National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*Type all entries—complete applicable sections

Type all entries	—complete applic	able sections			
1. Nam	e				
historic	Benjamin M	1. Smith Memo	orial Libra	ry	
and/or common	Meredith F	Public Libra	ry (prefer	red)	
2. Loca	ation				
street & number	50 Main St	reeti			N/A not for publication
city, town	Meredith	<u>N//</u>	A vicinity of		
state	New Hampshire	code 33	county	Be1knap	code 001
3. Clas	sification	1			
Category district _X_ building(s) structure site object	Ownership X public private both Public Acquisition in process being conside X N/A	on Acces: _X yes	cupied occupied ork in progress sible s: restricted s: unrestricted	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	museum park private residence religious scientific transportation X other: Library
4. Own	er of Pro	perty		33333	
name	Town of Me	eredith			
street & number	Municipal	Building - I	Main Street		
city, town	Meredith,	_ N,	Aicinity of	state	New Hampshire 03253
5. Loca	ation of L	egal De	scripti	on	
courthouse, regi	stry of deeds, etc.		ounty Court	try of Deeds (Book house	104, Page 107)
city, town		Laconia,		state	New Hampshire 03246
6. Rep	resentati	on in Ex	cisting	Surveys	
title Meredith	Historic Resou	rce Invento	ry has this pr	operty been determined	eligible? yes _X no
date 1981				federal s	tate county _X_ local
depository for su	urvey records Lake	es Region Pl	anning Comm	ission	
city, town		edith,	<i>,</i>	state	e New Hampshire 03253

7. Description

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Benjamin M. Smith Memorial Library is a brick library building which stands on its own lot on Main Street in the village of Meredith, New Hampshire. The library has a T-shaped plan. The hip-roofed, one and a half story main block is set parallel to the street with a shallow gable-roofed entry pavilion in the center of its street facade. Behind and perpendicular to the main block is the hip-roofed rear wing, which, although the same height as the main block, is a two-story structure. Save for the rear (west) facade of the rear wing, which is built of common brick, laid in common bond, flemish variation, the facades are sheathed with fine facing bricks laid in stretcher bond. The slate roofs have moulded copper gutters and copper ridge mouldings.

The main block, five bays wide and three bays deep, was treated more elaborately than the rear wing. Save on its rear (west) facades, which have low cut granite block foundations, the main block's brick walls are set on a high foundation of rock-faced granite blocks with dressed margins and watertable. Projections of the granite foundation at the corners serve as bases for the brick corner pilasters, whose capitals incorporate fine brick mouldings, notably an egg and dart moulding. The pilasters support a deep classical entablature. The brick entablature also incorporates moulded ornamental bricks, notably modillions, an egg and dart moulding, and three courses of fluted brick in the cornice, as well as more common projecting and dentiled courses.

In the center of the street (east) facade of the main block is found the shallow entry pavilion, which projects above the cornice of the main block. The entry, set in a semicircular arch, is framed by brick corner pilasters of the same design and height as the other corner pilasters. Directly above the arch is a long granite slab, with "BENJAMIN M. SMITH" in large raised letters. The stilted granite arch, with keystone and impost blocks, set in the brick wall, has "MEMORIAL LIBRARY" spelled out in large raised letters on its blocks. (The keystone is ornamented by a carved open book.) The arch has an outer moulding of moulded bricks, with lower terminations featuring a simple floral design. In each spandrel is a circular granite plaque with a circular frame of moulded bricks. These granite plaques display the building's date, again in large raised letters - "A.D." in the south plaque, "1900" in the north plaque. The entry itself is reached by steps, flanked by ramped sidewalls with end blocks, all of rock-faced granite with dressed margins. The recessed entry is set back within the arch. The five-panel door (with a builtin book drop) has a granite sill, wooden frame, and half sidelights above wooden panels. The tympanum is filled by wooden framed windows, a large semicircular pane directly above the door and four large panes in a half circle around the transom window. The short upper level of the entry pavilion contains two short windows with granite sills and lintels, all rock-faced with dressed The lintels, like most of the other main block window lintels, have slanted ends and central "keystones" marked by dressed margins. (One window has been replaced by a fan vent, but the other retains its ten-pane sash.) The pavilion is crowned by the same cornice as the main block, pedimented on the street facade. The pediment contains a round wooden clock face with Roman numerals, framed, like the date plaques below, by moulded brick. To each side of the pavilion is a five-pane basement window with granite lintel and two tall main level windows, with one over one sash, a single pane transom window, granite sill and lintel. All of the street facade window sills and lintels are rock-faced with dressed margins, and the main level windows have the

