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

1. Name of Property

historic name Harmonia Hall
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number	S2119 County Highway E	N/A	not for publication
city or town	Town of Waumandee	N/A	vicinity
state Wisconsin	code WI	county Buffalo	code 011 zip code 54622

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date May 1, 2009

State Historic Preservation Officer - Wisconsin

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Harmonia Hall
Name of Property

Buffalo
County and State

Wisconsin

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:
- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
 - determined eligible for the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
 - determined not eligible for the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
 - removed from the National Register.
 - other, (explain:)

Edson H. Beall

6-18-09

[Signature]

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	contributing	noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	1	4 buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	district	1	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	structure		structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	site		objects
	object	2	4 total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources is previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
Social: meeting hall

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
Recreation and culture: outdoor recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Mid-19th Century

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation Limestone

walls Vinyl

roof Asphalt

other Wood

Narrative Description

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

Harmonia Hall

Buffalo

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- 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

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

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social History

Period of Significance

1890-1930

Significant Dates

1890

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Schafer (Schaefer), Joseph

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Harmonia Hall
Name of Property

Buffalo
County and State

Wisconsin

9. Major Bibliographic References

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

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- 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 #

Primary location of additional data:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 2 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 601915 4904488
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

See Continuation Sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Donald Michael Aucutt	date	July 30, 2008
organization	Water Street Words	telephone	906 563 8837
street & number	1705 5 th Avenue	zip code	49870
city or town	Norway	state	MI

Harmonia Hall
Name of Property

Buffalo
County and State

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

Property Owner

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

name/title	Township of Waumandee, Buffalo County, Wisconsin	date	December 2008
organization		telephone	608-626-3031 (Clerk)
street&number	S2053 County Road E	zip code	54622
city or town	Waumandee	state	WI

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

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

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Harmonia Hall

Section 7 Page 1

Town of Waumandee, Buffalo County, Wisconsin

The Harmonie Gesellschaft's (Society's) Harmonia Hall, built in 1890, is a one-story building located on a slight rise next to County Highway E, one and one-tenth miles southwest of Waumandee in the Township of Waumandee, Buffalo County, Wisconsin. Harmonia Hall sits within a Township of Waumandee park (now called Harmonia Park) bounded by County Highway E to the east and farmland on the other three sides. A circular drive wraps around the building; most of the two acre parcel is planted with grass with tall deciduous and evergreen trees shading the site.

Vernacular in form, and characteristic of simple rural buildings of the mid and late 19th century, Harmonia Hall is 36 feet, six inches wide at the front facing County E and at the back; 48 feet, six inches long on the side facing south, and, because of an addition, 62 feet, 17 inches long on the north side. The square footage is approximately 1,800 square feet.

Harmonia Hall is basically rectangular in shape and finished on all four sides. The building is of frame construction. The roof is front-gabled. An entrance hood and a stage addition have hipped roofs, both partial. The foundation for the original building is limestone, with blocks 14 inches long in size.

The exterior walls are currently covered with vinyl siding, although the original wood siding is located underneath. Two entrance doors are at the center. An entrance hood supported by wood brackets shelters the entrance. An arched window is on the gable above the entrance hood. At either side of the entrance doors are single double-hung windows, each with four panels of glass at the top and the bottom. The original wood framing and wood muntins show, and these seem to be the original windows.

The south-facing exterior wall, which faces farmland, contains four evenly spaced double-hung windows, each with four panels of glass at the top and the bottom. The original wood framing and wood muntins show, and these seem to be the original windows.

The west-facing exterior wall has doors at either end of the wall, a single door at the south end and double doors at the north end. An open lean-to is attached to this elevation.

