

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received OCT 13 1983
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Cultural Center

and/or common Cultural Center historic District

2. Location

street & number 5200, 5201 Woodward Avenue, 100 Farnsworth Avenue ^{N/A} not for publication

city, town Detroit NA vicinity of

state Michigan code 26 county Wayne code 163

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input 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 checked="" 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 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
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: library

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple, see attached list

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Wayne County Registry of Deeds

street & number City-County Building, 2 Woodward Avenue

city, town Detroit state Michigan

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Michigan State Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1976 federal state county local

depository for survey records Michigan History Division

city, town Lansing state Michigan

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

Check one

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Cultural Center Historic District consists of three buildings which form the nucleus of Detroit's Cultural Center area, located approximately two miles north of the central business district on Woodward Avenue, Detroit's major north-south thoroughfare. The three buildings are the Detroit Public Library, a white marble Italian Renaissance style building designed by Cass Gilbert (1859-1935) and built in 1915-1921; the Detroit Institute of Arts, a white marble Beaux Arts style building designed by Paul Philippe Cret (1876-1945) and built in 1921-1927; and the Horace H. Rackham Education Memorial Building a limestone stripped classical structure built in 1941 according to the designs of the Detroit architectural firm of Harley, Ellington and Day to house the Engineering Society of Detroit and the Extension Service of the University of Michigan. The Detroit Public Library and the Detroit Institute of Arts are located directly across Woodward Avenue from one another with the Rackham Building located directly south of the Institute of Arts at the corner of Farnsworth Street and Woodward Avenue. Together the three buildings form an impressive complex with similar setbacks, size, scale, materials, and character.

Detroit Public Library

Cass Gilbert designed the Detroit Public Library Building in 1915. The spacious site allowed for an approach of terraces and the set back from the street to provide a monumental view from a distance. Gilbert designed the building in the Italian Renaissance style faced with white marble. The building is almost square in plan (196 feet x 219 feet) and rises 60 feet in height from a balustraded broad terrace of Indiana limestone and pressed brick. The building contains four floors, although only three are articulated on the main facade. The dominant horizontal division is that of the piano nobile at the second level, which has a ceiling height of 25 feet. This piano nobile is articulated on the front of the building with a succession of arches, composed of seven open bays forming a loggia, flanked by a projecting bay containing an arched window. The ceiling of the loggia contains richly colored mosaics in a series of garlands and small medallions. Flanking each arch is an Ionic pilaster rising the full 25 feet height of this second level.

The lower floor is lit by eight, almost square, deeply recessed windows which balance the vertical divisions of the upper floors, and by six smaller windows, which are long and narrow and barely recessed. The first story forms the base of the vertical composition, and is delicately rusticated.

The exterior treatment of the top story has an intervening frieze between the delicate pilastering of the piano nobile at the second level and the cornice which dominates the entire structure. This upper story is pierced with nine wall openings to correspond with the nine arches of the level below, and is richly adorned with twelve sculptural panels in vertical alignment with the twelve pilasters below. These panels are in low relief and portray the signs of the zodiac and their equivalents in ancient mythology. The cornice is crowned by a cheneau executed in terra cotta of old ivory tone with gold-colored detailing.

The carving in the loggia and that which adorns the windows and the tympanum under them is of fifteenth and early sixteenth century design inspirations. The firm of John Donnelly and Company crafted the bronze doors, which also carry relief ornament. Their program was derived from a scheme by Donatello that consisted of ten panels in which five Roman and five Greek episodes touch upon epic, tragic and lyric poetry, philosophy and comedy. The relief is very low but sharply outlined, to be visible at some distance. The white Vermont marble surrounding the doors was also carved and modeled by John Donnelly and Company. An inscription over the main entrance reads "Knowledge Is Power." The carved heads in the roundels of the arched openings of the piano nobile, also by John Donnelly and Company, portray eminent writers, poets, philosophers, and scientists whose names are carved on the beltcourse above the first floor level.

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The Detroit Public Library was enlarged in 1960. The plans drafted by architects Cass Gilbert, Jr. and Francis J. Keally for additions to the library were approved in 1944, but it was not until 1960 that the cornerstone was laid. This addition, sheathed in white marble, is designed in the stripped classic style, classical in proportion but completely devoid of any ornamental detailing. The addition abuts the first two floors of the rear elevation of the original building with flanking wings sited away from the original building. The front and side elevations of the original building are unaltered by this 1960 rear addition.

