National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form





Type all entries	—complete applica	ble sections				
1. Nam	e					
historic _{Islan}	ıd Lake Camp (pr	eferred)				
and/or common	Grav-McCormic	k Island Lake	Camp			
2. Loca		K IBIANG Dake	Odinp			
street & number	Island Lake	Road			not for pub	lication
city, town	Drummond Barnes	VIC, _X vic	cinity of	congressional district	Seventh	
state	Wisconsin	code 55	county	Bayfield	code	007
3. Clas	sification					
Category districtX building(s) structure site object	Ownership public private both Public Acquisition in process being consider	n Accessible	upied n progress e estricted	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	museu park X private religiou scientif transpo	residence is iic
name Mr. Ed	l Lee (Pa		(See Conti	inuation Sheet)		
city, town	Arden Hills	vic	cinity of	state	Minnesota	55112
	tion of Le					
courthouse, regis	stry of deeds, etc.	Bayfield Co	ounty Cour	thouse		
street & number		117 East 5t	:h			
city, town		Washburn		state	Wisconsin	54801
6. Repr	esentatio	n in Exis	sting	Surveys		
Wisconsi title Historic	n Inventory of Places		has this pro	perty been determined el	egible?y	es <u>X</u> no
date 1980				federal sta	te county	local
depository for su	rvey records Sta	te Historical	Society o	f Wisconsin		
city, town	Mad	ison		state	Wisconsin	53706

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one					
excellent X_ good	deteriorated ruins	X_ unaltered altered	X original site X moved date	Uncertain	- see	text		
fair	unexposed						fied :	log str.)

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located in the heart of the Wisconsin northwoods, the Gray-McCormick Island Lake Camp is set amid the Eau Claire Lakes chain, a group of more than eighteen lakes in south-western Bayfield County. The camp compound has had no official name, other than that of the lake that surrounds it. The extant camp buildings may easily be divided into two groups: those that were built during the Gray-McCormick years, 1886-1940, and those that W. R. Ford constructed, from circa 1945 through 1951. Buildings constructed by Ford are not significant to the nomination. No additional buildings have been built since that time.

From the summer of 1887, under the auspices of Dr. W. C. Gray, the camp began to take shape as a cluster of both tent and log buildings. Gradually, the log structures replaced the canvas ones. By 1901, the year of Dr. Gray's death, seven log buildings stood, several replacing earlier buildings that had burned. The main sleeping dormitory, a combination dining room-sleeping room cabin, a library, kitchen, boathouse, and two smaller structures, an ice house and a root house, comprised the log structures. After Dr. Gray's death, the McCormicks completed a kitchen enlargement that he had begun a year before his death. They also replaced the boathouse in 1915-1916. No additional buildings were added until the camp changed hands in 1941.

The log structures were hand-hewn, the white pine cut from Gray-McCormick holdings on the mainland and ferried over in the same manner that all supplies reached the island. These buildings were simple and rustic but well-constructed. The only visible repairs are those made by W. R. Ford in about 1950: new concrete foundations and floors, asphalt roofing shingles and new chinking. In recent years the log structures have been stained dark brown. The kitchen building and the library have undergone some remodeling and the root house and ice house have disappeared. One log structure that cannot be identified, but which obviously dates from the Gray-McCormick period, is also extant.

Main Dormitory Cabin 1887

The first log structure to be built on the island was a sleeping cabin, replacing a canvas tent. The dormitory-style building is a dog-trot cabin. The open area was enclosed by canvas on rainy days. The cabin is a single story, saddle notched, with transverse beams running the length of each room. The roof is exposed on the interior and no paneling covers the logs. The ends of the central open area are screened. Wood flooring covers the floor and one 2/2 window on each side wall admits light to the rather dark interior. Running water and electricity were added by W. R. Ford.

