Z

 \propto

s S

E E

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE:	
Nebraska	
COUNTY:	
Otoe	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

ATT and the second seco		NTRY DATE 		_
(Type all entries - complete applicable secti	ons)			
NAME				
COMMON:				
Arbor Lodge State Park AND/OR HISTORIC:				4
1	House			
Arbor Lodge; J. Sterling Morton	nouse			1
STREET AND NUMBER:				4
Off Centennial Avenue about 3/4	mile wes	+ of 11 c 7	2 /75	
CITY OR TOWN:	CONGRESSION	NAL DISTRICT:	3/13	4
Nebraska City	1	1		
STATE CODE	COUNTY:		CODE	-
Nebraska 3/	-	Otoe	/3/	4
CLASSIFICATION		<u> </u>	1/3/	
CATEGORY		T	ACCESSIBLE	4
(Check One)		STATUS	TO THE PUBLIC	
		MATE O	Yes:	-
District Building Public Public Acquisi		Occupied	Restricted	
- On octobe	Considered	Unoccupied	☐ Unrestricted	
Object Both Being	, 20113140104	Preservation work	No No	
		in progress		_
				J
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)				_
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate) Agricultural Government X Park		Transportation	Comments	1
100		Transportation **Other (Specify)	Comments	
☐ Agricultural ☐ Government ☐ X Park	lence [-	Comments	
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Resid	Resi	XOther (Specify)		
Agricultural Government ★ Park Commercial Industrial Private Resid Educational Military Religious Entertainment ★ Museum Scientific	Resi	XOther (Specify) dence of		
Agricultural Government Residucational Military Religious	Resi	XOther (Specify) dence of		
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Residuational Military Religious Entertainment Museum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME:	Resi park	XOther (Specify) dence of superintence		
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Resid Educational Military Religious Entertainment X Museum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY	Resi park	XOther (Specify) dence of superintence		
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Resid Educational Military Religious Entertainment X Museum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME: State of Nebraska, Game and Park	Resi park	XOther (Specify) dence of superintence		
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Residence Educational Military Religious Entertainment X Museum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME: State of Nebraska, Game and Park STREET AND NUMBER:	Resi park	XOther (Specify) dence of superintence		
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Resid Educational Military Religious Entertainment X Museum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME: State of Nebraska, Game and Park STREET AND NUMBER: 2200 North 33rd Street	Resi Park	XOther (Specify) dence of superintence sion	dent	
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Resident Reducational Religious Entertainment Museum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME: State of Nebraska, Game and Park STREET AND NUMBER: 2200 North 33rd Street	Resi Park	XOther (Specify) dence of superintence	dent	
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Resident Reducational Military Religious Entertainment Museum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME: State of Nebraska, Game and Park STREET AND NUMBER: 2200 North 33rd Street City or town: Lincoln	Resi Park	XOther (Specify) dence of superintence sion	dent	i
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Residence Educational Military Religious Entertainment Museum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME: State of Nebraska, Game and Park STREET AND NUMBER: 2200 North 33rd Street CITY OR TOWN: Lincoln LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:	Resipark STATE:	**Other (Specify) dence of superintence sion Nebraska	dent	i
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Resident Reducational Military Religious Entertainment Museum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME: State of Nebraska, Game and Park STREET AND NUMBER: 2200 North 33rd Street CITY OR TOWN: Lincoln LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION	Resipark STATE:	**Other (Specify) dence of superintence sion Nebraska	dent	i
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Resident Reducational Military Religious Entertainment Museum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME: State of Nebraska, Game and Park STREET AND NUMBER: 2200 North 33rd Street CITY OR TOWN: Lincoln LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Office of the County Clerk, Otoe STREET AND NUMBER: 1021 Central Avenue	Resipark STATE:	**Other (Specify) dence of superintence sion Nebraska	dent	1
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Resident Reducational Military Religious Entertainment Museum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME: State of Nebraska, Game and Park STREET AND NUMBER: 2200 North 33rd Street CITY OR TOWN: Lincoln COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Office of the County Clerk, Otoe	Resipark STATE:	**Other (Specify) dence of superintence sion Nebraska	dent	
