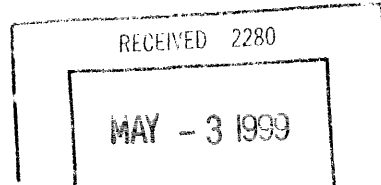


(January 1992)

United States Department of Interior
National Park Service



684

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Otter Spring House

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number approximately 80 meters south of Spring Pond Road at Otter Springs N/A not for publication

city or town Town of Lincoln N/A vicinity

state Wisconsin code WI county Forest code 041 zip code 54520

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 X meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Alicia Z. Guel 4/14/99
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer-WI

State or Federal agency and bureau

Otter Spring House
Name of Property

Forest / Wisconsin
County and State

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

<p>I hereby certify that the property is:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:)</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Signature of the Keeper</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Date of Action</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Edson H. Beull</i></u></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><u>6/3/99</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>_____</td> <td>_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td>_____</td> <td>_____</td> </tr> </table>	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action	<u><i>Edson H. Beull</i></u>	<u>6/3/99</u>	_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action								
<u><i>Edson H. Beull</i></u>	<u>6/3/99</u>								
_____	_____								
_____	_____								

Otter Spring House
Name of Property

Forest / Wisconsin
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(check as many boxes as apply)

private
 public-local
 public-state
 public-federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include listed resources within the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Camp

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instruction)

RELIGION/Ceremonial Site

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Rustic

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A
walls LOG

roof ASPHALT
other WOOD

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Otter Spring House
Name of Property

Forest / Wisconsin
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Native American

Period of Significance

1933-1948

Significant Dates

1933-34

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

CCC Company 649, Waubikon
Lake

Otter Spring House
Name of Property

Forest / Wisconsin
County and State

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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
- # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:
Forest County Potawatomi
Community

10. Geographical Data

Acree of Property 9.8 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. 11/6/ 13/5/8/5/2/0/ 15/0/4/9/8/1/0
Zone Easting Northing

3. _____
Zone Easting Northing

2. _____
Zone Easting Northing

4. _____
Zone Easting Northing

____ see continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Della G. Rucker

organization Rucker Historical Research date June 11, 1998

street & number P.O. Box 204 telephone 920/432-7044

city or town Green Bay state WI zip code 54305-0204

Otter Spring House
Name of Property

Forest / Wisconsin
County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Forest County
street & number 200 E. Madison St. Telephone 715-478-3323
city or town Crandon state WI zip code 54520

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct

comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1 Otter Spring House, Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI.

Introduction:

The Otter Spring House is a small, load-bearing log structure located over a natural spring adjacent to Otter Creek in the Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI. Built by a local Civilian Conservation Corps camp in 1933, the Spring House is a structure of high significance to the local populace, particularly members of the Potawatomi community, due to its historic role in the practical and cultural life of the community. Highly intact in terms of both its physical attributes and its structure, the building has undergone deterioration, particularly due to water damage over the past twenty years as a result of changes in the ecological character of the vicinity. The structure maintains, however, a high level of integrity; this nomination is prepared in accordance with a grant from the National Park Service for planning and for architectural services intended to stabilize and restore the structure.

Physical Context:

The Otter Spring House is located in an extremely rural, predominately forested area in the Town of Lincoln, approximately seven miles east of the city of Crandon and approximately one and one-half mile due north of U.S. Highway 8, the primary east-west auto route through the area. The spring area is accessed by land via two former logging roads extending from the highway; the second road, known as Spring Pond Road, passes in a westerly direction approximately eighty meters north of the spring and divides the spring and creek area from a pine plantation of several acres, which was established in the 1950s on the former site of the CCC camp that was responsible for the Otter Spring House's construction.

The Spring House is accessed from the road via a foot path leading through brush to the building. The building is located on the north side of Otter Creek, on the edge of the creek and near the edge of a flat, low-lying, marshy area, which surrounds the creek's meanders on either side and covers several acres. The creek itself is a small, winding waterway which commences in the marsh and flows in a northeasterly direction approximately eight miles to its juncture with the Peshtigo River. The Spring House is oriented in a roughly northwesterly direction, paralleling the creek bank at this location. There are no other structures in the vicinity, and no other known structures within the section in which the Spring House is located. The building is located on land that is at present owned by Forest County.

