

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties... See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16).

1. Name of Property

historic name Matson, Mike and Mary, Historic Farmstead other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Off County Highway 21 city, town Tower (Embarrass Township) state Minnesota code MN county St. Louis code 137 zip code 55732

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes sub-rows for Contributing and Noncontributing resources.

Name of related multiple property listing: Rural Finnish Log Buildings of St. Louis Co., MN Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official Ian R. Stewart Date 1/25/90 Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official Date State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: entered in the National Register. determined eligible for the National Register. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. other, (explain:)

Entered in the National Register Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 4/9/90

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE:

animal facility

agricultural outbuilding

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE:

animal facility

agricultural outbuilding

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Log

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Log

walls Log

Asphalt

roof Metal

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Mike and Mary Matson Farm consists of five log buildings, a wood frame house, and a metal clad pole structure bounded by cultivated fields and forest. The farmstead is clustered near the south edge of what was originally a 160-acre homestead in parts of Sections 13 and 14 of Embarrass Township. Access to the site is from a narrow, winding gravel driveway lined with thick trees that give way to open grain fields to the north and east of the farmstead. The following summary description of the Matson Farm corresponds to a sketch map of the site included with the registration form.

1) Cattle/Hay Barn, ca.1900, contributing.

This rather low building is comprised of two log sections that were probably constructed at different times. The 16'5" x 17' cattle barn is undoubtedly the "16' x 16' barn" referred to in the Homestead proof filed by Matson in 1905. It has walls made of square hewn, double notched logs which fill both gable ends. The floor is made of saplings and there are two purlins, a ridgepole, and a collar beam in the gable roof. A pair of low, 6'7"-wide doors open to the west, a 3'-wide entry is centered in the south gable, and a fixed sash window pierces the east wall. Five hewn joists which are embedded into the sidewalls support the loft floor made of saplings.

A 6'7"-wide space enclosed with vertical planks separates the cattle barn from the hay barn. The hay barn was likely constructed soon after the cattle section. A single door in the west side of the division between the two pens provides access into the center of the building.

The hay barn is constructed of round and hewn timbers which, on the average, are smaller in size than those in the cattle barn. Each tier is separated by a narrow gap, and like the cattle section, the logs rise for the entire height of the gables. A ridgepole and four purlins stabilize the roof. There is a 10'-wide opening cut into the lower part of the north gable end, and the south gable has two hinged wooden doors.

2) Stable (talli), ca.1900, contributing.

Located a few feet northwest of the cattle/hay barn at a right angle is the 14'4" x 23'4" horse stable. The one-story building features tightly-constructed hewn logs joined by vertical double notches. The logs extend into the gables and the metal clad gable roof is stabilized by a ridgepole and two

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture
Architecture
Ethnic Heritage: European

Period of Significance

ca.1900-1939

Significant Dates

ca.1900

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hanka, Gregorius, architect and builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Mike and Mary Matson Farm is historically significant under National Register Criterion A because it is associated with rural settlement in the cutover region of St. Louis County by Finnish immigrants who developed the marginal land into productive agricultural property during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is also architecturally significant under Criterion C as an excellent example of a large and mostly intact grouping of buildings that embody the distinctive, traditional log construction techniques utilized by the Finns in St. Louis County. The farm buildings and cultivated land represent the first associated property type (Finnish Log Farms) and demonstrate the kind of agricultural system common to the area. The Matson Farm is representative of the agrarian life style that a majority of Finns came to this country to achieve during and after their employment in the lumber and iron ore mining industries (see associated historic contexts, The Iron Range, 1880s-1930s and Northern Minnesota Lumbering, 1870s-1930s). All of the log buildings on the property represent the third historic context, Finnish Log Architecture, 1880s-1930s. The Matson Farm buildings are randomly located throughout the farmstead and form a loose courtyard arrangement as is sometimes the case with Finnish farms. The cleared land to the north and east and the various domestic and agri-cultural outbuildings -- the sauna, cattle barns, and hay shed -- illustrate that the Matson family was able to successfully modify the landscape to their farming needs. All of the log buildings are in good condition and relatively unchanged, thus they maintain their integrity of materials, design, workmanship, and association.

