



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

NOMINATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Date: 1/24/2019

Please provide as much complete information as you can to enable our staff to better evaluate the property.

What is the historic name of this property? Verona Graded School

What is the current name of this property? New Century School

I wish to nominate this property because (check one or more boxes):

- National Register and State Register listing is an honor
- I seek financial assistance in maintaining or rehabilitating the property
- This building is my primary residence
- This is an income producing property (commercial or residential rental)
- I wish to protect this property
- This property is threatened with demolition or destruction

Where is the property located?

If a city or village please provide:

Address (street and number) 401 West Verona Avenue

City (or village) Verona

County Dane

OR If an unincorporated or rural area please provide:

Address (with road or nearest road) _____

Civil Town/Township _____

City (nearest city or village) _____

County _____

Section _____, Town _____ North, Range _____

Do you know any of the following information?

The architect's name was James R. Law

The builder's name was Unknown

The date of construction was Circa 1917

List Sources of Information (or attach photocopies)

Source: See attachment Page: _____

What alterations or additions were made since the building was built? Please check one or more boxes where applicable.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Additions | <input type="checkbox"/> replacement siding or re-siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> removal of porches | <input type="checkbox"/> removal of decorative details |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> replacement doors and windows | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> interior remodeling or updating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> moved from its original location (if moved, list why, from where, and when in description below) | |

The dates of major alterations or additions were: 1950, 1977

Briefly describe any changes checked above:

The floor plan layout shown in the original 1917 blueprints is very similar to the building today, with some exceptions:

- *1950: Two rooms were added to the NW corner via an expansion of the building still visible from outside. (See Source 3, the Verona Area School District website.)
- *Around 1977: The Southwest corner of the building was modified with a hallway connecting it to the elementary school (later named "Sugar Creek") next to it. Additional rooms may have been added at this point. (Source 3. Also an interview with Pat Wehrley, who taught there at this time).
- *2008: Windows were replaced (Source: Verona City Hall records).
- *Unknown date: A gym area on the lower floor has been converted to classrooms. We are not sure when this was done but we believe it was done sometime after 1955 (Source: Former student Mary Stichter, attended this school from 1947-1955).

What do you know about the history of the property? For statements of historical fact, please indicate your sources of information (keep in mind that our evaluation may depend solely on the information that you submit, therefore, your sources should be reliable).

This building has been used by the Verona Area School District since its construction around 1917. Currently it houses the New Century Charter School. Please note that sources cited are listed in the attached supplementary materials.

- *March 3, 1917: This date is present on blueprints of this building that were drawn by James R. Law Architect, Madison Wisconsin (See Source 1, notes on the blueprints). These blueprints currently reside in storage at the business today called "Potter Lawson" - which is the current iteration of the business started by James R. Law and his brother (See Source 2, Wikipedia page on Potter Lawson.).
- *1917: According to the Verona School District website, the building was built in 1917 at a cost of \$17,000 as the "Verona Graded School". It served K-8 grade students. (See Source 3, the Verona Area School District website.)
- *1960s: The building was used for 7th and 8th grade students. (See Source 3, the Verona Area School District website.)
- *1980 into the 1990s: The building was used for 4th grade students. (See Source 3, the Verona Area School District website.)
- *1995: The building housed the newly created "New Century Charter School", which an article claims was the first elementary-level charter school in Wisconsin. (See Source 4, an article from the Wisconsin State Journal).
- *Present Day: New Century Charter School still operates there today. (See Source 5, the New Century Charter School website with street address).

List Sources of Information (or attach photocopies)

Source: See attachment. Page: _____

Source: _____ Page: _____

Significance of the property

Why do you think that this property should be listed in the National Register and the State Register? In one or two paragraphs, explain why the property is important.

Integrity: Examining the original blueprints and walking through the building shows that much of the structure's layout is still original. There have been alterations made (including those noted earlier and others), but the exterior, main entry, and several of the classrooms appear to be consistent with the original blueprints. The building has not been moved.

Local relevance: This school building has been used for schooling many generations of Verona residents. It played a part in two historically relevant movements in Wisconsin:

***Rural school consolidation:** In the mid 1960s, many small rural schools in the state of Wisconsin were forced to close and consolidate into larger districts. The Verona Area School District was formed in 1964 which led to the eventual closing of Verona's rural schools - most of whose students were then bussed in to this building for their elementary years. This event was culturally significant in that it forced the mixing of a more rural lifestyle into the arguably more urban school (See Sources 8, 9).

***Wisconsin's first charter elementary school:** Currently there are 233 charter schools in Wisconsin (see Source 6). 132 of those are elementary schools or contain an elementary school. A 1995 Wisconsin State Journal article claims that New Century was the first elementary-level charter school in Wisconsin (see Source 4).

List Sources of Information (or attach photocopies)

Source: See attached list of sources Page: _____

Source: _____ Page: _____

*Photographs

Please submit clear, recent photographs that show all sides of the exterior of the structure, views of the interior of the structure, and all associated outbuildings. The **photographs cannot be returned**, but will become a permanent part of our site records. Please reference the last page of this questionnaire for instructions for submitting digital photograph files on a CD.

* Properties with more than one building (for example: farmsteads, industrial complexes, religious complexes)

Please include photographs of all buildings and structures that make up the complex. The images should be keyed to a sketch map that indicates the relative relationship of the components. When known, dates should be provided for all of the buildings. Please indicate what buildings that once formed part of the complex have been lost over time.

*Map

Please draw a simple sketch map of the lot on which the property is located. Include all structures, adjoining streets, and other major features. Photographs of the buildings should be keyed to this sketch. If the property is rural, please submit a plat map, county map or other detailed map and precisely mark the location.

