

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



VLR - 9/18/96
NANA - 12/2/96

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Gainsboro Branch of the Roanoke City Public Library

other names/site number Gainsboro Library (DHR File No. 128-256)

2. Location

street & number 15 Patton Avenue, NW not for publication

city or town Roanoke vicinity

state Virginia code VA county of Roanoke Independent City code 770 zip code 24017

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally, (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] Oct. 24, 1996
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Virginia Department of Historical Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Gainsboro Library
Name of Property

Roanoke, VA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: Library

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: Library

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Tudor Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	CONCRETE
walls	BRICK
roof	SLATE
other	STONE: Limestone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- Criteria A, B, C, D, E, F, G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION
ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK

Period of Significance

1941-1946

Significant Dates

[Blank lines for significant dates]

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

[Blank line for significant person]

Cultural Affiliation

[Blank lines for cultural affiliation]

Architect/Builder

Eubank and Caldwell

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Primary location of additional data:

- Criteria for previous documentation on file (NPS).

- Criteria for primary location of additional data.

Name of repository:

[Blank line for name of repository]

Gainsboro Library
Name of Property

Roanoke, VA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .034 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	7
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5	9	3	8	5	0
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4	1	2	5	9	4	0
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Zone Easting Northing

2

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3

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Zone Easting Northing

4

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. John R. Kern, Director/Historian; Leslie A. Giles, Architectural Historian
organization Roanoke Regional Va. Dept. of Historic Resources, Preservation Office date 7/26/96
street & number 1030 Penmar Ave., SE telephone (540) 857-7585
city or town Roanoke state VA zip code 24013

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Roanoke
street & number 215 Church St. telephone (540) 981-2348
city or town Roanoke state VA zip code 24011

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

GAINSBORO LIBRARY
Roanoke, Virginia

Section number 7 Page 1

7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Summary Description and Integrity Statement

The Gainsboro Branch of the Roanoke City Public Library [hereafter referred to as Gainsboro Library] is located in the City of Roanoke, Virginia, and occupies a relatively level site at the northeast corner of Patton Avenue and Gainsboro Road. This site places Gainsboro Library squarely within the City's historic Gainsboro neighborhood, where it serves as an important architectural and cultural symbol for the predominantly black community that works and resides there. The library, a one-story, seven-bay, L-plan Tudor Revival style brick building built in 1941-42 for Roanoke's then-segregated black neighborhoods, is a well-crafted public building, with Tudor Revival style features similar to those seen in other city libraries of the period. Designed by the Roanoke-based architectural firm of Eubank & Caldwell, the Gainsboro Library has a domestic scale and character suited to its setting within a residential area. The interior plan includes a main reading room, office, reference room, and a rear ell that accommodates the lecture room. Some original furnishings, including Mission-style bookcases, remain in the building. A full basement for storage and mechanical equipment is located below the main level.

The Gainsboro Library, though no longer segregated, continues to serve on its original site in its historic function as a neighborhood branch library in the Roanoke Public Library system, and so retains its integrity of association and location. The library's exterior and interior architectural fabric, fixtures, and even some furnishings remain intact and essentially unaltered from their original appearances, and thus the property retains a high degree of integrity of design, feeling, material, and workmanship. Some loss of integrity to the library's general setting has taken place, due to various changes in neighborhood character that occurred after desegregation and urban renewal activities of the 1970s and later. Additional change to the general setting of the property is likely as a result of highway improvements to the Gainsboro Road/Second Street corridor, a project currently underway to ease automobile traffic into and out of downtown Roanoke.

Exterior

The Gainsboro Library is of masonry construction, with exterior walls sheathed in dark red bricks laid in the five-course American bond (Flemish variant) pattern. Built over a full basement lined with concrete foundation walls, the library has had no major additions or alterations since it was built in 1941-1942. The symmetrical front elevation is divided into seven bays. The one-story building is sheltered by a steep slate-shingled gabled roof that incorporates noticeable upward kicks at the gable ends and flares at the eaves. A smaller, steeply pitched front gable, also

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

GAINSBORO LIBRARY
Roanoke, Virginia

Section number 7 Page 2

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Exterior Description (continued)

employing flared eaves, breaks up the horizontality of the building to mark the centered main entry; a turned wood pendant adorns the gable's apex.