The interior of the library was adapted to the practical exigencies of handling books in large and varied quantities. The delivery hall, the center of activities, was situated on the second level (now used as exhibit space); the stack room occupied the rear of the building and extended over the full height and the full width of the entire edifice. Surrounding the delivery hall are the open-shelf, the reference reading, the fine arts, the social science, the music and drama, the public catalogue, the conversation and correspondence, and the registration and circulation rooms. Business offices, a book order department, a storage room and public rest rooms occupy the mezzanine floor between the ground and first floor. The third level contains the patent, industrial arts, and staff rooms, and the Burton Historical Collection. The ground floor contains the newspaper and periodical, and children's rooms opening off of either side of the entrance hall.

The entrance hall led to the main stairway through a colonnade of Roman Doric columns of pink-gray Tennessee marble. A richly coffered ceiling in the sixteenth century style, with caissons and rosettes in high plaster relief touched with gold, was decorated by W. F. Paris and F. J. Wiley. Wall murals were executed by Edwin H. Blashfield and represent great authors, musicians and artists.

The ceiling of the fine arts, music, and drama and social science rooms are also in the Renaissance manner with their soft tones and rich design. A frieze of rectangular panels with Pompeian grotesque decoration runs along the four sides of the fine arts room; the ceiling of the music and drama room is an adaptation of the design of one of the ceilings of the Mantua Ducal Palace. The murals on the third level are by Carl Melchers and depict events in the early history of Detroit. Mary Chase Stratton of Detroit's Pewabic Pottery supervised the work of setting of the interior tile and mosaic decoration. Contracts for paintings and interior adornment amounted to \$125,000.

The interior of the 1963 addition consisting of a central hall flanked by identical wings is more austere in design. Its central hall, a large building in its own right, has 180,000 square feet of floor space. The wings added 240,000 square feet, providing a total of 420,000 square feet and more than doubling the original library's size. The wings consist of four floors; two of these are stack levels below grade. Entry to the new section was made available through the Cass Avenue end of the original library building. A massive 16-foot by 40-foot mosaic mural above the Cass Avenue entrance of the addition, given by the Abbey Fund which was administered by the National Academy of Design, depicts five groups of allegorical figures, above which is inscribed, "Like a river flowing through the ages uniting distant men, knowledge, and thought into a community of ideas of the world and of time is the accumulated record of mankind." It was executed by Millard Sheets of California, who was selected from a field of nine artists. Communication between the

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new and old buildings was provided by removing the first flight of Cass Gilbert's grand staircase at the western end of the old entrance hall, and providing in its place a hallway leading into the new card catalogue room. Smaller flights of stairs now flank this hallway and lead to the original second flights of the staircase; the spatial quality of the stair hall, leading from the relatively constricted space of the entrance hall to the grandiose barrel-vaulted space above, has been destroyed.

The Detroit Institute of Arts

The Detroit Institute of Arts is located directly across Woodward Avenue from the Public Library. The entire institution consists of three connected structures; the original building of 1927 including the main block and the auditorium, designed by Paul Philippe Cret, the South Wing of 1965 and North Wing of 1971 both designed by the Detroit architectural firm of Harley, Ellington, Cowin, and Stinton.

The original building by Cret is of the modified Italian Renaissance style, an example of the Beaux-Arts tradition. The building, having three floor levels, has the external appearance of being a one-story structure. It is of fire-proof construction, reinforced concrete with a facing of smooth-faced, rusticated Vermont white marble. The front elevation, having a total frontage of 300 feet along Woodward Avenue, is dominated by the projecting central entrance pavilion, punctured by three arches springing from Ionic columns. Above the arches, in the attic story, are a central medallion containing the Seal of Detroit and an inscription in bronze reading, "Dedicated by the people of Detroit to the knowledge and enjoyment of Art." On either side of the arches within the frieze are pairs of putti with garlands and cornucopia. The glassed-in arches are further enhanced by ornamental grillwork and three hanging bronze lanterns. Two copies of statues at Versailles, Antoine Coysevo's River God and Philippe Magnier's Nymph and Cupid flank the monumental staircase leading from the street to the entry. An edition of The Thinker by Rodin sits in the center of the stairway at the mid-level terrace.

The central pavilion is flanked by long side wings emphasizing the horizontality of the front elevation. A denticulated cornice wrapping around the entire structure stresses again the horizontality. The fenestration of the side wings is composed of three rectangular openings on the main floor level and four groups of three small window openings on the ground level. The slightly projecting end bays contain arched niches that are carved with shell motifs and have keystones carved in the form of Roman gladiators. The niches contain bronze copies of two famous statues, Donatello's St. George, and Michelangelo's Dying Slave.

