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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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to your property, check the appropriate box. If the property is not documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Anna J. Scofield Memorial Auditorium and Harold E. Thorson Memorial Library

Other names/site number: Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building

Name of related multiple property listing: "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941"

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

2. Location

Street & number: 117 Central Avenue North

City or town: Elbow Lake State: MN County: Grant

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

<u>Barbara Mitchell Howard</u>		<u>March 20, 2015</u>	
Signature of certifying official/Title: Barbara Mitchell Howard, Deputy SHPO MNHS		Date	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government			
In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.			
Signature of commenting official:		Date	
Title :		State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building
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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

Per Edson H. Beall *5.11.15*
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL/meeting hall

EDUCATION/library

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/city hall

EDUCATION/library

SOCIAL/meeting hall

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER _____

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: CONCRETE _____

Walls: BRICK _____

Walls: STONE/Limestone _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Anna J. Scofield Memorial Auditorium and Harold E. Thorson Memorial Library (Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building) is located at 117 Central Avenue North on Lots 1 to 8 in Block 3 of the K.O. Laastuens First Addition to Elbow Lake, Grant County, in western Minnesota. The building faces west toward Central Avenue North in the southeast corner of the intersection of Second Street NW (State Highway 79) and Central Avenue North (U.S. Highway 59) and is set back from the road approximately 50 feet with grass and walkways in front. Designed by James C. Niemeyer and completed in 1934, the one-story building with full basement measures 119 x 54 feet. Constructed of light tan, variegated brick with Bedford stone trim, the Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building includes the symmetry, arched entries, and brick pilasters of the Second Italian Renaissance Revival style. The Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building retains its historic integrity.

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Narrative Description

See Continuation Sheet, Section 7.

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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.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- 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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1933-1934

Significant Dates

1934

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Niemeyer, James C.

Swedberg, Carl

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

With its groundbreaking in 1933 and completion in 1934, the Anna J. Scofield Memorial Auditorium and Harold E. Thorson Memorial Library (Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building) is significant under National Register Criterion A in the category of Politics and Government as a building constructed with Public Works Administration (PWA) funds that was recognized by the PWA as one of the best buildings of its type in the United States and the first such building project to receive this funding in Minnesota. The Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building is being nominated under the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941." The building's period of significance is 1933-1934. The period of significance begins when the project became associated with the Public Works Administration and ends when construction of the building comes to a close and the PWA no longer was actively involved with the building. The building has local significance.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

See Continuation Sheet, Section 8.

Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building
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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

PUBLISHED SOURCES

Christianson, Theodore. *Minnesota, The Land of Sky-tinted Waters*. Chicago and New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1935.

Construction Bulletin, 1977.

Department of Labor and Industry, *Twenty-fourth Biennial Report of the Department of Labor and Industry, Minnesota, 1933-1934*. Saint Paul: The Dept., [1934].

Fargo Forum, 1988.

Fergus Falls Weekly Journal, 1933-1939.

Grant County Herald. 1926-1977

Ickes, Harold L. *Back to Work: the Story of PWA*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1935.

Improvement Bulletin. 1933-1936.

Isakoff, Jack F. *The Public Works Administration*. Urbana: The University of Illinois, 1938.

Larson, Constant. *History of Douglas and Grant Counties, Their People, Industries and Institutions*. Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen & Company, Inc., 1916.

McElvaine, Robert S. *The Great Depression, America, 1929-1941*. [New York]: Times Books, 1984.

Marquis, Albert Nelson, ed. *The Book of Minnesotans: A Biographical Dictionary of Leading Living Men of the State of Minnesota*. Chicago: A.N. Marquis & Company, 1907.

Northfield News. 1920.

Short, C.W., and R. Stanley-Brown. *Public Buildings, A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and other Governmental Bodies Between the Years 1933 and 1939, with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration*. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1939.

Souvenir Edition, Grant County Herald on the Occasion of the Dedication of the Anna J. Scofield Memorial Auditorium and Harold Thorson Library. Elbow Lake, Minnesota: Grant County Herald, 1934.

Standard Atlas of Grant County, Minnesota. Chicago: George A. Ogle & Co., 1900.

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Sturgis, Russell. *A Dictionary of Architecture and Building*. 3 vols. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Minnesota: Number and Distribution of Inhabitants*. Population Bulletin, First Series, 1930. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1930.

Upham, Warren, and Rose Barteau Dunlap, comp. *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*. Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1912.

UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

Anderson, Rolf. "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1993. State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.

Hybben, Robert, and Charlene Roise. "Merriam Park Branch Public Library," Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) No. MN-123, (1991), 2.
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pnp/habshaer/mn/mn0200/mn0222/data/mn0222data.pdf>
(accessed 14 June 2014).

Minutes of the Village Council of the Village of Elbow Lake. 1932-1933. City Hall, Elbow Lake, Minnesota.

Twelfth Census of the United States (1900)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: Minnesota Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): GR-ELB-018

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10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property less than one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 45.993683 | Longitude: -95.976739 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building
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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lots 1 to 8, Block 3, K.O. Laastuens First Addition of the SW ¼ of the SW ¼ of S9 T129 R42.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes the parcel historically associated with the Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Emily Ganzel
organization: _____
street & number: 5317 14th Avenue South
city or town: Minneapolis state: MN zip code: 55417
e-mail emily@ganzelworks.com
telephone: 612-824-9960
date: November 2014

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property:

Anna J. Scofield Memorial Auditorium and Harold E. Thorson Memorial Library

City or Vicinity: Elbow Lake

County: Grant

State: Minnesota

Photographer: Emily Ganzel

Date Photographed: September 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 7.

West façade, camera facing southeast.

2 of 7.

East elevation (left) and north elevation (right), camera facing southwest.

3 of 7.

East elevation, camera facing northwest.

4 of 7.

West façade, camera facing northeast

5 of 7.

North entry faience, camera facing west.

6 of 7.

Interior city clerk's office, camera facing southeast.

7 of 7.

Interior hallway, camera facing southwest.

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building
Name of Property
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"Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941"
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Located in the northern part of Elbow Lake, the Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building is in the city's commercial district, with mid-twentieth century commercial buildings across Central Avenue North and the 1905 Grant County Courthouse (NR 1985) northwest across Second Street NW. The Grant County Historical Society museum is located behind the building to the east. There are additional commercial buildings across First Street NW to the south, including an early twentieth-century building that houses the offices of the *Grant County Herald* newspaper.

Symmetrical in plan, with a central block flanked by north and south wings, the building adapts to the property's terrain which slopes down from Second Street NW to First Street NW; the basement can be entered at street level on the east (rear) side of the building. The property includes a non-contributing 1977 addition¹ to the south that measures approximately 100 x 50 feet with an entry on the same level as the original building's basement. Because of the terrain, the addition appears to be half the height of the original building on the west facade. Designed by Koehnlein Lightowler Johnson, Inc.,² the addition's design and materials are similar and complementary to the original building but do not attempt to replicate it. (See Figures 1 and 2, Additional Documentation, and Photo 4.)

The Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building has poured concrete basement walls, exterior walls of light tan, variegated brick, and a drip course of Bedford stone³ that encompasses the entire building. The drip course creates the sill for each of the building's main windows, and the windows all have identical decorative brick lintels. A second horizontal band of Bedford stone encompasses the entire building above the windows and a Bedford stone coping crowns the top. A decorative brick frieze between the Bedford stone band and the coping extends around the building. (Photo 1.) The flat roof, originally asphalt-coated,⁴ is not visible from the ground. All of the windows, unless otherwise noted, are metal-frame, fixed-sash replacements.

On the west (front) façade, the concrete foundation is exposed with landscaping and steps that lead to a metal-framed glass basement door whose doorway is created from one of four original basement window openings. The three remaining windows are each one-over-one pane. (See Figure 3, Additional Documentation.) The west façade also includes two basement windows on the south wing that have been replaced with glass block.

The façade above the basement has five six-paned windows in the central block and two one-over-one windows on the north and south wings. Above the windows in the central block, the words "ANNA J. SCOFIELD MEMORIAL HALL" are engraved in Bedford stone.

