

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Minnesota</b>	
COUNTY: <b>Winona</b>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	<b>APR 23 1973</b>

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Bunnell House**

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
**Willard Bunnell House**

**2. LOCATION**

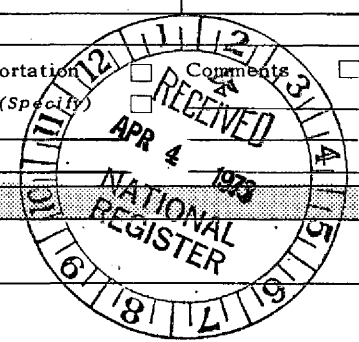
STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Homer Township 45.14**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Homer**

STATE: **Minnesota** CODE: **23** COUNTY: **Winona** CODE: **169**

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes: Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/>	Private <input type="checkbox"/>	Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/>	Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/>
Object <input type="checkbox"/>	Both <input type="checkbox"/>	Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/>	Government <input type="checkbox"/>	Park <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Comments
Commercial <input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial <input type="checkbox"/>	Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/>
Educational <input type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>	Religious <input type="checkbox"/>	
Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/>	Museum <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Scientific <input type="checkbox"/>	



**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNERS NAME:  
**Winona County Historical Society**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Box 644**

CITY OR TOWN: **Winona** STATE: **Minnesota** CODE: **23**

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

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

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: **Winona** STATE: **Minnesota** CODE: **23**

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **One acre**

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**Minnesota State Register**

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
**Minnesota Historical Society**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**690 Cedar Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **St. Paul** STATE: **Minnesota** CODE: **23**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Minnesota  
COUNTY: Winona  
ENTRY NUMBER: APR 23 1973  
DATE:

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7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Bunnell House is located in the village of Homer approximately three miles east of Winona, Minnesota on U. S. Highway #61. The house is a two and one half storey structure set into the side of the bluff so that the rear of the structure stands only one and one half storeys high. It stands on a 100' x 100' piece of land surrounded by an eight foot wrought iron fence installed for security by the Winona County Historical Society in the 1950s.

The house is a simple board and batten Gothic Revival structure with triangular headed windows and shutters. Bargeboard for gable and window hoods is of a very simple design. Unusual characteristics are the flat roofed extension to the rear and the large two storey veranda across the front which is more representative of its river heritage than the Gothic Revival style. Three doors open into the second storey veranda, one of which on the right acts as the access to the entry area.

The interior of the house contains a kitchen and pantry on the first level accessible only from the front of the house or from the staircase. On the second level is the entry hall and parlor with a dining room and private study located in the flat roofed extension to the rear. The upper level under the gable contains three small sleeping areas. The house is furnished with items from the 1850s period.

The Bunnell House is one of the finest remaining examples of Victorian Gothic architecture left in the upper Northwest area. It is an even more rare combination for this area of Gothic Revival style with the architectural features of the Ohio and Lower Mississippi River Valleys as characterized by the stone walk-out first floor level with the main living quarters above.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**6. SIGNIFICANCE**

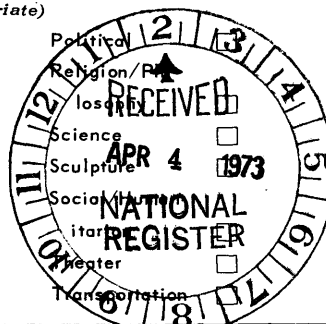
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian       16th Century       18th Century       20th Century   
 15th Century       17th Century       19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1849

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The Bunnell brothers, Willard Bradley Bunnell and Dr. Lafayette Houghton Bunnell, were the continuation of an old American family whose roots go deep into the expansion of the frontier in the 19th century. A distant relative, Edward Houghton of Vermont, obtained the title to the "Carver Tract" in 1794, although its validity was never recognized. Dr. Douglas Houghton, a cousin of their mother, was a noted botanist and geologist who was instrumental in the charting of the south shore of Lake Superior. He also had accompanied Henry Schoolcraft as surveyor and surgeon to the headwaters of the Mississippi in 1832 and later became State Geologist for the State of Michigan.

Lafayette Bunnell obtained his taste for frontier life after accompanying his father, Dr. Bradley Bunnell, from New York to Detroit in 1832, where as a young man he became personally acquainted with many of the old French traders and where he heard of the new lakes country, now Minnesota, from Colonel Josiah Snelling, after whom Fort Snelling in Minnesota was named.

Willard meanwhile had already lived many years on the Great Lakes, starting at age ten as a cabin boy and eventually becoming pilot of his own steamboat. In 1837 he married Matilda Desnoyer of Detroit and soon too became involved in the frontier life. He helped survey the military road from Detroit to Mackinaw and thereafter entered into trading with the Chippewa around the present site of Escanaba, Michigan.

In 1841 Lafayette, Willard and his wife Matilda, set out for the new frontier then opening in the Mississippi Valley. Traveling by way of Green Bay through the old Fox-Wisconsin trade route, they met Francois La 'Bathe; La 'Bathe being the chief agent in the Mississippi and later Minnesota River valleys for the American Fur Company.

