

**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 Eckhart Public Library and Park

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number 603 South Jackson Street \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Auburn \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district Fourth

state Indiana code 018 county Dekalb code 033

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Trustees of the Eckhart Public Library and City of Auburn

street & number 603 South Jackson Street Mayor's Office  
Municipal Building

city, town Auburn \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state Indiana

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dekalb County Recorder's Office

street & number Dekalb County Courthouse

city, town Auburn \_\_\_\_\_ state Indiana

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Auburn Historic Structures Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1978 \_\_\_\_\_ federal \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ county  local

depository for survey records Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer  
Division of Historic Preservation, Dept. of Natural Resources

city, town Indianapolis \_\_\_\_\_ state Indiana

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

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

The Eckhart Public Library and its surrounding park occupy an entire block in a residential area of the South-central part of Auburn. The library building stands on the Eastern third of the site, facing Jackson Street (Photo 1). In the center of the block a two-tier cast iron fountain, which was also donated by Charles Eckhart, provides a focal point for the open wooded area of Wesley (now Eckhart) Park (Photo 2).

The library building is a two story gabled rectangular mass whose buff glazed brick walls stand on a raised basement faced with Bedford limestone. The ridge of the green glazed tile roof runs North and South, and the East elevation is the facade. The three bays of the facade are punctuated by the one story gabled projection of the main entrance in the center bay. Similar visual relief of the building's length is provided on the West elevation by the panelled rectangular stack which projects from that wall's center bay. The broad projecting eaves of the roof are supported on both the East and West elevations by four pairs of massive curved brackets; on the gable ends each rake is supported by six square timbers whose chamfered ends project slightly past the plain wide band of the fascia, which is topped by an inclined board rather than a crown mold. On the first floor the ends of the gable walls project past the side walls as buttresses whose bell-cast tops sweep down almost to the level of the first floor window sills; these curves are echoed by similar treatment of the front wall of the entrance bay and the curves of the tops of the cheek walls of the steps at the front and side (North) entrances.

The elevations display a regular pattern of fenestration. On the first floor groups of three windows separated by wooden mullions are set within rectangular masonry openings. The vertical lines of these windows are continued to define the groupings of deeply recessed individual basement windows and the mullions which break the round-arched openings on the second floor into triple panels. The slightly larger arched openings on the gable ends of the second floor are divided into five panels of alternating widths. The basement windows each have single square lights of clear glass, and the first floor windows are one over one double-hung sash whose upper panels are square. On the gable ends the lower sash of the first floor windows are deleted to allow for the interior height of the bookcases. The upper panels of the first floor windows and all of the second floor windows are glazed with geometric designs worked in translucent opalescent glass. The windows use a constant motif of a central tee-shaped medallion surrounded by white glass and a colored margin (Photos 3, 4). Similar panels are used for the exterior doors, which are smooth leaves without panelling.

The smooth planes of the walls are given subtle relief by courses of brick which uniformly project from the surface and imitate the form and placement of moldings and sculptures in classical architecture. Soldier coursing is used over the first floor windows to form flat lintels which are visually supported at their ends by panelled ancons. Similar projections support the ends of the sills of the second story windows and the brick sills on which the bases of the paired brackets rest. Tee-shaped medallions which recall the window motif are centered beneath the brackets as well, and small rectangular panels are centered in the areas between the first and second floor windows. The second story of each gable wall is further enriched with a panel of buff stucco enframed by a border which extends from either side of the arched window's sill, turns upward at the outer lines of the first floor windows, and follows the rakes of the gable. On the facade, a similarly shaped stucco panel is used on the gable of the entrance bay between the projecting brackets which flank the doors; a trapezoidal bronze plaque inscribed "Eckhart Public Library" is mounted on the stucco. On the North elevation the West first floor window is replaced by a side entrance whose single door is centered within a segmental-arched art glass window, which is in turn enframed by an arch of soldier coursing within a blind rectangular recess. Both entrances are flanked by original wall-mounted lanterns which are glazed with translucent glass.

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The interior of the library includes a mechanical room and a room originally intended to be used as a public museum in the basement, the reading room and librarian's office on the main level, and a directors' room and public assembly hall on the second floor.