The main entry is further highlighted by a door surround of smoothly finished, light beige-colored limestone, which is articulated with rustication, label molding and an ogee arch. Small lantern-like electric light fixtures are suspended from the wall on either side of the entryway. Within the surround, the original tongue-and-groove wood double-leaf doors remain, altered to rectangles from their original shapes, in which the top edges met to form an ogee arch. Wood tongue-and-groove boards infill the space formerly occupied by the upper edges of the doors. One of the two doors retains an ornamental cast metal handle and escutcheon.

On either side of the central entry, the front elevation is punctuated by a tripartite arrangement of window openings. At the center of each group is a five-bay bow window composed of fixed upper four-light sash and operable lower eight-light casements, delineated by heavy wood mullions. Curved brick aprons support the bow windows from below, and the upper lintel of each bow is inscribed "Gainsboro Library" with handpainted Old English style black lettering. Each bow window is flanked by paired mullioned windows that are composed of fixed upper four-light sash and operable lower six-light casements. Each of the gable ends of the building's main rectangular block features a four-bay mullioned grouped window, with the familiar pattern of four-light fixed upper sash above operable ten-light casements. These window openings are placed relatively high on the gable end walls, to admit plentiful light into the main reading room and to allow for continuous shelving space along the lower reaches of the interior walls. The rear elevation of the main block incorporates additional grouped mullioned windows similar in character to those of the front elevation. A one-story shallow-hipped office wing extends behind and along a portion of the rear wall; matching materials and detailing reveal it to be contemporary with the main block rather than a later addition.

The library's rear ell constitutes a more substantial extension behind the main block. Like the slightly taller front section of the building, it too is of masonry construction with brick walls and a slate-shingled gable roof detailed with an upward kick at the ridge's gable end and outward flares at the eaves. The ell's exterior end brick chimney (used to vent the heating system) accentuates the domestic character of the building. The building's secondary entrance is located along the west elevation of the rear ell. Though less ornamented than the primary entry along

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

GAINSBORO LIBRARY
Roanoke, Virginia

Section number 7 Page 3

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Exterior Description (continued)

Patton Avenue, the secondary entrance has undergone fewer changes. Like the front entry, it features a door surround of smoothly finished limestone, articulated with rustication and an ogee arch; but it is distinguished from the principal entrance by a single-leaf door and a much reduced label mold at the top of the surround. The door retains its original shape, detailed at the upper edge with an ogee arch, and is crafted of tongue-and-groove boards pierced by a group of eight small glass panes. Original metal hardware, including an after hours book return slot, escutcheon and door handle, also survives at this entry. Three window openings, with paired mullioned windows like those used elsewhere in the library, pierce the west elevation, and one opening with tripled mullioned windows pierces the east elevation of the rear ell.

Interior

The Gainsboro Library's interior is dominated by the large open space of the main reading room, which comprises the whole front portion of the building. The original plastered cove ceiling, with stained and varnished beams spaced regularly along the length of the room, remains unaltered except for the installation of suspended fluorescent lights. Wood tongue-and-groove and paneled doors and simple unmolded varnished door and window trim remain unchanged. Commercial grade tiles laid in a black-and-white checkerboard pattern polished to a high gloss cover the floor of the reading room. The walls of the room are lined to a height of about seven feet with unpainted Mission-style oak bookcases; matching freestanding bookshelves, accessible from two sides, store additional materials in the library. Some original chairs and tables of sturdy oak construction also remain in use. At present, the main circulation desk extends out into the reading room.

