

City of Afton, Minnesota
Heritage Preservation Commission
LOCAL PROPERTY DESIGNATION

DRAFT

NAME OF PROPERTY:

Historic Name: Afton Village School
Other Names: Afton Brick School House
SHPO Inventory No.: WA-AFC-011
Parcel No.: 22.028.20.14.0038

LOCATION:

Street & No.: 15888-34th Street South
City/Town: Afton
State, County, Zip: Minnesota, Washington County, 55001

PROPERTY OWNER:

Owner Name: Kathleen M. Sullivan
Owner Phone/Cell:
Street & No.: 5431 Hilltop Avenue North
City/State/Zip: Lake Elmo, Minnesota 55042

CLASSIFICATION:

<i>Ownership of Property</i>	<i>Category of Property:</i>	<i>Number of Resources within Property</i>		
		<i>Contributing</i>	<i>Noncontributing</i>	
X private public	X building(s) district site structure object	1	1	buildings sites structures objects
		1	1	1TOTAL

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register of Historic Places: 0 *Open to the Public:* No

FUNCTION or USE:

Historic Functions: EDUCATION: school
Current Functions: DOMESTIC: single dwelling

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SIGNIFICANCE:

Historic significance: Associated with activities, processes, events, trends or persons of importance to the community, state or nation.

Narrative Statement:

“The farmer’s social life revolved to a large extent around the schoolhouse. With its adjoining lot, it functioned as polling place, caucus hall, public forum, clubhouse, church, funeral parlor, theater and picnic ground. It was quite natural that the schoolhouse should be variously used by the community, since it was the sole public meetinghouse in the neighborhood – at least, until a church was built” “Singing meetings, spelling bees, Sunday school festivals, temperance meetings, dramatic entertainments, panorama shows and Christmas celebrations with community trees were all held in the schoolhouse.” (Minnesota Farmers’ Diaries)

According to *Afton Remembered*, there were as many as twelve different schools, built between 1855 and 1884, serving the young people of Afton Village and Afton Township during the early years. The first school classes were held in private homes.

The first Afton Township school building, known as the Haskell School and named for Joseph Haskell, a local farmer, was constructed in the mid-1850. The school was approximately 4 miles southwest of the Village proper in Township Section 21. The first school building in Afton Village proper was a small wood-framed structure opened in 1856 near Gummesson’s Coulee in the southern portion of the Village. (Robb) That school was later incorporated into a residence that was recently demolished.

The brick school, which according to Ken Martens came to be known as the Afton Village School, was the second school built within the village and was defined as a community school (as opposed to a private home school). With the loss of the first one room, frame school house, the Afton Village School at 15888-34th Street South became the oldest remaining school building in the Village.

Information varies on the early years of the Afton Village School. It is a small brick building (originally constructed with a bell tower) facing the public square, erected by 1867 for approximately \$550. Although several sources identify the construction date as 1876, The Village’s first planning map supports the earlier date, which may have been mistakenly transposed and then repeated over time. The silken map, now held at the Afton Historical Museum, dated 1855, delineates streets, blocks and parcels of the original Afton Village in black ink. That base map was officially certified by a local justice of the peace as the Afton Village plat map. Overlaid on the original base map in sepia ink are property ownership and land use information added in the mid 1860s. The sepia ink overlay clearly shows “School House” written on the Afton Village School site parcel. The name “Foreman” is written on the plat directly east of the school (later the site of the Carnithan-Squires House). Noah Foreman owned this parcel for a little over a year between 1866-1867, thus dating the school to have already been sited and likely functioning on the adjacent parcel in the mid 1860s.

Elisha Partridge (1826-1900), originally from Massachusetts, served as the first classroom teacher. He was a Civil War veteran who served with the Third Minnesota Regiment. The building was utilized as a school until 1903. (Blondo)

In 1950 that the Afton area School District (known as District 22) officially consolidated all the rural and urban systems, closing the last remnants of this early system and the little schools became obsolete. In 1957 District 22 merged with the Stillwater School District 834 where it remains today. (Robb, 37-41)

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Architectural significance: Possessing distinctive characteristics of a style, place, period, method or materials of construction, builder or architect.

Architectural Classification: School
Materials Used: Brick, stone, wood flooring, asphalt roofing
Foundation: Brick
Walls: Brick
Roof: Front gabled with asphalt shingles

Narrative Description:

The Afton Village School is sited on block 17 along 15888-34th Street South facing the Afton Public Square to the south. The simple, 27 foot by 40 foot Greek Revival style building was rendered in cream-colored brick with its main elevation's open gable facing to the south. The roof is covered with high-profile asphalt shingles. The structure retains its original footprint.

Two large evergreens frame the front of the structure.

While the structure has retained its original brick chimney along the northerly ridge of the roof, it has lost its bell tower over time. However, the Afton Heritage Preservation Commission knows the bell's current location if the tower were ever rebuilt.

The main elevation displays a central door opening with a two-light transom above. The central door is flanked by two modern carriage lights and two tall nine-over-nine double hung windows. The windows appear to be newer insulated sash with divided light inserts. The door set and window openings are capped with stone lintels. The two front windows have stone sills.

