

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

|                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| STATE:           | Minnesota   |
| COUNTY:          | Chippewa    |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |             |
| ENTRY DATE:      | DEC 30 1974 |

1. NAME

|                  |                      |
|------------------|----------------------|
| COMMON:          | Swensson Farm        |
| AND/OR HISTORIC: | Swensson, Olof, Farm |

2. LOCATION

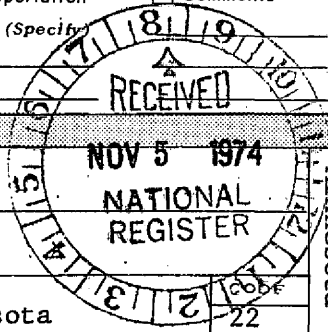
|  |          |                               |           |
|--|----------|-------------------------------|-----------|
| STREET AND NUMBER: <i>W of Granite Falls</i><br>W½SE¼ Section 6, T116N, R39W |          |                               |           |
| CITY OR TOWN: Granite Falls Township   |          | CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Sixth |           |
| STATE: Minnesota   | CODE: 22 | COUNTY: Chippewa              | CODE: 023 |

3. CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY<br>(Check One)   | OWNERSHIP   | STATUS  | ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC  |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure<br><input type="checkbox"/> Object | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public<br><input type="checkbox"/> Private<br><input type="checkbox"/> Both   | Public Acquisition:<br><input type="checkbox"/> In Process<br><input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered   | <input type="checkbox"/> Occupied<br><input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress |
| PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)  |   |   |   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural<br><input type="checkbox"/> Commercial<br><input type="checkbox"/> Educational<br><input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment             | <input type="checkbox"/> Government<br><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial<br><input type="checkbox"/> Military<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum | <input type="checkbox"/> Park<br><input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious<br><input type="checkbox"/> Scientific | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____<br><input type="checkbox"/> Comments                |

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

|                    |                                    |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| OWNER'S NAME:      | Chippewa County Historical Society |
| STREET AND NUMBER: |                                    |
| CITY OR TOWN:      | Montevideo                         |
| STATE:             | Minnesota                          |



5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

|   |            |        |           |
|---|------------|--------|-----------|
| COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:<br>Chippewa County Courthouse - Registrar of Deeds |            |        |           |
| STREET AND NUMBER:<br>Eleventh Street and Washington Avenue                             |            |        |           |
| CITY OR TOWN:   | Montevideo | STATE: | Minnesota |
|   |            | CODE:  | 22        |

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

|  |            |   |           |
|--|------------|---|-----------|
| TITLE OF SURVEY:<br>Statewide Historic Sites Survey            |            |   |           |
| DATE OF SURVEY:  | July 1973  | <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local |           |
| DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:<br>Minnesota Historical Society |            |   |           |
| STREET AND NUMBER:<br>Building 25, Fort Snelling               |            |   |           |
| CITY OR TOWN:  | Saint Paul | STATE:  | Minnesota |
|  |            | CODE:   | 22        |

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Minnesota  
COUNTY: Chippewa  
ENTRY NUMBER: DEC 30 1974  
DATE: FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

|           |                                    |   |                               |                                       |   |                                    |
|-----------|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| CONDITION | (Check One)                        |   |                               |                                       |   |                                    |
|           | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good      | <input type="checkbox"/> Fair | <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed |
|           | (Check One)                        |   |                               | (Check One)                           |   |                                    |
|           | <input type="checkbox"/> Altered   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered |                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Moved        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site |                                    |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Swensson Farm comprises a seventeen acre farmstead on the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 6, Twp.116N, R39W near Wegdahl in Chippewa County. The house, barn, ruins of the grist mill and family burial plot are located on about two acres in the southernmost part of the farmstead and accessible from County Road 15.

The Swensson house was begun in 1901. It is wood frame construction which was faced with a brick veneer in 1903. Stylistically the house shows a vernacular mixture of Italianate and Georgian elements. According to sketches by Olof Swensson the house was originally intended as a three storey mansion in the French Second Empire style which was to be highlighted by a four-storey mansarded stair tower. Lack of materials and finances prohibited this dream to reach fruition. The present house is set upon a foundation of huge granite stones, expertly cut and laid in pattern by Swensson and his eldest daughter Katherine. These stones were collected locally. Dimensions of this foundation are 40' x 78'.

Of note are the cut-granite corner stones on the southeast and southwest corners of the central mass of the house. On the east face of the southeast cornerstone is inscribed: "Olof Swensson Born 1843" and on the south face are the Roman numerals "MDCCCCI" designating the date of construction. On the south face of the southwest cornerstone is inscribed "Come to America 1871" and on the west face is "Settled 1873".