To the rear of the circulation desk is the library office which takes up about half of the smaller rear extension. Some original features, such as a tall wall cabinet and small restroom, remain in the office, and only limited cosmetic repairs have taken place. The other half of the rear extension serves as a reading alcove and reference room distinct from the main space but bearing similar finishes and furnishings. The larger rear ell is accessed from the main reading room and its plan includes a small vestibule and circulation hall, the building's secondary entrance, an interior stair to the basement, a small restroom, and a lecture room. None of these spaces have been subdivided or otherwise extensively altered since their original construction. The interior

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

GAINSBORO LIBRARY
Roanoke, Virginia

Section number 7 Page 4

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Interior (continued)

finishes, primarily plastered walls with stained and varnished wood trim around doors and windows, match those of the principal reading room. The library's basement is used primarily for storage, mechanical systems, and janitorial functions. With the recent replacement of the coal-fueled furnace by a modern HVAC system, some headroom in the space has been lost to ductwork, but otherwise the interior is relatively unchanged.

Landscape Features

In keeping with its domestic character, the property does not have an extensive paved parking lot associated with the building; parking as needed is available along Patton Avenue. Low plantings of annuals fill the constricted area between the building's foundation and the public sidewalk. Side and rear elevations of the library are embellished with examples of larger deciduous shrubs; one deciduous tree occupies the westernmost portion of the lot. A small freestanding sign near the secondary entrance identifies the building as the Gainsboro Branch of the Roanoke Public Library system.

In 1994-1995, the library's front concrete steps and entry walk were carefully modified to provide wheelchair accessibility into the building. The feature, centered on the entry, includes a small landing and two symmetrically placed ramps of poured concrete, with an unobtrusive iron handrail and balusters.

Architectural Analysis

The Gainsboro Library is a well preserved example of a domestic-scaled public building--the neighborhood branch library, a form relatively unusual in Roanoke during the first half of the twentieth century. The library was designed by the Roanoke-based architectural and contracting firm of Eubank and Caldwell. Beaufort N. Eubank, architect, and James A.W. Caldwell, engineer, established their partnership in 1920, having both worked at various times in the 1910s as draftsmen for Roanoke architect George R. Ragan. One of the firm's earliest projects, the \$16,000 remodeling in 1920 of Burrell Memorial Hospital (located in the segregated Gainsboro neighborhood), appears to have established a positive relationship between the firm and the black

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetGAINSBORO LIBRARY
Roanoke, VirginiaSection number 7 Page 5

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Architectural Analysis (continued)

community that may have later led to the firm's selection as designer of the Gainsboro Library. Other important public and non-profit institutional buildings in Roanoke designed by Eubank and Caldwell include the 1926-1927 Y.W.C.A. Building and the 1931 M.J. Patsel Library, a branch library located in a commercial area along Memorial Avenue in the Virginia Heights neighborhood.¹ This branch library served the rapidly developing white middle-class suburban areas of southwest Roanoke. Although smaller in footprint than the later Gainsboro commission, the Patsel Library similarly employs architectural detailing derived from the Tudor Revival genre. The application of Tudor Revival details in the case of the Patsel Library appears to be a direct reference to one of the most common revivalist styles in the early twentieth century Virginia Heights neighborhood. In Roanoke, the popularity of the Tudor Revival style for domestic architecture lasted much longer than in most other cities of similar size and external connections, probably due to the impressiveness of Hotel Roanoke, a Tudor Revival railroad hotel that served as the *epicenter of much of the city's commercial and social interactions*. Tudor Revival elements at the 1931 Patsel Library such as a slate-shingled gable roof, dark red brick walls, a rusticated and ogee-arched limestone door surround and mullioned bow windows establish a precedent for neighborhood branch library design that Eubank & Caldwell revised a decade later for the Gainsboro Library on a larger, more residential site.

