

**Wisconsin Concrete Park, Phillips, Wisconsin
National Register of Historic Places nomination website summary**

The Wisconsin Concrete Park is an outdoor museum comprised of over 200 embellished concrete and mixed media sculptures built between 1949 and 1964 by Fred Smith, a retired lumberjack and self-taught artist. Installed throughout Smith's northwoods property in Phillips, WI, the site is a historical panorama of life-size and larger-than-life tableaux depicting people, animals, and events from local, regional and national history, from local lore, and from Smith's expansive imagination.

Fred Smith was born in 1886 to first generation German immigrants to Price County. He built his house, barn, and tavern on property he homesteaded in Phillips in 1903. Smith worked in regional lumber camps from his early teens until 1948, when he retired due to severe arthritis. At that time he began to build bas relief plaques and sculptures in the vicinity of his tavern. Smith's work evolved from two dimensional into three-dimensional sculptures and tableaux, which he built on an ambitious scale throughout his property. Smith called his sculptural environment the Wisconsin Concrete Park. He focused his energy on its creation until he suffered a stroke in 1964, and was unable to continue.

Smith made sculpture within the longstanding, formal tradition of commemorative monuments and memorials, and within a regional tradition of grotto building. Conceived and created in his senior years, Fred Smith built the Wisconsin Concrete Park as a gift "for all the American people." Throughout this extensive site Smith depicted history, not as a string of isolated moments, but as an elastic, organic entity in which local and national people, events, and histories were intermingled with animals, all sharing a common landscape. The site is recognized as a masterwork in the genre of 20th century sculptural environments by self-taught artists.

**United States Department of Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Wisconsin Concrete Park

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number	Highway 13 South					N/A	not for publication		
city or town	Phillips					N/A	vicinity		
state	Wisconsin	code	WI	county	Price	code	099	zip code	54555

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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Wisconsin Concrete Park	County: Price	Wisconsin
Name of Property	County and State	

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):	_____

_____ Signature of Keeper	_____ Date of Action
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5. Classification

Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)	
private	building(s)	contributing	noncontributing
x public-local	x district	2	3 buildings
public-State	structure	0	3 sites
public-Federal	site	3	2 structures
	object	237	1 objects
		Total 242	9

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Stoney Pub (formerly Fred Smith's Rock Garden Tavern)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum, work
 of art, outdoor recreation,

LANDSCAPE/parking lot/park/garden

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store,
 museum

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum,
 work of art, outdoor recreation,

LANDSCAPE/garden/park/parking lot

Non-contributing:

EDUCATION/other: educational
 programming studio

EDUCATION/other: conservation
 studio/garage

RECREATION AND CULTURE/other: rest
 rooms

RECREATION AND
 CULTURE/monument/marker

RECREATION AND CULTURE/other:
 nature trail

LANDSCAPE/garden

RECREATION AND CULTURE/other:
 information kiosk, wheelchair ramp

RECREATION AND CULTURE/other:
 information kiosk

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Smith House: LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH
 CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS:
 Bungalow/craftsman

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/granite
 walls WOOD/weatherboard
 walls WOOD/shingle
 roof ASPHALT/ shingle

Rock Garden Tavern: LATE 19TH AND EARLY
 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS:
 other/no style

foundation: STONE/granite
 walls STONE/granite
 walls CONCRETE/home made
 concrete block
 walls WOOD: weatherboard
 roof ASPHALT/ shingle

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheets

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ART

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Period of Significance

1948-1964

Architect/Builder

SMITH, FRED

Significant Dates

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See continuation sheets.

9. Major Bibliographic References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

BOOKS

Beardsley, John. *Gardens of Revelation Environments by Visionary Artists*. New York: Abbeville Press (1995): 80-85.

Hall, Michael D. "Memory and Mortar: Fred Smith's Wisconsin Concrete Park" *Stereoscopic Perspective: Reflections on American Fine and Folk Art*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press (1988): 173-84.

Hartigan, Lynda Roscoe. *Made With Passion: The Hemphill Folk Art Collection in the National Museum of American Art*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, (1990): 55.

Hemphill, Herbert W., and Julia Weissman. *20th Century Folk Art and Artists*. New York: E.P.

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Dutton, & Co. Inc. 1974.

Sackett, F.W. Comp. *A Glimpse at the Early History of the State of Wisconsin Relating to Price County*. Unpublished manuscript, Phillips, Wisconsin, 1901.

Sellen, Betty-Carol. *20th Century American Folk, Self-Taught, and Outsider Art*. New York: Neal Schuman Publishers, Inc. (1993): 416.

Stevenson, Katherine Cold and Jandl, H. Ward. *Houses by Mail A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company*. Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1986.

Stone, Lisa, and Zanzi, Jim. *The Art of Fred Smith*. Phillips, WI: The Wisconsin Concrete Park/Weber & Sons (1991).

Stone, Lisa, and Zanzi, Jim. "Fred Smith's Wisconsin Concrete Park" *Sacred Spaces and Other Places A Guide to the Grottos and Sculptural Environments of the Upper Midwest*. Chicago: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago Press (1993): 104-123.

Wertkin, Gerard C., Editor. *Encyclopedia of American Folk Art*. New York / London: Routledge, in association with the American Folk Art Museum (2004). 492-93.

-- *Phillips Czechoslovakian Community Volume I*. Park Falls, WI: Weber and Sons, Inc. 1991.

-- *Phillips Czechoslovakian Community Volume II*. Park Falls, WI: Weber and Sons, Inc. 1995.

-- *Phillips Fire Centennial 1894-1994*. Park Falls, WI: Weber and Sons, Inc. 1994.

CATALOGS

Hoos, Judith, and Blaisdel, Greg. "Fred Smith's Concrete Park." *Naives and Visionaries*. An exhibition organized by Walker Art Center. Minneapolis: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc. (1974): 53-59.

Cole, Wanda G., *Grass Roots Art: Wisconsin Toward a Redefinition*. Sheboygan, WI: John Michael Kohler Arts Center (1978): 38.

----- *100 Years of Wisconsin Art, 1888-1988: A Centennial Celebration*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee Art Museum, (1988): 112-113.

ARTICLES

Bielskis, William H. "North Woods Picasso." *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, (May 3, 1964): 32-34.

Blasdel, Gregg N. "The Grassroots Artist." *Art In America*. (September/October 1968): 24-41.

----- "Grandpa Moses of Cement", *LIFE* (November 28, 1969) no page #.

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Howlett, Don and Sharron. "Folk Heroes Cast in Concrete." *Historic Preservation Magazine*. (May-June 1979): 35-38.

Knapp, Leo. An unpublished written recollection of the history of the Fred Smith House. Phillips, Wisconsin, 1990.

Stone, Lisa. "Fred Smith's Wisconsin Concrete Park". *Raw Vision*, Spring 2003, 32-37.

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service): **Primary location of additional data:**

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested | XState Historic Preservation Office |
| <input type="checkbox"/> previously listed in the National Register | <input type="checkbox"/> Other State Agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> previously determined eligible by the National Register | <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> designated a National Historic landmark | <input type="checkbox"/> Local government |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> University |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Name of repository: Friends of Fred Smith archive, Phillips, WI.

- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 18 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	_____	3	_____
	Zone Easting Northing		Zone Easting Northing
2	_____	4	_____
	Zone Easting Northing		Zone Easting Northing
			<input type="checkbox"/> See Continuation Sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)
The nominated boundary corresponds with the legal boundary description as follows: The south one half of the Northwest quarter of the Southwest quarter of Section twenty-one, Township thirty-seven North, Range one East, except parcels, approximately 18.0 acres. Beginning at the intersection of Trailer Lane and Highway 13, heading south along Highway 13 approximately 660 feet, then easterly

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1188 feet, then southerly 660 feet, then westerly 1188 feet, then northerly 660 feet to the point of beginning, approximately 18.0 acres.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)
 The boundary includes the 16.1 acre parcel presently owned by Price County, identified as the Wisconsin Concrete Park on page 1 of the site plans. (which includes the sculptures, landscape, and Smith House), and the contiguous although separately owned Stoney Pub, formerly Fred Smith's Rock Garden Tavern, on page 2 of the site plans. This boundary contains all of the contributing elements of Fred Smith's Wisconsin Concrete Park, and maintains the historic relationship between house, tavern, landscape, and sculpture.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Lisa Stone, Chair, Conservation Committee	date	December 2004
organization	Friends of Fred Smith	telephone	920. 566-4292
street & number	W5447 Cumberland Lane		
city or town	Neshkoro	state	WI
		zip code	54960

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets: Narrative, Statement of Significance, photograph description sheets, slide description sheet, site plans (6), and website summary.

