

NOV 19 1989

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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 Leach Public Library
other names/site number Leach Public Library

2. Location

street & number 417 Second Avenue North
city, town Wahpeton
state ND code ND county Richland code 077 zip code 58075

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 buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total

Name of related multiple property listing: Philanthropically Established Libraries in North Dakota

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 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 does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official James E. Sperry
State Historic Preservation Officer (North Dakota)
Date November 21, 1989
State or Federal agency and bureau

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.
determined eligible for the National Register.
determined not eligible for the National Register.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper: Beth Boland
Date of Action: 1/26/90

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Library

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Library

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Neo-Classical

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Cementwalls Brickroof : Asbestos

other

**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

The Leach Public Library is located near the central business district and across from the Richland County Court House in Wahpeton, North Dakota. The Classical styling of the building compliments the Neoclassical fabric of four other public buildings located in this part of town, including The City Hall (1914) and nearby Wahpeton Hospital (1911). The Neoclassical mandate was first invoked in the Georgian style Wahpeton Hospital (1911) and in the Beaux Arts exuberance of the Courthouse (1912). These more traditional expressions of Neoclassical design were stripped to dignified simplicity in subjects such as the Wahpeton Post Office (1914) and Leach Public Library.

The single volume structure comprises one tall story with raised basement and hipped roof. Uniformity in the color of brick and cornice elements, and the lack of projections in the form of entry portico or side bays imparts a monolithic presence. This heavy massing is pierced by the rhythmic disposition of large arched windows and raised basement windows. Arched windows feature thick mullions subdivided by Colonial muntins.

The monumental quality of the library is enhanced by a deep margin of lawn, minimal plantings and a lawn terrace built up four feet around the structure. The terracing device bolsters the height of the building by creating a pedestal effect. At the time of construction it was also a cost saving mechanism since it allowed the first floor to be set into the site as a basement instead of a fully finished story.

A stone block located in the entry stairway records the building's designers, "Keith & Kurke," of Fargo, and a corner stone at the northeast corner bearing the year of construction, "1923," contains a record of the events surrounding the endowment as well as the original plans and specifications. The brick veneer has a slightly variegated appearance due to the alternating placement of buff colored brick stretchers and slightly darker headers. Arched windows are defined by continuous soldier coursing and limestone sills. In departure from true Classical form, a simple limestone cornice with dentil band falls midway between the frieze and architrave. Located within the frieze are stone tablets inscribed with the names of various scholarly disciplines and artistic pursuits such as "Science, Religion, Politics, Poetry, History, Travel and Drama."

Unlike the well defined porticos and projecting vestibules that often guard the entries of Carnegie libraries, the entrance to the Leach Public Library is flush with the surrounding facade. A double entry door, treated as an edicula with engaged fluted columns and an entablature proclaiming, "Free To All," is capped by a deeply hooded arched transom.

**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)

Architecture  
Education  
Social History

Period of Significance

1923

Significant Dates

1923

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Keith/Kurke

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

Orations made during the dedication of the Leach Public Library remain perhaps the most strident endorsements for the social and educational value of public libraries ever made in the state. By proclaiming the study of good books as the "cure for evils," the opening address underscored the social and cultural mission of libraries. The Leach Public Library is therefore eligible under Criterion A as a component of the broader theme of social and educational history as related to philanthropically established libraries in North Dakota.

Originally from Irasburg, Vermont, benefactor Orrin Leach and his wife moved from Fargo to Wahpeton in 1896 to begin a commercial and banking venture. He and partner Edward Gamble operated the state's first fruit and grocery wholesale business in a simple wood frame structure on Fourth Street North. The profitable business later enabled the two wholesalers to move to a large two story brick structure on South Third Street. For Leach, increasing prosperity was later marked by a term as Wahpeton's mayor and by several philanthropic gestures made to the city of Wahpeton.

Leach's first pledge of \$25,000 eventually proved inadequate for his proposed gift. But instead of abandoning the project, he contributed the additional monies to a total of \$45,000, a sum considered a great fortune by many locals. Conditions for the use of his endowment were strikingly similar to those of the Carnegie Corporation. The city was required to furnish a site, taxes had to be levied in order to cover yearly maintenance costs and the library was to be open to the public. In 1923, the building opened to fulfill Leach's vision for a public library facility.

The reverence for book reading as a means of social and educational reform during this period is perhaps nowhere more evident than in remarks made during the dedication of the Leach Public Library. For example, the library was praised as "a mighty influence in the development of good characters and intelligence on the part of our citizens." Another statement points to the library as one of the most effective means of attracting new settlement to the community, pronouncing that, "it will be a badge of

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet.

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property Approx 1 acre

**UTM References**

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See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Located between 4th and 5th streets and Wisconsin Avenue  
North half Block 38, Lots 1-3, 15-17.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

Library boundaries include the structure and surrounding lawn which contributes to the building's original landscape and siting.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Lauren McCroskey, Architectural Historian  
organization State Historical Society of North Dakota date November 21, 1989  
street & number 612 E. Blvd Ave. Heritage Center telephone (701)224-2672  
city or town Bismarck state ND zip code 58505

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As with many libraries built during the period, the interior of the Leach Public Library was designed as a single space, open hall plan with free standing stacks and additional shelving located around the inside perimeter walls. In the absence of a projecting entry, an inverted vestibule provides transition between exterior and interior spaces. The inside of the doorway is framed by engaged Ionic columns which support a Classical cornice. Walls and ceiling of smooth plaster finish incorporate a frieze of raised plaster panels and plain medallions. Natural light provided by the large arched windows is enhanced by original lighting fixtures suspended from the ceiling.

The library presents an excellent level of integrity and is distinguished statewide for its retention of original windows and its pronounced visibility on a large lot which has remained undeveloped. Fortunately absent from the facades are the additions that are common to so many public libraries. The building's donor and attending architects adequately provided for immediate library needs, as well as anticipating long-range concerns.

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honor to the City of Wahpeton and it will be a factor in bringing new residents to this city."

As a period expression of stripped Neoclassical design in North Dakota, and as a work of acclaimed Fargo architects, Keith and Kurke, the Leach Public Library also merits National Register listing on grounds of architectural significance.

Keith and Kurke are known statewide for a distinguished body of residential, public and federal works. The building may be their only execution of a public library design. It is certainly the state's latest example of the Neoclassical style rendered on a privately endowed public library building. Stylistically, the building finishes the spectrum of representative library designs that began with the more academic versions such as the James Memorial and Valley City libraries. By departing from the typical three volume plan used for most Carnegie and non-Carnegie facilities, the building is also distinguished among other state libraries.

The surrounding terraces are an effective means of displaying the building on its site. As an example of landscape architecture, the feature is locally unusual since no other public structure in Wahpeton was elevated with the terracing device.

The Leach Public Library was not Orrin Leach's only library gift, the Leach Public Library in his Vermont hometown being the other object of his benevolence. The eastern subject is modest as compared to the Wahpeton building, but is no doubt an impressive facility in that small community. The style of the Irasburg library conforms closely to the sparse Classicism of many smaller Carnegies built ten years earlier. Leach's choice of design for the Irasburg library apparently drew little inspiration from the Wahpeton building, and although both are simple compositions, the terraced site of the Wahpeton library adds stature to the building's site and the chaste Neoclassical theme updates the stock designs of earlier years.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

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