* Historic photographs

While not required, historic photographs can be useful in evaluating changes to the property. When available, please provide photocopies of historic images. **DO NOT SEND ORIGINALS.** Please provide the source and the date of the photograph.

Person completing questionnaire:

Date: 1/24/2019

Name: Jesse Charles

Address: 1234 Cathedral Point Drive, Verona, WI

Zip Code: 53593

Telephone: 608-577-5525

Email: SaveVeronaHistory@gmail.com

Owner (if different than above)

Name: Verona Area School District

Address: 700 North Main Street, Verona, WI

Zip Code: 53593

Telephone: 608-845-4321

Email: _____

Submittal checklist:

- Completed questionnaire
- Recent photographs
- Disk with digital images
- Photocopy of historic image(s), if available
- Site map, if applicable
- Supporting documentation

Complete and return this form, along with recent photographs and any additional attachments to:

Division of Historic Preservation and Public History
Wisconsin Historical Society
816 State Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

Verona Graded School / New Century Building

National Register Questionnaire - Supplementary Materials

Verona Area Historical Society, 1/24/2019

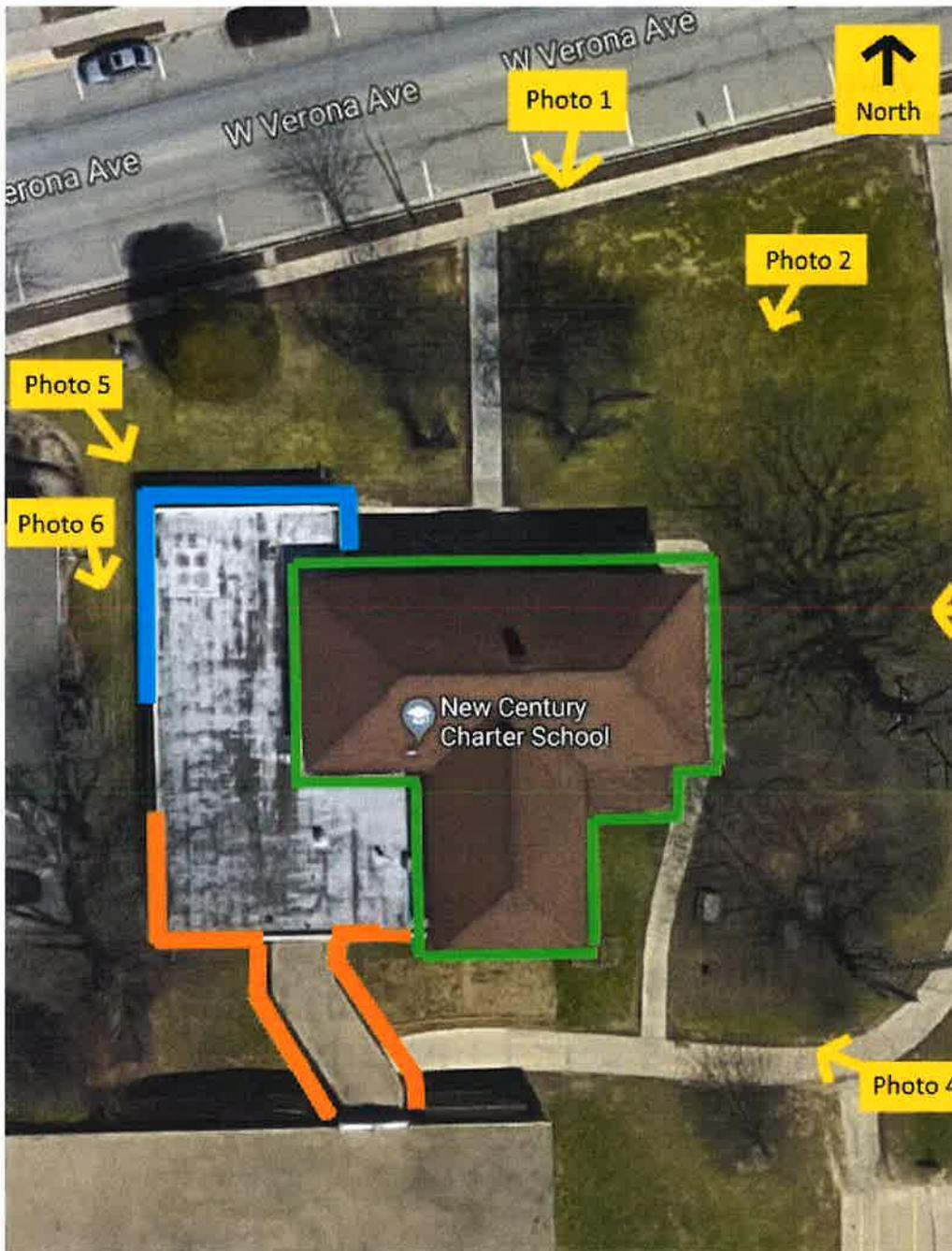
SaveVeronaHistory@gmail.com

608-577-5525

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Section 1: Current Map



Green = Original Structure.
Aqua = Two room 1950
Addition
Orange = 1977 addition and
Connection
Please note: We are not sure
where the 1950 and 1977
additions meet exactly.

Yellow arrows show the location and direction of the current exterior photographs.
Above image courtesy of Google Maps.

Section 2: Current Exterior Photographs

Current exterior photographs were taken 12/31/18.

Current Photo #1 (below): Front of building, looking south from West Verona Avenue. The right third of this picture is the single-story 1950 addition that was added on to the northwest corner and west side of the building.



Current Photo #2 (below): Front of building, including New Century School sign, looking slightly southwest from West Verona Avenue.



