

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Folsom Branch Library

Other Names/Site Number: Aunt Decie's Library; Folsom Village Library and Museum

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & Number: 13260 Broadway

City or town: Folsom

State: LA

County: St. Tammany

Not for Publication:

Vicinity:

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national state local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Kristin Sanders, State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title:

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other, explain: _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public – Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public – State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public – Federal

Category of Property (Check only **one** box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	District
<input type="checkbox"/>	Site
<input type="checkbox"/>	Structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

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

Contributing	Non-contributing	
1		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.): EDUCATION/Library

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.): EDUCATION/Library/Museum

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7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.): No Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: concrete

walls: wood weatherboard

roof: asphalt

other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Folsom Branch Library is located near the historic center of the village of Folsom, Louisiana east of Highway 25 at a transition point between the main commercial highway and a quiet residential neighborhood. The library is a small, simple one-room wood frame building of no particular style with wood siding, windows, and some original library furnishings on a concrete slab foundation. The entrance faces Broadway Street. Built circa 1940 as a tool shed, the building was converted to a one-room library in 1949. The library has a good degree of integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Integrity of setting is somewhat diminished by the loss of an adjacent house historically associated with the library; however, the overall setting is similar to the period of significance.

Narrative Description

The Folsom Branch Library is located at the intersection of Broadway Street and Leon Alley east of the main road of Folsom. The building sits relatively isolated near tree-lined Broadway Street to its north with a recreational area of green space and trees enclosed with a low wood fence to its east, a gravel parking lot to its south, and an alley to its west. The alley separates the library from the former residence of the long-time librarian, which faced west toward Highway 25. The residence has been demolished and replaced; however, the new building is similar in scale to the former building. The library faces north toward Broadway Street. A simple concrete bench sits in front of the building, and 9 concrete stepping stones serve as a small landing at the entry door. After the library closed in 1987, the building remained vacant and fell into disrepair. In its recent rehabilitation, the majority of the historic materials and original library furnishings were retained.

The library is a small one-room building originally constructed in the early 20th century as a storage shed or small workshop for the adjacent residence. The wood frame building sits on a concrete slab and is clad in painted wood clapboard siding. The side gable roof has exposed rafter ends. The recently replaced roof is covered with asphalt shingles on flat plywood sheathing, which replaced the original wood board decking. The primary (north) elevation features a wood vertical panel door near

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the west side. The door has new hardware and a new wood frame; one side of the original door frame containing a metal street number is mounted on the outside of the new frame. A new light fixture and mailbox are present between the door and paired 6/6 wood windows with a simple frame. The west elevation includes a single centered 6/6 wood window and a small gable vent. The south (rear) and east elevations contain no openings; a small gable vent and mechanical equipment are present on the east side.

The building's interior consists of a single room. The walls and ceiling are clad in sheetrock, which replaced older sheetrock wallboard that was damaged when the building was open to the elements for an extended period of time. The green interior paint color was matched from paint remnants found on the original library shelving. The floor is bare concrete. Original wood library shelves span the south and east walls; one retains a metal stamp from the St. Tammany Parish Library System. A low wood shelf with cubby-holes below on the north side below the windows is a replica of the original. The original library table sits in the center of the room. Original curtain valences are present on the windows. The ceiling contains a new ceiling fan and two new light fixtures, and a mini split air conditioner is installed on the east wall.

The library has a high degree of integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It remains in its location and largely retains its interior and exterior appearance from the period of significance. Replacement materials in the recent rehabilitation include the roof, interior finishes, door frame, and one replicated interior shelf. A limited amount of wood siding was replaced in kind, and the original windows were retained and repaired. Most of the original furnishings are present with the exception of the librarian's desk, and the shelves are filled with books as they were during the period of significance. Integrity of setting is somewhat diminished by the loss of the adjacent residence of the long-time librarian, Ella Odetha "Decie" Pittman. The scale of the replacement building is similar to the former residence, and the overall setting remains similar to the historic setting. The library would undoubtedly be recognizable to its former patrons.

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.)

