

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

77001665  
DATA SHEET 8046

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED  
DEC 13 1976

DATE ENTERED

AUG 3 1977

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**NAME**

HISTORIC

LaPointe Indian Cemetery

AND/OR COMMON

Old LaPointe Indian Burial Grounds

**LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

South Old Main Street

CITY, TOWN

LaPointe

VICINITY OF

Seventh Wisconsin

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Wisconsin 54850

55

Ashland

003

**CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Cemetery

**AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

Bureau of Indian Affairs, Great Lakes Agency

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Post Office Building

CITY, TOWN

Ashland

VICINITY OF

STATE

Wisconsin 54806

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

County Register's Office

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Ashland County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Ashland, Wisconsin 54806

STATE

**REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Wisconsin's Historic Preservation Plan, Volume II: The Inventory

DATE

1976

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

CITY, TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" 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      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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

The LaPointe Indian Cemetery has received sporadic minor restorative efforts by various groups over the years, but regular maintenance has not been done. The cemetery gives a weedy, neglected appearance with fallen fence rails, leaning and fallen tombstones, and grave enclosures in various disrepair. The center of the cemetery is dominated by a sixteen-foot tall white cross, which is in good condition and was built many years ago by persons unknown. The rock and cement base of the cross was added in recent years by a concerned Madeline Island resident.

Small American flags and some artificial flowers on several graves indicate periodic attention to some individual burials.

The cemetery area itself is enclosed by a four-foot high, two-rail wooden fence which is in fair condition. It was built over ten years ago to replace the original split-rail fence. It does not traverse the lake side. The area of the cemetery inside the fence is approximately three-fourths of an acre.

The west side of the cemetery is bounded by Lake Superior; the north side by a waterway channel giving access to the Madeline Island Marina; the east side by a blacktop road (Old Main Street) and parking area (immediately east of which lies a harbor of the marina); and on the south by a private residence and associated drive and yard. Open space between the cemetery and adjacent features consists of a six-foot strip of grass, and weeds.

The cemetery itself is covered with sparse grass and weeds kept in check by visitor's paths and shade from the cemetery's several tall trees. Weeds are high in places and obscure some graves, but in general the structures of the cemetery are readily visible. The west, or lake side is covered by tall brush within twenty-feet of the shore. Some cemetery area has been eroded away by the lake in past years. Erosion-control work (shoreline rip-rap) is scheduled to be done in the fall of 1976 by the Red Clay project to protect the cemetery from further erosion. The work should not harm the aesthetics of the site and will be done with proper clearances.

The cemetery area contains readily-apparent evidence of at least forty-eight burials. Seven large, wooden spirit-houses, five wooden and three metal-fence grave enclosures, and twenty-five headstones are prominent. Many graves have small footstones as well. It is known that many unmarked graves exist in the cemetery.

Headstones are in various condition ranging from very good to fallen, broken, and badly weathered. They are all still readable, but a few are barely so. The monuments which have fallen have weathered considerably more than those that remain upright, due to freezing and thawing of trapped water on the surface of the stone.

The gravehouses, or spirithouses, are evidently original. While their wood shows heavy weathering, they are not badly rotted. At least once over the years their fallen boards have been nailed back in place. They have a very weathered appearance and show no evidence of ever being painted.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED DEC 13 1976

DATE ENTERED AUG 3 1977

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The metal fences, crosses, and ornaments with several graves also appear to be original. While very rusty, they remain sound.

Evidence indicates that a few headstones were installed some years after the related burial.

Parts of the cemetery are crowded with graves, grave fences, and monuments, while other areas remain fairly open. It is thought that most, if not all, of the cemetery is occupied by graves, as many unmarked graves are known to exist.

The original condition of the cemetery is approximated in an 1870 photo which hangs in the Madeline Island museum at LaPointe. The cemetery then had no apparent large trees and was an open, grassy site. A split-rail wood fence enclosed the area, and some grave houses present then have evidently been destroyed. Father Baraga's Catholic mission was located just south of the cemetery, in the area where the private residence now stands. A metal plaque affixed to a large boulder now indicates the old mission site; however this is confusing as the boulder is located east of the north-east corner of the cemetery and does not specify the old mission's correct location.

The Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians presently has plans to do restorative work on the cemetery in the near future. The work would include uprighting headstones, fixing fallen boards and fences, and generally replacing objects in near-original positions. A program of regular maintenance will be arranged by the Bad River Band. The cemetery may be temporarily closed to the public during the work.