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Resident Reducational Military Religious Entertainment Museum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME: State of Nebraska, Game and Park STREET AND NUMBER: 2200 North 33rd Street CITY OR TOWN: Lincoln LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Office of the County Clerk, Otoe STREET AND NUMBER: 1021 Central Avenue	Resipark STATE:	**Other (Specify) dence of superintence sion Nebraska	coope 3/	1
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Residence Reducational Military Religious Entertainment Museum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME: State of Nebraska, Game and Park STREET AND NUMBER: 2200 North 33rd Street CITY OR TOWN: Lincoln LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Office of the County Clerk, Otoe STREET AND NUMBER: 1021 Central Avenue CITY OR TOWN: Nebraska City	Resipark STATE:	**Other (Specify) dence of superintence sion Nebraska	coope 3/	i
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Residence Reducational Military Religious Entertainment Museum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME: State of Nebraska, Game and Park STREET AND NUMBER: 2200 North 33rd Street CITY OR TOWN: Lincoln LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Office of the County Clerk, Otoe STREET AND NUMBER: 1021 Central Avenue CITY OR TOWN: Nebraska City REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS	Resipark STATE:	Mother (Specify) dence of superintence sion Nebraska Courthouse	CODE	
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Residence Reducational Military Religious Entertainment Museum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME: State of Nebraska, Game and Park STREET AND NUMBER: 2200 North 33rd Street CITY OR TOWN: Lincoln LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Office of the County Clerk, Otoe STREET AND NUMBER: 1021 Central Avenue CITY OR TOWN: Nebraska City REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS	Resipark Resipark STATE:	Mother (Specify) dence of superintence sion Nebraska Courthouse Nebraska	code 3/	
Agricultural Government X Park Commercial Industrial Private Residence Reducational Military Religious Entertainment Museum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME: State of Nebraska, Game and Park STREET AND NUMBER: 2200 North 33rd Street CITY OR TOWN: Lincoln LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Office of the County Clerk, Otoe STREET AND NUMBER: 1021 Central Avenue CITY OR TOWN: Nebraska City REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS TITLE OF SURVEY: Nebraska Historic Preservation F	Resipark STATE: STATE:	Mother (Specify) dence of superintence sion Nebraska Courthouse Nebraska	code 3/	
Agricultural	Resipark Resipark STATE: STATE:	**Nother (Specify) dence of superintence sion Nebraska Courthouse Nebraska	code 3/	
Agricultural	Resipark STATE: County STATE STATE STATE	**Nother (Specify) dence of superintence sion Nebraska Courthouse Nebraska ional Regist County ational Regist	CODE 3/ CODE 3/ Local ister	
Agricultural	Resipark STATE: County STATE STATE STATE	**Nother (Specify) dence of superintence sion Nebraska Courthouse Nebraska	CODE 3/ CODE 3/ Local ister	
Agricultural	Resipark STATE: County STATE Clan; Nat State Nay; of	**Nother (Specify) dence of superintence sion Nebraska Courthouse Nebraska ional Regist County ational Regist	CODE 3/ CODE 3/ Local ister	
Agricultural	Resipark STATE: County STATE Clan; Nat State Nay; of	**Nother (Specify) dence of superintence sion Nebraska Courthouse Nebraska ional Regist County ational Regist	code 3/ code 3/ ter code laces	
Agricultural Government Residence Commercial Industrial Private Residence Commercial Military Religious Entertainment Manuseum Scientific OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER OF PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME: State of Nebraska, Game and Park STREET AND NUMBER: 2200 North 33rd Street CITY OR TOWN: Lincoln LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Office of the County Clerk, Otoe STREET AND NUMBER: 1021 Central Avenue CITY OR TOWN: Nebraska City REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS TITLE OF SURVEY: Nebraska Historic Preservation From Survey: 1971; 1969 Federal DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Nebraska State Historical Societ STREET AND NUMBER: 1500 R Street; 1100 L Street, N. CITY OR TOWN:	Resipark Resipark STATE: STATE:	Nebraska Courthouse Nebraska ional Regist County Cational Reg: Historic P.	code 3/ code 3/ ter code code code	ENTRY NUMBER
Agricultural	Resipark Resipark STATE: STATE:	**Nother (Specify) dence of superintence sion Nebraska Courthouse Nebraska ional Regist County ational Regist	code 3/ code 3/ ter code laces	

