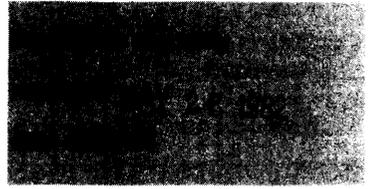


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 Alameda Free Library

and/or common Alameda Free Library

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2. Location

street & number 2264 Santa Clara Avenue n/a not for publication

city, town Alameda n/a vicinity of congressional district 9th

state California code (06) county Alameda code (001)

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 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 type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Library

4. Owner of Property

name City of Alameda

street & number Oak Street and Santa Clara Avenue

city, town Alameda n/a vicinity of state CA 94501

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Alameda County Courthouse

street & number 1225 Fallon Street

city, town Oakland state CA 94612

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alameda Historical & Architectural Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date February 1, 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records Alameda Historical Survey Room 103

city, town Alameda state CA 94501

①

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 type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located on the southwest corner of Santa Clara Avenue and Oak Street, across from the Alameda City Hall, the Alameda Free Library is a two-story rectangular brick building faced with buff-colored pressed and molded brick above a grey quarry-faced sandstone raised basement. The bricks were manufactured by N. Clark & Son at the West End pottery in Alameda and much of the sandstone came from Colusa County.^{1/} The building is 70 feet wide and 65 feet deep with a 10-foot landscaped border between the building and the street side property lines. There is a one-story rounded bay in the rear and a projecting portico for the front entry on Santa Clara Avenue. The building is eclectic in style, with Neoclassical, Renaissance, and Baroque elements.

The central raised portion of the building has a metal hip roof with a raised glass paneled skylight surrounded by a high stucco-covered parapet wall with a metal cap. This allowed for a 48-foot space between the surface of the foundation and the arched interior ceiling. The lower side sections of the building are topped by truncated hip roofs of standing seam metal with a galvanized iron cornice.

The Santa Clara (front) facade features a classical portico with two round, molded brick Corinthian columns, a beige-colored metal architrave, brick frieze and dentilated pediment with a galvanized iron tympanum. The tympanum is decorated with a classical scroll and a central medallion with an open book and bookmark. On either side of the entry are large round-arched composite windows consisting of a rectangular double-hung window below, flanked by engaged brick Ionic columns and Doric pilasters. Above is a semi-circular fanlight with brick surround arch and a decorative keystone. Small rectangular windows with Raymond granite sills are at the basement level.

The slightly projecting end bays of the Oak Street side of the building each contain a large composite window identical to the front windows. Between them are two rectangular chimneys which extend above the roof and four rectangular windows with brick panels below. The windows are trimmed above and below with bands of quarry-faced buff-colored sandstone matching the brick's color. Four small rectangular windows are located on the second floor below the metal trim and four more windows are at the basement level.

Two sets of wide steps lead to the front entry. The lower set is California granite and the upper set is marble. Low stone walls accented by carved fan-like finials flank the stairs. The porch and entry floor are marble mosaic and the entry walls are paneled in marble.

A second set of marble stairs leads to the main room of the building which is two stories high and features a barrel vaulted ceiling with a central skylight. The galleries along either side are 21 feet wide and 60 feet long, supported by eight smooth Corinthian columns in couplets. The galleries are reached by stairways from the left and right side of the oak paneled vestibule. The galleries and staircases have painted brass plated wrought iron railings with oak bannisters.

An outstanding features of the building is the five stained glass windows on the south wall at the second floor level. The center window depicts a torch of learning and an open book with the words *Ex Libris*. The other windows from left to right depict the trademarks of early printers Van der Goes (Dutch), Aldus (Italian), Fust & Schoeffer (German) and Regnault (French).