Although recent asphalt shingles cover the formerly cut-cedar shingle roof, the flat area on the summit retains its original wrought iron railing enclosure. Other distinguishing features are seen in the well crafted concrete posts and railings used on front and rear porches. A porch on the west side rear of the house was removed owing to its badly deteriorated condition; this porch was similar to that on the east side rear which is extant.

The interior attests to Olof Swensson's ability as a carpenter in application of good quality materials. The majority of rooms exhibit fine wooden-doors and mouldings. Walls are covered with patterned pressed metal which has been painted, in some cases polychrome. There are twenty-two rooms of which five are in the basement, twelve on the first floor, and five on the second floor.

The structure consists basically of two parts: the large front section containing hall, parlor, living/dining room, library, and four bedrooms; and the smaller kitchen dependency to the rear which consists of kitchen and six small rooms. The kitchen portion was the first section of the house to be completed, and served as the family's living quarters while the front part of the house was being finished. The kitchen is separated from the front (living/dining space) by a hall which links the rear porches by double doors.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

|                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| STATE            |             |
| Minnesota        |             |
| COUNTY           |             |
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|                  | DEC 30 1974 |

7. Description

The main front entry is through double doors with elaborate decorative glass panels. These doors open into the hall from which a wide staircase leads to the second floor. A door at the base of the staircase opens into the parlor, elaborately embellished by polychromed pressed-metal walls and ceiling. Connection between the parlor and master bedroom is provided by a large walk-through closet. Two bedrooms open into a 10 foot by 20 foot library. Local informants report that Swensson originally planned to board Norwegian students here for the purpose of educating them to American ways -- thus the reason for the dormitory-like arrangement of the library section of the house.

Of primary interest on the second floor is a large room which comprises the total floor area (38 x 38) of the front section. This room, also embellished by polychrome pressed metal, is where Olof Swensson held church services. A large kerosine lamp chandelier suspended in this room is adjusted by a cable on pulleys which comes down through the ceiling of an adjacent room. This room contains another cable which regulates a central ventilating grate in the large room ceiling.

The house is furnished with possessions of the Swensson family. Nothing has been added by the Chippewa County Historical Society which now operates the farm as a museum. An ongoing program of maintenance/preservation will continue to insure the future of this property.

In addition to the house, there is a large timber-framed barn which is presently undergoing restoration to house farm implements, most of which were made and used by Olof Swensson. It rests on a one-storey granite foundation cut from locally gathered boulders. It was constructed before the house while Swensson was homesteading this land. An elaborate system of wind-bracing and notching attest to Swensson's skill as a designer and builder.

Lastly, Swensson constructed a small grist mill near the barn in the 1890's. It was first powered by horses and later by a steam engine. Plans found in the Swensson collection indicate that the mill concept used was of English origin. Today the mill is in ruins, having ceased operation early in this century. The mill stones (burrs) were fashioned from local granite by Swensson.

The family burial plot adjacent to County Road 15 has concrete tombstones, designed and cast by Olof Swensson. The molds for these are preserved in the house.

After Olof Swensson's death in 1923 the farmstead gradually fell into disrepair although his son John and daughters Christine and Emma continued to occupy the premises. At John's death in 1967, the property was bequeathed to the Chippewa County Historical Society.

**3. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |                                       |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                        | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture  | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                      | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                        | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation                 | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |   | _____  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Olof Swensson was born 19 May 1843 on a farm at Ostmarken in Kongsvingers Parish, Norway. In his youth, he studied under Pastor Ole Gutormsen Ronning and became deeply absorbed in the teachings of the Lutheran doctrine. In 1869 at the age of 26, he married Ingeborg Agnetta Pearson, a nursemaid for a wealthy Swedish landowner. Three years later Swensson, with his wife and year old son, emigrated to the United States and settled on a farm near Wegdahl, Minnesota, where his father had homesteaded a few years earlier. Their first home was a dugout on this farm.

In 1873 Olof Swensson homesteaded a quarter section of land adjoining his father's land and constructed a log house. Here, in the following year their daughter Katie, who later became Olof's chief helper after the death of his first son, was born. She worked as a man in the fields to care for crops of wheat, potatoes, and livestock which were the Swensson's chief sources of income.

In the decade of the nineties, Olof and Katie gathered the granite boulders for the foundation of the large timber-framed barn and a small grist mill. This mill, now in ruin, was first powered by horses and later by steam engine. For a brief period "Swensson Flour" was marketed, until in 1904, the mill was used only for feed grinding.

