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United States Department of Interior
National Park Service

MAR 01 1993

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Medford Free Public Library

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 104 East Perkins Street N/A not for publication

city or town Medford N/A vicinity

state Wisconsin code WI county Taylor code 119 zip code 53949

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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 2/22/93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Officer-WI
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of Federal agency and bureau
Medford Free Public Library Taylor County, Wisconsin
Name of Property County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

Entered in this
National Register

I hereby certify that the property is:
 entered in the National Register. [Signature] 4/1/93 See
continuation sheet. Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

determined eligible for the National Register. _____

See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register. _____

See continuation sheet.
 removed from the National Register. _____

other, (explain:) _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include listed resources within the count)	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	1	
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		
		1	0
			Total

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

Public Library Facilities of Wisconsin

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
EDUCATION/library	EDUCATION/library
SOCIAL/meeting hall	

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
PRAIRIE SCHOOL	foundation CONCRETE
	walls BRICK
	roof ASPHALT
	other STUCCO
	CERAMIC TILE

Narrative Description

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

Medford Free Public Library
Name of Property

Taylor, Wisconsin
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the
criteria qualifying the property for the
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 of age achieved
significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from
instructions)

- ARCHITECTURE
- EDUCATION
- SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

- 1916
- 1916-43
- 1916-27

Significant Dates

- 1916⁶

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is
marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Liebert, Hans T.⁷

⁶ "To Dedicate Library," Taylor County Star-News 21 February
1917.

⁷ "To Dedicate Library."

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Name of Property

Taylor, Wisconsin
County and State

Previous Documentation on File (NPS):

Primary location of additional data:

- 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 # _____

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State Agency
 - Federal Agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository:
Medford Free Public Library

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>1/5</u>	<u>7/0/9/0/3/0</u>	<u>5/0/0/1/0/4/0</u>	3	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>
	Zone Easting	Northing			Zone Easting	Northing	
2	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	4	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>
	Zone Easting	Northing			Zone Easting	Northing	

___ see continuation sheet

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Amy Alexandra Ross
organization ABACUS Historical Consulting date December 1, 1992
street & number 932 Spaight Street, #2 telephone 255-0634
city or town Madison state Wisconsin zip code 53703

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

- NPS Form 10-900-a (Rev. 8-86)
- Wisconsin Word Processing Format (Approved 1/92)

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Medford, Taylor County, WI

Introduction

The Medford Free Public Library, constructed in 1916, is located in a mixed use area at the terminus of this city's main artery, Main Street. A site on the edge of the downtown district was considered a desirable location by twentieth century library planners. Train tracks lie 100 feet from the building's west end, and an industrial area stands beyond the railway. The setting also includes commercial structures to the north, and residential buildings to the east. The library stands in the center of an amply landscaped lot, situated much like its private dwelling neighbors and in keeping with the image of open, public-use facilities. Landscape features include: a small tree and a couple of shrubs at the front of the library; a well-kept lawn and flower beds; and several large trees toward the rear of the lot. The physical appearance of both the setting and the structure closely resembles the original condition.

Exterior Description

The Medford Free Public Library is a free-standing rectangular block that is approximately 50 feet long x 30 feet wide. Its Prairie School style was widely accepted in the early twentieth century for small-scale library facilities of a more informal design. The one-story library atop a high, raised basement is set into a hillside that slopes down toward the rear of the building. At the front of the building is a recently laid expanse of concrete, including the sidewalk along Perkins Street and the approach to the library. The foundation of the building is concrete. The walls are brick, which is covered with concrete at the basement level on the west and rear facades, and exposed on the main level. Some stone was used in the walls at the southeast corner of the building and the lower rear facade, but it is covered with concrete on the exterior. The attic and underside of the eaves are stuccoed. The low, hipped roof is now asphalt. It is unknown when the original shingle roof was replaced.

