

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name Fargo, L. D., Public Library

historic Fargo, Lorenzo Dow, Free Public Library

and/or common Fargo, L. D., Public Library (preferred)

2. Location

street & number 120 East Madison Street not for publication

city, town Lake Mills vicinity of congressional district 9th

state Wisconsin code 55 county Jefferson code 055

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: library

4. Owner of Property

name City of Lake Mills, Attn: Thomas G. Popp, Jr., City Manager

street & number 103 Church Street

city, town Lake Mills vicinity of state Wisconsin 53551

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jefferson County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Jefferson state Wisconsin 53549

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1974 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin 816 State Street

city, town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Built in 1902 with stones gathered, in part, from the nearby fields of L. D. Fargo, the Lorenzo Dow Fargo Public Library is an eclectic interpretation of English medieval styles, dominated by steeply-pitched gables, distinguished by lacy bargeboards, and enriched by the warm color and rugged texture of native fieldstone. Despite a subsidiary addition to the rear, and alterations to the interior, the Library still reflects the evocative Gothic design of Milwaukee architects Ferry & Clas and the skilled craftsmanship of the masons and wood carvers who built it.

Located across from the city commons, the fieldstone building rises two stories and culminates in a steeply-pitched gable roof, whose eaves slope well beyond the walls below. Crowning the roof, a delicately proportioned steeple tapers into an attenuated spire with flared base and gablet ventilators. Below the roof ridge, the facade is animated by multiple gabled elements: steeply-pitched gabled dormers rise through the eaves and cap the second story windows; a cross gable projects from the south wall to create a central pavilion; a gabled canopy shelters the main entrance. Although the sharp pitch of these units accentuates the strongly angular profile of the composition, the effect is softened by the intricately carved bargeboards and pendants which ornament the dormers and canopy. Crafted in an "organic" design, replete with floriated motifs, the bargeboards create a lacy, naturalistic aura which complements the solidity of the stone walls. The most elaborate decorative treatment is on the canopy, where the exuberant bargeboard, the pendant, and the tracery-like truss work in the gable end are supported by large brackets. Set within the canopy, the pointed arch doorway is framed with brown sandstone trim inscribed with the name "L. D. Fargo Library".

But the strongest visual element of the building is the rich fieldstone walls whose color ranges across muted hues of gray, brown, and russet, reflecting the landscape of the Lake Mills countryside. The careful masonry work creates a tapestry pattern, both colorful and substantial. At the corners of the building, as well as at the corners of the central pavilion, the wall thickens into buttress-like supports, and stone coping trims the slight parapet of the walls.

But if the profile and detail recall the Gothic Revival, the massing and fenestration are carefully balanced and controlled by a strict symmetry. Rectangular leaded-glass windows, cut deeply into the thick walls (underscoring the massiveness of the stone), are surmounted by heavy, flat brown sandstone lintels and rest upon sandstone sills. An oriel window on the west facade, supported by large wooden brackets, is balanced on the east facade by a shallow bay with a sloping roof housing a fireplace below the chimney. The rear elevation has the same fenestration pattern, (but without the projecting pavilion or the lacy bargeboards). In 1965, a one-story fieldstone-veneered addition was constructed on the rear of the building, with a canopied entry that reflected a modification of the front entrance. In 1981, after a serious fire damaged much of the interior, renovation included a new roof, reconstructed spire (both in exact duplication of the originals) and an added Tudor-like stairwell bay and elevator shaft. The same remodelling completely altered the interior into a contemporary style, retaining however the heavy beamed ceilings and brick chimney found in the original. The original exterior wall on the east side where the stairwell was added can now be seen in the interior office of the Librarian.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) cultural center of community
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1899 – 1902¹ **Builder/Architect** Ferry & Clas, architects
L. A. Giles, stone mason¹

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The historic centerpiece of Lake Mills cultural life, as well as the outstanding architectural landmark in the center of the city, the Lorenzo Dow Fargo Public Library is a distinguished interpretation of the English medieval style designed by noted Milwaukee architects Ferry & Clas.¹ Dedicated in 1902 to serve as the city's first public library and a community meeting hall for civic groups, the Library was financed by a gift to the city from L. D. Fargo (whose family figured prominently in the 19th century development of Lake Mills), constructed with stones from his farm,² but sustained since the days of its construction by the city of Lake Mills and by donations of labor, money and books from the community. More than the legacy of its initial benefactor, the L. D. Fargo Public Library has served as a major civic institution, and a important architectural resource of enduring significance in the 20th century history of Lake Mills.