X	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history

Criteria Considerations:

	A	Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
	B	Removed from its original location

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C	A birthplace or grave
D	A cemetery
E	A reconstructed building, object, or structure
F	A commemorative property
G	Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions.): Education

Period of Significance: 1950 - 1972

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person (Complete only if Criterion B is marked above): N/A

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion D is marked above): N/A

Architect/Builder (last name, first name): Pittman, James (builder)

Period of Significance (justification): The period of significance spans the years the building operated as the only public library in the village of Folsom up until the National Register 50-year cut off. The library continued to serve as the village's only public library until 1987.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary): N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Folsom Branch Library is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Education. The period of significance begins in 1950, when it was converted to a library, and ends in 1972, the current 50-year cut off. The building served as the first and only public library in the village of Folsom for several decades, beginning in 1950, when it was established as the Folsom branch of the St. Tammany Parish Library. The library provided educational opportunities not available elsewhere in Folsom and served as the library for nearby Folsom Elementary School in its earlier years. It remained Folsom's only public library until 1987, when a new Folsom branch library was built a quarter mile away.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Brief History of Folsom

At the end of the 19th century, St. Tammany Parish, was virtually covered with virgin longleaf pine forests, excepting a strip north of the Lake Ponchartrain shoreline along The Old Spanish Trail (today's Hwy. 190) and some small settlements along the rivers. In that so-called Golden Age of American Industry, it was not long before the post - Civil War railroad boom began to stretch its tracks into those forests and extract the valuable lumber to build an ever-expanding country. It was at a spot between three rivers, the Tchefuncte, Bogue Falaya, and the Bogue Chitto that the railroad built its terminal. That spot was to become the Village of Folsom. Homesteaders had been arriving and farming the area since the 1880s. One of these homesteading families, the Fendlasons, saw into the future and began to buy up the land that was to become Folsom. In 1904, George

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and Hines Fendlason drew up a "plat map" or street layout and submitted it to the St. Tammany government. By World War I, the village could boast a train station, hotel, general store, barber shop, drug store, livery stable, many homes, etc.

After World War II, the first service station opened, more houses were built, and the village was flourishing. Unfortunately, the pine forests began to disappear, and trains stopped running. The clearing of the forests did allow some enterprises to rise in its place. Folsom saw a brief return to prosperity with the rise of the Tung Oil industry. Alongside of the Tung tree planting, the plant Nursery industry began to fill the clear-cut areas where the pines had once ruled. Later the Tung Oil was replaced by synthetic products, but the land once again came to life with the establishment of vast farms for thoroughbred horses.

That first service station became one of the central gathering places of the village. Having the first phone in town and one of the first automobiles, it was soon a hub of activity. The couple who opened and operated the service station, James and Odetha Pittman, were to play a great role in the establishment and operation of the Folsom Branch Library.

History of Libraries in Folsom and St. Tammany Parish

Prior to 1925, Louisiana largely lacked public libraries outside of its major urban areas. In 1925, a \$50,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation through the League of Library Commissions allowed for the implementation of efforts to aid public library development in rural areas throughout the state. The recently formed Louisiana Library Commission selected Essae Martha Culver, a California librarian, to administer the program. Culver adapted a statewide library demonstration program in California to the needs of Louisiana, establishing a central state library in Baton Rouge with a headquarters in each parish seat.¹ Each parish library demonstration, which also included branch locations and bookmobiles in more rural areas providing books borrowed from the state library, lasted one year. The program was designed to encourage the parish to assume responsibility for its library system and continue to operate it after the demonstration period ended.² The program also promoted establishing a training course for librarians throughout the state.³

The library demonstration program was widely viewed as successful and was studied as an example by interested parties in other U.S. states and countries.⁴ Between 1925 and 1968, all 64 Louisiana parishes established their own permanent library systems. Over these four decades, the demonstration program was refined based on prior successes and failures. By the time the program reached St. Tammany Parish, administrators were selecting new parish candidates "based on the apparent strength of local interest and leadership and on the prospect of ongoing support. They standardized a procedure requiring the parish to provide physical facilities for the demonstration, as well as maintenance and utilities, furniture and shelving, office supplies, and salaries of part-time employees, bookmobile drivers, and custodians."⁵ Additionally, "Before the demonstration concluded, the police jury was expected to provide financially for the new parish library's continued operation."⁶