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same lintels with "keystones" and slanted ends as are found in the upper level of the pavilion. The north and south facades of the main block have fenestration of similar design, with the same sills and lintels, each facade having two three-pane basement windows and three main level windows with one over one sash and single pane transom windows. The rear (west) facades of the main block are, by contrast to the other facades, two stories in height and somewhat simpler in ornament. North of the rear wing, we find a basement bulkhead with cut granite block foundation and lintel, brick side walls, and wooden doors. Above the bulkhead appears a one over one sash window in the first story, and a twelve pane casement window in the second story. These two windows have rock-faced granite sills and lintels, which, like the other window sills and lintels of the rear wing and the rear facades of the main block, lack the dressed margins found on the public facades of the main block. South of the rear wing is found the library's rear entry, a six-panel door with builtin book drop, two pane transom window, granite sill and lintel. The rear door is reached by steps with a sidewall, all of rock-faced granite with dressed margins. To the south of the door is a one over one sash window with granite sill and lintel. The steps, door and window are now sheltered by a modern wooden porch with plain square wooden posts, a metal pipe hand railing, close eaves and a copper clad shed roof. Above the rear entry porch in the second story is another twelve pane window with granite sills and lintel. The rear slope of the main block's hip roof is broken by two tall brick chimneys with moulded caps.

The rear wing was not as lavishly decorated as the main block. It is set on a low cut granite block foundation. Its windows have the same moulded wooden trim as the main block's windows, but their rough granite sills and lintels do not have dressed margins, sloping ends or ornamental "keystones". No pilasters grace the corners of the rear wing. And its brick cornice, while the same depth as the main block's cornice, does not include any specially made decorative bricks, relying instead simply on projecting courses and one dentiled course for ornament. The fenestration of each story of the rear wing is much the same on each facade. The three-pane basement windows (two on the south facade, three on the north facade) have the usual rough granite sills and lintels. So do the one over one sash windows of the first story. The rear (west) facade has a single first-story window. Both the north and south facades have two double first-story windows, with the north facade also having another narrower single window of similar design. All three facades have the same second story fenestration—three casement windows with twelve—pane sash, granite sills and lintels.

The main level of the main block is divided into six major spaces. On the central axis of the building is the vestibule and the lobby which contains the main desk. On each side of the lobby is a large reading room, an adult browsing room to the south, and a children's room to the north. To the west of the reading rooms are two narrower spaces, the librarian's office in the northwest corner and a rear hall

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with stairs in the southwest corner. Most of the main level of the rear wing is devoted to stacks, while the rear wing's second floor and a small portion of the main block's upper level serves as a reference and study area. (Part of the reference area is lost to a well over the rear section of the lobby.) The main block actually has two upper levels, as the two reading rooms and the eastern section of the lobby have higher ceilings than the librarian's office and the rear hall to the west of them. On the same level as the reference room are a restroom in the northwest corner (above the librarian's office) and a stairhall in the southwest corner. The stairs continue a few feet higher to reach the attic above the higher ceilinged main rooms. (A full basement is found beneath both the main block and the rear wing.)

The vestibule, like the other public spaces, now has a carpeted floor. It still has plaster walls with paneled wainscoating, and a plaster ceiling. Attached to the south wall is a bronze plaque with the legend "This Building Is Erected By/Benjamin M. Smith/In Memory Of His Parents/John and Mary Smith/Architect George Swan/Builder John H. Smith". Moulded trim surrounds the outer door and windows as well as the inner double, five-paneled doors with two-pane transom window, which leads into the library.