Current Photo #3 (below): East side of the building. Looking west.



Current Photo #4 (below): The southeast corner of the building. Looking northwest. In the bottom left hand corner of the photo is a portion of a gray hallway that was added around 1977 to connect this building to a newer school building.



Current Photo #5 (below): The Northwest corner of the building, looking southeast. In the foreground is the 1950 addition to the building.



Current Photo #6 (below): The west side of the building, looking southeast. Visible is the 1950 addition to the building. We are not sure exactly where the 1950 addition meets the 1977 addition.



Section 3: Current Interior Photographs

Current interior photographs were taken 2/1/18

Current Photo #7 (below): Hallway on the lower floor.



Current Photo #8 (below): Classroom on the northeast corner, lower floor.



Current Photo #9 (below): Same classroom as in #8, on the northeast corner, lower floor.



Current Photo #10 (below): Entryway staircases, north entrance.



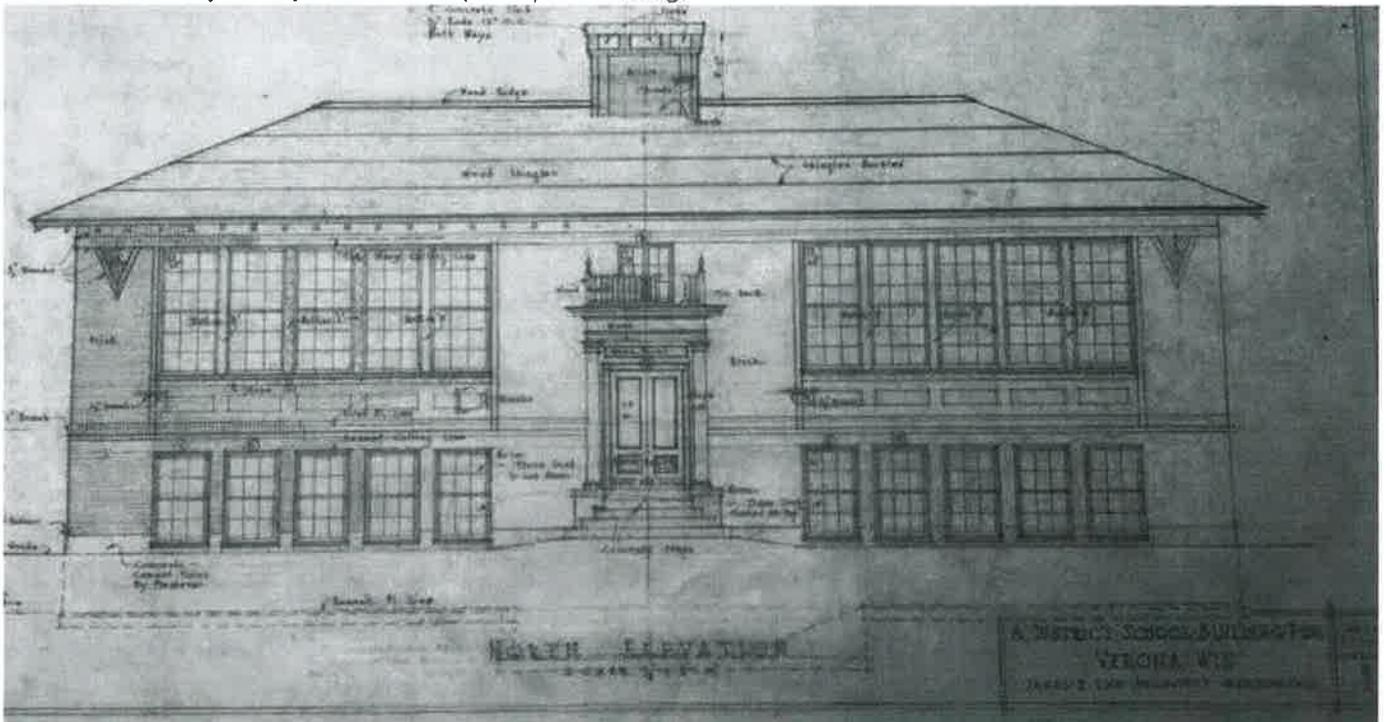
Current Photo #11 (below): Ceiling and woodwork above the north entrance.



