

MINNESOTA HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

MAR 2 1982

HISTORIC NAME: Steensland Library COUNTY: Rice
 CURRENT NAME: CITY/TWP.: Northfield
 LEGAL DESC.: See continuation sheet ADDRESS: St. Olaf College Campus

CLASSIFICATION:	CONDITION:	SIGNIFICANCE:	THEME/S:
Building <u>X</u>	Excellent <u>X</u>	Local <u>X</u>	Primary <u>Education</u>
Structure _____	Good _____	State _____	Secondary <u>Architecture</u>
Object _____	Fair _____	National _____	Others _____
District _____	Deteriorated _____		

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: Yes X No _____ Restricted X PRESENT USE: Gallery
 VISIBLE FROM THE ROAD: Yes X No _____
 OCCUPIED: Yes X No _____

DATE CONSTRUCTED: 1902 ORIGINAL USE: Library
 ORIGINAL OWNER: St. Olaf College ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Omeyer and Thori, St. Paul
 D.H. Lord, Northfield

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: St. Olaf College Northfield, MN 55057	ACREAGE: Less than one acre <u>X</u>
LOCAL CONTACT/ORG.: Northfield Historical Society, 408 Division Street, Northfield, MN 55057	UTM REFERENCE: Northfield Quad. 7.5 15 / 485645 / 4922720
FORM PREPARED BY: Britta Bloomberg	
DATE: April 1981	

DESCRIPTION:

Steensland Library occupies a prominent hilltop location at the southeast corner of the St. Olaf College campus on Northfield's west side. The building is located immediately northwest of Old Main (listed on the National Register in 1976). Steensland, Old Main, and two buildings of more recent construction (Classroom Annex and Flaten Hall) are situated around a cul-de-sac that is somewhat isolated from the main part of campus.

Steensland was designed in the Neo-Classical Revival style by St. Paul architects Omeyer and Thori and constructed in 1902. The building is of red brick construction and measures a mere 30 by 58 feet. The plan is symmetrical, with a raised projecting portico featuring four Ionic columns. The portico carries a full pediment which features a bullseye window enframed by a wreath and acacia sprigs in the tympanum. The three points of the portico are marked by owls at the sides and an acanthus leaf finial at the center. The portico is approached by a double stairway, and the raised portico base shelters the basement entry. This entry is flanked by two semi-circular windows. The wall surfaces are smooth, broken by contrasting brick corner quoins and Doric pilasters and a molded stone water table. Windows are rectilinear, with molded brick surrounds, trabeated cornices, and stone consoles. The main entry, featuring a perforated transom, is similarly framed by surrounds and cornice. A dentillated cornice circumvents the building. The hip roof is red tile and sports pineapple finials at the front corners. A central dome rises from the roof. The drum of the dome is decorated by garlands and swags. This drum is capped by a conical skylight of stained glass, and terminates in a pineapple finial.

Steensland retains excellent interior as well as exterior integrity. No longer in use as a library, Steensland served for a time as a recital hall and now is a campus gallery; both compatible uses have required a minimum of interior alterations.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Steensland Library is significant historically as one of the few extant buildings dating to earlier development period of St. Olaf College, a school founded as a Norwegian Lutheran high school in 1874. A college department was added in 1886, and by 1900 it had become an official college of the United Lutheran Church. Architecturally, Steensland is a good example of both the Neo-Classical Revival style as used in public buildings and of the first generation of college buildings constructed solely for library use at the turn-of-the-century. Steensland is one of three principal buildings on the campus which predates the majority of structures built between the mid-1920s and the 1950s. Steensland and adjacent Old Main (constructed in 1877-8 and listed in the National Register in 1976)

(see continuation sheet)

Significance - continued

best represent the academic building constructed during the college's early period of development. (Also dating to the earlier period is Ytterboe Hall, a dormitory constructed in 1900 and located across the campus among buildings of more recent construction.) Steensland Library was the gift of Mr. Halle Steensland, a friend of the college from Madison, Wisconsin. It was the first substantial individual gift received by the college and was dedicated on May 24, 1902. The building illustrates the changing role of a library at an institution of higher learning. Its modest scale was adequate in 1902 as a repository for books and a place for reference work, but as the college grew and as library services expanded, new facilities were needed. Forty years later, Rolvaag Memorial Library was constructed. Steensland, however, has remained a viable center of activity on the campus, serving for a time as a recital hall and now as a gallery.

Legal Description:

Part of the NW SW SW Sec. 36, T112 R20 described as follows. Begin at a point 275 ft. north of the southwest corner of the NW SW SW Sec. 36. Commence Ely. 150 ft.; thence Nly. 150 ft.; thence Wly 200 ft.; thence Sly. 150 ft.; thence Ely 50 ft. to point of beginning.

Bibliography:

Benson, William C., High on Manitou; A History of St. Olaf College, Northfield: 1949.

Mellby, C.A., St. Olaf College Through Fifty Years 1874-1924.

Northfield News, May 24, 1902; November 8, 1902.

St. Olaf College Archives, O.G. Felland Photo Collection.

Shaw, Joseph M., History of St. Olaf College 1874-1974, Northfield: 1974.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

for Keeper *Melvin Lynn*
1/19/89

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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**Note: These changes apply to
Steensland Library in Rice County,
Minnesota.**

REFERENCE NUMBER: 82003020

STATE: MINNESOTA

COUNTY: Rice

RESOURCE NAME (HISTORIC): Steensland Library, St. Olaf College

CITY:

VICINITY OF:

ADDRESS: off St. Olaf Ave.

CERTIFICATION DATE:

REMOVED DATE:

COMMENTS:

Nina M. Archabal

Nina M. Archabal
State Historic Preservation Officer

JUN 17 1988

Date