

SG 2514
(Expires 5/31/2012)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Edith B. Ford Memorial Library
other names/site number N/A
name of related multiple property listing N/A

Location

street & number 7169 Main Street N/A not for publication
city or town Ovid N/A vicinity
state New York code NY county Seneca code 099 zip code 14521

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Ron Daniel Muly 4/12/15
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

DSKPV
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register
 other (explain:)

Ron Daniel Muly 4/29/15
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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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 previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/library

EDUCATION/library

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Mid-20th century Modern

foundation: concrete, stone
walls: CMU, brick, tile, limestone

roof: metal
other: aluminum, glass

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Ovid is a village located roughly midway between Seneca Lake to the east and Cayuga Lake to the west at the juncture of State Routes 96 and 96a in the Finger Lakes area of New York State. The Edith B. Ford Memorial Library is on the east side of North Main Street, adjacent to a park at East Seneca Street. The library was constructed in 1961 to the design of architect John C. Ehrlich from Geneva, New York. The library is an T-shaped, one-story building, with a full basement. The exterior is a combination of brick, tile and limestone with a roof that dramatically overhangs the building, sheltering a clerestory of clear glass panels and stained glass featuring the images of cultural and scientific figures. The eaves are clad with tile and meet at triangular points. The rear or east side of the building contains a curving brick walk and enclosed exterior stair to the basement. The interior has the original book cases and furniture, patterned floor, and lights. The original circulation desk is wood with a polished stone top in front of a wood wall, inlaid with a geometric diamond design and raised letters with the names of famous persons from various branches of learning. Other symbols of scientific and cultural achievements are depicted in the tile band beneath the clerestory. The hanging aluminum lights are also original to the building. The library retains a high degree of integrity to its period of significance with the only changes being the enclosure of a south entrance, a lift and an accessibility impaired bathroom near the rear entrance, and redecorating the basement to meet current needs.

Narrative Description

Location and Setting

Seneca County, New York is often described as the county between two lakes, specifically Seneca Lake and Cayuga Lake in the Finger Lakes region of New York State. Ovid is located in the lower third of the county, south of Romulus and southeast of Sampson State Park. The Edith B. Ford Memorial Library is located at 7169 North Main Street in Ovid, on the east side of the street, between a public park to the south and a residence and U.S. Post Office to the north. The adjacent park is known as the Three Bears Park, due to it being the location of a historic court house complex commonly known as the "Three Bears" and consisting of a cluster of three Greek Revival style brick buildings built in the mid-nineteenth century that served as the Seneca County Courthouse Complex (NR

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listed 1976). The trio of buildings are on the east end of the top of the hill and overlook the park, an octagonal bandstand dedicated in 1983, and a veterans' memorial.¹

On the opposite side of the street (west side) is the Ovid Municipal Building, designed by John Ehrlich, who was also the architect for the Ford Memorial Library. Both buildings were gifts to the people of Ovid from Dr. Walter B. Ford, prominent mathematician and philanthropist who moved to the area after retiring from the University of Michigan. The library was given in memory of his wife, Edith Banker Ford (1875-1959), who was a native of Ovid.

The library sits on a 1.52-acre lot, with an upward sloping lawn on the western side from Main Street to the building. The library is set back from the street, with a long concrete walk leading from the street sidewalk to the main entrance. The area between the sidewalk and the library is open lawn. A wide asphalt paved drive is on the north side of the building, leading to the rear parking lot. Within the parking lot sit two non-permanent utility sheds, both of recent construction and are too small to count. To the east side of the library property is the park with its steep hillside leading to the Three Bears.

Built in 1960-61, the library building is a well preserved, single-story building with lower basement level and flat, overhanging roof. The foundation of the building is concrete masonry units and poured concrete. The walls are constructed of concrete masonry units, faced with brick and polychrome ceramic tiles, with parts of the front, west, northwest, and southwest faced with pink limestone supplied by the Babcock Company of Kasota, Minnesota. The building's a flat roof has uniquely designed eaves composed of planes of inverted pyramids, clad with tiles. Under the eaves is a clerestory featuring six stained-glass windows with unique compositions and narrative themes. The windows, crafted in polychrome primary colors of glass, can be appreciated from both the interior and the exterior. Large panels flank the stained glass and are irregular in shape to conform to the geometric planes of the exterior eaves and interior ceiling.

Exterior

Roughly centered in the façade (west elevation), the main entrance consists of front door flanked by seven-light sidelights of clear glass that are glass set into extruded aluminum alloy 6063-T5 frames, giving it an aesthetic of geometric balance, symmetry and harmony. The entrance is framed on both sides and above by sheets of smooth-cut Kasota limestone. Another Kasota panel is over the door and is incised with a quotation from Russian author Leo Tolstoy which reads: "THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON OF IGNORANCE--THE DIFFUSION OF PRINTED MATTER" and the lettering is filled with 23-carat gold leaf. The quote is framed at the beginning by an

¹ Teryl Reynolds, "Bandstand to Commemorate Remarkable Ovid Woman," *Ovid Gazette*, 18 May 1983.

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incised feather quill, and at the bottom right by a bas relief of an open book, also highlighted by gold-leaf. Above this is a large window of two trapezoid-shaped clear glass lights set into metal frames. Another is in the wall behind a wing, extending west from the north end of the elevation. Two larger, similar shaped windows are to the south, but these have a center stained-glass section and blue tiles separating the windows. The wall below is brick, laid in an American bond pattern, and the lower portion of the wall is currently obscured by plantings.

