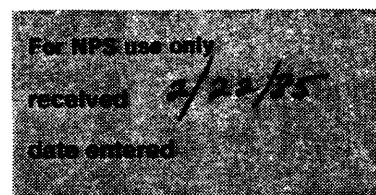


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DESCRIPTION OF THE THORDARSON ESTATE HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Thordarson Estate Historic District boundaries encompass almost all the extant Thordarson Estate buildings and structures, plus two newer park buildings. Of the 12 buildings and structures in the district, only two do not contribute to the significance of the district, because of their recent construction dates.

The original Thordarson Estate structures and buildings of this district have a similarity of design, construction materials, and purpose which make them an unusual, yet cohesive, building group. Unfortunately, park personnel demolished several other original estate buildings because of perceived maintenance problems (see blow-up map). The demolition of these mostly log and frame buildings has resulted in some loss of integrity in the district. However, the retention of all of the original stone buildings and structures, along with some of the frame buildings, is enough to reflect the significance and grandeur of the original estate.

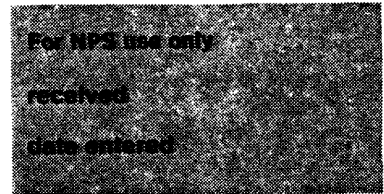
The district is easily distinguished from the rest of the island because the buildings and structures lie in a cleared section along the shore of the island. And, while the district buildings are widely spaced, the architectural similarities of the original Thordarson buildings and structures pull the district together because their designs are relatively simple and utilitarian, except for the boathouse-casino. The workmanship of the stone buildings is of high quality, with little evidence of major repairs, even after more than 50 years.

The buildings and structures of the district represent Thordarson's dream of creating a "romantic" replica of his native Iceland. The interior of the boathouse-casino, for example, still contains carved Icelandic verses and other details, reflecting Thordarson's interest in his homeland and its culture. It is also apparent that Thordarson wanted to build an estate on a scale similar to many of the great estates of turn-of-the-century wealthy businessmen. The buildings and structures of the district

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are significant reminders of Thordarson's dream, and reflect his interpretation of his culture and self-importance. As such, the district is an important and unusual historic resource in northeastern Wisconsin.

All the buildings and structures in the district which were part of the original Thordarson Estate are categorized as contributing to the district. They are the boathouse-casino, guest house and shed, reservoir, greenhouse building, pantry, pavilion, walls and gate, garage, and workshop. The buildings constructed since 1964, when the estate became a state park are non-contributing to the district because of their recent construction date. They are the rest room and ticket booth. These elements of the district will be discussed in detail following the building inventory.

INVENTORY OF BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

<u>Name</u>	<u>Map #</u>	<u>Classification</u>
Boathouse-Casino	A	Contributing
Ticket Booth	B	Non-contributing
Guest house	C	Contributing
Shed	D	"
Reservoir	E	"
Greenhouse building	F	"
Rest room	G	Non-contributing
Pantry	H	Contributing
Pavilion	I	"
Walls and Gate	J	"
Garage	K	"
Workshop	L	"

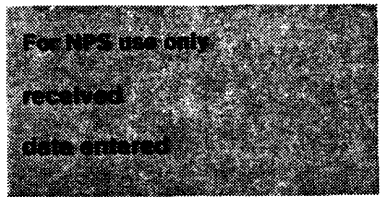
Of the 12 buildings and structures in the district, 10 are contributing (83%) and two (17%) are non-contributing.

DESCRIPTION OF INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

Of the individual buildings in the district, the most significant is the Boathouse-Casino, sited at the water's edge. Constructed of irregularly coursed, locally-quarried limestone, it features a red tiled gable roof with wide overhanging eaves and exposed rafter ends. At each gable end there is applied stickwork in the peak of the gable. The raised first story is 1-1/2 to 2 stories high, with four large round arch windows and two tall, narrow round arch windows with spandrels on each side facade. The first floor end facades feature large round arch entrances with transoms, side lights, and glazed tympanums flanked by two tall, narrow round arch windows. All openings are topped with simple segmental stone arches. The basement story is wider than the first story, creating a "deck" around the building. This level extends into the water, creating an entry for boats. The water flows into the building through two small and two large round arched openings. Along the sides of this level are smaller, round arch, multi-paned windows, and two similar entrances. The segmental stone arches decorating these openings feature small keystones.

