

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received NOV 25 1983

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Davis Avenue Branch, of the Mobile Public Library, Government Documents

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 564 Davis Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Mobile N/A vicinity of

state Ala. code 01 county Mobile code 097

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 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 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	<u>N/A</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<u>N/A</u> being considered	<input 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: <u>Civic</u>

4. Owner of Property

name City of Mobile, Public Library

street & number 701 Government Street, Main Library

city, town Mobile N/A vicinity of state Ala., 36602

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Mobile County Court House, Probate Court Records Division

street & number 109 Government Street

city, town Mobile state Ala., 36601

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1970 - present federal state county local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state AL

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" 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

In 1930 when George B. Rogers planned the first branch of the Mobile Public Library, he repeated the classic spirit and general massing of his design for the main library that he had designed in 1928, but on a smaller scale. The building is a rectangular block with projecting end pavilions. The surfaces are treated with a chaste simplicity without the decorative pilasters used on the main branch. The only strong accents are the raking cornice of the door pediment and the thin shadow line cast by the slightly projecting cornice molding. Any potential austerity is avoided by the slightly recessed panels in which the casement windows are centered. The strong horizontal movement is subtly controlled and anchored by the triangular shape of the door pediment, an accent that also gives vitality and spirit to an otherwise repetitive design set up on a rectangular module.

The building is one story in height with the roof hidden by a low parapet wall. The walls are stuccoed brick and the interior walls are plaster. It is built on a concrete slab that covers a basement extending under the central room. The basement has a head clearance of 8 feet. The main entrance has a two leaf door with glass windows and a wide transom. The transom has been partially hidden by a metal canopy added to protect the entrance from the driving rain. The facade windows are steel casement of three sashes the upper two having 4 lights (2/2) and the lower 8 lights (2 rows of 4). The windows on the side elevation are square, 4 light, and placed above the interior bookcases in a ribbon row of 5 openings. There are two solid doors on the west side, one leading into the addition at the rear, the other into the basement.

In 1961 Harry Inge Johnston, architect, designed an addition which was compatible with the Rogers building. It is a simple rectangular room extending the width of the Rogers building and is 23'8" deep with a ceiling height of 11' 2". To accommodate this addition, a portion of the rear wall of the main roof was removed leaving an open space into the new room. The wall support was replaced by steel joists. The addition is stuccoed brick on concrete slab over a 5" gravel fill with a moisture resistant barrier. The exterior continues the same surface effect as the original, however, the height of the wall extends only to the cornice line and does not continue the parapet. Ribbon windows of 1/1 lights along the back wall are placed 8 feet above the interior bookcases and maintain the same line as the windows on the original portion of the building. A service wing 11 ft. x 17 ft. 4 in. has been added at the northeast side to house mechanical equipment.

The interior of the 1930 Rogers portion has three rooms, the central one 36'8" x 22'6" with small alcove-like side rooms each 13'4" x 24'2". The entrance to each of these side rooms is enframed by a wide flattened archway resting on square paneled pilasters which continue the design of the paneled wainscoting which extends across the front of the main room. All three sides of the alcoves are lined with oak bookcases, built in at the time of construction. Bookcases are now painted the same color as the wall and extend 8 feet in height above a marble baseboard. This baseboard consists of slabs of beige stone 10 inches high by 1 inch thick. This same marble baseboard continues around the front wall under the wainscoting. The original floor was cork but it has been covered with the same asbestos vinyl tiling that is used in the 1961 addition. The interior of the Johnston addition is perfectly plain with acoustical tile ceilings and bookcases along the rear wall as well as throughout the room.

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 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 1930 **Builder/Architect** George B. Rogers

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Architecture:

The Davis Avenue Branch-Mobile Public Library is an excellent example of the Neo-Classic style of George B. Rogers. It repeats the same massing and general design employed by Rogers in the Main Library although it is done on a smaller scale and without the pilastered bays. Even though the building is small, it has been given a monumental effect through the harmonious elements of its design, by the formal balance and beauty of its proportions--all achieved without the use of standard classic moldings and details. The centrally placed entrance with its triangular pediment breaks the simplicity of the stuccoed wall surfaces while the projecting end pavilions prevent the horizontal mass from becoming monotonous. The three part interior plan is clearly reflected on the exterior. Overall the building style is a result of the early 20th century revival of classic influence that spread across the United States as a result of the Chicago World's Fair.

History:

The Davis Avenue Branch was constructed specifically to serve the needs of the black community. It was constructed at a cost of \$26,000 and the same architect used to design the Main Branch employed to do the work. The building was expensively done with built-in bookcases and paneled wainscoting. The aid of the black population was engaged to collect books and money to acquire books. The construction of this small scale version of the public library is a reflection of the social climate of the day when blacks were prevented from participating fully in educational endeavors and were provided with separate educational facilities.

Integrity:

The 1930 Rogers building remains unaltered except for the portion of rear wall that was removed when the rear addition was constructed. Original bookcases, marble baseboard, wainscoting, windows and door framings are intact. An easily removable metal canopy has been added in front of the entrance door in order to prevent rain from leaking under the front door. The 1961 addition was designed with careful consideration for the original building. The single large room is the width of the original building and about 23 feet deep. While it continues on the exterior the same stuccoed wall surface, it is identifiable from the original portion of the building since it does not continue the parapet of the Rogers building. The height and ribbon arrangement of the windows in the front portion has been continued along the new rear wall. The only other addition to the building has been a ramp at the right side of the front court built in accordance with current handicapped access regulations.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Original plans by George B. Rogers, located in Local History Division, Public Library.
2 books of specifications
Plans of the addition by Harry Inge Johnston, 10 sheets; Local History Division, Public Library
Herndon Smith, History of the Mobile Public Library, Mobile Public Library files.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Mobile

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	6	3	9	9	1	9	0	3	3	9	6	1	1	0
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 110' x 112', being the front portion of lot #34 owned by the city that is located on the northeast corner of Davis and Congress Streets. Said lot being in the middle of the block, facing on Davis Avenue, bordered on all side by property owned by the city.

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Barrett Gould, architectural historian/ Anne S. Bantens, Arch. Hist.

organization Mobile Historic Development Commission date April 29, 1983

street & number P.O. Box 1827 telephone (205) 438-7133

city or town Mobile state Ala., 36633

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 National Park Service

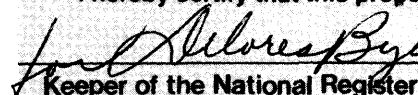
State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 11/21/83

For NPS use only

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


Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register date 12/22/83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

Criteria for Assessment:

The Davis Avenue Branch--Mobile Public Library is a good example of a classic revival building done by a local architect of note. The building was modeled on the main branch of the library but done on a smaller scale.

Prominent Mobile citizens who served on the library board responded to a local need for a library that would exclusively serve the needs of the black population. The architect George B. Rogers was employed to design the building. Attention was paid to interior details and even landscaping was considered by the Library Board. The minutes of the board also address questions concerning black involvement in acquiring books for the library and in raising money for the acquisition of books.

Typical of George B. Rogers' designs of the period, the building is interesting both for its relationship to the main library and to other Rogers' designs. It was Rogers who locally strongly influenced the trend away from the Victorian to the Neo-Classic.

The idea of a separate library to service the black population is a reminder of the time when segregation was a fact of life in the U. S. The changing of the branch library to a division which would house government documents coincided with the period when court-ordered desegregation was taking place in the public schools.