

United States Department of the 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 Hewitt Public School

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 514 N. Wisconsin Street not for publication N/A

city or town Hewitt vicinity N/A

state Minnesota code MN county Todd code 153 zip code 56453

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.)

Britta L. Bloomberg 11/10/06
Signature of certifying official Date

Britta L. Bloomberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Minnesota Historical Society

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 certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this 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.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

Edson H. Beall 12-27-06
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
		sites
		structure
		objects
1	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education: school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture: museum

Social: meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Colonial Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone, Concrete

walls Stucco, Concrete, Brick

roof Asphalt

other

Narrative Description

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

See continuation sheets

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for 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 a 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)

Education
Social History

Period of Significance

1911-1952

Significant Dates

1911

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Parsons, C. Howard (architect)
Medson Brothers (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Todd County Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 2.5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1.	1 5	3 3 9 6 1 4	5 1 3 2 3 5 4
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2.			
3.			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4.			

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	<u>Daniel J. Hoisington</u>	date	<u>1 August 2006</u>
organization		telephone	<u>651-415-1034</u>
street and number	<u>P. O. Box 13790</u>	city or town	<u>Roseville</u>
city or town	<u>Roseville</u>	state	<u>MN</u>
		zip code	<u>55113</u>

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name	<u>City of Hewitt</u>	telephone	<u>218-924-4343</u>
street & number	<u>P. O. Box 91</u>	city or town	<u>Hewitt</u>
city or town	<u>Hewitt</u>	state	<u>MN</u>
		zip code	<u>56453</u>

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.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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Hewitt Public School

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7. Narrative Description.

The Hewitt Public School is located at 514 North Wisconsin Street in Hewitt, Minnesota, a small, rural community with a population of 268 (2000 Census) in the central area of the state, about 165 miles northwest of Minneapolis. The building is located on the eastern edge of the town with residential housing on the west and an open farm field to the east. The building and lot are owned by the City of Hewitt, which uses the north half of the property for recreation, including playground equipment, a basketball court, a small one-stall public restroom, and a softball field.

The property includes one contributing building and one noncontributing building.

The school is a two-and-a-half story building, laid in a shallow cross plan, visually dominated by its cross gambrel roof form. The main ridgeline, on the east/west axis, is forty-two feet high, while the lower ridgeline, running north/south, is approximately thirty-six high. The roof is sheathed with asphalt shingles, although the original roof covering was cedar shakes. The roof line also holds two large circular sheet metal ventilation stacks as well as a fifty-foot brick chimney.

The exterior walls are made of poured concrete, with a dark gray stucco exterior finish. The foundation is concrete with a five-foot ashlar granite block inlay. The blocks of stone are approximately one-foot thick and the backs can only be seen from an unfinished coal storage room inside.

The fenestration utilizes more than sixty windows and fifteen different styles of windows. The dark grey color of the stucco is offset by the white hood moldings, some which are made of concrete and others of sheet metal.

The primary façade has a main block with a central entrance, flanked by narrow, arched windows with keystones and 1/1 glazing. The original entrance, with its outlines still visible, was obscured in the early 1950s, when the school added a seven-by-eight foot cement block double-door entryway, coated with stucco to match the outside of the original building. On the second level, there are two large rectangular windows on the outside edge. Inside these are two pilasters with detailed cornices, two label hooded windows and two arched narrow windows with keystone drip moldings. Other windows include two-foot roundel windows, and a Palladian window. The arched fanned portion of the Palladian window is in the attic portion of the structure. In the foundation there are six large double hung windows with 2/2 glazing.

The north elevation has a band of six rectangular windows on the first story, with concrete sills and lintels. These are currently covered with painted fiberboard. On the second story, two square windows are flanked by roundel windows. The gable end is capped with a single arched window in the center and two on either side.