Similar to many Finnish immigrants, Mike Matson moved from Virginia, Minnesota (where he probably worked harvesting white pine or mining iron) around the turn of the century to establish a new agricultural way of life. On 14 August 1900 he filed for a 160-acre homestead in Sections 13 and 14 of Embarrass Township. After completing construction of a log house (which was actually built by his neighbor Gregorius Hanka; see the Hanka National Register form elsewhere in this document) in February, 1901, he sent for his wife and children, who arrived from Finland two months later. Matson and his family were extremely productive during the initial settlement period. When they

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9. Major Bibliographical References

See the Historic Contexts Bibliography

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 160 acres

UTM References

A

1	5	5	5	9	3	6	0	5	2	8	1	2	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

1	5	5	6	0	2	0	0	5	2	8	0	3	9	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B

1	5	5	6	0	1	8	0	5	2	8	1	2	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

D

1	5	5	5	9	4	0	0	5	2	8	0	4	1	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies the southwest quarter of the northwest quarter and the northwest quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 13; and the southeast quarter of the northeast quarter and the northeast quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 14, T60N, R15W, Embarrass Township, St. Louis County.

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Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the farm outbuildings and cultivated fields that have historically been part of the Matson Farm and that maintain historic integrity.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael Koop/Preservation Consultant

organization N/A date January 1989

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purlins. The interior is whitewashed, and a hewn log partition that formerly divided the building longitudinally was removed at an unknown date. A pair of doors and a small window pierce the south wall. A sectional, overhead garage door was installed in the east gable at an undetermined date.

3) Cattle Barn (navetta), ca.1900, contributing.

The cattle barn is a tall, two-story log building measuring 25' x 28'10". The lower fifteen tamarack logs stand on an unmortared fieldstone foundation and are hewn and locked by double notches. Some of these timbers are 14" wide. At an unknown date, the old roof was removed and nine more unhewn poplar logs were added on top of the original building. These timbers are also joined at the corners with double notches. Vertical planks extend from the eaves to the ridge. There is a small door in each gable end and a large hay mow door on the east wall. Three fixed sash windows pierce the south wall, while two are located on the north elevation. The interior contains at least eleven animal stalls and an intact loft for hay storage. The gable roof is covered with corrugated metal. The present owner indicated that the barn may have been moved here from another location, but this cannot be verified.

4) Hay Barn, ca.1900, contributing.

Measuring 19'2" square, the hay barn is constructed of a mixture of unhewn timbers including balsam, spruce, and tamarack. The logs are spaced a short distance apart to promote air circulation, and have saddle corner notches. They extend into the upper gables, and there are two unhewn purlins and a ridgepole. A 7'-wide opening without doors is cut into the east gable end.

5) Smoke Sauna (savusauna), ca.1900, contributing.

Located away from the other farmstead buildings because of fire danger is the former smoke sauna or savusauna. It measures 11'10" x 17'10" in plan and is made of tightly fitting, hewn tamarack logs that have full dovetail corner notches. Entry is gained through a door in the east axial wall that leads into the changing room. One small window adjacent to the door lights this interior space. A 2'5"-wide door in the center of a hewn log partition provides access into the bathing room. A tiny window to the left of the door allowed light from a kerosene lamp into the bathing room. To the immediate left inside the steam room is the stove, although it is not the original kiuas. There is a small window along the east wall, and a narrow, sliding wooden panel above the three benches on the back wall which was used to ventilate the smoke and regulate the temperature. The exterior walls are clad in asphalt shingles, but because this siding is believed to have been applied

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in the early 1930s, the sauna is considered a contributing building.

6) Well (kaivo), ca.1900, contributing.

The well stands in the center of the yard between the cattle barn and house. It has a hand pump attached on the top.

7) Agricultural Fields, contributing.

These fields were cleared from the cutover and turned into productive land for a variety of crops. They continue to be cultivated.

8) House, ca.1925, noncontributing.

The wood frame house replaced the original log dwelling that burned in the mid 1900s. It was originally a summer kitchen on the John Palo farm and was moved here at an unknown date. It is covered with modern siding and has altered windows.

9) Shed, ca.1970, noncontributing.