The lobby is actually divided into two sections, with the wide opening between them framed by moulded trim. The main (eastern) lobby is somewhat more formal, having paneled wainscoating beneath plaster walls and a coved plaster ceiling with ceiling moulding and a central multipane skylight with plain surround. (The function of the skylight is somewhat of a mystery, as the attic above it receives little natural light, making the skylight almost useless as a source of light. It may have been designed to serve more as a ventilator, than as a lighting device.) The wide openings from the main lobby into the flanking reading rooms are framed by Palladian motifs, set on low paneled partitions with baseboards. The central arched opening (open to the floor) of each Palladian motif is flanked by short finely carved Ionic columns, set on the paneled partitions. Similar Ionic pilasters flank the motif's side openings, which, being above the partitions, are less than half the height of the central opening. The Palladian motifs do not have classical entablatures, just the same moulded trim found around the library's other interior openings.

The adult browsing room and the children's room are almost identical. Both have the same wall treatment, paneled wainscoating with baseboard beneath plaster walls, as is found in the lobby. Their plaster ceilings now have modern light fixtures. In the lobby wall of each room, to the east of the Paladian motif, is a tall shallow alcove, with moulded frame, and plaster inner walls, largely filled by a bookcase. Each room is lit by five one over one sash windows with transom windows and moulded trim, two in the street wall, three in the side (north or south) wall. The main feature of the west wall in each reading room is a brick fireplace with tile hearth, moulded wooden surround, and a mantelshelf supported by two fluted colonettes. The only significant difference between the two rooms is that the children's room fireplace is flanked by two more shallow alcoves, like those in the lobby walls.

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The rear lobby is simpler than the main lobby, having plaster walls with base-boards, and being open above to the second floor reference area. The lobby's south wall contains a small, plaster walled alcove, now housing a coat rack, and a paneled door with builtin window and moulded trim with cornerblocks, that opens into the rear hall. Similar moulded trim with cornerblocks surrounds the opening to the librarian's office in the north wall. (The office door has been removed.) To the west of the office door is a narrow stairway with carpeted steps and plaster walls with baseboards, which serves the second story reference area.

The librarian's office is a narrow room with carpeted floor, plaster walls with baseboard, and plaster ceiling. It is lit by a single western window with one over one sash and moulded trim with cornerblocks. The most impressive feature of the office is a large fireplace in the eastern wall. The brick fireplace has a wooden surround, and a mantelpiece with carved foliage beneath the shelf, which is supported by two fluted Ionic colonettes.

The rear hall is also a simple space, again with carpeted floor, plaster walls with baseboards, and a plaster ceiling. Moulded trim surrounds its two closet doors, the rear door, the door to the basement stairs, and the one over one sash window that lights the stairs to the second story.

The stack area on the first floor of the rear wing is filled with wooden book-cases and again has plaster walls with baseboards. Its one over one sash windows, two double windows in the north and south walls, and a single window in the west wall, all have moulded trim with cornerblocks, as does the paneled door to the closet underneath the stairs to the second story reference area. The stack area's plaster ceiling is interrupted only by two boxed beams, which are supported by two boxed posts incorporated into the bookcases.

The reference area on the second story has the usual carpeted floor, and plaster walls with baseboards. The plaster ceiling, although flat in the center is pitched towards the three outer walls, because of the slant of the hip roof. The well above the rear lobby has a semicircular western termination. The well and the stairway are protected by a railing with plain balusters, moulded rails, and posts distinguished by paneled sides and moulded caps topped by spherical knobs. Overlooking the well in the eastern inner wall are two sixteen pane windows which serve the main block's attic. Like the more useful twelve pane casement windows in the reference room's outer walls (three in each of the three walls), these windows have moulded frames with cornerblocks. The same frame surrounds the five-panel door found in both the north and south walls. The northern door serves a small restroom, featuring the usual plaster ceiling and plaster walls with baseboards, and lit by a twelve pane casement window with moulded trim and cornerblocks. The southern door opens onto the second story landing of the

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rear stairs, the only public space where the hardwood floor is still visible. Otherwise, the walls, the ceiling and the twelve pane window are the same as in the reference area. A short stairway leads from the landing up to the attic door, another five panel door with moulded frame and cornerblocks. The unfinished attic, now used for storage, has a plain board floor, low brick walls, and exposed rafters. It is lit by a single short window in the front gable. The other storage area is the basement which is also unfinished, with concrete floor, stone and brick walls, and a ceiling with exposed beams and joists. The basement is one large room covering the entire space beneath the main block and the rear wing, interrupted only by brick piers and the brick chimney foundations.