The north and south side elevations are identical. The smooth-faced rusticated white marble facing is penetrated by three rectangular window openings flanked by slightly projecting end bays containing arched window openings which have doors and a small wrought iron balcony below. The keystones in the arches are again carved into heads of gladiators. On either side of the doors are reliefs of goddesses, one holding a Greek temple and the other holding the lamp of wisdom. Between the windows are small medallions with reliefs of winged fish and classical heads in profile. The ground level is articulated by a frieze and by a smoother rustication of the marble created by narrower mortar joints. Like the front facade, four groups of three small windows lie underneath the window openings of the main floor.

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The rear elevation of the main block and the connecting link to the auditorium block are hidden by the later additions. The John R Street elevation of the auditorium is framed by the later wings, its white marble contrasting with the dark granite of the later portions. The John R Street facade of the auditorium lacks fenestration, since it is the side wall of the auditorium itself. Rusticated side sections flank a slightly projecting smooth-surfaced central block, on which is centered an elaborate marble balcony supported on a first-floor level arcade of rusticated marble and flanked by stairs. This balustraded balcony above five segmentally arched openings supports large bronze and glass lanterns. The arcade shelters a ramp to a lower level receiving entrance. Centered at the piano nobile level is an oversized doorway heavily enframed and crowned by a broken pediment within which is a carved relief of a Greek musician and theater masks. Above the doorway in the attic story is a bas relief depicting a muse with a lyre.

The south-facing theater entrance facade is treated on the upper story with three arched windows, which reflect the treatment of the main entrance. Keystones in the form of carved masks portraying comedy, satire, and tragedy center the arches, which are flanked with smaller rectangular windows below which are bronze lanterns. The entrance itself consists of three rectangular openings below the arches, sheltered by a metal marquee, and containing double doors in brass.

The basic plan of the Cret's building is T-shaped with a major longitudinal axis. Along this axis are the three central rooms; the lobby, the Great Hall, and the garden court. The auditorium is at the foot of the T. On either side of the axis are small galleries for the collections arranged in historical order which surround and open onto two large square temporary exhibit halls on the north, and on the south, an open-air medieval courtyard.

The entrance lobby is articulated by the repeat of the triple arch motif on the facade. Long columns supporting a denticulated cornice with classical profiles are made of cast stone and lead to a transverse barrel vault. Through the triple arch, a small stairway leads to the Great Hall, intended for receptions. The floor is of multi-colored marble with a rectangular design stretching the length of the room. White marble bordered in black and green marble surrounds three circles of stone and tiles in designs of griffins, winged fish and horses. The walls are travertine blocks and are covered with French and Flemish tapestries. Five doors trimmed with denticulated cornices and decorated with hand wrought iron grilles and carved classical heads lead from the side walls into the galleries. The ceiling is decorated with trompe l'oeil painted decorations in the Pompeian manner with a color scheme incorporating Etruscan red, soft yellow, and a Wedgwood blue. Above and between the windows in the clerestory, are hexagonal medallions with plaster reliefs imitating Wedgwood pottery of the Adam period. Below these are trompe l'oeil gold-leaf classical temples with scenes of Greek gods and goddesses composed within them. These configurations are also placed above the east and west archways.

Through a large arched opening, one enters the garden court, now known as the Rivera Court. Formerly, the skylit court was decorated with a square, central fountain. The walls were penetrated by arched niches sculpted to imitate Italian grottoes of the sixteenth century Renaissance period containing statuary. Above a series of Tuscan columns on the north wall is a loggia which leads to the auditorium. The skylight was softened by a blue and gold canopy. In 1930, Diego Rivera was commissioned to fresco the walls of the court with scenes of the automotive industry. A smaller fountain replaced the original and the statuary was removed from the niches. The floor is white marble with a border of green and black marble.

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The galleries located off these central rooms were treated individually to reflect the style of the period of art that was displayed within them. Cret preferred the use of window lighting to the use of skylights because of the interesting effects, shadows, and contrasts they produce. In a court separating the galleries, Cret installed portions of two authentic period structures: the facade of Whitby Hall, a Federal style house from Philadelphia, and a sixteenth century French chapel from the Chateau of Lannoy Herbaviller in Lorraine, France. The traceried stained glass windows of the chapel look into the formerly open air courtyard, known today as the Kresge Court. This brick, medieval courtyard, echoing the Bargello in Florence, is unusual in the employ of fenestration of the different countries and periods, reflecting the artifacts displayed in the rooms behind these court walls. For instance, the north wall is penetrated with semi-circular arched windows of the Italian Renaissance style, the west wall represents a Gothic wall with pointed arches and buttresses, and the south wall is treated with Flemish oriel and circular window openings. The original pavement was grey stone. Medieval coats of arms and guild insignia are incorporated into the wall surface. In 1961, the courtyard was glassed in by Minoru Yamasaki in order to make a year round cafeteria. In 1980 the court was remodelled with a new skylight and new flooring.

