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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** Watts Free Library  
historic name Watts Free Library  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**  
street & number 101 3rd Street North N/A  not for publication  
city, town Leonard N/A  vicinity  
state ND code ND county Cass code 017 zip code 58052

**3. Classification**

<b>Ownership of Property</b>	<b>Category of Property</b>	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<b>Contributing</b>	<b>Noncontributing</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ 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.

James E. Sperry November 21, 1989  
Signature of certifying official James E. Sperry Date  
State Historic Preservation Officer (North Dakota)  
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. Beth Boland 5/31/90  
 See continuation sheet. \_\_\_\_\_  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet. \_\_\_\_\_  
 determined not eligible for the National Register. \_\_\_\_\_  
 removed from the National Register. \_\_\_\_\_  
 other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
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)

Late 19th and 20th Century

Revival

Other: Stick

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete (block)

walls Concrete (block)

roof Tin

other

**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

Located on a corner lot in Leonard, North Dakota, the Watts Free Library is the sole occupant of the west side of the block. The structure is sited adjacent to the original city park which was given in conjunction with the library donation. The undeveloped treed surroundings affirm the library's stature as the principal public building in Leonard.

The small, symmetrical massing conveys a cottage-like appearance, trimmed with scalloped gingerbread trim around eaves. Architecturally, the building suggests a belated appearance of the "Stick" style through the use of a decorative truss motif in the entry gable. Decorative quoins, cut wood trim and decorative metal roofing are the remaining embellishments.

The modest, one story, single room structure is composed of eight inch concrete blocks. Entry into the building is emphasized with a slightly projecting vestibule, capped by a shallow gable which contains the decorative truss. Within the gable are incised blocks bearing the name, "LIBRARY, 1911." The hipped roof is sheathed in scalloped metal shingles, now painted silver; deep soffits are edged with scalloped wood trim painted white. Rocked-faced concrete blocks are treated as quoins around the entry and at facade corners.

The entry has retained the original paneled door with beveled oval glass and overlying transom. Typical for the period, though somewhat contemporary for the "Stick" theme are the broad single plate windows headed with diamond pane leaded glass lights. These windows provide generous natural light to the interior and were perhaps chosen for their functional value to library reading activity.

Interior walls of smooth finish plaster support a coved ceiling finished with decorative pressed metal. Most original furnishings have been retained, including an exceptional oil lamp suspended from the ceiling. Shelving for library books is provided by movable wooden units located along interior walls.

The building presents good physical integrity, aside from settlement cracks that probably occurred early in the life of the building. A cosmetic change has been made to the original exterior color which, based on historic photographs, appears to have been a darker, monochromatic scheme. Today principal surfaces are painted white with quoins accented in green, and the metal roof has been coated with a metallic silver paint.

12/12/89

**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

Architecture  
Education  
Social History

1911

1911

:

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

As a component of the state's inventory of philanthropically established libraries, the Watts Free Library is significant under Criterion A for it's contribution to the history of library building patronage in North Dakota. The historic profile of the building conforms to the general pattern of private library endowments made for social welfare and educational benefit.

The gift of the Watts Free Library was made in 1911 by Edgerton Watts, postmaster of Leonard, in memory of his wife Mary Hewitt Watts. Built in the then unincorporated village of Leonard, the Watts Free Library remained the first and only township library in the state. In addition, it is perhaps the smallest private library ever built in the state, and indeed Leonard may be the smallest community in North Dakota ever to have received a library. Built at a cost of \$5,000 the library endowment was supported by a four mill levy approved by local voters in 1913, a figure which was readjusted to one mill at the time of Leonard's incorporation in 1951.

Edgerton Watts made a library the object of his benevolence for much the same reasons as did other library patrons throughout the state. Recognizing the local need for a library facility, Watts made his donation for the future benefit and educational welfare of the surrounding community. His library gift also included the adjacent parcel of land donated as a city park. Unlike many other library benefactors in the state, Edgerton Watts was not moved to make his library donation as result of surplus wealth or because of political constituency, but rather by seemingly humanistic values based on the visible needs in his community. An Easterner by birth, Watts had no documented assets other than income derived from his role as postmaster and from small land holdings within Leonard. It is appropriate that, as the sole library facility serving Leonard and the nearby communities of Kindred, Sheldon, Chaffee and areas south of town, the Watts Free Library has continued to function in the capacity designed by its benefactor. Furthermore, the library still operates from it's original source of income, a local apportionment from the mill levy.

See continuation sheet

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

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property Less than one acre.

**UTM References**

A 

1	4
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6	7	4	7	9	0
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5	1	6	7	9	1	0
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Zone      Easting      Northing

C 

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B 

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Zone      Easting      Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Corner of 3rd Street and 1st Avenue North, adjacent to City Park to the Northwest. Lots 17-32, Block 11.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

Boundary is delineated by the legal description (based on platting) of the library and its surrounding property.

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

12/13/89

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**National Register of Historic Places  
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The small size and restrained ornament of the Watts Free Library in no way detract from the building's architectural significance. Under Criterion C, the library may be cited as the only known public library in North Dakota given a Victorian "Stick" style motif, and as one of few extant public properties in the state that reflect this stylistic influence. For a 1911 composition, the decorative gable truss makes a curiously late appearance, as compared to "Stick" ornamentation which peaked elsewhere in the country well before the turn of the century. Apart from a state level of significance for architectural values, the library is locally, the earliest extant public structure designed in the late Victorian tradition. Interestingly, this earlier stylistic theme is rendered with more contemporary period materials and features such as decorative cast concrete blocks, deep soffits and broad plate glass windows.

The Watts Free Library continues it's role as a centerpiece of educational activity in the regional community. With a local commitment for operating funds, and a regular Friday program for elementary students, the building will be ensured of continued patronage and heightened visibility among residents for years to come.

12/13/84

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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## MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

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