



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 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 Mattson, Edward and Lisa, House and Fish House
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Off U.S. Highway 61 not for publication N/A
city, town Beaver Bay Twp. Beaver Bay vicinity
state Minnesota code MN county Lake code 075 zip code 55601

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>2</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</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.
Ian R. Stewart 6/25/90
Signature of certifying official Ian R. Stewart Date
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. Peth Poland 8/9/90
 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)

DOMESTIC: single dwellingSUBSISTENCE: fishing facility

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwellingSUBSISTENCE: fishing facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Log

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concretewalls LogHalf Logroof Asphaltother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Edward and Lisa Mattson House and Fish House consist of a log and half-log building on the North Shore of Lake Superior in northeastern Minnesota's unincorporated community of East Beaver Bay. The building's are secluded and stand at the bottom of a steep hill on the water's edge. Wieland Island, a diminutive rocky islet, is located about 325' south of the property.

As originally constructed in about 1902, the Mattson House was a one-story, 31'7" x 16'3" building made of chinked hewn logs joined by half dovetail corner notches. Its facade had three 6/6 double hung windows to the left and one to the right of the off-center door. In 1910 the gable roof was raised a half-story made with logs. While this resulted in a taller house, the additional seven logs did not seriously affect the historic integrity because the design, materials, and workmanship were similar to the original building. At the same time three six-light casement windows were installed to light the loft. In 1940 a stone chimney was added to the west gable end and two casement windows were cut in on each side of the chimney. At an unknown date an entrance was added to the east gable end and a fifth double hung window installed in the facade. In 1942 an 8' x 10' cinder block and wood frame shed wing was added to the rear. The interior walls and exposed joists were covered with knotty pine boards in 1940 when the house was electrified. These alterations and additions do not seriously compromise the overall integrity of the house because they are minor and constitute part of the building's evolution.

The Fish House, located about fifty feet southeast of the dwelling, replaced another earlier log fish house around 1930. It is a low, 28'8" x 24' vertical half-log building erected on a high concrete foundation. A pair of wide wooden hinged doors flanked by four six-light windows on the south wall open to a concrete and stone boat ramp leading into Lake Superior. The west elevation has a door and two windows, and a small wood frame shed is attached to the east side. The pyramidal hipped roof is covered with rolled asphalt. The Fish House was an integral element of the Mattson's enterprise. It served a variety of functions including repairing nets, salting and packing fish in barrels, storing ice and supplies, and maintaining boats.

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)

Maritime History

Period of Significance

1907-39

Significant Dates

1907

ca. 1930

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person N/A

Architect/Builder

Benson, Andrew, architect & builder: house

Mattson, Edward, architect & builder: fish

house

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

In the context of commercial fishing on Minnesota's North Shore of Lake Superior, the Edward and Lisa Mattson House and Fish House are historically significant under National Register Criterion A because they are associated with the development of an industry that was of great importance to residents of the North Shore during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These buildings, among the few which remain in good condition along the North Shore, represent the kind of small scale, family-managed commercial fishing operation that was once common on Lake Superior.

Commercial fishing along the 168-mile shoreline from Duluth to the Canadian border at Grand Portage dates from 1834 when the American Fur Company added fish to their assortment of trade goods. After the firm abandoned their venture in 1841, fishing on the North Shore remained a mildly successful, relatively small scale activity until the last quarter of the century. In 1860, of the 642 non-Indian residents in St. Louis and Lake counties, 22 were fishermen, while 1870 census figures enumerated thirteen fishermen along the North Shore who were dispersed at Beaver Bay, Grand Marais, and Pigeon River. The industry expanded in 1870 when the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad was completed between Duluth and St. Paul, and the Northern Pacific Railroad began laying tracks toward the Pacific coast. Duluth soon became an important receiving and shipping point for fish, as well as a strategic location for dealers and wholesale fisheries. During the last half of 1870 nearly 1,400 half barrels (266,100 pounds) of salted fish were shipped by rail and boat from Duluth. By 1890, 51 men worked in fisheries around the city, and statewide a total of 162 persons in the fishing industry had secured over \$98,000 worth of products. Using gill nets, set lines, and pound nets, fishermen caught trout, herring, and whitefish that was usually salted in the summer season and frozen in winter. The bulk of the fish was shipped to ports on the lower Great Lakes, the Twin Cities, and larger inland railroad cities.

A variety of foreign-born and native residents fished on the North Shore and on the western tip of Lake Superior. However, by 1880 Norwegians constituted the largest group in Duluth's fishing industry, although there may have been no more

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Mattson, Edward and Lisa, House and Fish House, Lake Co., MN

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than a dozen fishermen living along the North Shore at this time. Five years later Norwegian fishermen had settled at 14 different localities on the North Shore; nearly one-half of the 177 total fishermen in Duluth and along the shoreline were Norwegian.