The museum housed on the lower floor the library, the print room, study rooms, tea room, storage and administrative offices. The building has two auditoriums, one seating 1200 and a smaller lecture hall seating 500. A sub-floor contains the physical plant.

The North and South Wing additions, both designed by the Detroit architectural firm of Harley, Effington, Cowin and Stirton, are almost identical in design, and differ only slightly in size. These wings are built of structural steel with concrete floors and block granite wall sheathing. The dark Cold Spring granite exterior acts like a mirror reflecting the white marble facades of the original building, focusing on it rather than competing with it. The only element interrupting the planar wall surface is a horizontal setback at the second floor level. Fenestration is sparse with only a tall, vertical corner window and a continuous clerestory, both of tinted glass; this allows for maximum interior exhibition space. The strong horizontal line of the cornice meets the corniceline of the original building, thus establishing a smooth transition between the two buildings.

The South Wing added thirty-eight new galleries and the North Wing provided new administrative offices, a library, and extra gallery space. Some interior walls are faced with dark Breche Nouvelle marble, although the majority are covered with linen stretched over moveable plywood panels designed for flexibility. The recessed lights are supplemented by track lights. The tinted glass of the windows provides subdued daylight. The most dramatic areas are the two courts that are created at the junction of the new and old buildings. The sixty-foot-high spaces are closed in by two white marble walls of Cret's building and by floating balconies with teak railings on the other two sides. The ceiling skylight is made by plaster formed around a central glass panel with additional overlaid glass panels gradually diminishing in size to reduce the intensity of the light. All doors and windows extend from floor to ceiling in order to enhance the open vistas from room to room and to increase the amount of natural light.

The Horace H. Rackham Education Memorial Building

The Horace H. Rackham Education Memorial Building is located on the south side of Farnsworth Avenue between John R Street and Woodward Avenue in Detroit's Cultural Center. The building faces the Institute of

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Arts building, directly across Farnsworth Avenue. Constructed of white Georgia marble, the building designed by the Detroit architectural firm of Harley, Ellington, and Day combines simplicity and dignity. The building, 404 feet in length, contains a central auditorium flanked on the east by a wing housing the Engineering Society of Detroit and flanked on the west by a wing devoted to the University of Michigan Extension Service. Construction began July 1, 1940, and the building opened in the fall of 1941.

The long rectangular building is symmetrically arranged with the auditorium at the center. This is expressed on the exterior as a central auditorium block with a higher roofline, gently bowed front and a terraced entry approach. The two-story auditorium facade is designed with piers separating five bays with entry doors on the first floor and windows above. The metal sash doors below and windows above are separated with a bronze bas relief panels. Above each second floor window is a bas relief stone carving.

The two flanking wings are identical. The roof lines of the wings are lower and their facades are set forward from the center auditorium section, connected by an intermediate block. The two-story wings are nine bays long with entrances in the third bay from the auditorium. The entrance bay is wider than the others and is accented with a higher roofline. Above the second floor window in the entrance bay is a bas relief sculpture. As in the auditorium section, the second floor windows are separated from the first floor windows or doors with a bronze bas relief panel. The narrow east and west ends of the building contain only doorways.

The rear of the building was not designed as a major facade and has since been obscured from general view by a parking structure. The area between the Rackham Building and the parking structure has been designed as a courtyard.

The interior of the central auditorium section contains a small entrance lobby with marble floors and wall trim. This lobby leads to the auditorium and is also interconnected with the wings. The wings are functional in design and house offices and class or meeting rooms. The east wing was gutted by a fire in 1974. It was remodeled and reopened in 1977. The other sections of the building are functional in design and remain unaltered.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1915–1943

