



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

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

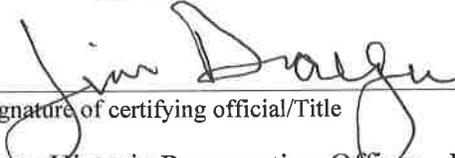
historic name Florence Town Hall
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number	748 Central Avenue	N/A	not for publication
city or town	Town of Florence	N/A	vicinity
state Wisconsin	code WI	county Florence	code 037
			zip code 54121

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 _____ Date 2/25/14
Signature of certifying official/Title
State Historic Preservation Officer - Wisconsin

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Florence Town Hall

Florence

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

removed from the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

other, (explain:)

Ethan H. Beall

4.15.14

Jan

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	contributing	noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	1	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> site		structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		objects
		1	0 total

Name of related multiple property listing:
(Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources
previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)
GOVERNMENT/City Hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)
COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)
MODERN MOVEMENT/Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation Concrete

walls Brick

Concrete

roof Metal

other Stone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Florence Town Hall
Name of Property

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1937

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hanisch, Max L., Sr.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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9. Major Bibliographic References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # ___
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # ___

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 402825 5086000
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

See Continuation Sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Timothy F. Hegglund	date	May 10, 2013
organization		telephone	608-795-2650
street & number	6391 Hillsandwood Rd.	zip code	53560
city or town	Mazomanie	state	WI

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title	date
organization	telephone
Street & number	zip code
city or town	state

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Florence Town Hall
Town of Florence, Florence County, Wisconsin

Description:

The Town of Florence Town Hall is a fine, freestanding, largely intact building that was designed to house the offices and other functions of the Town of Florence. The building was built in the Art Moderne style in 1937 using WPA-funded labor and materials and its design was supplied by Marinette, Wisconsin architect Max L. Hanisch, Sr. This T-plan building has a main block that is essentially rectilinear in plan and it measures 58-feet-wide by 20-feet-deep and it is two-stories-tall. This block originally contained offices and meeting rooms that were used by the Town's employees and elected officials.

The building has a full basement story that is enclosed by poured concrete foundation walls and the exterior surfaces of these walls rise several feet above grade and are clad in roughly coursed split fieldstones that have raised mortar joints placed between the courses and between each stone. A broad encircling concrete watertable separates the basement story of this block from the two stories above and the exterior walls that rest on this watertable are faced in a rose-colored red brick and they terminate in parapet walls that hide the block's asphalt-clad roof from view.

In addition to the main block there is also an 86-foot-deep by 47.5-foot-wide rectilinear plan auditorium wing attached to the rear elevation of the main block. This wing is one-story-tall and it rests on a fully exposed basement story that is enclosed by poured concrete foundation walls. Portions of the exterior surfaces of these walls are also clad in the same roughly coursed split fieldstones that cover the foundation walls of the building's main block. The exterior walls that rest on this wing's foundation walls are clad in rock-faced concrete blocks. These wall surfaces are enriched with bands of regularly spaced courses of rose-colored brick and they are sheltered to some extent by the slightly overhanging boxed eaves of the wing's arched roof, the surface of which is now clad in corrugated metal roofing. This wing originally housed work and storage space in its basement story while its first story contains the Town Hall's auditorium, whose arched ceiling is supported by massive glued and laminated (glulam) wood beams manufactured by Unit Structures Co.

The resulting building is locally significant and eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion C (Architecture) for its architectural significance as a fine, largely intact and early example of the work of Max Hanisch, Sr. Hanisch, a native of Germany, was a highly trained and experienced architect before coming to the United States in 1923 and he left a legacy of fine buildings both in Germany and in this country. He is best known today for having introduced glued, laminated, structural wood beam construction into the United States and for having co-founded Unit Structures, Inc. in Peshtigo, Wisconsin in 1934, which pioneered the manufacture of glulam laminated wood beams in this country. Hanisch's Florence Town Hall building is a fine

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example of Art Moderne style design and it is especially notable as a very early example of his use of Unit Structure's historically significant laminated wood beam construction technique.

The Florence Town Hall is located in the town of Florence, which is the county seat of Florence County.¹ The Hall's two-and one-half-lot parcel is a prominent corner lot that forms the southwest corner of a block. The block is bisected from east to west by a paved alleyway. The west side is the north-south-running Pewabic Street; the north side is the east-west running Florence Avenue; the east side is the north-south-running Quinnesec Street; and the south side is the east-west-running Central Avenue. Central Avenue (USH 2) is the principal east-west thoroughfare in Florence and the community's historic business district is arrayed along much of its length. The corner parcel on which the Hall sits slopes gently downhill to the north from Central Avenue and the main (south-facing) façade of the Hall abuts the rear (north) edge of a broad concrete sidewalk and curb and gutter that edges the north side of Central Avenue. The rear north-facing elevation of the Hall faces onto the alleyway and there is a small strip of mown lawn between it and the south edge of the alleyway. Otherwise, the west-facing side elevation of the Hall faces onto a parking lot that is surfaced in asphalt, while its east-facing side elevation faces onto a concrete-paved alley that it shares with the commercial building that is located next door to and to the east of the Hall.

The Hall is located at the west end of Florence's commercial district and the neighboring buildings to the east of it and across Central Avenue are mostly much altered one and two-story commercial buildings whose construction dates, for the most part, predate that of the Hall. A single residence is located on Central Avenue on the opposite (west) side of Pewabic Street from the Hall and other old and modern residential buildings are located in the neighborhood to the north of the block in which the Hall is located.

Exterior:

Main Facade

The 58-foot-wide, slightly asymmetrical, south-facing Central Avenue facade of the main block of the Hall has a tall raised basement story that is clad in split, roughly coursed fieldstones. The basement story is topped by a full-width concrete watertable, and the exterior walls above are clad in rose-colored brick that is laid in American Bond and which terminate in parapet walls whose topmost course consists of a course of soldier bricks that is itself crowned by a thin concrete coping. The

¹ The population of the Town of Florence was 2002 in 2010; the population of Florence County in 2010 was 4423.

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stepped design is a variant of a classically inspired three-part design that, in this case, features a projecting 27.5-foot-wide, two-story-tall central element that is flanked on both sides by two stepped, two-story-tall wings. This central element is symmetrical in design, is three-bays-wide, and its south-facing elevation abuts the north edge of the sidewalk that edges Central Avenue. The base of this element consists of a raised basement story and each of its three bays contains an oblong window opening in this story that has a concrete sill and which is now filled with glass block. The first story of each of these bays contains a large rectangular window opening having a concrete sill, and the spandrel below it is filled with dog-tooth courses of bricks. Both these spandrels and the equal-width windows above them are together enframed with a course of slightly recessed header course bricks, but the eight-over-eight-light double hung wood sash windows that originally filled these openings have now been removed. The openings have since been filled with plywood that has been painted in trompe-l'oeil fashion to resemble the original windows. Placed just above each of these windows is another, taller, equally wide spandrel that is also filled with courses of dog-tooth bricks, and the second story of each bay contains another slightly shorter rectangular window opening that now contain modern eight-over-eight-light double hung windows that are replacements for the original ones.² Each of these bays is then crowned by a slightly recessed, octagonal-shaped, concrete-faced decorative panel, and the entire central element is capped by a parapet wall whose topmost course consists of a course of soldier bricks that is itself crowned by a thin concrete coping.

This central element is flanked on both sides by fifteen-foot-wide two-story-tall wings whose wall surfaces are each divided vertically into two unequal-width inner and outer portions. Both of these wings also have split fieldstone-faced basement stories and upper stories that are clad in rose-colored brick and they are both also crowned by parapet walls whose topmost course consists of soldier bricks crowned by a thin concrete coping. These parapet walls step downward across the width of each wing and the inner portion is shorter than the central element and the outer portion is shorter than the inner portion.