				(Check One)		
CONDITION	X Excellent	☐ Good	☐ Fair	Deteriorated	Ruins	Unexposed
CONDITION		(Check O	ne)		(Che	eck One)
	☐X Alter	ed	Unaltered		☐ Moved	🔀 Original Site

Shortly after arriving in Nebraska City in 1855, J. Sterling Morton had a small frame cottage erected for himself and his bride. The 1 1/2-story, L-shaped, gable-roofed structure had fewer than five rooms, and with the passage of time, the family required more space. At some point between 1865 and 1871, Morton appended several rooms to the rear of the dwelling, installed gabled dormers at the front,

and added a balustraded railing and other ornamental woodwork to the front veranda. In 1879-80 he remodeled the house completely, adding a full second story, a hipped roof, and an Italianate facade that featured a two-tiered veranda across the front and part of the north side.

About a year after Morton's death in 1902, his son Joy enlarged the residence again, remodeled it in the Neo-Colonial style, and built a carriage house in the rear. For some 20 years Joy Morton utilized the dwelling, which by then had 52 rooms, as a summer home, then in 1923 he donated it and approximately 60 acres of surrounding landscaped grounds to the State of Nebraska. Currently the property is a State park, and the expertly maintained buildings are in excellent condition.

The Residence. Known commonly as Arbor Lodge, the Morton House is T-shaped today. The 2 1/2-story, hip-roofed rear stem constitutes the portion that J. Sterling Morton erected, while the 3-story, gable-roofed, approximately 90-foot-long, front transverse section is the part that Joy Morton built. The white stucco-covered frame structure rests on a brick foundation and above a full basement.

Chief among the exterior features of the mansion are three identical two-story, semicircular porticos that shelter the centrally located front entrance and the portals at the north and south ends of the transverse. Each of these massive flat-roofed porches is supported by six large fluted Corinthian columns and two pairs of fluted Corinthian pilasters. Underneath each portico there is a balustraded, semi-elliptically shaped balcony at the second-floor level and a four-foot-wide door space with semi-elliptical fanlight and broken-pedimented frontispiece at the first floor level. Only the front door has side lights.

Descriptions of the Morton House as it appeared prior to 1903 are based primarily on photographs and dates in Mary Ulbrick, Arbor Lodge, vol. 2 (Nebraska City, 1972).

SIGNIFICANCE			
PERIOD (Check One or More as A	ppropriate)		
Pre-Columbian	16th Century	☐ 18th Century	20th Century
15th Century	☐ 17th Century	19th Century	
SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable	and Known) 185	5-1902	
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Chec.	k One or More as Appropr	riate)	
Abor iginal	☐ Education	🔀 Political	Urban Planning
Prehistoric	Engineering	Religion/Phi-	Other (Specify)
Historic	☐ Industry	losophy	
Agriculture	Invention	Science	
Architecture	🗶 Landscape	Sculpture	
☐ Art	Architecture	Social/Human-	
☐ Commerce	Literature	itarian	
Communications	Military	Theater	
Conservation	☐ Music	Transportation	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

J. Sterling Morton was the founder of Arbor Day, one of the most constructive of all American holidays. In the early 1850's Morton migrated from Michigan to Nebraska with the expection of taking part in the political and economic development of the frontier. As a Democrat in a Republican-dominated region, he enjoyed little success in his many political campaigns, but as a hobbist who indulged in tree planting, he left an indelible mark on American conservation and folkways. In 1872, at Morton's urging the State of Nebraska proclaimed an annual Arbor Day and awarded prizes to counties and individuals who planted properly the largest number of trees on that day. few years the custom spread across the entire United States and to several foreign countries as well. Largely because of Morton's long interest and experience in agriculture and conservation, President Grover Cleveland appointed him Secretary of Agriculture in 1893. Emphasizing scientific investigation, the Nebraska tree planter introduced several important new areas of research in the Agricultural Department, among them the study of soils and crop production.