In early 1950, the Louisiana State Library began a public library demonstration in St. Tammany Parish. Beyond the planning of central libraries in Covington and Slidell, meetings were held around the parish to announce and elicit support for a parish-wide system. Consistent with reports of publicity tours to generate and gauge public support for the demonstration program, Folsom's first librarian later recalled, "A lady came down from Baton Rouge and they had a party to see who was interested in having a library."⁷ Many of the smaller towns

¹ Jumonville, "Essae M. Culver," *Library Trends*, spring 2004, 859.

² Jumonville, 860.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Jumonville, 867-868.

⁵ Jumonville, 868.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Mullen, "Folsom's library: a look back." *St. Tammany News-Banner*, November 29, 1987.

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and villages in the parish stepped up and volunteered to participate. In Folsom, the Pittman and Magee families took the initiative and provided space and personnel to oversee the creation of the Folsom Village library branch.⁸ At that time, prominent citizens Price and May Magee took part in the parish-wide planning efforts for the new St. Tammany Parish Library system. They were instrumental in getting a library opened in Folsom. Mrs. Odetha Pittman offered her services as librarian and later attended formal librarian training in Covington.⁹ A small shed behind the Pittman home was renovated and furnished with shelving, a desk, a table, and chairs to serve as the library building. On Friday, June 2, 1950, the *St. Tammany Farmer* announced, "the entire system of the St. Tammany Parish Library will swing into operation in the next three weeks..." and "Folsom will open the last week in June."¹⁰

The *Saint Tammany Farmer* announced that the Folsom branch "opened Wednesday, June 21.... (the librarian) in charge, Mrs. James Pittman will open the library on Monday and Friday afternoons from 12:30 until 5:30."¹¹ With books on loan from the Louisiana State Library as well as Bookmobile services, the Folsom branch was in full service by the middle of the summer, 1950. Within the next month, "... Mrs. Price Magee donated the awning and lovely drapes for the library."¹² By the end of the year, the small branch had circulated 386 books among 79 patrons.¹³ As a full-service library, the Folsom branch served all white citizens of the Folsom area due to widespread racial segregation laws at the time. The new parish library system included one branch for Black residents: the J.S. Clark Branch in Covington. Legal desegregation occurred in 1957 (US Supreme Court - *Brown vs. the Board of Education*). In Folsom, as in much of the state, actual desegregation occurred during the 1960s in slow sporadic fashion.

Education in Folsom

Formal education for children began in Folsom almost from the very beginnings of the village itself. There is an apocryphal story of the first schoolmaster teaching "under an oak tree" circa 1900.¹⁴ Schools in actual buildings began in several of the churches in and around the village. These early schools included The Wardline School on Bennett Bridge Rd. (c. 1900), The Savannah Branch School, and the Onward School.

Public education first got underway in 1911 when the first grade for white children was opened "in a building... located near the Town Hall {then on R.R. Ave.}"¹⁵ In the 1920s the first Folsom Elementary School was built on a hill behind the First Baptist Church.

The first local school for the Black population of Folsom was the Folsom School, a two-teacher Rosenwald School built in 1928 at the current location of Folsom Junior High School.¹⁶ ¹⁷ The Folsom School was said to have a library among its early furnishings.¹⁸ Early classrooms at the Folsom Elementary School often had a small section in the rear or side of the room for a few bookshelves and some books available to the children. The current Elementary School building and site opened in 1949. It had no formal space dedicated to library use until 1964, when a library space was cordoned off in the cafeteria and Blanche McCloskey became the first school librarian. From then on, Folsom Elementary has had its own library.¹⁹

⁸ Bice, *passim*.

⁹ Mullen, "Folsom's library: a look back." *St. Tammany News-Banner*, November 29, 1987. A two-day training program for the parish library demonstration staff ahead of the library openings is also mentioned in "Opening Ceremonies For Library Tonight," *St. Tammany Farmer*, June 2, 1950.

