

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Willow River Rutabaga Warehouse and Processing Plant
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Off County Hwy. 61 not for publication N/A
city, town Willow River vicinity N/A
state Minnesota code MN county Pine code 115 zip code 55795

3. Classification

| | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Ownership of Property | Category of Property | Number of Resources within Property | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | Contributing | Noncontributing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local | <input type="checkbox"/> district | <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> buildings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State | <input type="checkbox"/> site | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal | <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> structures |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> object | <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> objects |
| | | | <u>0</u> Total |

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official Ian R. Stewart Date May 16, 1990
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register. **Entered in the National Register**
 See continuation sheet. 6/24/90
 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 [Signature] Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE:Processing

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Concrete

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Willow River Rutabaga Warehouse and Processing Plant is a concrete block building located in the small community of Willow River (1980 pop. 303) in northwestern Pine County. Constructed in two sections, the one-story building stands adjacent to the former Northern Pacific Railroad right-of-way.

The original north section dates from 1935 and measures approximately 30' by 56'. It is erected on a concrete foundation and has a concrete block shed wing which extends 16' to the east. Three small square windows and two doors pierce the east wall. The upper gable is covered with asphalt shingles and has two small windows and two ventilators. A single door opens to the west. There is a brick chimney abutting the southeast corner.

In 1937 a 41' by 42' concrete block addition was linked south of the original section. An 11'-wide truck loading space separates the two sections, which are connected above by a gable roof. The south gable end has one door; the upper gable is identical to the north elevation. Two small square windows punctuate the west wall. The east side of the roof is covered with rolled asphalt, and the west side was clad with metal in 1986. Plywood covers all the windows.

The interior of the 1935 section consists of the original wooden framing and processing facilities. The rutabaga crop was unloaded from wagons or trucks into a ground level hopper called a "trap." From this trap, the root crops passed on a series of conveyors and chain elevators into wooden slatted hopper bins for storage. Each bin has a sliding wooden gate at the bottom which opens into a conveyor that carries the rutabaga into a processing room or directly to the bagger. The crop was washed, air dried, and dipped into a vat of paraffin in the processing room. After cooling, the vegetables were conveyed into a bagger where they were sacked into 50-pound bags made of printed cotton cloth.

Rutabagas were stored and processed in this facility until the mid-1940s. Since then the building has not been used. The current owner has maintained the structure, and the county historical society is interested in rehabilitating the interior for eventual display to the public.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Period of Significance

1935-1939

Significant Dates

1935

1937

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Anderson, Sven, builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Considered in the statewide context of "Northern Minnesota Lumbering, 1870s-1930s," the Willow River Rutabaga Warehouse and Processing Plant is historically significant as the only known example in Minnesota of an agricultural facility designed exclusively for storing and processing rutabagas. The production and marketing of rutabagas in Pine County served not only as an important cash crop for area residents, it also contributed to the economic development of the region as well as the state.

Central and northern Pine County have traditionally been important areas for the growth and processing of root crops, particularly rutabagas and potatoes. Willow River is located in the "cutover", a landscape which had been exploited by lumber and timber companies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Before a cutover area could be claimed for agriculture, the land had to be cleared of the stumps, brush and boulders which remained. Although removing such obstacles was difficult, soils in the area were sandy in texture and slightly acidic, thus well suited to growing such vegetables as rutabagas and potatoes which provided relatively steady income for local farmers.

In 1906 Askov (located ten miles south of Willow River) became the third major Danish colony in Minnesota. One of the first settlers grew rutabagas from seeds sent by a friend in Denmark in 1890. Others grew the vegetable with much success and in some years more than 300 train carloads annually left the village to be shipped throughout the United States. By the 1950s area farmers were growing 3,000 tons of rutabagas each year, or one-fourth of the national crop, and Askov was calling itself the "Rutabaga Capital of America." The community's last rutabaga warehouse, however, was demolished in 1977. By the 1920s Pine County was one of the state's leaders in the growth of root crops. State agricultural statistics for 1922 reveal that Pine County had the most acreage (877) statewide in root crops other than potatoes. (Figures for later years are not available.)

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Willow River Rutabaga Warehouse and Processing Plant, Pine Co., MN

Section number 8 Page 1

Although basically a lumber and milling town, Willow River became established as a marketing center for root crops during the second decade of the twentieth century. Until the mid-1930s the village had two rutabaga warehouse and processing plants, but neither are extant. Both of these wooden buildings were rather small and lacked interior mechanical processing systems. The town's third rutabaga warehouse (considered here) replaced an earlier warehouse that stood in the same location. The new building incorporated an array of bins, conveyors, belts, and pulleys as part of its processing system. This marked the introduction of mechanical devices for handling, sorting, and processing the root crop, and as such represents an important evolution of the types of rutabaga processing facilities. It is noteworthy that this equipment remains in its original location inside the building.

