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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Larsmont School
other names/site number Larsmont Volunteer Fire Department

2. Location

street & number County Highway 61 N/A not for publication
city, town Unorganized Territory (Larsmont) vicinity Two Harbors
state Minnesota code MN county Lake code 075 zip code 55616

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> objects
			<u>3</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official Ian E. Stewart, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date 5/12/92

State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Entered in the National Register 6/18/92

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
EDUCATION/school

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
SOCIAL/meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls WOOD/weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Larsmont School is a single story structure of wood frame construction built in 1914 on a foundation of concrete piers. The school is on a site some 60 feet above Lake Superior and c. 1200 feet from the shoreline at the crossroads of old Highway 61 and Larsmont Road. Three of the seven original windows in the southwest wall have been removed, but otherwise the property is essentially unmodified both inside and out and occupies its original site.

The exterior dimensions of the Larsmont School are 34 feet wide by 38 feet long, with a 6½ by 10½ foot entrance porch. This plan comprises three elements: a hipped roof classroom, a gable roofed space containing three rooms, and an entrance porch. The porch gable is an unbroken pediment and there are cornice returns of the segment between the porch and the classroom. The main entrance is surrounded by windows and all but one of the building's other windows are on either the southwest or northeast elevations. There is one small window on the northeast wall of what was the library.

The library (now a kitchen) measures 11 by 14 feet as does a room on the east corner which was a cloakroom, and was also used for wood fuel storage, which accounts for the exterior door on the southeast side. In the classroom, only the southwest wall had windows; the southeast and northwest walls were covered with blackboards. The northeast wall of the classroom represents a symmetrical balance similar to the opposite wall of windows: two narrow doors on either side of the central entrance.

The lower 3 feet of the classroom wall is covered with painted wood wainscoting and the entry hall has 4 foot wainscoting on the original lath and plaster walls. Maple flooring covers the floor surface throughout the building.

The exterior has always been covered by wooden lap siding, but the original color scheme was white with dark (possibly black) trim. In recent years the building has been painted red with white trim. Other changes include the removal of three of the original seven windows on the southwest side in 1980 and the addition of a ramp off one side of the porch and the replacement of low walls on the porch with railings. None of these modifications have changed the character or feeling of the structure in any significant way.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Larsmont School
Unorganized Territory (Larsmont), Lake County, MN

A Fire Department garage was erected on the westernmost edge of the lot in c. 1960. This structure and a privy located c. 100 feet behind the school are listed above as non-contributing resources as well as the flagpole near the school.

The Larsmont School is in excellent overall condition and is located on its original two acre site at the corner of Larsmont Road and old Highway 61 in Government Lot 1, Section 21, Township 52 North, Range 11 West, Lake County, Minnesota.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1914-1941

Significant Dates

1914, 1932,

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

John Strom and Charles Hill

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Larsmont School is significant under National Register Criterion A because it is closely associated with events that make up the history of the Larsmont community and because it represents efforts to maintain and further the welfare of the community and its social groups. Larsmont was settled mainly by Swede-Finns who came directly from Finland between 1908 and 1913. These Europeans and three Norwegians who preceded them in 1887 were the first permanent white settlers in the area, who arrived to purchase cutover forest land expecting to find economic opportunity in lumbering, railroading, and in commercial fishing. The significance of the school within the history of Larsmont can be seen by its physical setting in the community and in the many social functions it served over the years: educational, religious, recreational, and cultural.