The front elevation also displays a decorative brick dentil banding immediately under the front gable bargeboard. The brick dentil banding follows the bargeboard around all four elevations of the school building. The lower portion of the front façade, from window sill level down, has been painted with a cream band of paint.

The octagonal window in the upper gable is an addition to the original design. It does not appear in the historic photograph of the school.

The east and west (side) elevations display three tall windows evenly placed with newer nine-over-nine appearing insulated glass sash. All windows also have stone lintels and sills. Both elevations display moisture damage to the foundation brick.

The back elevation displays a variety of fenestration including a back entry door, a horizontal window set and a tall window that matches the size and shape of the windows on the other three elevations. In the back gable at attic level is a small six-light window. All the windows have stone lintels and sills. The back door also displays a stone lintel. The horizontal window set and the gable window may not be original to the structure as originally built.

There is a raised wood deck and modern wood railing off the north-facing (back) elevation that provides access to and from the back entry.

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There are a number of areas on the elevations where building settling has caused stress and a need to repoint. The repointing was done with a dark, rust red mortar that draws attention to the repairs. A light colored patina applied over the dark joints could fix this distraction.

Adjacent to the original school is a late 20th century garage-like structure that has been brick faced on the south side to compliment the brick on the school structure. The original garage door opening has been infilled with brick and two double door sets, each supporting 15-light glass windows. The building is currently used for educational purposes.

The roof of the secondary structure displays the same shingles as the main building, however the gabled end elevations and the north-facing elevation are sheathed in a wide lap siding. A concrete driveway approaches the structure from the street.

The original school is contributing. The late 20th century garage structure is noncontributing to the historical significance of the property.

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT: The Afton Village School House, dating back to the mid 19th century, is the oldest remaining school structure within the Village of Afton. The school structure is also significant for retaining most of its character defining features. The building retains its original footprint without subsequent additions that would have blurred its architectural profile and diminished its simplicity of design and utility. The period of significance spans the time from when the school house was built circa 1867 to 1903 when it no longer functioned as a school.

OTHER ITEMS OF SIGNIFICANCE:

<p><i>Related Historic Contexts:</i> Townsite Development in Washington County 1839-1955 Immigration and Ethnicity in Washington County ca. 1838-1920 Early Agriculture and River Settlement 1840-1870 Railroads and agriculture Development 1870-1940</p>	<p><i>Significant Person(s):</i></p>
<p><i>Period of Significance:</i> Circa 1867 to 1903</p>	<p><i>Cultural Affiliation:</i></p>
<p><i>Significant Dates:</i></p>	<p><i>Architect/Builder(s):</i></p>

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA:

Acreage of Property: 0.208

Legal Description of Property: W1/2 OF LOT 9 BLOCK 17 & ALSO LOT 11 -BEING THE ELY 15FT SUBDIVISION NAME AFTON LOT 10 BLOCK 17 SUBDIVISION CD 19040

Boundary Justification: Washington County tax records, Afton Village boundaries

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PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION:



Detail from the 1855 base map that shows the original street, block and parcel layout of the Village in black ink on a silk sheet. A sepia ink overlay added in the 1860s shows the name “Foreman” on lots 7 & 8 of block 17, and “School House” written in the same hand on lots 9 & 10. Noah Foreman only owned the parcels between 1866 and 1867 indicating that the Afton Village School was likely on the adjacent parcels at least by the mid 1860s.

Historical Photographs:



This early photograph shows the Afton Village School as it appeared in the 3rd quarter of the 19th century.

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Current Photographs:



The Village School retains much of its original architectural profile. While it has lost its bell tower and an octagonal window has been added to the front façade, the brick detailing, fenestration openings and simple, rectangular footprint remain intact.



The school house now shares its lot with a 20th century garage structure that has been faced to compliment the original building. This view was taken across 34th Street South from the Afton Public Square.

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The south and west-facing elevations of the school building, now a residence.



The north-facing elevation. Note that while the majority of the openings are original the divided light windows are newer, insulated windows.

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AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH(S) AND SITE MAP(S) OF THE PROPERTY:



Aerial photograph of the original Afton Village School on the north side of 34th Street South.



The plat map for the school structure located to the west behind the historic Carnathan-Squires House and north of the Afton Public Square.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES:

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Final Report of the School Survey Committee of Washington County Minnesota. November 1, 1948. Minnesota State Archives.

Grant, Evelyn Bolles. "History of Valley Creek and Surrounding Afton Township." Presented to Valley Creek Women's Club. 1963. Washington County Historical Museum.

Robb, Edwin G. *Afton Remembered*. Afton Historical Society Press.1996.

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Stillwater Gazette. "Early History of Afton Village School... recalled by one of Pupils" by Alvin Hedstrom. April 19, 1951.

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www.mn-washington.manatron.com

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Martens, Ken. Phone conversation. January 25, 2016.

FORM PREPARED BY:

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Date Prepared: May 28, 2016

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER COMMENT:

Review and comment by the State Historic Preservation Officer pursuant to Minnesota Statute _____; Subd. ____.

Date Submitted to SHPO: _____ Date of SHPO Comment: _____

AFTON CITY COUNCIL REVIEW / APPROVAL:

Designation of property pursuant to: _____

Date of Action: _____