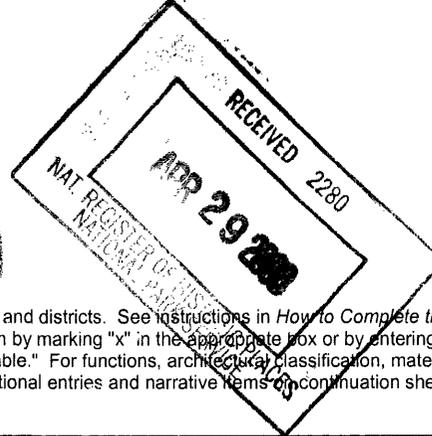


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 Pyhala, Anna and Mikko, Farm  
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 4745 Salo Road  not for publication  
city or town Embarrass Township, vicinity of Tower  vicinity  
state Minnesota code MN county St. Louis code 137 zip code 55732

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ian R. Stewart  
Signature of certifying official

4/16/03  
Date

Ian R. Stewart, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Minnesota Historical Society  
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 certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this 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.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

**Entered in the  
National Register**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

6/12/03

Pyhala, Anna and Mikko, Farm  
Name of Property

St. Louis County, MN  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	1	buildings
3		sites
1	1	structure
		objects
8	2	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
Rural Finnish Log Buildings of St. Louis County,  
Minnesota, 1890-1930s

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE:

animal facility

agricultural outbuilding

agricultural field

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Log

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Log

walls Log

Concrete

roof Metal

other

**Narrative Description**

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

See continuation sheet.

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for 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 a 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)

Agriculture

Architecture

Ethnic Heritage: European

**Period of Significance**

1895-1931

**Significant Dates**

1909

1924

1928

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Pyhala, Mikko, builder

Pyhala, Matt, builder

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- 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:

\_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 40 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1.	<u>1</u>   <u>5</u>	<u>5</u>   <u>6</u>   <u>1</u>   <u>0</u>   <u>5</u>   <u>0</u>	<u>5</u>   <u>2</u>   <u>7</u>   <u>9</u>   <u>0</u>   <u>1</u>   <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2.	<u>1</u>   <u>5</u>	<u>5</u>   <u>6</u>   <u>1</u>   <u>2</u>   <u>4</u>   <u>0</u>	<u>5</u>   <u>2</u>   <u>7</u>   <u>9</u>   <u>0</u>   <u>1</u>   <u>0</u>
3.	<u>1</u>   <u>5</u>	<u>5</u>   <u>6</u>   <u>1</u>   <u>2</u>   <u>4</u>   <u>0</u>	<u>5</u>   <u>2</u>   <u>7</u>   <u>8</u>   <u>8</u>   <u>2</u>   <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4.	<u>1</u>   <u>5</u>	<u>5</u>   <u>6</u>   <u>1</u>   <u>0</u>   <u>5</u>   <u>0</u>	<u>5</u>   <u>2</u>   <u>7</u>   <u>8</u>   <u>8</u>   <u>2</u>   <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

Embarrass, Minn.  
1949  
Photorevised 1985

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	<u>Michael Koop, State Historic Preservation Office</u>		
organization	<u>Minnesota Historical Society</u>	date	<u>2/27/03</u>
street and number	<u>345 Kellogg Blvd. West</u>	telephone	<u>651.296.545</u>
city or town	<u>St. Paul</u>	state	<u>MN</u>
		zip code	<u>55102</u>

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name	<u>Town of Embarrass</u>		
street & number	<u>7528 Levander Road</u>	telephone	<u>218.984.2672</u>
city or town	<u>Embarrass</u>	state	<u>MN</u>
		zip code	<u>55732</u>

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Pyhala, Anna and Mikko, Farm

Name of property

St. Louis County, MN

County and State

Section 7 Page 1

The Anna and Mikko (Mike) Pyhala Farm is a 40-acre property located on a rise of land about 200 feet west of the Embarrass River in east-central St. Louis County in northeastern Minnesota. The property is surrounded on the north and west by dense, second-growth deciduous and coniferous forest, and a gentle slope down to the east opens to a hay field that parallels the Embarrass River. The property is entered from the south by a gravel driveway that gradually rises uphill as it curves northeast toward the cluster of farm buildings. At least 12 buildings were constructed on the farmstead between the late 1890s and 1945, seven of which are extant: a ruinous log house; a cattle and hay barn; a sauna; a horse stable; a wood shed; a concrete block house; and a ruinous calf shed. The following summary description of the Pyhala Farm corresponds to a map included with the registration form.

