

56-2106



**United States Department of Interior
National Park Service**

**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 Niedecker, Lorine, Cottage
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number W7307 Blackhawk Island Road N/A not for publication
city or town Sumner N/A vicinity
state Wisconsin code WI county Jefferson code 055 zip code 53538

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 X nationally _ statewide _ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Dana A. Lenkuena
Signature of certifying official/Title

12/27/2017
Date

State Historic Preservation Office – Wisconsin

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Niedecker, Lorine, Cottage
Name of Property

Jefferson
County and State

Wisconsin

4. National Park Service Certification

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

Joe Salter

2-20-2018

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	contributing	noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	1	3 buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	0	0 sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> site	0	0 structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	0	0 objects
		1	3 total

Name of related multiple property listing:
(Enter "N/A" if property 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 / single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements
OTHER / Rustic

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation CONCRETE
walls LOG
roof ASPHALT
other WOOD

Narrative Description

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

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.)

Property is:

- 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Literature

Period of Significance

1946-1963

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Niedecker, Lorine

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Name of Property

County and State

9. Major Bibliographic References

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

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- 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:
Dwight Foster Public Library
Hoard Historical Museum

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.00 acre

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

1	<u>16N</u>	<u>345263</u>	<u>4751238</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		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	Rowan Davidson, Associate AIA & Jennifer Lehrke, AIA, LEED AP, NCARB	date	July 22, 2016
organization	Legacy Architecture, Inc.	telephone	(920) 788-6808
street & number	605 Erie Avenue, Suite 101	zip code	53081
city or town	Sheboygan	state	WI
name/title	Peggy Veregin, National Register Coordinator	date	May 08, 2017
organization	Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office	telephone	(608) 264-6501
street & number	Wisconsin Historical Society, 816 State Street, Rm 305	zip code	53706
city or town	Madison	state	WI

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Section 7 Page 1

Niedecker, Lorine, Cottage
Town of Sumner, Jefferson County, WI

Narrative Description

The Lorine Niedecker Cottage, constructed in 1946, is a largely intact, small Rustic style home of the notable Modernist poet Lorine Niedecker and is located in an area known as Blackhawk Island. The cottage is a simple 20 foot by 20 foot, single story, wood frame building with painted split-log vertical siding, resting on an elevated concrete foundation. The building sits near the road on a wooded lot along the north bank of the Rock River near Lake Koshkonong in Jefferson County. The Rustic style of the cottage is common among small buildings in resort settings during the 1940s and is marked by the use of log siding, low-pitched roof, and asymmetrical fenestration. Other resources on the property are non-contributing and include a house built by Niedecker and her husband late in their lives, a garage, and an outbuilding constructed after Lorine's death. The house is non-contributing because it has been significantly altered.

The cottage was constructed in 1946 by Niedecker's father at her behest. Previous to construction of the cottage Lorine Niedecker lived with her family not far away, also on Blackhawk Island. Niedecker is widely considered to be one of the seminal modern Objectivist poets of the mid-twentieth century. While her work was largely unknown during her lifetime, she took part in the discourse on modern poetics from the 1930s through the 1960s, her work was more frequently published later in her life, and posthumously she has been published and has received critical acclaim. Her work, often focusing on the concept of place, biography, and the subconscious, is considered some of the finest examples of objectivist, surrealist, and folk poetry of the period. In 1963, Lorine Niedecker married Al Millen, and the two moved to Milwaukee the following year. They also constructed a house, larger than and on the same property as the Cottage, near the river and retired to Blackhawk Island in 1968. Niedecker died a few years later.

The Lorine Niedecker Cottage is located on a one acre subdivided parcel along Blackhawk Island Road. The site is a flat piece of wooded marshland that is historically prone to flooding. The unique geography and setting of Blackhawk Island, the site of indigenous encampments and turn of the century tourism, plays a pivotal role in Niedecker's biography and in her poetry. The northern boundary of the lot is the road, the eastern and western boundaries are neighboring residential lots, and the southern boundary edges the north bank of the Rock River. No part of the river is included in the nominated property.

Building Description

The Lorine Niedecker Cottage is located on a wooded lot along the north bank of the Rock River at W7307 Blackhawk Island Road in the Town of Sumner. Its setting on Blackhawk Island near Lake Koshkonong means that the local environment is largely marshland, with the water of the river and

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Niedecker, Lorine, Cottage
Town of Sumner, Jefferson County, WI

lake dictating life in the area which is known for its flooding, relative isolation, wildlife, and a history of tourism. Blackhawk Island is not actually an Island at all, but a narrow peninsula surrounded by river, lake, and marshland. The cottage itself resembles a number of the small boarding cabins that could be found along Blackhawk Island Road and associated with a number of historic resorts located there at the turn of the twentieth century and at mid-century. Since its original construction in 1946 the cottage has been raised on a concrete foundation. The cottage is also set far back from the river and is about 60 feet from Blackhawk Island Road. It is visible with a historic marker sign and a water pump near the cottage.

The cottage is designed in what may be called the Rustic style. Its formal origins are found in National Park Service buildings and previous resort architecture of the Adirondack's of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. The style can also be understood as an architectural response to the native and wild landscapes of the United States, most often utilizing local, easily found materials such as stone and logs. The style, closely related to the Arts and Crafts movement, paralleled and was influenced heavily by the development of the craftsman, bungalow, and WPA-era projects of the 1930s. It became especially popular for private lake houses, cabins, hotels, resorts, and recreational camps during the 1930s and 1940s. Epitomized by log cabins, the style emphasizes the use of natural materials, especially stone and wood, and exposed structural systems. Generally informal, examples of the style feature both symmetrical and asymmetrical forms covered by gable or hipped roofs. The Niedecker Cottage specifically is a humble and small example that is likely closely related to the resort aesthetic common on Blackhawk Island¹.

The east façade of the Lorine Niedecker Cottage faces a dirt drive and has a small painted water pump in front of it. The cottage sits on a raised concrete foundation. The foundation crawl space has screened openings on two sides that act as a functional relief for flood waters. There is one such opening, approximately 3 feet square, towards the north side of the eastern façade. The main entry, and its porch and steps, is located slightly south of center. There is a simple concrete front porch that is approximately 4 feet square with 4 steps and one more at the door. There are two round log columns at each corner of the porch supporting a small overhanging gable end roof over the porch. The gable end is sided, like the rest of the frame building, with slightly uneven and weathered split logs. This log siding is painted brown, as it is everywhere on the cottage. The siding of the cottage, on all façades, is of uneven and rough vertical split wood logs over horizontal wood sheathing, each log varying in width from 3 inches to 6 inches. The cottage was originally painted a light green color by Lorine Niedecker, and the paint color is still visible along seams and next to window framing. The single front door is original and is of vertical planks of hardwood, stained the color brown. The door is covered on the exterior by a contemporary exterior wood screen door. There is also a small, double-

¹ Tweed, William C., Laura Soulliere, and Henry G. Law. *Rustic Architecture: 1916-1942*. S.I.: National Park Service Division of Cultural Resource Management, 1977.

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Niedecker, Lorine, Cottage
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hung wood window toward the north end of the eastern façade. This window is in a two-over-four configuration, painted white, and is the smallest window on the cottage, presumably a kitchen window. The roof is a shallow pyramidal hipped roof over the square plan of the cottage and is finished with contemporary asphalt shingles. The brick chimney, which extends about three feet, is centered near the peak on the eastern façade. The eaves extend approximately a foot over the exterior walls with plain exposed rafter tails and a narrow fascia board.

The appearance of the south façade of the cottage is similar to the east façade. The foundation wall, more exposed on the south side of the cottage, is concrete and has a large screened opening along the western side. Above the concrete foundation, the wood frame wall is finished with the same vertical split logs. There are two double-hung wood windows, spaced evenly and symmetrically along the façade. The windows are placed just below the eaves and have a narrow wood sill. Each window is painted white and has contemporary storm windows on the exterior. The roof is same as the other façades with asphalt shingles.

The west façade is almost identical to the others with the exception that, as the rear of the house, it has a larger picture window centered on the façade. Like the other windows, this larger one is wood, painted white, and sits just below the eaves with a small wood sill. The tripartite configuration has two identical double-hung windows, matching those elsewhere on the cottage, flanking a larger square fixed window with nine divided lights. The foundation wall on this façade has no opening, and the vertical log siding and asphalt shingles of the roof remain the same.

The north façade has the same concrete foundation without any screened openings to the crawl space below. It also has the same vertical log siding and asphalt shingle roof with exposed rafters underneath the overhanging eaves. Like the southern façade, this one has two windows symmetrically spaced evenly on the façade just below the eaves. These windows match the double-hung wood windows found elsewhere on the cottage and are also painted white; however, these two windows also have narrow fixed shutters applied on either side to the exterior wall. Each wood shutter has a simple diamond shaped cut out and is painted white.

It has been suggested that the cottage is in fact a kit house, purchased from a catalogue by Lorine Niedecker's father and assembled on site on a simple concrete foundation. While the scale and style of the building suggest that this could be the case, the plan does not appear to match any catalogue types from the 1940s. Furthermore, the framing and roof joists are uneven which either means that it was constructed incorrectly or was not from a catalogue or prefabricated source.

