

PH0508209

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	OCT 31 1977
DATE ENTERED	FEB 17 1978

**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  
Fifield Town Hall  
AND/OR COMMON  
Same

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
Southeast corner of Pine Street and Flambeau Avenue

CITY, TOWN  
Fifield

STATE  
Wisconsin 54524

VICINITY OF  
Price

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
Seventh

COUNTY  
Price

CODE  
55

CODE  
099

**CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" 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	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input 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:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
Price County Historical Society, c/o Ms. Elva Lessard

STREET & NUMBER  
Flambeau Avenue

CITY, TOWN  
Fifield

STATE  
Wisconsin 54524

VICINITY OF

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Registrar of Deeds, Price County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
Phillips

STATE  
Wisconsin 54555

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places

DATE  
1976

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS  
State Historical Society of Wisconsin

CITY, TOWN  
Madison

STATE  
Wisconsin 53706

—FEDERAL  STATE —COUNTY —LOCAL

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Fifield Town Hall faces northwest on a knoll at a prominent corner of the main street in Fifield. The structure is a two-story rectangular frame vernacular building covered with the original narrow wood clapboards. All exterior materials (except a new roof) are original, making the building identical to its exterior physical appearance when first constructed. It is painted white with dark green trim.

The steep-pitched gable roof structure is two and a half stories high. The foundation is fieldstone, and three tall crowned red brick chimneys top the building.

The main facade, facing northwest, features a paneled double-door entrance flanked by asymmetrically placed 2/2 double hung sash windows. On the second story there is a small balcony and door in the center, with spindle railings and carved supportive brackets. Above the balcony door is the 1894 building date. Two windows flank either side of the balcony, making the fenestration of the total facade asymmetrical. In addition to wide wooden horizontal overlays across the center of the building and narrow overlays extending vertically from the window sills, the gable comprises the main decorative element of the primary facade. The lower portion consists of four alternating sections of vertical and diagonal narrow wooden siding. The upper portion of the gable has a central round window and three sections of shingling, each with a different pattern: regular rows, diamond, and imbricated at the top.

The northeast and southwest facades are composed of seven bays of 2/2 double hung sash windows on both stories. All windows have an identical projecting cornice treatment. The rear facade, facing southeast, is asymmetrically fenestrated. On the first story are two of the same 2/2 windows on the east end of the building, and a larger 2/2 window in the center (the hall window). In the center of the second story above are two 2/2 windows which are behind the stage inside.

The interior of the town hall has been partially restored (work is continuing at present) and serves as a local historical museum run by the Price County Historical Society. The first floor has a long central wainscoted hallway with rooms to either side. Floors are hardwood in the halls and white pine in the rooms; upstairs floors are all hardwood. Each room on the first floor, formerly town offices, now features different aspects of local history, ranging from logging artifacts to a railroad ticket office to a "gilded age" parlor. Local antiques and artifacts have been restored as well as the exhibit rooms. A large walled staircase leads upstairs to the former "opera house." This large room, with its ample stage and scrolled stencilwork on the plaster walls, will be restored as the Price County Historical Society obtains the necessary funds. The plan is to use the renovated opera house for community and social functions, which was one of its original uses.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1894<sup>1</sup>

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Theodore Ristin, head carpenter

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Fifield Town Hall's past function as a nexus of community life from the early days of settlement to the mid-twentieth century, and its present function as a historical museum and a good example of restoration and a symbol of local history, make it significant as a historical landmark in Price County.

Located in the hub of a once booming logging region, the Fifield Town Hall was started on May 31, 1894 and completed on July 4th of the same year. It replaced its predecessor of the same dimensions, built in 1882 and destroyed by the Fifield fire of 1893. The building served as a visual and functional focal point in a social and political climate of boomtown instability and rural isolation.

### Politics/Government

All phases of government, and much of the area's political activity, were carried on here. A "clerk's room" contained a vault for town records. Court cases were heard there, and the room often became a temporary morgue until the coroner could arrive from the county seat. This room also served as a marriage hall and place for funerals. A two-celled jail existed until it was dismantled for scrap iron during World War II.

The town hall was the scene of political rallies, elections, and attendant celebrations. The balcony was the podium for political speeches and announcements. Beginning in 1901, celebrations were held after presidential returns were in, regardless of who won. In the early twentieth century, these celebrations included a banquet, where a roasted steer was served to the community.

### Social/Humanitarian

In addition, the town hall was the meeting place of a variety of social and community organizations. Church services and school sessions were held there while new buildings were constructed. Each church had a kitchen there; organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Red Cross met there. The social hall upstairs was used for local plays, Christmas programs, graduations, lecture courses, traveling shows, and medicine shows. It was the scene of masquerades, fancy balls, and social affairs of the Royal Neighbors, Odd Fellows, and Modern Woodmen, the latter having dress balls with orchestras up to fifteen pieces.