Several vantage points exist within the cemetery where it is possible to view the grounds, graves, and Lake Superior as they have existed, virtually undisturbed, for over a hundred years.

The cemetery has many particularly interesting features, one of which is a twenty-inch diameter spruce tree growing in the exact center of an 1859 grave. Headstone inscriptions are interesting and often touching, as is the one which records the deaths of a brother and sister, only months old, two years apart.

The cemetery's usual atmosphere is serene and the serious visitor will attain an understanding of the hardships and circumstances of settlement, and a respect for the Chippewa souls that endured them.

## 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" 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 **Established 1836**

BUILDER/ARCHITECT **Old LaPointe Catholic Mission**

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Reason for nomination:** The LaPointe Indian Cemetery is nominated with hope of enhancing the protection and preservation of this important property, and to create a general awareness that the cemetery is a unique and rich historical resource giving evidence of the Chippewa contribution to modern society.

### JUSTIFICATION OF AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Archeology-Historic:** The cemetery, through names, dates, and information inscribed on tombstones, gives valuable evidence concerning the life and culture of important native Americans and early explorers and settlers of the north-central United States in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries. The graves, monuments, and interred artifacts represent physical evidence of an Indian way of life and culture which no longer exists.

**Exploration and Settlement:** Tombstones and epitaphs in the cemetery present undeniable evidence that important early pioneers and settlers were active and present on Madeline Island. A famous Indian signer of the still-significant 1854 Treaty, Chief Great Buffalo, lies now in the cemetery. This Treaty made settlement of northern Wisconsin possible.

**Religion:** The cemetery gives evidence of old religious beliefs, especially concerning death and burial; and shows changes brought by an abrupt transition of the Chippewa to Christianity. The cemetery was created by Father Frederic Baraga, an important early missionary to the area who later became a Bishop.

**Social and Humanitarian:** The cemetery gives proof of inter-racial relationships and interactions which occurred during contact between the Chippewa and early settlers of the Northern Wisconsin region.

### HISTORY AND FEATURES

The LaPointe Indian Cemetery was established in 1836 as part of a Catholic mission which was built on Madeline Island in 1835. Father Frederic Baraga, a missionary priest who arrived on the Island in 1835, ordered the creation of the cemetery at a location approximately one-hundred feet north of the mission. The mission was completely destroyed by fire in 1901 after having been rebuilt in previous years.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Levi, Sister M. Carolissa; F.S.P.A. Chippewa Indians of Yesterday and Today. Pageant Press, Inc., New York, New York. 1956.  
 Ross, Hamilton Nelson. LaPointe--Village Outpost. Edwards Bros., Inc. 1960.  
 Personal interviews: Mrs. Pat Knode at LaPointe on 6-30-76; Mr. Raymond Maday, Bad River Tribal Chairman, and other Bad River Chippewas, June, 1976.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.80

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,5	6,6,9,3,4,0	5,1,8,2,0,3,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D							

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated area is bounded on the west by Lake Superior; on the east and south by the wood cemetery fence; and on the north by the wood cemetery fence and the westerly extension of the fenceline to Lake Superior.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Not Applicable			

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Michael H. Weburg, Natural Resource Specialist

ORGANIZATION: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Great Lakes Agency

STREET & NUMBER: Post Office Building

CITY OR TOWN: Ashland, Wisconsin 54806

DATE: August 2, 1976

TELEPHONE: 715/682-4527

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_

# 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES  NO  NONE

*Richard Steiner*  
 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is X National    State    Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE: *Edmund Manydeeds*  
 TITLE: Acting Superintendent, Great Lakes Agency

DATE: December 8, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY:

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

DATE: 8/3/77

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION: *Charles...*

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 7-27-77

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED DEC 13 1976

DATE ENTERED

AUG 3 1977

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

The cemetery received burials from 1836 through 1948. In the latter year, the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians authorized the last burial in order to grant Mrs. Julia Newago's wish that she be buried near her husband. After about 1910 very few burials in the cemetery occurred due to lack of space. Future burials there are not expected.

Only Catholics are buried in the cemetery due to its religious affiliation; however no explanation has been found for the fact that only people having at least some Indian blood are buried there.

