

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED NOV 9 1976  
DATE ENTERED OCT 5 1977

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Frances Willard Schoolhouse

AND/OR COMMON

Same

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

4-H Fairgrounds, Craig Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Janesville

VICINITY OF

First

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Wisconsin

CODE

55

COUNTY

Rock

CODE

105

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Building: Rock County Historical Society

Land: County of Rock

STREET & NUMBER P. O. Box 896

51 South Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Janesville

VICINITY OF

STATE

Wisconsin 53545

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Rock County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

51 South Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Janesville

STATE

Wisconsin 53545

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Rock County Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings

DATE

1975

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Rock County Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Janesville

STATE

Wisconsin 53545

# 7 DESCRIPTION

2

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE <u>1970;</u> 1972

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Built in 1853, this is a small (18' x 24'), frame, Greek Revival style structure with returned cornices and frieze board. The frieze board was continued around the sides but not on the back and is now missing under the right front cornice return. There were originally two front doors, one each for boys and girls. When the siding was replaced at the turn of the century, the left door was boarded over, although the original is still intact and visible from the interior. In 1904 the building was "well renovated without and within"<sup>1</sup> and a small porch with a shed roof was added at the right entrance. This porch was removed in 1970.

For at least its first 40 years, the building was unpainted and was referred to as the "little brown schoolhouse."<sup>2</sup> Around the turn of the century it was painted off-white or cream with brown trim, appearing that way in postcard illustrations of the time.<sup>3</sup> It has been all white since at least 1921, when the schoolhouse was repainted by the Rock County chapter of the W.C.T.U.

The three windows on either side are 6/6 double-hung sash. Since about 1900 they have been protected by solid shutters of flush vertical boards, hinged at one side. There are no front or back windows.

The interior is a single room with a flat plaster ceiling and a hardwood floor. The floor may date to 1904. The walls are plastered above a chair rail and panelled below with wainscoting, now painted a teal blue. Some of the rough lath, about 2" wide, is exposed, and a blackboard has been removed which concealed the original unpainted door. There is a low teacher's platform on the floor between the doors; it may in part be the original platform mentioned by Miss Willard. On the back wall is a narrow chimney, probably built about 1904, with a cabinet and shelving below it. The original stove and chimney are long gone.

Descriptions of the school house by Miss Willard in her autobiographies give data to aid in the restoration of the school and its furnishings:

"It was plain and inviting, that little bit of a building, standing under the trees on the river bank. No paint has ever brightened it, outside or in, from that day to the present. It looks like a natural growth; like a sort of big ground nut. Inside, the pine desks were arranged around the wall, boys on one side, girls on the other, a slight platform with rude desk taking up the end nearest the door....It was a cold winter morning when school opened...we got the key, made the fire, and were the first to take possession.. So passed the day - our first in the old school house we learned to love in spite of - nay, perhaps the better because of, its ugliness...as school was so far away we stayed from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and made much of our dinners, setting them out on the teacher's desk."<sup>4</sup>

In 1969 the Rock County W.C.T.U. donated the school and original property, near the Rock River on Janesville's southern outskirts, to the Rock County Historical Society. The school was moved in 1970 and stored temporarily on the site of the Tallman Restorations, then relocated in 1972 on the Rock County Fairgrounds, on a small parcel of land adjacent to the main gate and leased from the County on a 25-year basis. The move was made for two reasons: first, the isolated river site was increasingly subject to vandalism, and permanent security would be difficult to maintain. Secondly, the W.C.T.U. had desired that the structure be made available to the public and particularly to school children, which is

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better done at the fairgrounds site. Since 1972 more than 10,000 visitors of all ages have seen educational exhibits in the schoolhouse which were installed by the Rock County Historical Society for the annual 4-H Fair and other events. The Society at present retains ownership of the original site, but hopes to sell it to the City of Janesville to establish a public park.

The building will be restored to its mid-19th century state as fund-raising permits. Re-roofing and interior renovation are of first priority. Interior wood will be stripped of its paint and seating along the wall will be restored. To revert to the original unstained siding, however, might possibly be more appropriate for a rural setting.

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1. Rock County, 1908, Vol. I, p. 238.
  2. A. Gordon, The Beautiful Life of Frances E. Willard, 1898, pp. 26, 35.
  3. Rock County Historical Society, Iconography files.
  4. F. Willard, Glimpses of Fifty Years, 1892, pp. 79-81.