¹ "City council excepts [sic] bids," *Grant County Herald*, 4 August 1977, 1.

² *Construction Bulletin* 179 (8 July 1977): 28.

³ *Souvenir Edition, Grant County Herald on the Occasion of the Dedication of the Anna J. Scofield Memorial Auditorium and Harold Thorson Library* (Elbow Lake, Minnesota: Grant County Herald, 1934), unnumbered page. Russell Sturgis, *A Dictionary of Architecture and Building* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901, v1), 264. Bedford stone is also known as "Bedford limestone" or "Indiana limestone" because of its origins in Lawrence County, Indiana. Since the contemporary *Souvenir Edition* refers to "Bedford stone," this phrase is used throughout this document.

⁴ *Souvenir Edition*, unnumbered page.

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Projecting bays from the north and south ends of the central block include identical arched entries trimmed in Bedford stone with green tile faience above each door and what appear to be the original light fixtures. (Photo 5.) Above each entry, Bedford stone panels are inlaid below the coping with the word "LIBRARY" over the north entry and "AUDITORIUM" over the south entry. Each entry has a metal-frame glass door with side lights (not original). Concrete steps with added metal railings lead to the two entries.

The north elevation features a long horizontal window opening with a decorative brick treatment on each side; the bricks project at an angle from the wall. The replacement window includes a ribbon of four metal one-over-two sliding glass windows with opaque upper panes. These replacement panes replicate the original window's convex curve design. Above the window, the words "HAROLD E. THORSON LIBRARY" are cut in Bedford stone. (See Figure 4, Additional Documentation.)

The east (rear) elevation is similar to the main façade, with five six-paned windows in the central block and two window openings on the north and south wings. The south wing's windows are one-over-one fixed sashes; the window openings on the east elevation of the north wing are infilled. (Photo 2.) There are two one-over-one basement windows in the south wing. Like the west façade, there are also two projecting bays on the north and south ends of the central block on the east elevation, but instead of entryways, the two half-moon green-tile faience are above paired one-over-one double-hung windows. There is also a rear building entry on the side of each of the projecting bays. (Photo 3.)

The south elevation has been altered with the 1977 addition. Because the addition is lower than the original south wing, the coping and brick frieze are still visible. The addition replaces the original Bedford stone drip course with a horizontal stone band of the same width. (Photo 4.)

The first floor interior of the Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building has been functionally reorganized, but the building's original physical plan remains almost unchanged. The central block is now used by the library, with a bathroom added in the northeast corner and a staircase to the balcony in the southwest corner. The north wing now houses the city clerk's office and the library's computer lab is in the south wing. A conference room is on the east side of the building where a stairwell was located. Stairs to the basement and an elevator to the balcony have been added by the current library's main entrance. (See Figures 5 and 6, Additional Documentation.)

Despite these alterations, the first floor retains many original features, including (in the north wing) the original library fireplace, mantel, and hearth, as well as the original fir woodwork, the built-in library bookshelves, and many of the original fir paneled doors and hardware. (See Figure 7, Additional Documentation and Photos 6 and 7.) In addition, the "Nu-wood" ceiling, a "fibrous composition compressed from wood pulp" used for its acoustic properties in the original auditorium,⁵ remains intact behind the current library's suspended ceiling. (See Figure 8, Additional Documentation.) The building also retains several original ceiling light fixtures. (See Figure 9, Additional Documentation.)

In the basement, additional alterations have been made. The south wing has been modified to accommodate a hallway to the 1977 addition, the original stairwell has been removed, and modifications were made for ADA accessibility requirements. (See Figures 10 and 11, Additional

⁵ *Souvenir Edition*, unnumbered page.

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Documentation.) Nevertheless, some original elements are still visible. The storage room that replaced the stairwell still includes part of the staircase. (See Figure 12, Additional Documentation.) While the original terrazzo floors have been removed from most of the building, some terrazzo stairs remain visible inside a storage closet built over them. (See Figure 13, Additional Documentation.)

The Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building retains its integrity of location. The original symmetrical design of the building was altered with the 1977 addition to the south wing, but the addition's low profile and complementary materials do not diminish significantly the integrity of the original building's exterior design. The replacement windows in the central block retain the original six-pane design, although the originals were paired one-over-one double-hung sashes below fixed transom panes. The replacement windows in the north and south wings also retain the originals' one-over-one design, although they are fixed rather than double-hung. A comparison of the exterior of the building today with historic photographs and with the architect's rendering before its construction in 1933 demonstrates that the integrity of the exterior design has been largely retained. (See Figures 14 and 15, Additional Documentation.)

The interior has been remodeled to accommodate the building's current functions yet it retains the integrity of design in its floor plan. This is significant because, in designing the building, the architect created two distinct spaces to reflect the different sources of private funding (in addition to the PWA funding) for the building's construction: the north wing, paid for in part with Thorson library funds, and the rest of the building, paid for in part with Scofield auditorium funds. These two spaces remain distinct on the first floor, with the city clerk's office now in the north wing (and using the original library entrance) and the library in the remainder of the first floor (and using the auditorium entrance). The only modification to this plan has been the enclosure of the auditorium's stage for use by the city clerk's office. (See Figures 6 and 16, Additional Documentation.)

On the basement level, the alterations are largely the result of mandated ADA compliance and the building addition to the south. Aside from these alterations, the floor plan remains relatively unchanged, with the addition of storage space and a performance stage in the original dining hall and a bathroom added within the mechanical space. (See Figures 10 and 11.)

The building also retains the integrity of its setting within the commercial district of Elbow Lake and in particular, its relationship with the 1905 county courthouse across Second Street NW. The architect's aesthetic preference for open space and walkways for the front (west) façade of the Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building have been maintained and expanded. Commemorative markers (including a large stone), other permanent signage, and a small picnic table added to this space diminish the setting's integrity but are reversible. The presence of the Grant County Historical Society museum to the east (rear) of the building has only a minor impact on the setting's integrity, thanks in part to the distance between the two buildings. The mid-century buildings to the west and south of the Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building also retain the area's commercial setting.

The building retains integrity of materials and workmanship, including the original brick, the Bedford stone trim, and the green tile faience above the doors and back windows. The interior retains much of its historic fabric, especially in the north wing of the first floor, where walls, woodwork, doors and hardware have been preserved, as well as the original library fireplace, mantel, and hearth. In the rest of the building, original light fixtures, the auditorium's Nu-wood ceiling, as well as a portion of the

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basement's terrazzo floors remain.

The Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building retains the integrity of feeling with its Second Italian Renaissance Revival style. It also retains the integrity of its association with the Public Works Administration and with the intent of the bequests that helped to fund its construction; most significantly, the building continues to serve as the combined library and community center originally established in 1934, as well as the Elbow Lake city office. As a result, the Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building embodies what PWA Administrator Harold Ickes identified as one of the objectives of the PWA, namely "[to strive] . . . for the welfare of the particular community served."⁶

⁶ Harold L. Ickes, *Back to Work: the Story of PWA* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1935), 207.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Anna J. Scofield Memorial Auditorium and Harold E. Thorson Memorial Library (also referred to as the Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building)⁷ is located at 117 Central Avenue North in the city of Elbow Lake in west central Minnesota. Centrally located in Grant County, Elbow Lake was determined to be the county seat before the village was established; the first county courthouse was erected there in 1878, although the village wasn't platted until 1886.⁸ The Minneapolis, St. Paul and Sault Ste. Marie Railroad reached Elbow Lake in 1887,⁹ and by 1900, the population of Elbow Lake was 625.¹⁰ In 1930, the population had reached 903¹¹ and with a creamery, two railroad lines and four trunk highways, the village of Elbow Lake served as a center for the predominantly agricultural county.¹²

While the construction of the Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building began in 1933, its origins can be traced to 1889 when Harold Thorson¹³ and Edward J. Scofield each first arrived in Grant County.¹⁴

Harold Thorson

Harold Thorson was born in Valdres, Norway in 1841, immigrated to the United States in 1857 and eight years later moved to Northfield, Minnesota. A prominent businessman, Thorson helped to found the First National Bank of Northfield and became one of its directors. After moving to St. Paul in the 1880s, Thorson bought land in Grant County in 1889 and by 1900 he owned over 154 acres in North Ottawa Township¹⁵ and lived with his family in the village of Elbow Lake.¹⁶

⁷ *Souvenir Edition, Grant County Herald on the Occasion of the Dedication of the Anna J. Scofield Memorial Auditorium and Harold Thorson Library* (Elbow Lake, Minnesota: Grant County Herald, 1934), unnumbered page.