That portion of each of these two wings that lies closest to the central element is recessed five-feet from the south face of the central element, it is slightly shorter, and it is nine-feet-wide and has an outer vertical edge that actually steps inward as it rises upward towards the parapet wall above. The left-hand (west) of these two inner wall surfaces has no openings of any kind, but the right-hand one has a double door opening in its first story that is the principal entrance into the building. This entrance is accessed by ascending a flight of three concrete steps that open onto a broad stoop; the current entrance doors themselves are modern and it is not known what the original ones looked like.

² The spandrels between the first and second story windows are still intact but they are currently covered over by modern signage.

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Florence Town Hall
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The outer portions of these two wings are both six-feet-wide, they are each recessed one brick deeper than the inner portion, and they are very similar to each other but are not entirely identical. The left-hand portion has a single oblong window opening that is now filled with glass block placed in its basement story. Four small square window openings are stacked two above and two below and placed high up in the first story. Each of these windows is fixed and has X-shaped muntins. These windows also have sills and lintels that consist of raised courses of soldier course bricks and these courses extend around the corners of the façade and will be discussed when the side elevations are described later. The second story of this left-hand portion contains a second stacked group of four of these small square fixed windows and they are treated in the same way as the group below and have the same raised soldier course sills and lintels.³ This portion is then crowned with a parapet wall having the same design as that of the inner portion but it is several feet shorter.

The right-hand outer portion, meanwhile, has no openings in its basement story, but there are two rectangular window openings placed in the lower part of its first story that each contains fixed, superposed X-shaped muntins. These windows have lintels that consist of a raised course of soldier course bricks and this course extends around the corner of the façade. Placed higher up in the first story is a pair of the same small, square windows with X-shaped muntins that were described above and this pair also features sills and lintels that consist of raised courses of soldier course bricks that extend around the corners of the façade. The second story is identical to the one in the left-hand outer portion and consists of a stacked group of four of these small square fixed windows and they are treated in the same way as the group below and have the same raised soldier course brick sills and lintels.

The main façade's stepped parapet wall also reflects the design of the asphalt-clad roof that shelters the main block. The gabled center portion of this roof sits behind the parapet of the block's central element and its south-facing gable end is hidden by the parapet wall and it has a ridgeline that runs north-south. Flanking both sides of this center portion are shallow-pitched shed roofs that slope to the left (west) and to the right, and a large brick chimney mass that serves the three fireplaces inside the main block is also located on the westerly slope of the roof.

West-Facing Side Elevation:

The 112-foot-wide west-facing side elevation of the Hall is comprised of the west-facing side elevations of the main block and of the auditorium wing. The 22.5-foot-wide side elevation of the

³ These square windows are identical to the original ones but are modern replacements.

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main block is two-stories-tall and it is two-bays-wide and it was originally symmetrical in design. The treatment of the raised basement story of this side of the block is identical to that on the main façade and it is also clad in split, roughly coursed fieldstones and it also has raised mortar joints placed around each of the stones. This basement story is also topped by a full-width concrete watertable and the exterior wall above that rests on this foundation is also clad in rose-colored brick that is laid in American Bond. This elevation terminates in a parapet wall whose topmost course originally consisted of a course of soldier bricks that was crowned by a thin concrete coping, but this parapet wall has now been cut down slightly to accommodate a new roof. The right-hand bay of this elevation has a single oblong window opening in its basement story that is now filled with glass block. Four small, square window openings are stacked two above and two below and placed high up in the first story. Each of these windows is fixed and has X-shaped muntins. These windows have sills and lintels that consist of raised courses of soldier course bricks and these courses extend around the corners of the elevation and are continued across the equivalent windows on the main facade. The second story above contains a second identical set of these four small square windows and these also have raised courses of soldier course brick that extend around the corner of the elevation. The basement story and the first story of the left-hand bay are identical to those in the right-hand bay and its second story was originally identical to the right-hand bay and contained a second stacked group of four small, square fixed windows. These window openings were bricked shut at a later date and a large aluminum ventilator that serves the commercial kitchen inside this block is now placed in the upper right-hand opening of this group.

The asymmetrical 89.5-foot-wide west-facing side elevation of the auditorium wing is six-bays-wide and rests on a tall raised basement story. The wall surface of the first story is clad in rock-faced concrete blocks and these walls are sheltered by the slightly overhanging boxed eaves of this wing's arched roof, which is now clad in blue-green corrugated metal. The right-hand (south) bay of this elevation consists of a projecting 14.5-foot-wide by 4-foot-deep, rectilinear plan, shed-roofed bay that has a single entrance door opening set into its west-facing wall. This entrance door opening is placed off-center to the left and it has a concrete lintel but the door itself is a modern replacement for the original and is sheltered by a modern arched roof entrance hood supported by wooden brackets. The lower portion of the wall surface of this bay is a continuation of the basement story of the main block and it too is clad in split, roughly coursed fieldstones and it also has raised mortar joints placed around each of the stones. A narrow rock-faced concrete watercourse is placed across the top of the basement story and the rest of the wall surface above it is clad in rock-faced concrete blocks.

The second, third and fourth bays from the right are identical to one another. The exterior surface of the basement story of each of these bays consists of the poured concrete foundation wall and each of these bays has a single large oblong window opening set into its basement story that has a concrete

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lintel placed above it and which is now filled with glass block. The first story wall in each bay contains a large rectangular triple window group that has a massive concrete lintel and a sill that is composed of a single course of brick that acts as a belt course that extends around the entire wing. Each of these openings now contains three equal size six-over-six-light windows and these windows are modern replacements for the originals, which were identical in design. The windows in these three bays all provide light for the interior of the auditorium.

The wall surface of the basement stories of the fifth and sixth bays from the right are both continuations of the basement story of the main block and they too are clad in split, roughly coursed fieldstones and they also have raised mortar joints placed around each of the stones, while the rest of the wall surface above is clad in rock-faced concrete blocks. There are no window openings in the fifth bay from the right. There is a single small square window opening in the sixth and last bay and it contains a nine-light window that is also a modern replacement for the original one, which was of identical design.⁴

Rear Elevation:

The symmetrical north-facing rear elevation of the Hall is comprised of the north-facing rear elevations of both the main block and the auditorium wing. Most of the 58-foot-wide rear elevation of the main block is covered by the attached auditorium wing and there are no openings of any kind in those portions of its rear elevation that are not covered by this wing. The 47.5-foot-wide rear elevation of the auditorium wing also has no openings except for a small ventilator opening that is located next to and to the left of a large rose brick chimney mass that bisects this elevation and which extends upward some five feet above the peak of this wing's arched roof. The wall surface materials of this elevation are identical to those that were described above for the west-facing elevation of the wing. The tall raised basement story is clad in split, roughly coursed fieldstones that have raised mortar joints placed around each of the stones and the wall surface in the first story above is clad in rock-faced concrete blocks. This elevation differs, however, in that it has not been painted over. As a result, the five separate original courses of rose colored bricks that span the full width of the concrete block-clad portion of this elevation and ornament its wall surface are still clearly visible.⁵

⁴ The entire west-facing elevation of the auditorium wing (excepting only the split fieldstone foundation walls) has recently been painted in a trompe-l'oeil fashion that gives it the look of several separate business places, this being a change that can also be reversed.

⁵ These courses of brick also extend across the wall surface of the east-facing side elevation of the wing and the west-facing side elevation as well, although those courses on the latter are not obvious because of having been painted over.

