

PH0501565

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUL 27 1977
DATE ENTERED JUN 9 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Cole Watch Tower

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

W of Omro on WI 21

CITY, TOWN

Omro

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
6th

STATE

Wisconsin 54963

CODE

055

COUNTY

Winnebago

CODE

139

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER: Storage

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. Bruce Cole

STREET & NUMBER

State Highway 21

CITY, TOWN

Omro

VICINITY OF

STATE

Wisconsin 54963

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Winnebago County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 319

CITY, TOWN

Oshkosh

STATE

Wisconsin 54901

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

1974

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

816 State Street

CITY, TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Cole Watch Tower is a much later addition to the Italianate farmhouse built circa 1870 by Charles King of Omro.¹ According to the present owner, building the house took three years and was largely the work of one very skilled craftsman who did all of the masonry and carpentry himself. The brick was hauled from Waupaca.

The house sits on a low stone foundation and has an L-shaped floor plan--a two-story brick square and a one-story brick wing behind. Simple Italianate features include a low hipped roof, brackets below the wide eaves, and a denticulated cornice. This same bracket and dentil combination is used above the entrance porch and over the bay window on the north side of the house. Each double hung window has a panelled cornice and most of the glass is original.

The Watch Tower was built in 1935 and designed by Howard-Jensen-Brown of Oshkosh.² The seven-story steel structure rises above the back wing of the house. The exterior is a curtain wall of tan faced brick and tile with concrete spandrel covers that delineate each of the floors. The second and third stories were designed as living quarters and include a kitchen, living and dining room and dressing room. The rest of the floors serve as storage area. A shed roof projects out over the tower entrance.

Because of its massive construction, the building remains structurally sound although it has not been used since 1948.

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1. Interview with Bruce Cole, February 28, 1977.
 2. Ibid.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1935 - Tower;
 1870's-House BUILDER/ARCHITECT Tower: Howard-Jensen-Brown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Cole Tower was built during the heyday of the fox fur industry in Wisconsin. It is one of very few surviving structures of its kind and is representative of the development of fur ranching versus fur trapping. Because of this, it is believed that the watch tower possesses sufficient significance to override the fifty year criterion.

With the decline of the fox farming industry and the development of new breeding techniques, the watch tower, once so common in Wisconsin, has become obsolete. However, in the early decades of this century, when raising foxes was both very popular and profitable, the tower was a necessary part of the ranch and was recommended by the American National Fox Breeders Association in their trade journal.¹

Because foxes are extremely nervous and shy animals, the best way of observing their quarrels, accidents, and mating without alarming them was from a secluded post. Most towers were small (one to three stories). The Cole Tower was built especially tall in order to give the observer a view into all the pens which were built on an incline away from the house.

Between 1920 and the 1930's Wisconsin supplied 55% of the United States fox pelts. At the end of the War, however, the fox industry had declined to such a level that most farmers dissolved their fur businesses and tore down their watch towers. No foxes have been raised at the Cole farm since 1948 but it would not have been feasible to destroy their tower since it is an integral part of the house and is so solidly constructed.

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1. "Year Book of the Silver Fox and Fur Farming Industries, 1927-1928," American National Fox Breeders Association. Minneapolis, p. 50.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Ahern, Albert M. Fur Facts, 1922.

American National Fox Breeders Association. "Year Book of the Silver Fox and Fur Farming Industries - 1927-1928." Minneapolis.

Ashbrook, Frank. Fur Farming for Profit. New York: Macmillan & Company, 1928.

Interview with Bruce Cole, February 28, 1977.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 4.0

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,6	3,5,7,2,7,5	4,8,7,8,4,9,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is an approximately square area of four acres bounded on the north by the south side of State Trunk Highway 21. The house and tower are in the center of this area and there are no specific structures, fences or landmarks to delimit the east, south and west boundaries.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Louise Farnsley, Preservation Assistant, Historic Preservation Division

ORGANIZATION

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

June 1, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

816 State Street

TELEPHONE

608/262-2970

CITY OR TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Richard Penney

TITLE Acting Director

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

7/20/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Walter Cole

DATE 6/9/78

ATTEST:

Walter Cole

DATE

6.5.78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

See
ITEM NUMBER below PAGE

Item 7 - DESCRIPTION, continued.

Appearance

The Watch Tower is engaged to the Italianate farmhouse on its north facade. Though the method of construction of the foundations of the tower is unknown, it appears visually to spring from the long, one-story wing projecting northward from the house. The house is square in plan, with the north wing attached, and built with brick walls resting on split-fieldstone foundations. The square, hipped roof rises to a central brick chimney. The tower is integrally molded to the house such that the two units, while different in period and function, constitute a single entity.

Item 8 - SIGNIFICANCE, continued.

The brick farmhouse, on its split-fieldstone foundations, is an example of the post-Civil War vernacular Italianate style. Characteristic of this period are its full roof-eave bracketing, its bracketed window lintels, and the bracketed entry porch and west bay window. Inasmuch as the house and tower are fully integrated physically, the house itself is a significant element of the entire structure.

Submitted May 9, 1978.