

**United States Department of 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 Colfax Municipal Building
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 613 Main Street **N/A** **not for publication**
city or town Colfax **N/A** **vicinity**
state Wisconsin **code** WI **county** Dunn **code** 033 **zip code** 54730

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.)

Alicia Z. Coe December 15, 2003
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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 commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Colfax Municipal Building
Name of Property

Dunn County
County and State

Wisconsin

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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.
___ See continuation sheet.
___ removed from the National Register.
___ other, (explain):

Edson H. Beall

1/28/04

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

private
x public-local
public-State
public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

x building(s)
district
structure
site
object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

contributing	noncontributing
1	0 buildings
0	0 sites
0	0 structures
0	0 objects
1	0 total

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

Number of contributing resources is previously listed in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/GOVERNMENT OFFICE

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/GOVERNMENT OFFICE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation Sandstone
walls Sandstone

roof ASPHALT
other WOOD

Narrative Description

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

Colfax Municipal Building
Name of Property

Dunn County
County and State

Wisconsin

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the 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 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)

Politics/Government
Social History

Period of Significance

1916-1953

Significant Dates

1916

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Volkman, Carl (architect)
Wisconsin Construction Company (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Colfax Municipal Building
Name of Property

Dunn County
County and State

Wisconsin

9. Major Bibliographic References

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

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- 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:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- x Other

Name of repository: Colfax Municipal Bldg

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 600274 4983608
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

See Continuation Sheet

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	Elizabeth L. Miller, historic preservation consultant, on behalf of	date	May 10, 2003
organization	Colfax Municipal Building Restoration Group (contact: Joan Scharlau, P. O. Box 238, Colfax, WI 54730)		
street & number	4033 Tokay Blvd	telephone	608-233-5942
city or town	Madison	state	WI
		zip code	53711

Colfax Municipal Building
Name of Property

Dunn County
County and State

Wisconsin

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name/title	Village of Colfax (John Jahr, Village Clerk)	date	May 10, 2003
organization	Village of Colfax	telephone	715-962-3311
street&number	613 Main Street	zip code	54730
city or town	Colfax	state	WI

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.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

Section 7 Page 1

DESCRIPTION: INTRODUCTION

The Colfax Municipal Building stands on the west side of Main Street, toward the northern end of the central business district of the village of Colfax. Constructed of locally-quarried "Colfax sandstone" and designed by Eau Claire architect Carl Volkman, the municipal building was begun in 1915 and completed in 1916.¹ This imposing, two-story building rests on a raised basement of rock-faced ashlar. A parapet hides the asphalt-shingled, hip-with-deck roof. The municipal building has a boxy form with parapeted, hip-with-deck roof; a symmetrical composition of the front façade; stone ashlar construction; and a raised basement. The municipal building exhibits very little ornament, and its decorative flourishes, confined to the entrance tower and the parapet, suggest the elements of the Collegiate Gothic style.

PRESENT APPEARANCE

The Colfax Municipal Building is situated in an area of low-scale, commercial buildings that predominantly date from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Small neighborhoods of single-family homes surround the commercial area. The municipal building is set very close to the narrow sidewalk that runs along the east edge of the property. West (to the rear) of the municipal building is a parking lot. A narrow, grass side-yard separates the municipal building from its neighbor to the north. South of the municipal building lies Tower Park, a diminutive greenspace featuring a winding path, an octagonal gazebo, a trellis, a picnic table, and a scattering of mature trees.

The municipal building is rectangular in plan. The footprint measures 54 feet (north-south) by 84 feet (east-west). The main block is 44 feet in height, and the entrance tower rises 60 feet high. The municipal building faces east.

The entrance tower is centered on the east-facing (front) façade of the municipal building. The square tower projects from the face of the main block, and is capped with a pedimented parapet. Monumental pilasters anchor the corners of the tower. Each pilaster displays an implied capital composed of a narrow, projecting belt course surmounted by a segmental-arched niche and terminating in the broad, bracketed stone cornice that wraps around the tower. A slender, vertical element of stone pierces the belt course, bisects each niche, passes through the cornice, and rises to the top of the parapet.

The main entrance is found at the base of the tower and retains the original pair of oversize, segmental-arched, paneled wood-and-glass doors. The doors are set in a compound, segmental arch of smooth-faced ashlar. A wooden awning with a bow-shaped profile shelters the entrance. The awning

¹ "Proposed New Municipal Building Soon To Be Under Construction," *The Colfax Messenger*, September 10, 1915; and "Colfax's Municipal Building A Credit to the City," *The Colfax Messenger*, April 28, 1916.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

Section 7 Page 2

is not original, but its shape, narrow board ceiling and row of tiny bulb-in-socket light fixtures suggest a construction date of c. 1920. Above the entrance is a stone panel carved with three shields, surmounted by a group of three window openings. Although these openings were covered with beaded boards in 1983, the original wooden, 1/1, double-hung sash windows are present behind them.² Raised lettering reading: COLFAX MUNICIPAL BUILDING can be seen above these openings. Another group of three window openings surmounts the lettering. These openings are also boarded up, but the 1/1 double-hung sash and single-pane transoms are still in place underneath. The tower is crowned with a belvedere, the east face of which features three screened, shaped openings, recessed within a stone frame and unified beneath a stone label molding. Four similar openings of varying sizes can be seen on the north and south faces of the belvedere.

On either side of the tower, the east-facing (front) façade exhibits two columns of openings, each with two windows, boarded up in 1983. This configuration makes it appear as though the municipal building is three stories in height, but in fact, the second story is extra tall in order to accommodate the balcony in the auditorium. The original 1/1, double-hung sash window is still present in each opening, beneath the boards. At the first story, south of the tower, a large opening holds a picture window flanked by 1/1, double-hung sash, and is surmounted by single-pane transoms. This window grouping is original and lights the library. Beneath the window is the datestone, carved: 1915. North of the tower, a concrete driveway slopes up to a tall, rectangular opening that once held two large, paneled wood doors, and a broad transom. These doors opened outward to admit the fire truck and gave access to the fire station, which occupied most of the north half of the first floor. In 1978 the fire station section was remodeled to house the police station (which had had smaller quarters in the rear of the building).³ At that time, the garage opening was reduced and fitted with an overhead garage door. The existing single door was installed later.