Builder/Architect various, see text

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Cultural Center Historic District is significant as the nucleus and seed of Detroit's cultural district. It is also significant for encompassing some of Detroit's most important civic architecture and important works of prominent architects. It is also significant as an important accomplishment during the City Beautiful movement of the early twentieth century. With considerable foresight, civic leaders purchased ideal sites for the future Detroit Public Library and Detroit Institute of Arts. Edward H. Bennett of Chicago and Frank Miles Day of Philadelphia were engaged by the City Plan and Improvement Commission to study the sites and prepare plans for developing them. These plans were published in 1913 in a brochure entitled "A Center of Arts and Letters." The completion of the Public Library, designed by Cass Gilbert, in 1921 and the Institute of Arts, designed by Paul Philippe Cret, in 1927, created for Detroit the distinguished cultural center which satisfied the needs of the day. Though early plans for the cultural center called for related buildings to be clustered around the library and art museum, the cultural center remained unchanged until 1941 when the Horace H. Rackham Education Memorial Building, designed by Harley, Ellington and Day, was built directly south of the art institute across Farnsworth Street. The Rackham Building completes the trio of monumental buildings, similar in scale, character, materials and setback. Together, these three buildings provide a unique monumental streetscape for Detroit.

The Cultural Center area expanded in 1951 after the City Plan Commission published a revised Cultural Center Plan in 1943. The Detroit Historical Museum was constructed on the northeast corner of Woodward Avenue and Kirby Street in 1951 to the designs of William E. Capp. Also in 1951, the International Institute designed by O'Dell, Hewlett and Lackenbach was constructed on Kirby Street. The Society of Arts and Crafts Art School, located at Kirby and Brush Streets, was built in 1958 according to designs by Minoru Yamasaki and expanded in 1975 according to designs by William Kessler and Associates. William Kessler and Associates also designed the Detroit Science Center on John R Street south of Farnsworth Street in 1975. Though located in the area known as the Cultural Center, these post 1943 buildings are not included within the Cultural Center Historic District because they do not maintain the scale, materials, character and setback found in the three earliest Cultural Center buildings and are a result of the 1943 revised Cultural Center Plan.

Detroit Public Library

The first Detroit Public Library was formally opened to the public in rooms on the first floor of the Old City Hall in 1865, after years of discussion. A new building was constructed to house the library in Center Park in 1875, and was added to twice before the turn of the century. At the beginning of the twentieth century it became apparent that the old library building would soon become insufficient to meet the growing demands of the booming city.

The Detroit Public Library Commission was incorporated in 1901, giving the library commissioners the right to accept gifts for the institution and the city the right to issue bonds to raise money. At the same time, Andrew Carnegie of Pittsburgh was offering liberal cash gifts for the erection of library buildings in cities that would provide the site and raise annually a sum equal to one-tenth of his gift for library maintenance. In 1901, Carnegie offered to give Detroit \$750,000. One-half was to go towards building the new

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main library and the remainder toward the construction of branch buildings. Because the city of Detroit had never raised such a large amount of money before and Carnegie's Homestead Steel Mills had massive labor troubles, Carnegie's offer was not accepted by the City Council until 1909.

The Woodward Avenue site was decided on as the location of the new public library because land had already been purchased on the opposite side of the street between Ferry and Putnam Streets for the new Institute of Arts. Together the library and art Institute would be the nucleus for Detroit's cultural center. The highest price paid for Woodward Avenue frontage was \$599.70 a front foot. The total cost of the large property, bounded by Woodward, Kirby, Cass, and part of Putnam, was close to \$500,000. It was paid for with funds generated from the sale of \$750,000 in bonds.

Architect Frank Miles Day of Philadelphia was retained as a consultant to the library commission. He advised holding a competition for the design of the library. From the preliminary competition, open only to Detroiters, two were selected to compete with outside architects. The competition for the design of the Detroit Public Library was won by Cass Gilbert of New York City on December 22, 1913.

Cass Gilbert (1859-1934) had studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and traveled extensively through Europe. He worked in the offices of McKim, Mead and White before setting up his own office. Gilbert began receiving commissions for residences once out on his own, and soon obtained larger jobs including the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul (1896) and the New York Customs House (1899). He was elected to the presidency of the AIA in 1908 and 1909 and was well respected in his profession by the time he designed the Detroit Public Library in 1915. After being asked to design the Detroit Public Library, Gilbert traveled to Italy to revive his memories of Renaissance architecture.

Gilbert had designed several other libraries prior to the Detroit Public Library, including the New Haven Public Library and the St. Louis Public Library, and had very definite thoughts on what a library should be. He believed that libraries should not only be a repository for books, but a symbol of the cultural life of the community.

"It would be as improper to house a library in a building that was 'illiterate' in its architecture, as to fill it with books written in an illiterate manner. A library should create an environment of scholarship and refinement; it fails its purpose as an educative factor if it is other than a beautiful building."