¹⁰ "Opening Ceremonies for Library Tonight," *St. Tammany Farmer*, June 2, 1950

¹¹ *St. Tammany Farmer*, June 30, 1950

¹² *St. Tammany Farmer*, July 28, 1950

¹³ "4,785 Books Borrowed From Parish Library During Month of Sept." *St. Tammany Farmer*, October 20, 1950

¹⁴ Bice, 2004

¹⁵ Bice, page 52.

¹⁶ The Rosenwald Database, <http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/>.

¹⁷ "History of Folsom Jr. High School," <http://folsomjunior.stpsb.org/history.htm>

¹⁸ Bice, page 50.

¹⁹ Jerry Laiche, interviews with the Pittman families and former students of Folsom Elementary, fall-winter 2021.

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Conclusion

The Folsom Branch Library continued to operate as Folsom’s sole public library until 1987, when the parish library system constructed a new 2,000 square foot building for its Folsom branch at the corner of Canton Street and Railroad Avenue.²⁰ The years of operation of the original library have almost become a source of educational and literacy legend in the village of Folsom and its surrounding countryside. The feeling was best described by Ms. Liz Blackwell Willie at the grand opening of the restored facility as, "It was our window to the world."²¹ (Dec 3, 2021) Another local library legend was the career and services of Mrs. Pittman, still fondly known as “Aunt Decie,” the original librarian from 1950 to 1971. While the building remained vacant for many years after its closing and fell into disrepair, it was restored and reopened as a community space in 2021. The library remains a local landmark and an important reminder of the village’s educational history.

Developmental History/Additional historic context information

9. Major Bibliographical Resources

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

A Folsom Library Scrapbook. St. Tammany Parish Library, Folsom Branch.

Bice, David A. Folsom Village, A Centennial Celebration, 1904 - 2004. Clanton, AL. Heritage Publishing Consultants, 2004.

Ellis, Fredrick S. St. Tammany Parish, L'autre Cotè du Lac. Gretna, LA, Pelican Press, 1981. Forward by Walker Percy.

Laiche, Jerry. Interviews with David Pittman, Anne Pittman, Jamie Pittman, Judith O.W. Loyde, Suellen Armitage. All are current residents of Folsom, LA and former students of Folsom Elementary School. Summer 2021, January-February 2022.

Mullen, J. “Folsom’s library: a look back.” *St. Tammany News-Banner*, November 29, 1987

St. Tammany Farmer, various.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

²⁰ “Folsom Branch Library,” newspaper clipping; publication and date unknown.

²¹ Jerry Laiche, interview with Liz Blackwell Willie, December 3, 2021

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_____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property: less than one acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. **Latitude:** 30.629307 **Longitude:** -90.186724

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary includes the nominated building and the area immediately surrounding it; it corresponds to the current property boundaries. LOT 10 SQ 11 FOLSOM CB 723-913 CB 1514 219 INST NO 1490429 INST NO 2200555. See boundary map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the current property boundaries associated with the historic Folsom Branch Library. The parcel includes the library building and a portion of the historic setting.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Emily Ardoin, National Register Coordinator, and Jon (Jerry) Laiche

organization: N/A

street & number: 13260 Broadway St.

city or town: Folsom

state: Louisiana

zip code:70437

e-mail: jlaiche@earthlink.net

telephone: (985) 795-2372

date: February 2022

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Folsom Branch Library
City or Vicinity: Folsom
County: St. Tammany Parish
State: LA
Name of Photographer: Emily Ardoin
Date of Photographs: February 1, 2022

- 1 of 7: Northwest corner of building, camera facing southeast
- 2 of 7: North (front) elevation, camera facing south
- 3 of 7: Northeast corner of building, camera facing southwest
- 4 of 7: Southwest corner of building, camera facing northeast
- 5 of 7: Library interior with original shelves and table, camera facing west
- 6 of 7: Library interior with original shelves and table, camera facing east
- 7 of 7: Library interior, closer view of original curtain valance, camera facing northeast

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Photo 8