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Interior

The interior of the cottage is spare and parts of it are unfinished. The floor is of plywood panels, and the walls are of exposed wood composed of the back of the horizontal wood exterior sheathing. In the center of the room is a small, rough brick chimney and adjacent to it is a small detached metal heater/stove with a pipe leading up to the roof. The wood roof framing is uneven, exposed, and braced across the hipped roof. There is some furniture in the single room, though none of it is historic. The cottage may have had interior walls dividing a small kitchen, equipped with a sink, range, and refrigerator in the northeast corner, and a small bathroom with a shower in the southeast corner. However, the kitchen could just as likely have originally been open to the rest of the interior single-room space. At first, the cottage lacked a bathroom, and the site had an outhouse. It is unknown when Niedecker had a bathroom installed. The main space served as both a bedroom and living room with the bed set under the picture window along the north wall. Much of the interior walls were lined with bookshelves and cabinets around each side of the room. The 15 inch deep cabinets below were used by Lorine for storage, and the 10 inch deep bookshelves, which Lorine Niedecker referred to as her "immortal cupboard," rose above to the ceiling. Though these elements are no longer extant, the overall impression of the interior, including its materials, scale, and furnishings, matches the historic quality of the rustic cottage that Lorine Niedecker lived in for nearly two decades and would be clearly identifiable to her. It is also possible that, like the casework, a number of features in the cottage were altered during Lorine Niedecker's lifetime and the period of significance from 1946 to 1964, particularly given the history of flooding on this property.

Since Lorine Niedecker's death, the cottage has experienced a series of damaging floods. Such floods are commonplace on Blackhawk Island and occurred with some frequency during Niedecker's lifetime, likely requiring repairs and maintenance to the cottage due to water damage. The cottage was partially gutted in 2000 with the bookcases removed because of water damage and fears of mold. In 2007, the owners, Ken and Cathy Gans, made major repairs to the cottage and house and both were renovated with new materials and finishes with help from the Friends of Lorine Niedecker organization. The renovations to the cottage included repainting the exterior, soffit repair, the lower crawl space foundation was cleaned and screened, an antenna and heater chimney were removed, the roof repaired, broken window panes replaced, and the pump repainted. A flood in 2008 destroyed much of the recently completed work including interior finishes, exterior improvements, and cabinetry. The non-contributing house suffered serious damages and changes. The cottage, a simpler building, was not as badly damaged.

Non-contributing Resources

Other buildings on the site include the house, which is approximately 1,000 square feet in size with a

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Town of Sumner, Jefferson County, WI

kitchen, dining room, living room bathroom, two bedrooms, and a screened porch. It was constructed in 1965 and is adjacent to the river. The small ranch style house has painted horizontal wood lap siding, aluminum replacement sliding windows, and a low-sloped side gable roof with asphalt shingles. On the south façade, facing the river, there is a screened in porch, bay window, and a recently constructed wood deck and stairs. Like the cottage, the house has subsequently been raised on a new foundation as a flood precaution in 2011. The house's interior has been altered significantly, and it has a side addition and a new porch. Little of the house's architectural integrity from the 1960s remains. Likewise, the two car garage adjacent to the house was constructed later and is also non-contributing. The garage has matching painted wood lap siding, four fixed aluminum windows, a front gable roof with asphalt shingles, and a two-car contemporary garage door. There is a small storage building of wood panel walls, having a garage door and gambrel roof with asphalt shingles. It was constructed in the 1980s, outside of the period of significance.

Rustic Style

The Rustic style became popular for recreational properties during the late-nineteenth century. The style was widely publicized in architectural journals and the popular press in the early-twentieth century and it quickly became accepted as the most appropriate architectural imagery for vacation houses, roadhouses, resorts, and camp buildings in heavily forested landscapes. The formal application of the style emerged from the resort architecture of the Adirondack region in northern New York state in the 1870s. It is characterized by the use of indigenous materials, broad shingled roofs with wide overhangs, open porches, and simply proportioned door and window openings. Building materials were often oversized in comparison to conventional construction and left in their natural condition. Round glacial boulders and large peeled logs were typical materials. Rubble stone or split boulders were sometimes laid in imitation of geologic strata. Walls are often battered or sloped in a manner typical of bungalow design. Buildings were sited and materials shaped in an attempt to make them appear as if they belonged in the surrounding landscape and often included designed landscape elements such as bridges, walls, and benches. Designs attempted to convey a sense of the past through a feeling of having been hand-crafted by pioneer builders. Vernacular adaptations of the style took on a simpler form. Although the full-log method of construction may come first to mind when discussing the Rustic style, more often half-log, log slabs, or manufactured log siding was utilized. Vertical log construction was commonly used for the construction of cabins using vertical logs six to eight feet long that are set upright and spiked or mortared into a sill course and attached to neighboring logs by large spikes. The Niedecker Cottage is typical of the vernacular Rustic building tradition, using locally available materials, and built using simple construction techniques. The result is a cottage that blends with and compliments the surrounding landscape.

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Statement of Significance

The Lorine Niedecker Cottage is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B in the area of Literature, having National significance, as well as local and state significance, for its association with Lorine Niedecker. Niedecker was part of an international group of Objectivist poets; her influence extended far outside of the small community where she lived, although rural Jefferson County, the Cottage, and its setting influenced her poetry. Niedecker's poetry owes much to her life and the place where she lived, and the subject matter of much of her work- in the Objectivist tradition- directly references her home and its environs. The period of significance for Literature begins in 1946 with the construction of the cottage and ends when Lorine Niedecker marries and moves away from the cottage on Blackhawk Island in 1963. A larger house, along with a detached garage and storage building, were built by her and her husband a few years later on the same property, but was only lived in by Lorine Niedecker for a few years before her death in 1970 and are therefore non-contributing. The Cottage is the building most closely associated with her, as the place she lived and where she wrote most of her poetry. The Cottage and surrounding landscape were influential forces and integral connections to her writing.

Historic Context

The area around Blackhawk Island, where Lorine Niedecker spent much of her life, in the southwestern corner of Jefferson County is primarily rural with the nearest community being Fort Atkinson. The area is generally flat marshland with winding rivers and dotted with lakes, most notably Lake Koshkonong. Floods have been a part of life along this section of the Rock River for a long time with records indicating water rising over 8 feet at least five times just in the twentieth century.²

The United States Army established Fort Koshkonong along the Rock River at the fork of the Bark River during the 1810s to provide protection to American interests in present-day southeastern Wisconsin which was at that time inhabited by the Ho-Chunk. After the Ho-Chunk surrendered their lands in present-day Wisconsin to the United States government in 1829, Sauk Chief Blackhawk lead a war party through the area and camped on present-day Blackhawk Island for a short time while being pursued by General Atkinson of Fort Koshkonong during what was known as the Black Hawk War of 1832. Jefferson County was included in territory ceded to the United States by the Potawatomi under the Treaty of 1833. The first settlers of Jefferson County were attracted to waterfalls to power mills

² Ott, John Henry. *Jefferson County Wisconsin and its People*. Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1917, pages 1-5; & General Files in the Niedecker Collection and Archives with the Dwight Foster Public Library, Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin.

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and transportation routes along the Rock River.³

Early settlers established community-building businesses such as saw mills, grist mills, hotels, and general stores; many were simply land speculators, purchasing land to sell to other settlers. In rural areas, many established wheat farms, the cash crop of the day. The popularity and viability of wheat eventually faded and was supplanted by a brief period of the successful cultivation of hops, and ultimately dairy farming. The first railroad reached the settlement at Fort Atkinson in 1859, bringing an influx of settlers and the Village of Fort Atkinson was incorporated in 1860. The latter part of the nineteenth century saw the size and influence of Fort Atkinson grow. By the time Fort Atkinson was incorporated as a City in 1878, it was a center for a variety of industries, including creameries and cheese factories, food processing, and publishing. Through the turn of the twentieth century, commercial activities and the innovations of William Dempster Hoard near Fort Atkinson spurred an increase in dairy farming across Jefferson County.⁴

The geography of Lake Koshkonong and adjacent marshland along the Rock River greatly influenced land use in the region. The presence of a variety and numerous water fowl encouraged the development of hunting clubs around the lake at the turn of the century. Plat maps show a series of resorts appearing along the end of Blackhawk Island in the late nineteenth century. By the early-twentieth century, resorts and hunting clubs for the affluent were patronized by city residents from Fort Atkinson. Soon, visitors from across the state began to arrive along the Rock River and Lake Koshkonong to vacation at these resorts. These vacation properties, often remotely located and surrounded by marshland, could only be easily accessed and supplied by boat and have a distinctive landscape compared to the rest of the county. The early-twentieth century saw the subdivision of land along Lake Koshkonong for private homes. Henry Neidecker's Addition and a series of lots along 48 acres are noted on plat maps by 1919. Neidecker's addition disappears after the early 1950s. Blackhawk Island, during the mid- to late-twentieth century, gradually transitioned from an idyllic resort destination to a blue collar permanent community with trailers, fishing shacks, and bar-boat resorts. The pace of life in the area also increased with a paved road and motor boats replacing the launches and leisure resorts. The natural world of Blackhawk Island was often a difficult and uncomfortable one for people and seemed to teach an acceptance of loss, both of which became themes in Lorine Niedecker's poetry; however, she portrayed her home in generally idyllic terms.⁵

³ Swart, Hannah. *Koshkonong Country – A History of Jefferson County Wisconsin*. Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin: W. D. Hoard & Sons Co., 1975, pages 16-22.