In 1855, shortly after Morton arrived in Nebraska City, he had a small frame cottage erected for himself and his bride, and he lived there until his death in 1902. Morton remodeled and enlarged the residence at least twice, and at the time of his demise, it bore an Italianate facade. About 1903 one of Morton's sons, Joy, converted the house to a 3-story, 52-room, Neo-Colonial mansion, and in 1923 he donated it to the State of Nebraska. The white stucco-covered frame structure is maintained presently as an excellent house museum.

Biography

Born in Adams, N.Y., in April 1832, J. Sterling Morton was the oldest child of Julius Dewey and Emeline Sterling Morton. When J. Sterling was about 2 years old, the family

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES			
			2.00
Dictionary of American Biography, VII (New York, 1927).			
Olson, James C., J. Sterl	ing Mo	rton (Lincoln, 19	42).
Ulbrick, Mary, Arbor Lodg	<u>e</u> , 2 v	ols. (Nebraska Ci	ty, 1972).
White, Leonard D., The Retive History, 1869-190	public I (New	an Era: A Study York, 1958).	in Administra-
CATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINAT DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PRO		LATITUDE AND LONG DEFINING THE CENTER	ITUDE COORDINATES
		R OF LESS THA	N TEN ACRES
Degrees Minutes Seconds Degrees Minutes	s Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds
NW 40 · 40 · 55" 95 · 52 · NE 40 · 40 · 55" 95 · 52 ·	59 _" 24 _"	0 , .	0 , 11
se 40 ° 40 ° 43 ° 95 ° 52 ° 52 ° 52 ° 52 ° 52 ° 52 ° 52			
APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPE		. 60 acres	
ILIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERT			
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
I. FORM PREPARED BY		1	
George R. Adams, Managing	Editor		
ORGANIZATION	<u> </u>		DATE
American Association for S	tate a	nd Local History	Sept. 1, 1974
1315 Eighth Avenue South		STATE	CODE
Nashville		Tennessee	47
2. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION	ı	NATIONAL REGISTE	~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the c-iteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended		I hereby certify that this pro National Register.	
level of significance of this nomination is: National State Local		Director, Office of Archeology	
Name		Date ATTEȘT:	

Date

Title

Date

Keeper of The National Register

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE	
Nebraska	
COUNTY	
Otoe	
FOR NPS USE ONL	Υ
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
[

Arbor Lodge

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

(Page 2)

7. Description (cont'd.)

Other noteworthy exterior characteristics of the mansion include a large two-window shed dormer on each open side of the hip-roofed rear wing, a bracketed and denticulated cornice around that section, three gigantic interior brick chimneys, a railed widow's walk atop the roof of the front transverse portion, and 20-over-20 sash front windows on the first two stories of the transverse and 15-over-15 sash windows on the third-floor front. Most of the other windows, including those in two first-floor bays on the north side of the rear wing and in a single bay on the south side, are one-over-one sash. Also most are flanked by green louvered shutters.

The front door of the Morton House opens into a 30-foot-square reception hall that has a 10-foot ceiling supported by exposed, white-painted wood beams. Similarly painted wood paneling extends from the floor to a height of 8 feet, and blue paint covers the remaining wall space. To the right of the entrance hall is Joy Morton's library, a similar-sized room with naturally finished paneling and ceiling beams. The upper walls are painted red. To the left of the reception hall is a drawing room. Silk tapestries cover the walls, while four fluted Corinthian pilasters support two large white-painted wooden ceiling beams. Immediately behind this room is a glass-enclosed sun porch with Tiffany skylight.

From the reception hall a central corridor leads through the rear wing of the house. The front portion of the hallway has a carved oak wainscot and provides access to a music room and dining room on the right and a bedroom and J. Sterling Morton's library on the left. All these rooms feature carved oak woodwork and door facings that have monogramed corner blocks. The library exhibits carved bookcases and beautiful parquet flooring. Beyond these rooms are four others that are used currently as living quarters for the park superintendent and his family.