The library features a large amount of wall area devoted to fenestration, particularly on the front facade with two large window groupings to either side of the main entrance. The transom windows on the frieze level of the front and side facades are original. However, new panes were installed in all the original openings on the rear facade, and in

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the lower windows of the front facade in April 1982.¹ Modern storm windows covered all the windows except for the large, central window grouping on the rear facade, which is without storms. The basement windows have their original panes and sashes, which tilt open at the bottom. However, modern storms now cover these openings and the windows have remained shut for years.

The main facade is symmetrical with a prominent front stoop. From the front, the library appears as one-story on a raised basement. Only the tops of the basement windows are visible. The central stairs are concrete and are flanked by brick posts with globe-shaped lamps atop, set in a cast-iron framework. There are pale green ceramic tiles set into the brick posts. The left-hand post and the wall that extends back from this post exhibit some poorly-executed repointing. The modern front door, glass with a steel surround, is in the center of the facade. The original decorative door surround includes the inscription "PUBLIC LIBRARY" above the entrance, and narrow panels of pale green tile that flank the doorway.

The middle section of the front facade is textured brown brick, some of which have an orange, green or yellow tint. Decorative features in the brick middle section include four geometric motifs, formed with brick and ceramic tile. There is a large window grouping to either side of the entrance, each group consisting of a large central window flanked by tall, narrow windows with a ribbon window above at transom level. There is also a transom window above the entrance. There is a concrete beltcourse that runs under the transom windows on each of the building's facades. This beltcourse is painted brown, except for on the rear facade where it is unpainted. The stuccoed frieze panel and underside of the eaves are painted pale yellow. Within the stuccoed frieze, there are four rectangular decorative panels formed by header bricks and corner tiles outlining a stucco center panel. An unpainted aluminum gutter, which is not original, runs along the entire roofline.

¹ Public Library Questionnaire, received 22 June 1984, Historic Preservation Division-State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

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The west facade of the library faces the train tracks and the industrial area of Medford. The basement wall is exposed with the hillside dropping alongside the building. A concrete sidewalk curves down the hill to the basement door. This opening used to be a large window but has been converted into a door, probably to make the basement handicapped accessible. The door is steel, and is surrounded by new bricks that fill in the former window opening.² These bricks do not match the rest of the bricks used on the facade, being more orange in color and lacking texture. The base of the building is covered with concrete. Decorative features include a large rectangle of projecting soldier bricks with pale green ceramic tiles at its corners which fills the majority of the wall surface, and tile and brick geometric motifs to each side of this. At the frieze level, a group of four openings create a "ribbon window" effect. Flanking the windows are rectangular decorative panels with bricks and tiles outlining a stucco center.

The building appears as a two-story structure on its south side also, and has a concrete base, brick middle section and stucco frieze. This facade is largely symmetrical and has a large, tripartite window group between the two exterior chimneys flanked by tall, narrow windows. Five openings are grouped above these main story windows to form a "ribbon window" at frieze level, and five basement openings are arranged below in the concrete base. All the lights on this facade are new, though installed in the original openings. Ornamental details are absent from the back facade. There is a wood door, with a large light in the upper part, at the west end of this facade that is no longer used. The stairs up to it have been removed. The brick chimneys rise high above the roof and have two rings of concrete around their upper part forming a stylized chimney cap. The chimneys are also non-functional. Aluminum drainpipes run from the gutter at the roofline down the building at each end of this facade. The air-conditioning unit sits on the ground at the back of the building.

The basement is largely below ground on the east facade with only the top of the small, centralized basement window visible. The middle

² This alteration was made at least ten years ago, but the exact date is unknown; Shirley Lemke, librarian, personal interview, 22 November 1992.

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section and attic level are treated similarly to the west facade with identical window arrangement and ornament. There is a large shrub in front of the northeast corner of the building.

Interior Description

The main level of the library is a large rectangular space interrupted only by the small, enclosed entrance vestibule located in the center of the long front wall of the building. The double glass and wood inner doors at the back of the vestibule are original. The room has a high ceiling, with fluorescent light fixtures and two metal fans hanging from it. The floor was originally cork, but is now covered with a new brown carpet.³ The walls are plaster, as was the original ceiling before it was covered with small, square particle board tiles. The dark-stained wood moldings surrounding the windows are original, but the thin wood molding around the top of the wall is not. The original attic-level windows, on all walls except the rear, include wood mullions that create a geometric pattern.