Immediately to the north of the front entrance is a single-story projecting wing with a flat roof, containing the Children's Reading Room. The exterior of the south-facing wall contains six aluminum-framed two-lite horizontal sliding glass windows. The area above the windows is framed by a tiled frieze consisting of blue, brown, tan, white and black tiles with symbols showing the evolution of communication, beginning with a cave drawing and proceeding to cuneiform tablets, a scroll and quill, and ending with an open printed book and a camera. The bottom of the wall is tiled with blue, one and one-sixteenth inch frost resistant tiles. The southwest edge of the wing is framed with Kasota limestone. The north wall of this section contains a series of three, rectangular-shaped clear glass windows, all framed in aluminum and equal in size. The windowless, west-facing exterior wall of the Children's Reading Room consists primarily of panels of smooth-cut sheets of pink Kasota limestone, with two rows of seven panels below the inset panel with the name of the library. Smaller panels are above the name plate. The large sheets of pink limestone are rectangular-shaped and framed above by two smaller rows of more pink limestone. The base of the wall is brick and gray limestone. The simplicity of this wall brings into focus the beauty of the pink Kasota stone. A long aluminum light fixture is over the name plate.

The north elevation of the library faces the paved driveway leading to the parking lot and rear, east-facing entrance with a handicapped parking area. This elevation features a single-story wing used as an administrative office that has the same brick exterior as the rest of the building. The upper part of the wall contains five hopper style windows that are framed in aluminum and set together in a continuous, horizontal ribbon. The windows are equal in size and rectangular in shape. The overall composition is simple and balanced with the greater focus on the tiled eaves located above the wing and on the underside of the main structure. The roof eaves do not fully extend over both the administration and children's wings.

Extending from the north end of the east elevation is another small wing with a secondary entrance. The north side of the wing has two small hopper style glass and aluminum windows, one for providing light for a restroom. Like the rest of the building, the exterior wall is brick in the same American bond pattern as the rest of the building. A large metal door with a large, upper glass panel is a recent addition to meet code for ADA accessibility. To the right

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of the door is a light, a fire alarm and a dedication plaque with the names of the building committee and architect. The plaque is bronze and was made in March 1962 by the Armento Metal Arts Company of Buffalo, New York. A second bronze plaque of similar design is located within the main entrance foyer.

The remainder of the east elevation has a raised patio accessed by a sloping brick walkway edged with low Belgian block fencing that acts as a retaining wall with the sloping landscape. Metal fencing extends from the library to provide additional safety and rests on a concrete wall. The south end of the patio has another concrete wall and metal fence that contains a stairwell leading to and from the basement level. An emergency exit door was added in 2008 as required by law. The main wall of the east elevation shows the same brick as seen in the rest of the building and a clerestory of two combination windows of clear glass with a stained-glass center and two, two-lite glass windows (without stained glass). All windows are set into aluminum frames and separated by blue tile pilasters.

When viewed from the park, the south elevation shows a symmetrical design of brick, metal and glass wall portions and two large clerestory windows. The center of the wall is a metal and blue-tile pilaster. Both sides have an adjacent lower wall of drywall panels and large glass upper sections, all set into aluminum frames. These sections were originally an exit but were permanently closed due to being underutilized and difficult to maintain. The remaining portion of the wall is brick, again in the same American bond pattern. The two clerestory windows have the same two clear glass sections with a stained-glass panel in the center. Blue tile-covered short pilasters compose the upper end wall sections. Highly visible in this and the east elevations are diamond-shaped colored tiles in the eaves over the blue tile pilasters. This design is repeated throughout the underside of the entire roof but is most visible in these elevations due to the rise in the ground and absence of foliage.

The main walls of the building are recessed under the flat roof with a metal coping and large, dramatic tiled eaves. The building's foundation is a combination of concrete, brick and limestone. The shape of all the windows conform to the geometric planes defined by the steel framing of the roof and the eaves. The six stained-glass sections of the clerestory windows were created by Charles Northrup, of Rochester, New York. The central panels contain geometricized stained glass in primary colors with images of two notable scholars, writers or artists, two figures per window.

Interior

Most visitors to the library enter through the west elevation main door, through an enclosed foyer. The foyer is a rectangular area designed to accommodate a floor mat and contains original Parco Paragon vinyl-link floor tiles manufactured by the Pawling (New York) Rubber Corporation in bluish gray colors as specified by the architect.

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The walls are mosaic tiles of two shades of blue in a random pattern. The south wall of the foyer contains an original shadowbox style display case with a sliding glass window set into an aluminum frame. The east wall has one of two dedication plaques made by the Armento Metal Arts Company of Buffalo and the north wall contains an aluminum and glass door for access to the main reading room.



Panorama view of library interior looking south from circulation desk (Photo Courtesy of the Edith B. Ford Memorial Library)

In the main library, space consists of open stacks, original circulation desks, study carrels, built-in wood shelving and a children's section in the west wing. The interior ceiling is a geometric pattern of triangular panels, painted white, which contrasts with the original patterned flooring of granulated raw cork with a resin binder. The flooring is remarkably intact, consisting of twelve-inch by twelve-inch squares, manufactured by the Armstrong Cork & Tile Company of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, set in an alternating pattern. The main room is accented with large, mosaic tilework bands (27-inches high) with symbols of human communication and knowledge throughout history on a brown-toned background. The tiles take the form of a time-line beginning with the west wall (over the children's reading room) of a cave painting depicting a man with a bow hunting two antlered animals. To the right of the hunter are Roman numerals, Egyptian hieroglyphics, a stone tablet and stylus, a scroll, a bound book with quill pen, ending with an early printing press. The tiled north wall features stylized mosaic symbols of paper manufacturing and trees. The tiled band continues with an artist's canvas depicting a modern style painting. As the band extends along the east wall, more symbols depict music, art and drama (musical clefs, lyre, hymnal, ballet shoes, Greek comedy/tragedy masks, Venus de Milo statue, etc.) The mosaic band is limited to the north end of the building, reaching a length of 25.5 feet, and is positioned below the plain clerestory windows on the west and east walls.

