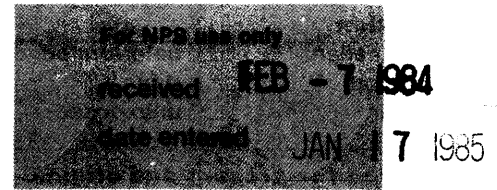


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Cushing Hotel

SUBSTANTIVE

and/or common Afton House

REVIEW REQUESTED

2. Location

street & number 3291 St. Croix Trail Avenue^S South

N/A not for publication

city, town Afton

N/A vicinity of

~~congressional district~~

state Minnesota

code 22

county Washington

code 163

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Afton St. Croix Company

street & number 3291 St. Croix Trail Avenue South

city, town Afton

N/A vicinity of

state Minnesota

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds -- Washington County Courthouse

street & number 14900 North 61st Street

city, town Stillwater

state Minnesota

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Statewide Historic Sites Survey

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1980

federal state county local

depository for survey records Minnesota Historical Society-Fort Snelling History Center

city, town St. Paul

state Minnesota

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>N/A</u>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Cushing Hotel is a two-story frame structure measuring 24 feet by 80 feet. It was constructed in 1867 on the foundations of the earlier 1856 Paterson Hotel which was destroyed by fire in 1861. The foundation of the Paterson Hotel survives beneath the Cushing Hotel and measures 24 feet by 24 feet. Like the present hotel, the Paterson Hotel was two stories in height and of wood frame construction.

The Cushing Hotel was constructed of locally milled white pine boards measuring 1-1/2" by 16" extending vertically from sill to plate. These boards are sheathed in narrow-lap clapboard. Similar white pine boards were utilized in the construction of the hipped roof. The appearance of the building was otherwise simple, the only decorative treatment being low-profile bracketed hoods over selected windows and doors.

The Cushing Hotel has gone through several alterations during its lifetime, the earliest of which was the addition of a rear two-story section at an unknown date to provide additional sleeping rooms. Around 1907, the third owner of the hotel erected a screen porch on the first story of the street facade. Subsequent alterations included enclosure of the original side-lighted side entrance with a gabled vestibule, erection of an exterior brick chimney to accommodate a fireplace in the front dining room, and construction of wings at the rear and north sides to serve the bar and restaurant functions. In 1981 a program of extensive restoration was begun and included structural, roofing, and siding replacement and restoration. The result of the work returned the original section of the Cushing Hotel to its pre-1907 appearance.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates	1867	Builder/Architect	Unknown
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Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

The Cushing Hotel is significant as a local example of a post-Civil War era hotel built in 1867 in Afton, a river-oriented community in Washington County.

Settlement in Afton Township (formerly organized in 1858) began in the 1830s. Attracting settlers to the area were the well-watered valley creeks which were utilized to supply power for numerous saw and flour and feed mills, the township's strategic location along the St. Croix River, and the pivotal location of the Point Douglas-St. Louis River Government Road. This road provided a vital land connection from Point Douglas on the south to Superior, Wisconsin on the north, with access for settlers to the communities located along its route.

In 1855 the village of Afton was platted on the right bank of Lake St. Croix. Its proximal location to a major waterway and the convenience of its steamer wharf provided traveler access to Afton's commercial district. To lodge the lumberman, settler and traveler, a hotel was built in 1856 by Samuel H. Paterson. It burned in 1861. In 1867, Charles C. Cushing erected a second hotel on the site of the first hotel. Cushing died in 1876, but his wife continued the hotel's operation catering to the needs of travelers and increasing numbers of summer tourists.

No known information exists regarding the building's use during the period 1881-1907. In 1907 the hotel was purchased by Mary Pennington who used it solely as a restaurant. Succeeding owners continued that use. Today the Cushing Hotel, now known as the Afton House, has been substantially rehabilitated and continues in use as a popular local restaurant.

The Cushing Hotel is significant as an example of the mid-nineteenth century hotel constructed in communities which developed along major navigable rivers. The building's simple design is characteristic of many of the structures built during that period.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 0.08

Quadrangle name Hudson Quad.