⁴ Swart, Hannah. *Koshkonong Country – A History of Jefferson County Wisconsin*, page 21.

⁵ Swart, Hannah. *Koshkonong Country – A History of Jefferson County Wisconsin*, page 307; & Plat Maps and Atlases. Various years. On file at the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison, WI.

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Niedecker, Lorine, Cottage
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Biography

Lorine Faith Niedecker was born on May 12, 1903 in a small summer cottage associated with the Fountain House at W7528 Blackhawk Island Road. The Fountain House, a ten-guestroom resort and bar, was a major Blackhawk Island establishment owned by Lorine's maternal grandparents Gottfried and Louisa Kunz. Her mother, Theresa Kunz Neidecker, also known as Daisy, was a clever, but quiet woman who suffered from episodes of depression. Her father, Henry Neidecker, was energetic and charismatic, though not always successful or loyal. The family name was originally spelled Neidecker. Lorine changed the spelling to Niedecker at the time of her first marriage in 1928; biographers speculate it was to leave no confusion over its pronunciation. The old form appears on her parent's gravestones and on all public records and maps.

Lorine was an only child and one of the few who lived on Blackhawk Island throughout the year. She spent a lot of her childhood outdoors, and was described as a bright, quiet, and lonely child who always wore thick glasses due to being severely near-sighted. Lorine's father, Henry Neidecker, was a commercial fisherman who also managed vacation cottages. He came to own 26 Blackhawk Island lots, some taken over from his in-laws, and a boat launch named the *General Atkinson* used for fishing and tourism. He also ran the Fountain House for the Kunz family. By 1908, he operated the Neidecker-Thompson Fish Company that harvested and shipped tons of carp out of Fort Atkinson. In 1918, Henry met a neighbor Gertrude Runke, who was twenty one years younger, and began an affair. Henry spent lavishly on his new mistress and her family, often openly. Gertrude was married to Otto Runke, who remained friendly with Henry. By 1920, Gertrude, at the age of 20, gave birth to a daughter and flagrantly named her Lorraine. It was an unusual and uncomfortable arrangement for nearly everyone, especially Lorine's mother, Theresa. Her husband's betrayal and the callousness of her husband's and Gertrude's behavior made Theresa resentful. Theresa also suffered from failing hearing; these factors, combined with her depression, led her to become increasingly reclusive.⁶

As a child, Lorine Niedecker quickly developed a reputation as being studious and literary, and earned excellent grades. In school she was a good, though quiet, student who made some close friends. She did not talk much about her family, but did discuss Blackhawk Island. She also developed a reputation for a dry sense of humor. She moved into Fort Atkinson to attend Caswell School and lived at 1000 Riverside Drive with her family. Her high school teacher, Daisy Lieberman, is credited with inspiring Lorine's love of poetry and she began writing on her own. As a young student, Lorine Niedecker was known to enjoy music and read constantly. Lorine graduated at the top of her high school class; she

⁶ Knox, Jane Shaw. *Lorine Niedecker, an Original Biography*. Fort Atkinson, WI: Dwight Foster Public Library, 1987, pages 7-33; & Peters, Margot. *Lorine Niedecker: A Poet's Life*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011, pages 8-33.

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Niedecker, Lorine, Cottage
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applied, and was accepted to the private liberal arts focused Beloit College. With a reputation as a progressive and arguably feminist school at the time, Beloit College was only 40 miles away from home. She maintained her interest in poetry, joining clubs, writing, and attending lectures, like one given by Harriet Monroe, the editor of the new magazine *Poetry*, in 1923. She left college after only two years of studying English and Mathematics, likely due to financial troubles back home. After she returned to Blackhawk Island, she lived with her family and seemed to disappear for a while (this family home is non-extant). As a young woman, many of her friends from Fort Atkinson and college gradually moved away and moved on with their lives. While no records exist from this period during the early and mid-1920s, it is likely that Niedecker continued to write poetry.⁷

During the 1920s Henry Niedecker's carp-seining business failed, and he turned back to tourism for income. The lack of steady income, combined with the financial support Henry continued to provide to his mistress, left little for Lorine and her mother. In the late 1920s Lorine met Frank Hartwig, who worked occasionally for her father. Frank was the older brother of Ernest Hartwig, one of Lorine's friends from high school. Frank was known to be even more reserved than Lorine, sensitive, hardworking, and attractive. The two, to everyone's surprise, were married in 1928. Frank Hartwig worked primarily as a road contractor and was able to build a home in Fort Atkinson before their wedding. The marriage did not last. Rumors indicated that Lorine did not like being a housewife, and the two ended up being incompatible. In 1929, Frank's business collapsed with the stock market, and the two separated. They were legally divorced years later. During this time Niedecker worked as an assistant at the Dwight Foster Public Library in Fort Atkinson.⁸

Early Literary Influences

Harriet Monroe was a publisher and supporter of leading poets of her time such as Wallace Stevens, Ezra Pound, H.D., T.S. Eliot, and Carl Sandberg. She also was the founder of a nation-wide, leading monthly poetry journal called *Poetry*. In 1931, Monroe, was persuaded by her friend and colleague Ezra Pound, to allow poet Louis Zukofsky to guest edit an entire special issue devoted to new English and American poets. For this issue, Zukofsky described himself and other like-minded poets as Objectivists. Objectivists experimented with modern interpretation of literary form and expression.

In 1931, Lorine read the objectivist issue of *Poetry* magazine and wrote to Louis Zukofsky six months later. A few years later, she travelled to New York to meet him and immediately stayed with him in his small Greenwich Village apartment. The two developed an intimate relationship and lived together for nearly two years, during which time she lived the bohemian New York lifestyle, meeting a number

⁷ Lehman, John. *America's Greatest Unknown Poet*. Cambridge, WI: Zelda Wilde Publishing, 2003, pages 11-27; & Peters, Margot. *Lorine Niedecker: A Poet's Life*, pages 34-38.

⁸ Peters, Margot. *Lorine Niedecker: A Poet's Life*, pages 39-47.

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of other writers and editors. Zukofsky introduced her to respected poet, William Carlos Williams; novelist and critic, Edward Dahlberg; poet Charles Reznikoff, and a host of publishers and editors. In some ways he was her connection to the wider world of poetry. Niedecker considered Zukofsky in high regard: one part mentor, one part colleague, and one part close friend and romantic interest. Niedecker later claimed that she loved him, but it may not have been requited. Their relationship became strained; Zukofsky became restive and asked Lorine to leave by 1934. Their relationship evolved, and they maintained correspondence for many years, considering each other close friends. Most of the letters between Zukofsky and Niedecker from 1931 to 1944 have been destroyed. Zukofsky began a relationship with musician Celia Thaew in 1937 and was married a year later.⁹

The Literary Productive Years

Lorine returned to Wisconsin where family life was hard; everyone seemed to avoid her mother, and Lorine became increasingly upset with her father for frittering all of their money away. It was difficult for Lorine to find steady work and over the next few years she took advantage of what opportunities she could find. Lorine moved to Madison, Wisconsin in 1938 to work for the Wisconsin Federal Writers Project. The Federal Writers Project in Madison was poorly run, but appealed to her. The WPA writer's project was terminated in 1939, though it was replaced locally by the Wisconsin Writers Project the same year. She worked on the *Wisconsin Guide* encyclopedia of influential Wisconsinites and briefly served as a radio script writer for WHA Public Radio while living in Madison. She returned to Blackhawk Island in 1942 when the job in Madison ended. In 1942, upon her return to Blackhawk Island, she finally filed for divorce from Frank Hartwig. Lorine was isolated and unemployed from 1942 to 1944. Eventually she found work as a stenographer and proofreader at W.D. Hoard's, which distributed the trade magazine *Hoard's Dairyman*. Biographies of her life describe her unhappiness during this time; she had only a few friends left in the Fort Atkinson area and stress from working at Hoards limited her writing from 1945 to 1948. In 1946, Lorine told her father she could not live with him and take care of him anymore. Henry built a small wood frame cottage for Lorine on an acre lot along 180 feet of river frontage. The cottage was set on a high concrete base back from the river as a precaution against flooding and had a small kitchen and heater, an outhouse, no telephone, and was painted spring green at Lorine's request. She moved into the cabin after its completion and lived there until the end of 1963. It was in this cabin, where at a small desk placed in front of a window, Lorine wrote most of her poetry. Her mother continued to suffer from mental health issues and by 1950 had heart disease; she died a year later.¹⁰

⁹ Penberthy, Jenny, Ed. *Lorine Niedecker: Women and Poet*. Orono, ME: National Poetry Foundation, University of Maine, 1996, pages xv-xx and 396-423.

¹⁰ Knox, Jane Shaw. *Lorine Niedecker, an Original Biography*, pages 7-33.