On the north-facing exterior wall three of the original four windows remain. These three windows are double-hung with four panes of glass above and four panes of glass below. The original wood framing and wood muntins show on these three windows, and these windows seem to be the original. The appearance of the original north-facing wall was altered in the 1920s with the addition of a stage. Set on a concrete-block foundation, the three walls of the stage addition measure 10 feet, five inches facing west; 10 feet, ½ inch, facing north; and 10 feet, five inches facing east. The west- and east-facing walls angle toward the north-facing wall. Each of the stage addition walls is now covered with

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Harmonia Hall
Town of Waumandee, Buffalo County, Wisconsin

vinyl siding. Each of the stage addition walls has a single window at the center. These three stage addition windows are double-hung with six panels of glass above and six panels of glass below. These windows replaced one-over-one double hung windows that were in place as late as 1999.

The interior is a single room. The floor is wood—fir. The lower walls are wainscoted in vertical pine boards up to the windows. Above the wainscoting, the walls are covered with narrow pine boards set horizontally. The same horizontally placed pine boards cover the ceiling, which arches at the south and north sides. Some old pews and benches are inside the hall, but their origin and age are unknown.

Harmonia Park (C)

The setting for the Harmonie Gesellschaft's Harmonia Hall is a two-acre park dating to 1880. Located on a rise, the park has pine trees—some dating to the early 1880s, hardwood trees and grassy areas and several newer park buildings. Because of the role the park has played in the history of the Society as a gathering spot, the park is considered a contributing site.

ALTERATIONS

Harmonia Hall was expanded in 1893 with a lean-to addition to the west-facing wall. This lean-to addition, which included a balcony at the back of hall, was removed in 1950. However, a new, open lean-to addition has been added. The front entrance dates to the 1960s and is a simpler version of the original more decorated hood, which seems to have been changed in the late 19th or early 20th century. The entrance steps have been replaced. A new railing for the steps was added in 2004. The exterior vinyl siding was added in 2004 over the original wood siding. Returning the hall to its original appearance would be a rather easy task, requiring removal of the vinyl. The front of the interior stage was rebuilt and the north-facing interior wall of the stage repaired in 2005, after being damaged during basketball practices and games.

The park appearance has changed with the construction of park related resources on the grounds. The park also has playground equipment, old equipment moved from the Anchorage School nearby, new equipment placed in 2004, and picnic tables and small freestanding grills.

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Harmonia Hall
Town of Waumandee, Buffalo County, Wisconsin

NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

Waumandee Rod and Gun Club Building (1965) (NC)

The building rests on a concrete block foundation, has drop siding and a front-gabled roof covered with asphalt shingles. A centered, wooden, paneled door is the only opening on the east gabled end wall. The west wall also features a single centered door. The north and south elevations both have three hinged openings that can be lifted open to provide serving for concessions.

Restroom Facility (1960s) (NC)

With a concrete block foundation and walls, the restroom facility is a utilitarian building topped by a gabled, asphalt covered roof. Each gabled end wall contains a centered metal door, while the north and south walls each feature screened, rectangular openings that provide light and ventilation.

Picnic Shelter (1960s) (NC)

Built on a poured concrete foundation, the shelter consists of wooden post, rafters and girders supporting a corrugated metal roof. Waist-high wooden planks encircle the east, north and west sides, creating counter-like spaces. A concrete block grille occupies the center of the shelter.

Shed (1960s) (NC)

At the northwest corner of the picnic area is a plywood shed built on wooden footings. The walls are of plywood boards, while the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. A square opening is off-centered on the west side, and a plywood door is off-centered on the south side.

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Section 8 Page 1 Harmonia Hall
Town of Waumandee, Buffalo County, Wisconsin

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Harmonie Gesellschaft's Harmonia Hall, built in 1890 in the Township of Waumandee near Waumandee, Buffalo County, Wisconsin, is nominated under Criterion A for its local significance in the area of Social History. The hall was the meeting place for the members of the Harmonie Gesellschaft. These people were Freethinkers who gathered for intellectual and social purposes. The members were immigrants from Germany and Switzerland or the children of these immigrants. The hall they built was used for meetings and for entertainment and social events. The carpenter who built, and likely designed, Harmonia Hall was Joseph Schafer (umlaut on the "a") of Arcadia, Wisconsin, not far from Waumandee in Trempealeau County near the Buffalo County boundary (*Buffalo County Republikaner*, May 20, 1890: unnumbered page). The period of significance begins in 1890 with the construction of the hall and ends in 1930 with the growing use of the hall by other organizations. While the Harmonie Gesellschaft did not officially dissolve until the 1950s, by the 1930s its numbers had diminished and the group was again meeting in private homes rather than the hall.