Quadrangle scale 7.5

UMT References

A

1	5	5	1	7	1	4	0	4	9	7	1	7	6	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B

Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

Zone	Easting				Northing									

D

Zone	Easting				Northing									

E

Zone	Easting				Northing									

F

Zone	Easting				Northing									

G

Zone	Easting				Northing									

H

Zone	Easting				Northing									

Verbal boundary description and justification

All of lots 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, Block 7. Original village of Afton.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A
-------	-----	------	-----	--------	-----	------	-----

state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A
-------	-----	------	-----	--------	-----	------	-----

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Garold L. Jarvis

organization Afton St. Croix Company date August, 1983

street & number 3291 St. Croix Trail Ave. South telephone 612(612) 436-8883

city or town Afton state Minnesota

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Russell W. Fridley

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 2/1/84

For NPS use only

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

Paul D. Shull

date 1-17-85

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation sheet DESCRIPTION Item number #7 Page 1

The Cushing Hotel began as a 24' x 24' building with a hipped roof in 1867. It was erected on the limestone foundation of the Paterson Hotel and had the same dimensions. Framing for the original walls of the Cushing Hotel was 2" x 2" studs (not on 16" centers) to which were nailed virgin white pine boards of approximately 1½" x 16" and up to 24" in width. These pine boards were of varying lengths and were nailed to the studs vertically on the north and west sides of the building and horizontally or vertically elsewhere. The effect must have been haphazard, indeed, in the first years until the clapboards were added. The white pine boards were applied flush to each other and painted with a milk-based white paint. Strength in the walls came from the 2 x 2 studs and the 1½" thickness of the white pine. All of this material is intact today under the clapboards. The ceiling joists and roof rafters in the building were large members mortised and tendoned. These, too, remain intact as do the wide white pine boards used as underlayment on the roof, over which were laid wood shingles. In an area known as the heart of the white pine country in the 1860s, the Cushing Hotel was constructed hastily and of local pine, probably cut in Afton or nearby Stillwater, ten miles upriver.

Between 1867 and 1872, the building was expanded twice; first with a two story rear addition measuring 24' x 23', and then with another two story addition to the rear of the first measuring 24' x 33' (see sketch map). By the ca. 1872-8 period, the building expanded to its present dimensions of 24' x 80' with elongated roof ending in hips at the front (west) and rear (east). The construction of these two additions was identical to the original 24' x 24' built in 1867; that is, 2" x 2" studs supporting wide white pine boards for external sheathing, painted white and laid both vertically and horizontally. When exposed in 1981 for major stabilization of the building the boards on the original and the additions matched in age, size, weathering, and application, suggesting that the additions were added shortly after the original structure was built. Ceiling joists and rafters in the additions were also massive and put together with mortise and tendon construction like the front of the structure.

Some pencilled names and a railroad name were used to date the clapboards and give a good approximate date on the additions. On the southwest corner of the front facade were several names and the notation "W.W.R.R." pencilled in the soft white pine sheathing, which was exposed in 1981. In 1866, the West Wisconsin Railroad (W.W.R.R.) was formed, and completed a line west from Madison to Hudson, Wisconsin on the east side of the St. Croix River across from Afton between 1868-1872. By 1878, the bankrupt West Wisconsin Railroad was absorbed into the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Omaha Railway Company.¹ The identical materials, methods of construction, unweathered pencilled names on the building and the railroad information strongly suggest that the clapboard over the entire building and the additions were completed by no later than 1878 and probably in the 1868-72 period when the railroad was abuilding and before it ceased to exist as the West Wisconsin. Although conjectural, the railroad would have

¹ William F. Raney, Wisconsin: A Story of Progress (Perin Press, Appleton, Wisc.) 1963, pp. 189-190.

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Continuation sheet

DESCRIPTION, cont.

Item number #7

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created the need for additional rooms in the hotel between 1868-78, giving bracket dates for the additions. The pencilled names, written lightly on the original pine sheathing are entirely unweathered strongly suggesting that the clapboard siding was put on immediately after the names were written or by the mid-1870s, less than ten years after the hotel was built.

