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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**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 Barn Bluff
other names/site number LaGrange

2. Location

street & number off U.S. Highway 61 not for publication
city, town Red Wing vicinity
state Minnesota code MN county Goodhue code 049 zip code 55066

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u>3</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u> objects
			<u>6</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 6/27/90
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 March 2, 1989 August 3, 1990
 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

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Landscape: Natural Feature

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Landscape: Natural Feature

Landscape: Park

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls

roof

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Barn Bluff, also known as La Grange, is a lone, level-crested bluff which rises about 343 feet above the Mississippi River in Red Wing, the seat of Goodhue County. The south slope is cut by a fault in Paleozoic rock, which is displaced about 150 feet lower than those of surrounding strata. There are exposures of Franconia Green sandstone, St. Lawrence dolomite and shale, Jordan sandstone and Oneota dolomite, all topped by 65 feet of glacial drift. The siltstones contain trilobites and other marine fossils. Thousands of years ago, it was an island in a much larger, post-glacial river. As the water receded, the islands were left as bluffs. A number of geologists have noted how several hundred years of geological time¹ are observable in Barn Bluff's 300-foot cross section of rock.

Although Barn Bluff is located in an area of dramatic river topography which extends from Red Wing to LaCrescent, Minnesota, its orientation to the river is particularly striking. Seen from downriver, it appears almost to stand alone in the river above Colvill Bay. The summit provides expansive views of the bluffs along both sides of the Mississippi and of Red Wing below.

Highway 61 runs along the western edge of the bluff and a large road cut is evident at its southern and western edges. The integrity of the feature, however, is not greatly diminished by these cuts or by the highway bridge at Barn Bluff's northern tip. Railroad tracks run along the base at the river's edge.

A winding stair, consisting of approximately 100 concrete steps beginning near Fifth Street, provides access to the summit. Because of the history of the stair, it is a contributing structure. Three interpretive signs, non-contributing objects, are located at the base of the feature.

Three tumuli mounds have been noted by recent researchers but their significance is not known (GD-15). While non-contributing resources in this nomination, they may be contributing resources when evaluated in other contexts.

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)

Exploration/Settlement

Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance

1817-1939

Significant Dates

1817

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

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

See continuation sheet.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bray, Edmund C. and Martha Coleman Bray, Joseph N. Nicollet on the Plains and Prairies. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1976, 255.

Long, Stephen H. The Northern Expeditions of Stephen H. Long: The Journals of 1817 and 1823 and Related Documents. Ed. by Lucile M. Kane, June D. Holmquist, and Carolyn Gilman. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1978, p. 38-39, 79-80.

Sansome, Constance. Minnesota Underfoot. Stillwater, Minnesota: Voyageur Press, 1983, 82-84.

Schwartz, George M. Minnesota's Rocks and Waters. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954, 304.

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 108 acres

UTM References

A

1	5
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5	3	7	1	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	9	3	5	0	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting Northing

C

1	5
---	---

5	3	7	9	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	9	3	5	1	5	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

B

1	5
---	---

5	3	7	4	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	9	3	5	1	4	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting Northing

D

1	5
---	---

5	3	8	1	7	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	9	3	5	0	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Quadrangle name: Red Wing 1974

Quadrangle scale: 1: 24,000

See continuation sheet
7,8,10:5

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the 740-foot contour line on the enclosed USGS map (Red Wing, Minn.-Wis.) and is noted by a series of small arrows. This 740-foot contour line is enclosed in a polygon whose vertices are marked by the UTM reference points on the topographic map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire parcel that has historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carole Zellie
 organization Landscape Research date 5/31/89
 street & number 1466 Hythe St. telephone (612) 641-1230
 city or town St. Paul state MN zip code 55108

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Barn Bluff, Goodhue County, MN

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Barn Bluff is one of the best-known natural features along the Mississippi River between LaCrescent and St. Paul. It is significant for its association with the exploration of the Upper Mississippi in the nineteenth century, and for its association with mid-nineteenth through early twentieth-century travel, tourism, and recreation. A many-layered interpretation of the feature is evident in local legend, as well as in published historical and scientific accounts, works of art, and photography.

Barn Bluff in Pre-history and Legend

Hham necha, meaning "hill that appears as if it were in the water" is the Dakota name given to Barn Bluff and its vicinity. At the time of early nineteenth-century exploration by whites, the village of Red Wing, and the Mdewakanton Dakota, was located at present-day Red Wing. Legend states that it was a favorite camping place of Indians because of its abundance of wood and water and its₂ elevation. Fields of corn and squash were tended at its base. Early white visitors₃ noted several burial mounds on the highest point of Barn Bluff.

