

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
(Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medical Center)  
5000 West National Avenue  
Milwaukee  
Milwaukee County  
Wisconsin

HALS WI-13  
*HALS WI-13*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY  
MIDWEST REGIONAL OFFICE  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
601 Riverfront Drive  
Omaha, NE 68102

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY  
NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH

HALS No. WI-13

Location: Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medical Center, 5000 West National Avenue, Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

The landscape is in an urban setting generally bounded by the Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medical Center (Building 111) to the south and Miller Park Stadium to the northeast. Miller Park Way provides an eastern boundary, while Wood National Cemetery provides a western limit. The site is approached from the south via National Avenue and from the north via West Bluemound Road. General Mitchell Boulevard runs in a southeast-northwest alignment through the landscape to connect these arteries.

Soldiers' Home Reef is located along the bluff forming the landscape's northeast boundary. This fossil reef dates to the Silurian Period of Earth's history—430 million to 400 million years ago. The reef was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1993 for its scientific and geologic importance.

Present Owner: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Present Occupant and Use: Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medical Center

Significance: The National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS) was established in 1865 as the first federal-level institution dedicated to the care of veteran soldiers. The Northwestern Branch in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was one of three original NHDVS branches. By the time the NHDVS was absorbed into the newly formed Veterans Administration in 1930, there were eleven branches across the country.

The buildings and grounds of each branch represent the Board of Managers' policies and practices regarding veterans' care. The campuses featured significant architecture and landscape designs intended to instill pride in veteran residents as well as the cities that hosted each facility. The grounds for the Northwestern Branch were planned in 1867 by Thomas Budd Van Horne. Avenues were laid out with respect to the undulating topography of the campus, consistent with the ideology of the Picturesque landscape movement. Ornamental pavilions, lush landscaping, and attractive water features were linked by winding roadways.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 2)

The campus of the Northwestern Branch is an important example of the Picturesque landscape movement, which was popular throughout the late nineteenth century. Many landscapes of this era were conceived along the lines of sequential vistas (the creation of a series of “pictures” from which the stylistic term “picturesque” was, in part, derived). This sequence of vistas is present at the Northwestern Branch landscape as one moves through the grounds from south to north.

Historians: Jessica Berglin and Charlene Roise, Hess, Roise and Company, 2012

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Historical Context

The National Asylum (later renamed Home) for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS or National Home) was created by an Act of Congress signed by President Abraham Lincoln in March 1865. Though a soldiers' pension system had been in place, the establishment of a national institution for the care of Union soldiers wounded in the Civil War marked an unprecedented federal effort in veterans' care.

After the establishing legislation passed in 1865, Congress devised a committee of one hundred members to oversee the creation of the National Home system. Realizing the inefficiency of such a large committee, Congress appointed a nine-member Board of Managers in April 1866. Managers could not be members of Congress and no two managers could be residents of the same state. In addition to these nine managers, ex officio members of the board included the president of the United States, the secretary of war, and the chief justice.<sup>1</sup>

One of the first tasks of the Board of Managers was to select sites for the homes. Initial legislation called for the creation of three branches, though it did not specify where they would be located. To make the homes easily accessible throughout the northern states, the managers chose to locate one home in the Northeast, one in the Northwest, and one "near the geographical centre of the loyal states." A former health resort site in Togus, Maine, was selected for the Eastern Branch, the first of the National Homes. The Northwestern Branch was located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and opened in 1867 as the second National Home. The Central Branch opened later in 1867 in Dayton, Ohio. Within a few years, the Board of Managers opened the Southern Branch in Hampton, Virginia. The buildings and grounds of each branch represent the Board of Managers' policies and practices regarding veterans' care. The campuses featured significant architecture and landscape designs intended to instill pride in veteran residents as well as the cities that hosted each facility.<sup>2</sup>

The campus of the Northwestern Branch in Milwaukee is an important example of the Picturesque landscape movement, which was popular throughout the late nineteenth century. The movement emphasized rolling topography with curvilinear pathways linking scenic vistas. Thomas Budd Van Horne, a landscape designer and chaplain with the Ohio Volunteer Infantry, was selected by the Board of Managers to plan the grounds of the Northwestern Branch. He had previously designed military cemeteries at Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Marietta, Georgia, and

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<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Board of Managers of the National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers*, 40th Cong., 1st sess., 1867, House misc. doc. 45, 1–2 (hereafter *1867 Annual Report*); Maria Barrett Butler, "The National Home for Volunteer Soldiers," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 73 (October 1886): 686.