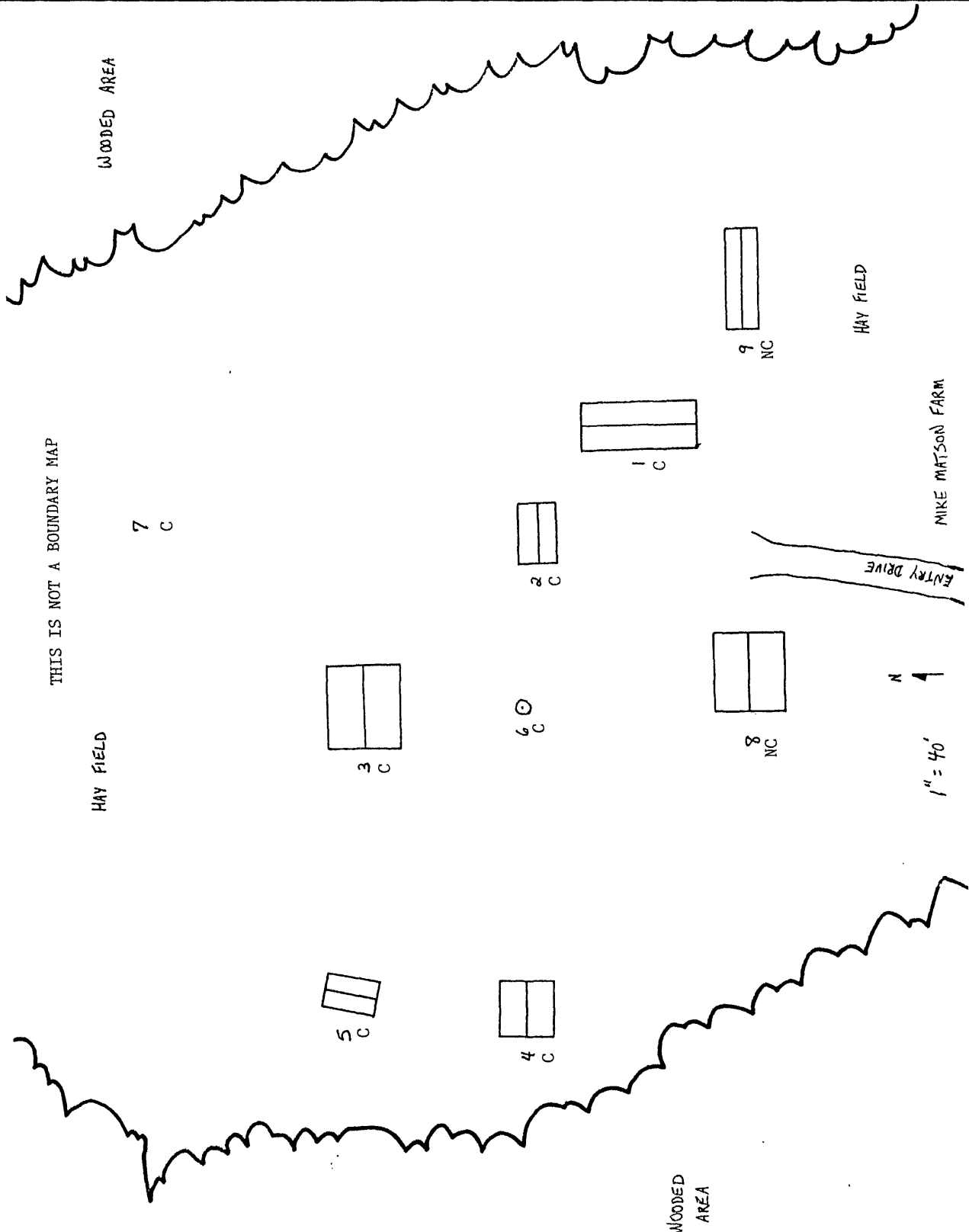
This long, narrow wood frame structure is covered with modern metal siding.

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filed their final proof on 10 September 1906, the family had already cleared an astounding nineteen acres of land with thirteen acres plowed, fenced and planted in hay and vegetables. In addition to the house, the farm consisted of five other major buildings, plus eight cattle and one horse. The property and improvements were assessed at \$1,000, the highest amount of any Finnish farm in the area.

In about 1915 the property was sold to Henry Maki, who continued to operate the farm as it was by Matson.

The buildings on the Matson Farm illustrate the tendency by Finnish farmers to erect a relatively large number of small structures, each for a specific purpose. The original cattle barn is one of the smallest in the area, and the addition of the hay barn at a later date demonstrates a common pattern by Finns, who gradually expanded the farmstead as they found the time and resources. Although the original stove has been replaced by a self-contained furnace, the sauna is nevertheless a good example of the early, traditional smoke sauna used by many Finns in the settlement area. Each building represents the use of the north European construction technique, particularly those buildings in which the retention of heat was important, such as the sauna, stable, and cattle barn.