

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

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

received **MAR 12 1985**

date entered **APR 11 1985**

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

1. Name

historic Physical Education Building, La Crosse State Normal School

and/or common Wittich Hall, University of Wisconsin - La Crosse

2. Location

street & number University of Wisconsin - La Crosse Campus not for publication

city, town La Crosse vicinity of

state Wisconsin code 55 county La Crosse code 063

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name State of Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin System

street & number 1930 Monroe Street

city, town Madison vicinity of state Wisconsin 53706

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, La Crosse County Courthouse

street & number North Fourth Street

city, town La Crosse state Wisconsin 54601

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Wittich Hall is a sizable 32,000 square foot red brick building incorporating both a 1916 gymnasium and pool facility and a 1930 addition to the south. Located within the heart of the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse campus, directly to the north of the school's Main Hall, Wittich Hall was designed by the noted La Crosse firm of Parkinson and Dockendorff in the prevalent Collegiate Gothic style of the period.

Rectangular in shape, the original 1916 main block is three stories and rests on a slightly raised brick basement area capped by a stone water table. Prominently featured on the west facade are the building's two main entry towers. Each is elaborately detailed with stylized Gothic stone tracery and trim. The entry doorways are marked by low pointed arch openings flanked by carved inset panels. Above both doorways is inscribed the notation "Physical Education 1916." An additional notation above the northernmost entry marks the building as "Wittich Hall." Above the ground floor level rise tall narrow stairway windows, which rest on carved stone spandrels emblazoned with heraldic shields. Additional Gothic stone detailing is found at the roofline. The entry projections mark a strongly vertical emphasis, in contrast to the low horizontality of the main block.

The first floor windows of the main block feature simple rectangular openings grouped in sets of two or three. Above these windows rest a slender stone belt course and the small slit windows of the second floor. Lighting the interior gymnasium space, each opening features a heavy stone sill and deeply recessed glazing. In contrast to these small openings, the third floor is marked by large expanses of glass block set into sizable rectangular openings. The upper story windows light the upper area of the gymnasium at the level of the suspended running track. The entire main elevation is broken into bays by exterior buttressing piers of brick capped with stone. Except for a decorative panel at the midpoint of the facade, the roofline features only a simple stone cornice and a cut stone coping.

The main building's rear or eastern elevation is much less richly detailed than the facade, but still retains a similar fenestration pattern and twin entry towers. The northern elevation, facing upon the modern Cowley Science Hall building, is even less ornamented, featuring a plain brick surface punctuated by rectangular openings with cut stone sills and original wood sash. Small Gothic panels are visible at the roofline above a stone cornice.

Constructed of rusticated brick, the 1930 addition lying to the south of the main building is oriented perpendicular to the earlier gym, its long wall constituting the original south elevation. Generally viewed as two stories in height with a raised basement, the addition features cut stone belt courses at each floor, a simple stone cornice and sizable window bays framed in tall Gothic pointed arches. The building's south elevation is divided into four bays by brick piers capped by stone details. The three-part upper windows, which rest above stone inset panels, light the former women's gymnasium on the upper floor of the addition. On the raised first floor level, narrow rectangular openings light a pool area. The southern elevation also features a simply detailed exit to one side. Single pointed arch window bays mark the east and west facades, and the roofline is detailed with diamond, quatrefoil and trefoil patterns.

Although altered for handicapped access (entrance ramps, elevators) the interior of the structure remains in remarkably original condition. The ground floor, ceramic tile pool

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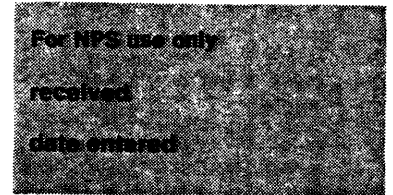
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and upstairs skylit gym of the 1930s addition remain substantially unchanged. In the original portion of the building, the large open gymnasium with its suspended running track, maple floors and oak trim remains intact as well. The first floor pool area, however, has been filled in and the area now serves as office and storage space. At present, Wittich Hall serves the College of Health, Physical Education and Recreation as a training area for teachers of the physically handicapped. A modern Physical Education facility for the entire campus was completed in 1965 (Mitchell Hall).

