

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

| |
|----------------------------------|
| STATE: Wisconsin |
| COUNTY: Door |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |
| ENTRY DATE DEC 31 1974 |

1. NAME

COMMON:

AND/OR HISTORIC:
The Clearing

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Ellison Bay

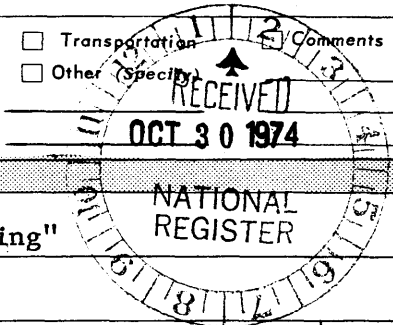
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
Eighth

STATE: **Wisconsin** 54210 CODE: **55** COUNTY: **Door** CODE: **029**

3. CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY (Check One) | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC |
|--|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum | <input 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) |

Yes:
 Restricted
 Unrestricted
 No



4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Wisconsin Farm Bureau, "Friends of the Clearing"

STREET AND NUMBER:
7010 Mineral Point Road

CITY OR TOWN:
Madison

STATE:
Wisconsin 53711 CODE: **55**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

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

STREET AND NUMBER:
138 South Fourth Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:
Sturgeon Bay

STATE:
Wisconsin 54235 CODE: **55**

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Wisconsin's Historic Preservation Plan, The Inventory

DATE OF SURVEY: **1974** 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 53706 CODE: **55**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)

Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated Ruins Unexposed

(Check One)

Altered Unaltered

(Check One)

Moved Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Clearing is 125 acres of land in Door County, Wisconsin, north of Ellison Bay. It was originally the summer home of Jens Jensen, who has been called the "Dean of American Landscape Architects." Jensen began to buy land for the Clearing in 1919 and put in an access road and two cabins between 1919 and 1935 when, at the age of 75, he went into semi-retirement there. Additional buildings then were added, and Jensen opened The Clearing as a retreat and school.

The Clearing sits on limestone cliffs overlooking the waters of Green Bay. It has been planted, according to Jensen's landscaping tenets, in plants indigenous to Northern Wisconsin. Thus it is wooded with hardwoods, pine, elder, and maple, and the ground cover is largely of bearberry, partridge berry, hepatica, trillium, and Solomon Seal. Sawdust-thickened paths wind through the forests and meadows. At one point on the western bluffs of the bay a large meadow, accentuated at its edges with pine and cedar, widens out to a spectacular view of the water.

The name, "The Clearing," refers not so much to the physical setting itself as to the cleansing of the mind which Jensen felt accompanied closeness to nature. It was to enable others to obtain this clearing that the school and retreat was established.

In 1937 there was a disastrous fire on the grounds which destroyed the school's main building and all of Jensen's personal papers. In the rebuilding which followed Jensen used local stone and wood to construct buildings which he intended to blend with the natural environment as nearly as possible. Jensen's friend, Prairie School architect Hugh Garden, helped him a little with the design of the rough-hewn wooden dormitories and the stone school building. The detailing of these buildings was Gothicized to "turn the eyes upward."¹

Courses at The Clearing emphasize the spiritual and emotional development of the student. They are intended to restore the equilibrium of the student by putting him back into contact with nature. The handcrafts also are emphasized as are the fine arts. After Jensen's death in 1951, The Clearing was run by his long-time secretary, Mertha Fulkerson who retired in 1969. It is now owned and operated as a school by the Wisconsin Farm Bureau.

¹According to Jensen's secretary, Mertha Fulkerson.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1935**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input 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

The Clearing embodies Jens Jensen's ideas on the purpose of landscape architecture and on the role of nature in American life. Jensen wanted to create a landscape which was neither classical nor romantic but was natural and essentially American. Jensen was an early member of "Friends of the American Landscape," a reader of the works of John Muir, and a friend of Aldo Leopold, so he should be known as a conservationist as well as a landscape architect.

Jensen's landscape designs emphasized the natural possibilities of the site. He had a strong sense of "decorum," feeling that every sort of natural terrain had a potential expression proper to it, and that the duty of the landscapist was to bring out these possibilities in the land rather than to impose some false order on it. He insisted that only flora native to a locality be used in landscaping it and refused to use imported and exotic flowers, trees or shrubs.

It is probably not a coincidence that Jensen's origins were on a farm near a small Danish town on a bluff overlooking water. The similar situation of The Clearing made it a reminder of his earliest contacts with nature. Jensen was intensely Danish and did not come to America until mature (he did not begin his career as a professional landscape architect until he was 40.) He became fond of the Midwestern landscape and is thought to have been the first landscape architect to design using the prairie as a design motif. Like his long-time colleague, Frank Lloyd Wright, he associated the prairie with something essentially American. Also like Wright, he had little respect for easterners. Eastern landscape architects seemed to him to be merely repeating European patterns without regarding the qualities of the American land. The only eastern landscape architect he respected was Frederick Law Olmstead.

