**INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

**1 NAME**

**HISTORIC**  
Bass Island-Brownstone Company

**AND/OR COMMON**  
Basswood Island Quarry

**2 LOCATION**

**STREET & NUMBER**  
Basswood Island (SE 1/4, SW 1/4, Section 4, T50N, R3W)

**CITY, TOWN**  
Town of La Pointe

**STATE**  
Wisconsin

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

<table>
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<th>STATUS</th>
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<td>BEING CONSIDERED</td>
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**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

**NAME**  
multiple ownership (see continuation sheet)

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

**COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.**  
Register of Deeds, Ashland County Courthouse

**STREET & NUMBER**  
201 West 2nd

**CITY, TOWN**  
Ashland

**STATE**  
Wisconsin

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

**TITLE**  
Apostle Islands National Lakeshore Buildings Survey

**DATE**  
1975

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS**  
State Historical Society of Wisconsin

**CITY, TOWN**  
Madison

**STATE**  
Wisconsin 53706
The site of the Basswood Island quarry of the Bass Island Brownstone Company is located near the southeastern tip of Basswood Island. The nominated property starts from a point approximately 150' S.W. of the ruins of a small cabin noted on the U.S.G.S. quadrangle and continues along the shore for approximately 850 feet. The property includes that area within 500 feet of the shore.

The main quarry is an irregularly shaped opening approximately 200' long. One section is partly filled with water; other sections are largely overgrown. But the quarry itself is more open than the surrounding country and excavation benches on the sides of the quarry are easily visible on the 25-foot walls. Throughout the immediate area of the quarry is evidence of the operation: there are large blocks of brownstone lying about and some appear to be cut and ready for transport. There are smaller areas that have been quarried, and here and there can be seen pieces of cable or rusted metal spikes used in the quarrying operation.

When the quarry was being worked, workers' cabins and heavy machinery were at the site. These no longer exist.
The opening of the Basswood Island Quarry in 1868 signaled the beginning of the brownstone industry in northern Wisconsin. Though active quarrying lasted little more than thirty years, Lake Superior brownstone achieved, in that short time, a lasting reputation as a strong and particularly attractive building material.

After many months of prospecting, Almson Sweet and his exploration party chose a site at the southeastern tip of Basswood Island to commence quarrying activities. The Bass Island Brownstone Company was established to quarry and market the stones. Docks and buildings were built and machinery was brought to the island. A census in 1870 showed nineteen people, mostly of Irish descent, employed at the quarry. The stone was "cut by channelers, in two directions, and then wedged off along the bedding plane to the desired thickness." These cuts were usually eight to ten feet deep. Channeling was preferred to blasting, as the stone often broke and shattered during the latter process. The Basswood Island Quarry did not have facilities for sawing.

Proposed for use in the Milwaukee County Courthouse, the stone of the Basswood quarry was subjected to extensive testing to determine its structural capability. The results were favorable, and the first stones produced by the quarry were used in the construction of that imposing Renaissance Revival building (now demolished). Other buildings known to have been built of Basswood Island brownstone include the old Chicago Tribune Building, the Forest Home Cemetery Chapel in Milwaukee, designed by Ferry and Clas, and St. Paul's Episcopal Church, also in Milwaukee, a National Register property.

The growing popularity of the steel frame building and consequent use of lighter materials, coupled with the economic recession of 1893, halted the operation of the Basswood Island Quarry. Other quarries in the area continued to supply brownstone for buildings throughout the mid-west until the market disappeared in the early twentieth century.


MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 9.7

UTM REFERENCES

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE

COUNTRY CODE

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Herschel L. D. Parnes, Field Surveyor, Historic Preservation Office

ORGANIZATION
State Historical Society of Wisconsin

STREET & NUMBER
816 State Street

TELEPHONE
608/262-9504

CITY OR TOWN
Madison

STATE
Wisconsin

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   STATE X   LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

S.H.P.O. Signature

TITLE
Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE 1/29/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 3.26.78
BASS ISLAND BROWNSTONE COMPANY

Charlotte Learned George
3053 Hermit Way
Santa Rosa, California 95405

Harold N. Learned
14111 S. E. 260th
Kent, Washington 98031

National Park Service - Midwest Region
1709 Jackson St.
Omaha, Nebraska 63102

State of Wisconsin
Department of Natural Resources
4610 University Avenue
Madison, Wisconsin 53705
# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet

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Property name should read **Bass Island Brownstone Company Quarry**

Bass Island Brownstone Company Quarry.

Signed, SHEO or Authorized Representative  

DATE 2/18/86
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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PROPERTY NAME Basswood Island Brownstone Quarry

REFERENCE NUMBER 78000075
STATE WI
COUNTY CODE 003

Property name should read Basswood Island Company Quarry

SIGNED, SHPO OR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE DATE
NAME

HISTORIC
Bass Island Brownstone Company

AND/OR COMMON
Basswood Island Quarry

LOCATION

CITY, TOWN
Town of La Pointe

VICINITY OF

COUNTY
Ashland

STATE
Wisconsin

PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT
Herschel L. D. Parnes

DATE OF PHOTO
1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT
State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison

IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

View of typical quarry benches found at the Basswood Island Quarry
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

1 NAME
HISTORIC
Bass Island Brownstone Company
AND/OR COMMON
Basswood Island Quarry

2 LOCATION
CITY, TOWN
Town of La Pointe
VICINITY OF
COUNTY
Ashland
STATE
Wisconsin

3 PHOTO REFERENCE
PHOTO CREDIT
Herschel L. D. Parnes
DATE OF PHOTO
1975
NEGATIVE FILED AT
State Historical Society of Wisconsin

4 IDENTIFICATION
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

View from South of Main Quarry

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED FEB 5 1976
DATE ENTERED MAR 29 1978