Edward Mattson, originally from the Norwegian coastal village of Kristiansund, and his wife Lisa moved from Duluth to East Beaver Bay in 1907. They bought a small log house owned by Andrew Benson, one of four Norwegian fishermen in the community. Mattson had intended to be hired as a fisherman but instead bought his own boat, probably the "Sunbeam," to test his skills on the lake. He later acquired the "Dagmar," a 45' wooden vessel built in 1914 by Christian Ronning at Beaver Bay. In addition to fishing near his home, Mattson plied the rich waters of the North Shore and around Isle Royale in the late spring, one of two peaks in the fishing season. During one trip he took his entire family and their cow to the island. At the end of July, Mattson hauled his salted catch to Two Harbors or Duluth where he used the earnings to buy provisions for his family. Staples such as flour, butter, and meat were also sold from their house by Lisa Mattson. In 1926, after Highway 61 had been built, the Mattsons constructed a wood frame and stucco building from which they sold supplies to tourists camping in the area. While this endeavor supplemented the family's income, it did not constitute a major source of revenue and remained dependent upon Edward Mattson's primary occupation as a fisherman, a trade he continued until his death in 1941. Because this building is located up a hill approximately 300' from the original property and does not characterize the fishing industry as clearly as the other buildings, it is not included in the nomination.

By the early 1900s commercial fishing on the North Shore had become firmly established as a relatively substantial industry. In 1917 273 commercial fishermen applied for licenses in Minnesota, and one writer suggested that "there is almost one fisherman for every half mile of shore all the way from Duluth to Grand Portage." The entire Lake Superior fishing region experienced highly productive years from the end of World War I through the 1930s. As a reflection of the importance of commercial fishing in the area, the Two Harbors Chronicle in 1931 initiated a publicity campaign in an attempt to market the abundant supply of Lake Superior fish being caught along the North Shore. In 1936 413 licenses were issued to North Shore fishermen who caught 5,676,041 pounds of lake fish. By the late 1950s, however, the combination of overfishing and the appearance of predatory species such as sea lamprey began to have a disastrous effect on Great Lakes fishing, and the industry started a steady decline.

A 1981 survey along the North Shore revealed only a half dozen other buildings related to commercial fishing. Four of them are simple frame houses or storage sheds dating from the 1920s and 1930s; regrettably, they are in deteriorated to

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ruinous condition. After the Mattson property, the best representations of the industry are the wood frame Scott Fish House (1907, NRHP) near Grand Marais and the Fenstad Brothers Fish House (ca.1920) in Lake County, the latter of which warrants further investigation to determine its potential for National Register eligibility.

The Mattson House continues to be owned and maintained by one of Edward and Lisa's children, while the Fish House is utilized by a grandson who works as a commercial fisherman. Together these buildings serve as an important link with the fishing industry along the North Shore of Lake Superior.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Davis, Jessie C. Beaver Bay, Original North Shore Village. Duluth: St. Louis County Historical Society, 1968.
- Holmquist, June D. "Commercial Fishing on Lake Superior in the 1890s." Minnesota History 34/6 (Summer 1955): 243-49.
- Johnson, Liz Holum. Mattson House and Fish House National Register form, 1984.
- Kaup, Matti. "Norwegian Immigrants and the Development of Commercial Fisheries Along the North Shore of Lake Superior: 1870-1895." In Norwegian Influence on the Upper Midwest, edited by Harald S. Naess. Duluth: University of Minnesota, 1976.
- . "North Shore Commercial Fishing, 1849-1870." Minnesota History 46/2 (Summer 1978): 43-58.
- Van Brunt, Walter. Duluth and St. Louis County Minnesota: Their Story and People. Chicago and New York: The American Historical Society, 1921.

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

Acres of property less than one

UTM References

A 15 629940 5236080
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Starting at the intersection of the western boundary of Section 7, T55 R7 with the shoreline of Beaver Bay, thence easterly along said shoreline two hundred feet, thence northerly to the base of bluffline, thence westerly 400 feet along the irregular base-line of said bluff, thence southerly to shoreline of Beaver Bay, thence easterly along said shoreline to point of beginning.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the house, fish house, and adjoining land that has historically been part of the Mattson property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael Koop/Preservation Consultant

organization N/A date January 1990

street & number 615 Jackson St. NE telephone 612-623-8356

city or town Minneapolis state MN zip code 55413