HISTORY OF THE TOWNSHIP OF WAUMANDEE, WISCONSIN

The early residents of the area which is now the Township of Waumandee were Ho-Chunk Indians (Loew: 40-following). The first permanent white settlement in what is now Buffalo County, and was then part of the Wisconsin Territory, occurred in 1839 at Holmes's Landing (now Fountain City) on the Mississippi River (Buffalo County: 1). Buffalo County was organized in 1854 (No. 6 Buffalo County: 11) after Wisconsin became the 30th state in the United States in 1848. The first white settlers, farmers, arrived in the Waumandee Valley in 1853 and 1854 (Kessinger: 654). Organization of the Township of Waumandee began with a Buffalo County board resolution on March 13, 1856 (Curtiss-Wedge: pages 98-99). The resolution was approved, thereafter, by election. The village of Waumandee was platted in 1871 (Kessinger: 653).

FREETHINKERS IN WISCONSIN

In 1848, revolutions developed in Europe because of the economic effects of crop failures in 1846-47 and political repression (Chernow, Columbia, revolutions: 2312). By 1848, in the German states, the members of Free Congregations formed by Freethinkers totaled 150,000 (Goc: 22). Among the consequences of the failed revolutions of 1848 was the emigration of Germans to North America.

The number of German immigrants who arrived in Wisconsin after the 1848 revolutions was a small part of the total German immigration to the state (Wyatt: 2-3). Even so, the number of free-thinking Germans was substantial enough to result in more than a dozen free congregations, or "Freie

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Town of Waumandee, Buffalo County, Wisconsin

Gemeinde," being formed by 1852 (*Dictionary of Wisconsin History*). These congregations were in Burlington, Fond du Lac, Jefferson, Manitowoc, Oshkosh, and Sauk City. Freethinkers' Hall in Sauk City was built in 1884 by one of the largest and most enduring Freethinkers groups. It was listed in the National Register in 1988.

Organized Freethinker congregations received mentions in the *Truth Seeker*, a publication founded in 1873 in Peoria, Illinois, and soon relocated to New York (Jacoby: 155-156). The *Truth Seeker's* staff was an "eclectic bunch," explains Susan Jacoby in her book *Freethinkers, a History of American Secularism*. She describes them as "proponents of sexual abstinence and free love, urban sophisticates and devotees of pure country air, spiritualists and uncompromising rationalists, temperance campaigners and promoters of a European association of wine..." (Jacoby: 156).

FREETHINKERS IN THE TOWN OF WAUMANDEE

The first Freethinker society in Buffalo County was organized about 1861 in the Waumandee Valley along Waumandee Creek in the Township of Waumandee (Kessinger: 508). The members were mostly from farm families. These families were attracted by "undulating agricultural land lying in valleys enclosed on their sides by forest-crowned bluffs... Fed from upstream springs which erupt at the foothills, Waumandee Creek once provided livestock water, once powered a large mill, and once lent cooling for cream and milk storage on farmsteads" (Ripley: 1-2).

The Waumandee Freethinkers organized as the Harmonie Gesellschaft (Society) "as early as 1861," wrote Lawrence Kessinger in his *1888 History of Buffalo County* (Kessinger: 508). In his history of the Township of Waumandee, Albert Hess said the Waumandee Valley populace included "quite a number of people belonging to no church organization, mostly of Swiss and German origin..." (Hess: 4). Among these unchurched organizers were John Ochsner and his brother-in-law Henry Waelty, both mentioned as such in John Ochsner's unpublished autobiography of 1901 (Ripley—Ochsner biographical manuscript: 93). Ochsner and Waelty were Swiss immigrants who first lived in Sauk County. Society members met the first Sunday of each month. (Kessinger: 508) Their purpose, explained historian Kessinger, was "the entertainment and general mental improvement of the members, discussion of important topics of local, political and general importance and interest. Those inclined to do so form a singing club, for their own amusement and for social purposes." Hess mentions the later organization of a Harmonie Singing Society (Hess: 4). The Harmonie Gesellschaft was not organized as a Free Congregation. The Freethinking spirit was manifested, however.