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In 1943, Louis and Celia Zukofsky had a son, Paul. Lorine visited New York again in June of 1947 to see the Zukofsky family and especially their young son Paul. After Paul Zukofsky's birth, Lorine developed an attachment to the child, making him the explicit subject of much of her work from 1949 to 1953. Generally, she was interested in the Zukofsky family and perhaps saw them as a reflection of her own family or an alternative story or history of her own. Between 1949 and 1953, she wrote about 50 poems with Paul as the primary subject. She was also drawn to the prodigious youth's talent in music. Paul wasn't sure what to think of this stranger from Wisconsin. The desire for a relationship on her part was not reciprocated. This was, in some ways, her relationship with the Zukofsky family. They liked her; she loved them; or, at least, the idea of them.

Henry Niedecker, her father, died in June of 1954. The cottage and the land were deeded to Lorine upon Henry's death and the value of the property was listed at \$5,664. She then largely subsisted off of the income from her father's two properties on Blackhawk Island after inheriting them in 1954. Lorine worked at the Fort Atkinson Memorial Hospital cleaning kitchens from 1957 to 1963. During this time she also operated what was left of her father's resort boarding cottages along Blackhawk Island.¹¹

On May 26, 1963 she married Al Millen, an industrial painter from Milwaukee, and moved to an apartment in South Milwaukee where they lived for four years, returning to Blackhawk Island on the weekends. Niedecker reportedly did not really consider Milwaukee home. In 1964, the couple constructed a house on the same property that she had inherited from her family and on which she lived in her cottage along the Rock River. The new house cost \$7,580, and a detached garage was constructed in 1967. The couple travelled occasionally, visiting South Dakota, North Dakota, and Minnesota in the mid-1960s. By the summer of 1968, Lorine and Al had retired permanently to Blackhawk Island. Toward the end of 1970, she stayed in the Fort Atkinson hospital for four weeks, conscious but unable to speak clearly. Her situation deteriorated, and she was transferred to Madison General Hospital where she died of a cerebral hemorrhage on New Year's Eve, December 31, 1970. She had instructed Al to destroy her papers and records after her death. However, some still remain including letters and some photographs. Al Millen died in 1974, and the property was inherited by his four children. Additions were soon made to the house, and the property passed to other owners as a vacation home. A historic marker, commemorating Lorine Niedecker, was erected along Blackhawk Island Road at the cottage in 1991.¹²

¹¹ Peters, Margot. *Lorine Niedecker: A Poet's Life*, pages 48-110.

¹² Peters, Margot. *Lorine Niedecker: A Poet's Life*, pages 111-133; & Knox, Jane Shaw. *Lorine Niedecker, an Original Biography*, pages 7-33.

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Literature/Poetry

The Lorine Niedecker Cottage is nationally significant, as well as on the local and state level in the area of Literature as the primary home of Lorine Niedecker during her most productive years as an influential Objectivist poet. The cottage itself possesses sufficient integrity reflecting the years Lorine lived and worked there. Although some interior finishes have been removed due to flooding, the cottage would be clearly recognizable to Lorine if she were to see it today. Niedecker rarely listed her interests, influences, or ideology directly; however, she is typically labeled as an Objectivist and it is known her home and its setting along the river had a significant impact on her work. Literature is currently not a study unit in *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*; when CRMP is updated at some point in the future, this may be a study unit for consideration.

Literary Modernism

Literary Modernism traces its origins to the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in Europe and North America. During this time, modernist writers of both prose and poetry, broke from traditional ways of writing, and experimented with literary form and expression. Modernist poetry ascended from literary modernism. Traditional lyrical expression emphasized personal imagination, culture, emotions, and memories of the author. For Modernists, it was essential to move away from the personal, and toward an intellectual statement that poetry could make about the world. Questions of impersonality and objectivity were crucial to Modernist poetry. Objectivist poets were a group of second-generation Modernists who emerged in the 1930s. They were mainly American and were influenced by early Modernist poets such as Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams. Louis Zukofsky, one of the most prominent Objectivist poets, helped define the movement by stating that the principals of Objective poetry was to treat the poem as an object, emphasize sincerity, intelligence, and the poet's ability to look clearly at the world.

The core group of Objectivist poets were Americans Louis Zukofsky, Charles Reznikoff, George Oppen and Carl Rakosi, and the British poet Basil Bunting. Later, Lorine Niedecker became another of the group's most prominent members. These poets generally suffered critical neglect early in their careers, which was the case with Lorine; however, over time they were to become highly influential for later generations of Modernist poets.

Poetic journals, critics, scholars, and organizations including the Poetry Foundation and the Academy of American Poets invariably identify the core group of poets who made up the Objectivist movement to include Lorine Niedecker along with: Louis Zukofsky, Charles Reznikoff, George Oppen, Carl Rakosi, and Basil Bunting.

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Objectivist Poetry

An Objectivist poet regards the poem as an object apart from its meaning, typically paying more attention to images, structure, and syntax than to a specific theme. It is a radical approach, taking away the traditional ways that language is constructed to convey meaning. Words, phrases, and clauses are intentionally altered; an act of removing words as a direct treatment of the thing (poem), reinforcing the belief that words can lie or only approximate truth. Some would argue that this approach is destined to fail because western languages, including English, rely on word order and syntax. Niedecker, for example, was always condensing her work so that it was simple in appearance and spare in its expression. The linking verbs were often left out to leave more “space” and “quiet” as Niedecker described it, often with the danger of alienating the reader. Niedecker felt her job was to “condense” life into art. Objectivists were interested in the visible world, the object, as a contribution to modern poetry. This appealed deeply to Lorine Niedecker. She often wrote about her family, sometimes taking the voice of one or both of her parents in her poetry, which reflects a respect for her mother and admiration for her father. She also drew on the natural world, specifically around her home on Blackhawk Island. Despite comparisons to William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, and Emily Dickenson, Lorine Niedecker is not generally well known in literary circles, or even in the Wisconsin poetry community. Interestingly, she is better known nationally to those critics, poets, and academics that follow and study Modernist poetry. Locally, in Jefferson County, she is somewhat known, and stanzas of her work adorn the side walls of buildings in downtown Fort Atkinson; however, her posthumous influence, and the appreciation of her work, is recognized internationally.¹³

Niedecker’s Literary Evolution

Lorine Niedecker likely took an interest in poetry at a young age, reading it when she was a child and writing at least two poems for her high school year book by 1922. These poems displayed her later precision but lacked the style and craft. They are spare, with few unnecessary words or stanzas, possess natural themes, and the insertion of an external narrative voice. There is also an element of burgeoning environmentalism in her work, expressed at a young age with an influence from naturalists such as Thure Kumlien and Rachel Carson as well as Thoreau, Audubon, and Darwin, who she read extensively. Niedecker sometimes mentioned her peers in her poetry and referred to a number of influences openly, only some of whom were poets, including: William Wordsworth, Mary and Percy Shelley, W.B. Yeats, William Carlos Williams, Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, Karl Marx, John Ruskin, William Morris, Thomas Jefferson, and John and Abigail Adams. She had at an early point realized how great the romantics like Wordsworth were, but how dated. Lorine was

¹³ Walsh, Phyllis. *Lorine Niedecker: Solitary Plover*. La Crosse, WI: Juniper Press, 1992.

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consciously looking for a replacement.¹⁴

In February of 1931, Niedecker checked out the current issue of *Poetry Magazine* from the library, guest edited by Louis Zukofsky, who had selected poems for the issue and provided a discussion of what he called Objectivism: “The poet’s desire for what is objectively perfect, inextricably the direction of historic and contemporary particulars.” Zukofsky claimed he never intended to define Objectivist poetry, but did so under pressure to describe a second wave of Modernist poetry out of New York City. Objectivist poetry was outlined in the magazine as “clarity of image and word-tone,” “thinking with things as they exist, and directed them along a line of melody,” “an economy of presentation,” “poetic rendering of current speech.” All of these things appealed to Niedecker and she would incorporate the local speech patterns of rural Jefferson County into her poetry. She submitted some work to *Poetry* in late 1931, and one was accepted. Within a few years Lorine travelled to New York to meet Zukofsky and others.

She communicated primarily with the Objectivists including Zukofsky, Basil Bunting, and Charles Reznikoff, even beyond the formative years of the 1930s. Objectivists were not widely popular. Publishers, universities, and the public ignored most of their work, which didn’t seem to bother Niedecker as much as the others in New York. Many of the second wave of Modernist poets, including Niedecker, scorned imprecision, sentimentality, loose imagery, complicated language, grandiose subjects, and traditional forms. Wallace Stevens described modern poetry as tackling, paraphrasing Ezra Pound, “Not ideas about the thing but the thing itself.” Almost all of these poets were urban, many from immigrant backgrounds, and all were men, except Niedecker, who was obviously none of these things. Her relationship with Zukofsky had been interpreted as one directional as a tutor-mentor relationship; however, she rarely heeded his advice or referenced his work. Her occasional deference to him made her marginalized in some analyses of the history of poetry, though she was arguably the greater writer.

Some discussions of Niedecker’s work have portrayed her as the naïve, feminine, and fragile person led by a circle of male admirers and inspirers such as Zukofsky, Cid Corman, and her father. This was not the case. She considered herself a peer of fellow poets and certainly did not follow her own father’s lead on much of anything.¹⁵ It is important to keep in mind that in literary critique of the time, much of the discussion of her work, and the placement of her in the canon of American poetry, unfortunately dealt with whether she was subordinate to some her male contemporaries (or men in general), such as Zukofsky, despite her arguably being the superior poet. More recent academic

¹⁴ Bertholf, Robert J. Ed. *From this Condensery: The Complete Writing of Lorine Niedecker*. Winston-Salem, NC: The Jargon Society/Inland Book, 1985, pages xi-xxii.

