

P40355372

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
MAR 2 1976  
RECEIVED  
DATE ENTERED AUG 11 1976

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 *Whe* \*\* Coney Island of the West

AND/OR COMMON  
Coney Island

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER Lake Waconia

CITY, TOWN *Waconia MN 5* VICINITY OF  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT Second

STATE Minnesota CODE 27 COUNTY Carver CODE 019

**CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Island has returned to natural wilderness

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Multiple (see continuation sheet - page 1 - for complete listing)

STREET & NUMBER  
CITY, TOWN VICINITY OF STATE

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Registry of Deeds - Carver County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER 205 East 4th Street  
CITY, TOWN Chaska STATE Minnesota

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Statewide Historic Sites Survey

DATE 1975.  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 type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	
	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED	

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The thirty-one acre Coney Island is located north one-half mile off shore of the City of Waconia in Lake Waconia. The physical dimensions of the island are as follows: along its East-West axis it is about 2000 feet long; along its North-South axis on the West end it is about 1200 feet across; and on the North-South axis on the East end it is about 650 feet across. The high point on the island is about 60 feet above the water line. Beaches one to three feet above the water line occur on the East end of the island and on the Southwest corner of the island.

Until the beginning of the 1880s the island existed in its natural wilderness state. The decade of the 1880s witnessed a great building boom and development on the island. By 1920, when the resort/hotel enterprises on the island began to decline, all of the land was utilized. Forty structures, of which thirteen are of relatively major size, remain today although in a severe state of deterioration. Of the well-manicured parks, paths, and grounds all but infrequent remnants have been engulfed under dense and uncontrolled undergrowth. Six streets were dedicated to public use in the original plat: Lakeside Avenue (which circumscribed the island), Park Avenue (which circumscribed Coney Island Park in the center of the island), Goethe Street, Schiller Street, Lessing Street, and Uhland Avenue. Uhland Avenue was the main access between the landing and the Island Hotel complex in Coney Island Park; it was constructed of concrete slabs and is the only clearly discernable street on the island today.

All structures on the island are of frame construction, the majority being on concrete or post foundations. The thirteen major structures included the Island Hotel, Pavilion, Dining Hall, Boarding House, Emile Amblard's three villas (Villa Emile, Villa Marie, and Villa Topsy), and six large cottages. The remaining minor structures were primarily associated with the resort/hotel operation and were simple one or two room sleeping cottages. Remnants of several other structures including boathouse/pavilions, necessaries, barn, baggage house, laundry, and storage exist although the majority of these are in an advanced state of decay.

The first area of development on the island was in Coney Island Park (denoted Naegele's Park in the original plat) and consisted of a resort/hotel complex. This was begun in 1884 with the main hotel building (the Island Hotel) constructed in 1886. This building is a two storey frame structure executed on an elongated cruciform plan. Although it has been severely vandalized, the exterior has retained a significant amount of original architectural detailing, such as stick-style surface treatment and gable ornament, and scroll-sawn brackets. The porch has retained its original configuration although the former spindle ornament and turned posts were removed when it was converted from an open verandah to a screened-in space. All sash have been destroyed as have the interior fixtures, woodwork, plaster walls and ceilings by vandals. The original floor plan indicates two large rooms and kitchen on the first level with six to eight sleeping rooms on the second level. Subsequent alterations, probably during the 1920s, were made on the first level to provide one large room directly behind and opening into the porch; the second floor has retained original configuration.

Adjacent to the Hotel are the Pavilion and Dining Hall. Both are large, hall-like frame structures which are totally lacking in architectural embellishment. These buildings, along with the hotel, were used infrequently until about 1960. Since that time, these have also been vandalized.

# 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Recreation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES 1880-1920

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

When the village of Waconia on the south shore of Lake Waconia (formerly Clearwater Lake) was platted in March of 1857 by G.W. King on land owned by Roswell P. Russell, Russell strongly believed that the town and lake could be developed into a summer resort area. Although the idea was accepted, a period of about twenty years passed before significant development began. This development primarily focused on Coney Island, a thirty-one acre island in the center of Clearwater Lake.