**1) Log House, ca.1895, contributing.**

Now a ruin, the original one-and-one-half story 17' by 25' house or *tupa*, was constructed at the turn of the century of logs measuring 5" to 8" wide and up to 12" thick. The hewn members were held together by carefully crafted, full dovetailed corner notches. Vertical two-inch-long pine pegs at the door and window openings helped hold the walls in place. The house was placed on large, vertical cedar posts at the four corners; short, square upright filler logs were placed around the perimeter. The cellar hole, about four feet smaller on all sides than the foundation of the house, was divided into three areas: two potato bins, and an area with crudely built wooden shelves that held sausages, pies, and milk cooling jars. The rafters were four-inch round poles, flattened on the top to carry the rough-sawn pine roof sheathing and thin sawn cedar shingles.

The interior was organized into three rooms: a combination sitting-dining-kitchen area, and two bedrooms. A wood-burning cook stove was placed in the combination room, while a parlor stove heated one bedroom. The second floor, which had its own heating stove, served as a bedroom with a curtain separating the boys' and girls' sections.

The house was constructed by a single Finnish immigrant, Charles Matson, who sold his property to the Pyhala's in 1909. Despite its deteriorated condition, the log house provides important information about construction techniques and is associated with Finnish settlement in the region. As such, it is considered a contributing site on the farm.

**2) Cattle and Hay Barn, 1928, 1931, contributing.**

The three-bay barn began as a two-story, 24' by 26' single pen cattle barn or *navetta*, built in 1928 by Mikko Pyhala and his brothers Matt (who is credited with its design) and Jacob. Solidly constructed and relatively large, the barn could hold seven milk cows, as well as young stock, a bull, and feed. Chickens were also kept in the barn during the winter to utilize the heat generated by the cattle.

The walls of the barn are expertly hewn 6-inch pine and balsam logs, fully scribed and held together by a rather unusual locking dovetail notch at the corners. (Unfortunately soil moisture and water from a leaky roof has spoiled many of the notches.) Tightly fitting, 6" to 10" thick hewn logs extend up to the eaves, then vertical planks cover the area to the ridge. There is a single wood door in each gable end; two six-light fixed windows pierce the west elevation and one is located in the center of the east wall. The gable roof is supported by squared balsam

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Pyhala, Anna and Mikko, Farm

Name of property

St. Louis County, MN

County and State

Section 7 Page 2

pole rafters on 24-inch centers, and is covered with metal; two small wood ventilators pierce the ridgeline. The poured concrete foundation is original, as is the manure handling system.

A hay barn measuring 31 feet in length was added adjacent to the south end of the cattle barn around 1931. It stands about 15 feet away from the cattle barn but is linked to it by plate logs and the roof, thereby creating a drive-through passage for hay wagons between the buildings. The hay section was built by Mikko Pyhala and his sons John, Ben, Waino, Vern, and Oscar. It was placed on dry-laid fieldstone pillars that permitted the building to sit on a sloping hillside. Pole flooring is used throughout the hay barn. The side walls use 6-inch, round balsam logs joined at the corners with saddle and inverted "V" notches; narrow air spaces were left between each log to facilitate hay drying. The design was especially appropriate for a hay barn since air could circulate underneath and through the building. The logs extend up into the gable ends, where seven log courses are held together by sets of full-length purlins and wind braces. A large double-door built into the northern gable wall allowed hay to be pulled up into the mow by a rope and pulley system.

Both barn sections were rehabilitated in 1999 by the Town of Embarrass using local craftsmen. Work included replacing about a dozen deteriorated logs in the cattle barn and four logs in the hay barn, reinforcing the concrete foundation of the cattle barn, and installing new interior partitions in the cattle section.

**3) Sauna, 1924, contributing.**

The smoke sauna (*savusauna*) is a small, one-story log building that measures about 14' by 25'. It is constructed of fully scribed, 7-inch, rounded spruce logs that are slightly hewn flat, and joined at the corners with double notches. The interstices between the logs are very tight, with some evidence of cheese cloth chinking wedged between the cracks. The logs extend about four inches beyond the notches. The walls originally rested directly on the ground but in 1999 a new concrete and fieldstone foundation was laid, and the bottom three logs were replaced. The 8-foot-high side walls have three 17-inch-square windows: one on each side of the dressing room, and the other on the north side of the steam room. Gable end walls carry logs all the way up to the ridge. A small fresh-air vent is cut into the western gable end. The gable roof is sheathed with wood shingles and has a brick chimney on the south slope. The roof is supported by pole rafters that are squared at the ends where they are seated on the plate, and by two round purlins and a ridgepole.