Excavation for the library was begun in 1915 by the Detroit construction firm of Irwin and Leighton. The structural steel framework was erected by the American Bridge Company. But by the end of that year, the Library Commission ran out of money. For the next year and one-half, the skeletal frame remained exposed. The voters finally authorized a bond sale in the fall of 1916 and Carnegie released his check for \$375,000, enabling the library construction to continue.

The plan of the library was altered and enlarged to accommodate the gift of the Burton Historical Collection to the City of Detroit. The general contract for the building was awarded to the George A. Fuller Company for \$1,236,320. The cornerstone was laid November 1, 1917, and in March, 1921,

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after seemingly interminable delays, the building was opened to the public, having cost three times the original estimate, or \$2,500,000 exclusive of the site.

Planning for additions to the library began in the 1940s; it is not surprising, therefore, that the plans by Cass Gilbert, Jr. and Francis J. Keally are in the stripped classic style, popular at that time. However, the time the additions were built in the 1960s, the style had passed its period of vitality, and the additions have never gained the reputation of the original building. The designers respected the original design only in the choice of white marble sheathing; otherwise, only the siting of the additions can be regarded as fortuitous, since they are well set back from the main facade of the original building, and, therefore, do not infringe upon it. The first two stories of the rear Cass Avenue facade of the original building has been totally masked by the additions; fortunately, this was the least significant of the original facades, since it reflected the library stacks located behind it.

Detroit Institute of Arts

The Detroit Institute of Arts, as it is known today, grew out of the Detroit Museum of Art which was founded in 1885. The original museum, the outgrowth of the Art Loan Exhibition of 1883, was built on property at Jefferson Avenue and Hastings Street and was realized chiefly due to the efforts of Senator Thomas W. Palmer and William H. Brearley who helped to raise the \$140,000 for the building. Canadian architect, James Balfour of Hamilton, Ontario, designed the first museum in the Richardsonian Romanesque style and its doors opened to the public in 1888. One year later, an art school opened in conjunction with the museum.

The first most significant donation of a collection came from James E. Scripps, editor and publisher of the Detroit Evening News, who gave his eighty old master paintings in 1889. Other prominent donors to the museum included Charles Lang Freer, George G. Booth, Frederick Stearns, Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., and James McMillan.

In 1919, the new city charter of the city of Detroit established an Arts Commission. The first commissioners were Ralph H. Booth, president; Albert Kahn, William J. Gray and Clyde M. Burroughs. Under this new provision, the Detroit Museum of Art and its collections, with an estimated value of \$1 million were turned over to the city of Detroit. At this time, the name was formally changed to the Detroit Institute of Arts, and the Founders' Society of the Detroit Institute of Arts was organized under the presidency of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr. to promote interest in the arts, to augment the collection and to administer the endowment fund and encourage future gifts. The city was responsible for the operational and maintenance costs of the Institute.

As early as 1908, however, because of the need for more space and the increased pollution caused by the industrialization around the Jefferson Avenue museum, the decision was made to build a new museum. William C. Weber, a trustee, initiated a movement to relocate to the site on Woodward Avenue. The site, bounded by Kirby and Farnsworth Streets on the north and south and Woodward Avenue and John R Street on the east and west, was originally two lots, one owned by Dexter M. Ferry and the other by Leander L. Farnsworth and later by Senator Thomas W. Palmer. The cost of the property was \$200,000. The purchase went through in 1909 due to the perseverance of William C. Weber and Joseph L. Hudson who each personally contributed \$40,000 to the

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effort. The new site for the museum, together with the Detroit Public Library built on the other side of Woodward Avenue, would create a new civic and cultural center for the city.

The first plan for the museum, designed by the Detroit firm Donaldson and Meier, was rejected in 1913. Upon the advice of Albert Kahn, the Arts Commission hired Paul Philippe Cret in 1922 as architect for the museum building. Born in Lyons, France in 1876, Cret graduated from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris in 1901 and by 1903, had come to the United States to join the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania's School of Architecture. Before the Detroit commission, Cret had already designed the Pan-American Union Building in Washington, D.C. and the Central Public Library in Indianapolis. Cret worked together with the Philadelphia architectural firm of Zantzinger, Borie and Medary on the Detroit project producing over 2,400 drawings including 800 working drawings. Other local Detroit firms associated with the project were Bryant and Detwiler, Builders; Leon Hermant, sculptor; the Volgt Company, decorative sculpture; Gustave Ketterer, interior decoration; Joseph Allen Enfield Pottery and Tile Works; Mary Chase Stratton, Pewabic Pottery; and Samuel Yellin, iron craftsman. The imposing and monumental structure, begun in 1921 and completed in 1927, rivaled its white marble neighbor across the street in beauty.

