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INVENTORY SHEET FOR GROUP NOMINATIONS: IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BOISE, IDAHO

NOMINATION: Idaho Falls Downtown multiple resource area
(partial inventory: architecture)

SITE NAME: Idaho Falls Public Library SITE NUMBER: 8

LOCATION: Elm and Eastern streets

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS:

City of Idaho Falls
P.O. Box 220
Idaho Falls, ID 83402

QUADRANGLE AND SCALE: Idaho Falls South, 7.5 minute ACREAGE: less than one

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nomination includes the Idaho Falls Public Library and the property on which it stands, lots 5 and 6, block 23, Idaho Falls Original Townsite.

UTM(S): 12/416130/4815570

DATE OR PERIOD: 1916, 1938-1940 ARCHITECT OR BUILDER: Wayland and Fennell

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: architecture

EVALUATED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: state

CONDITION: good, altered, original site

DESCRIPTION:

The Idaho Falls Public Library is a one-story red brick building with a raised basement story. The current facade is a tripartite symmetrical composition with a central projecting entrance pavilion. This entryway is a 1938-1940 addition to the original building. The remaining sections of the facade are two bays each, separated by brick piers. Each bay contains metal sash window of twelve panels with two operational lights in each unit. Above each window unit is a flat brick relieving arch with a projecting, scrolled terra cotta keystone. These metal windows are also a 1938-1940 modification of the original structure. Other changes include enlargement of the basement windows, an addition to the rear of the building, and an outset side entrance to the lower level. The original character of the building, with a classical entrance flanked by large Doric columns and windows with heavy wood mullions separating a central window from smaller side lights, was changed somewhat with the 1938-1940 remodeling. The new entrance piece has double metal doors recessed between large brick piers. The terra cotta decoration of floral, leaf, and egg and dart motifs and the thin rope-like columns are suggestive of the Art Deco style of the period of the remodeling. These motifs are repeated on the new side entrance. A metal cornice and brick parapet extend along the entire circumference of the structure.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Idaho Falls Public Library is architecturally significant as a representative of two phases in library construction and development in Idaho Falls. The core of the building, still representative of the Renaissance Revival style of the original building, dates from 1916; the entrance pavilion, window sash, side entrance, and rear extension are representative of the Art Deco-influenced classicism of Public Works Administration projects as they were typically designed in southern Idaho. Among PWA-sponsored construction in southeast Idaho the building's 1938-1940 entrance is an exceptionally fine example of Art Deco design, equalled only in a handful of examples around the state.

The library building is historically significant for its association with a group of prominent Idaho Falls women who in 1898 formed an organization to improve the quality and appearance of the town in which they lived. They called themselves the Village Improvement Society and embarked on a crusade to beautify Idaho Falls. Their achievements included establishment of city parks, planting trees along then barren streets, and founding the city's public library. The library was originally housed in the basement of the Baptist church, but the VIS soon set out to obtain a grant from the Carnegie Library Foundation for the construction of a library building. In 1905, Andrew Carnegie pledged the sum of $10,000 for the city of Idaho Falls to commission a building for the public library. The building was completed in 1916. At this time the population of the city was 6,000 persons. By 1938, the population had risen to 15,000 and the size and quality of the building had become inadequate. The city, in conjunction with the Public Works Administration, began a remodeling project to modernize and enlarge the existing structure. At a cost of $70,000, the structure was reinforced to withstand earthquakes and fire, the electrical and mechanical systems were updated, and the size was increased to 12,500 square feet.

PUBLIC
LIBRARY

Idaho Falls Public Library
Site 8, Idaho Falls Downtown multiple resource area
Elm and Eastern streets
Idaho Falls, Bonneville County, Idaho