The east side is simpler, with a row of rectangular windows on the first floor. On the second floor, there is a single large rectangular window at the center—again, covered with fiberboard—with an arched window on the right and an arched single door entryway on the left, leading to a metal fire escape.

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The south side matches the fenestration of the north elevation. Four of the first floor windows have remained uncovered and provide a glimpse of the original window framing. To accommodate community events, a twelve-foot wide, shed-roof extension was built off the south wall of the original school and is used for picnic tables and outdoor grilling equipment. Its wood post frame is covered with sheet metal roofing.

The interior of the original building is accessed through a double-entry door, with nine steps leading up to a twelve-foot high foyer. The foyer also contains two stairways, one on each side of the entryway. The staircases lead up to the second floor. The oak balustrades are stained very dark to match the doors and trim. They consist of eight newels on each stairway with decorative square caps. The stairways are enclosed with vertical bead board and the hand rails are worn smooth from the many hands that glided over them through the many years.

On the first floor, there are three principal rooms, with plaster or plasterboard walls, blackboards, and oak trim. Doors are horizontal paneled oak doors. The flooring in all the rooms is hardwood maple.

On the second floor there are six rooms. There is one large center room, known as the assembly room. To the left of the assembly room are two classrooms. On the right side of the assembly room are three small rooms, used, west to east, as the superintendent's office, the library, and a supply room.

The basement contained boys' and girls' lavatories, a boiler room, art and chemistry rooms, and a lunch room.

The building's interior has had few changes from the time of its use as a school. These include lighting and wiring updates, with a shift from incandescent globes to florescent tubes in the classrooms. The original hanging globes can still be seen in the foyer. The ceilings in three of the rooms were lowered by six inches or so to allow for 2' by 4' ceiling panels. Some walls have been covered with white paneling or sheet rock. The original plaster is still intact and can be seen in the hallways, foyer, and smaller rooms.

The school added a gymnasium in 1952. It is a one-story, low-pitched gabled roof building, built off the southeast corner of the original school. Measuring forty-five by sixty feet, it is connected to the main building by a simple one-story corridor. The exterior is a medium red brick with a concrete foundation and a sheet metal roof.

In the early 1980s, a one-story addition, with a kitchen, bathrooms and a meeting room, was built off the south side of the gymnasium. It has a low-pitched gabled roof, running east-west, with a double-entry door on the east side and a single sliding window. On the south wall, there is a single entry door and a sliding window. Its exterior is sheathed in sheet metal with a concrete foundation.

On the south side of the property, there is a single noncontributing building—an open picnic shelter, roughly twenty by forty feet in dimension, with wood framing, open sides, and a gabled roof.

The school building retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The addition is not visually intrusive since it has a low profile compared to the rest of the building.

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Although many of the windows on the original building have been covered with painted fiberboard, this is easily reversible since the windows remain underneath.

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8. Statement of Significance

The Hewitt Public School served the community of Hewitt, Minnesota, as its only educational institution between 1911 to 1952, and is locally significant under National Register Criterion A, for its association to the broad patterns of our history in the area of education and social history. The school provided space for instruction to children, grades kindergarten through high school, teaching the fundamentals that enabled them to take a productive place in the community as they grew into adulthood. It also became the host for a growing array of social services, such as public health programs and agricultural extension training, typically fulfilling changing public policy objectives on the state and federal level.

The school relates to the historic context entitled "Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940," one of the statewide historic contexts developed by the State Historic Preservation Office. The period of significance begins in 1911, the construction date of the school, and ends in 1952, when the local school district consolidated with eleven other area districts to form District #51. At that time, high school classes moved to nearby Bertha, Minnesota.