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 2 Otter Spring House, Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI

General Features:

The Otter Spring House stands approximately six feet in height at the ridge pole and approximately four and one-half feet in height at the eaves.¹ The Spring House's gables are oriented in a northwesterly-southeasterly direction; the building measures approximately twelve feet along this axis and spans approximately eight feet at its gable ends. The walls are constructed of closely-matched cedar logs² approximately six inches in width, which are joined at the corners by closely-matched full saddle notches, which are also closely fitted. The building has no foundation and its sill logs rest directly on the ground. The logs are not chinked and do not appear to have ever been chinked, and there is no evidence of nails or spikes used in the construction. The building has one opening, this consisting of a low doorway approximately four feet in height, which is located in the eastern gable end; this was cut into the logs and framed on either side with narrow dimension boards. There is no evidence of any historic or non-historic door or other means of closing the entry. The gable ends are of load-bearing log to the ridge pole, which is round and flanked to either side by a single round purlin. The ends of the ridge pole and purlins are exposed and extend approximately one foot beyond the wall, where they support the roof's modest overhang. The roof is constructed of dimension lumber, and consists of asphalt tab shingles laid directly on the roof boards. There are two layers of roof boards, the top layer oriented horizontally and the lower layer oriented vertically; there are no rafters. The roof structure appears to be entirely original to the building and unaltered; the roof is severely deteriorated in most locations, particularly along the ridge and on the eastern portion of the building. The building is inclined toward the southeastern corner as a result of deterioration due to water damage of some of the logs adjoining the creek in this location; this damage and the damage to the roof are to be addressed by the restoration plans being prepared as another portion of this National Park Service-sponsored project. With the exception of the deterioration identified above and below, the Otter Spring House is in highly intact original condition, having undergone no known active

¹ The building at present sits at a sloped angle due to the deterioration of some of the lower logs of the southerly facade as a result of water damage, as discussed below; the measurements given indicate the dimensions of the portion of the building which has been the least damaged.

² Interview with Henry Ritchie, May 8, 1998.

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Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 3 Otter Spring House, Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI.

alterations since construction. The individual facades and the interior are described in greater detail below.

East-facing facade:³

The east-facing facade contains the entry, described above, and is the most readily accessible facade for the pedestrian visitor. Although most of the logs at this facade appear to be sound, the roof at this gable end is in poor condition, with the southerly fascia board partially separated from the roof substructure and the northerly fascia board missing entirely. The ridge pole and rafter ends, as well as the exposed ends of the protruding logs, appear to be in good condition. Several of the upper logs and the extant fascia board are inscribed with visitors' names and, in some cases, home locations and dates of visits; although some of these are non-historic, some appear to be, or are likely to date, from the period of historic significance. As discussed below, visitors to the Spring House have left such graffiti since shortly after the building's construction; as a result, both historic and non-historic graffiti may be seen to represent a significant aspect of the building's historic function and should be viewed as aspects of the building's integrity rather than as damage.

North-facing facade:

The walls of the north-facing facade are intact and show little evidence of water damage, as this facade rests on the higher land adjoining the marsh area. The roof at this facade, however, is severely deteriorated, particularly on its easterly half; a large portion of the roof overhang near the easterly facade and most of the shingles along the ridge pole are essentially disintegrated. There is no evidence of historic or non-historic graffiti at this facade.

West-facing facade:

The west-facing facade is highly intact, showing little evidence of water or other damage to its roof, roof substructure or walls. There is no graffiti on this facade, which is less accessible due to brush and the proximity of the marsh.

³ As the building is neither oriented to the cardinal directions nor sitting along an exactly northwesterly-southeasterly direction, cardinal directions will be used in designation of the building's facades with the understanding that such directions are only approximately accurate.

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Section 7 Page 4 Otter Spring House, Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI

South-facing facade:

The south-facing facade, which adjoins the creek, evidences the most damage to the logs of the lower portion of the facade; the one or two lowest logs are almost entirely deteriorated, particularly near the eastern corner. The upper logs and the exposed log end appear to be sound; however, the roof of this facade is also severely deteriorated and has a hole near the eastern gable. There is no graffiti at this facade, as it is extremely difficult to access by foot due to the proximity of the creek bed.

