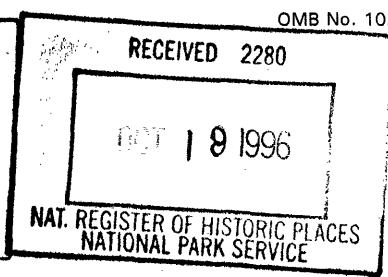
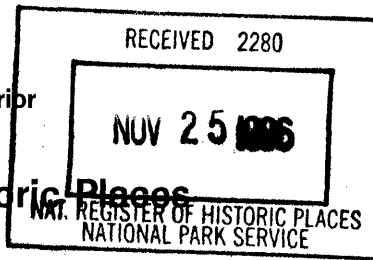


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 any 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 Fujita, Jun Cabin

other names/site number Sackett Cabin, Wendt Cabin

2. Location

street & number Wendt Island, Voyageurs National Park (VOYA) not for publication

city or town Ranier X vicinity

state Minnesota code MN county St. Louis code 137 zip code 56668

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Rowland Bowen 11/25/96
Signature of certifying official Date
National Park Service

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] 5/22/96
Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

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] *Edson H. Beall* 12-2-90
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Entered in the
National Register

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)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing | Noncontributing |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 1 | buildings |
| | sites |
| | 3 structures |
| 1 | objects |
| 2 | 3 Total |

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing

resources previously listed on

the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/CAMP

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/CAMP

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Single pen cabin

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation WOOD:log, STONE:
stone piers

walls WOOD:log, WOOD:wood siding

roof WOOD:weatherboard,
OTHER: asphalt roofing

other

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 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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION
ETHNIC HERITAGE/ASIAN
ART

Period of Significance

1928-ca. 1941

Significant Dates

1928, 1941

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Fujita, Jun

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Fujita, Jun

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 4.0 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 Zone 15N Northing: 5377190N Easting: 509520E

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 John Hurley, Seasonal Historian

organization Voyageurs National Park date August 15, 1994
street & number 3131 Highway 53 telephone (218) 283-9821

city or town International Falls state MN zip code 56449

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 National Park Service/Voyageurs National Park

street & number 3131 Highway 53 telephone (218) 283-9821

city or town International Falls state MN zip code 56649

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.

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Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Fujita Cabin
St. Louis County, Minnesota

Narrative Description

Overview

The Fujita cabin is a modest, one-story cabin located on a small, remote island near the Canadian border on Rainy Lake in Voyageurs National Park in northeastern Minnesota. The simply constructed cabin presents an impression of deliberate rusticity and deference to the natural landscape. Chicago photographer and poet Jun Fujita is believed to have commissioned or performed the initial construction of the cabin soon after 1928, and to have made two additions before 1941.

Constructed on the eastern tip of a four-acre island locally known as Jap Island, the cabin is located approximately 30 miles east of Ranier, the closest permanent settlement. The island scenery is dramatic, characterized by immense crevice-riddled boulders, rocky shorelines, and steep bluffs rising above the lake. The cabin has the appearance of requiring no modifications to the landscape and is thoughtfully integrated into the wilderness setting. Pine trees tower above the cabin on the north, east, and west sides. Tucked against a massive glacial erratic to the south, the cabin also takes advantage of a gentle rock ledge that provides easy access to the lake on the east.

The high degree of historical integrity and good physical condition that the Fujita cabin exhibits is distinctive for the area. The cabin is in its original location, where the setting and feeling have changed little since Fujita's time. The property maintains a high degree of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The harsh local climate has caused minimal deterioration to the cabin beyond the usual settling inherent to log construction.

The property exhibits qualities influenced by Japanese tradition--qualities imported by a teenage Fujita arriving in North America from a country that had experienced minimal exposure to Western ideas. As a Japanese immigrant, Fujita faced prejudices directed against all Asians after World War I. He had to make extraordinary efforts to acquire recreational property in the northwoods and was compelled to abandon the cabin with the beginning of World War II and renewed anti-Japanese hostilities. This civil rights factor underscores the significance of this particular recreational cabin and contributes to our understanding of discrimination against immigrants and Asians.

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Section number 7 Page 2

Fujita Cabin
St. Louis County, Minnesota

Architectural Description

No written evidence about the construction of this remote cabin has survived. Rainy Lake informants say it was built in the late 1920s or early 1930s. Florence Carr, friend and eventually Fujita's wife, bought the island for Fujita's use in 1928.¹ The cabin was probably constructed shortly after Carr bought the property.

The cabin is composed of four distinct sections. The overall shape is a 34' (north-south) by 16' (east-west) rectangle consisting of the original core cabin, porch, and later bedroom addition, with a 6'10" by 7'9" log room appended to the east side of the main cabin. The cabin rests on a foundation of log joists on rough stone piers and the roof is finished with roll asphalt roofing.

The original 13x16 frame cabin is covered with drop siding, initially painted a mustard yellow color and nailed directly to the pole studs. Multi-light casement windows are found throughout the cabin. The front door, which faces north, is flanked by vertical, 6-light casement windows which reach nearly from floor to ceiling. A large, rustic chimney built of native rubble is centered on the west facade. The fireplace and chimney were built by local grocer and jack-of-all-trades Harry Erickson, Sr., who built several other stone chimneys on Rainy Lake.²

The interior of the one-room cabin is simply finished with exposed framing of unfinished, peeled cedar pole studs and rafters. The contrast of the poles with the regular rhythm of the exposed wood siding combined with the wood floors contributes to the richness of texture and warm atmosphere of the cabin.