The first-story space is crowded with shelving and furniture. Originally the book collection was housed in wall shelves around the perimeter of the interior. The high ribbon windows on the end walls allowed for taller shelving along these walls. Now there are wood shelves up against all the walls, four free-standing steel stacks in the eastern half of the room, and numerous rotating metal shelves around the room that hold paperback novels. In the western half of the room there are four small wood tables used by patrons and staff as work space. The large check-out desk faces the entrance and stands in front of the centralized window grouping on the back wall. While the location of the librarian's desk is original, it is a modern piece of furniture. The pair of pedestal plant stands that stand in front of the large window to the west of the entrance are the only original furnishings.

³ A linoleum floor was laid in January 1958; Minutes of the Library Board, 1903-1979, collection of the Medford Free Public Library. The present carpeting is quite new but the date of its installation is not known; Lemke.

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The ducts of the modern heating system are located below the two long windows on either side of the back wall of the reading room. These vents are boxed in and covered by a metal grille. Originally the heat flowed through vents located high up on the wall to either side of the central back window. These vents have since been converted to serve as air-conditioning ducts.

At the southwest corner of the reading room, there is a stairway that leads down to the basement. A portrait of Andrew Carnegie, donated to the library by the Carnegie Foundation in 1935, is located at the head of the stairs. The top of the staircase is bordered by an original wood railing. The stairs have a landing midway down where there is a door. This was originally the back entrance, but is no longer operable as the outside stairs have been removed. The stairway turns the corner at this landing. At the bottom of the stairs, there is another original railing with two wood posts with a rail and balusters between. A modern wood railing, attached to the wall, follows the stairs down. The stairs are carpeted.

The high, raised basement contains one large room, formerly a meeting hall and now the children's library, and several small rooms. A hallway runs the length of the building, extending east from the foot of the stairs.

A doorway to the left off the hall leads into the children's library. This former meeting room has been divided into two sections with a low partition wall. The front part is used as the children's library and the back section for storage. This alteration was completed in November 1979.⁴ This room has shelving along each of its walls. The crowded storage area has a concrete floor, while the rest of the room has been carpeted. The room has a dropped ceiling with large particle board tiles interspersed with plastic sheets shielding fluorescent bulbs. This ceiling, at a lower height than the original, obscures the top half of the basement windows but slants back toward these openings so that they remain operable.

⁴ Public Library Questionnaire.

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There is a door in the north wall of the children's library that leads into the small storage space under the front stoop. This small room has a concrete floor, and plaster walls that exhibit some water damage. This is the only place in the basement where water seeps through the walls. The basement level entrance is in the west wall of the children's room. It is unknown when this door was cut, but it is not original. The door is steel, and contains a small, vertical window.

There are two bathrooms in the basement, located off the hallway to the right. The narrow wood doors to the restrooms are original. Each room has a small window, with original sashes and new panes, located at the top of the south wall. The fixtures are modern. The floors are concrete, and have been painted.

At the end of the hall is the furnace room. The wood door to this room is original. The four walls are primarily exposed brick, with some stone used in the southeast corner of the room. There is a concrete patch in the south wall, probably made when the heating system was changed. Of the three windows in this room, only the one at the east end has a pane in it. The middle window is enclosed with wood, and the other has been converted into a vent for the furnace. The original furnace burned wood, a later one used coal, and the present furnace is fueled by oil.⁵

Integrity

The library has remained in continual use as an educational and cultural center since its construction in 1916. The major physical characteristics which relate to its property type, a free-standing public library facility, are unchanged. The alterations to the interior do not significantly detract from its integrity.

⁵ Minutes of the Library Board.

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Significance

The Medford Free Public Library is locally significant in the context of the Public Library Development in Wisconsin Multiple Property Form as an example of the Free-standing Public Library Facility property type. The library meets the registration requirements for the property type under Criterion A in the areas of Education and Social History. The building has continually served as an important cultural and educational center in its community. In the area of Education, the period of significance is 1916, the date of construction, through 1943, fifty years ago. The last documented activity of a local social group related to the library was in 1927. Thus, the period of significance in the area of Social History is 1916-1927. The library is also significant under Criterion C as a fine example of Prairie School architecture, with the period of significance and significant date being the time of its construction.