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East-Facing Side Elevation:

The 112-foot-wide east-facing side elevation of the Hall is comprised of the side elevations of the main block and of the auditorium wing and it is essentially the same as the west-facing side elevation described above. The 22.5-foot-wide side elevation of the main block is two-stories-tall and two-bays-wide and is symmetrical in design. The treatment of the raised basement story of this side of the main block is identical to that on the main façade and it is also clad in split, roughly coursed fieldstones and it also has raised mortar joints placed around each of the stones. This basement story is also topped by a full-width concrete watertable and the exterior wall above is clad in rose-colored brick that is laid in American Bond and it terminates in a parapet wall whose topmost course originally consisted of a course of soldier bricks that was crowned by a thin concrete coping. This parapet wall has also now been cut down slightly to accommodate a new roof. Both the right and left-hand bays of this elevation have a single oblong window opening in their basement stories that are now filled with glass block and there are two square window openings placed in the lower part of the first stories above in each bay, and each of these openings contains a fixed window comprised of a pair of superposed X-shaped muntins. These windows also have sills and lintels that consist of raised courses of soldier course bricks, and in the left-hand bay these courses extend around the corner of the façade, while those in the right-hand bay extend around the corner of the rear elevation. Placed higher up in the first story of both bays is a pair of the same small, square, fixed windows with X-shaped muntins that were described earlier and these pairs also feature sills and lintels that consist of raised courses of soldier course bricks that extend around the corners of the main façade and the rear elevation. The second stories of both bays contain a stacked group of four of these small, square fixed windows with X-shaped muntins and they have the same raised soldier course brick sills and lintels that extend around both the main façade and the rear elevation.

The asymmetrical 89.5-foot-wide east-facing side elevation of the auditorium wing is six-bays-wide and rests on a tall raised basement story. The wall surface is clad in rock-faced concrete blocks and these walls are sheltered by the slightly overhanging boxed eaves of this wing's arched roof. The left-hand (south) bay of this elevation contains a single entrance door opening in its first story and this opening contains an entrance door that is sheltered by a modern, open, shed-roofed porch and it is reached by ascending a wooden handicap ramp.⁶

The second, third and fourth bays from the left are identical to one another. The exterior surface of the basement story of each of these bays consists of the poured concrete foundation wall, while the first

⁶ Both the handicap ramp and the entrance porch are modern. It is not known if the entrance door itself is historic or of a more recent date.

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story contains a large triple window group that has a concrete lintel and a sill that is composed of a single course of brick that also acts as a belt course that extends around the entire wing. Each of these openings now contains three equal size six-over-six-light windows and these windows are modern replacements for the originals, which were identical in design. These three window groups all provide light for the interior of the auditorium. In addition, the basement stories of the second and third bays from the left are now sheltered by a shed-roofed one-story open porch that was built to shelter the building's ground-mounted air-conditioning units.

The wall surfaces of the basement stories of the fifth and sixth bays from the left are both continuations of the basement story of the main block and they too are clad in split, roughly coursed fieldstones with raised mortar joints placed around each of the stones. The rest of the wall surface above is clad in rock-faced concrete blocks and is ornamented by five separate courses of rose-colored bricks. The fifth bay from the left has a single double door opening located in its first story that is crowned by a concrete lintel. These doors provided access to the stage area in the auditorium, reached by ascending a flight of wood stairs that cover most of the basement story of the fourth bay from the left.⁷ A single small square window opening is located high in the first story between the fifth and sixth bays and it contains a nine-light window that is a modern replacement for the original one, which was of identical design. There is also a single entrance door opening set into the basement story of the sixth and last bay from the left. This opening is placed off-center to the right and it has a concrete lintel. The door itself is a modern replacement for the original and is sheltered by a modern arched roof supported by wooden brackets.

Interior:

First Story:

One enters the building by passing through the double doors on the south-facing main Central Avenue façade and stepping into the two-story-tall stair hall. This rectilinear plan room is 13.5-feet-wide and 22.5-feet-deep, it occupies the right-hand (east) third of the main block, its walls and ceiling are plastered, and it receives natural light from the numerous small square windows that are placed on both sides of the main block's southeast corner. One steps first onto a tile-floored landing, and a broad staircase that descends along the east wall of the hall to the basement story that underlies both the main block and the auditorium wing is placed just to the right of this landing. One then ascends three broad steps up to a second, larger landing. Located to the left of this landing on the west wall of the hall are

⁷ There is also a tall poured concrete loading dock placed below these doors that is probably a later addition to the Hall but which is not of recent date.

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two door openings that open into separate men's and women's restrooms that were added recently to serve the auditorium's current use as a banquet and reception venue.⁸ The main entrance to the auditorium is located directly ahead on the north wall of the hall, while a broad open newel plan staircase that ascends to the second story of the main block is located to the right on the hall's east wall. This staircase ascends via a straight flight up the east wall of the hall to a landing, it then turns 90 degrees and continues up another straight flight that is attached to the south wall of the hall, and it then opens onto a much larger second story landing that has a quarter turn terminus and which spans much of the Hall's west wall. This staircase is original, it is made out of poured concrete, and it is edged by a heavy wooden balustrade that has large squared newel posts, squared balusters, and a beveled hand rail.

The original rooms in the remaining two-thirds of the first story of the main block were completely altered when the Hall was converted into a restaurant sometime in the 1980s or 1990s. What was originally a 23 by 28-foot meeting room with a fireplace and possibly other small rooms were all converted into a large restaurant kitchen and kitchen storage space. The kitchen is still in use today to serve the Hall's current incarnation as a banquet and reception venue.

The broad double door opening in the stair hall's north wall opens into the auditorium. This large, imposing room measures 46.5-foot-wide by 70-foot-deep and it has a varnished hardwood floor, plastered walls, and a tall arched ceiling that is supported by four massive, arched, varnished glulam laminated wooden beams.⁹ No photos of this room in its original state have yet been found but it is known that when the building was converted into a restaurant and banqueting center sometime in the 1980s and 1990s, a 50-foot-long slightly V-plan varnished wood bar was built along the length of the room's east wall. This bar with its associated back bar is still in place and has been restored as part of the recent renovation of the building. This renovation also added a tall wooden wainscot composed of diagonally laid varnished wood boards across the lower halves of the east and west walls of the room, and varnished diagonally laid wood boards were also used to cover the deteriorated original ceiling of the room.

The original appearance of the lower portion of the auditorium's south wall is not known but this wall's most architecturally significant original feature is still intact. This is a large, centered, quadruple door opening that opens from a second story meeting room in the main block out onto a narrow 22.5-foot-long by 3-foot-deep wooden balcony whose floor is composed of varnished

⁸ Portions of the stair hall's west and north first story walls have now been covered over with varnished wooden boards.

⁹ These beams have bolted metal plates that cover their apexes and although these plates are structurally unnecessary but were added while the building was being constructed because the technology at that time was so new that State of Wisconsin regulations would not allow glulam beams to be used without them.

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hardwood boards and which is edged by a fine wooden balustrade. This balcony is also original and it has been recently restored, but its small size does not meet current building codes and its size also makes it too small to serve a useful purpose today. Consequently, during the course of the recent building renovation, a new, nearly full-width ten-foot-deep addition was built across the entire first story of the original south wall, thereby creating space for a new entrance lobby into the auditorium and a new food serving area, and the flat ceiling (roof) of this one-story addition was then turned into a large full-width deck that can be used for dining or for other purposes. This deck is edged with a tall modern wood balustrade and it is located immediately below the original balcony and it can be accessed either from the original balcony above or from a new open staircase that ascends from the auditorium floor up the west wall of the auditorium to the level of the deck. In addition, this entire addition has been covered in varnished diagonally laid wooden boards that match the ones that have been added to the lower portions of the room's east and west walls.

A raised stage is inset into the north wall of the auditorium at the opposite end of the room and this stage has a rectangular proscenium. It is accessed by ascending a broad flight of five wooden steps from the auditorium floor. The stage itself measures 22.5-feet-wide by 14.5-feet-deep and its floor is made of narrow varnished hardwood boards and its walls are plastered with their lowest three-feet being covered in an original wainscot that is comprised of angled tongue-and-groove boards that have been painted a glossy black. Two small door openings that each contain an original five-panel wood door are placed on the wall surface to the right and left of the stage. The opening on the left opens into a small room whose original purpose is uncertain while the one on the right opens into a rear stair hall. This stair hall is 7.5-feet-wide and 15.5-feet-deep, it has a plastered ceiling and plastered walls. Upon entering it from the auditorium one steps onto a small board-floored landing that has a flight of wooden steps attached to the room's west wall that lead up to a landing and to an entrance door to the stage that is also located on the hall's west wall while a second straight flight of stairs that is attached to the east wall of the hall descends down to a second landing, where an exit door is located in the hall's east wall. A third flight of straight stairs that is attached to the north wall of the hall then descends from this lower landing down to the wing's basement story.