(Continued)

^{1/} Alameda Argus, May 24, 1902, in Library Notes, Vol. 2, July 1899-December 1902.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

Alterations

The exterior of the building is almost unchanged since its completion in 1903. In 1926, an elevated corridor was built between the rear of the library and the shingled bungalow at 1429 Oak Street which was converted into the Children's Library at that time. The bungalow is a redwood-frame structure, one-story with raised basement and a hip roof. It was erected in 1904 by C. H. Foster, builder of the Library. Foster lived in the bungalow until a few years before his death in 1915. It is not included in the nomination.*

In 1955, a portion of the brick facade on the third floor parapet walls fell off due to deterioration of the lime mortar. In 1956, the brick was removed and the walls were stuccoed, as was a portion of the brick frieze on the front of the building. Four metal urns on the corners of the parapet wall were removed at the same time. Other minor alterations include replacement of the wooden front doors with modern glass doors and replacement of the wooden window sashes with aluminium on the east side of the building. Metal grills were added to the front fanlights in 1980.

The interior has been modified only slightly over the years as the library's collection has grown and book shelves and cabinets have encroached into the once-open central area. A few partitions and book shelves have been added below the galleries and in 1965 a librarian's office was enclosed in the south end of the west gallery. The original light green interior with dark green columns has been painted white and fluorescent lighting was installed throughout the building in 1948. The original charge desk, located at the rear of the library, was replaced in 1945 and moved to its present location at the front of the library in 1965.

*Note: The Children's Library has not been included in the nomination for the following reasons:

1. It was not a part of the original design of the Library. It was a residential structure on an adjacent parcel which was later acquired by the Library and converted to Library use.
2. The original bungalow has been so substantially altered that it has lost much of its historic character.
3. The building is not structurally integrated into the original library building; the two are connected by an elevated corridor which could be removed easily.

The bungalow which now serves as the Children's Library originally had its own Assessor's Parcel Number. Following acquisition by the Library, the residential lot was added to the original Library lot, and the present Assessor's Parcel Number now includes both sections. The nominated property is the northern portion of Assessor's Parcel 71-218-01, and is the original 90' x 98.75' Library lot.

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/
<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Library
Specific dates 1902	Builder/Architect C. H. Foster & Son/Curtis & Willcox			

Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

The Alameda Free Library building, erected in 1902-03, is significant as the City of Alameda's first library building, still in use as the City's main library. It was built with a \$35,000 grant from Andrew Carnegie and designed by architects William H. Willcox and John M. Curtis of San Francisco who designed many private and public buildings in California. The builder was C. H. Foster and Son who lived in Alameda and built over 100 private and public buildings in Alameda over a 30-year period. The building is located across Santa Clara Avenue from the Alameda City Hall (1896; Percy and Hamilton, included on the National Register in 1980), and next to the Park Street Historic Commercial District (application for inclusion on the National Register pending, February, 1982). The Library is outstanding for its craftsmanship in the use of brick and stone in a major public building. The entry columns were said to be the first brick columns ever constructed in California.^{1/} The building conveys the appropriate monumental Neo-classical imagery of its type and period, and is notable for the high quality of its interior and exterior design. It is in excellent condition with only a few minor alterations.

History of the Alameda Free Library

The Alameda Library had its beginnings in 1877 as the Free Reading Room and Library Association, located in a store in the Smith Block on Park Street. The early library moved frequently and occupied temporary quarters in a number of buildings until the first library building was constructed. In 1878, it moved to a room in the Park Opera House Building at Park Street and Buena Vista Avenue, and in 1879 the Library was taken over by the Town of Alameda following the enactment of enabling laws for public libraries by the California Legislature. The library moved to the Tucker Building above the Post Office at the corner of Park Street and Santa Clara (Park Row) in 1881 and to the Tisdale Block on Park Street in 1886. The present library lot was purchased in 1886 for the sum of \$4,000 from Mr. F. Boehmer "less \$400 which that gentleman threw off as his donation."^{2/} The Library moved to the Boehmer Building at Park Street and Central Avenue in 1887 where it remained until it moved into the west wing of the new City Hall in 1897. The last move took place in 1903 when the present building was completed.

