

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

BURNHAM ATHENAEUM

AND/OR COMMON

CHAMPAIGN PUBLIC LIBRARY

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

306 W. Church Street

CITY, TOWN

Champaign

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

21

STATE

Illinois

CODE

61820

COUNTY

Champaign

CODE

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

(current)

## CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT  
☒ BUILDING(S)  
☐ STRUCTURE  
☐ SITE  
☐ OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC  
☐ PRIVATE  
☐ BOTH  
**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**  
☐ IN PROCESS  
☒ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☐ OCCUPIED  
☒ UNOCCUPIED (after 2-3-78)  
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS  
**ACCESSIBLE**  
☐ YES: RESTRICTED  
☒ YES: UNRESTRICTED  
☐ NO

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE  
☐ MUSEUM  
☐ COMMERCIAL  
☐ PARK  
☐ EDUCATIONAL  
☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
☐ ENTERTAINMENT  
☐ RELIGIOUS  
☐ GOVERNMENT  
☐ SCIENTIFIC  
☐ INDUSTRIAL  
☐ TRANSPORTATION  
☒ OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CITY LIBRARY OF THE CITY OF CHAMPAIGN

STREET &amp; NUMBER

505 S. RANDOLPH

CITY, TOWN

CHAMPAIGN

VICINITY OF

STATE

ILLINOIS 61820

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Champaign County Courthouse, Registrar of Deeds

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Urbana

STATE

Illinois

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Illinois Historic Structures Survey/Champaign County

DATE

April 1975

☐ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☒ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Illinois Department of Conservation

CITY, TOWN

Springfield

STATE

Illinois

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT  
☒ GOOD  
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED  
☐ RUINS  
☐ UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED  
☒ ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE  
☐ MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Burnham Athenaeum, built in 1896, is situated on two adjacent urban lots forming a 132' square site, near the downtown business center of Champaign, Illinois. The building faces West Side Park to the south. This large, open public park is the oldest in the county and allows an uninterrupted view of the Athenaeum looking north.

The exterior of the two story neo-classic style building is of cream-colored Powhattan brick, with horizontal bands of matching terra cotta at the window sill lines. The front (south) facade features a classical pediment surmounting four engaged fluted Ionic columns. Below the pediment the frieze is inscribed with the words "The Burnham Athenaeum." Above the door of the symmetrical entrance portico, the following statement is also inscribed in terra cotta: "This building was erected by A.C. Burnham as a free public library for the city of Champaign anno domini MDCCCXCV." A hip roof of light green slate caps the building, which has a modified "T" shaped plan. The building is 70' deep and 92' wide at its extreme points.

Minor modifications were made to the exterior structure in 1970-71. A vestibule was added at the main entrance and a fire escape was added on the northeast. At that same time, window-style air conditioners were installed in many windows. In most cases, the section of sash was removed to receive the units. No other changes have been made on the exterior of the structure from its original construction.

The interior of the building features a large front staircase leading to the second floor. Service stairs descend to the basement both here and in the northeast. The first floor contains reading rooms, circulation desk, book stacks, work room and toilet.

The second floor features a large meeting room (since subdivided), children's reading room, librarian's office, staff room, and recently, two toilets. Plastered ceilings and walls on both floors are high and delineated with wood beams. Large single-light sash windows provide ample natural light.

Also in 1970-71, certain modifications were made to the interior of the building. A suspended acoustical tile ceiling was installed with new fluorescent lighting, covering up but not destroying the original beamed ceiling. A new electrical service was added to serve the window air conditioners, etc. Smoke doors were added on the first floor to enclose the front staircase. The circulation desk was removed and a new one installed near the entry vestibule. In addition, new non-structural partitions were installed on the second floor to provide more work space, increased children's room and toilets.

In summary, the building has been altered very little during its lifetime, and is in good structural condition. Modifications which have been made can be easily reversed. With proper planning and supervision the Burnham Athenaeum can readily be restored to its original condition.