The interior plan of Cret's building was the product of a cooperative effort between the architects and Dr. William H. Valentiner, the Art Director of the Institute. Dr. Valentiner, an art historian brought over from Germany by Ralph H. Booth, became art adviser for the Institute in 1921 and director in 1924. Cret and Valentiner worked together in determining the spatial organization of the galleries and the storage administrative and maintenance areas. The plan called for "period rooms" in order to exhibit paintings together with the furniture and decorative objects of the same period. The building design also incorporated a lecture hall and an auditorium seating 1200 people. Cret's philosophy behind the design was to create a visually exciting interior, one that would stimulate the visitor by the use of a large variety of materials, small, intimate galleries which represented different historical styles, and open air spaces. This ideology was contrary to the conventional museum design of long, monotonous sky-lit galleries. Cret's well-organized plan achieves its primary purpose of displaying works of art without neglecting the space necessary for museum administration, storage and physical plant.

The Institute underwent a steady period of growth during the next three decades under the directorships of Valentiner, Edgar P. Richardson, and Willis F. Woods. The value of the gifts and acquisitions made to the collections was estimated at over \$5 million. Some of the more important contributions were the gifts of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr.'s collection of nineteenth century American paintings, and Robert H. Tannahill's collection of American decorative arts and French Impressionist paintings. In 1931, Diego Rivera was commissioned to create a series of frescoes for the enclosed fountain court. These were a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edsel B. Ford to the city of Detroit. The only stipulation was that the theme be related to Detroit, and thusly, Rivera chose as his theme the manufacture of the automobile. Today, these frescoes are considered to be one of Detroit's greatest treasures. In 1954, the Archives of American Art was established at the Institute to collect and research documents pertaining to American artists and artisans. The Institute also publishes two periodicals, The Art Quarterly, a scholarly journal, and the Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts, a monthly newsletter.

By the early 1960s, the collection and administrative space requirements had already outgrown the building, so a \$7.6 million expansion plan was presented to City Council calling for two new wings to add

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over 190,000 square feet to the museum. It was approved under the agreement that the city would provide half of the funds for the construction costs, and that the Founders' Society would raise the other half. The Detroit architectural firm of Harley, Ellington, Cowin and Stirton was hired with Gunnar Birkerts as design consultant. Other buildings by this firm include the City-County Building in Detroit and the State Department Building in Washington, D.C. In 1965, the South Wing which added thirty-eight new galleries was completed and ground was broken for the new North Wing, which provided more offices, a library, cafeteria and additional gallery space. The two twin wings are successful in their design because, rather than competing with the original Cret building, they enhance its beauty with their dark granite facing emphasizing the white marble of the original. The additions are praiseworthy not only for their flexible interior spatial layouts, but primarily for the fact that they are complimentary to and non-competitive with the Beaux Arts building.

Horace H. Rackham Education Memorial Building

The cultural center remained unchanged until the construction of the Horace H. Rackham Education Memorial Building in 1940-41. The Rackham Building was planned to provide quarters for the Engineering Society of Detroit, the world's largest regional society of engineers, scientists and architects; and the University of Michigan Extension Service. Construction began in July of 1940 and the building was ready for occupancy in the fall of 1941. Designed by Detroit architects Harley, Ellington, and Day, the Rackham Building was a gift to the University of Michigan and the engineering and scientific community of Michigan by the Horace H. Rackham and Mary A. Rackham Fund. The building is an outstanding example of stripped classical design popular in the 1940's and it completed the trio of Detroit's most impressive monumental buildings.

Horace H. Rackham was born in Harrison Township, Macomb County, Michigan on June 27, 1858. Rackham graduated from Leslie High School in Leslie, Michigan in 1878 and moved to Detroit the following year to work at various jobs and study law at night. He was admitted to the bar in Wayne County in 1884 and immediately started a law practice. In 1886 he married Mary A. Horton of Fenton, Michigan.

His skill and reputation as a lawyer grew. In 1903, Rackham and his partner John W. Anderson drew up the incorporation papers for the projected Ford Motor Company. The partners had a chance to invest in the new company. Though advised against it, Rackham believed that an investment in the Ford Motor Company might be profitable and borrowed money on a four acre farm and subscribed for fifty shares of stock at \$100 a share. This was all he ever invested in the Ford Motor Company, but it was the foundation of a great fortune. In 1913 Rackham retired from his active practice of law.