Raising Funds for the Library Building

In the years from 1895 to 1901, several efforts were made to raise money for a library building. Although Alameda ranked well above any other city in California for per capita circulation of books, the City Trustees were unwilling to institute a tax or to hold a bond election, and efforts to raise money by private subscription were not successful. In 1899, in response to a request from the City Librarian, Charles L. Weller, \$10,000 was offered to the City by Andrew Carnegie with the balance of the cost of the building to be raised by subscriptions. "Alameda is so rich (Mr. Carnegie) thinks her citizens will respond liberally."^{3/} Again efforts to raise additional money were unsuccessful. George H. Mastick, President of the Library Board, sent a second letter to Mr. Carnegie in 1901 explaining that the City had not been able to raise enough money to build a "proper edifice." Mr. Carnegie then increased his gift to \$35,000,^{4/} an unusually large amount even for Andrew Carnegie. Of 1349 communities in the United States that received grants from Andrew Carnegie to build one library building, only 119 or 9% received grants for \$30,000 or more.^{5/}

(Continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Library Clippings & Notes, Vol. 1-18, 1893-1982 (Unpublished)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 0.20 Acre

Quadrangle name Oakland East, California

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 1 0 5 6 6 7 2 0 4 1 7 9 9 0 0
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Library

occupies its original 90' x 98.75' lot on the southwest corner of Santa Clara Avenue and Oak Street. Northern portion of Assessor's Parcel 71-218-01.

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

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code

11. Form Prepared By

Woody Minor, Consultant

name/title Rhoda Alvarez, Assistant Planner; Claire Coustier, Alameda Free Library;

organization City of Alameda Planning Department date February 9, 1982

street & number Santa Clara at Oak Street telephone (415)522-4100, ext. 252

city or town Alameda state CA 94501

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 State Historic Preservation Officer

date May 24, 1982

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

date 6/25/82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Register

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

In 1967, of 142 Carnegie Libraries erected in California, 37 had been demolished and only 86 were still in use as public libraries;^{6/} the remainder had been converted to other uses. It is not known how many Carnegie libraries are still in existence at this time.

Designing & Building the Library

After receiving the generous grant from Andrew Carnegie, the Library trustees held a competition for design of the building with a first prize of \$750. The building was not to exceed \$30,000 in cost. "A one-story building with a gallery wholly or partially around the inside is preferred . . . Terra Cotta, Brick or stone or a combination of such materials may be employed. . . A building is required that shall be as fire resisting as possible."^{7/}

The winning design, chosen out of 14 entries, was submitted by San Francisco architects, William H. Willcox and John M. Curtis. (See Appendix pp. 4 & 5 for perspectives.) They had "erected hundreds of buildings in this and other states" including St. Luke's Hospital and the United States General Hospital at the Presidio (San Francisco), the Evening Bee Building and High School in Sacramento, and the Palo Alto High School.^{8/}

The building was constructed generally as planned although the original bids all came in too high and much of the planned decoration was eliminated to reduce the cost. The main floor contained a children's room, fiction room, reference room, delivery room, stack room and librarian's office. The east gallery was the ladies room and the reading room was located in the west gallery. The basement contained a workroom and a fumigation plant to kill germs on books used by sick people.

The building contract was awarded to C. H. Foster & Son, residents of Alameda and builders of many residences and public buildings in Alameda. Foster came to Alameda in 1872 when he was chosen to supervise construction of a plant for the Pacific Cordage Company in Melrose, now part of Oakland. Much of his work in Alameda has been torn down such as the first city hall and fire house, the first high school (1875) and the first west end school. The 1892 annual edition of the Argus described Foster as "connected with all the leading improvements of the City, and fully 125 houses now stand to show the thoroughness of his work. . . He has also built fully 25 of the glass front stores on Park Street."^{9/} He formed a partnership with his son, G. J. Foster in 1892. Among his existing buildings are the Wells Fargo Bank formerly the Alameda National Bank, 1902 remodeling (1400 Park Street), the Knowland Wedding cottage, 1893, the Fossing Building, 1886 (Park Street and Pacific Avenue), and the Old Masonic Temple, 1891 (1327-33 Park Street).^{10/} He also built and occupied the bungalow directly south of the Library (1429 Oak Street, 1904) which was converted to the Children's Library in 1926.

