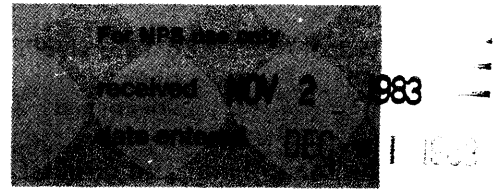


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 Crawford County District #1 School

and/or common Old Rock School (preferred)

2. Location

street & number South Marquette Road at Parrish Street not for publication

city, town Prairie du Chien vicinity of congressional district

state Wisconsin code 55 county Crawford code 023

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Social

4. Owner of Property

name City of Prairie du Chien

street & number 205 West Blackhawk Avenue

city, town Prairie du Chien vicinity of state Wisconsin 53821

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Crawford County Courthouse

street & number 220 North Beaumont Road

city, town Prairie du Chien state Wisconsin 53821

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1976 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

With load-bearing coursed limestone walls of twenty-four-inch thickness, the Old Rock School is a rectangle 54' x 34' x 20' in size, crowned by a square cupola. Front, side, and rear walls are cut by regularly-spaced rectangular openings on both stories; three across in front, two in the rear, and four (originally) on each side. Asphalt shingles now cover the roof, replacing the original wood shingles. The attic level in the front gable end is lighted by a modified Palladian window, whose side wings parallel the slope of the roofline above. The panelled wood center door is sheltered by a 1930s-vintage gable-roofed wood canopy. The foundation and flight of front steps are of the same coursed, rough-cut limestone as the walls.

Despite minor modifications made to the building in the last sixty years, the integrity of the original design remains intact. A historic photo of the building taken shortly after the building's closing in 1926 shows the returning cornices which originally defined the abbreviated "pediment" of the building; the interior chimney at the rear (east) end of the roof ridge, which was removed in the 1940s when an exterior chimney (stone to the roofline, red brick above) was installed in one column of windows along the south side wall; tall windows in the cupola, that have since been covered or reduced in size, and the wood balustrade that trimmed the deck, that has since been removed; planking covering openings in the building, suggesting that a glazed transom once topped the door; and no canopy or other elements embellished the entrance. The single panel of glass in the center of the Palladian window has been replaced with a temporary wood panel, but the louvres in the lunette and side wings remain. A south side and rear entrances have been created by modifying single window openings in the walls, and a fire escape from a rear, second-story window was installed. The one-story screened addition attached to the rear of the building is unobtrusive. More recent changes in the building have been largely cosmetic, and include roof replacement, interior repainting, and replacement of light fixtures.

A photograph of the interior taken around 1890 suggests that the interior character was modest, with painted plaster walls, simple wood wainscoting, and hardwood floors. Apparently the wainscoting was removed, leaving full-height painted plaster walls; the tall, deep window openings are faced with wood paneling. Large painted plaster arches, springing from wood posts (recently replaced), support the second floor. The north stairway of the pair originally at the front (west) corners of the interior was removed within the last forty years, and small bathrooms and kitchens were added on both stories through the installation of partition walls. Aside from these changes, and periodic painting and changes in services, the original fabric is intact.

In the context of present-day Prairie du Chien, the Old Rock School is located on the east side of Highway 18, the dominant south approach to the city. The site is grass-covered and shaded by trees, but the building stands essentially isolated, and now unrelated to the sparsely-developed immediate environment.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> education/Comm.Devel-	<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 1858¹ Builder/Architect Ashbel Gates¹

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1858-1926
 Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Prairie du Chien's "Old Rock School" of 1858, as the oldest extant and most substantial early public school building in the community, is significant to the history of education in the area. At the same time, as the sole public building constructed by district residents during a critical year of the city's development, and a survivor of subsequent floods, the building is a fitting representative of the city's greatest period of economic growth. Architecturally, the Greek Revival-period stone building represents a combination of type, period, and method of construction; and in its scale, location, and dignity of form, is one of the city's most conspicuous architectural landmarks.

Education/Community Development

Like settlement itself, formal education was established early in the Prairie du Chien area. Although the burough of Prairie du Chien was not incorporated until 1821, private schools were reported in operation in the fur trade and military outpost settlement by 1817; by then, both English-teaching and French-teaching schools had been established, as well as one at the post at Fort Crawford.² In 1840, in accordance with Michigan territorial law of 1839 which required that every settlement of ten or more families establish a public school district, "efforts were made [in the town of Prairie du Chien] to establish school function as part of town government..." in October of 1841, the settlement at Lower Town (removed slightly to the west of the larger settlements at Upper Town and St. Friole Island in Prairie du Chien) established District Number 1 of Crawford County, with the election of officers.³ Trustees were elected in 1843, and a schoolhouse had been completed and accepted by 1846.⁴ With the coming of the Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad to Prairie du Chien in 1857, from 1855-85 the area in general experienced its greatest period of economic and physical growth.⁵ In anticipation of an resulting from improved transportation, industry, immigration, and construction rose; in 1857 alone some one hundred forty-one new buildings appeared in Lower Town.⁶ In that year, Lower Town's school District No. 1 proposed construction of a new schoolhouse; dissatisfied with initiating the project for the \$300 which could legally be raised through district taxation, citizens petitioned the state legislature for permission to impose a higher tax to support the cost of a more substantial building.⁷

(continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

History of Crawford and Richland Counties, Wisconsin, Union Publishing Co., Springfield, Illinois, 1884.

