

Laney School

Shawano

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

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

12.4.98

Edson

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- 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
	sites
	structures
	objects
1	0 total

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

None

Number of contributing resources is 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)
GOVERNMENT/city hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)
Late 19 & 20 Century Revivals

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)
Foundation Brick
walls Brick
roof Asphalt
other Wood

Narrative Description

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

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Section 7

Page 1

Laney School, Town of Maple Grove, Shawano County WI

Introduction

The historic Laney School, located in the Town of Maple Grove in Shawano County, is an excellent example of an early 20th century one-room school, built in 1928 by local builder George Hanson after plans prepared by the architectural staff of the State Department of Public Instruction. The former school, now functioning as the Maple Grove Town Hall, is located near the southeastern corner of Shawano County, three miles southwest of the Village of Pulaski, located in extreme northwestern Brown County. The site, on which stood a school building as early as the 1876, is located in a predominately rural agricultural community and is adjoined by dairy farms and fields and rural residences. The unincorporated community of Laney lies approximately one-quarter mile north of the Laney School; a recently rerouted portion of State Highway 29 traverses the intervening space. The Laney School has undergone some relatively minor alterations in recent years; these do not substantially distract from the building's excellent integrity and its representation of a building type once common, but now increasingly rare, in rural Wisconsin.

Physical Context:

The Laney School is situated on the northeast corner of a section in the north-central portion of the Town of Maple Grove. The town's overall landscape consists of rural agricultural land uses, predominately dairy farms, punctuated by a few unincorporated communities, including Laney, the earliest established and the closest in proximity to the Laney School. Laney and the other communities, all of which are located over one mile from the school, developed predominately as local markets for the rural farming communities; most historically included one or more taverns, a grist or sawmill, and, following the transition to dairy farming in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a creamery and/or cheese factory. The community of Laney, which included these features, was located on what was historically known as the Military Road, improved and renamed as State Highway 18 in 1918. This two-lane highway has been in the process of widening from two to four lanes during the 1990s; in 1996 the highway was rerouted to the immediate southeast of the existing Laney commercial district, which retained the two-lane road. As a result, the highway as presently configured passes between the Laney School and the historic commercial center of Laney; the distance between these features, however, is less than one-quarter mile, and the visual relationship between the school and the community has not been significantly obscured.

The Laney School sits on a slight rise at the center of the east border of its one-acre lot in the extreme northeast corner of Section 15. The remainder of the parcel is predominately level and, other than the building, driveway and associated parking lot, is unimproved. The parcel is bordered to the west and south by foliage; beyond this visual screen lies a non-historic residence to the south and a farm field to the west. The east and north borders of the parcel are demarcated by adjoining town roadways. This immediate context, the building's siting on one of the highest pieces of ground available, and the predominance of open fields in the vicinity give the building considerable visual impact; its primary facade is easily visible from over a mile away. The school building's primary facade is east-facing; the building's main entry is accessed by a blacktop semicircular driveway which reaches from the town road to the front door. A sign denoting the building's current use stands near the street. The building overall has excellent locational integrity; the property's immediate environs are relatively little changed since the building's period of significance.

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Building General Features:

The Laney School has excellent overall exterior integrity and significant interior integrity; those alterations that have been made are generally minor and do not significantly impact the building's overall visual impact or ability to represent its historic and architectural significance. Designed in the Georgian Revival style, the building consists of a single-story T-plan load-bearing brick block with a hipped roof. The main block of the building extends along a north-south axis a length of 50 feet; a utilitarian brick chimney rises from the north-facing plane of this roof. The main block is adjoined on the east by a narrow block of slightly less length and 14 feet in depth, which also has a hipped roof and constitutes the building's primary facade. The boxed eave of the roof overhang is plain. The building's first floor commences approximately four feet above grade; the building has a basement level which is roughly half above ground and is demarcated above grade by small window openings. The building's brickwork is executed in red-brown variegated brick laid predominately in a common bond; the brickwork is overall in very good condition, with some slightly mismatched tuckpointing evident in a few locations. Mortar joints are simply tooled and original mortar has a red cast approximating the bricks' tint. With the exception of the soldiered bricks at the window's lintels, the only other notable brick feature is a slightly protruding water course at the level of the first floor, consisting of a single row of soldiered bricks. This feature encircles the building and is only broken by the two doorways.

All of the windows, both at the first floor and basement levels, have plain concrete keystones set flush in plain brick window surrounds with a single row of soldiered, slightly angled bricks across the lintel of each window opening. Each first-floor window also has a narrow, slightly rusticated sill. All of the main floor windows were replaced in the 1970s with aluminum-clad sash and are covered with storm windows; however photographs indicate that the building originally had one-over-one double-hung sash of the same dimensions as the present windows; as a result these alterations do not significantly alter the appearance of or adversely impact the overall historic integrity of the structure. The basement windows were also altered at approximately the same time due to security concerns; these were infilled with glass block and a small amount of concrete block adjoining the grade. Each facade and the building's interior features will be described below.

