

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED NOV 9 1976
DATE ENTERED APR 11 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
La Prairie Grange Hall No. 79

AND/OR COMMON
La Prairie Grange Hall

LOCATION (NE 1/4, NE 1/4, NE 1/4, Sec. 21, T 2 N, R 13 E)

STREET & NUMBER SE of Janesville
Town Hall Road, 1/2 mile south of Avalon Road

CITY, TOWN
Town of La Prairie VICINITY OF Janesville CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 1st

STATE Wisconsin CODE 55 COUNTY Rock CODE 105

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Meeting Place

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
La Prairie Grange No. 79, c/o Mrs. Chris Carlson, Acting Historian

STREET & NUMBER
Route 3, County Trunk Highway J

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 & Buildings

DATE
1975
_FEDERAL _STATE COUNTY _LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Rock County Historical Society

CITY, TOWN
Janesville STATE Wisconsin 53545

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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

La Prairie Grange Hall No. 79 is a two-storied, three-bayed vernacular building, sided with white clapboard and covered with a gable roof. Dimensions are 32' x 50' x 22' to the plate and rafters. The Hall faces east on a gentle prominence and commands a pleasant view of the surrounding countryside. Its plot occupies 1650 square feet. The original seven foot fence and the horse sheds have long been gone.

There are few embellishments to the exterior. A white moulded frieze board parallels the eaves. There is simple green wood trim at the corners and windows, which are tall 4-over-4 pane double hung sash, with the original glass. The window frames have a cap at the top of the sides and across the lintel; a vernacular reminder of the contemporary popular Italianate stilted arch. Original green blinds were removed from the windows in 1884.

The double-doored entrance is at the center of the front; the window above it is blind, covered with a pair of white closed shutters. The doors enter directly into the first story hall, an open room which takes up the full width of the building (32 feet) and extends 34 feet back to the kitchen. Central wooden posts support a wooden beam from the front to the back. The present hardwood floors were installed in 1899, "laid by the boys" (La Prairie Grange records, RCHS). Walls on both stories are covered with their original narrow vertical tongue and groove and scored paneling, intersected by a chair rail. They are now painted cream yellow. The base below the chair rail is painted tan downstairs and green on the second story.

The downstairs hall has always been used as a combination Town Hall meeting room and Grange dining hall. Collapsible voting booths are attached to the north wall. The room is furnished with tables and used for Junior Grange meetings and along with the upstairs, for card parties.

The second story hall is reached by a back stairway and by an enclosed wooden fire escape against the north wall, the latter added in 1931. The hall ceiling is a truncated gable. This room is used for Grange meetings, for "old time" parties with dances (it has historically boasted a good floor for dancing), and for 4-H plays. The stage, a low platform, was built in 1921 and enlarged in 1929. The "play curtain," covered traditionally with local advertising, is the second one in use, painted as late as the 1950's (Carlson interview).

A lean-to addition at the rear of the building, with pent roof, was added in 1931 with indoor privy-type latrines; these were converted fairly recently into modern gas burning toilets. The library bookcases of the 1880's were moved downstairs to be used as kitchen shelves. The kitchen is not modernized. In all, the building has undergone very little alteration since its construction in 1874 and has been well maintained by the members of the Grange.

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 checked="" 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1874

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The La Prairie Grange Hall No. 79 is the oldest Grange Hall standing in Wisconsin and possibly one of the four oldest Grange Halls still standing in the United States. It is a well-preserved example, still in active use, of one of the earliest existing meeting places of the Patrons of Husbandry, commonly called the Grange, the dean of politically active agricultural organizations in the United States.

It is also a unique combination of Grange Hall/Town Hall, constructed with cooperation from the town and used by both the Grange and the Town for over 100 years. Since its construction it has been the center of political life in this rural township, a place for Town Meetings, a site for voting, and a spot to meet with County Supervisors, other elected officials, or candidates to discuss current government problems. It is also the oldest Rock County structure built for use as a Town Hall and still serving that purpose.

The National Grange was founded in December, 1867, by Oliver Hudson Kelley of Minnesota, at a meeting held in Washington, D. C. It was created for the mutual protection and advancement of American farmers in reaction to the railroad monopolies. Its Declaration of Purposes of February, 1874, advocated productive farming; greater marketing efficiency and elimination of surplus middlemen; reduced transportation costs and lower interest rates; and further educational opportunities in agriculture and domestic science. Women were specifically admitted to membership and office.

The La Prairie Grange No. 79 was organized February 27, 1873 as a subordinate Grange or local lodge of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry. The Town of La Prairie provided the land and \$700.00 towards building expenses. The Grange agreed to provide the building. The Supervisors of the Town of La Prairie were "to have and own a room... on the first floor and to front on the road." The Grange was "to have the use of the room for a dining room, when not in use by the Town." (Articles of Agreement, 1874.) In 1960 the township deeded its share of the building to the Grange, reserving the right to use it for such functions as town meetings or voting.

The Grange was a cohesive social force in the rural La Prairie area, and its hall provided a place for social activities such as card parties and dancing, Sunday church services, and Grange meetings. Agricultural questions were foremost on the agenda of meetings, including debates on various ways to improve dairying and farming. The La Prairie Grange was also a local political force, and members still feel that belonging to the Grange gives them a stronger voice nationally. In general, the grange supported agricultural education. In 1890 the local Grange advocated, with the National Grange, Rural Free Delivery. They also supported parcel post and rural electrification, the latter of which reached the local grange in the 1930's.

The La Prairie Grange currently has about 60 active adult members, and there is a Junior Grange (ages 5-15) as well. Some of the children are fifth generation members.

In 1973 the La Prairie Grange Hall was designated Wisconsin Registered Landmark No. 104.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Gardner, Charles M. The Grange, Friend of the Farmer, Washington: The National Grange, 1949, p. 517 etc.

Marquart, Mrs. LaVerne. Wisconsin's Agricultural Heritage, The Grange 1871-1971, Lake Mills: Rural Life, 1972, p. 91.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.1

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,6	3,3,9,8,2,0	4,7,2,1 ^{0 20} ,0,1,5	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 Belle Douglas, Preservation Coordinator

ORGANIZATION

Rock County Historical Society

DATE

August 31, 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 X

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. Curney

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

CHIEF *[Signature]*
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 4/11/77

ATTEST *[Signature]*
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 3/25/77