(Prairie du Chien) Leader, 1857-1858.

Scanlon, Prairie du Chien, Banta Publishing Co., Menasha, Wisconsin, 1937

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Prairie du Chien

Quadrangle scale 1:62,500

UMT References

A	115	651181010	41761601115	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, Block 192, Plat of Lower Prairie du Chien, City of Prairie du Chien, Crawford 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 Diane H. Filipowicz/Architectural Historian

organization State Historical Society of Wisconsin date May, 1983

street & number 816 State Street telephone (608) 262-2732

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 [Signature] date 10/27/83

title Director of Historic Preservation

For NPS use only

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

[Signature] Entered in the National Register date 12/1/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Education/Community Development (continued)

In the year that construction was delayed, the cost of the desired stone building had risen from \$2,000 to \$3,000,⁸ but the actual price at completion (partly subsidized by loans from future district treasurer Samuel A. Clark), was nearer \$4,000.⁹ In anticipation of the completion of the building, its interior finishing, and grounds, the Prairie du Chien Leader called the school "...unquestionably the finest public building in our city; ...among the finest school edifices in the state." In addition to imposing the additional 2 1/2-mill tax needed to finance construction, and the donation by Samuel Clark, builder Ashbel Gates was also reported to have taken a loss on his contribution to the project.¹⁰

The "Old Rock School" (as it came to be called by historians and citizens) served as the district and neighborhood schoolhouse from its opening in 1859; through a devastating flood in Lower Town later in that year;¹¹ after incorporation of the City of Prairie du Chien in 1872 and subsequent stabilization of the population; until 1926 when the last elementary classes were moved to another building. Since then, the building has served as a recreation center for area teenagers; meeting hall for the Veterans of Foreign Wars (1936-64); crafts center for Old Rock School Arts and Crafts, Inc.; and more recently as classroom space for practical and fine arts classes, gathering place for activities of senior citizens, and meeting hall for the Crawford County Historical Society.¹² (In recognition of its public value and their shared responsibility for the building, the City of Prairie du Chien, Crawford County Historical Society, and Old Rock School, Inc. jointly financed the cost of a new roof for the school.) The Old Rock School was designated as a Wisconsin Registered Landmark in 1973.

Architecture

Distinguished in scale, materials, and design, the Old Rock School is a locally-significant example of Greek Revival-period public building constructed of locally-quarried stone. With the Crawford County Court-house (1867-8; NRHP 1981), Second Fort Crawford Military Hospital (1829; NHL 1966), and several substantial buildings of residential, commercial, or light-industrial nature, the use of stone corresponds to a short period of building construction in the nineteenth-century;

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Architecture (continued)

these "monuments" contrast with the more typical small-scale vernacular building stock characteristic of Prairie du Chien. Despite the loss of its cornice returns, the school retains its Greek Revival identity in its rectangular form, proportions, regular openings, and unusual "primitive Palladian window in the front gable end; the building is clearly identifiable as it appeared in the 1870 bird's-eye view of the City of Prairie du Chien by Ruger & Stoner. A 1976 reconnaissance survey of the city of Prairie du Chien suggests that the school may be the only identifiable Greek Revival style building to have survived the 1869 flood of the Lower Town area; aside from it and the Military Hospital, only a few small, altered one-story vernacular cottages appear to be of sufficient age and character to represent the historic apex of the community's development.

¹ Prairie du Chien Leader, February 20, 1858

² Peter Lawrence Scanlon, Prairie du Chien, 1937, p. 182.

³ Ibid., p. 203.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Richard H. Zeitlan, "Prairie du Chien: Urban Consolidation and Decline, 1858-1930," July, 1980, unpublished report for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul, p. 7.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ History of Crawford and Richland Counties, Wisconsin, Union Publishing Co., 1884, pp. 646-67. Such waivers of allowable building construction and taxation limits were quite common in Wisconsin from 1841 on, when territorial law established a \$200 limit on single building cost. The school law was revised in 1848 to allow building construction through local taxation at a 2 1/2-mill rate (see Lloyd P. Jorgenson, "The Origins of Public Education in Wisconsin," Wisconsin Magazine of History, Vol. 33, No. 1, September 1949, pp. 15-27).

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⁸ Prairie du Chien Leader, August 21, 1858.

⁹ History of Crawford and Richland Counties, 1884, p. 647; School District Number 1 Annual Report, September 27, 1858, Record of District Number 1 Proceedings, State Historical Society of Wisconsin Archives, Madison, Wisconsin.

¹⁰ Prairie du Chien Leader, August 21, 1858.

¹¹ History of Crawford and Richland Counties, 1884, p. 667.

¹² Prairie du Chien Courier-Press, January 13, 1982.