<sup>2</sup> *1867 Annual Report*, 2; Suzanne Julin, "National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers National Historic Landmark Context Study," August 2009, 10.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 4)

used the same rural cemetery landscape design principles for laying out the grounds of the Home. As part of Van Horne's plan for the Northwestern Branch, avenues followed the undulating landscape, consistent with the ideology of the Picturesque landscape movement. Ornamental pavilions, lush vegetation, and attractive water features were linked by these winding roadways.<sup>3</sup>

Van Horne's experience in cemetery design underscores the history of the Picturesque landscape movement in the United States, which had its infancy in the rural cemetery movement of the mid-nineteenth century. Many factors prompted the movement of cemeteries from urban churchyards to rural settings in the 1830s. Urban areas were experiencing rapid growth, creating a high demand for land in expanding cities such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. This high demand, coupled with congestion and disrepair of older church graveyards, often resulted in the desecration of urban cemeteries. Additionally, a popular theory at the time maintained that decomposing bodies created "miasmas," making the air impure and causing disease. Cholera outbreaks in the 1830s led to the misperception that urban cemeteries posed threats to public health because they released miasmas into the air.<sup>4</sup>

Mount Auburn Cemetery was established in Cambridge, Massachusetts, just six miles outside Boston, in 1831. It was the first rural cemetery in the United States. The mastermind behind the design was Jacob Bigelow, a doctor and botanist, whose primary interests were the intersection of public health and botany. He proposed a cemetery united with an "experimental garden" that would provide a meditative retreat for urbanites. The land at Mount Auburn was laid out with respect to the undulating topography of the riverside site. Lush greenery, curvilinear pathways, and decorative gravestones produced the scenic vistas that became characteristic of the Picturesque movement. Other major metropolises followed Boston's example. The most notable examples were Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York, and Laurel Hill Cemetery in Philadelphia. These verdant landscapes became welcome retreats from the congestion and industrialization of these growing cities. As historian David Schuyler commented in *The New Urban Landscape*, "At the cemetery the visitor could leave behind some of the cares of urban life, revel in the natural beauty of the scenery, and learn the moral lessons of the landscape and its monuments."<sup>5</sup>

The writings of esteemed landscape designer and horticulturist Andrew Jackson Downing helped perpetuate the Picturesque aesthetic. As an editor for *Horticulturist* magazine, Downing authored many articles on gardening and landscape design. In an article from 1849, he wrote that "one of the most remarkable illustrations of the popular taste, in this country, is to be found in the rise and progress of our rural cemeteries." Because few American cities had formal public park

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<sup>3</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 18, 1867, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Administration Medical Center Archives, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (hereafter VAMC Archives).

<sup>4</sup> David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 41–54.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 54–55.

systems at that time, citizens found an escape in the natural beauty offered by rural cemeteries. In the same article, Downing further remarked on the influence of rural cemeteries on the American aesthetic: “The true secret of the attraction [of rural cemeteries] lies in the natural beauty of the sites. . . . Indeed, in the absence of great public gardens, such as we must surely one day have in America, our rural cemeteries are doing a great deal to enlarge and educate the popular taste in rural embellishment.”<sup>6</sup>

Publications promoted the Picturesque ideals of rural cemeteries. Often filled with elaborate engravings depicting lush greenery, ornate headstones, and visitors meandering along serpentine pathways, these publications served as advertisements for the cemeteries, which attracted thousands of visitors from neighboring locales and farther afield. *Green-Wood Illustrated* describes the Brooklyn cemetery’s draw as a place of recuperation and a spiritual retreat from the bustle of the city with a vivid, romantic tone:

He who stands upon its verge sees only water, woods, and sky. He hears naught but the notes, plaintive or lively, of scores of birds, which haunt this dell, and at times fill it with their music. To the weary and worn citizen, it may well seem the very ideal of solitude—a charming picture of repose. Ever since he entered these green-wood shades, he has been sensibly getting farther and farther away from strife, and business, and care; at every step he has become more and more imbued with the gentle spirit of the place. But here he finds the illusion and the charm complete. A short half-hour ago, he was in the midst of a discordant Babel; he was one of the hurrying, jostling crowd; he was encompassed by the whirl and fever of artificial life. Now he stands alone, in Nature’s inner court—in her silent, solemn sanctuary. Her holiest influences are all around him, and his heart whispers, It is good to be here!<sup>7</sup>

Drawing on the popularity of rural cemeteries, support for public parks grew in the years preceding the Civil War, especially in major eastern metropolises. According to Schuyler, parks would provide the scenic attractions of the cemetery “without the graves and without the funeral processions.” New York’s Central Park was the first grand public park in the United States. Influenced by Downing, designers Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted submitted their Greensward Plan to the park’s design competition in 1858. Their winning plan included serpentine pathways, vast open spaces, groves of trees, water features, and picturesque monuments such as bridges, fountains, and pavilions.<sup>8</sup>

The enormous success of Central Park prompted many American cities to create their own public parks as places where citizens could enjoy social interaction and recreation in the fresh air of lush landscapes. As an oasis from the rigid urban grid, a city park could contribute to the mental,

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<sup>6</sup> Andrew Jackson Downing, *Rural Essays*, ed. George William Curtis (New York: George A. Leavitt, 1869), 155.

