

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

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

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

1. Name

historic Smith Valley School

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 4130 Smith Valley Road (Route 2) not for publication

city, town La Crosse vicinity of congressional district 3rd

state Wisconsin code 55 county La Crosse code 063

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<u> </u> district	<u> X </u> public	<u> X </u> occupied	<u> </u> agriculture <u> X </u> museum
<u> X </u> building(s)	<u> </u> private	<u> </u> unoccupied	<u> </u> commercial <u> </u> park
<u> </u> structure	<u> </u> both	<u> </u> work in progress	<u> X </u> educational <u> </u> private residence
<u> </u> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<u> </u> entertainment <u> </u> religious
<u> </u> object	<u> </u> in process	<u> X </u> yes: restricted	<u> X </u> government <u> </u> scientific
	<u> </u> being considered	<u> X </u> yes: unrestricted	<u> </u> industrial <u> </u> transportation
		<u> </u> no	<u> </u> military <u> </u> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Medary, Gregory McHenry, Town Chairman

street & number 4130 Smith Valley Road (Route 2)

city, town La Crosse X vicinity of state Wisconsin 54601

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds

street & number La Crosse County Courthouse

city, town La Crosse state Wisconsin 54601

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wisconsin Inventory of
Historic Places

has this property been determined eligible? yes X no

date 1977 federal X state county local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town 816 State Street, Madison state Wisconsin 53706

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 Smith Valley school is a soft red brick structure on a stone foundation with a metal roof. A belfry with metal roof containing the original bell is on the front part of the roof. It is a typical rural one room school nestled between corn fields and a cabbage field and surrounded by a dairy farm. It is situated deep in the valley along the narrow, winding country road known as the Smith Valley Road, with picturesque wooded bluffs on each side.

The 24x40x12 foot building faces the road to the south and has centered double doors. A metal canopy and cement steps were added in 1906. The school name is painted across the front above the door and a circle form now containing a vent is at the point of the roof. It is painted and has Town of Medary-1887 painted on it. (The original glass inscribed window in a wooden frame that was originally in the circle opening is preserved in the museum inside.)

Four rectangle windows, 4 over 4 in white frames and cement sills, are on each side of the building. A brick chimney extends from the roof at the center back.

Large trees surround and shade the school. A well-maintained grass school yard is to the front of the building and the east side of the school. A black-top parking area is built on the west side. A local garden club has planted a row of old-fashioned bridalwreath and lilac shrubs along the property line on the east. A small well pump shelter has recently been built to protect the electric pumps where the old hand water pump once stood.

Entry through the front door brings you into the narrow cloak hall where a row of metal hooks (cast iron) faces you. These are hung with period outerwear--jackets, wool scarves, wool caps, leather mittens, etc., along with a teachers velvet hat, gloves and umbrella. Under the coat hooks is the original hall bench, with several antique lunch buckets and syrup cans of various types. A wash stand with a water-cooler, tin cups and an enamel washdish and soap dish are displayed. This hall has two doors, one on each end, that enter the classroom. The right door always used for the girls and the left door for the boys.

The interior is of plaster-covered calcimine construction with wide vertical painted wainscoating. There are narrow hardwood floors. The plain wide woodwork was painted to match the walls. The high ceiling is of horizontal wainscoating and painted white. Four globe light fixtures on brass chains hang from the ceiling.

The classroom is virtually unchanged and is presently restored to its appearance during the 1920's according to a survey taken of people who either taught or attended the school at that time. The upper portions of the walls are light yellow in color and the wainscoating is green. Across the front and in the corners of the back and along the sides are original blackboards.

The twelve inch white, starched sheer cotton curtains are on the windows gathered with a wire inside the window frames.

(continued)

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Continuation sheet

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DESCRIPTION (continued)

Desks of various sizes are in four rows down the center of the room. A wooden map box is above the blackboard in the front as are a row of alphabet cards. The teacher's desk is at the front as well as a standing globe in a brass stand. A forty-eight star flag is hanging in the front. A glass doored bookcase on the left side of the room contains sixty original books stamped with Smith Valley Schools name in them, many signed with former teachers and students names. An old upright piano, rythum band equip, and small flags are near.

