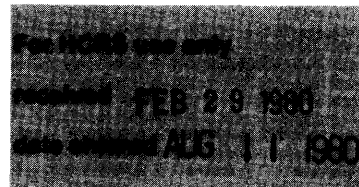


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Thorstrand

and/or common Magnus Swenson Estate

2. Location

street & number 1-2 Thorstrand Road

not for publication

city, town Madison

vicinity of

congressional district

Second

state Wisconsin

code 55

county

Dane

code 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: <u>Vacant</u>

4. Owner of Property

name City of Madison Parks Department

street & number 704 East Gorham Street

city, town Madison

vicinity of

state

Wisconsin 53709

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dane County Courthouse

street & number 210 Monona Avenue

city, town Madison

state

Wisconsin 53709

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Designated Madison Landmark has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date December 17, 1979 federal state county local

depository for survey records Madison Landmarks Commission

city, town Madison

state

Wisconsin 53703

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Thorstrand - the Magnus Swenson Estate consists of 15.29 acres of mostly wooded land and five buildings -- the Swenson House, the Mary North House, both built in 1922, two detached garages, one in ruinous condition, and a small, concrete block cottage. For the purposes of nomination, only the two large houses will be considered. The land around the houses has been purchased by the City to preserve it as a passive recreation area. The possible preservation of the houses within the park is currently being explored.

The Swenson House

The Swenson house is a two story mansion in the Mediterranean Revival style. It is constructed of stuccoed wood frame. Its plan is rambling, with asymmetrically arranged pavilions crowned by low, hipped roof of red tile with projecting beam ends. The three-story tower, with its band of windows at the third level, dominates the composition.

To the right of the tower is the entrance pavilion which features a shallowly traced arch enclosing the main doorway. The doorway is capped by a carved wooden pediment with console supports. Between the entrance and the large service wing, which forms an ell, is a one-story arcade composed of three stained glass windows set within shallow stuccoed arches. These windows were crafted by Magnus Swenson and represent a Viking ship, the State Capitol (symbolizing Swenson's membership in the Capitol Building Commission), and a steam ship of his Norwegian-American line.

Attached to the service wing is a one-story garage. It was added in the 1950s and is not significant to the character of the house. Porches project from the northeast and southwest sides of the house. Originally open between the classical wooden columns, they have since been enclosed. Windows on the house are either double hung with small panes in the top halves only, or many-paned casements. A beltcourse separates the stories and serves as the sill for the windows above. The Parks Department has temporarily stabilized the deteriorating condition of the exterior surfaces.

The first floor plan of the Swenson house includes a kitchen (10 x 12), two pantries, dining room (17 x 14), living room (16 x 30), library (14 x 19), lavatory, phone booth, servants room (10 x 13), coat room, sun room and enclosed veranda. A wide staircase adorns the entrance hall, where the three stained glass windows are located. The living room has a beamed ceiling with a large working fireplace. The second floor includes six bedrooms and four full bathrooms. Woodwork throughout the house is painted with stained wood doors. Floors are exposed hardwood. The kitchen, butler's pantry and bathrooms have been somewhat altered, but the rest of the interior detail appears to be original.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) association with historic personage
Specific dates 1922 ¹	Builder/Architect Law and Law ¹			

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Magnus Swenson house and the Mary North house are significant primarily for their association with Magnus Swenson, a nationally significant Norwegian-American figure, and "one of Wisconsin's most versatile and colorful citizens." ²

Magnus Swenson (1852-1936) emigrated from Norway to Janesville, Wisconsin in 1867 at the age of fourteen. According to his obituary in the Wisconsin State Journal, "his was the Horatio Alger life of an immigrant boy who worked his way to become a chemist, inventor, administrator, capitalist and builder."³ He first became well known in Madison through the presentation of his University of Wisconsin thesis "The Chemical Analysis of Madison Well Waters," in which he contended that 96% of Madison's well water was contaminated and unfit to drink. The Common Council asked Swenson to set up a small testing station on the university campus to monitor the quality of the city's well water (this station has since been replaced by the State Laboratory of Hygiene). After he graduated in 1880 with a degree in engineering, Dean Henry of the Department of Agriculture appointed him the second faculty member of that new department. In that position, he began to study the refinery of sugar from sorghum, a study which attracted national attention because of the scarcity and high cost of sugars imported from the Phillipines and Cuba.

As a result of his work, he was asked to manage a large sugar refinery in Texas and spent the next several years as a consultant in sugar refining throughout the South. In Fort Scott, Kansas he worked out a special chemical process which made the refining of sugar from sorghum so successful that he was hailed throughout the nation as "the Eli Whitney of sugar." He won international attention when the U.S. government tried to prohibit him from patenting the process because he was employed by the government for a short time. After a lengthy dispute which was battled even on the floors of Congress, Swenson won his right to patent his invention.

Swenson then founded the Fort Scott Foundry and Machine Works (latter the Walburn-Swenson Company) to research, develop and manufacture multiple-effect evaporators and other machines for the sugar industry. In the 1880s he branched out to developing an ore concentrator for the mining industry, and machines for the processing of salt, caustic soda, paper pulp, glue and fertilizers among others. He developed a round cotton baler, a feat which had been attempted unsuccessfully for 50 years before. During this period he patented over 200 machines and processes, including such basic equipment as the surface condenser, spray separator, heat interchanges and centrifuges. His combination of mechanical ability, chemical knowledge, and practicality (his motto was "Save the Waste"), insured him of an almost instant fortune, so that by the year 1900 he could retire from the industry and return to Madison a rich man.