⁸ Constant Larson, *History of Douglas and Grant Counties, Their People, Industries and Institutions* (Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen & Company, Inc., 1916), 392, 481.

⁹ Larson, 431; *Standard Atlas of Grant County, Minnesota* (Chicago: George A. Ogle & Co., 1900), unnumbered page.

¹⁰ Larson, 396.

¹¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Minnesota: Number and Distribution of Inhabitants*. Population Bulletin, First Series, 1930. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1930), 14.

¹² *Souvenir Edition*, unnumbered page.

¹³ Sources give Thorson's first name as either "Harold" or "Harald." The text of this registration form uses the "Harold" spelling as it appears on the building but the citations spell his name as it appears in the cited source.

¹⁴ "Harald Thorson," *Northfield News*, 20 Feb 1920, 1; Warren Upham and Rose Barteau Dunlap, comp., *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1912), 682-683.

¹⁵ "Harald Thorson"; *Standard Atlas of Grant County*, unnumbered page.

¹⁶ Twelfth Census of the United States (1900).

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Shortly after moving to the village, Thorson organized and became president of the Bank of Elbow Lake.¹⁷ He continued to expand both his farming and banking businesses in Minnesota and North Dakota and, at the time of his death in 1920 in St. Paul, he was considered one of the leading bankers of the Northwest.¹⁸

In his will, Thorson left \$3,000 to the village of Elbow Lake with "the proviso that the same should be invested in interest bearing securities until such time as it amounted to five thousand dollars when it was to be used for a public library."¹⁹

Edward J. Scofield

Born in Caledonia, Minnesota, in 1864,²⁰ Edward J. Scofield was graduated from the University of Michigan Law School in 1887 and moved to Elbow Lake in 1889.²¹ In addition to his law practice—he was elected County Attorney for Grant County for seven successive terms—Scofield was a successful farmer and became one of the largest land owners in Grant County.²²

In 1894, Scofield married Anna J. Anderson, a public school teacher who was the principal of the Elbow Lake school at the time of her marriage. Born in Lund, Skåne, Sweden, in 1869, Anna immigrated to the United States in 1881 and later moved to Grant County. Anna J. Scofield died in Elbow Lake in 1922.²³

When he died in 1926,²⁴ Edward J. Scofield left over \$30,000 to the village of Elbow Lake, including "one bequest [of] \$10,000 . . . for a structure or monument to the memory of his deceased wife Anna Scofield." Another \$10,000 in a trust fund would be used to maintain the memorial.²⁵ Over the next six years, the citizens of Elbow Lake considered various ways to spend the bequest and on April 12, 1932, with eight different options to consider, they voted to build a community hall.²⁶ Proponents of the community hall argued that

. . . [the] structure would be of such nature so that it could be used as a gymnasium,

¹⁷ *Souvenir Edition*, unnumbered page; Upham, 782.

¹⁸ *Souvenir Edition*, unnumbered page.

¹⁹ *Souvenir Edition*, unnumbered page.

²⁰ "Edward J. Scofield Dies," *Grant County Herald (GCH)*, 13 May 1926, 1.

²¹ Marquis, Albert Nelson, ed. *The Book of Minnesotans: A Biographical Dictionary of Leading Living Men of the State of Minnesota*. (Chicago: A.N. Marquis & Company, 1907), 454.

²² "Edward J. Scofield Dies."

²³ *Souvenir Edition*, unnumbered page.

²⁴ "Edward J. Scofield Dies."

²⁵ "\$30,000 to Elbow Lake," *GCH*, 20 May 1926, 1.

²⁶ "Sample Ballot," *GCH*, 7 April 1932, 7; "Community Hall Choice of Voters as Memorial," *GCH*, 14 April 1932, 1.

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auditorium for holding conventions brought to the town, political gatherings, dramatic productions, community dances, and a center for the entire village to meet when necessary. One part of the building would be set aside as a library and the bequest left by the late Harold Thorson for such a purpose could be used.²⁷

Of the 291 votes cast, the community hall received 181 votes, more than triple the 55 votes received for the second choice, a "White Way" (electric street lighting) and public square park.²⁸

Between November 1932 and May 1933, the village of Elbow Lake acquired lots in the K.O. Laastuens First Addition to Elbow Lake "to be used as [the] building site for the Scofield Memorial Building."²⁹ They hired James C. Niemeyer, a St. Paul architect, in May 1933 to draw up building plans and then discovered in June 1933 that the proposed bids for construction exceeded the funds they had available.³⁰

Even with additional money from the village hall fund—funds acquired from a tax levy to build a village hall in Elbow Lake—the village did not have the approximately \$35,600 needed to complete the project.³¹ On August 8, 1933, the Elbow Lake Village Council voted to apply for a grant from the newly created Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works.³²

Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works

First proposed on May 7, 1933, in a radio address by the newly inaugurated President Franklin D. Roosevelt,³³ the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works (also known as the Public Works Administration or PWA) was created to deliver federal funds for public works projects in states, counties, and local governments. Since the U.S. stock market crash of 1929, these governing bodies and their citizens had been suffering from the economic collapse and the onset of the Great Depression—by 1933, construction nationwide was down by 78% and investments by 98%, while unemployment rose from 3.2% in 1929 to 24.9% in 1933.³⁴

To relieve the devastated economy, Roosevelt proposed a variety of "New Deal" legislation, including the National Industrial Recovery Act which included the creation of the PWA. The act

²⁷ "Four Major Projects Named for Scofield Memorial Here," *GCH*, 25 June 1931, 1.

²⁸ "Community Hall Choice of Voters as Memorial."

²⁹ Minutes of the Village Council of the Village of Elbow Lake, available at City Hall, Elbow Lake, Minnesota, 7 November 1932 and 1 May 1933.

³⁰ Minutes of the Village Council, 18 May 1933 and 15 June 1933.

³¹ "Council Is Undecided About Hall," *GCH*, 22 June 1933, 1; *Souvenir Edition*, unnumbered page.

³² Minutes of the Village Council, 8 August 1933.

³³ Harold L. Ickes, *Back to Work: the Story of PWA* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1935), 12.

³⁴ Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression, America, 1929-1941*. ([New York]: Times Books, 1984), 75.

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passed the U.S. Congress on June 12, 1933, a little over a month after Roosevelt first proposed it.³⁵ Using PWA funds for necessary public works construction, state governments and local municipalities could provide much needed employment to the country's workers.³⁶

Despite its name, the Public Works Administration was designed to benefit private enterprise by distributing funds through municipalities for private contractors and industries to use in hiring workers and materials for public works projects.³⁷ Provided in the form of grants or loans, this funding differed from later New Deal projects, such as the Works Progress Administration, which provided work relief funds directly to workers.³⁸

For PWA grants, such as the one sought by Elbow Lake, 30% of the cost of labor and materials would be paid by the federal government.³⁹ This meant that the remaining funds would be provided by the grant recipient, often through bond issues passed by voters.⁴⁰

The weekly Minnesota trade publication *The Improvement Bulletin* summarized for building contractors the criteria that the PWA used in selecting projects including, in order of importance:

- Projects that could be completed with reasonable speed;
- Projects in or near centers of unemployment; and
- Projects that were integrated with other projects into a significant plan.

The publication also explained that the PWA required that

- The projects contributed something of value to the community
- The projects could not require additional federal funding for maintenance or operation.⁴¹

The projects also had to use human labor instead of machinery when possible⁴² and to restrict individual laborers to 30 hours of work per week so that more people could be employed.

³⁵ Ickes, 16-17.

³⁶ Jack F. Isakoff, *The Public Works Administration* (Urbana: The University of Illinois, 1938), 88-89.

³⁷ Ickes, 197.