Historical Background

The first permanent settler of what became the city of Medford was A. E. Harder, who established a homestead in December 1872 on the north half of the NE 1/4 of section 34, township 31 north, range 1 east. Additional settlers came in 1873, and a depot for the Wisconsin Central Railroad Company was built in Medford in that year. Many of the original promoters of the Wisconsin Central railway were natives of Massachusetts, and borrowed the name "Medford" from that state. Medford officially became a town in 1874. Taylor County was organized for judicial purposes in 1875. By a provision of the act creating this county, the Village of Medford was established as the county seat. Early industry in this town revolved around logging. Several sawmill companies were soon established in Medford, and operated there until 1926.⁸

⁸ Historical Album: Medford Area, 1874-1974 Centennial
(Medford, Wisc.: n.p., 1974) 2-4.

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Social History

The Carnegie building, which replaced a community reading room housed in the Temperance Hall, has served as the library for the community since its construction in 1916. Events and activities sponsored by three local women's groups revolving around this local library make the building particularly important in the area of Social History.

The alliance of women's clubs in the interest of founding libraries was a common occurrence at the turn of the century. According to David L. Macleod, author of Carnegie Libraries in Wisconsin, these women were largely motivated by their hope of luring men away from the saloons (27). The Medford Women's Club was formed in 1900. Article I of this club's constitution stated their objectives as two-fold, being both "social and educational."⁹ In 1902, the Medford Women's Club joined with the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) to organize a center to foster reading and the dispensation of information in their community. The WCTU erected a building on Wheelan Avenue, part of which was to be used for a free public library.¹⁰ The Women's Club contributed \$100 toward the endeavor. This library operated in these quarters in the WCTU's Temperance Hall for the next fifteen years.

The first library board met in January 1903, and decided to maintain the library by soliciting public funds. This campaign for funds resulted in the collection of \$75 for outfitting the room in the Temperance Hall, and \$50 for the purchase of books. Benefit talent shows and Opera Hall events were thrown by social groups to raise additional funds.

⁹ Scrapbook of the Medford Women's Club, 1901-1909, collection of the Medford Free Public Library.

¹⁰ "To Dedicate Library".

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The library officially opened on February 23, 1903 with Joanna Hislop hired as the first librarian. Medford had 1,758 residents at the time, and the library issued 549 "borrower's cards."¹¹ In 1909, the library moved into a larger room in the Temperance Hall. The WCTU donated \$60 to outfit the new space.¹² Four years later, that space was considered inadequate. In 1913, the library board decided to apply to the Carnegie Foundation for a grant to construct a library building.

Women's clubs played an important role in the completion of the Carnegie library. In the fall of 1915, the Medford Woman's Alliance was organized to assist in maintaining the new library. In 1916, the Alliance helped furnish this public library, donating a new mahogany desk, shades and plant stands.¹³ The next year, they "donated proceeds of a musical and other funds amounting to \$70.00 to the public library."¹⁴

The new building was occupied in late April of 1916. At this time, Dr. Lesage, President of the Library Board, expressed his thanks to the WCTU in the local newspaper. The article read: "For this occasion it is a pleasure and a duty to express to the WCTU the thanks and acknowledgement of the board for all the good the ladies have done for the benefit of this educational institution." He credited this group for their efforts to establish a public library in 1903, and for maintaining the reading room for many years.¹⁵

¹¹ Max Kirby (pseudonym), "A Brief History of the Medford Public Library: Part I: Medford establishes a new library in 1902," Star News 29 January 1992: n. pag.

¹² Minutes of the Library Board, 15 October 1909.

¹³ "To Dedicate Library;" Year Book of the Wisconsin Federation of Women's Clubs (Milwaukee: Advocate Publishing Co., 1916) 148.

