

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED NOV 9 1976
DATE ENTERED AUG 16 1977

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
Eager Free Public Library
AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
39 West Main Street
CITY, TOWN
Evansville
STATE
Wisconsin 53536
VICINITY OF
COUNTY
Rock
CODE
55
CODE
105

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 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	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" 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:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
City of Evansville, Robert M. Olsen, Mayor
STREET & NUMBER
31 South Madison
CITY, TOWN
Evansville
STATE
Wisconsin 53536

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
Rock County Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings
DATE
1975
DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
Rock County Historical Society
CITY, TOWN
Janesville
STATE
Wisconsin 53545

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<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 DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Eager Free Public Library is a hip-roofed oblong block (67 1/2' wide and 39' deep) built in 1908 by the Madison, Wisconsin architectural firm of Claude and Starck. This fine Prairie School building consists of two stories, a main floor and a basement, with an unfinished attic. The low foundations of concrete are battered. The body of the structure is of dark pressed red brick, topped with a string course and surmounted by a fine Sullivanesque terra cotta frieze. Originally bronze green, the frieze is now painted a cream color. Five ribbon windows with leaded glass punctuate the frieze on the east and west walls. Above the frieze spread the broad, flat-soffited eaves of the roof. The roof is still covered with terra cotta ceramic tiles.

The facade is symmetrical, with the entrance vestibule block balanced by projecting triple-bay windows on either side. The stained glass upper panes of the bays intersect with the frieze. This vestibule block is as high as the string course below the frieze. Two octagonal brick engaged columns project outwards at the corners. Their necking bands and abaci carry Sullivanesque relief; the top of the vestibule is a continuation of the horizontal line of the string course below the frieze.

A smaller and lower brick porch with a simpler frieze of concrete is located at the west or basement entrance. The elevation is similar to the T. B. Scott Free Library, a National Register property in Merrill, Wisconsin, constructed three years later by the same firm, though in the latter the triplet windows are flush with the walls; here they project.

The vestibule stairway leads up a half-story to the library proper, which is panelled in dark mission oak with high wainscoting, to allow for library shelves. The oak shelving is original. The 1865 square foot interior forms an open space for the central desk, displays and lounge area, flanked by the balanced reading room areas. This space is covered by curved ceilings in light plaster. On the south wall is the original red brick fireplace. The building is heated by radiators; the coal furnace has been converted to oil. Unobtrusive air conditioning and narrow-banded storm windows were recently installed so as to leave the original leaded Prairie School glass intact.

The only alterations to the library are minor, and in the eyes of the Wisconsin State Industrial Commission, did not constitute a structural alteration of the building. A low baffle wall of brick in front of the entrance holds two Prairie School planters; these are broad concrete basins on low pedestals. The wall was lowered and moved forward, and the stair landing of the front vestibule was extended, after 1958.

More recently, in 1974, the lecture room on the east side of the basement was redecorated as a children's room. The original Georgian pine panelling was painted. The floor was carpeted, including the stage, which holds book shelves for younger children. The rest of the basement is unaltered.

In 1964 and again in 1976 the tile roof was repaired. The original cork floor was covered with vinyl in 1964. The building has been maintained in fine condition and is a source of considerable civic pride. The board and staff are fully aware of its architectural merit.

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 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 1908

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Claude and Starck

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The primary significance of the Eager Free Public Library is architectural as possibly the first of a series of Prairie School libraries designed for Wisconsin towns by the architectural firm of Claude and Starck of Madison, Wisconsin. The partners of the firm were Louis Ward Claude (1868-1951) and Edward F. Starck (also born 1868), both Wisconsin natives. Claude had been employed in the offices of Adler and Sullivan in Chicago ca. 1890-91 and with Burnham and Root during the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. He remained a long-time friend of renowned architects Louis Sullivan, George Grant Elmslie and Frank Lloyd Wright. Claude and Starck were partners from ca. 1896-1929. Their most noteworthy works were designed in the Prairie style, apparently influenced by Claude's experience and contacts.