Population figures from the 1930 Federal Census indicate that some 3% of the people in the United States citing Swedish as their native language were born in Finland.¹ Finland Swedes, or Swede-Finns, had been living on the west and south coastal areas of Finland for generations before emigrating to the U.S. in significant numbers between 1870 and 1930, settling in Massachusetts, Michigan, Washington, and in Minnesota. Something like 20-25% of Finns emigrating to Minnesota were Swede-Finns, and most of these settled in St. Louis County, with lesser numbers in Lake County. The lakeshore settlement at French River in St. Louis County was largely Swede-Finn as was Larsmont, named for a place in southwest coastal Finland: Larsmo parish.² A cultural transfer can be seen in the occupations pursued by these immigrants---initially woodworking, lumbering, fishing, and subsistence farming.³ And Larsmont Swede-Finns represent nationally a minority within a minority, in that they were mostly Swedish Baptists in their religious preference.⁴

To fill out the picture of why the Swede-Finns and Norwegians settled in Larsmont and why the community took the shape it did, three historic contexts need to be discussed. The first of these is Minnesota's Iron Ore Industry (1800s-1945). In 1884 the first shipment of iron ore went from the Soudan mine to Two-Harbors on the Duluth and Iron Range railroad for shipment to lower Great Lake ports.

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1 Larsmont School
Unorganized Territory (Larsmont), Lake County, MN

This line was extended from Duluth through Larsmont to Two Harbors in 1887. This railroad eventually became important for the other extractive industries in the area as well: lumbering and fishing. It was at this time that permanent settlement in Larsmont began, with most of the earliest residents arriving between 1908 and 1913.⁵ A depot was established in what became Larsmont, known at first as "Milepost 22." The railroad was the most important transportation facility for Larsmont until c. 1926, when Highway 61 was paved, and it provided jobs for area residents through the period of World War II, especially after lumbering and fishing declined.

An important aspect of Northern Minnesota Lumbering (1870-1930s) in the history of settlement was that relatively inexpensive land became available to settlers after the timber had been removed and some areas subjected to forest fires. By the time most of the first settlers arrived in Larsmont, the timber in the immediate area had been cut and fires had been and would continue to be a problem. The Swede-Finns in Larsmont established small subsistence farms on their property and cut timber in areas inland not yet logged. The turn-of-the-century to c. 1910 was the high point for lumbering activity in northeast Minnesota, and we also note that pulpwood harvesting, which would shortly replace lumbering as the most important use of timber in the area, began to increase at this time, since the Northwest Paper Co. mill at Cloquet was in operation by 1900. The period from 1910 to c. 1930 marks the decline and end of lumbering in Lake County, although pulpwood harvesting continues into the present.⁶

Settlement and Fishing on Lake Superior (1854-1930) is the third historic context relevant to the social history of Larsmont. The first settlers in the area, Theodore, Tollof, and Louis Thompson, who arrived in 1887, were Norwegians who pursued commercial fishing. Others also did so, although Larsmont was never primarily a fishing village like Hovland and Tofte in Cook County or Castle Danger in Lake County, where most of the residents were Norwegian.⁷ Norwegians were a minority in Larsmont, but fishing was important enough that special facilities were available at the depot for loading herring for shipment to Duluth.⁸ Boat building by the Swede-Finns Charles Hill and John Coson, and later by Charles' son Reuben, was carried out primarily for the fishing industry, which saw its best years between 1890 and 1940, and which had declined rapidly by the end of the 1950s because of overfishing and sea lamprey predation.

The land in the Larsmont area had been owned by several parties before 1908 when Govt. Lot 1 of Section 21 (all of S. 21 not part of Lake Superior) was sold to immigrants John Strom, Victor and John Sjöblom, and John Hendrickson, but none of the previous owners had settled there.⁹ This was the group that in effect produced a settlement at Larsmont, and many of the subsequent settlers were relatives of these people or came from the same parish in Finland.¹⁰ Larsmont was never incorporated and its official existence was defined by a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2 Larsmont School
Unorganized Territory (Larsmont), Lake County, MN

post office (1916-1978) and a railroad depot. As part of Two Harbors Township, which includes Knife River and Two Harbors, governmental affairs including voting took place in Two Harbors, which is also the County seat. The community was never laid out in streets, but in 1913, Govt. Lot 1 was platted into 12 outlots, ranging in size from 0.6 to 12.55 acres.