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1916¹, 1930 (addition)¹ **Builder/Architect** B. Dockendorff and A.E. Parkinson¹
Period of Significance: 1916-1935

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Wittich Hall on the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse campus is locally significant for its role in the growth and development of the State Normal School at La Crosse during its early years, specifically relating to the school's development as a recognized and well respected leader in the training of teachers and instructors in the specialized field of physical education.

As a part of the growing specialization of Normal school education in Wisconsin during the early decades of the twentieth century, the Board of Regents of Normal Schools authorized the La Crosse normal to establish a school of physical education in 1913.² Physical education had always been an extremely important facet of a well rounded education at the La Crosse school, and it was President Fassett A. Cotton's concepts on physical training that became the guiding philosophy of the physical education department at La Crosse.

President Cotton (1909-1924) viewed physical education not as athletic competition but as individual development. Like practical instruction in morals, music education and art education, Cotton believed a thorough and comprehensive course in physical education should be provided in every school in the nation, public, private and parochial. In his vision, some organized form of physical education should be compulsory for all boys and girls attending elementary and secondary school, and every high school should be equipped with a good gymnasium and required to maintain a systematic training program. To implement his vision, Cotton realized the necessity of training skillful, highly knowledgeable and well motivated teachers and instructors. From the start his school was to offer the best possible educational opportunities to those wishing to pursue careers in the field.^{3,4,5}

The establishment of vocational training programs at the state normal schools in the early 1900s had been in keeping with the progressive ideas of upper level state educators that the training of teachers should respond directly to the growing needs of specialized academic fields and also reflect the regional differences among the various normal school sites. Between 1909 and 1914, curriculum revisions within the state normal school system resulted in the establishment of twelve new specialized departments. At La Crosse, Oshkosh, River Falls, Stevens Point, Whitewater, and Platteville the board of regents maintained departments for the training of teachers for rural schools, while departments for the preparation of kindergarten teachers existed in Milwaukee and Superior. The Stevens Point normal school specialized in domestic science education, while at Whitewater a commercial education (business) program was initiated. An art department and a music department were established at Milwaukee, as well as a special department for the training of the deaf. A teacher training department in industrial education was located at Oshkosh and a manual training department was instituted at Platteville. A physical education department was set up as part of the new La Crosse campus, while special agricultural departments were established at River Falls and Platteville.⁶

9. Major Bibliographical References (continued)

- Gilkey, George R. The First Seventy Years: A Hisktory of the University of Wiskconsin La Crosse 1909-1979. (La Crosse: UW-La Crosse - La Crosse Foundation, 1981).
- Herrmann, William H. The Rise of the Public Normal School System in Wiskconsin. (Madison: Board of Regents of the State Universities, 1971).

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name La Crosse, Wisc.-Minn.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	6	4	2	3	5	0	4	8	5	2	5	6	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

All of Lots 5, 6, 7, and 12, 13, 14 of Block 12; Metzger and Funks Addition to the City of La Crosse, WI. (See attached site map.)

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 Paul R. Lusignan, Acting Architectural Historian

organization State Historical Society of Wisconsin date December 1984

street & number 816 State Street telephone 608/262-4772

city or town Maidson 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title DIRECTOR OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

date FEB. 21, 1985

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 4-11-85


Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

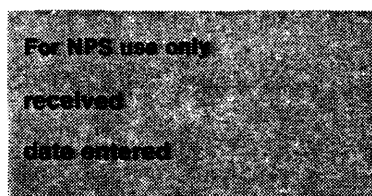
date

Chief of Registration

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When established in 1913, under the direct supervision of Mr. Carl Sputh, the physical education program at La Crosse was the first and only such normal school training program to be offered in the state, and as far as could be discerned at the time, it was also the only school of physical education known to exist in the United States supported by state funds.⁷ It was a unique role that the La Crosse program was to maintain well into the 1920s. From an initial enrollment of ten students in 1913, the program continually grew in size and stature. A total of 175 students were enrolled in the department in 1920 when the first permanent home for the school of physical education was finally completed with the official dedication of Wittich Hall.⁸

The Board of Regents had authorized the erection of a permanent physical education facility at La Crosse in 1914 and construction of the building had actually begun in 1916, based on plans submitted by the prominent La Crosse design firm of Parkinson and Dockendorff.⁹ The building stood only partially completed until 1920 however, a victim of World War I cutbacks and fiscal restrictions. Prior to 1920, department courses were conducted in the cramped gym and training room quarters housed to the rear of the 1909 Main Building.