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Island Lake Camp, Barnes vicinity, Bayfield County, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet Item number 7



Page 1

Dr. William C. Gray's Library 1888

The library cabin, located at the northern tip of the island, was Dr. Gray's retreat from which he penned his popular newspaper column, "Campfire Musings." The gable-roofed structure is one and one-half stories, with horizontal logs held in place by saddle notching. Early photographs reveal interior pine paneling with the luxury of curtains and rugs. Since changing hands in the late 1960s, some remodeling has occurred. The transverse beams are still visible. The half story, formerly exposed to the roof, has been converted to a sleeping room. An exterior staircase provides access to the loft. An enclosed screen porch on the front facade and a small frame addition to the rear have been added. The exterior logs have been stained.

Dining-room Cabin 1896

This combination dining-room and sleeping-room cabin is identical to the main dormitory cabin. The south end of the dogtrot cabin was used by the Grays as a dining room, replacing the large canvas tent. The other half of the structure was used for additional sleeping space. This cabin sits obliquely to its twin, to the north and east. Both this cabin and the main dormitory cabin are now used as overnight rental cabins.

"Wanigan" or kitchen cabin c. 1902 and later additions

The "wanigan" or kitchen is composed of several structures with later additions. The major structure is two log cabins under a common roof with a smaller "court" or passage between the two. Although similar to the two sleeping cabins, it is apparent that the two cabins were not constructed as one unit. The north cabin was apparently planned by Gray in 1900 and built in 1902, after his death. It was used as a kitchen, replacing one built in 1889. The cabin on the south was possibly used by one of the caretakers. A log addition to the south was used later by a cook and then caretaker. In later years, the kitchen became a dining room, the cabin on the south enlarged and additions built to accommodate a modern kitchen. The log addition on the south became the cook's quarters. An addition, made of vertical logs, was constructed in 1890 but razed in the 1940s. Two small frame wings were built by Ford in the 1950s.

Boathouse 1915-1916

This log structure was the last of the old buildings to be constructed during the Gray-McCormick years. It replaced the boathouse built in 1889 by one of Dr. Gray's handymen. The present structure is built into a bank and has one story with a gable roof. The logs are saddle notched. The roof overhangs on the front, supported by vertical log posts, providing a canopy for the boatramp. The concrete floor and boatramp were poured by Ford. The boathouse is used now chiefly as locker space, toilet and shower facilities.

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Island Lake Camp, Barnes vicinity, Bayfield County, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet

Page 2

Unidentified log structure c. 1890s

This log building is located on the southern portion of the island. It is very similar to the other early buildings. Early maps show no structures in this area and it is apparent that the log cabin has been moved to the site and now sits on a new foundation. It shares with the other early buildings the same single square plan, with 2/2 windows on each side wall and saddle notching. A screened porch is attached to the front facade that faces east. An addition of a toilet and basin has been made. This is the only old log building that has not been stained. It is presently unoccupied.

Item number

Willis Roland Ford buildings

W. R. Ford constructed a variety of buildings from c. 1945-1951 for his personal use as well as to accommodate large groups from his church. One of his earliest projects was to build up and maintain a natural sandbar on the eastern side of the island as a causeway for moving building supplies on to the island. The causeway remained in constant need of repair. The first building that Ford constructed was a two-story lodge of modest proportions for his personal and family use. His church groups numbered from 30 to 40 at a time and accordingly, he built toilet facilities, summer help cabins and modernized the kitchen facilities. He also built a recreational hall, a home for the recreational leader and a caretaker's home. All the buildings are frame, the major buildings covered with log siding that blends in with the older log structures. These and the Gray-McCormick buildings have been stained a dark brown in recent years. None of the following buildings built by Ford is significant to the nomination:

W. R. Ford lodge Recreational hall Recreational leader's house Summer help cabins (2) Toilet and bath cabins (2) Caretaker's house Laundry room

Upon Ford's death in 1966, the Island Lake camp and surrounding lands were left to an Illinois YMCA, which in turn sold the property to a land developer. The island for the most part is in a property owners' association for community use. No buildings have been constructed or razed since the years of Ford's ownership.