One of the interior key features is the backdrop to the circulation desk in the library's the north wall, designed by architect John Ehrlich. It is made of rosewood with lighter diamond-patterned inlaid wood that serves as framing

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devices for the original clock and contain the names of notable scholars, writers and artists in applied metal letters. Names beginning on top left are Plato, Michelangelo, and Euclid. Below are Ruskin, Pythagoras, and Erasmus, followed by Ovid, Confucius and Bach. The right side of the composition features Milton, Aristophanes, Goethe, Aesop, Copernicus, Marlow, Freud, William James, and Virgil. (Marlow is presumed to be a misspelling of Christopher Marlowe, a contemporary of Shakespeare.) The original clock has a 16-inch diameter and consists of simple rectangular markers indicating the hours that are finished in satin aluminum. The hour markers are simple, sans serif, and achieve an understated elegance.

The south end of the main room is dominated by stained-glass windows in the center of six clerestory windows, created by artist Charles Northrup of Rochester, New York. The clerestory windows are double paned glass that are trapezoidal in shape with the top of the window conforming to the pyramidal planes in the ceiling and eaves. Each of the six windows is in three parts with clear glass flanking the central, stained glass panel. The central panels contain geometricized glass pieces, primarily in blue colors with details in reds and green. Metal kaming defines the composition, except for the portraits. The upper and lower section of the panel features the glass portraits of two notable cultural figures, either scholars, writers, musicians or scientists. Each of the portraits is framed in a stylized mandorla frame of colored glass, a device often seen in religious icons, and each is identified by the name below with yellow block lettering in a black background.

Eight original light fixtures are placed in the ceiling where the geometric ceiling planes meet. Each of the lights is cream-painted metal, nearly blending with the ceiling, and each is suspended by six metal conduit rods attached to a circular ceiling mount or cap, flush with the ceiling. Each fixture contains six lights with conical metal shades that are wider in circumference at the top and taper to be narrower at the base. This inverted style of shade casts the light upward and serves to dramatically highlight the ceiling planes while providing additional illumination to the reading room.

Near the circulation desk is a hallway leading to the east (secondary) entrance and basement stairwell. The hall has blue tiles on the floor with a recessed rectangular-shaped area holding the second original vinyl-link Parco Mat. Within the hallway is a janitor's closet, public coat rack, one ADA compliant bathroom (renovated in 2008), and a porch lift installed in 2008 for handicap accessibility. The stairwell leading to the lower level is an enclosed stair of concrete with metal treads and an original, round aluminum railing as specified by the architect. At the base of the staircase is a landing and a small, square foyer. Within the foyer is a side-hinged door leading to an elevator in the

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Two of the Northrup stained glass windows and original light fixture. (Photo courtesy of the Edith B. Ford Memorial Library)

northwest corner. Next to this on left is a utility closet with an oak door. Across from the elevator, in the southwest corner, is a storage closet with an oak door.

The main room of the lower level is a multi-purpose community meeting room with walls of painted CMU, and the floor is carpet over concrete. This large room is presently used for stacks for the non-fiction collection, community meetings, public programs, youth activities, story time, tutoring, and individual meetings for social service providers. On the east wall is a metal emergency exit door, which is connected to the ascending, exterior concrete stairs. The north wall has double doors which lead to the furnace and mechanical room, supply and storage areas. In the northwest corner of the basement is a separate room, rectangular in shape, with a locked, single door entrance. This room holds the archives collection and reference room of the library.

The Edith B. Ford Memorial Library retains of high level of integrity for continuing to conform to and display the specification and designs of architect John Ehrlich. The library's archive is fortunate to have many of the

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documents from the construction in its collection, which aids with the preservation and maintenance of the building. Any needed changes (ADA compliant restroom, closing the south exit) were done to be compatible with the overall design.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1960-1962

Significant Dates

1960, 1962

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

John C. Ehrlich (architect)
Brown & Hoyt Co. (builder)

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

The period reflects the construction of the building beginning with its groundbreaking in 1960 to its completion and its dedication in 1962.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary) N/A

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Constructed in 1961, the Edith B. Ford Memorial Library is significant under criterion C in the area of architecture as an outstanding and highly intact example of modern architecture in the village of Ovid. It is also one of two Modernist buildings in the village designed by John Ehrlich, an architect from Geneva, New York, who also designed a number of local schools and the Taylor Brown Hospital in Waterloo, New York. Both of Ehrlich's Ovid buildings (library and municipal building) were gifts from Dr. Walter B. Ford, a philanthropist and retired mathematics professor, and are sited on opposite sides of North Main Street. The library building was dedicated to the memory of Edith B. Ford, the donor's recently deceased wife. The library was also in stark contrast to its first location in a Greek Revival Building, which stands within view at the top of the hill and adjacent park. The first library building was commonly known as the Mama Bear, one of three temple-fronted Greek Revival buildings known as the Three Bears that were part of the Seneca County Courthouse complex (NR listed 1976). The Edith B. Ford Library also represents the public spirit of the citizens of Ovid, who in 1899 established the Ovid Public Library, and continue to support it as a thriving educational and community center in the heart of the village. The building is highly intact to its construction, exhibiting the architect's vision for its form, design and use of modern construction materials that has been respectfully maintained and preserved through its extant interior and exterior features and furnishings. The Edith B. Ford Memorial Library Archives also holds the original blueprints, architect's specifications, and photographs which document the construction process and assist in maintenance and preservation of the building.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Early History of Ovid and the Library

Following the American War for Independence (1775-1783), lands were surveyed for sale in the central and western portions of New York State, but roughly 1.5 million acres in Central New York were reserved for military lots, known as the Military Tract. The lots were presented as partial payment to veterans of the Continental Army. After the survey (1788), veterans could draw lots in the newly created towns, with those who had the rank of private being allowed 600 acres. More acreage was available to officers. Ovid was one of these towns, created as Military Township No. 16, which was divided into one hundred parcels of 600-acre lots. Much of what became the village was situated on Military Tract Lot No. 3.