With the completion of Wittich Hall, which had an original capacity of up to 250 students, the popularity of the program continued its amazing growth and La Crosse quickly became recognized for its high quality of instruction throughout the U.S.¹⁰ Containing a 7,000 square foot gymnasium, a sizable pool, offices, classrooms and lockerrooms, the fully equipped and totally modern facility served as the heart of the La Crosse physical education program throughout the 1920s and saw the normal school evolve into the 1930s as a state teachers college. In 1929, the legislature appropriated \$65,000 to be made available in 1930 for the construction of an addition to the Physical Education building.¹¹ Designed by the same La Crosse firm, the new addition included a second gymnasium and swimming pool, sizable locker rooms, an orthopedic room and various offices primarily for use by the increasing number of women students enrolling in the program.

The completed Wittich Hall facility, named for director of the La Crosse School of Physical Education from 1918 to 1954, Walter J. Wittich, continued to serve as the home of the program until the 1960s, when construction began on the multi-million dollar Mitchell Hall facility located on the eastern end of campus. At present the facility serves in an adjunct capacity as a training area for teachers of the physically handicapped.

¹ Original plans and drawings on file with the office of Physical Facilities on the UW-La Crosse campus, La Crosse, WI. Dated 1916 and 1930.

² Herrmann, William H., The Rise of the Public Normal School System in Wisconsin, (Madison: Board of Regents, 1971), p. 449.

³ Gilkey, George R., The First Seventy Years: A History of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, 1909-1979, (La Crosse: UW-La Crosse, 1981), p. 25.

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⁴ Gilkey, G. R., "La Crosse, a half-century of higher education in Wisconsin's Coulee region 1909-1966," in History of the Wisconsin State Universities, (W. Wyman, editor) (River Falls: River Falls State University, 1968), pp. 274-285.

⁵ Bulletin of the State Normal School La Crosse, Department of Physical Education, May 1914, p. 11.

⁶ Board of Regents of Normal Schools, The Organization of Special Departments in the Normal Schools of Wisconsin, (Madison: Board of Regents, 1915), p. 3-4.

Herrmann, William H., The Rise of the Public Normal School System in Wisconsin. (Madison: Board of Regents, 1971), p. 432-436.

Kittle, William, History of the Special Departments in the Normal Schools of Wisconsin, 1914-1925, (Madison: Board of Regents, 1925), pp. 5-7.

⁷ Bulletin of the State Normal School La Crosse, Department of Physical Education, May 1915, p. 12.

⁸ Bulletin of the State Normal School La Crosse, Department of Physical Education, May 1920, p. 54.

⁹ Original plans, UW-La Crosse Office of Physical Facilities.

¹⁰ Gilkey, G. R., op. cit., p. 99.

¹¹ La Crosse State College Annual Bulletin, 1935-1936, (La Crosse: LSC, 1935), p. 12.

9. Major Bibliographical References (continued)

Bulletins of the State Normal School La Crosse, 1914-1935. On file at the State Historical Library. Madison, Wisconsin.