The previous Gainsboro Branch of the Roanoke Public Library was located at the Hunton Y.M.C.A., in the 1921 "Colored International Order of Odd Fellows Hall." The three-story brick commercial structure included two ground-level storefronts; the library occupied rented space in one of the storefronts from 1921 until the new Gainsboro Branch building was completed. Eubank and Caldwell rejected this formal precedent, with its commercial overtones, to favor instead a domestic model that emphasizes and reinforces the significant roles played by households in the ongoing learning process. Rather than identifying or developing a stylistic vocabulary that specifically references the predominant architectural modes found in the Gainsboro neighborhood, the firm elected instead to resurrect the Tudor Revival style as used in 1931 at the Patsel Library in Virginia Heights. The Gainsboro Library's closest Tudor Revival neighbor at the time of its design was Hotel Roanoke, three blocks away.

The 1941 Gainsboro Library turned out to be one of Eubank and Caldwell's final commissions, and was built concurrently with the firm's other designs for Smith and Lucas halls at Roanoke College in nearby Salem, Virginia.² Minutes of the Roanoke Library Board indicate that the firm

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetGAINSBORO LIBRARY
Roanoke, VirginiaSection number 7 Page 6

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Architectural Analysis (continued)

also had been chosen to design the City's new Main Library at Elmwood Park; landscape architect A.A. Farnham of Blacksburg worked with Eubank and Caldwell on a landscaping plan for the site. The Library Board "was emphatically of the opinion that the building should be of colonial type rather than modernistic and of red brick rather than of Indiana limestone."³ Construction of this Main Building, for which funds were being sought from the Works Progress Administration [WPA], was postponed due to new restrictions on disbursements of WPA monies and laborers just prior to the onset of World War II. The Gainsboro Branch, on the other hand, was wholly financed with locally appropriated bond monies, so its construction was not delayed by the loss in federal funds. When construction on the new Main Library was finally undertaken in 1952, the Library Board's opinion on architectural styles had obviously changed, for Eubank and Caldwell's "colonial" plans had been scrapped for a decidedly "modernistic" building, designed by architects Frantz and Addkinson of Roanoke.⁴ Likewise, all later branch libraries of the Roanoke Public Library system also turned away from historical precedents to adopt the aesthetics of Modernism popularized in the second half of the twentieth century. The Gainsboro Library is the City of Roanoke's only example of the pre-war revivalist style branch library to retain its original use.

Leslie A. Giles

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

GAINSBORO LIBRARY
Roanoke, Virginia

Section number 7 Page 7

End Notes

1. Wells and Dalton, personal communication.
2. Ibid.
3. Roanoke Library Board Minutes, 22 April 1941 and 26 November 1940.
4. Whitwell and Winborne, 175.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

GAINSBORO LIBRARY
Roanoke, Virginia

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

Begun in 1941 and dedicated in 1942, the Gainsboro Branch of the Roanoke City Public Library provided African American residents of Roanoke's segregated Gainsboro neighborhood with their second home for a library facility where children and adults could pursue self education with advice and assistance from competent and dedicated librarians. The one story brick Tudor Revival library at the northeast corner of Patton Avenue and Gainsboro Road continues to serve the educational needs of Gainsboro neighborhood residents and offers them significant opportunities for the study of African American heritage.

Justification of Criteria

The Gainsboro Branch of the Roanoke City Public Library is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Education and Ethnic Heritage/Black because of its association with successful efforts to secure and maintain a separate library branch in Roanoke's historically black Gainsboro neighborhood so that residents would have an opportunity to better their self education and study their heritage.

Historical Background

Dedicated in May 1942, the Gainsboro Branch of the Roanoke City Library, hereafter referred to as Gainsboro Library, provided the second home for the branch library for Gainsboro residents. Dedicated in December 1921, Roanoke's first "Colored Branch Library," was housed in the north portion of the "Colored International Order of Odd Fellows Hall" at the southwest corner of Patton Avenue and Gainsboro Road. African American leaders of Roanoke in 1920 and again by 1940 called for separate black library facilities at the same time that white civic leaders mounted well publicized campaigns, in 1920 to establish a Roanoke City public library in downtown Roanoke, and by 1940 to replace the downtown library with a new building.