The integrity of the building is excellent and the changes have been few since the mid-1870s. The only elements not original to the building in a 1930 photograph are a south side chimney of red brick and the south entrance vestibule, both added between 1945 and 1960. They were not removed during the 1981 certified rehabilitation because they needed no work and were left untouched. A small bathroom window in the ca. 1930 photograph on the south side of the second floor was a later addition and was removed. Two original window openings on the first floor, south side, were shut off after 1930 and were restored in 1981 to their original appearance. Since the original configuration of the wood double-hung windows was unknown in 1981, new wood 1 over 1 windows were installed in 1981 as part of the certified rehabilitation. The windows, the sill at the foundation, and 30% of the clapboards needed replacement in 1981 because of a combination of dry rot and water damage. The old wood in these elements by 1981 was the consistency of sawdust. These features were documented and sent to Denver with the Part II. The current owner continues to be willing, as he was in 1981, to remove the chimney and the vestibule, but the state historic architect and state review board, familiar with the building and the streetscape, did not see these elements as intrusive. Damage to the clapboards, which had received no attention between 1907 and 1945 necessitated 30% new replacements to match the original and 70% restoration of the originals.

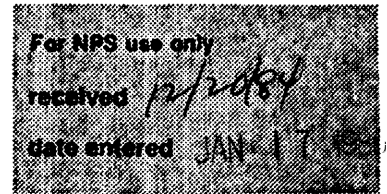
The fabric of the building is intact. All framing members in walls and roof are original and did not need additional work. Corner boards, window trim and door trim is original. The lack of hood molds on the front portion of the building is as it was originally. The additions and the first floor of the original building did have the molding and it was scraped and painted. Since the wide pine underlayment on the roof was in an advanced state of decomposition, it was left in place and new boards added above before a new asbestos roof was laid. The original wood shingled roof was beyond hope and was removed. Four brick chimneys evident in the ca. 1930 photograph were gone by 1976 and the flues nonfunctioning. It is not known if these chimneys were original to the building and they were not reconstructed.

Interior doors were saved and restored where possible. The building was bowed along the lateral sides (north and south) because the 2" x 2" studs were not sufficient to keep the building erect. Interior walls were so badly water damaged as to be unsalvageable. Consequently, the old walls were removed, the original 2 x 2 studs left in place with 2 x 4s added on 16" centers, the building reinsulated, the bowed sides left intact, the ceiling joists left intact and the building rebuilt on the inside. The original 4 panelled wood doors on the exterior were remanufactured to match the originals because they were badly split, and dry and had missing members. The two major original entrances, the front door and the south side door (at the vestibule), were retained and the south side door (inside the vestibule) side lights were retained.

The front porch with a hipped roof shown in the ca. 1930 photograph had collapsed

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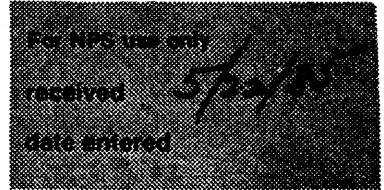
Continuation sheet DESCRIPTION Item number #7 Page 3

sometime between 1945-60 and had been removed. Since no photographs exist of the building in the 19th century and no direct evidence from the building exists, it is not known if the porch was original or added later or when added. The present owner poured a cement slab in 1981 for a new porch, intent on reconstructing the front porch, but code regulations prevented his doing so at the time because of the small setback from the street which has been widened. Since simple buildings with hipped roofs exist in Minnesota from the ca. 1865-80 period with and without porches, the presence or absence of the porch has minimal impact on the building either way.