Hewitt, Minnesota

The area around present-day Hewitt was settled in 1869, when farmers acquired homesteads in the Long Prairie River valley. Most notable were the Stowe brothers of New Hampshire, who gave the township its name, Stowe Prairie, when it organized in 1877. It remained a series of small farms and rural crossroad hamlets until the construction of the "K" line of the Great Northern Railroad, extending north from Sauk Centre, in 1892. Platted in April 1891 in anticipation of arrival of the railroad, the village was named after Henry Hewitt, a local farmer. Within a year, local residents established Common District 103 and opened its first public school.¹

The town itself incorporated as a village in 1899 with a population around 300. By 1906, Hewitt could boast of three general stores, a hardware store, a bank, a hotel, a creamery, saw and flour mills, and a grain elevator. In the social sphere, the town had three churches (with a Lutheran Church just west of town), a G.A.R. Hall, an active lyceum series, and a chapter of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.

The local economy revolved around the dairy and flour industries, with the Hewitt stockyards shipping out fifty railroad cars of stock in 1910, while the creamery produced 7,784 pounds of butter. Farmers found potatoes to be well-suited to the soil, turning it into one of the major cash crops. Then, after 1929, the town became a center for growing pickling cucumbers for the Gedney Company, which opened a buying station in Hewitt. Gedney

¹ This schoolhouse was moved across the street and is still being utilized as a house. Among the instructors was Arthur Townley, later president of the Nonpartisan League.

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representatives arranged for seed in the spring, then employed local residents during the harvesting season to sort the cucumbers as they arrived in bushels from surrounding farms.²

A New School

The town grew modestly in the first decade of the twentieth century, from 311 in 1900 to 322 in 1910. Yet space in the original school house was cramped, possibly due to a 1909 state compulsory attendance law aimed at preventing truancy in farming communities. The school board authorized bonds for a new building in late 1910.

What spurred construction of the new school, however, was state legislation that provided funds for school construction. On the national and state level, leaders in education pressed for consolidation of smaller, one-room schools. In 1896, for example, the Educational Council of the National Education Association appointed a committee to conduct a study of rural schools in the United States. The study found that “compared with the apparent efficiency and standardization of the urban schools, the rural schools . . . were individualistic, inefficient and chaotic.” A 1903 state law authorized consolidation of rural schools into districts, followed by a 1911 bill that simplified the local election process and added financial incentives.³

In response, the Hewitt District convinced residents of nearby rural school districts to consolidate in order to take advantage of the new law. Following the vote of the surrounding rural school districts in July 1911, this step made the Hewitt School eligible for \$1,500 towards construction—roughly fifteen percent of the total cost—plus additional grants for operations. The money was not without strings, however, as the state increasingly required stricter building codes and the provision of specific courses of instruction. For example, the school term increased from five-and-a-half months to eight months.

The school board hired Minneapolis architect C. Howard Parsons to design their new school building. Parsons had already earned a solid reputation in the area, specializing in government buildings, schools, and churches. He was responsible for schools in several nearby towns, including Little Falls, Bemidji, Sauk Centre, Wadena, and Long Prairie. During the period when the Hewitt School was under construction, Parsons also designed and supervised construction of the Methodist Church in Wadena.⁴

The architect and building committee made an unusual choice with its decision to use concrete as the basic structural material, reflecting a growing interest in this relatively new material. Nationally, production of cement increased from 990,000 barrels in 1895 to more than 22,000,000 by 1904. Several issues of *The*

² *The Hewitt Banner*, 16 December 1909; *Long Prairie Leader*, 26 October 1911.

³ David R. Reynolds, *There Goes The Neighborhood: Rural School Consolidation at the Grass Roots in Early Twentieth-Century Iowa* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 54-55.

⁴ *The Improvement Bulletin*, 3 December 1910. The Lincoln County Courthouse in Ivanhoe, Minnesota, designed by Parsons in 1919, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Also see *Papers*, Cyrus Howard Parsons, Minnesota Historical Society. The Wadena Methodist Church was much more traditional in design and had a stone exterior.

