

**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

historic Fern School

and/or common

2. Location

SW OF FLORENCE ON

street & number WI
~~Wis~~ 101 WI not for publication

city, town Florence vic.
Fern vicinity of congressional district 8th

state Wisconsin code 055 county Florence code 037

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Fern, Darwin Sternhagen, Town Clerk

street & number Route 1, Box 93

city, town Florence vicinity of state Wisconsin 54121

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Florence County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Florence state Wisconsin 54121

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

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

Located along Wisconsin state highway 101 in central Florence County, the former Fern School is situated in a heavily forested area which at one time supported limited farming. Rectangular in plan with an entry attached to the east facade, the building is of frame construction and rests on a fieldstone foundation. The intersecting gable roofs were originally-covered with asphalt shingles, since replaced with a similar covering. Wood shingles fill the gable peaks which feature leaded-glass bull's-eye windows. Elsewhere, the exterior is sheathed in clapboard that was locally-milled. The building's otherwise regular fenestration is broken along the west facade where a group of six, double-hung windows with 6/6 lights are placed. An enclosed, back entry-way is located at the northwest corner and was added in the 1930s. The brick belfry, complete with the old school bell, is still intact and in its original position. Outstanding features include the returned eaves and the pedimented entry supported by wood columns.

The interior of the former school is divided into a large room, former classroom area, and a library and kitchen which are placed along the north wall. A large cloak room is located in the entry along with restrooms on either side of the dogleg stair. Floors are constructed of hard maple. The original plaster ceilings were covered-over in the late 1920s with pressed-tin. In 1946, the present electrical system was installed, replacing the kersene lamps and holders which had been used until that time. Desks and some other furnishings were removed in 1956 when the school was closed.

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 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)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1921¹ **Builder/Architect** civic development

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Constructed in 1921 following the separation of the Town of Fern from the Town of Florence, Fern School is significant as a representative of the fruits of that victory. Since then, it has served as the focal point for the area, fulfilling the educational, political and social needs of the township for nearly sixty years.

Settlement in Florence County, in northeastern Wisconsin, did not begin until the late 1870s and was dependent on the abundance of timber and high-grade iron ore to be found there. Political and economic power was centered at Florence as most of the miners were located in that region of the county. Because of this, outlying areas settled primarily by Polish, German, and Swedish immigrants who had first worked as loggers, and later turned to farming the cut-over, were poorly-represented. Fern, which grew around a sawmill operated by Frank Miller, was one such settlement.²

In 1917, settlers who resided around the post office and mill at what was Fern, petitioned the Town of Florence for the right to form their own town government. Florence, at that time, near the end of its mining boom, opposed the proposition. Finally, after months of delay and debate, the Town of Fern was formed.³

Shortly after this, in 1921, the first and only major structure erected by Fern Township, Fern School, was completed at a cost of \$3,000.⁴ Prior to this, several schools had operated in the area but all were deemed inadequate by the newly-formed town board. The school served as the focal point for the township, especially after it lost its post office. School plays, Christmas programs, town dances, pie socials, and the popular Halloween parties were held here into the 1950s.

In 1956 the school was closed, victim of the consolidation of school districts in the county, and became the property of the Florence School District. The Town of Fern acquired possession of its community symbol in 1958 for use as a townhall, a purpose it still serves today. Although neglected in past years, the former school has become the focal point of the township as it is now the site of the annual town picnic. Last year's event was highlighted by the reunion of many of the former teachers and students.

¹ School records in the possession of Darwin Sternhagen, Fern Town Clerk.

² Wisconsin State Gazetteer, 1913–1925 lists Miller as owner of a sawmill and as postmaster.

³ Florence Mining News, March 10, 1917, p. 1.

⁴ School records in the possession of Darwin Sternhagen, Fern Town Clerk.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Florence Mining News, November 18, 1916 - June 1, 1918.
Green Bay Press-Gazette, March 22, 1961.
Wisconsin State Gazetteer, 1913 - 1925.

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreege of nominated property 1.0
Quadrangle name Florence SW, Wis.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	1 6	3 9 2 3 2 0	5 0 7 6 5 7 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C			
E			
G			

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D			
F			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

A parcel of land in the Northeast Quarter of the Northeast Quarter (NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of NE $\frac{1}{4}$), Section Twenty-nine (29), Town Thirty-nine (39) North, Range Seventeen (17) East, described as follows: One (1) square acre in the southeast corner thereof.

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 Michael R. Matucheski, Preservation Assistant, Historic Preservation Division
 organization State Historical society of Wisconsin date December 15, 1980
 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 M. Murrey

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin date 2/5/81

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.	
<u>[Signature]</u>	date <u>3/20/81</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest: <u>[Signature]</u>	date <u>3/16/81</u>
Chief of Registration	