

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**HISTORIC  
Bass Island Brownstone CompanyAND/OR COMMON  
Basswood Island Quarry**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Basswood Island (SE 1/4, SW 1/4, Section 4, T50N, R3W) NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Town of La Pointe

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Seventh

STATE

Wisconsin

CODE

55

COUNTY

Ashland

CODE

003

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT  
☐ BUILDING(S)  
☐ STRUCTURE  
☒ SITE  
☐ OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC  
☐ PRIVATE  
☒ BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☒ IN PROCESS  
☐ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☐ OCCUPIED  
☒ UNOCCUPIED  
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED  
☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED  
☒ NO

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE ☐ MUSEUM  
☐ COMMERCIAL ☐ PARK  
☐ EDUCATIONAL ☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
☐ ENTERTAINMENT ☐ RELIGIOUS  
☐ GOVERNMENT ☐ SCIENTIFIC  
☐ INDUSTRIAL ☐ TRANSPORTATION  
☐ MILITARY ☒ OTHER: None

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

multiple ownership (see continuation sheet)

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds, Ashland County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

201 West 2nd

CITY, TOWN

Ashland

STATE

Wisconsin

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Apostle Islands National Lakeshore Buildings Survey

DATE

1975

☒ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

CITY, TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT  
☐ GOOD  
☒ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED  
☐ RUINS  
☐ UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED  
☐ ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE  
☐ MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

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.

V.B.D.

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.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION	
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE	
___1500-1599	___AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	___LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE	
___1600-1699	___ARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	___MILITARY	___SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
___1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER	
<u>X</u> 1800-1899	___COMMERCE	___EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	___TRANSPORTATION	
___1900-	___COMMUNICATIONS	<u>X</u> INDUSTRY	___POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		___INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES **1868,-1893**

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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."<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> Ross, Hamilton, La Pointe--Village Outpost (Ann Arbor, 1960), p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Buckley, Ernest, On the Building and Ornamental Stones of Wisconsin (Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey Bulletin No. IV, Madison 1898), p. 178.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Buckley, Ernest, On the Building and Ornamental Stones of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey, Bulletin No. IV, State of Wisconsin, Madison, 1898.

Ross, Hamilton, La Pointe - Village Outpost, Edwards Bros., Ann Arbor, 1960.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 9.7

UTM REFERENCES

A 15 671170 5188750  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
C         

B           
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
D         

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

*FOUR 11 22 44 55 66 77 88 99*

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Herschel L. D. Parnes, Field Surveyor, Historic Preservation Office

ORGANIZATION

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

July 23, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

816 State Street

TELEPHONE

608/262-9504

CITY OR TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin

## 12 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

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

*James Norton Smith*

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, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

ATTEST:

*Walter C. Cole*

~~KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER~~

DATE

3-29-78

~~KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER~~

DATE

3-28-78

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 4

PAGE 1

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 68102

State of Wisconsin  
Department of Natural Resources  
4610 University Avenue  
Madison, Wisconsin 53705

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

PROPERTY NAME Bass  
~~Bassxxxx~~ Island Brownstone ~~Quarry~~ Company Quarry

7	8	0	0	0	0	7	5
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REFERENCE NUMBER

W	I
---	---

STATE

0	0	3
---	---	---

COUNTY CODE

Property name should read ~~Basswood Island Company Quarry~~

Bass Island Brownstone Company Quarry.

SIGNED, SHPO OR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE

DATE

*Jeff Dean*

2/18/86

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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7	8	0	0	0	0	7	5
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

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\_\_\_\_ 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, Madison

**4 IDENTIFICATION**

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

PHOTO NO 1 of 2

View of typical quarry benches found at the Basswood Island Quarry



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PHOTO NO 2 of 2

View from South of Main Quarry