Both at the close of World War I and on the eve of World War II, calls for a black branch library reflected Roanoke's history as a steel rail era center that developed rapidly as a segregated city following the arrival of the Norfolk and Western Railroad in the 1880s. By 1900 railroad related industrialization made Roanoke the largest city west of Richmond, and Roanoke blacks lived in segregated neighborhoods north of the Norfolk and Western tracks in the near northeast and northwest quadrants of the city; what survives of that neighborhood is now generally known as Gainsboro. Black leaders served that black segregated community as ministers, doctors, and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetGAINSBORO LIBRARY
Roanoke, VirginiaSection number 8 Page 9

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Historical Background (continued)

educators.¹ By 1920 blacks living in Gainsboro numbered over 9,000 residents and comprised 18% of the City's population of 50,000. In 1920 the self contained black community of Gainsboro had a remodeled Burrell Memorial Hospital, a new Harrison Elementary School with Lucy Addison as principal, and an enlarged Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church headed by the Rev. L.L. Downing.² A new pastor the Rev. A.L. James led First Baptist Church, the largest black congregation west of Richmond.³

As black leaders served the needs of their segregated community by 1920, they sought to secure facilities in their neighborhood to enhance equal opportunities for self advancement. Thus as soon as newspaper articles in February 1920 announced the formation of a Roanoke Library Association to establish a downtown Main Library, black leaders in Gainsboro launched a "Colored Branch Library Movement" and collected several thousand dollars for the library campaign. By April 1920 the Library Association agreed, "to meet the needs of colored citizens, a separate branch will be established in some suitable location in their section of the City."⁴ In November 1920 the Rev. A.L. James, as chair of the branch library committee, wrote Mrs. W.W.S. Butler, Jr., who headed the Roanoke Library Association to recommend that the branch library should be housed at some central location in the black community. In May 1921 Mrs. Butler, by then President of the Roanoke Public Library Board of Directors, reported that the Library Committee had secured space for the branch library in the "Colored International Order of Oddfellows Hall" on the southwest corner of Patton Avenue and Gainsboro Road. The Library Board deemed that location ideal, "being situated in the heart of the colored district business section." The Rev. A.L. James, the Rev. L.L. Downing, and Lucy Addison worked as a cooperating committee with the Library Board to develop plans for the branch library. The Gainsboro Branch Library opened in a large room of the new Odd Fellows Hall on December 14, 1921, just five month's after Virginia's first black branch library opened in Norfolk in a room at Norfolk's Booker T. Washington High School.⁵

The new Gainsboro Branch Library opened its doors to Gainsboro school children and adults who used the library in about equal numbers. So many students were using the Gainsboro Branch Library by 1928 that steps were taken to admit only one class at a time to avoid overcrowding. As early as 1926 the Gainsboro Branch Library subscribed to the Journal of Negro History, and by 1928 the library mounted a special book display for Negro History Week. The next year the new branch librarian Mrs. Virginia Young Lee organized a reading club that reviewed novels, religious works, and current topics, and hosted lectures from visiting ministers and educators. With the arrival of Mrs. Lee as librarian, the branch increased its holdings, circulation, and attention to special

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceGAINSBORO LIBRARY
Roanoke, VirginiaNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 10

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Historical Background (continued)

collections pertaining to black culture. In 1932 "Church News," published by the Rev. A.L. James with assistance from Mrs. Lee ran the following notice:

The Gainsboro Branch Library has on display a number of outstanding books by and about Negroes that are proving quite popular. This display was prepared especially for "Negro History Week," featuring some of the most recent publications available on Negro life and literature. Are you interested in the progress of our people? If so, keep informed by reading the books that are being released from time to time on the Negro. The Library may have the exact book that you wish. Inquire and see.

Throughout her more than 40 years as Gainsboro librarian, Mrs. Lee worked to encourage school children's use of the library and to secure special collections on African American history.