photograph by Duane Garrett

1978

Negative on file at Idaho State Historical Society

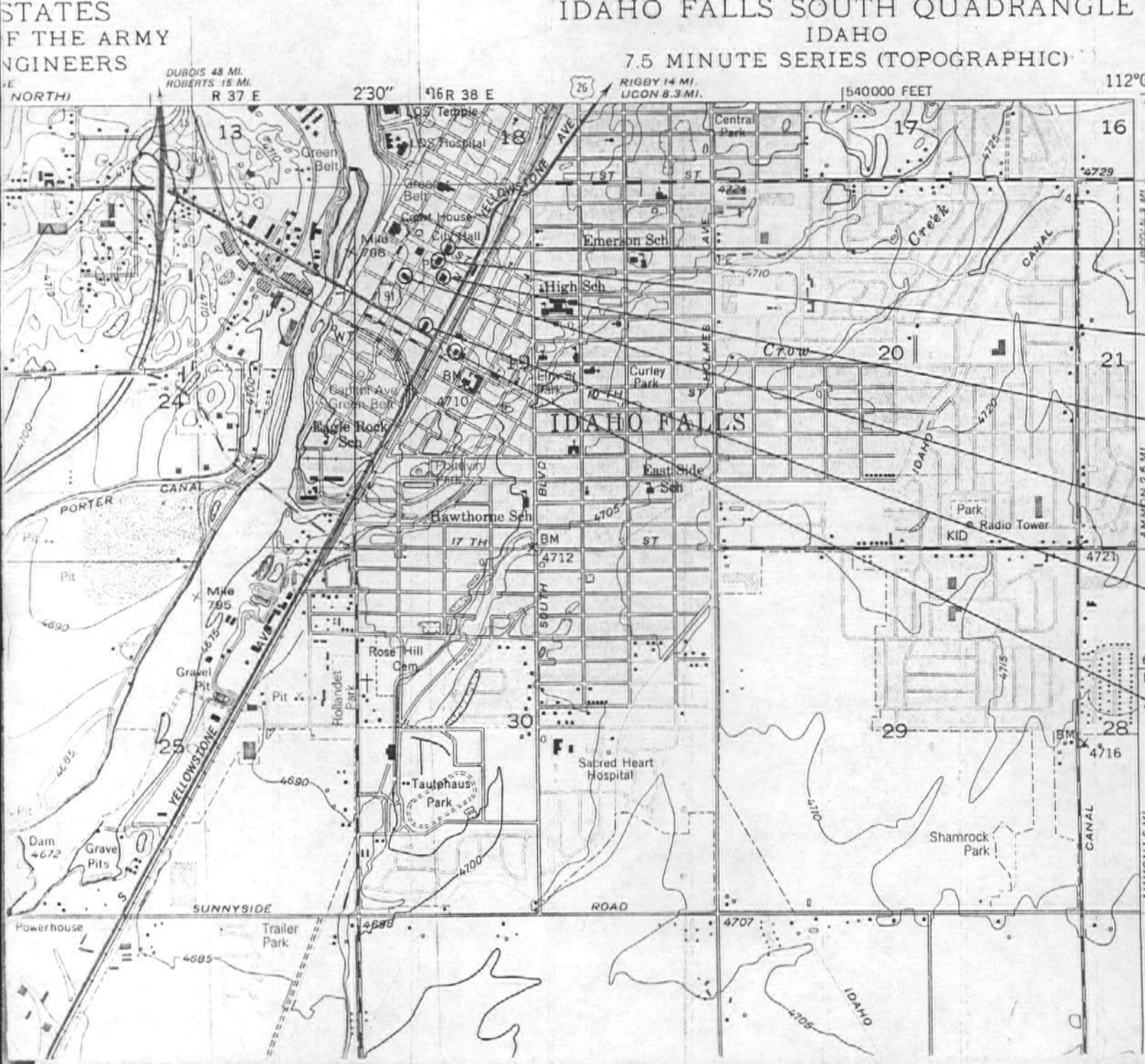
view from northwest

Photograph one of one

STATES
F THE ARMY
NGINEERS

IDAHO FALLS SOUTH QUADRANGLE
IDAHO
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

3671 III SW (UCON)



IDAHO FALLS DOWNTOWN...
IDAHO FALLS, IDAHO

1 IDAHO FALLS CITY BLDG.
12/416110/4816000

5 ROSS HOTEL (com. name)
12/416060/4815960

4 AHLSTROM BUILDING (common name)
12/416085/4815885

6 KRESS BUILDING
12/415920/4815900

9 ROCKY MOUNTAIN BELL BUILDING
12/416000/4815680

8 IDAHO FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY
12/416130/4815570