During his lifetime, Rackham gave anonymously large sums of money to civic, educational, and charitable organizations. He shunned publicity and only those close to him knew anything of these philanthropies. It was not until after his death that their extent was revealed. When Horace Rackham died June 13, 1933 the value of his estate was \$25,026,000. Under the stipulation of his will 84 percent of the estate or \$14,000,000 was to create the Horace H. Rackham and Mary A. Rackham Fund, to be administered for the following purposes:

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For such benevolent, charitable, educational, scientific, religious and public purposes as in the judgment of the trustees will promote the health, welfare, happiness, education, training and development of men, women and children, particularly the sick, aged, young, erring, poor, crippled, helpless, handicapped, unfortunate and under-privileged, regardless of race, color, religion or station, primarily in the state of Michigan and elsewhere in the world.

Without limiting the scope of the above purposes and uses, it shall be within the scope of the foregoing purposes to use, disburse and expend said Fund in such a manner as shall seem expedient to the Trustees for public, civic, social and general welfare; better rural and urban living and working conditions; the inculcation of thrift, industry, frugality, temperance, self-reliance, good-citizenship, and other cardinal virtues, particularly among the young; the care of the sick, aged and helpless; wholesale recreation for the people; the establishment, ownership, operation and maintenance and/or assistance of charitable, educational, benevolent, scientific, religious and the other public activities and institutions already or hereinafter established; and study, research and publication. The Trustees shall have the power to do any and all such things as in their judgment will tend to effectuate the purposes above mentioned; in short to benefit mankind.

To administer this fund Rackham had designated five persons to a Board of Trustees. In June 1934, the executive offices were established in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where members of the University of Michigan faculty were available for advisory council. The Board of Trustees was later incorporated as a non-profit Michigan Trustee Corporation. The grants made by the trustees for the Horace H. Rackham Educational Memorial totalled \$1,500,000 to cover the cost of the structure; an additional \$1,750,000 was given by Mrs. Rackham for the building fund and for endowment.

The building was planned and built to house the Engineering Society of Detroit and the University of Michigan Extension Service. The Engineering Society of Detroit was established in 1895 to promote the establishment of a separate School of Engineering at the University of Michigan. By 1923 the Society had purchased a building in Detroit and hosted the University of Michigan's first off-campus extension courses. Here Detroit's noted engineers and architects would meet to hear lectures and exchange information and ideas. Members included Henry Ford; Fred Zeder, designer of the first Chrysler automobile; Alex Dow, who welded private and public electric companies into the Detroit Edison Company; the Dodge brothers, early automobile producers; Fred Wardell, who made and lost a fortune as the nation's first producer of vacuum cleaners; Chris Smith, the country's first production builder of Chris Craft luxury boats; Albert Kahn, foremost industrial building designer; and William B. Stout, aircraft designer.

During the depression, the society was forced to forfeit its home and meet in rented headquarters in the Statler Hotel. Noting the plight of what was considered the nation's most sophisticated metropolitan technical society, the trustees of the Rackham Fund began negotiations to fund a permanent institution for

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the society. Trustees at that time included Bryson Horton, Rackham's brother-in-law, Alex Dow, founder of Detroit Edison Company, Edsel Ford, inheritor of his father's company, Standish Backus, Chairman and founder of Burroughs corporation, and William Knudsen, head of General Motors. Negotiations were complete and land for the building was purchased in 1939. The building still serves as the headquarters for Engineering Society of Detroit and the University of Michigan Extension Service.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 27 acres

Quadrangle name Detroit

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	17	33000000	46917000
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C	17	329960	4691290
E	17	329750	4691290
G			

B	17	330150	4691400
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D	17	329920	4691380
F	17	329660	4691490
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification area bounded by E. Kirby Ave. on the north, Cass Avenue on the west, John R Street on the east, and on the south by Putnam Avenue and the Rear lot line of the property on the south side of Farnsworth Avenue between Woodward Ave. and John R Street

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

state	NA	code	county	code
state	NA	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Brian D. Conway

organization Michigan History Division

date 2/25/83

street & number 208 N. Capitol

telephone (517) 373-0510

city or town Lansing,

state Michigan 48918

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

Jonathan M. Bigelow

title Director, Michigan History Division, D.O.S. date 10/10/83

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

Ruth Grosvenor
Keeper of the National Register

date 11/3/83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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District boundaries have been drawn to include the three earliest buildings in the Detroit Cultural Center constructed according to the 1913 Cultural Center Plan while excluding the surrounding buildings constructed after the Cultural Center Plan was revised in 1943. The buildings included are similar in scale, character, materials, setback and quality of design and workmanship.

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