Information researched and submitted by:
Norene A. Roberts, President
Historical Research, Inc.
5535 Richmond Curve
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55410
(612) 929-2921
26 November 1984

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National Park Service

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Continuation sheet

Cushing Hotel (Afton House)

Item number

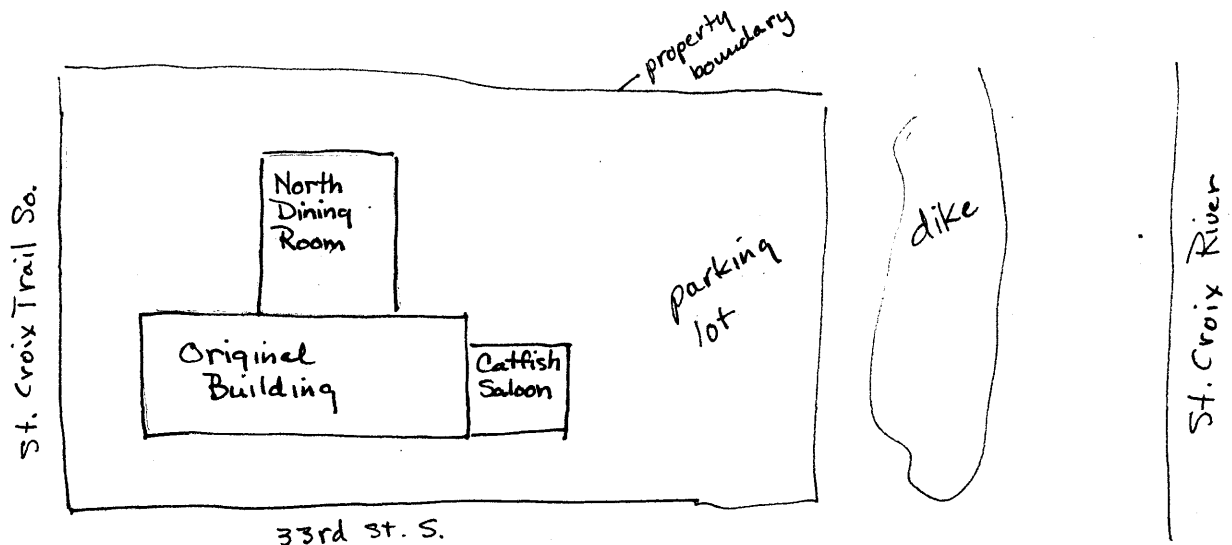
7

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The Cushing Hotel has two other one-story additions: a north side dining room and an east (rear) addition known as the "Catfish Saloon," which also houses the kitchen preparation area for the food service. The north dining room is located on the site of an earlier porch which appears in a ca. 1907 photograph. In 1960, when this old porch fell down, a previous owner installed a new larger porch and the current owner enclosed it creating the north dining room in 1979. It is frame, one story, with clapboard siding and a pent roof (see photos 1, 2, 3). A row of pine trees on the west side effectively mask the north dining room (photo 2), as does its 30-foot setback from the road (photo 5).

A previous owner also added the Catfish Saloon (rear addition) in 1965 (photo 3). It has vertical wood siding and is located at the east end of the building on the dead-end street which ends at the St. Croix River dike. Part of the Catfish addition is contained within the original building.

Both additions have been painted a blue-grey at the suggestion of the Minnesota SHPO during the Part II tax certification to effectively blend with the plantings and appear unobtrusive vi-a-vis the original two story structure (painted white). Attached views show that these additions have no visual ill-effect on the original portion of the Cushing Hotel (photos 2, 4). These additions are within the National Register boundaries for the property.



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Continuation sheet

SIGNIFICANCE

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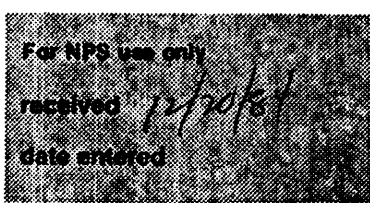
The Cushing Hotel, the village of Afton's only hostelry since 1867, dates from the early period of settlement along the lower St. Croix River and the period of early statehood in Minnesota. It is the earliest surviving example of a modest workingman's hotel and the earliest surviving frame hotel above Point Douglass, the fork of the St. Croix and Mississippi rivers. The hotel has defined the heart of the village of Afton since its predecessor, the Patterson Hotel, was built in 1856. When the Paterson Hotel burned, the Cushing was built on its foundation in 1867. It is also the earliest commercial structure remaining in Afton and is associated with Afton's early commerce, travel routes, and the white pine industry.