Interior:

One enters the spring house through the low entry described previously; there is a drop of approximately one foot between the threshold and the floor of the spring house. The floor is of fine gravel to facilitate the spring water's flowing into the creek. During the historic period, the building had a floor of cedar slats suspended above the gravel, with the slats laid parallel to the roof's ridge and the space between the slats wide enough to discourage the entry of deer and small animals; no evidence of this floor remains in the building, and it is likely to have deteriorated at an early date due to use and proximity to the water.⁴ The spring water itself rises from two corrugated steel pipes set into the building's northwest corner; these were installed over the natural spring during construction of the building in order to limit contamination of the spring source. A triangular bench constructed of lumber is set into the northwest corner; a low bench which appears to be made of logs is set on the ground level immediately above the spring openings and is considerably deteriorated. A larger, low, plank bench is located along the southerly wall adjacent to the spring culverts. Most of the interior logs are marked with the names of visitors, and, in many cases, the dates of their visits and home locations. The earliest inscription noted is dated 1934. Some inscriptions are carved into the logs, while others are in pencil or pen; as discussed previously and elaborated in Section 8 below, the tradition of visitors leaving such graffiti dates from shortly after the building's construction and may be viewed as evidence of an aspect of the building's historic function and role.

⁴ Interview with Henry Ritchie, *op cit*.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)
Wisconsin Word Processing Format
(Approved 1/92)

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Section 7 Page 5 Otter Spring House, Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI

Conclusion:

The Otter Spring House retains an excellent level of integrity in terms of its physical structure and of its setting and siting; the only substantial alterations to the building since the close of its period of historic significance result from water and weather damage, such as may be expected in a foundationless log structure of this vintage located in a perpetually wet and isolated area. Restoration plans are currently being prepared under sponsorship of the National Park Service. The only active alterations to the building, consisting of the historic and non-historic graffiti found on the interior logs and on the east-facing facade, represent a significant aspect of the building's use during the historic period, a use that has been perpetuated into the recent past; as a result such graffiti represents an aspect of the building's history rather than a level of damage or a non-historic alteration.

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Section 8 Page 1 Otter Spring House, Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI.

Introduction:

The Otter Spring House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criterion A due to its significant association with the physical and cultural history of the Forest County band of Potawatomi Indians. Constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933-34, the Otter Spring House facilitated access to the Otter Spring, which was used by members of the tribe from approximately that time to the present for both everyday water and for use in events of special cultural and religious significance. The Otter Springs House is the only such facility remaining in the Stone Lake area, a portion of Forest County having a significant concentration of Potawatomi residents; it is also the only known spring house remaining in the Potawatomi-inhabited areas of Forest County. As such, the Otter Spring House represents a significant resource within the cultural context of the historic Forest County Potawatomi community and may be considered to have historic significance at the local level within the context of this community's cultural continuity. This nomination is prepared in accordance with a grant awarded by the National Park Service to the Forest County Potawatomi Community for documentation and preparation of restoration plans for the Otter Spring House.

Historical Background: Forest County Potawatomi Community

The Forest County Potawatomi are members of the widely dispersed Potawatomi nation, one of the Algonquin group of tribes; the Potawatomi have particularly close historical, cultural and linguistic ties to the Ojibwa and Ottawa nations. Believed to have initially developed as a distinct cultural entity in the eastern Great Lakes region, the three nations were driven into the western Great Lakes region due to conflict with the Iroquois nations during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵ Significant Potawatomi settlements occurred throughout the eastern portion of modern Wisconsin, with large population centers developing in the vicinity of the mouth of the Milwaukee River and along the bay of Green Bay. The 1833 Treaty of Chicago and subsequent treaties, however, provided for the removal of the Potawatomi and other tribes from their Wisconsin settlements; the Potawatomi, in what was then the Michigan Territory, were obligated by the treaty to move to reservation lands west of the Mississippi River. Although a majority of the region's Potawatomi did travel to the designated location beginning in 1836, undergoing severe privation and many deaths in the process, small bands of Potawatomi in modern Wisconsin challenged the legitimacy of the treaties and refused to be relocated. Some groups remained in their settlements in Wisconsin, depending on the location, for several years;⁶ however, these bands remained in a continually precarious situation, as they could obtain neither citizenship rights nor the meager protections provided to Native Americans living on reservations during the nineteenth century. After being forced from their settlements, these bands began to migrate north, generally ahead of the line of settlement and into the remaining unoccupied areas of Wisconsin. During much of the balance of the nineteenth century, such Potawatomi groups alighted temporarily in isolated areas of

⁵ Robert Eugene Ritzenthaler, The Potawatomi Indians of Wisconsin. [Milwaukee: the Public Museum of the City of Milwaukee], 1953, p. 106.