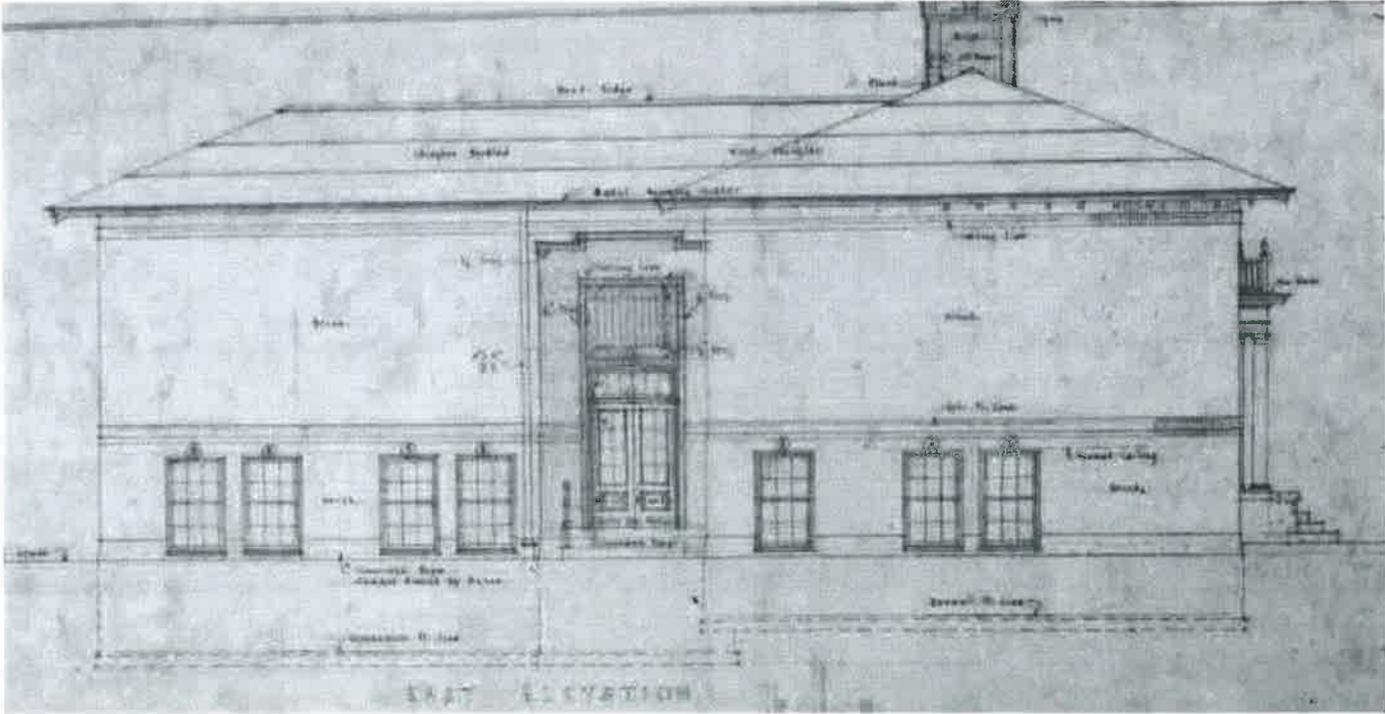
Section 4: Excerpts from the 1917 Blueprints

James R. Law Architect, dated March 3, 1917.

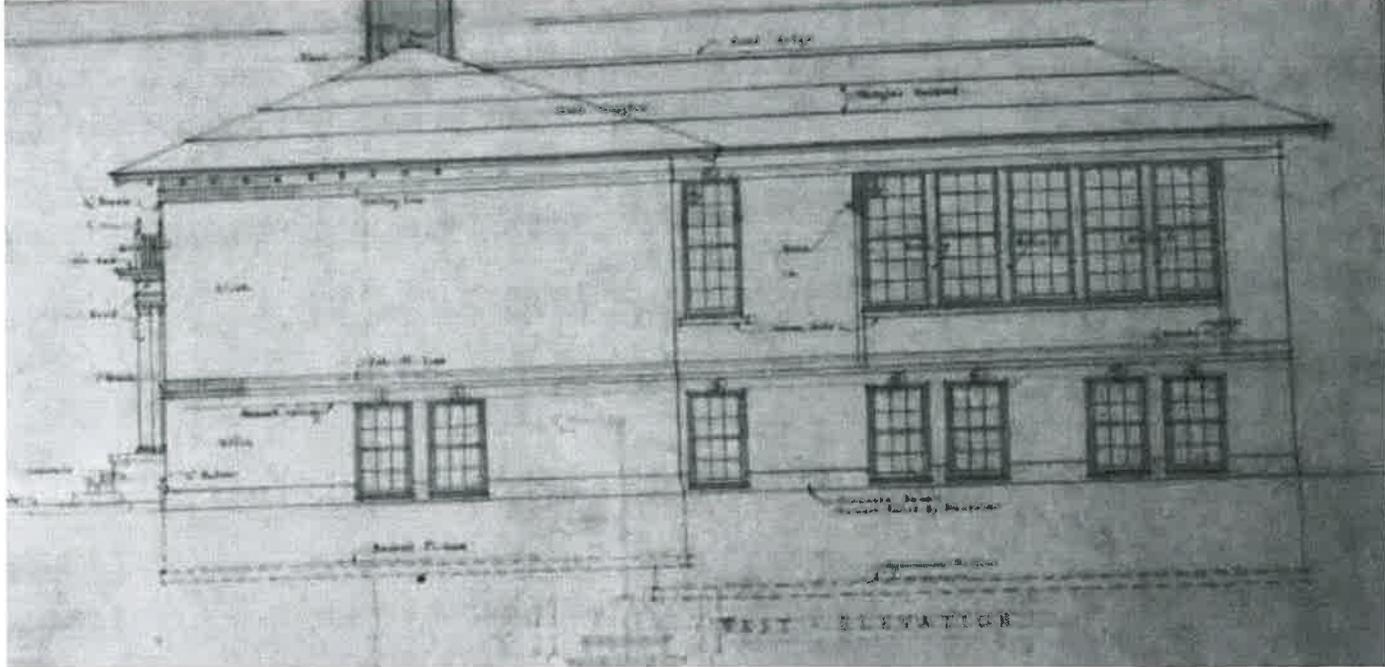
1917 Blue Print (below): North side (front) of building:



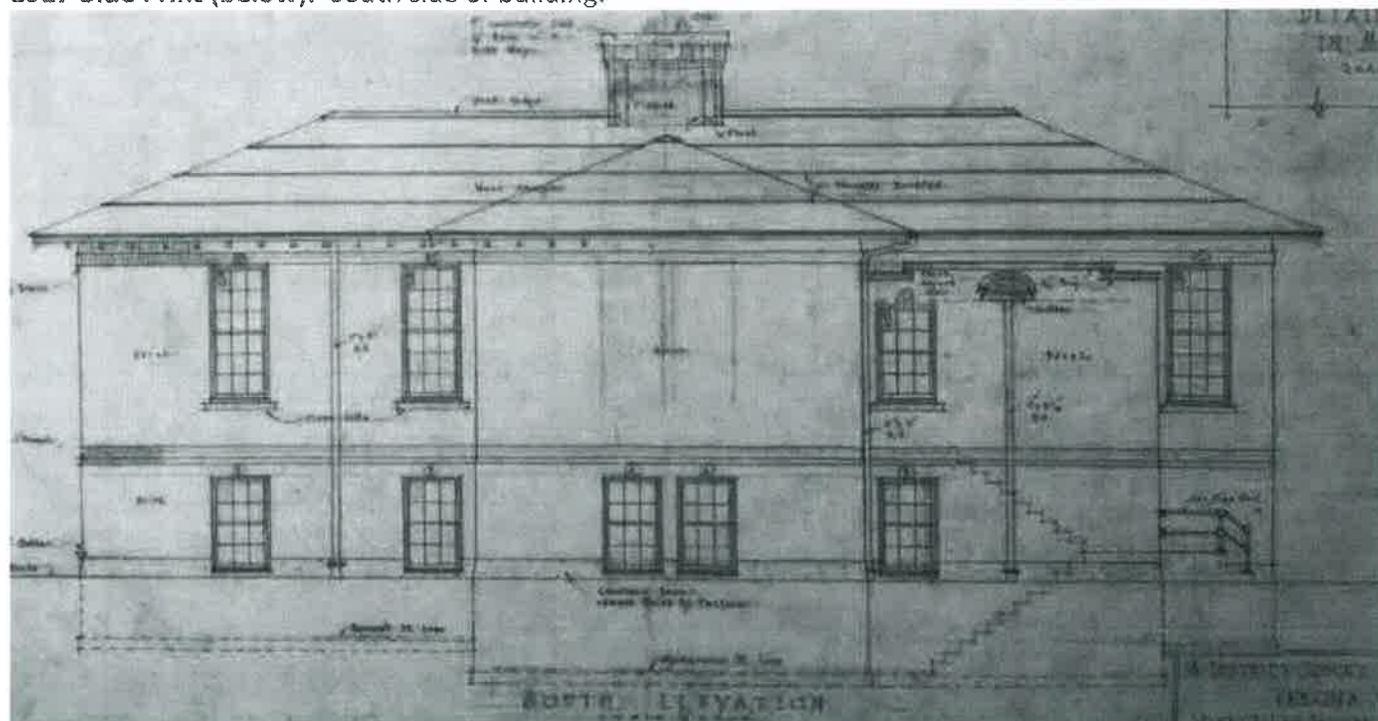
1917 Blue Print (below): East side of building:



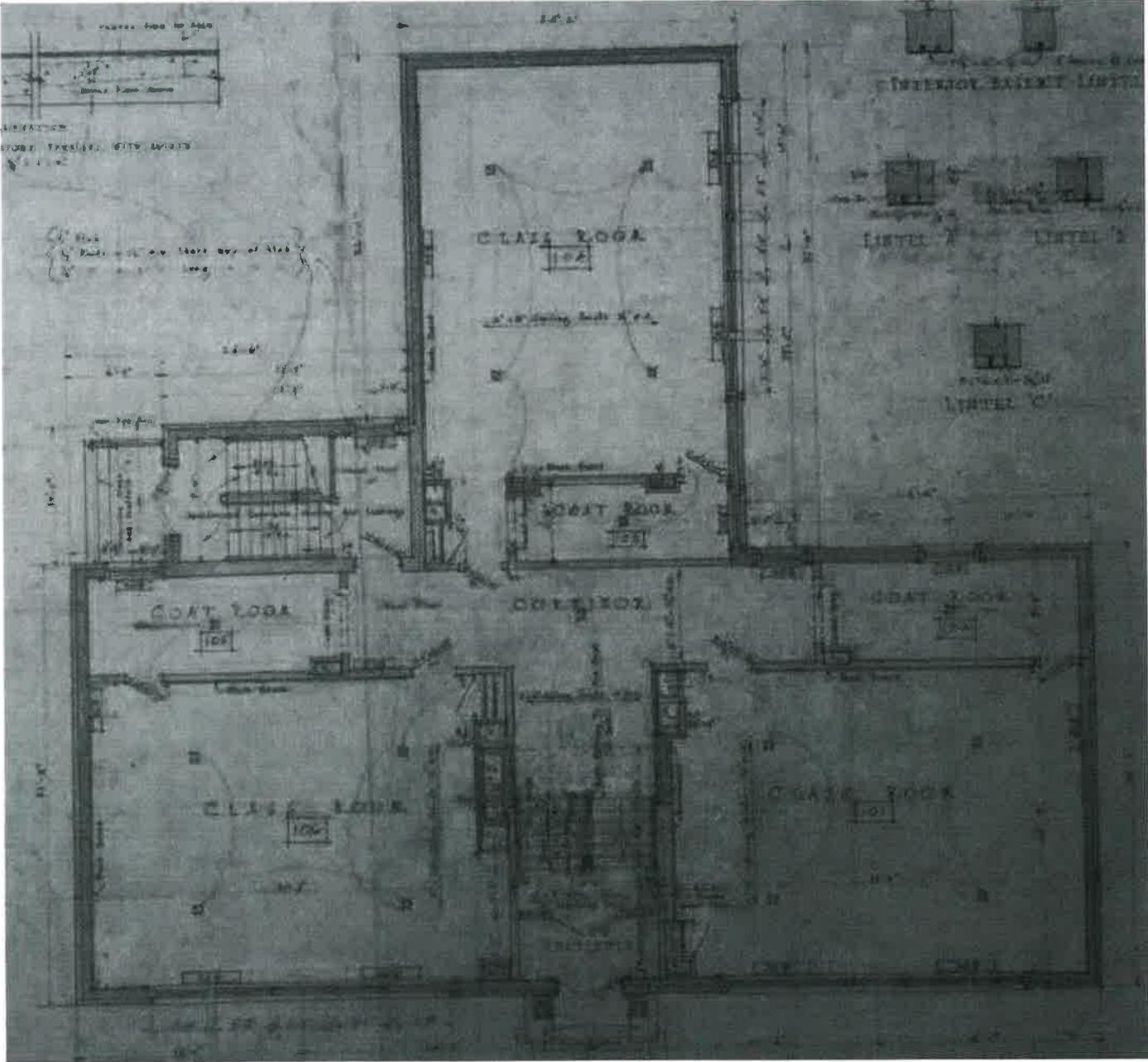
1917 Blue Print (below): West side of building:



