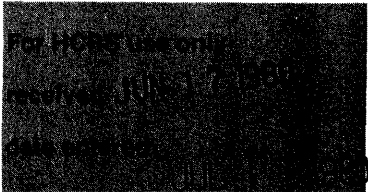


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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

and/or common Henry Wildhagen Schools of Ashland *Thematic Resources*

**2. Location**

street & number various - see item 7 \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Ashland \_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district Seventh

state Wisconsin code 55 county Ashland code 003

**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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> thematic	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> group		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Ashland Board of Education-Harvey Johnson, Superintendent

street & number Ellis Avenue

city, town Ashland \_\_\_ vicinity of state Wisconsin 54806

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Ashland County Courthouse

street & number 201 Second Avenue West

city, town Ashland state Wisconsin 54806

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

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

date 1975 \_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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**

General Description

The Ashland Middle, Wilmarth, Beaser, and Ellis Schools, designed by Ashland architect Henry Wildhagen, are located in the small city of Ashland, Ashland County, Wisconsin. At 10,000 population, only half of that of the city at the time of the schools' construction, the city is no longer the booming Lake Superior port that it was at the turn of the century. Taken together, the schools compose one facet of the wealth of masonry buildings that still give Ashland its distinctive appearance today.

Ashland Middle School, 1000 Ellis Avenue

The largest and most imposing of the four Wildhagen schools, the Middle School, includes most of the design motifs of the earlier structures resolved in a large and rationally elegant design. The brick and brownstone building is principally NeoClassical in style, incorporating some Richardsonian Romanesque elements. The main block of the school, facing Ellis Avenue, has two stories, a full exposed basement and attic story. A projecting pedimented entry, surmounted by a short tower, is centrally located on the front. The tower was formerly topped with a belfry which was removed circa 1950. One of the finest features on the building is the main, round-arched entrance in the tower. The brownstone entry, flanked by paired polished granite columns with foliated capitals, is reached by a wide stairway. Over the doorway a stone balcony accentuates a band of windows that is below a panel reading "Ashland High School." A Palladian window pierces the tower above the panel, as do several long, louvred vents in the upper portion of the tower. Windows in the main block of the building are grouped in threes with brownstone sills and lintels. Several hipped dormers light the attic story.

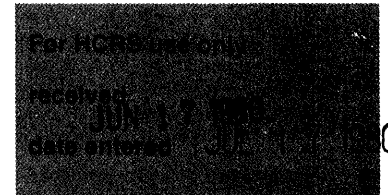
Identical three-story and exposed-basement wings flank the main block of the building. These wings have low-pitched hipped roofs with pediments. Entrances, flanked by squared granite columns, face 10th and 11th Streets. The entrances are surmounted by brick piers that terminate in a round arch, framing three third story windows. A small pediment on the roof accentuates this feature. Bands of windows pierce the facades, round-arched at the third story. Second and third story windows have brownstone sills and lintels; fourth floor windows have brownstone sills.

At the rear of the building an angular wing originally provided space for a gymnasium and auditorium. Large round-arched windows at the second level illuminate the auditorium. To the south of this wing there is a small structure that houses the heating plant. It is spaced a few feet from the main building, but there is passage from the heating plant to the gymnasium wing.

Embellishment on the building consists of corbelled brick below the cornices, a denticulated cornice, and relief brick work resembling piers at the building's corners. As mentioned above, brownstone trim provides further interest, as does a water table separating the basement and first floor. Throughout the school there is an abundance of woodwork. Doorways, window frames, staircases, baseboards, and chair rails are all of oak. The hardwood floors on the top three floors are mostly exposed. Basement floors are concrete in the halls and hardwood in the rooms, some carpeted.

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

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



Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 1

The school has suffered few changes in the seventy-five years since its construction. The removal of the belfry on the tower in about 1950 is the only alteration on the exterior. Alterations on the interior have been minimal, reflecting changing needs and functions. Fire doors were installed at each landing in the late 1950s. Office areas were created at the ends of the second, third, and fourth floor hallways in the early 1960s, and some of the basement rooms were made into offices. Plumbing and lighting fixtures have been replaced as necessary. In about half of the rooms the original lighting fixtures are extant. The heating system is also nearly in its original state.

