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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Exeter Public Library; Carnegie Library
other names/site number Carnegie Community Center

2. Location

street & number 309 South E St. n/a not for publication
city, town Exeter n/a vicinity
state California code CA county Tulare code 107 zip code 93221

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private, public-local (checked), public-State, public-Federal
Category of Property: building(s) (checked), district, site, structure, object
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing (1), Noncontributing (0), Total (1)

Name of related multiple property listing: California Carnegie Libraries
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination (checked) request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets (checked) does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official: Kathryn Gueltner
Date: 10/22/90

In my opinion, the property meets () does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official:
Date:
State or Federal agency and bureau:

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
Entered in the National Register (checked)
determined eligible for the National Register ()
determined not eligible for the National Register ()
removed from the National Register ()
other, (explain):

Entered in the National Register

Signature of the Keeper: Helene Lyne

Date of Action: 12/10/90

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/library

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/clubhouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Mission/Spanish Colonial revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

Stucco

roof Asbestos

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

CALIFORNIA CARNEGIE LIBRARIES: EXETER CARNEGIE COMMUNITY CENTER

Section number 7 Page 1

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The Exeter Carnegie building, now known as the Carnegie Community Center, is basically rectangular in shape, one story over a slightly raised basement, and stucco with a brick foundation. Mission Revival in style, there are also classical elements in its central projecting entrance and symmetry. The low hipped roof is interrupted at the sides with a gabled parapet, and the line of the parapet is repeated above the wide central entrance. Tall narrow side panels of glass flank the recessed door, plain under a transom. Eaves extend widely beyond the building, supported by shaped rafters which project slightly. Casement windows, tall and narrow under a transom, are each framed with a slightly projecting stucco label and extended sill. Basement windows are similarly framed as the brick of the foundation rises around them. Tall metal lamp standards flank the entrance path at the sidewalk. The building was constructed in 1916 and its exterior is essentially unchanged except for the addition of a wheelchair access ramp in the rear and a single simple bent pipe hand rail at the entrance. These changes do not detract from the integrity of the building as reflected in its style and workmanship. The building is situated at one end of a city park under tall shade trees planted prior to the library siting. The new library is adjacent, with the remainder of the park in lawn and trees with a bandstand, picnic area, and playground.

Exeter's Carnegie Community Building is a long, low, one story building under a low hipped roof. Entrance and gable ends are capped with an angled parapet, simply detailed. The central entrance projects from the building, below the line of the hipped roof which extends almost over the entrance itself. Below the eaves is a row of shaped extended rafters. Above the portico, the gabled parapet bears the words "1916 Carnegie Community Building 1976." The portico itself is wide, with side panels containing three small square windows with Union Jack motif, arranged vertically, the upper one separated a little from the lower two, all over a wide and slightly projecting stucco sill. Between them, the doorway is deeply recessed within a series of stepped frames. The door itself is simple and not as wide as the transom above it; possibly it has replaced a wider or double door. The transom consists of four panes repeating the Union Jack motif.

Viewed from the front, only the entrance portico and two windows are clearly visible under the trees and beyond a few nearby shrubs, but small plantings at the sides and rear permit a closer view of the construction details. The flat walk leading to the entrance starts at the street, passes between two tall metal light standards at the sidewalk, and crosses the lawn to the foot of the wide low steps, with a flagpole on each side. A simple handrail has been inserted on one side of the stairs and, off to the side, a bench provides a shady resting place.

Casement window are deeply recessed, tall and narrow under a plain transom and widely spaced, three on each side of the entrance and two at each end. Each is separately outlined above by a label of slightly raised stucco; below, each group is connected by an extended, slightly raised sill, also stucco. Above the pair of windows at the sides, the facade interrupts the extended eaves

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

CALIFORNIA CARNEGIE LIBRARIES: EXETER CARNEGIE COMMUNITY CENTER

Section number 7 Page 2

to form an angled pediment similar to that over the front door. Here, the angle of the pediment is framed in two narrow stucco lines and within the angle the Union Jack motif is repeated in three small vents. On either side of the paired windows there is a small square high unframed window, each also with Union Jack motif. A small design of stucco on each side of these windows is apparently decorative, as interior pictures show no bracing at those points.

