

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Wisconsin</b>	
COUNTY: <b>Door</b>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER <b>MAY 19 1972</b>	DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON: **Rock Island Historic District**

AND/OR HISTORIC: **Congressmen to be notified:  
Sen. William Proxmire  
Sen. Gaylord A. Nelson  
Rep. John W. Byrnes**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: **Portions of SW 1/4 and SE 1/4 of SW 1/4, and SW 1/4 of SE 1/4 Sec. 23, and NW 1/4 of NW 1/4, Sec. 26, T 34 N, R 30 E, in Rock Island St. Pk.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Town of Washington**  
*Island at NE tip of Lake Waubesa, in Lake Wisconsin*

STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **55** COUNTY: **Door** CODE: **029**

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

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

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME: **State of Wisconsin, Department of Natural Resources**

STREET AND NUMBER: **4610 University Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN: **Madison** STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **55**

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: **Door County Courthouse**

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: **Sturgeon Bay** STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **55**

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY: **Wisconsin Archaeological Survey**

DATE OF SURVEY: **1915**  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: **State Historical Society of Wisconsin**

STREET AND NUMBER: **816 State Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Madison** STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **55**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

District consists of forested land immediately inland from southern shore of Rock Island. There are no standing structures.

The district includes an as yet undetermined number of overlapping and/or contiguous sites buried beneath the present surface of the ground and covered by secondary woodland growth. The topography is low, but with small stabilized sand dunes lakeward. The subsurface consists of alternating buried occupational surfaces, aeolian sand, and lacustrine sands and gravel over bedrock.

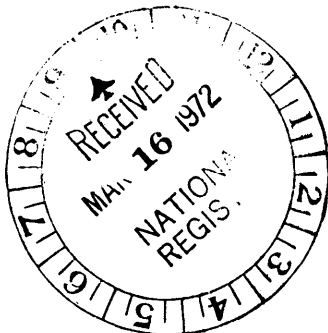
There are multiple archaeological components, in places showing simple to complex physical stratification. There are abundant evidences of multiple shifting occupations of prehistoric Indian communities and historic Indian components in one place associated with a palisaded village containing the buried remnants of French built structures as well as Indian midden. The remains of two French buildings, together with great quantities of French trade goods in and near the palisaded village, make this one of the richest Early Historic sites yet discovered in the western Great Lakes.

For further description see "Statement of Significance."

**DESCRIPTION OF BOUNDARIES OF HISTORIC DISTRICT (see maps):**

An irregular area of approximately 55-60 acres along the south shore of Rock Island included within a rectangle bounded on the east by a line starting at a point on the south shore at 45° 24' 27" N latitude and 86° 48' 50" W longitude, extending north northwest on a bearing of 345° for a distance of approximately 0.2 miles to a point lying at 45° 24' 40" N latitude and 86° 48' 56" W longitude; <sup>thence</sup> on the north by a line extending west southwest on a bearing of 255° for a distance of approximately 0.67 miles to a point lying at 45° 24' 32" N latitude and 86° 49' 40" W longitude; thence on the west by a line extending south southeast on a bearing of 165° for a distance of approximately 0.2 miles to a point on the south shore at 45° 24' 19" N latitude and 86° 49' 34" W longitude; thence on the south by a line extending east northeast on a bearing of 75° for a distance of approximately 0.67 miles to the point of beginning.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian       16th Century       18th Century       20th Century  
 15th Century       17th Century       19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

French structures believed to date 1678-79.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal       | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric      | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic         | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | A major significance relates to early history of French Empire in Great Lakes and to migrations of Indian tribes. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           |   |
| 1/2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             |   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce         | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications              | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation                |   |  |   |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The sites included in the district have been under investigation by Lawrence University since the summer of 1969 with financial support from private sources and the state. The archaeologists in charge are Ronald J. Mason, Lawrence University, and Carol Mason, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay.

Archaeological evidence, supported by primary historical sources, suggests strongly that one of the sites (that containing the palisade and European structures) was the place to which La Salle came in 1679 aboard the Griffin, the first sailing vessel ever to sail the Great Lakes, and that it was from here that the Griffin sailed to its unknown fate while La Salle went on southward on his voyage of exploration. The European structures, preserved in the soil by wall footing trenches and still preserved sub-surface wall sections, are believed to have been built by La Salle's agents who traveled among the tribes of Green Bay collecting furs and who wintered over on the island in 1678-79. Rock Island would then be Hennepin's "Island of the Potawatomes." The French built structures are thus the oldest known European buildings in the western Great Lakes. Great quantities of French trade goods and Indian artifacts are associated in this site.