¹⁵ Willis, Elizabeth, Ed. *Radical Vernacular: Lorine Niedecker and Poetics of Place*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2008, pages xiii-xxiii.

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discussion, since the early 1990s, seems to have gotten over this dismissive and diminutive point of view and discusses Niedecker's poetry in terms of an example of Objectivist modern poetry (with regionalist elements). Now, her work is instead often put alongside Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams.

After she returned to Wisconsin, Niedecker kept experimenting with little recognition from poetry publishers in the 1930s. Ezra Pound accepted some of her work for his issue of the quarterly literary journal *Bozart-Westminster* in 1935 at the behest of Zukofsky, but he also scorned the surrealist aspects of the work. She also wrote occasional polemical and propaganda pieces with a leftist bent and later looked back on these as naïve. Her work became even more surreal and challenging, in one case layering three poems next to each other in haiku-like stanzas with the words of her subconscious ostensibly captured on the page. One editor called such poetry "utterly mystifying." She was simultaneously drawn to Surrealism as an artistic movement, read Andre Breton's *Le Manifeste de Surrealism*, and found the anti-logic of it appealing. Zukofsky also introduced similar work to Lorine like Gertrude Stein and *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce. Illogical expression of subconscious was as important as pure objectivism to her poetry. A number of her contemporaries, such as Zukofsky and William Carlos Williams, considered explorations of the subconscious a dead end, but she continued with it. Her surrealism was slowly abandoned in the late 1930s since editors and publishers found it too difficult and unpopular. Lorine was also dismissed alongside Zukofsky for similar work because he was a man with associates, and she was not. Though Niedecker reportedly produced a lot of work from 1931 to 1946, nothing was published and little even exists from this period. The letters between her and Zukofsky notably leave out much discussion of Objectivist Poetry or personal poetics; they are far more personal rather than professional. Some of Niedecker's notable poems that have survived from her early period of work include collections such as *Mother Geese*, *Lady in the Leopard Coat*, *Fascist Festival*, *News*, and *Will you Write Me a Christmas Poem*.¹⁶

Once back in Wisconsin, folk origins became important to her again. The common tales of her mother were updated, objectified, and made subversive in Niedecker's poetry. In 1943, James Decker of Prairie City, Illinois decided to publish the poet. Decker founded a magazine called *Compass* that was published in the late-1940s to publish worthwhile books of poetry. His quarterly *Compass* published such well-known poets such as William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, and others, and Decker planned on publishing Zukofsky's work and then Niedecker's. It took until 1946 with Niedecker's, *New Goose*. *New Goose* was an updated take on traditional rhymes and folktales made modern and cutting with topics including poverty, threadbare coats, farmers, destitute women, Audubon, and Van Gogh. The short collection was considered good and especially musical by her peers, but it did not sell well; however, it did place her within the contemporary poetry scene. Niedecker also worked on a

¹⁶ Walsh, Phyllis. *Lorine Niedecker: Solitary Plover*.

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series of nearly 50 poems for or about the Zukofsky's young child Paul in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The *For Paul* poems avoid the common folk tone of her work by using a more elevated language, typically reserved for the traditional icon. The period from 1949 to 1956 is seen as a time when she moved away from the literary associations and influences she had made. To some extent Niedecker was consciously creating her own style that, while it borrowed from accepted schools such as Objectivist and folk poetry, it was not easily categorized. These post war years included well known poems and collections such as *For Paul and Other Poems*, *The Years Go By*, *In Exchange for Haiku*, and *Home/World*.¹⁷

She called her own work in the 1960s "reflective" poetry that went beyond the Objectivist concept of perfection and describing objects with concerns for dream, memory, and the subconscious. The July 1966 edition of *Origin*, a national poetry magazine that promoted ground-breaking poets and created an alternative to academic poetry, featured Lorine Niedecker's work extensively, encouraging her and introducing her to other publishers. She was close to Cid Corman in the 1960s, who published her work in *Origin*. She also found receptive and interested publishers in Jonathan Williams, another publisher and the editor of the magazine *Jargon*, and Ian Hamilton Finlay, who solicited her for poetry for publication in Britain. By mid 1960s she was attempting to have a larger collection of work published with Cid Corman's Origin Press. *North Central* was published in 1968, and *T & G* was published in 1969 and enlarged the following year with the new title *My Life by Water*. The bulk of her published work came in the 1960s, towards the end of her career, and coincides with a small renaissance in Objectivist poetry during the period. Despite this, most of her earlier work has either been lost or has been published posthumously. The last phase of Niedecker's work during the last six years of her life, and arguably the most productive and most appreciated, included the collections *North Central*, which contained "Lake Superior," "Traces of Living Things," and "Wintergreen Ridge," and the collection *Harpsichord & Salt Fish*, which contained "Thomas Jefferson," "Darwin," "Foreclosure," and "Paeon to Place." Late in her life, she did receive the acclaim of her male peers, but not the publishing success. She feared her work and her name would disappear due to her obscurity.¹⁸

During her life Niedecker expressed a preference, like many poets, for smaller presses, but was often let down by their lack of resources and abilities to reproduce her work. The list of poetry published during her lifetime is short and only becomes frequent in the 1960s. Only four books, *New Goose*, *My Friend Tree*, *North Central*, and *T&G*, were published before her death in 1970. Niedecker's output of completed and recorded work is not large, including only 378 poems of varying length, 5 radio plays, 5 short works of prose, and 3 reviews of other works of poetry. The responsibility for

¹⁷ Bertholf, Robert J. Ed. *From this Condensery: The Complete Writing of Lorine Niedecker*, pages xi-xxii.

¹⁸ Sturgeon, Tandy Jennifer. *A Critical Edition of the Collected Poems of Lorine Niedecker; dissertation*. University of Wisconsin – Madison, 1990, pages 42-70.

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publishing Niedecker's work posthumously fell to Cid Corman, her literary executor and friend who, as a magazine editor, had worked to publish Niedecker's work during her lifetime. *Origin* featured Niedecker's work again in the July 1981 issue and the *Granite Pail* and *From This Condensery*, two collections of her poetry, were published in 1985 after much planning. By the 1990s, collections of her work, critical essays, and the popularity of work became more widespread.¹⁹

Niedecker was not involved in the academic world of poetry politics and has often been labelled a "folk" poet. Again, this reflects the era in which she worked; where Bohemian literary developments and various Modernist movements existed largely outside of academia. For these reasons, she (and other Objectivist poets) was a fringe character amongst the established literary intelligentsia. Furthermore, a lot of attention in discussions of her work has focused on the apparently simple and isolated life she led in Wisconsin and the regional background of her chosen poetics. Despite this, she bristled at the idea of her being a regional or uneducated poet. While her work draws on place as obvious source material, it is not necessarily tied to it as a concept. She was full of contradictions, at least in regards to labels. She was both urbane and isolated, a folk poet and intellectual, a surrealist and objectivist, a Marxist landlord; Niedecker was interested in the commonplace and outside of professional networks. Her poetry can be understood in periods as well, each one representing a different favored mode of work, from modernist folk poetry like *New Goose* in the 1940s, to haiku like forms in the 1950s, to longer complex poetry like *North Central* by the late 1960s. Because of these changes and because of her lack of full dedication to any one ideological school, her work is often difficult to label, though it can be contextualized within the wider world of contemporary modern poetry. For example, Lorine disliked being labelled a "regional writer" and responded in one instance with "What region – London, Wisconsin, New York?" She felt she could just as easily be defined by where she was published or where her school of thought originated as be tied to a specific place. Lorine Niedecker, largely appreciated after her death, has gained national recognition as an important part of the objectivist canon of modern poetry with notable contributions to surrealist and folk poetry as well.²⁰

Niedecker's Influence

Niedecker wrote most often about the world around her on Blackhawk Island: her family, neighbors, the local flora and fauna, and the river outside her door- its ebb and flow, and frequent flooding. Her poems did not receive wide critical attention until later in her life and posthumously. This was in part due to her geographic isolation and her shy nature. Many of her relatives and neighbors didn't know she was a poet. According to *A Poet's Life*, by Margot Peters, Lorine was a poet of extraordinary talent whose life and work were long enveloped in obscurity, and after her death, poet Basil Buntin

¹⁹ Sturgeon, Tandy Jennifer. *A Critical Edition of the Collected Poems of Lorine Niedecker; dissertation*, pages 1-36.

²⁰ Willis, Elizabeth, Ed. *Radical Vernacular: Lorine Niedecker and Poetics of Place*, pages xiii-xxiii.

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wrote that she was “the most interesting woman poet America has yet produced.” Her first collection of poetry, *New Goose* (1946), was published by a very small press, and her second collection, *My Friend Tree* (1962), was published in England. Her collection, *North Central* was published in 1968. Although often overlooked during her lifetime, three volumes of poetry have been published since her death: *Blue Chicory* (1976), *From This Condensery: The Complete Writings of Lorine Niedecker* (1985), and *The Granite Pail: The Selected Poems of Lorine Niedecker* (1985).