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Improvement Bulletin, an important regional architectural journal, were filled with articles praising the virtues of concrete. James G. Houghton, Minneapolis inspector of buildings, bluntly stated that the city “is entering the concrete age.” Hailed as a fireproof modern answer, it seemed especially suited to public buildings. Thomas Edison reportedly warned, “Some fire insurance people will go out of business.” The choice of materials won high praise in the local press, with the *Long Prairie Leader* declaring, “The building is to be solid concrete which will be durable as well as artistic.”⁵

Work began in May 1911 with the prime contractor, Medson Brothers of Minneapolis, generally utilizing local laborers and subcontractors. The walls were built of cement all the way to the roofline, hauled to the top by a pail attached to a pulley and one horse. The project was completed by the end of summer, with a total cost of \$9,708 (roughly equivalent to \$190,353 in 2006), leading a county newspaper to declare, “The new school building is said to be one of the best school buildings in the state to be found in a town the size of Hewitt.”⁶

An Educational Institution

As an educational institution, the Hewitt Public School provided instruction and training for several generations of local children. When the school opened in 1911, it held eight elementary grades and one high school grade in its six rooms. The building was apparently not finished, since in 1921 the school board authorized contracts for “completion of the school house according to plans and specifications.” Work specifically mentioned included additional heating and plumbing work. The improvements permitted the school board to add an additional high school grade.⁷

In the fall of 1929, Common School District 103 voted to become an independent school district. This opened the door for increased state aid and allowed the expansion to three high school grades. It also helped to supply funds for a major renovation of the school in 1930. The Minneapolis engineering firm of Frank Tustison and Company provided plans and specifications for updating the ventilation, heating, and electrical systems. The lighting and electrical systems were updated, and a central ventilation system was added. During this renovation the bell tower was probably removed. One early photograph shows the cupola and the physical evidence of its existence can be seen in the attic.

In return for increased funding, of course, the State Department of Education handed down stricter guidelines. In a January 1931 letter, the department commended Hewitt for its new mechanical system of ventilation, new science laboratory, and improvements in record-keeping practices. However it strongly encouraged even more improvements such as better library facilities, science apparatus, and lighting.

⁵ *The Improvement Bulletin*, 1 July 1905; *Long Prairie Leader*, 11 May 1911.

⁶ “Hewitt Schools to consolidate,” *Long Prairie Leader*, 20 July 1911. Also see 18 May, 8 June for construction reports.

⁷ Minutes, Hewitt School Board District 103, 26 April, 5 May, 26 May 1922. Archives, Minnesota Historical Society.

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The state board also expressed concern about the quality of education, since only fifty-six percent of the high school students and twenty-eight percent of seventh and eighth graders were able to pass the State Board Examinations — much lower than the average state scores of seventy-five percent. The state recommendation was that the superintendent be given full administrative charge of the school and have the final word in filling teacher vacancies. The school board adopted many of the recommended policies and the District was promoted to a Class A four-year high school with the first senior class graduating that year.

From 1931 to 1953 more than 250 pupils graduated from Hewitt. The largest graduating class was sixteen students in 1943 and the smallest class was four in 1946.

Public Health Services

Public social programs grew dramatically during the years and relied on the local school for their execution. In 1904, the first public health services were formed, financed by the Red Cross. The services provided were mainly school nursing, the control of communicable diseases, and infant welfare. Family members usually took care of the sick at home, and were taught how to provide the needed care. World War I brought a dramatic change in the involvement of women in public health. By the end of the war, nearly eight percent of the population had joined a Red Cross Chapter. Todd County had a particularly active chapter, with 4,324 members in 1919—340 in Hewitt alone.⁸

On top of the drive to win the war, the influenza epidemic of 1918 and the high rates of maternal and infant death led to major developments in local public health law. By the time the pandemic was finally over in Minnesota at the end of 1920, more than 75,000 people had been stricken, leaving nearly 12,000 dead.