Plans for construction of a new Main Library and a new Gainsboro Library began to be discussed in the late 1930s. In 1938 a black delegation headed by attorney J.L. Reid told the Library Board that the black community would work for a bond issue to finance building costs for a new downtown library and a new Gainsboro branch, because the black branch library in its present quarters was too small for remodeling. In October 1940 when the Library Board apparently reneged on the 1938 agreement by proposing that the Gainsboro Branch acquire an adjacent room in the old Odd Fellows Hall now known as the "Hunton Branch Colored YMCA," J.L. Reid and the Rev. A.L. James addressed Roanoke City Council saying they had been promised a new building and that black voters would not support tax increases for the library bond issue unless they received a new library branch building. City Council then agreed to allocate \$20,000 of the bond issue for construction of the Gainsboro Library along with construction of the Main Library. In November 1940 the Library Board selected a Gainsboro Library site on the northeast corner of Patton Avenue and Gainsboro Road, property formerly occupied by Shanks Foundry and then owned by St. Andrew's Roman Catholic Church. Trustees of St. Andrews sold the .34 acre parcel for the library to the City of Roanoke in February 1941 for \$4,709.⁶ The board selected the Roanoke firm of Eubank and Caldwell as architects, and agreed to consult with a black advisory building committee headed by the Rev. A.L. James, attorney J.L. Reid, and Dr. E.D. Downing.⁷ In April 1941 Eubank and Caldwell drafted blue prints for the brick one story Tudor Revival building that met with the approval of all committees.⁸ Rough cost estimates for the building were less than the \$20,000

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceGAINSBORO LIBRARY
Roanoke, VirginiaNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 11

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Historical Background (continued)

branch library bond issue, so that supplementary Works Progress Administration funds were not required. The total library bond issue of \$170,000 was approved by Roanoke voters in November 1941. With the approach of World War II, WPA funds earmarked to supplement the \$150,000 bond issue for construction of the Main Library were frozen, so that new Main Library was not built for another decade.

Construction on the branch library proceeded after the bond issue vote and the Rev. A.L. James presided over opening dedication exercises for Gainsboro Library on May 10, 1942. The library dedication recognized gifts and contributions including funds for a museum display case, thanked members of the reading club for organizing public support for the library bond issue, thanked Roanoke City Council for appropriating \$1,000 for library equipment and furnishings, and noted that the branch had over 9,000 registered borrowers--more than half of Roanoke's 16,000 black inhabitants in 1940. The Gainsboro Library dedication featured music directed by Miss Eunice Poindexter of First Baptist Church, comments on the "Library Then and Now" by attorney J.L. Reid, a dedicatory address by Dr. J.M. Ellison, President of Union University, and thanks to the Building Committee of James, Downing, and Reid and to Librarian Lee, all of whom "worked selfishly and with civic pride for the good of all."

Perhaps the service of librarian Virginia Young Lee best embodies the spirit of the Gainsboro Library that opened in 1942. All who used Gainsboro Library remember Mrs. Lee's work with young children. George Heller recalled "she made us read big folks books, and she saw to it that all black children in the Gainsboro Library could read and read with understanding." Mrs. Mary Hackley remembered that Mrs. Lee expected all children who used the library to realize their full potential. An inspirational speaker, Mrs. Lee encouraged and motivated many young people to remain in school and helped them find career placement by drawing on her many personal and organizational contacts. A faithful member of Rev. James' First Baptist church located two blocks southwest of the library, she coordinated publication of "Church News" where she frequently reported activities of the "Library Vacation Reading Club," and the "Jessie Fauset Reading Club" and charged young boys and girls to read more library books and return them on time. Mrs. Lee planned many public relations programs and exhibits at the library and took particular interest and pride in the collection of African American materials which she assembled. Following her retirement in 1971 she noted that one of her concerns was to build a collection of black history books at Gainsboro Library. She "knew the day would come when there would be a widespread interest in treasures of Africa as well as the heritage of other blacks and their contributions to America."⁹

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

GAINSBORO LIBRARY
Roanoke, Virginia

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Historical Background (continued)

Since the 1960s integration and urban removal have diminished the size and the self contained cultural vitality of Roanoke's Gainsboro Neighborhood. In consequence, the number of registered borrowers at Gainsboro Library has declined, and some of the former functions of the library are now provided elsewhere. Five blocks to the west, the Harrison Museum of African American Culture now serves as the Roanoke Valley repository for preservation and interpretation of the material culture of black heritage. Nonetheless, Gainsboro Library continues to provide viable reading programs for school children and continues to maintain and augment the largest printed collection of African American history in the Roanoke Public Library system.