Well known for their domestic architecture in Madison and environs, they also achieved a regional reputation through their numerous commissions to build small libraries. They developed a functional plan, with balanced open interior spaces, high windows above built-in book shelving, and a useful basement. The simplicity of the dark interior woodwork plays against light plaster and panes of glass. In several cases, especially before 1908 and after 1916, exteriors in eclectic, neoclassic styles were used; as in the Aram Public Library in Delavan, or the Galena, Illinois Public Library. However, the firm's stature is based on the development of exteriors in the Prairie Style, with emphasis on the horizontality of brick walls and spreading hip roofs. The rhythmic grouping of windows was enhanced by their geometric patterns in softly colored leaded glass. Horizontality was furthered by rich organic terra cotta friezes in Sullivanesque style. These friezes were manufactured on special order by the now defunct Chicago Architectural Decorating Company. They closely resemble the designs of Louis Sullivan as carried out by his chief designer, George Grant Elmslie.¹

The Eager Free Public Library is the earliest existing of Claude and Starck's "Sullivanesque" Prairie School libraries in Wisconsin. It was followed by Merrill (1911), Jefferson (1911), Reedsburg (1912), Barron (1913) and Tomah (1916).

The library is named for its donor, Almeron Eager (1838-1902), a prominent local businessman and industrialist who made generous provisions in his will for a free public library for Evansville. He is also memorialized by a life-size bronze statue inside.

¹ David Gebhard, "Louis Sullivan and George Grant Elmslie," JSAH XIX (1960):62-68.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

History of Rock County. Chicago: Western Historical Co. 1879, pp. 827-8.
 Brown, Wm. F., ed. Rock County. Chicago: Cooper, 1908. Vol. II, p. 664; pp. 999-1001.
 Campbell, Byron. Pioneer Days in Evansville & Vicinity. Evansville: Antes, 1915. p. 60.
 Gebhard, David. "Louis Sullivan and George Grant Elmslie." JSAH. XIX (1960): pp. 62-68.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.2

UTM REFERENCES

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3	1	1	7	9	0
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4	7	3	8	7	4	0
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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Nancy Belle Douglas, Preservation Coordinator

ORGANIZATION

Rock County Historical Society

DATE

August 24, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 896

TELEPHONE

608/756-4509

CITY OR TOWN

Janesville

STATE

Wisconsin 53545

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Richard A. Erney

TITLE Acting Director
 State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE 10/29/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Wm. H. ...
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST: *Charles ...*
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 8/16/77
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
 DATE 8.15.77

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CONTINUATION SHEET	ITEM NUMBER	See below	PAGE 1
6.	<u>Wisconsin's Historic Preservation Plan, Volume II: The Inventory</u>		
	1972		State
	State Historical Society of Wisconsin		
	Madison		Wisconsin 53706
9.	Orr, Gordon D., Jr. "Prairie Homes in Madison," <u>The Journal of Historic Madison</u> , 1975, pp. 23, 30.		
	Dean, Jeffrey M. "T. B. Scott Free Library, Merrill, Wis.," ms: <u>NRHP 10-300</u> , 1973		
	Files of Rock County Historical Society; Eager Free Public Library.		
	Interview with Eunice Mattakat, 1975.		
	Douglas, Nancy and Hartung, R. P. <u>Rock County Historic Sites and Buildings</u> . Rock County, 1976, pp. 105 (Plate 37 h), 109, 144-7.		
11.	Donald N. Anderson, Historian & Registrar, Historic Preservation Division		
	State Historical Society of Wisconsin		8 September 1976
	816 State Street		608/262-0746
	Madison		Wisconsin 53706
	Katherine E. Hundt, Architectural Historian, Historic Preservation Division		
	State Historical Society of Wisconsin		27 October 1976
	816 State Street		608/262-2970
	Madison		Wisconsin 53706