Access into the front dressing room is gained through a door in the east gable end. The low ceiling in this room is supported by four hewn log joists that run perpendicular to the ridge. A round log partition wall separates the dressing and steam rooms; centered in the wall is a door and a 12-inch-wide window and shelf to accommodate the kerosene lamp that provided light into the dark steam room. The blackened interior surfaces of both rooms reveal years of use, both for preheating the original rock pile stove, and for smoking meat. The square stove with rocks piled on top is connected to a circular water tank. The sauna bench is a simple, wide-plank framework that stretches across the western end of the room, while the floor uses regular width pine boards laid over log joists. The low ceiling in the steam room is supported by four round log joists placed parallel with the roof ridge.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Pyhala, Anna and Mikko, Farm

Name of property

St. Louis County, MN

County and State

Section 7 Page 3

**4) Horse Barn, 1929, 2002, contributing.**

The 17'3" by 19'4" horse barn or stable (*talli*) was constructed in 1929 on the site of an older barn that had been moved north of the building cluster. Originally built of 5-inch-thick scribed, balsam, aspen, and fir logs, the logs extend 4 inches beyond the double corner notches. The logs extend to the gable peaks and use a ridge pole and a pair of purlins. Six floor joists support the loft floor. The one-and-one-half-story building has three doors: one for the front entry in the west gable, another at the rear for manure clean-out, and a third for hay at the upper level of the front. Attached to the south wall is a 3'-long small wood box that functions as an air ventilator. Stables for two horses, Danny and Prince, were placed along the northern wall of the barn; a coal bin was later built into one corner. After Prince died in 1944, a home-made "joker" (a tractor fabricated from an old car or truck chassis) performed many of the power chores on the farm.

The horse barn meets Criteria Consideration E as a Reconstructed Property because most of the building's fabric is not original. The condition of the horse barn had deteriorated to such a degree that in 2002 it was reconstructed by local craftsmen according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. It was rebuilt in the exact location as the original horse barn and situated in its original grouping of farm buildings. The work included building a new concrete foundation, a new roof, and replacing about 75% of the logs. This reconstruction was part of an overall restoration plan for the Pyhala Farm outlined in a 1995 historic structures report.

**5) Wood Shed, ca.1910, 2002, contributing.**

The wood shed (*puusuoja*) is a low, one-story building measuring 15'7" by 19'4" made of 8"-round logs joined at the corners with saddle notches. Constructed on a stone foundation, the walls extend for the full height of the gable ends. The gable roof is covered with wood shingles and supported by a ridge pole and purlins. A door is located on the east wall and small windows pierce the east, west and north walls. The wood shed was originally used at one of Mikko Pyhala's logging camps (perhaps as a bunk house) and moved to the farm around 1917; numbered logs suggest it was dismantled and rebuilt at the farm.

The wood shed meets Criteria Consideration E as a Reconstructed Property because nearly all of the building's fabric is not original. The condition of the wood shed had deteriorated to such a degree that in 2002 it was reconstructed by local craftsmen according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. It was rebuilt in the exact location as the original wood shed and situated in its original grouping of farm buildings. The work included building a new stone foundation, a new roof, and replacing about 85% of the logs. This reconstruction was part of an overall restoration plan for the Pyhala Farm outlined in a 1995 historic structures report.

**6) Concrete Block House, 1942-1945, noncontributing.**

Construction on a second house began in 1938 when the Pyhalas purchased a Sears concrete block machine to fabricate their own blocks. The actual building of the one-and-one-half-story house did not begin until 1942; the project was completed three years later. The house represents the children's efforts to provide their parents with a low maintenance home where they could live out the rest of their lives. Prominently placed at the center of the farmstead, the house welcomed family members who returned home, as well as other guests who came to visit.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Pyhala, Anna and Mikko, Farm

Name of property

St. Louis County, MN

County and State

Section 7 Page 4

The first floor of the house was divided into four rooms: kitchen, dining room, living room, and bedroom. The second floor had three bedrooms and several closets. In 1945, the parents and four children resided in the house. Unfortunately, the 1,500 square feet of space were very difficult to heat during the winter, and required four stoves to keep the building warm.