The Clearing derives ultimately from the Danish folk schools, which Jensen knew as a boy, and which were intended to give one a sense of tradition, a respect for the natural environment, and a patriotic love of the homeland. However, Jensen's attitude was neither sentimental nor precious. He felt that nature was not merely to be preserved for the enjoyment to be derived from it, for its role was also restorative and spiritual. In 1935 he envisioned a future time when the area around Lake Michigan from Gary, Indiana, to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, would be completely urbanized. He fought long and hard to preserve some natural areas within urban Chicago, and in Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and Iowa, and he envisioned The Clearing as a place where urbanized Americans could

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Jensen, Jens. Siftings. Chicago: Seymour Company, 1939.

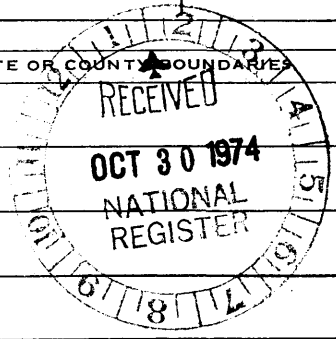
Jensen, Jens. Siftings, the Major Portion of the Clearing, Collected Writings. Chicago: Seymour Company, 1956.

Eaton, L.K. Landscape Architect in America, the Life and Work of Jens Jensen. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.

Eaton, L.K. "Jens Jensen and the Chicago School," Progressive Architecture December, 1960 pp. 144-150.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|----------------|---|---------|---------|------------------|---------|---------|
| U.T.M. - Zone 16 | | | O R | | | | | |
| | | | LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES | | | | | |
| CORNER | Northing | Easting | LATITUDE | | | LONGITUDE | | |
| | | | Degrees | Minutes | Seconds | Degrees | Minutes | Seconds |
| NW | 5,012,360 | 493,830 | 0 | | | 0 | | |
| NE | 5,012,360 | 494,770 | | | | | | |
| SE | 5,011,480 | 494,360 | | | | | | |
| SW | 5,011,480 | 493,930 | | | | | | |
| APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: | | | 125 acres | | | | | |
| LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES | | | | | | | | |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY | | | | CODE | | |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | | | | CODE | | |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | | | | CODE | | |
| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY: | | | | CODE | | |



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Charlene Stant Engel, Preservation Planning Assistant

ORGANIZATION: **State Historical Society of Wisconsin** DATE: **July 2, 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER:
816 State Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Madison** STATE: **Wisconsin 53706** 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: Oct. 22, 1974

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

[Signature]
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 12/31/74

ATTEST:

[Signature]
Keeper of The National Register

Date: 12/31/74

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501500
093250

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(Continuation Sheet)

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|------------------|-------------|
| STATE | Wisconsin |
| COUNTY | Door |
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| DATE | DEC 31 1974 |

(Number all entries)

THE CLEARING

8. re-establish contact with their natural roots. Nature courses were taught at The Clearing, as were weaving, painting and other handcrafts; but the emphasis was on quiet, meditation, and the enjoyment and understanding of the natural environment. Jensen intended that his last home should instruct his fellow Americans in their natural heritage.



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| COUNTY Door | |
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THE CLEARING

9. Caldwell, A. "Jens Jensen, the Prairie Spirit," Landscape Architecture Quarterly Vol. LI, (January, 1961), pp. 102-5.

Tarr, M. Review of Siftings, the Major Portion of the Clearing and Collected Writings Landscape Architecture Quarterly Vol. XLIX, (January, 1957), pp. 379-80.

"Jens Jensen, Landscape Architect," Landscape Architecture Quarterly Vol. XL (October, 1949), p. 37 and Vol. XL (January, 1950), p. 78.

Eichstedt, E. A. "Trends in Landscape Architecture," American Institute of Architects Journal Vol. XI (May, 1949), pp. 225-31.

Schaffer, O. G. Review of Siftings Landscape Architecture Quarterly Vol. XXX (April, 1940), pp. 153-40.

"Naturalistic Design in a Michigan Estate," American Landscape Architect Vol. III (November, 1930), pp. 10-14.

"Naturalistic Treatment in a Metropolitan Park," American Landscape Architect Vol. II (January, 1930), pp. 34-8.

Blei, Norbert. "The Clearing," Midwest: Chicago Sun-Times Magazine December, 16, 1973, pp. 38-41.

Fulkerson, Mertha, and Corson, Ada, The Story of the Clearing.

Sweetland, Harriet M. "Jens Jensen--Conservator of Nature and of the Human Spirit," Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters Vol. LIII (1964), pp. 9-17.

