

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**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

O. E. Rolvaag House

AND/OR COMMON

O. E. Rolvaag House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

311 Manitou Street

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Northfield

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

001 (First)

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Minnesota

CODE

27

COUNTY

Rice

CODE

131

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. Keith and Mrs. Torild Homstad

STREET & NUMBER

311 Manitou Street

CITY, TOWN

Northfield

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Minnesota 55057

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Rice County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Faribault

STATE

Minnesota

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1969

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Historic Sites Survey

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" 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

Early in 1912, O. E. Rolvaag bought a large lot on Manitou Street in Northfield, Minnesota, where he taught at St. Olaf College. Contractors finished his house that fall. A gray stucco house, one-and-a-half stories in height, it had a gabled roof with two large dormers in front, an enclosed porch, and a bay window on the right side of the street facade. The house remained the author's home until his death in 1931.

Few alterations were made in the house during Rolvaag's occupancy. The front porch was enclosed and its pillars were replaced with walls and windows and a formal garden was added to the rear of the house in the late 1930's.

In 1968 Torild Rolvaag Homstad, the author's grand-niece, took possession of the house with her husband Kieth. The master bedroom was expanded to include the sleeping porch at the front of the house. The kitchen was remodelled and modernized, as was the bathroom. New carpets and wall paint were added throughout the first floor and the upstairs hall. Radiators and a basement cistern were removed.

The maple kitchen cabinets and woodwork remain intact, as do the oak interiors of the living and dining rooms, library and entrance hall. The old garden has been overgrown for more than twenty years. The exterior of the house appears much as it did during Rolvaag's occupancy.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1912-1931 (period of occupancy)

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

O. E. Rolvaag (1876-1931) was the first American novelist to give a true accounting of the psychological cost of pioneering on the farmer's frontier. His famous trilogy--Giants in the Earth (1927), Peder Victorious (1928), and Their Father's God (1931)-- stands in our literature as the most mature and penetrating assessment of the adjustments immigrant pioneers had to make in order to find peace and prosperity in Middle America. The house where he lived and wrote in Northfield, Minnesota, still stands, its exterior basically unaltered.

BIOGRAPHY

Ole Edvart Rolvaag was born in Norway, April 22, 1876. At fifteen he went to work as a fisherman, but emigrated to South Dakota in 1896. For the next three years, Rolvaag worked as a farmhand for his uncle and neighbors.

Encouraged by the local pastor, Rolvaag entered a Lutheran high school in 1898 and graduated with honors. In 1901 he entered St. Olaf, a Lutheran college in Northfield, Minnesota, and graduated in 1905. In 1912, married and teaching Norwegian at St. Olaf, Rolvaag moved into his new home at 311 Manitou Street.

Rolvaag believed strongly that immigrants should maintain their national identity and that only by doing so would they be able to contribute greatly to American life. He promoted Norwegian language and culture in the classroom and in his books.

Rolvaag published his first book in 1910 but it was not until 1920 that he reached artistic maturity with the publication of To Tullinger (Two Fools), translated into English in 1930 as Pure Gold. The book tells of an immigrant couple who renounce the past, embrace materialism and destroy themselves. His second novel, Laungselens Boat (The Boat of Longing), followed in 1921. Like its predecessor, this book was not published in English until after the success of Giants in the Earth.

In the spring of 1923, Rolvaag began writing his greatest novel, Giants in the Earth, a book Henry Commager was to call "the most penetrating and mature depiction of the westward movement in our literature." It was published in Norwegian in two parts, in the fall of 1924 and 1925. In 1926 King Haakon of Norway made Rolvaag a knight of the order of St. Olaf, and in 1927 the book appeared in English. Its success was phenomenal, selling 200,000 copies by 1929. The Nation called it "the fullest, finest, most powerful novel

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Commager, Henry, "The Literature of the Pioneer West," Minnesota History, Vol 8, 1927.
- Jorgensen, Theodore, and Nora O. Solum, Ole Edvart Rolvaag: A Biography, 1939.
- McDermott, John D., "O. E. Rolvaag House, Northfield, Minnesota," Historic Sites Survey report, 1968.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre
 UTM REFERENCES

A	115	484300	4923120	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Rolvaag property has been reduced in size over the years and now comprises less than an acre of ground. The narrow rectangular plot fronts onto Manitou Street. The boundary follows the plot line, which includes the Rolvaag House and the remains of a pool and fireplace in the rear.

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

Stephen Lissandrello, Historian, Landmarks Review Project

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

9-26-75

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, NW.

TELEPHONE

(202) 523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

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.

Landmark Designated Aug 21, 1969
Boundary Certified
George Emery
 DATE Mar 16, 1978

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

2/4/3/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

that has been written about pioneer life in America."

Giants in the Earth is set in South Dakota in the 1870's. Per Hansa and his wife Beret come from Norway to settle on the plains. Per Hansa prospers as he works to bend the force of nature to his will. In contrast Beret longs for her homeland and the familiar things which had always defined her existence. "Transplantation of human souls," wrote Rolvaag, "even under the most favorable conditions, is a difficult process. There are many adjustments to be made. That of acquiring a feeling of home in an alien wilderness is certainly not easy. And the more sensitive the soul, the more dangerous the experiment." Beret rejects her harsh environment, retreating inward until she loses all sense of reality. In the end, however, she comes back to the world to begin anew the process of adjustment. Per Hansa, on the other hand, loses his battle with nature. He dies in a snowstorm, on his way to a minister. However, even in death Per Hansa looks to the future. In the spring some young boys find him in a haystack looking westward.

Peder Victorious appeared in 1929. In it Beret struggles with her son and the new culture he embraces. She loses him, but in Their Father's God (1931), Peder finds his true self by regaining his love for his Norwegian heritage. Rolvaag died of a heart attack on November 5, 1931. He is buried in the Oaklawn Cemetery in Northfield on the slope of a hill--facing west.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 2

Major Bibliographical References

Rolvaag, O. E., Giants in the Earth, 1927.