Second Story:

Reading from east to west, the second story of the main block contains the upper story of the main stair hall, a single large meeting room that measures 25.5-feet-wide by 22.5-feet-deep, and a smaller office room that measure 23-feet wide by 10.00-feet deep. The meeting room is accessed from the landing outside in the stair hall and one passes through a pair of broad, side-hinged, five-panel wood doors that are centered on this room's east wall into the room itself. This room has a hardwood floor comprised of narrow varnished boards, its walls are plastered, and its ceiling is now covered with modern ceiling

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tiles. Two more single door openings are located to the right and left of the entrance doors on the room's east wall and they both also contain single five-panel wood doors that open into closets. Three large six-over-six-light windows are placed on the room's south wall, while a fireplace is centered on its west wall and it is flanked on either side by two more single door openings that also contain five-panel wood doors and which open into the two offices. Centered on the room's north wall is a large opening that contains four six-light-over-three-panel wood doors that open onto the second story balcony that overlooks the auditorium, and these doors are so hinged that they can be folded back completely. A baseboard encircles this room and all of the doors and windows are encircled by simple varnished wood casework, all of which is original to the building.

Basement Story:

The original layout of the Hall's 12-foot-high basement story has been altered due to the recent renovation of the Hall. The poured concrete stair case that leads down to the basement story of the main block from the main stair hall opens into a central hallway that has rooms on both sides. One of these rooms, the first door to the right (north), is the building's original men's restroom and it is still in use as such and still contains this room's original porcelain urinals and other plumbing fixtures. Located further down the hall on the left (south) is another original room that contains a fireplace with a brick surround, and this room is now used as an office and it probably was originally as well. The other rooms in this story, however, date from the building's recent renovation and the new walls that contain them are modern and are covered in drywall.

Likewise, the basement story of the auditorium wing has also been altered. Originally, this was essentially a single large room having a poured concrete floor and poured concrete walls, but this space has now been divided up into a number of smaller rooms that have walls covered in drywall, and the entire wing now has a suspended ceiling that contains inset light fixtures and it has a distinctly contemporary appearance. Today, this story houses a fitness center with offices, a 1200 sq.ft. equipment area, a 900 sq.ft. dance studio with a sprung floor, a 9-foot by 16-foot exercise pool, a lounge, utility rooms, and restrooms.

Integrity:

The Town of Florence used its new Town Hall for its original purposes for just ten years, and for part of that time its auditorium wing was used as a factory that served the war effort in World War II. After the war ended, the building was used as a factory by several successive manufacturers, and the *Florence Mining News* newspaper was also printed in the building in the 1970s. The building then

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became the home of a series of failed restaurants, after which it stood vacant until 2003, when the present owners purchased it and began its extensive renovation process.

By that time many of the building's original elements were either invisible or were badly deteriorated. For instance, by 2003, the staircase that led up to the second story in the stair hall in the main block had been completely covered over with new walls and a dropped ceiling. As a result, the staircase was completely hidden from view and there was also no access to the second story of the block. Likewise, a dropped ceiling had been added in the auditorium by that time, turning a room with an arched ceiling into one with a much lower flat ceiling that hid the second story balcony located on the auditorium's south wall from view. Turning the building into a restaurant resulted in the conversion of the main block's first story meeting room into a full-scale commercial kitchen with walk-in freezers, commercial stoves, and the like, and the three first-story windows in the south-facing principal façade that served this room were removed and their openings were filled in with plywood. In addition, most of the building's other original windows and exterior doors had deteriorated significantly by this time.

Most of these changes were reversed during the renovation process. The alterations to the stair hall and the auditorium were removed, wood floors in several of the rooms and in the auditorium were refinished, and the main block and the auditorium wing's deteriorated roofs were replaced. Other changes that were made during the renovation occurred to make the building financially viable. These changes included converting the formerly utilitarian basement story into modern offices and other rentable spaces. Still more changes that have been made since 2003 include covering the original bare concrete floors in the stair hall and the basement story hallway with ceramic tiles, covering the lower portions of the walls and also the ceiling in the auditorium with varnished wood boards, and installing modern light fixtures in all of these spaces.

The end result is that the Hall today is once again in excellent condition, its most significant public spaces have been rehabilitated, and it is one of Florence's few updated multi-use buildings.

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Significance:

The Florence Town Hall was built in 1937 using WPA-funded labor and materials. The period of significance corresponds to the date of construction. It is a fine, largely intact representative example of Art Moderne style design. Research to assess the Hall's National Register eligibility was undertaken using the NR significance area of Architecture, a theme that is also identified in the State of Wisconsin's Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP). This research centered on evaluating the Hall by utilizing the Art Moderne Style subsection of the Architectural Styles study unit of the CRMP.¹⁰ The results of this research are detailed below and demonstrates that the brick and concrete block-clad Florence Town Hall is locally significant under NR Criterion C and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its significance as an early example of the use of glulam laminated wood beams in Wisconsin, for its association with Max L. Hanisch, Sr., a highly experienced architect who was responsible for bringing this building technique to the United States, and as a fine, largely intact example of Art Moderne style design.

The Florence Town Hall was built to provide new offices and meeting rooms for the Town government and it was also intended that the building would contain an auditorium that could serve as a community center for the citizens of both the village and the township of Florence. The Hall was built to an Art Moderne design that was supplied by prominent Marinette, Wisconsin architect Max L. Hanisch, Sr.¹¹ Hanisch was born in Germany in 1882 and he spent his high school summers working as an apprentice carpenter and mason. After graduating with a degree in architecture in 1903 he went to work for several construction firms that were involved in both general construction work and in the design and supervision of the construction of sewage disposal plants, bridges and railroads. It was during this period that he also worked with a company that had been associated with Otto Hetzer, who was the "inventor" of glued, laminated (glulam) timber. In 1911 Hanisch started his own architectural firm in Stendal, Germany, and was responsible for designing a full range of building types including exhibition halls and auditoriums. During World War I, Hanisch worked as an architect for the German War Department but he resumed work at his own firm after the war ended in 1918 and mostly designed municipal and government structures. Hanisch came to the United States with his wife and family in 1923 and settled first in Detroit, but by 1924 he had moved to Racine, Wisconsin, and he worked there for several years. Hanisch then moved to Milwaukee and in 1933 he became a registered architect in Wisconsin. One year later, he moved to Mountain, Wisconsin, and in that same year he and the owners of the Thompson Bros. Mfg. Co. in nearby Peshtigo, organized Unit Structures, Inc.,

¹⁰ Wyatt, Barbara (ed.). *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin* (3 vols.). Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Division of Historic Preservation, 1986, Vol. 2, p. 2-35 (Architecture).

¹¹ "New Town Hall About Finished." *The Florence Mining News*, September 4, 1937, p. 1.

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which was set up to manufacture glulam arches for the construction industry using the Hetzer process that Hanisch had worked with earlier in Germany. These were the first structural members made in the United States using this process, and while laminated wood beams have since been used in thousands of buildings and other applications, both in this country and abroad, the earliest examples were used in buildings built in Wisconsin by this firm, including the Florence Town Hall.

History:

The centennial publication *Heritage of Iron & Timber: 1880-1980*, published in 1980, contains a good general history of Florence County and of the village of Florence.¹² Consequently, the historic context that follows, deals just with the relevant portions of that publication that pertain to the history of the Florence Town Hall.

The north edge of today's Florence County borders the south edge of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, from which it is separated by the Menominee River. It was originally part of Brown County in 1851, then became part of Oconto County when that county was split off from Brown County in 1861, and in 1879 it became a part of Marinette County when that county was split off from Oconto County.

