

MINNESOTA HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

HISTORIC NAME: Smith-Cosgrove House

COUNTY: Le Sueur

CURRENT NAME: Harris House

CITY/TWP.: Le Sueur

LEGAL DESC.: Lots 1, 2, S 3 ft. of lot 3; lots 15, 16 less
railroad right of way; 20 ft. front lying S of
lots 1 & 16, block 39, Le SueurADDRESS:
228 South Main Street

CLASSIFICATION:

Building X

Structure _____

Object _____

District _____

CONDITION:

Excellent _____

Good X

Fair _____

Deteriorated _____

SIGNIFICANCE:

Local X

State _____

National _____

THEME/S:

Primary ArchitectureSecondary Commerce

Others _____

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: Yes X No _____ Restricted X

PRESENT USE:

VISIBLE FROM THE ROAD: Yes X No _____

Offices

OCCUPIED: Yes X No _____

DATE CONSTRUCTED: c. 1878

ORIGINAL USE: Residence

ORIGINAL OWNER: Edson Smith

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Unknown

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: O'Brien Plumbing, Heating and
Sheet Metal
224 S. Main, Le Sueur, MN 56058ACREAGE: Less than one acre XLOCAL CONTACT/ORG.: Le Sueur County Historical Society
Box 577, Elysian, MN 56058

UTM REFERENCE:

LeSueur Quad.

FORM PREPARED BY: Britta Bloomberg

15 / 427050 / 4923105

DATE: August 1980

DESCRIPTION:

The Smith=Cosgrove House is situated at the south edge of Le Sueur's main business district, just east of the railroad tracks and the Minnesota River.

The c. 1878 brick French Second Empire house is one of the most architecturally distinctive residences in the county. Characteristic style features include the high mansard roofs; central tower; extensive use of dormers; tall, narrow windows; stained glass windows; metal crestings; brackets and modillions; and irregular massing. The effect is that of a highly three-dimensional structure with numerous decorative details.

The building is basically comprised of four sections: a two-and-a-half story central projecting tower; a two-and-a-half story section on the north; and one-and-a-half story south and west sections. Entry is through a pair of large double doors capped by a stained glass transom and sheltered by a bracketted entry stoop with metal cresting on the east side of the projecting tower. A pair of floor-length rectangular windows comprised of a smaller upper section and tall lower section are located above the doorway. A pyramidal roof featuring half-moon dormers and metal cresting caps the tower section. Windows throughout are tall and narrow with stone sills and lintels. The north section features a truncated hip roof with hooded dormers and a secondary entry, sheltered by an entry stoop featuring scroll sawn and turned detailing and a metal cresting. The one-and-a-half story sections on the south and west feature mansard roofs with pedimented dormers on the south section and shed dormers on the rear section. Modillion blocks and corner brackets adorn all of the dormers and the cornices of all four sections.

The house has been restored recently for commercial use and is well preserved. The building had been painted previously and at the time of restoration was painted a cream color which contrasts with the stone sills and lintels and approximates the original color of the brick. The wood trim throughout is painted white. Deteriorated front porches were removed and the door openings were converted to windows. Window sash was also replaced in the restoration. The interior has also been very well preserved; the original woodwork and floor plan remain unchanged. The building houses law offices and a rental apartment.

(continued)

SIGNIFICANCE (continued):

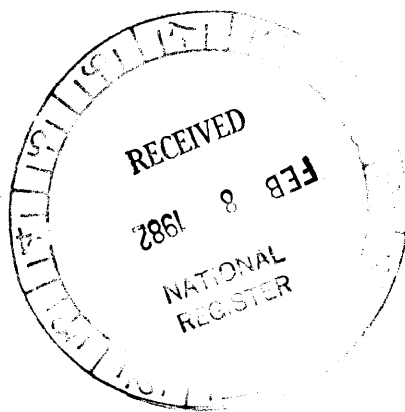
It is also significant as a particularly well preserved late nineteenth century residence representative of the success achieved by area entrepreneurs. The Minnesota Valley Canning Company was founded in 1903 by a group of ten local Le Sueur investors; the company expanded greatly over the years, and in 1950 became the Green Giant Company. C. N. Cosgrove chaired the first meeting of investors in 1903, and later served on the Board of Directors and as president and as Chairman of the Board. Cosgrove's continuous involvement in the Company from its founding until his death in 1936 make him the figure most clearly identified with the initial development of the operation. He built a large residence, c. 1895, over twenty years after coming to Le Sueur as a dealer in hardware and agricultural machinery and a decade before his involvement with the canning company. Cosgrove was also an active and respected community leader during his lifetime, and served as a state senator and on the Minnesota State Fair Board.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Cosgrove family, misc. papers on file in LeSueur Museum, LeSueur, Minnesota.

Memoirs of a Giant : Green Giant Company's first 75 years 1903-1978, LeSueur 1978.

News Herald, LeSueur.



SIGNIFICANCE:

The Smith-Cosgrove House is significant both as one of the most architecturally distinctive residences in the county and for its association with two early Le Sueur settlers. The house was constructed c. 1878 by Edson Smith, an early banker in Le Sueur who first settled there in the 1850s. He sold the house in 1893 when his bank experienced financial difficulties. The house is best known for a later owner, James A. Cosgrove, who purchased it in 1911. Cosgrove was another early Le Sueur settler who had operated a harness shop in town since 1875. Descendants of the Cosgrove family lived in the house until 1978. Few "high style" residences are located in Le Sueur County; the location of the elaborate Smith-Cosgrove House in the city of Le Sueur reflects the community's early position of importance as a center of trade on the Minnesota River.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

LeSueur Bicentennial Book Committee, LeSueur, Town on the River, 1977.

News Herald, LeSueur.