During Fujita's time and before the outbreak of World War II, when Fujita stopped using the island, two log additions were built.³ It is likely that Fujita designed and built these sections himself. A shed porch addition about 9 feet deep and constructed of logs, runs the full width of the north facade. The tongue and groove floor and exposed rafter design of the core cabin extends into the porch. A screen door opens into the porch on the west side and provides access to the main cabin.

¹ St. Louis County Torrens Office *Tract Files*.

² Mary Dodds Schlick, longtime border lakes area resident; interview by Mary Graves, 8/8/90. Mary Jane Wendt, current user of Fujita cabin and friend of former owners who purchased it from Fujita; interview by John Hurley, 7/8/94.

³ Wendt interview.

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Section number 7 Page 3

Fujita Cabin
St. Louis County, Minnesota

A small, 7' x 8' hip-roofed log addition protrudes from the east side of the core cabin. The cedar logs that form this room were carefully selected to be uniform in appearance. Each wall of the log addition contains a large vertical, paired 6-light casement window which allow⁴ considerable natural light into the room.

The floor in the log room is a step higher than the floor of the rest of the cabin. The raised floor is the probable source of the current occupant's belief that Fujita used this room as a shrine.⁴ However, one informant remembers seeing a sleeping mat in this room on his two visits to the island about 1934.⁵ The narrow tongue and groove floor, exposed pole rafters, and rustic wood shelves enhance the coziness of the alcove. The intimacy and charm created by the handcrafted qualities, rich textures, and faceted windows provides a pleasing contrast with the heavier scale and horizontal lines of the log work.

The interior of the log room is unpainted. The structural logs form the inside face of the walls. The logs are chinked with oakum and wood wedges are nailed between the logs. The long view of Rainy Lake from the alcove, the low windows on three sides, and the rising grade of the bedrock on two sides provide a strong connection with the outdoors. The alcove opens to its full width into the core cabin.

A windowed, panel door was added between the log room addition and the porch along the east facade and is currently nailed shut. The placement of this door seems puzzling in that it is located only a few feet from the front door and well to the north of the center of the east wall. The wall studs are further apart here than elsewhere, but they were also notched to accommodate the door. This seems to indicate that a smaller door or window was originally intended for this location, but that the present door replaced an earlier opening. However, it is known that this door stood as it now is when Fujita stopped using the cabin.⁶ The center of the door contains hinges where a folding table was once attached.

Although the cabin is characteristic in some ways of other seasonal cabins in the area, the Fujita property conveys a Japanese influence in its design, use and setting.⁷ The cabin

⁴ Wendt interviews.

⁵ Norman Selsaas, interviewed by telephone by John Hurley, 8/16/94.

⁶ Wendt letters.

⁷The following descriptions of Japanese homes are drawn primarily from the 1961 Dover reprint Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings by Edward S. Morse. It was originally published in 1886 at a time when Westernization had made few inroads into Japanese life. Morse's investigation of Japanese homes and houses is contemporary with Fujita's arrival in North America.

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Fujita Cabin
St. Louis County, Minnesota

shares many materials and details with area seasonal cabins but the property exhibits a deliberate composition of elements that give it a unique character and feeling evocative of the ideal picturesque Japanese country house. Even when residents possess great wealth and can afford variety in their Japanese country house, the rural imagery persists with a desire for diminutive and inconspicuous construction.

The dramatic landscape of Fujita's small island with its large rocks, pine trees, wildflowers evokes images of a Japanese landscape. Indistinct paths, improved only by the placement of stepping stones in subtle clusters, follow the natural topography of the island. The cabin is subtly integrated into the landscape, with an emphasis on the view. The cabin entrance is obscured by the veranda, forcing a side entry and producing an indefinite entrance characteristic of modest residential Japanese construction. Nowhere is there evidence of the efficient orthogonal site organization typical of northern Minnesota lake cabin sites.

Typical of Japanese houses, the cabin has a moderate pitch to the roof. The picturesque appearance is substantially a result of the assemblage of various roof forms. The additions are deferential and supplemental to the main roof. The cabin includes forms from the Japanese palate of hips, gables and pent (shed) roofs. Across the front extends the essential veranda. Characteristic of Japanese residential construction, the cabin has no foundation other than simple dry-laid stones.

The use of natural materials, simple lines, light construction, little decoration, subdued colors, create a certain daintiness or grace in the construction that is suggestive of Japanese architecture. While the core cabin uses a simple post and beam system to carry the roof, this is typical both of Japanese and local cabin building tradition, it is the additions that emphasize the Japanese character. Fujita took unusual care to obtain and place uniform appearing cedar logs for the additions. More care was given to produce a precise rhythm to the natural material than to assembly for durability. It is conspicuous and unusual that the additions are more rustic than the original construction and largely disguise the simplicity of the original form.

