



CITY OF MERRILL

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

AGENDA • WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 20, 2023

Regular Meeting

City Hall Council Chambers

6:00 PM

To attend remotely call 910-434-5666 PIN 211 642 123 #

- I. Call to Order
- II. Consider approving the minutes from the previous meeting:
 1. August 9th meeting minutes
- III. General Agenda Items:
 1. Discussion regarding Historic homes and buildings:
 - a. Legion Building - discussion if needed
 - b. Update on virtual Historic home/building tour with Social Media Specialist Savall
 - c. Discussion with AAC member Mike Ravn - coordination between the AAC and Historic Preservation Committee
 2. Consider signage for Normal Park
 3. Discussion and update on sign placement schedule, media coverage and next steps
- IV. Next meeting date and time: Wednesday, October 18 at 6:00 PM
- V. Public Comment
- VI. Adjournment

**City of Merrill
Historic Preservation Committee
Wednesday, August 9, 2023
City Hall Common Council Chambers**

Historic Preservation Voting Members Present: Chair Caylor, Alderperson Sabatke, Elizabeth McCrank, and Bill Heideman. Bea Lebel was excused.

Other's present: City Clerk Anderson-Malm and Merrill Productions

I. Call to order – Chair Caylor called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

II. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes from July 19, 2023

Alderperson Sabatke made a motion to approve the July 19 minutes. Elizabeth McCrank seconded and the motion carried.

III. General Agenda Items:

1. Discussion on Legion Building:

Chair Caylor included a response from Park & Recreation Director Wendorf and read it to the committee regarding the use of the Legion Building.

Elizabeth McCrank gave an update on the story board. She asked this to be on the September agenda. The committee is looking for inside pictures of the Legion Building to include on the story board. Chair Caylor will post this on a Facebook page.

2. Discussion regarding historic homes and buildings including media coverage:

Chair Caylor provided the letter that has been generated to send to six historic homeowners. This letter asks the possibility in having personnel from Merrill Media interview the homeowner, either inside their home or outside, regarding their historic home.

Chair Caylor also talked with Mike Ravn and John Greenwood, members of AAC. They are interested in collaborating with the Historic Preservation Committee regarding historic buildings. This will be added to the September agenda for further discussion.

3. Continued discussion on sign placement schedule and media coverage:

Chair Caylor updated the committee on the sign placement schedule. This will be a recurring item on the proceeding agendas. Chair Caylor contacted Kuffer Kaltenborn, a descendent of Hans von Kaltenborn; he will try to establish an interview that can be added to the QR code.

IV. Next meeting date and time:

The next meeting will be Wednesday, September 20 at 6:00 pm

V. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Attachment: 2023-08-09 Historic Preservation Minutes (10361 : August 9th meeting minutes)

VI. Adjournment

Bill Heideman made a motion to adjourn. Alderperson Sabatke seconded and the motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 6:19 PM.

Minutes prepared and submitted by: Lori Anderson-Malm, City Clerk

408 E. 5th Street
Merrill, WI 54452
September 1, 2023

Michael Caylor Jr.
Chair, City of Merrill Historic Preservation Committee
c/o Merrill City Hall
1004 E. 1st Street
Merrill, WI 54452

RE: Recommendation to Provide Historic Recognition for a City of Merrill Site

Dear Mr. Caylor and Committee,

I would like to bring to your attention a living artifact of Merrill's past, one which I'm hopeful warrants your consideration for permanent historical recognition.

Since I moved to Merrill in 2009, notable changes have been made to the city block known as Normal Park. A gazebo has been erected, a playground established, and a concession stand with restrooms built to facilitate the use of those features for concerts, recreation and other community gatherings—not to mention the farmers' market in the parking lot. These improvements have been constructive and worthwhile, enhancing the value of Normal Park as a community asset.

That said, perhaps the only aspect of Normal Park yet undeveloped is its historic legacy—as the site of Lincoln County's first courthouse and its Normal School. Fortunately, links to the past—physical evidence of Normal Park's original purpose—still remain. Below are two photographs of the same spot in the park. The first was taken, one can surmise, in early 1942, as it was published in the 1942 edition of Lincoln County Normal School's yearbook, the *MahWah*. The second photo was taken by me on August 11, 2023.