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Frederick P. Dinkelberg, who had worked for some time with the D. H. Burnham firm, executed the plans for the boathouse-casino in 1926, and it is thought the building was actually constructed shortly thereafter. Dinkelberg's specifications called for strong, sturdy building materials and construction techniques. In 1942, Thordarson, in a letter regarding fire insurance, stated about the building, ". . . we could have 12 fires burning simultaneously, that would burn all the door frames and shatter all the plate glass but would not set fire to the building," and, "it would take a big earthquake to shake it [the building] up."¹

The interior first floor of the boathouse-casino, is a large, grand hall with exposed ceiling beams and rafters. The walls are unfinished stone, and the large windows light up the room significantly. A "nordic" type chandelier hangs from the ceiling in the center of the room. At one end of the room sits a large free-standing fireplace built of fieldstone, with stone quoins. The mantel extends several feet above the fireplace opening and is topped with "battlements." An Icelandic verse is carved on a wood plaque imbedded in the mantel. It is one of the few reminders of the original interior furnishings which were massive tables and chairs engraved with Icelandic verses. Currently, the boathouse-casino is used as a park reception hall and contains a small museum about the island and Thordarson.

The boathouse-casino is in excellent condition and has a high level of integrity. It was one of the last of the Thordarson estate buildings to be constructed, and during the last years of Thordarson's ownership of the estate (1942-1945), it held his significant rare books collection.

Southeast of the boathouse-casino is the estate's stone gate and wall. The wall extends to other areas of the estate (see map). The gate has three sections; two identical limestone and fieldstone piers flanking a wider, shorter limestone and cobblestone entry marker. The flanking piers are constructed of limestone with panels of fieldstone, and are topped with stepped and pointed stone caps. Attached to these large columns by fieldstone sections are smaller limestone piers also topped with stone caps. The marker section of the gate consists of limestone piers on each side of a shorter and wider cobblestone wall, which sits on a limestone base. The stone wall runs on each side of the gate and extends to other parts of the district. The gate and wall were built around 1925, and are the last remnant of Thordarson's elaborate landscaping.

To the immediate northeast of the gate, right behind a section of the wall, is the pavilion. a large open structure with a red tile pagoda-type roof supported both by large log beams and six regularly coursed stone piers. Stone steps on two sides of the raised structure lead to a stone enclosure wall with openings for entry into the pavilion. Probably constructed around 1925, the pavilion is in excellent condition and contributes to the district. It is currently used as a picnic shelter.

Just to the northeast of the pavillion is the pantry, formerly a part of the estate's kitchen complex. Park personnel demolished the log kitchen in the 1960s. This small building, constructed of irregularly coursed stone, has a red tile roof and the wall, extending from the gate, abuts the southwest corner of the building. On one end there are two wooden doors with stone lintels. Windows are double-casement type with stone

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sills and lintels. The overhanging roof has exposed rafter ends. Like the other buildings in the complex, it is in excellent condition and park personnel currently use it for storage.

To the north of the pantry about 200 feet sits the greenhouse building. When the building was constructed in the 1920s, it included a greenhouse attached to the southwest side. The greenhouse was removed in the 1960s, but the stone portion remains, and is now vacant. This building is a 1-1/2 story, gable roofed structure with wide eaves and exposed rafters. The exterior surface is constructed of medium sized cobblestones with very little mortar showing. All the stones are light grey very nicely complementing the other limestone buildings of the complex. At the four corners of the building are cobblestone pilasters. The gable roof is covered with green tiles. There are four wooden doors, three of which have small glazed panels at the top of the door. Most of the windows are constructed of wood sash, and there is a small round opening in each gable end. The interior is somewhat remodeled, with a new ceiling and wood paneling. The building is in excellent condition, and the cobblestone exterior makes it a somewhat unusual structure in the district.