Seemingly as important as discussing, singing and band-playing was the society's library. The library had 321 books when Kessinger wrote the Buffalo County history in 1888 (Kessinger: 509).

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He described these as “works of most of the prominent German authors, especially of the past, a very commendable feature of any similar society.” The library is also mentioned in the undated history of the Town of Waumandee by Albert Hess. He mentions the accumulation of “quite a large library, mostly German books and especially of anti-religious strain.” (Hess: 4) Thus, it seems probable that the library would have included *The Age of Reason* (1794, 1795), a two-part “deistic, antibiblical work,” by Thomas Paine (1737-1809), the English-born writer and pre-revolutionary patriot and patriot after moving to the English North American colonies (Chernow/Columbia: 2049). *The Age of Reason* appeared in a German translation in Hamburg in 1794 (Kistler: 82). *The Age of Reason* seems to have been easily found in the Midwest in the latter part of the 19th century. Recalling his first extended visit to the United States in 1880 and 1881, the Norwegian writer Knut Hamsun (1859-1952) mentions being lent Paine’s book by a friend from Ireland, both of them being in rural Minnesota (Hamsun: 163). German-American Freethinking organizations celebrated Paine’s birthday on January 29.

For their reading, contemplation, and socialization, Kessinger wished that societies similar to the Harmonie Gesellschaft “were formed in every locality which affords an opportunity for it. They are not only of benefit for the present, but also for the rising generation, both by affording a chance for instruction and by creating habits of reflection and mental recreation” (Kessinger: 509).

More must be made of a Sauk County connection to the Township of Waumandee. Albert Hess wrote about this link because of people “who came here from Sauk County, where they had been associated with what was called the ‘Free Thinkers’” (Hess: 4). The Freie Gemeinde von Sauk County, or, in English, the Free Congregation of Sauk County, was organized in October 1852 in Sauk City by some 80 persons of varied German descent (Runge: 27). Their purposes, which are pertinent to the Harmonie in the Township of Waumandee, given the movement of Sauk County Freethinkers to the township, included erecting “a strong fortification against the pernicious power of churches, sects and clericalism;” organizing on the base “of reason, which is defamed by the priests of all ‘revealed’ religions, and the book of nature and world history, feared and regulated by clericals, but loved and honored by the wise of all nations and all times;” and not being bound by “‘supernatural and incomprehensible means of grace’ (exclusive business of the church), but the natural and intelligible means through which man influences and inspires his fellow human beings: speech, song and reciprocal exchange of opinions” (Runge). On January 29, 1856, the Free Congregation began its annual Thomas Paine celebration. In 1861, rural Honey Creek members dedicated their own hall. Another hall was completed in Merrimac in 1863. Both communities are in Sauk County.

The History of Sauk County, Wisconsin provides more explanation of the Free Congregation. “The congregation has no settled dogma, neither do the members recognize any authority as being infallible,

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and to be explicitly followed.” At first, this organization “met with strong opposition from church people, which has become modified with the passage of time” (History of Sauk County: 608).

In 1856, members of the Ochsner family, one of the founding families of the Free Congregation in Sauk County, moved from the Honey Creek area in rural Sauk County to the Township of Waumandee. They were brothers John and Conrad Ochsner and their married sisters Barbara (Ochsner) Waelty and Dorothea (Ochsner) Mainz and their families. The Ochsners were of German-speaking Swiss origin, specifically Canton Zurich (Kessinger: 654; and John Ochsner obituary). In 1863, John Ochsner built a grist mill powered by a dam across Waumandee Creek to grind local wheat into flour and corn into animal feed. In 1866, he rebuilt the mill to accommodate a roller system (Ripley: 73-76, 91). By 1878, Ochsner, Waelty and Manz farms were located near what would be the site of Harmonia Hall (Waumandee Township map). When John Ochsner died in 1920, there was no mention of his spiritual associations in his long obituary; there was mention of his funeral being in the home of George Schmidt and burial in the Waumandee cemetery, now called the Waumandee Public Cemetery (John Ochsner obituary; Buffalo County cemetery records).