Afton was surveyed and platted in May, 1855, but was first settled in 1843, when the area was still part of Wisconsin Territory. In the 1840s, Afton was located on the major territorial road from Point Douglass at the fork of the Mississippi to Stillwater to the north. This road ran along the west bank of the St. Croix River. Since railroad construction did not begin in Minnesota until 1862, the patrons of the Patterson Hotel, the Cushing Hotel's predecessor built in 1856, attracted foot and wagon traffic and the route up the west side of the St. Croix was well-established by the time the Cushing Hotel was built in 1867. With the coming of the West Wisconsin Railroad on the east side of the St. Croix in 1868-72, Afton attracted enough travellers to justify a hotel in the small center of town. Railroad workers stopped at the Cushing hotel between 1868-78 while the West Wisconsin was in operation. It was easy to cross the river from the east to west bank of the river because of the shallows between Afton and Hudson. Since the Cushing Hotel offered only modest accommodations between 1867 and the 1880s, it is also likely that lumbermen working in the pineries of the upper St. Croix also availed themselves of a good meal and a sleeping room at the hotel. The white pine used in the construction of the Cushing Hotel was locally cut and planed.

Since the early years of the 1860s, the Cushing Hotel has been Afton's only hostelry. It sits at the center of the small village along with five or six other commercial structures. The town has changed little since the early years. An 1888 history describes Afton: "The village contains one hotel, one church (Congregational), one school house, an academy building, and several stores, shops and dwellings."² The hotel is the Cushing located at the center of the village west of the steamboat landing on the St. Croix River, now a marina. Afton is much the same as it was 100 years ago, having suffered no urbanization, no strip development, and no significant change in population. Other buildings mentioned in the 1888 description exist, in modified form. The St. Croix Academy has been much altered and changed to a private dwelling. So too with the school house. These were erected in 1876 and 1868, respectively, and were of brick. A bank across the street from the hotel was built ca. 1890-1900 and has been modified with a large two story addition to the rear (east). The remainder of Afton village is scattered older homes built by early settlers like Erastus Bolles, Gilbert Newington, Squires, and Andrew McKay between 1854 and 1867. All are Greek Revival and tucked away in the hills around the village center. The commercial buildings in Afton today are boomtown style, frame one story, rusticated stone block, or Greek Revival houses turned into businesses.

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Behind the hotel (to the east) is the site of the early stramboat landing. Much of the village's business today comes from the marina for pleasure boats now located on the site. In the early 1870s and 1880s, steamboat travellers seldom debarked at Afton on trips up the lower St. Croix River between Point Douglass and Stillwater. The trip by water could be made in a day between these points and fashionable large hotels were located ten miles north of Afton at Stillwater. The best known of these in the 1860-1880 era was the Sawyer House at Stillwater, a three story frame building of simple style with a gabled roof which was razed in the 1920s. Another frame two story hotel at Marine, the Marine House, was razed years ago. None of the frame or early brick pre-1890 hotels upriver from Afton or downriver to Point Douglass survive today except for the Cushing Hotel, but historical photographs indicate that two story frame hipped or gabled roofed hotels were common in the region of the lower St. Croix before 1880.³

As the sole survivor of early hotel days, the Cushing Hotel was used by working men in need of lodging on the lower St. Croix. Since there are no written records of the hotel's guests in the 19th century, there is a strong presumption that only travelers of modest means stayed at the hotel. The names of West Wisconsin Railroad workers on the front facade lend support as do the fact that the sleeping rooms on the second floor are very small (about 8' x 9'), further suggesting that the hotel offered only modest accommodations. In 1881, the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad constructed a line up the west side of the St. Croix River from Point Douglass to Stillwater.⁴ Running through Afton, the rails were located behind the hotel parallel to the River. Although there is no direct evidence that railway workers on the Milwaukee Road continued to use the hotel, it is probable, since the hotel rooms were never enlarged, the dining room never updated, and the hotel was used continuously for lodging from 1867 until sometime before 1945. In the early twentieth century, between 1907 and 1945, lumbermen at a small camp on the east side of the St. Croix at Hudson, Wisconsin stayed at the hotel, particularly when the water was low in the river and they could walk across to Afton in the shallows. In the 1920s and 1930s, commercial fishermen taking rough fish out of the St. Croix River stayed in the nine or ten rooms Mary Pennington kept open.⁵

