

**BASIS FOR REQUEST OF APPROVAL TO DESIGNATE THE LIMNOLOGY PROPERTY, located at
6008 London Road, Duluth, Mn., as a LOCAL LANDMARK**

HPC FN _____

Historic Preservation Commission

Local Landmark Nomination

I. Name of Property

- A. Historic: US Fisheries Station
- B. Common: Limnology Research Station

II. Location:

- A. Address 6008 London Rd, Duluth, Mn
- B. Legal Description Township 50 Section 0 Range 13

Part of Lot 1 Sec 8 and part of SE 1/4 of SE 1/4 of Sec 5 Beg at a PT in the WLY Shore of Lester River 300 Ft SELY from the Central Line of the DM&IR RY Track measured at RT angles thence SWLY Parallel with said Track 656 Ft thence SELY at RT angles to RR Track to the Shore of Lake Superior thence NELY along shore line to mouth of Lester River thence along the WLY shore of the Lester River to PT of Beg EX Part N of N Line of London Rd.

III. Classification:

- A. Type of Property Research/Education
- B. Current Use Donated office space: Northshore Sugarloaf Cove Stewardship Assoc. (one room)
- C. Current Zoning R-1 Traditional Residential

IV. Current Owner:

- A. Name University of Minnesota-Duluth
- B. Address Darland Administration Bldg., 1049 University Dr, Duluth

C. Telephone (218) 726-7101

V. Property Status:

A. Occupied/Vacant One occupant/office space 8x10

B. Assessed Value \$527,300

C. Condition Very Good

VI. Historical Background:

A. Year Built 1888

B. Architect and/or Builder U.S. Fish Commission/Ennis

C. Original Site yes

D. Altered/Unaltered Unaltered

E. Architectural Style Shingle Style/Stick/East Lake/Bungalow-Craftsman

VII. Description of Property: Located on the south side of London Rd, with the Lester River on the east boundary, Lake Superior on the south boundary. The property consists of the main research building, and small boat house, and a residential cottage-house. Two drives are established for property access. The west end drive is a City of Duluth Street that dead-ends at a utilities station for the City.

VIII. Present Condition: The general condition of the buildings is considered as good. The exterior of the building was restored by UMD in 2013 with a re-shingled roof and repainting.

IV. Statement of Significance: Historical significance is in event, Architectural and Engineering. The Lester River Fish Hatchery was the first such hatchery in the region, and one of 5 in the country. At the time it was considered to be the finest hatchery in the country.

X. Findings on Designation Criteria:

A. "It has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City of Duluth, State of Minnesota, or the US."

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Mr. John Gay, United States Fish Commission, states in a newspaper article that the Duluth hatchery, "when completed, will be the finest in the country and capable of hatching 50,000,000 Whitefish per season. Moreover, the hatchery cannot fail to advance the fishing interests."

It is reported that construction of the hatchery began on June 25, 1888, with the laying of the foundation by Contractor Ennis.

B. "Its location was a site of a significant historical event."

Findings: Property does not meet this criterion

C. "It is identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the cultural development of the City of Duluth, State of Minnesota, or the US."

Findings: Dr. Robert Ormsby Sweeny was a one of the most distinguished early settlers of our State. The highly respected R.O. Sweeny, President of the Minnesota State Fish Commission, was appointed Superintendent of the U.S. Fish Hatchery Sept 11, 1888. Dr. Sweeny was a renowned Pisculturalist and known throughout the northwest region and in the United States for his sterling qualities and knowledge of fish.

R.O. Sweeny was also a remarkable artist and is recorded in Minnesota history as having designed the State seal. Although his original design was selected for this purpose, it has undergone alterations as we know it today.

D. "It embodies a distinguishing characteristic of an architectural type."

Finding: Property does not meet this criterion

E. “It is identified as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the City of Duluth or the State of Minnesota.”

Finding: Property does not meet this criterion

F. “It embodies elements of architectural design, detail, materials, and craftsmanship which represent significant architectural innovation”.

Finding: Property does not meet this criterion

G. “Its unique location or singular physical characteristics represent an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City as a whole.”

Finding: The structure is unique in representing the history of commercial fishing on Lake Superior and the first federal fish hatchery to be developed for the purpose of propagating and sustaining the fish population of Lake Superior and the Great Lakes overall.

XI. Conclusions:

A. Points in Favor:

1. Historical event: In 1886 the Lakeside Land Company donated five acres for the hatchery and Lester Park, which is adjacent- north of the hatchery. The hatchery was built with the intention of being one of the finest in the world.
2. Historic event: The idea for a hatchery was spawned by a group of local commercial fisherman who recognized the declining number of White fish in Lake Superior. The group, established as the Duluth Fishery Association, appealed to the U.S. Fisheries Commission to build a hatchery at the Lester River.
3. The building design depicts an architectural design of the period 1880’s; a stick-style/shingle featuring Queen Ann accents.
4. Inspector John Gay, U.S. Fish Commission, states; “the Duluth hatchery, when completed, will be the finest in the country and capable of hatching 50,000,000 White fish per season.”