The north-facing (side) façade matches the front façade in finish and details. Most of the windows on this façade, although still in place, were boarded up c. 1980.⁴ At the east end (toward the front), a narrow pavilion projects slightly. The pavilion exhibits a single window at the first story, and a column of two windows at the second story. On the first floor, the rest of the north-facing façade displays (east to west), a doorway at grade level that led into the fire station, three window openings, followed by a door and another window. The two easterly windows are boarded up, but the 1/1, double-hung sash windows flanking the door are uncovered. The window just east of the door lights the former jail cell, and is covered with a metal grill. The door originally provided a separate entrance into the police station. At grade level east of this door is a small, concrete block, shed-roofed, enclosed entrance porch, with a door into the basement. The entrance porch was built in 1977.⁵ At the

² Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, April 11, 1983.

³ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, February 13, 1978; and May 5, 1978.

⁴ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, October 12, 1980.

⁵ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, May 23, 1977.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

Section 7 Page 3

second story, a door appears high in the wall just west of the pavilion. It opens from the auditorium balcony onto the original iron fire escape, which descends the wall east to west. Four tall, boarded window openings are evenly-spaced west of the door. These hold 1/1, double-hung sash, each surmounted by a transom, but are now boarded up. A column of two, small, boarded windows can be seen at the west end of the second floor. Four window openings appear in the basement. In 1974, these openings were filled with glass block and fitted with air vents.⁶

The south-facing (side) façade of the municipal building exhibits the same materials and details as the front façade. The second-story windows, still in place, were all boarded up c. 1980.⁷ A slightly projecting pavilion similar to the one on the north-facing façade appears at either end of the south-facing façade. A column of two windows is found at the second story in each pavilion. The east pavilion retains original, 1/1, double-hung sash with single-pane transom at the first story. A door appears at grade in the west pavilion. The concrete ramp leading up to this door was poured in 1990.⁸ Four grouped windows appear at the first story between the pavilions. Each group is composed of a picture window flanked by 1/1, double-hung sash windows. Two 1/1, double-hung sash windows are found just east of the west pavilion. Six window openings are regularly distributed at basement level. In 1974, these openings were filled with concrete block and glass block.⁹

The west-facing (rear) façade is constructed of coursed, sandstone rubble. A square, exterior chimney of sandstone rubble rises in the center of the façade. At the base of the chimney is a front-gabled, enclosed entrance porch of concrete block. It was built in 1990 and exhibits a solid door on its west face.¹⁰ Two windows flank either side of the chimney at the first story. The southernmost is boarded up, but in the other three, the 1/1, double-hung sash windows are visible.

On the interior, a stair hall and vestibule occupy the entrance tower. The wooden, double dogleg staircase displays Craftsman style wooden newel posts, handrails and balustrades. Carpeting, installed in 1980, covers the wooden treads and risers.¹¹ A metal chairlift was installed the same year down the south flight of stairs to the basement for the senior center.¹² The walls and ceilings in the stair hall and vestibule are plastered. A second staircase is located in the southwest corner of the building. Constructed of wood, it is quarter-turn-with-winders in configuration. The newel posts, handrails and balustrades are similar to those of the main staircase, and the wooden steps are exposed.

The first floor plan consists of a central, ell-shaped hallway, with spaces that house the Colfax Police Department (north), the Colfax Public Library (south), the Colfax Village Clerk (northwest),

⁶ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, August 26, 1974.

⁷ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, October 12, 1980.

⁸ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, April 10, 1990.

⁹ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, August 26, 1974.

¹⁰ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, April 10, 1990.

¹¹ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, May 27, 1980.

¹² Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, June 24, 1980.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

Section 7 Page 4

and two small restrooms (see attached floor plans). This plan is original, except that interior of the Police Department's space was partitioned into three rooms when it was remodeled in 1977-78.¹³ Previously, the Colfax Fire Department occupied this space. The Village Clerk's office originally served as the Village Council Chamber, and as the Colfax Police Court. The small jail cell is still intact, including the steel bars, although the plumbing fixtures were removed in 1988.¹⁴ The finishes in the women's restroom were applied in 1986, while those in the clerk's office date from 1994.¹⁵ The hallway, men's restroom, and the library retain most of their original finishes, including wood flooring, concrete flooring (men's restroom), Craftsman wood baseboards and surrounds, and plastered walls and ceilings. Original, paneled wood doors with brass hardware are found throughout the building.

The library features built-in wooden bookshelves, oak paneling that rises almost the full height of the walls, and a beamed ceiling. A cased, segmental-arched opening at the east end of the library frames a nook that likely was the children's reading room. A fireplace of dark red brick with a brickwork mantelpiece, nestled between built-in bookshelves, dominates the north wall of the nook. The fireplace was the gift of the Colfax Ladies' Reading Club (later known as the Women's Club), which had initiated the community's first lending library in 1904.¹⁶

The auditorium occupies the second floor. An oversize pair of paneled wood doors, framed with multipane sidelights and transom, opens into the auditorium. North of the entrance into the auditorium is a small room designed to serve as a ticket booth, with the ticket window still intact. South of the entrance is another small room. This originally served as the chamber for the police court judge, but has been used for storage for many years. The auditorium displays a large, raised stage at the west end, and a balcony with seating at the east end above the entrance. Narrow board flooring, a beamed ceiling and a crown molding embellish the auditorium. The walls are finished with a fiberboard material that may be original; it is shaped, forming a wainscot with a chair rail, as well as the wall of the proscenium. A row of bulb-in-socket light fixtures illuminates the stage. The curtain is said to date from 1921, put up by Gerhard Hammer, who had arranged an agreement with the Village Board to show movies in the auditorium on a regular basis beginning in 1919.¹⁷ The original curtain had been selected by the Ladies Reading Club, and featured an "evening view of the Pyramids as seen from the Village of Kafr, painted in Sepia."¹⁸ Metal-and-vinyl seating is found on the main floor of the auditorium. The seating probably dates from 1938, and is easily moved.¹⁹ The balcony is

¹³ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, February 13, 1978; and May 5, 1978.