³⁸ Rolf Anderson, "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, 1993, E-66.

³⁹ Isakoff, 88, 90. The federal contribution was increased to 45% with the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935.

⁴⁰ "Removed from PWA Program," *The Improvement Bulletin (IB)* 81 (27 December 1935): 5.

⁴¹ "Board Announces Public Works Policies," *IB* 76 (30 June 1933): 9.

⁴² "Policies and Procedures of the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works," *IB* 76 (18 August 1933): 6.

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Minimum wages were required, with eight different wage classifications created within Minnesota.⁴³

Despite these bureaucratic hurdles, by August 1933, state and municipal applications totaling \$200,000,000 had been submitted to the Minnesota Public Works Advisory Board, with \$35,000,000 in 74 municipal projects,⁴⁴ including the proposed building in Elbow Lake. After reviewing the projects, the advisory board sent its selections to the PWA regional advisor for the Upper Midwest, Frank W. Murphy.⁴⁵

One of seven regional advisors,⁴⁶ Murphy reviewed PWA applications from the state advisory boards in Region 4, namely Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, and Wyoming.⁴⁷ During the month of August 1933, Murphy travelled throughout the region to inspect the combined \$100,000,000 worth of projects the region's six state advisory boards had recommended. On September 3, 1933, Murphy headed to Washington, D.C., to impress upon the Roosevelt administration that "winter arrives early in the Northwest and that on account of unemployment, it is necessary that projects be under way before winter sets in."⁴⁸

Living in Wheaton, Minnesota, Murphy didn't have to travel far to inspect the Elbow Lake project, less than 40 miles away. His familiarity with the nearby community may have given the project more prominence, but the village had also made every effort to address the PWA requirements and get the project underway before the winter.

"Ready to be launched."

PWA Administrator Harold Ickes in his 1935 book *Back to Work, The Story of PWA* lamented that when the PWA began, "It was surprising how few of [the non-federal projects] were ready to be launched when the public works program started."⁴⁹ Elbow Lake, however, had already overcome several PWA hurdles: thanks to the Thorson and Scofield bequests, the village had already paid for architectural drawings for the building and purchased the land on which it would be built. Perhaps most important, the bequests meant that the village did not have to take the time to pass a bond issue and sell bonds for their share of the project costs. Scofield's bequest

⁴³ "Minimum Wage Rates on Minnesota PWA Projects Divided Into Eight Classifications," *IB 76* (20 October 1933): 9.

⁴⁴ *IB 76* (11 August 1933): front cover.

⁴⁵ "Frank W. Murphy Appointed Regional Advisor," *IB 76* (28 July 1933): 9.

⁴⁶ C.W. Short and R. Stanley-Brown, *Public Buildings, A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and other Governmental Bodies Between the Years 1933 and 1939, with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1939), xi.

Short notes that the number of regions was reduced to six in July 1939.

⁴⁷ "President Names State Advisory Boards," *IB 76* (28 July 1933): 9.

⁴⁸ *IB 76* (8 September 1933): front cover.

⁴⁹ Ickes, 217.

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also meant that money was already allocated for the building's maintenance, another PWA requirement. And with Grant County's unemployment rate of almost 16.5% in 1930,⁵⁰ Elbow Lake met the PWA priority of being near a center of unemployment.

So it was perhaps not surprising that a little over two weeks after sending in their PWA application, the village of Elbow Lake optimistically advertised for construction bids stating that the "contractor shall comply with all the requirements of the National Industrial Recovery Act"⁵¹ in anticipation of the application's approval. Furthermore, on September 27, 1933, excavation for the building's basement began based on "informal approval" from the PWA "to speed building before winter."⁵² On October 13, 1933, the village received official approval for the \$8,000 grant to cover 30% of the material and labor cost.⁵³ The PWA grant was the first received in Minnesota.⁵⁴

Building Design and Construction

With the award of the \$8,000 grant, the *Grant County Herald* announced that "work starts on Scofield Memorial Hall Building."⁵⁵ The construction followed the architectural drawings of James C. Niemeyer who, during his brief tenure from 1929 to 1930 as St. Paul's city architect,⁵⁶ had designed both Merriam Park and Hamline branch libraries for the city.⁵⁷ His design acknowledged the difference between the Thorson and Scofield bequests—while the building's exterior displayed symmetry in the paired entrances to the Thorson library and the Scofield auditorium, the interior layout dedicated much more space to the Scofield auditorium. (See Figure 16, Additional Documentation).

With the low bid of \$26,720, Carl Swedberg of Wheaton, Minnesota, was awarded the contract for the Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building on September 14, 1933.⁵⁸ Carl F. Lohse and A.O.

⁵⁰ Department of Labor and Industry, *Twenty-fourth Biennial Report of the Department of Labor and Industry, Minnesota, 1933-1934* (Saint Paul: The Dept., [1934]), 15.

⁵¹ *IB 76* (25 August 1933): 25.

⁵² "Excavation for Scofield Memorial Hall Started," *GCH*, 28 September 1933, 1.

⁵³ "Work Starts on Scofield Memorial Hall Building," *GCH*, 19 October 1933, 1.

⁵⁴ *Souvenir Edition*, unnumbered page.

⁵⁵ "Work Starts on Scofield Memorial Hall Building."

⁵⁶ Theodore Christianson, *Minnesota, The Land of Sky-tinted Waters* (Chicago and New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1935) 262-263.

⁵⁷ Robert Hybben and Charlene Roise, "Merriam Park Branch Public Library," *Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) No. MN-123*, (1991), 2.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pnp/habshaer/mn/mn0200/mn0222/data/mn0222data.pdf> (accessed 14 June 2014).

⁵⁸ Minutes of the Village Council, 14 September 1933. There is no evidence of a connection between

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Alberts, both of Elbow Lake, were awarded the contracts for electrical and for heating and plumbing, respectively. As the project began, it was estimated that 25 men would be employed in the construction for up to five months.⁵⁹

Architect Magnus Foss was hired by the PWA to inspect and supervise construction of the building.⁶⁰ According to PWA Administrator Ickes, "[the engineer inspector] makes daily and weekly progress reports, not only on the quality of the material being used, but on the number of men employed, the wages paid and the quantity of material delivered and used."⁶¹ The choice of Magnus Foss is an interesting one; he grew up in Elbow Lake⁶² and his architectural firm, Broaten and Foss, had submitted preliminary plans for the building before Niemeyer's were selected.⁶³

The Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building was substantially completed by March 1934⁶⁴ and was dedicated on August 3, 1934.⁶⁵ Based on available research, there are no other PWA-funded buildings in Elbow Lake.

Among the Best.

In 1939, the Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building was featured in *Public Buildings*, a federal publication that singled out specific PWA-funded buildings constructed between 1933 and 1939. Authored by C.W. Short of the PWA and R. Stanley-Brown of the Public Buildings Administration, the book identifies those buildings that are "among the best designs that have been produced for a given type of structure."⁶⁶ The Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building incorporates the "modern design" and "native materials"⁶⁷ that the PWA highlighted—a brick façade with Bedford stone trim on the exterior and terrazzo floors and fir doors and woodwork on the interior. With the brick and stone exterior, *Public Buildings* described the structure as "semifireproof."⁶⁸

Public Buildings notes that in the PWA's Region 4 where Elbow Lake resides, "the best work has been done in ... municipal auditoriums," among other places. The building's auditorium

Svedberg and PWA regional advisor Frank W. Murphy, although they were both residents of Wheaton, Minnesota.

⁵⁹ "\$8,000 Loaned to Elbow Lake," *Fergus Falls Weekly Journal*, 19 October 1933, 7.

⁶⁰ *Souvenir Edition*, unnumbered page.

⁶¹ Ickes, 74.

⁶² "M.O. Foss, Longtime Area Architect Dies," *Fargo Forum*, 28 January 1988.

⁶³ "Prepare Plans, Drawings, of Scofield Memorial," *GCH*, 18 February 1932, 1.

⁶⁴ "Memorial Hall Nears Completion," *GCH*, 29 March 1932, 1.

⁶⁵ *Souvenir Edition*, unnumbered page.