Originally part of a land grant from the United States government to the Saint Paul and Sioux City Railroad in 1866, the island was sold in two parcels to Josephine Hassenstab and her father Robert Miller in 1874 and 1876 respectively at a total cost of \$96.50. The members of this family played an active role in the development of Coney Island as a resort/recreation enterprise until the decade of the 1890s. Frances Hassenstab and Andrew F. Schutz, sons-in-law to Miller were prime promoters of the tourist trade.

Whereas Hassenstab concerned himself primarily with the island in addition to a colorful career as County Treasurer accused of absconding with more than \$14,000 in 1875 whereupon he "disappeared" to Philadelphia, Schutz maintained a sound reputation as the proprietor of the Lake House Hotel and boat livery at Waconia. In 1877, Schutz acquired and enlarged his hotel and promoted Coney Island until it reached statewide acclaim as a summer recreation center by 1882, although most of the visitors came from the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area. Excursion trains ran from the cities to Waconia every weekend, leaving Minneapolis at 9:00 AM and returning at 6:30 PM for a cost of \$1.25 for the round trip.

Until 1884 activities concerning Waconia and Coney Island were primarily fishing, boating, and picnicking. In 1883 Schutz constructed a double-decked steam excursion vessel for use on the lake; the capacity of this vessel was 300 persons. The vessel (Niagara) was destroyed in 1904 by a cyclone which literally devastated Waconia and the island.

In 1884 Coney Island was sold to Lambert Naegele, editor of the Minneapolis Free Press for \$5200. At this time the official name Coney Island of the West was given and the island surveyed for parks, streets, and individual lots, some of which sold for \$500 each. Naegele's Plan for the island called for the investment of \$10,000 to be used in landscaping and the construction of hotel/resort facilities. A large pavilion was constructed and followed by a large hotel and four cottages in 1886. At this time also, streets and paths were gravelled and over \$300 worth of ornamental trees planted. Livery and excursion boat service was greatly expanded to provide for large groups which came by the trainload.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Holcombe, R.I., and Bingham, W.H.; History and Biography of Carver and Hennepin Counties, 1915.
- Lahr, Grace; paper: Coney Island of the West (A history of events in its development and the people who made them happen), 1964.
- Miller, Elmer F., A History of Coney Island and Clearwater Lake in Carver County at Waconia, Minnesota, Waconia Patriot Series of 32, 10 April 1975 - 13 November 1975.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 31  
 UTM REFERENCES

A	1,5	4,3,8,6,0,0	4,9,6,7,6,5,0	B	1,5	4,3,7,8,0,0 <sup>825</sup>	4,9,6,7,3,0,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,5	4,3,7,7,5,0	4,9,6,7,9,0,0	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

ORGANIZATION  
 Minnesota Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER  
 Building 25, Fort Snelling

CITY OR TOWN  
 Saint Paul

DATE  
 31 December 1975

TELEPHONE  
 612-726-1171

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  
 2-20-76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Acting DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
*Lowery* DATE 8/11/76

ATTEST: Keeper of the National Register  
*Charles* DATE 8/6/76

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CONTINUATION SHEET Coney Island

ITEM NUMBER 4

PAGE 1

Francis Dvorak Loomis  
316 East MacArthur  
Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701

Paul and Luke Melchert  
Waconia, Minnesota 55387

John F. and Germaine M. Zeglin  
Route 1, Box 43B  
Maple Plain, Minnesota 55359

James Totino  
3434 Fillmore N.E.  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55418

Bernard J. and Geraldine Rauen  
Waconia, Minnesota 55387

Pennview Inc.  
c/o G.E. Ruedy  
730 Northwestern Financial Center  
7900 Xerxes Avenue South  
Bloomington, Minnesota 55431

George and Terese F. Mayo  
3521 11th Avenue South  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55407

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Cottages associated with the resort/hotel operation are of simple frame construction and consist of one or two rooms. They are primarily located along the former Goethe Street and Park Avenue. As in the case of other buildings in the complex, these cottages have also been vandalized. The majority seem structurally sound. They range in date from the late 1880s through the 1920s.