The library is set back from the street, at the top of a gentle slope. grounds are largely grassed with some foundation shrubs around the building and two maple trees on the front lawn. A curb of rockfaced granite blocks with dressed margins separates the lawn from the sidewalk found along the entire street frontage. A broad paved walk with granite steps and a metal pipe hand railing leads up to the entry from the sidewalk. And a paved driveway south of the building serves a paved parking lot in the rear of the asymmetrical lot. A sign for the library parking lot stands next to the driveway, while another wooden sign announcing the library hours stands next to the walkway. The library lot also contains two war memorials, both northeast of the building. The Meredith Veterans Memorial, dedicated in 1973, is a bronze plaque on a rough boulder flanked by evergreen shrubs. Behind the Veterans Memorial stands a flagpole. More impressive is the 12th Regiment Memorial, erected by Major E.E. Beede in 1902 and dedicated to the donor's Civil War regiment, the 12th N.H. Volunteer Infantry. A granite statue of a Union soldier stands on a tall smooth granite pedestal with tapered dado and base, in turn set on a rockfaced granite foundation. The pedestal is inscribed "In Honor Of/The 12th Regt. N.H. Vols./Who Fought In The War Of/1861-1865/For The Preservation Of/The Union/Erected By Major E.E. Beede".

8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 1900–	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric agriculture x architecture art commerce communications	heck and justify below community planning conservation economics education engineering exploration/settleme industry invention	`law literature military music	religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation
Specific dates	1900-1901	Builder/Architect	George Swan, Architec	ture

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Benjamin M. Smith Memorial Library is one of the earliest and still one of the best library buildings in the Lakes Region. It is a fine, well preserved example of the Classical style so popular for libraries and other public buildings at the beginning of the 20th century. A basic principle of Classical design can be seen in the building's symmetry of plan and facade, particularly in the emphasis placed on the central axis by the entry pavilion and the central lobby. The library's ornament, as well, was largely inspired by the Classical styles. The corner pilasters of the main block and the entry pavilion, the deep, rich entablature, the pediment that crowns the pavilion, the semi-circular arched entry, the Palladian motifs that link the three main rooms, are all typical of Classical buildings. However, these Classical quotations were used with a good deal of freedom. The pilasters and entablature do not correspond to any recognized order. And the design does incorporate elements, such as the pavilion's second story windows, that are more typical of Victorian America than of Classical or Neo-Classical Europe. This free approach to design gives the building a refreshing vitality.

The Library was given to the Town of Meredith by Benjamin M. Smith as a memorial to his parents. In the fall of 1899, Smith offered to construct a building for the Meredith Public Library (established in March of 1882) provided the Town purchase and prepare the Meredith House property next to the Baptist Church on Main Street in the village. By a vote of 201 to 1, the citizens of Meredith accepted the offer at the annual Town Meeting in March of 1900. By the end of the month, the Town had acquired the property. In April, the buildings on the lot were sold at auction and removed by their new owners. By June 15, work had begun on the new library, designed by architect George Swan and erected by builder John H. Smith. The roof was on by late September and the exterior completed in October. The decorators finished their work on the interior in February, 1901. But work on the lot, including grading and curbing, was still underway in May and early June. The completed building was dedicated on June 19, 1901, with much ceremony and many speeches. The Meredith Public Library soon moved from its rented quarters to its new home. And the building was opened to the public in late July. The building has been in continuous use as a public library ever since, but has seen relatively few architectural changes. Those few changes have been rather minor--carpeting of the floors in the late 1960's, the replacement of a window by a fan vent and the construction of a porch over the back steps in the early 1970's, as well as the usual updating of the utilities, such as the modern lighting fixtures. Basically, however, both the exterior and the interior of the building appear today virtually as they did in 1901.