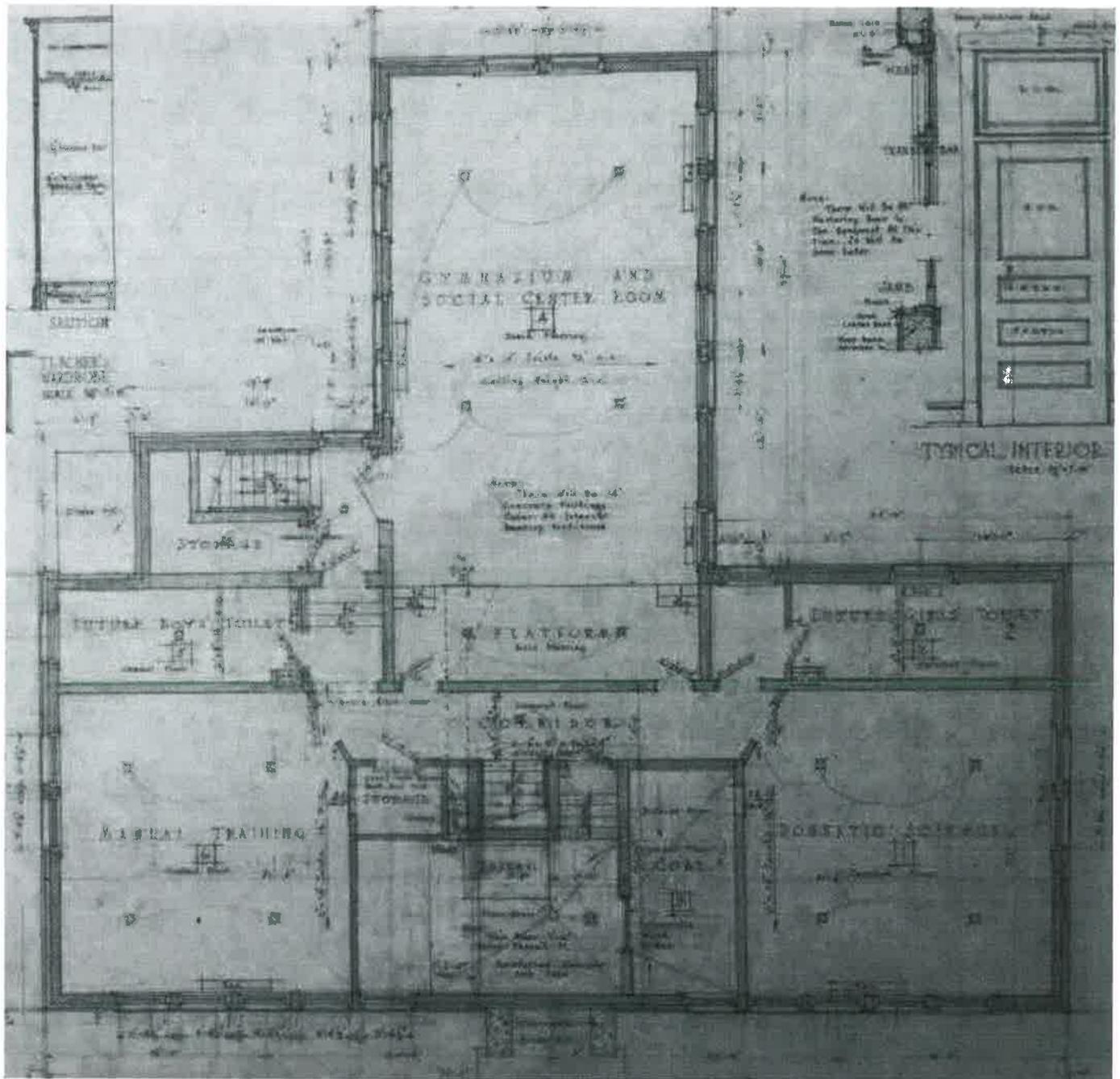
1917 Blue Print (below): South side of building:



1917 Blue Print (below): Interior, upper floor of building. Some alterations of internal walls have occurred, mostly in the main corridor.