¹⁴ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, January 11, 1988.

¹⁵ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, June 4, 1986; and December 12, 1994.

¹⁶ Mrs. A. C. Chase and Mrs. E. B. Hill, "History of Colfax Womans [sic] Club," Colfax, Wisconsin, 1932, p. 43.

¹⁷ Joan Scharlau, Colfax Municipal Building Restoration Group, personal communication, April 3, 2003; and Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, January 8, 1919.

¹⁸ Chase and Hill, p. 43.

¹⁹ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, April 11, 1938.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

Section 7 Page 5

suspended on cables, and retains its original fixed, wooden benches. A projection room and a storage room flank the balcony.

The basement is divided into three main spaces: the banquet hall (south), the kitchen (northwest) and what was originally the kitchen pantry (northeast). The latter was soon taken over by the Boy Scouts, and is commonly known as the "Scout Room." At the west end are two tiny restrooms (carved out of the rear stair hall in 1977),²⁰ the boiler room and a storage room. A straight, concrete staircase, built in 1977,²¹ rises from the west end of the basement, providing a direct exit. The banquet hall displays narrow board flooring, plastered walls with a broad, wooden chair rail, and a beamed ceiling. Some paneled wood wainscot appears on the walls, but quite a bit was removed in 1998 by workmen in search of a leak.²² A mural depicting the old dam and mill on 18 Mile Creek can be seen on the west wall of the banquet hall. It is thought to date from c. 1980.²³ In the kitchen, many original built-in, wooden cabinets have been preserved, but the sink and countertop were replaced in 1974.²⁴ The carpeting and dropped ceiling in the former pantry date from 1978.²⁵

ALTERATIONS

On the exterior of the Colfax Municipal Building, two small concrete block entrance porches have been appended to the building, the basement window openings have been filled, an overdoor has been installed above the front entrance, all of the second-story windows have been boarded up, and the former fire station entrance has been reduced. The entrance porches are located on the rear and side (toward the back) of the building and cannot be seen from the street, making their impact negligible. The reduced basement window openings are on the side facades of the building, cannot be seen from the street, and are not very noticeable even when looked at from the side facades. The overdoor appears to have been in place for more than 50 years, and is now part of the historic fabric of the building, adding an eclectic accent to the front façade. The second-story, boarded-up windows detract

²⁰ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, January 10, 1977.

²¹ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, February 28, 1977.

²² Scharlau.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, November 25, 1974.

²⁵ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, February 13, 1978.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

Section 7 Page 6

from the building's appearance, but the original windows are all in place behind the boards, making this a change that could easily be reversed. The loss of the original fire station entrance doors also detracts somewhat from the historic appearance of the building.

The interior of the Colfax Municipal Building retains a high degree of integrity in its layout and in its use. Structural interior alterations are limited to the former fire station space, partitioned to serve the Colfax Police Department in 1977-78, and to the basement rear stair hall, where two small bathrooms were installed the same year. Other interior changes are cosmetic, and easily reversible. Aside from the former fire station, the significant spaces in the building – the library, the former police court, the auditorium, and the banquet hall – all are intact. Further, the building continues to serve most of its original purposes, including housing the library, the police department, and municipal offices. The auditorium hosted public events until 2001, and the senior center occupied the basement until 1998; in both cases, lack of funding to bring the building up to code ended its use as the center of the community's social life. The Colfax Municipal Building is an imposing building that displays a great deal of character. Its continuing utility for its original uses is a testimony to the excellence of its plan. These factors outweigh the alterations, such that the alterations do not compromise the integrity of the property.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 1

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Colfax Municipal Building is eligible for the National Register under *Criterion A*, at the local level, as an outstanding example of a multipurpose municipal building that was both the center of government and of the social life of the community. The building was designed with spaces for the police station, the fire station, and meetings of the village council. The police department and the village clerk's office are still in residence. The building's plan also incorporated spaces for social and educational use, such as the public library, an auditorium, and a banquet hall. It continues to serve part of its social function, as the library still operates in the building. Social events in the auditorium were discontinued in 2001, and the use of the basement banquet hall ended in 1998. The Colfax Municipal Building displays very good integrity. The period of significance extends from the date the building was opened for governmental and social functions, 1916, through 1953, the 50-year cut-off date.

HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE OF COLFAX

The village of Colfax is situated in Colfax Township. The earliest permanent European-American settlers in the township arrived in 1859, coming predominantly from southern Wisconsin and New York state. By the early 1860s, they were joined by growing numbers of Norwegian immigrants. The first building erected on the future village site was a log cabin, constructed for the John D. Simons family c. 1867, at what is now the corner of River and Main Street (not far from the Colfax Municipal Building). In 1869, Simons built a dam and a gristmill on 18 Mile Creek, which was much patronized by local farmers, who had been carting their grain as far as Chippewa Falls or Menomonie for grinding. A tiny settlement sprang up next to Simons' mill, on the north side of 18 Mile Creek. In 1874, the community was platted as Colfax, with two blocks of eight lots each.²⁶

Colfax continued to develop as an agricultural support community through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1884, the Wisconsin Central Railway (succeeded by the Minneapolis, St. Paul and Sault Ste. Marie) extended a line through Colfax, and the hamlet became a shipping center for the agricultural products (principally grain) of the area. The tracks were laid south of 18 Mile Creek, spurring Colfax to expand south toward the railroad. By 1892, Colfax had a population of about 100, and boasted a blacksmith shop, a wagon shop, several stores, a school, two churches, a doctor and a dentist, in addition to Simons' flour and gristmill.²⁷

Colfax incorporated as a village in 1904, with a population of about 600. Amenities and enterprises in the village at that time included a volunteer fire department (organized 1889), a

²⁶ *Dunn County History*, (Menomonie, Wisconsin: Dunn County Historical Society, 1984), p. 19; and J. Curtiss-Wedge, George O. Jones, et al, *History of Dunn County, Wisconsin* (Minneapolis: H. C. Cooper, Jr. & Co., 1923), p. 172.