The concrete block house is symbolic of the progress the Pyhala family made in developing their farm. However, because it is not a log building, it does not meet the registration requirements set forth in the Multiple Property Documentation Form. It is therefore considered a noncontributing building.

**7) Calf Shed, ca.1910, contributing.**

The 11' by 12' calf shed is located on the southwestern edge of the farmstead. Currently in a state of ruin, the building was made of 6" to 7" round cedar and balsam logs secured with saddle notches at the corners. It originally had a sloping flat roof and a door on the north wall. Despite its deteriorated condition, it is considered a contributing site.

**8) Well, 1910, contributing.**

Located east of the log house some 70', the 36'-deep well (kaivo) was dug in 1910. Originally the top was capped with a wood platform and a hand-operated rope and bucket assembly. A concrete slab was installed in 1945. The well is considered a contributing structure.

**9) Agricultural Land, contributing.**

Historically, the Pyhala's farmed 80 acres of land located on the north and south sides of Salo Road. After clearing the trees, stumps, and rocks, about 50 acres of clover and timothy hay located on the east and west sides of the Embarrass River were regularly mowed. Potatoes were rotated on four different fields, each about two acres in area. By about 1940, the 40 acres south of Salo Road was sold. The three buildings that stood on that side of Salo Road were later demolished; a modern house now stands on this parcel. As such, this part of the farm is not included in the nomination. The agricultural land on the north side of Salo Road is considered a contributing site.

**10) Parking Lot, noncontributing.**

In 1998 a 45' by 100', 10-car bituminous parking lot was constructed in the southwestern corner of the Pyhala property. It provides parking for the Pyhala Farm and is linked to a bike trail that leads to another Finnish farm open to the public. The parking lot is considered a noncontributing structure.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Pyhala, Anna and Mikko, Farm

Name of property

St. Louis County, MN

County and State

Section 8 Page 1

**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Anna and Mikko Pyhala Farm is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A, significance to the broad patterns of our history, in the areas of Agriculture and Ethnic Heritage: European; and under Criterion C, method of construction, in the area of Architecture. The farm is considered to be of statewide significance. The property is one of St. Louis County's most impressive and substantial examples of Associated Property Type I – Finnish Log Farms – and one of its best examples of traditional Northern European log construction techniques. The Pyhala Farm is associated with Finnish immigration to northeastern Minnesota's Iron Range during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Associated Historic Context "The Iron Range, Minnesota 1880s-1930s"), and represents one family's efforts to convert the marginal cutover into productive agricultural land (see Associated Historic Context "Northern Minnesota Lumbering, 1870s-1930s"). The farm's physical and architectural integrity is bolstered by its rural location amidst fields and woods and by its exceptional collection of outbuildings. It is an outstanding example of a large and relatively intact cluster of buildings that embody the distinctive log construction techniques utilized by Finnish immigrants in Embarrass and rural St. Louis County (see Associated Historic Context "Finnish Log Architecture, 1880s-1930s"). The property was still in use as an active farm into the 1970s; its period of significance has been assigned a closing date of 1931, however, because that is the date the last log building was constructed on the farm.

The National Register eligibility of the Pyhala Farm has been evaluated using the registration requirements in the Multiple Property Documentation Form entitled "Rural Finnish Log Buildings in St. Louis County, Minnesota, 1890-1930s." The property meets the registration requirements for the first Associated Property Type: Finnish Log Farms:

**Registration Requirement: Historical Significance.** The Anna and Mikko Pyhala Farm is significant to the history of St. Louis County as an excellent example of a farm that developed over the course of three decades by Finnish immigrants who transformed the marginal cutover into productive agricultural land, thereby meeting the registration requirement. As an early twentieth-century rural property in northeastern Minnesota's Iron Range, the Pyhala Farm is significant as a representative of the agrarian lifestyle that thousands of Finnish-Americans attempted to achieve in rural St. Louis County during the time they were employed in the iron mining and lumber industries.

**Registration Requirement: Design Significance.** The Anna and Mikko Pyhala Farm is an excellent example of how Finnish builders used traditional northern European log construction techniques to craft a dozen buildings, thereby meeting the registration requirement. The farmstead buildings display the work of highly skilled craftsmen through the chinkless log walls and superior corner notching, and the distinctive use of local indigenous materials.