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Originally part of Onondaga County, the town of Ovid was formed on March 5, 1794. Two additional towns were formed from Ovid, specifically Covert in 1817 and Lodi in 1826. Well before that time, Seneca County separated from Onondaga County (1804) and Ovid served as the first county seat with a courthouse constructed in 1806 and a county park laid out in front of the building. The village of Ovid was established in 1816 on what was largely 900 acres of land owned by pioneer settler John Seeley, who donated a part of it for the county buildings.² The village's location in the middle of an agricultural region, between Cayuga and Seneca Lakes, aided in its growth, and by the 1860s, the village had three churches, six factories, a thriving newspaper and a well-known private school named the Seneca Collegiate Institute.³ Also called the old academy, it was celebrated for its library of 500 volumes, in addition to the excellent education it offered to its students. Public school students had access to a district library, with volumes purchased with state discretionary funds, but as one writer observed, "It would be useful in this connection, could it be known to what extent the books have been read, and the measure of their value as an educational appliance."⁴

In 1845, the original wood courthouse was replaced by a larger, brick temple-like structure, which was shortly after joined by two more brick Greek Revival county buildings. The complex became known as the Three Bears, with the



The "Three Bears" Seneca County Courthouse complex

largest of the three buildings (Papa Bear) being the court house, located on the hilltop. The central building, or "Mama Bear," was built in 1860 as a larger, new county clerk's office, replacing the old clerk's office, also built in 1845, the smallest of the three buildings (Baby Bear). In 1905, the "new" clerk's office (Mama Bear) became the home of the Ovid Free Library and it remained there until

² Harry Melone, *History of Central New York Embracing Cayuga, Seneca, Wayne, Ontario, Tompkins, Cortland, Schuyler, Yates, Chemung, Steuben, and Tioga Counties* (Indianapolis, IN: Historical Publishing Company, 1932), 481.

³ J. H. French, *Gazetteer of the State of New York* (Syracuse, NY: R. Pearsall Smith, 1860), 616.

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the library moved into its new building in 1962.

By the mid-twentieth century, the concept of the public library changed from a “house of books” to a community center, requiring meeting space as well reading rooms and rows of shelves. The post-World War II baby boom required an expansion of children’s services that often included a separate space for children’s books and programs. Furthermore, 1950 New York State library aid legislation encouraged a professionalization of the library staff, consolidation of library services (cooperative library systems) and provided grants for acquisition of books and materials. In 1961, the Ovid Free Library joined the Finger Lakes Library System “to offer to the public a larger selection of books and make available films and records for use by organizations in the community.”⁵ When the new library building opened, it included a separate children’s room off the main reading room and a community room in the basement.

According to a 1962 library pamphlet, the Ovid Free Library was established in 1898 following a suggestion from village resident, Mrs. H. A. Porter.⁶ A larger group of residents joined with her to form the library and a provisional charter was granted by the State University of New York Board of Regents in December 1899. Since 1892, state law recognized the role of libraries in public education and assigned the regents the duty of formal library incorporation. The Ovid Free Library, as it was known, was first housed in the office of the *Ovid Gazette* before it moved to the Seneca County Clerk’s office in 1905. In 1912, the Ovid Free Library received a permanent charter from the state. The library quickly became one of the treasures of Ovid, supported by the local community with a one dollar membership fee and donations of books, furniture and volunteer labor. In 1932, one writer described Ovid as being “perched proudly upon a hill,” and having “a free library of 3,000 volumes.”⁷

Criterion C: Architecture

In April 1960, a proposal from local philanthropist Dr. Walter B. Ford was accepted by the library’s board of trustees to fund a new library building, named in honor of his late wife, Edith Banker Ford (1875-1959). Ford stated that the library’s location on top of a hill often made it inaccessible in the winter and that the current building had outgrown its usefulness as a library. Walter Burton Ford (1874-1971) was a prominent mathematician originally from Oneonta (Otsego County, New York) whose father was an investor in the Computer Tabulating Record Company,

⁴ *History of Seneca Co., New York with Illustrations Descriptive of its Scenery, Palatial Residences, Public Buildings, Fine Blocks and Important Factories*. Philadelphia, PA: Everts, Ensign & Everts, 1876., 58.

⁵“Open House—Edith B. Ford Memorial Library, June 10, 1962.” [Ovid, NY: n.p., 1962], 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*

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a predecessor of the IBM Corporation. Ford was a graduate of Harvard University, earning his master's degree in 1898 and his doctorate in 1905. He taught for 40 years at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) and co-authored several high school and college mathematics text books before retiring in 1940 to the Ovid area. Edith was from Ovid, and the Fords and their two sons spent their summers at the family's Elm Beach property along the banks of Cayuga Lake.