Niedecker was published in both regional and national poetry journals beginning in the 1930s including: *Poetry*, an influential monthly journal; the quarterly literary journal *Bozart-Westminster*; the magazines *Compass* and *Jargon*; and the national poetry magazine that promoted ground-breaking poets, called *Origin*.

During her lifetime, prominent and well-known poets considered Lorine their contemporaries, and since then, poetic journals, critics, and scholars, and organizations including the Poetry Foundation and the Academy of American Poets invariably identify the core group of poets who made up the Objectivist movement as: Louis Zukofsky, Charles Reznikoff, George Oppen, Carl Rakosi, Basil Bunting, and Lorine Niedecker.

Her posthumous influence, and the appreciation of her work, is recognized internationally: the Times Literary Supplement, an international weekly published in the United Kingdom, in 1997 declared her a poet who demands attention, and again in 2012 discussed Niedecker’s work as spare and enigmatic lyric poetry has been carefully studied and appreciated. Further, Lorine received attention in 2003 when scholars converged from the United States, Canada and abroad to celebrate the centenary of her birth with poetry readings, scholarly papers, reminiscences, and pilgrimages to Blackhawk Island. The “Friends of Lorine Niedecker” was established in 2004 and hosts an annual Lorine Niedecker Poetry Festival in Fort Atkinson.

Her body of work includes 378 poems of varying length, 5 radio plays, 5 short works of prose, and 3 reviews of other works of poetry.

Poems and Collections

For Paul and Other Poems

The Years Go By

In Exchange for Haiku, and Home/World.

North Central, which contained *Lake Superior*, *Traces of Living Things*, and *Wintergreen Ridge*

Harpsichord & Salt Fish, which contained *Thomas Jefferson*, *Darwin*, *Foreclosure*, and *Paean to Place*.

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Books:

New Goose (1946)
My Friend Tree (1961)
North Central (1968)
T&G, Collected Poems 1936-1966 (1969)
My Life by Water: Collected Poems 1936-1968 (1970)

Posthumous

Blue Chicory (1976)
Origin featured Niedecker's work again in the July 1981 issue
From This Condensery (1985)
The Granite Pail: the Selected Poems of Lorine Niedecker (1996)
Lorine Niedecker: Collected Works (2002)
Lake Superior (2013)

Niedecker has also been the subject of multiple books including:

Lorine Niedecker: An Original Biography by Jane Shaw Knox (1987)
Niedecker and the Correspondence with Zukofsky 1931-1970 by Jenny Penberthy (1993)
Lorine Niedecker: Woman and Poet by Jenny Penberthy (1996)
America's Greatest Unknown Poet: Lorine Niedecker Reminiscences, Photographs, Letters and Her Most Memorable Poems by John Lehman (2003)
Radical Vernacular: Lorine Niedecker and the Poetics of Place by Elizabeth Willis (2008)
Lorine Niedecker, A Poet's Life by Margot Peters (2011)
Lorine Niedecker: Enough to Carry Me Through: A Fictional Autobiography by Jack Lehman (2014)

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A notable example of her later work, and perhaps her most famous poem, "Paeon to Place" (in Greek approximately 'pain, or healing poem, in this place') can serve as an example of Lorine Niedecker's poetry demonstrating her objectivist phrasing, semi-autobiographical subject matter, and the importance of place and the natural world

"Paeon to Place"

And the place
was water

Fish
fowl
flood
Water lily mud
My life

in the leaves and on water
My mother and I
born
in swale and swamp and sworn
to water

My father
thru marsh fog
sculled down
from high ground
saw her face

and away
She
who knew boats
and ropes
no longer played

She helped him string out nets
for tarring
And she could shoot
He was cool
to the man

who stole his minnows
by night and next day offered
to sell them back
He brought in a sack
of dandelion greens

if no flood
No oranges—none at hand
No marsh marigold
where the water rose
He kept us afloat

I mourn her not hearing canvasbacks
their blast-off rise
from the water
Not hearing sora
rails's sweet

spoon-tapped waterglass-

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at the organ
bore the weight of lake water
and the cold—
he seined for carp to be sold
that their daughter

might go high
on land
to learn
Saw his wife turn
deaf

before summer hum
To be counted on:
new leaves
new dead
leaves

He could not
—like water bugs—
stride surface tension
He netted
loneliness

As to his bright new car
my mother—her house
next his—averred:
A hummingbird
can't haul

Anchored here
in the rise and sink
of life—
middle years' nights

descending scale-
tear-drop-tittle
Did she giggle
as a girl?

His skiff skimmed
the coiled celery now gone
from these streams
due to carp
He knew duckweed

fall-migrates
toward Mud Lake bottom
Knew what lay
under leaf decay
and on pickerel weeds

I was the solitary plover
a pencil
for a wing-bone
From the secret notes
I must tilt

upon the pressure
execute and adjust
In us sea-air rhythm
“We live by the urgent wave
of the verse”

Seven year molt
for the solitary bird
and so young
Seven years the one
dress

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Continuation Sheet

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Niedecker, Lorine, Cottage
Town of Sumner, Jefferson County, WI

he sat

beside his shoes
rocking his chair
 Roped not “looped
 in the loop
of her hair”

I grew in green
slide and slant
 of shore and shade
 Child-time—wade
thru weeds

Maples to swing from
Pewee-glissando
 sublime
 slime-
song

Grew riding the river
Books
 at home-pier
 Shelley could steer
as he read
 How much less am I
in the dark than they?

Effort lay in us
before religions
 at pond bottom
 All things move toward
the light

except those
that freely work down

for town once a week
One for home
 faded blue-striped
as she piped
her cry

Dancing grounds
my people had none
 woodcocks had—
 backland-
air around

Solemnities
such as what flower
 to take
 to grandfather’s grave
unless

water lilies—
he who’d bowed his head
 to grass as he mowed
 Iris now grows
on fill

for the two
and for him
 where they lie
by the flood
 Leave the new unbought—
 all one in the end—
water

I possessed
the high word:
 The boy my friend
 played his violin

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 18

Niedecker, Lorine, Cottage
Town of Sumner, Jefferson County, WI

to oceans' black depths
In us an impulse tests
the unknown

River rising—flood
Now melt and leave home
Return—broom wet
naturally wet

Under

soak-heavy rug
water bugs hatched—
no snake in the house
Where were they?—
she

who knew how to clean up
after floods
he who bailed boats, houses
Water endows us
with buckled floors

You with sea water running
in your veins sit down in water
Expect the long-stemmed blue
speedwell to renew
itself

O my floating life
Do not save love
for things
Throw things
to the flood

ruined

in the great hall

On this stream
my moonnight memory
washed of hardships
maneuvers barges
thru the mouth

of the river
They fished in beauty
It was not always so
In Fishes
red Mars

rising
rides the sloughs and sluices
of my mind
with the persons
on the edge²¹

²¹ Niedecker, Lorine. *Paeon to Place*. Milwaukee, WI: Woodland Pattern Book Center. 2003. Originally Published 1969.

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Niedecker, Lorine, Cottage
Town of Sumner, Jefferson County, WI

Conclusion

The Lorine Niedecker Cottage is nominated at the national level of significance under National Register Criterion B in the area of Literature for its association with the poet Lorine Niedecker. The Cottage, where she lived from 1946 to 1963, was her home during one of her most productive periods as a poet. Niedecker has posthumously come to be recognized as one of the best Objectivist modern poets of the mid-twentieth century. The cottage itself is a small wood frame building with painted split log siding set on a raised concrete foundation. The interior is a single spare room and much of the building remains intact despite numerous floods in the area. These features have been maintained and preserved during the years since its construction.

Statement of Archeological Potential

This area of the state, with its numerous lakes, was home to considerable Native American activities. A large concentration of earthen Woodland Culture effigy mounds can be found in the Lake Koshkonong vicinity, including a grouping in Koshkonong Mounds Park directly southwest across the Rock River from the nominated property. While it is possible that Native American resources may be extant with the boundaries of the nominated property, archaeological potential has not been assessed.

Preservation Activities

Special mention should be made of the Friends of Lorine Niedecker organization, who has taken an active interest in the preservation and dissemination of Lorine Niedecker's life and work. The organization has worked in partnership with the property owners to maintain the Cottage and other buildings on the property. In addition, the owners have been proactive in protecting this historic resource, despite numerous setbacks - particularly flooding- the owners continue to care for and repair this property. This nomination is a continuation of their efforts and the efforts of Jefferson County. In listing this property, the owners and the Friends of Lorine Niedecker hope to utilize state historic tax credits and/or other incentives to rehabilitate and maintain the property.

Acknowledgments

The Certified Local Government program receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or disability or age in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program,

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Niedecker, Lorine, Cottage
Town of Sumner, Jefferson County, WI

activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849C Street NW; Washington, DC 20240. The activity that is the subject of this Nomination has been financed entirely with Federal Funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, and administered by the Wisconsin Historical Society. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior or the Wisconsin Historical Society. Nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior or the Wisconsin Historical Society.