Two major disasters mark the history of the school. In 1917 a fire swept through a portion of the building causing much damage in the auditorium/gymnasium wing. It appears that repairs duplicated the original work. The ceiling on the second floor fell in 1969; it was replaced with a suspended ceiling. Third and fourth floor hall ceilings were secured with four inch strips bolted to the ceiling joists.

In 1973 the school was converted from a high school to a middle school. As a high school it had housed as many as 900 students, but at present there are about 440 students. The fourth floor is not used. Much work is needed on the building to bring it to code standards. The School Board is considering renovating the building or razing it to build a facility that would meet present requirements.

Wilmarth School, 913 Third Avenue West

The Ellis, Beaser, and Wilmarth Schools are smaller brick and brownstone structures incorporating many of the same NeoClassical and Romanesque elements later included in the Middle School. Constructed in 1895, the Wilmarth School is most like the Middle School in the distribution of masses. The two-story-plus-basement facade is broken up into three vertical planes, with the center chisel-roof tower containing the entrance forwardmost of the three. Double-windowed sections frame each side of the tower. Classroom sections are stepped back a stage farther, and are cut by single double-hung windows. The cream brick building's most striking decorative elements are the contrasting brownstone quoins trimming all vertical edges, brownstone courses marking the wall between stories, and the large round-arched stairlight over the double-door entrance. As in the three other schools, Wildhagen has "pointed" to the center of the building with a stone name panel and motif of three windows over a center arch. On the Wilmarth School, the three rectangular openings are crowned with brownstone-framed semicircular overlights. A Palladian motif is suggested by the association of two thin, simple sidelights to either side of the door with the large arched stairlight above. Two large cream brick chimneys with corbelled caps are set into the ridge of the hipped roof on the sides of the tower.

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

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



Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page 2

Beaser School, 612 Beaser Avenue

Least like its fellow schools, the 1899 Beaser School shows Wildhagen in a more fanciful mood. Basically symmetrical like the others, the two-story-plus-basement design is decorated with pseudo-stepped brownstone gables with raised chimneys in the Flemish fashion. The pale cream brick surface is warmed with a brownstone basement, courses, and central portal. An open belfry rises from the peak of the gabled roof. Three gables intersect the front slope of the roof, one a shallow, full-height projecting section to the left, a smaller one to the right covering a roof dormer, and the center one enclosing a lunette over the center portal and familiar three-part window scheme. Two units of three windows are stacked to form the center stairlight; underneath, the great brownstone arch encloses a recessed doorway. The stone panel between stories identifies the building only as "Public School." The Beaser School received some interior remodelling in 1916.

Ellis School, 310 Stuntz Avenue

The Ellis School, closest in age to the Middle School, is also a two-story-plus-basement NeoClassical design. The simple, rectangular mass is varied only by a projecting center pedimented pavilion, cut by a NeoClassical arch over the entrance. The brownstone voussoirs and keystone of the arch and the basement story contrasted with the brick walls relate to the materials of the other schools. Although the grand arch and triple-window motif is again used to mark the story over the entrance, the omission of overt Richardsonian Romanesque references make the Ellis School unique among its fellows. Distribution of double-hung windows to either side of the center pavilion is regular, with four to each side. An elliptical window is set into the center pediment which intersects the low pyramidal roof.

# 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" 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** 1895, 1899, 1900, 1904<sup>1</sup> **Builder/Architect** Henry Wildhagen<sup>2</sup>

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Singularly imposing, the collective nomination of Henry Wildhagen schools enhances the significance of each by providing an opportunity to consider the development of an important area architect during a nine-year period. The four brick and brownstone structures represent the peak years of Ashland's industrial development, and the city's response to its educational needs during that critical time.