The most notable changes have actually been the erection of two war memorials, the 12th N.H. Regiment Memorial in 1902, and the Meredith Veterans Memorial in 1973. Of the two, the 12th N.H. Regiment Memorial is the most impressive. A granite statue of a Union soldier on a high granite pedestal, it was designed and erected by Henry Murray of Boston, given by Major E.E. Beede, and dedicated at the annual regimental reunion on September 26, 1902. The statue is Meredith's only public sculpture and apparently, the only monument to a Civil War regiment in the state.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(see continuation sheet)

state N/A code county code 11. Form Prepared By name/title David L. Ruel1 organization Lakes Region Planning Commission date March 1984 street & number Main Street telephone (603) 279-8171 city or town Meredith state New Hampshire 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:	10.	Geograp	hical Data			
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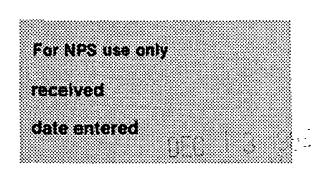
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Although almost every town and city in the Lakes Region had established a public library by 1900, most of those libraries were still housed in rented rooms, or in the upper story or back room of a public building primarily devoted to other purposes. Only five library buildings were erected in the region during the 19th century, the Minot-Sleeper Library in Bristol (1884), the Hall Memorial Library in Northfield (1885-6), the Haynes Library in Alexandria (1894), the Cook Memorial Library in Tamworth (1895), and the Gordon-Nash Library in New Hampton (1895-6). Of the five, only the last, the Gordon-Nash Library, can be considered a Classical style building. But, the Classical style was soon the preferred style for libraries in the region. Of the seven libraries built in the region in the first decade of the 20th century, four were basically Classical in design. The more modest of the four, the Holderness Free Library (1909-10) was perhaps more eclectic than Classic, but it still shared the symmetry and Classical details of its contemporaries. The Franklin Public Library (1905-6) and the Nichols Memorial Library in Centre Harbor (1909-10) were more elaborate buildings, heavily influenced by the Neo-Classical style.³ The Franklin and Centre Harbor libraries were built of light colored brick, trimmed with stone, and distinguished by entry pavilions with columns in antis and ornate pediments. Their ornament was both more elaborate and more correct, in the academic sense, than that of the Meredith library. The Benjamin M. Smith Memorial Library was closer in its interpretation of Classicism to its predecessor in New Hampton, than to its successors in Franklin and Centre Harbor. Both the Meredith and the New Hampton libraries have symmetrical plans, hip roofs, and central entry pavilions. But their use of Classical ornament was much freer than in the later libraries. The designer of the Benjamin M. Smith Memorial Library did not feel bound to blindly follow Classical precedent. He did not reproduce the Classical orders in his pilasters and entablatures. And his handling of the entry pavilion, inserting second story windows between the pediment and the pilasters framing the entry, would no doubt disturb the academic architect, as a violation of basic rules of Classical composition. George Swan approached the Classical style with a Victorian freedom of design. He accepted its symmetry and the use of pilasters, entablatures and pediments, as the basic elements of his design. he did not have that need to be "correct" that would tend to dampen the creativity of later 20th century architects working in the Classical and Colonial Revival styles. The result was an imaginative and unique library, quite different from any other public building in the Lakes Region. The Benjamin M. Smith Memorial Library is not only Meredith's finest public building, but also one of the Lakes Region's most attractive libraries.

²Two of the five libraries have been listed in the National Register, the Hall Memorial Library on October 4, 1978, the Cook Memorial Library on June 25, 1980. Both the Franklin and the Centre Harbor libraries are now on the National Register, the Franklin Public Library as part of the Franklin Falls Historic District (listed August 19, 1982), the Nichols Memorial Library as part of the Centre Harbor Village Historic District (listed September 8, 1983).