⁶ James A. Clifton, The Potawatomi. [New York: Chelsea House Publishers], 1987, p. 66.

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Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 2 Otter Spring House, Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI.

northern Wisconsin, making a scant existence by subsistence hunting and gathering, and moving farther north as Euro-Americans began to purchase and occupy the lands in that area. Such a peripatetic existence earned the Wisconsin remnant the romantic sobriquet of "The Strolling Band of Potawatomi."

By 1894, one of the primary groups of Wisconsin Potawatomi had settled in the region of Wittenberg, located in western Shawano County. In the early 1890s, a Lutheran missionary named Erik Olson Morstad relocated to Wittenberg, and, with a small amount of backing from his synod, began to work among the Potawatomi, who apparently had received little missionary attention during the previous decades due to their transitory experience. In 1893, Morstad wrote that approximately twenty to thirty Potawatomi children under the age of 16 lived in the Wittenberg vicinity, and that none had ever obtained any schooling.⁷ In May 1894, Morstad accompanied several Potawatomi families to Wausau in order to apply for homesteads under the Indian Homestead Act of 1884; those in Morstad's company were granted scattered homesteads in Forest, Marinette and Oconto counties.⁸ During the same approximate time period, Potawatomi from Vilas County and from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan also applied for homesteads, which were granted in the same geographic area.⁹ In approximately 1898, Morstad built a school for the Potawatomi on the Rat River east of present-day Wabeno.¹⁰ By 1910, over 450 Potawatomi were counted by the federal government as living in southern Forest County, particularly in the area surrounding Wabeno and the Stone Lake area east of Crandon.¹¹

A congressional act passed in 1913 appropriated \$150,000 for the purchase of land and \$100,000 for the building of houses.¹² This amount reflected a portion of the total annuities determined to be owed to the Potawatomi living in Wisconsin as a result of the 1833 Treaty of Chicago and subsequent treaties, annuities which had been denied the Wisconsin Potawatomi for 80 years due to their refusal to move to the western reservation lands. In accordance with federal practices at that time, administration of these monies was retained by the federal government, which proceeded to purchase lands, building supplies and other equipment on behalf of the Wisconsin Potawatomi. As a result of federal policy, the lands purchased with the Potawatomi's funds by the federal government

⁷ Alexander E. Morstad, The Reverend Erik Olsen Morstad: His Missionary Work among the Wisconsin Pottawatomie [sic] Indians. [Clearwater, Fla. : The Eldnar Press] 1971, p. 16

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Ritzenhaler, *op cit.*, 108.

¹⁰ Morstad, *op cit.*, 23.

¹¹ Ritzenhaler, *op cit.*, 108.

¹²Ritzenhalter, *op cit.*, 108.

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Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 3 Otter Spring House, Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI.

were intentionally scattered, with noncontiguous forty-acre parcels being designated as reservation lands throughout the Stone Lake and Wabeno areas. This policy was apparently intended to foster the Potawatomi's adaptation of Euro-American practices by forcing close proximity to non-Indian settlers; this geographic arrangement, however, resulted in severe isolation due to poor roads and limited transportation. Moreover, the lands obtained for the new reservation consisted almost exclusively of cutover lands obtained from the region's logging operations; as such, most of these lands offered few useful resources and ultimately proved, like much of the cutover of northern Wisconsin, to be ill-suited for agriculture. Nevertheless, the 1913 legislative actions and purchases did provide a permanent settlement and new homelands for the Wisconsin Potawatomi, and this status did include some benefits and protections which had not been available to the Strolling Band during their wanderings.

During the early twentieth century, the Potawatomi in Forest County generally made their living through logging, usually either as timber cruisers or as logging camp employees such as saw filers and setters; some also found work as hunting and fishing guides for the area's newly-developing tourism industry. Some income could also be obtained by beadwork or baskets sold to local residents and tourists,¹³ or by providing seasonal harvesting labor in Door County orchards.¹⁴ However, all of these types of employment were at best seasonal, and were usually highly volatile and low-paying. Potawatomi were often excluded from pursuing more reliable or year-round employment, either in Crandon commercial establishments or with the area's logging firms, as late as the 1950s.¹⁵ Not unexpectedly, the Potawatomi were severely impacted by the economic conditions of the 1930s, at which time some reservation residents did benefit from assistance programs that provided home repairs, and emergency aid. One improvement provided during the 1930s was the installation of wells, as discussed below. In 1936, the Forest County Potawatomi Community established itself in accordance with the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, and ratified its constitution and bylaws. The community continued to face relatively severe privations and isolation, however, until establishing a more reliable economic base via gaming in the early 1990s.