Further contextual information on the property is available in the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) entitled "Rural Finnish Log Buildings in St. Louis County, Minnesota, 1890-1930s."

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Pyhala, Anna and Mikko, Farm

Name of property

St. Louis County, MN

County and State

Section 8 Page 2

**History of the Farm**

In Finland, subsistence farming had gone on for centuries because of the country's dense forests, rocky soils, and harsh climate. As a result, Finnish immigrant farmers who settled in the cutover region of northeastern Minnesota were familiar with the grassland hay farming techniques that were necessary to survive in the region known for its timber, rocky soils, and short growing season. The Pyhala Farm is one of several hundred farms that were built throughout rural St. Louis County by Finnish-American settlers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Thirty-year-old Mikko Pyhala came to America from Finland in 1902, eventually taking up a homestead at Bear Island Lake about ten miles southwest of Ely. He then married Anna Kujola, who had emigrated in 1895 with her father, Jacob Kujola, an Apostolic Lutheran minister. Pyhala improved his claim by building a small house and clearing land for cultivation. He also worked in an iron ore mine near Ely, about ten miles from the homestead. The youngest of their first five children (17 children were borne by Anna), Waino, was only a few months old in 1909 when a fire destroyed their house. Mikko was away at the mines when the incident occurred and could not be reached. Marion Saranpaa, the youngest of the Pyhala children, recalled the story that, "Mother walked through the woods back to Ely carrying two babies and leading three others. Father came home and found the ashes and thought everyone had died."<sup>1</sup>

In the spring of 1909 the family purchased an 80-acre tract of land (the east half of the southeast quarter of Section 24, Embarrass Township) from Charles Matson, a Finnish railroad laborer who came to America in 1896 and built the log house on the property. Over the next several years the Pyhalas cleared and cultivated their land along the meandering Embarrass River, which bisected the farm roughly in half, north to south. In order to support his growing family, Mikko also worked on the Duluth, Mesabi and Iron Range Railroad and in logging camps. Approximately 50 acres of clover and timothy hayland north and east of the farmstead, and on the south side of Salo Road, were regularly mowed and raked. Potatoes were rotated on four different fields, each about two acres in size; they were stored in a log-lined root cellar (not extant) that had been dug into the west bank of the river. The farm's south 40 acres across Salo Road (not part of this nomination) contained three additional buildings: a barn, a blacksmith shop, and a shoemakers' house. Horizontal pole fencing surrounded the pastures and defined the cattle lanes. The concrete block house was built during the summer months between 1942-1945, although according to the youngest Pyhala child, Anna Pyhala only reluctantly moved into the new house. Mikko Pyhala lived in the concrete block house for just one year before he died in 1946; Anna died in 1960.

One domesticated apple tree was planted in the yard north of the second house, and a large, terraced vegetable garden, enclosed with a picket fence, was developed south of the log house. The garden typically produced carrots, beets, rutabagas, turnips, and onions. In the late 1940s, a second garden was developed northwest of the family's new house. Each fall, two 50-gallon wooden barrels were packed full of wild cranberries picked from

<sup>1</sup> "The Mikko and Anna Pyhala Farmstead Historic Structures Report," p.4. The names and years of birth of the Pyhala children are as follows: Emil, 1905; Eino, 1906; Esther, 1907; Hannah, 1908; Waino, 1909; William, 1910; John, 1912; Walter, 1913; Fanny (Faye), 1914; Helen, 1915; Benjamin and Jenny, 1917; Verner, 1918; Oscar, 1919; Martha (Judy), 1920; Tom (Leonard), 1921; Marion, 1924.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Pyhala, Anna and Mikko, Farm

Name of property

St. Louis County, MN

County and State

Section 8 Page 3

the river. They were then allowed to freeze in a shed and used throughout the winter season. Hundreds of quarts of fruits and vegetables were canned and stored in the cellar of the log house. Ice was cut from the river and stored in a pit dug in the ground north of the second house.