8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799X 1800–1899X 1900–	Areas of Significance—C — archeology-prehistoric — archeology-historic — agriculture — architecture — art — commerce — communications	heck and justify below community planning conservation economics education engineering exploration/settlement industry invention	politics/government	e religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation _X_ other (specify) significant person
Specific dates	1886-1916 ¹	Builder/Architect	and Recreation	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Island Lake Camp is significant as a representative of an early northwoods retreat that has been in continuous use for nearly a century. In addition, the camp is important for its association with the Prairie School architect, William Gray Purcell, who spent his summers here prior to his formal training as an architect. It was here, Purcell notes in his reminiscences of the camp, that he first experienced organic construction, which he felt greatly influenced his later work.

Recreation

As an example of a rustic northwoods retreat built by city dwellers, the Island Lake Camp is notable for its early development. In northwestern Wisconsin, logging had been concentrated along the shores of Lake Superior and the countless streams and rivers that feed into it, and along the St. Croix and Chippewa Rivers that flow down to the Mississippi. Until the arrival of the railroad in the 1880s, much of the interior region was scarcely touched. Shortly afterward as the pinelands gave out, the conservation ethic came into vogue, a realization that too much of the wilderness was being destroyed along with a strong desire to escape the pollution of the fledging industrial cities. While summer resorts and retreats had developed quite early around the Lake Geneva area and later moved northward to Waukesha and Sheboygan counties, similar developments in northern Wisconsin would not occur until the turn of the century. In Vilas County, the first resorts appeared in the 1890s. Others sprang up in the Chequamegon Bay region's Apostle Islands and along the Brule River. However, in contrast to Island Lake these were luxurious in the context of the northwoods and were commercial enterprises. The Island Lake Camp was in fact a private rustic retreat where wealthy Chicago families, their friends, and their employees could escape the pollution and tension of the city.

In 1887, Dr. William Cunningham Gray, his wife and grandsons William Gray and William Gray Purcell spent the first of fifteen summers together at Island Lake. Following a fishing trip to the island by Gray and several friends the previous year, Gray had persuaded Nettie Fowler McCormick, widow of Cyrus H. McCormick, to acquire part interest in the island and several hundred acres surrounding the lake. Slowly, the camp took shape, first as canvas tents and later with log buildings gradually replacing them. It was from Island Lake that Gray wrote his column, "Campfire Musings," which appeared in The Interior, a weekly religious journal edited by Gray and published jointly with

(continued)

William Gray Purcell, St. Croix Trail Country, Minneapolis, 1967

²Edmund Epseth, "Early Vilas County--Cradle of an Industry," in <u>Wisconsin Magazine of History</u>, Autumn, 1953, volume 37, number 1, pp. 27-34. Although dealing primarily with Vilas County, Epseth provides background information on the development of northwoods resorts and retreats in general.

NAM WELL MAIN

9. Major Bibliographical References

ACCESSES TO VENERO

See continuation sheet

		·			
10. Geograph	ical Data				
Acreage of nominated property Quadrangle name Ellison I UMT References			C	Quadrangle	e scale1:62500
A 1 5 6 1 3 0 0 0 5	5 1 3 7 8 0 0 Northing	B Zone	Easting		Northing
C		D]		
Verbal boundary description See continuation sheet	ı and justification				
List all states and counties	for properties overl	apping state or	county bou	ndaries	
state	code	county			code
state	code	county	_		code
name/title Marilyn McMill organization Northwest Reg street & number 302 Walnu		Commission		7 23, 19	980
_	L Street		77.4	consin	54801
12. State Hist	oric Prese		otate		18.
The evaluated significance of the					
As the designated State Historic 665), I hereby nominate this prop according to the criteria and pro	perty for inclusion in th	ne National Registe	er and certify	that it has	s been evaluated
State Historic Preservation Offic	er signature	Vael	unel [Kern	щ
title Director, State His	storical Society	of Wisconsin		date	518/81
For HCRS use only I hereby certify that this pr	operty is included in th	าe National Regist	er	date	3/12/82
Keeper of the National Registe				date	