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
 A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title	Bill and Cindy Elliott	date	
organization	Stoney Pub	telephone	715. 339-3350
street&number	N8220 State Highway 13		
city or town	Phillips	state	WI
		zip code	54555

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

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Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Narrative Description

The Wisconsin Concrete Park is located in the heart of Wisconsin's northwoods, on State Highway 13, two miles south of the city of Phillips. The Wisconsin Concrete Park is an outdoor museum comprised of 237 embellished concrete sculptures and other objects built by Fred Smith. Smith was born in 1886 to German immigrants to Price County. He became a lumberjack in his early teens, and retired in about 1948. At that time he began to build bas relief plaques and sculptures on an ambitious scale, throughout property he homesteaded in 1903. The Smith property is at the peak of a gradual rise in the region's topography, and is reached by inclines from the north and south. Smith situated his sculptures in the landscape surrounding the Smith family house (a Craftsman style house built in 1922), and in the vicinity of his roadside bar, the Rock Garden Tavern (a fieldstone, concrete block, and clapboard structure built in 1936, presently called Stoney Pub). In his sculptural environment—the Wisconsin Concrete Park—Smith created a cohesive panorama of local, regional, and national history, combined with legends derived from late 19th and early 20th century northwoods culture. His installation of monuments is a unique spatial narrative in which all sculptures and/or tableaux are visually and conceptually interrelated. Conceived and created in his senior years, Fred Smith built the Wisconsin Concrete Park as a gift “for all the American people.”¹

Originally all of the property in this district was owned by Fred Smith, and the relationship between house, tavern, and sculptural environment was uninterrupted. In 1973 Smith (who was 87 and living in a rest home) sold the Rock Garden Tavern—but not the sculptures surrounding it—to a private owner. After Smith's death in 1976 the Wisconsin Concrete Park (16.1 acres, including the Smith house and all sculptures, including those remaining on the tavern property) was purchased by Kohler Foundation, Inc., of Kohler, WI. After funding a sculpture conservation project (which included relocating all sculptures except one from the tavern property to the Wisconsin Concrete Park-proper), Kohler Foundation, Inc. deeded the site to Price County to be maintained as an outdoor museum and county park. This description outlines the original and present conditions of, and relationships between, the Smith House, the Rock Garden Tavern, and Smith's sculptures. These elements comprised the original, historic property of the Wisconsin Concrete Park. Despite the relocation of some sculptures from their original locations into the present park, the alteration of the landscape due to damage from two windstorms, the loss of the Smith barn (destroyed in a windstorm in 1977), and some exterior alterations to the Smith house and tavern, the site has strong historic integrity and retains the essential aspects and character of its original appearance, and its public, roadside orientation to State Highway 13.

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The Smith House

The Smith house is located at the center of the western boundary of the site. The most dense concentration of sculptures are immediately to the north of the house, and additional sculptures are south and east of the house. In this area along the highway, a few miles south of the city of Phillips, barns and remnants of agricultural structures are interspersed among newer houses, built circa: 1940-1980. Most buildings are oriented to the highway. The Smith house is one of the two prominent architectural elements in the Wisconsin Concrete Park. A pair of embellished concrete deer sculptures created by Smith flank the sidewalk leading to the front entrance, directly connecting the house with the sculptural environment. Prior to 1948, when Smith began to build sculpture, the house was bordered by the driveway and a naturalized landscape to the north, Smith's ginseng plantation sheds to the east, and his rock garden to the south.

Built in 1922, the Smith house is a side-gabled two story Craftsman-style bungalow with a modified rectangular plan, intersecting dormers, and a full-width front porch. The foundation is concrete with a section of fieldstone and mortar. The first floor walls and porch piers are finished with wood clapboards, the second story walls and dormer are sheathed in wood shingles; the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Craftsman-style detailing is evident in the alternating wall surfaces, porch, dormer, and window designs, and the deep overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails. The house has undergone some additions and alterations, and is in very good condition.

The Smith house foundation is about 24 inches high, made of concrete on the east, south and west, and fieldstone on the north facade. On the west (primary) façade, two rectangular piers of flush, uncoursed fieldstone bonded with green-tinted rope mortar joints flank three concrete steps leading to the front porch. Clapboard walls are recessed slightly behind battered porch piers. Pairs of simple wood columns support arches that enframe the porch window openings. These openings received infill wood frame windows, installed flush with the outer edge of the openings c: 1980, replacing multi-paned original windows recessed behind the openings. The original dormer porch, centered on the second story, featured a dormer projected over a smaller, recessed pediment roof, sheltering a porch. A door was flanked by two windows, and a railing spanned two slightly-projecting shingled piers. The recessed pediment roof, door, windows, piers, and railings were removed c: 1984, and replaced with a narrow

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horizontal window. A brick chimney is located at the intersection of the dormer gable at the center of the roof.

The first story walls of all facades are clapboard. The second story walls of the north and south facades are sheathed with wood shingles with dentilated bottom edges; the roof gables form the second story of the east and west facades. The north wall is penetrated by three 1-over-1 double hung sash windows on the first floor, and two 1-over-1 double hung sash windows on the second floor. All windows are wood framed with cornice molding. A concrete block chimney (added c: 1984) projects from the north facade, west of center. A single door and three 1-over-1 double hung sash windows penetrate the first story of the east facade. A wood stairway (1996) leads to an open air porch in the center of the east facade. This is the second alteration to the porch; the first replaced an enclosed one-story porch with clapboard siding on the bottom and a continuous band of 2-over-2 windows and 1-over-1 windows along the east. The steps lead to a single porch door with sidelights. The porch was originally covered with a half-hipped roof sheathed with asphalt shingles. The original roof was replaced with a shed roof. In 1996 a ramp was built to provide wheelchair access to the porch; in 1997 an information kiosk was incorporated into the ramp, creating an orientation area for visitors to the site.

The house's rectangular plan was extended with a one story sun porch along the full length of the south facade. The clapboard porch walls are penetrated by a band of narrow, vertical Arts and Crafts style casement windows divided into three sections of three windows each on the south elevation; the east and west elevations have one section of three windows each. A simple hipped roof with exposed rafter tails covers the south porch.

The interior plan is common to early 20th century Craftsman homes, with four first story rooms, plus bath, and a central staircase leading to 4 second story bedrooms with ample, walk in closets. The interior is unified by simple Craftsman woodwork. Significant features include the front entry, dining room wainscotting, and Smith's "rock garden room." The front entry comprises the most elaborate Arts and Crafts features of this modest Craftsman house. An oak door with two clear glass vertical lights divided by a central mullion is centered in a surround of Craftsman styled oak molding. Two narrow art glass sidelights contain green, ocher and opalescent gold glass in a modified Prairie School, chevron pattern. The entry leads to the dining room, with oak framed wainscot panels and interior sections of a synthetic wood-grained material (possibly Flex-Wood). Other intact features include plaster walls above the wainscotting, oak picture rails, and a

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brass chandelier with frosted ocher pressed glass shade components. The room openings between the dining and living rooms, and between the living room and “rock garden room” feature Craftsman-styled oak surrounds, with two square columns rising from flanking piers. Doorways from the living room and east bedroom lead into Smith’s “rock garden” room. In it, spanning nearly the length of the room, Smith built a 24” x 23’6” x 33” trough of red brick with green mortar joints. In the center of the trough Smith created a small concrete basin with mica-flecked rock walls fitted with a pipe, from which water trickled into the pool. Smith incorporated a cistern in the closet of the second story northeast bedroom to collect water to feed this pool. The trough interior was spanned by lengths of crosscut saw blades (reflecting Smith’s years as a lumberjack, and his basic ingenuity), creating a planting area for his rock garden. Only a few of the saw blades on the west end remain. Although the fountain is no longer operable and the trough is not planted, it is in good condition, and remains the focal point in the rock garden room, and a unique element of the house. The Arts and Crafts windows are intact and are caulked closed with clear sealant, c: 1988. The north wall now has sheets of simulated wood-grained paneling, and the original ceiling is covered with acoustical tile. The openings in the oak door surrounds at the west entry to the sun room were fitted with acrylic panels attached with clear caulk.

Most of the primary features of the Smith house, including its exterior envelope, distinguishing interior elements, its orientation to the highway, and relationship to its surrounding landscape, sculptures and tavern, are intact, and its original character is strongly evident. Most of the additions and alterations are reversible. The first floor is currently used as a gallery/gift shop by local artists; the rock garden room has interpretive displays about the house’s history. The second floor plan is intact and is used for lodging, storage, and a Friends of Fred Smith office.

The Rock Garden Tavern

The Rock Garden Tavern (currently Stoney Pub) is located about 30 yards south of the Smith house, on the same axis and orientation, facing State Highway 13, at the south west corner of Smith’s original 120 acre homestead. The tavern was built in 1936 by Fred Smith, with local stonemasons Albert and John Raskie. When the tavern was built it related to Smith’s rock garden to the north—an example of vernacular landscape architecture combining formal garden spaces and informal plantings of shrubs and flowers. When Smith built the addition on the east facade (c: 1945) the tavern evolved into an architectural statement combining conventional and original masonry techniques,

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beginning Smith's monumental sculptural project, which was begun and later completed in the vicinity of the tavern.

