

**United States Department of the 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 any 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.

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**1. Name of Property**

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historic name **Ellsworth Rock Gardens**

other names/site number

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**2. Location**

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street & number **via boat, 3 mi. n. from TR 122 boat landing, n. shore Kabetogama Lake, Voyageurs National Park (VOYA)**

not for publication

city or town **Ray**

vicinity

state **Minnesota**

code **MN** county **St. Louis** code **137** zip code **56669**

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**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  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.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
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 certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**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.	Signature of Keeper	Date of Action
<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): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5	4	buildings
0	0	sites
1	3	structures
7	2	objects
13	9	Total

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/garden

RECREATION AND CULTURE/work of art

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/national park

WORK IN PROGRESS

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY  
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS

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### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

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walls WOOD

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roof ASPHALT

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other STONE

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### Narrative Description

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

### Summary

The Ellsworth Rock Gardens are situated on a remote peninsula that forms the northern shore of Kabetogama Lake in far northern Minnesota. Less than ten miles from the United States border with Canada, the gardens are part of Voyageurs National Park. Established in 1975, the 219,000 acre park preserves the character of the natural setting associated with the North American fur trade during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The mosaic of lakes and meandering waterways, southern boreal forest, and ancient volcanic rock formations are part of the Canadian Shield. Kabetogama Lake is in the south-central portion of the park; its southwestern shore supports a small resort community.

In 1942, Jack and Elsie Ellsworth acquired property on the northern shore of Kabetogama Lake for a recreational summer retreat. The gardens were built between 1944 and 1965. Initially the parcel consisted of a sixty foot high granite outcrop with a large grassy clearing and a lone cabin that remained from a turn-of-the-century lumber camp. A mixture of deciduous and coniferous trees surrounded the clearing and covered part of the granite hillside. The Ellsworths lived in the cabin while they began construction of their summer home (the "main cabin"), and then used the cabin as guest sleeping quarters. Mr. Ellsworth also built a small workshop in the clearing and privies for the main and guest cabins. The granite outcrop eventually became the foundation and canvas for Mr. Ellsworth's rock garden creation. The gardens encompass 7 of the thirty-one overall acres. Because the cleared gardens area is irregular and the forest around the clearing may include undocumented sculptures, the property boundary will encompass the entire parcel once owned by the Ellsworths. The site includes five contributing buildings, three ponds, one system of planting beds, one system of paths, and approximately 1,200 linear feet of dry stacked stone walls. At current count, there are 204 sculptures.

Although Mr. Ellsworth was not a trained artist or landscape architect, his gardens represent an intuitive response to the site and a refined use of natural materials to create a composition dedicated to expressing his views about the beauty of the northwoods environment. He used a limited palette of materials and exaggerated simple forms to establish a rhythm within the gardens. Rocks from on and possibly off-site were cut or crushed and placed to produce consistently undulating forms and varied textures.

Ellsworth first constructed 62 terraced flower beds on the outcrop, which he filled with more than 13,000 lilies of four varieties. He augmented the lilies with twenty-eight other flower varieties incorporating both annuals and perennials. Working with a hierarchy of local stone, Ellsworth crowned the meandering dry-stacked walls that surround the planting beds with a layer of crushed white quartz, creating a distinctive "frosting." The terraced beds were connected through pathways subtly indicated by stone gateways, stairways, stepping stones, simple bridges, grass paths and the use of a few painted stone signs including an "Up" sign at the east edge of the gardens.



**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for 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 a 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.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**See continuation sheet.**

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

**ART**

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE**

**ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION**

**Period of Significance**

**1944-1965**

**Significant Dates**

**N/A**

**Significant Person**

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

**JACK A. ELLSWORTH**

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 31.25 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	15	501,270	5,371,300
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	15	501,690	5,371,300

3	15	501,700	5,371,630
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4	15	501,280	5,371,640

See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title **Mary Graves, Cultural Resource Specialist (with assistance from Marla McEnaney, Lisa Stone, and Eric MacDonald)**

organization **Voyageurs National Park**

date **May 2007**

street & number **3131 Highway 53  
6000**

telephone **218-283-**

city or town **International Falls**

state **MN**

zip code **56649**

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****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)

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**Property Owner**

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

name

street & number

city or town

state

telephone

zip code

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**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.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number **7** Page **1**

**Ellsworth Rock Gardens**  
Name of Property

**St. Louis MN**  
County and State

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