Architecture. Built in the first years of the twentieth century, the L. D. Fargo Public Library is a remarkably skillful interpretation of English medieval styles, reflecting the transition between the late Victorian Gothic Revival and the emerging Tudor Revival. Constructed of local fieldstones and ornamented with elaborately carved bargeboards, the multi-gabled structure was the result of a collaboration between noted Milwaukee architects Ferry & Clas and Waterloo mason L. A. Giles.¹ At once dramatic in its evocation of the Gothic style -- "pleasingly antique", commented the local newspaper on the day of dedication,¹ recalling the romance of cloistered study -- and harmonious with its natural setting, the Library is not only an outstanding example of early 20th century eclecticism but an important visual landmark as well.

George Ferry (1851–1918), whose son later served on the Fargo Library Board, was among Wisconsin's most successful architects at the time. Together with his partner Alfred Clas, his designs included libraries in Madison -- The State Historical Society of Wisconsin building, 1900 (NRHP, 1972) -- and Milwaukee -- the Milwaukee Public Library, 1893–97. Ferry's intricate bargeboard designs for the Fargo Library were executed by Frank Stevens of Milwaukee.³ L. A. Giles, the stone mason, was considered a "master builder of stone work," according to contemporary accounts, "and no more skillful an operative mason has been known in this part of Wisconsin."⁴

Cultural Center of Community. From its dedication in 1902, when the new structure was heralded as the beginning of "an epoch in the history of the village"¹, the Lorenzo Dow Fargo Free Public Library has been a major civic institution in Lake Mills, serving since its inception as the public library, the meeting hall for the Woman's Club and other civic groups, a center of literary and cultural activities, and an important adjunct to the community's educational system. Initially funded by a gift to the city from L. D. Fargo (1824 – 1909) and his wife Sarah Rich Fargo as a "living monument to their memory"² the Library quickly evolved into a community center, with books, equipment, and a site financed through a city-wide subscription drive.¹ In the ensuing decades, the Library has

(Continued...)

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Library Dedication," Lake Mills Leader, August 28, 1902 (Vol. 23, No. 42), p. 1.

"A Public Library," Lake Mills Leader, March 16, 1899 (Vol. 20, No. 21), p. 1.

Carrie Fargo Bicknell, ed., Autobiography of Lorenzo Dow Fargo, unpublished manuscript, Lake Mills Library.

10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED
UTM NOT VERIFIED
Quadrangle scale 1:24000

Acreege of nominated property less than 1.0

Quadrangle name Lake Mills, Wis.

UTM References

A

1	6
---	---

3	4	4	4	7	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	7	7	1	3	4	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting Northing

B

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

E

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

F

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

G

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

H

--	--

--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 9 and SW 49.50 feet of Lot 4, Block 4, Original Plat. Also a row over NW 16.5 feet of Lot 8 and over NW 16.5 feet of SW 33 feet Lot 5, SD Addition.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Leonard T. Garfield/Historian

organization State Historical Society of Wisconsin date November 1981

street & number 816 State Street telephone 608/262-2970

city or town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Richard Perry

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

date 12/2/81

For HCRS use only

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

Richard Perry
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register date 1/18/82

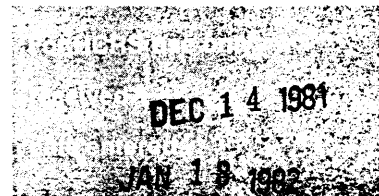
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet The Lorenzo Dow Fargo Free Item number 8 Page 1
Public Library

8. SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT.

maintained its commitment to the Lake Mills community while broadening its services and collections.