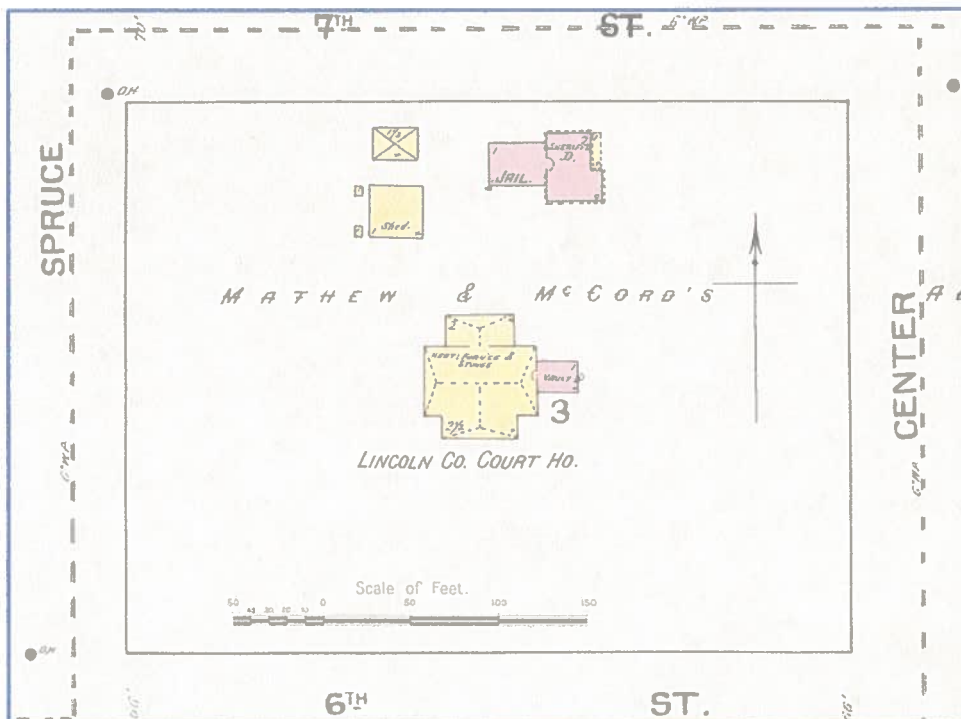


Attachment: Normal School background (10372 : Consider signage for Normal Park)



The above photographs clearly show that:

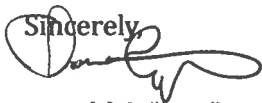
- 1) The sidewalk which, to the ahistorical eye, appears to lead nowhere, in fact once led to the steps of the building that served the public as Lincoln County's first court house from 1882 to 1903, and then as the Lincoln County Normal School (LCNS) from 1907 to 1967.
- 2) The mature trees defining that sidewalk (while I'm no forester, I believe they are Norway Spruces) which today tower above Normal Park were barely seedlings in 1942, which would age them at over 80 years. They can be expected to live 200 years, according to the U.S. Forest Service.