The LaPointe Indian Cemetery is unique in Wisconsin, and is thought to be the only cemetery with a significant number of original gravehouses in the nation. The cemetery is a rare example of an organized burial ground of the time of the Chippewa transition to Christianity. It appears to be the oldest and most significant identifiable cemetery with direct ties to the settlement of the northern great lakes area.

Madeline Island was probably discovered in 1618 by Champlain, who must have encountered Chippewa Indians who had inhabited the Island since about 1490. Around 1620 the Chippewas evidently left the island due to superstitions, but returned in 1671 to find the Island being settled by the French.

From settlement of Madeline Island until January, 1973, the cemetery was controlled by the Catholic Church. In 1973, the Diocese of Superior gave the property to the United States to be held in trust for the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians. The cemetery is now in the jurisdiction of the Great Lakes Agency of the Bureau of Indian Affairs at Ashland, Wisconsin and is governed by the Bad River Tribal Council.

The LaPointe Indian Cemetery has gained historic significance over the years by serving as a link between present and past people and events. The cemetery, through tombstone inscriptions, relates circumstances of birth, life, culture, and death of people important in the past development and history of northern Wisconsin and surrounding regions.

In the cemetery lie the remains of early explorers and settlers, and Indian Chiefs and leaders whose past deeds still influence current events of the region through treaties signed generations ago.

The cemetery contains the remains of Michel Cadotte, one of the most significant settlers and businessmen of the area; and those of Chief Great Buffalo, a principal chief of the Chippewas.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	DEC 13 1976
DATE ENTERED	AUG 3 1977

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 3

Cadotte, the son of Indian-Frenchman Jean Baptiste Cadotte and Jean's Chippewa wife, took over the LaPointe fur and trading concession in 1782. Until his death and burial in the LaPointe Indian Cemetery in 1837 he was well liked and respected by both the Indians and non-Indians of the northern Great Lakes area.

Chief Great Buffalo, also called Bezhike, was chief speaker for the Chippewa and was a principal in the Treaty of 1854. This Treaty ceded a large area of land to the United States and also established the Bad River and Red Cliff Indian Reservations. The Treaty remains an important, valid document to Wisconsin residents and Indians and has potential for greater significance through modern, legal interpretations. Great Buffalo was a principal chief of the Chippewas and remains famous for his wise leadership and war strategy. He died in 1855 at the age of 96 and rests in the Indian cemetery under a broken, but identifiable tombstone.

Chief O-Shaka, Great Buffalo's son lies buried about 500 feet south and east of the cemetery proper. His remains were not placed in the cemetery because he was not a Catholic at the time of his death in 1853.

Michel Cadotte, O-Shaka, Chief Great Buffalo, and other persons important in history lie buried in or near the cemetery and have many descendants living in the Northern Wisconsin area.

The cemetery gives evidence of an abrupt transition of Lake Superior Indians from an early lifestyle and religion to more modern living and Christianity. Mixed in the graveyard are found unmarked graves, graves with headstones, and graves covered by spirit houses. The casket-sized, wooden spirit houses were intended to protect the spirit of the deceased until such time as the spirit left this world, and to provide a place to leave food and other offerings for the spirit. The structures contained openings for the spirit to enter and exit. Graves without spirit houses evidently signify that the deceased or his family no longer believed that spirits of the dead needed earthly sustenance or lingered near the graves. Christian Indians buried in the cemetery were identified by wood crosses mounted on the graves. Many of these crosses are still in place today.

Before being introduced to Christianity, the Chippewas never planned ahead for burial sites or weeded, freshened, or disturbed a grave because of superstitious fears that such actions would bring death to their family. However, burial sites were sacred and without aversion to the Chippewa, who preferred to live close to the final resting places of their ancestors.

MARINA BLDG.  
(APPROX. LOCATION)

DOCKING-FUELING

ENTRANCE CHANNEL

BREAKWATER

ROCK

RIP RAP

WOOD FENCE

BRUSH AND WEEDS  
SAND BEACH

VISIBLE GRAVES

WOOD CROSS

FENCE

ASPHALT

CHURCH SITE MARKER

PARKING

RIP RAP

BOAT

DOCKING

LAKE SUPERIOR



ROAD

OLD S. MAIN ST.

PIER

HOUSE

SCALE: 1" = 66'

U.T.M. REF: 15/669340/5182030

LAPORTE INDIAN  
CEMETERY  
JUNE, 1976