The Fifield Town Hall continued its variegated functions until 1966, when Fifield built a new town hall. In 1968 the old town hall was given to the Price County Historical

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Lessard, Elva, History of Fifield (Fifield Centennial Book, 1976), p. 20.

Interviews with Elva Lessard. July and August 1976.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.25

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>1,5</u>	<u>7,0,0,1,2,5</u>	<u>5,0,8,3,4,2,5</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Bounded on the west by Flambeau Avenue, on the north by Pine Street, and on the east and south by the property lines of the parcel.

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

Gail L. Hunton, Consultant and Donald N. Anderson, Historian & Registrar, Historic Preservation Division

ORGANIZATION

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

August 11, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

816 State Street

TELEPHONE

608/262-0746

CITY OR TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

# 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

*Richard McEnany*

TITLE

Director  
State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

10/24/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Robert B. Rettig*

DATE

2/17/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*Charles A. ...*

DATE

2-8-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

Society for the purpose of a historical museum. Since then restoration and museum work has been sponsored by the PCHS and carried on with the help of local volunteer workers. The restoration efforts have been acclaimed in local and regional publications such as the Duluth Tribune and the Rural Electrification Administration Magazine.

Fifield, with the old Town Hall in midtown along its main street, now main State Highway 13, is situated on the old Indian trail leading from the Lac Du Flambeau Reservation (established 1854) 40 miles east of Fifield to the Lac Courte Oreille Reserve some 50 miles west. The Chippewa Indians after reaching Pike Lake via Twin Lakes and Fish Trap followed the Southfork of the Flambeau River to Fifield proper. They camped overnight, performed ceremonies, resumed their journey at sunrise along the Flambeau Northfork, crossed the Northfork at Babs Island 20 miles West then the Thornapple River and ended their journey at Lac Courte Oreille Reserve. These Indian trails later became our earliest logging tote roads and finally partial town and state roads. The last battle for supremacy between the area Chippewas and Sioux took place at Coles Point at Pike Lake near an old Indian village. The defeated Sioux like the earlier Ottawa, departed. Before County boundaries, etc. were drawn this area was part of the Chippewa Valley ruled by the Lac Du Flambeau Chippewa Chiefs and extended from Lac Du Flambeau to the Chippewa River. Have found no record of north & south boundaries.

Pike Lake, 20 miles east of Fifield in Fifield Township is a famous chain of lakes with a heavy concentration of resorts, summer and year-around homes and figured prominently in early day logging operations here. It is also the site of the famous 3000 acre Doering Tract held by the Doering family since 1905 and ceded to the U. S. Government in 1968. An old tract dam built prior to 1883, believed to be the only one of its kind and now unused, was restored by the Doerings.

The Southfork of the Famous Flambeau River begins at Round Lake of the Pike Lake chain and cuts through Fifield on the east and south two blocks from midtown, joins the Northfork 20 miles south and eventually the Chippewa River and Mississippi. The Flambeau River and Sailor Creek in Fifield which empties into it, were famous early day logging waterways with huge log drives comint to Fifield mills and some going on to the Chippewa the finale of the Pike Lake drives.

Fifield, founded October 1876, was a booming logging and community center in the late 1800's and early 1900's with a population triple its present size. Surrounding settlements used its churches, cemetery, town halls, etc. until their own were established. It is now a well-known tourist center.

The old Town Hall was built in 1894 to replace a similar predecessor destroyed in the disastrous 1893 fire that consumed the entire business district (60 buildings) of Fifield. The old Town Hall is unique and in the appraisal some time ago of the State Historical Society 'a most impressive landmark - one of the few remaining of its kind'. It is the only government building in the area and I believe in Wisconsin with a large social hall (old opera house) above and council chambers below with other rooms used for church kitchens, etc. No cupboards, etc. were built to mar the rooms. The social hall has a fine hardwood stage and flooring. Like the entire building it has a 4 foot wainscoting the social having a fine two-plate stencil all around just above it. This hopefully can be reproduced once restoration of the upper floor can be accomplished - only the first floor being done so far. The building which has 12 foot ceilings is completely intact except for the two-celled jail removed for scrap during WW II and the large vault door moved to a new hall to save the sum of \$1800. The opening was rebricked and another door put in, the

vault part remaining. The building has the old knob and tube wiring. No remodeling has taken place - the building remains almost exactly as when built.

As to exterior the front gable has three designs of wooden scales around the center round window, the top and bottom layers one shade of red, the center of another blending well with the original colors of the building - white with dark green trim. As to architecture I know only it is truly reminiscent of early day buildings, the front faintly resembling the European half-timber style.

