

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JEC 8 1981

date entered 1/17 1982

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

1. Name Wilton Public and Gregg Free Library

historic THE GREGG FREE LIBRARY

and/or common THE WILTON PUBLIC & GREGG FREE LIBRARY (preferred)

2. Location

street & number Forest Street not for publication

city, town Wilton vicinity of Second congressional district

state New Hampshire code 33 county Hillsborough code 011

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: library

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Wilton

street & number

city, town Wilton vicinity of New Hampshire state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hillsborough County Registry of Deeds
Hillsborough County Courthouse (Volume #656, pg. #61)

street & number 19 Temple Street

city, town Nashua state New Hampshire

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title none has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Wilton Public & Gregg Free Library building in Wilton, New Hampshire was constructed from July, 1905 until October, 1907. Designed by the Boston architectural firm of McLean & Wright, the building is a superb example of the "Neo-Classic" style prevalent among monumental architecture between 1900 to 1920.

The building is symmetrical in plan and elevation, basically rectangular (45'x65') in configuration with a front projecting pedimented entrance pavilion. Even though the site pitches to the south rather steeply, a flat terrace was created upon which to place the building.

The structure is basically 2½ stories in height, comprised of a basement, main level and second level. One-half of the basement level is above grade, visually defined by a granite base of regular bond. The two upper levels are built of brick in a flemish bond pattern. The front entrance portico is flanked by four monumental limestone Corinthian columns, one pair at each side of the arched limestone entrance. Limestone pilasters frame all corners of the structure. The entire building is capped with a limestone entablature of rich detail. The roof cornice is entirely of copper, including the gabled pediment above the main entrance portico (see photo #1).

The front double hung windows (one to each side of the central pavillion) have rounded-headed windows with pointed arch tracery, and the windows are detailed with a limestone surround, including small pilasters, keystone, and a very ornate balustered limestone relief below each one. The second level wall surface is articulated with 2 rectangular windows with an arched and oval patterning. Curved bay projections on the east and west facades add visual interest, both inside and outside the building (see photo #2). Two brick chimneys flank the Northeast and Northwest corners of the roof. The slate hip roof is crowned with a copper clad skylight monitor which furnishes light to the leaded glass window of the dome in the circular Rotunda room.

A grand double staircase approached by semi-circular walks under huge maple trees provides the visitor with a fitting entrance to this classic building.

The main level floor is symmetrically divided into seven rooms: the Entrance Vestibule, Rotunda (delivery room), Adult Reading Room, Children's Reading Room, Stack Room, Reference Room and Librarian's Room/Stiar Hall.

The Entrance Vestibule (22'x10½') features an ornamental stair in quarter oak, and a tile mosaic floor.

The Rotunda (22'x22') is richly paneled in mahogany, including eight Corinthian columns with wood veneer (see photo #3). The floor is a circular pattern of tile mosaic (see photo #4), and the ornately plastered domed ceiling is highlighted by a round stained glass window, which receives its light from the roof monitor (see photo #5). The column capitals and plaster ceiling friezes are decorated in gilt.

The Adult Reading Room (24'x22') is also paneled with mahogany raised paneled wainscotting. The mahogany mantel surrounds handmade ceramic tiles, depicting a pastoral scene, on the brick fireplace front (see photo #6). The upper plaster frieze is stenciled. Both wall and ceiling stencils were painted over with oil base paint in 1975.

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CONTINUATION SHEET #1-DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The Children's Reading Room (24'x22') is paneled in curly birch including wainscoting, doors, mantel and built-in bookcases. The fireplace front is of handmade ceramic tile depicting an open cart scene (see photo #7). The plaster frieze is hand stencilled, and the entire ceiling is bordered in a hand stencilled pattern. The most prominent feature of this marvelous room is the intricate wall stencilling, divided into thirteen wall panels on a dark red background wall color, each panel containing an oil painting of African animal scenes (see photos #8 & #9).

The small Reference Room (16'x11') is entirely paneled and shelved in curly white oak.

The large Stack Room (28'x24½') is paneled and shelved in cypress.

The Librarian's Room (10'x9½') is paneled in sycamore.

The lower level (basement) is comprised of meeting rooms, a stack room and a mechanical room for the heating plant. The upper level (second floor) contains a large meeting room and historic rooms.

The renovations to this structure since its construction have been relatively minor and fortunately have not disturbed the elegant facade. Linoleum sheet flooring was laid over all hardwood floors on the main level in 1931. The building was lighted and wired for electricity in the 1920's. The small wood-frame "back porch" was added in 1963.

Because of the building's architectural significance as a neo-classic design, and its excellent condition both interior and exterior, we consider the Wilton Public & Gregg Free Library worthy of nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Prepared by:

Frank L. Brookshire, Architect
Wilton, New Hampshire

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1907

Builder/Architect McLean & Wright Architectural Firm of
Boston, Massachusetts

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Architecture: During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the donation of public library buildings became a characteristic form of philanthropy. While many such structures in New England, as elsewhere, were gifts of Andrew Carnegie, dozens of others in New Hampshire were given by local people to their native towns. Many of those built in New Hampshire in the 1890s were designed in a Romanesque style reminiscent of that used for library buildings by H. H. Richardson in some of the larger cities of the northeast. A number of others, built after World War I, were of a neo-Federal style perhaps inspired by the Boscawen, N.H., Public Library (1915), designed by Boston architect Guy Lowell. A few New Hampshire library buildings, most dating from the decade 1905–1915, were designed in an ambitious neoclassical style that reflected European prototypes and the influence of the Ecole des Beaux Arts more than American colonial precedents. Of these, the Gregg Free Library is one of the finest in New Hampshire and ranks with any of comparable size in New England.