Northwest of the greenhouse building is the guest house (1926), also designed by F. Dinkelberg. The 1 1/2 story guest house has a red tiled gable roof, with wide eaves and exposed rafter ends. The stone exterior is irregularly coursed creating a rubble-like appearance. The front entrance consists of a wooden door with screen, decorated by sidelights and a fanlight. The entrance is topped with a segmental arch and keystone. Two small narrow windows flank the entrance. Other openings include simple double-hung sash windows and a plain rear entrance. All openings except the front entrance have flat arches with keystones. The building is in excellent condition and contributes to the district. Behind the guest house is a small shed, which was one of the estate's original sheds. Park personnel moved the shed to this location in the 1960s. The garage is a one-story frame building with an asphalt shingled gable roof. The entrance is a plain square opening, and window openings are also plain wooden sash. This building, now used as a park office, has retained most of its original appearance and features.

To the northeast of the guest house, closer to the forested area, is the reservoir. Of similar construction to the guest house, this 1-1/2 story building features a simple red tiled gable roof with wide eaves and exposed rafter ends. The irregularly coursed rubble-like stone exterior has several small openings with stone lintels and sills and a round window in the peak of the gable. Probably constructed around 1925, the building is currently vacant.

In the southwest corner of the district is the park workshop and garage. Both of these buildings were part of the original Thordarson estate. The workshop is a rectangular, asphalt-shingled, gable-roofed building sitting on a stone foundation. The building has vertical wood siding and the exterior is punctuated with many windows. On two sides, the windows are double casement types with 10 lights on each side. The other two sides of the building have newer, double-hung, single paned windows. An original wooden door is on one side of the building next to a modern metal garage door. The building is in good condition, but has suffered some integrity loss due to the remodeling. However, it still contributes to the district.

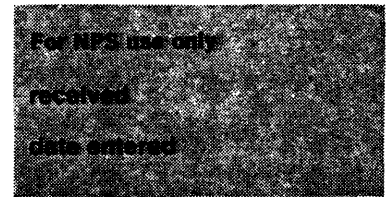
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The frame garage has a gable roof with asphalt shingles and what appear to be original openings. It is used by the park personnel as a garage and is one of the original Thordarson buildings and contributes to the district.

Non-Contributing Buildings in the District

There are two buildings not original to the Thordarson Estate which are considered non-contributing because of their recent construction. The rest room was built around 1975 for the park. It has a red tiled gable roof and cobblestone exterior. There are small narrow windows under the eaves on the sides and a metal entry door. There was an attempt to make this new building blend in with the rest of the estate, and although somewhat successful, because of its recent construction date, the rest room is a non-contributing building.