The main level is approached from the two entrance vestibules by short flights of steps and is divided longitudinally by a wall whose middle is pierced by three flat-topped openings separated by two square piers (Photo 5). Walls extend West behind the central partition to enclose the librarian's office in the Southwest corner and a rear vestibule and stairwell in the Northwest corner. From the main entrance, the central portal enframes a view of the fireplace directly opposite on the rear (West) wall (Photo 6). The hearth is faced with the same buff glazed brick used on the exterior, and the simple rectangular timber of the mantle shelf is supported at either end by brick corbels. In a gilded frame above the shelf hangs Robert Grafton's three-quarter life-size portrait of Charles Eckhart, which was donated by the citizens of Auburn at the building's dedication in 1911. The reading room has since lost most of its golden oak Craftsman style furniture, including tables, chairs, and bookcases. The plaster ceiling has been clad in acoustical tile, and the walls and delivery desk have been covered with wood panelling. The original hanging brass electroliers have been replaced by ceiling-mounted fluorescent fixtures. Although the panelling has covered the embossed paper frieze, the wide board and narrow crown mold of the cornice are still visible along the tops of the walls. The plaster was additionally decorated with an embossed paper dado band and geometric plaster moldings similar in form to those seen on the exterior brickwork. The top corners of the rectangular portals were originally filled by broad shaped plaster modillions (Photo 7).

The other major public space is the assembly hall which occupies the Southern two-thirds of the second floor (Photo 8). This auditorium was provided by Eckhart under the provision that it be used as a meeting place for all educational or philanthropic organizations, but for no sectarian or political gatherings, nor for monetary gain. The room is entered on its North end through a pair of fully glazed doors with bevelled lights. The doors are set within a round-arched opening divided by vertical mullions into six art glass panels like those of the second floor windows which otherwise illuminate the room. Two wood picture moldings extend around the room. Seating for forty-five persons is provided by the original folding wooden opera chairs, which have upholstered cushions on their backs and seats; 175 such seats were originally provided, as well as a 9-by-14-foot dais on which a table, a large upholstered chair, and a piano stood (Photo 9).

The Eckhart Public Library and its park have largely retained their original appearance. While some of the building's fittings have since disappeared, most of the alterations of the building have been of a reversible nature. Such original features as have not simply been covered over are nonetheless well documented. The principal threat to the building's integrity is its need to accommodate more than the 30,000 volumes and generous reading areas for which it was originally designed. The entire site is a largely intact monument to Charles Eckhart's generosity and concern for his community.

# 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1911

**Builder/Architect** Patton & Miller, Architects  
J. Perry Long, Builder

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Eckhart Public Library and Eckhart Park are significant both as manifestations of local philanthropy and as a unique architectural expression. Efforts to create a library began c. 1897 when a committee headed by Auburn carriage and automobile manufacturer Charles Eckhart established a reading room in a downtown storefront. At the same time, the local Culture Club had established a library for the use of its members and contributors. After the passage of a state enabling act in 1904, the various service clubs joined together to raise subscriptions for the creation of a free public library. On July 6, 1906, the library board was officially constituted, the subscriptions were gathered, and the collections of the two reading rooms were donated to the board. A temporary library opened on March 8, 1907, and an appeal for building funds was made to Andrew Carnegie, who agreed to pledge \$ 12,500. At that time, Library Board Chairman Charles Eckhart, who had previously pledged to donate a site, additionally offered to provide a permanent library building as well as all furniture and equipment for it. His offer rather than Carnegie's was accepted, and on May 13, 1910, the corner stone was laid in ceremonies which included a speech by Indiana Governor Thomas Marshall (who became Woodrow Wilson's Vice-President three years later). The building was dedicated in 1911 and donated to the city along with the surrounding park under a series of protective covenants. In 1918 Eckhart purchased a fountain in Philadelphia for \$ 3,000. and donated it for the beautification of the park. His concern for the provision of a pleasant natural setting for the library was in step with the "City Beautiful" movement then current, which valued the creation of public parks and squares as much as the provision of grand civic architecture. Eckhart's simultaneous involvement in the founding of the Auburn Y.M.C.A. demonstrated that his philanthropy was devoted to the general improvement of the community, rather than the expression of a particular personal interest. The building produced by his commission of Chicago architects Patton and Miller is equally as varied in its architectural expression. The proportional dominance of the roofline recalls the Japanese and Swiss models then emulated by the Chicago Prairie School of the period, although a gabled form like that of the historical models was used, rather than the hipped, boxed eave roof type used by the early moderns. Similarly, the ornamentation of the wall surfaces and the design of the art glass windows use a stylized classical vocabulary heavily influenced by English Art Nouveau and the Vienna Sezession movements. Ornament is treated as an applique, rather than a by-product of functional requirements. This juxtaposition of a classically derived ornamental grammar upon a rustic massing is fundamental to the Craftsman style then popular. Public and commercial buildings in that style tend to be rusticized versions of contemporaneous Beaux-Arts compositions, and display an insistence upon axial symmetry. As an example of the Craftsman style, the Eckhart Public Library is atypical in the curved lines of its round-arched windows, projecting buttresses, and stair walls, the exceptional quality of its materials, and the use of buff glazed brick and golden oak woodwork rather than the dark brown tapestry brick and walnut or mahogany stain usually favored. Auburn possesses no other buildings of both the same style and quality; only the Beaux-Arts Dekalb County Courthouse (Mahurin & Mahurin, architects), begun in the same year the library was dedicated, provides a comparable level of architectural excellence. Across Indiana, most Craftsman style libraries of the Carnegie era,