Fujita allowed Fred and Edythe Sackett of Rapid City, owners of nearby Norway Island, to use his Rainy Lake cabin from the early 1940s. The Sacketts sought to buy the property, but Fujita and Carr refused to sell it to them until 1956. The Sacketts added a bedroom on the south side of the cabin about 1960.⁸ The bedroom addition is of frame construction and runs the entire width of the cabin. The walls are covered with a fiberboard and asphalt roll roofing. The commercial-lumber framing of the recent bedroom is conspicuous from the inside of this room, where the two-by-four wall studs and 1.5 x 6 rafters are exposed. The east and west walls of this room are dominated by the 3/3 casement windows. A windowed

⁸ Wendt interview.

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Fujita Cabin
St. Louis County, Minnesota

door on the west side provides access to the bedroom from the outside. A plank door provides access from the main cabin to the bedroom. The original casement windows between the main cabin and the new bedroom were left in place but painted over.

The current kitchen appliances, including a sink to the north of the fireplace, a metal storage cabinet to the south of the fireplace, a propane refrigerator and stove along the south wall, and propane lights, were added by the Sacketts during the 1950s or 1960s. The propane stove replaced an earlier kerosene stove. A small, open-sided shed addition, constructed by the Sackett's on the west facade, housed a refrigerator during the 1950s and is now used for general storage.⁹

The Sacketts sold the property in 1973 to their Rapid City friends Charles and Mary Jane Wendt, who owned it until 1985, when it was acquired by Voyageurs National Park.¹⁰ The Wendts, who now lease the cabin, painted the inside of the drop siding white and recently laid linoleum in the porch, kitchen, and log room. The cabinets which hang over the stove on the south side of the kitchen, were added by the Wendts during the 1970s.¹¹ Also constructed by the Wendts was a built-in, fold-out couch on the porch.¹²

Other Resources on the Property

A rustic bench, made of unfinished wood poles and blotched with the pigment of long-dead moss, overlooks the water from about 20 feet east of the cabin. It is nailed between a spruce tree and the stump of another tree that was cut several years ago, long after the bench was first attached to it. The Wendt's report that the bench was made by the Sacketts from Fujita's original front door, however it is very similar in style and construction to a privacy screen located between the privy and the path to the dock. The Sackett's and Wendt's called this the "pouting bench" because of its use by solitary individuals after marital quarrels.¹³

Stepping stones have been placed on the west side of the cabin between the porch and the bedroom addition and may continue under the bedroom addition.

⁹ Wendt, Mary Jane, and Kathie (Wendt) Pellegrini, interviewed by John Hurley and Mary Graves, 8/12/94.

¹⁰ Wendt interviews and letters; St. Louis County Recorder of Deeds files.

¹¹ Wendt, Mary Jane, and Kathie Pellegrini, interviewed by John Hurley and Mary Graves, 8/12/94.

¹² Wendt / Pellegrini interview.

¹³ Wendt interviews.

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Fujita Cabin
St. Louis County, Minnesota

A path of about 100 yards from the cabin to the dock, with side switches leading to the privy and to the woods at the western end of the island, closely follows the topography as it meanders to avoid steep climbs and difficult areas. While this path is faithful to the style of the island's cultural landscape, it may not date to the Fujita period, as local informants remember landing in a different location on the island when visiting Fujita.¹⁴

Noncontributing resources include a privy and a storage shed, which date from the 1970s, a dock reconstructed in 1994, and an 8' by 8' tent platform near the cabin that was under construction in August 1994.

At least three homemade ladders, made from two-by-fours and heavy nails, provide access to the rock outcrops near the cabin. These ladders are probably not very old, but they are consonant with the character of the site, and Fujita may well have used similar ladders in the same spots. A gravity-flow water tank, added by the Wendts, sits high on the rock behind the cabin. A wooden bench lies against the west wall of the porch; this bench replaced older deteriorated wooden planters.¹⁵ A flower planter rests on cinder blocks along the east wall of the porch.

¹⁴ Schlick 1994 interview; Selsaas interview.

¹⁵ Wendt / Pellegrini interview.

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Fujita Cabin
St. Louis County, Minnesota

Statement of Significance

The Fujita property qualifies for the National Register under criterion A, for its association with historical events, and criterion B, for its association with a historically significant person. The construction of the cabin was associated with the early development of recreation in the area, which has been a powerful force in the local culture and economy. The cabin is the oldest known intact recreational cabin on Rainy Lake within Voyageurs National Park. It is one of very few cabins in this rustic style that survive in the border lakes area from the period of the interwar upsurge in northwoods recreation. The rustic resort style of the period would have appealed to the traditional Japanese aesthetic of picturesque settings, mannerist use of natural materials, and humble, unobtrusive designs.

Jun Fujita was one of the earliest Japanese-Americans to achieve prominence in the Midwest. He was an eminent photographer in the region, working in news, commercial, and artistic photography. He also had noteworthy success as a poet. Fujita used the cabin from ca. 1928 until ca. 1941 for recreation and as a base for commercial photography. It is likely that the rugged setting of the cabin provided inspiration for Fujita's artistic work, which was dominated by portrayals of flowers, forests, and landscapes. The remote location of the cabin probably also provided an atmosphere conducive to reflection. However, for a Japanese-American in Fujita's era experiencing legal discrimination against Asians, even meditative solitude and rugged recreation required unusual measures.

