

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SLIP

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JUL 8 1975  
DATE ENTERED SEP 18 1975

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

The Ricks Memorial Library

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

310 N. Main Street

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Yazoo City

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Third

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Mississippi

CODE  
28

COUNTY  
Yazoo

CODE  
163

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Yazoo Library Association

STREET & NUMBER

310 N. Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Yazoo City

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Mississippi

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Yazoo County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

211 E. Broadway

CITY, TOWN

Yazoo City

STATE

Mississippi

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Statewide Survey of Historic Sites

DATE 1975

\_\_ FEDERAL  STATE \_\_ COUNTY \_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

CITY, TOWN

Jackson

STATE Mississippi

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located on North Main Street in Yazoo City, Mississippi, the Ricks Memorial Library is a noteworthy example of the Beaux Arts Classicism fashionable at the beginning of the twentieth century. While the building is not large, the use of Edwardian proportion and classical ornament combine to give it a pronounced monumentality. Standing on a concrete foundation, the library is constructed of hydraulic pressed brick with terra-cotta trim and is covered by a tin roof. Its composition is dominated by a central, two-story pavilion designed with attenuated pilasters supporting an entablature ornamented with Adamesque swags and shallow reveals in the frieze. To emphasize the approach axis, the central bay is slightly let-out, defined by pilasters, and capped with a terra-cotta cartouche and consoles resting above the cornice. Sheltering the entrance is a single-story, semi-circular portico of paired Tuscan columns of Indiana stone, and a full entablature surmounted by a prominent balustrade. This composition is extended to the single-story wings which symmetrically flank the entrance pavilion. Use of the semicircle, of which the portico is the most conspicuous example, also appears in the skillfully detailed arches above the windows and the door opening, and the large apsidal projection of the rear elevation. Other details include panels placed in the spandrel areas beneath the windows, which are double hung with one-over-one glazing.

The plan of the Ricks Memorial Library is a straightforward arrangement of interior spaces necessitated by, and well suited for, its function. A vestibule, with a barrel vault ceiling enriched with coffers and gilded egg and dart molding, is lined with Georgia marble and serves to connect the entrance with the stack area. While simpler in materials and detail than the vestibule, the stack room derives much of its interest from the spatial effect created by its large apsidal end and the continued repetition of circular shapes evident in the windows and the large, colorful skylight. Notable features of the room include many of the original bookcases decorated with miniature pilasters and entablatures, and the striking Edwardian portraits of General and Mrs. Benjamin S. Ricks, for whom the library was named. A general reading room currently devoted to juvenile literature adjoins the stack room to the south, while the smaller reference and periodical rooms, originally the smoking and chess rooms respectively, occupy the north wing. Reached by a narrow stair adjacent to the stack room and vestibule, the second floor provides space for the director's office, known originally as the board room, and for a large storage-work area. To provide needed work, storage, and browsing space, a single-story addition was attached to the northwest portion of the library in 1970. The architect, Jack DeCell of Yazoo City, produced a sensitive design which neither altered any original interior space, nor detracted from the exterior integrity.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES                      1900                      BUILDER/ARCHITECT    Alfred Zucker

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Occupied by one of the oldest library associations in Mississippi, the Ricks Memorial Library building was given to the Yazoo Library Association in 1900 by Fannie Ricks in honor of her late husband General B. S. Ricks. Since its founding on September 8, 1838, the library association had been housed in numerous locations throughout the city including the Armory of Manchester Fusiliers, the Masonic Lodge, the City Hall, and the rooms of the public school. According to the association's "Minute Book, 1838-1933," the organization in its early years conducted weekly meetings at which members participated in political and social debates on such timely topics as "Was the United States Bank Constitutional?" "Was the condemnation and beheading of Charles I a patriotic or traitorous measure?" or "Which will sustain man best: genius or application?" In addition to debates, original essays were delivered to the association by its own members. These speakers were selected by the president, and failure to comply with his request resulted in a strong censure and a fine. To help meet the financial requirements of the association, the debates and essays were often heard in the nearby Presbyterian Church where the public could be better accommodated and an admission fee charged. Essays of particular interest were occasionally printed in the Yazoo City Whig. The cultural stimulus given to the community by the collections and public activities of the library association was typical of similar benefits being felt over the nation as a whole through the Lyceum Movement.

Despite what seems to have been a most promising start, the Yazoo Library Association suspended its meetings in 1847, after only nine years of operation, and continued dormant for the next twenty-four years. When it reappeared in 1871, the association revived its weekly meetings, complete with debates and readings, and opened its doors to women. The history of the association remained relatively uneventful until November 19, 1900, when a special meeting was called to accept Mrs. Benjamin S. Ricks's offer of a new building "not to cost less than \$20,000" to house the association's collections.

It was Mrs. Ricks's intention that the new library be a permanent memorial to her late husband General B. S. Ricks (1843-1899), who had been a member of the Yazoo Library Association since 1893. A citizen of Yazoo City from 1882, Ricks attended Princeton University before joining the Twenty-eighth Mississippi Cavalry at the outbreak of the Civil War. He settled at Belle Prairie plantation on the Yazoo River after the war and was later commissioned Brigadier General of the state militia by Governor Robert Lowry in 1880. At the time of his death Ricks was president of the Yazoo Commercial Company, the Producers Cotton Oil Mill, and the Peoples Ice Factory, in addition to owning over 18,000 acres of land in the Yazoo Delta.

Accompanying Mrs. Ricks's offer to the Yazoo Library Association were plans for the new structure "drawn by Mr. Alfred Zucker, the noted architect of New York." A native of the German state of Silesia, Zucker came to America in 1873 and worked in the office of Alfred B. Mullett, the famous Washington architect. In 1876, he moved his practice to

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Jackson. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Yazoo Library Association Minute Book, 1838-1933.

(continued)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approx. 1

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 5	7, 4, 2, 2, 2, 5	3, 6, 3, 7, 3, 0, 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

William C. Allen, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Mississippi Department of Archives & History

DATE

May, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 571

TELEPHONE  
(601) 354-6218

CITY OR TOWN

Jackson

STATE

Mississippi

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

*Elmer R. Hilliard*

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

July 3, 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

9/18/75

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

SEP 16 1975

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Galveston, Texas, and opened a branch office in Vicksburg, Mississippi, where he served the Vicksburg and Meridian Railroad as consulting architect. Before leaving the South in 1882, Zucker designed several major buildings for the Agricultural and Mechanical College at Starkville, the courthouses of Alcorn and Lauderdale counties, the East Mississippi State Insane Asylum at Meridian and the Deaf Mutes' Institute of Jackson, none of which have survived. In 1883, Zucker established his practice in New York City, where he was later retained by Mrs. Ricks to design the Ricks Memorial Library. Zucker's design, which is considered to be among the finest examples of Beaux Arts Classicism in the state, received much contemporary attention and praise. When the library was dedicated on New Year's Day, 1902, Congressman John Sharp Williams applauded it as "classic in design, chaste in ornamentation, graceful in outline [and] simple in adaptation to a most useful and abiding purpose."

Although the Yazoo Library Association receives grants from local, state, and federal governments, it continues to operate as a private organization under its articles of incorporation issued on February 22, 1840 by the Mississippi legislature. With their collections, activities, and fine building, the Ricks Memorial Library and Yazoo Library Association are responsible for much of the cultural activity in Yazoo County.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Encyclopedia of New York Biography and Genealogy. Vol. 3. Leslie's History of the Greater New York. New York: Arkell Publishing Co., n.d.

Yazoo City, Miss. Yazoo City Herald. December 8, 1899; November 23, 1900; January 3, 1902; November 8, 1918.