When Fargo first made his gift to the village council in the Spring of 1899, he hoped to create a "common center where the many interests" of the community could find a meeting place, a crucial step "towards the upbuilding of an intelligent community."¹ To guarantee its central role in the life of Lake Mills, Fargo specified (and the village council readily agreed) that "this library is to be free with no distinction of society, nationality, or color," and that space be provided for reading rooms, a museum, the Woman's Club (who maintained the only previous library in the village), the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and rooms for other "literary and scientific purposes."⁵ Moreover, at the dedication services, Fargo announced plans to include ample German-language publications and to provide services for the outlying rural communities in an attempt at letting all residents "share alike in its privileges and benefits."¹ The village, as well, was excited by the prospects. "Lake Mills is proud of her commercial interests", commented the village newspaper, "but the proudest day is to come when she dedicates her new library building to become forever a center for intellectual and spiritual activity that shall leaven the whole community."⁵

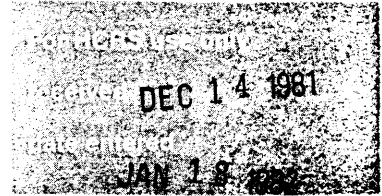
Although agitation for a public library preceded Fargo's gift, the earliest history of the building is intricately associated with his family. Among the earliest settlers of the area, Lorenzo Fargo arrived in Lake Mills from New York State in 1845, settling with his brothers Enoch, Robert, Lyman, and Issac. Throughout the 19th century, the brothers and their families contributed to the development of the village, variously operating a grist mill, foundry, store, bank, creamery, diary supply company, hotel, and several prosperous farms.⁶ But their community involvement was not limited to their business interests. When the question of a library for Lake Mills was raised in 1899, both Robert Fargo (Lorenzo's brother) and Frank Fargo (his nephew) were appointed to the committee. Robert, who would serve as president of the first Library Board, which supervised the construction of the facility, encouraged his brother Lorenzo to contribute \$5000 to the village on the condition that it would secure a site and maintain the building.¹

Lorenzo's gift was presented to the village council by Robert in March, 1899, and the plans of Milwaukee architect George Ferry (whose son Robert would later serve on the Fargo Library Board) were accepted in June of that year.¹ The city had originally planned to locate the building in the city-owned commons, but a community subscription drive raised the funds to purchase a more popular site across the street. Volunteer labor helped dig and transport the stone,⁷ further fund raising efforts helped finance the equipment, and the Woman's Club donated many of the 1,471 volumes which formed the opening day collection.⁸

(Continued...)

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet The Lorenzo Dow Fargo Free Item number 8 Page 2
Public Library

8. SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT.

At the dedication of the Library in August, 1902, former Governor W. D. Hoard, Secretary of the State Library Commission F. A. Hutchens, and Judge E. W. Keyes of Madison (one of Lake Mills' pioneer residents) all lauded the new building. "As a library for the needs of a small community," it was announced, "it has already become famous throughout the state."¹

Throughout the twentieth century, the L. D. Fargo Library has adhered to its original commitment as a free community cultural center, the home of civic groups and a center of "literary and scientific" study. Moreover, its collections have grown with the passage of time, eventually embracing an extensive children's program, a music collection, and a reference center for local school children. In 1931, the Library's collections had grown from the original 1,471 volumes to over 7,000⁸ and by 1980 it numbered more than 16,000 items. In 1965, the Beatrice Seaver addition was constructed to the rear of the library, alleviating the need for more space. When a serious fire caused over \$500,000 in damage to the Library in 1980, hundreds of volunteers helped restore the Library and its contents. (The architectural restoration was undertaken by Ross Potter, of Sample & Potter. At the time of the fire, a librarian told reporters, "It is just hard to describe how much feeling the people here have displayed."⁹

FOOTNOTES:

1. "Library Dedication," LAKE MILLS LEADER, August 28, 1902 (Volume 23, #42), p. 1.
2. Carrie Fargo Bicknell, ed., Autobiography of Lorenzo Dow Fargo, unpublished manuscript (1943?) in L. D. Fargo Library, pp. 83-84.
3. LAKE MILLS LEADER, Feb. 2, 1950
4. "Library fire is a loss locally," Waterloo Courier, Jan. 24, 1980
5. "A Public Library." LAKE MILLS LEADER, March 16, 1899 (Vol. 20, No. 21) p. 1.
6. For Fargo family history, see "Fargo Family History and Geneology," (1946) unpublished manuscript in collection of Mrs. Mary McCammon Wilson, Lake Mills WI
7. "The New Library," LAKE MILLS LEADER, June 29, 1899 (Vol. 20, No. 36), p. 1.
8. LAKE MILLS LEADER, September 21, 1933.
9. "Lake Mills Saves its Library," Wisconsin State Journal (Madison), March 2, 1980, Section 4, p. 1.