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Island Lake Camp, Barnes vicinity, Bayfield County, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1



SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

Nettie Fowler McCormick, in association with McCormick Theological Seminary. The column reflected Gray's deep religious beliefs and his love of nature and was widely read by his contemporaries.³

Following the death of Dr. Gray in 1901, the McCormick Estate held the property and used it as a retreat for company employees, McCormick Theological Seminary professors and others until 1940. Since then the camp has passed through various hands but has retained its original function. Today, Island Lake Camp is owned by the Potawatomi Property Owners' Association which maintains the former Gray-McCormick holdings as common property. While there were several camps similar to Island Lake in northern Wisconsin, the Island Lake camp is the least unaltered and remains on its original site.

Association with significant person.

William C. Gray passed on his love for the natural world to his small grandson, William Gray Purcell, during those summers at Island Lake. Born in 1880 at Wilmette, Illinois, Purcell lived with his maternal grandparents during most of his boyhood. He attended public school in Oak Park, just outside of Chicago. Young Willie Purcell spent every summer from the age of seven, in 1887, until he was 21, in 1901, the year of his grandfather's death, at Island Lake.

Two years later, in 1903, Purcell graduated from Cornell University and entered upon his long career as an architect. He first worked in the office of Louis Sullivan. In 1909 he formed a firm with George Grant Elmslie, a partnership with offices in Chicago and Minneapolis that designed notable buildings throughout the midwest. After the firm's dissolution in the early 1920s, Purcell moved to Portland, Oregon, and then to California. Near the end of his long life, Purcell was made a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. He died in 1964 at the age of 84.

Throughout his life Purcell kept the campfires of Island Lake burning bright in his memory. In his book, St. Croix Trail Country, he spoke of the significance that the camp had had for him: "Coming to know life in the primitive forest really shaped my life, ruled my ideals and ambitions." In these reminiscences of his boyhood summers spent in the northwoods, Purcell remembered the first stirrings of an architect: "Getting the hang was 'figuring it out' and 'practicing' using tools and materials properly. The boy got the hang of many things at Island Lake, listening and watching....Watching the men around him he learned how things worked. He actually experienced organic construction. He began, just began, to be an architect." Clearly, as Purcell himself indicates, his we experiences at Island Lake were seminal to his later architectural career.

Stella Virginia Roderick, <u>Nettie Fowler McCormick</u>, West Rindge, New Hampshire, 1956, p. 104.

⁴Roderick, Nettie Fowler McCormick, p. 185.

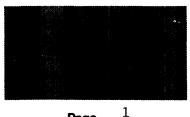
⁵Purcell, <u>St. Croix Trail Country</u>, p. ix.

⁶<u>Ibid</u>, p. 119.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Island Lake Camp, Barnes vicinity, Bayfield County, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES



Page

Brooks, H. Allen. <u>The Prairie School</u>. New York, 1972. Burgess, Charles O. <u>Nettie Fowler McCormick</u>. Madison, Wisconsin, 1962. Espseth, Edmund C. "Early Vilas County--Cradle of an Industry," in Wisconsin Magazine of History, Autumn, 1963, volume 37, number 1, pp. 27-34. The Interior. (Chicago) October 10, 1901. Purcell, William Gray. St. Croix Trail Country. Minneapolis, 1967. Roderick, Stella Virginia. Nettie Fowler McCormick. Topside, West Rindge, New Hampshire. 1956.

