

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**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 Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home

AND/OR COMMON Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
812 Sinclair Lewis Avenue

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Sauk Centre

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

__ VICINITY OF

006 (Sixth)

STATE
Minnesota

CODE
27

COUNTY
Stearns

CODE
009

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME (Sinclair Lewis Foundation, Inc.) Mrs. Tillie Guelow, Vice President

STREET & NUMBER
71 Main Street

CITY, TOWN
Sauk Centre

__ VICINITY OF

STATE
Minnesota 56378

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Stearns County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
St. Cloud

STATE
Minnesota

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Historic Sites Survey

DATE
1961

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

CITY, TOWN
Washington

STATE
D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RESTORED	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Sinclair Lewis moved with his parents when he was only a few months old to an eight-room house directly across the street from his birthplace. L-shaped in appearance, the house was two stories high with a gabled roof and clapboard siding. An open, roofed porch extended the length of the facade. Behind the house was a frame stable one-and-a-half stories high.

Immediately to the left on entering the house was the staircase leading to the second floor. To the right was the living room and to the left were the dining room and the kitchen. Behind the kitchen was a small, enclosed porch. Upstairs were four bedrooms and a bath with running water and a flush toilet.

In 1956 the building was purchased by the Sinclair Lewis Foundation. At that time it was a duplex, with a stucco exterior. The downstairs kitchen had been partitioned, the floors replaced, the front porch enclosed, and a dormer window had been added in the left wing. In cooperation with the Minnesota Historical Society, all the original features have been restored. Also, the painted walls have been papered with period patterns; the partition between the parlor and family room has been restored; the duplex bathroom and bedroom have been removed from the dining room; the door between the kitchen and back porch has been reopened; the stairway from the kitchen to the maid's room has been restored--the maid's room has been panelled and made into the curator's office; the front porch has been reduced, reopened, re-roofed and re-trimmed with gingerbread; the upstairs duplex kitchen has been removed, the chimney torn out, the basement modernized for heat and cooling, the grounds restored, the carriage house and the main house re-roofed, and the whole refurnished with period pieces, some of them Lewis originals. The most questionable alteration is the cement flooring for the carriage house in the rear. It extends beyond the building several feet onto the lawn from both its front and side entrances. The Foundation provides guided tours of the home throughout the tourist season.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1885-1902

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Sinclair Lewis was the best-known novelist in America during the 1920's. He was the first American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, and the first to establish a truly international reputation since Edgar Allen Poe. His satiric insights exposed the crassness of a generation, be it in small-town provincialism (Main Street, 1920), the business world (Babbitt, 1922), medicine (Arrowsmith, 1925), or revivalism (Elmer Gantry, 1927).

Main Street was inspired by Lewis' boyhood experiences in Sauk Centre, Minnesota. From the beginning he was an outsider, physically repulsive, poor in athletics, the butt of many jokes. He bared the hatred for much of what he saw in his most famous novel, Main Street.

Lewis first began to write in Sauk Centre--sometimes in his room and sometimes in a garret in the barn. Many of the incidents in Main Street come directly from Lewis' actual experiences: his mother's social club and its efforts to uplift; the famous public restroom and the anti-fly campaign; amateur theatricals, revival meetings, make Main Street, as Mark Schorer wrote, "a whole scrapbook of his youth." More importantly, Lewis absorbed the values of a small town, though he bitterly attacked those who paid these values lip service only. Sauk Centre was his yardstick for good and bad. "To me, forever," he wrote, "ten miles will not be a distance in the mathematical tables, but slightly more than the distance from Sauk Centre to Melrose."

Dodsworth, Lewis' last major work, was completed in 1929. Twice divorced, he died, lonely and dejected, on January 10, 1951, near Rome.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Dulles, Foster Rhea, The United States Since 1865, 1959.
 Quinn, Arthur H., ed., The Literature of the American People, 1951.
 Mattison, Ray H., "Sinclair Lewis' Boyhood Home," Historic Sites Survey report, 1961.
Minnesota History News, Vol. II, No. 2, 1960.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,5	34,77,4,0	5,06,65,2,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home is bounded by the property lines of 812 Sinclair Lewis Avenue, Sauk Centre, Minnesota. The area includes the home, the carriage house, and small front and back yards.

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

Stephen Lissandrello, Historian, Landmarks Review Project

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

August 5, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, N.W.

TELEPHONE

(202) 523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

20240

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 National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)