Historical Background: Otter Springs House

The Otter Spring House was built by members of Company 649 of the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933, shortly after the establishment of the camp. The camp itself was officially designated as Laona Camp 57-S,¹⁶ but it was commonly known as the Waubikon Lake camp due to its relative proximity to a large lake, that is also known by the name's English translation, Rat Lake. The

¹³ Clarice Werle, "Potawatomi: Keepers of the Fire." MSS; [1996].

¹⁴ Ritzenthaler, *op cit.*, p. 115.

¹⁵ Ritzenthaler, *op cit.*, p. 125

¹⁶ "202 Men Arrived Here Yesterday for Camp." Forest County Republican, June 15, 1933, p. 1 col. 8.

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Section 8 Page 4 Otter Spring House, Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI

Waubikon Lake Camp was among the first established in northern Wisconsin following the enactment of the Emergency Conservation Work Program on March 31, 1933;¹⁷ it also appears to have been the first camp established in Forest County.¹⁸ The camp itself was located approximately one-sixth of a mile east of Otter Springs, on the north side of a former logging railroad right-of-way which is now known as Spring Pond Road.¹⁹ Like most CCC camps, it housed approximately 250 men in military surplus tents, which were replaced with winterized buildings in late 1933.²⁰ The camp received its first recruits in June 1933,²¹ and conservation work in the Crandon vicinity commenced shortly thereafter.

The precise date of the construction of the Otter Spring House is not known; it is apparent, however, that the structure was constructed shortly after the camp was established. Attempts were made to use the spring as a primary source of water for the camps' occupants at the time of the camp's establishment; however, the spring proved unable to provide sufficient water for the camp's more than 200 inhabitants.²² Due to the proximity of the stream and the generally low-lying condition of the terrain immediately surrounding the Spring House, it is likely that the structure was built in the fall of 1933 or the winter of 1933-34. As discussed below, visitors to the Spring House began writing or carving names and dates into the interior logs of the structure at an early date; the earliest two inscriptions noted are dated 1934 and September 15, 1934. As a result, it can be determined that the Otter Spring House was constructed between June 1933 and September 1934.

From 1933 to 1936, members of Camp 649 engaged in the typical CCC work of building fire lanes, improving forest roads, fighting forest fires and constructing improvements to rivers and lakes in order to foster game fish propagation. During this time period, members of Camp 649 also constructed two spring houses, one at Otter Springs and one near the north shore of Waubikon Lake, as discussed below. In May 1935, Camp 649 was relocated to Bloomington, Wisconsin; the staff and equipment left the Crandon area via special train on May 4, 1935.²³ The buildings of the camp site were left standing, apparently in order to allow reuse at a later date. Prior to World War II

¹⁷ M. Chester Nolte, ed. Civilian Conservation Corps: The Way We Remember it 1933-1942. [Paducah, Ky.: Turner Publishing Co.], 1990, p. 9.

¹⁸ "250 Men to be at Forest Camp East of Crandon." Forest County Republican, June 8, 1933, p. 1, col. 8.

¹⁹ Interview with Mary Daniels, March 27, 1998.

²⁰ "Let Bids Today on CCC Winter Camps." Forest County Republican, October 5, 1933, p. 1 col. 2.

²¹ "202 Men Arrived Here Yesterday for Camp." Forest County Republican, June 15, 1933, p. 1 col. 8.

²² *ibid.*

²³ "CCC Camp Left for Bloomington Saturday." Forest County Republican, May 9, 1935, p. 1 col. 7.

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Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 5 Otter Spring House, Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI.

the camp was bulldozed. During the war, however, the materials were dug up and salvaged for scrap.²⁴

The Otter Spring House has been used by area residents and visitors to Otter Creek since that time period; the site was maintained in good condition into the 1980s. During the last twenty years, the Spring House has undergone significant deterioration due to alterations in the creek's bed and its typical flow, resulting from human and beaver alterations to the creek and surrounding territory. The site remains highly isolated, and both the creek and the spring house are still used for recreational and, on the part of the Potawatomi residents of the community, for spiritual purposes, as discussed in greater detail below.

Significance: Use of Spring House During Period of Historic Significance.