The school was built on Outlot 4 and became the focal point of the community. Roads, highways, and railroads further defined what became Larsmont by 1914: Larsmont Road, the old North Shore Road, then old Highway 61, and the Duluth, Missabe and Iron Range Railroad. The junction of Larsmont Road with the railroad and old Highway 61 represents the "center" of the Larsmont community and all these features are visible on the current 7.5 Minute U.S. Geological Survey map of the area (Two Harbors Quadrangle). The school is there and until recently there was a general store directly across from it on Larsmont Road. The rail depot was also nearby. Neither of these structures is extant. The last post office location, a store c. ¼ mile southwest of the school, is still standing and is now a veterinary supply outlet. The population of Larsmont was c. 100 between 1914 and the 1940s.¹¹

Lake County School District #4, which included but was not limited to Larsmont, was created in 1900.¹² School was held in local homes until the present building was erected in 1914, which from the beginning was intended to mainly serve the Larsmont community. There were other schools in District 4, including one at the larger community at Knife River. The Larsmont School later became part of District #2 and finally the Lake County School District, after consolidation in 1930. A law passed by the State Legislature in 1929 permitted any county to consolidate its school districts into one county district and board. The Superintendent of Schools in Lake County at the time was a supporter of this legislation and of consolidation generally, and some rural schools in Lake County had already been closed by 1930 when a single board and district was established.¹³ This was undoubtedly a factor in the current scarcity of rural school buildings in Lake County and in Minnesota generally, in contrast to other parts of the Midwest.

There is general agreement locally that the builders of the Larsmont School were John Strom and Charles Hill, both Swede-Finns who had arrived in Larsmont by 1911. Hill and Strom were well-known builders in Lake County. Hill was equally well known as a boat builder in the area, a trade often pursued by Swede-Finn immigrants.¹⁴ Hill's 35 foot Crusader II, a fishing boat now owned by the Lake County Historical Society, is one of the few remaining vessels of its kind. Hill and Strom built several other schoolhouses in Lake County, but a review of a 1984 reconnaissance survey reveals that few rural schools are still standing in Lake County, and that most of these have been moved and/or extensively modified.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 3 Larsmont School
Unorganized Territory (Larsmont), Lake County, MN
CFN-259-1116

Until 1914 when the school was built, education and religious services in Swedish were held in local homes.¹⁶ In addition to Sunday School and church services, a Bible school was held every summer and the annual Christian holidays were celebrated there, as well as weddings and funerals. The north-east corner room, which had been a library, was converted to a kitchen for community functions sometime after classes were suspended in 1932. The school became the site for a myriad of social and cultural activities. Baseball and other games were played in the yard, and historic photos demonstrate that the school was a center for musical activity, both as a part of and separate from the Baptist church functions. Charles Hill, co-builder of the school, organized a string band in about 1913. Community picnics on July 4 and Memorial Day were annual events. In 1938, six years after it was closed as a school, the building was sold to the Larsmont Gospel Mission Society (a descendant of the Swedish Baptist church), which retained ownership until 1959, when the building was sold to the Larsmont Volunteer Fire Department.

That Larsmont survived into the 1940s in spite of the decline of most of the local economic activities was due to its good transportation links to the larger population centers of Two Harbors and Duluth. That Larsmont survived into the years of World War II when other small communities failed is manifest in the continuous social functions served by the school. It was the desire to maintain a community that has meant survival for the Larsmont School building when others of its kind have been moved or demolished.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4 Larsmont School
Unorganized Territory (Larsmont), Lake County, MN