Fujita's Life

Fujita was born in Hiroshima, Japan on December 18, 1888 and immigrated to Canada as a teenager, later finding his way to the United States. Fujita's obituary in the *Chicago Tribune* says that he went to Canada at age 18 on a commission to photograph Canadian lumbering for a Japanese publication where his uncle was an editor.¹⁶ Fujita's surviving friends remember his accounts of his early work as a photographer in Canada.¹⁷ Other sources provide slightly different dates for Fujita's immigration to Canada. Several of Fujita's friends remember him saying that he came to North America by himself at age 14 or 15¹⁸,

¹⁶ "Jun Fujita, 75, Photographer, Dies at Home." Unsigned obituary, *Chicago Tribune*, July 13, 1963.

¹⁷ Biesel interview. Also Pape, Thomas, friend of Fujita and Carr at Indiana Dunes from 1940's through 1960's, interviewed by John Hurley, 6/27/94.

¹⁸ Hall/Byrne and Biesel interviews.

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Fujita Cabin
St. Louis County, Minnesota

and his Chicago *Daily News* obituary¹⁹ says that he went to Canada at 13, living in British Columbia for some time.

Fujita moved to Chicago some time before 1915. Japanese immigration to the United States was restricted in 1908, but a working photographer could have entered the U.S. legally until Japanese immigration was completely banned in 1924. Fujita was working in Chicago for the *Evening Post* by 1915; it is not known whether he spent time elsewhere in the United States before moving to Chicago.²⁰ Fujita's *Daily News* obituary says that he finished high school in Chicago, which would probably place his arrival there somewhat earlier than 1915. Fujita could not be found in Illinois in the 1910 census, but neither the census indexing nor the enumeration itself is completely reliable for this period; in fact, he was also not found in the census of 1920, when he certainly was living in Chicago.²¹

Both obituaries state that Fujita studied mathematics and physics at the Armour Institute in Chicago. Fujita worked for the *Evening Post* until at least 1929, and probably a few years longer. Few of the *Post*'s photos were attributed to particular photographers in Fujita's time, but photos by Fujita related to the sinking of the USS *Eastland* in the Chicago River in 1915 and the 1929 St. Valentine's Day massacre have been located.²²

After this fifteen-year career in news photography, Fujita turned to commercial and artistic work. In the 1930s, he established a private photography studio in Chicago, which he ran until his death in 1963. He was very successful in his commercial photography, doing work for the manufacturers of Johnson motors, and for Stark nurseries, Sears Roebuck, and the federal government.²³ His friends remember that he photographed the Hoover Dam before the outbreak of World War II, because of a standing joke among them about the potential

¹⁹ "Private Services for Fujita." Unsigned obituary, *Chicago Daily News*, July 13, 1963.

²⁰ Chicago Historical Society, *Daily News Negative Files*. This collection includes Fujita's *Evening Post* photos discussed below because the *News* absorbed the *Evening Post* during the 1930's.

²¹ United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; *Thirteenth* (1910) and *Fourteenth* (1920) *Censi of the United States, Schedule 1: Population*. Washington, DC, 1910 and 1920.

²² Chicago Historical Society, *Daily News Negative Collection*.

²³ Hall and Byrne, Biesel, Pape interviews; *Tribune* obituary; E.O. Brown, longtime seasonal visitor to Rainy Lake area, letter to Mary Graves, 4/21/92; Lauren Erickson, longtime border lakes area resident, interviewed by Mary Graves, 9/19/89; Norman Selsaas, longtime area resident, interviewed by telephone by John Hurley, 8/16/94.

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Fujita Cabin
St. Louis County, Minnesota

consequences if he had been seen there with a camera during the war.²⁴ The settings for some of the photography Fujita completed for Johnson motors were on Rainy Lake.

In addition to his commercial and news photography, Fujita produced artistic work in several different media. In all of these media, his favorite subjects were flowers and landscapes. He made this observation in a photoessay in Allstate Insurance's magazine *Home and Highway* in 1957:

We had been scouting around different parts of the country for many years--a busman's holiday; I would be looking for wild flowers to photograph. Whether these flowers are rare or common they all have delicate languages and create vivid moods. I try to recreate these moods in my photographs.²⁵

The Art Institute of Chicago has a collection of Fujita's color photos of flowers.²⁶ Some of these were done with very early color equipment, but the color is remarkably natural and the lighting very dramatic.

Fujita wrote poetry in English using a minimalistic Japanese form called *tanka*. A friend of Fujita's who is an amateur poet remembers his writing *haiku* also.²⁷ Many of his *tanka* were published in the 1920's in *Poetry* magazine as well as other periodicals. *Poetry* is one of the country's most prestigious literary serials, and during Fujita's era it also published the works of such major figures as T.S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Robert Frost, and carried a regular column of criticism by Ezra Pound. Fujita also published several reviews of Japanese-American poetry in the same venue. A 1923 collection of Fujita's *tanka* was privately published and received a favorable review in *Poetry*. Fujita's poetry was highly unusual in that it applied the rules of Japanese poetic genres to poetry written in English well before the vogue of English *haiku*. Perhaps this is why he named his collection *Tanka: Poems in Exile*, implying that the poems themselves were in exile.