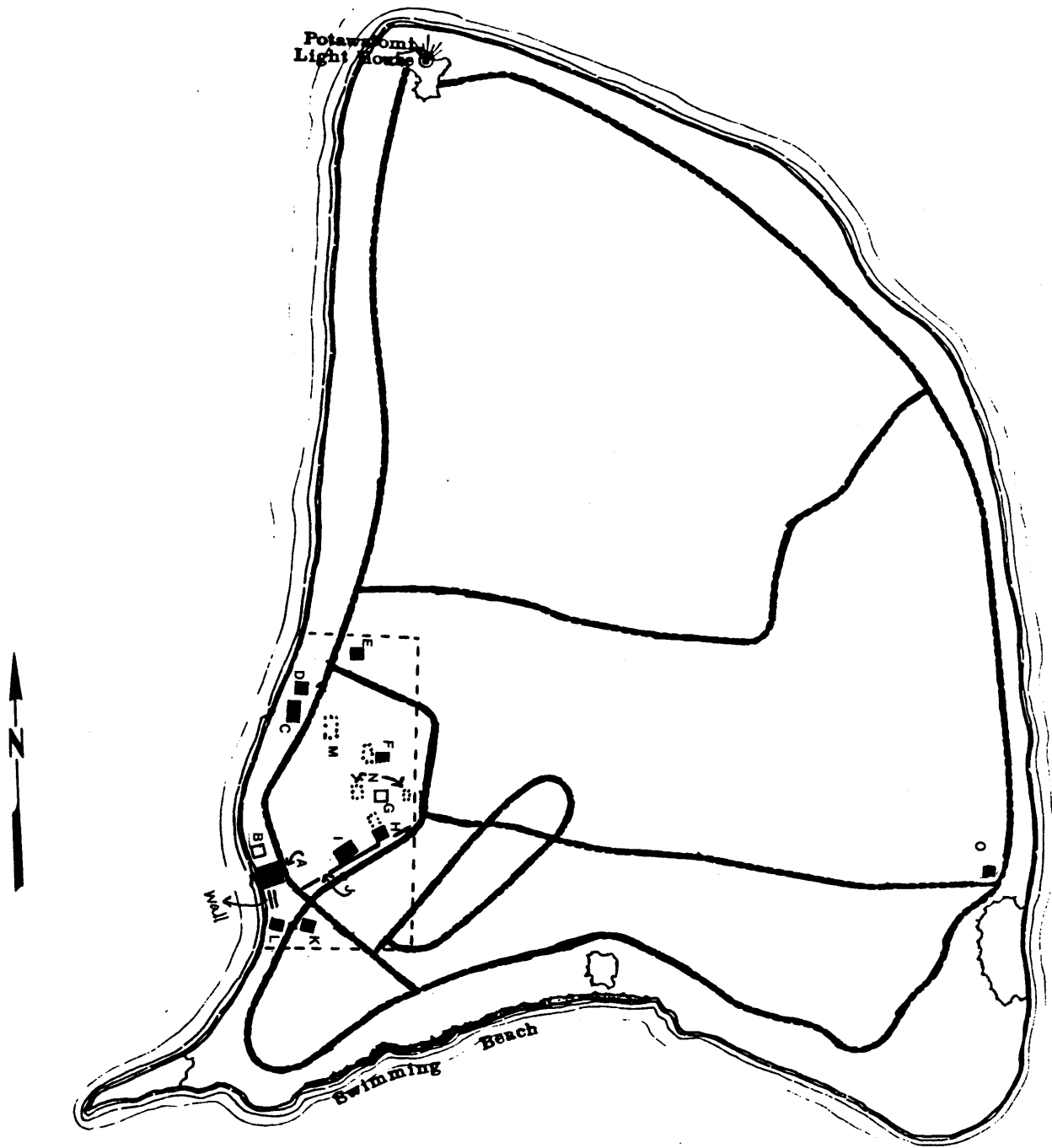
The small frame ticket booth next to the boathouse-casino is also of recent construction and does not contribute to the district.

Notes

¹Henry F. Withey, A.I.A. and Elsie Rathburn Withey. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970, pp. 174-175; Dinkelberg, Frederick P., "Specifications for Boat-House and Casino," February 10, 1926, Chester H. Thordarson Papers, 1885-1943, on file, Archives Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin; Letter from Chester H. Thordarson to A. M. Wilbins, February 3, 1942, Thordarson Papers.

²Detail of expenses for water tower, on Thordarson Electric Manufacturing Company letterhead, January 28, 1929, Thordarson Papers.

HISTORIC STRUCTURES OF THE THORDARSON ESTATE



KEY:

- A - Boathouse-Casino
- B - Ticket Booth
- C - Guest House
- D - Shed
- E - Reservoir
- F - Greenhouse Building
- G - Restroom

- H - Pantry (Kitchen)
- I - Pavilion
- J - Gate & Wall
- K - Garage
- L - Workshop
- M - Lodge foundation
- N - Bunkhouse & Office (demolished)
- O - Water Tower