Gainsboro Library stands today as a tribute to the support of leaders and residents of Roanoke's black community from the 1920s through World War II and to the tradition of educational service and pride in ethnic heritage established by librarian Virginia Young Lee from 1928 to 1971. Since the recent demolition of Rev. A.L. James' First Baptist Church, Gainsboro Library survives as the principal historic building that reflects Gainsboro neighborhood traditions of self improvement and pride in cultural heritage.

Dr. John R. Kern

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

GAINSBORO LIBRARY
Roanoke, Virginia

Section number 8 Page 13

ENDNOTES

1. John Kern, "Black History in Southwest Virginia: 1790 to 1900," Florida Memorial College Academic Review, III (1994), 37-44.
2. Erin Baratta, Gainsboro Historic Context, Roanoke Regional Preservation Office, 1992.
3. John Kern and Daniel Pezzoni, First Baptist Church, Roanoke, Virginia, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Report, 1990.
4. Unless otherwise cited, this and all subsequent references to Gainsboro Library are taken from two holdings in the Virginia Room of the Roanoke City Public Library: a book of newspaper clippings labeled Roanoke Public Library; and a typed collection of Roanoke Library Board Minutes. Virginia Room Librarian Carol Tuckwiller provided great assistance in the use of these documents.
5. Telephone conversation with Peggy Haile, Archivist, Sargeant Memorial Room, Norfolk Public Library, July 23, 1996. The name, Gainsboro Branch Library, refers to the facility in the Old Fellows Hall that housed the library from 1921 until the 1941-1942 construction of the present Gainsboro Library.
6. Record of Tax Map 2011002 and Tax Map 2011001, Commissioner of Revenue, City of Roanoke, Virginia.
7. John Wells and Robert Dalton, Virginia Architects, 1835-1955: A Biographical Dictionary, unpublished manuscript, Richmond, Virginia.
8. Eubank and Caldwell Architectural Blueprints for Gainsboro Library, Gainsboro Library archives. Gainsboro Librarian Carla Pullen provided very helpful assistance with these and other Gainsboro Library archival materials.
9. Dedication of the Afro-American Collection honoring Mrs. Virginia Y. Lee, Gainsboro Branch of the Roanoke City Public Library System, 1982, cassette tape recording, Gainsboro Library archives.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

GAINSBORO LIBRARY
Roanoke, Virginia

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 14

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Eubank and Caldwell. Blue prints for Gainsboro Library, 1941. Gainsboro Library archives, Roanoke, Virginia.

Haile, Peggy, Archivist, Sargeant Memorial Room, Norfolk Public Library. Telephone conversation with author, July 23, 1996.

Kern, John. "Black History in Southwest Virginia: 1790 to 1900," Florida Memorial College Academic Review III (1994): 37-44.

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Roanoke City Commissioner of Revenue. Record of Tax Map 2011001 and 2011002.

Roanoke City Public Library. Book of newspaper clippings, 1920-1987. Virginia Room, Roanoke City Public Library.

Roanoke Library Board Minutes, 1920-1942. Virginia Room, Roanoke City Public Library.

Wells, John E. And Robert E. Dalton. The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955: A Biographical Dictionary. Publication scheduled 1996 by New South Architectural Press, Richmond, Virginia.