A low base of brick surrounds the building, rising to frame the small rectangular basement windows, slightly recessed, placed at grade level under casement windows in the front and back of the building and on one side. The basement, under one half of the building, is now used only by city maintenance people for supplies. In the rear of the building, a slight projection like a pilaster frames a central section where there is outside basement access, and a first floor door for which wheelchair access has been provided. The basement is also accessible from inside. In addition to wheelchair access and a stair hand rail, a new door was provided and lamp posts and flagpole installed when the building was renovated for community use in 1976. The building is in very good condition, and is well maintained. Changes over the years have been minimal and today's Carnegie Community Center retains the integrity of design and workmanship of the 1916 Exeter Carnegie Library.

Inside, the building is high ceilinged and light. Walls are painted a light color, contrasting with the original dark wood panelling, the trim framing the windows, and the molding which surrounds the room. Furniture consists primarily of chairs and tables for dining, meetings, and sociability, plus a piano and desk. Senior meals are brought in hot by a "meals on wheels" truck as there is no stove, but a refrigerator and sink facilitate serving and washing up.

The building is located in a full block park within a residential area, centrally located in the old part of town. The old Carnegie library and the adjacent new one are built at one end of the park. Other park buildings are a bandstand and, just behind the Carnegie building, a rest room provided for park visitors. The park also provides a shaded picnic area, children's playground, and grassy expanse for games.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Social History
Architecture

1916-1921

1916

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Significant Person
n/a

Architect/Builder
Bowser, A. Merrill

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

CALIFORNIA CARNEGIE LIBRARIES: EXETER CARNEGIE COMMUNITY CENTER

Section number 8 Page 1

The Exeter Carnegie building is one of only two remaining Carnegie libraries in Tulare County where six Carnegies were constructed between 1904 and 1921. Tulare Carnegies span most of the years of the Carnegie program in California. In Exeter, no library existed until 1910; in that year the Exeter Women's Club, organized seven years earlier, campaigned for a State Library "deposit station" to be located in Exeter. A few months later Tulare County established its county library system and Exeter became a branch. Incorporated in 1911, Exeter in late 1913 applied for Carnegie funding, with the support of the County Librarian and the continuing participation of the Women's Club; \$5000 was granted. A city park site had been landscaped earlier by the Women's Club and in accordance with the terms of Carnegie giving, the city pledged the required amount for maintenance of the building and the collection. The library opened in 1916 and served until 1975, when a new county library building was erected adjacent to the old, within the park. The old library continues its central role in Exeter as the Carnegie Community Building, a meeting hall for clubs and groups, and senior dining center.

Tulare County's total of six Carnegie libraries surpasses that of all other California counties with the exception of the metropolitan counties of San Francisco, Alameda, Contra Costa and Los Angeles. In Tulare County, the older towns of Visalia, Tulare, and Porterville, incorporated in 1874, 1888, and 1902 respectively, each applied for and received Carnegie grants between 1903 and 1907. When Tulare County established a county library system in 1910, the other incorporated cities in the county were Dinuba and Lindsay; Exeter incorporated the following year. In 1913 the County Board of Supervisors requested funds from the Carnegie Corporation for a new central library and for branches at Dinuba Station, Exeter, Lindsay, Alpaugh, and Oroshi, among others. That request was denied. Then Dinuba and Exeter, with the support of the Board of Supervisors, applied for and received Carnegie funds in 1914 and 1915; in 1917 Carnegie funding was secured by the county for a library in the unincorporated Oroshi area. By that time all was not well in the county library system and in order to complete promised road improvements without raising the tax rate, the county library budget was cut. In Lindsay, the only remaining incorporated town without a library, the Chamber of Commerce started a fund drive for a city library; there is no indication that they again sought Carnegie funds.

The three earlier libraries each received \$10,000 grants. Visalia and Porterville Carnegies were Mission Revival and Tulare's was Classical Revival with an angled central pavilion supported by four columns. Dinuba, Exeter, and Oroshi received grants of \$8000, \$5000, and \$3000 respectively. Dinuba and Exeter both constructed their libraries in 1916, Dinuba's a restrained Classic Revival style with slightly projecting central element, Exeter's with suggestions of classic detailing incorporated with Mission Revival. The last California Carnegie to be completed was Oroshi's, a frame building with some Craftsman details, which opened in November, 1921. Today the remaining Tulare County Carnegies are Exeter's Carnegie Community Center and the Oroshi/Cutler Branch Library.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