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Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 1

Niedecker, Lorine, Cottage
Town of Sumner, Jefferson County, WI

Major Bibliographical References

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 1

Niedecker, Lorine, Cottage
Town of Sumner, Jefferson County, WI

Verbal Boundary Description

The property that is the subject of this nomination consists of 1 contributing resource and 3 non-contributing resources all sited on a one acre subdivided lot between the Rock River and Blackhawk Island Road in the Town of Sumner east of Fort Atkinson. The boundary for the Niedecker Cottage described above matches the boundaries for the property exactly and is clearly delineated on the accompanying sketch map.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encloses a one acre parcel identical to the current legal parcel for the property at W7307 Blackhawk Island Road. The northern boundary of this parcel is the south edge of the right-of-way of the east-west running Blackhawk Island Road. The eastern western boundaries are the property lines which are approximately 150 feet wide and 350 feet deep. The southern boundary is the impermanent shore of the north bank of Rock River.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 1

Niedecker, Lorine, Cottage
Town of Sumner, Jefferson County, WI

Name of Property:	Lorine Niedecker Cottage
City or Vicinity:	Town of Sumner
County:	Jefferson
State:	Wisconsin
Name of Photographer:	Rowan Davidson
Date of Photographs:	October 1, 2015
Location of Original Digital Files:	Wisconsin Historical Society,
Division of Historic Preservation, Madison, WI	

- Photo 1 of 12: (WI_JeffersonCounty_LorineNiedeckerCottage_0001)
Cottage, East Façade, camera facing west.
- Photo 2 of 12: (WI_JeffersonCounty_LorineNiedeckerCottage_0002)
Cottage, East and North Façades, camera facing southwest.
- Photo 3 of 12: (WI_JeffersonCounty_LorineNiedeckerCottage_0003)
Cottage, North Façade, camera facing south.
- Photo 4 of 12: (WI_JeffersonCounty_LorineNiedeckerCottage_0004)
Cottage, North and West Façades, camera facing southeast.
- Photo 5 of 12: (WI_JeffersonCounty_LorineNiedeckerCottage_0005)
Cottage, South Façade, camera facing north.
- Photo 6 of 12: (WI_JeffersonCounty_LorineNiedeckerCottage_0006)
Cottage Detail, East Façade, camera facing west.
- Photo 7 of 12: (WI_JeffersonCounty_LorineNiedeckerCottage_0007)
Cottage Detail, North Façade, camera facing southwest.
- Photo 8 of 12: (WI_JeffersonCounty_LorineNiedeckerCottage_0008)
House and Garage, North and East Façades, camera facing southwest.
- Photo 9 of 12: (WI_JeffersonCounty_LorineNiedeckerCottage_0009)
House, South and East Façades, camera facing northwest.
- Photo 10 of 12: (WI_JeffersonCounty_LorineNiedeckerCottage_0010)
Storage, South and West Façades, camera facing northeast.
- Photo 11 of 12: (WI_JeffersonCounty_LorineNiedeckerCottage_0011)
Cottage Interior, camera facing northwest.
- Photo 12 of 12: (WI_JeffersonCounty_LorineNiedeckerCottage_0012)
Rock River, camera facing southwest.

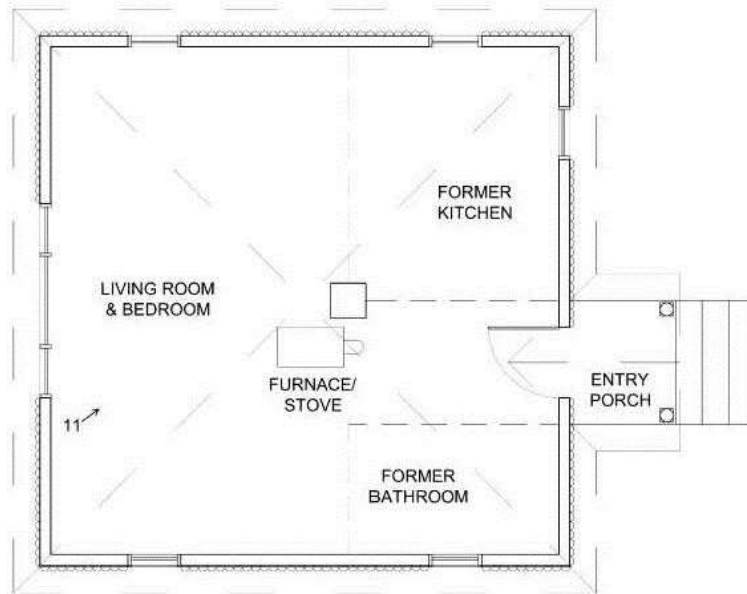
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Niedecker, Lorine, Cottage
Town of Sumner, Jefferson County, WI

Section figures Page 1

Figure 1: Sketch Plan and Photo Key



LEGEND
1 → PHOTO NUMBER & VANTAGE POINT

SKETCH PLAN
0 1 2 4 f

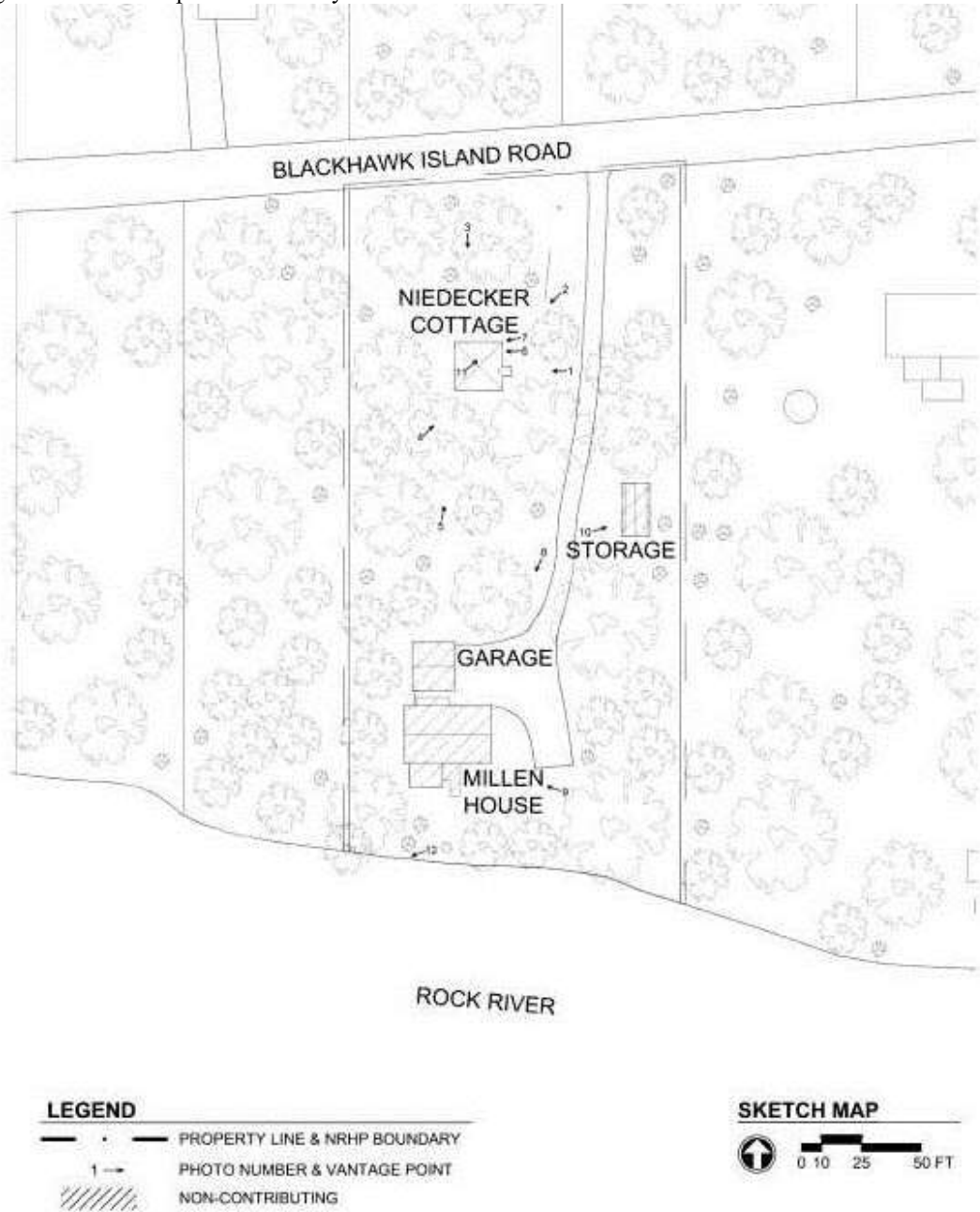
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section figures Page 2

