NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

539

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Sumner Branch Library

other names/site number _____

2. Location

Street & number 611 Emerson Ave. N. __ not for publication N/A

city or town Minneapolis __ vicinity N/A

state Minnesota code MN county Hennepin code 053 zip code 55411

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets __ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant __ nationally __ statewide x locally. (__ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ian R. Stewart 4/24/00
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Minnesota Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property __ meets __ does not meet the National Register criteria. (__ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

_____
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

_____
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

x entered in the National Register.
__ 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:)_____

for Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

5/26/00
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ___ private
- x public-local
- ___ public-State
- ___ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- x building(s)
- ___ district
- ___ site
- ___ structure
- ___ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
1		objects
2	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education: Library

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education: Library

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century

Revivals: Tudor Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

Sandstone

roof Asphalt

other

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- x **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- x **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- __ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- __ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is: N/A

- __ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- __ **B** removed from its original location.
- __ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- __ **D** a cemetery.
- __ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- __ **F** a commemorative property.
- __ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education
Social History

Period of Significance

1915-1949

Significant Dates

1915

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Countryman, Gratia Alta

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Chapman, Cecil Bayless (architect)
Haglin and Stahr (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- __ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- __ previously listed on 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 #_____

Primary location of additional data:

- __ State Historic Preservation Office
- __ Other State agency
- __ Federal agency
- __ Local government
- __ University
- x Other

Name of repository:
Minneapolis Public Library

Sumner Branch Library
Name of Property

Hennepin County MN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References Minneapolis South, Minn., 1967, revised, 1993
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15	476780	4981100	3			
2				4			

__ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Granger and Kay Grossman

organization Gemini Research date Dec. 31, 1998

street & number 15 East 9th St. telephone 320-589-3846

city or town Morris state MN zip code 56267

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

7. DESCRIPTION

The Sumner Branch of the Minneapolis Public Library is located on the northwestern corner of Emerson Avenue and Sixth Avenue North (also known as Olson Memorial Highway). The library stands in a mostly-residential portion of the Sumner neighborhood in Near North Minneapolis. It is surrounded by the recently-vacated site of the Sumner-Field housing project across the street to the east, a modern apartment complex across the street to the north, a vacant lot to the west, and a modern school and light industrial buildings across the street to the south.

The library is a well-preserved, one story, brick structure that was built in 1915 by Minneapolis contractor Haglin and Stahr, with additions made in 1927 and 1939. It was designed by architect Cecil Bayless Chapman in the Tudor Revival style, a style that was often used for libraries, colleges, and schools in the first half of the 20th century because of its European historical and literary associations. The building consists of two, intersecting, gable-roofed forms (which together comprise the original building) and flat-roofed wings that extend west and north (which are the two additions). The library's overall dimensions are roughly 92 feet by 82 feet.

The building is faced with reddish-brown brick with shallow, light-colored mortar joints. The bonding pattern consists of headers placed between every three stretchers. Brick string courses extend from the window divisions across the major wall surfaces. The gable ends have diaper-patterned and other decorative brickwork, rectangular vents, label moldings above the windows, and decorated bargeboards "supported" by projecting purlins. (Several of the purlins are missing.) The library's roof is covered with asphalt shingles. (A skylight has been added to the western slope of the gable.) The gabled eaves have curvilinear rafter tails and copper eave troughs with ornate downspouts.

The library has rectangular window openings, most of which have splayed brick surrounds. Most of the main-floor openings are filled with multipaned casement sash. Most of the basement openings have sandstone sills, poured concrete window wells, and 6/6 sash. Metal-framed storm windows have been added to the building. The building has two chimneys, one of which (near the southern facade) is an elaborate composition topped by terra cotta chimney pots.

The main entrance is located in a flat-roofed, buttressed, polygonal entrance tower located at the intersection of the two gabled forms. A single-leaf paneled wooden door, a multipaned transom, and narrow sidelights are deeply recessed within a Tudor-arched opening. (The door and

surrounding lights are replacements.) Above the arched entrance is a rectangular panel of red sandstone that reads "Minneapolis Public Library" in Gothic style lettering. Above the stone panel is a pair of Tudor-arched vents (originally windows) and the tower's parapet wall, which has decorative brickwork and sandstone trim. (The tower was originally topped by a dramatic crenelated parapet which has been removed.) The main entrance is approached via exposed aggregate poured concrete steps located between brick plinths.

The two additions to the library were designed to match the original structure. The western wing (whose brickwork is slightly more red than the original brickwork) was added in 1927. It has a buttress at the southwestern corner and, at the roofline, a parapet wall with occasional crenels and stone coping. There is a small, enclosed, brick-faced service entrance with a double-leaf steel door on the northern side of the western addition. The northern wing was added in 1939. It also has a flat roof, multipaned windows, and Tudor Revival detailing. It has a single-leaf basement entrance on its eastern wall.

The library stands on a corner lot planted with grass and mature evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs. At the southeastern corner of the building, just outside the main entrance, is an exposed aggregate poured concrete plaza (added circa 1970) with several modern lampposts with globe shades (circa 1970). The grassy yard at the southwestern corner of the building is surrounded by an original wrought iron fence that has iron balls at the top of the main supports. (The fence is Contributing to the property.) Similar fencing originally surrounded the southeastern corner of the lot as well. There is a chainlink fence along the western and northwestern boundaries of the property. There is an asphalt-paved parking lot immediately north of the building. Public sidewalks run along the southern, eastern, and northern sides of the site.

The interior of the building, like the exterior, is well-preserved. It retains plaster walls, stained oak woodwork, marble baseboards, wall-mounted radiators, original wall-mounted oak shelving, and many Tudor Revival features. (Circa 1970 ceiling-mounted light fixtures have been added and the first story floors have been carpeted.) In 1923 the library's tables and benches accommodated approximately 82 patrons on the main floor and 44 in the basement level.

Just inside the main entrance is a foyer with a set of stairs that lead to the main floor of the library. The foyer has a vaulted ceiling with ribs decorated with molded plaster grape leaves and other detailing. The lower portion of the walls has oak and plaster paneling with Tudor arches,

wooden grillwork, and an incised wooden panel that reads "This building is a gift of Andrew Carnegie. XV."

At the base of the foyer stairs, an original door with Tudor-arched leaded glass leads to the basement. The basement has several rooms, most now offices, with plaster walls, original woodwork, and original or early light fixtures. The basement also has a bathroom with an original tile floor and early fixtures.

Near the top of the foyer stairs is a second door that leads to a small restroom. Like the door to the basement, the restroom door has Tudor-arched leaded glass. The restroom retains plaster upper walls, glazed tile lower walls, marble panels dividing the stalls, and original or very early fixtures.

Outside the restroom, a double-leaf, multipaned, Tudor-arched door marks the division between the foyer and the main reading room. The circulation desk, which is polygonal in shape and has a Tudor arch motif in its paneled base, is located at the crossing of the building's two gabled wings -- the main floor's focal point. The crossing's rib vaulted ceiling is supported by plaster compound piers with simple capitals, and there is an octagonal skylight at the peak of the vaulted ceiling. Behind the circulation desk is an ornate oak fixture that supports bookshelves and an ornate wooden clock, and also encompasses a small restroom.