²⁴ Byrne and Hall interview.

²⁵ Fujita, Jun, "Gifts of the Countryside," *Home and Highway* 6:2 (May 1957), p. 2-5.

²⁶ Art Institute of Chicago, Still Photography Study Room, *Jun Fujita Collection*.

²⁷ Hall / Byrne interview. This was Mary Byrne's recollection.

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Fujita Cabin
St. Louis County, Minnesota

Fujita also painted watercolors of flowers, of which a few survive in the possession of his friends. None of his watercolors is known to have been sold commercially.²⁸

Fujita had a long-term relationship with Florence Carr, a Euro-American woman who was about six years younger than he.²⁹ Carr was a secretary and later a social worker, and she studied at the University of Chicago. She and Fujita lived together from the early or mid-1920s until his death. In the early 1930s, Fujita and Carr lived in an artists' colony in one of the old Columbian Exposition buildings, at 5644 Harper Street. When Fujita established his studio, they moved into an apartment above the business.³⁰ Fujita and Carr had another vacation cabin in present-day Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, located on land they bought in 1938, near the houses of artist friends.³¹

Although Carr was the owner of the Minnesota property, local informants do not remember her. Fujita, the only Japanese person ever seen in the area at that time, is well remembered, but informants say he used the cabin alone.³² Similarly, the Indiana Dunes property deed listed Carr's name first, although Fujita was also listed.

Friends say Carr owned their property in her name because of fear that it could be confiscated from Fujita under state laws restricting land ownership by aliens, and particularly by Asian aliens. The provisions of these laws varied over time and between the three states where Fujita and Carr had property. Minnesota's legislature passed a law in 1945 that limited ownership of land over 90,000 square feet (slightly over 2 acres) by aliens who had not declared intent to become US citizens, although the law contained several significant

²⁸ Biesel and Hall/Byrne interviews.

²⁹ *Fourteenth* (1920) *Census*.

³⁰ Pape, Biesel, Byrne/Hall, interviews. Hannell, Hazel, friend and neighbor of Fujita and Carr at Indiana Dunes; interviewed by John Hurley by telephone, 6/27/94. Also *Fourteenth* (1920) *Census* on Carr's work as a stenographer.

³¹ Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore *Tract Files*; Porter County Recorder of Deeds files.

³² Schlick interview; Erickson, Harry Jr., longtime area resident; interviewed by telephone by John Hurley, 6/21/94. These two informants were specifically questioned about Carr and said that they had no memory of her, and Schlick said that everyone assumed Fujita was single. No one else interviewed from the border lakes area mentioned Carr at all.

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exceptions and grandfathered in already-existing holdings.³³ Asian aliens could not become U.S. citizens at this time, except under very extraordinary circumstances, so the discriminatory effect of this law fell most heavily on them. Illinois allowed aliens to hold land for up to six years.³⁴ Although Indiana was a notoriously unfriendly place for ethnic minorities in this period, its state government allowed aliens who had not declared intention to become citizens to own holdings of not more than 320 acres.³⁵

Fujita and Carr were married in 1940. Friends say that Fujita and Carr married to protect their property from confiscation related to his Japanese citizenship.³⁶ However, concern for their property should have discouraged them from marrying. Although the Cable Act of 1922, which nullified the citizenship of American citizens who married Asian immigrants, had been overturned, a revival of some form of this policy must have seemed possible in the anti-Japanese atmosphere of the war years.³⁷ The Cable Act's primary purpose was to prevent men who were Asian immigrants from avoiding state-imposed property holding restrictions by marrying the US-born daughters of other Asian immigrants, but the added complication of a racially mixed marriage might well have provoked extra vigilance on the part of enforcing authorities. In the event of a revival of some form of this policy, marriage would jeopardize Carr's property without protecting any held by Fujita in his own name. Obviously, loss of citizenship could also cause various other problems for Carr.

³³ State of Minnesota, *Session Laws of the State of Minnesota*, Fifty-Fourth (1945) session, St. Paul, MN, 1945. Chapter 280, S.F. No 993, amending Section 500.22 (pages 468-470). This was repealed in 1977; see *Session Laws of Seventieth Session*, Chapter 269 (p. 440-442).

³⁴ West Publishing, *Smith-Hurd's Illinois Statutes Annotated*; Chap. 765. St. Paul, MN. 1993.

³⁵ West Publishing, *West's Annotated Indiana Code*, St. Paul, MN, 1993. 32-1-7-2 through 32-1-8-2 (pages 271-278).

³⁶ Hall/Byrne interview.

³⁷ See Wilson, Robert A. and Bill Hosokawa, *East to America*; New York, 1980, p.185 and 248 for a discussion of this law. Interestingly, a white woman who lost her citizenship this way could regain it if the marriage ended, but a US-born Asian woman under the same circumstances could not, since as an Asian she was ineligible for naturalization.