Florence County remained a region of hunting and trapping until 1877, when iron ore was discovered therein. The iron mines on the Michigan side of the Menominee River were discovered in 1873 by Dr. N. P. Hulst and other mining engineers. In 1876 the Menominee Mining Company was organized and the Chicago & Northwestern officials began the building of the Menominee River Railway, which in 1877, was extended to the Vulcan mine. The Florence mine was discovered in October, 1874, by Hiram D. Fisher. Work there was begun in the winter of 1879-80, when 30,000 tons of ore were taken out. The summer of 1880 the railroad reached the Florence mine. ... The Florence mine was named by Mr. Fisher for Mrs. N. P. Hulst.¹³

What is today the town of Florence owes its existence to the Florence iron mine that was first established at this site in 1874. After a railroad was built to this mine site in 1879, the population in the area grew rapidly and in 1880 a town site was platted by H. D. Fisher on the north shore of Fisher's Lake, which lake was completely surrounded by land owned by the Florence mining company, and this settlement was named Florence. Subsequently, in 1882, what is now Florence County was split off

¹² The Florence County Centennial Committee. *Heritage of Iron & Timber: 1880-1980*. Florence, WI: 1980.

¹³ "Early History of Florence County." *The Florence Mining News*, May 14, 1938, p. 1.

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from Marinette County. Both the township surrounding the settlement and the county itself were named Florence. The town of Florence was designated as the county seat and is the county seat today.

The history of the town is essentially the story of the boom and bust cycles that attended the fortunes of the mining industry in the area and of the lumber industry that also developed in the area at this time in order to harvest the huge stands of timber that covered most of the county.

Because of the mine people rushed into the region and by 1880 Mr. Fisher laid out the townsite, putting a number of lots upon the market. He said he would put the lots in at government prices selling the ordinary lots for \$100.00 while the corners sold for \$150.00. In sixty days Mr. Fisher sold \$60,000 worth of realty. The population at this time was 50 people. In a short time a blast furnace was put up as was a foundry, five coal kilns, a large sawmill and a cheese factory.

Through donations on the part of Mr. Fisher, "a progressive promoter," fifty town lots were given as church sites, school and other humanitarian purposes. News of the rise of the mining town was spread throughout the land.¹⁴

Once the railroad to Florence was completed, the population in the town boomed and this growth was accelerated by the development of both the mining and logging industries in the area.

By the year 1890 the town of Florence was estimated to have had a population of about 3,000 people. People came from all over the country to work in the mine, logging camps and start small farms. Workers in the area logging camps and nearby settlements gave the immediate area a population of nearly 5,000 people.

In 1889, the court house was built, Florence had five hotels, seven two-story boarding houses, 47 saloons and an estimated annual trade of almost \$1,000,000.00.¹⁵

By the late 1890s, however, the lumber industry in Florence County was on the decline and logging operations were rapidly decreasing. This situation was further exacerbated by a massive forest fire in 1908 that destroyed much of the standing timber in the county. The history of the mining industry in the town of Florence and in Florence County was much the same. By 1915 the high sulfur content of

¹⁴ The Florence County Centennial Committee. Op. Cit., p. 10.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 12. The Florence County Court House and its adjacent jail building were both built in 1889; they are both extant and listed in the NRHP (12/2/1985).

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the ore from the Florence mine was hurting sales, which resulted in the laying off of most of the men that were employed there, and in 1931 the closing of the mine itself. Adding to the town's plight at this time was the ever increasing rate of tax delinquency that both the town and the county were incurring. This was happening because the logging companies who then owned most of the county's land could not find buyers for their cut-over lands. As a result, these companies let their less desirable lands go delinquent in order to reduce their taxes, which lightened their tax burden but resulted in reduced tax revenues for the county, which, by 1931, was also struggling with the effects of the Depression.

Fortunately, the Depression's many different federally financed relief programs gave communities like Florence the means to stay afloat during this challenging period and it also allowed them to modernize and improve their infrastructure. The most important of these new federal programs for Florence County was the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which was established in July 1935 and which would ultimately become the largest of the various federal Depression-era relief agencies. Unlike the earlier Federal Emergency Relief Agency (FERA), the WPA was a federal program of works projects, and was not the same as the grants-in-aid to the states that had provided direct funding or work relief under the FERA. The WPA provided money just for labor and materials and unlike the Public Works Administration (PWA), another federal program that paid union scale wages, the WPA paid much lower relief wages. This was because the goal of the WPA was employment; putting as many people to work as possible. Consequently, the kinds of projects it favored tended to be labor intensive and they were for unemployed, relatively unskilled workers. Projects that were approved by the WPA originated with state and local agencies, which were known as "sponsors," and it was the sponsor's responsibility to do most of the planning that each project required. This included such things as a project's design and engineering, and it was the sponsor's responsibility to handle the legal and financial aspects of a project. What the WPA provided was wages for the workers and funding for the materials to be used.

By 1936, WPA-funded projects represented just about the only growth industry in Florence County. Among the proposals it received was one for the construction of a new Town Hall and Community Center building in the village of Florence, which was hoping to build a new and larger building on the site of its old town hall. The WPA gave the Town of Florence permission to construct its new town hall in February of 1936, and by April of that year the Florence Town Clerk's monthly report showed

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that an architect had already been paid \$325.00 for services involved in its design.¹⁶ The actual work on the Hall began in June.

A crew of men began work Monday excavating for the new town hall and community building. The building will be of two stories with basement and will be built of stone, brick and cement blocks. The basement will be large enough for recreation purposes and will have a cafeteria. The first floor will be used as a community room with a full size stage for entertainments, dances, etc. The second floor will be used for offices, council room, etc. It will be an imposing structure. The cost will be from \$27,000 to \$30,000. The sponsor's or town's share will be \$9,000 and the balance is furnished from WPA funds. The size of the building is 116 by 58 feet.¹⁷

The town of Florence's town hall project was a good fit for the WPA because the new building was to be built out of brick, concrete, concrete block, and split field stones, all of which required large amounts of hand labor. In addition, the stone that was to be used would be sourced locally and most of the building materials would be purchased from area merchants. As the construction proceeded, the periodic reports of the Florence Town Clerk identified several of the local merchants and contractors who supplied both materials and specialty building trade services that the WPA workers could not provide. Among the most important of these persons was E. W. Peterson, who owned the local hardware supply store and who furnished the joists and subfloor for the Hall as well as many other items.¹⁸ Still others included the Champion Gravel Co., who supplied sand, the Sacchetti Constructing Co., who did the plastering, and the Spletter Roofing Co., who did the roofing.¹⁹

By September of 1937 the Hall was nearly complete and it was the subject of a front page article in the local newspaper.

The new town hall and community building on the site of the old town hall at the corner of Central Avenue Pewabic [sic] Street is rapidly nearing completion and will be used for the first time Sunday and Monday to house the county fair exhibits and Monday night for the Legion dance. The building is a WPA-Town project and the estimated cost is in the neighborhood of

¹⁶ Florence Town Clerk's Financial Report. *The Florence Mining News*, April 4, 1936, p. 4. The architect was Max L. Hanisch Sr. and he was paid an additional \$575.00 in March of 1937 and another \$150.00 in 1938. See: Florence Town Clerk's Financial Report. *The Florence Mining News*, April 3, 1937, p. 4; April 2, 1938, p. 4.

¹⁷ "Work Begun On New Town Hall." *The Florence Mining News*, June 27, 1936, p. 1.

¹⁸ Florence Town Board Proceedings. *The Florence Mining News*, September 26, 1936, p. 4.

¹⁹ Ibid, July 17, 1937, p. 4. See also: Ibid, September 25, 1937, p. 4.

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\$27,000, the WPA furnishing \$19,000 and the town \$8,000. Thursday's Milwaukee Sentinel carried a picture of the new structure.