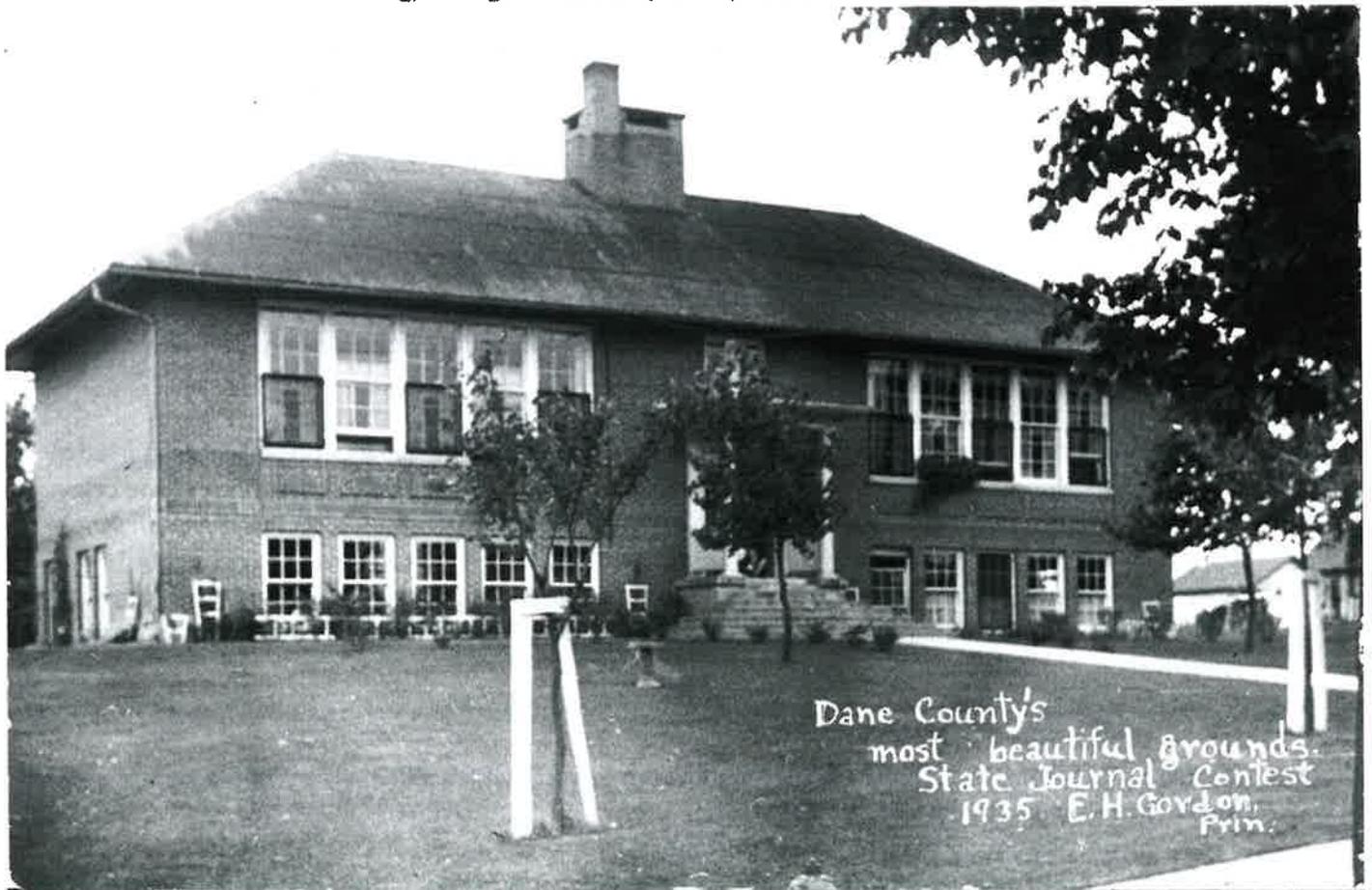


1917 Blue Print (below): Interior, lower floor of building. The gymnasium shown has been converted to two classrooms. The 1950 addition added a hallway next to the lower right classroom. Restrooms in this hallway were added at some point, and other changes have occurred.



Section 5: Historic Photographs

North side exterior of the building, facing southwest (below). Believed to have been taken around 1935.



Section 6: Sources Cited

Below are sources cited in the National Register Nomination Questionnaire.

- **Source 1** - Blueprints by James R. Law Architect dated 3/3/1917 labeled “A DISTRICT SCHOOL BUILDING FOR VERONA, WI”. These physical blueprints are on site at Potter Lawson in Madison, Wisconsin. The included photographs of these blueprints were taken around 2016.
- **Source 2** - Reference indicating that the firm “Law, Law and Potter” became Potter Lawson, and that James R. Law was a founder:
 - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law, Law %26 Potter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law,_Law_%26_Potter)
- **Source 3** - Timeline provided by the Verona Area School District’s website. Most of that information came from Verona resident Mary Stichter, who attended school in this building from 1947-1955 and later worked for the school district from 1973-2006. Her father Jack Rood was on the Verona Schools schoolboard from approx. 1950-1962.
 - http://sces.verona.k12.wi.us/our_school/history_of_v_a_s_d
- **Source 4** - A 1995 Wisconsin State Journal article describing how the New Century School started in this building. Note that the author mentions the location as “Located on the first floor of the original red Sugar Creek School building on Verona Road, The New Century school is tied to the main school by a short hallway.” Also mentions that New Century is the first elementary-level charter school in Wisconsin: “New Century is charting new territory to explore options in elementary education”. Please note we have not confirmed with other sources that New Century was the first elementary-level charter school in Wisconsin.
 - “Learning At Their Own Pace. Verona School is First in State”, Wisconsin State Journal, Sept 9, 1995, pages 13-14.
- **Source 5** - The website of the “New Century Charter School” which still operates in the building today. Note the address of 401 W. Verona Avenue.
 - <http://newcenturycharterschool.org/about-us>
- **Source 6** - A list of all currently operating charter schools in Wisconsin, from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction’s website. Note that this can be downloaded as an excel spreadsheet.
 - <https://dpi.wi.gov/sms/charter-schools/current>
- **Source 7** - A document from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction detailing the first years of charter schools in Wisconsin. Note table 2 on page 7 which lists one charter school as existing in the 1994-1995 year, and seven more in the 1995-1996 year. This report does not list New Century by name, but illustrates the beginning of charter schools in Wisconsin.
 - <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sms/Charter-Schools/01-02%20leg%20report.pdf>

■ Table 2

Charter School Growth in Wisconsin

Year	Number of Charter Schools
1994-1995	1
1995-1996	8
1996-1997	13
1997-1998	18
1998-1999	34
1999-2000	87
2000-2001	92
2001-2002	109
2002-2003	128
2003-2004	137

-
- **Source 8** – An account of the forming of the Verona Area School District and the closing of Verona’s rural schools, starting in the mid-1960s. See pages 48-49 of “A Sesquicentennial History of Verona”, by Karl Curtis. 1997. Available in the Verona Library.