Item number

Correspondence and photographs of William Gray Purcell to Mrs. May Barnes Eshrich and Mrs. Stanley Barnes. In private collection. Oral interview with Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Barnes, Barnes, Wisconsin. May-July, 1980.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Island Lake Camp, Barnes vicinity, Bayfield County, Wisconsin Continuation sheet Item number 4



Page 1

OWNER OF PROPERTY

Dr. Michael Ryan (Parcel D) 2808 River Road West Minneapolis, MN 55406

Potawatomi Property Owners' Association (Parcels 2, 3, 4, 10) c/o R. W. Davis SR Box 2735 (Barnes) Solon Springs, Wisconsin 54873

St. Paul Seminary (Parcel A) 2260 Summit Avenue St. Paul, Minnesota 55105

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Island Lake Camp, Barnes vicinity, Bayfield County, Wisconsin Continuation sheet Item number 10



Page 1

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary description (see site map):

Parcel A: (includes Dr. W. C. Gray's library)
.4 acres

A parcel of land located in the NE 1/4-NE 1/4, Sec. 18 and in the NW 1/4-NW 1/4, Sec. 17 T45N, R9W: commencing at the SE corner of Lot 9 of the Plat of Potawatomi Estates; thence S0°-29 W, 33.00 feet; thence N 81°-47'E, 329.40 feet along the centerline of a 20 foot wide private drive easement; thence N23°-29'E, 347.85 feet along the centerline of a 20 foot private drive easement; thence N40°-48'E, 204.30 feet along the centerline of a 20 foot private drive easement to the point of beginning; thence N 49°-12'W, 50.90 feet to a meanderline; thence N40°-48'E, 55.70 feet along said meanderline; thence S81°-04'E., 189.44 feet along said meanderline; thence S40°-48'W, 155.70 feet along said meanderline; thence N 49°-12'W, 110.00 feet to the point of beginning.

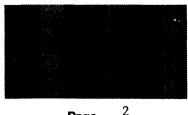
Parcel C: (includes unidentified log structure)
.6 acres

That part of Government Lot Six (6), Section Eighteen (18), Town Forty-Five (45) North, Range Nine (9) West; Commencing at the southeast corner of Lot 9 of Potawatomi Estates; thence S0°29'W, 33.00 feet; thence N 81°47'E, along the center line of a 20 foot private drive easement, 225.40 feet to the point of beginning; thence continuing N 81°47'E along said drive centerline, 179.10 feet; thence S 20°00'E, 115.00 feet to a point on a meander line; thence S 49°00'W, along said meander line, 133.73 feet; thence N 41°00'W, along said meander line 198.1 feet; thence N 36°00'E, 25.00 feet to the point of beginning. Including the land between the meander line and the water line of Island Lake, between the parcel lines extended.

A parcel of land located in the NE 1/4-NE 1/4, Sec. 18 and in the NW 1/4-NW 1/4, Sec. 17 T45N, R9W: Commencing at the SE corner of Lot 9 of the plat of Potawatomi Eastates; thence 80°-29'W, 33.00 feet; thence N 81°-47'E, 329.40 feet along the centerline of a 20 foot wide private drive easement; thence N 23°-29'E, 347.85 feet along the centerline of a 20 foot wide private drive easement; thence N5°-28'E, 159.60 feet along the centerline of a 20 foot wide private drive easement; thence N 40°-48'E, 204.30 feet along the centerline of a 20 foot wide private drive easement to the point of beginning; thence S 49°-12'E, 110.00 feet to a meanderline; thece S 40"-48'W, 144.30 feet alon said meanderline; thence N 77°-49'W, 125.30 feet; thence N 75°-13'W, 56.64 feet to another meanderline; thence N 40°-48'E, 229.14 feet along said meanderline; thence S49°-12'E, 50.90 feet to the point of beginning.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Island Lake Camp, Barnes vicinity, Bayfield County, Wisconsin Item number 10Continuation sheet