Aside from the Island Hotel, the most significant property historically and architecturally is the Amblard Estate which is located on the southwestern tip of the island. Of the three villas, only shells remain in an advanced state of deterioration, much of which has been caused through vandalism. The elaborate parks and gardens which surrounded the villas are now nearly undistinguishable due to a dense undergrowth.

The first villa to be constructed in 1894 was the Villa Emile, the most elaborate of the three. It is a frame building executed on a "T" plan. The long axis of the "T" is a one storey section with a gabled roof; the short axis is two storeys, the upper level serving as an observation room. This portion was covered with a hipped roof with an elaborate scroll-sawn cresting at the ridge. The entire building was surrounded by a verandah graced by turned posts and latticework. Above the verandah at the second storey observation room was a spindlework balcony with canvas awning. The entire villa was surrounded by well-manicured lawns and flowerbeds and ornamental trees and shrubs. A system of gravel pathways linked the villas and outbuildings as well as led to the upper terrace of the island where the hotel was located. At its prime, the Amblard Estate occupied nearly one-half of the island, however, with the exception of the immediate grounds surrounding the three villas, the land was open to the public as a park.

Today, the Villa Emile is a shell which is nearly devoid of ornament. The basic "T" mass exists although the verandah has collapsed, the lattice and spindlework shattered or rotted, sash broken, and roofs and floors near collapse. The Villa Marie and Villa Topsy, situated at the foot of the rise to the upper terrace are in similar condition.

In general, Coney Island (which was at one time called Paradise Island) could be classified as a ghost town. The majority of buildings remain in original locations and represent a period of resort/cottage architecture from 1880 through 1920. Although in an advanced state of deterioration, architectural elements as well as landscaping treatment are recognizable although with difficulty to the untrained eye.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Coney Island      ITEM NUMBER 8      PAGE 3

Although individual lots continued to be sold, two major changes in ownership of large parcels on the island occurred in 1892 and 1894. In 1892 Reinhold Zeglin acquired the Island Hotel property and facilities, the promotion of which had expanded to the eastern states. Two years later a wealthy and colorful French citizen, Monsieur Emile Amblard, a member of the French firm of F. Chauvenet and Company, Wine Importers, visited Waconia and Coney Island. So favorable was his impression that he purchased land in Waconia and on the island; he added to his island holdings until he owned about one-half of the island.

Amblard had been widely traveled and was a devout naturalist. His prime concern was the beautification of the island. He constructed three villas; one for himself, one for his wife and mother-in-law, and one for guests. He had an outstanding artistic ability which was applied in his extensive plans for buildings and landscaping, all of which he financed himself. Although retaining his French citizenship throughout his life, Amblard honored American holidays as well as custom. Every Fourth of July and on other holidays, Amblard would provide extensive displays of fireworks from his villa on the island. Advertising photos often depicted the Amblard property. In addition, Amblard constructed a clubhouse, dining room, and automobile garage in Waconia itself. So prolific were his accomplishments that he was given the title, "Duke of Clearwater Lake".

Emile Amblard died in July of 1914, his property being sold in total to J.R. Ferris, proprietor of the National Hotel in Minneapolis, for the sum of \$12,000. Ferris pledged to preserve the Villa Emile and to continue to open the parks to the public. Ferris, however, died in 1920.

Although the recreation trade continued in Waconia and on Coney Island, the decade of the 1920s marks the beginning of the decline and deterioration of the island as a resort. With the development of transportation routes and the automobile it became more possible for residents of urban areas to make journeys further than before, extending far into the northern forest and lakes area of the state. Consequently, with diminished trade, the grounds of the island were gradually allowed to become overgrown and neglected and the buildings to fall into disrepair and victim to vandalism. What remains of Coney Island today is a grave reminder of what was one of Minnesota's most popular early resort areas, a representation of the desire of urban dwellers to seek recreation in Minnesota's lakes and nature areas as early as the 1880s.