²⁷ *Dunn County History*, p. 19; and Curtiss-Wedge, Jones, et al, p. 172.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 2

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

newspaper (*The Colfax Messenger*, begun 1897), a creamery (1898), a bank (1899), the Colfax Stone Company (1900), the Colfax Cement Block Works (1902), and a telephone exchange (1903). In addition to stone and concrete block, the principal products shipped from Colfax were potatoes, hay, and butter. By 1920, the population had reached 905 and Colfax boasted a fine municipal building, a water system, and its own electric plant.²⁸

The leading employer in Colfax during the early twentieth century was the Colfax Stone Company. In 1900, William Lister and O. W. Olson were scouting the area looking for good building stone. They found a deposit of high quality, buff-gray sandstone about a mile west of Colfax. Lister bought the land and opened a quarry, with Olson acting as manager (a position he would hold until at least 1923). Lister took on two out-of-town partners, Sam Conway (in Eau Claire) and John Peterson (in Madison) in 1908. In 1916, Lister and Conway died, and Peterson became sole proprietor. Under Peterson's direction, the Colfax Stone Company was consolidated with the Wisconsin Construction Company of Madison, and stone-cutting at the Colfax quarry intensified. Stone was shipped as far away as New York city, and was primarily used in the construction of churches, schools and other public buildings. In Colfax, the Municipal Building, the Norwegian Lutheran Church (1902), the Colfax High School (1910, demolished), the Soo Line Depot (1914), several residences and two commercial blocks were built of Colfax sandstone. The stone-cutting industry mechanized in the early 1920s, but it was discovered that the hardness of Colfax sandstone made it very difficult to work with machinery. At the same time, the cost of cutting it by hand became prohibitive. The Colfax Stone Company began importing stone from Bedford, Indiana, and cutting it in Colfax. The company continued this practice through the 1930s, but demand dropped precipitously. In 1940, John Peterson closed the operation and had the buildings associated with it demolished.²⁹

During the last half of the twentieth century, Colfax continued to serve as an agricultural support community for the farmers in the surrounding countryside, many of them engaged in dairying. The population of the village has remained fairly steady since 1950, numbering slightly more than 1,000 persons. Today, the leading employer in Colfax is Woods Run Forest Products, a lumber materials company, and some residents work in Chippewa Falls or Menomonie. Tourism is a growing sector of the local economy. Visitors are drawn to the Colfax Railroad Museum, housed in the Soo Line Depot, and enjoy the recreational activities associated with the various parks and waterways in the area.

²⁸ Ibid, pp. 172-175.

²⁹ "Stone Gone, Marks Remain," *St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, July 13, 1969; "Colfax Stone Company Gets Reputation: To Ship Fifteen Carloads of Sand Stone to New York City – Also Have Many Other Orders," *The Colfax Messenger*, May 10, 1917; and Curtiss-Wedge, Jones, et al, p. 175.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 3

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

SIGNIFICANCE: GOVERNMENT

The Colfax Municipal Building has been the center of government in the village of Colfax from the date of its opening, September 11, 1916, until today. Prior to the opening of the Colfax Municipal Building, public meetings were held in the Colfax Opera House. In October 1913, the Colfax Hall Association, which owned the Opera House, decided to sell that property at auction and offer the proceeds to the village to help fund the construction of a building that would include spaces for public meetings and the public library (which the village had funded since 1907), as well as an opera house.³⁰ In early November, O. G. Kinney purchased the Opera House for \$1,100. Although Kinney converted the building into an automobile garage, it continued to be used for public meetings until the municipal building was complete. On June 21, 1915, the Opera House was the location of a special election, held to authorize the village president and clerk to apply for a loan from the state for \$13,000 to erect a municipal building.³¹ The initiative passed, and in September 1915, the village bought Lot 3, Block 2, Simons First Addition to Colfax for \$1,500. The municipal building would be constructed on this site.³² Carl Volkmann, an Eau Claire architect, was selected to design the building and the Wisconsin Construction Company of Chippewa Falls was awarded the contract to erect the structure.³³

Volkman's plans for the Colfax Municipal Building called for a banquet hall, kitchen, pantry and furnace room in the basement; fire house (including a gym), council chamber, police court, jail, library and rest rooms on the first floor; and a 560-seat auditorium with a gallery, ticket booth, and police court judge's chamber on the second floor, the whole to be constructed of local Colfax sandstone.³⁴ The cornerstone was laid on November 6, 1915 amid a daylong celebration that featured Governor Emmanuel L. Phillip as keynote speaker. The mayors of Eau Claire, Chippewa Falls, Menomonie, Rice Lake, New Richmond, Glenwood City, and Bloomer gave speeches as well. Entertainment was provided by the Colfax Cornet Band. In the evening, the women of Colfax served a dinner at the Colfax Methodist Church as a fund-raiser for the municipal building.³⁵

The Colfax Municipal Building opened to the public on September 11, 1916. On the afternoon of October 7, 1916, the library opened with a children's program of stories and music. That evening, the Secretary of the Wisconsin Library Board, Matthew S. Dudgeon, gave a lecture. Since that time, the building has housed most of the village's governmental functions, including the police department,

³⁰ "New Opera House In Prospect," *The Colfax Messenger*, October 24, 1913.

³¹ "Notice of Special Election," *The Colfax Messenger*, June 11, 1915.

³² Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, September 14, 1915.

³³ "Proposed New Municipal Building Soon To Be Under Construction," *The Colfax Messenger*, September 10, 1915.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ "Cornerstone Laid," *The Colfax Messenger*, November 6, 1915.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 4

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

the fire department, the village clerk's office, the village council, and the library. With the exception of the fire department, all of these services are still located in the Colfax Municipal Building.