Explorers' and Geologists' Studies

French explorers probably conferred the title of LaGrange, but no record exists. The earliest published mention of the site appears to be in Carver's Travels (1778), where he refers to having visited this feature in 1766.⁴ It was a standard point of navigation and of general interest for many white explorers who came up the Mississippi River in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Army officer Stephen H. Long and his geologist, William Keating, ascended the bluff during their exploration of the river in 1817. Long noted the mounds, and his discussion of Barn Bluff and the general geology of the area revealed the prevailing theories of geologists Constantin F. Volney and Samuel Mitchill, who had proposed that the Mississippi watershed was once a lake held in by a chain of mountain dams.

In 1832, Henry R. Schoolcraft called it an "isolated calcareous cliff...one of those monuments resulting from geological denudation."⁶ During geologist George W. Featherstonhaugh's trip down the Mississippi in 1835, he also described La Grange, calling it an "outlier on the right bank of the Mississippi, about three-hundred feet high, which presented a good section of sandstone and limestone."⁷ Nicollet, in 1838, also referred to it as LaGrange.

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From early geologist's descriptions, it is evident that the existence of Glacial River Warren--which at one point inundated this area--was not yet fully understood. By the time of the survey of David Dale Owen, published in 1852, and the more exhaustive The Geology of Minnesota (1884), these theories were revised and Barn Bluff was discussed as an outcome of glaciation.⁹ Owen called it "a remarkable headland which has the appearance of a hill split down the middle."¹⁰

The geologist's descriptions of the rocks represented in Barn Bluff also reveal changes in geological nomenclature. While modern geologists classify the major rocks as Oneota and St. Lawrence Dolomite and Jordan Sandstone, earlier geologists described primarily the Lower Magnesian Limestone and Sandstone.

Modern geologists often use Barn Bluff to illustrate fault block formations, Paleozoic rocks and erosional processes. It is a standard entry in most Minnesota geology texts, including Bray (1977), Ojakangas and Matsch (1982), and Sansome (1983).¹¹

Barn Bluff in Local Historical Accounts

Geologists were among the first to elaborate on the presence of La Grange or Barn Bluff, but early permanent white settlers at Red Wing also made written record of it. In 1849, the Reverend John Hancock noted that he had "peculiar sensations" at the sight of "that bold bluff standing in the middle of that great valley..."¹²

On the original town plat, the bluff was the terminus of Main Street, and served as a backdrop for the manufacturing and trade center. Beginning in the 1850s, a quarry was worked in the Oneota Dolomite exposed on the south face, and the stone was used in the construction of a number of local buildings including the Episcopal church.

Over the past century and a quarter, the bluff has been hiked by many Red Wing residents as a popular pastime. Two rough paths, likely the remnant of Indian trails and about three feet apart, were in use until 1889, when local resident C.C. Webster directed the construction of an improved approach, known as "Webster's Way." The Citizen's Memorial Stairway, consisting of 472 concrete steps, was built in 1929. Each step was endowed by a local donor. (Only about 100 of the original steps are still in place at the west end of the bluff; bridge construction in 1958

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Barn Bluff, Goodhue County, MN

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eliminated many.)¹³ In 1910, the land was acquired by the city for
use as a public park.

Barn Bluff and its Scenic and Literary Aspects

Many of those studying the scientific aspects of Barn Bluff were also attracted to its scenic value. Stephen H. Long wrote in his journal of July 18, 1817 that "from the summit of the Grange, the view of the surrounding scenery is surpassed perhaps by very few, if any, of a similar character that the Country and probably the world can afford. The sublime and beautiful are here blended in most enchanting manner, while the prospect has very little to terrify or shock the imagination."¹⁴ His geologist, William H. Keating, used similar language in describing it. Most geologists remarked at some length about the scenic views possible from this site.

Among the others who came here seeking vistas and aesthetic experience were those on the "Fashionable Tour" of the upper Mississippi. Beginning the 1830s and in some number in the 1840s, they disembarked from steamboats, and later, railroad cars, at this site.¹⁵ Mixed in with the scenery seekers were artists and panoramists such as Henry Lewis, who spent 1848 touring the river and painting sites such as Barn Bluff. Lewis' depiction appears in a painting titled "Red Wing's Village" and in his sketchbooks.¹⁶ There are a variety of landscape paintings and engraved views by a number of artists from the period 1850-1880.