⁶⁶ *Public Buildings*, xi.

⁶⁷ *Public Buildings*, xii.

⁶⁸ *Public Buildings*, 120.

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includes such features as steel trusses that support the roof so that no pillars are needed in the auditorium or its balcony. The auditorium still retains its "Nu-wood" ceiling, described at the time as "a fibrous composition compressed from wood pulp . . . [that] greatly improves the acoustical properties."⁶⁹

"A Building That Will Endure."

The brochure distributed at the Scofield-Thorson Memorial Building's dedication on August 3, 1934, prophetically stated that it is "a building that will endure."⁷⁰ Remarkably, for the last 80 years, it has retained much of its original function as a public gathering place. For example, Elbow Lake's 1940 Memorial Day Parade finished in front of the building;⁷¹ Berskow's Orchestra headlined a dance in the auditorium in 1943;⁷² and in 1964 the Elbow Lake council convened a public hearing there to discuss plans for Highway 79.⁷³ Today's tenants include the library, which now occupies most of the main floor, and the city hall, whose offices reside in the former library room. A community room remains in the basement, still serving Elbow Lake citizens.

The Public Works Administration continued to provide funding for non-federal projects until 1941 when the onset of World War II made job-creating initiatives unnecessary.⁷⁴

Conclusion

The Anna J. Scofield Memorial Auditorium and Harold E. Thorson Memorial Library is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the category of Politics and Government as a PWA-funded building that was publicly recognized by the PWA as one of the best buildings of its type in the United States and the first building project in Minnesota to receive PWA funding. Specifically identified as an early PWA project in the Multiple Property Documentation Form "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941," it has local significance

⁶⁹ *Souvenir Edition*, unnumbered page.

⁷⁰ *Souvenir Edition*, unnumbered page.

⁷¹ *GCH*, 30 May 1940, 1.

⁷² *GCH*, 29 April 1943, 5.

⁷³ *GCH*, 12 March 1964, 1.

⁷⁴ McElvaine, 320.

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Figure 1: West facade with 1977 addition on the far right. Camera facing east.



Figure 2: The 1977 addition with original building on left. Camera facing southeast.

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Figure 3: Landscaping on west façade with basement door. Camera facing northeast



Figure 4: Window on north elevation. Camera facing southeast.

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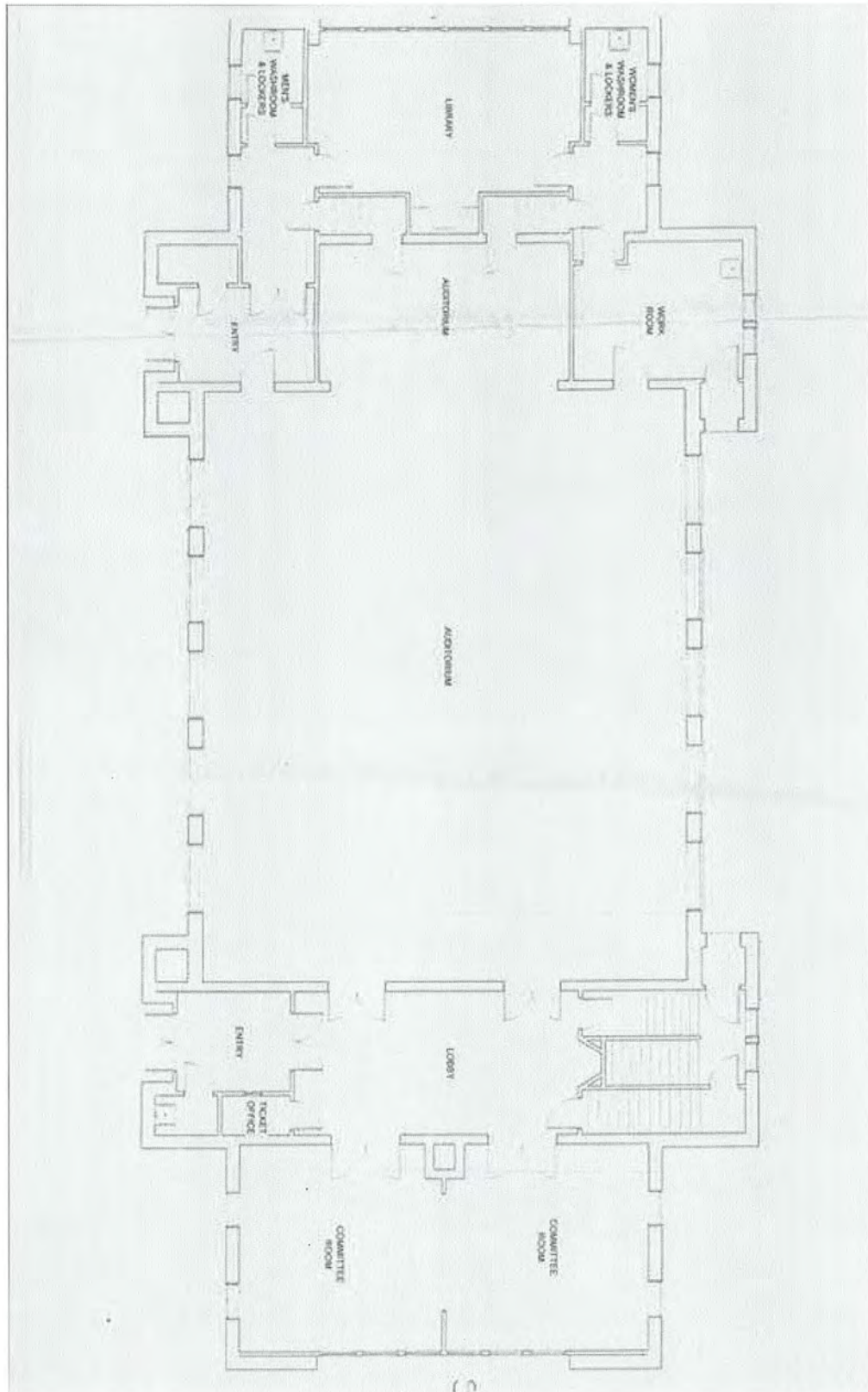


Figure 5: First floor plan in 1934. Copy of original drawing owned by John Kreft, Elbow Lake.

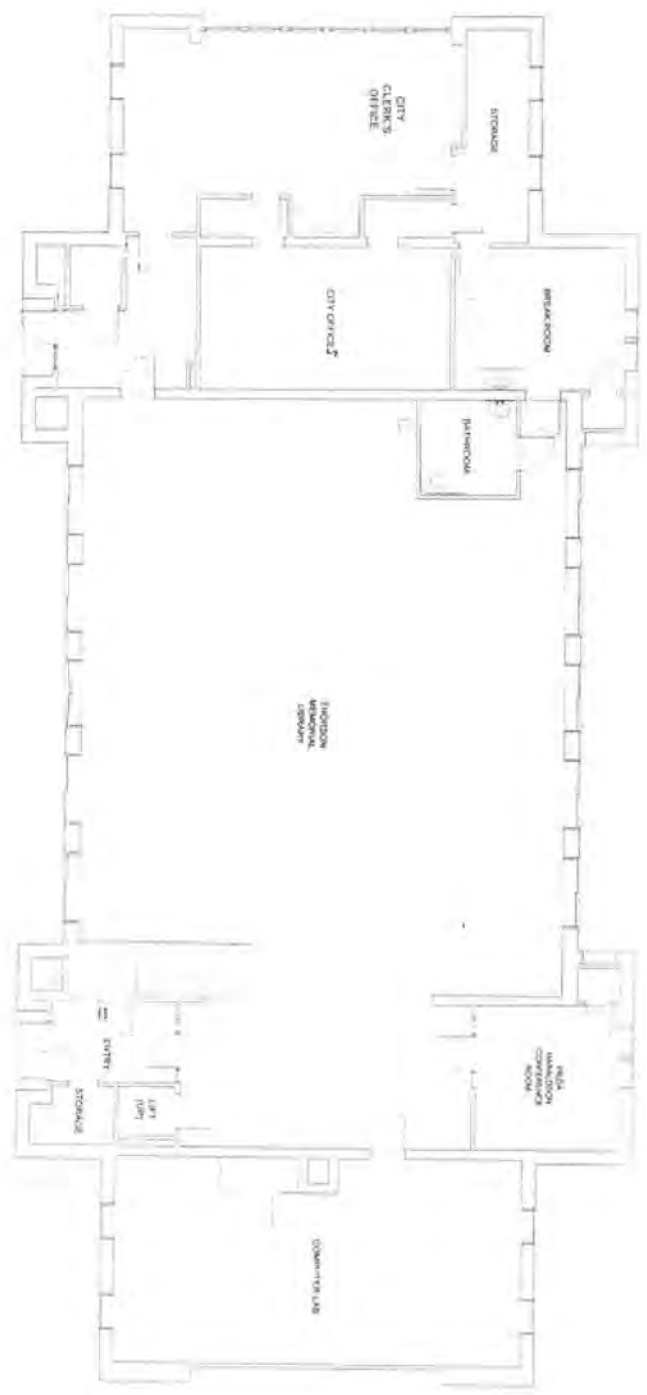
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Figure 6: First floor plan in 2014. Copy of the original drawing owned by John Kref, Elbow Lake.