The building is 58 feet wide and 112 feet long, two stories with full basement. Cement blocks and brick were used in the construction. The basement has a large room, a boiler room, and two small rooms. The auditorium on the first floor, 48x72 feet, is a beautiful, well-lighted room with a stage 16x26 feet on the north end with two small rooms off the stage. In the front on the south off the auditorium is a cozy room 23x28 feet, with a fireplace; in fact the building has three fire places. The second story over the front part of the building has a room 23x24-feet, which will be used for meetings of the town board. There is also a smaller room 10x23 feet, which can be used as the town clerk's office.

Max Heinesch [sic], of Marinette, is the architect and the building construction is under the supervision of Carl Anderson, one of our leading carpenters and contractors. Mr. Anderson tells us that the building will be completed between November 1st and 15th. The cement floor in the basement is yet to be laid, also hardwood floors on the first and second floors, some wiring and the plumbing is yet to be completed, also the window and door casings and doors to be installed.

WPA workers are only allowed to work so many hours per month and that is the reason that it has taken so long to build our new town hall and community building, but when it is completed Florence will have reason to be justly proud of the new structure.²⁰

The new building was not to be completely finished until later in 1938 as was indicated by the Town Board's request for bids for the installation of a heating plant for the building in December of 1937. In fact, a bid of \$3,200 from the National Heating Co. in Wausau, Wisconsin, was not finally accepted until the Board's February meeting, which must have made them grateful for the fireplace in their meeting room, which was first used for their January 1938 meeting.²¹

The building was viewed as a success by its users despite the fact that it was still in a semi-completed state.

Many compliments were heard on election day about our new town hall and community building. The general comment was "What a beautiful structure." The new heating plant has

²⁰ "New Town Hall About Finished." *The Florence Mining News*, September 4, 1937, p. 1.

²¹ Florence Town Board Proceedings. *The Florence Mining News*. January 22, 1938, p. 4; February 26, 1938, p. 4.

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been installed and is operating satisfactorily. The hardwood floors will now be sanded and waxed.²²

That the new Hall was a success is evident from reading subsequent issues of the local newspaper that list a steady stream of dances held in the Hall's auditorium, as well as regular meetings of the town board and periodic notices of village elections, all of which were held in the building. These listings continued throughout the duration of World War II. The Hall played a role in the war effort when part of its auditorium wing was converted into a factory that made war uniforms and tents. Once the war ended the town's continuing financial problems made the upkeep of the Hall difficult, so the building was leased to a series of small scale manufacturers who made such diverse products in the building as wood cabinets and electrical components (the Volta Co.).²³ In the 1970s, the *Florence Mining News* newspaper was also printed in the building and still later the Hall was occupied by a series of restaurants which, unfortunately, eventually failed. All of these diverse usages left their mark on the building and it was in deteriorated condition when the current owners purchased it in 2003 from a local bank that had acquired it in a foreclosure proceeding. Fortunately, the new owners have since rehabilitated the building and it is now once again a community center, albeit a privately owned one, and it once again plays a useful role in town life.

Architecture:

The Florence Town Hall is eligible for listing in the NRHP on the basis of its architectural significance at the local level as a fine, largely intact Art Moderne style example of the Town Hall resource type and as a fine representative example of the work of the highly important Marinette, Wisconsin architect, Max L. Hanisch, Sr. Hanisch pioneered the use of structural laminated wood timber construction (glulam) in the United States and use of this construction method in the Florence Town Hall constitutes an early example of its use in Wisconsin.

Max L. Hanisch Sr. (1882-1950) was born in Vangrin, Germany, on May 14, 1882, and in the summer seasons while attending high school he worked as an apprentice bricklayer and carpenter. Hanisch subsequently attended the Konenigliche Baugewerks Schule at Deutsch-Krone and graduated with a degree as an architectural engineer in 1902; he graduated with a master's degree in architecture from the Poly-Technikum Strelitz in Mecklenburg in 1903. Following graduation, Hanisch worked for several different builders, designing and supervising the construction of commercial buildings,

²² "Many Compliments for New Town Hall." *The Florence Mining News*, April 9, 1938, p. 1.

²³ Most of this manufacturing activity took place in the basement of the auditorium wing.

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churches, factories, office buildings bridges and larger residences, and in one of his last places of employment he also specialized in structural steel and reinforced concrete construction.

In 1911 I started my own business in Stendal, Germany, as Architectural Designing, Civil Engineering and General Construction Firm. I specialized in roof and reinforced concrete ceiling and stone ceiling construction; also extra large factory chimneys up to 300 feet in heights [sic]. I designed and constructed large residence apartment colonies, factories, churches, schools, monuments, a opera house, castles, exhibition halls and auditoriums. I was also very active in the construction of sewer and drainage systems.²⁴

It was during this same period that Hanisch became acquainted with the manufacture and use of glue laminated wood arches through his connection with a German company founded by Otto Hetzer that had originated this method of construction.

In 1915, Hanisch was called for military duty in World War I, during which period he acted as the architect and general construction supervisor of one of Germany's largest munitions plants. After the armistice was signed late in 1918, Hanisch then resumed his own practice, this time in the state of Thuringia. He was mostly concerned with the design and construction of municipal and government buildings and structures up until 1923, when he moved his wife and family to the United States. By the time of his arrival in this country, Hanisch was a highly accomplished architect familiar with every aspect of architectural practice and of the building trades.

On coming to the United States he [Hanisch] settled in Detroit and acquainted himself with American methods of construction by working at various building trades. Thereafter he experimented and built monolithic cinder concrete homes in Racine [Wisconsin]. In 1933, he obtained a license from the Wisconsin registration board of architects and engineers to practice as a registered architect and engineer.²⁵

Once he settled in Wisconsin he designed a number of buildings in this state between his arrival and his registration as an architect in 1933. Between 1923 and 1933, Hanisch designed and drew up plans for, among other things, "a tabernacle and apartment houses in Racine, a church in Suring, Wis., factories in Kenosha and Oconto, Wis., a Masonic Temple for Oconto, a Legion Hall in Marinette,

²⁴ Wisconsin. Examining Board of Architects, Professional Engineers, Designers, and Land Surveyors. Applications for Licenses, 1917-1974. Madison: Wisconsin Board of Architects, Professional Engineers, Designers, and Land Surveyors, 1917-1974. WHS Archives Division, Series 1591, Box 11.

²⁵ "Max Hanisch, 68, Dies at Hospital." *Marinette Eagle-Star*, June 24, 1950, p. 1. Obituary of Max L. Hanisch, Sr.

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Wis., an Airplane Hangar in Kenosha, Wis. and several dancehalls.”²⁶ Later in his career, in 1942, Hanisch designed the Art Deco Style Marinette County Court House, which has been evaluated as being eligible for National Register listing. More importantly, Hanisch was an inventor and a pioneer in the development and application of new building products and building techniques.

In April of 1931, Hanisch, who by that time had moved to Milwaukee, became associated with the Lakeside Bridge & Steel Company in Milwaukee, which he had licensed to develop the Interlock Arch Roof Construction technique that he had invented. This new construction method consisted of a curved roof framing system that utilized short, solid-sawn timbers (called lamellas) that were interconnected to form a honeycomb design. One of the best known of the buildings that came from this collaboration was the Eagle River Stadium, which was built in 1933 in Eagle River, Wisconsin, to Hanisch’s design and which is listed in the NRHP (6/24/1994). Unfortunately, Hanisch’s Interlock Arch Roof design system turned out to be very similar to a building technique that had been developed in Germany in 1908 by Friedrich Zollinger (1880-1945), who also used lamellas to form his roofs but had the foresight to patent his system and license its use. When word of Hanisch’s system reached a firm in California that had a license to use Zollinger’s system, they requested royalties from Hanisch that he could not pay. Hanisch turned his attention instead to another technique, one that he had first encountered in Germany before World War I. This was the glued and laminated structural wood frame construction system that had been patented in 1906 by Otto Hetzer, a carpenter and mill owner in Weimar, Germany, who developed a system of gluing together layers of dried wooden boards that were bonded together under pressure in order to make structural members. Hetzer’s system soon became popular both in Germany and in surrounding countries and it was at his factory in Weimar that Hanisch first encountered glulam structural members and the techniques that were used to make them. Because these glulam members could be used to span considerable distances and could be configured in a great variety of shapes they had a special appeal to Hanisch, who had already made a specialty of roofing systems and designs. Since Hetzer’s system had never been used in the United States, it presented an opportunity that attracted Hanisch’s attention.