In 1907, Mary Pennington purchased the hotel and ran it until her death in November, 1945. Aside from lodging fishermen and lumbermen, her chief business was serving Sunday chicken dinners to motorists from St. Paul and the surrounding area. By the early 1940s, she was renting out the hotel on a self-serve basis to youth hostel groups touring the valley by bicycle.⁶ After a quick succession of owners from 1945 until 1960, the hotel became a first class restaurant. Today, the chief fame of Afton is the Afton House, formerly the Cushing Hotel.

² William H. C. Folsom, Fifty Years in the Northwest (Pioneer Press Co., St. Paul, Minn.), 1888, p. 357.

³ Ibid.; Minnesota Historical Society Audio-Visual Collection, St. Paul, Minnesota.

⁴ Harold A. Meeks, "The Growth of Minnesota Railroads, 1857-1957." Plan B Paper for the Masters of Arts, University of Minnesota, 1957, p. 23.

⁵ Interview with Florence Johnson, daughter of Mary Pennington, September 8, 1984.

⁶ St. Paul Pioneer Press, Photo Gravure Section, July 6, 1941.

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Cushing Hotel, Afton, MN; Wasington County

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Bibliography

Item number

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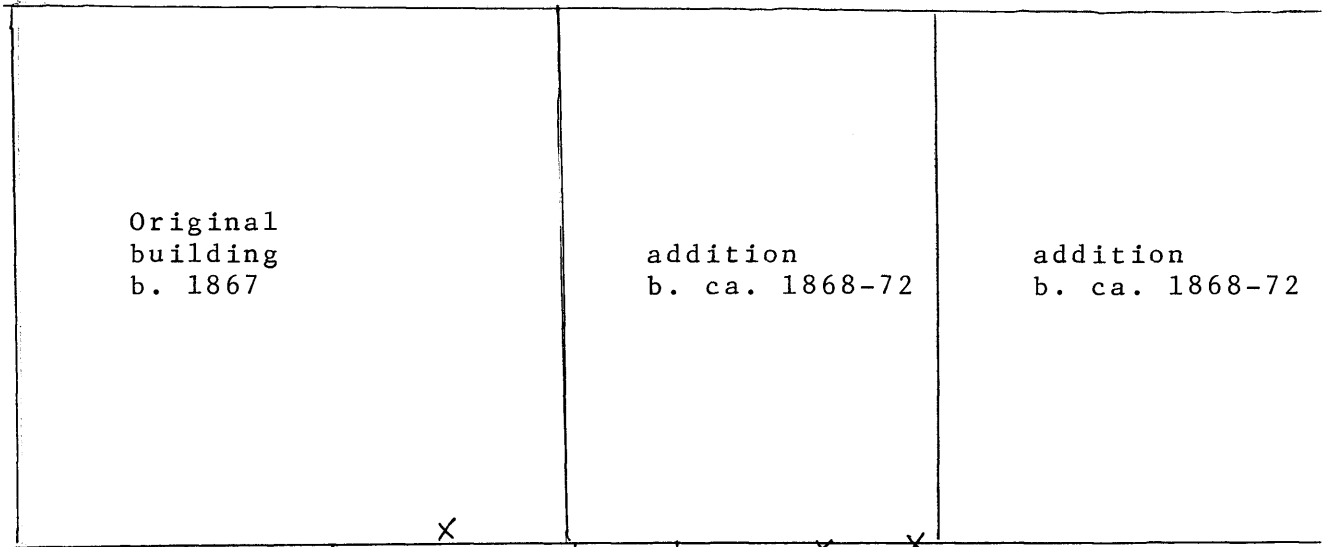
CUSHING HOTEL (Afton House)
Afton, Minnesota

N



12/24/21

St. Croix Trail South



Original
building
b. 1867

addition
b. ca. 1868-72

addition
b. ca. 1868-72

chinmey

gabled
vestibule

small bathroom
window on 2nd
story, not original,
removed in 1981

2 original window openings boarded up,
reopened and restored in 1981