FOOTNOTES

- ¹Nelson, Helge. The Swedes and the Swedish Settlements in North America (1943). New York: Arno, 1979. p. 277.
- ²Kaups, Matti. "Finnish Place Names in Minnesota: A Study in Cultural Transfer." Geographical Review 56/3 (1966), p. 387.
- ³Riippa, Timo. "The Swede-Finns." (in) Holmquist, June (ed.). They Chose Minnesota. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981. p. 314.
- ⁴Norgard, Irene Hill. Larsmont Yesterday. Two Harbors: Privately Published, 1980. p. 19.
- ⁵Norgard, p. 1. Files, Lake County Recorder's Office.
- ⁶Fritzen, John. History of North Shore Lumbering. Duluth: St. Louis County Historical Society, 1968. All of the data here is from Fritzen.
- ⁷Norgard, p. 1. Kaups, Matti. "Norwegian Immigrants and the Development of Commercial Fisheries Along the North Shore of Lake Superior: 1870-1895." (in) Naess, Harald S. (ed.). Norwegian Influence on the Upper Midwest. Duluth: University of Minnesota, 1976..
- ⁸Walther Barthell, a longtime Larsmont resident.
- ⁹Files, Lake County Recorder's Office
- ¹⁰Barthell.
- ¹¹Norgard, p. 35. Population figures here are an estimate. Figures in the 13th Federal Census (1910) do not identify location beyond Two Harbors Township. The 1916 Minnesota State Plat Book's section on Lake Co. does not show a breakdown of Section 21.
- ¹²Woodward, Walter B. "Early History of Lake County Schools." Unpublished Manuscript in the Lake County Historical Society Collection, Two Harbors.
- ¹³ibid. Finland Schools Reunion Committee. Keeping Our Heritage. Finland, Minnesota 1895-1976.
- ¹⁴Riippa, ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5 Larsmont School
Unorganized Territory (Larsmont), Lake County, MN

¹⁵Norgard, p. 12.

¹⁶All the information in this paragraph is from Norgard and interviews with
Larsmont residents conducted for this nomination. See bibliography.

9. Major Bibliographical References

PRINTED MATERIAL

Norgard, Irene Hill. Larsmont Yesterday. Two Harbors: Privately Published, 1980.

Nelson, Helge. The Swedes and the Swedish Settlements in North America (1943). New York: Arno, 1979.

Fritzen, John. History of North Shore Lumbering. Duluth: St. Louis County Historical Society, 1968.

Stone, Mrs. John. "Castle Danger in 1890." (in) This Is Lake County. Two Harbors: Privately Published, 1966.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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
Specify repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Two Acres

UTM References

A [1,5] [5,9,5,2,6,0] [5,2,0,3,4,6,0]
Zone Easting Northing
C [] [] []

B [] [] []
Zone Easting Northing
D [] [] []

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description BEGINNING AT A POINT 264 FT E OF THE SW CORNER OF OUTLOT 4, GOVERNMENT LOT 1, SECTION 21, TOWNSHIP 52 NORTH, RANGE 11 WEST OF THE FOURTH PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN IN LAKE COUNTY, MINNESOTA; THENCE E ALONG THE S LINE OF SAID OUTLOT 4 A DISTANCE OF 382 FEET TO A POINT 10 FEET FROM THE RIGHT-OF-WAY OF THE DULUTH MISSABE AND IRON RANGE RAILROAD; THENCE NE PARALLEL TO AND 10 FEET FROM THE D.M. & I.R. RAILROAD'S RIGHT-OF-WAY, A DISTANCE OF 174 FEET TO

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

THE BOUNDARY INCLUDES THE CITY LOT THAT HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROPERTY.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David C. Anderson, Ph.D., Contracting Historian
organization N/A date September 18, 1991
street & number Rt. 2 Box 146 telephone (319) 382-3079
city or town Decorah state Iowa zip code 52101

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1 Larsmont School
Unorganized Territory (Larsmont)
Lake County, Minnesota

THE SOUTH LINE OF THE TOWN ROAD AS NOW LAID OUT; THENCE NORTHWEST A LONG THE SOUTH LINE OF SAID TOWN ROAD A DISTANCE OF THREE HUNDRED NINE (309) FEET; THENCE SOUTHWEST IN A DIRECT LINE TO THE PLACE OF BEGINNING.