

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED NOV 7 1978

**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 Plumb Memorial Library

AND/OR COMMON Plumb Memorial Library

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 47 Wooster Street

CITY, TOWN Shelton VICINITY OF Fifth - Ronald A. Sarasin

STATE Connecticut CODE Fairfield COUNTY CODE 01

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 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 type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input 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 City of Shelton

STREET & NUMBER 54 Hill Street

CITY, TOWN Shelton VICINITY OF CT 06484 STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Shelton Land Records, City Hall

STREET & NUMBER 54 Hill Street

CITY, TOWN Shelton STATE CT 06484

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE State Register of Historic Places

DATE 9/8/77 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN 59 South Prospect St., Hartford, CT 06106 STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

Plumb Memorial Library was built in 1895 on a corner site high on a ridge overlooking the downtown section of Shelton, Connecticut. Constructed of yellow brick with heavy reddish brownstone trim and a red slate roof, it is a distinguished example of the Romanesque public buildings of the late nineteenth century. The plan is "L" shaped with a square tower rising at the corner where the two one story wings intersect (Photo 1).

The tower is the most prominent architectural feature of the design. At its base is a large round arched entranceway having in the arch over a lattice the words "PLUMB LIBRARY" executed in red terra cotta (Photo 2). The arch springs from anthemion moldings in which every third motif is a human face. Above to the right is a recessed panel in which is carved an open book with the lettering "LUX" on one page and "LEX" on the other. This panel is balanced on the left by a curved section of brownstone wall decorated at the top with acanthus leaves.

Inside the entranceway granite steps lead up to the front doors. To the left of the doors is a metal plaque which, over a suitable inscription, has a bas relief bust of David W. Plumb in whose memory the library is named (Photo 3). In the entranceway a terra cotta molding in a spiral acanthus motif divides the glazed white tiles which form the lower part of the wall from the bricks above.

Over the arch between two brownstone string courses is a large clock face and above it are three narrow windows which rest on the upper brownstone string course. The tower rises above the height of the wings four square and free standing with a group of three round headed windows on each face. The windows are linked together by a third brownstone string course which runs around the four sides of the tower and serves as sill for the windows. Their wide, half-round brownstone caps also tie the windows together (Photo 4). The tower is crowned with a steep pyramidal roof of red tiles, with finial.

To the right of the tower the building extends just far enough under a partial gable to provide room for a group of three tall rectangular windows which light the Directors' Room. These three windows rest on the brownstone ashlar which as a high foundation forms the lower section of the wall. They are topped by a string course above which are three transom windows surmounted by the brownstone string course which runs under the clock. The recessed panel with the carving of the book is in the position of a fourth such transom window in the spandrel of the entrance arch.

A similar fenestration scheme is apparent in the wing to the left of the tower which is the reading room. Here the importance to the design of the high foundation again is clear. Above the water table the brownstone ashlar rises to the level of the sills so that fully one-third of the wall is brownstone, while the upper two-thirds is yellow brick. The end of this wing is semi-circular and its roof conforms, making a half-cone or apsidal shaped roof, topped by a crest finial (Photo 5). The red roof slates are exposed to weather as pentagons. The front expanse of the roof is broken by a curved eyebrow dormer.

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The northern wing, which is the book room, is rectangular in shape with a gable roof from which rises a tall molded chimney. High up on the walls under the eaves, in the Richardsonian manner, are rows of rectangular windows between continuous brownstone sills.

The library measures 67 feet across the front, and 62 feet in depth to the west wall of the book room wing.

The interior is executed in oak in the heavy manner of the period. In the reading room an unusual structural member is installed as part of the roof support system. Timbers attached to the walls, which slope inward, are joined at top and bottom across the room by connecting members which themselves, in the middle of the room, are connected by a vertical post. The resulting "truss" is not connected to the upper portions of the walls or to the ridgepole.

Two fireplaces are noteworthy. One, in the Directors' Room, has a glazed tile surround under a carved oak mantel and carved oak overmantel which includes an oval mirror. Original fireplace hardware is in place. The other, in the reading room, is of brick and terra cotta with the mantel corbelled out over supporting piers and with an overmantel in the shape of a truncated pyramid rising two-thirds of the height of the wall.

The building is in excellent condition and has no structural changes; a doorway has been cut in the north wall to connect with a modern addition.

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In 1975 a new building was added to the northeast. It connects with the original structure and the two are used as a unit. The new building, of steel skeleton construction with brick curtain walls, is two stories high and has 13,244 square feet of floor space. Theodore Chase of Ansonia was the architect.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input 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 1895

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Charles T. Beardsley

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Plumb Memorial Library is a fine example of the Romanesque design popularized for libraries in the late nineteenth century by H.H. Richardson (1838-1886) and his disciples. Its high square tower, large arched entranceway, brownstone water table and string courses, Richardsonian fenestration, and red tile roof all qualify it as one of the few examples of its type in Connecticut. The originality shown in the design of the architectural detail further establishes the building as one of outstanding quality.

Other libraries of this genre in Connecticut include the New London library (1890) by Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, successors to the office of H.H. Richardson, and the libraries of Hartford's George Keller (1842-1935) for Norfolk (1888) and Ansonia (1891). Keller also designed a library in Granville, Massachusetts (1900) in the same combination of yellow brick and brownstone trim as seen at Shelton.