In Madison, he began a series of exciting capital investments. He built the hydroelectric power dams on the Wisconsin River at Kilborn and Prairie du Sac, the first great hydroelectric developments west of Niagara Falls, an enterprise which earned him another

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property ~~less than 1.0~~ **ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**
 Quadrangle name Madison West, Wis. *Approx 1.4 A - see maps rec'd 8/6/80 KOC* Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	1 6	2 9 7 9 6 0	4 7 7 3 7 2 0	B	1 6	2 9 8 0 2 0	4 7 7 3 7 4 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification *See material rec'd 8/6/80 KOC*

The outside walls of each house are the boundaries of the nomination - *revised*

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Katherine H. Rankin, Preservation Planner
 organization Madison Landmarks Commission date December 17, 1979
 street & number 351 West Wilson Street telephone 608-266-6552
 city or town Madison, state Wisconsin 53709

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Richard Berry*

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin date 2/25/80

For HCRS use only
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
W. Ray Luce date 8/11/80
 Keeper of the National Register
 Attest: *Kristin J. O'Connell* date 8/6/80
~~Chief Registration~~

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED FEB 29 1980
DATE ENTERED AUG 11 1980

THORSTRAND, Madison, Wisconsin

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 6 PAGE 1

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places

1973

State

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Madison

Wisconsin 53706

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 29 1980
DATE ENTERED	AUG 11 1980

THORSTRAND, Madison, Wisconsin

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

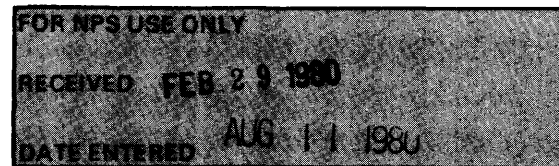
The North House

The Mary North house was built by Swenson for his daughter and is separated from the Swenson house by the main drive and is located closer to Lake Mendota. It is constructed of similar materials in a very restrained version of the Mediterranean Revival. Its exterior design is more formal, with two projecting pavilions symmetrically framing the main central doorway. A heavy cornice and decoratively carved panels embellish the entablature of the flat roof. Projecting from the roof are two tall stuccoed chimneys flanking a cupola with a red-tile roof. Double hung windows with small panes in the top sash rest on a projecting beltcourse. On the first floor shallow round-arched reveals enclose double hung and casement windows. The central door is decorated with classical columns and crowned by an iron balustrade. The North house is in excellent condition.

The first floor plan of the Mary North house includes a kitchen (10 x 20), butler's pantry dining room (16 x 15), breakfast porch (11 x 13), living room (13 x 26), library (12 x 14), enclosed veranda (13 x 15), servants room (8 x 12), lavatory, and coat room. The second floor includes eight bedrooms, three full baths, a sewing room, and a large linen closet. The basement contains a large finished game room. Woodwork and floors are the same as in the Swenson house, but the original fixtures and cabinets in the kitchen, butler's pantry and some of the bathrooms are also intact. There are three large fireplaces in the house, located in the living room, library and game room.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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



THORSTRAND, Madison, Wisconsin

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

nickname -- "the Electricity King." He was one of the organizers and later the American president of the Norwegian-American steamship Lines. In Madison, he founded and became president of the U.S. Sugar Beet Company on the east side (now Garver Feed and Supply) and was for a long time on the Board of Directors of the First National Bank.

He was active not only in business, but in humanitarian endeavors, also. During WWI he served as the federal food administrator for the state and as the chairman for the Wisconsin Council for Defense. After the war, Herbert Hoover sent him to Europe as the post-war director of food supplies in northern Europe. He was one of the promoters of a chemical engineering department at the University of Wisconsin and served as chairman of the Board of Regents for ten years. He also was an active promoter of the first University Extension system in the United States, a progressive concept embodied in the slogan "the boundaries of the campus are the boundaries of the state." He served as chairman of the building commission for the new state capitol and was for many years the president of the national Norwegian-American Association. In 1918 Woodrow Wilson selected Swenson to visit Mount Vernon as the representative of Norwegians of American birth.

According to one commemorative article, Magnus Swenson had a dream from the time he was a student at the University to build a home on the shores of Lake Mendota. 4 When he was living in Chicago in the 1890s he bought fifty acres of cornfield on the lake which was to later become his estate. Through the years the family planted thousands of trees on "the Farm" so that today it is a mature woodlot. In 1922 he commissioned the Madison architectural firm of Law and Law to design two large houses for his estate. James and Edward Law's firm was the most active architectural firm in Madison in the 1920s. The firm was known for its residential designs in traditional modes. Drawing heavily from European forms of ornament for the exterior detail, their domestic designs were often set out on a modern, open interior plan. The firm was also known for its commercial design work, including the Tenney Building, the Wisconsin Power and Light Building, and collaborative work on the Harry S. Manchester Department Store.

1. Original sketches in the possession of Swenson's grandchildren.
2. Wisconsin State Journal, March 30, 1936, p. 1.
3. I bid.
4. Wisconsin State Journal, March 30, 1936.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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THORSTRAND, Madison, Wisconsin

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Interviews with Dixie Curkeet and Polly North O'Hare, granddaughters of Magnus Swenson, conducted by Lance Neckar and Tim Heggeland, 1978 and 1979

Haugen, Olaf, "Among the Foremost," Wisconsin State Journal, April 5, 1936

-- "Magnus Swenson, Inventor and Chemical Engineer," Norwegian-American Studies and Records, 10:152-175 (1938)

"Magnus Swenson, Madison Capitalist and Builder, Dies," Wisconsin State Journal, March 30, 1936, p. 1

"Swenson Helped Lay Foundation of Ag School Fame, Dean Recalls," Wisconsin State Journal, March 30, 1936