Perhaps more than any other building, the sauna serves as a cultural icon of Finnish farms and is closely associated with the domestic and agricultural lifestyles of St. Louis County farmers during the settlement period. The *savusauna* was built in 1924 and probably replaced an earlier sauna on the property. It was used as a traditional smoke sauna until ca. 1936 when a brick chimney and heating stove were installed. Every Saturday the family used the sauna, the women and girls going first, followed by the men and boys. Since the log dwelling never had indoor plumbing, the sauna was the primary bathhouse for the family, but it also had other essential functions on the farm. Anna Pyhala relied on it along with various home remedies to heal her children when they were sick. She prepared turpentine and lard on a cloth over the chest for colds, puff balls from the woods and fields for bee stings, and balsam pitch for cuts. Old clothes and other items were stored above the dressing room. In the summer the girls often slept in the sauna to relieve overcrowding in the log house. Venison, fish, chickens, and ham were smoked in preparation for storage in the house cellar.

**Finnish Log Architecture**

Following in the tradition of the forebears, Finnish-Americans in St. Louis County relied on an ancient method of log construction quite different from that used by others in the New World. Most American log building is distinguished by horizontal tiers with spaces called interstices filled with any one of several kinds of chinking such as clay, stone, or sticks. Scandinavian and Finnish builders, by contrast, employed a 2,000-year-old method of wall construction that rendered obsolete the use of chinking by tightly fitting the timbers together. Known as the northern European technique, it involved using a double pointed metal scribe called, in Finnish, a *vara*, to trace the contour from the top of one log to the underside of the log immediately above. The scribed wood was then hewn with a broadaxe or similar tool to match the adjoining log. Simultaneously, a longitudinal groove was carved into the underside for the full length of each log, resulting in a narrow gap that was typically filled with moss, burlap, or some other kind of insulation. The tightly fitted walls eliminated the need for chinking and resulted in a more weatherproof building. Interior and exterior wall surfaces also were hewn flat to allow for the application of wood siding on the outside and plaster on the inside.

Structural stability was gained by joining the horizontal timbers at the corners by one of several interlocking joints. The double notch and the less common tooth notch are used by Finns and Scandinavians, while the more common full dovetail and half dovetail notch is characteristic of both the northern European technique and other Continental regions. Each of these forms of corner timbering were used on houses and agricultural outbuildings in which protection from the elements and conservation of heat were important.

Other traditional northern European construction features are the use of purlins laid horizontally to support the rafters and roof system, end walls built of logs for the full height of the gable up to the ridge, and wood pins used to stabilize the walls. Resembling large pegs, these pins were crafted from the same wood building materials as the other farm structures. Driven vertically into holes bored by augers, they are most often found near door and window openings and sometimes at the corner of a building. All of these construction techniques were transplanted to St. Louis County by Finnish settlers.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Pyhala, Anna and Mikko, Farm

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Name of property

St. Louis County, MN

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County and State

Section 8 Page 4

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Many of the log buildings on the Pyhala Farm reveal not only typical northern European construction techniques and traditional forms, but also display unusual and distinctive architectural features. The cattle barn utilizes the complex and rare tooth notch to join hewn timbers at the corners – the only known example of this type of corner notch in the Embarrass area, and a credit to its builder, Matt Pyhala. The hay barn connected to the south side of the cattle barn was added three years after the cattle barn was built, and is characteristic of Finnish construction in which structures were built through careful planning to expand the farmstead. The bathhouse is a traditional smoke sauna and still retains its blackened interior logs and low ceiling. Both the sauna and the horse stable are excellent examples of the northern European log construction technique, which was the most practical solution for retaining heat and protecting animals from the elements.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Anna and Mikko Pyhala Farm is an excellent example of a rural Finnish property that represents the efforts of an immigrant culture to transform a harsh cutover landscape into productive agricultural land while simultaneously working in the logging and mining industries. The farmstead is also an excellent example of traditional northern European log architecture as applied to a variety of domestic and agrarian outbuildings. The Pyhala Farm illustrates how Finnish immigrants carried cultural traditions from the Old to the New World, and successfully made over a relatively small parcel of land for one family.