Three stairways provide access to the second floor. There is a single-flight stair in the superintendent's quarters, a wainscoted and balustraded single-flight stair in the central corridor adjacent to J. Sterling's library, and a wide double-flight, balustraded stair in the main reception hall. Most of the compartments on the second story are bedrooms. The rear wing contains several along each

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE	
Nebraska	
COUNTY	
Otoe	
FOR NPS USE ONL	Y
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

Arbor Lodge

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

(Page 3)

7. Description (cont'd.)

side of a central hallway, while the transverse section has a large chamber at each end. Joy Morton's bedroom is at the south end, and the Cleveland Room, named in honor of President Grover Cleveland, is at the north end. Between these two rooms are a maid's chamber, a dressing room, and a small guest room. The third floor contains 10 additional bedrooms that are reached by a continuation of the front and rear stairways. The upper level also houses three storage tanks that originally collected rainwater for use in flushing toilets.

Much of the furniture presently in the Morton residence belonged to the family, but there are numerous period pieces also. Several of the second- and third-floor bedrooms house exhibits of family china, cookware, clothing, and toys. Especially interesting is the basement bowling alley, which was installed by Joy Morton.

The Carriage House. A large, 1 1/2-story, T-shaped building, the carriage house was erected about 1900. The transverse portion measures approximately 90 by 20 feet, and the rear wing about 40 by 30 feet. Green-painted wooden shingles cover the exterior walls, and 12 variously placed, hip-roofed dormers adorn the roof. An open passageway runs through the structure immediately to the right of the rear wing and thereby separates the servants' quarters in the north end from the hayloft, first-floor work and storage areas, and basement stables in the southernmost section. Currently the building houses 10 Morton family carriages and service facilities for the park.

Other Structures. There are two other buildings on the Arbor Lodge grounds. One is a 1900-vintage greenhouse located south of the carriage house, and the other is a replica of a log cabin situated near Centennial Avenue east of the main house. The cabin was constructed about 1890 as a memorial to early Nebraska City settlers.

Boundary (as indicated in red on the accompanying sketch map). Beginning at the intersection of Arbor Drive and Centennial Avenue, a line running due east approximately 1400 feet along a wire fence to a cross fence; thence due south about 400 feet to another cross fence; thence due east approximately 1400 feet to still another cross fence; thence due south to Centennial Avenue; thence westward and northwestward about 3,000 feet and northward approximately 900 feet along curving Centennial Avenue to the starting point.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE	
Nebraska	
COUNTY	
Otoe	
FOR NPS USE ONL	Υ
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Page 4)

Arbor Lodge

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

7. Description (cont'd)

ADDENDUM (December 31, 1974)

Immediately west and southwest of Arbor Lodge State Park are 230 acres that comprised part of the Morton family farm at the turn of the century. Apparently a sizeable orchard occupied part of the land, while the rest served multiple uses. Several Morton barns and other outbuildings are extant on the property. The nonprofit National Arbor Day Foundation is working toward acquisition of the area and has obtained an option to purchase it. The foundation plans to use the tract as a buffer for Arbor Lodge State Park and is considering developing the area into a living Morton-period farm. The present owner of the land is Grove Porter (Porter Orchard, Nebraska City, Nebraska, 68416).

Except for a concrete masonry building and the Porter House, which will not be transferred to the National Arbor Day Foundation, all the structures were built sometime prior to 1903. The relative positions of these edifices are indicated in yellow on the attached photocopied map furnished by the Nebraska State Historical Society.

The apple barns are rectangular-shaped, gable-roofed, frame structures that were once part of a larger complex that included a huge barn and two sets of double silos. Situated between the remaining barns is a concrete masonry structure that somewhat impairs the historical integrity of this site.

The so-called connected barn group is slightly altered but remains much like it was when the Mortons owned the property. Dominating the group are two large, rectangular-shaped, gambrel-roofed barns that have enclosed sheds extending along each side. These barns are situated parallel to each other and are connected along their northern edge by a series of smaller structures and along their southern edge by an open-air corral.

Particularly noteworthy is the large corncrib situated near the southwestern corner of the property. It is a rectangular-shaped, frame structure with a shed roof and partially open sides, and it adds considerable visual interest to the landscape.