The Rock Garden Tavern is a one and one-half story side gabled rectangular building with a shed addition on the rear (east) elevation. The foundation and walls are contiguous, uncoursed field stone that rise from the ground and terminate at the bottom edge of the roof, in the front (west) section of the tavern. The combination of local rock of various shapes and colors, bonded with green rope-style mortar joints lends a visual dynamism to the building. The pitched roof is punctuated by dormers in the center of the east and west elevations. The roof-proper and dormer roofs are sheathed with gray asphalt shingles. The slight roof and dormer eave overhangs are boxed on the gable ends and have exposed rafter tails. A chimney rises from the center of the roof, at the juncture of the dormer and roof peaks.

The tavern windows are 1-over-1 rectangular wood frame. The ground floor windows have concrete sills, equal to the window width and about 6 inches high, projecting from the facade slightly, and fitted with concrete lintels, flush with the rock walls. The windows in the upper floor s are identical to the ground floor windows, but lack lintels. The primary elevation faces west and is prominently visible from State Highway 13, which runs parallel to the west elevation. The highway was raised after Smith's lifetime, altering the original relationship of the tavern to the road. They were originally on the same level, now the tavern is lower than the highway. An unpaved driveway runs in between the tavern and highway. A door on the west façade is located near the north corner. The door rests on a concrete sill and has a concrete lintel, slightly wider the door width, flush with the stone wall. Ground floor windows on this elevation are symmetrically placed, one south of the door, and the second at the south end. Two windows are symmetrically placed in the dormer. The bottom third of the windows are recessed into the stone wall; the top two thirds rise into the clapboard area. An entry foyer (added c: 2001) projects from the west doorway.

The north elevation originally featured a door and four windows, in a composition similar to the west elevation. A door located on the east side, about 3 feet from the corner, was recessed into the stone wall, with concrete lintel, slightly wider than the width of the door and flush with the stone wall. The door was raised on a single concrete step. (When Smith owned the tavern, the door had the sign Fred's Bar). Two ground floor windows were symmetrically spaced in the wall area to the right (east) of the door. Two upper floor windows are symmetrically placed, with the top outer corners near the roof line.

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Like the dormer windows, the bottom third of each window is inset into the stone wall and the top two thirds rise into the clapboard area. In 2001 a 16 x 20 foot room was added to the north elevation, altering the original door, stone wall, and windows.

Smith extended the rear (east) elevation with a shed addition (circa 1945). The contrast between the original building and Smith's addition is dramatic, and illustrates Smith's transition into constructing sculpture. As self-taught artist and architect Smith worked quickly and inventively. Rather than repeating the traditional fieldstone construction of the tavern, Smith created decorative and highly original concrete blocks for the addition. Smith's blocks are similar in size but are not uniform. To give them texture he embedded granite and mica-flecked rocks in the center of each. The rocks protrude about 6 inches from each, incorporating a fieldstone surface into a cement block structure. The concrete surfaces around protruding rocks were originally painted yellow and green. In his article "Concrete Park" (*Naives and Visionaries*), Gregg Blasdel referred to the "once brightly painted Rock Garden Tavern." The blocks are bonded with a convex, rope style mortar joint, similar to the joints in the tavern-proper. The mortar joints were also painted and retain faint traces of blue pigment.

The north elevation of the shed is broken by a simple wood door, slightly east of center. The east elevation roof is broken by a central dormer that was originally identical to the dormer on the west elevation. The dormer has been extended over the shed addition, with a shed roof over board and batten walls projecting from the full width of the original dormer, extending to the edge of the shed roof. The east elevation of the shed is broken by a central entry flanked by single windows to the north and south.

The south elevation mirrors the north elevation, with two exceptions: there are no doors on the original structure or shed, and there was a tavern sign between the two upper floor windows, prominently placed to attract auto traffic from the highway. The sign was centered in the pediment and between the windows, and consisted of a horizontal band about 18 inches tall, stretching nearly to the roof lines on both sides. The top band read ROCK GARDEN TAVERN. Beneath the sign was a lower register, slightly less wide but twice as tall as the top band. Available documentation does not indicate if there were images or text in this space. Carved wood quarter-sun-burst shaped ornament connected the top and bottom registers at the corners. The top register is intact but the text has been painted over. The bottom section and ornament are no longer extant.

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When Smith began to build sculpture he constructed some of his earliest works around the tavern. By 1977 the tavern was no longer owned by the Smith family, and the sculptures in the tavern vicinity were moved to a meadow on the east side of the Wisconsin Concrete Park. Due to its proximity to the Wisconsin Concrete Park it retains its tangible relationship to the sculptural environment; tavern patrons are welcomed to the site through a gate near the tavern entrance. The exterior has a high degree of architectural integrity; alterations primarily concern signage and north foyer and west room additions. The interior has been superficially altered from Smith's original interior design, primarily with contemporary tavern advertising and furniture.

The Wisconsin Concrete Park - Landscape and Sculptures

Fred Smith's sculptures are situated throughout 16.1 acres of land to the north, east, and south of the Smith house, and directly north of the tavern. The site is on high, undulating, relatively even and open ground. A line of hemlock and mixed conifers planted in 1978 forms the north border. The east and south edges of the park blend into a forest of pine and balsam. Highway 13 prominently defines the western border. Located at the top of a hill, the Wisconsin Concrete Park occupies an area that signifies the entrance to, or exit from, the environs of Phillips from the south. Smith took advantage of the commanding impact his sculpture garden would have on travelers on Highway 13, who are invariably taken by surprise by the sudden appearance of an abundance of concrete statuary by the side of the road.

Originally a line of tall white pine ran along the front (western) border of the site, and along an east/west line between the tavern and the Smith house. Other pine and hardwoods were interspersed throughout the sculptural environment. The ground was unmanicured, blanketed in pine needles and leaves. In 1977 a cyclonic downburst destroyed most of the large trees, transforming the site from a shaded environment into a sunny, open space. The transformation of the site into a County Park in 1978 precipitated a landscape program of mown grass to facilitate public access to the sculptures. A few older growth silver maples and younger hardwoods grow within the north sculpture area. Red pines and mixed conifers planted throughout the site in 1991 (to replace trees lost in the 1977 storm) are beginning to mature. Other naturalized areas contain conifers and volunteer trees and plants. Price County created a one half mile self-guided nature trail through the forest east of the park, with trail heads at the north east end, behind the Budweiser Clydesdale Team (site plan #45), and at the south east end, behind the Barbecue (site plan #54).

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Visitors arriving by car enter the site from the west by a driveway that runs past the Smith house to the south, and by the most dense concentration of sculpture to the north. Continuing east, the driveway opens into a parking area leading past a modest visitor information structure (built in 1978, non-contributing, now a shaded bench) to an open area, the original footprint of Smith's barn (destroyed in the 1977 windstorm), and former location of the studio/garage, built to replace the barn in 1977 (non-contributing and moved in 2001 to the rear parking area). At the south end of the parking lot the driveway continues east and south to a bus and recreational vehicle parking area, County Park restroom building, studio/garage, and Educational Programming Studio (built in 2002), all non-contributing features. Originally unpaved, the driveway and parking areas are paved with black asphalt. The bus and RV parking area was created in 1995 to accommodate the increase in tour busses and recreational vehicles. This parking area is sheltered by stands of trees on three sides, and is barely visible from the sculpture areas.

Other sculptures and tableaux are situated south and east of the Smith house. A cyclone fence runs between the park and tavern. The grade of State Highway 13 was raised, creating an elevated highway and a ditch between it and the west border of the site. These changes in elevation created a division between road and roadside, altering the seamless relationship between the two when Smith built his house, tavern, and sculptures.

The Wisconsin Concrete Park consists of 237 individual sculptures or objects in 56 tableaux. Most of the sculptures are figures or animals, and the unifying visual element throughout the site is their surface of cement, textured and colorfully embellished primarily with shards and/or objects of colored glass, over formally composed, distinctive forms. Male figures have armatures of oak 2 x 4s, and often steel or galvanized pipe for leg supports. Female figures have box-like armatures of 2 x 8" boards and wood lath, supported by steel or galvanized leg pipes. Animal armatures generally consist of pipe leg supports and box-like bodies for armatures. Most horse and deer sculptures have actual animal skulls for head armatures, and most deer skulls were installed with their actual antlers. Smith incorporated real objects that had acquired personal or local significance, such as the Kerosene Wagon (site plan #13), several horse drawn buggies and a sleigh (site plan #s 38, 46, 47, and 20 respectively), in his tableaux. He incorporated smaller objects, such as horseshoes and harness parts, into animal sculptures. The incorporation of found objects into constructed sculptures was an essential aspect of Smith's approach to sculpture, synthesizing representative figures and animals with historical objects, and by association, to the material culture of the time, and to actual events.