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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Association with historically significant person.	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES      1853, 1904, 1920      BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Frances Willard Schoolhouse is historically significant as the best preserved building associated with the world-famous feminist and temperance leader's formative years in Wisconsin (1846-1858). It is locally significant because Frances Willard was the most famous personage who ever lived in Rock County. She was well known and highly regarded in the Janesville area, where her father was a prominent scientific farmer and civic leader.

Over the years it has been visited by thousands of people, including local, state, and national W.C.T.U. groups. For its national association with Frances Willard it may be considered second in importance only to Rest Cottage, built as the Willard home in Evanston, Illinois in 1865. The schoolhouse has greater integrity than Forest Home, the only other Wisconsin building associated with her. That building, the family homestead, still stands but was relocated on the farm and remodeled several times after the family sold the property in 1869.

The Schoolhouse is of secondary local importance as an extant example of a very early one-room schoolhouse and one of the oldest school buildings standing in Rock County. Only the 1851 Moore-Stone Jug-School in Magnolia is known to be older. In regular use for nearly 70 years, the Willard School was briefly reactivated after World War II and used for overflow classroom space for 5th and 6th graders from the local school district.

Frances Willard (1839-1898) was among the most distinguished women of the 19th century. Her post-Rock County education included study in Milwaukee, Evanston, Syracuse, and informally in Europe (1868-69); she held M.S., M.A., and L.L.D. degrees. As an educator she pioneered as a female president of a women's college (Evanston College for Ladies, 1871) and was the first Dean of Women at Northwestern University, Evanston. As a suffragist, she was co-founder with Susan B. Anthony of the National Council of Women (1888) and its president in 1890. She advocated legal protection for women, the eight-hour day for men and women, and the vote for women. She is best known, however, as the longtime National President of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (1879-98) and the promoter (1883) and first president (1891) of the World's W.C.T.U. The latter may be considered the first international organization of women which combatted drug abuse as well as alcoholism on an international scale. She was a dynamic speaker and organizer. Her suffragist sentiments had a divisive effect within the membership of the W.C.T.U.; nonetheless she repeatedly won popular election to its presidency and expanded its chapters and activities until her death.

Josiah Willard, Frances' father, was one of the promoters of the first Wisconsin State Fair, which was held in Janesville in 1851 about a half-mile from the present fairgrounds, which is now also the location of the schoolhouse. An energetic and progressive farmer, he helped found the Rock County Agricultural and Mechanics' Association, which sponsored the fair, and he was co-author in 1856 of the first, and very early, History of Rock County, published by the Association. Distantly related to other well-known members of the Willard family, including the clock makers, Josiah came to Rock County in 1846 from New York state, where Frances had been born in 1839, via Ohio.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Brown, Wm. Fiske, ed., History of Rock County (Chicago, 1908) I:238.  
 Dillon, M.E., "Willard, Frances Elizabeth Caroline," Notable American Women, (Cambridge: Harvard, 1971), 613-618.  
 Gordon, Anna A., The Beautiful Life of Frances Willard, (Chicago, 1898), 26, 33, 44.  
 Willard, Frances F., Glimpses of Fifty Years, (Chicago, 1892), 79-81.  
 Willard, Frances F., My Happy Half-Century, (London, 1894), 72-79.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.1  
 UTM REFERENCES

A	1 1 6	3 3 5 7 4 1 0	4 7 2 8 2 7 1 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

Nancy Douglas, Preservation Coordinator

ORGANIZATION

Rock County Historical Society

DATE

September 17, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 896

TELEPHONE

608/756-4509

CITY OR TOWN

Janesville

STATE

Wisconsin 53545

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Richard A. Emery*

TITLE

Acting Director  
 State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

10/29/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Walter H. Cote*

DATE

10/6/77

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*Walter H. Cote*

DATE

10-5-77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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In early 1853 Josiah Willard, with the help of David Inman and other neighbors, built the schoolhouse which was the first "real" school attended by Frances and her sister Mary, although Frances was already 14. Earlier education had been conducted at home. Frances attended the school for about ten months, then returned on a summer vacation and taught there in 1858, at age 17. The building continued to mean much to her and was affectionately described in her autobiographies. She revisited the school and her early Rock County home on New Year's of 1898, two months before she died. The school was named for her at the time of the 1904 remodeling and has borne a plaque reading "Frances Willard School" ever since. After being closed as a district school, it was acquired by the Rock County W.C.T.U. in 1920 to assure its preservation. (Since then the name plaque has been dated 1853-1920.) An opening dedication ceremony held on September 28, 1921, Miss Willard's birthday, was attended by 1,500 people, including Anna Gordon, National President of the W.C.T.U. and Frances Willard's biographer.

