

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

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

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

**1. Name**

historic Janesville Public Library

and/or common Crossroads Building

**2. Location**

street & number 64 South Main Street \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Janesville \_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district First

state Wisconsin code 55 county Rock code 105

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> museum</span>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> park</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> private residence</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> religious</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> scientific</span>
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> transportation</span>
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: social</span>

**4. Owner of Property**

name City of Janesville; Philip L. Deaton, City Manager

street & number 18 North Jackson Street

city, town Janesville \_\_\_ vicinity of state Wisconsin

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Rock County Courthouse

street & number 51 South Main Street

city, town Janesville state Wisconsin 53545

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1975, 1981  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Situated in center Janesville one and one-half blocks northeast of the Rock River, the former Janesville Public Library faces the southeastern edge of the Courthouse Park. Adjacent blocks to the northeast and southwest are commercial in nature.

A low concrete block foundation supports the three-story rectangular building; both the rusticated ground story and story above are constructed of gray pressed brick. To the rear (southwest), the sloping site reveals a basement story beneath the upper stories. An Ionic portico with paired end columns marks the center of the front facade; the pediment above is set with carved stone ornament and a date stone. Carved festoons alternate with segments of the building name across the freeze. Against the building wall, an applied wood cornice creates a plain brick parapet above the roof line, enclosing a tar-covered low gable roof. Large windows with starburst muntins flank a fanlight window with stone Ionic pilasters and keystone centered in the portico. Starburst wood gates span the pedestals of the colonnade. Keystoned stone arches mark the recessed entrances to either side of a starburst window in the basement below. A continuous sill underlines four closely-set double-hung windows to each side of the pedimented pavilion; in the story above, profiled brick moldings and wide stone panels with raised letters (FREE TO THE PEOPLE and ELDRED MEMORIAL) provide decorative emphasis to corresponding openings. A wide flight of concrete stairs provides a formal approach.

Side elevations are lighted only by regularly-spaced double-hung windows in the ground (library) story. The rear is divided into three sections, with a wood-framed pediment crowning the multi-windowed center portion. Groups of three double-hung windows with continuous sills are centered in the stack stories (corresponding to the ground story in front); three-quarter-size versions fill the concrete-block basement. Fire escapes provide access to doors immediately to the sides of the pedimented pavilion.

The plan of the original library on the main floor (corresponding to the rusticated ground story) is regular, with a center delivery lobby and stack space facing the entrance. A reading room and research alcove filled the southwest end of the plan, opposed by a large children's room (with fireplace) to the northeast. Wall surfaces are plaster with painted wood trim; tile flooring and celotex ceilings were installed in 1932. An open stair with turned wood balusters, set between the recesses entrances at the front, still winds to the second story. The second story assembly hall, originally used by the Apollo Club, was finished for use as an auditorium in 1932; a stage with a classical proscenium with Doric columns and entablature was then installed. The museum space at the northeast end of the plan was used by the American Legion Museum from 1932-1950. Apparently the boys and girls club plan to occupy the basement story<sup>3</sup> was never fully realized, and it served principally as storage and building services space until it was taken over for use as a senior citizens center in 1968.

Interior building alterations made in 1932, 1957, and 1968 were minor. As previously mentioned, auditorium improvements were made, and new floors and ceilings were installed, in 1932. Changes in wiring and lighting systems were required in 1957. When the city Department of Recreation took over use of the building for its offices in 1968, (the time that the library moved to a larger facility) several partitions were installed on the ground story interior.

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Janesville Public Library, Janesville, Rock County, Wis.

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Janesville Intensive Survey  
1981

Local

City Hall; Rock County Historical Society  
Janesville

Wisconsin 53545

## 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** 1902<sup>1</sup> **Builder/Architect** J.T.W. Jennings<sup>2</sup>

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Architecturally, Janesville's former Public Library building has statewide significance as a distinguished example of large scale formal NeoClassical design, with details typical of Carnegie libraries. Historically, the building has been the city's best-known theater facility, associated with the Apollo Club early in the twentieth century, and since 1932 has been the home of the regionally-known Little Theater.

Architecture. The only remaining public NeoClassical building in Janesville, the former Carnegie library is typical in concept and form of others of its period. Less typical is the formality of its stylistic vocabulary, including a rusticated ground story, true portico, sculpted pediment, and raised stone inscriptions. Correspondingly formal is the second-story stage and auditorium, whose inclusion in a social facility was characteristic of the Carnegie type of the early twentieth century. Distinguished by size and quality of design, the building is among the best NeoClassical Carnegie libraries in the state. Architect J. T. W. Jennings designed the building during his term as supervising architect of University of Wisconsin Building & Grounds.