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The sculptures can be organized by type into categories that include free-standing plaques and plinths, small standing animals (such as dogs, deer, lion, tiger, bear cubs, skunk), large standing animals (horses, moose, elk), standing and seated male and female figures, and miscellaneous forms. The windstorm of 1977 caused extensive damage to many sculptures, and a similar but less powerful windstorm in 1987 caused some damage. Most sculptures have received some conservation and a smaller percentage have received more extensive conservation. Exposure to the elements has caused gradual deterioration to interior armatures and has affected embellishment materials. Preservation activities have included: creating substantial reinforced concrete footings to replace some of Smith's rubble and mortar footings; removing deteriorated wood armature materials through unobtrusive openings; stabilizing sculptures by installing interior steel armatures; treating organic surfaces (such as antler and skull material) with consolidant; and repair or recreation of wood components. During the conservation project following the 1977 storm most of Smith's painted surfaces were repainted. Remaining original paint was preserved in 1993. After the storm of 1977 flat roofs in tableau #s 20 and 38 (destroyed in the storm) were replaced with gabled roofs.

It's known that Smith created his first work, the Barbecue, in 1948, to celebrate the Pennant (World Series), so it was ostensibly created in the fall of that year. It's known that Smith's work as an artist ended when he had a stroke, late in 1964. It's known that his last work was the Budweiser tableau, and that he struggled to complete this work, since he was not feeling well and may have anticipated an obstacle to his work due to health. An exact chronology of the creation of his sculptures does not exist. An approximate chronology has been compiled based on examination of photographs taken during the period of creation, information from people who observed the site during the time of its creation, and by analyzing the physical construction of his work and how his construction techniques evolved. Since exact dates cannot be stated authoritatively, the chronology below lists works in three categories: early works, thought to have been created between 1948 and 1951, mid-period works, thought to have been created between 1952 and 1961, and late works, thought to have been created from 1962 and 1964. The list below corresponds to the site plan, indicating contributing features as listed on the site plan, followed by non-contributing features and their dates of construction, also listed on the site plan.

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Site plan #	Sculpture or Tableau (T)	Approximate period of creation
1	Entrance Plaques	early
2	Last Log Drive Plaque	mid-period
3	Paul Bunyan's Lumberjacks	early
4	Moose	early
5	Elk	early
6	Chiann the Beer Drinker tableau	mid-period
7	Mabel the Milker	mid-period
8	Cow and Calf	mid-period
9	Eleven Deer	mid-period
10	Mabel the Milker Figures	mid-period
11	Farming with Horses	mid-period
12	Farming with Oxen	mid-period
13	Hans Everson's Kerosene Wagon	early
14	Paul Bunyan's Wolfhounds	mid-period
15	Paul Bunyan	mid-period
16	Mr. Knox and Oxen tableau	early
17	Kit Carson	mid-period
18	Wisconsin Wishing Well	early
19	Deer Fight	mid-period
20	Sleigh	mid-period
21	Indian with Red Feathers	mid-period
22	Wind Vane with Owls	early
23	Henry Mocavits and John Putro	mid-period
24	Hi Ho Silver	early
25	Woman and Angel	mid-period
26	American Eagle	mid-period
27	Muskie Pulled by Horses	mid-period
28	Bandstand with Nativity Plaques	mid-period
29	Panther	early
30	End of the Road Woman	mid-period
31	Native American and Woman Treaty	mid-period
32	Bird Pedestal	early
34	Elk Family	mid-period
35	Moose Family	mid-period
36	Man and Woman on Rock	mid-period

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37	Rearing Horse		mid-period	
38	Double Wedding		mid-period	
39	American Flag		mid-period, flag, no longer extant	
41	Sun Yat-sen		early	
42	Sacajawea		early	
43	Statue of Freedom Plaque		early	
44	Statue of Liberty Plaque		early	
45	Budweiser Clydesdale Team		late/1948	
46	Horse and Buggy		mid-period	
47	Horses and Buggy		mid-period	
48	Tavern Marker		early	
49	Bear Family and Skunk		early	
50	Native American Shooting Deer		mid-period	
51	The Silent Spot		mid-period	
52	Lion, Tiger, and Angora Cat		late	
53	Native American with Drawn Bow		mid-period	
54	Barbecue		early/1948	
55	“From the Movie Ben Hur”		late	
56	Deer Plaques		early	
57	Lincoln-Todd Monument		mid-period	
58	Bird Houses, Bird Bath		early	
59	Deer Family		early	
60	Two Deer		early	
61	Smith House		1922	
62	Iwo Jima Plaque		early	
63	Mileage Marker		early	
64	Native American Entrance Posts		early	
65	Fred Smith’s Rock Garden Tavern		1936, now the Stoney Pub, privately owned	

Non-contributing resources

33	Former donation box area, created 1977, transformed into a bench and “do not touch” sign 2002			
66	Nature trail		1999	
67	County Park Restroom		1978	

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68		Friends of Fred Smith Conservation studio, built at the location of site plan #40 in 1977 to replace Smith's barn, destroyed in a storm; moved to present site in 2001.
69		Wheel Chair Ramp, Information Kiosk, and Donation Box, built in 1999
70		Friends of Fred Smith Veterans' Commemorative, 2000
71		Friends of Fred Smith Rock Garden, 2001
72		Friends of Fred Smith Workshop, 2002

Additional non-original elements include the pitched roof structures over site plan #20, Sleigh, and site plan #38, Double Wedding. These were made to replace Smith's original flat roofs, which were destroyed in the windstorm of 1977. Smith's original sleigh in site plan #20 deteriorated in the late 1970s. The design was replicated in steel, and this replication is noted in a nearby interpretive plaque.

Smith incorporated typewritten text encased between glass panes in wood frames, mounted on seven stone and concrete plinths, located in relationship to specific tableaux throughout the north section of the sculptural environment, to provide history and anecdotes essential to the understanding of his work. In two monumental free-standing plaque figures (Sacajawea, site plan #42, and Sun yat-Sen, site plan #41), Smith incorporated text into concrete frames attached to their bodies. Smith's original typewritten pages and plinth frames were lost in the mid 1970s; the original texts for all but Sacajawea and Sun yat-Sen had been recorded and saved. All plaques have been reproduced in anodized aluminum, duplicating Smith's composition, with text indicating that the plaques are replacements.

Relocation of some of the sculptures was necessitated by the sale of the Rock Garden Tavern to a private owner in 1973. To retain these as part of the Wisconsin Concrete Park, sculptures from the tavern property, including Indian Entry Plaques (site plan #64), Indian and Deer (site plan #50), Statue of Liberty (site plan #44), Statue of Freedom (site plan #43), Iwo Jima plaques (site plan #62), Tavern Marker (site plan #48), Sacajawea (site plan # 42), Sun yat-Sen (site plan #41), Mileage Marker (site plan #63), and Smith's last sculptural tableaux, the Budweiser Wagon and Clydesdale Team (site plan #45). These sculptures were moved to an area prepared to the east of the original barn, and installed there in 1977. Two Horse and Buggy tableaux (site plan #s 46 and 47), the Bear Family (site plan # 49), and Tavern Marker (site plan #48) were also relocated to this area in 1977. The Iwo Jima plaque remained at the Rock Garden Tavern for several years, as its then-owner was a World War Two veteran and wanted it there. It

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was moved to its present location in 1987. In 2001 a male figure from site plan #47 was moved to the John Michael Kohler Arts Center (Sheboygan, WI), so a representative example of Smith's sculpture with high integrity would be preserved in an indoor, museum setting, over time. Other than these, the remaining sculptures stand where they were built.

Non-contributing features include a small rock garden created by Friends of Fred Smith, on the north side of the driveway leading to the rear parking area in 2000, to reference Smith's original rock garden; flagpole, granite bench, and granite marker with bronze plaques representing the American military branches of service, installed in the vicinity of the relocated Iwo Jima plaque (site plan # 62) by Friends of Fred Smith as a veterans memorial in 2001; and a nature trail, developed in the wooded area east of the Budweiser Wagon and Clydesdale Team (site plan #45) and south of the parking area and Conservation Studio and Garage.

NOTES

1 - This quote was recorded in an interview with Fred Smith by Stephen Beal and Jim Zanzi c: 1970.

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Statement of Significance

The Wisconsin Concrete Park, comprised of Fred Smith's house, tavern, and his unique installation of sculptures, represents a cohesive built environment that celebrates the region's history and character, and the highly original artistic talent of its builder, Fred Smith. Fred Smith's early life reflected conventional activities common to the time and region. Born in 1886 of first generation German immigrants, Smith worked as a lumberjack from his early teens until about 1948. He built his house, barn, and tavern on property he homesteaded in 1903. During his years as a lumberjack Smith cultivated ginseng (which he sold to an Asian market) and Christmas trees (which he sold locally) on land surrounding his house, and later his tavern. In addition to these practical activities, Smith further enlivened his landscape with an elaborate rock garden. The architecture on the Smith homestead reflected local conventions and Smith's creative impulses. After the Smith family's first house burned in 1921, Smith replaced it with a Craftsman style house—a style distinctive to the period and popular in the region—adding an unusual Rock Garden Room as an interior counterpart to his rock garden outside. In 1936 Smith built his Rock Garden Tavern with the assistance of local stonemasons, whose distinctive masonry style is seen in fieldstone houses, outbuildings, and foundations throughout Price County. Smith's addition to the tavern, made of handsomely decorated, homemade concrete blocks, is another example of the artist's original approach to building. Later in life, with his lumber career behind him and his home, tavern, and landscape firmly established, Smith began a new career. Between 1948 and 1964 he created a monumental environment of sculpture, in which the region's history and legends, as well as events and persons of local, regional, and national significance, are presented as a historical, sculptural panorama. Smith's Wisconsin Concrete Park is internationally known as one of the most outstanding and original sculptural environments by a 20th century American artist. It contains sculpture and architecture combining convention with invention, and is a museum where the entire oeuvre of an artist can be seen in one place.