Swensson was a deeply religious man and declared himself a self-appointed lay-preacher. He conducted weekly religious services in the large room on the second floor of the house which he and Katie constructed between 1901 and 1903. His sermons, written in Norwegian, have been preserved. In addition, Swensson wrote and published a book in Norwegian stating his religious beliefs.

Copies of this book were sent out in 1908 and the remuneration was set at fifty cents. A quotation from the book reveals Swensson's purposes and philosophy: "To reveal the corruption in the seminaries and the Christianity they practice I am writing this book. The church policy they maintain is a mere moon-beam in the world's dark night. God's Spirit is not in it."

Olof Swensson was politically active as well as religious. After living in the United States for twenty years, he was disturbed by what seemed wrong to him in the nation's political and economic situation.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Swensson, Olof - Draft of Amendment to U.S. Constitution, 6 February 1892  
 Swensson Papers, Chippewa County Historical Society  
 Swensson, Olof - Det Tyvende Aarhundredes Christens og Christianas, 1908

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

| LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES<br>DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY |          |         |         | O<br>R  | LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES<br>DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY<br>OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES |         |         |          |         |         |           |         |
|--|----------|---------|---------|---------|---|---------|---------|----------|---------|---------|-----------|---------|
| CORNER   | LATITUDE |         |         |         | LONGITUDE   |         |         | LATITUDE |         |         | LONGITUDE |         |
|  | Degrees  | Minutes | Seconds | Degrees | Minutes   | Seconds | Degrees | Minutes  | Seconds | Degrees | Minutes   | Seconds |
| NW   | °        | '       | "       | °       | '   | "       | 44°     | 52'      | 41"     | 95°     | 35'       | 28"     |
| NE   | °        | '       | "       | °       | '   | "       |         |          |         |         |           |         |
| SE   | °        | '       | "       | °       | '   | "       |         |          |         |         |           |         |
| SW   | °        | '       | "       | °       | '   | "       |         |          |         |         |           |         |

UTM  
 15/295320  
 4972460  
 (D)

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **17 acres**

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

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY  | CODE |
|--------|------|---------|------|
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | CODE |



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Lynne Van Brocklin - Charles W. Nelson**

ORGANIZATION: **Minnesota Historical Society**      DATE: **22 August 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Building 25, Fort Snelling**

CITY OR TOWN: **Saint Paul**      STATE: **Minnesota**      CODE: **22**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION      NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National     State     Local

Name Russell W. Fridley  
 Russell W. Fridley, Director

Title Minnesota Historical Society

Date Oct 25, 1974

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Atkinson  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 12/30/74

ATTEST:

W. [Signature]  
 Keeper of the National Register

Date **DEC 27 1974**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

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|                  |           | DEC 8 0 1974 |

(Number all entries)

**8. Significance**

Swensson wrote a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution and had it printed under the date of 6 February 1892. This amendment, sixteen pages in length, was found in Swensson's desk by the Chippewa County Historical Society in 1967. Twenty-two envelopes were also found with the amendment, addressed to the heads of state of twenty-two different counties. In the appendix of the amendment Swensson wrote: "I have endeavored to place all upon a common footing and to regulate wages of labor for rich and poor alike --- I would not write anything that would destroy any of the industrial institutions of this country, but I aim to protect the laborer as well as the capitalist----." During the period of this writing, Swensson also ran for governor of Minnesota, however unsuccessfully.

After his brief career in politics, Swensson returned to his life on the farmstead, making elaborate plans to construct his mansion. This twenty-two room brick veneer house was finished in 1903. Swensson died in 1923 leaving two spinster daughters and a bachelor son. They retained everything which was on the property at the time of their father's death, and when the last member of the family died in 1967, a veritable museum of family history was passed on to the Chippewa County Historical Society. This history has been preserved for the education and enjoyment of future generations.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

for Keeper *Melvin Lynn*  
11/19/89

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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**Note: These changes apply to  
Swensson Farm in Chippewa County,  
Minnesota.**

**REFERENCE NUMBER:** 74001010

**STATE:** MINNESOTA

**COUNTY:** Chippewa

**RESOURCE NAME (HISTORIC):** Swensson, Olof, Farmstead

**CITY:**

**VICINITY OF:** Granite Falls

**ADDRESS:** Co. Hwys. 15 and 6

**CERTIFICATION DATE:**

**REMOVED DATE:**

**COMMENTS:**

*Nina M. Archabal*

**Nina M. Archabal  
State Historic Preservation Officer**

**JUN 17 1988**

**Date**