A review of the Architecture History Inventory (AHI) in the Wisconsin Office of Historic Buildings revealed that 117 municipal buildings have been identified in Wisconsin, most of them erected in the early twentieth century. Judging from this sample, village and city halls became increasingly multifunctional over time, incorporating the expanding number of governmental services in a single building, and often including an auditorium. A library was less common to the plan, perhaps because so many communities built freestanding library buildings through the largesse of Andrew Carnegie. Interestingly, an organization in Colfax (probably the Ladies Reading Club) approached the Carnegie foundation in 1915 about building a library in the village, but this effort failed.³⁶ Among the municipal buildings included in the AHI, excluding those of the largest cities in the state, Colfax's is one of the grandest examples, and incorporates more uses than any other. The Independence City Hall (1905-06, NRHP) is probably the best comparison property. Still serving its original governmental functions, Independence's plan originally included council chambers, police office and jail, fire station, library, and a large auditorium. However, it did not have banquet hall and kitchen facilities, as does the Colfax Municipal Building.

SIGNIFICANCE: SOCIAL HISTORY

The Colfax Municipal Building is also important as the center of the social and civic life of the village. The auditorium was the setting for lectures, musical programs, dances, plays, sporting events, and movies, while the banquet hall and basement rooms have hosted roller skating, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Kiwanis, local singing groups, senior citizens, youth groups, and birthday and anniversary parties. The municipal building continues to serve one of its original social/educational functions in that the library still operates in the building. Use of the basement was discontinued in 1998, and the auditorium was closed to the public in 2001.

Among the very first speakers to appear on the auditorium's stage was one of Wisconsin's most distinguished politicians, Senator Robert M. "Fighting Bob" La Follette, who spoke before a large crowd on October 6, 1916, less than one month after the building opened.³⁷ A series of monthly programs were offered each year for many years, providing a mixture of education, culture and entertainment. The lecture course for 1916, for example, included a magician, a trio of singers who did impersonations, two plays, an orchestra, and a "humorous lecturer and make-up character."³⁸ In other years, popular science lectures, vocalists, musicians, ventriloquists, dramatic readings, and ethnic

³⁶ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, September 14, 1915.

³⁷ "La Follette Draws A Big Crowd," *The Colfax Messenger*, October 13, 1916.

³⁸ "A One Dollar Course," *The Colfax Messenger*, September 29, 1916.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

Section 8 Page 5

cultural programs (such as songs and stories of American Indian nations) were presented.³⁹ Another early event that took place in the auditorium was the Community Sing, to which everyone was invited to “[c]ome and sing the old songs with your friends and neighbors.”⁴⁰ Beginning in October 1916, dances were held monthly in the auditorium, to raise funds to help pay for and maintain the municipal building.⁴¹ Charity dances, such as the Roosevelt Ball (held as a benefit for the March of Dimes during the 1930s), and American Legion dances also took place there.⁴² During World War I, weekly rallies were held in the auditorium in support of servicemen and women.⁴³

In January 1919, Gerhard Hammer acquired the Joy Theater, the only moving picture venue in Colfax. Hammer closed the theater and made an agreement with the village to move the projector and electric player piano into the auditorium, and show films there twice a week. Hammer, a member of the municipal building’s Hall Committee, which managed the operation of the building, agreed to share the profits with the village on a fifty-fifty basis. The first film screened in the auditorium was “Pershing’s Crusaders.” Shown on January 21 and 22, 1919, this was essentially a newsreel, with footage from the battlefields of World War I taken by photographers of the U. S. Signal Corps, the Navy, and the French army.⁴⁴ The auditorium continued to serve as Colfax’s movie theater into the 1970s.⁴⁵

The auditorium also hosted high school commencement exercises and basketball games, high school and 4-H plays, and in recent years, library programs, exercise classes, and local theater productions.⁴⁶

The banquet hall was the setting for regular roller skating evenings during the 1940s, housed the youth center in the 1960s, and the senior center from at least 1978 until 1998.⁴⁷ The banquet hall and other basement rooms were probably used by the Boy Scouts from the time the building opened; by 1947, if not earlier, the Girl Scouts also met there.⁴⁸ In 1925, the first, second and third grades met in the banquet hall and the police court while a new school building was under construction. Classes

³⁹ “Lecture Course Dates – Season 1917-18,” *The Colfax Messenger*, January 26, 1917.

⁴⁰ “Movement on Foot to Organize Big Chorus,” *The Colfax Messenger*, November 17, 1916.

⁴¹ “Next Dance November 3rd,” *The Colfax Messenger*, October 20, 1916; and “Municipal Dance,” *The Colfax Messenger*, April 11, 1917.

⁴² Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, January 13, 1936; and Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, January 10, 1927.

⁴³ Scharlau.

⁴⁴ “Movie Shows in the Auditorium,” *The Colfax Messenger*, January 15, 1919.

⁴⁵ Scharlau.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*; Village of Colfax, and Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, October 25, 1925.

⁴⁷ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meetings of the Village Board, January 24, 1949; December 9, 1963; February 13, 1978; and Scharlau.

⁴⁸ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, November 10, 1947.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

Section 8 Page 6

were held in the basement again during the 1961-62, and 1962-63 school years.⁴⁹ A pre-school was conducted in the basement in 1977.⁵⁰ While the Lutheran Church was being remodeled in 1950, services were held in the auditorium, and Sunday School and confirmation classes met in the basement.⁵¹

The Colfax Municipal Building has also served the community in times of need. On June 4, 1958, the village was devastated when a tornado touched down, killing 12 people and destroying as many as two-thirds of the buildings in town.⁵² The municipal building provided shelter during the tornado, and was the place where the injured were brought to await the arrival of ambulances.⁵³

Carl Volkman, the architect of the Colfax Municipal Building, practiced in Eau Claire from at least 1916 until 1941.⁵⁴ In 1916, Volkman worked in partnership with Edward Hancock. Volkman is said to have designed Grace Lutheran Church at 202 West Grand Avenue in Eau Claire.⁵⁵ No other information has been discovered about him or his work.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Colfax Municipal Building is significant at the local level as an outstanding example of a multipurpose municipal building. It is significant in Government as the administrative center of Colfax, housing all the village's public functions and services including the council chamber, police department, fire department and library. The fire department has moved out, but the other governmental functions are still housed in the municipal building. The Colfax Municipal Building is

⁴⁹ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meetings of the Village Board, October 25, 1925; and July 9, 1962.

⁵⁰ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meeting of the Village Board, January 10, 1977.

⁵¹ Village of Colfax, Minutes of the Meetings of the Village Board, August 28, 1950; and September 11, 1950.