Standing near the corncrib is the so-called Churchill House. The exact relationship between this small, hip-roofed, frame structure and the Morton family is unknown, but the

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

Nebraska	
COUNTY	
Otoe	
FOR NPS USE ONL	Y
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

Arbor Lodge

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

(Page 5)

7. Description (cont'd)

the dwelling is believed to have been erected on the Morton property prior to 1900.

The small, rectangular-shaped, gable-roofed, frame schoolhouse was moved from a nearby site to the present location sometime before 1900. Officials of the Nebraska State Historical Society are still researching the background of the structure, but they believe that it is closely related to Morton family history.

Should this 230-acre tract be designated part of the protected area, the boundary of the whole would be as follows (and as indicated in red on the accompanying supplementary U.S.G.S. maps that show the compass coordinates for both the park and the appended tract).

Boundary (see above paragraph and maps). Beginning at the intersection of Arbor Drive and Centennial Avenue, a line running due east approximately 1,400 feet along a wire fence to a cross fence; thence due south about 400 feet to another cross fence; thence due east approximately 1,400 feet to still another cross fence; thence due south to Centennial Avenue; thence westward and northwestward approximately 2,250 feet to a point immediately northeast of the Porter House; thence due south about 700 feet to an unmarked point; thence due southeast about 1,000 feet to the nearest street; thence due south about 600 feet to an unmarked point; thence due west about 5,300 feet to an unmarked point; thence due north about 1,325 feet to an unmarked point; thence due east about 1,300 feet to an unmarked point; thence due north about 1,300 feet to Wagon Road; thence due east about 2,600 feet along Wagon to the starting point where Wagon becomes Arbor Drive.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE Nebraska	
COUNTY	
Otoe	
FOR NPS USE ONL	Υ
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

Arbor Lodge

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

(Page 2)

8. Significance (cont'd.)

moved to Monroe, Mich., where young Morton spent most of his youth. His father prospered from a variety of banking and business interests, so the family lived comfortably, and J. Sterling received excellent educational opportunities.

In 1853 Julius moved the family again, this time to Detroit, and about that same time, J. Sterling entered the University of Michigan. After spending approximately 2 years there, he was expelled for disobeying school regulations. Eventually he managed to obtain an A.B. degree from Union College in Schenectady, N.Y., although he was never a resident student at that institution.

On October 30, 1854, J. Sterling exchanged marriage vows with Caroline Joy French. The couple had met 7 years earlier while attending Wesleyan Seminary at Albion, Mich. Almost immediately after their wedding, the Mortons set out for Nebraska Territory, where he expected to participate in the political and economic growth of the frontier. Believing that Bellevue would become the territorial capital, they resided in that town for a short time then settled in Nebraska City.

J. Sterling took a position as editor of the Nebraska City News and accepted several city lots as part of his remuneration. This marked the beginning of both a business career and a lifetime of participation in public affairs. In 1855-56 and again in 1857-58, Morton served as a member of the territorial legislature, and in 1858 President James Buchanan appointed him secretary of the territory. A Democrat, Morton lost the secretaryship with the inauguration of Republican President Abraham Lincoln in 1861.

During subsequent years, Morton sought elective office on numerous occasions, but each time he met defeat in Republican-dominated Nebraska. Twice he ran for territorial delegate to Congress, and four times he represented his party in unsuccessful races for Governor. As a campaigner he expressed his opinions freely and earned a reputation as a low-tariff, hard-money man.

When not attending to business matters or running for public office, Morton was a student of agriculture. On his quarter section of land on the northwestern edge of Nebraska City, he planted hundreds of trees and urged other Nebraskans

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE	
Nebraska	
COUNTY	
Otoe	
FOR NPS USE ONL	Υ
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

Arbor Lodge

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

(Page 3)

8. Significance (cont'd.)

to do the same. At a meeting of the state horticultural society in 1871, Morton asserted that if every farmer in Nebraska would plant and cultivate a flower garden, an orchard, and a few forest trees, eventually Nebraska would lead the Nation in agricultural production. The following year he persuaded the horticultural society and the Nebraska Board of Agriculture to sponsor an annual tree-planting day, known as Arbor Day, and to award prizes to counties and individuals who planted properly the largest number of trees on that occasion.

