

112 Lewis Avenue North (HOUSE)
(Lewis Avenue North Historic District)
City of Watertown
Carver County
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-128

HABS
MINN
10-WATO,
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P. O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

112 LEWIS AVENUE NORTH (HOUSE)

Location: 112 Lewis Avenue North,
Watertown, Carver County, Minnesota

Quad: Watertown, Minnesota

Date of Erection: Circa 1860

Architect: Unknown

Significance: This structure, together with neighboring 200 Lewis Avenue North and 108 Lewis Avenue North (HABS Nos. MN-130 and MN-129, respectively), is the surviving core of the initial settlement of Watertown. They are relatively rare examples of Minnesota's mid-nineteenth century, vernacular, residential architecture.

Project Statement: In May 1988, the City of Watertown received a Small Cities Block Grant for Flood Plain Redevelopment. The redevelopment plan called for removal of twelve properties, including 108, 112 and 200 Lewis Avenue North. Due to long-term damage from flooding and poor maintenance, renovation of the properties was considered unlikely given structural and financial considerations.

HABS documentation was thus initiated by an agreement between the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, the Minnesota Department of Trade, the Carver County Housing and Redevelopment Authority, the City of Watertown, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

Historians: Charlene K. Roise and Robert M. Hybben; Hess, Roise and Company, Minneapolis; September 1990.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

For a general history of the Lewis Avenue North Historic District, see HABS No. MN-130. On 14 April 1859, Ira Kingsley, a prominent Saint Anthony physician and the father-in-law of Isaac Lewis' brother, Eli, purchased lots 1 through 5 of block 49 from the elder Lewis.¹ Although Eli Lewis owned a store on lots 4 and 5 as early as 1858, an historic structures report of 112 Lewis Avenue North by Miller-Dunwiddie-Associates, an architectural firm, asserts that the amount of the transfer (\$2,100) would suggest that more than one building was involved."² Of course, an earlier building may have occupied the same land, only to be later demolished to make room for 112 Lewis Avenue North. Of additional note, the number "1862" appears crayoned on the house's first floor wall. It is upside down, indicating that it was written before construction, and may be a lumber mill mark and not a date. Judging from historic data and architectural detailing, the house dates to the late 1850s or mid 1860s.

DESCRIPTION

This small, 1½ story, gable-roofed house lies on a lot situated between Lewis Avenue at the property's west (front) edge and the Crow River to the east. It is between two other mid-nineteenth century houses (108 and 200 Lewis Avenue North) just north of Watertown's downtown commercial district.

The west gable end of the house is set back only a few feet from Lewis Avenue. Original clapboard is exposed on what is now an interior wall where a small, one-story, gable-roofed room was added to the eastern end of the building's north side. A shed-roofed section was later attached to the east wall of the addition. Wide, composition-shingle siding now covers the entire structure's exterior walls. Composition shingles also sheath the roof. A band of simple board trim runs beneath the eaves and outlines the gable end. A doorway, which has been partially covered with boards, enters the first floor near the front right corner. Another doorway is on the east end of the south wall, next to the addition, and the addition has a doorway on the west wall. All doors are modern. The frame of the doorway on the south wall and all window frames are edged by shallow, ogee molding. All extant windows are 6-over-6 sash. Many are covered by 12-pane, wood-frame, storm windows. Glass is broken in most panes of both windows and storm windows. Windows are centered on the front (west) gable end on both first and second floors. There are two windows on the north side. The rear (east) wall has a window centered beneath the gable on the second floor; no glass or muntins remain. The first floor

¹ Carver County Deed Records, Book B, 610.

² Miller-Dunwiddie-Associates, 7.

rear window is slightly to the left of center. There is a single window on the south side near the front. The building's original section rests on a fieldstone foundation, which encloses an unfinished basement. Foundations for the additions, which do not have basements, are quite deteriorated, particularly under the most recent section.

Interior renovation was initiated. Plaster has been stripped from most walls and ceilings, exposing lath and oak structural members. Most were cut with a circular saw. The wood was presumably supplied by a sawmill first brought to the area by Alexander Moore in 1856 and purchased by town founder Isaac Lewis and his brother Eli in 1858. Square nails were used for the construction. Partitions dividing the first floor and attic of the original section have been removed, and with them all original doors and hardware. A central brick chimney, which does not extend completely to the floor on the first level, has connections for stove pipes. The stairway to the attic has been removed, leaving a large, square hole in the ceiling to document its probable location. Curved molding edging a window on the east end of the north wall and wide plank flooring are virtually the only original detailing that remains. The southeast corner addition has also been gutted. Flooring has been removed, so that the level of the floor is significantly lower than that of the original building.

A small, wood-sided garage on a recent concrete foundation sits to the north of the house further back from the street. (The site was originally platted as Carter Street, but the lack of a bridge over the Crow River at that location ultimately caused the street to be vacated.) The front (west) gable end has a single-leaf, overhead door. The structure, which dates from the first half of the twentieth century, was designed for automobile storage.

INFORMATION SOURCES

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