The Pyhala Farm was acquired in 1997 by Embarrass Township, which is working with Sisu Heritage, Inc. (a local nonprofit organization) and other groups to preserve several Finnish farms in the Embarrass area and develop a heritage tourism initiative for the region.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Pyhala, Anna and Mikko, Farm

Name of property

St. Louis County, MN

County and State

Section 9, 10 Page 1

**9. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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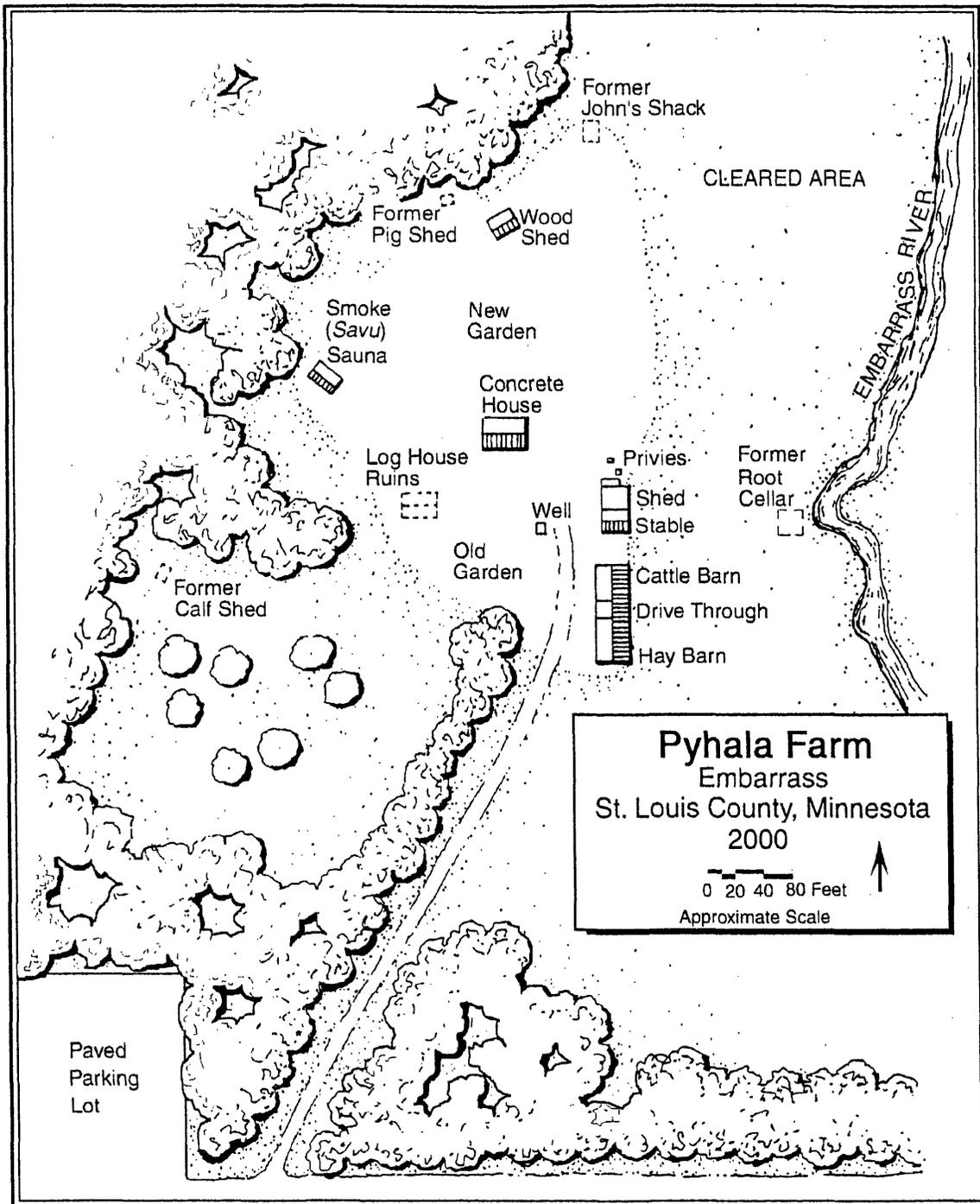
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA, CONTINUED**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property occupies the northeast quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 24 of Embarrass Township (60N 15W) of St. Louis County.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the farmhouse, outbuildings, and cultivated fields that have historically been part of the Pyhala Farm and that maintain historic integrity. The parcel of land that was originally part of the farm located on the south side of Salo Road has been excluded because the historic buildings that formerly stood there are no longer extant, and because it contains a modern house.



Site Plan for the Pyhala Farm, 2000. Source: Based on field measurements by Michael Koop in 1984. Further field work undertaken by Alan Pape in 1995, and updates by M. Koop and A. Alanen in 1999 and 2000. Cartography by Debra Flanders.