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Fujita was granted U.S. citizenship by a private Congressional bill in 1954.³⁸ Fujita died on July 12, 1963, apparently of cancer. Carr died in New York City a few years later.³⁹

Fujita's success as a photographer working for a mainstream newspaper and for major commercial corporations was extremely unusual among Japanese-Americans in his time, and especially among the Japanese-born population. Most Japanese immigrants arrived in the United States as farm laborers. Most of those who escaped agricultural wage labor did so by becoming sharecroppers or, with luck, independent small farmers.⁴⁰ Even the considerable number of second-generation Japanese-Americans who experienced upward social mobility consisted mainly of professionals serving segregated Japanese-American communities.⁴¹

Fujita was also one of the earliest Japanese residents of the American Midwest; as late as 1940, less than 5% of the 285,115 Japanese-Americans lived outside of Hawaii and the West Coast states.⁴² An Iowan who remembered Fujita well from her summer visits to Rainy Lake pointed out that, "I suppose he was the first Japanese person I ever knew--and probably my parents [had also never previously met a Japanese person]."⁴³

Recreation in the Rainy Lake Area

Rainy Lake was still remote in Fujita's time. Access to the area for recreation had originally become practicable when railroads reached International Falls in 1907 and adjoining Fort Frances, Ontario in 1908.⁴⁴ Highways to the area from Duluth, Baudette, and Bemidji were graveled and graded, making them passable for automobiles during most of the year, by 1922.⁴⁵ However, the nearest large town, Duluth, is more than 150 miles away from Rainy

³⁸Immigration and Naturalization Service, Chicago Illinois

³⁹ *Tribune* and *Daily News* obituaries and Hall-Byrne and Pape interviews.

⁴⁰ O'Brien, David J. and Stephen S. Fugita, The Japanese American Experience. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991, p.19-32

⁴¹ O'Brien and Fugita, p. 38-39.

⁴² Rolater, Fred. S. and Jeanette Baker Rolater, Japanese-Americans. Vero Beach, FL, 1991, page 52. The Rolaters derived these figures from the 1940 US Census.

⁴³ Schlick interview, 8/16/94.

⁴⁴ Drache, Hiram, Taming the Wilderness, Danville, IL: Interstate Publishers, 1992, pages 136-7, 148.

⁴⁵ Drache, Taming the Wilderness, p. 158.

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Lake by road, and the closest sizeable cities, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Winnipeg, are each nearly 300 miles away.

The large paper mill in International Falls began production in 1910, and an associated sawmill opened in 1912.⁴⁶ However, outside of the Falls, use of the area by non-aboriginal people had been limited to through travel on the lakes by *voyageurs* during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, logging from the 1880s, unproductive gold mining between 1893 and 1901, commercial fishing, and scattered hunting and trapping. Turn-of-the-century attempts to develop permanent communities based on agriculture had failed because of the severe climate.⁴⁷

Fujita established his vacation cabin at a time when a growing number of people were coming to this rugged area to enjoy outdoor recreation in a wilderness setting. This followed earlier development of tourism at Vermilion Lake to the southeast, and was roughly contemporaneous with or slightly ahead of the growth of the industry in the area of Lake of the Woods to the northwest.⁴⁸

The area attracted visitors who came to fish and to hunt for big game. Others visited simply to experience the wilderness. Around 1920, a number of excursion boats began to offer tours of the lakes. A contractor in Orr, 60 miles to the south of Rainy Lake, specialized in building vacation cabins on the border lakes from the mid-1920s. International Falls collected parking fees from 1483 automobile loads of tourists in 1926, while a large number also arrived by railroad. By the end of the period in which Fujita vacationed at Rainy Lake, floatplanes were common sights as tourists sought access to the hinterlands.⁴⁹

Historians of the border lakes emphasize the prominent availability in the area of recreational activities of less reputable character during the 1920s and into the depression era. Gambling, moonshine, prostitution, and other types of vice were openly purveyed at Ranier, International Falls, and Kettle Falls during this period. However, while this trade was part of the ambiance of the area, it apparently catered to locals and transient lumber workers

⁴⁶ Drache, Taming the Wilderness, 6-11.

⁴⁷ Drache, Taming the Wilderness, p.93-114. Also Fritz, David L., Gold Mining Near Rainy Lake City -- 1893 to 1901 and Logging and Lumbering as Associated with the Area Now Incorporated Within the Bounds of Voyageurs National Park. National Park Service *Special History Studies*, Denver, 1986.

⁴⁸ Drache, 271, Slakey, Anne, and Mary Graves, Task Directive: Historic Context; Tourism and Recreation in the Border Lakes Region, 1890's- 1945, unpublished, Voyageurs National Park, 1993.

⁴⁹ See Drache, Taming the Wilderness, p.263-287 for a discussion of these developments.