Upon entering the Upper Mississippi, they quickly developed friendships with Thomas Holmes, founder of present day Janesville and Fountain City, Wisconsin and finally settling at James Reed's settlement, Trempeleau, Wisconsin. This was most beneficial as Reed's wife was sister to the trader, La 'Bathe, and cousin to Wah-pa-sha, chief of the Sioux who at this time controlled the west bank of the river. Without her support Willard would have found it difficult to later obtain a trader's permit and establish a homestead on the west bank before the land was officially open to settlement in 1852.

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Winona And Its Environs, On The Mississippi In Ancient And Modern Times,  
Lafayette Bunnell, 1897.

History Of Winona And Wabasha Counties, pub. H. H. Hill & Co., 1884.

History Of Winona And Olmsted Counties, pub. H. H. Hill & Co., 1883.

Minnesota History Bulletin, pub. Minnesota Historical Society, Vol. V,  
1923-24, pp. 124-29.

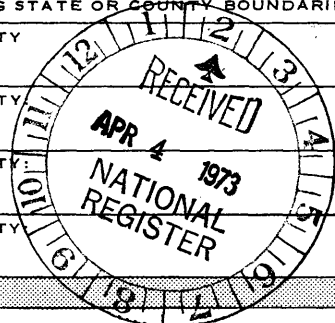
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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 ONE ACRE		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "		44°	01'	20"
NE	° ' "	° ' "		91°	33'	44"
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

NO  
LTM  
CD

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:  
**Thomas Lutz, Survey and Planning (Approved: Charles W. Nelson)**

ORGANIZATION: **Minnesota Historical Society**      DATE: **March 26, 1973**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Building 25, Fort Snelling**

CITY OR TOWN: **St. Paul**      STATE: **Minnesota**      CODE: **23**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

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 *Russell W. Fridley*

Title Director, Minnesota Historical Society

Date 3-27-73

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

*Robert W. Utley*  
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 4/23/73

ATTEST:

*[Signature]*  
Keeper of The National Register

Date 4/18/73

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Minnesota	
COUNTY Winona	
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## Significance

During the 1840s both brothers became involved in a number of significant events. In 1845 Lafayette became involved in one of the first attempts at commercialized rafting and logging in the Chippewa River Valley, establishing logging camps at the mouth of the Red Cedar River. The cut timber was floated down the Chippewa during high water in spring and then tied into large rafts at another camp at the river's mouth. From there they were rafted down the Mississippi to the saw mills at St. Louis. Willard Bunnell supervised this final stage. The enterprise lasted only from 1845 to 1846, but the operation predated the great rafting and logging operations that were to last through the turn of the century at the mouth of the Chippewa and from which the great Weyerhauser logging empire was to emerge. Also during the summer of 1846, Willard and Lafayette, along with George and Simon Randall erected the first saw mill on the Eau Claire River. The Randalls who operated the mill were instrumental in establishing the logging operations at the mouth of the Eau Claire River from which the city of Eau Claire, Wisconsin grew.

After their short lived enterprise, the brothers were to part ways. Lafayette returned to the east and soon after entered the Mexican War. He eventually found his way to California during the gold strike, serving with the Mariposa Battalion which discovered Yosemite. It was named at his suggestion after its inhabitants, the Yosemite Indians. He returned to Minnesota in 1865 after serving as a surgeon during the Civil War and resided at the Willard Bunnell House until his death in 1903.

Willard continued to live in the Mississippi Valley, and in 1848, assisted in the removal of the Winnebago Indians to the Long Prairie Reservation north of St. Paul.

Anticipating the opening of the west bank to white settlement, he obtained a trader's permit in 1849 to deal with chief Wah-pa-sha and commenced to construct the first permanent house in Indian territory in Minnesota, the present Willard Bunnell House.

In 1852 after a number of violent confrontations with the early settlers at Winona, Willard Bunnell co-founded the village of Minneowah. It was located approximately one mile west of his home and founded as an alternative landing site to Winona. He founded it on the assumption that Winona would flood at high water in spring and thus be exposed as a poor location. Winona, however did not flood, and continued to prosper while Willard lost title to the village in a claim dispute. Minneowah eventually declined and disappeared.

In 1853 he was also a force in the establishment of Chatfield, Minnesota, founding it as a replacement to Winona as the county seat of Fillmore County.

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	Minnesota	
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(Number all entries)

8. Significance

The effort was thwarted as the county was subdivided in 1854, creating Winona County and Winona was again established as the county seat.

His final attempt at town planning was the founding of Homer, Minnesota in 1855. He named it after his father's home town in New York and he died there in his own house in 1861.

The Willard Bunnell House is significant because it is the first permanent house to be constructed in Minnesota below St. Paul. The house was the residence of two brothers whose life histories are a link not only to the opening of the Upper Mississippi Valley in the 1840s but also to the opening of the entire western frontier in mid-19th Century America.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

for Keeper Melvin Lyman  
11/19/89

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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**Note: These changes apply to  
Bunnell House in Winona County,  
Minnesota.**

**REFERENCE NUMBER:** 73000998

**STATE:** MINNESOTA

**COUNTY:** Winona

**RESOURCE NAME (HISTORIC):** Bunnell, Willard, House

**CITY:**

**VICINITY OF:** Winona

**ADDRESS:** Homer and Matilde Sts. (Homer)

**CERTIFICATION DATE:**

**REMOVED DATE:**

**COMMENTS:**

*Nina M. Archabal*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Nina M. Archabal**  
**State Historic Preservation Officer**

**JUN 17 1988**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**