In the back of the room is a small table with a Dick and Jane Big Book and four Dick and Jane series on it surrounded by a circle of tiny chairs. A wooden sand box on three foot legs and filled with white sand and antique metal toys (farm equipment) are also displayed. A chimney runs up the back wall in the center of the room with burn spots on the floor where the wood burning stove sat. In the right hand corner of the room are book shelves under the blackboard. These are filled with assorted school library books, three slates and slate pencils, inkwells and straight pens, penmanship books, three sets of encyclopedias, wood rulers, all authentic within our timeline. All around the room the walls are hung with pictures commonly found in rural schools, including the portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

A back door which used to exit outdoors to the woodshed now enters into a hall of a new portion of the school built of concrete blocks in 1958. This was added to provide indoor toilet facilities and one new classroom. Another classroom and a basement addition was added at a later date. This portion is presently being used as a town hall and community center.

At present the outside brick has been painted a soft tan to match the new construction. Plans are to have this paint scraped off this summer. The windows are also covered with plywood to prevent vandalism.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input 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 1887¹
Builder/Architect Seidenberg & Hemkie²

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The significance of Smith Valley School lies in the role it has always played in the lives of the people of Smith Valley, meeting the educational needs of this rural area. Used as a one-room schoolhouse from 1888-1977, the building continues to be a focus of community pride as exhibited by its fine state of preservation.

Smith Valley, originally part of the Town of Campbell, was first settled in the early 1850s and was named after S. G. Smith who held some 560 acres in the valley. The first school was a one-room log cabin erected in 1867 and was replaced in 1887 with the present structure. While the first settlers were of English and Swiss extraction, the later immigrants were predominately German-Lutherans.³

In 1887, \$250.00 was earmarked by the town for construction of a new school for the people of Smith Valley. Another \$1,000.00 was later bonded to complete the work. A Seidenberg and Hemkie were contracted to build the school. The town board stressed that all materials and labor were to be obtained locally and this was followed in every respect. Soft red brick was purchased from the Anton Keppel brickyards in Medary. Stone for the foundations were quarried by Jas. Wehle at the Herman Wolf farm in Smith Valley. School board records include a list of all names and amounts paid to local farmers who hauled the supplies to the site at a rate of \$2.00 per thousand pounds.⁴

The Smith Valley School is a reminder of how rural people educated their children, planning school terms around the planting and harvesting of crops. The school would serve grades 1-8 for five to eight months per year--often three months during the summer and four months during the winter. The school was always an integral part of the community. Farmers would take turns providing milk, bread, meat, cheese and fruit for school lunches. Others would provide wood for heating the school in winter. Later the local homemaker's club donated a small gas stove so the students could have a hot lunch.

Community concern for the school is also illustrated in the opposition by locals to the consolidation of the school into the La Crosse school district who felt they would lose control of how their children would be educated. Another fight ensued in 1977 when the people of Smith Valley made a valient attempt to prevent the closing the school but the legal battle was lost in the courts. The community rallied back and bought the building from the La Crosse School District and set to work on its restoration. Today, the school serves as a museum where the public may experience a typical day in a one-room rural school and is used as such for day trips by the La Crosse area schools.

¹School Board Records, District #4, Town of Campbell, La Crosse County.

²Ibid.

³Memoirs of La Crosse County, Madison, Wisconsin: Western Historical Association, 1907.

⁴School Board Records, District #4, Town of Campbell, La Crosse County.

9. Major Bibliographical References

La Crosse County Superintendent of Schools Records
 Memoirs of La Crosse County, Madison, Wisconsin: Western Historical Association, 1907.
 School Board Records, District #4, Town of Campbell, La Crosse County

10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreege of nominated property 1.22
 Quadrangle name La Crosse, Wis.-Minn. Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

UTM NOT VERIFIED

A	<u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>6</u> <u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>4</u> <u>7</u> <u>5</u>	<u>4</u> <u>8</u> <u>5</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at a point at the northeast corner of the schoolground on the west side of Smith Valley Road, proceed southerly along said road a distance of 250 feet, thence west 212.6 feet, thence north 250 feet, thence east 212.6 feet to the point of beginning, all in the NW, SE, Sec. 23, T16N, R7W, Civil Town of Medary, La Crosse County, Wisconsin.

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joan Dolbier, Charter President
Smith Valley Restoration Branch
 organization of the West Salem Historical Society date January 1981
 street & number 9526 U. S. Hwy. 16 telephone 608/783-2068
 city or town Onalaska state Wisconsin : 54650

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Richard Meiny

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin date 6/24/81

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<i>Sharon Byers</i>	Entered in the National Register date <u>7-30-81</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

for certifying

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FORM PREPARED BY (continued)

Michael R. Matucheski, Preservation Assistant
State Historical Society of Wisconsin
816 State Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

March 30, 1981
608/262-2970