# 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 1896, 1970

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Julius A. Schweinfurth

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Burnham Athenaeum of Champaign, Illinois was erected in 1896 through the generosity of Albert C. Burnham. Until that time the public library had been housed in two different temporary locations. Julius A. Schweinfurth, F.A.I.A., was the architect. He received his architectural training in the Boston firm of Peabody and Stearns, and remained as a draftsman for 13 years. From 1884-1886, he practiced in Cleveland with his brother, Charles. The years from 1886-1895 seemed to have been spent in study and travel abroad--we know he attended the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris and also travelled to London, Florence, and Rome. In 1895, he returned to Boston and opened an office on State Street. His reputation was secured with the many buildings he designed for Wellesley College and his churches, schools, municipal, and private buildings constructed in the Boston area. Youngstown, Ohio has some of his work, but the Burnham Athenaeum seems to be the westernmost example of his work.

The Burnham Athenaeum was one of the first commissions he received upon his return from Europe. He published the plans in The American Architect & Building News of April 25, 1896 and made these comments:

"This public library is now being built at a cost of \$35,000, the gift of A.D. Burnham, Esq. of Champaign. The first floor contains a stairway hall, a small reception or private reading room, the delivery room, main reading room, reference room, librarian's room, book stack room (present capacity, 50,000 to 60,000 books), and the usual toilet arrangements. A peculiarity of the arrangement is that the librarian standing at the desk can control all of the rooms. The second floor contains various committee rooms, trustees' room, ante-room and a large hall, to be used for the art collection and for meetings, etc.; this will seat from 400 to 500 people. The building is constructed on the "slow-burning" plan, the stack room being especially well protected by tinned doors, etc., heated and ventilated by indirect steam. The exterior is built of light cream-colored bricks and terra-cotta of about the same tone, and the roof covered with light green slates."

When the Athenaeum was officially turned over to the city of Champaign on December 17, 1896, the exercises were held in the First Presbyterian Church. Mr. Gere, representing the donor, expressed Mr. Burnham's hope that the "Library would grow in usefulness...". Dr. Draper, president of the University of Illinois, as closing speaker said, "We have been given this magnificent building and now we should undertake to put it to its true uses. There is no Institution which can be reared in a community which will work greater good than a public library."

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 6

PAGE 1

Historic Sites in Champaign County.  
1976  
Champaign County Historical Museum  
Champaign, Illinois

Xcounty

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The connection between the University and the library began early on. In September, 1899, a children's department was opened and over the years has been a source of practice of library theory for the Library School students and faculty. By 1923 three rooms and 16' of the auditorium had been given over to the Children's Department on the second floor.

For 82 years the library has grown in usefulness, until now it must leave its home. Books, audio-visual equipment, art reproductions have gradually reduced the space for "suitable reading and lecture rooms" as specified in the original deed of gift. However, this aspect of the building's use could be revived.

The view from the windows of the upper hall fronting on the park (much admired at the library reception) has changed little in 82 years. West Side Park, (the first park in Champaign County, c. 1854) provides a pleasing landscape for the area. Its bronze fountain, "Prayer for Rain" was installed in the park in 1899 and is the work of Edward Kemeys who designed several groups for the Columbian Exposition. The neo-classic form of the library with its Ionic columned facade also reflects the impact of the Columbian Exposition. Mr. Schweinfurth's former employer, Peabody & Stearns, was one of the five firms which planned the exposition buildings.

At the east side of the park, there remain the homes of Mr. Burnham's banking partners, Mr. Trevett and Mr. Mattis, whose bank held the original trust for the Athenaeum. These two homes, Trevett House (1900 Georgian Revival), and the Mattis House (1883 Queen Anne style) compliment the Athenaeum, which reflects the elegance and culture of the turn of the century.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Krats, Edwin A., History of the Champaign Public Library and Reading Room, June, 1926, Champaign, Illinois.  
"The Burnham Athenaeum" in The American Architect and Building News, v. 52, p.39, p1/1061 April 25, 1896, illus.  
"The Burnham Athenaeum, Champaign, Illinois., in Brickbuilder. v.5, p1.63-64, 1896.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1

QUADRANGLE NAME Urbana

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 16 39 40 00 00 44 41 50 00

B                           

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C                           

D                           

E                           

F                           

G                           

H                           

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots nine (9) and ten (10), block four (4) of Farnum, Clark and White's addition to Urbana, (now a part of the city of Champaign), in the State of Illinois.