Rather than retrench at war's end, the Red Cross began a new Minnesota program aimed at prevention and education through the employment of nurses. The Todd County Public Health Nursing Service was established in January 1920 under the auspices of the Red Cross. Describing the plan, already in place in twenty Minnesota counties, the nurse:

visits every part of the county, organizes health classes among the women folks, visits the schools, arouses interest in health matters wherever and in whatever way she can, checks up on tuberculosis patients and in general endeavors to organize the county for interest in better health effort.

It required that each village organize a local health association to provide local support.⁹

The Hewitt Public School became the central location for the provision of these services in Stowe Prairie Township. Almost immediately, the newly-hired nurse traveled to Hewitt to conduct screenings for children

⁸ *Long Prairie Leader*, 2 January 1919.

⁹ *Todd County: Then and Now*, 42; "Will Finance Nurse Program," *Long Prairie Leader*, 6 November 1919.

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between the ages of five and fifteen. Other programs included inoculations and testing for tuberculosis.¹⁰ Other public health programs, almost always held in the school, were aimed at parents, ranging from lectures on nutrition and cooking to First Aid classes. This work continued throughout the school's history.¹¹

Agricultural Extension Services

The school also took on the role of providing basic agricultural education as the federal government introduced new programs during the Progressive Era.

The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 established the Cooperative Extension Service to provide public financial support for extension programs such as instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics. The intent of the act was to encourage the introduction of new farming ideas into rural communities, and farm and home demonstration agents understood that boys and girls were often more open to learning new production methods than their parents. They also found that by working with youth, the parents were reached more effectively.

The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 provided federal funds to support the teaching of agriculture. This act stated that the purpose of vocational agriculture was to train people "who have entered upon or who are preparing to enter upon the work of the farm." With its agriculturally-based economy, Todd County quickly took advantage of this new legislation, providing Farm Bureau classes of "practical education" that might consist of raising an animal or raising a small tract crop.¹²

A typical program was the development of a school garden. Hewitt students helped to plan and plant the plot, tended it throughout the summer, then learned canning techniques. Not only did they receive practical training, the food was then used for the school hot lunch program "to furnish the pupils with a better and more diversified menu during the year."¹³

Other important functions were also performed at the school. With the outbreak of World War II, the federal and state government turned to the extension programs to encourage farmers to increase production. The Extension Service conducted farm labor recruitment programs, lead scrap metal drives, allocated scarce supplies of fertilizer and machinery, and helped homemakers substitute for unobtainable foods during the war emergency.

¹⁰ *Long Prairie Leader*, 6 January 1921; "Inoculation Program Completed At School," *The Hewitt Banner*, 29 May 1941; "Mantoux Tests Available to High School Students," *The Hewitt Banner*, 26 February 1942.

¹¹ "Advanced First Aid Class to Start," *The Hewitt Banner*, 31 December 1942. Also see *HB*, 8 October 1942.

¹² *Long Prairie Leader*, 21 March, 20 June 1921. These courses continued throughout the period of significance. See, for example, *Long Prairie Leader* 6 February 1941. The Capper-Ketcham Act, passed in 1928, greatly increased funding for extension work in agriculture and home economics for men, women, and children.

¹³ *The Hewitt Banner*, 17 July 1941; "School Canning Project in Need of More Jars," *The Hewitt Banner*, 31 July 1941.

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Again, the Hewitt Public School provided the setting for these services in the area. For example, sugar rationing during WWII was handled by the school faculty. Teachers conducted registration at the school, gathering information from each resident, weighed the needs of its citizens to assign sugar allocations, then supervised the distribution of ration books. *The Hewitt Banner* proudly stated, "Teachers will carry out this work as a patriotic duty, serving without pay."¹⁴ To manage shortages, women had the opportunity to attend classes on "Food for Health, Morale, and Victory" to learn how to prepare "Three Meals a Day the Minnesota Way" with the use of home-grown or locally-produced dairy products and vegetables.¹⁵ Local students were encouraged to buy stamps and fill up albums to redeem for War Bonds.¹⁶

A Social Center

The Hewitt Public School also provided a home for a wide variety of community organizations and cultural events. In fact, it was considered to be a central role of the public school. As the superintendent boasted in 1915, "During the past year several of our teachers have taken an active part in the social life of the community. They have taken an active part in the preparation of farmer club programs, in school entertainments, and various social activities in the community."¹⁷

School board minutes suggest that demand for the school's rooms was high. In March 1922, the board approved a rental fee for the first time, modified at its next meeting to exempt the Boy Scouts, Campfire Girls, and community organizations who held open and free meetings. Socials, parties, and receptions, though, were specifically prohibited.¹⁸

With its auditorium, of course, the school played host to plays, concerts, and lectures. Programs might be pure entertainment, such as a school play or basketball game. They might also be serious, as when the local teachers, in the midst of World War II, held a "Back to School Night" to express their belief in the importance of education in the midst of conflict, saying in a public message, "As teachers, we have failed to point out and lead the way toward world harmony and peace. Are we going to make the same errors again and again?"¹⁹

¹⁴ "Teachers to Assist in Sugar Rationing Plan," *The Hewitt Banner*, 12 February 1942. Also *HB*, 26 March, 23 April 1942, 18 February 1943.

¹⁵ "Women Complete Nutrition Work," *The Hewitt Banner*, 11 June 1942.

¹⁶ "School Begins War Stamp Sale," *The Hewitt Banner*, 13 January 1944.

¹⁷ Clara K. Fuller, ed. *History of Morrison and Todd Counties, Minnesota* (Indianapolis, Ind.: B. F. Bowen & Company, 1915), 278.

¹⁸ Minutes, Hewitt School Board District 103, 28 March 1922. Archives, Minnesota Historical Society. The Boy Scouts (1910), Campfire Girls (1911), and 4-H Clubs were all relatively new organizations and relied on the public school system for recruitment.

¹⁹ *The Hewitt Banner*, 4 November 1943. Also see 23 April 1942.

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The spirit of the era might have been captured at a Hewitt community picnic in 1926, when Rev. Harry Bell of Wadena, spoke on the subject "Community Cooperation" and "paid the people of the community a fine tribute for the splendid way in which they have cooperated to make this an ideal community." The public school contributed to socialization not only of its pupils, but of all its citizens.²⁰

Consolidation

Shrinking enrollment and shifting educational mandates led the school board to consider closing the school. In June 1948, they voted, 3-2, to close the high school. Within a week, agitated local citizens presented a petition to the board, demanding a reversal. The board acceded to their wishes and the high school remained open for four more years.²¹

In 1952 a major school consolidation brought an end to the independent Hewitt school board. There was considerable opposition in the town and the first vote on consolidation suffered a narrow defeat. As the school superintendent David Brown noted, "A majority of the children who attend or have attended school in Hewitt and a majority of their parents seem to want a school at Hewitt to continue here. It is a trading and religious center for many families who enjoy coming here." But, he added, "there will soon be too few pupils left to operate even a grade school in Hewitt."

The State Board of Education continued to apply pressure on Hewitt to merge. Given assurances that the grade school would remain at Hewitt (with the high school in nearby Bertha), the opposition crumbled. In the end, eleven area school districts formed the single District 51, joining ten other nearby districts. A contemporary newspaper account called it "the largest school consolidation in the state." In 1957 it became School District 786, Bertha-Hewitt, which it still the name yet today.²²

The Hewitt School continued to play a role in the community. From 1953-1964 it housed first to sixth grades, then from 1964-1980 grade levels were trimmed to just fifth and sixth graders. The school closed permanently in December 1979 and the school building and grounds were sold to the city of Hewitt for one dollar.

The Hewitt Historical Society, organized in 1981, uses the building for exhibits and storage of its collections. The Hewitt Lions Club holds a ninety-nine-year lease on the gymnasium, adding a meeting room and kitchen in 1980. It serves as a general community center.