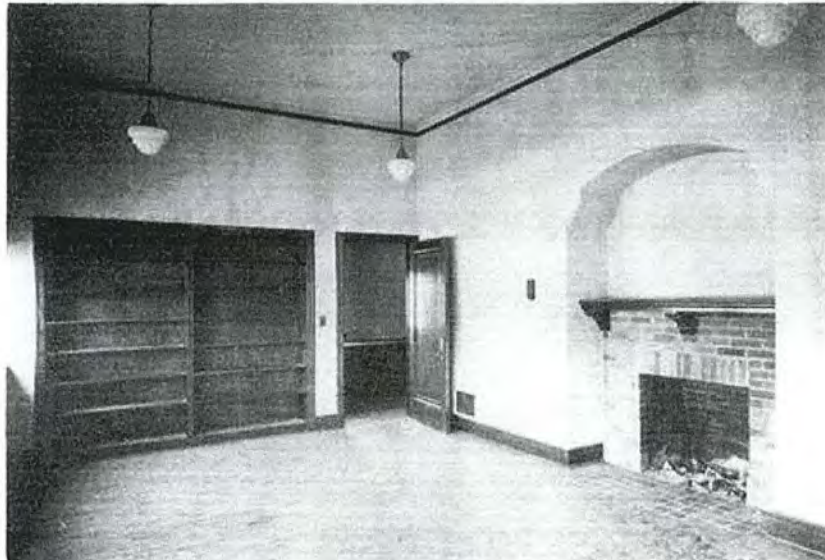
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View of Library Rooms

Figure 7: Photo of library from 1934 *Souvenir Edition*. Copy of original owned by John Kreft, Elbow Lake.

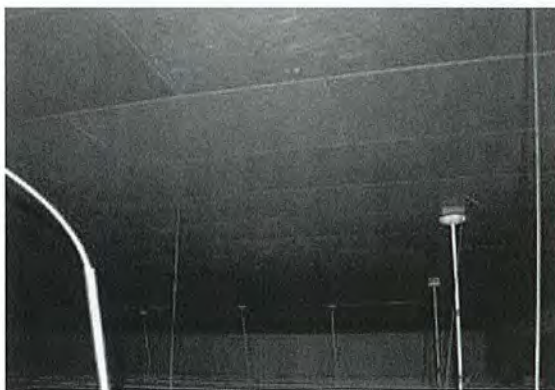


Figure 8: Nu-wood ceiling from original auditorium. Camera facing south.



Figure 9: Original light fixture in computer lab. Camera facing east.

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National Park Service**

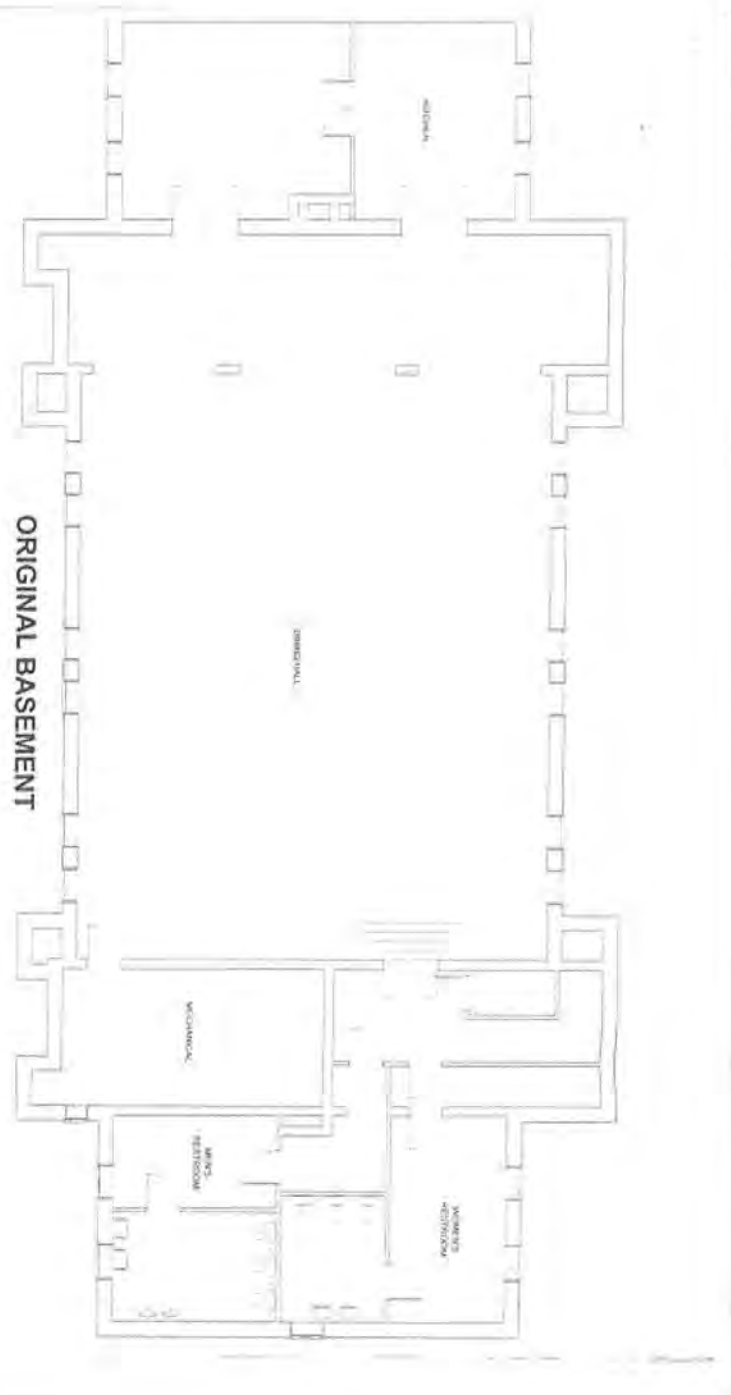
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Figure 10: Basement floor plan in 1934.
Copy of original drawing owned by John Kref, Elbow Lake.