In the 1870s, members who lived in the Little Waumandee Valley in the Township of Lincoln split from the Waumandee Valley Harmonie (Kessinger: 509). The reason for this was practical, a matter of not wanting to travel eight miles or more to Waumandee Valley. In 1878, these people started the Frohsinn, which, “means merriment, hilarity, or good humor.” Kessinger continues, “It must not, however, be supposed that they did not make preparations for serious things, as they have a small library containing some good books.”

BUILDING HARMONIA HALL

By 1890, when Harmonia Hall was built, the members had been meeting for some 30 years in various homes. In 1880, society members Fred and Maria Hohmann sold a small part of their farm to the society. The warranty deed from March 4, 1880, still filed at the Buffalo County Courthouse in Alma, conveys the property to the “Waumandee Library Society named Harmonie,” for \$20. Soon after, the members “planted a fine grove of pine trees” on the land. They continued to meet at various locations until the summer of 1890. Starting with the May 20, 1890 edition of the *Buffalo County Republikaner*, a German-language newspaper published in Fountain City, Wisconsin, regular announcements appeared about the construction of the society’s new hall on its land next to the Hohmann farm. The May 20 report, under the heading of “Waumandee” on an unnumbered page, was: “Mr. Jos. Schafer from Arcadia has begun with the joiner work on Harmonia Hall,” or, in German, “Herr Jos. Schafer von Arcadia hat mit der Schreinerarbeit an der Harmonia Halla begonnen.” (In the 1905 Wisconsin state census, Mr. Schafer’s name was spelled Schaefer.) The building is front-gabled, a form

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“ubiquitous in urban and rural settings” and perhaps “linked to the Greek Revival style” (Wyatt: 3-2). A week later, the *Buffalo County Republikaner*, reported: “The new hall for the singing club ‘Harmonie’ will be completed in about two weeks” (*Buffalo County Republikaner*, May 27, 1890: unnumbered page). Soon enough, the building was finished.

Next came the dedication of the new hall. An advertisement in the *Buffalo County Republikaner* read: “The Society known as ‘Harmonie,’ Town of Waumandee will dedicate its new hall on Sunday, the 22 of June 1890. To this end, all arrangements have been taken, to make this a joyful day for their guests. The festivities begin at 1 p.m. In the evening: A Grand Ball! Free Admission! The organizing committee extends an invitation to the general public” (*Buffalo County Republikaner*, June 10, 1890: unnumbered page). A week later, a further report in the same newspaper mentioned that Bach’s Orchestra had been invited to play at the June 22 program, and whether the orchestra was in the hall or not, the dedication program would “take place vivaciously” (*Buffalo County Republikaner*, June 17, 1890: unnumbered page). The Bach’s Orchestra could have been a popular musical group from Milwaukee, the Bach in the name being Christoph Bach (1835-1927) (Milwaukee Liederkrantz). Mr. Bach, as first violinist and conductor, started the orchestra as a string sextet in Milwaukee in October 1855. By 1890, the year of the completion of Harmonie Hall, Bach’s Orchestra had more than 70 players, who performed music from the German romantic classical tradition, including Beethoven, Schubert and Wagner.

Celebrating done, society members began meeting in Harmonia Hall—described as “quite a spacious hall,” (Hess: 4) and sponsored social gatherings and concerts by German-American singing choruses. Examples of these functions are: An April 26, 1891 lecture by the Rev. N.C. Earl on the subject of religion; a June 1891 picnic with cornet bands from Arcadia and Waumandee, singing societies, and in the evening inside the hall “dancers who enjoyed themselves until daylight the next morning;” and in June 1893, a Sangerfest with eight singing societies, dinner and supper and later “the hall... jammed full of dancers — there were hundreds and hundreds from far and near” (Ripley: 5-8).