⁵² *Dunn County History*, p. 20.

⁵³ Scharlau.

⁵⁴ *By-Laws and Rules of the Wisconsin Board of Examiners of Architects and Civil Engineers*, (Madison: Wisconsin Board of Examiners, 1940; and 1941).

⁵⁵ Architects File, Wisconsin Office of Historic Buildings, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 7

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

also significant in Social History as the center of social and civic life in the village. It has been the setting for political and educational presentations and discussions, for sports and entertainment, of activities for youths and for senior citizens, and for important family celebrations.

The Colfax Municipal Building retains a high degree of integrity, but its condition is deteriorating. Since 1998, the village has been considering the future of the building. In 1999, an engineering firm was commissioned to study the building. The firm's report detailed three options: a minor remodeling (bringing the building up to code), which was estimated would cost over \$800,000; a major remodeling (gutting the building), estimated to cost over \$900,000; and the construction of a new municipal building, which would cost nearly \$700,000.⁵⁶ The Colfax Municipal Building Restoration Group formed in response, and is working to preserve the building. This nomination was sponsored by the Colfax Municipal Building Restoration Group.

⁵⁶ "Study Recommends Abandoning Building," *The Colfax Messenger*, undated article in the possession of Joan Scharlau.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 1

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

BIBLIOGRAPHY

By-Laws and Rules of the Wisconsin Board of Examiners of Architects and Civil Engineers, (Madison: Wisconsin Board of Examiners, 1940; and 1941.

Chase, Mrs. A. C. and Mrs. E. B. Hill. "History of the Colfax Womans [sic] Club." Colfax, Wisconsin, 1932. (Type-written).

The Colfax Messenger. 1913 – 1917,

Colfax, Village of. Minutes of Village Board Meetings. 1915-1999.

Curtiss-Wedge, J., George O. Jones, et al. *History of Dunn County, Wisconsin*. Minneapolis: H. C. Cooper, Jr. & Co., 1923.

Dunn County History. Menomonie, Wisconsin: Dunn County Historical Society, 1984.

Madison, Wisconsin. Wisconsin Historical Society. Architects File, Wisconsin Office of Historic Buildings.

Madison, Wisconsin. Wisconsin Historical Society. Architecture/History Inventory, Wisconsin Office of Historic Buildings.

St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press. (St. Paul, Minnesota). 1969.

Scharlau, Joan. Colfax Municipal Building Restoration Group. Personal communication, April 3, 2003.

Wyatt, Barbara ed. *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 10 Page 1

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Colfax Municipal Building is located on Lot 3, Block 2, Simons First Addition to the Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin. The area encompassed totals less than one acre.

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries of the Colfax Municipal Building encompass all those resources historically associated with it and coincide with the legal boundaries of the parcel on which the municipal building sits.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section photos Page 1

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

Photo 1 of 10

Colfax Municipal Building
Village of Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin
Photo by Elizabeth L. Miller, April 2003
Negatives on file in the Wisconsin Historical Society
View of the east-facing (front) façade, looking west.

The information for the following photographs is the same as the one above, except as noted:

Photo 2 of 10

Close-up of the entrance tower, looking west.

Photo 3 of 10

View of the north- and west-facing (rear) facades, looking southeast.

Photo 4 of 10

View of the south- and east-facing (front) facades, looking northwest.

Photo 5 of 10

View of the west-facing (rear) façade, looking east.

Photo 6 of 10

View of the interior of the library, looking southeast.

Photo 7 of 10

View of the fireplace in the library, looking northeast.

Photo 8 of 10

View of the auditorium, looking west toward the stage.

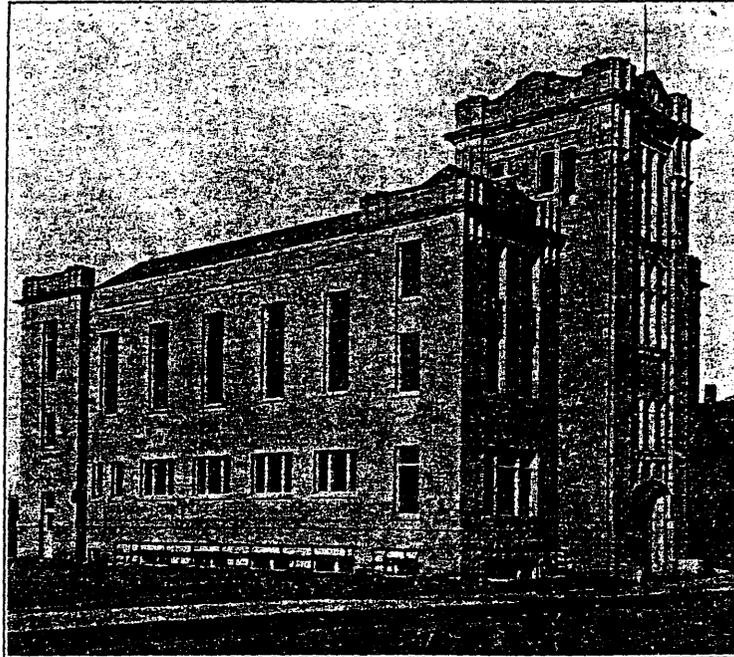
Photo 9 of 10

View of the auditorium, looking east toward the balcony.

Photo 10 of 10

View of the banquet hall, looking west.

MUNICIPAL BUILDING, COLFAX, WIS.



Lecture Course Dates--Season 1917-18

1. "The Gales." Songs and Stories of the Red Man.—November 6th.
2. Burt D. Newkirk. Popular Illustrated Science Lecture—January 2nd.
3. Cathedral Male Quartette. Solos, Readings, Humorous Action Songs—February 1st.
4. Schubert Sextette. Instrumental, Vocals and Readings—April 10th.
5. Abel Cantu. Native Mexican, Instructor at Wisconsin University. (Date not set)
6. Dr. Elsom, M. D. Out of Door Lectures. (Date not set.)

Season tickets for all six big numbers—\$1.00.