The Willow River Rutabaga Warehouse and Processing Plant was built by local resident Sven Anderson in response to a lack of storage space for the crop. In early 1935 the Northern Rutabaga Growers Association met to discuss the warehouse situation, and in June of the same year they held their annual meeting in Askov where they addressed the need for additional warehouse/processing facilities. While it is unknown if Anderson attended these meetings, he was likely a member of the Growers Association and well aware of their concerns.

The Willow River facility employed three to four men during the six-month harvest season from fall until mid-winter. Employees earned \$2.00 per day for working a ten to twelve hour shift. Rutabagas were unloaded from wagons or trucks into a small, ground level opening on the east side of the building known as a "trap." Passing through a system of conveyors, the rutabagas were hand screened for size and quality and then loaded into storage hoppers. Next, the crop went into a processing room where it was washed, air dried, and dipped into a vat of hot wax. Earlier waxing bins were heated by burners fueled with kerosene, wood, or coal, while later types used a series of 240 volt electric immersion heating elements. Because of the combustible nature of these vats fire was a constant threat in processing rutabagas, and, in fact, two earlier Willow River rutabaga warehouses were destroyed by fire around 1935 and 1938. After cooling, the rutabagas were placed in 50-pound cloth sacks and loaded by hand into railroad cars. During the winter season, cars had to be pre-heated by charcoal burners in order to prevent the crop from being damaged by frost. Larger rutabagas were sold without being processed to metropolitan markets like Minneapolis and Chicago where the vegetable was distributed to low-income families and the Campbell Soup Company.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Willow River Rutabaga Warehouse and Processing Plant, Pine Co., MN

Section number 8 Page 2

By 1925 county agricultural extension offices were experimenting with various fertilizers to speed the rutabaga growth process, which was seen as an important advancement due to increased prices earlier in the harvest season. One acre of land usually yielded about ten tons of rutabagas, and farmers sold their crop at the Willow River warehouse for between \$5.00 and \$50.00 a ton depending on the market each year. In 1937 rutabagas sold for \$5.00 per ton and one year later their price had more than doubled to \$12.00 per ton. In the early 1940s rutabaga crops suffered extensive damage from insects and disease, and because most Pine County farmers raised small plots they could not afford to buy equipment required for spraying. The agricultural extension office, in cooperation with the University of Minnesota, eventually developed a treatment for rutabaga seed that resulted in increased crop production.

The Willow River Rutabaga Warehouse and Processing Plant is the only root processing building remaining in Pine County and the only known facility of its kind in Minnesota. Its interior equipment is particularly significant in the state's agricultural history because it serves as an important link in the development of rutabaga processing facilities. All of the original wooden bins, elevators, pulleys, and waxing pit are intact, thereby strengthening the association between this building and the agricultural products processing industry of Minnesota.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Askov American. 13 June 1935.

Centennial History Committee. One Hundred Years in Pine County. Askov, MN.:n.p., 1949.

Lloyd, David. "Askov: A Study of a Rural Colony of Danes in Minnesota," in Edmund D. Brunner, ed., Immigrant Farmers and Their Children. Garden City, N.Y. :, 1929.

Minnesota. State Department of Agriculture. Minnesota State Farm Census, 1922 and Annual Crop Statistics, 1921-1922. St. Paul, January 22, 1923. (Bulletin No. 22).

Pine County Agricultural Extension Office Annual Report. 1925, 1938, 1940-1944, 1946-1958.

Poatgieter, A. Hermina. "In East-Central Minnesota: How the Land Is Used," in Gopher Historian. Spring, 1959.

Rupp, Nina. "The Rutabaga Industry in Pine County," unpublished paper on file in the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office.

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one

UTM References

A 15 | 512270 | 5129280
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____ | _____ | _____

B _____ | _____ | _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____ | _____ | _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Willow River Rutabaga Warehouse and Processing Plant is a rectangular parcel measuring 71 x 100 feet , whose northwest corner is 15 feet directly northwest of the northwest corner of the foundation of the warehouse and whose southeast corner is 15 feet directly southeast of the southeast corner of the foundation of the warehouse.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the concrete building and 15 feet beyond its exterior dimensions which is the parcel that has historically been part of the Willow River Rutabaga Warehouse and Processing Plant.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael Koop/Historic Preservation Consultant

organization N/A date February 1989

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