The much-commented library was moved into Harmonia Hall and remained there long after the Freethinker society dwindled and disappeared. In 1950, when an 1893 lean-to addition was removed, the books, aged by time and damaged by changes in temperature and moisture, were taken from the hall and thrown away.

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Harmonia Hall
Town of Waumandee, Buffalo County, Wisconsin

BEYOND THE FREETHINKERS

By the 1930s, the Harmonia Hall was being used by others and not so much by the Harmonie Gesellschaft (Society). In October 1930, the Waumandee Local Farmers Union sponsored a dance in the hall with “music by the Putz 5-pieces Orchestra, admission 50 cents per couple” (*Cochrane Recorder*—Cochrane, Buffalo County, Wisconsin, September 25, 1930 [cited in Rippley: 9-10]). In 1936, E.F. Ganz, publisher of the *Buffalo County Journal* in Alma, reported that society meetings were again “held in the homes of the members” and that the society “has strayed far from its early traditions” (Ganz: unnumbered page). Even so, wrote Mr. Ganz, the society “is still a factor in the promotion of the welfare of the community” and “its activities have resulted in real good to the community and indirectly to the county at large.” Albert Hess mentioned that “many of the old timers in this organization died or moved away,” resulting in the society becoming “dormant” (Hess: 4); the society formally disbanded in the 1950s. For a time, the hall and park were leased to the Garden Valley Camp of the Modern Woodmen of America. Later, Buffalo County owned the property. In August 1995, the county passed the property to the Township of Waumandee for “park and recreation purposes” (Buffalo County quit claim deed, August 7, 1995). The park is now called Harmonia Park (Township of Waumandee: phone conversation, July 29, 2008).

As a park, Harmonia Hall and its grounds continue to function in some of the ways enjoyed by the Freethinkers. Weddings, graduation parties and family reunions happen here. Local groups, among them the Waumandee Rod and Gun Club, Waumandee Area Lions Club, the Waumandee-Montana Township Fire Department, and a snowmobile club called the Waumandee Trail Blazers, meet at the hall and use the grounds for their activities.

Many of the people who organized and sustained the Harmonie Gesellschaft are buried in the Waumandee Public Cemetery, which can be seen from Harmonia Hall. Most of the early markers are for people who belonged to the Harmonie society. How some of these people functioned for the society is shown in the different accounts and documents related to the Harmonie society. The 1880 warranty deed, passing the park land from the Hohmanns to the society lists Charles Hohmann as chairman, Charles Kirchner as secretary and Henry Knecht as treasurer. Of these, Mr. Knecht was buried in the cemetery in 1925. When Lawrence Kessinger wrote his Buffalo County history in 1888, Charles Hohmann was president, John Farner treasurer, and Charles Kirchner secretary and librarian. Mr. Farner is buried in the cemetery. In LaVern Rippley’s Waumandee history, the officers of the Harmonia Singing Society in 1893 are named as Christian Florin, president; R.H. Manz, secretary; A.G. Ochsner, leader, and John Florin, treasurer, whose family members are buried in the cemetery. The cemetery was initiated by the Harmonie Gesellschaft and now belongs to the Township of Waumandee (Township of Waumandee: phone conversation).

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Harmonia Hall

Town of Waumandee, Buffalo County, Wisconsin

In 2006, three members of a Buffalo County and Township of Waumandee farm family, LaVern J. Rippley, his brother Charles L. Rippley and their sister Elsie (Rippley) Brommer, “positioned a sign in the foreground of the building to instruct local residents about the history and significance of the structure” (Rippley letter, September 7, 2007).

OVERVIEW STATEMENT

The Harmonie Gesellschaft’s Harmonia Hall stands at more than 100 years old as a reminder of the German and Swiss farmers who settled in the Township of Waumandee and their progressive ideas, brought with them from the German states and the German-speaking area of Switzerland. The hall and its park are significant locally for the role it played in the lives of its members as a central gathering spot for both socializing and for cultural activities and lectures.