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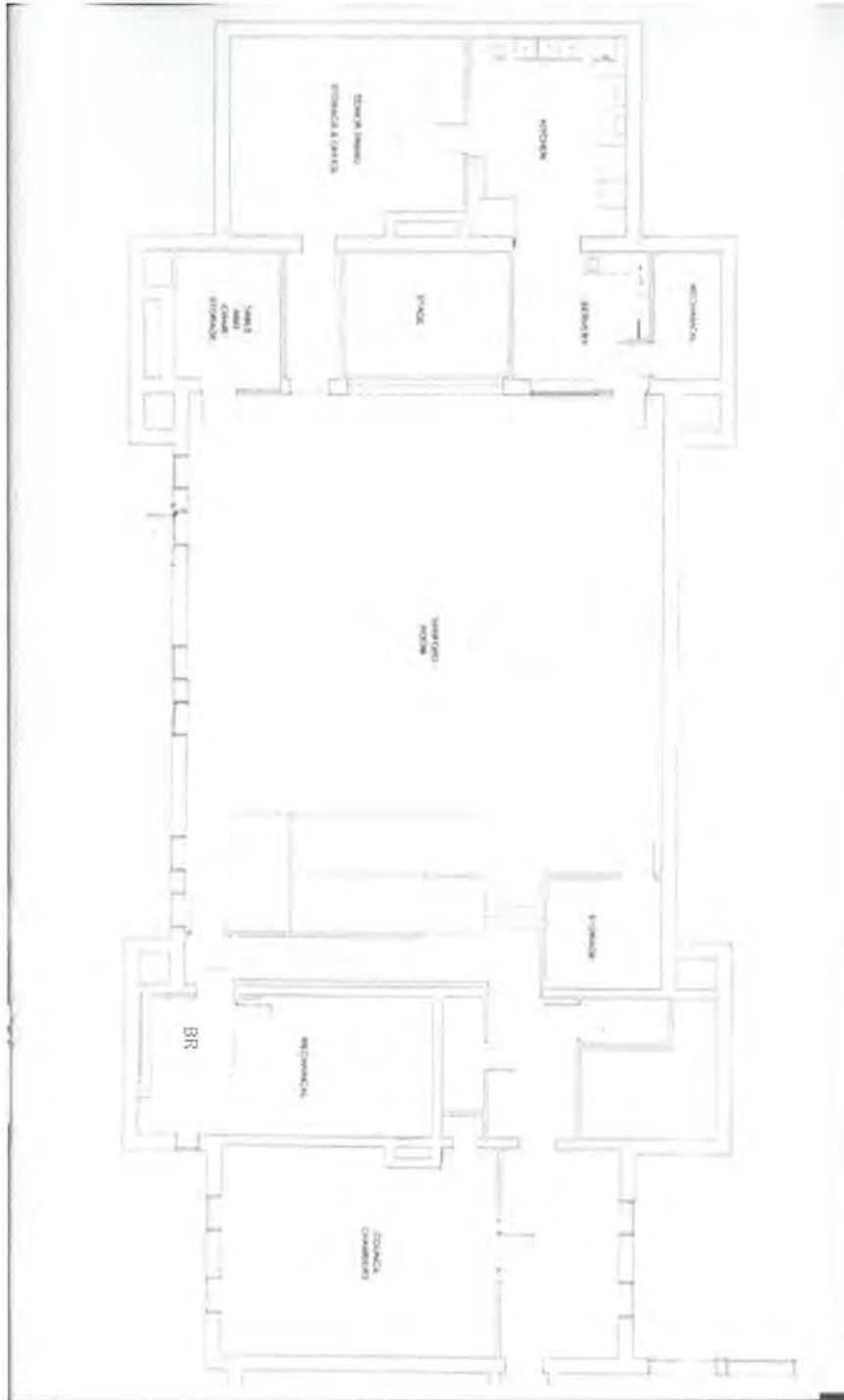
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Figure11:
Basement floor
plan in 2014.
Copy of original
drawing owned
by John Kreft,
Elbow Lake,.



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Figure 12: Detail showing stairs inside basement storage room.



Figure 13: Detail showing terrazzo steps inside basement storage room.

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Figure 14: Building in 1934. Photo provided by Grant County Historical Society.

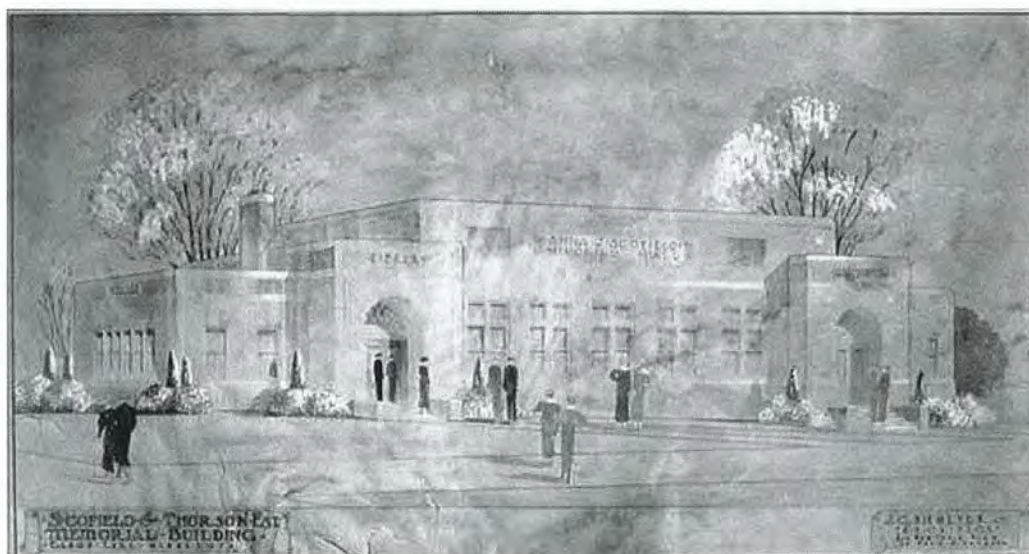


Figure 15: Building in 1934. Copy of original drawing owned by Thorson Memorial Library.

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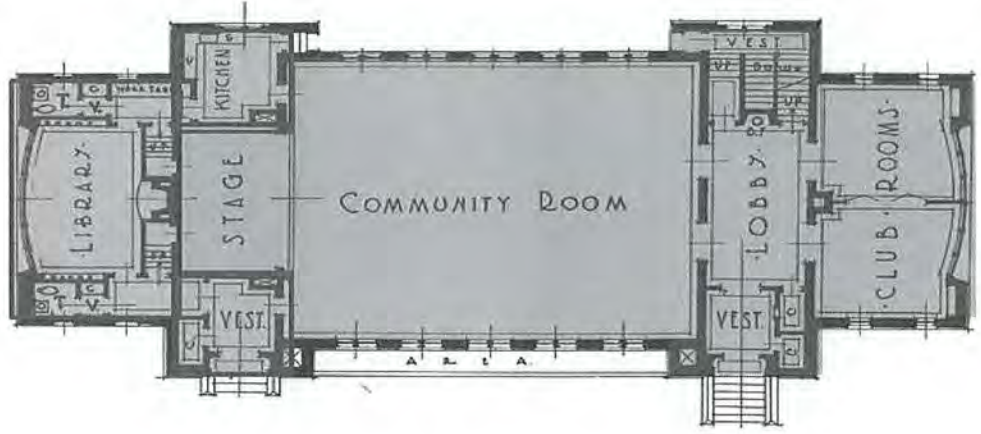


Figure 16: Floor plan from *Public Buildings*, page 120. Color added to compare Thorson library space (in blue) with Scotfield auditorium space (in green).

SKETCH MAP

117 Central Ave N, Elbow Lake, MN 56531

46.993683, -95.976739

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- Thorson Memorial Library
- Elbow Lake Senior Nutri Site

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Anna J. Scofield Memorial Auditorium and Harold E. Thorson Memorial Library
Grant County, Minnesota

Sign in 3 of 5

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117 Central Ave N, Elbow Lake, MN 56531