The Otter Spring House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criterion A due to its significant association with the physical and cultural history of the Forest County band of Potawatomi Indians. The historical significance of the Otter Spring House may be seen to stem primarily from two aspects of the structure's use: as a source of water for everyday purposes during a difficult era of Potawatomi existence in Forest County, and as a source of water sought and used specifically for events of spiritual and cultural significance. The spring house is the only remaining building of this type known to exist in the Potawatomi reservation areas of southern Forest County, and is the only extant building in the vicinity to fill the specific roles in community life discussed below. As such, the Otter Spring House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

It should be noted that, like many resources drawing their historic significance from association with Native American traditions and practices, much of the information specific to the Otter Spring House has not previously been permanently recorded. The majority of the available information pertinent to the Otter Spring House's history and use was of necessity obtained via oral history interviews with tribal elders and non-Potawatomi residents of the Otter Springs vicinity. These interviews were conducted in March, April and May 1998 at the Forest County Potawatomi reservation and in Shawano, Wisconsin. Information pertinent to the Otter Spring House as gleaned from these interviews has been summarized and forwarded to the Office of the Tribal Historian, Forest County Potawatomi Community, for permanent archiving.

Otter Spring was used by the Potawatomi prior to the construction of the Spring House, and is likely to have been used for as long as the Potawatomi and Euro-American settlers have lived in the vicinity. The construction of the building, however, greatly facilitated the use of the spring by protecting the spring's source from contaminants and backflow from the creek due to nearby agitation. Prior to the installation of wells on some Indian and non-Indian properties in the area in the 1930s, the spring provided drinking and cooking water for nearby residents. One Potawatomi elder recalls her brothers hauling 50-gallon wooden barrels to the spring in a wagon as early as

²⁴ Interview with Clarice Werle, Tribal Historian, March 27, 1998.

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1935.²⁵ The purity of the spring water appears to have accounted for such extraordinary measures; other commonly-used sources of water included the numerous lakes and swamps in the vicinity. Although most area residents would have found it easier to obtain water from a swamp or lake closer to their homes, use of the Spring House was particularly prevalent during periods when swamp or lake waters were particularly contaminated, and some families appear to have used the spring on a regular basis.²⁶ By the close of the 1930s, however, most Potawatomi and non-Potawatomi families had access to a drilled well, either on their own property or nearby, and the spring became a water source used specifically for cultural and spiritual activities. Water from lakes, swamps or wells was referred to as "plain water," in order to distinguish it from the more culturally and spiritually significant waters rising from a spring.²⁷

The particular significance of spring waters to the Potawatomi results from the water's purity and, more significantly, from its upwelling out of the earth. Such waters are referred to by Potawatomi spiritual leaders as "living waters" or "holy waters," and the imagery used to speak of these waters is drawn from the act of giving birth. Spring waters are frequently described as the earth giving birth; this image of renewal carries a powerful import, due to the traditional belief in the unity of humankind with the earth, and in the earth as a mother to all living things. Significance is attached to naturally moving water in all forms, such as falling snow; however spring waters do appear to occupy a particularly significant place in the Potawatomi world view due to the intimate earth and birth correlations.²⁸ When drawing water from a spring, whether for ceremonial use, use in the home, or simply to drink while traveling, traditional Potawatomi beliefs included a prayer of thanks and, if possible, an offering of tobacco to the spirit associated with the spring.²⁹

Although Potawatomi spiritual and cultural practices were by no means uniform during the historic period, as adherents of traditional and newer Native American belief systems practiced concurrently within the Potawatomi community, the significance and use of spring water appears to have been among the fundamental tenets underlying most, if not all, of these practices. Most rituals associated with Potawatomi life involved either a feast or gifts of food; the water required for the preparation and cooking of foods appears to have been expected to come from a spring if one were available. One such ritual feast honored a boy who had caught his first fish, rabbit or other such game; the featured animal was cooked in a kettle separately from the other foods and each guest, with the exception of

²⁵ Interview with Mary Daniels, March 26, 1998.

²⁶ Interview with Bill Daniels, March 27, 1998; interview with Ruth Jaeger Phelan, March 26, 1998.

²⁷ Interview with Mary Wensault, March 26, 1998.

²⁸ Interviews with Mary Wensault, March 26, 1998; and Bill Daniels, March 27, 1998.

²⁹ Interview with Clarice Werle, Tribal Historian, March 27, 1998.