The Wisconsin Concrete Park relates to a tradition of combining elements of sculpture, architecture, and landscape architecture into art environments that are integrally incorporated into, and extensions of, an artist's home. Such composite sites can include elements of some or all of the elements of art, architecture, and landscape architecture, in varying degrees, according to the vision and inclination of their makers. Their makers, not always known as artists--much less architects or landscape architects--often lack an academic orientation to the fine and/or building arts. Widespread recognition of a few major examples of art environments in the United States, such as Simon Rodia's Watts

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Towers in Los Angeles, and S.P. Dinsmoor's Garden of Eden in Lucas, Kansas, stimulated initial public interest in such sites in the 1950s and 60s. The September/October 1968 issue of *Art in America* featured the cover story "The Grassroots Artist". Author Gregg Blasdel described the art environments of fifteen self-taught artists from around the country, including four from Wisconsin: Father Mathias Wernerus' Dickeyville Grotto, Herman Rusch's Prairie Moon Museum and sculpture garden, James Tellen's sculpture garden, and Fred Smith's Wisconsin Concrete Park. Blasdel examined this work with an insightful and informed eye, and the article introduced the genre of art environments to a broad art audience, motivating many to visit the sites. In 1974 The Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, MN) mounted the landmark exhibition, *Naives and Visionaries*, in which the art environments of nine self-taught artists were represented primarily through photographs, and augmented by a selection of objects that could be removed from sites temporarily and returned. By presenting enlarged black and white photos and rear-lit photo murals of art environments within the context of their surrounding landscapes, as opposed to focusing on individual art objects in an isolated, museum context, the Walker exhibition encouraged people to visit the environments *in situ*, and appreciate that essential context, much as Blasdel's article had done six years earlier. However, the museum's attempt to bring elements of environments into the museum caused controversy among a few of the artists. At the time Fred Smith, who was then 88 and in a nursing home, refused to grant permission to the curators to remove a few small-scale sculptures from his Wisconsin Concrete Park, temporarily, for the exhibition. Smith believed in the power and value of his work and wanted it preserved in perpetuity. He was unyielding in his belief that people had to see the work exactly where he built it, avowing that "...it would ruin it for others.."2 to remove any sculptures from the site, ever. The Smith family was convinced by admirers of the site that mainstream museum exposure could contribute to a larger view of the art of Fred Smith and to its preservation. Two sculptures were thus removed (and returned) without the artist's permission or knowledge. Artist Herman Rusch also resisted the idea of having works removed from his Prairie Moon Museum and Sculpture Garden in Cochrane, WI. The Walker Art Center commissioned Rusch to create a replica of one of his signature embellished-concrete fence posts for the exhibition. These instances indicate that the artists did not merely decorate their yards haphazardly, but worked intentionally, creating environments in which each part was integral to the whole. This sophisticated concept was augmented by the artists' convictions that their work had to be experienced exactly where it was built, slightly predating and later paralleling the mainstream art world phenomena of "site-specific" art, in vogue in the 1960s and 70s.

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Many art environments have achieved historical significance, and ten have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places, to date.³ The Wisconsin Concrete Park is one of the most extensive and cohesive sites in this national genre, and is also closely linked to a strong tradition in the Upper Midwest, where the presence of three extensive Catholic devotional grotto environments, all engaging embellished concrete, inspired a number of builders in the region to create sculptural environments with similar materials. The Grotto of the Redemption (West Bend, IA, built 1912-1959, and satellite grottos throughout the region by the same artist/priest), The Dickeyville Grotto (Dickeyville, WI, built 1919-1930), and the Rudolph Grotto (Rudolph, WI, built c. 1919-1959), anchored a geographic region in which the tradition of building extensive environments flourished. Artists inspired by these grottos, particularly by the Dickeyville Grotto due to its relative proximity, include the Jacob Baker (individual embellished sculptures, northwestern IL), Frederick Schultz (embellished houses, Freeport, IL), Fred G. Zimmerman (garage and flagpole, New Glarus, WI), Nick Engelbert's Grandview (Hollandale, WI), Bill Notzke's Jubilee Rock Garden (Brimfield, IL), the Paul and Matilda Wegner Grotto (Cataract, WI), James Tellen Sculpture Garden (Black River, WI), Molly Jensen's Art Exhibit (River Falls, WI), Herman Rusch's Prairie Moon Museum and sculpture garden (Cochrane, WI), and Fred Smith's Wisconsin Concrete Park. These sites can all be linked to the presence of the three religious grottos, and reflect a strong tradition of creative expression within the contexts of home and landscape that is firmly rooted in the region, and contributes significantly to its cultural identity.

The Smith House

The Smith house is the first structure built within what eventually became the Wisconsin Concrete Park. It was constructed in 1922 by local contractor John Kougl, with the help of local fourteen year old twin boys, Frank and Joe Salek. The house was built to replace the Smith homestead house, which burned in 1921. Facing State Highway 13, the Smith house was built to relate to the major north-south transportation artery in Wisconsin's northwoods. Kougl may have used pattern book plans and/or millwork in the construction of the Smith house. It resembles the Sears and Roebuck design, "The Wesley" (a version of which was published in 1922), with minor variations in detail and plan. This modest scale Craftsman/bungalow house exemplifies a style that was especially popular in northern Wisconsin, and variations on it are ubiquitous throughout the region. The plan is compact yet commodious, with ample room and closet space. The front and back porches, plus the porch that was originally located in the second story dormer, gave the house easy access to the outdoors. The steep pitch of the roof sheds snow easily—most likely contributing to the popularity of this style in the region. The Smith house

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represents the time period in American housing, from about the turn of the century until just before World War Two, when architecturally designed houses of high quality craftsmanship and detailing, that proved to be durable and adaptable over time, were available to common people of modest incomes. Built within this era, the Smith house relates to many similar houses in the region, yet it contains a singular physical feature—its rock garden room—and strong associative links to Fred Smith’s evolving landscape of sculpture, which eventually became the Wisconsin Concrete Park.

In the rock garden room, spanning the south elevation on the first floor, Smith created a space for an indoor rock garden. The brick-and-rock trough, nearly spanning the length of the room, once contained a fountain, fish pool, plants and flowers. The trough itself was constructed using a conventional coursed brick and mortar technique. Smith added a rock lined concrete pool in the center of this structure, and incorporated sections of cross cut saw blades across its middle, referencing Smith’s years as a lumberjack, to form the basin for rocks, soil and plantings. This indoor rock garden is an early example of Smith’s facility with combining vernacular innovations and found materials with traditional building techniques, and provides early evidence of Smith’s predilection for combining landscape architecture and sculpture, and for conflating home life and creative expression.

Smith created an elaborate outdoor rock garden directly outside the rock garden room sometime between 1922 and the late 1940’s; the exact dates are unknown. The rock garden had raised, rock-bordered beds shaped in star patterns and other decorative forms, among informal plantings of shrubs and flowers. The rock garden theme, begun in a modest interior space, evolved into an elaborate exterior garden, which was eventually replaced by Smith’s ambitious building program of sculptures and monuments, begun between the Smith house and tavern in about 1948.

Once begun, the Smith house continued to relate directly to Fred Smith’s continuum of creative expression, as reflected in sculptures in the immediate vicinity of the house. One of Smith’s earliest sculptures, a bas relief plaque (site plan #56 east), features a common northwoods motif: a deer jumping over a log. Smith built this sculpture to the memory of one of the Salek brothers, who had worn a sweater with this image when helping construct the Smith house. Another tableaux refers to the concept of home metaphorically. The Deer Family (site plan #59) features a buck, doe, and 2 fawns, symmetrically and serenely composed, conveying familial security and harmony. Smith

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placed this tableau in relationship to his own home, along with two standing deer sculptures flanking the entry.

The Rock Garden Tavern

The Rock Garden Tavern is a unique example of northwoods vernacular tavern architecture, combining a conventional masonry style and technique by builders known throughout the region, with an original masonry style and technique developed by Fred Smith. It first functioned as a common tavern, and later (from 1948 to 1964) it provided a gathering place for visitors to Smith's monumental sculptural environment, the Wisconsin Concrete Park. Smith's Rock Garden Tavern is the architectural terminus of a built landscape that evolved intuitively and chronologically, following a north-south axis, and expressing the rock garden theme. At the north end of the axis is the Smith family home, with its rock garden room, which faced Smith's outdoor rock garden. Further south, the Rock Garden Tavern completed the axis, and the rock garden theme, from house to garden to tavern.