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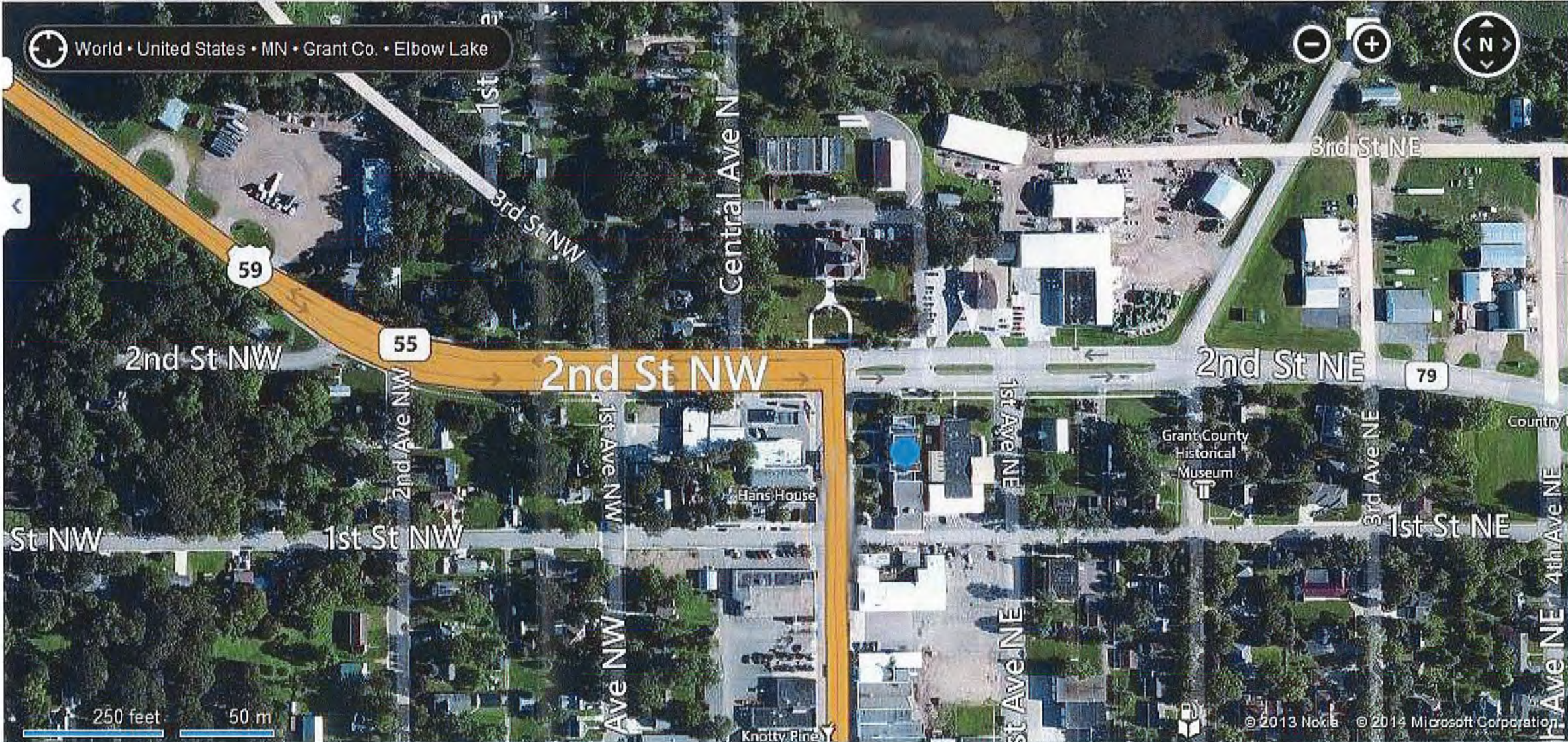
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Anna J. Scofield Memorial Auditorium and Harold E. Thorson Memorial Library
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LIBRARY

AMERICAN
MUSEUM OF
NATURAL HISTORY

ELBOW LAKE

Elbow Lake
Public Library

St. Mary's
Catholic
Church

ELBOW LAKE
PUBLIC LIBRARY







Senior
Citizens
Nutrition
Center









UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Scofield, Anna J. Memorial Auditorium and Harold E. Thorson
Memorial Library

MULTIPLE NAME: Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota MPS

STATE & COUNTY: MINNESOTA, Grant

DATE RECEIVED: 3/27/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/20/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 5/05/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/12/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000212

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 5.16.15 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

Minnesota Historical Society
State Historic Preservation Office
345 Kellogg Blvd West, St. Paul, Minnesota 55102
651-259-3451



TO: Stephanie Toothman, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Denis P. Gardner

DATE: March 19, 2015

NAME OF PROPERTY: Anna J. Scofield Memorial Auditorium and Harold E. Thorson Memorial Library

COUNTY AND STATE: Grant County, Minnesota

SUBJECT: National Register:
 Nomination
 Multiple Property Documentation Form
 Request for determination of eligibility
 Request for removal (Reference No.)
 Nomination resubmission
 Boundary increase/decrease (Reference No.)
 Additional documentation (Reference No.)

DOCUMENTATION:

Original National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
 Multiple Property Documentation Form
 Continuation Sheets
 Removal Documentation
 Photographs
 CD w/ image files
 Original USGS Map
 Sketch map(s)
 Correspondence
 Owner Objection
The enclosed owner objections
Do Do not constitute a majority of property owners

STAFF COMMENTS:

The map that accompanies the nomination is a Bing Map.

Thorson Memorial Library

117 Central Ave ~ P.O. Box 1040
Elbow Lake, MN 56531
218-685-6850 library@runestone.net

RECEIVED MAR 04 2015

March 2, 2015

Secretary, State Review Board
State Historic Preservation Office
345 Kellogg Blvd. W.
St. Paul, MN 55102-1906

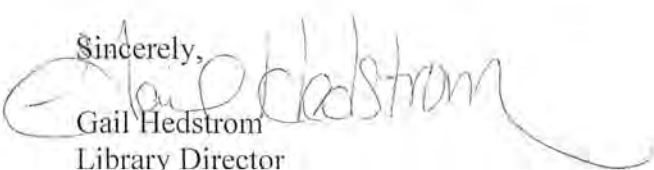
To whom it may concern:

It is with great pleasure that I write to support the nomination, as presented by Emily Ganzel, for the Scofield – Thorson Memorial Building to be included in the National Register of Historic Places. A few years ago I had the pleasure of meeting Ms. Ganzel when she contacted me to share her discovery that the Scofield – Thorson Memorial Building was the first building in the state to receive funds from the Public Works Administration (PWA).

The Scofield – Thorson Memorial Building is filled with generations of memories for the people in our community. The building has served numerous purposes, yet always remained true to its original purpose, serving as a public library and community gathering space. The revelation that this building was the first in the state to receive PWA funding is a great source of pride for our community. Through financial donations and physical labor, community members contributed to the creation of this building and have for the past 80 years continued to maintain the integrity and purpose of this architecturally distinctive building.

I enthusiastically support this nomination and am grateful that Ms. Ganzel has enlightened us about the historic significance of this building.

Sincerely,


Gail Hedstrom
Library Director

Grant County Historical Society & Veterans' Memorial Hall

PO Box 1002, Elbow Lake, MN 56531
phone **218.685.4864** e-mail gcmnhist@runestone.net



February 27, 2015

RECEIVED MAR 02 2015

Secretary
State Review Board
State Historic Preservation Office
345 Kellogg Blvd. W.
St. Paul, MN 55102-1906

Re: Anna J. Scofield Memorial Auditorium/Harold E. Thorson Memorial Library National Register nomination

Dear Secretary:

I am writing in support of the nomination of the Anna J. Scofield Memorial Auditorium/Harold E. Thorson Memorial Library to National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the Politics and Government category. It is significant in that it was the first building in Minnesota, and possibly in the nation, to be constructed with Public Works Administration funds. As the PWA intended, its construction provided jobs to a number of local contractors and laborers during a time of economic need. It also provided contractors, inspectors, administrators, etc. involved in future PWA projects with valuable experience.

Although interior spaces have been rearranged over the years, the building maintains its historic integrity. Its use as a public library and meeting space continues. Work on the building in recent years to increase efficiency and accommodate ADA regulations have been done with sensitivity to the historic nature of the building. Next to the Grant County Courthouse (NR 1985), the Scofield Memorial Auditorium is the most impressive building in Elbow Lake.

The auditorium is generally referred to locally as the 'Community Building' which is most fitting because it is a place where our community comes together for numerous events. Through the years the building has played host to meetings of all kinds, dances, proms, plays, an Army Reserve unit, an indoor shooting range, rummage sales, dinners and much more.

Finally, I believe our community is supportive of the nomination of the Scofield Auditorium to the National Register. A program celebrating the building's 75th anniversary in 2009 garnered much attention locally from everyone appreciative of the historic nature of the building.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia Benson".

Patricia Benson
Director
Grant County Historical Society
Elbow Lake, MN