After accepting Dr. Ford's proposal, a library building committee formed and, in October 1960, chose architect John C. Ehrlich (1899-1968) of Geneva (Ontario County), New York, to design the new building. Ehrlich designed another building donated by the Fords in 1958, the Ovid Municipal Building and Firehouse on North Main Street. Dedicated in 1960 just as the planning for the library was beginning, it was a large, three-story Modernist building covered with Kasota limestone panels and featured a tall entrance clock tower with an applied aluminum grid. Ehrlich (1899-1968) was a 1926 graduate of Columbia University, who completed additional studies at New York University in 1928.⁸ After working as a draftsman and designer for other firms, he started his own practice in Geneva and remained active until his death in 1968. His entry in the 1962 American Institute of Architects Directory listed his principal works, which included other Modern style buildings such as the Taylor-Brown Hospital (1955) in Waterloo and St. Michael's Syrian Orthodox Church (1961) in Geneva, New York. Ehrlich also served on the Post-War Planning Committee in 1944 for the Waterloo Chamber of Commerce.

Ehrlich's school projects came at a point in time when school populations were expanding due to the post-war boom and school districts consolidated or centralized in New York State. This required new, larger buildings for larger student populations in settings that allowed for academics and athletics while providing bus access and ample parking. Ehrlich's design for the new Geneva Junior High School on North Street was featured in full page advertisement (1957) showing a large, axial-plan one-story building with a two-story wing, surrounded by large lawns. Like most schools from this era (and most of Ehrlich's other schools), it was a fireproof steel-frame structure clad in brick with ribbons of windows and classrooms conforming to state standards (located off double loaded corridors, hygienic floor and wall surfaces of tile and travertine, ribbons of windows for natural illumination, etc.). Most school districts looked to economy of construction, so decorative elements were limited. Ehrlich's entrance for the Geneva school building was accented by a projecting stone wall that matched the stone exterior of

⁷ Melone, *History of Central New York*, 482.

⁸"Area Architect, John C. Ehrlich, Dies at Age 69," *Geneva Times*, 27 April 1968, 5.

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Former Ovid Municipal Building. (Photo courtesy of Edith B. Ford Memorial Library.)

the central portion of the façade, and recessed doors of aluminum and glass. His design for the Taylor-Brown Memorial Hospital (1955) followed much the same plan of clean, Modernist lines and an entrance highlighted with a stone wall and a large metal clock.

Like schools, the post-war boom also affected public libraries, especially in terms of design. Prior to the war, larger communities built impressive library buildings, many funded by industrialist Andrew Carnegie, while smaller villages tended to house the collections in homes or available buildings such as Ovid’s “Mama Bear.” During the 1930s and 1940s, scarce resources led to deferred maintenance of existing buildings and the inability to upgrade collections and services. The older buildings, either high style or common became obsolete or were regarded as inadequate space for required services. A 1941 study of libraries decried many of the older buildings as giving the general public the illusion that libraries were “palaces for the learned, pretentious, withdrawn, dull, self-sufficient, making no appeal to the average passerby to come inside” and that it was time for librarians and architects to “produce new libraries

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which will be the liveliest and most inviting buildings in their communities.”⁹ New designs focused on the efficient functioning of the building, with open spaces where librarians could have clear view of the main interior, and trends such as the use of glass fronts and walls were used to draw the public into the building.

With the commission for the Ovid library, Ehrlich was free to experiment with new forms and ideas, without the constraints of state requirements he encountered with school buildings. Ehrlich’s plans for the library coincided with the popularity of an experimental form in architecture known as the hyperbolic paraboloid, defined as a doubly curved surface often described as a saddle or butterfly. A derivation of this was the inverted umbrella described as consisting of a central column supporting geometric planes that “creates a low centre point at the column and a uniform elevation around the perimeter, allowing multiple umbrellas to be assembled and cover large areas with minimal supports.”¹⁰ Widely publicized, the form embraced the use of new construction materials (thin shell concrete, extruded aluminum, steel cables, etc.) “to construct everything from churches to warehouses, to residences to gas stations, libraries to arenas.”¹¹

Ehrlich’s design for the Ovid library capitalized on the idea of the inverted umbrella form for the roof, with the walls and body of the library following the Modernist straight lines and right angles seen in the Municipal building across the street. He used a simpler, less radical version of the geometric plane to create an open library space by suspending the ceiling panels from a flat roof by short posts and supporting the exterior overhanging planes with enclosed steel beams in CMU walls. This allowed for an upper window portion to follow the shape of the planes and create a clerestory around the exterior of the main reading room. This construction system was described in a dedication pamphlet created for the official library Open House on June 10, 1962:

The roof of the building is flat with the underside creating a series of pyramids. The underside of the exterior portion of these pyramids is furnished with ceramic tile having radiating lines from the columns to the eaves. At the juncture of these radiating lines and columns, the tile patterns create the illusion of column caps in different colors. The pyramidal surfaces create a feeling of uplift toward the eave of the building, symbolic of the expanding horizons imparted by research and education.¹²

Covering the CMU wall was an application of brick. Additional tiles covered the steel beam columns above the wall and consisted of blue and tan pieces with white grout. All of the exterior tiles were durable, a prerequisite for the climate of Central New York. Ehrlich specified that the tiles were to be produced by the American-Olean Tile

⁹Joseph L. Wheeler and Alfred Morton Githens, *The American Public Library Building: Its planning and design with special reference to its administration and service* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1941), 11-12.

¹⁰ Tyler S. Sprague, “Beauty, Versatility, Practicality”: The Rise of Hyperbolic Paraboloids in post-war America (1950-1962), *Construction History*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2013), 166.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹² “Open House—June 10, 1962, 1.

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Company in Olean, N. Y.: "Ceramic tile for exterior work at the underside of the roof shall be frost proof cushion edge 1 1/16" x 1 1/16" unglazed porcelain tile with a small percentage of glazed tile. Tile shall be of various colors set in patterns and designs as selected."¹³ The exterior tilework under the roof eaves could be seen from the



Construction photograph showing open plan of the library and roof support system. From the collection of the Edith B. Ford Memorial Library Archive.