The old Town Hall is definitely associated with events that have made a contribution to the broad patterns of especially early small-town history. The building and components are distinctive, an old-time ticket office and upper social hall, two of the interesting components. In the process of collecting artifacts, etc. information on early day logging in Wisconsin definitely comes to the fore.

The old Hall was saved from destruction in 1968 at the request of Fifield members of the Price County Historical Society who considered its planned demolition an impending tragedy. It was then given to the Historical Society. It is now a museum of the 'Logging Era'

The old Town Hall is located at the intersection of Flambeau Avenue (main State Highway 13) and Pine Street, Fifield. We do not use building numbers as they are for fire department use. We pick up mail at the local post office.



IT ALL HAPPENED THERE

The old Fifield Town hall was built over three-quarters of a century ago in 1894 to replace its predecessor, built in 1882 and destroyed by the disastrous fire of 1893. The old hall is a spacious building, having had ample rooms for all the community's needs. The large upstairs social hall, the fine stage, and the long downstairs main hall have floors of fine hardwood, while adjacent rooms have floors of white pine indicating the need for economy even in those boom lumbering days. Considering the footsteps these floors have withstood in over (now 84) seventy-five years, all are in a remarkable state of preservation as is the entire building.

All phases of local government were carried on here mainly in the "clerk's room" that contained the vault for storing town records. Court cases were heard here and often the room became a morgue for victims of drowning, homicides and suicides. The town hall was a convenient place for the coroner to come after his arrival by train from the County seat. Marriages, too, were performed here by the justice of the peace and the old hall served as a church and school while new buildings were under construction. It had a two-celled jail in the rear that served mainly to house rowdies and vagrants. During World War II, the jail was removed and sold for scrap iron. Since then the County jail at Phillips has played host to undesirable citizens.

The old Town hall was the scene of political rallies, elections and attendant celebrations. Beginning at the time of McKinley's terms, celebrations were held after presidential returns were in, regardless of who won. A roasted steer, barbecued in the foundation pit of what is now the Fifield Cash store, was transported to the social hall where a huge camp cook, Herman Diner by name, who had attended the huge roast, supervised the election banquet. The roast was placed on a large table, sliced and served to all with homemade bread and butter furnished by the women. There was coffee, of course, and milk for the children.

The old Town hall, with 'council chambers' below and its upstairs social hall (known as the 'opera house' in early days) was a true community building servicing nearby communities, churches, schools and organizations. Each church had a kitchen, and it was here that the famous Congregational Ladies Election Day dinners began; and where Catholic ladies held their well-known St. Patrick's day bazaars. All water for cooking, washing dishes, and cleaning, was carried from the Badger hotel a block away where there was always a large metal barrel of boiling water heated by pipes from a big hotel cookstove. Community life was closely knit and the usual good turnout for these events made the labor seem light indeed.

Veterans of Foreign Wars met here, Red Cross training and the knitting sessions which produced the famous khaki army sweaters were held in downstairs rooms. The hall was the headquarters of the Modern Woodmen and they held their fancy dress balls upstairs in the social hall. Orchestras up to 15 pieces were engaged for these formal affairs, and a sergeant-at-arms was stationed at upper and lower entrances to make sure no rowdyism marred the stateliness of these occasions.

The walls of the social hall still echo with the delighted laughter from home talent plays, the buzz of excitement from the magic of the Christmas program with its huge tree, the solemnity of graduation night. The old stage curtain with its center scenery surrounded by hometown advertising, rolled down countless times on lecture courses, traveling shows, and the famed medicine shows that dispensed their cure-all elixirs. Even the Mikado was produced here in 1906 with local talent from Fifield and Park Falls.

Somehow this old hall has defied time and usage, and stands proudly to reflect the life of another day--a monument to those now gone who felt the full impact of its gracious reign. The small balcony from which was heard the cries of "Hear ye, hear ye the polls are open," or "polls are closed," which had to be removed for reasons of safety, will be replaced to become a living memory.\*

The old Fifield Town hall is the oldest government building of its kind in Price County. It has been construed by the State Historical society as a "very impressive landmark --one of the few remaining of its kind." So at the crossroads of yesterday and today it is hoped that this unique old landmark will pick up the frayed threads of a bygone era and remain to preserve, at least in part, something of our heritage.

The old Fifield Town hall was acquired by the Price County Historical Society February, 1968, as a gift from the Town of Fifield. It will hopefully be used for a museum of the logging era if, and when, the costly job of restoration can be accomplished.

\* It was in 1970

By: Elva Lessard, Secretary  
Published in local  
papers in 1969 at  
beginning of campaign  
for restoration.