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

- \_\_\_\_\_, "Dedication of the Eckhart Library," Garrett Weekly Clipper, Garrett, Indiana, January 19, 1911, Volume XXVI, Number 13.
- \_\_\_\_\_, History of Dekalb County, Indiana, B. F. Bowen and Company, Indianapolis, 1914.
- \_\_\_\_\_, History of Northeast Indiana, Lewis Publishing Company, Chicago and New York, 1920.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approximately one and one-half acres

Quadrangle name Auburn

UTM Zone Easting Northing  
Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UMT References

A	1 6	6 6 2	4 2 0	4 5 8 0	7 8 0	B	1 6	6 6 2	5 2 0	4 5 8 0	7 8 0
	Zone	East	ing	North	ing		Zone	East	ing	North	ing
C	1 6	6 6 2	4 2 0	4 5 8 0	7 2 0	D	1 6	6 6 2	5 2 0	4 5 8 0	7 3 0
E						F					
G						H					

### Verbal boundary description and justification

All of the block bounded by Twelfth Street on the North, Thirteenth Street on the South, Jackson Street on the East, and Van Buren Street on the West, which constitutes the whole of Eckhart Park and the grounds of the Eckhart Public Library.

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary Pifer Mountz

organization Library/Park Preservation, Inc. date February 1981

street & number 507 East Houston Street telephone (219)-357-4220

city or town Garrett state Indiana

## 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

title \_\_\_\_\_ date 9-29-81

For HCERS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>William H. Brown</u>	date <u>11.20.81</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest: <u>Linda McClelland</u>	date <u>11/9/81</u>
Chief of Registration	

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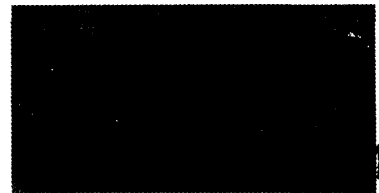
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such as those in nearby Garrett and Kendallville, or Patton and Miller's own design at Kentland, were built on a much more modest scale. The Eckhart Library's relationship to its setting is emulated by the Craftsman style library at Angola, which has most of its park, as well as a fountain, in front of the building, though the structure itself is of more modest sophistication. Most libraries of comparable size and quality were executed in the Beaux-Arts classical mode, such as those at Goshen and Crawfordsville. The Eckhart Public Library and Eckhart Park are thus both an expression of the social and humanitarian concerns of their donor, as well as a unique fusion of both the formal and informal proclivities of American architecture and urbanism at the turn of the Twentieth Century.

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\_\_\_\_\_, "Corner Stone of New Eckhart Public Library has now been Laid,"  
Auburn Courier, Auburn, Indiana, May 19, 1910, Volume XLVI,  
Number 14.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Gift of Citizen to His Beloved Townspeople," Auburn Courier,  
Auburn, Indiana, January 26, 1911, Volume XLVI, No. 50.