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

Nora Winay/ Paul Selin/ Gary Olsen/ Michele Olsen/ Joyce Wajenberg/ Russell Dankert

ORGANIZATION

Burnham Athenaeum Committee (BAC)

DATE

January 17, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

One American National Bank Building

TELEPHONE

211/356-6363

CITY OR TOWN

Champaign,

STATE

Illinois 61820

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE X

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

Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

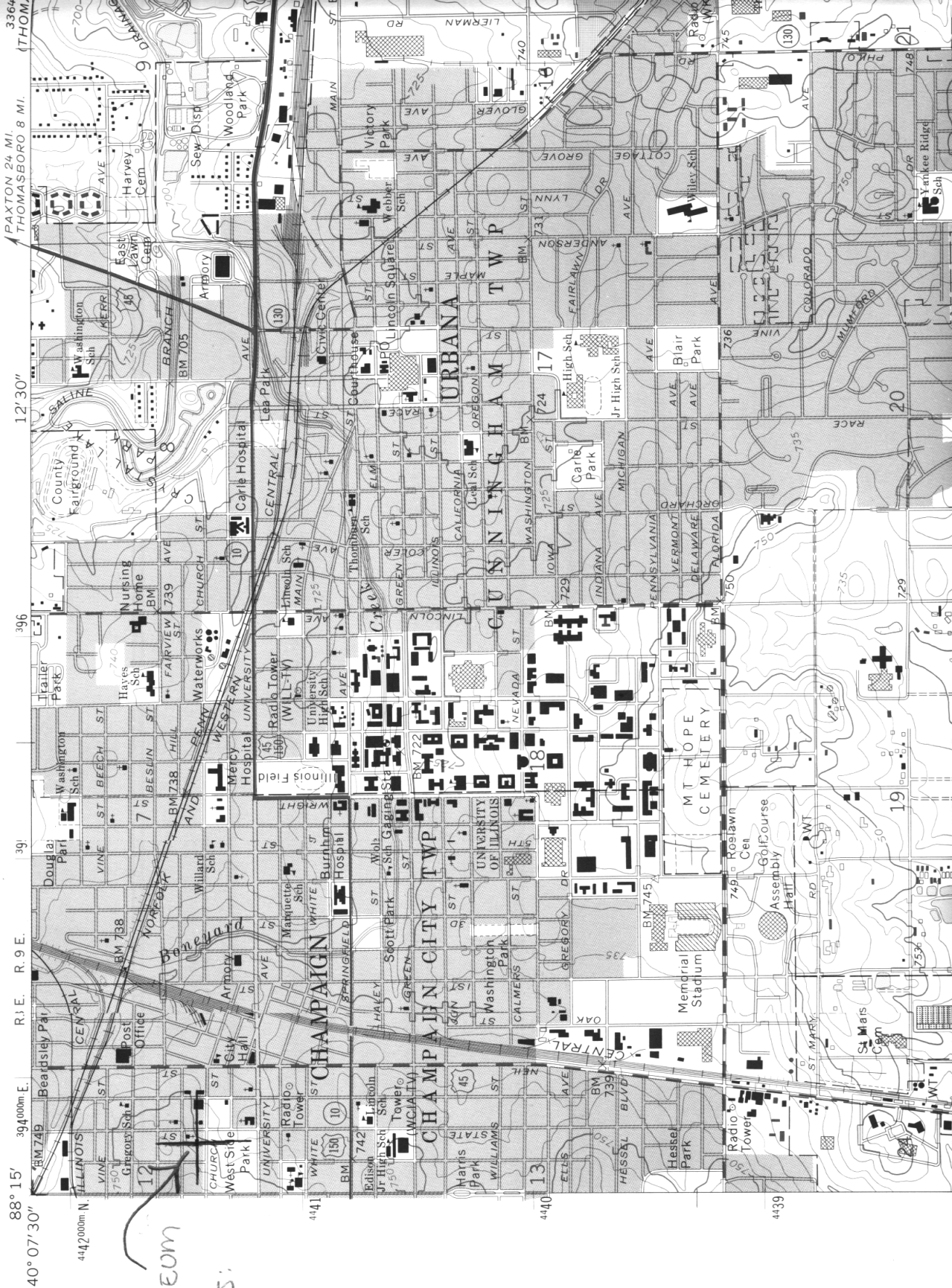
DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

STATE OF ILLINOIS  
DEPARTMENT OF REGISTRATION  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
URBANA

3364 III NE  
(RISING)



BURNHAM ATHENAEUM

UTM REFERENCES:

AE=393 690

N=4441 470