Because the State needed additional trees for windbreaks, fuel, lumber, and shade, Morton's fellow citizens responded enthusiastically to Arbor Day. They planted millions of trees. In 1874 the Nebraska Legislature adopted a resolution setting aside the second Wednesday of April each year for Arbor Day, and 11 years later, the solons declared it a legal holiday. From Nebraska the idea spread throughout the United States and ultimately to such foreign countries as Canada, Mexico, England, France, Russia, Japan, and China.

As the popularity of Arbor Day increased, Morton continued his interest in politics. He campaigned widely for Democratic Presidential candidate Samuel J. Tilden in 1876 but remained without public office until 1893. In that year President Grover Cleveland appointed Morton Secretary of Agriculture.

Immediately upon taking office Morton set out to streamline the Agricultural Department and promote additional scientific research. Within a few months he reduced the Department's payroll by 500 employees and clashed with Congress over the free distribution of seeds by Members, an age-old practice that cost the Government approximately \$160,000 annually. Morton refused at one point to purchase seeds for distribution, but Congress passed a joint resolution ordering him to buy them. He had better luck when he called for greater supervision of State expenditures in the federally funded agricultural experiment station program. Congress authorized the Secretary to prescribe the form of annual report required from the States and to ascertain whether expenditures were properly made.

Believing that scientific investigation ought to be the central purpose of the Department of Agriculture, Morton increased bureau expenditures in that area by more than 6

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

^{STATE} Nebraska	
COUNTY	
Otoe	
FOR NPS USE ONL	Υ
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

Arbor Lodge

(Continuation Sheet)

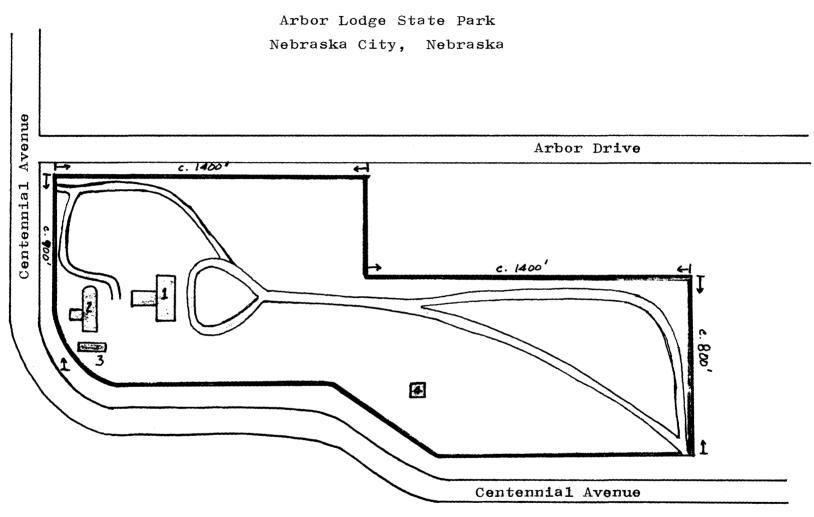
(Number	all	entries)
---------	-----	----------

(Page 4)

8. Significance (cont'd.)

percent, despite his economy program, and he introduced three new avenues of research. These were the development of agrostology, the study of soils and crop production, and the investigation of methods of road improvement. In addition Morton argued for congressional authorization of a permanent Under Secretary who would be technically trained and capable of overseeing the Department's scientific work. The Nebraska tree planter failed to attain this goal, but by the end of his tenure in 1897, he had left a lasting influence upon departmental affairs.

After leaving Washington, Morton remained active. In 1897 he began work on The Illustrated History of Nebraska, which was completed later by another editor, and in 1898 he started publishing the Conservative, a political and economic journal. He took great pleasure also in following the careers of his sons. One of them, Joy, became the Father of Morton Salt Company, and another, Paul, served briefly as Secretary of the Navy under President Theodore Roosevelt. In the winter of 1901-02 the founder of Arbor Day suffered from a severe, lingering cold, and in April 1902 he died from a blood clot in his brain.



- 1. J. Sterling Morton House
- 2. Carriage House
- 3. Greenhouse
- 4. Log Cabin

Prepared by George R. Adams AASLH September 1, 1974