Primary (East-Facing) Facade:

The Laney School's primary facade is clearly marked by its prominent visual orientation toward the adjoining street and nearby community. The dominating feature of this facade is the elaborate entry, a double doorway set between Georgian Revival-style sidelights under a large, two-tiered semicircular fanlight. The six-paneled double doors are recent replacements, but unobtrusive. The sidelights are original; each consists of a narrow wood frame approximately one-third the width of a single adjoining door. Each panel is set with three lights in the upper portion, and a single plain wood panel in the lower portion. The doors and sidelights are surmounted by a plain wood lintel; above this lintel rises the fanlight. The fanlight is an exact semi-circle, and due to the width of the doorway appears as a result to be somewhat larger than usual Georgian proportions. The central portion of the fanlight is centered over and is slightly less wide than the double doorway; this feature has six triangular lights divided by narrow wood muntins radiating from a plain central hub. The two portions of the fan light are separated by a wider semicircular wood mullion. The outer portion of the fan light consists of two rows of roughly rectangular lights separated by narrow wood muntins;

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each of the two rows has 12 lights. The fanlight, sidelights and doorway are set in a plain narrow wood frame, which is joined at slightly above the level of the lintels by plain concrete impost blocks set flush into the surrounding brickwork. A semicircle of soldiered bricks rises from these blocks and enframes the fanlight; this brick semicircle being marked at its apex by a plain concrete keystone identical to those found over the building's windows, as described previously.

This central doorway is surmounted by a gabled roof canopy that has now been completely re clad in aluminum and has a plain-surface with a slight molding at its bases, each of which rest on single, solid brackets with slightly scrolled edges. Directly under these brackets, and adjoining the upper portions of the sidelights described previously are two smooth, flush-set concrete plaques. The plaque on the south side of the doorway is inscribed in plain block letters with the legend: "LANEY / SCHOOL; " the plaque on the north side of the doorway reads, "DIST - NO 1 / 1928." With the exception of the doors themselves, this entry composition is entirely intact and demonstrates high integrity.

The central entry is balanced on either side by three windows, two at the main floor level and one at the basement level. The main floor windows are evenly spaced, while the basement windows are set at an even distance from the central entry and edges of the facade, and are located slightly offset from directly below the outer windows of the main floor. The main floor and basement windows of this facade are identical to the general description of the building's windows given previously. The highly visible and clearly prominent facade has good overall integrity and is to a great extent responsible for the building's visual impact and public perception.

South-Facing Facade:

The south-facing facade consists of the narrow facades of the building's main block and entry block, as described previously. Due to the shorter dimensions of the entry block, the portion of the south-facing facade adjoined to the entry block is set back from the plane of the south-facing facade of the main block by approximately five feet. Each portion of this facade has two singly-spaced windows, with features identical to those described previously. The windows of the main block, however, are roughly twice the size of those of the entry, reflecting the use of the main block as a classroom requiring more natural light, in the educational theory of the building's period of construction. The two basement windows of the main block, which are identical to those described previously, are directly aligned beneath the main floor windows. The single basement window of the entry block of this facade has been bricked closed. This alteration appears to postdate the building's period of significance. The reason for this alteration appear to stem from changes to the building's heating or plumbing system. Clearly subordinate to the east-facing facade, the south facing facade has acceptable overall integrity; the alterations detailed do not significantly impact the building's historic significance and public perception.

West-Facing Facade:

The west-facing facade has historically faced a field, and thus received little architectural detail. This facade originally had two very large, probably multi-paned fixed window, which have been replaced by two singly-spaced double-hung casements, with the intervening space filled with closely-matched brick. These alterations also appear to postdate the historic period. The soldiered brick lintels and the plain concrete keystones associated with these initial windows are extant. These windows are located in the southerly two-thirds of the facade; the northern third of the facade is unbroken

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except for a single door in a plain wood frame surmounted by a concrete keystone and soldiered brick lintel identical to those described previously. The facade also has three basement windows, roughly evenly spaced across the facade from the door, and altered as described previously. Although this facade has undergone some alterations, these occurred to a facade of the building seldom seen by the public, and do not substantially impact the building's overall integrity.

North-Facing Facade:

Like the south-facing facade, the north-facing facade is a narrow, utilitarian surface clearly designed as subordinate to the primary east-facing facade. The main block portion of this facade originally had four narrow windows of the same height but approximately one-half the width of those on the corresponding portion of the south-facing facade; one pair of these windows were located to either side of the interior chimney flue. The two easternmost of these were replaced by single-pane casement windows one-half the height of the opening, the rest being infilled with approximately matching brick. This alteration occurred when a former library area was converted to a kitchen in the 1970s, a conversion that required the installation of overhead pipes at the level of the upper portion of the windows. The second from westernmost window was also bricked up at this time; the westernmost window and the two windows on the portion of the facade adjoining the entry block are intact. Two single basement windows, one under the westernmost window and one under the windows in the entryway, are identical to those described previously; a coal chute under the easternmost windows was infilled with brick at an undetermined date. Although this facade has undergone some alterations, these occurred to a facade of the building less prominent and clearly considered less essential to the building's perception than the primary facade; as a result they do not substantially impact the building's overall integrity.

Interior:

The interior of the Laney School building consists of an entryway, a large classroom, and several auxiliary spaces. The entryway and classroom are predominately intact, while some of the auxiliary rooms have undergone alterations. Upon entering through the primary doorway, as described previously, one ascends a staircase of five steps from the grade level to the level of the main floor. The stairway is approximately one-half the width of the entryway space, and the pine stairs are adjoined on either side by solid banisters with wide, slightly rounded oak railings. A utilitarian railing is bracketed to the side of the banister at the present code-mandated height. The remaining area of the entryway at grade level is unadorned except for a plain board chair rail along the visible wall; narrow paneled doors near the front wall on either side of the entry space lead to small storage rooms.

The stairway terminates at the main level in a landing that extends the width of the entryway; this landing is bordered on either side of the stairway by a continuation of the banister and railings. A single door at either side of this landing leads into the former cloakrooms; the room on the south side is presently use for storage, while the room to the north was converted into a restroom following the introduction of indoor plumbing to the building. The door to the south is original, while the door to the north is a plain utilitarian replacement. The doorway to the classroom opens onto the landing at the center of the stairway. The classroom space is a large open room that spans most of the main block of the building and has original plastered ceilings approximately 12 feet above the floor. The room has no decorative woodwork, with the

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exception of plain wood baseboards and simple molded cornice boards. A kitchen was installed in the former library area at the southeast corner of the main block in the 1970s. In general, the most public spaces of the buildings, particularly the entry and the classroom, demonstrate good integrity, as most alterations such as the introduction of plumbing were confined to peripheral areas.

Conclusion:

According to the section entitled "Public Primary Education" in Volume 3 of Cultural Resources Management in Wisconsin, "one room schoolhouses in particular should retain a high level of integrity both inside and out to be eligible for the National Register."¹ The Laney School demonstrates an accordingly high level of integrity, particularly with regard to those elements that have the greatest impact on the building's public perception and identity. Those alterations that have taken place are mostly found on the less public and less readily visible facades; the utilitarian architectural treatments originally accorded to these facades also lessen the impact of the alterations that have taken place. As will be demonstrated in the following section, few historic school buildings maintaining this level of integrity may be found in the Town of Maple Grove. As a result, the Laney School may be considered to have good overall integrity, and to effectively represent the areas of historic significance for which it is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

¹ Stephen Kretzmann, "Public Primary Education." Barbara Wyatt, ed., Cultural Resources Management in Wisconsin Volume 3 [Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin], 2-12.

Laney School
Name of Property

Shawano
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)

Education

Period of Significance

1928-1947

Significant Dates

1928

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hanson, George/b

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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Section 8

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Laney School, Town of Maple Grove, Shawano County WI

I. Introduction:

The Laney School, located in the Town of Maple Grove in Shawano County, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A due to its historic local significance as an ungraded rural school, one of few left in its vicinity. Built in 1928 on the site of an earlier school building, the property functioned as an ungraded school into the 1940s, when the building became host to two classes using the original, unaltered classroom. As the primary location for education, civic and community events, the Laney School played an essential role in the development of the Laney area. Of the few similar properties remaining in the area, none evidence the Laney School's level of integrity.

II. Historical Background: Laney and Town of Maple Grove.

The unincorporated community of Laney is situated in the Town of Maple Grove in southwestern Shawano County. It is two miles southwest of the Village of Pulaski, which is located in extreme northwestern Brown County. Laney's community center formed along the historic Fort Howard-Keshena Military Road, which later became part of State Highway 29 (that route's roadbed was relocated to just southwest of the historic community center in 1996). Much of Laney's initial growth stemmed from the location in this vicinity of a sawmill owned by David McCartney of Fort Howard (now part of the City of Green Bay). McCartney started his sawmill in approximately 1867, shortly after moving to Fort Howard.² Located in an area of virtually undisturbed pine forest, McCartney's sawmill was one of dozens operating in northeastern Wisconsin during this era, and it encouraged lumbermen, sawmill operators and farming families to move to the recently-unoccupied vicinity. McCartney cut his ties to this and other mills in 1882, after which time he founded the McCartney Exchange Bank in Fort Howard. Although it is not known when this mill ceased operation, it appears likely to have closed at the time of or shortly following McCartney's divestment; by the early 1880s most of the former lumbering territory in northeast Wisconsin had been stripped of salable pine, and by the date of publication of the town's first known plat map in 1898, the mill was not indicated. The township including Laney was incorporated as the Town of Maple Grove in 1870.³

Following the decline of the lumbering industry, the Laney area's complexion changed dramatically, as a result of the transitions in settlement and ethnic patterns and economic bases common to many rural northeastern Wisconsin communities of this era. As immigration from Europe accelerated following the United States' Civil War, the cutover territory formerly occupied by the lumbering establishments became desirable as farmland for immigrants who could not afford or could not access unforested farmland elsewhere. As a result, the Laney area, virtually unpopulated by Euro-Americans before the construction of the Military Road, was quickly settled; by 1898, 364 property owners were listed in the Town of Maple Grove.⁴ Unlike cutover areas further north, where poor soil quality, shorter growing seasons, and other adverse conditions limited the overall success and expansion of farming, farmers in Shawano County tended to meet with reasonable levels of success. As a result, the landscape in the vicinity of the Laney School became decidedly agricultural, with relatively brief periods of subsistence and cash crop wheat cultivation being supplanted near the turn of the century by an overwhelmingly dairy-driven economy.

² Deborah Martin, History of Brown County, Vol.2 [Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co.] 1913, 78.

³ Shawano County Centurawano :1853-1953 [program, n.p.] 1953, [52].

⁴ Illustrated Atlas of Shawano County, Wis. [Milwaukee: Radtke Bros. & Kortsch] 1898, 66-67.

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One measure of this evolution is evident from the town's 1898 plat map: although there is no evidence of the sawmill, a cheese factory is clearly marked, one of two in the town.⁵ Late nineteenth and early twentieth century dairy barns and silos continue to dominate the built landscape in the Laney vicinity; a considerable proportion of the vicinity's residents continue to be engaged in dairy production.

Although the initial settlement of the Laney area consisted primarily of native-born Americans and immigrants from Ireland and other parts of the British Isles, by the mid-1870s a heavy influx of ethnic Polish immigrants began to arrive in the area. Estimating conservatively, at least forty percent of the property holders listed in the 1898 plat have Polish surnames; the remainder include a variety of ethnic Scandinavian and Irish names. According to the town clerk, writing in 1953, "today over 85 percent of the town is of Polish descent."⁶

III. Historical Background: Laney School

The Laney School was formally known as Town of Maple Grove District #1, identifying it as the first school district formed in the township. Secondary accounts indicate that the first Laney School was built in 1876, shortly after the military road was completed and settlement began to occur along this isolated portion of the route.⁷ This building's particulars are not known, but it was commonly described as a one-room frame building, a type common in the area at that time. Standing on the northeast corner of the plot, this early school building survived until 1928, when it was replaced by the present building. Although the exact reasons for the replacement of the original school cannot be determined from extant resources, it is clear that, as early as 1919, the old building was considered to be well below accepted educational standards, and was in poor physical condition. A supervising teachers' report of 1919 listed the building's heating, lighting, ventilation and sanitation as "poor," and added to the report that the district needed a new building.⁸ The supervising teachers' reports in 1920 and 1921, the last date for which such reports survive, continue to describe the building's condition as poor, and cite broken hinges on the girls' outdoor toilet in 1920. No other details of the building's conditions are given, a fact that appears to indicate the prevalence of such substandard school buildings. Between 1920 and 1921, the school added 7 children to its rolls, swelling its enrollment to 45 students, most of whom sat in double seats described as being in poor condition.⁹ Despite these concerns, the school district did not move to replace the building for another six years.

In 1928, a new school building was erected on the same parcel as the original school. The building was completed on September 24, 1928, and was opened with fitting fanfare, including a dance at the old school and a procession from the old building to the new one. The Laney School was one of four rural ungraded schools constructed that year, of Shawano County's 104 rural one-room schools. It was also one of the most expensive one-room graded school constructed that year, at an estimated \$10,000.¹⁰ The newspaper article about the school's opening described the brick and tile building

⁵ *ibid*, p. 67.

⁶ Centurawano, *op. cit.*

⁷ *ibid*.

⁸ "Maple Grove #1." Supervising Teacher's Report dated March 9, 1919. MSS: Shawano Small Series 6.

⁹ *ibid*; reports dated November 02, 1920 and February 9, 1921.

¹⁰ To the Honorable Board of Supervisors / Shawano County, Wisconsin / for school year ending June 30, 1927." [MSS: Shawano Small Series 6], 2.

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as "virtually fireproof," with ornamental electric lights and a space large enough to accommodate events for "people of the district." The article also called attention to the building's basement dining hall and playroom, water fountain, library and teacher's room, which was located in the north end of the building. The new school provided, as the article claimed, "everything there that a city school could give."¹¹ The school did lack indoor plumbing, apparently considered a luxury that, since few farm families had it at home, was not needed at the school. Two privies stood at the rear of the property; these were demolished after indoor plumbing was installed in the 1970s.

Although the school's builder is known, the source of the exact design cannot be conclusively determined. According to accounts of eyewitnesses, local builder George Hanson constructed the building himself, using the 1927 Ainsworth school, in the Town of Wescott near the city of Shawano, as his model, adapting the design in some of its details. Hansen is not remembered as using plans; he had a well-established local reputation for building houses and barns from minimal sketches. As one witness, who was a student in the new school and daughter of a school board member recalls, "When George built something, he had it all in his head -- never had a plan."¹² The witness also recalled her father, Hanson and the other school board members examining other recently-constructed school buildings in the area, apparently making their selection on the basis of the standing buildings. It appears likely, however, that Hanson did have access to blueprints prepared for the building by staff architects in the Department of Public Instruction School Buildings and Plants Section, who had provided designs for new rural schools since 1924. Records of the Section indicate that plans for the new Laney School were forwarded to Hugh Lutsey, Clerk of the Maple Grove District #1, in May 1928; the description of the building given matches closely to the features of the Laney School. The plans are attributed simply to "Department;" the design is also noted as being a "Special Adaptation" of a previously-prepared plan.¹³ As a result, it appears likely that formal plans for the Laney School were provided to meet the district's request for one similar to the Ainsworth School, although whether and to what extent those plans were actually used cannot be determined. Regardless of the exact provenance, the Laney School closely resembles the Ainsworth School with some variation in the architectural details.

The school functioned as an ungraded school until 1936, when, having hired a second teacher, the school became classified as a graded school. Despite having two teachers, alterations to the building were minimal: both the grades 1 to 4 class and the grades 5 to 8 class worked in the same room, without any physical barrier between them. As the younger grades' teacher in 1943 recalled, students' desks were located in the large central room, where they were expected to work quietly while individuals and grade-level groups met with their teacher for direct instruction. The older students met with their teacher in the former teacher's room area in the north end of the building, while the younger students received instruction in the former cloak room south of the entry.¹⁴ During this period the school also housed a variety of public events, including dances, dinners, political meetings, and school events presented for the public.

¹¹ Shawano County News, September 30, 1928, n.p.

¹² Interview with Marianne McGilvary, August 11, 1997.

¹³ Construction & Alteration card: Dist. #1 Maple Grove. MSS: Series 691, Wisconsin State Archives: Department of Public Instruction, school buildings and plants section. School Bldg. Data Card file 1922-48.

¹⁴ Interview with Marian Schroeder, July 28, 1997.

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The school continued to function in this manner until 1976, when the school district joined the newly-consolidated Pulaski School District. Shortly after the consolidation, the former Laney School was sold to the Town of Maple Grove for use as a town hall. Conversion required the installation of plumbing, a kitchen, and a new heating system; relatively few alterations to the building's appearance were required to incorporate these features. The building at present continues to function as the Town of Maple Grove Town Hall.

IV. Historical Context: Rural Schools in Wisconsin

As in most Midwestern states, Wisconsin's rural ungraded schools educated significant numbers of the state's children throughout the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. Following the creation of the local school district as a governmental entity in 1841, rural ungraded schools became ubiquitous features of the rural Wisconsin physical and cultural landscape, developing in a given area as a sufficient population of school-aged children came to live there. Most of these schools were one room structures with one teacher, and, after passage of a state law in 1901, were classified by the state as ungraded, signifying that students of all age, ability and achievement levels were placed in the same room and taught at the same time by the same teacher. By the 1921-22 school year, Wisconsin had 6,708 such one-room ungraded schools, responsible for educating 160,290 students, as opposed to only 618 graded schools, employing two or more teachers and in most cases housed in a building with two or more classrooms.¹⁵

Most rural school districts operated in essentially the same manner for much of the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, although state government involvement in local education gradually increased during that time. Rural school districts generally consisted of three local elected residents, who were then responsible for most of the personnel, physical plant and equipment needs, as well as the administrative and educational policy, of the local school. Most such districts only had one school, and usually only one teacher, under their jurisdiction; other ungraded schools nearby were generally administered by an entirely separate school board. Schools taught grades one through eight; in 1901 state legislation required local school boards to pay a student's tuition to a high school if he or she had graduated from their rural school and desired continued education.¹⁶ All of the rural schools in a county were generally under the oversight of a County Superintendent of Schools, whose office was established by state law in 1861 and who was responsible for certifying teachers, inspecting schools, and distributing each district's self-assessed portion of taxes paid to the county. This elected official was joined after 1905 by a rural school inspector, generally a former teacher who visited every rural school in a county, examined and assessed a given building's condition, the teacher's performance and the student's progress, and submitted reports on the findings to the county superintendent and local school boards.

Although local school boards initially had virtual *carte blanche* to determine who would teach, what would be taught, and what kind of building would house the school, state and county involvement in the administration of rural schools gradually increased as a result of a combination of mandates and incentives designed to combat the commonly-perceived shortcomings of the rural school system.

¹⁵ Harold L. Henderson, "Public Education in Wisconsin." Wisconsin Blue Book, 1931 [Madison: State Printer], 121.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 113.

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For education reformers and state education administrators, calls to amend or abolish the rural schools began as early as 1853 as the "only effective remedy for the problems -- unequal tax burden, miserable schoolhouses, poor teachers and lack of apparatus."¹⁷ These four problems would continue to bedevil local school boards and cause consternation among reformers and administrators for over one hundred additional years. Due to the very small physical area of the local school district, financial resources and educational needs could vary widely within a town or county, as districts with fewer taxpayers or less successful farmers and businesses, or those with high numbers of school-age children, generally had greater difficulty supporting a school. Financial resources also determined the quality of the school building, the availability of books, maps and other teaching equipment and, to some extent, the quality of the teachers hired. Rural schools also faced difficulties resulting from differences among individuals or ethnic groups with regard to the value, necessity, and means of education required; changes in school levies, attendance policies or subject matter might be strenuously resisted by members of a community who did not agree with the need for such changes. As a result, even in communities with similar economic resources and similar groups of school-aged children, individual districts might vary widely in terms of school tax levy and other school financial support, as well as in the methods and subjects of education required. Some education reformers added to the list of evils a tendency to develop "a narrow point of view" and "prejudice against neighboring communities,"¹⁸ factors which, while unquantifiable, were widely accepted by reformers and administrators of the era.

Despite these limitations, rural schools provided an essential and powerful focus for the community. Depending on the building, the teacher and other factors, a rural school was likely to be the location for community activities such as student Christmas pageants and spelling bees, speeches and lectures by visiting orators, community dances and dinners, voting and political debates, and church services for denominations lacking their own building. Later schools, like the Laney school, might be designed intentionally with basements and movable classroom furniture to incorporate space for activities such as dinners and dances. Local residents often took considerable pride in their school building, even if it was less than ideal, since such schools were the most prominent evidence of local governance and community identity to be found.

One-room school buildings varied in execution as a result of the quality and availability of building materials, the source of the design, and the availability of labor in a given locale. Regardless of the materials and construction, however, most schools had several similar features. Most nineteenth- an early twentieth century ungraded schools consisted of a single large classroom, often with a blackboard at one end and a coal- or wood-burning stove for heat. A desk for the teacher sat near the blackboard, sometimes on a podium, while benches or student desks were arrayed in rows facing the teacher. A library, maps and other teaching equipment might be stored in a cabinet. The entry into the building was often located at the opposite end from the teacher's desk; students might enter through gender-defined doorways or enter gender-defined cloakrooms before coming into the classroom. Twentieth century designs often reflected increasing architectural and construction sophistication, including full basements and more extensive architectural styling. Such schools also tended to be physically larger, reflecting increased student populations, expanding mandatory attendance laws and evolution in theories of educational space and light requirements. But such features as the students-facing-teacher

¹⁷ Anderson, William T. "The Development of the Common Schools." Wisconsin Blue Book [Madison: State Printing Board] 1923, p. 111.

¹⁸ *ibid*, 111.

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orientation, the rows of student desks, and the blackboards remained integral features, with new buildings designed to meet essentially the same educational processes as practiced in earlier buildings.

The state graded school system, initiated in 1901, was one of the first steps toward the consolidation of local rural school districts into larger districts served by centrally-located, multiple-room schools. Rural graded schools were, in the words of one historian, promoted in order to "allow for pupils of different ages and abilities to be taught in separate environments."¹⁹ Since grades, as conceived, required physical separation of the different levels, such schools would have to be larger, more complex and more expensive; to partially overcome local districts' resistance to such added expenses, special state aid was provided for schools with more than one room. Within a few years another law had been passed requiring at least two teachers in any school enrolling more than 65 students. As a result of this combination of state-level incentive and regulation, the number of graded schools gradually increased, although ungraded schools continued to dominate numerically until the 1930s. During the same period, the state Department of Instruction began to provide architectural assistance in remodeling rural schools affected by these two laws.

However, even the reformers and state administrators continued to recognize the necessity of the ungraded school, even while anticipating their decline. As one administrator wrote: "one room schools there will always be while our farmers live in the coulees among our western hills and until our western wilderness is subdued and pioneering is at an end."²⁰ As a result, in 1924 the Department of Instruction began to employ architects in the design of new ungraded rural schools, as well as rural graded and city schools, in order to promulgate features of school construction considered in the educational theory of the era to be necessary for successful student education. Schools were to be substantial, well-ventilated and heated, with large windows for adequate natural light to avoid eyestrain, which received a great deal of attention. For the most part, schools designed by these architects appear to have been prepared individually on the basis of each individual district's particular size, financial base and other requirements, although, as discussed above, some school designs were apparently modifications of earlier staff-designed buildings. Between 1924 and 1930, 183 plans were prepared by staff architects, with only six being duplicates.²¹ Following 1930, and until after World War II, most new school designs were prepared by private architects as federal projects under the Public Works Administration and the Work Projects Administration.

As increased mobility and communications technologies raised expectations for the types and quality of education people desired for their children following World War II, Wisconsin's small rural districts faced increasing difficulties in their efforts to recruit qualified teachers and provide the educational and technological innovations demanded by students and taxpayer-parents. Financial incentives for consolidation began in 1915 with a state law providing aid for new school construction made necessary by district consolidation, and continued to be developed at both the state and federal level throughout the 1950s and 1960s. As a result, the numbers of rural ungraded schools in Wisconsin steadily declined. In the 1937-38 school year, 7,777 individual school districts operated in Wisconsin; most, as has been demonstrated,

¹⁹ Kretzmann, *op. cit.*, 2-9.

²⁰ Anderson, *op. cit.*, 112.

²¹ Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

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operating a single ungraded school. By 1973, only 435 school districts covered the entire state.²² Larger, centralized graded schools could take advantage of economies of scale in terms of physical plant, staffing needs, and educational amenities, economies made possible in part by the advent of school bus service. These advantages rendered the one-room ungraded school, already perceived as less than ideal educationally, as economically disadvantageous. The last one-room school in Wisconsin closed in 1970,²³ most small rural graded schools were either closed or received large additions in the 1970s and 1980s.

V. Significance: Historical

The Laney School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criterion A due to its local historic significance. For several generations of Laney area residents, the Laney school building played a central and integral role in the life of the rural community. For the hundreds of students educated in this building between its construction and 1947, the Laney school provided the first, and, in many cases, the only contact with formal education available. For students in this building during much of the historic period, education beyond that available at the Laney School was not a preordained part of childhood, and for many area children formal education began and ended in this building. As in many rural communities, significant numbers of the schools' students during the historic era remained in the school district, taking over the management of a family farm, buying a farm or marrying into a neighboring farming family. These former students, as a result, frequently sent their own children to the same school. By providing training in reading, mathematics and other subjects, the Laney school ensured that most community residents had the basic information they would need for much of the work available in the community, including farming, cheesemaking and other vocations requiring a basic level of formal education. Training in reading, geography and American history was also necessary in order for area residents to be able to vote and read a newspaper, essential for their participation in local and national democratic processes. As a result, much of the character of the community in terms of its economic basis, its level of literacy, and its participation in democratic processes was extensively reliant on the education provided in the Laney School.

The Laney School also represented the location of non-school community activities, essential in a rural community to maintain social contacts, foster community identity, and allow residents to make their own recreation. As in many unincorporated communities, the Laney School was one of few spaces available for public events in the district it served. Other than spaces owned or dominated by one person or group, such as residential parlors, churches, and a few stores, indoor spaces available for large public groups were rare in a community such as Laney; as a result the school provided virtually the only publically-owned, non-sectarian indoor setting available. As a result, the school became the setting of dinners, dances, lectures, and a variety of other public events. As the Maple Grove Town Hall was located outside of the Laney local school district during the historic period, the school building also fulfilled a variety of civic roles, ranging from polling to political debates, such as those for town or school board candidates. Community pride in and identification with the building springs from this combination of features; by incorporating much of the educational, social and civic aspects of the community, the Laney School played a significant role in the life, development and identity of the Laney community.

²² Kretzmann, *op cit.*, 2-9

²³ *ibid.*

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VI: Context: Rural Schools in Town of Maple Grove

Although the Laney School's local historical significance stems from its prominent role in the history of its immediate rural community, several schools in the Town of Maple Grove also served their respective communities in a similar manner. Few, however, remain in the Town of Maple Grove, and most have been altered beyond reasonable recognition. Former schools in the Shawano County region were often either demolished or converted to alternate uses, particularly storage and residences; alterations completed for these purposes frequently resulted in the removal and replacement of windows, doors and other character-defining features. As a result, in addition to gaining significance from its immediate local history, the Laney School may also be considered one of few extant examples in the Town of Maple Grove of a type of building with historically significant associations with the development of rural communities in the region.

Two altered school buildings can be conclusively identified in the Town of Maple Grove, although both lack integrity:

- The former Frank Dorn School, now a private residence, located at W1 307 Highway 156, near the community of Rose Lawn. A vernacular brick structure built shortly after World War I, this building's windows have almost entirely been replaced.
- The former Poland School, built in the early 1930s. Also now a private residence, it is located at W1117 Main Laney Road, near the town's east border. Replacement and infill of most of the building's historic fenestration have also significantly impacted this building's integrity.

As a result of these building's integrity, and the dearth of similar buildings extant in the Town of Maple Grove, the Laney School may be demonstrated to represent a historically significant building in terms of the history of the community of Laney and the Town of Maple Grove as well.

VII: Conclusion

To quote again from the Public Primary Education chapter of Cultural Resources Management in Wisconsin, twentieth-century one-room schools like the Laney School are among the buildings that have "served as the heart of the state's extensive and expanding system of public education. The evolutionary stages of that system undoubtedly deserve careful preservation."²⁴ A highly intact example of an important stage of this evolution, the Laney School played a pivotal role in the development of the Laney area, providing space for necessary educational, social, cultural and civic activities for the area's children and adults. Such activities were essential to the economic, social and cultural success of the Laney community. During the historic period the Laney School served as a point of contact and identity for the community, and represented an important and immediate level of self-governance; few extant examples of such buildings remain in the Town of Maple Grove. As a result, the Laney School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criterion A as a result of its significant association with the history and development of the community of Laney and the Town of Maple Grove in Shawano County.

²⁴ Kretzmann, *op.cit.*, 2-10.

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VIII: Archeological Potential

Although the site has been occupied and relatively little disturbed during and since this building's historic period, little historic archeological material in any significant concentration may be expected due to the small numbers of people involved and the limited use of the open land on the parcel. It is likely that scattered items belonging to schoolchildren from the late 19th and early 20th centuries may be found, but significant concentrations of below-ground resources are unlikely. There is no information available to indicate a likelihood of pre- Euro-American settlement on this location.

Laney School
Name of Property

Shawano
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:

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

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property One Acre

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

1	<u>1/6</u>	<u>3/9/7/4/8/0</u>	<u>4/9/4/3/9/2/0</u>	3	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		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	Della G. Rucker	date	9/25/97
organization	Rucker Historical Research	telephone	920 432-7044
street & number	PO Box 204	zip code	54305
city or town	Green Bay	state	Wisconsin

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Major Bibliographical References:

Anderson, William T. "The Development of the Common Schools." Wisconsin Blue Book 1923 State Printing Board, Madison.

Henderson, Harold L. "Public Education in Wisconsin." Wisconsin Blue Book, 1931, State Printer, Madison.

Illustrated Atlas of Shawano County, Wis. Radtke Bros. & Kortsch, Milwaukee, 1898.

Kretzmann, Stephen. "Public Primary Education." Barbara Wyatt, ed., Cultural Resources Management in Wisconsin Volume 3. State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, 1986.

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Martin, Deborah. History of Brown County, Vol.2. S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., Chicago, 1913.

School Bldg. Data Card file 1922-48, Construction & Alteration cards. MSS: Series 691, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, School Buildings and Plants Section. Wisconsin State Archives.

Schroeder, Marian. Interview July 28, 1997.

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Shawano County Supervising Teacher's Report, 1917-1921. MSS: Shawano Small Series 6. Wisconsin State Archives.

Shawano County News, September 30, 1928, n.p.

"To the Honorable Board of Supervisors / Shawano County, Wisconsin / for school year ending June 30, 1927." MSS: Shawano Small Series 6. Wisconsin State Archives.

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Boundary Description:

The nominated property is defined as follows:

That parcel of land consisting of one square acre, more or less, lying at and comprising the Northeast corner of the Northwest quarter of Section 15, Town 25 North of Range 18 East, Shawano County, as recorded by the Register of Deeds, Shawano, County. Said parcel being bounded on the east and north by Public Right of Ways, on the south by a line lying in an east-west direction and intersecting the east boundary of said parcel at a point 2640 feet south of the northeast corner of said parcel, and on the west by a line lying in a north-south direction and intersecting the north boundary of said parcel at a point 2640 feet west of the northeast corner of said parcel.

Boundary Justification:

The above boundaries encompass the entire property, including the building cited above and all of the open land historically associated with this building's function as a school. The boundaries as determined exclude non-historic residential property to the south, agricultural land not associated with the building's current or historic function to the west, and agricultural land not associated with the building's current or historic function across the public right of way to the east and north. There are no other permanent structures or buildings on the property.

Laney School
Name of Property

Shawano
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	Town of Maple Grove	date	9/25/97
organization		telephone	920 822-5786
street&number	N1675 Laney Road	zip code	54165
city or town	Seymour	state	Wisconsin

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.

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Photo #1 of 8

LANEY SCHOOL
Town of Maple Grove, Shawano County, WI
Photo by D.G. Rucker, July 28, 1997
Negative at State Historical Society of Wisconsin
View looking west.

Photo #2 of 8

LANEY SCHOOL
Town of Maple Grove, Shawano County, WI
Photo by D.G. Rucker, July 28, 1997
Negative at State Historical Society of Wisconsin
View looking south.

Photo #3 of 8

LANEY SCHOOL
Town of Maple Grove, Shawano County, WI
Photo by D.G. Rucker, July 28, 1997
Negative at State Historical Society of Wisconsin
View looking east.

Photo #4 of 8

LANEY SCHOOL
Town of Maple Grove, Shawano County, WI
Photo by D.G. Rucker, July 28, 1997
Negative at State Historical Society of Wisconsin
View looking north.

Photo #5 of 8

LANEY SCHOOL
Town of Maple Grove, Shawano County, WI
Photo by D.G. Rucker, July 28, 1997
Negative at State Historical Society of Wisconsin
Detail, east-facing facade.

Photo #6 of 8

LANEY SCHOOL
Town of Maple Grove, Shawano County, WI
Photo by D.G. Rucker, July 28, 1997
Negative at State Historical Society of Wisconsin
Detail, south-facing facade (behind obstacle).

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Photo #7 of 8

LANEY SCHOOL
Town of Maple Grove, Shawano County, WI
Photo by D.G. Rucker, July 28, 1997
Negative at State Historical Society of Wisconsin
Detail, interior southwest corner.

Photo #8 of 8

LANEY SCHOOL
Town of Maple Grove, Shawano County, WI
Photo by D.G. Rucker, July 28, 1997
Negative at State Historical Society of Wisconsin
Detail, interior facing south.