CALIFORNIA CARNEGIE LIBRARIES: EXETER CARNEGIE COMMUNITY CENTER

Section number 8 Page 2

Until the arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1888, the area around what is now Exeter was primarily one of large farms of wheat and barley, with some livestock. Visalia was the nearest town. The railroad bought a hundred acre right of way through the Firebaugh Ranch and planned a town which was named for the birthplace of one of the railroad promoters. Streets were laid out parallel to the tracks which came through from northwest to southeast. The original town site is thus on the "diagonal" within the north/south rectangle that characterizes Valley communities, and is now surrounded by subdivisions laid out more traditionally by the compass. After the successful introduction in 1895 of table grapes and citrus, two additional railroads arrived: in 1905 the Visalia electric railway and in 1914 the Santa Fe.

Many community groups fostering civic improvement were active in the years before incorporation and one of the most active was the Women's Club, organized in 1903. Among their earliest activities was the landscaping of a city block set aside for a park, which later was to become the site of the Carnegie Library. Meanwhile, it was also through the women's efforts that a state traveling library deposit station was established in Exeter in early 1910. Several months later county library organizer Bertha Kumli, followed by Harriet Eddy, campaigned throughout the county in behalf of rural library service. Eddy reported that she found the people everywhere supportive, but she was concerned about the inclinations of the "very conservative" Board of Supervisors. They heard from their constituents, however, notably the women's clubs, and the resolution passed.

Meanwhile, the Exeter deposit station, first located in a general store, had grown to include a reading room. Among its subsequent locations were the basement of the Board of Trade building, and a store room; prior the new Carnegie building, its last location was above the Fix-it Shop. In 1911, after two unsuccessful tries, Exeter voted 135-24 to become a city. In November 1913 the new city applied for its own library, and having received no response tried again in February 1914. Because Exeter hadn't been counted in the 1910 census, it could "estimate" its population: 1000 at the time of the 1911 election; in 1913, a town population of 1500 plus an additional 1000 in the surrounding rural area. The second request, supported by a letter from the county librarian, brought an almost immediate offer of \$5000, subject to the usual contingency that a site be provided and annual support be provided equal to 10% of the grant.

The ensuing correspondence of some fifty letters, some illegible on microfilm, contains interesting examples of Bertram comments on siting and architectural plans, and provides insight into the amount of attention given by Bertram to even a small library. A site controversy was reported to Bertram and he urged that the whole community be satisfied, and that the lot be large enough to allow for light all around, plus future expansion; perhaps his comment influenced the eventual city park choice. Bertram rejected the first plans with the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

CALIFORNIA CARNEGIE LIBRARIES: EXETER CARNEGIE COMMUNITY CENTER

Section number 8 Page 3

admonition that the building should have four straight sides and "your bilding* has about thirty sides." Also, it had no basement. After plans were finally approved, the site was changed.

Next the City Clerk sent Bertram the plans of three architects, H.Y. Davis, Glass & Butner, and A. Merrill Bowser, eliciting a testy Bertram response "that it is about as much as we can do to go over one set of plans which has been tentatively decided upon by a community, without having to take up the points for, or against, three different sets."** Bertram then proceeded to comment on all three and in a flurry of subsequent letters discussed their revisions in regard to location of basement stairs, size of lecture room, entrance, and delivery room. At the same time he reminded the City Clerk that the Carnegie Corporation would pay for only one set of architectural plans. At one point, Davis sent plans directly to Bertram who returned them to the Exeter City Clerk and requested an explanation; early in each correspondence Bertram made clear his disinclination to correspond with architects. Bowser also communicated directly with Bertram, adopting the Carnegie/Bertram spelling style.

The final selection of Bowser's plans by the trustees brought another letter from Davis to Bertram complaining that Bowser was not an architect and that his plans were selected only because he had friends on the Board of Trustees and the Women's Club. Bertram forwarded that letter to the City Clerk for comment, adding that the lack of a basement would prejudice any request for future expansion funds. When all finally appeared resolved, Bertram found he had in error stamped both Davis and Bowser plans "Approved," and requested that the City Clerk retrieve the plans erroneously stamped. When it was learned that to get the Davis plans back they would have to buy them, Bertram decided that a dated "Approved" stamp on the last plans would cancel any earlier approval. That letter was dated April 1916, after which events must have run smoothly because on August 18, 1916, the Board of Trustees sent Bertram photos showing the completed building.

