

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Wisconsin</b>	
COUNTY: <b>Marinette</b>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER <b>70.10.55.0009</b>	DATE <b>10/15/70</b>

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Peshtigo Fire Cemetery**

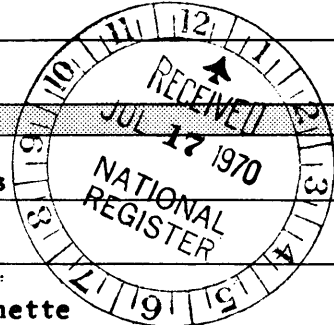
AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Oconto Avenue between Peck and Ellis Avenues**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Peshtigo**

STATE <b>Wisconsin</b>	CODE <b>54157</b>	COUNTY: <b>Marinette</b>	CODE <b>075</b>
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**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u><b>Cemetery</b></u>

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**City of Peshtigo**

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: <b>Peshtigo</b>	STATE: <b>Wisconsin</b>	CODE <b>48</b>
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**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

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

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: <b>Marinette</b>	STATE: <b>Wisconsin</b>	CODE <b>48</b>
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**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**None**

DATE OF SURVEY:                     Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE:
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7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

An old, well-maintained cemetery consisting largely of an elongated mound, well covered with grass, having a few shade trees, and landscaped with a few ornamental evergreen shrubs and trees at a commemorative area near the center of the mound, where an Official Wisconsin Marker stands. Near the center of the northwestern edge of the cemetery is a mass burial plot where 350 unidentified victims of the holocaust of October 8, 1871 are interred. The center of this mass burial is enclosed by an iron picket fence within which is a single headstone commemorating the burial.

Markers and/or monuments in the cemetery date from the middle 1800's to the early 1920's. Some alterations have occurred in that various known dead were exhumed and reinterred in a newer cemetery, and a number of older markers were destroyed and/or damaged due both to toppling as old graves settled and to vandalism. Old markers have been repaired, reset and reinforced wherever possible. Some re-landscaping has been done, especially in the central area where the official marker is placed and a flagstaff erected. This was done about 20 years ago.

The original condition of the cemetery is known only to the extent that it was an ordinary small town cemetery of the middle and latter 1800's. It withstood the full blast of the wind-driven fire which swept into Peshtigo via Oconto Avenue, the street on which the cemetery is located. At least some of the original markers withstood the fire and remained standing or were reset in their original locations.

DESCRIPTION OF BOUNDARIES OF HISTORIC SITE (see appended maps):

Bounded roughly on the north by Trout Brook and a backwater of the Peshtigo River, on the south by Oconto Avenue, on the east by Ellis Avenue and on the west by a private property.

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## 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) October 8, 1871

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                        | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture            | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                        | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation                 | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conservation |   |   |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Note: Although cemeteries do not ordinarily qualify for the National Register, it is believed that the Peshtigo Fire Cemetery, as the site most directly connected with a major historic event, is eligible for consideration under exception (D) of Section 2.3, Criteria Considerations, of the Grants Guide.

Social/Humanitarian. The primary significance of the Peshtigo Fire Cemetery is that it commemorates a major event in the history of Wisconsin, a tornado of fire<sup>1</sup> which, in a matter of minutes, took the lives of some 800 people and completely destroyed Peshtigo, a town of about 1700 population, and a large surrounding area, even extending across the Menominee River in a northeasterly direction into Upper Michigan. In terms of loss of human life, it was not only the greatest forest fire disaster in American history but also a greater disaster than the great Chicago fire which occurred on the same evening, October 8, 1871.

"Modern students of such matters agree that the four largest forest fires which occurred in nineteenth century North America had the same basic causes: many small fires, coupled with unusually dry weather. If the Wisconsin and Michigan fires of October 8, 1871 are considered as a unit, they were probably the most extensive of the four--there is no doubt that they were the most deadly."<sup>2</sup>

Conservation. Although the connection between the Peshtigo fire and modern forestry conservation may be too tenuous to justify the designation of conservation as an area of major significance in this nomination, it nevertheless ought not to be excluded entirely. At least four years before the Peshtigo Fire, Increase A. Lapham pointed out to the Wisconsin Legislature the careless and wasteful methods of harvesting forest resources in the state's timberlands.<sup>3</sup> Further, Steuber states, "The Peshtigo Fire was a turning point. It made government and industry take a look at their practices. Out of it, in a slow evolution that took decades, came improved forestry, fire-preventive measures, conservation of natural resources, regulation."<sup>4</sup>

1. Wells, Robert W., Fire at Peshtigo, 199-214. Nearly a century of study of forest fires has justified the rather common use of "tornado-fire" or similar designations in connection with rapidly spreading crown fires like the one that occurred here in 1871. Such fires create strong convection currents which, as energy increases, develop vortices that

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Wells, Robert W., Fire At Peshtigo, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1968.

"Peshtigo, Wisconsin, the Community That Rose From the Ashes of the World's Most Disastrous Fire to Become America's Busiest Small City!" Peshtigo, Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce, 1950.

"October 8, 1871, The Night Peshtigo, Wisconsin Was Destroyed by Fire," The Thirtieth Star, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 3(5): 1-2, 1958.

Steuber, William F., Jr., "The Problem at Peshtigo," The Wisconsin Magazine of History, 42:13-15, 1958.

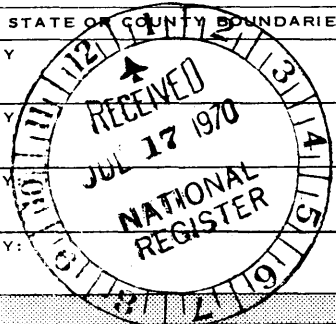
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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	° ' "	° ' "		N 45° 03' 24"	W 87° 45' 14.5"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **2.5**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**D. N. Anderson, Assistant Director, Historic Sites & Markers Division**

ORGANIZATION: **State Historical Society of Wisconsin**      DATE: **7/8/70**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**816 State Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Madison**      STATE: **Wisconsin 53706**      CODE: **48**

**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: Richard A. Erney  
**Richard A. Erney**

Title: Acting Director  
**State Historical Society of Wisconsin**

Date: July 14, 1970

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

Ernest Allen Connolly  
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

**OCT 15 1970**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:  
William J. VanAntwerp  
Keeper of The National Register

Date: **AUG 27 1970**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Wisconsin	
COUNTY Marinette	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER 70.10.55.0007	DATE 10/15/70

(Number all entries)

PESHTIGO FIRE CEMETERY

8.

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behave exactly as tornadoes, sweeping unpredictably, uprooting trees as well as burning them, and hurtling objects through the air for miles.

2. Ibid., 208
3. Ibid., 206
4. Steuber, William F., Jr., "The Problem at Peshtigo," 13.