Page

(includes wanigan, caretaker's house, laundry cabin) .5 acres

A parcel of land located in the NE-1/4 NE-1/4, Section 18, T45N-R9W: Commencing at the SW corner of Lot 9 of the Plat of Potawatomi Estates; thence S0°-29'W, 33.00 feet' thence N81°-47'E along the centerline of a 20 foot wide private drive easement. 225.40 feet to the point of beginning; thence N 14°-48'E along a meanderline, 245.32 feet; thence \$ 66°-31'E, 125,56 feet to the centerline of a 20 foot wide private drive easement; thence S 23°=29'W along said centerline, 187.85 feet; thence S 81°-47'W along said centerline 104.00 feet to the point of beginning.

(includes ining room-sleeping cabin, bath cabin) Parcel 3: .3 acres

A parcel of land located in Government Lot 6 Section 18, T45N-R9W: Commencing at the SE corner of Lot 9 of the Plat of Potawatomi Estates; thence S0°-29'W 33.00 feet; thence N 81°-47 E along the centerline of a 20 foot wide private drive easement: 329,40 feet; thence N 23°-29'E along the centerline of said 20 foot wide private drive easment 187.85 feet to the point of beginning; thence N 66°-31'W 125.56 feet to a point on a meanderline; thence N 14°-48°E along said meanderline 100.00 feet; thence S 51°-04'E 145.92 feet to the centerline of said 20 foot wide private easement; thence S23°-29'W along said private drive centerline 60.00 feet to the point of beginning. The above parcel is to include the lands lying between the meanderline described and the water line of Island Lake.

Parcel 4: (includes main sleeping cabin) .6 acres

A parcel of land located in Government Lot 6 of Section 18, T45N-R9W; Commencing at the SE corner of Lot 9 of the Plat of Potawatomi Estates; thence S0°-29'W, 33.00 feet; N 81°-47'E along the centerline of a 20 foot wide private drive easement, 329.40 feet; thence N 23°-29'E along the centerline of said 20 foot wide private drive easement, 247.85 feet to the point of beginning; thence N51°-04'W, 145.92 feet to a point on a meanderline; thence N 14°-48'E along said meanderline 61.86 feet; thence N 40°-48'E along said meanderline, 150.00 feet; thence S 75°-13'E, 56.64 feet to the centerline of said 20 foot wide private drive easement; thence S 5°-28'W along said private drive centerline 159,60 feet; thence \$23°-29'W along said centerline 100.00 feet to the point of beginning. The above parcel is to include all lands lying between the meanderlines described and the water of Island Lake.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Island Lake Camp, Barnes vicinity, Bayfield County, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet Item number



Page 3

(includes recreational hall, boathouse, main lodge, two summer help cabins Parcel 10: 2.5 acres and bathhouse)