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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TOWN OF MEREDITH for the years ending February 15, 1900; February 15, 1901; February 15, 1902 (Meredith)

Solon Colby "Benjamin M. Smith" - EARLY MEREDITH (Meredith, 1968)

Charles Hardon, "Meredith" - GRANITE MONTHLY, Vol. XLVI, nos. 1 & 2 (January-February, 1914)

<u>Laconia Democrat</u> - December 1 & 8, 1899; March 2, 9, 16 & 20, April 6, 13, 20 & 27, May 4, 18 & 25, June 15, October 19, November 16, December 21, 1900; February 15, March 15, April 19, June 21 & 28, July 19, 1901

<u>Laconia News</u> & <u>Critic</u> - February 28, March 21 & 28, April 4, 18 & 23, May 23, June 13, September 19 & 26, October 10 & 17, 1900; April 24, May 15, June 4, 19 & 26, July 17, August 14, 1901

Meredith News - July 27, September 21, October 19 & 26, November 2, 9, 23 & 30, December 14, 1899

"Meredith Town Meetings, 1888-1915" (manuscript, Meredith Municipal Building, Meredith, N.H.)

Marion Watson - "History of Meredith Public Library" (manuscript, 1964, Meredith Public Library, Meredith, N.H.)

Interview - Marilyn Rushton, March 6, 1984.

12th N.H. Regiment Memorial bibliography

Laconia Democrat - September 12 & 26, October 3, 1902

Laconia News & Critic - September 17, 1902

Manchester Union - September 27, 1902

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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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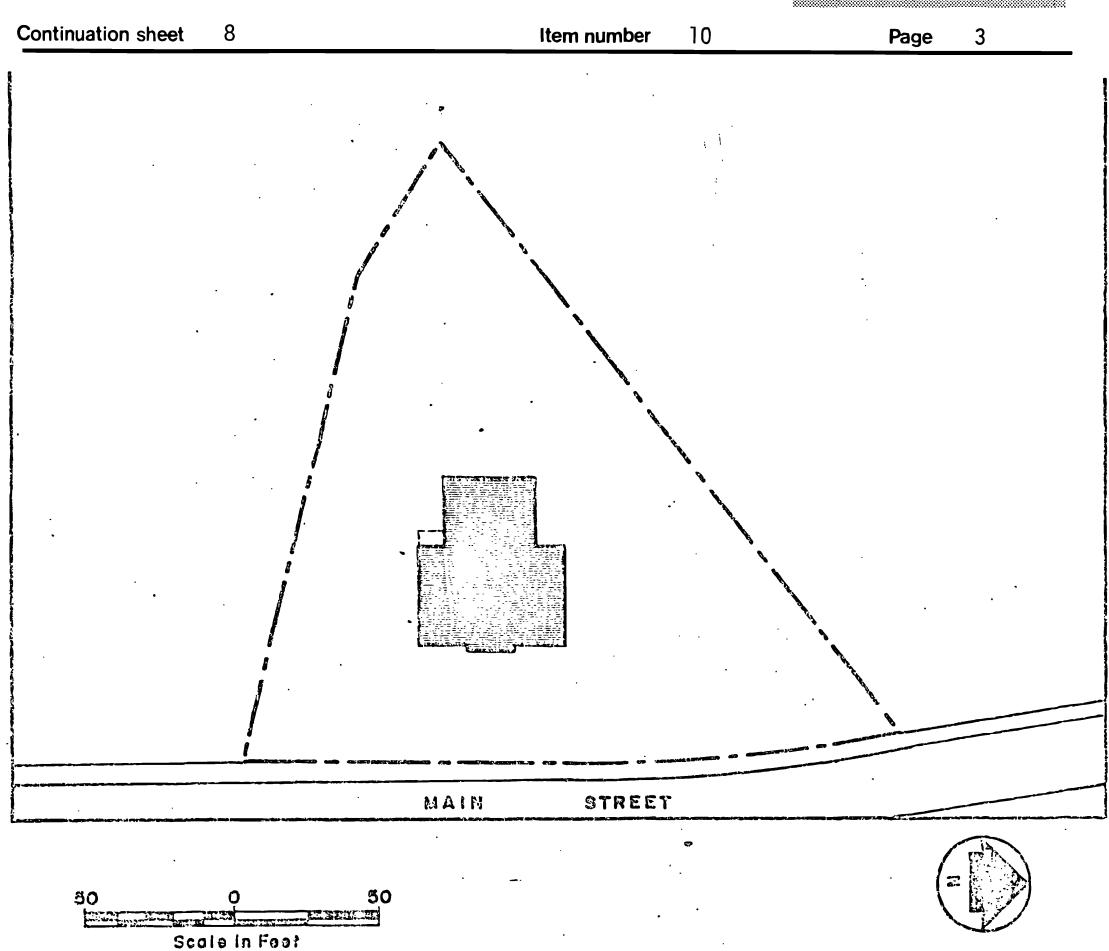
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The boundary of the nominated property is shown as a dashed black line on the accompanying map entitled "Benjamin M. Smith Memorial Library, Meredith, N.H.". The library lot is an asymmetrical four-sided parcel, whose bounds measure as follows-easterly boundary (Main Street frontage) - 217 feet, northerly boundary - 249 feet, southerly boundary - 170 feet, and westerly boundary - 52 feet. The nominated property includes the Benjamin M. Smith Memorial Library and the lot on which it has stood since its construction. (Meredith Property Map U-6, lot 59)