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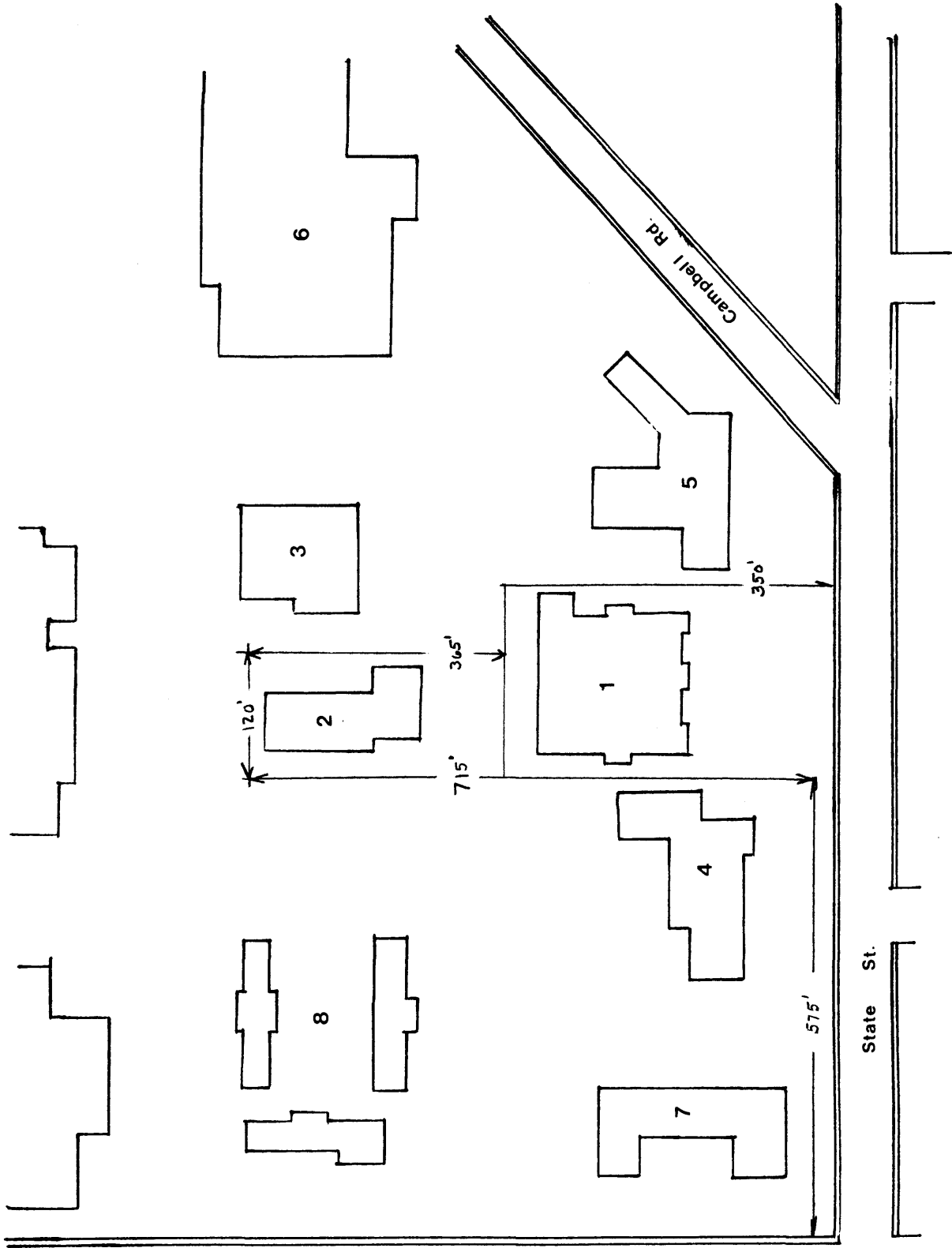
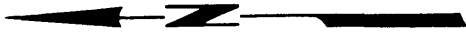
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Architectural Significance

Characterized by tall, multi-part pointed arch windows, brick quoins, and dramatic entry bays with a clear vertical emphasis, Wittich Hall is an architecturally significant provincial example of the Collegiate Gothic style, introduced into the La Crosse area in the early part of this century. The 1984 La Crosse Intensive Survey identified this well preserved structure as the best example of Collegiate Gothic architecture in the city.

The La Crosse based design firm of Parkinson & Dockendorff are credited with the design of over 800 public buildings, including schools, hospitals, commercial and civic buildings in the upper Midwest during their long and productive partnership (1905-1952).



- 1 Main Hall
- 2 Wittich Hall
- 3 Power House
- 4 Wing Comm. Ctr.
- 5 Cartwright Center
- 6 Mitchell Hall
- 7 Morris Hall
- 8 Dormitories