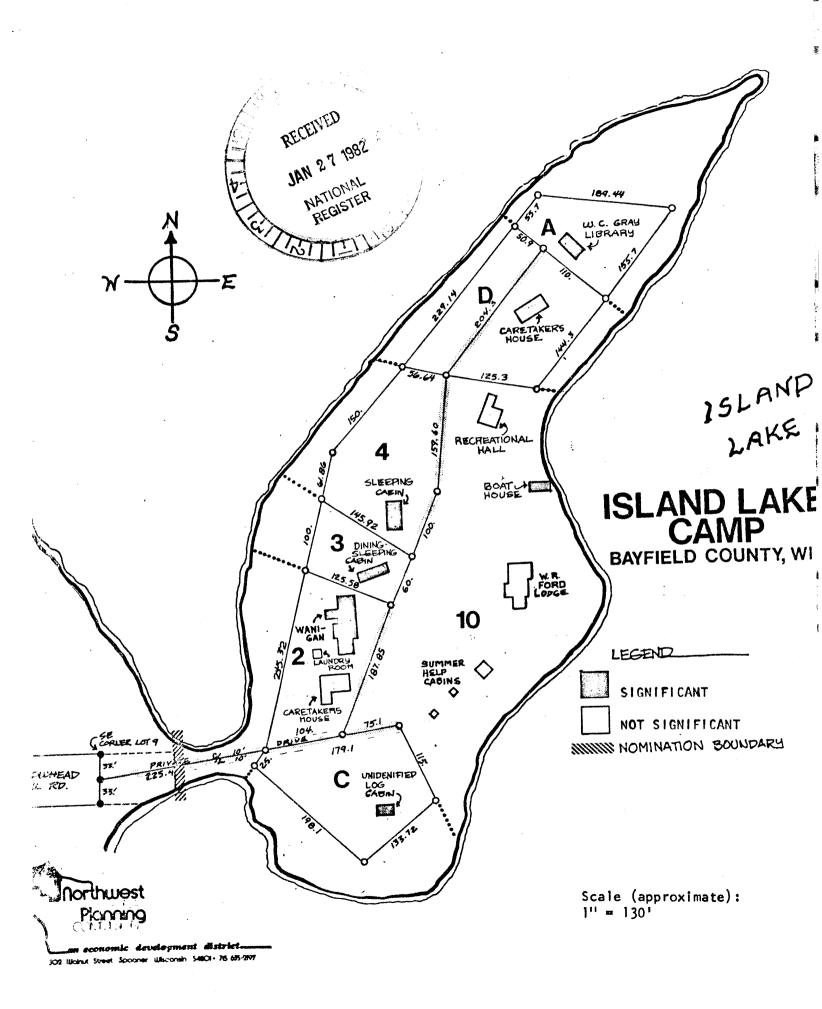
A parcel of land located in Government Lot 6, Section 18 and Government Lot 1 of Section 17, T45N R9W: Commencing at the Southeast corner of Lot 9 of the plat of Potawatomi Estates, thence S0°-29'W 33 feet, thence N 18°-47'E 404.50 feet along the centerline of a 20 foot wide private drive easement, thence S 20°-00'E 115.00 feet to a meander corner, thence continuing S 20°-00'E along said line 60 feet more or less to the waters edge of Island Lake and the point of beginning, thence N 20°-00'W 60 feet more or less to said meander corner, thence continuing N 20°-00'W 115.00 feet to the centerline of a 20 foot wide private drive easement, thence S 81°-47'W along said centerline 75.10 feet, thence N 23°-29'E along the centerline of a 20 foot wide private drive easement 347.85 feet, thence N 5°-28'E along said centerline 159.60 feet, thence S 77°-49'E 125.30 feet to a meander corner which is 25 feet more or less from the waters edge of Island Lake, thence continuing S 77°-49'E 25 feet more or less to the waters edge of Island Lake, thence in a southerly direction along the waters edge of Island Lake to the point of beginning.

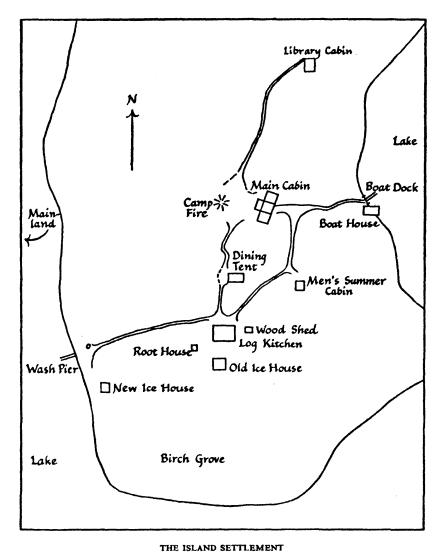
11. Form Prepared By:

Michael R. Matucheski, Preservation Assistant, Historic Preservation Division State Historical Society of Wisconsin 816 State Street Madison

December 8, 1980 608/262-2970 Wisconsin 53706

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[58
William Gray Purcell, St. Croix Trail Country