¹⁴ Year Book of the Wisconsin Federation of Women's Clubs (Milwaukee: Advocate Publishing Co., 1917) 136.

¹⁵ Article in Taylor County Star-News, 3 May 1916.

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Donations from the Woman's Alliance continued throughout the 1920s as recorded in the Minutes of the Library Board. These gifts ranged in size from about \$5 to more than \$60. In October 1925, the library board voted to open the library two evenings a month for Woman's Alliance meetings. The last record of a contribution by this club to the library was on February 14, 1927 when a meeting was held at the library and \$50 was drawn from the Woman's Alliance fund to purchase books for the public library.¹⁶

Education

The city of Medford's proposal to continue their annual appropriation of \$600 to the public library if \$6000 would be given for the proposed new building was accepted by the Carnegie Foundation in May of 1913. A library board was subsequently appointed, and assigned the task of selecting a site. The site on Perkins Street was soon selected, but the deed was not secured until 1915 as the property was being replatted. In the meantime, the board had made arrangements with architect Hans T. Liebert to make plans for the building. Changes were made to the original plans in order for the contracting estimates to fall within the limits of the appropriation. H. A. Giles bid of \$5261 was subsequently accepted, and the building was completed in January 1916.¹⁷

The present Carnegie library had its grand opening in 1917 with the dedication ceremony held on February 22, Washington's Birthday. Initially all the books were shelved along the walls of the rectangular first floor room. Though this system could accommodate the original collection of 2,221 volumes, by 1936 the collection had expanded to 5,637 books and remodeling was necessary to handle the expanded inventory. In the early years of the library, new book acquisitions were regularly

¹⁶ Minutes of the Library Board.

¹⁷ "To Dedicate Library."

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reported on the first page of the local newspaper, the Taylor County Star-News. More and more shelving units were added as the collection continued to grow. In 1984, the number of items in the library was estimated at 21,900, including books, records, cassettes, and a few videotapes.¹⁸

In 1979, the downstairs meeting room was converted into a children's library in an attempt to relieve the main reading room's overcrowding. This library facility has continually been a tool for the cultural and educational development of the citizens of Medford. The community's dedication to education is reflected in their continual efforts to accommodate a larger collection. However, limited space is still a problem, and a new library or an addition to the historic building is currently being debated.

Hans T. Liebert

Constructed in 1916 with Carnegie funds, the Medford Free Public Library by Wausau architect Hans T. Liebert exemplifies Prairie School design. In 1893, Liebert first appeared in the Milwaukee City Directory with no occupation listed. Three years later, he was listed as a draftsman. In 1900, he was called an architect. However, Liebert did not appear again in this city's directory.¹⁹ In the 1919-20 Wisconsin State Gazetteer, H. T. Liebert was listed as having both a Wausau and Milwaukee office.

Liebert practiced architecture in Wausau from 1914 to 1920 before moving to Milwaukee and opening an office with Eugene Liebert (relation unknown). An ad in the Wausau City Directory (n.d.) advertised Liebert's execution of public and private structures that represented a total expenditure of \$6,000,000. His business was said to extend to three states: Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio. He designed two known structures in Wausau: the astylistic St. Mary's School (1914; now Cabrini Middle School), and the Mediterranean Revival house at 923 Fulton Street (1927;

¹⁸ Public Library Questionnaire.

¹⁹ Carlen Hatala, telephone interview, 18 November 1992.

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demolished). His work in Milwaukee has not been identified.²⁰ One notable design by Liebert is another library, the Finney Public Library in Clintonville, which was also built in 1916. Like the Medford Free Public Library, the Clintonville library is a Prairie School design constructed with Carnegie funds.

Architecture

Prairie School architecture is concentrated in the upper Midwest. In Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin: Volume 2, the style is described: "Horizontalness was the essence of Prairie School design, emphasized by a low, long hipped or gable roof, windows banded in horizontal ribbons, and the use of an emphatic belt course or shelf roof between stories." Wood, brick and stucco are the primary materials used. Leaded-glass windows, interior furnishings and exterior details employed abstract, angular patterning. The Prairie School shared a respect for simplicity and expression of materials in design with the proponents of the American Arts and Crafts movement.