To facilitate the production of glulam framing members, Hanisch and his family moved to northern Wisconsin, where his lamella-roofed Eagle River Stadium had just been completed. He settled first in Mountain, Wisconsin and soon thereafter in Marinette, where he would remain for the rest of his life. Once in Mountain, he and his two sons went into partnership with the two Thompson brothers in nearby Peshtigo, Wisconsin, in 1934 and formed Unit Structures, Inc. The Thompson brothers already had a well established and successful wooden boat company in Peshtigo (Thompson Boat Co.) and a

²⁶ Wisconsin. Examining Board of Architects, Professional Engineers, Designers, and Land Surveyors. Applications for Licenses, 1917-1974. Op. Cit. The factory in Oconto was a warehouse for the Bond Pickle factory.

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Florence Town Hall
Town of Florence, Florence County, Wisconsin

national distribution system to sell them, but even a successful company was glad to have an additional product to sell in the Depression. The Marinette newspaper reported:

A new industry for the city of Peshtigo, a welcome one too, has been forged by the Thompson Bros. of this city, and Max Hanisch, architect, of Mountain. The new concern is to be located at the large plant of the Thompson Bros. Mfg. Co., and is to manufacture arches. The arches are to be built in various designs of wooden material. Sales of the product is said to be in large demand and as the Thompson Bros. and Mr. Hanisch are builders in the wooden materials line of long standing and with reliable and progressive business ability, there is no doubt that the new firm will prosper rapidly.

The new company, an incorporated one, bears the name of Unit Structures, Inc., and has already received an order from the Forest Products Laboratories at Madison. The laboratories are to use the arches for experimental uses.²⁷

Unit Structures' sale to the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory was a critical first step for the company because getting approval from the State of Wisconsin to use this new, untried building method was essential to the company's future.

It was T.R.C. Wilson at the FPL [Forest Products Laboratory] who led research in the design, suitability, and economy of laminated arches for use in the construction of buildings requiring large, clear spans. Laminated arch construction received its first practical demonstration in this country in the service building erected on the Laboratory grounds in 1934. This demonstration served to introduce laminated wood arches into American architectural practice. Commercial application of the development followed almost immediately. By 1939 one company in Wisconsin had constructed more than 200 attractive and serviceable auditoriums, churches, gyms, garages, and barns in which laminated arches were used.²⁸

The "company in Wisconsin," of course, was Unit Structures, Inc. of Peshtigo, whose corporate successor, Sentinel Structures, Inc., took over the original plant in 1973, and is still very much in the business of manufacturing laminated wood structural products today.

²⁷ "New Industry for Peshtigo." *Marinette Eagle-Star*, August 23, 1934, p. 3. The arches sold to the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory were used by them to build what was called Building No. 2 on the Laboratory's campus. It was the Laboratory's successful tests of this new construction method that secured the State of Wisconsin Division of Building and Safety's approval for its use. Building No. 2 was finally demolished in 2010 to make way for new construction on the Laboratory's campus.

²⁸ Nelson, Charles A. *History of the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory (1910-1963)*. Washington, D.C.: G.P.O, 1971, p. 113.

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Florence Town Hall
Town of Florence, Florence County, Wisconsin

The first commercial use of Unit Structures' new glulam arches and the first commercial use in the United States was for the gymnasium wing of the Peshtigo High School, built in 1934 and designed by Max Hanisch, Sr.²⁹ Not surprisingly, this new building method was slow to catch on at first, and the earliest examples that utilized it were typically additions to buildings that required the use of broad, clear spans. These wings included the one in Peshtigo; the 1935 gymnasium wing for the Henry Mitchell School in Racine; the 1935-6 gymnasium for the Wabeno School; the 1937 gymnasium wing for the Crandon, Wisconsin, Grade School; the 1937 gymnasium for the Goodman School in Goodman, Wisconsin; and a gymnasium wing and a band room wing for the Darlington School that were built in 1936 and 1939, respectively. How involved Hanisch was in the actual design of these wings is not clear. Hanisch is credited with the designs of the Peshtigo, Darlington, Goodman, and Crandon gymnasium wings but, given his training and knowledge about glulam construction, it is likely that he also acted as the architectural engineer for projects that were the work of others such as J. Mander Matson of Racine, who was the architect of the Mitchell School.³⁰

Other buildings that Hanisch himself designed during this period that included glulam structural elements manufactured by Unit Structures, Inc. included: a dance hall wing for the St. Stanislaus Catholic Church in Hofa Park, Wisconsin in 1935; the St. Leonard's Catholic Church in Laona, Wisconsin in 1936, which was the first church in the nation to utilize glulam construction; an airplane hangar at the Outagamie County Airport in 1937; the Jordan College Gymnasium and the Jordan College Community Center buildings in Menominee, Michigan, in 1937; and the Equity Co-operative Dance Hall in Pound, Wisconsin, also in 1937. It was during this same early period in glulam's development that Hanisch won the contract to design a new town hall and community center building for the town of Florence.

The design that Hanisch created for the main block of the Florence Town Hall combines both the verticality of the Art Deco style and the horizontality of the Art Moderne style, but the overall effect owes as much to contemporary German and Dutch examples as it does to American expressions of these styles. The essentially symmetrical design, three-part, classically inspired main façade of the block steps back from the sidewalk even as its unornamented cornices step down from the center towards the outer edges of the block, and both serve to reinforce the design's verticality. The windows

²⁹ Architects Vertical Files. Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society. This wing has either now been demolished or has been greatly altered.

³⁰ Other architects who were early users of glulam beams in their designs included: E. A. Stubenrauch, Pittsville Community Building, Pittsville, WI – 1936; Joseph G. Durrant, Community Building-Gym, Viola, WI – 1936; and Hugo Logemann, St John's Lutheran Church, Reedsburg, WI – 1937. Architects Vertical Files. Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society.

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Florence Town Hall
Town of Florence, Florence County, Wisconsin

in both the first and second stories of the center portion of this façade are slightly recessed into vertical bands on the façade's surface and the spandrels below and above the first story windows are filled with panels of dog-tooth-course, diagonally laid bricks, which are a frequently used motif in Art Deco design. Likewise, the way the outer edges of the facade's side wings step inward as they rise is a feature that can also be found in Art Deco and Expressionist German and Dutch designs of both the 1920s and the 1930s. At the same time, something of the horizontality that is a hallmark of the Art Moderne style was also achieved by using the slightly projecting soldier course brick sills and lintels that outline the small, stacked, square corner windows found in the outer portions of the facade's wings in a decorative way. These sills and lintels wrap around the corners of the façade and across the widths of the side elevations of the block, just as the small grouped square windows themselves do, and the end result is not dissimilar to the way in which windows in more typically streamlined American versions of the Art Moderne style often wrap around the corners of their façades, but the total effect here is a more formal, modernist classical composition known as "WPA Modern." Hanisch also introduced an additional horizontal element into his design by using belt courses of rose-colored brick on the building's auditorium wing that act as a contrast to the prevailing grey of the wing's concrete block walls.

The fact that the Hall was to be built out of brick, concrete block, and split fieldstones reflected WPA preferences, which put a premium on labor-intensive projects that could employ the most men. Likewise, the use of glulam arched beams to support the roof of the Hall's auditorium wing was also in compliance with WPA guidelines. Ideally, WPA-sponsored projects sought to use materials that were native to the area in which they were being used, and Unit Structures' laminated wooden beams were manufactured out of wood that was sourced from loggers in the surrounding region and they were then fabricated in Marinette, Wisconsin, which is located some 80 miles to the southeast of Florence, all of which resulted in employment for still more local workers.