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rather than tourists, although some tourists did gamble.⁵⁰ Vice of all kinds declined during the 1930s. By World War II, the Kettle Falls Hotel had made the transition from a house of prostitution and home of transient smugglers, moonshiners, gamblers, and fugitives from the law to a tourist attraction.⁵¹

The vacationers at Rainy Lake during this period included a number of Minneapolis professionals and several wealthy families from various parts of the Midwest who formed a social circle dominated by the family of local capitalist E.W. Backus. This group began building elaborate vacation homes on Rainy Lake soon after the arrival of the railroads. Less wealthy visitors in the period stayed at the growing number of rustic resorts that began to appear during the 1910s⁵² or built rustic cabins on their own property or on lots rented from the state at nominal charge.⁵³

The development of tourism in the area did bring some conflicts with those involved in the area's older industries. Dams had been built at International Falls in 1905 and Kettle and Squirrel Falls in 1914, and mill management manipulated the lake levels according to their needs for power and floating of logs.⁵⁴ Organized pressure against the further development of hydroelectric power and for more stable water levels was well under way by the time Fujita began coming to the area. This pitted local capital, unions, and the local government, who were mainly concerned for the health of the local mills, against vacationers and environmentalists, who opposed further disruption of the ecosystems and geological resources, and tourist-trade operators, who had difficulty operating lakeside facilities such as marinas under conditions of extreme variation in lake levels.⁵⁵ Another conflict set the tourist industry, with its dependence on recreational fishing, against commercial fishermen. Although fluctuating water levels still cause conflict today, environmentalists did succeed in blocking plans for an elaborate series of dams.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Drache, Taming the Wilderness, p.206-235.

⁵¹ Drache, Taming the Wilderness, p.206-235, 263-287.

⁵² Drache, Taming the Wilderness, p.263-271.

⁵³ See Slakey, Anne, Minnesota's Lakeshore Leasing Program, (unpublished, Voyageurs National Park, 1993) for an extensive discussion of this program.

⁵⁴ Drache, Taming the Wilderness, p.276; 306-310.

⁵⁵ Drache, Taming the Wilderness, p.306-325.

⁵⁶ Drache, Taming the Wilderness, p.273-275; Slakey, Minnesota's Lakeshore Leasing Program, p.24-26.

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The economic history of the border lakes area reached a turning point in the 1930s. The last trees to be felled for lumber in the Rainy Lake area were cut around 1937, although trees continued to be cut for pulp until the park was established.⁵⁷ Preliminary results of a study currently under way of the history of recreation in the area indicate that the 1930s was also a time of unprecedented vigor for the recreation industry.⁵⁸ It is surprising that an industry reliant on discretionary spending would peak during this period of economic depression, but perhaps trips to the rugged northwoods replaced more expensive forms of recreation for middle-class vacationers. The construction of campgrounds and other visitor facilities by CCC units also may have been a contributing factor.⁵⁹

Fujita's Use of the Cabin

Fujita clearly sought and found solitude on the island. In addition to the remoteness of the border lakes area in Fujita's time, the island is 30 miles from Ranier, the nearest town. Despite Fujita's isolation on the island, however, several long-time area residents were able to share their memories of Fujita's activities in the area. These informants say Fujita used the cabin primarily for recreational purposes but also for commercial photography. It is not known whether Fujita produced any of his artistic work at the cabin, but the rugged surroundings certainly suggest the subject matter of his poetry, artistic photos, and paintings. Fujita's quest for solitude was complicated by discrimination that led him to keep the property in Carr's name and prevented him from using the island after 1941.

A longtime seasonal visitor to the lake who visited Fujita's island a number of times during the 1930s reported that Fujita spent a great deal of time reading and meditating on the island. She commented that he "loved the silence, the quiet of the island...The rocks, the lake, the sound of the water, was in his soul." Although many people stopped by the island, "nobody stayed a long time" because no one wished to intrude on Fujita's solitude.⁶⁰

A more visible recreational activity Fujita pursued on Rainy Lake was his use of racing boats at a time when powerboats of any kind were still unusual in the area.⁶¹ Fujita also fished

⁵⁷ Drache, Taming the Wilderness, p.11.

⁵⁸ Slakey and Graves, Task Directive, p. 2.

⁵⁹ Slakey, Minnesota's Lakeshore Leasing Program, p. 31-33.

⁶⁰ Mary Dodds Schlick, interviewed by telephone by John Hurley, 8/16/94.

⁶¹ Harry Erickson interview, Brown letter. Also, Lauren Erickson, interviewed by Mary Graves, 9/19/89.

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on Rainy Lake. The great majority of visitors to the lake do some fishing there, but Fujita was unusual in that he used the catch to prepare Japanese raw fish dishes at the cabin.⁶²

Longtime residents say Fujita also used the cabin as a base for his commercial photography for the manufacturers of Johnson boat motors, in which he photographed local people, boats, and Johnson motors.⁶³ Since many Rainy Lake people remember Fujita's photography for Johnson, it is likely that it was relatively extensive.

The constraints put upon Japanese-Americans during Fujita's era affected both the manner of his acquiring the cabin, as discussed above, and the time of his abandoning it. Fujita used the island from about the time of Carr's purchase in 1928 until shortly before the outbreak of World War II.⁶⁴ Due to his residency in Chicago, Fujita avoided wartime internment. However, he apparently never returned to the Minnesota cabin after the beginning of the war, vacationing instead at the Indiana Dunes cabin, which is little more than an hour's travel from Chicago. Friends of Fujita's and Rainy Lake informants assume that Fujita did not wish to travel the long distance to northern Minnesota during the war era because of the prevalence of anti-Japanese hostility.⁶⁵ One informant reports it was rumored that Fujita was threatened by a local person at Rainy Lake at this time.⁶⁶ It is indicative of the conspicuousness of Fujita's background that the island was popularly known as Jap Island.

⁶² Brown letter.