Born in Brooklyn in 1856, John T. W. Jennings was educated in the New York public schools and at New York University, from which he took a degree in civil engineering. After his first architectural assignment with the Astor estate,<sup>4</sup> Jennings was chief engineer of the New York Suburban Transit Road. From 1885 to 1893 Jennings was architect of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad. After practicing privately for a short time in Chicago, Jennings took his post with the University of Wisconsin, returning to private practice in Madison in 1905. Works accomplished under his supervision include the University's Agriculture Hall, Dairy Barn, University Stable, Agricultural Power House, Engineering Building, Horticulture Building, and Chemistry Building. Recently nominated to the National Register was Jennings's Delafield Fish Hatchery in Waukesha County, Wisconsin.

Social/humanitarian. The Janesville Public Library is also locally significant for its role in the cultural development of that city, primarily through its association with the Janesville Little Theatre which it has housed since 1932. Dedicated in 1902, the library has housed several social and cultural organizations, including the Apollo Club, a locally prominent musical group.<sup>5</sup> In 1932, the auditorium was completed and was offered to the Little Theatre for a modest fee, which the group gladly accepted. The Little Theatre was organized in 1929 and is reputedly the oldest self-supporting, continuously operating community theatre in Wisconsin and one of the three oldest in the United States.<sup>6</sup> The first play performed by the group in the auditorium of the Janesville Library was Shakespeare's Twelfth Night on December 13, 1932. Several goals were set by the Little Theatre when it was organized, one of which was to establish a sense of community service. For many years beginning in 1931, the players performed several children's plays each season with free admission. This practice ended with the Second World War. Free performances for the elderly and the ill remain, however, with invitations to the final dress rehearsal of each play. In the 1930s the Little Theatre took to the airwaves producing a number of pieces on the local radio station. Since 1964 the Little Theatre has been active in experiments in outdoor summer theatre. In 1979 the group celebrated its 50th anniversary.<sup>7</sup>

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Janesville Gazette, February 20, 1901  
 Library Board Minutes, Janesville, Wis., 1902  
 "Madison, Past & Present," Wisconsin State Journal, 1902  
 Niles, Charles P., and Gary J. Lennot, compilers, A History of Janesville Little Theatre and a Review of Its First Fifty Years, (Janesville, 1979)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Janesville West, Wis.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	6	3	3	4	4	4	0	4	7	2	7	1	9	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

Lots 3 and 4, Block 4 of the original plat of Janesville, Rock Co., Wisc.

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

state \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

state \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

## 11. Form Prepared By

Michael R. Matucheski, Preservation Assistant, and

name/title Diane H. Filipowicz, Architectural Historian (continued)

organization State Historical Society of Wisconsin date February, 1981

street & number 816 State Street telephone (608) 262-2970

city or town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

## 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

*Richard M. Kelley*

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

date 5/15/81

For HCRS use only

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

*Beth G. Gorman*

date 7/1/81

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: *Arda M. O'Connell*

date 6-24-81

Chief of Registration

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Janesville Public Library, Janesville, Rock Co., Wisc.

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8. Significance (cont.)

Further reinforcing the social significance of the building is its philanthropic origin. One of the sixty-three Carnegie libraries in the state and granted as one of the first four in 1901, the Janesville Library received additional local support from prominent merchant and manufacturer, F. S. Eldred. His bequest of \$10,000, made in memory of his daughter, Ada Eldred Sayre, was used to finish the children's room on the northeast end of the building.<sup>8</sup>

The role of community service continues today. Since the library's move in 1968, the building has served as a senior citizens center and houses the offices of the Janesville Department of Recreation, as well as the Little Theatre.

<sup>1</sup>Blueprints; inscription stone on building.

<sup>2</sup>Library Board Minutes, 1902; blueprints.

<sup>3</sup>Blueprints.

<sup>4</sup>Wisconsin State Journal, Madison, Past & Present, 1902, p. 139.

<sup>5</sup>William Fiske Brown, ed. History of Rock County, Wisconsin, Chicago: C.F. Cooper & Co., 1908, p. 589.

<sup>6</sup>A History of Janesville Little Theatre and A Review of its First Fifty Years, compiled by Charles P. Niles and Gary J. Lennot, Janesville, Wisconsin, 1979, a copy of which is filed in the offices of the Historic Preservation Division.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Janesville Gazette, February 20, 1901. p. 1.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Research assistance by: Judith Adler  
Janesville Community Development Authority  
City of Janesville  
18 N. Jackson Street  
Janesville

February 1981  
608/754-2811  
Wisconsin 53545