²⁰ *Long Prairie Leader*, 1 July 1926.

²¹ *Long Prairie Leader*, June 29, 2 July 1948.

²² "School Districts in Hewitt Area to Vote," *Wadena Pioneer Journal*, 28 February 1952. Also see 6 March, 12 June 1952. "School Matters Still Plague Hewitt Residents," *Wadena Pioneer Journal*, 19 June, 3 July, 17 July 1952.

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The Hewitt Public School stood at the center of community life between 1911 and 1952. It became part of the town's daily rhythm of life—classes, sporting events, parent-teacher conferences, school plays and concerts, and graduation ceremonies. Several generations of young people received instruction and training, preparing them for active roles as adults. The school also proved to be the conduit for a host of social programs, aimed not just at children but at adults as well. These ranged from agricultural extension classes that taught cooking to public health programs on child care and Red Cross First Aid.

As such, it is significant under Criterion A and eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.²³

²³ The school's exuberant Colonial Revival Style, barn-like form and early use of concrete are not typically found in schools constructed during this period. However, school board records and the local newspaper that could have revealed the decisions that led to the school's distinctive appearance are lost.

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9. Bibliography

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description:

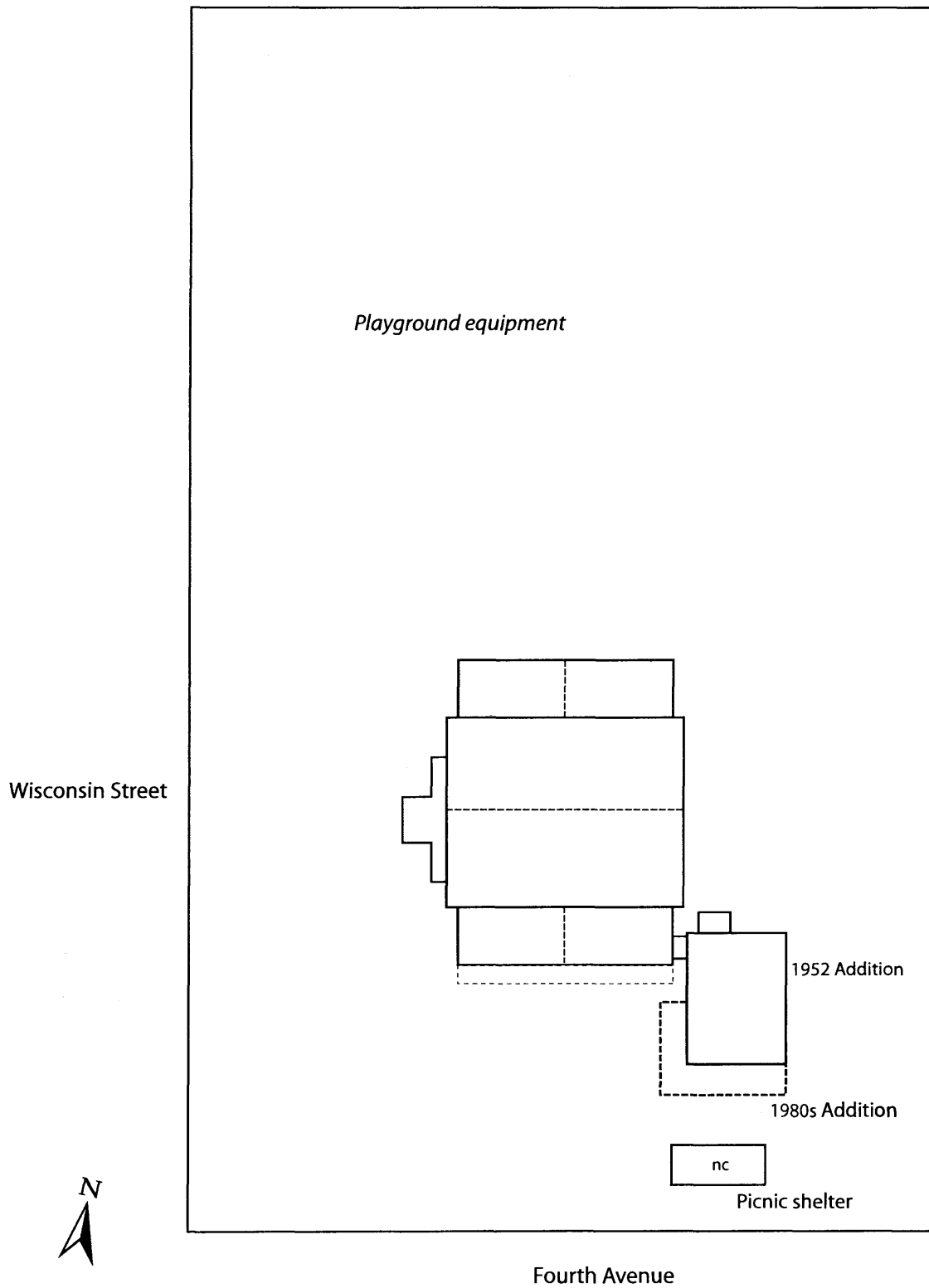
The nominated property is described as BLK 15, original Village of Hewitt, Parcel Number 35-4000400, Lots One through Six.