Built at an undisclosed cost estimated at \$100,000, the Gregg Free Library was designed by the Boston architectural firm of William H. McLean and Albert H. Wright. McLean (1870–1942) was a specialist in public structures, designing other libraries as well as schools and academies.¹ One of the most unusual facets of the library's construction was the personal involvement of its donor, David Almus Gregg (1841–1928). Gregg, whose business career began in Wilton in 1859, became a prominent manufacturer of doors, blinds and sashes in nearby Nashua, N.H.; his firm was described as "the largest manufactory of the kind in the country."² Gregg's business placed him in an unique position to supply the choicest woodwork for the library. He put Henry L. Emerson, a skilled contractor and builder of Wilton, in charge of construction and supplied almost all of the interior woodwork of the building from his own shops. Gregg also selected the other craftsmen from among his business associates in New Hampshire and elsewhere, choosing the best architectural specialists from New England for the work. The cut granite of the foundation was supplied by Gen. C. W. Stevens of Nashua, N.H.; the brickwork and the setting of limestone trim were done by Johnson & Keith of Milford, N.H.; the limestone columns, pilasters, and other trim was furnished by Joseph F. Carew of Boston; the copper cornice and slate roof were installed by Bailey & Merryman of Boston, Mass.; the plastering was done by Garney Brothers of West Newton, Mass.; the mosaic floor of the delivery room was laid by Paul Vogt of Everett, Mass.; the cornice work and tiling were executed by George W. Crowley of Boston; the painting was superintended by H. V. Griswold of Nashua, N.H.; and the interior decorating was the work of Mortenan & Holdenan of Boston. The result was a structure which, though intended for local uses, was a showpiece of New England design and constructive skills.

Social-Humanitarian: David A. Gregg showed his concern for the welfare of the people of Wilton, then a small town of some 1,700 people, when he donated the Free Library with these sentiments:

9. Major Bibliographical References

Wilton Town History, Published by Wilton Historical Society, compiled and edited by Hamilton S. Putnam, printed by Dabinet Press, Milford, New Hampshire, 1939.
 Milford Cabinet and Wilton Journal, Milford, New Hampshire, Number 13, Volume 106, September 24, 1908.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Milford, NH

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	9	2	7	6	1	9	2	4	7	4	7	0	5	5
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing							

C

Zone		Easting				Northing							

D

Zone		Easting				Northing							

E

Zone		Easting				Northing							

F

Zone		Easting				Northing							

G

Zone		Easting				Northing							

H

Zone		Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Tax sheet J, parcel # 68.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Harland Savage, Jr.

organization The Wilton Public & Gregg Free Library Trustees date June 10, 1981

street & number RFD #1 telephone (603) 654-9833

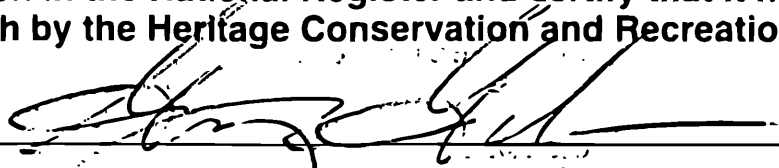
city or town Wilton state New Hampshire 03086

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

Commissioner, Department of Resources & Economic Development
 title NH State Historic Preservation Officer date December 2, 1981

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

 date 1/11/82
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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CONTINUATION SHEET #2-SIGNIFICANCE ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Before I built the library building, I had a little money I wanted to invest, and having had a varied experience in making investments, I was anxious to place this money where it would not be lost; where the principal would be safe and the interest good and sure. In casting about in my mind for an opportunity of this kind, it occurred to me that a library building for the town of Wilton would be as safe a place as I needed to look for; that the principal would be safe and the interest good to all those who cared to accept it.³

In 1912, showing his continuing concern for the town and its library, Gregg gave the community an endowment of \$25,000, to be maintained and managed by a board of trustees. Through this fund, the town has been able to maintain the building virtually in its original form and to provide reading material of increasing scope and quantity. Gregg's gift also served the interests of local history through the dedication of the building's second story as a meeting place and collections room for the Wilton Historical Society. The provision of a structure of high architectural quality and ample size for library and historical purposes was the act of a single donor, but it was also characteristic of the type of private philanthropy that saw the construction of similar buildings throughout New Hampshire and the rest of New England at the same period.

Notes:

¹Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970, p. 413.)

²The Granite Monthly LX (1928), p. 186; Ezra S. Stearns, ed., Genealogical and Family History of the State of New Hampshire, 4 vols (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1908), I, pp. 399-400.

³Excerpt from library dedication speech, September 22, 1908.