Architecture

Wildhagen, one of northern Wisconsin's best-known architects at the turn of the century, was born in Hanover, Germany in 1856. He immigrated to the United States at the age of 30, having graduated from the University of Hanover's technical school some years earlier.<sup>3</sup> Prior to undertaking the Ashland School Department commissions, Wildhagen had established a reputation designing sulphate mills in the eastern United States and Canada. His last mill commission brought him to Ashland where he opened an office with civil engineer Herman Rettinghaus in 1893. A comparison of his Wilmarth, Beaser, Ellis, and Ashland Middle Schools reveals Wildhagen's restrained coloristic tendencies in the simple contrast of brick and brownstone, and his predilection for clearly-defined and symmetrical masses. Following the national trend resulting from architectural models constructed at the World Columbian Exposition in 1893, Wildhagen progressively introduced more NeoClassical elements into the Ashland schools, finally producing the grand-scale Ashland Middle School with its Palladian rationalism. The retention of Romanesque motifs may have been quotations from Richardsonian design, or an appropriate manner of treating brownstone details.

The use of brownstone in itself is an important historical key to the era of greatest activity in Ashland's five brownstone quarries. Extensive use of hardwood in the buildings' interiors also testifies to the importance of the area's logging and lumber milling industries. More productive near the turn of the century, those industries continue today.

(continued)

<sup>1</sup>School department records.

<sup>2</sup>Ashland Board of Education Minutes, 1903-1905; Ashland Daily Press, March 24, 1920.

<sup>3</sup>Ashland Daily Press, March 24, 1920.

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

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

For HCRS use only

received \_\_\_\_\_

date entered \_\_\_\_\_

Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page

1

The Ashland Wildhagen schools are among the finest buildings in Ashland, a community of distinctive brick and brownstone structures. Alterations made to the structures do not detract from the handsomeness of the materials or the clarity and pleasing proportions of the designs. Both aesthetically and historically, the buildings are important contributions to the architectural heritage of northern Wisconsin.

---

<sup>4</sup>"Ashland, Tops in Wisconsin," Ashland League of Women Voters, 1967, p. 8.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Ashland Daily Press, 24 March 1920, 30 September 1905, 3 January 1906, 16 October 1899.  
 Ashland Board of Education Minutes, 1903-1906.  
 "Ashland Tops in Wisconsin," Ashland League of Women Voters, Eckman Printery,  
 Ashland, WI, 1967.

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

# 10. Geographical Data

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

Acreeage of nominated property various--see continuation sheet

Quadrangle name (a,b,c) Ashland West, Wis.  
 (d) Ashland East, Wis.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000  
1:24000

UMT References

Ashland High:

Wilmarth:

A 

1	5	6	6	2	7	6	0	5	1	6	0	9	8	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B 

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

C 

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

Ellis: D 

1	5	6	6	2	9	6	0	5	1	6	2	0	4	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

E 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

F 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

G 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

H 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

**Verbal boundary description and justification**

Various - see Continuation Sheet

**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 Eugene Stauffer (continued)  
 organization School District of Ashland date December 22, 1979  
 street & number Ellis Avenue telephone (715) 682-5271  
 city or town Ashland state Wisconsin 54806

# 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 Murray*

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

date 6/11/80

For HCPRS use only

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

*W. Ray*  
 Keeper of the National Register

date 7/17/80

Attest: *Kristen O. Connell*

date 7/19/80

Chief of Registrations

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

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

For HCRS use only  
 routing  
 date stamp

Continuation sheet

Item number 10, 11

Page 1

10. Acreages of Nominated Properties

Ashland School: 2.06  
 Wilmarth School: less than one  
 Beaser School: less than one  
 Ellis School: less than one

Verbal boundary description:

Wilmarth School: Block 256, Ellis Division of Ashland, Ashland County, Wisconsin.

Beaser School: Lots 7 thru 12, Block 68, Ashland Proper, Ashland, Ashland County, Wisconsin.

Ellis School: Block 129, Ellis Division of Ashland, Ashland County, Wisconsin.

Ashland Middle School: Fractional lots 1-4 and all of lots 5-24 of Block 278, Ellis Division of Ashland, Ashland County, Wisconsin.

11. Form Prepared by:

Barbara Wyatt, Survey & Planning Coordinator, Historic Preservation Division  
 State Historical Society of Wisconsin December 22, 1979  
 816 State Street 608/262-8904  
 Madison Wisconsin 53706

Diane H. Filipowicz, Architectural Historian, Historic Preservation Division  
 State Historical Society of Wisconsin March, 1980  
 816 State Street 608/262-2970  
 Madison Wisconsin 53706