Boundary Justification:

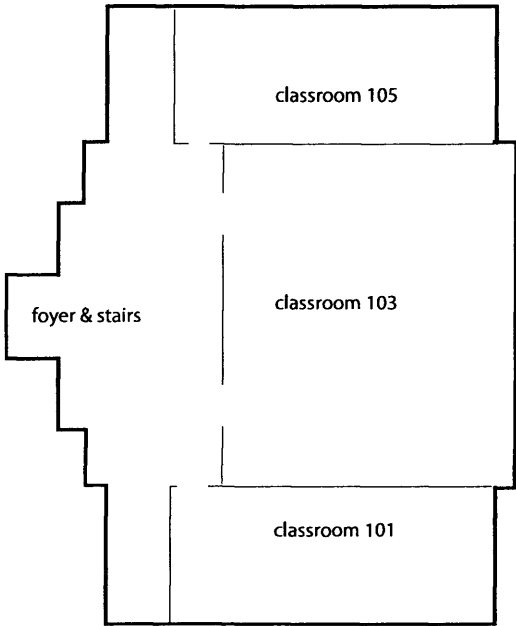
The boundary of the nominated property includes the parcel of land historically associated with the school.

Hewitt Public School

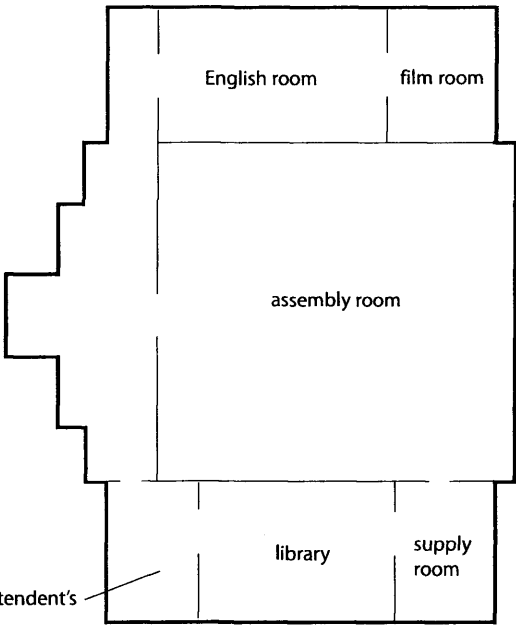
Todd County, Minnesota



Hewitt Public School
Todd County, Minnesota



First floor



Second floor