WHAT HAPPENED AT SCHOOL TODAY?

The biggest local news story to take place during the 1950s and 1960s was the consolidation of fourteen rural school districts and the Verona Union Free High School District into the Verona Area Public School District. Brought on by dramatic growth within the community, the move to consolidation brought with it bitter controversy.

Growth had been causing the schools in Verona to split at the seams during the 1950s, and twice during the decade old structures had to be replaced. First, a new elementary school, now Sugar Creek Elementary, was built in 1956 when the old brick school on Verona Avenue was filled to capacity. William Lueschow was principal at the time. Continued growth also prompted two more additions to the school during the mid-1960s.

As is still the case today, the growth in the elementary school population spelled doom for the high school shortly thereafter. By the late 1950s the old high school building on South Marietta Street felt the pressure of a swelling student body, and in 1961 a new high school was completed. That building went on to serve as the Verona Middle School, and is now Country View Elementary. John Thorson served as the first Principal at the new high school.

Although there had been talk of school consolidation, or "integration," for several years, the first serious move toward merger came in January of 1962 when a mass meeting of Village residents called for consolidation.

The movement almost instantly met strong opposition from most of the rural elementary schools, which would later join the merged district. Although petitions requesting the change had been circulated, the Dane County School Committee rejected the merger plan in August of 1963, mainly because of rural opposition to the plan.

But a year later, the Committee gave its approval for a referendum in November of 1964. The Committee for a Progressive Rural Verona Area and the Rural School Committee stood in opposition to the merger. The Committee for Reorganization was the group in favor. The two sides traded charges and rebuttals up to the time of the referendum, and in the end the reformers won by a vote of 1,186 to 515.

The merger became effective on December 5, 1964. Merged with the high school were the Verona Grade, Maple Grove, Camp Badger, Stoner, Andrew Henry, Maple Corners, Gordon, White, Riley, McPherson, Schaller, and Valley View elementary school districts.

The new consolidation created the need to elect a new Verona Area Public School Board. Those first people to serve their community were Walter Sartorius, President, Hilmer Olsen, Maynard Mani, Larry Monthey, Donald Geiger, and Jay Henderson. The district also found itself in need of a superintendent to run its administrative affairs, and it chose John Lawrence. Mr. Lawrence had previously been principal at the high school. Lloyd Hornbacher was named high school principal, and Richard Herbison remained as principal at the elementary school.

As if this upheaval were not enough, the students of Verona were in for even more change within the coming year. A junior high school was formed for the fall of 1965, and operated in the old Verona Grade School building on West Verona Avenue. The junior high was later renamed the Verona Middle School. Robert Kleinfeldt was the first Principal of the junior high.

Beginning in November of 1965 the new school district began selling off the old rural school buildings at public auction. At the first auction the McPherson School building was sold to Wesley Topper, Mt. Horeb, for \$4100. The Schaller building went to William Kuenzi of Madison for \$4,950. Orville Himsel purchased the White building and site for \$2,225. The last and biggest bargain of the day was the Andrew Henry school, which was sold to Dr. James J. Van de Grift, Verona, for \$290. Dr. Van de Grift owned the property on which the school building was located. The Gordon School was officially closed at the completion of the 1965-66 school year. Only eleven students attended Gordon in its final year. The Camp Badger School was sold to the City of Fitchburg in 1975.

In a bit of good fortune, the old Maple Grove School had been torn down in 1957 and replaced by a more modern structure. That fact, along with heavy lobbying by area residents, allowed Maple Grove to stay open.

- **Source 9** – Mention of the rural schools closing and their students then attending the Verona Graded School has been described by several of our historical society members who lived through this era, including Mary Stichter.



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Mr. Jesse Charles
1234 Cathedral Point Drive
Verona, WI 53593

February 22, 2019

Dear Mr. Charles:

Thank you for your inquiry regarding the **Verona Graded School at 401 West Verona Avenue in Verona, Dane County**. The staff of the Division of Historic Preservation has had the opportunity to carefully review your questionnaire response to evaluate its potential for listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Based on the information provided, the former school may be eligible for listing under Criterion A in the area of Education for its association with the history of education in the community, and having sufficient integrity to represent this history.

You should realize that this is only a preliminary opinion based on the information supplied to us. The full nomination, should you decide to proceed, requires substantially more information. Nomination of a property to the State Register and National Register can be extremely demanding to those uninitiated to the process. That is why we strongly suggest that individuals secure the services of an experienced consultant before attempting to complete a nomination. We have enclosed a list of people who have expressed interest in this work, and who have recently successfully completed nominations in Wisconsin.

If you have any further questions regarding the State or the National Register of Historic Places in Wisconsin, please call me at (608) 264-6501, or I may be reached by e-mail at peggy.veregin@wisconsinhistory.org.

Sincerely,

Peggy Veregin
State Register and National Register Coordinator
Wisconsin Historical Society

enclosure