Niedecker, Lorine, Cottage
Town of Sumner, Jefferson County, WI

Figure 2: Sketch Map and Photo Key

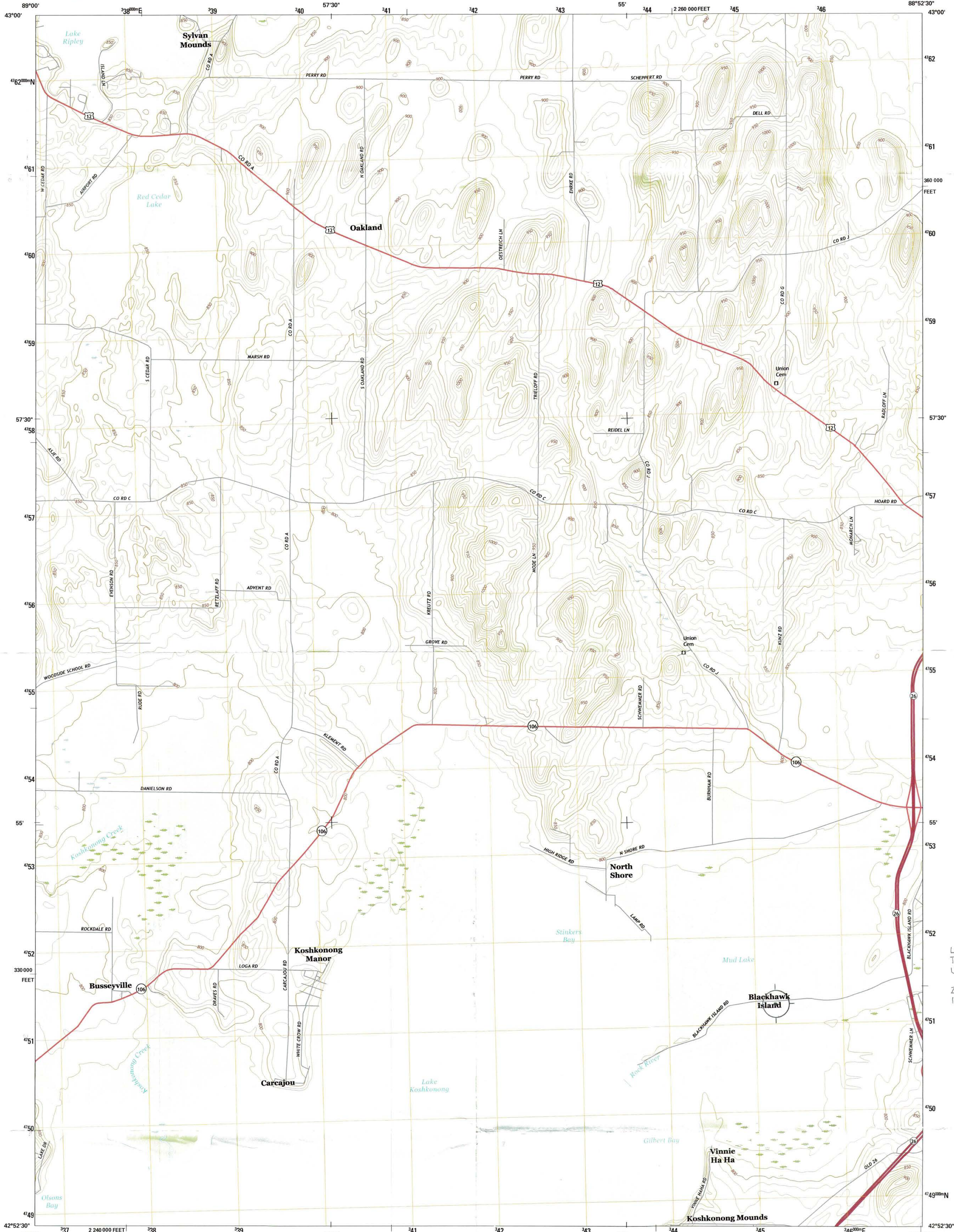




U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



BUSSEYVILLE QUADRANGLE
WISCONSIN-JEFFERSON CO.
7.5-MINUTE SERIES



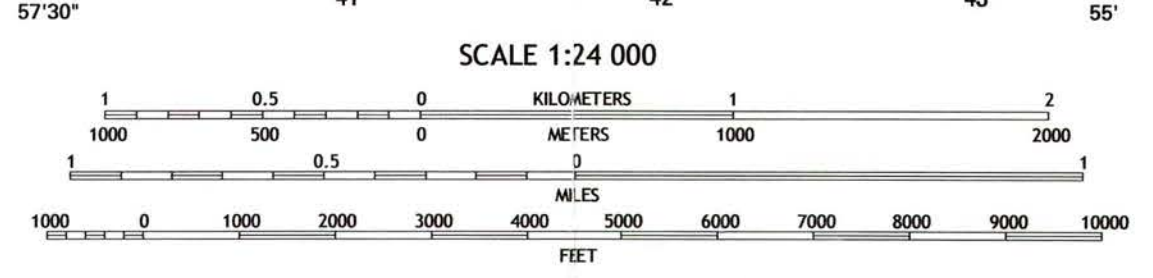
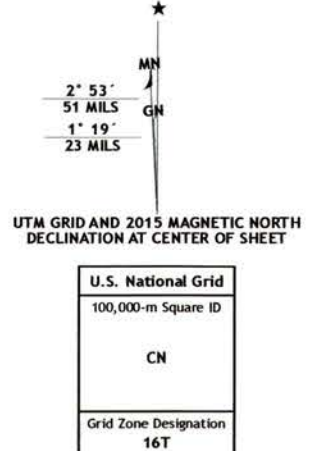
Lorine Niedecker Cottage
Town of Sumner, Jefferson Co., WI
UTM Reference:

Zone Easting Northing
16N 345263 4751296

Produced by the United States Geological Survey
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD83); Projection and 1000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, Zone 16E
10 000-foot ticks: Wisconsin Coordinate System of 1983 (south zone)

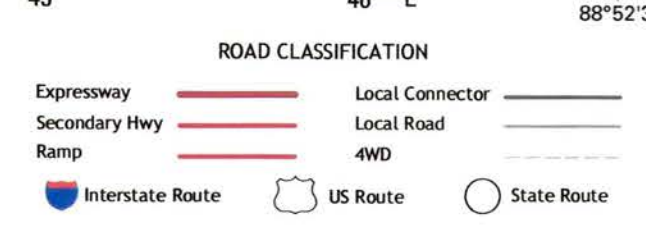
This map is not a legal document. Boundaries may be generalized for this map scale. Private lands within government reservations may not be shown. Obtain permission before entering private lands.

Imagery:.....NAIP, June 2013
Roads:.....U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 - 2015
Names:.....GNS, 2015
Hydrography:.....National Hydrography Dataset, 2013
Contours:.....National Elevation Dataset, 1998
Boundaries:.....Multiple sources; see metadata file 1972 - 2015
Public Land Survey System:.....BLM, 2014
Wetlands:.....FWS National Wetlands Inventory 1977 - 2014



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NORTH AMERICAN VERTICAL DATUM OF 1988

This map was produced to conform with the National Geospatial Program US Topo Product Standard, 2011.
A metadata file associated with this product is draft version 0.6.19



1	2	3	1 Deerfield
			2 Lake Mills
			3 Jefferson
4	5	4 Rockdale	
		5 Fort Atkinson	
		6 Edgerton	
6	7	7 Milton	
		8 Lima Center	

BUSSEYVILLE, WI
2015





114























UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 1/5/2018 Date of Pending List: 1/29/2018 Date of 16th Day: 2/13/2018 Date of 45th Day: 2/20/2018 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG | |

Accept Return Reject 2/20/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria:

Reviewer Jim Gabbert Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

RECEIVED
MAY 05 2017

BY:

Town of Sumner

N1525 Church St, Edgerton, WI 53534

Phone/Fax 608-884-7925 E-mail: townsumner@compufort.com
www.townofsumner.com

May 3, 2017

Wisconsin Historic Preservation Review Board
Mr. James Draeger, Preservation Officer
Wisconsin Historical Society
816 State Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

Dear Review Board,

The Town of Sumner Town Board Officers are delighted that you are considering the Lorine Niedecker Cottage on Blackhawk Island for inclusion on the Wisconsin and National Registers of Historic Places.

The residents of Sumner are quite proud of Ms. Niedecker's important work in poetry, and her interactions with other writers and community members that came to know her home on Blackhawk Island. Her influence spread throughout Jefferson County, most notably to the City of Fort Atkinson where her national influence on writing and poetry is honored in many ways.

We are proud to support the remembrance of Lorine Niedecker, through a designation of her Cottage on the Wisconsin State Register of Historic Places, and the National Register of Historic Places. Please know we speak on behalf of the residents of the Town of Sumner and will be happy to share this important designation if the Review Board approves the Cottage nomination.

On behalf of the Town Board of the Town of Sumner,



John Dohner, Jr, Chairperson



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY



TO: Keeper
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Peggy Veregin
National Register Coordinator

SUBJECT: National Register Nomination

The following materials are submitted on this Twenty-seventh day of December 2017, for the nomination of the Lorine Niedecker Cottage to the National Register of Historic Places:

<u>1</u>	Original National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form
<u>1</u>	CD with NRHP Nomination form PDF
<u> </u>	Multiple Property Nomination form
<u>12</u>	Photograph(s)
<u>1</u>	CD with image files
<u>1</u>	Map(s)
<u>2</u>	Sketch map(s)/figures(s)/exhibit(s)
<u>1</u>	Piece(s) of correspondence
<u> </u>	Other:

COMMENTS:

<u> </u>	Please ensure that this nomination is reviewed
<u> </u>	This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
<u> </u>	The enclosed owner objection(s) do or do not constitute a majority of property owners
<u> </u>	Other: