

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received SEP 30 1982
date entered

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

1. Name

historic People's Free Library of South Carolina

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Church Street (~~off SC State Highway 909~~) NA not for publication

city, town Lowrys NA vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state South Carolina code 045 county Chester code 023

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Zion Presbyterian Church

street & number Church Street

city, town Lowrys NA vicinity of state South Carolina 29725

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Chester County Courthouse

street & number Main Street

city, town Chester state South Carolina 29706

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Inventory of Historic Places
in South Carolina has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1982 federal state county local

depository for survey records South Carolina Department of Archives and History

city, town Columbia state South Carolina 29211

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 People's Free Library of South Carolina is a small frame building in Lowrys, Chester County, built ca. 1904 through the patronage of Dr. Delano Fitzgerald for the people of the community. The building is essentially unaltered since its construction and retains most of its original furnishings.

Additional Information: The People's Free Library is a small one-story building with a single room. The building is rectangular with a gable roof, weatherboard siding, and stone foundation piers. A wooden porch spans the facade (southeast elevation) and the right side (northeast elevation). The porch has chamfered wooden posts with reeding and sawn brackets and a balustrade with turned balusters. The facade, beneath the porch, has a central door with a fluted door surround and single six-over-six sash windows on either side. The side elevations and the rear elevation have single six-over-six windows. All windows have louvered wooden shutters. The gable roof has a boxed cornice and composition shingles.

The single room of the interior has wooden floors, walls, and ceiling. The northeast, southwest, and northwest walls have built-in wooden bookcases on either side of the windows. A large potbelly stove was originally situated in the center of the floor; this has been replaced by a small iron stove, which has a metal flue rising to a small brick chimney. The library is furnished with many of the original fittings and books and five of the wooden cabinets used to circulate the books around the county.

Surroundings: The People's Free Library is located on the grounds of Zion Presbyterian Church in the small community of Lowrys. The nineteenth century church building, a modern brick parsonage, and several frame houses from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are in the vicinity.

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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" 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 ca. 1904 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The People's Free Library of South Carolina, located in Lowrys, was established in 1903-04 by Dr. Delano Fitzgerald, a winter resident of Lowrys, and the small frame building was completed ca. 1904. The library made a significant contribution to the cultural and intellectual development of Lowrys and the surrounding areas between 1904 and 1954 and continues to serve as a museum and community landmark. In addition, the People's Free Library operated a travelling library service from 1904 until at least 1909, perhaps the first such service in the state. Although the library is owned by a religious institution, as a property which derives its primary significance from historical importance, it qualifies as an exception to the restriction on listing such properties.

Additional Information: In 1903 Dr. Delano Fitzgerald donated funds for the construction and maintenance of a lending library in Lowrys, South Carolina. Dr. Fitzgerald was a Baltimore, Maryland, pharmacist who wintered in Lowrys to take advantage of the fine hunting in the area. His warm acceptance by the permanent residents of the community prompted his generous gift.¹

Mr. J. S. Guy conveyed one-ninth acre of land, in 1903, to the trustees of the Lowrysville Library, Mrs. Eula H. Atkins, R. S. Hope, Mrs. Florence G. Anderson, and Mrs. Elizabeth H. Guy, for the sum of one dollar. The deed stipulated that there would always be at least three trustees and that in the event the property should cease to function as a library, it would become the property of Zion Presbyterian Church, located on an adjacent lot also donated by Mr. Guy.²

The small frame building was constructed ca. 1904 and stocked with a variety of books, including works by Sir Walter Scott, James Fenimore Cooper, Thomas Carlyle, William Thackeray, and Charles Dickens.³ The library also made available copies of many of the day's most popular magazines, including American Poultry, Ladies Home Journal, McClures, The Delineator, and Cosmopolitan.⁴ Magazines, newspapers, and reference works remained at the library but the individual volumes could be checked out for up to two weeks.⁵ An early hand-written inventory of books included 1,381 volumes, and by 1924 the library boasted about 8,000 volumes, placing it in the top ten of the more than fifty libraries in the state.⁶

In addition to operating its permanent facility in Lowrys, the People's Free Library operated a travelling library, perhaps the first in the state.⁷ Dr. Fitzgerald designed twenty-two cabinets, each accommodating about forty-five volumes, which fit in the back of a wagon. Walter Bankhead, a local farmer, traveled throughout Chester County and into York County making twenty-two stops at homes, stores, and schools to deliver the cabinets of books. The cabinets were changed each month; use was governed by a strict set of rules.⁸

The beginnings of travelling libraries, forerunners of modern bookmobiles, are not clear, but it is certain that by 1892 the state of New York was appropriating funds for circulating small collections to designated points. Michigan, Ohio, Iowa, and Wisconsin had similar private and public lending programs by 1898.⁹ By at least 1904,

continued

9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Rock Hill

Latitude 34° 48' 16"

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

Longitude 81° 14' 29"

A

Zone	Easting				

B

Zone	Easting				

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary for the People's Free Library nomination is shown as the red line on the accompanying Chester County tax map #205-3, which is drawn at a scale of 200 feet to the inch. The nominated property includes the significant building.

