

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED  
DATE ENTERED  
MAR 29 1978

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
Bass Island Brownstone Company

AND/OR COMMON  
*Wbu* Basswood Island Quarry

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER *W of La Pointe*  
Basswood Island (SE 1/4, SW 1/4, Section 4, T50N, R3W) NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN  
Town of La Pointe

VICINITY OF **Seventh**

STATE  
Wisconsin

CODE  
55

COUNTY  
Ashland

CODE  
003

**3 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"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: None

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
multiple ownership (see continuation sheet)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Register of Deeds, Ashland County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER  
201 West 2nd

CITY, TOWN  
Ashland

STATE  
Wisconsin

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
Apostle Islands National Lakeshore Buildings Survey

DATE  
1975

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY 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 type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED    DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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

The site of the Basswood Island quarry of the Bass Island Brownstone Company is located near the southeastern tip of Basswood Island. The nominated property starts from a point approximately 150' S.W. of the ruins of a small cabin noted on the U.S.G.S. quadrangle and continues along the shore for approximately 850 feet. The property includes that area within 500 feet of the shore. } V.B.D.

The main quarry is an irregularly shaped opening approximately 200' long. One section is partly filled with water; other sections are largely overgrown. But the quarry itself is more open than the surrounding country and excavation benches on the sides of the quarry are easily visible on the 25-foot walls. Throughout the immediate area of the quarry is evidence of the operation: there are large blocks of brownstone lying about and some appear to be cut and ready for transport. There are smaller areas that have been quarried, and here and there can be seen pieces of cable or rusted metal spikes used in the quarrying operation.

When the quarry was being worked, workers' cabins and heavy machinery were at the site. These no longer exist.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE
___1500-1599	___AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	___LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE
___1600-1699	___ARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	___MILITARY	___SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
___1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER
<u>X</u> 1800-1899	___COMMERCE	___EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	___TRANSPORTATION
___1900-	___COMMUNICATIONS	<u>X</u> ___INDUSTRY	___POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)
		___INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES **1868, -1893**

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The opening of the Basswood Island Quarry in 1868 signaled the beginning of the brownstone industry in northern Wisconsin. Though active quarrying lasted little more than thirty years, Lake Superior brownstone achieved, in that short time, a lasting reputation as a strong and particularly attractive building material.

After many months of prospecting, Almsen Sweet and his exploration party chose a site at the southeastern tip of Basswood Island to commence quarrying activities. The Bass Island Brownstone Company was established to quarry and market the stones. Docks and buildings were built and machinery was brought to the island. A census in 1870 showed nineteen people, mostly of Irish descent, employed at the quarry. The stone was "cut by channelers, in two directions, and then wedged off along the bedding plane to the desired thickness."<sup>2</sup> These cuts were usually eight to ten feet deep. Channeling was preferred to blasting, as the stone often broke and shattered during the latter process. The Basswood Island Quarry did not have facilities for sawing.

Proposed for use in the Milwaukee County Courthouse, the stone of the Basswood quarry was subjected to extensive testing to determine its structural capability. The results were favorable, and the first stones produced by the quarry were used in the construction of that imposing Renaissance Revival building (now demolished). Other buildings known to have been built of Basswood Island brownstone include the old Chicago Tribune Building, the Forest Home Cemetery Chapel in Milwaukee, designed by Ferry and Clas, and St. Paul's Episcopal Church, also in Milwaukee, a National Register property.

The growing popularity of the steel frame building and consequent use of lighter materials, coupled with the economic recession of 1893, halted the operation of the Basswood Island Quarry. Other quarries in the area continued to supply brownstone for buildings throughout the mid-west until the market disappeared in the early twentieth century.

<sup>1</sup> Ross, Hamilton, La Pointe--Village Outpost (Ann Arbor, 1960), p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Buckley, Ernest, On the Building and Ornamental Stones of Wisconsin (Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey Bulletin No. IV, Madison 1898), p. 178.



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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 4

PAGE 1

BASS ISLAND BROWNSTONE COMPANY

Charlotte Learned George  
3053 Hermit Way  
Santa Rosa, California 95405

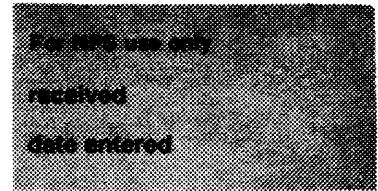
Harold N. Learned  
14111 S. E. 260th  
Kent, Washington 98031

National Park Service - Midwest Region  
1709 Jackson St.  
Omaha, Nebraska 68102

State of Wisconsin  
Department of Natural Resources  
4610 University Avenue  
Madison, Wisconsin 53705

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

PROPERTY NAME Bass  
~~Bassxxxx~~ Island Brownstone Quarry ~~Company Quarry~~

7	8	0	0	0	0	7	5
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REFERENCE NUMBER

W	I
---	---

STATE

0	0	3
---	---	---

COUNTY CODE

Property name should read ~~Basswood Island Company Quarry~~

Bass Island Brownstone Company Quarry.

SIGNED, SPO or AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE

2/18/86

DATE

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet

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Page

PROPERTY NAME Basswood Island Brownstone Quarry

7	8	0	0	0	0	7	5
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REFERENCE NUMBER

W	I
---	---

STATE

0	0	3
---	---	---

COUNTY CODE

Property name should read Basswood Island Company Quarry

SIGNED, SHPO OR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE

DATE