

PH0503321

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED AUG 29 1977
DATE ENTERED MAR 29 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

Laura Baker School

AND/OR COMMON

Laura Baker School

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

211 Oak Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Northfield

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First

STATE

Minnesota

CODE

22

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

Laura Baker School, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER

211 Oak Street

CITY, TOWN

Northfield

VICINITY OF

STATE

Minnesota

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Registry of Deeds -- Rice County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Faribault

STATE

Minnesota

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Statewide Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1976

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Minnesota Historical Society - Building 25, Fort Snelling

CITY, TOWN

St. Paul

STATE

Minnesota

7 DESCRIPTION

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

Constructed in the 1880s on the western fringe of Northfield, the main building of the Laura Baker School was originally the spacious country residence of Congregationalist minister C.E. Wilcox. It is a two-and-one-half storey frame building in the Queen Anne mode. Since its purchase in 1898 by Laura Baker for conversion into a school/residence facility for the mentally retarded, the house has undergone many modifications and additions; however, all have been in keeping with the original architectural design intent, a factor which tends to obscure the alterations and blend the complex into a unified, rambling entity.

Characteristic features of the Queen Anne which have been repeated throughout the main building are the shingle-sheathed gables, a dentillated cornice, narrow one-over-one windows, corbelled and fluted chimneys, bay windows, spindlework and rambling wrap-around porches. In that much of the work had been done early in the twentieth century, many elements such as mouldings and millwork were continued to be produced and were available for incorporation.

The largest addition to the original building is the north wing, an addition which virtually doubles the size of the building. This wing houses a kitchen, dining room, and residential facilities. The southeast wing of the building is devoted to a large assembly room with residential facilities on the second floor.

In 1929 a two storey brick dormitory was erected to the southeast of the main building. It is linked to the main building by a one storey enclosed brick concourse. Stylistically, the brick building can be classified in the Georgian Revival mode in that it is essentially rectangular, symmetrical and end gables are coped and incorporate two chimneys.

Two other buildings are included in the Laura Baker School complex. To the northeast of the main building is a two storey barn. This has been modified into use as a four-car garage, however it retains the loft above and stanchions for cattle in the basement level. The other building is a former farm residence for staff. It is a simple frame building with gabled roof, two storeys in height, and sided in clapboard.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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. to present	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1898-1899

BUILDER/ARCHITECT J.E. Cook

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Laura Baker School is significant primarily for its association with Laura B. Baker, innovator in special education methodology.

The main building of the Laura Baker School was designed as a residence for C.E. Wilcox by architect J.E. Cook during the 1880s. Wilcox, the first owner of the house, had been a Congregational minister and one of the founders and directors of the Northfield Independent Publishing Company.

In 1898 Laura B. Baker purchased the spacious house and 5½ acres of property. Miss Baker received her teaching certificate in 1877 and went to the State School at Glenwood, Iowa to fill a teaching vacancy. She held the position for seven years and discovered the challenge of teaching handicapped children. In 1884 she was appointed principal of the State School at Faribault, Minnesota. During her twelve years at Faribault, Miss Baker found many parents who sought for their children more intensive educational programs than a state school could provide. Rather than teach in the East where specialized private schools were located and where her teaching skills could be better utilized, Miss Baker drew on her expertise and opened a school in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1897. A year later, desiring to move the school to a more rural setting, she found the fifteen room Wilcox residence in Northfield well suited for the purpose of having all the students live and be educated in a "large family" environment.

In September of 1898 the school opened. Curriculum included Montessori, kindergarten and elementary through eighth grade classes, speech and language therapy, gymnastics and industrial art classes. It was Miss Baker's intention to provide a structured and secure environment for mentally retarded children so that they could form stable perceptions of the world around them and develop their learning capacities to the fullest.

Begun as an experiment in education, the Laura Baker School, eighty years and seven hundred students later, is considered a pioneer in non-restrictive programs for educable, retarded children. The school is considered to be one of the first of its kind established in the midwestern states and today serves fifty-five children and adults from all over the United States and several foreign countries. Approximately two fifths of the school population comes from areas within fifty miles of Northfield. A developmental continuum composed of a private school, an adult program and a residential center is provided by the school. All the students are involved in programs that develop and maintain proficiency in social, vocational and academic skills.

(see continuation sheet)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Donnelly, Antoinette and Alice Archibald. Women's Almanac. New York: Oquaga Press, 1938.
 Foster, Mary Dillon. Who's Who among Minnesota Women. Privately Published, 1924.
 Laura Baker School. Commemorating Eighty Years, 1897-1977. Northfield: Laura Baker School, 1977.
 Minnesota Editorial Association. Who's Who in Minnesota. Minneapolis: Minnesota Editorial Association, 1941.
 "School will Perpetuate Laura B. Baker's Vision," Northfield News, 9 June 1960, p.1 & 2.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3 1/2 acres
 UTM REFERENCES

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

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

Charles W. Nelson, Architectural Historian and Susan Zeik, Research Associate

ORGANIZATION

Minnesota Historical Society

DATE

6 June 1977

STREET & NUMBER

Building 25, Fort Snelling

TELEPHONE

612-726-1171

CITY OR TOWN

St. Paul

STATE

Minnesota

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

Russell W. Fridley

TITLE Russell W. Fridley
 State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 8-22-77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

W. Smith

DATE 8-29-78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST *Walter Cole*

DATE 3-16-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED AUG 29 1977
DATE ENTERED MAR 29 1978

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Laura Baker School

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

Laura Baker's interest in the school continued until her death in 1960 at the age of 101. She devoted eighty-three years of her life; sixty-two years at her school, to the care and betterment of people who are mentally retarded. The school continues the work of its founder, Laura Baker.