INTEGRITY

Through changing use and ownership of the Harmonia Hall building and property, alterations have been made to both the grounds and the building. The grounds have gained additional buildings and playground equipment; however, the open feel of the parcel remains as does the general landscaping of lawn and stands of trees. In addition, the current use as a community park and gathering place for picnics and social events continues the historic use of the property. The building itself has been altered through the application of vinyl siding. However, the overall form of the building and the location and size of the openings remains the same. It is thought that the windows of the main hall are original to the building. In addition, the narrow siding is of a visually similar dimension to the original drop siding with corner boards. The interior hall retains the appearance of when it was used by the society. The building is a rare extant example of a building associated with a Freethinker group.

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Town of Waumandee, Buffalo County, Wisconsin

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Harmonia Hall
Town of Waumandee, Buffalo County, Wisconsin

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundaries are those for the original Harmonie Gesellschaft (Society) grounds.

The Buffalo County legal description is: "A part of the Southeast Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of Section Number Twenty-One, Township Number Twenty-One, North of Range Eleven West, according to the following descriptions: Commencing at a point on the Northern boundary line of said SE ¼ of NW ¼, etc., twenty-nine rods West from the Northwest corner, thence West on said line twenty-six rods; thence in a Southeasterly direction along the top of the bank, twenty-three rods to a point, twenty-four rods South along the Waumandee and Fountain City Road, thence in a Northerly direction along said road to place of beginning being twenty-four rods, containing one acre 152 rods more or less according to foregoing description." This description is from the Quit Claim Deed of July 31, 1995, passing the site from Buffalo County to the Township of Waumandee.

Boundary Justification:

The nominated boundary is the property associated with the hall and forms the park surrounding the building. The boundary conforms with the legal description for the parcel.

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Town of Waumandee, Buffalo County, Wisconsin

Photo #1 of 9
Harmonia Hall
Township of Waumandee, Buffalo County, WI
Photo by Donald M. Aucutt, October 2007.
Neg. at Wisconsin Historical Society
View of the exterior looking west

Photo #2 of 9
Harmonia Hall
Township of Waumandee, Buffalo County, WI
Photo by Donald M. Aucutt, October 2007.
Neg. at Wisconsin Historical Society
View of the exterior looking north

Photo #3 of 9
Harmonia Hall
Township of Waumandee, Buffalo County, WI
Photo by Donald M. Aucutt, October 2007.
Neg. at Wisconsin Historical Society
View of the exterior looking southeast

Photo #4 of 9
Harmonia Hall
Township of Waumandee, Buffalo County, WI
Photo by Donald M. Aucutt, October 2007.
Neg. at Wisconsin Historical Society
View of the exterior looking south

Photo #5 of 9
Harmonia Hall
Township of Waumandee, Buffalo County, WI
Photo by Donald M. Aucutt, October 2007.
Neg. at Wisconsin Historical Society
View of the exterior looking southwest

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Harmonia Hall

Town of Waumandee, Buffalo County, Wisconsin

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Photo #6 of 9
Harmonia Hall
Township of Waumandee, Buffalo County, WI
Photo by Donald M. Aucutt, October 2007.
Neg. at Wisconsin Historical Society
View of the interior looking southwest

Photo #7 of 9
Harmonia Hall
Township of Waumandee, Buffalo County, WI
Photo by Donald M. Aucutt, October 2007.
Neg. at Wisconsin Historical Society
View of the interior looking south

Photo #8 of 9
Harmonia Hall
Township of Waumandee, Buffalo County, WI
Photo by Donald M. Aucutt, October 2007.
Neg. at Wisconsin Historical Society
View of the interior looking east

Photo #9 of 9
Harmonia Hall
Township of Waumandee, Buffalo County, WI
Photo by Donald M. Aucutt, October 2007.
Neg. at Wisconsin Historical Society
View of the interior looking west