Archaeological evidence, again with documentary support, indicates that Rock Island was one of Perrot's "Huron Islands" to which the Huron-Petun, together with their Ottawa allies, fled in the period 1650-52 following their expulsion from their homelands at the hands of the Iroquois. Huron-Petun artifacts and possible Ottawa ceramics occur in the site along with French manufactured items.

Several historic occupations richly represent the period from about the time of the La Salle expedition up into the first third or half of the 18th century. Archaeological data, particularly ceramic, and backed up by numerous historic references suggest either long-term, or repeated short-term, occupations by the Potawatomi. Other named tribal units identified on the island, though not always with the same certainty, are the Fox, Winnebago, and Menominee (and possibly Noquet). Thus, one of the important attributes of the district is the unusual opportunity, because of the congruence of historical documentation and archaeological field data, to relate archaeological assemblages with named ethnic units whose movements are described in The Jesuit Relations, and other primary sources.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Blair, Emma Helen, The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes, Cleveland, The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1912.  
 Thwaites, Reuben Gold, ed., The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791, Cleveland, The Burrows Brothers Company, 1896-1901. (73 vols.)

Numerous references to the island and its environs, and early historical events therein, are contained in The Jesuit Relations, and the memoirs of Perrot, Charlevoix, Hennepin, Raudot, and La Potherie (see Blair). There are numerous secondary sources bearing on the area.

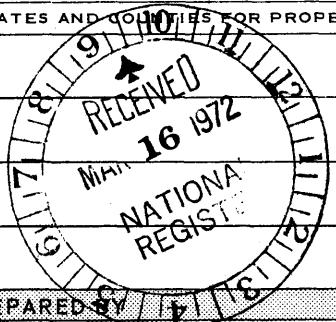
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	45 ° 24 ' 32 "	86 ° 49 ' 40 "		0	'	"
NE	45 ° 24 ' 40 "	86 ° 48 ' 56 "				
SE	45 ° 24 ' 27 "	86 ° 48 ' 50 "				
SW	45 ° 24 ' 19 "	86 ° 49 ' 34 "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **55-60**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Ronald J. Mason, Professor of Anthropology**

ORGANIZATION: **Lawrence University** DATE: **Feb. 2, 1972**

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: **Appleton** STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **55**

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

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name James Morton Smith  
**James Morton Smith**

Title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Date MAR 13 1972

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

Robert M. Utley  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 5/19/72

ATTEST:  
J. Bradford  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date May 17, 1972

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ROCK ISLAND HISTORIC DISTRICT

8. Significance (Cont'd).

An unusually rich and varied inventory of French trade goods has been and is being recovered in the archaeological field program. Some of this, together with aboriginal assemblages, has been recovered in stratified or otherwise separated physical contexts, thus allowing for a uniquely fine-scaled chronology of native cultural change during the period of French intrusion and later hegemony. Later occupations persist to the time of the French and Indian War.

Another important attribute of the district is the presence of multiple prehistoric Indian components beginning in the early centuries A.D. (now being tested directly by C14 dating) and continuing into the protohistoric period. This fortunate fact should make it possible to link up some of the known historic Indian groups with their direct prehistoric ancestors in a detailed fashion.