The final result was a fine representative example of Art Moderne style design that was well suited to its dual functions as the village's town hall and as a center for community activities. Today, the Florence Town Hall is privately owned but continues to serve Florence as a community center in its recently rehabilitated state. Its exterior and interior are still largely intact and are well maintained. Consequently, this building is eligible for listing in the NRHP on the basis of its architectural significance at the local level because it is both a fine example of an Art Moderne style public building that was constructed using WPA-funded labor and materials and because it is also a fine representative example of the work of its architect, Max L. Hanisch Sr. This building is one of the first complete buildings to come from Hanisch's hand after he cofounded Unit Structures, Inc. in 1934, which was the first manufacturer of laminated structural wood glulam beams in the United States, and it is also an early building in Wisconsin that incorporated this new building material in its design.

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Town of Florence, Florence County, Wisconsin

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Continuation Sheet**

Section 10 Page 1

Florence Town Hall
Town of Florence, Florence County, Wisconsin

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots 11 & 12 & W½ of Lot 13 of Block 16 of Plat of the Village of Florence.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries enclose all the land that has historically been associated with the Town Hall.

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Continuation Sheet

Florence Town Hall
Town of Florence, Florence County, Wisconsin

Section photos Page 1

Items a - d are the same for photos 1 - 19.

Photo 1

- a) Florence Town Hall
- b) Florence, Florence County, WI
- c) Timothy F. Heggland, November 12, 2012
- d) Wisconsin Historical Society
- e) General View, View looking ENE
- f) Photo 1 of 19

Photo 2

- e) Main Facade, View looking N
- f) Photo 2 of 19

Photo 3

- e) Southwest Corner, View looking NE
- f) Photo 3 of 19

Photo 4

- e) West-facing elevation, View looking E
- f) Photo 4 of 19

Photo 5

- e) General view, View looking SE
- f) Photo 5 of 19

Photo 6

- e) Rear Elevation, View looking SW
- f) Photo 6 of 19

Photo 7

- e) General View, View looking SW
- f) Photo 7 of 19

Photo 8

- e) Main Facade, View looking NNW
- f) Photo 8 of 19

Photo 9

- e) Main Entrance Doors, View looking N
- f) Photo 9 of 19

Photo 10

- e) Stair Hall, View looking NE
- f) Photo 10 of 19

Photo 11

- e) Stair Hall, View looking S
- f) Photo 11 of 19

Photo 12

- e) Stair Hall, View looking E
- f) Photo 12 of 19

Photo 13

- e) Stair Hall, View looking W
- f) Photo 13 of 19

Photo 14

- e) Second Story Board Room, View looking E
- f) Photo 14 of 19

Photo 15

- e) Second Story Board Room, View looking NE
- f) Photo 15 of 19

Photo 16

- e) Second Story Board Room, View looking N
- f) Photo 16 of 19

Photo 17

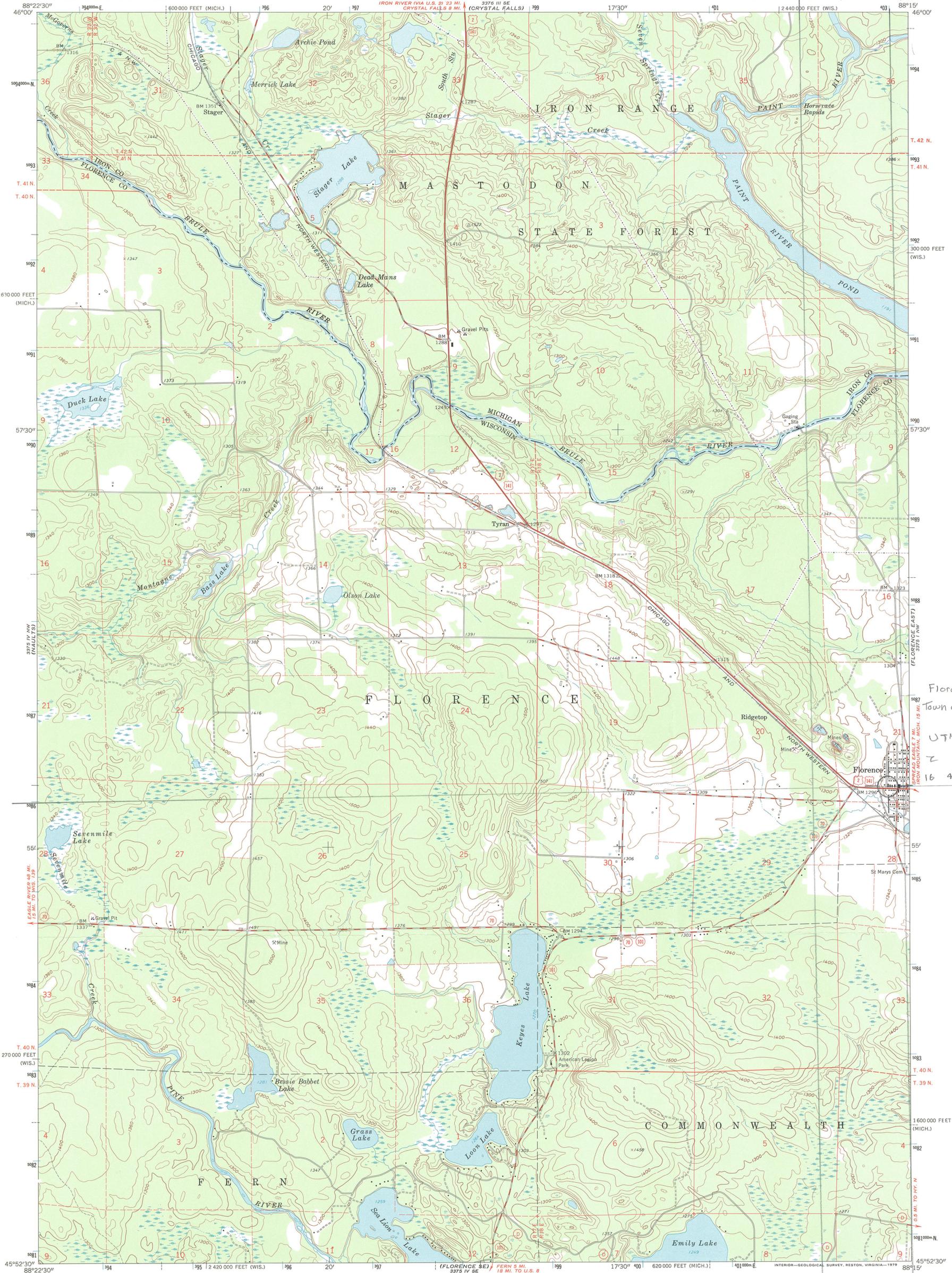
- e) Auditorium, View looking N
- f) Photo 17 of 19

Photo 18

- e) Auditorium Beam Detail, View looking N
- f) Photo 18 of 19

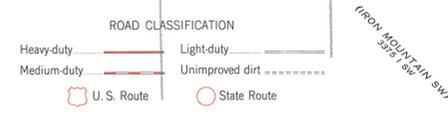
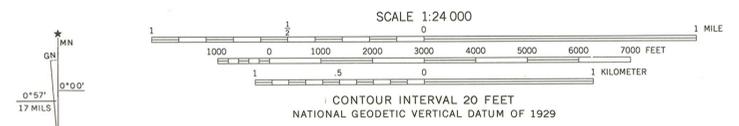
Photo 19

- e) Auditorium, View looking S
- f) Photo 19 of 19



Florence Town Hall
Town of Florence, Florence Co.,
W.I.
UTM coordinates
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Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Planimetry of Michigan area by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1958. Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1943. Field checked 1945. Revised 1962
Topography of Wisconsin area by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1958. Field checked 1962
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grids based on Wisconsin coordinate system, north zone and Michigan coordinate system, west zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 16, shown in blue
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked
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