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

state NA code county NA code

state NA code county NA code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Suzanne Pickens Wylie John E. Wells Reba P. Brooks, Catawba Regional Planning Council

organization South Carolina Department of Archives and History date July 30, 1982

street & number 1430 Senate Street telephone (803) 758-5816

city or town Columbia state South Carolina 29211

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 *Charles E. Lee* date *Sept 7, 1982*

title Charles E. Lee State Historic Preservation Officer date

For NPS use only I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register. *Melvin Byers* date *10/29/82* Entered in the National Register. Attest: Chief of Registration date

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

**National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet 1

Item number 8

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the Washington County Free Library in Hagerstown, Maryland, offered travelling library services, and it seems likely that Dr. Fitzgerald became aware of the concept in his home state and adapted it to the People's Free Library.¹⁰ Although the travelling library was only in operation for a short time, it appears to have been very popular and well used. The wagon left cabinets in many communities, including McConnellsville, Guthriesville, Wilkesburg, Baton Rouge, and Sealy's Creek.¹¹

Dr. Fitzgerald hired Mrs. Florence Guy Anderson Jenkins to be the first librarian. Later the ladies of the community served as volunteers to keep the library open. The library was forced to close sometime after 1924. It was reopened as a branch of the Chester County Library between 1936 and 1954, but disuse forced it to close again.¹² In 1955, as the original deed directed, the property was deeded to the Zion Presbyterian Church.¹³ The building remained unused for many years, but in 1972 the Thursday Afternoon Club chose to restore the building as its Bicentennial project. The People's Free Library now serves as a museum.¹⁴

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

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Continuation sheet 2

Item number 9

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Goldstein, Harold, ed. Milestones to the Present. Syracuse, N.Y.: Gaylord Professional Publications, 1978.

Hendrix, Julia S. "A Survey of Public Library Facilities in South Carolina." Master's thesis, University of South Carolina, 1925.

Shaw, William B. "The Traveling Library - A Boon for American Country Readers." In Contributions to American Library History, pp. 154-60. Edited by Thelma Eaton. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Lithoprinted by Edwards Brother, Inc., 1961.

Wilson, Mrs. Joe. Lowrys, South Carolina. Interview, 8 July 1982.

People's Free Library of South Carolina Nomination
Footnotes

¹Interview with Mrs. Joe Wilson, Lowrys, South Carolina, 8 July 1982.

²Deed Book 99, pp. 718-19, #430, Chester County Clerk of Court, Chester County Courthouse. Chester, South Carolina.

³List of volumes in People's Free Library collection, 1904, People's Free Library Collection, Chester County Library, Chester, South Carolina.

⁴Ledger, People's Free Library Collection, Chester County Library, Chester, South Carolina.

⁵By-Laws of the People's Free Library of South Carolina, People's Free Library Collection, Chester County Library, Chester, South Carolina.

⁶List of volumes in People's Free Library collection; Julia S. Hendrix, "A Survey of Public Library Facilities in South Carolina" (Master's thesis, University of South Carolina, 1925), pp. 16-20.

⁷Interview with Mrs. Joe Wilson; Ledger book from travelling library cabinet, People's Free Library Collection, Chester County Library, Chester, South Carolina.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Harold Goldstein, ed., Milestones to the Present (Syracuse, New York: Gaylord Professional Publications, 1978), pp. 274-75; Eleanor Frances Brown, Bookmobiles and Bookmobile Service (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1967), p. 14; William B. Shaw, "The Traveling Library - A Boon for American Country Readers," in Contributions to American Library History, ed. Thelma Eaton (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Lithoprinted by Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1961), pp. 154-60.

¹⁰Brown, p. 14.

¹¹Ledger book from travelling library cabinet.

¹²Interview with Mrs. Joe Wilson.

¹³Deed Book 384, pp. 210-11, Chester County Clerk of Court, Chester County Courthouse, Chester, South Carolina.

¹⁴Interview with Mrs. Joe Wilson.