The gable-roofed rooms that extend south and east of the circulation desk comprise the rest of the original library. Each of the two rooms has a beamed, gabled ceiling supported by three sets of ornate wooden trusses. (These ceilings were covered in 1954 with low, suspended ceilings, and then uncovered during a library refurbishing project in 1970.) The western wall of the southern room has a Tudor-inspired fireplace faced with light brown brick. The fireplace has decorative brickwork, an arched fire box opening, and a wooden mantelpiece with crenelation. (The fireplace was refurbished in 1939.) Both the eastern and southern rooms have mock half-timbering with brick nogging. Both rooms are furnished with oak window seats (some of which are missing) and original oak shelving.

The western portion of the building consists of the flat-roofed wing that was added in 1927 to house the Children's Room. The Children's Room is entered through a Tudor-arched opening west of the circulation desk. The room has original crown molding and, like the rest of the library, plaster walls and multipaned casement windows. The main portion of the room was

originally designated for older children. The northern quarter of the room, entered through three Tudor-arched, wood-lined openings, was originally designated for small children.

The northern portion of the library is a flat-roofed wing that was added in 1939. It was built to house a reference section and an office. The rooms within this wing have flat ceilings with original wooden crown molding and oak woodwork and shelving.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Sumner Branch of the Minneapolis Public Library, built in 1915, is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A (significance to the broad patterns of our history) in the areas of Education and Social History, and under Criterion B (significant person) for its association with Gratia Alta Countryman, chief of the Minneapolis Library (MPL) from 1904-1936. The Sumner Branch is important as one of 14 public library branch buildings that were built and acquired in Minneapolis during the years 1894-1936, as one of 10 of those buildings which are still standing, and as a well-preserved example of a small public branch library. It is one of four public libraries in Minneapolis that were built with Carnegie funds. The building is associated with the extensive outreach program of the Minneapolis Public Library, a well-orchestrated set of services that had a significant impact on the educational and cultural development of the city and its neighborhoods. The building is one of nine extant branch library buildings in Minneapolis that comprise the standing structures that are most closely associated with the career of Gratia Alta Countryman, longtime head of the Minneapolis Public Library and a leading figure in the development of the public library movement nationwide. The Sumner Branch is significant within the statewide historic context entitled "Urban Centers, 1870-1940," and within the "Civic" historic context established by the City of Minneapolis' Heritage Preservation Commission.

FOUNDING OF THE MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC LIBRARY

The broad movement to establish public libraries in the U.S. began in the 1870s, a time when relatively few public libraries existed and when most members of the general public had no access to library books. Instead, most libraries were private facilities that were open only to those who could afford to purchase a "subscription" or membership privileges to borrow books. The Minneapolis Public Library (MPL) descended from one of these private subscription libraries called the Minneapolis Athenaeum. The Athenaeum had been established in 1859 (a year after statehood) as the Young Men's Library Association.

In the 1870s several leading members of the Athenaeum, including wealthy Minneapolis businessman T. B. Walker, proposed establishing a free public library in an effort to serve more people and to influence more effectively the intellectual and cultural development of the city. In 1884 the Athenaeum and the City of Minneapolis agreed to create a public library, and on March 2, 1885, the Minneapolis Public Library was founded with a governing board that operated as an independent branch of city government. (The St. Paul Public Library, which had opened in January of 1883, had been formed in 1882 from a similar private library organization.) The first

MPL board of directors was comprised of influential businessmen led by T. B. Walker. The mayor of Minneapolis, the president of the University of Minnesota, and the president of the Minneapolis Board of Education served as ex officio members of the board.

The Minneapolis Athenaeum's 20,000 books formed the nucleus of the Minneapolis Public Library's collection, and proceeds from the Athenaeum's sale of its own building helped finance the construction of the MPL's first building. The new library (soon called the central library) was a Richardsonian Romanesque style structure built in 1886-1889 at the corner of Hennepin Avenue and Tenth Street downtown. The library opened to the public in December of 1889 with 30,000 books, making it the eighteenth largest public library in the nation. By 1890, 13,000 library cards had been issued, 200,000 books had been borrowed, and the library was open seven days per week. In 1891 circulation at the MPL ranked sixth in the nation, and by 1899 the per capita circulation was the highest in the country (Benidt 1984:56). The original building at Hennepin and Tenth served as the central library for 72 years until January of 1961 when the MPL's current central building (now called the Minneapolis Public Library and Information Center) opened a few blocks away on Nicollet Avenue. The original library was razed the same year.

GRATIA COUNTRYMAN

Gratia Alta Countryman (1866-1953) served as head librarian of the Minneapolis Public Library for 32 years, from 1904 to 1936. She was the system's third head librarian, succeeding George Herbert Putnam, who served from 1885-1892, and James K. Hosmer, who was head from 1892-1904. Countryman led the institution during the period that most of its outreach services, including the branch libraries, were established, and when 13 of the system's 14 pre-1960 branch buildings were completed or acquired.

Countryman had been born in Hastings in 1866. Her father was a Hamline University-educated teacher, and Gratia and her three siblings also became college-educated. In 1884 her family moved from Hastings to Minneapolis so that Gratia and her sister could attend the University of Minnesota. At the university Countryman helped found the Women's Military Drill Team (which was the first campus organization to provide physical fitness for women), was vice president of the Hermean Society (a literary group), and was the first woman to enter the university's annual Pillsbury oratorical contest (Rohde 1998:174).

Countryman graduated in 1889 at the age of 23. With recommendations from university president Cyrus Northrop and professor William Watts Folwell, she was hired by the

Minneapolis Public Library, which was just preparing to open its new building. Countryman joined head librarian Herbert Putnam and a staff of five others. She first worked at classifying the library's 30,000 volumes. In 1890 she was appointed head of the cataloguing department, and in 1892 she became assistant librarian under the new chief, James K. Hosmer. Within a short time Hosmer, who was not a professional librarian and devoted much of his time to research and writing, apparently turned the daily management of the library over to Countryman (Rohde 1998:176).

James Hosmer resigned as head librarian in March of 1903. Although Countryman was highly recommended by Putnam and Hosmer to replace him, the MPL board of directors initially favored hiring a man, in large part because it was not customary in 1903 for women to hold executive positions at such a level of responsibility. During the process Countryman received numerous professional and public endorsements, many of which advised the board not to let her gender negatively sway their choice (Ostendorf 1984:386). After difficult deliberation, the library board voted 6-3 on November 7, 1903, to hire the 37-year-old woman as chief administrator. She assumed the helm on February 1, 1904, and was the first woman to head a large public library in a major U.S. city. (In the mid-1970s she was still one of few women to have held such a position (Rohde 1998:173).) Countryman's salary was one-third less than Hosmer's had been, simply because she was female. In addition, the position of assistant librarian was abolished so that, in essence, she was asked to do twice Hosmer's work for two-thirds his salary (Rohde 1998:177). The salary inequity, coupled with the doubled workload, created a public and professional uproar, both locally and nationally. Despite the outcry, however, the board did not increase her pay.

Countryman proved to be a dedicated leader who effectively guided the development of the Minneapolis Public Library during its most expansionary period. Library historian Bruce Benidt writes, "No individual had a more dynamic and positive effect on the library system of Minneapolis, and few played such as significant role in the cultural development of the city" (Benidt 1984:72). Library science professor Nancy Freeman Rohde writes that, although the MPL's first two head librarians had laid the groundwork for the institution's success, "It was Gratia Countryman, however, with her strong commitment to making the public library a vital part of the community, who expanded library services until they touched nearly all aspects of life in the city" (Rohde 1998:181). Rohde also writes:

> In 1904 when she took charge, there were 43 persons on the staff and the system consisted of the main library, 3 branches, and 10 stations, mostly in drugstores. When she retired in 1936, there were 250 people on the staff (excluding WPA workers on professional

> projects), and over 350 distributing agencies including branches, stations, classrooms, business firms, factories, and hospitals. The book collection had grown by 500,000 volumes and the circulation from 500,000 to over 3,600,000. The budget had more than quadrupled. These figures, however, tell little of the innovations in service which helped the library earn a local and national reputation as the city's 'most human institution' (Rohde 1998:180).

Countryman had been an enthusiastic spokesman for the public library movement since at least 1890. She believed that tax-supported, free, public libraries had tremendous potential to foster literate and knowledgable citizens, and that such an educated electorate was essential to a smoothly-running democracy. She championed the pluralism of public libraries. Robert Gordon Freestone writes that "Countryman's aim was to create a 'people's library' that was, at least to her way of thinking, anti-elitist" (Freestone 1977:199). Countryman wrote in 1905 in her first annual report:

> A public library is the one great civic institution supported by the people which is designed for the instruction and pleasure of all the people without age limit, . . . rich and poor, . . . educated and uneducated, without culture limit. . . . It should be 'all things to all men' in the world of thought (quoted in Ostendorf 1984:390).

Countryman wrote in 1918 that "The library is a great, live, working school for the education of all the people" (quoted in Rohde 1998:186). She explained that "The rich and well-to-do use the library only occasionally and for emergency calls. The middle classes and the poorer classes form the great body of borrowers; they are the beneficiaries" (quoted in Benidt 1984:121).

Countryman also saw libraries as institutions that could address citizens' social needs, a relatively new idea at a time when many libraries were stodgy, somber places for warehousing reference books, and when "only in exceptional circumstances did libraries actively and integrally participate in the social life of their communities" (Freestone 1977:199). Countryman was at the forefront of a national Progressive movement which regarded public libraries as natural places to expand "settlement work" and similar early social services to the poor. She wrote in 1905 in her first annual report:

> The library should be a wide-awake institution for the dissemination of ideas, where books are easily accessible and obtainable. It should be the center of all the activities of a city that lead to social growth, municipal reform, civic pride and good citizenship. It should have its

> finger on the pulse of the people, ready to second and forward any movement (quoted in Ostendorf 1984:390).

Paul John Ostendorf writes: "[Countryman's] philosophy was that of a missionary to the common people. Her attitude was like that of a social worker encouraging the needy to make use of the benefits held out to them. As early as 1901 she insisted that a library must be a dynamic force in the community" (Ostendorf 1984:389-390). Nancy Freeman Rohde explains that,

> Believing that books were stimulating, inspiring, curative, and regenerative and that they should be freely available to anyone who needed them, [Countryman] put into practice a humanitarian philosophy that saw the public library as an agency for social betterment and uplift, a force against laxness in morals, and an institution for lifelong education (Rohde 1998:182).

The Minneapolis Public Library's branch buildings, scattered in neighborhoods throughout the city, were among Countryman's proudest accomplishments and stand today as testimony to her work. While the first branches had been established under head librarians Putnam and Hosmer, Countryman's emphasis on outreach was much stronger than that of her predecessors (Freestone 1977:196, Benidt 1984:54). Countryman was head librarian when the majority of the library branches were established and when most of the pre-1960 branch buildings were built. Only the first pre-1960 branch building -- the North Side Branch (built 1890) -- was built before Countryman became head librarian in 1904. (Although construction of the second branch building began before Countryman was named head librarian, she supervised its completion and the establishment of service in the new building.) The last pre-1960 building to be built or acquired -- the Longfellow Branch -- was acquired in 1936, the year Countryman retired. A *Minneapolis Tribune* editorial published at her death states that Countryman "left countless library users in debt because she planned so well against the future's needs" (Rohde 1998:189).

In addition to guiding the development of the Minneapolis Public Library, Countryman was a leader in the establishment and promotion of libraries throughout Minnesota and nationwide. She spoke frequently within the state and across the country about the virtues of public libraries and about Minneapolis' programs. In 1891 she was an organizer of the Minnesota Library Association (MLA), formed to promote the establishment of both permanent and traveling libraries. She became secretary of the MLA in 1892, and was elected president in 1905. Countryman was instrumental in securing state funding for public libraries and in establishing the Minnesota Public Library Commission, a five-member legislative body formed in 1899 to promote library development. Countryman was one of the commission's five original members

and served as its recording secretary for its entire existence from 1899 to 1919, after which it was absorbed by the Minnesota Department of Education. Nationally, Countryman was a founding member of the American Library Association (ALA) in 1898, and addressed the ALA's first national conference that year. In 1902 she was elected to a five-year term on the ALA's governing council, and in 1908 she was elected to the first of two terms as vice president (in addition to serving as national conference chair). Countryman was president of the ALA at the depth of the Depression in 1934. She spoke at, and served as an ALA delegate to, the Second International Library and Bibliographic Congress held in Madrid in 1935. During World War II she was one of seven members nationwide that comprised the ALA's National War Service committee. Paul John Ostendorf writes, "by 1916 she had established her reputation as a leader in the library world. Of all the library leaders considered in Minnesota during the period from 1849 to 1916, there is no other person who takes even a close second to Countryman as the most dynamic force in the public library movement" (Ostendorf 1984:378-379).

In addition to her library career Countryman was active in many civic organizations, particularly those that addressed social welfare. She was an organizer, charter member, and director of both the Women's Club of Minneapolis and the College Women's Club. She was a founding member and first president of both the Minneapolis Women's Welfare League (a social service organization serving women) and the Business Women's Club (founded in 1919). In 1938 she chaired the national convention of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which was held in Minneapolis that year (Rohde 1998:187). She was a member of the Better Minneapolis Committee, the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts, Phi Beta Kappa, and Delta Gamma (Foster 1924:69). She helped organize and served on dozens of committees and groups in Minneapolis. Her contemporaries wrote that "No public welfare organization in the community was complete without Miss Countryman's name on its board of directors" (quoted in Rohde 1998:173).

Countryman received numerous awards in recognition of a life dedicated to public service. In 1931, for example, she was the first woman to receive the Minneapolis Interracial Service Council's "Civil Service Honor Medal" for her assistance to foreign-born Minneapolis residents. In 1932 she was awarded an honorary Master of Arts Degree by the University of Minnesota. (This was considered by Countryman to have been her greatest honor. She was only the fourth person to have received an honorary degree from the university. The other three were former university presidents Folwell and Vincent and former U.S. Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg (Pejsa 1995:218).) Countryman was included in the 1924 volume *Who's Who Among Minnesota Woman* (Foster 1924). She is also one of sixteen women featured in the Minnesota Historical Society's publication *Women of Minnesota: Selected Biographical Essays* (1977, rev. ed. 1998).

Gratia Countryman retired from the Minneapolis Public Library in 1936 at age 70. In 1938 she was rehired by the library to organize and supervise a multi-year Works Progress Administration (WPA) project. From 1938-1941 she supervised a staff of more than 200 WPA workers who indexed the *Minneapolis Journal* newspaper and worked on several other projects. On July 26, 1953, Countryman died at the age of 87.

EXTENSION SERVICES OF THE MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC LIBRARY

During Gratia Countryman's long service as head librarian, the Minneapolis Public Library expanded to serve the entire city. Countryman led the establishment of the institution's numerous library extension services, frequently quipping, "This isn't the century when Abraham Lincoln walks twelve miles for a book" (Benidt 1984:80). Although the Minneapolis Public Library was creating outreach services at the same time that they were being established by other libraries nationwide, Countryman expanded the concept much farther than did librarians in most cities. She wrote in 1905:

> It is obvious that if a library is to perform its functions of elevating the people, it will need to adopt methods other than buying a fine collection of books and housing them in an attractive building and then waiting in a dignified way for people to come. The scholarly and studious will come as surely as the needle turns to the north, but the others will wait until the library goes to them (quoted in Benidt 1984:78).

The Minneapolis Public Library outreach programs included several kinds of services, with the branch library buildings being the largest of these undertakings. Among the simplest were delivery or deposit stations and reading rooms. Delivery or deposit stations, the first of which were already operating when Countryman became head librarian, were sites where a rotating collection of books was "deposited" for patrons to read or borrow. (Many of the first deposit stations were located at the front counters of drug stores.) Card holders could also order books from the central library that would be delivered to a station the following afternoon. In 1900 alone, 138,348 books circulated through the Minneapolis Public Library's deposit stations (Freestone 1977:96, 98). Reading rooms were similar to deposit stations but provided patrons with a quiet environment and tables and chairs, along with a supply of books and periodicals. Reading rooms were often located in rented storefronts or in public or quasi-public buildings. Ten deposit stations had been established before Countryman became chief librarian in 1904. There were 65 deposit stations in 1918 and, when Countryman retired in 1936, the library had more than three hundred reading rooms and stations.

Countryman expanded MPL extension services by taking books to any location where she saw potential readers. In 1905, for example, deposit stations were established in the MPL's first two business sites, the Twin City Telephone Company and the Cream of Wheat factory, so that workers too busy to visit the library could read books. By 1911 there were 20 deposit stations in factories and businesses and, by 1936, 53 business sites. In 1906 books were placed in each of the city's fire stations to be read by fire fighters between calls. In 1910 Countryman opened a reading room at Bridge Square, a dilapidated part of downtown populated by inexpensive hotels and large numbers of unemployed and homeless men about whom Countryman said: "They have no homes, they have not even the privilege of a chair in many of the lodging houses; where shall they go in the daytime?" (quoted in Benidt 1984:79). Countryman was also concerned about the education of women. In 1913, in one of her many efforts to reach women, she placed collections in each of the city's eight telephone exchanges where most employees were female. In 1915 stations were opened in prisons, workhouses, jails, orphanages, and poor farms. In 1916 a Business and Municipal Branch Library was established downtown with books on advertising, banking, and business. In 1927 a Social Service Branch Library was also established downtown with books on social welfare, public health, and related fields. In 1923 hospital service began and, by 1927, books were being delivered to 14 hospitals. Small collections had also been established in public schools beginning in 1893. By 1936 there were collections and small libraries in dozens of school sites.

The Minneapolis Public Library also extended services to Hennepin County residents living outside the city of Minneapolis. In 1915 the library granted borrowing privileges to these county residents and, by 1916, 40 deposit stations had been established in the county. Truck delivery of books to farms and other locations began in 1922. (Bookmobile service within the city of Minneapolis started in 1939 after Countryman retired.) Also in 1922, Countryman helped establish the Hennepin County Library system, which was headquartered at the Minneapolis Public Library. Countryman served as the Hennepin County Library's first head librarian.

THE BRANCH LIBRARY BUILDINGS

The Minneapolis Public Library's branch buildings were the crown jewels of the library's extension services. Fourteen branch buildings were built (and acquired) by the MPL before 1960. (Additional branches were operated within rented quarters.) The 14 pre-1960 branch buildings were built (and acquired) during the years 1894-1936. Eight of the buildings were built for previously-existing branches, and six were built (and acquired) for newly-established branches, usually established in areas that had been previously served by deposit stations. Ten of

the 14 buildings are extant, and five are still in use as branch libraries. The 14 branch buildings are listed below:

Minneapolis Public Library Pre-1960 Branch Buildings

	Branch Name	Building Opened
	North Side (NRHP '77)	Jan. 1894
	East Side/Pillsbury (NRHP '71)	Apr. 1904
*	Camden Park/Webber Park	Jan. 1910
	Walker	June 1911
*	Seven Corners	1912
*	Logan Park	June 1913
+	Franklin	Aug. 1914
*	Central Avenue	Nov. 1915
+	Sumner	Dec. 1915
+	Thirty-sixth Street/Hosmer	Mar. 1916
	East Lake	Feb. 1924
+	Roosevelt	Feb. 1927
+	Linden Hills	Feb. 1931
	Longfellow (NRHP '69)	1937

* indicates building has been razed +indicates library in service in 2000

Nine of the extant branch library buildings are relatively small brick structures and the tenth, the Longfellow branch, is a woodframe Colonial Revival house that was acquired by the MPL for use as a library. Most of the branch buildings were designed in historical revival styles such as the Neo-classical Revival and the Tudor Revival. Most were designed by Minneapolis architects and a few were designed by outstate designers. Most of the buildings had a main floor that was divided into approximately three reading rooms that were naturally lit with numerous windows and, sometimes, with skylights. Most had a basement level that contained one or two meeting or lecture rooms. Each building also contained public restrooms, and small office and store rooms.

The MPL's first three branch libraries were established under the leadership of Herbert Putnam and James K. Hosmer. The first branch, the North Side Branch, was established in 1890 at neighborhood request in the basement of the newly-completed North High School, north of downtown. The second branch, the South Side Branch (later named the Franklin Branch), was

established in 1890 in a rented store south of downtown at Franklin Avenue and 17th Avenue South. The third branch, the East Side Branch (later named the Pillsbury Branch), was established in 1891 in Winthrop School on University Avenue Southeast.

The first branch building was constructed in 1894 for the North Side Branch. It is a Queen Anne style, brick building located at 1834 Emerson Ave. N. on land that had been donated by library board member Samuel Gale and Minnesota Supreme Court judge C. E. Vanderburgh. The building itself was partially funded by other private contributions. The North Side Branch still stands, although it is no longer used as a library. It was listed on the National Register on Dec. 7, 1977.

In 1904 the second branch library was erected, once again through philanthropic efforts. It was built for the East Side Branch, which was outgrowing its quarters in Winthrop School. Both the library's site and its new building were financed by former governor John Pillsbury, prompting the MPL to rename East Side as the Pillsbury Branch Library. This Beaux Arts style building still stands at the corner of University and Central avenues across the Mississippi River from downtown. It is no longer a library, and was listed on the National Register on March 11, 1971, as part of the St. Anthony Falls Historic District.

The MPL's first branch libraries (both those in rented quarters and those in their own buildings) were immediately successful. Combined circulation at the branches far surpassed that of the central library every year except 1890, the year after the central library had opened (Lincoln 1958:358). In his study of the development of the Minneapolis Public Library, Robert Gordon Freestone explains:

> Branches proved to be one of the most successful of all the experiments [nationwide] (including open shelving [allowing patrons to browse through the books, rather than request each book from the librarian]) aimed at breaking down barriers between books and people. From the various factors thought to affect the propensity to read, physical accessibility was selected as the critical one. A working maxim emerged: more branches meant better community access to library services which meant higher rates of circulation which meant a more widespread distribution of library benefits which meant the library was doing a splendid job (Freestone 1977:27-28).

In her annual report to the library board in 1906, Countryman argued for more extension outlets:

> When we analyze the circulation, it will be seen that the bulk of the increase comes from the Branches and Stations, and this will be increasingly true as Minneapolis continues to travel toward its suburbs. We cover so large a territory, and are acquiring so large a population of working people with our increasing factories, who settle in outlying regions, that your librarian believes that the time has come for entering upon a broader and more far-reaching policy of distributing stations (quoted in Freestone 1977:196).

In 1908 Countryman reported that the system needed at least ten new branch buildings as soon as money could be raised (Benidt 1984:93). Longtime library board president T. B. Walker shared Countryman's vision and the board generally supported her pursuit. Freestone notes:

> Minneapolis was typical of most systems. Coupled with Countryman's expansionist plans, the Library generally seemed to assess its success in quantitative terms. The greater the number of distribution points, then the greater the physical accessibility of the Library, and therefore the greater the relevance of the Library to everyday life. The equation was simple and compelling: more is better. The number of distribution points and system circulation were always listed with great satisfaction in the Annual Reports (Freestone 1977:200).

The Minneapolis Public Library's third branch building opened in 1910 as a facility to be shared by the newly-established Camden Park Branch Library and the Minneapolis parks department. This Craftsman style structure was built in Camden Park (later called Webber Park) and was financed by the Charles Webber family. The library was located on the second floor of the building, while the first floor was used as a field house. In 1954 the library expanded to occupy the entire building and was renamed the Webber Park Branch Library. The building was razed in 1979. The Camden Park Branch is one of only four structures built as branch libraries that are no longer standing. (The others are the Seven Corners, Central Avenue, and Logan Park branch buildings.)

The fourth branch library building, the Walker Branch, opened in 1911 for a newly-established branch. It was the first branch building for which the library board assumed the entire cost of construction, although the site (near the corner of Hennepin Avenue and Lake Street) was donated by board president T. B. Walker (Freestone 1977:227). The Walker Branch is a Neo-classical Revival style structure that is now owned by a non-profit group. (A new Walker Community Library building was completed across the street in 1981.) The next branch building to be built, the Seven Corners Branch, was a Tudor Revival style library built in 1912 for a branch that had been established in 1906. The Seven Corners Branch was the first building to be

sited and constructed entirely with public funds. It was demolished in 1964 for highway construction and is one of the four structures built as branch libraries that are no longer standing.

By 1912 the city of Minneapolis was growing rapidly, and library services were expanding to keep abreast. The city's population had grown 49 percent between 1900 and 1910 and would grow another 26 percent between 1910 and 1920. All city services were amplified as residents of newly-developing areas lobbied for fire protection, parks, schools, and libraries. In 1911, the MPL's circulation broke the one million mark for the first time, with about 70 percent of the books circulating from the branches (Benidt 1984:98). In 1912 and, again in 1914, Minneapolis had the highest per capita circulation of any major city in the country, as it had in 1899. In 1915 the MPL had 14 branches, 25 deposit stations, 39 school libraries, 30 factory and business libraries, 21 collections in clubs, settlement houses, and halls, 9 in fire stations, and collections in each of the city's streetcar stations (Ostendorf 1984:311).

By 1910 Gratia Countryman was using criteria such as population distribution, the ethnic composition of neighborhoods, the location of streetcar lines, the location of parks and schools, petitions of residents, and circulation statistics to help determine the location of each delivery station and branch library. In 1911 she compiled information from police records, school officials, and charitable groups to make a "Race Map" of the city which she used to analyze population and ethnic distribution (Freestone 1977:226). In addition to the "Race Map," Countryman made circulation maps of the city which she used to further plan the growing system. (Countryman's original maps are still held by the Minneapolis Public Library.) This scientific approach to establishing services -- "planning by dots," as Freestone calls it -- placed Countryman at the forefront of the professionalization of library science and characterized her work throughout her career (Freestone 1977:230).

In 1913 the sixth branch library building, the newly-established Logan Park Branch, opened in a new field house in Logan Park in northeast Minneapolis. The building was constructed as a joint venture with the parks department, just as the Camden Park Branch Library had been. In 1957 the library was moved to rented quarters and renamed the Pierre Bottineau Branch Library. The field house was subsequently demolished. (Logan Park is one of the four structures built as branch libraries that have been demolished.)

The next four branch library buildings -- Franklin, Central Avenue, Sumner, and Thirty-sixth Street (later called Hosmer) -- were financed by a grant from Andrew Carnegie. They represent Minneapolis' only four Carnegie library buildings. The four are among the most ornate of the branch buildings, and were built in the Renaissance Revival and Tudor Revival styles. Three of

the Carnegie buildings -- Franklin, Central Avenue, and Sumner -- were built for branch libraries that had been previously established. (Franklin had been established in 1890 as the South Side Branch, Central Avenue had been established in 1907 as the New Boston Branch, and Sumner had been established in 1912, just about the time the Carnegie grant was awarded.) The fourth building, the Thirty-sixth Street (Hosmer) Branch, was built for a newly-established branch. (In 1914, the year Franklin was built, the Minneapolis Public Library was operating 14 branches: five in their own buildings, two which shared public field houses with park programs, five in rented quarters, one in a school, and one in a settlement house (Freestone 1977:87, 91).)

Pennsylvania steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie had been funding library construction since 1886 (although most Carnegie grants were made after 1897). The Minneapolis Public Library had submitted requests to Carnegie for central library construction in 1902 and for branch buildings in 1909, but both had been denied. By the time of the next application, submitted by Countryman to the Carnegie Corporation in 1911, Countryman had surveyed city neighborhoods to gather demographic information, mapped the city's ethnic distribution and library circulation, and tabulated the results which she included within her application. In 1912 Countryman received official word of a forthcoming $125,000 Carnegie grant to fund the construction of four branch buildings. The funds were contingent on a typical Carnegie arrangement whereby the City of Minneapolis would supply building sites and agree to allocate a specific annual amount for each library's operation. The $125,000 grant was among the $56 million donated by Carnegie for library construction worldwide during the years 1886-1919. Minneapolis was among 57 communities in Minnesota that received more than 60 library buildings through Carnegie gifts during this period (Jones 1997:129). In 1914, two years after Minneapolis' award, St. Paul received a grant for its three Carnegie branch libraries.

The four Carnegie-funded branch buildings were built as soon as land became available. The Franklin Branch, which opened in August of 1914, was completed first because a building site had been donated in 1913 by three members of the McKnight family. Construction of the other three branches waited until a bond issue was passed in 1914 for land acquisition. The Central Avenue Branch opened in November of 1915, the Sumner Branch opened one month later in December of 1915, and the Thirty-sixth Street Branch (later called Hosmer) opened three months after Sumner in March of 1916. The Franklin, Sumner, and Thirty-sixth Street branches are still standing and still house branch libraries. The Central Avenue Branch was razed in 1972 and replaced by the Northeast Branch Library, which opened in a new building in 1973. (Central Avenue is one of the four structures built as branch libraries in Minneapolis that are no longer standing.)

Each of the MPL branch libraries became a social and educational center in its respective neighborhood under the guidance of MPL staff. Clubs for children were formed in the libraries, and their basement meeting rooms were used for games, story hours, contests, lectures, and exhibits at a time when organized recreational activities for children were rare (Rohde 1998:184). Educational programs were also provided for women who, in 1921, became a new population of voters seeking to become better informed (Rohde 1998:185).

Minneapolis' large numbers of foreign immigrants were also frequent library patrons. Countryman once wrote that most adult immigrants were not reached by public schools, "but the library, because it is more informal and more inviting, and because it makes less strenuous demands upon tired men and women, can come into a more genial relation with them" (quoted in Benidt 1984:79-80). Countryman also, "in the 'spirit of internationalism,'" "urged a better understanding of the lifestyle of ethnic minorities" (Freestone 1977:202). Many MPL librarians, like Countryman, believed that libraries could offer important services to immigrants trying to assimilate into American society. The MPL branch and central libraries provided explanatory materials, English lessons, American history and civics classes, and informal assistance to those seeking to become naturalized. Each branch library was stocked with foreign-language books and periodicals appropriate to the national group living in each neighborhood. (The Minneapolis Public Library was, in fact, the first public library in the country to purchase books written in the languages native to the city's immigrant groups (Rohde 1998:184).) The Franklin Branch Library, for example, maintained an extensive, heavily-used collection of books and periodicals published in Scandinavian languages. The Sumner Branch Library, which estimated in 1916 that approximately 95 percent of its card holders were Jewish immigrants from Bohemia, Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Russia, held a large collection of Yiddish, Russian, and Hebrew books. Several of the branch buildings also became daily sanctuaries for children from immigrant families whose parents worked long hours.

To better serve their constituents, Countryman and her staff continued to analyze the demographic and cultural composition of the city's neighborhoods. Beginning in 1913, for example, the staff completed a "Community Survey" for each neighborhood served by a branch library (Peterson 1996:9-10). The Community Survey report for the Sumner Branch, dated 1916, summarizes the ethnicity of residents (e.g., 1,300 of the 2,250 families in the neighborhood are Jewish of Eastern European descent), the ethnicity of library patrons, the neighborhood wage earners' occupations, the neighborhood residents' educational level, and social support facilities available nearby. The report for Sumner, for example, characterizes the neighborhood families:

> most of whom are poor people [where] the parents can neither speak nor write English. It becomes clear that the children, the first generation in their adopted country, start under an immense handicap of having to meet the ups and downs . . . of city life without any advice or aid from their parents. Regrettable as it is, there is no settlement house near at hand to help matters. . . . Much commendable work is being done by various welfare clubs but even they can cover but a limited field. . . . Few parents know where their children are from close of the schoolday till dark. The fathers of many of them do not get home from work until eight or nine o'clock in the evening ("Community Survey" 1916).

The Minneapolis Public Library's next three branch library buildings were constructed between the early 1920s and the early 1930s. The first to be built was the East Lake Branch building, which opened in February of 1924 for a newly-established branch. The East Lake building differed stylistically from the MPL's other branch buildings in that it was designed to resemble a light industrial or commercial structure. The building was designed to fit into its neighborhood -- a fast growing industrial and commercial area along Lake Street -- and to attract factory workers as well as residents of surrounding neighborhoods. The core of the East Lake Branch's original collection covered topics such as business, industry, and technology. (East Lake is extant and now houses a private business.) Two years later, in February of 1927, the Roosevelt Branch Library opened in south Minneapolis. The Roosevelt Branch had been operating since 1923 across the street in Roosevelt High School. The Roosevelt building was very similar to the East Lake Branch, but its design was softened somewhat with Tudor Revival detailing. The Roosevelt Branch continued to function as the school library as well as serving neighborhood residents. (Roosevelt is still a branch library today.) The Linden Hills Branch Library opened in 1931 in the Linden Hills neighborhood west of Lake Calhoun in southwestern Minneapolis. The Linden Hills building was constructed for a branch that had been established in 1911. (The Linden Hills Branch building is still a branch library today.)

During the Depression, tax support for the Minneapolis Public Library was reduced. The libraries were forced to cut back their open hours, even though widespread unemployment had swelled the demand for library services, library-associated social welfare programs, and recreational activities at the libraries. A survey taken on March 12, 1934, to help garner support for increased public funding recorded that 27,789 patrons visited the libraries on that day (Benidt 1984:118). Library funding was eventually restored to normal levels in 1936 after considerable public pressure. During the Depression at least three federal work relief programs -- the Civil Works Administration (CWA), the Emergency Relief Administration (ERA), and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) -- provided librarians, indexing staff, maintenance workers, and construction labor to the MPL.

The final MPL branch building to be built or acquired during Gratia Countryman's tenure as chief librarian was also the last branch building to be built or acquired before the 1960s. It was the Longfellow Branch, which opened in 1937 near Minnehaha Park in south Minneapolis. The library was established in a house that had been bequeathed to the city by its owner, Robert "Fish" Jones, and had then been acquired by the library board in 1936 for the branch. It is a large, woodframe, Neo-classical Revival style building that was built in 1906. The Longfellow Branch Library was opened to the public in 1937 shortly after Countryman retired. (The building still stands, although it is no longer a library. It is located within the Minnehaha Historic District, which was listed on the National Register on Nov. 25, 1969. In 1994, the house was moved to a new site in the park and rehabilitated.) In 1968 the Longfellow Branch was moved into new quarters, called the Nokomis Community Library, which had just been completed at Thirty-fourth Avenue and Fifty-first Street South. While Longfellow was the last of the early branches, Nokomis was the first of a new series of branch buildings that were built beginning in the late 1960s, launching the modern period in MPL branch library construction.

SUMNER BRANCH LIBRARY

The Sumner Branch Library was established in March of 1912 after a request and petition from neighborhood residents. The library's first home was a rented store building at 901 Sixth Ave. N. (about three blocks east of the current library). Mae Westburg (later Mae Hamilton) was Sumner's first librarian, serving from 1912-1915. The library and its surrounding neighborhood were named for Charles Sumner (1811-1874), a U.S. Senator from Massachusetts who had been an outspoken abolitionist.

The Sumner Branch was located in Minneapolis' largest Jewish neighborhood. (The neighborhood was roughly bounded by the Great Northern (now BNSF) railroad tracks on the south, Plymouth Avenue on the north, Washington Avenue on the east, and the city limits on the west (Sassaman 1979:30).) By 1916, approximately 95 percent of the library card holders at Sumner were Jewish, most of them immigrants from several Eastern European countries. In 1936 about 70 percent of Minneapolis' 16,260 Jewish residents lived in the Sumner area, which included the city's "poorer and less desirable Jewish [residential] districts" (Schmid 1937:153). The neighborhood's religious center, the Talmud Torah School and Hall, was located about two blocks north of the Sumner Branch building.

Even before the branch library had been established in March of 1912, the Minneapolis Public Library had submitted an application to Andrew Carnegie for funding for a branch building to be possibly located in the Sumner neighborhood. In April of 1912 the MPL received official word

that the Carnegie grant was forthcoming. The Sumner building, constructed in 1915, was the third of the four Carnegie libraries to be built. (The Franklin Branch Library had been completed the year before in 1914, Central Avenue Branch was built in 1915 (now razed), and the Thirty-sixth Street (later Hosmer) Branch was completed the next year, in 1916.)

The Sumner Branch was designed in the Tudor Revival style, a style used for approximately two percent of Carnegie libraries nationwide (Jones 1997:61). Both the Sumner and the Thirty-sixth Street branches of the MPL were designed by architect Cecil Bayless Chapman of the Minneapolis firm Chapman and Magney. Like the other three Carnegie libraries in Minneapolis, the design of the Sumner Branch loosely follows the library building plans suggested by Carnegie (Sassaman 1979:6-7). Chapman had been born in Iowa and grew up in Minneapolis. He initially worked as a draftsman for William Channing Whitney in Minneapolis and for Ferry and Clas in Milwaukee. He practiced alone in Minneapolis from 1907-1909 and again in 1917. From 1912-1916 Chapman was in partnership in Minneapolis with Gottlieb R. Magney. Chapman and Magney designed many Minneapolis buildings including the Calhoun Athletic and Boat Club (1912), the Saxe Movie Theater (ca. 1914), and Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church (1915). Chapman died at the height of his career in 1918 at the age of 42. His former partner continued to be a leading Minneapolis architect, practicing next with Magney and Tusler and with Magney, Tusler, and Setter.

The building was constructed for approximately $25,000 by Haglin and Stahr, a prominent Minneapolis contractor. The site at the corner of Emerson and Sixth avenues was located on the Sixth Avenue North streetcar line and near the Sumner public school. The site had been purchased by the city for $8,000, which had been raised through a bond issue. The new building was opened to the public on December 15, 1915. The opening program included musical performances and remarks from Mayor Nye and library board members E. C. Gale and T. B. Walker. Dr. J. C. Gordeon interpreted the speeches for the mostly non-English-speaking audience.

Shortly before the new building opened, the *Minneapolis Tribune* wrote:

> Librarians in the city are accustomed to calling Sumner Branch the 'melting pot' branch of the city, because people of so many nationalities patronize it. A few of the nations represented are the Irish, Romanian, Hungarians, French, German and Scandinavian. Last month patrons of the library took out books in 11 different languages. . . . It is said that easily one-half of the patrons of Sumner Branch do not read or write English (*Minneapolis Tribune*, May 31, 1915).

MPL head librarian Gratia Countryman designed Sumner's collection to serve its diverse patrons. The library purchased Hebrew- and Yiddish-language books, 3,000 of which were borrowed from Sumner in 1914. The Sumner Branch eventually housed the MPL's entire, extensive Hebrew-Yiddish collection, and by the mid-1940s also had a large collection of Russian, Finnish, and African-American books (Lincoln 1958:290; Peterson 1996:7.5). (In 1961, the Russian, Finnish, and Yiddish-Hebrew collections were transferred to the central library.) To further serve its constituents, Sumner offered English language lessons (held until 1952), Americanization classes, and history sessions. Sumner was dubbed the immigrants' "university" by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author Harrison Salisbury who grew up nearby and describes in his memoirs the Sumner library's positive impact on his neighborhood (Benidt 1984:101-102).

Sumner was especially popular among children and had a huge circulation of children's books. (Many of the children's books were also borrowed by adult immigrants learning to read English (Benidt 1984:102).) The Minneapolis Public Library's Annual Report, written shortly after the library opened, reports:

> Already after a month's occupancy, the Sumner Branch is proving too small. It is situated in a Jewish neighborhood, which appreciated highly the advantages offered. Already nearly one-third of the children who come must either go away or stand up. It is impossible to keep order much less to assist them adequately when there is such a mob to take care of. The grown people have been literally crowded out of the Branch by the children, and it looks as if an addition would be an immediate necessity (quoted in Sassaman 1979:30).

The crowding was somewhat remedied by the end of the first year, in 1916, when the basement's original auditorium was converted into a children's room. In 1918, however, the Minneapolis Public Library board was presented with a petition from 500 residents requesting that the library be expanded. In 1927 the building was finally enlarged with the addition of a Children's Room (the western wing) and the former children's room in the basement again became a meeting room.

In May of 1923 Sumner Branch Library had 5,000 regular patrons. It housed 10,230 volumes and the average monthly circulation was more than 6,736. The library had a staff of eight including three assistant librarians, one junior assistant librarian, three clerks, and one janitor ("Data Concerning Branch Libraries" 1923). An important influence at library was Adelaide C. Rood, Mae Westburg's successor, who served as head librarian for 37 years from 1916-1953. (She was followed by Donna H. Sher, who served from 1953-1955.)

As neighborhood demographics changed, African Americans joined European immigrants as frequent patrons of Sumner Branch Library. By 1910 African-American families had begun to move into Near North Side neighborhoods that had historically been the homes of Jewish immigrants. In 1936 about 1,700 of the city's 4,176 African Americans lived in the Near North Side "at a relatively short distance from the central business district" (Schmid 1937:180). By the 1950s and 1960s the neighborhood had become predominantly African-American, and was one of the most important cultural centers for the Minneapolis black community. Sumner Library's early service to the African-American community included operating a "sub-branch" library at the nearby Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House in the 1920s (Peterson 1996:7.6).

Even before it moved into its own building in 1915, the Sumner Branch Library was "already a social center" (*Minneapolis Tribune*, May 31, 1915). In 1916, Sumner was holding two to three story hours per week (attended by 50-75 children), a sewing program for girls, and "game days." Its extensive social and cultural programs also included a mothers' club, debate groups, and lectures. The basement meeting room was heavily used by the community -- in 1917 there were roughly 21 clubs meeting weekly in the library. Adult groups using the meeting rooms included the North Side Improvement League, the Red Cross, the Jewish War Relief, the P.T.A., and various women's clubs. In 1927, a girls' library club was organized whose members shelved books, worked with younger children, and assisted the librarians with other chores (Benidt 1984:102). The neighborhood Boy Scout and Campfire Girls units were both founded at Sumner -- apparently by the librarians -- according to a *Minneapolis Tribune* article of 1915 which explains: "The branch library was the strongest influence for juvenile welfare in the vicinity and it seemed natural to the librarians to take over this endeavor when opportunity offered" (*Minneapolis Tribune*, May 31, 1915).

Sumner Branch Library continued to be an educational, cultural, and social force in the midst of a neighborhood that became increasingly impoverished. The library's quiet, handsome rooms were patronized by many neighborhood residents who were escaping harsh, crowded, living conditions and who discovered the pleasures of reading and education through the library's collections and the assistance of the librarians (Benidt 1984:100-101). As crime in the neighborhood rose in the 1920s-1940s, vandalism at the library was often a problem (Sassaman 1979:35-37). During the Depression, Sumner Branch Library expanded its social services and became, for example, a distribution center for food and clothing and a gathering place for the unemployed. The library staff even acted as liaisons between needy patrons and various social service agencies when necessary (Sassaman 1979:33).

In the late fall of 1938 the library was moved 100 feet northward during the widening of Olson Memorial Highway (Sixth Avenue North). Johnson and Backstrom, a Minneapolis architecture and engineering firm, planned the move, which cost approximately $32,000. Children's books were temporarily circulated through Sumner school and the adult department was closed during the project. One year after the move, in 1939, the northern wing was erected to add a reference room and an office to the library.

In his centennial history of the Minneapolis Public Library, Bruce Benidt quotes a *Minneapolis Tribune* article of 1962 which says, "People never came to the Sumner Branch of the Minneapolis Public Library just to take out a book. They met their friend there, studied there, sometimes brought home-baked bread to the staff. One couple became engaged at Sumner, and now their children and grandchildren use the branch" (Benidt 1984:100). Benidt also writes that Sumner Library, "considered a friend and a vital part of neighborhood life by many residents, perhaps came closer to living out the ideals of Gratia Countryman than any other branch in the city" (Benidt 1984:100).

SUMMARY

In summary, the Sumner Branch of the Minneapolis Public Library is eligible for the National Register for its associations with the early history of the Minneapolis Public Library and the MPL's highly successful library outreach programs, and for its associations with MPL head librarian Gratia Alta Countryman.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

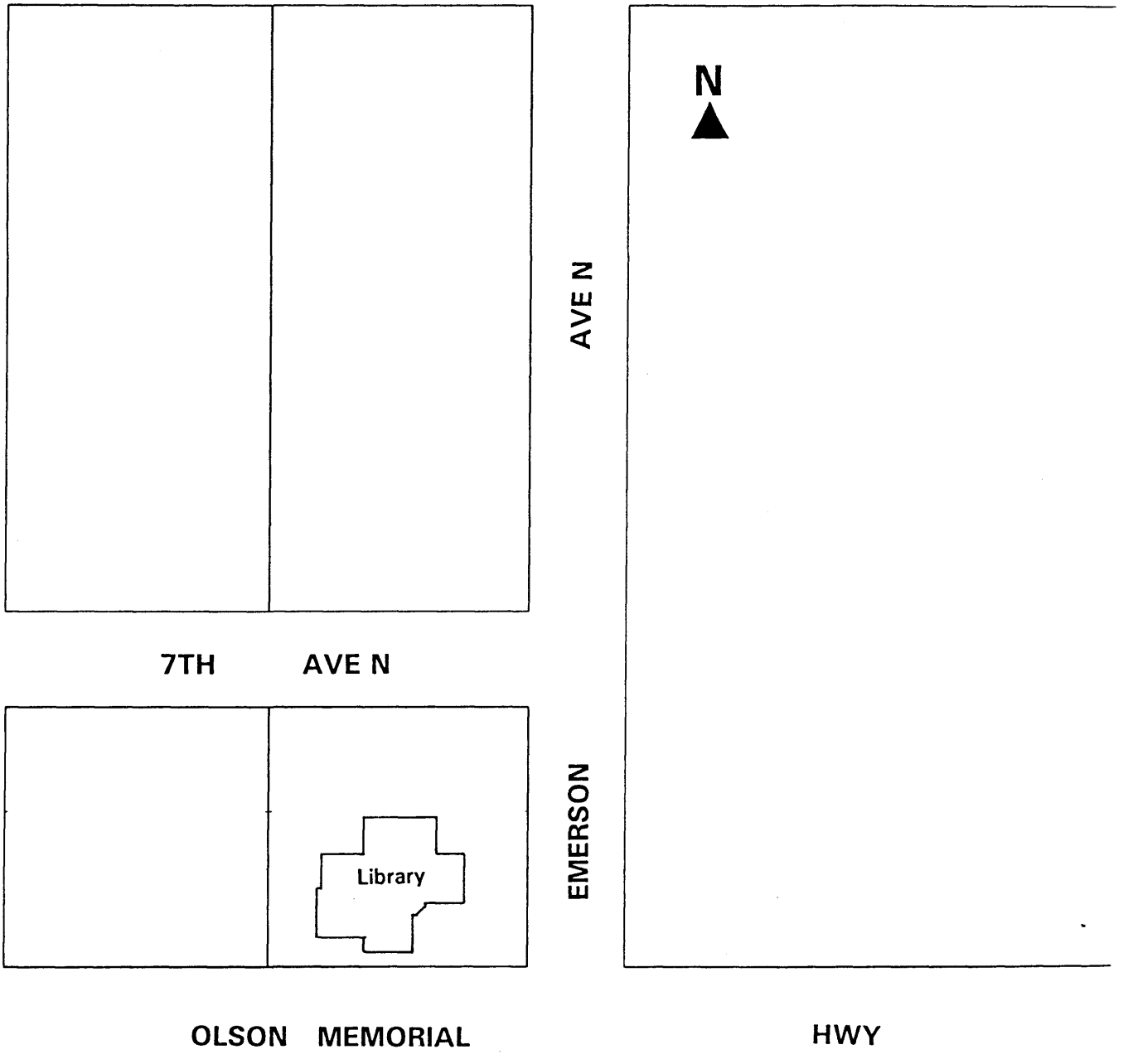
Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots 3, 4, and 5, and that part of Lot 2 lying south of the North 38 70/100 feet thereof, including the adjacent half of alley vacated, Block 7, Jewett's Addition to Minneapolis.

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property is comprised of the parcel of land historically associated with the Sumner Branch of the Minneapolis Public Library.

Sumner Branch Library
Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota



APPROX SCALE 1" = 100'

Prepared by Gemini Research 1998