Footnotes

- 1/ Alameda Encinal, October 13, 1902, in Library Notes, Volume 2, July, 1899-December, 1902.
- 2/ Alameda Encinal, August 23, 1895, in Library Notes, Volume 2, July, 1899-December, 1902.
- 3/ Alameda Argus, October 18, 1899, in Library Notes, Volume 2, July, 1899-December, 1902.
- 4/ Alameda Encinal, July 9, 1901, in Library Notes, Volume 2, July, 1899-December, 1902.

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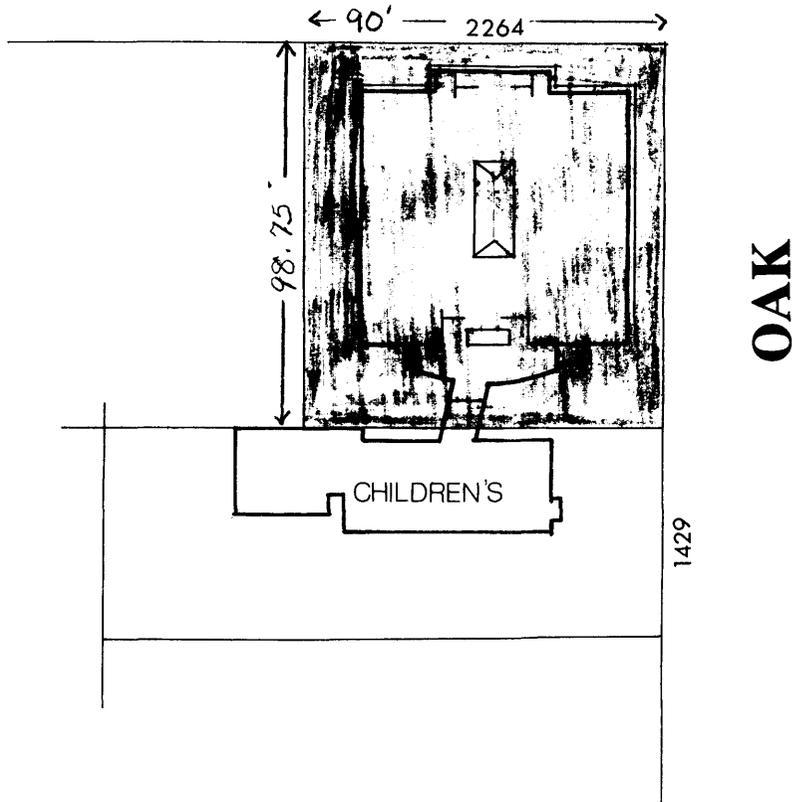
CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

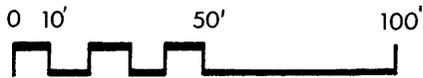
PAGE 2

- 5/ Geo. S. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries, Their History & Impact on American Public Library Development*, Chicago, 1969, p. 16.
- 6/ Ibid, p. 19.
- 7/ Competition of Plans for the New Library Building for the Alameda Free Public Library the Gift of Andrew Carnegie, Esq., Alameda, Cal. Nov. 1, 1901, pp. 4-7 in *Library Notes*, Volume 2.
- 8/ Alameda Encinal, January 13, 1902, in *Library Notes*, Volume 2.
- 9/ Alameda Argus, December 24, 1892, page 5, Col. 5.
- 10/ Alameda Argus, December 20, 1902, p. 4, Col. 7;
Oakland Tribune, February 17, 1909;
Alameda Times Star, January 23, 1915 (Obituary);
Alameda Times Star, December 18, 1978, p. 3 (copies available in C. H. Foster file, Room 103, City of Alameda Planning Department, City Hall);

SANTA CLARA



LIBRARY SITE PLAN



SOURCE: SANBORN MAPS, JUNE 1970

Alameda Free Library
2264 Santa Clara Avenue
Alameda, Alameda County, CA

 Nominated Property