Among the best known of the early tourists was Henry David Thoreau, who sat atop the bluff in 1861, just one year before his death. He noted the botanical, rather than geological aspects of the site.¹⁷ Barn Bluff appears to have been a favorite subject of local poets. Red Wing resident Charles P. Hall wrote--apparently in the 1930s--that "it is the Gibraltar of our city."¹⁸

Barn Bluff was a standard point of interest for early automobile travelers along both sides of the Mississippi. The 1938 WPA Guide to Minnesota was among several tour guides of the pre-World War II period which featured this site as part of a river trip.

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NOTES

1. See Schwartz, George M., Minnesota Rocks and Waters. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954, 304, and Sansome, Constance, Minnesota Underfoot. Stillwater, MN: Voyageur Press, 1983, 82-84.
2. History of Goodhue County. Red Wing: Wood, Alley & Co., 1878, p. 201.
3. Minnesota Historical Society, The Aborigines of Minnesota: A Report St. Paul: 1911, 154, 164-6, 169; illustration opposite 164. The mounds were surveyed by archaeologist J.V. Brower in 1885.
4. Jonathan Carver, Travels through the Interior Parts of North America, in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768. Reprint of 3rd London ed., 1781. Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1956.
5. Long, Stephen H. The Northern Expeditions of Stephen H. Long: The Journals of 1817 and 1823 and Related Documents. Ed. by Lucile M. Kane, June D. Holmquist, and Carolyn Gilman. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1978, p. 38-39, 79-80.
6. Schoolcraft, Henry R. Summary Narrative of an Exploratory Expedition to the Sources of the Mississippi River, in 1820. Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1855, p. 162-3
7. Featherstonhaugh, George W. A Canoe Voyage up the Minnay Sotor, with an Account of the Lead and Copper Deposits in Wisconsin; of the Gold Region in the Cherokee Country; and Sketches of Popular Manners. 2 vols. Reprint ed. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1970. 1st ed. published London, 1847., vol II, 18.
8. Bray, Edmund C. and Martha Coleman Bray, Joseph N. Nicollet on the Plains and Prairies. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1976, 255.
9. See David Dale Owen, Report of a Geological Survey of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota; and Incidentally of a Portion of Nebraska Territory. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1852, and Minnesota Geological and Natural History Survey, The Geology of Minnesota. Volumes 1-6 of the Final Report. St. Paul and Minneapolis, 1884-1901. See also P.K. Sims, "History of Geologic Investigations" in P.K. Sims and G.B. Morey, eds. Geology of Minnesota: A Centennial Volume, St. Paul: Minnesota Geological Survey, 1972.
10. Owen, p. 46.
11. Bray, Edmund C. Billions of Years in Minnesota. St. Paul: The Science Museum of Minnesota, 1977; Ojakangas and Charles L. Matsch, Minnesota's Geology. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

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- Press, 1982; Sansome, Constance J., Minnesota Underfoot.
Stillwater, Minnesota: Voyageur Press, 1983.
12. Curtiss-Wedge, Franklyn, ed. History of Goodhue County,
Minnesota. Chicago: H.C. Cooper, Jr. and Co., 1909, p. 530.
13. Johnson, Patricia C. Pretty Red Wing: Historic River Town.
Afton, Minnesota: Johnston Publishing Co., 1985, p. 28.
14. Long, Stephen H. The Northern Expeditions of Stephen H. Long:
The Journals of 1817 and 1823 and Related Documents. Ed. by Lucile
M. Kane, June D. Holmquist, and Carolyn Gilman. St. Paul:
Minnesota Historical Society, 1978, 38-39, 79-80.
15. Blegen, Theodore. "The Fashionable Tour on the Mississippi."
Minnesota History 20 (December, 1939), 377-396.
16. Lewis, Henry. The Valley of the Mississippi Illustrated.
Trans. from the German by A. Hermina Poatgieter. St. Paul:
Minnesota Historical Society, 1967, p. 115-116.
17. The First and Last Journeys of Thoreau. Boston: The
Bibliophile Society, 1905. vol II, p. 27, 62-63.
18. "Barn Bluff" by Charles P. Hall in C.A. Rasmussen, A History
of the City of Red Wing, Minnesota. Red Wing, Minnesota: 1933.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM References (Continued):

E: 15 538120 4934890

F: 15 537250 4934910