## 1. NAME

HISTORIC

Bass Islands-Brownstone Company

AND/OR COMMON

Basswood Island Quarry

## 2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Town of La Pointe

CITY, TOWN

Town of La Pointe

STATE

Wisconsin

## 3. CLASSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>PRESENT USE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DISTRICT</td>
<td>PUBLIC</td>
<td>OCCUPIED</td>
<td>AGRICULTURE</td>
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<tr>
<td>BUILDING(S)</td>
<td>PRIVATE</td>
<td>UNOCCUPIED</td>
<td>COMMERCIAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRUCTURE</td>
<td>BOTH</td>
<td>WORK IN PROGRESS</td>
<td>EDUCATIONAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SITE</td>
<td>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</td>
<td>ACCESSIBLE</td>
<td>ENTERTAINMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBJECT</td>
<td>IN PROCESS</td>
<td>YES: RESTRICTED</td>
<td>RELIGIOUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNOCCUPIED</td>
<td>BEING CONSIDERED</td>
<td>YES: UNRESTRICTED</td>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

multiple ownership (see continuation sheet)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds, Ashland County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

201 West 2nd

CITY, TOWN

Ashland

STATE

Wisconsin

## 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Apostle Islands National Lakeshore Buildings Survey

DATE

1975

STATE

Wisconsin

COUNTY

53706
The site of the Basswood Island quarry of the Bass Island Brownstone Company is located near the southeastern tip of Basswood Island. The nominated property starts from a point approximately 150' S.W. of the ruins of a small cabin noted on the U.S.G.S. quadrangle and continues along the shore for approximately 850 feet. The property includes that area within 500 feet of the shore.

The main quarry is an irregularly shaped opening approximately 200' long. One section is partly filled with water; other sections are largely overgrown. But the quarry itself is more open than the surrounding country and excavation benches on the sides of the quarry are easily visible on the 25-foot walls. Throughout the immediate area of the quarry is evidence of the operation: there are large blocks of brownstone lying about and some appear to be cut and ready for transport. There are smaller areas that have been quarried, and here and there can be seen pieces of cable or rusted metal spikes used in the quarrying operation.

When the quarry was being worked, workers' cabins and heavy machinery were at the site. These no longer exist.
STATEN OF SIGNIFICANCE

The opening of the Basswood Island Quarry in 1868 signaled the beginning of the brownstone industry in northern Wisconsin. Though active quarrying lasted little more than thirty years, Lake Superior brownstone achieved, in that short time, a lasting reputation as a strong and particularly attractive building material.

After many months of prospecting, Almson Sweet and his exploration party chose a site at the southeastern tip of Basswood Island to commence quarrying activities. The Bass Island Brownstone Company was established to quarry and market the stones. Docks and buildings were built and machinery was brought to the Island. A census in 1870 showed nineteen people, mostly of Irish descent, employed at the quarry. The stone was "cut by channelers, in two directions, and then wedged off along the bedding plane to the desired thickness."  These cuts were usually eight to ten feet deep. Channeling was preferred to blasting, as the stone often broke and shattered during the latter process. The Basswood Island Quarry did not have facilities for sawing.

Proposed for use in the Milwaukee County Courthouse, the stone of the Basswood quarry was subjected to extensive testing to determine its structural capability. The results were favorable, and the first stones produced by the quarry were used in the construction of that imposing Renaissance Revival building (now demolished). Other buildings known to have been built of Basswood Island brownstone include the old Chicago Tribune Building, the Forest Home Cemetery Chapel in Milwaukee, designed by Ferry and Clas, and St. Paul's Episcopal Church, also in Milwaukee, a National Register property.

The growing popularity of the steel frame building and consequent use of lighter materials, coupled with the economic recession of 1893, halted the operation of the Basswood Island Quarry. Other quarries in the area continued to supply brownstone for buildings throughout the mid-west until the market disappeared in the early twentieth century.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 9.7

UTM REFERENCES

<table>
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<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
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<td>5,1</td>
<td>8,8</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZONE EASTING</td>
<td>ZONE EASTING</td>
<td>NORTHING</td>
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>CODE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

FORM PREPARED BY

Herschel L. D. Parnes, Field Surveyor, Historic Preservation Office

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

816 State Street

Madison, Wisconsin

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

608/262-9504

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Wisconsin

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE X 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.

S.H.P.O. Signature

TITLE

Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE 1/29/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 3/26/78

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 3/26/78
BASS ISLAND BROWNSTONE COMPANY

Charlotte Learned George
3053 Hermit Way
Santa Rosa, California 95405

Harold N. Learned
14111 S. E. 260th
Kent, Washington 98031

National Park Service - Midwest Region
1709 Jackson St.
Omaha, Nebraska 63102

State of Wisconsin
Department of Natural Resources
4610 University Avenue
Madison, Wisconsin 53705
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Continuation sheet</th>
<th>Item number</th>
<th>Page</th>
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</thead>
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| PROPERTY NAME | Bass Island Brownstone Quarry |

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<tr>
<th>REFERENCE NUMBER</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>COUNTY CODE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>78000075</td>
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<td>0003</td>
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Property name should read **Bass Island Brownstone Quarry**.

Bass Island Brownstone Company Quarry.

SIGNED, SHEO OR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE  
DATE  
2/18/86
**United States Department of the Interior**

**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**

**Inventory—Nomination Form**

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<tr>
<th>Item number</th>
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**PROPERTY NAME** Basswood Island Brownstone Quarry

**REFERENCE NUMBER**

**STATE** WI

**COUNTY CODE** 003

Property name should read Basswood Island Company Quarry