Early advocates of the Prairie style were George Elmslie, who later coupled with William Purcell, and George W. Maher. Frank Lloyd Wright's Oak Park studio was the home to many Prairie School designers in the early twentieth century, including: Walter Burley Griffin, Marion Mahony and William Drummond. Wright's contribution to the formation of this style also occurred in these years as illustrated in his architecture of this period, which includes: the Ward Willits in Highland Park, Illinois (1902); the Hillside Home School in Spring Green, Wisconsin (1902); and the Gilmore House in Madison, Wisconsin (1908). Each of these Prairie School architects owed a debt to Louis Sullivan, the great Chicago skyscraper designer and early teacher of both Wright and Elmslie.

²⁰ Mary L. Malaguti et al., Final Report: Intensive Historic Survey: City of Wausau, Wisconsin (City of Wausau and the Historic Preservation Division-State Historical Society of Wisconsin, May 1984) 86.

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Two native Wisconsin architects established an office in Madison in 1896 after having worked in Sullivan's office. Louis W. Claude and Edward F. Starck's firm designed over 40 libraries in the Midwest, including many in the Prairie School manner. The Jefferson Public Library (NRHP 1980) is a distinguished example of a Carnegie-financed Prairie School library by this firm (Education 5-4). Architecture designed in the Prairie style was built between the years 1895 and 1925.²¹

The horizontality of the Medford Free Public Library is emphasized by the wide overhang of its low hipped roof, its beltcourse and the ribbon windows. Brick and stucco are the primary materials in this building as is typical with this style. The abstract, geometric patterning in the frieze windows and the brick and tile decorative motifs is also characteristic of the Prairie School.

Registration Requirements

The Medford Free Public Library meets the registration requirements for Free-standing Library Facilities specified in the Multiple Property Form as follows:

- a) Criterion A: The Medford Free Public Library served a significant role in the local community as an educational and cultural center, and social focal point.
- b) Criterion C: The library, by Wisconsin architect Hans T. Liebert, is a fine example of Prairie School design.
- c) Integrity: The library has remained in continual use since its construction in 1916, and its major physical characteristics are largely unchanged.

²¹ Barbara Wyatt, ed., Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin: Volume 2 (State Historical Society-Historic Preservation Division, June 1986) Architecture 2-21 and 22, "Prairie School (1895-1925)."

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Section 8 Page 8 Medford Free Public Library
Medford, Taylor County, WI

Summary

The Medford Free Public Library is an intact example of the products of Andrew Carnegie's early twentieth century campaign to provide communities with this civic service. The library represents this community's commitment to serving the literary and research needs of its citizens. Like most libraries, it originally served as both an educational institution and community center.

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Section photos Page Medford Free Public Library
Medford, Taylor County, WI

Photographs

Photo 1 of 5

1. Medford Free Public Library (items 1-5 same for all photos).
2. Taylor County, Wisconsin.
3. Jim Draeger.
4. September 1992.
5. Negative at WI Historical Society.
6. view looking south.

Photo 2 of 5

6. view looking east.

Photo 3 of 5

6. view looking northeast.

Photo 4 of 5

6. view looking west.

Photo 5 of 5

6. view looking south, detail of entrance.

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**National Register of Historic Places
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Section 9 Page 1 Medford Free Public Library
Medford, Taylor County, WI

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Section 9 Page 2 Medford Free Public Library
Medford, Taylor County, WI

Minutes of the Library Board, 1903-1979. Collection of the Medford Free Public Library.

Public Library Questionnaire, received 22 June 1984. Historic Preservation Division-State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Scrapbook of the Medford Women's Club, 1901-1909. Collection of the Medford Free Public Library.

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Section 10 Page 1

Medford Free Public Library
Medford, Taylor County, WI

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 1 of Perkin's Second Addition to the city of Medford, in Section 34 of Township 31 North, Range 1 East.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the city lot that has historically been associated with this library.

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Section owner Page ____ Medford Free Public Library
Medford, Taylor County, WI

Property: Medford Free Public Library
Owner: City of Medford