United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

GAINSBORO LIBRARY
Roanoke, Virginia

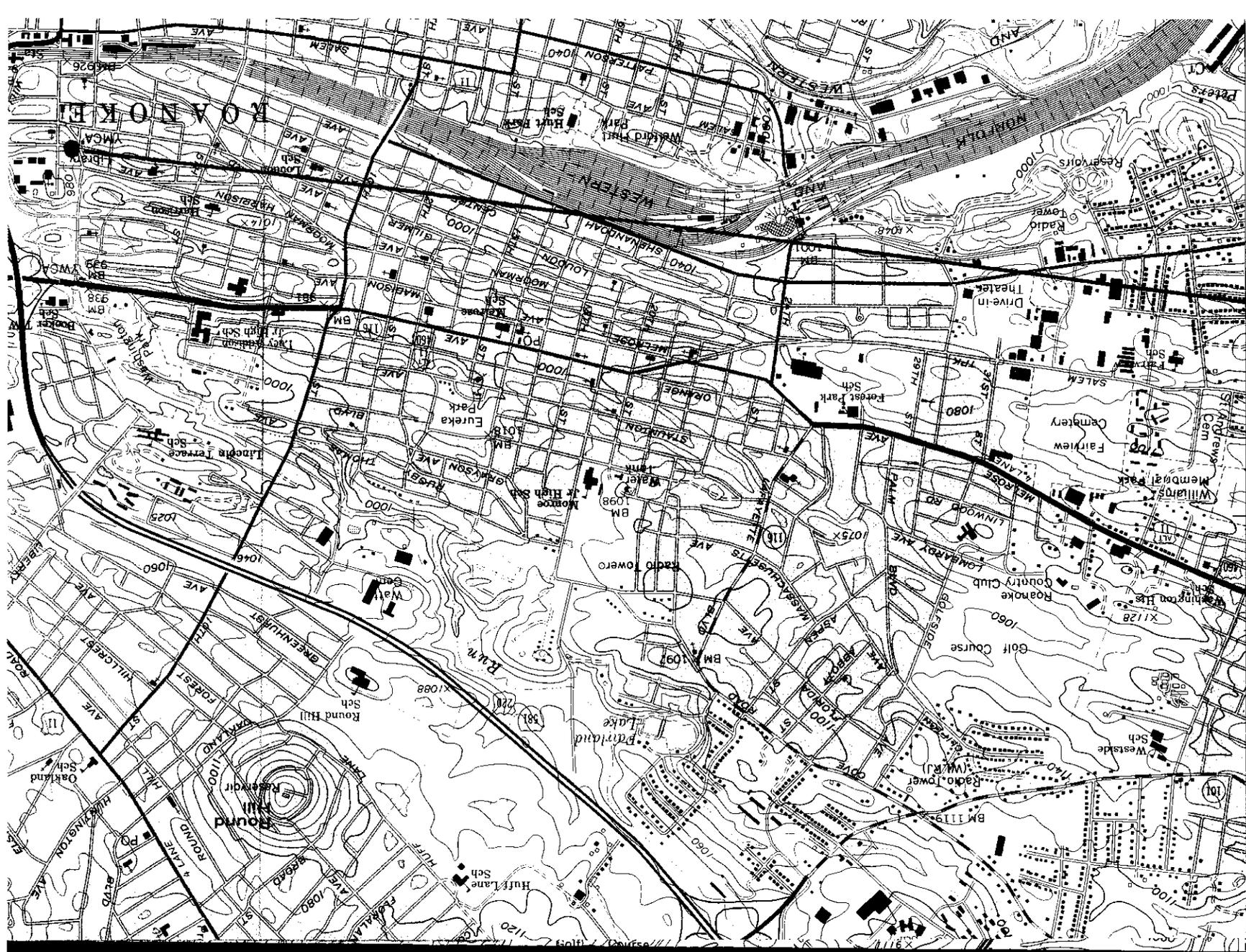
Section number 10 Page 15

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Gainsboro Library nominated parcel are shown as parcel 2011002 on the 1:100 scale map that accompanies this report.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with Gainsboro Library.



4126
SALEM 6 MI.
4127
17.30"
CHRISTIANSBURG 28 MI.
SALEM (P.O.) 3.2 MI.
4129

Roanoke, VA
Gainsboro Library
UTM ref (zone 17)
E 591850 N 4125940