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inside of the building due to the clear-glass panels of the clerestory windows, which he used as a vehicle to blend and unify all of the tilework from the outside to the inside. Ehrlich used his version of the inverted umbrella form in at least one subsequent project. The entrance to his South Glens Falls High School (1965) has a walkway with a covering similar to the ceiling pattern of in the Ovid library. He also used similar colored tile seen in the library to accent the exterior and interior of the school building.¹⁴

Inside the library, the ceiling planes were painted white and aluminum lights affixed at the junctures. This left the windows unobstructed from the interior as well as the exterior. Beneath the windows, Ehrlich added a band of tiles in the north end of the building depicting the development of the written word, communication and the arts. In keeping with Modernist design ideals, Ehrlich also designed the furniture and specified the lights and floor coverings, creating a harmonious blending of exterior and interior designed spaces. His design for the wooden wall behind the circulation desk repeated the geometric theme of the ceiling with a contrasting inlay. He continued the theme of cultural achievement by including names of various famous figures from all disciplines in raised metal letters. The top of the wall included one of his signature elements, a clock of burnished metal with the hands and numbers made of clean, simple geometric shapes.

In addition to Ehrlich's decorative elements, the theme of cultural achievement was emphasized through the use of stained-glass windows with portraits of famous writers, musicians, scientists and philosophers. Ehrlich designed the windows in the reading room in three sections to accommodate the center stained-glass panel. The center panels were designed and executed by Charles R. Northrup from Rochester and later, Penn Yan, New York, where he was a member of the Penn Yan Art Guild. After serving in the army during World War II, Northrup used the G.I. Bill to attend the Rochester Institute of Technology, where he studied art and stained glass. In addition to producing the windows for the library, he also designed six bell tower windows for St. Francis de Sales Church in Geneva (NR listed 2015).¹⁵

Northrup used shades of blue in the background of the windows, which complemented the blue tile work on the exterior. Contrasting colors of red and green were used to frame the portraits with an almond-shaped device known as a mandorla, once reserved for depicting religious figures in Christian art and Orthodox icons. Portraits were

¹³ John C. Ehrlich, "Specifications of Labor and Material for the General Construction Work, Contract No. 1; Heating and Ventilating Work, Contract No. 2; Plumbing Work, Contract No. 3; Electrical Work, Contract No. 4 for the Edith B. Ford Memorial Library, Ovid, New York." Architectural specifications, Ovid Free Library Building Committee, 1960, Section 20-1.

¹⁴ "New School Features Original Tile Designs," *The Saratogian*, 22 June 1965, 14.

¹⁵ "Charles R. Northrup Arts Profile," online at <https://www.zoominfo.com/p/Charles-Northrup/653908123>.

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paired, two per window beginning with Shakespeare and Homer, followed by Da Vinci and Einstein, Chaucer and Darwin, Mozart and Newton and ending on the east side of the building with Dante and Whitman, followed by Socrates and Jefferson. Northrup also fashioned the name plates of each of the figures so that they could be read from the exterior as well as the interior.

Ehrlich originally planned two formal entrances for the library with the primary entrance being on the west side of the building near a projecting section containing the Children's Room. The aluminum and glass door was framed with panels of Kasota limestone, the same covering used in the Municipal Building across the street. A large panel over the door was engraved with a quote by author Leo Tolstoy extolling the virtues of the printed word, and a decorative tiled panel over the windows of the Children's Room depicted a book, flash camera and ancient forms of writing. The south and east exterior walls of the Children's Room were also covered with panels of Kasota limestone. The other formal entrance was a set of double glass and aluminum doors at the south end of the reading room, allowing patrons to enter from the adjacent park between the stained-glass portraits of Chaucer, Newton, Darwin and Mozart.

In accordance with Dr. Ford's wishes, no formal dedication ceremony took place when the library officially opened in February 1962; however, the library held an open house that following June. Visitors received a booklet, courtesy of Dr. Ford, describing the new building and the library's history. The booklet stated that "since the Edith B. Ford Memorial Library has the same donor as the Ovid Municipal Building, it was thought advisable to have the same thread of harmony between the two buildings" that was achieved through employing the same architect and the use of the same limestone and harmonizing brick. It also stated that the basement was reserved for use as a "general purpose room ...which may be used as an historical museum and a lecture room for various cultural interests."¹⁶ Since its opening, the basement has been continuously used by a number of community groups, most notably scout troops.

Few alterations were made to the building since 1962. Shortly after the construction, the front entrance was modified to add a foyer to prevent wind from blowing into the main reading room (completed c. 1965). In 2007-2008, the library trustees undertook a Capital Campaign to fund a construction project to improve library services by making the library ADA accessible and to double the usable library floor space by allowing the public to have safe egress from the lower level. At the same time, two little used two entry doors on the south wall were removed

¹⁶ "Open House—June 10, 1962, 1-2.

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and the space enclosed with glass in the upper portion of the aluminum frame and a drywall panel in the lower part. These doors, which led outdoors to the village park on the southern boundary, were a constant problem by being difficult to keep closed, especially during winter months. The drywall was painted to match the rest of the exterior and the reuse of the door frame made this change compatible with the rest of the building. Other capital campaign changes were to install a mobility lift for patrons in one of the first-floor bathrooms and to redesign the other to be wheelchair accessible. The exit door on the east elevation was also widened to accommodate a wheelchair. The lower level exit door was also replaced to remedy code issues. The basement floor was carpeted and a new parking lot was added to the northeast side of the property. These changes are considered minor and maintain the library's high level of integrity.