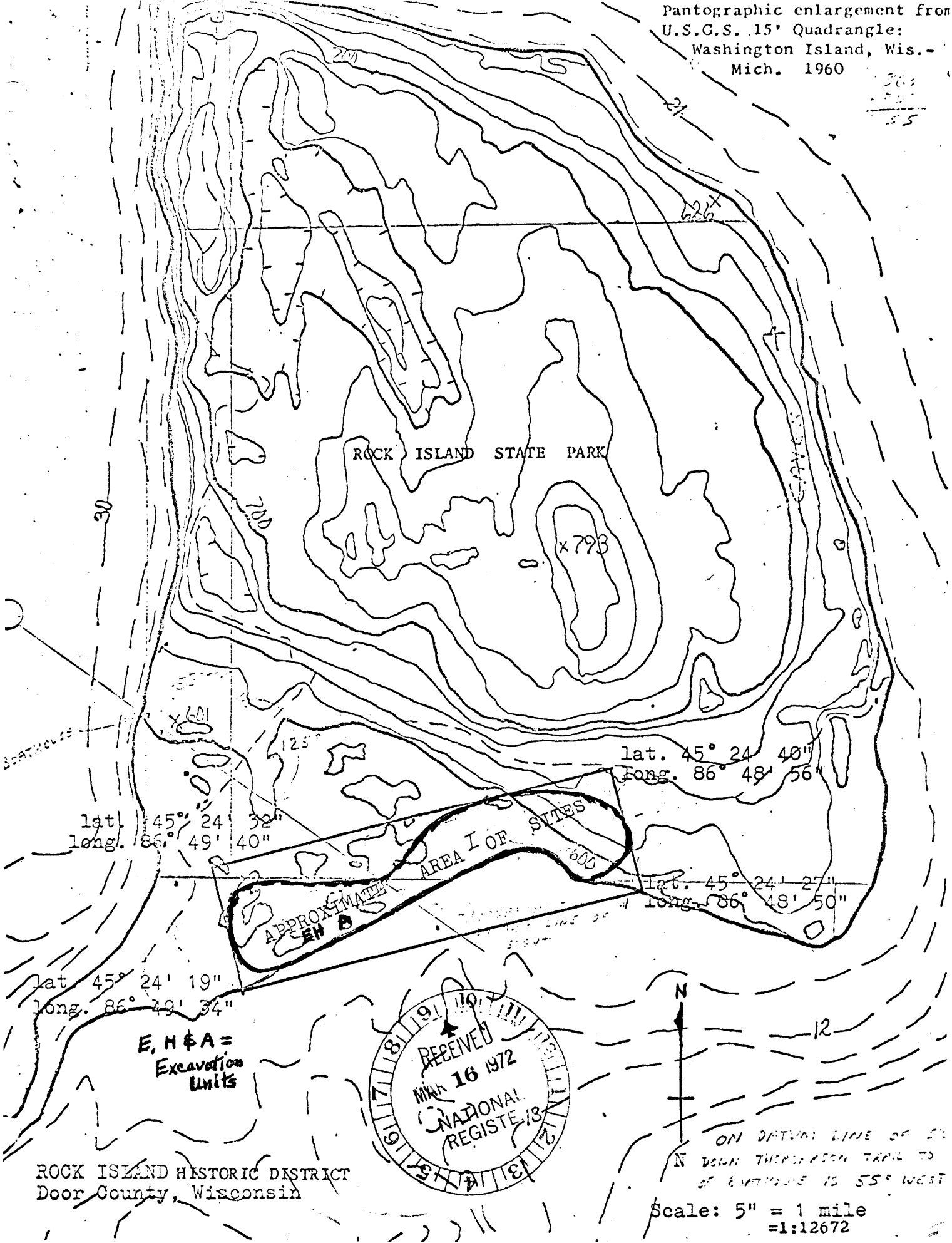
The preservation of large faunal samples and even vegetable remains (charred corn, corncobs, squash seeds, etc.) make feasible subsistence resource studies and a reconstruction of biological-environmental factors at various periods.

The sites in the district are clearly of major importance in the prehistoric and the historic archaeology of the Great Lakes. The evidence linking one of the sites with La Salle and another component with the Huron diaspora (Perrot's "Huron Islands"), makes the district of unique historic importance and a goldmine of information on the early French Empire in the western Great Lakes.



Pantographic enlargement from  
U.S.G.S. 15' Quadrangle:  
Washington Island, Wis.-  
Mich. 1960

363  
35



ROCK ISLAND STATE PARK

x 798

30

APPROXIMATE AREA I OF SITES

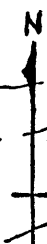
lat. 45° 24' 40"  
long. 86° 48' 56"

lat. 45° 24' 32"  
long. 86° 49' 40"

lat. 45° 24' 27"  
long. 86° 48' 50"

lat. 45° 24' 19"  
long. 86° 49' 34"

E, N & A =  
Excavation  
Units



ON DATUM LINE OF 50  
N DOWN THROUGH TOWN TRAIL TO  
OF ELEVATION IS 55' WEST

ROCK ISLAND HISTORIC DISTRICT  
Door County, Wisconsin

Scale: 5" = 1 mile  
= 1:12672