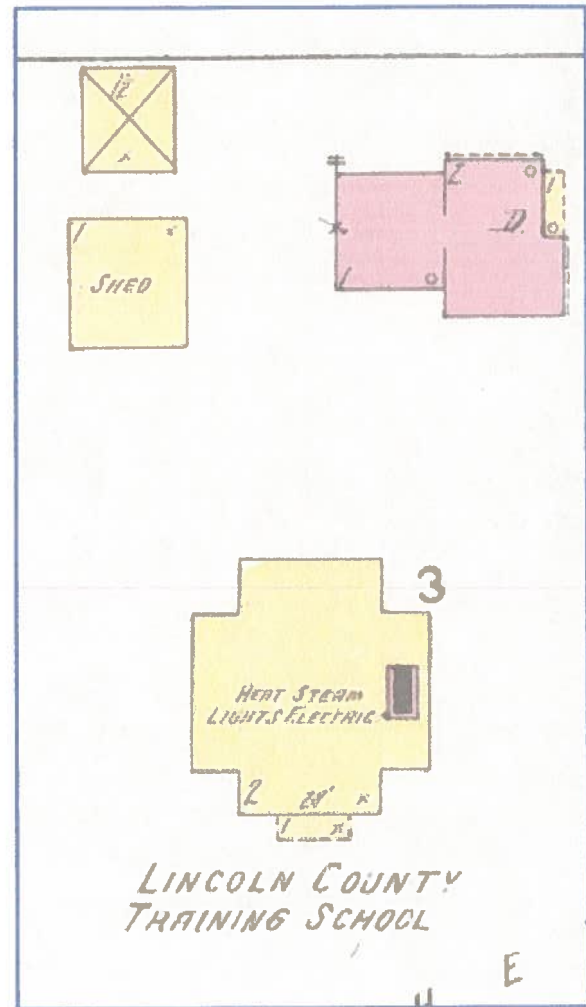
At left and below are screenshots from the 1892 and 1913 Sanborn fire insurance maps for Merrill (copied from the Wisconsin Historical Society's website) showing how the block was occupied over a century ago, first by the Lincoln County Court House and Jail, and then by the Lincoln County "Training School."

I recommend that the approach to Lincoln County's 1st Court House/LCNS be designated as a memorial to the 85 years during which this space served the public as Lincoln County's Court House and Normal School. The tree cluster, representing the profound impact that the teachers graduated from LCNS made on Lincoln County, might be named "MahWah Grove" or "Teachers Grove." An interpretive sign, perhaps erected near the spot where the "sidewalk to nowhere" ends, could explain the park's original purpose and place it in historical context. In sum, I believe it is worthwhile to define and express the historical significance that this location, literally hidden in plain sight, has had on our community for over 140 years (additionally, a sign may provide identification for the park which, as far as I can tell, has none at present).

During the recent 2023 Lincoln County Fair, I took the opportunity to share my concept with retired teacher and historian Marie Rein, whose letter of support is attached. Marie and I are in agreement that now is the time to ensure that evidence of Normal Park's historic past is not ignored, or even worse, needlessly destroyed. Let me know if you have any questions regarding the above.

Sincerely,


Donald S. "Don" Litzer
 Librarian Retired
 dlitzer@gmail.com



W3568 Center Road
Merrill, WI 54452
August 25, 2023

Michael Caylor Jr.
Chair, City of Merrill Historic Preservation Committee
c/o Merrill City Hall
1004 E. 1st Street
Merrill WI 54452

RE: Suggestion for site worthy of historic recognition

Dear Mr. Caylor and Committee,

The 600 block of Merrill's Center Avenue holds two mysteries within its boundaries. First, why name a park with such an ambiguous name as Normal Park? Second, why lay a sidewalk that leads nowhere?

Both questions can be answered with the same response. The sidewalk entering the park on its south side once led to the front entrance of the Lincoln County *Normal* School, a college which trained teachers in the most recent "norms"/standards for classroom practice. Prior to its years as a teachers college, the building served as the Lincoln County Courthouse. All in all, this block is a historic and memorable site, worthy of being noted in a permanent manner.

I am writing as a retired teacher of the Merrill Area Public Schools, as a citizen fascinated with Merrill history, as a member of the Merrill Historical Society and its Brickyard School Committee who, in the latter capacity, studied the history of the Normal School in order to create a large display. Through this study I developed an understanding of the integrity of its staff and curriculum and also discovered the deep regard its graduates hold for the institution. I am writing, as well, as someone who likes mysteries explained!

I recommend that you act on Don Litzer's recommendation to place some sort of permanent marker at Normal Park, for the purpose of informing both citizens and visitors of the significant place the site played in Merrill's past. Merrill has such a rich history. Let's help people to remember it.

Sincerely,

Marie Rein

Marie Rein

Attachment: Normal School background (10372 : Consider signage for Normal Park)