⁶³ Brown letter; Harry Erickson jr., Lauren Erickson, Schlick (1994) and Selsaas interviews.

⁶⁴ Wendt interviews and letters, Schlick interview, Brown letter.

⁶⁵ Brown letter; Erickson and Wendt interviews.

⁶⁶ Wendt interview.

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Verbal Boundary Description

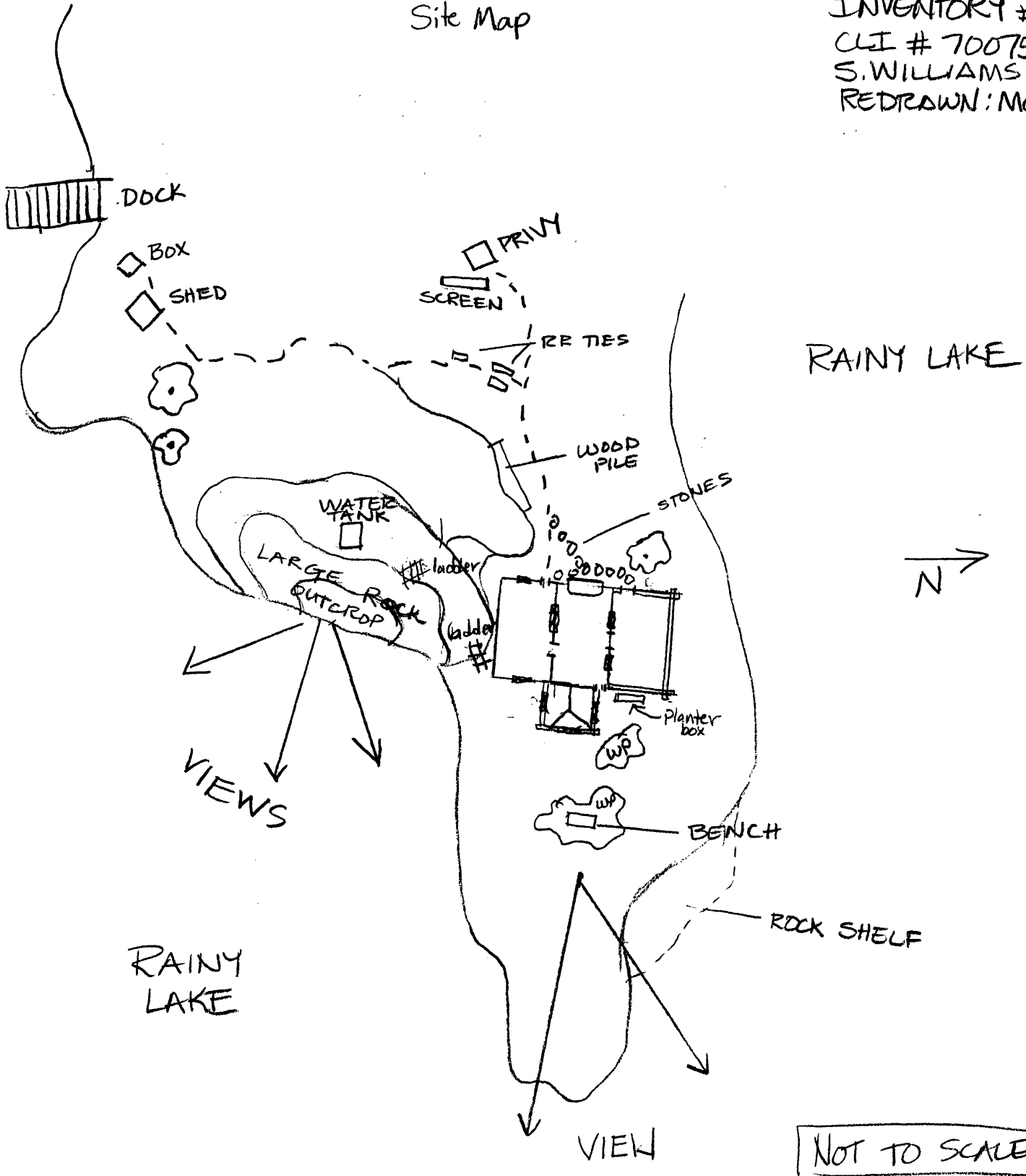
The property nominated is defined as the full land area of Wendt island, Section 14, Township 70 North, Range 20 West, 4th Principal Meridian, government lot 2. The center of the island is located at latitude 48 degrees, 32 minutes, 59 seconds north and longitude 92 degrees, 52 minutes, 13 seconds west. UTM references are given on the main National Register form. The island is located in Rainy Lake, within the area of present-day Voyageurs National Park.

Boundary Justification

It is necessary to include the entire island to encompass the full area used by Fujita; the outbuildings and dock site are scattered on the island. All structures on the island are related to the Fujita cabin. Furthermore, the island was legally treated as a single property throughout the period of significance, as well as in later times.

FUJITA Site Map

TRACT 36-113
INVENTORY # 46
CLI # 70075 (draft)
S. WILLIAMS 5/26/93
REDRAWN: MGRAVES



Paths seem to meander somewhat more than necessary, "fitting" into niches in rock. House tucked into rock. Several large pines very close to house - perhaps indications of "fitting with nature" philosophy.