The Rock Garden Tavern was built by stonemasons Albert and John Raskie, working with Fred Smith. The Raskie brothers had erected many impressive stone structures in Price County in the early decades of this century, including houses, barns, farm outbuildings and building foundations. Their masonry technique was characterized by fieldstone bonded with rope-style mortar joints, generally tinted either green or blue. Their structures are rhythmic and colorful expressions of rural architecture and are easily identifiable as the work of "the Raskie Brothers." At some point, ostensibly c: 1950, Smith constructed an addition to the rear of the tavern, contrasting with the tavern-proper dramatically, in style and construction. Smith's artistic temperament was geared towards working quickly and inventively, and he constructed this shed addition with homemade, irregular, rectangular concrete blocks, with rocks protruding from their painted surfaces. The addition was built sometime during the fifteen year period (1948-64) that Smith was building sculptures and sculptural tableaux—his second rock garden—throughout his property. Smith's stone addition to the Rock Garden Tavern is an architectural counterpart to his inventive sculptural style and construction techniques.

During Fred Smith's life (1886-1976) the northwoods of Wisconsin was more sparsely populated than most rural areas to the south. Taverns have been integral to the social structure of the region, and were especially important from the late nineteenth century until about the 1960s, when transportation and communication systems changed established social patterns, including tavern life, significantly. Like downtown cafes,

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taverns provided gathering places for the entire family, and did not function exclusively as drinking establishments for adults. The Rock Garden Tavern was begun in 1936, when Smith was still working as a lumberjack, a career that kept him away from home for long periods of time. Smith originally built the tavern to provide a social life for his wife and family during his long absences, and for himself when he was at home. When Smith began to build sculpture, the intensity of his project imposed the demands of artistic solitude, and once again he spent time apart from his family, living in the rooms above the tavern.

The region in and around Price County was home to a number of noteworthy taverns, where people gathered to tell stories, sing, dance, and play music. The Wigwam (15 miles west of Phillips), and the Grunerwald (13 miles north of Phillips) are both architecturally significant examples of multi-purpose taverns that once thrived, providing social and cultural facilities for people who lived outside of town. The Wigwam is a collection of three vernacular log structures: a tavern and dance hall built in 1931, and lunch room (moved to the site shortly after), all facing County Highway W. The Grunerwald is a large stone building with a dance hall, similar in style to the Rock Garden Tavern, and also facing Highway 13. Built in 1935, the Grunerwald may have inspired Smith to build his tavern a year later. Like these and other northwoods taverns, the Rock Garden Tavern functioned as a kind of cultural center. Smith was known as an imaginative story teller (steeped in the Paul Bunyan tradition during his lumberjack years), and a flamboyant musician—*avant garde* by northwoods standards. He strapped bells to his thighs and ankles, and jumped from table to table playing the mandolin or fiddle discordantly, according to his own musical vision. Several of Smith's sculptural tableaux illustrate tales that were related in the tavern, including Muskie pulled by Horses (site plan #27), and Paul Bunyan (site plan #15). The Rock Garden Tavern was a significant place where folk traditions in the region were enacted, and later preserved in Smith's narrative sculptures outside.

Smith was strongly influenced by another tavern owner, Martin Ribinicker, who built Martin's Museum (now known as The Museum Bar), one mile north of Phillips. Ribinicker was born in Phillips and retired there after working as a taxidermist at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago for seventeen years. Ribinicker filled his bar with masterfully-crafted taxidermy displays, creating one of the exceptional examples of the "museum bar" genre. The concept of museum bar is not uncommon in the Upper Midwest. Taverns with extensive taxidermy displays and other artifacts of northwoods life and craft, known as museum bars, have been documented throughout Wisconsin,

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Michigan, Minnesota, and further west. Both Smith and Ribinicker built northwoods museums associated with their taverns. Ribinicker's museum was inside, and Smith's was outside. It was Ribinicker who suggested that Smith build armatures for his sculptures (which he had been making solid up to that point) and it was that innovation in his sculptural technique that allowed Smith to build figures and animals more quickly.

After Smith retired from the lumber industry in 1948, and lasting until 1964, when a stroke placed him in a nursing home, the Rock Garden Tavern functioned as Smith's home and "salon," where he entertained people who stopped to experience his sculptural environment as it progressed. During this time period the Rock Garden Tavern was central to Smith's life as an artist. He displayed small sculptures he created on the back bar, and it was here that Smith spent time with people who were truly interested in his work.

Smith's sculptural career appears to have evolved from his experience with the conventional masonry techniques that he learned by working with the Raskie brothers when building the front stone section of the Rock Garden Tavern. In 1948, to celebrate the baseball pennant game (precursor to the Worlds Series) in which the Indians played the Braves, Smith built a Barbecue northeast of the Rock Garden Tavern. The Barbecue was constructed with the rock-and-rope-mortar-joint masonry technique used in the tavern. Smith entered into the sculptural realm by adding two bas-relief Indian profiles to plinths that flank the Barbecue-proper. Smith's first non-architectural sculptures were built in the landscape directly surrounding the tavern, and it was here that he established his facility with embellished concrete and monumental sculpture. It was also in the dozen or so sculptures and tableaux in the tavern vicinity, that Smith solidified the conceptual content of his oeuvre, which he expanded upon in another two hundred plus pieces, while maintaining the focus and coherence inherent in his first works. This conceptual content included attention to the original Native American presence in the region in two Indian Entrance plinths (site plan # 64), and his Indian wrapped in Blanket/Tavern Marker (site plan #48); the broader significance of Native American history (Sacajawea, site plan #42)); commemoration of major patriotic themes and events (Statue of Liberty site plan #43, Statue of Freedom, site plan #44, and the Marines Raising the Flag over Iwo Jima, site plan #62); recognition of international political history (Sun yat-Sen, site plan #41); and the heart of northwoods social life and American popular culture, as depicted in his final piece, the Budweiser Clydesdale team (site plan #45), a wagon with two figures and a dog on the seat, and a team of eight horses and two ponies. Although the Rock Garden Tavern began as a common northwoods roadside tavern, it became the architectural focal

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point for Smith's monumental sculptural environment, which was initiated and completed in the landscape surrounding the tavern. From 1948 to 1964 the Rock Garden Tavern was an integral facet of Smith's artistic career, symbolically and architecturally, inside and out.

The Wisconsin Concrete Park - Sculptures and Landscape

Smith created sculptures within the context of his home and landscape to visually narrate the history and legends of the region. Smith was not formally educated and did not read or write. He intuitively discovered the communicative power of art and engaged it in the creation of a panorama of interrelated historical moments. His earliest pieces (built in the vicinity of the tavern and described above) established his program of commemorating local and national history, in plinths and plaques and markers. Originally, Smith may have been inspired to create commemorative plaques by a significant instance of community sculpture in Phillips. In 1942 Phillips residents of Czech descent erected a temporary monument to the memory of the Czechoslovakian village of Lidice, decimated by Nazis on June 10th of that year. In 1944 a permanent monument to Lidice was erected in Sokol Park in Phillips. The example of the Lidice sculpture, which continues to be the focus of a somber memorial service during the Czechoslovakian festival in Phillips each June, may have suggested to Smith that other histories could be honored and/or brought to live through public sculpture. His monument to the Marines Raising the Flag at Iwo Jima (site plan #62) not only commemorated a major national event, it related to Czechoslovakian-American history, as one member of the famous "flag squad" was the son of a Slovak immigrant. In one instance Smith's inspiration is known to have come from an existing, patriotic sculpture, the Lincoln Monument by Frederick Hibbard, located in Racine, WI. The text on this monument indicates that it was the "...first statue erected to a president of the United States of America and his wife...". Smith's Lincoln-Todd monument, similar in subject and composition, although highly original in execution, features a sign indicating that it is "The Second Monument of its Kind in the U.S.A." Although he was not formally educated in art, Smith was keenly observant, aware of the power of public sculpture to communicate aspects of collective history, and sensitive to the impact of commemorative artworks.

In the most densely populated areas of his sculptural environment, north of the house, Smith created sculptures that represent the chronological history of the region and the people who settled it. Smith was intent upon conveying specific messages, and to do so he narrated texts that were typewritten by a friend; the typed pages were encased in glass, framed in wood, and mounted on concrete and rock plinths. Several information plaques

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describe Smith's perspective on lifestyles that were rapidly changing. Smith's texts also described in detail how work was done by hand at the time, and the social impact that machinery was having, in his lifetime, on people and the landscape. The information plaques complement the spatial narrative of his sculptures to relate history in his own voice.