5. Robert O. Sweeny, the first named Superintendent of the hatchery was at the time the President of the Minnesota Sate Fish Commission. R.O. Sweeny was well known throughout the country for his vast knowledge of fish, respectfully referencing him as a Pisculturalist.

6. Significant individual: Robert Ormsby Sweeny, Superintendent of the Lester River Fish Hatchery, is known in history as one of the most distinguished of early settlers of Minnesota. He was also a renowned artist. Being recognized as such he was chosen in designing the Minnesota State Seal. Sweeny was the President of the State Historical Society for several years and served as the first Chairman for the State Fish Commission.

In addition to his reputation for knowledge of fish, Dr. R.O. Sweeny was one of the incorporators of the Minnesota State Pharmaceutical Association, having possessed extensive knowledge of drugs and medicine

7. The establishment of the Lester River Fish Hatchery illustrates an early event in Minnesota history, whereby a group of fisherman united in creating a sustainable management plan for fish in the Great Lakes.

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B. Points in Opposition:

At the time of this writing, no points of opposition are known to the author.

XII. Attachments:

A. National Registry:

1. Property Search
2. Significance
3. Nomination Form

B. UMD Letter of Commitment

C. Bibliography:

1. Weber Stream Restoration Initiative, UMD- NRRI
Spring 2007 Publication
2. University of Minnesota-Duluth, NRRI website
3. State Historic Preservation Office (website)
4. Duluth Public Library, Genealogy Bank

Duluth Biography

Duluth Daily News Tribune:

Friday July 15, 1887 Duluth Daily News Vol. XVIII Issue 11 P. 1

Tuesday Nov 29, 1887 Duluth Daily News Vol. II Issue 176 P. 8

Friday March 23, 1888 Duluth Daily News Vol. II Issue 266 P. 5

Tuesday June 26, 1888 Duluth Daily News Vol. III Issue 44 P. 4

Saturday Aug 11, 1888 Duluth Daily News Vol. III Issue 84 P. 4

Tuesday Sept 11, 1888 Duluth Daily News Vol. III Issue 110 P. 4

B. Location Map (enclosed)

C. Photos of subject property

Source: Duluth Public Library, Genealogy Bank (photos)

SUMMARY

The existing buildings on said property, comprise what is known to us today as the UMD Limnology Center. UMD has preserved and safeguarded the property since 1948, when the building closed its operation as the Lester River Fish Hatchery.

The historical value of this property is currently recognized by designation on the National Historic Registry. It was granted registry status as the U.S. Fisheries Station on November 28, 1978, on the basis of architecture style and architecture theme. The shingle and stick style, accented with Queen Ann features, is representative style of the 1880 period. The picturesque structure elaborates hammer trusses under eaves and gables, with scalloped and dentate shingled walls that fan out above the first floor, forming hoods over windows. The main building specifically was constructed in 1888, and operated for 60 years under its intended purpose as a fish hatchery. This hatchery was commissioned by the U.S. Fisheries Commission.

The buildings represent the time period when fishing the Great Lakes was prolific. Lake Superior was fished heavily for White fish until local fisherman recognized a declining population in the species. Their actions pursued in establishing the Duluth Fish Commission, which was the first of its kind in the fishing industry. The group rallied its efforts to convince the U.S. Fisheries Commission in Washington, DC, to erect a fish hatchery at the Lester River, whereby fingerling stock of White fish, Walleye, Brook Trout, Rainbow Trout, Lake Trout, and Lake Herring would be propagated to supply the Lakes for a sustainable fish population, consequently supporting the commercial industry. However, over time, the summer water temperatures made the waters too warm for cold-water breeding. This eventually led to closing the hatchery and selling it to the UMD, through the State of Minnesota.

The history of the property as a project commissioned by the U.S. Fisheries Commission in an early period, elevates its value as a national monument to be preserved. From its beginning, the hatchery was billed as the finest fish hatchery in the United States.

Moreover, the history of the property brings forth the recognition of one of Minnesota's earliest settlers and most prominent figures; Dr. Robert Ormsby Sweeny. Dr. Sweeny's artistic qualities led to his work being chosen for the State Seal (stamp). Furthermore, he was a leader in establishing the Minnesota Pharmaceutical Association, and served as the first Commissioner of the State Fish Commission. He came to Duluth in 1888 to serve as the first Superintendent at the Lester River Fish Hatchery, having been appointed by Inspector John Gay, of the U.S. Fisheries Commission. Dr. Sweeny was known across the country as one of the most knowledgeable individuals about fish, earning him the title of Pisciculturalist.

Overall, the property at 6008 London Rd represents a period of time in the history of Duluth, the region, and the United States; from its' unique architecture, to its specialized purpose for the Great Lakes. The buildings' image carries forth a history that is worthy of timeless preservation.

Duluth Fish & Seafood Market LLC hereby submits this nomination for approval of local landmark status.