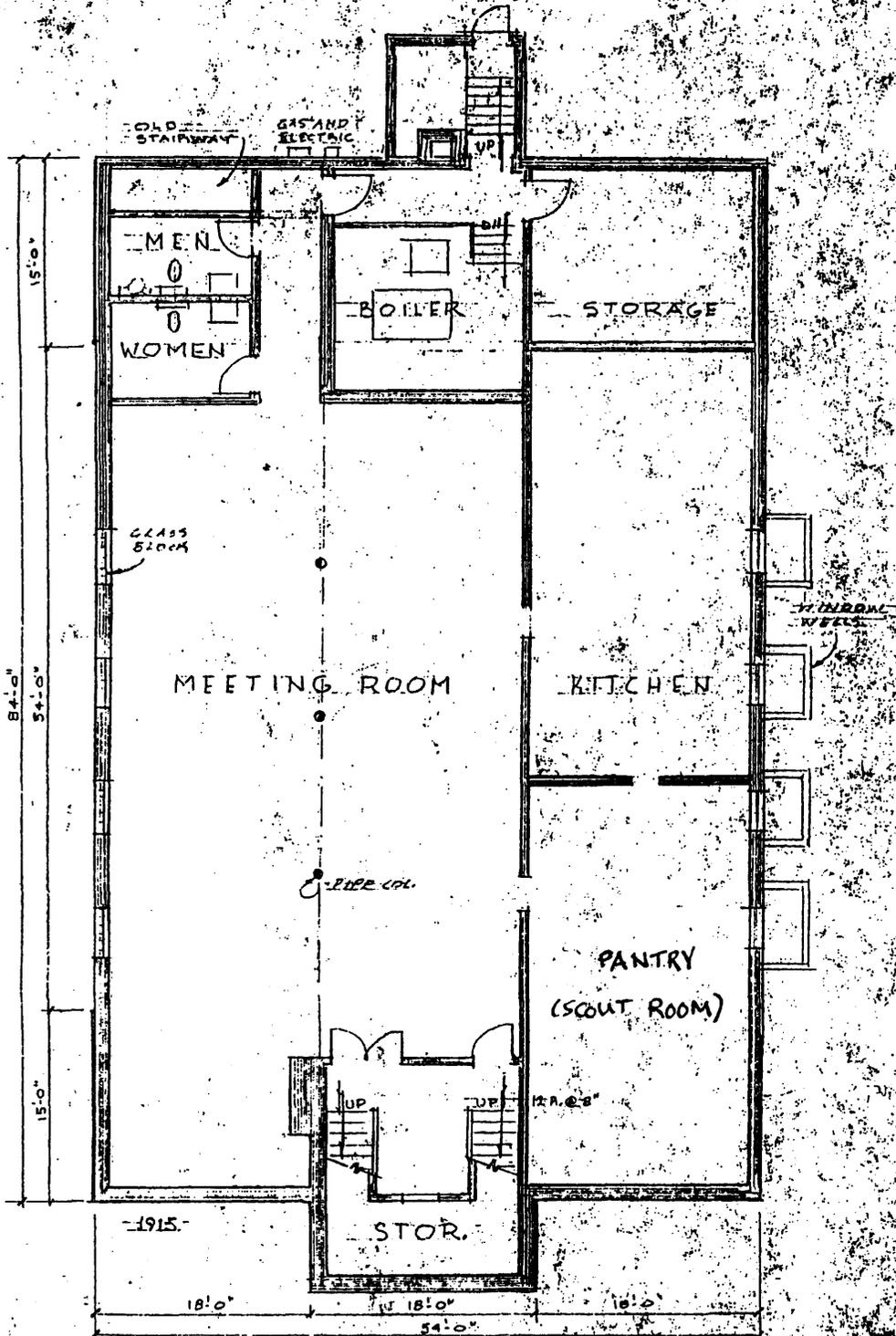
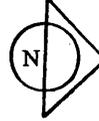
All school children season tickets—50c.

Single admission to Sextette and Quartette numbers—50c. Other numbers—35c each.
No reserved seats, as all seats are good seats.

Tickets can be procured at Toycen's Confectionery Store, or of the Boy Scouts.

COLFAX MUNICIPAL BUILDING
Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin

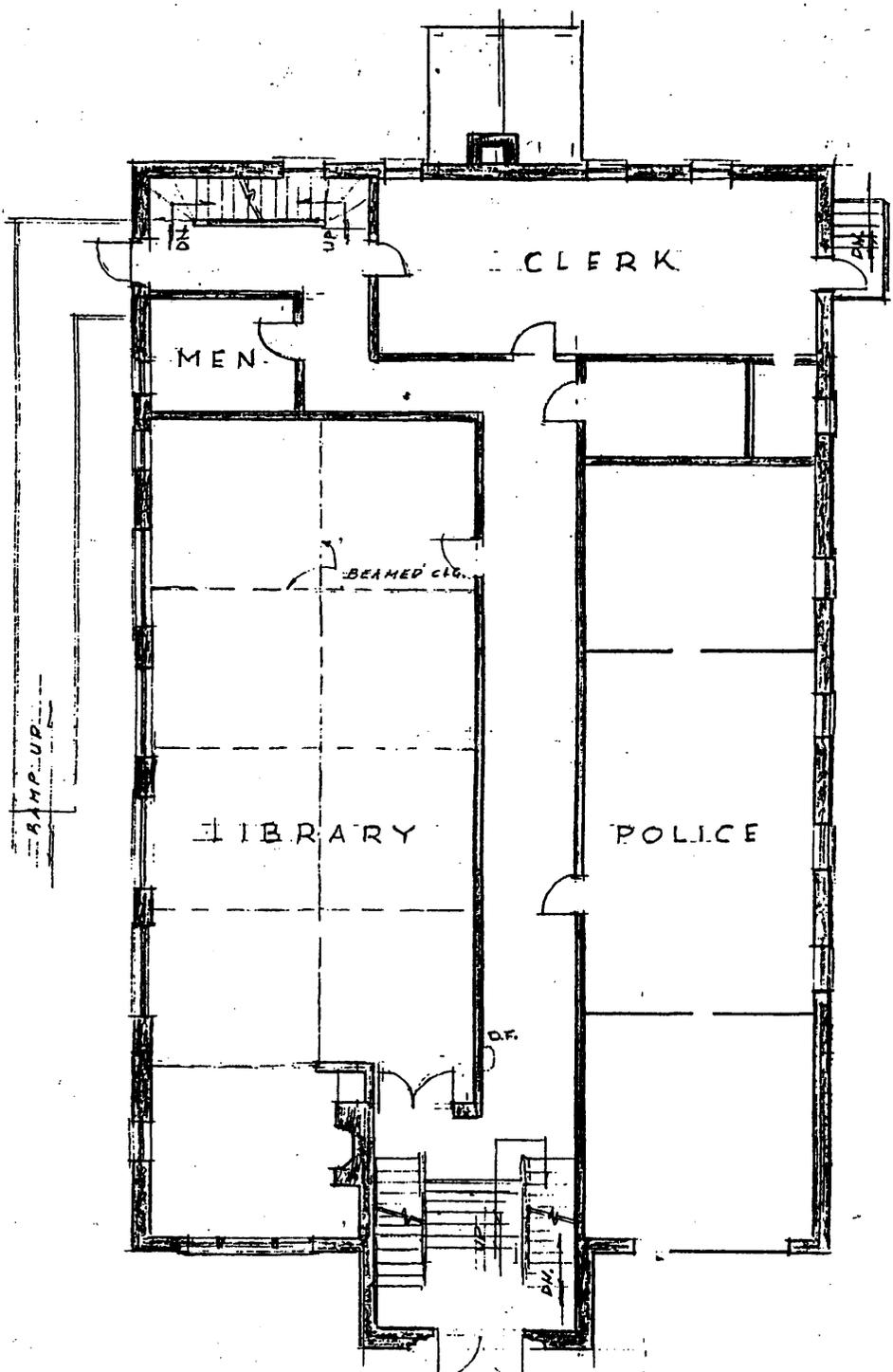
COLFAX MUNICIPAL BUILDING
Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin



B A S E M E N T P L A N

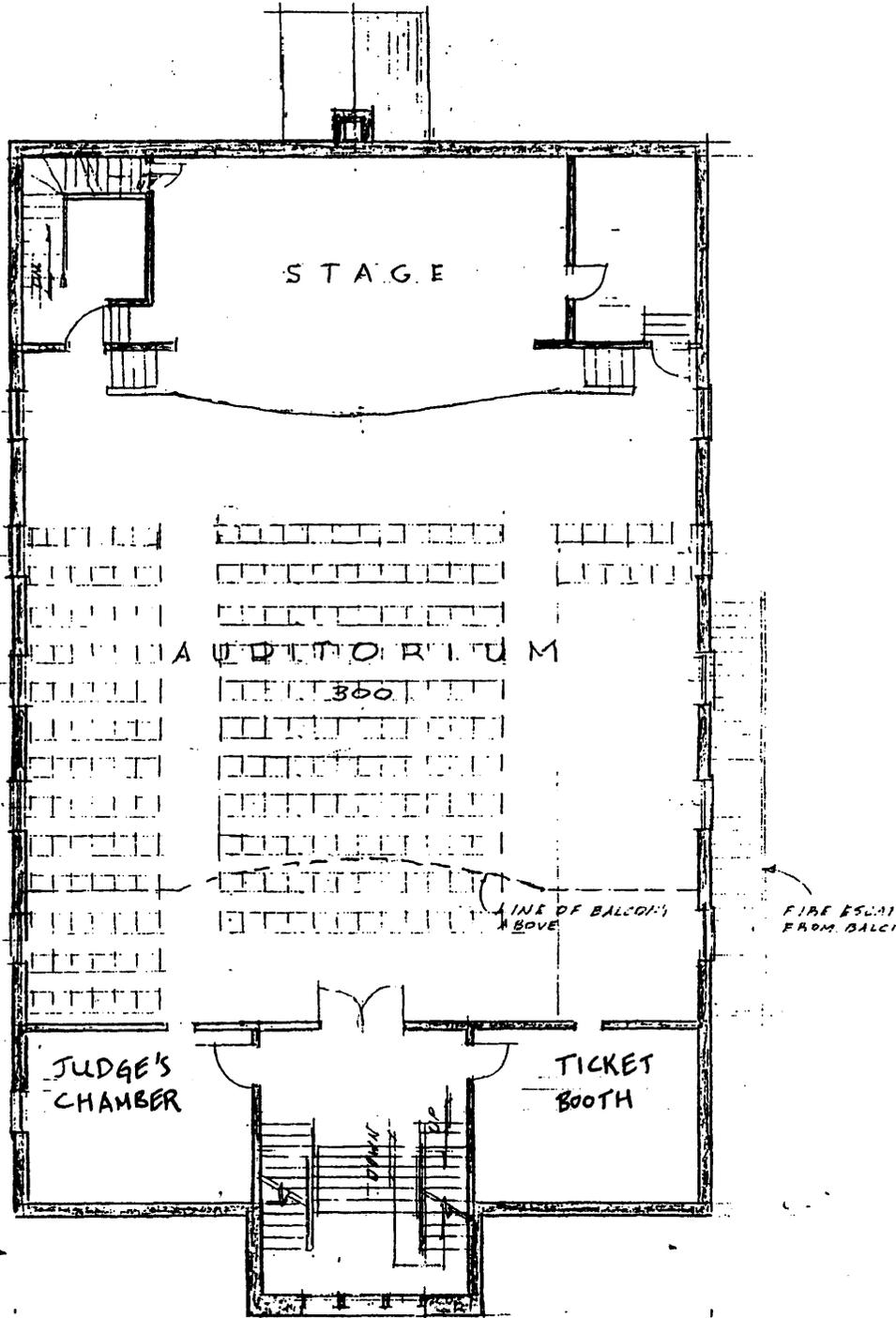
COLFAX MUNICIPAL BUILDING

Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin



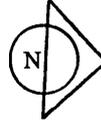
FIRST FLOOR

COLFAX MUNICIPAL BUILDING
Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin



S E C O N D F L O O R

COLFAX MUNICIPAL BUILDING
Colfax, Dunn County, Wisconsin



not to scale