Price County was settled primarily by European immigrants of Czech, Bohemian, and German descent, and Smith's sculptural portraits reflect the physical traits of this population with uncanny accuracy. Unlike some figural and portrait work by self-taught (and mainstream artists), which is highly stylized, Smith's sculptures are individual, highly expressive, and very naturalistic, without being "realistic" in the traditional sense of realistic sculpture. Lumberjacks are prominently featured, in sculptures depicting actual people (site plan #3), and in the monumental figure of Paul Bunyan (site plan #15). Mr. Knox and Oxen (site plan #16) represents the process of working with oxen to ice down roads to facilitate the hauling of logs from the woods, with an actual water tank pulled by stone-encrusted concrete oxen. He incorporated hand logging tools into this tableau to further illustrate how the work was done. After the lumberjacks cleared the land, "the stump farmers," whom Smith depicted majestically in a tableaux of two farmers on horses with six tall men standing by (site plan #23), prepared the land for farming. The accompanying plaque for this tableau is a paean to the time prior to automobiles and tractors, whose arrival changed life significantly. The arduous task of farming the land is depicted in the tableaux Farming with Horses (site plan #11) and Farming with Oxen (site plan #12). Other tableaux representing the people of Price County include Kerosene Wagon, (site plan #13) in which a local man Hans Everson is depicted atop a wagon seat in the actual wagon that carried kerosene from Fifield to Park Falls. Smith created the Mable the Milker tableau (site plan #7) to show how milking was done before mechanization. His accompanying plaque text reads: "Mable, an old milker, has been milking cows for many years. She has tried all the power milking machines. After milking by hand for many years, she finds that the hand milking will beat anything in the long run. So she is here milking by hand. That is the cheapest machine made. It shows here one of her faithful milking cows." Double Wedding (site plan #38) depicts two local couples in their wedding carriage, attended by nine solemn figures. Referencing the roadside nature of the site and the tourists it attracted, Smith created a figure taking a photograph of a deer sculpture, which he described in the accompanying plaque: "...and here comes a little shrimp with a camera..." (site plan #6).

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In addition to communicating vital aspects of local history in sculptures and text, Smith's tableaux depicted common people at work, in formal compositions conveying great dignity, during a time when most public sculpture commemorated heroes and heroic acts. In his article "Concrete Park" in the book *Naives and Visionaries*, Gregg Blasdel described Smith's work as "...an exotic cosmology of animal and human forms. Figure groups portray incidents from folklore, local history and the daily life of the region. Standing side by side, mythical and actual personages are distinguishable from each other only by their poses or explanatory captions. In the park, local notables and familiar events acquire mythological quality."

Smith depicted spiritual and patriotic themes in his "Angel" (site plan #25) and "American Eagle" (site plan #26), and throughout the entire panorama he depicted the earlier Native American presence in the region. In "Indian and Woman" (site plan #31) Smith used scale to imply stature, with a larger-than-life Indian shaking the hand of a white woman, commemorating a land treaty that was ostensibly broken shortly after. "Indian with Red Feathers" (site plan #21) features a Native American with a grand headdress, a Native symbol of tribal stature. On the reverse of the headdress Smith incorporated the tree-of-life motif in a sophisticated and original synthesis of Native symbolism with a universal symbol of regeneration.

Although related to the grotto tradition in the region, Smith's method of embellishment was highly original, and aesthetically inventive and cohesive. To create texture on wilder creatures (such as bear) he embedded small, rough-edged granite pieces. Smith developed an original method for embellishing garments for male and female figures. Many shirt or dress fronts feature blue or clear glass insulators and other objects in formal patterns, suggesting highly tailored garments. Using rectangular pieces of colored and mirrored glass embedded in a shingle effect, the sculptures not only shed water effectively, but have a rhythmic, visual effect, reflecting light and enlivening sculptures with sensational compositions of texture and color. The relationship of reflective surfaces with the changing elements of trees, wind, sun, and sky creates a continually dynamic visual interplay between nature and sculpture that was a crucial element of Smith's creative oeuvre.

Smith made sculpture within the longstanding, formal tradition of commemorative monuments and memorials, and within a regional tradition of grotto building, albeit with a highly original execution. He said he made the Wisconsin Concrete Park "...for all the American people..."⁴ He may have felt

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he was providing a cultural experience for a remote community, far removed from urban areas replete with public monuments. In the Wisconsin Concrete Park Smith depicted history, not as a string of isolated moments, but as an elastic, organic entity, in which local and national people, events, and histories intermingled, sharing a common landscape. Self-taught and entirely unmotivated by financial gain or art world fame, Smith created this site for the people, and placed it where they find it, not in an indoor museum, but right on the side of the road.

Criteria Considerations B and G have been checked in this nomination, but neither criteria apply to the entire site. Regarding Criteria B, of the 56 tableaux and 237 sculptures, 12 tableaux with 38 sculptures or sculptural elements (site plan #'s 41, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 62, and 63) have been moved from their original locations where they were built by Fred Smith. All remain in the Wisconsin Concrete Park (save one, moved to an indoor museum location for preservation), and all are in the same context of a sculptural landscape that Smith built them within originally. Most sculptures were relocated to be in relation to the works they were originally built near, and they retain their artistic and historical significance as part of the Wisconsin Concrete Park, despite having been moved from the vicinity of the tavern. One sculpture (site plan #1 North) was moved about 5 feet to allow for widening of the driveway entrance.

Regarding Criteria G, Smith began building sculpture in 1948, but sufficient information to establish an exact chronology of Smith's sculpture does not exist. Based on photo documentation and analysis, at least 24 tableaux with 61 sculptures (site plan #s 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 15, 41, 42, 43, 44, 48, 49, 50, 51, 56, 58, 59, 60, 62, 64) were most likely created between 1948 and 1954, and are now 50 or more years old. The genre of sculptural environments built by self-taught artists in the United States dates to the early decades of the Twentieth Century. As a relatively recent genre in American art and culture, art environments have nonetheless been recognized as a significant and enduring facet of American art and culture, with links to historical precedents, and which are still being created today. Due to its conceptual, historical, and artistic scope, the Wisconsin Concrete Park is one of the most significant and original examples of this genre. It can be seen as a benchmark to which other examples can be compared, including those already listed in the NRHP.

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Notes

1. This quote was recorded in an interview with Fred Smith by Stephen Beal and Jim Zanzi c: 1970.
2. Ibid.
3. The ten art environments presently listed in the National Register of Historic Places include:

site	date listed	criterion & exceptions
Simon Rodia's Watts Towers of Los Angeles, CA National Historic Landmark	April 13, 1977	A, C, g
S.P. Dinsmoor's Garden of Eden and Cabin Home, Lucas KS	April 28, 1977	B, C, g
Baldisare Forestiere's Underground Gardens Fresno, CA	October 28, 1977	A, B, C, g
Pop" Schaffer's Rancho Bonito Mountainair, NM	November 15, 1978	C
Schaffer's Hotel Mountainair, NM	November 29, 1978	C, e, g
Bert Vaughn's Desert View Tower Jacumba, CA	August 29, 1980	C
The Ave Maria Grotto, Cullman, AL	January 19, 1984	C
Edward Leedskalnin's Coral Castle Homestead, FL	May 10, 1984	

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On this form the areas of significance are listed as architecture, engineering, science, sculpture, and other, tourist attraction. They are not listed as A,B,C, or D.

4. Beal and Zanzi.

References

Stevenson, Katherine Cold and Jandl, H.Ward. *Houses by Mail A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company*. Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1986.

Hoos, Judith, and Blaisdel, Greg. "Fred Smith's Concrete Park." *Naives and Visionaries*. An exhibition organized by Walker Art Center. Minneapolis: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc. (1974): 53-59.

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Key to black and white photos

name of property Wisconsin Concrete Park

All photographs are of the Wisconsin Concrete Park District. Photos listed with the preface **WCP** are of the Wisconsin Concrete Park, a Price County Park owned by Price County Forestry Department. Photos with the preface **Rock Garden Tavern** are of the present Stoney Pub, directly south of the Wisconsin Concrete Park, owned by Bill Elliott.

All photographs were shot by Scott Dietrich, September 2004. Negatives for all photographs are stored in the archive of Friends of Fred Smith, Wisconsin Concrete Park, Phillips, WI.

Photos are labeled: Wisconsin Concrete Park, Phillips, Wisconsin, followed by the photograph number. This Continuation Sheet presents a list of photographs by number, with a description of the image and direction of the camera.