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the young honoree, ate a small portion of the catch.³⁰ Traditional funeral rituals also involved the preparation of food; food offerings would be left at the grave regularly after burial as an offering to the spirit who would escorts the deceased, and a bowl of cooked food would often be placed in the coffin with the deceased in order to sustain the person during the journey to the afterlife.³¹ Most of the more formalized religious ceremonies, including the Medicine Dance, the War or Chief Dance, the Sacred Bundle ceremonies and the Dream Dance also featured a feast as a central aspect of the belief and ritual.³²

Robert Ritzenthaler, a non-Potawatomi anthropologist writing in 1953 for the Milwaukee Public Museum, provides a particularly detailed description of the use of spring water in his account of a relatively minor sect within the Potawatomi spiritual tradition. The Peyote Dance, which was introduced to the Wisconsin Potawatomi from western bands in the early twentieth, and which was still being practiced by some adherents into the 1950s, was at that time the only practice known to Euro-American anthropologists as not incorporating a feast; the peyote ritual, however, did make specific and featured use of water. At two points in the peyote ceremony, which lasted through the night, a participant designated as the fire chief brought a bucket of water into the house where the ceremony was being held. The first time this occurred the water was used to trace an emblem in the fire's embers with the balance being drunk in turn by the participants. When the water was brought into the room a second time at sunrise, preceded by a water song, it was set before a female participant designated as the mother, who prayed over it for the dead, children, the sick, and others in need.³³

Although written sources seldom indicate the source of the water used for ceremonies and rituals such as those described above, it should be noted that all such accounts known to have been written during the historic period record the observations of Euro-American anthropologists, historians and others, who were generally privy to little other than the ceremony itself. These written accounts indicate that most attention was given to such seemingly mundane matters as the preparation of food or to the source of the water used in such work and ceremonies, well before the ceremony began. This oversight may be due to the reluctance of Potawatomi practitioners to volunteer information beyond that requested by the outsiders; it is also likely that such questions may have entirely escaped the recorders or have been discounted as minor matters that did not merit recording. However, interviews with Potawatomi elders who participated in such activities during the Otter Spring House's period of historic significance clearly indicate that the participants did consider the source of the water to be an important aspect of the spiritual and cultural meaning of

³⁰ Ritzenthaler, *op cit.*, p. 142.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 147.

³² *ibid.*, p. 153.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 162-163.

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these rituals. Although traditional and later Native American spiritual practices are not followed at present to the extent to which they were observed in the past, practices involving the use of the spring water indicate a continued reverence for the water's significance and association with the powerful images cited above. One elder who was interviewed for the preparation of this nomination is currently continuing such a tradition, which was carried out by his father and uncle, who were spiritual leaders in the community. In accordance with the tradition, this person gathers water from the Otter Spring House every Easter morning before daylight and distributes it to other elders within the community; one of the elders who receives the water also recalls that as children they were told to wash their faces in the spring water on that morning in order to benefit from the water's cleansing and strengthening attributes.³⁴ Another Potawatomi elder asserts that all traditional feasts begin with a communal sharing of spring water, which is drunk by all present; this tradition also dates from prior to the Otter Spring House's period of significance.³⁵

As a result of this profound significance, the Otter Spring House can be seen to have played a significant role in the cultural life of the Forest County Potawatomi Community, particularly in the expression and continuance of traditional cultural and spiritual beliefs during the period of significance. Due to the significance attached by traditional Potawatomi beliefs to a fundamental element such as spring water, the Otter Spring House's role in the continuance of the Potawatomi culture is of basic and fundamental importance. Use of the spring water by the Potawatomi ranged from the practical and the privately spiritual to the most elaborate rituals practiced by the Forest County Potawatomi during the period of significance; as a unique and meaning-laden source of a necessary element the Otter Spring House was thus materially essential to Potawatomi culture and practice during this period. For these reasons the Otter Spring House is determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criterion A due to its role in the cultural and ritual life of the Forest County Potawatomi Community.

Context:

During the Otter Spring House's period of historic significance, the Forest County Potawatomi used two known spring houses for the purposes described above. Of these, only the Otter Spring House is extant. The second spring house was located in the southeast quarter of Section 30, Town 36 North of Range 14 East; this structure stood on the north shore of Waubikon Lake immediately south of the historic right-of-way of U.S. Highway 8, which at that time skirted the north lakeshore more extensively than at present. The historic right-of-way is at present known as Potawatomi Trail. The Waubikon Lake Spring House was constructed at approximately the same time as the Otter Spring House, and is believed to have also been constructed by CCC Company 649. Although this spring was used extensively by the Potawatomi due to its easily accessible location, it became polluted and of limited usability by 1935. Shortly thereafter, the structure was illegally demolished by the owner

³⁴ Interview with Mary Daniels, March 26, 1998; Interview with Bill Daniels, March 27, 1998.