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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BENJAMIN M. SMITH MEMORIAL LIBRARY MEREDITH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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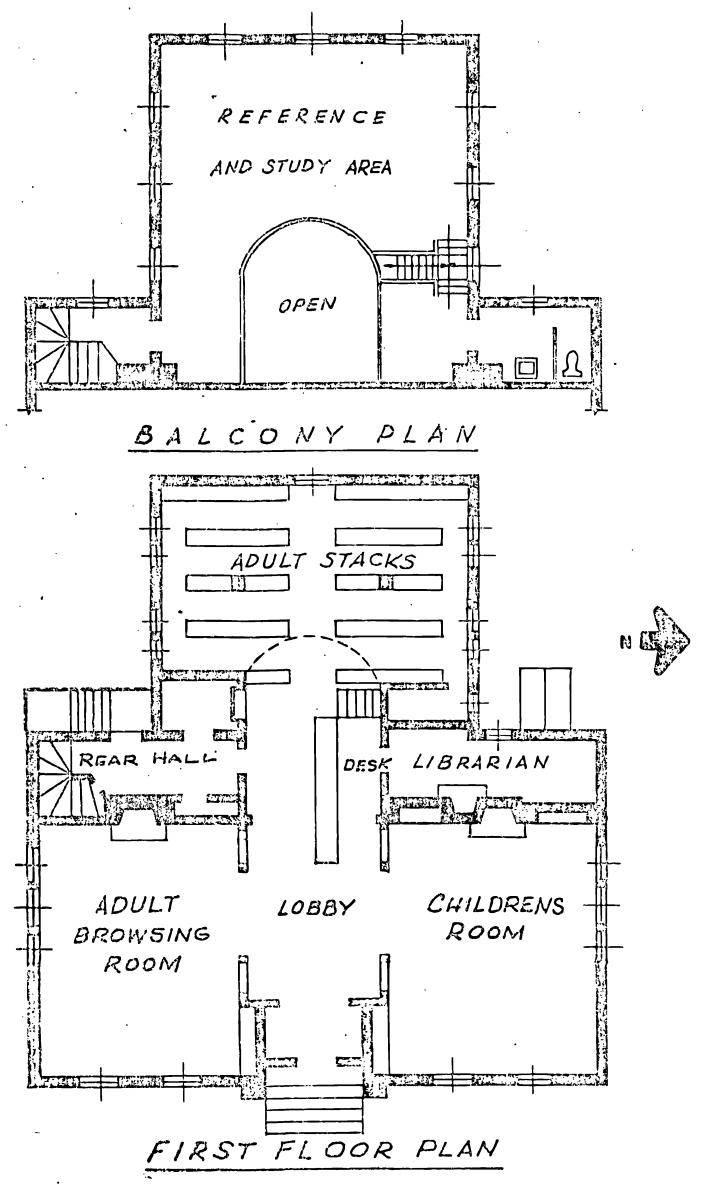
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Scale: 1"= 12.25" (Approx.)