

2835

RECEIVED

NOV 14 1988

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Memorial Library
other names/site number Etta C. Ross Memorial Library

2. Location

street & number Sixth St. and Ramsey Ave. not for publication N/A
city, town Blue Earth vicinity N/A
state Minnesota code MN county Faribault code 043 zip code 56013

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
			Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Nina M. Archabal 11/4/88
Signature of certifying official Nina M. Archabal Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Entered in the National Register 12/20/88
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/Library

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/
Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

STONE

roof ASPHALT

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Etta C. Ross Memorial Library is a one-story, buff-toned, pressed brick building raised one-half story above grade, located at the corner of Sixth St. and Ramsey Ave. in Blue Earth, MN. Erected in 1904, the 24' x 48' Neo-Classical Revival style building rests on a low concrete foundation, is trimmed with stone and terra cotta, and has a symmetrical plan with a projecting central entrance.

The main floor is raised about six feet above grade, allowing for windows to provide ample light to the basement rooms. Ten concrete steps lead up to the Classical entrance which features two glass doors flanked by pilasters and an arched, multi-light transom set in a stone surround with keystone. Two coupled Ionic columns trimmed with terra cotta at the capitals are set on large brick bases which support a pediment with a slightly-raking cornice, bulls-eye, and "MEMORIAL LIBRARY" in terra cotta relief along the architrave. Fenestration is identical with each side of the entry pierced by two 1/1 double hung sash on the lower story, a series of fixed and double hung lights on the main floor, above which are small, narrow fixed windows with decorative clathri. A concrete belt course surrounds the front and sidewalls of the building directly above the foundation.

The west elevation features two 1/1 double hung windows at grade level and on the main floor, with two fixed lights below the eave. A bulls-eye is centered within the pediment.

Fenestration of the east wall is the same as the west but includes a door and upper floor window on the side of a 1938 brick addition attached to the south-east corner of the library. This full height addition extends across about two-thirds of the building's length and features window openings essentially identical to the original structure. The pediment is covered with wood siding.

The pitch of the original gable roof was slightly modified after 1980 to improve water drainage, but it is consistent with the building's historic appearance.

A 10' x 10' alcove provides access inside the library which has four polished oak columns with Corinthian capitals around a rotunda featuring a stained glass skylight (roof alterations obscure light for this opening). To the right side was the 19' x 22' main reading space with a 14½' ceiling, and a

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Memorial Library, Blue Earth, Faribault Co., MN

Section number 7 Page 1

fireplace along the south wall. The 19' x 22' children's reading room was located on the opposite side, while the 1938 addition served as the shelving area for books. A club room for literary groups, storage space, a furnace, and rest rooms occupied the basement. Wall murals in the main reading room suffered water damage and were painted or covered with paneling in 1946. Fluorescent lights were installed in ca. 1964.

The building was last used as a library in 1985. Despite the 1980 alterations to the roof line which resulted in the removal of acroteria and the replacement of some of the original fenestration with aluminum sash on the west, east and north sides, the building retains a strong sense of its historic presence and is in good condition. It is presently being converted to use as a museum by the Faribault County Historical Society.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1904-1938

Significant Dates

1904

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Church, A.C., architect

Lippert, Fred, builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Etta C. Ross Memorial Library is historically significant within the context Agricultural Development and Railroad Construction for its representation of the generosity of local philanthropist, W.E.C. Ross, who provided moral and financial support toward establishing a permanent library facility in Blue Earth. Erection of the Memorial Library, initially intended to be financed through a grant from the Carnegie Foundation's library fund, indicated widespread community support for the building, as well as local pride and concern for public enlightenment. The Ross Library is also architecturally significant as a good example of the Classical Revival style adapted to a relatively simple and modestly-scaled building.

Blue Earth's first public library originated in the early 1870s when about 1500 books were kept in a commercial business for use by local residents. It was supported by donations, membership fees, fines, and fundraisers sponsored by the Sorosis Minervae Literary Club. In 1894 the library was moved to the high school where the public could draw books each Saturday afternoon. Three years later Mrs. F.A. Ross initiated a movement to establish a permanent library building; a room within the city hall was subsequently furnished for use as a community library.

In 1902 Blue Earth voters overwhelmingly favored a proposal to fund and maintain a public library building, and at a special election nine members were chosen to serve on the city's first library board. By the Spring of 1903 the city had accepted a grant from the Carnegie foundation to construct a new library but remained undecided regarding the building location. Since Carnegie required communities to provide building lots as part of his assistance program, the city needed to choose a site before they could acquire the funds. A debate ensued between two possible locations, but before the matter was resolved, local banker William E.C. Ross presented a proposal to erect a library building in memory of his wife Etta Chadbourn Ross, who had died on 21 March 1903. Unlike Carnegie grants for libraries which required communities to agree to devote at least ten per cent of the building's cost to its maintenance, Ross offered to provide at least \$11,000 for actual construction costs with funds for upkeep to be independently generated.

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Memorial Library, Blue Earth, Faribault Co., MN

Section number 8 Page 1

Dedication of the library on 15 November 1904 was an important community event marked by W.E.C. Ross's inspiring presentation speech, followed by an evening cultural program at the Converse Opera House. Night time activities featured music and singing, a history of the public and Blue Earth library movement by the local librarian, culminated in an entertaining address by the President of the University of Minnesota.

Although the Carnegie Foundation's grant was refused, the Blue Earth library is distinctive because it is essentially identical in plan and style to many of the 57 Carnegie-financed libraries constructed in Minnesota between 1899 and 1914. The Memorial Library represents a culmination of ideas by the contractor, Fred Lippert, the architect, A.C. Church, and William Ross, who had visited numerous library buildings in Minnesota and Wisconsin to determine a suitable design for his own community. The Ross Library follows Carnegie's suggestion that a small library be rectangular in shape with one floor plus a basement. Similar to one of the standard building plans promulgated by Carnegie's secretary, James Bertram, the main floor holds the circulation and reference areas in the center, bookshelves, and an adult's and children's reading room to the sides.

The refined Classical Revival style Etta C. Ross Library reflects the prevailing vogue for classical forms in the first decades of the twentieth century. It also exemplifies design features advocated by Carnegie which suggested a plain, dignified structure with an ornamented exterior, and a practical, economic interior layout. The building is in keeping with Neoclassicism by its symmetrical plan finished with smooth, pressed brick, Ionic ordered main entrance, sparse application of ornament, and large, single light windows.

The Etta C. Ross Memorial Library has had few minor interior and exterior changes; despite these alterations the building is in good condition, and has retained its historic architectural integrity. The library reflects a commitment by the community and W.E. Ross to provide for the education of Blue Earth's citizens.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Blue Earth Post 15 November 1904; 28 June 1956.

Faribault County Register. 17 November 1904; 27 October 1904.

50 Years of Service, 1904-1954. n.a., n.d.

Bobinski, George S. Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development. Chicago: American Library Association, 1969.

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acree of property _____ Less than one _____

UTM References

A

1	5	4	1	1	4	1	0	4	8	3	2	0	6	0
Zone	Easting		Northing											

B

Zone	Easting		Northing											

C

Zone	Easting		Northing											

D

Zone	Easting		Northing											

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies city lots 1 and 2 of Block 92 of the Original Townsite of Blue Earth.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city lots that have historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title _____ Michael Koop _____

organization _____ N/A _____ date _____ 15 January 1988 _____

street & number _____ 615 Jackson St. NE _____ telephone _____ 612-623-8356 _____

city or town _____ Minneapolis _____ state _____ MN _____ zip code _____ 55413 _____