³⁵ Interview with Clarice Werle, Tribal Historian, June 30, 1998.

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of an adjoining resort.³⁶

There are no other known historic or extant spring houses in the Potawatomi reservation area of southern Forest County; the existence of historic spring houses in the northern portion of Forest County is possible but any such extant structures would not represent the area of historic significance attributed to the Otter Spring House, as discussed above. As a result, the Otter Spring House is determined to be the only known extant structure in the vicinity of the reservation occupied by the Forest County Potawatomi Community to represent its unique historic role as source of a culturally significant natural resource. As such, the Otter Spring House is determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under National Register Criterion A due to its significant association with the conduct and continuance of fundamental cultural practices and beliefs by the Potawatomi of southern Forest County during the building's period of historic significance.

Archeological Potential:

It is possible that the Otter Springs area may include below-ground cultural resources pertaining to historic-era Native Americans, particularly the Ojibwa and Potawatomi cultural groups. At the time of the Potawatomi's initial relocation to the Otter Springs vicinity, the Objibwa were already established in the region, and although no specific use of Otter Springs by the Objibwa is known to have been documented, the spring is likely to have been used by any Objibwa that may have lived or traveled in the Otter Creek vicinity. The Potawatomi are also known to have used the spring prior to the construction of the Spring House, as discussed above; it is thus possible that resources dating from the 1890s and early 1900s may be extant on the site. The immediate vicinity is largely undisturbed, with the possible exception of stream bed, which is likely to have been altered somewhat during the era of Native American inhabitation of the Otter Springs area.

³⁶ Interview with Clarice Werle, Tribal Historian, April 7, 1998.

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Boundary Description:

The nominated property is defined as follows:

A parcel of land lying in the Northwest Quarter of Section 24, Town 36 North of Range 13 East, and having the following physical boundaries:

Commencing at a point on the southerly Right of Way of Spring Pond Road lying and being situated 300 meters west of the intersection of said Spring Pond Road with Otter Creek; commencing thence South a distance of 200 meters; commencing thence West a distance of 200 meters; commencing thence North the distance necessary for said West boundary to intersect the southerly Right of Way of said Spring Pond Road; commencing thence easterly along the southerly Right of Way of said Spring Pond Road to the Point of Beginning.

Boundary Justification:

The above boundaries incorporate the Spring House and its immediate setting, including wooded and grass lands and a portion of Otter Creek immediately adjoining the building. The above boundaries exclude lands to the north of Spring Pond Road that are not directly associated with the property's historic function; the above boundaries include a portion of the Otter Creek vicinity sufficient to incorporate the Spring House's setting and siting; the boundaries do exclude the balance of the Otter Creek and Otter Springs vicinity, which spreads over several dozen acres.

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OTTER SPRING HOUSE

Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI

Photo by D.G. Rucker, March 26, 1998

Negative at State Historical Society of Wisconsin

View looking northwest.

Photo #2 of 8

OTTER SPRING HOUSE

Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI

Photo by D.G. Rucker, March 26, 1998

Negative at State Historical Society of Wisconsin

View looking west.

Photo #3 of 8

OTTER SPRING HOUSE

Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI

Photo by D.G. Rucker, March 26, 1998

Negative at State Historical Society of Wisconsin

View looking south.

Photo #4 of 8

OTTER SPRING HOUSE

Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI

Photo by D.G. Rucker, March 26, 1998

Negative at State Historical Society of Wisconsin

View looking southeast.

Photo #5 of 8

OTTER SPRING HOUSE

Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI

Photo by D.G. Rucker, March 26, 1998

Negative at State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Detail of east-facing gable.

Photo #6 of 8

OTTER SPRING HOUSE

Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI

Photo by D.G. Rucker, March 26, 1998

Negative at State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Detail of east-facing facade; northeast corner.

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OTTER SPRING HOUSE

Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI

Photo by D.G. Rucker, March 26, 1998

Negative at State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Detail of interior east wall.

Photo #8 of 8

OTTER SPRING HOUSE

Town of Lincoln, Forest County, WI

Photo by D.G. Rucker, March 26, 1998

Negative at State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Interior; detail of spring conduit and bench, northwest corner.