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Name of Property

Seneca County, NY
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

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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 # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: Edith B. Ford Memorial Library Archive

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.52 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>18N</u> Zone	<u>350759</u> Easting	<u>4726587</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is the same as for the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sally Eller, Shannon O'Connor, Monica Kelly (edited by Virginia L. Bartos, Ph.D., NYSOPRHP)
organization Edith B. Ford Memorial Library date 15 March 2018
street & number 7169 N Main St PO Box 410 telephone 607-869-3031
city or town Ovid state NY zip code 14521
e-mail ovidlib@rochester.rr.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

Edith B. Ford Memorial Library
Name of Property

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- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Edith B. Ford Memorial Library

City or Vicinity: Ovid

County: Seneca State: New York

Photographer: Virginia L. Bartos

Date Photographed: 28 June 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 0001 of 0014: West elevation, view looking northeast.
- 0002 of 0014: North and west elevations looking southeast from drive.
- 0003 of 0014: East elevation, view looking northwest.
- 0004 of 0014: South and east elevations, view looking north.
- 0005 of 0014: Detail view of clerestory window, south elevation.
- 0006 of 0014: Detail of inscription over Main entrance (west elevation).
- 0007 of 0014: Detail view of projecting section, west elevation by main entrance.
- 0008 of 0014: Overview of interior looking at main desk and looking into children's section (northwest side).
- 0009 of 0014: View of original shelving.
- 0010 of 0014: Main desk, west end of reading room.
- 0011 of 0014: Detail of tile mosaic over entrance to Children's section.
- 0012 of 0014: View of work room, north end of building.
- 0013 of 0014: Overview of basement room.
- 0014 of 0014: View of stair from main floor into basement.

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name N/A
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

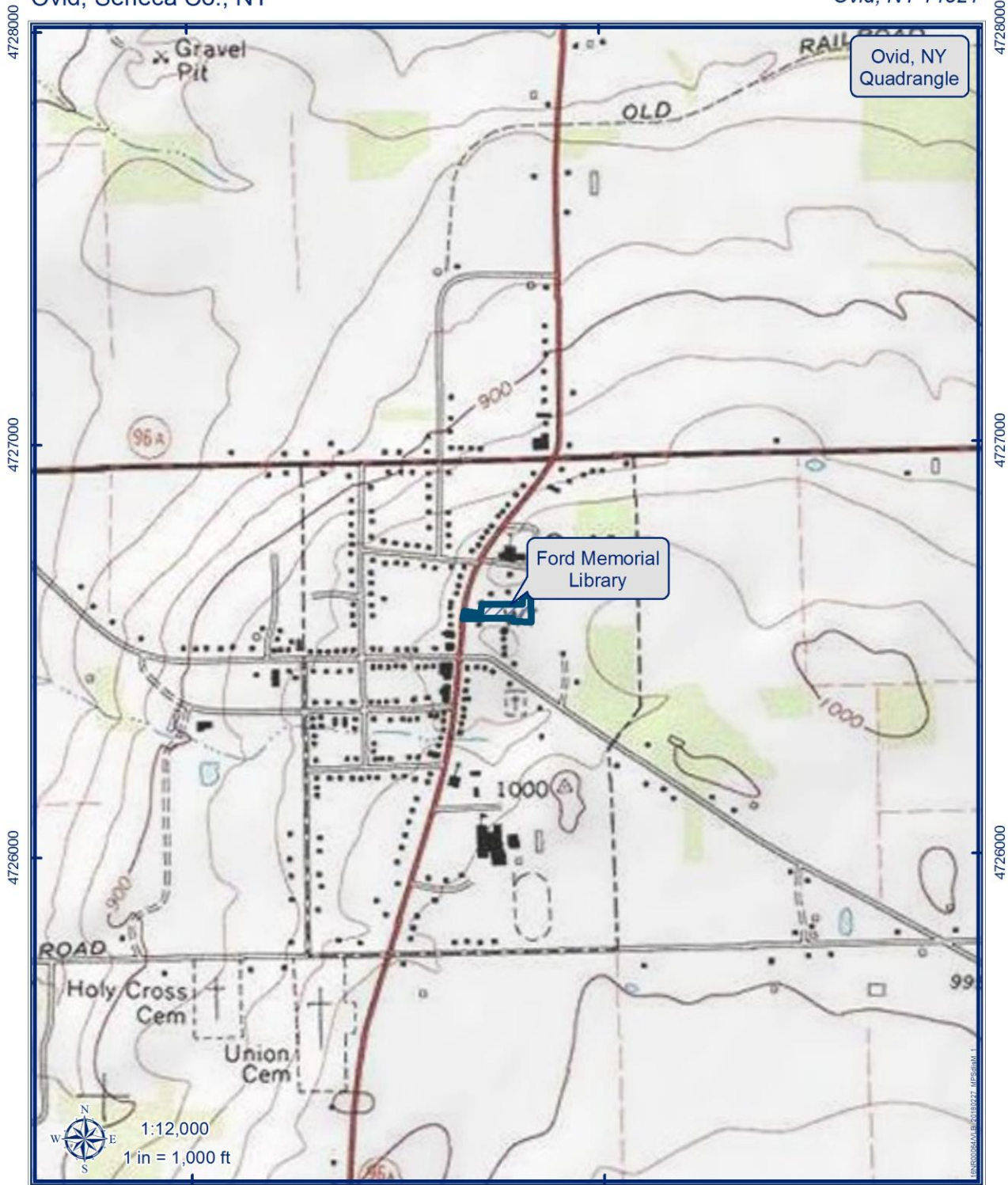
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Edith B. Ford Memorial Library
Ovid, Seneca Co., NY

7169 Main Street
Ovid, NY 14521



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



Edith B. Ford
Memorial
Library



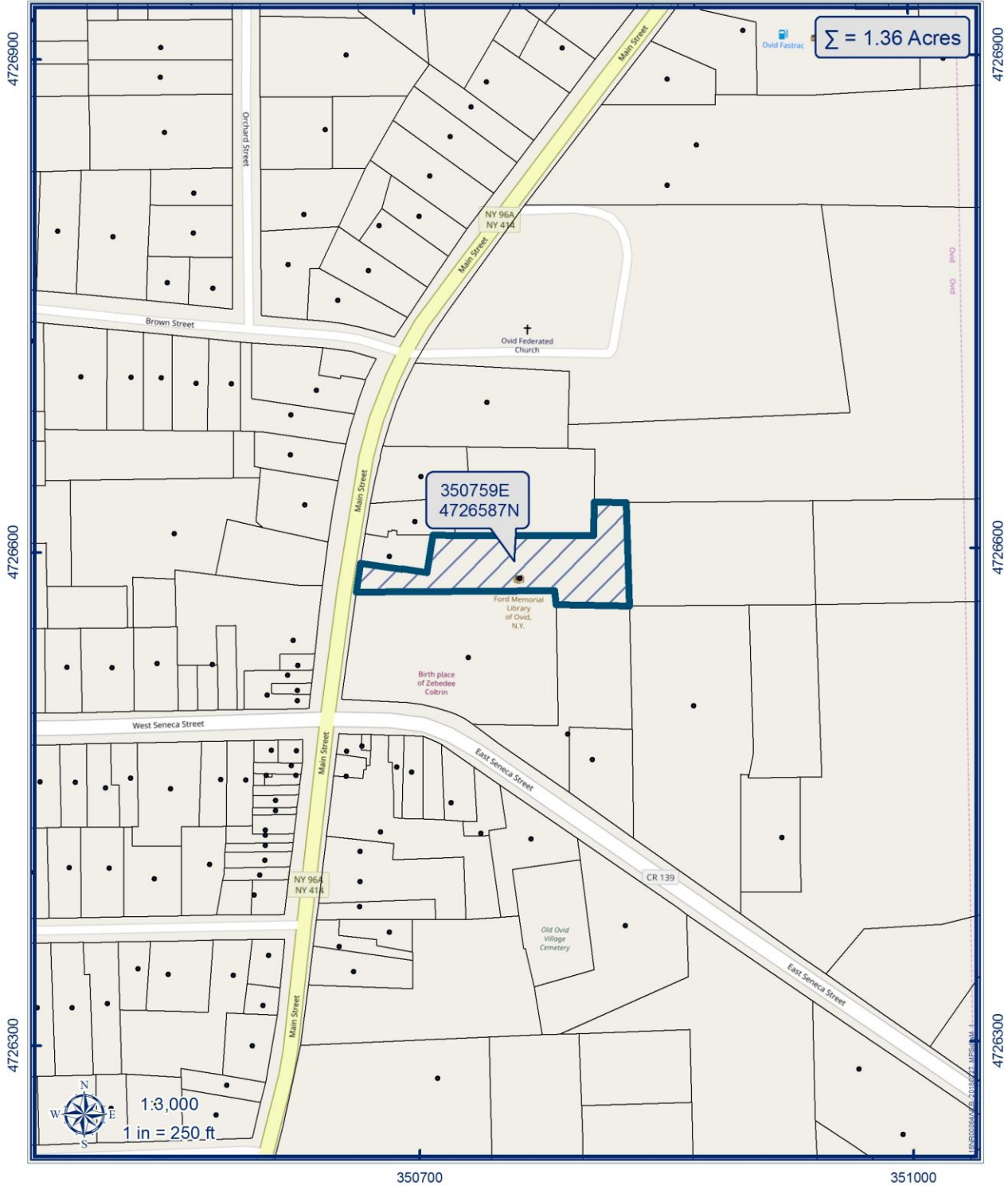
Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

Edith B. Ford Memorial Library
Name of Property

Seneca County, NY
County and State

Edith B. Ford Memorial Library
Ovid, Seneca Co., NY

7169 Main Street
Ovid, NY 14521



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



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Parks, Recreation
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[Posters and notices on the right wall]



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 4/19/2018 Date of Pending List: 5/4/2018 Date of 16th Day: 5/21/2018 Date of 45th Day: 6/4/2018 Date of Weekly List: 5/25/2018

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject 5/25/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary
Comments:

Recommendation/
Criteria

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

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Edith B. Ford Memorial Library

Serving the towns of Ovid and Romulus

October 19, 2017

RESOLUTION

Motion by Currie to move that the RESOLUTION of the Board to pursue the nomination of the library as a New York State and National Historic Building be approved. Motion passed. Unanimous.

Present to vote: Jean Currie, Sally Eller, Barbara Gerlach, Mary Lou Schwartzberg, Chris Willson (a quorum)

Excused: Mark Jauquet, Honorine Rock

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sally Eller".

Sally Eller, President
Board of Trustees
Edith B. Ford Memorial Library
sallyeller@ovidlibrary.org



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner



15 April 2018

Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places

Mail Stop 7228

1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following eight nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Edith B. Ford Memorial Library, Seneca County
Austerlitz Historic District, Columbia County
Spencertown Historic District, Columbia County
Ingleside Home, Erie County
Westminster House Club House, Erie County
Copeland Carriage House, Saratoga County
Tibbetts-Rumsey House, Tompkins County
Buffalo General Electric Complex, Erie County

In addition, I have also enclosed a request for a change to contributing status for 348 Ashland Avenue in the Elmwood Historic District (West), Erie County. Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank
National Register Coordinator
New York State Historic Preservation Office