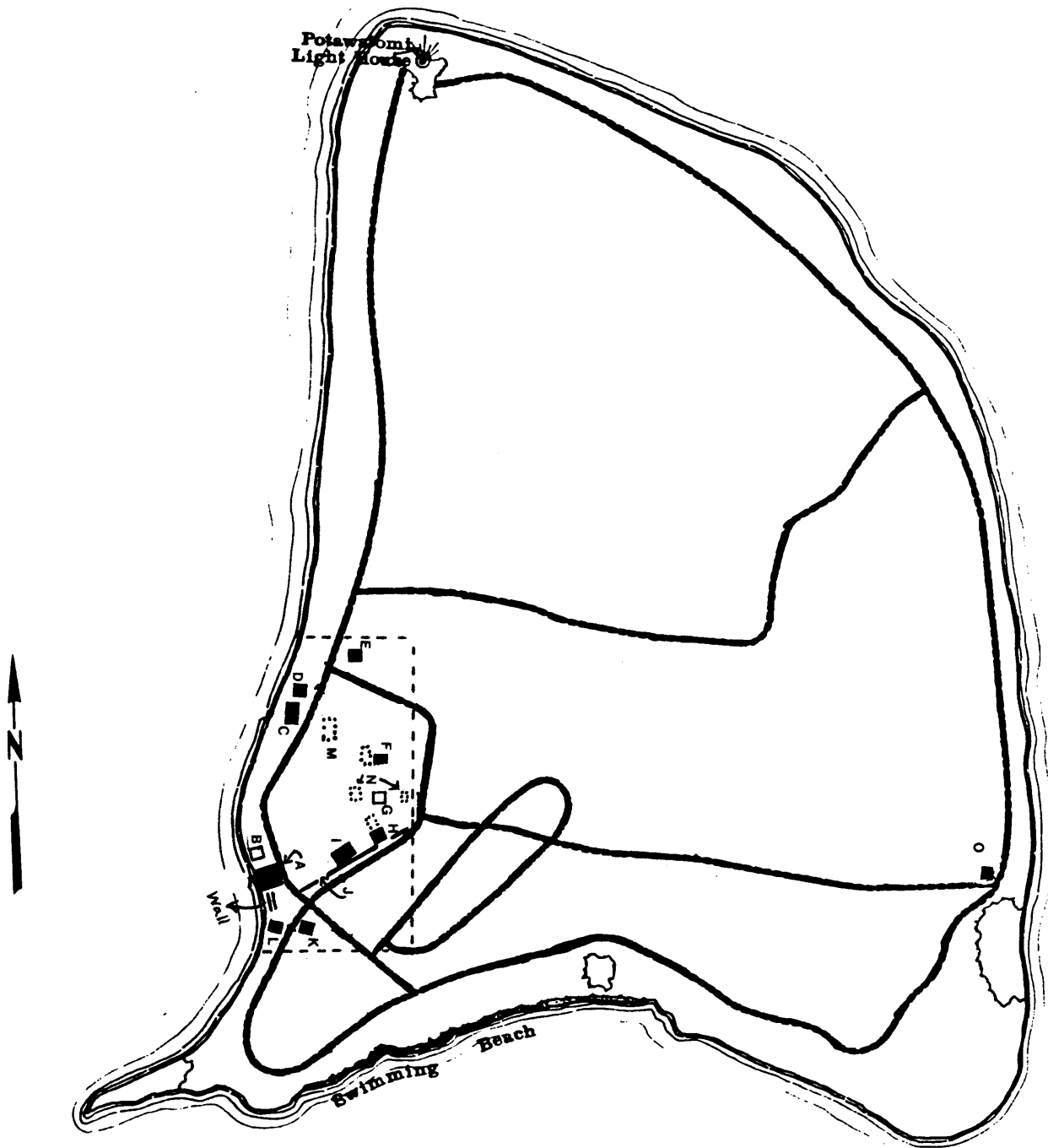
KEY:

- - Contributing
- - Non-Contributing
- ⋯ - Demolished
- - - - District Boundary
- Trails

(see next map for blow-up of historic district)

Not to scale

HISTORIC STRUCTURES OF THE THORDARSON ESTATE



KEY:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| A - Boathouse-Casino | H - Pantry (Kitchen) |
| B - Ticket Booth | I - Pavilion |
| C - Guest House | J - Gate & Wall |
| D - Shed | K - Garage |
| E - Reservoir | L - Workshop |
| F - Greenhouse Building | M - Lodge foundation |
| G - Restroom | N - Bunkhouse & Office (demolished) |
| | O - Water Tower |

KEY:

- - Contributing
- - Non-Contributing
- ▤ - Demolished
- - District Boundary
- - Trails