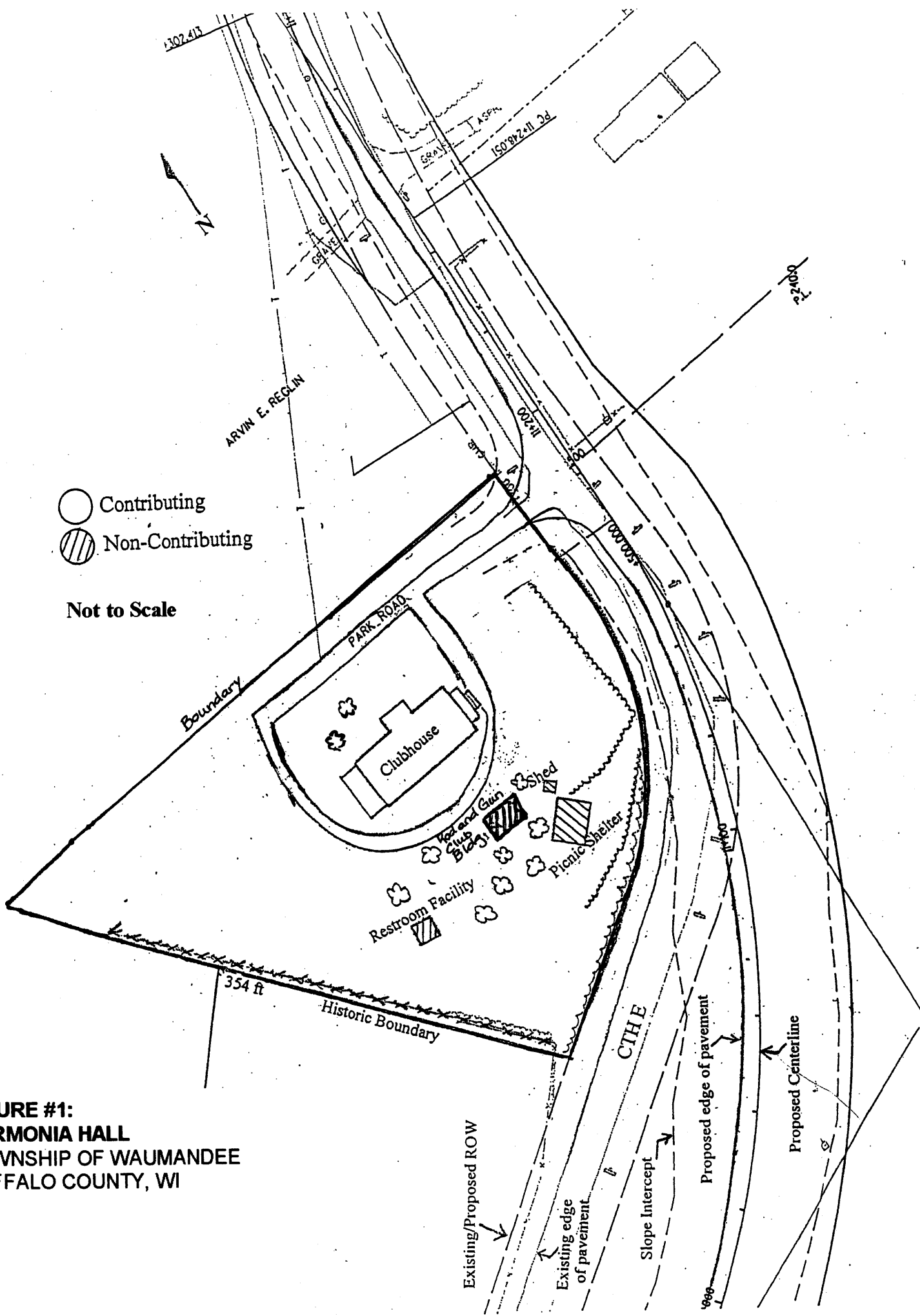


FIGURE #1:
HARMONIA HALL
 TOWNSHIP OF WAUMANDEE
 BUFFALO COUNTY, WI