On September 1, 1916, books were moved to the new building, and on October 6 the building was formally opened. That same day the newspaper carried an announcement of the resignation of the librarian; the newspaper speculated the resignation was because "the salary of \$25 per month was not commensurate with the work required." The article went on to praise the librarian, Mrs. A.O. Woodworth, as "an excellent librarian. Always on hand ready to accommodate. . .pleasant and agreeable. Her place will no doubt be filled at the meagre stipend, but certainly no more capable person will be found to take her place." The newspaper's stance may have had an effect because Mrs. Woodworth was still librarian on January 19, 1917, when the newspaper reported on the library's fumigator, a feature of the new library that was "not generally known" and in which librarian Woodworth each day placed returned books in order to kill all germs.

* Note Bertram's use of simplified spelling as advocated by Andrew Carnegie.

** The copy on microfilm is of Bertram's rough draft, edited by him.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

CALIFORNIA CARNEGIE LIBRARIES: EXETER CARNEGIE COMMUNITY CENTER

Section number 8 Page 4

The library continued to serve the community until it was outgrown. In December 1975 books were moved to the new library constructed adjacent to it. As Exeter is again a part of the county library system, the county owns the new building and pays Exeter \$1 per year lease on the site in the park. The city continues to own the Carnegie building and the land it is on. It was renovated in July 1976, the only major alteration being the addition of wheelchair access. As the Carnegie Community Building, it provides a meeting place for many groups and is used daily to serve meals to senior citizens.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

California Carnegie Survey

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A

1	0	3	9	9	0	0	0	4	9	1	8	4	2	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

B

Zone		Easting						Northing						

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

AP# 135 150 19, located at the northeast corner of Chestnut and E streets within Library Park. City of Exeter.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city lot that has historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lucy Kortum
organization (Sonoma State University) date 11/89 (rev 4/90)
street & number 180 Fly Rd. telephone 707/762-6219
city or town Petaluma state CA zip code 94954

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

CALIFORNIA CARNEGIE LIBRARIES: EXETER CARNEGIE COMMUNITY CENTER

Section number 9 Page 1

Bobinski, George S. Carnegie Libraries: Their History and impact on American Public Library Development. Chicago: American Library Association, 1969.

Eddy, Harriet G. County Free Library Organizing in California, 1909-1918. Berkeley: Committee on California Library History, Bibliography, and Archives of the California Library Association, 1955.

Mangini, John A. Exeter Now and Then. 1976.

Van Slyck, Abigail A. "Free to All: California Libraries and the Transformation of American Culture, 1886-1917." Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1989.

Tulare County Historical Library, Mary Anne Terstegge, Local History Librarian
copies of pictures, clippings, letters, resolutions etc. related to the Tulare County Carnegies
Letter, Chairman, Board of Supervisors, to Andrew Carnegie, May 5, 1913.
"Librarian Woodworth Tenders Resignation," Exeter Sun, Oct. 6, 1916.
"Library Reception Brilliant Success," Exeter Sun, October 13, 1916.
"All Books for Local Library Fumigated," Exeter Sun, Jan. 19, 1917.
"C of C Votes Funds for Library," Lindsay Citrograph, Nov. 1, 1917.

Carnegie Corporation of New York: Exeter correspondence

California Carnegie Survey: not returned

Resource people: printed information and conversations:

Betty J. Darby, Administrative Secretary, City of Exeter.

John Mangini, local historian

Mary Anne Terstegge, Local History Librarian, Tulare County Library, Visalia.

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CALIFORNIA CARNEGIE LIBRARIES: EXETER CARNEGIE COMMUNITY CENTER
PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Exeter Carnegie Community Building
309 S. E. St.
2. Exeter CA 93221
3. Lucy Kortum
4. June 13, 1989
5. California Carnegie Survey

6. Entrance, view to east
7. Photo #1

6. Entrance and park setting, view to southeast
7. Photo #2

6. Left side, view to south
7. Photo #3

6. Rear, view to northeast
7. Photo #4

3. Unknown
4. Unknown
5. Re-photographed, new negative, California Carnegie Survey
6. Interior
7. Photo #5

Exeter
Carnegie
Community
Center

