

2082

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **SEP 30 1988**  
date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic District School No. 92

and/or common Middletown Town Hall

**2. Location**

street & number County Highway 9 N/A not for publication

city, town Middletown Township X vicinity of Jackson Zip Code: 56143

state Minnesota code 22 (MN) county Jackson code 063

**3. Classification**

|   |  |   |  |  |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| <b>Category</b>                                 | <b>Ownership</b>                               | <b>Status</b>                                       | <b>Present Use</b>                             |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> district               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied        | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture           | <input type="checkbox"/> museum            |
| <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> both                  | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress           | <input type="checkbox"/> educational           | <input type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site                   | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                      | <b>Accessible</b>                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment         | <input type="checkbox"/> religious         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object                 | <u>N/A</u> <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input checked="" 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    |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> no                         | <input type="checkbox"/> military              | <input type="checkbox"/> other:            |

**4. Owner of Property**

name Middletown Township Board

street & number c/o Forrest Showman  
Route 2

city, town Jackson N/A vicinity of Minnesota 56143

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jackson County Courthouse

street & number 4th and Sherman Streets

city, town Jackson Minnesota 56143

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Minnesota Statewide Historic  
Sites Survey

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1985-86  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office, Fort Snelling History Center

city, town St. Paul Minnesota 55111

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## 7. Description

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|  |                                       |   |   |            |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|------------|
| <b>Condition</b>                         |                                       | <b>Check one</b>                              | <b>Check one</b>                                  |            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent       | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site | N/A        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good            | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input type="checkbox"/> altered              | <input type="checkbox"/> moved                    | date _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    |   |   |            |

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

District School No. 92, now known as the Middletown Town Hall, is located along a gravel road in Section 9 of Middletown Township in southern Jackson County. The school stands on a one acre site surrounded by cultivated farmland.

District School No. 92, built in 1906, is one of two octagonal rural school houses known to be standing in Minnesota. The one story, woodframe building measures approximately sixteen feet by sixteen feet and is sheathed in clapboard siding, with an interior endwall brick chimney on the west facade. It stands on a concrete covered foundation and has an octagonal roof covered with asphalt shingles which supports an entrance porch supported by Tuscan columns on paneled bases, and a single leaf door. The school's large rectangular windows are covered with hinged wooden shutters. The building is simply ornamented with modillions at the eaves of the main roof, porch, and belfry. The building is basically intact and in fair condition. Its only major exterior alteration is an asphalt shingle roof. The interior is also basically intact and in fair condition.

Also located on the school grounds are two outhouses which are small, one story buildings, sheathed with clapboard siding and covered with a gable roof.

The District School No. 92 nomination contains three contributing buildings: the school and two outhouses.

# 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 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** 1906 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

District School 92, (now known as the Middletown Town Hall) in southern Jackson County, is architecturally significant (Criterion C) as one of Minnesota's most unusual rural school houses and, in fact, one of only two octagonal schools known to be standing in the state.

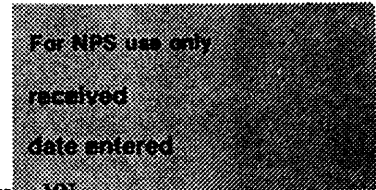
The concept of an eight-sided plan for domestic use was promoted by Orson Squire Fowler, a publicist and practicing phrenologist in the middle of the nineteenth century. Fowler believed the octagon, which most closely relates to the natural form of the sphere, allowed for increased natural sunlight, more efficient use of space by eliminating square corners and increased communication and ventilation between rooms. Fowler extended his concept of ideal domesticated space to the school house. In his book, The Octagon House: A Home For All, he states, "To gather around a spherical or elliptical table, occasions more harmony and agreeable sensations than around a square one. The more so where, as in school, all eyes are often required to be directed simultaneously toward the same object - the teacher". Fowler believed that the use of the octagon plan not only increased communication between teacher and pupils, by reducing the equidistance between them, but also maximized natural light, which when desks and benches were properly arranged, allowed the light to fall at the backs and sides of pupils, reducing glare on books and slates.

While the architect or carpenter of this octagon school remains unknown and, therefore, so does the specific ideas which influenced the design, Fowler's principals for the use of the octagon are evident in the use of the spherical form and window placement which maximizes southern light. Northern facade exposures are devoid of windows, utilizing the interior walls for blackboards. Thus, Fowler's principals of space, light and orientation are utilized in the design of District School No. 92.

Orson Fowler's principals for the use of the octagonal form reached their zenith near the middle of the eighteenth century. However, the use of the design continued in rural Minnesota until the early twentieth century. The later use of both the octagon and round forms are found in two buildings in Big Stone County: District 13 School, constructed in 1898 (NR August 2, 1985), and the Larson Round Barn, built in 1912-1913.

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District School No. 92 was built in 1906. Classes were held in the building until 1958 when rural schools in Jackson County were consolidated and local children began attending public school in nearby Jackson. That year the Middletown Township Board acquired the building and it became the Middletown Town Hall. Since 1958 the building has been used for town meeting, elections, and other township activities.

District School No. 92 was included in a historic sites survey of Jackson County conducted recently by the State Historic Preservation Office. The survey staff determined that the school is one of only two octagonal school houses known to be standing in the state. The other is District School No. 13, now known as the Artichoke Town Hall, standing in Big Stone County's Artichoke Township about 150 miles northwest of Jackson County. District School No. 92 fits within the Agricultural Development and Railroad Construction Context of the State Historic Preservation Office's preservation planning framework. Built at the time when railroad lines were being constructed across Jackson County and the county's farmlands were rapidly being settled, the school house represents an architecturally distinctive example of the rural schools houses which accompanied agricultural development in the region.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Fowler, Orson S. The Octagon House, A Home For All, New York, 1973 edition.  
Hassing, William. "Middletown Township". Unpublished paper, 1978.  
Phone conversation with Forrest Showman, 21 Sept. 1988.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1 acre

Quadrangle name Lakefield SE Quad.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

|      |   |         |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 5 | 3       | 3 | 5 | 6 | 4        | 0 | 4 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 0 |
| Zone |   | Easting |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

B 

|      |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

C 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

D 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

E 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

F 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

G 

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|      |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

H 

|      |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|      |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet - page 2

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Granger, Contract Historian

organization State Historic Preservation Office  
Minnesota Historical Society

date February 1986

street & number Fort Snelling History Center

telephone (612) 726-1171

city or town St. Paul

state Minnesota 55111

## 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

title Nina M. Archabal

State Historic Preservation Officer *Nina Archabal* date 9/29/88

### For NPS use only

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date

10/27/88

*[Signature]*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Commencing at the Southeast corner of the Northeast Quarter (NE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>) of Section 9, Township 101, North, of Range 35, West of the 5th Principle Meridian, Jackson County, thence running West 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> rods, thence North 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> rods, thence East 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> rods, and thence South 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> rods to the point of beginning. The boundary includes the area that has historically been associated with the property.