Photo #	Description of view and direction of camera
1	WCP. Entrance to the Wisconsin Concrete Park from Highway 13. Direction of photo: northeast.
2	WCP. Overview of the area directly north of the driveway, bordered by Highway 13 on the left. Direction of photo: northwest.
3	WCP. Paul Bunyan's Lumberjacks tableau, site plan #3, and Moose, site plan #4, at north west corner of driveway entrance. Direction of photo: northeast.
4	WCP. Detail, north Lumberjack in Paul Bunyan's Lumberjack's tableau, site plan #3. Direction of photo: east.
5	WCP. Deer in Chiann the Beer Drinker tableau, site plan #6, with Farming With Oxen tableau, site plan #12, to the left, and Indian with Red Feathers, site plan #21, on the right. Direction of photo: northeast.
6	WCP. Hans Everson's Kerosene Wagon tableau, site plan #13. Direction of photo: north.
7	WCP. Mr. Knox and Oxen tableau, site plan #16. Direction of photo: east.
8	Indian With Red Feathers tableau, site plan #21. Direction of photo: east.
9	WCP. North riding figure bust, Mocavits/Putro tableau, site plan #23. Direction of photo: southeast.
10	WCP. Detail of face and torso, south riding figure, Mocavits/Putro tableau, site plan #23. Direction of photo: southeast.
11	WCP. Woman and Angel tableau, site plan #21. Direction of photo: east.
12	WCP. Double Wedding tableau, site plan # 38. Direction of photo: east.

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- 13 WCP. Sun Yat-sen, site plan #41. Direction of photo: west.
- 14 WCP. Sacajawea, site plan #42. Direction of photo:
- 15 WCP. Statue of Liberty plaque, site plan #44. Direction of photo: north.
- 16 WCP. Overview of east meadow, area to which a group of sculptures that had originally been created on Smith's tavern property were moved to in 1977. Photo shows Horses and Buggy tableau (left center), site plan #47, and Budweiser Clydesdale Team, site plan #45, right center. Direction of photo: northeast.
- 17 WCP. Budweiser Clydesdale Team tableau, site plan #45. Direction of photo: east.
- 18 WCP. Horse and Buggy, site plan #46, and Statue of Liberty plaque, site plan #44. Direction of photo: north
- 19 WCP. Silent Spot, site plan #51. Direction of photo: east.
- 20 WCP. Close up view of south west female figure in Silent Spot, and Silent Spot gate, site plan #51. Direction of photo: northeast.
- 21 WCP. Lion, Tiger, and Angora Cat, site plan #52. Direction of photo: East.
- 22 WCP. Barbecue, site plan #52. Direction of photo: east.
- 23 WCP, "From The Movie Ben Hur", site plan # 55. Direction of photo: east/south.
- 24 WCP. Lincoln/Todd Monument, site plan #57. Direction of photo: north.
- 25 WCP. Fred Smith House, west (primary) elevation, site plan # 61. Direction of photo: east.
- 26 WCP. Fred Smith House, south and west elevations, Rock Garden Room in extension on right, site plan # 61. WCP. Direction of photo: northeast.
- 27 WCP. Front (west) interior entry to Fred Smith House, site plan #61 (contemporary view with craft shop displays). Direction of photo: southwest.
- 28 WCP. View of rock garden rough in Rock Garden Room, Fred Smith House, site plan #61 (contemporary view with craft shop displays). Direction of photo: west.
- 29 Fred Smith's Rock Garden Tavern (now Stoney Pub) showing south west corner of Wisconsin Concrete Park (ivy covered fence). Direction of photo: southeast.
- 30 Fred Smith's Rock Garden Tavern (now Stoney Pub), primary elevation with non-original addition (left).). Direction of photo: east.

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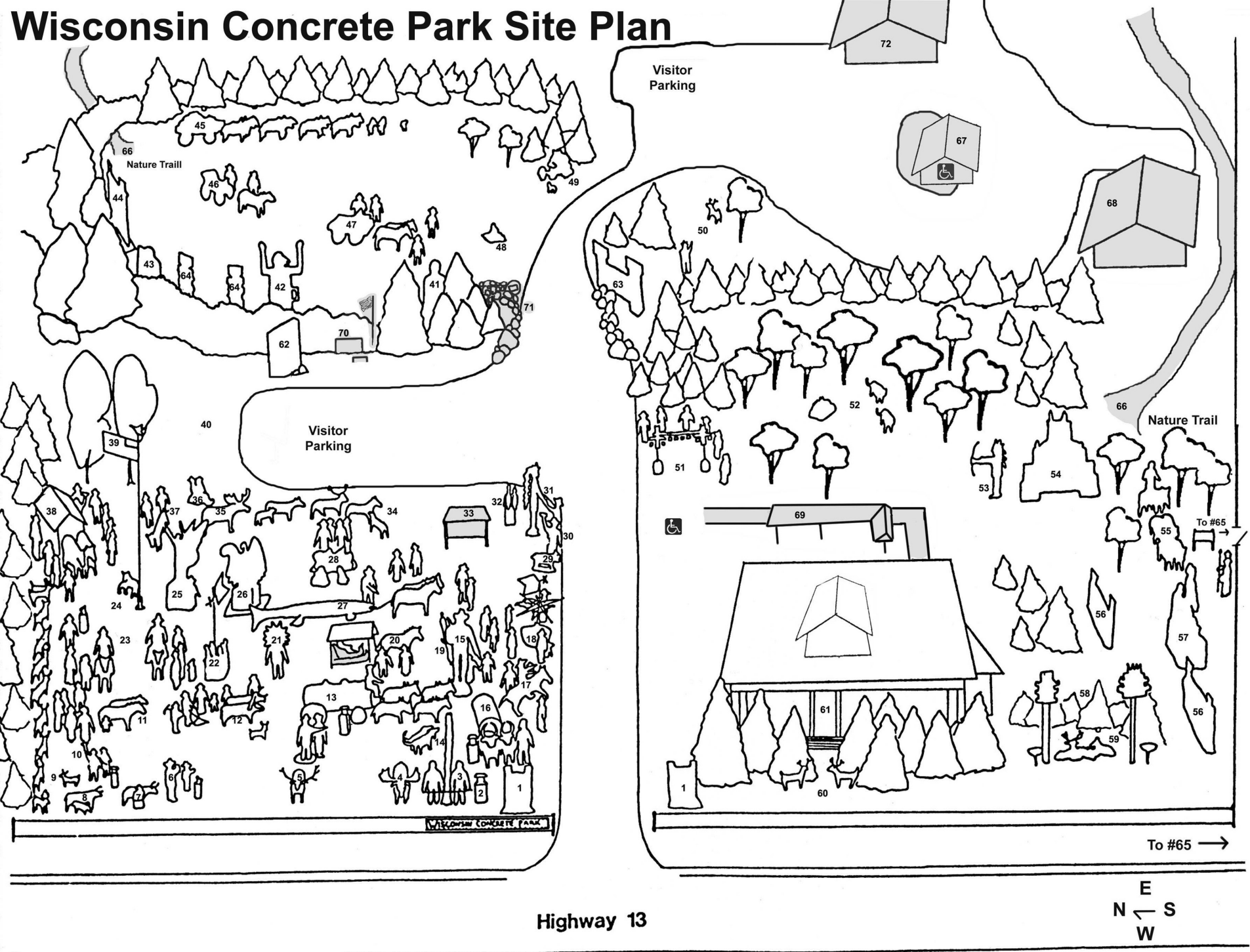
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- 31 Fred Smith's Rock Garden Tavern (now Stoney Pub), south elevation.
Direction of photo: north.
- 32 Fred Smith's Rock Garden Tavern (now Stoney Pub), south elevation
showing conventional masonry (left) and Smith's masonry block (right).
Direction of photo: north.
- 33 WCP. Smith House with non-original, non-contributing wheelchair ramp
and information kiosk. Fred Smith's Rock Garden Tavern (now Stoney
Pub), south elevation. Direction of photo: southwest.
- 34 WCP. Iwo Jima Plaque, site plan # 62, with Friends of Fred Smith
Veterans memorial and flag pole, non-contributing (center, left of tree),
and Friends of Fred Smith rock garden, non-contributing, detail visible to
the right of the tree. Direction of photo: northeast.
- 35 WCP. Parking area with county Park restrooms (center),
Garage/Conservation studio (right), and Friends of Fred Smith Studio,
(left rear), all non-contributing

Wisconsin Concrete Park Site Plan



Highway 13



USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form
Wisconsin Concrete Park
Phillips, Wisconsin

Wisconsin Concrete Park Site Plan Continuation Sheet

The Wisconsin Concrete Park site plan has three pages:

- Page 1 Site plan of the Wisconsin Concrete Park property, owned by Price County Forestry Department, with non-original (non-contributing) features shaded,
- Page 2 Site plan of the Rock Garden Tavern (presently Stoney Pub), owned by Bill and Cindy Elliott; plan shows non-original addition to the building, and indicates relationship to page 1 of the site plan.
- Page 3 Site Plan key

Site plans included with this nomination:

- #1 Site plan indicating non-contributing features (all 3 pages).
- #2 Site plan indicating sculpture chronology, EARLY works, thought to have been created between 1948 and 1951 (1 page).
- #3 Site plan indicating sculpture chronology, MID-PERIOD works, thought to have been created between 1952 and 1961 (1 page).
- #4 Site plan indicating sculpture chronology, LATE works, thought to have been created between 1962 and 1964 (1 page).
- #5 Site plan indicating works moved from their original locations (1 page).