The origin of the Shelton library dates from a special town meeting held on 13 February 1892 at which David W. Plumb (1809-1893) offered a resolution, which was adopted, that the town establish a Free Public Library and Reading Room. Plumb was a local business man with interests in the adjoining cities of Derby and Ansonia. He was president of the Star Pin Co., the Silver Plate Cutlery Co., and the Housatonic Water Co. and vice president of the Birmingham National Bank (Birmingham was the former name of Derby). His home was in Shelton and he had already made a gift to the community of Riverview Park.

His proposal for a library moved ahead and the institution took quarters in the Pierpont Block, a commercial building in the center of Shelton which is still standing. Plumb talked of plans for a new building for the library but unfortunately he died before any action was taken. Soon thereafter his brother, Horace S. Plumb of Bridgeport, offered to go ahead with such plans. The library holds in its records a receipt for the \$25,000 in securities which he donated for the purpose. Mrs. David W. Plumb donated the lot on which the library was built.

Charles T. Beardsley (1861-1937) of Bridgeport was engaged as architect and the building contractor was Beardsley Construction Co. of Shelton. Charles T. Beardsley was born in Derby, at the age of 15 went to work in the architectural office of Henry Ostend & Son in New Haven, and in 1885 opened his own office in Bridgeport where he designed the Park Lodge, St. Paul's parish house, Police Station No. 2, and homes for many clients including J. Lockwood and L.B. Plumb.

The sculptor of the bas relief bust in the entranceway was Emilio F. Patti (1860-1909) who worked in the Italian school. He died at the age of 49 in Englewood, New Jersey.

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bridgeport Post, 22 November 1937.
 Samuel Hart, ed., Representative Citizens of Connecticut, New York:
 American Historical Society, 1916.
Dictionnaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs et Graveurs, 1953,
 Librairie Gründ, 1962, v. 6.
Illustrated Review of Bridgeport, Connecticut, 1889.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .20 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	6591310	45757310	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See Map 73, Lot 375, Shelton Land Records, City Hall, 54 Hill St.,
 Shelton, Connecticut 06484

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

David F. Ransom, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

9 August 1977

STREET & NUMBER

59 South Prospect Street

TELEPHONE

203 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT 06106

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



TITLE

Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

5/19/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST *William Johnson*
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE *11/2/78*
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
 DATE *11/2/78*

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Work went forward in Shelton in 1894 and 1895 with appropriate dedication ceremonies held 4 December 1895 at which the governor of Connecticut, O. Vincent Coffin, was the featured speaker.

The proximity of the similar Keller library, built in the adjoining city of Ansonia only four years earlier, invites comparison of the two designs. It is reasonable to believe that Beardsley must have been familiar with Keller's work. Both used the "L" shaped plan with red tile roof, one a mirror image of the other, with a tower at the point of intersection of the wings. Keller designed the book room to parallel the street to the right of the tower with the reading room in a wing to the back. Beardsley reversed the positions and the direction by designing his reading room parallel to the street to the left of the tower, with the book room wing to the rear. Keller did his building in a monochrome of red sandstone while Beardsley made much of the difference in colors between red stone and yellow brick both for contrasting solid surfaces and for his several string courses. Both honored the patron by a metal plaque with bas relief in the entrance.

The Ansonia library is larger, 70 by 82 feet compared with 67 by 62 feet in Shelton. Both have the Romanesque round entrance arch and the row of high Richardsonian windows. In both libraries the entrance is twelve to fifteen feet from the corner of the building. In Ansonia Keller placed the tower to the left of the intersection of the wings and the entrance to the right of the tower. In Shelton Beardsley placed the Directors' Room to the right of the tower so that the tower, with the entrance, is not at the corner of the building. Both have an element of sculpture on the exterior near the door, the carved book in Shelton and a statue of Sapentia in Ansonia.

Keller's design is somewhat simpler, and with his use of only one color of building material he achieved a greater monumentality. Moreover, he is due credit for having created his design first. On the other hand, Beardsley successfully displayed an inventiveness in careful asymmetry which sets his building apart.

An instance of this inventiveness is the partial gable to the right of the tower which is unusual but which is prevented from overweighting the design by the sensitive use of the eyebrow dormer on the left. In similar fashion, the book sculpture panel, placed as an extension of the row of transom windows is balanced by the curved double acanthus leaf molding. The supports from which the entrance arch springs are another case in point. On the right the anthemion molding is over a block of red stone which rises one course above the regular ashlar, creating the effect of a pier capital. On the left the same molding appears as a molding at the top of the ashlar, here higher than on the

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right side which is the lower part of the reading room wall. The apsidal roof of the reading room, while not unique, fitted in with Beardsley's general purpose of creating an out of the ordinary design.

The library which the Plumb family gave to the City of Shelton has been steadily used and well maintained over the more than three-quarters of a century since it was constructed. With a modern addition to the north which provides added floor space and more efficient book storage, it continues to serve the community well, providing library facilities in a building which is a distinguished example of late nineteenth century Romanesque architecture.