Not to scale

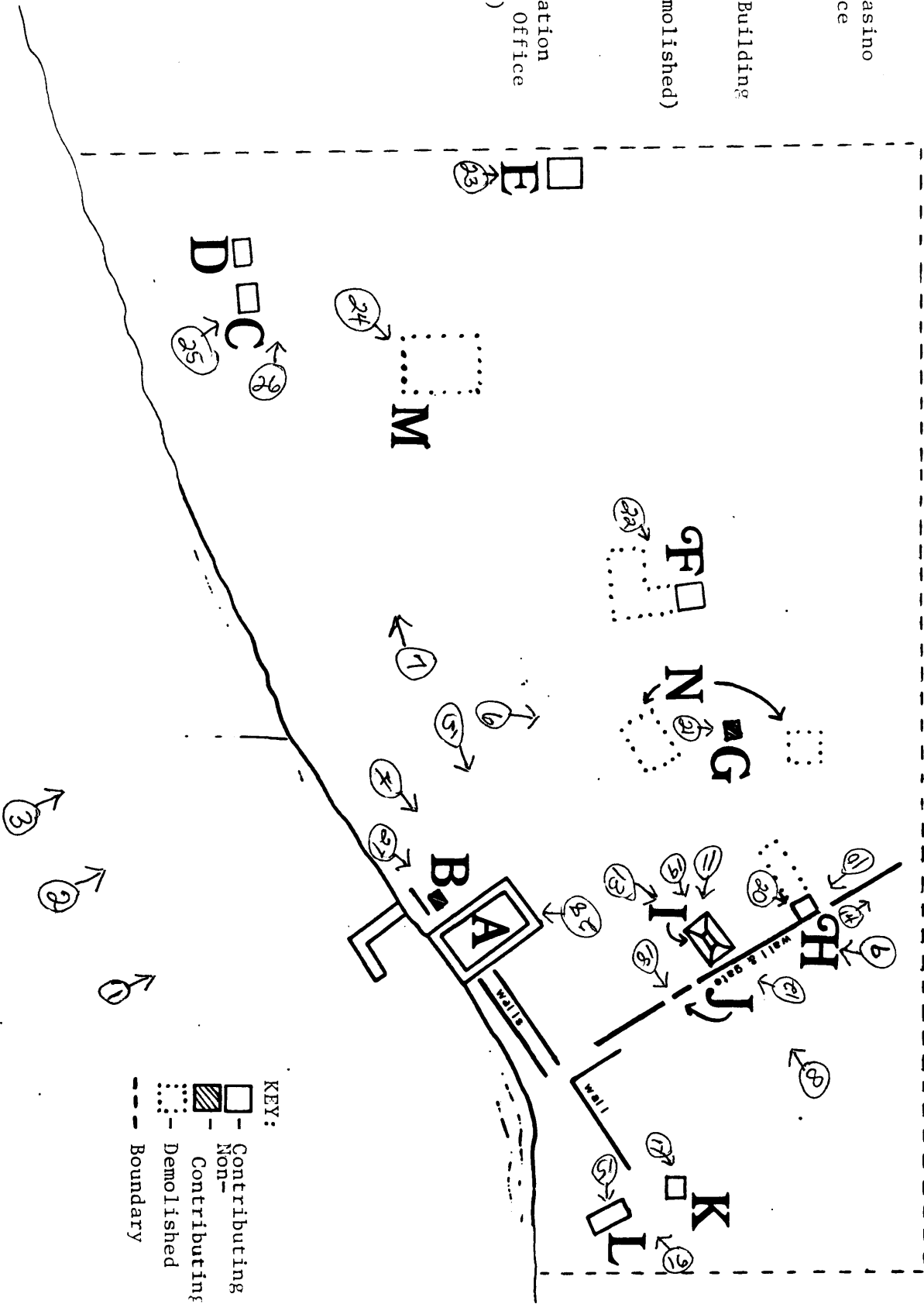
(See next map for blow-up of historic district)

THORDARSON ESTATE HISTORIC DISTRICT



- A - Boathouse-Casino
- B - Ticket Office
- C - Guest House
- D - Shed
- E - Reservoir
- F - Greenhouse Building
- G - Restroom
- H - Pantry (Kitchen demolished)
- I - Pavillion
- J - Gate & Wall
- K - Garage
- L - Workshop
- M - Lodge foundation
- N - Bunkhouse & Office (demolished)

Not to scale



KEY:

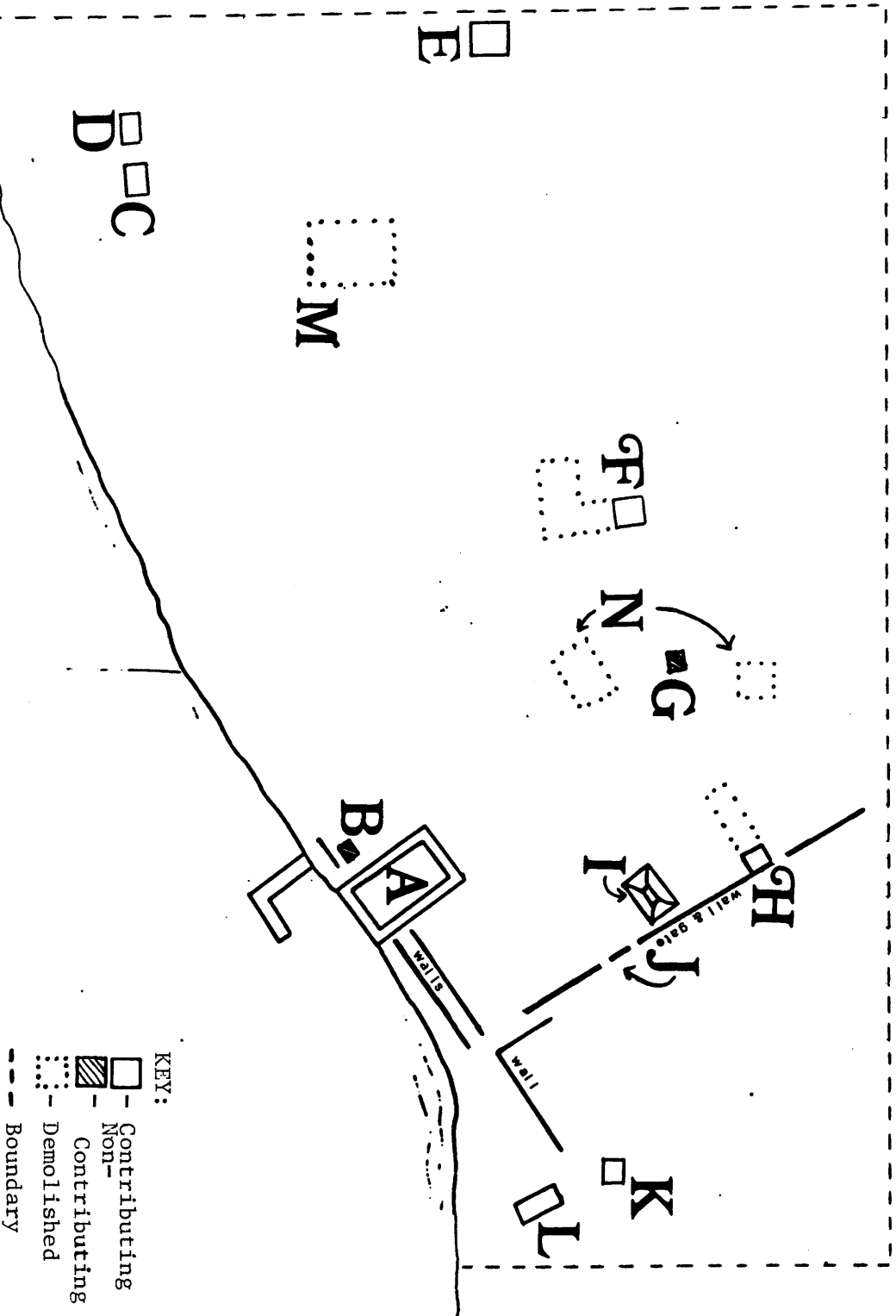
- - Contributing
- ◻ - Non-Contributing
- ▨ - Contributing Demolished
- - Boundary

THORPARSON ESTATE HISTORIC DISTRICT



- A - Boathouse-Casino
- B - Ticket Office
- C - Guest House
- D - Shed
- E - Reservoir
- F - Greenhouse Building
- G - Restroom
- H - Pantry (kitchen demolished)
- I - Pavillion
- J - Gate & Wall
- K - Garage
- L - Workshop
- M - Hedge foundation
- N - Bunkhouse & Office (demolished)

Not to scale



KEY:
 □ Contributing
 □ Non-Contributing
 ▨ Demolished
 - - - Boundary