<sup>7</sup> Nehemiah Cleaveland and James Smillie, *Green-Wood Illustrated* (New York: R. Martin, 1847), 13–14.

<sup>8</sup> Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape*, 55; Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History* (New York: Abrams, 2001), 337–343.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 6)

spiritual, and physical well-being of area residents. In the same way city leaders sought to improve life for their constituents by providing scenic retreats within the city, the NHDVS Board of Managers sought to provide peaceful, restorative landscapes where injured veterans could recuperate and live healthfully at the National Homes.

In nineteenth-century Milwaukee, the pastoral setting of the Northwestern Branch provided a similar therapeutic escape from the city, especially for industrial workers who were faced with dark and smoky work environments. The *Milwaukee Sentinel* proclaimed that a trip to the Home grounds could offer “opportunities for the tired laborer, who . . . is held to the bench or confined in the shop, to take his family into the fresh pure air, view the beauties which surround the Home and secure that rest and change which is beneficial and needful.”<sup>9</sup>

Milwaukee epitomized Downing’s earlier lament regarding the absence of grand parks and gardens in American cities, having still not developed a park system by the end of the nineteenth century. Instead, the Home grounds provided the city with an idyllic retreat. A local newspaper regarded the Northwestern Branch as a “place of resort for our citizens and those who visit us” and enthusiastically claimed that “the grounds possess natural advantages and beauty superior to those of the great Central Park of New York.”<sup>10</sup>

Visits to public parks became engrained in Victorian culture as parks became places to see others and be seen. At the Northwestern Branch, entertainment, attractions, and recreation opportunities drew scores of visitors. The Home band offered open-air concerts in the summer. The ensemble performed at bandstands and pavilions scattered throughout the campus, entertaining visitors who passed their time strolling along the Home’s rambling pathways on sunny afternoons. Sunday afternoon concerts brought especially large numbers of visitors to the Home.<sup>11</sup>

Fourth of July celebrations at the Northwestern Branch attracted thousands of visitors for a day of patriotic festivities. Special trains shuttled Milwaukeeans to the grounds from Union Depot for the occasion. Home members entertained guests in amusing competitions such as tub races on the lake, sack races, and wheelbarrow races. The public was invited to tour Home facilities, and the Main Building was of particular interest to visitors, who inspected the grand building with officers of the branch as their guides. According to newspaper accounts, “Numerous other interesting and handsome places in and around the grounds were also visited, such as grottoes, shady and serpentine walks, flower parks, greenhouses, artificial lakes, the bald eagle and the well-cultivated fields.” The Home band performed a medley of patriotic tunes during an afternoon promenade. String bands played for crowds gathered in the dancing pavilion, and theatrical productions were held in Ward Memorial Hall as well. The “grandest sight” at the Fourth of July festivities, however, took place after sunset. Avenues throughout the Home were

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<sup>9</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 16, 1883, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

<sup>10</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 13, 1868, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

<sup>11</sup> *Annual Report of the Northwestern Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, 1875* (Milwaukee: National Soldiers’ Home Printing Office, 1876), 7 (hereafter *1875 Annual Report*).

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 7)

“lined with myriads of Chinese lanterns.” Among the trees were “beautiful and dazzling lights of all shades and descriptions.” The lakes were also lit up with glistening lights. A deck on the peninsula at Lake Wheeler provided a launching pad for fireworks. Even the Main Building was “a blaze with lights. From basement to turret its windows shone with brilliancy almost impossible to describe.”<sup>12</sup>

Aside from elaborate events such as Fourth of July celebrations, everyday attractions also drew visitors. The greenhouse and gardens were popular because botany and horticulture were subjects of particular interest in nineteenth-century culture. Influenced by Joseph Paxton’s Crystal Palace at London’s Great Exhibition of 1851, glass-walled conservatories became common sights in early public parks. Keeping with the public park model, the Northwestern Branch first constructed a greenhouse in 1877. Situated south of the railroad tracks near the central bandstand, it featured a formal garden with a labyrinth and fountain in front. The original greenhouse appeared to have half-glass walls with a hipped roof, also constructed of glass. It was reconstructed and expanded in 1903. Postcards from the early twentieth century reveal the new, more elaborate design with vaulted glass walls and a central glass dome and cupola. Flowers grown in the greenhouse were taken to “brighten the hospital wards” and used to decorate headstones in the cemetery. Foliage plants were also grown for landscaping throughout the grounds.<sup>13</sup>

Accompanying the nineteenth-century interest in horticulture was a curiosity about exotic plants and animals. Many conservatories were built as tropical hothouses to display plant varieties from far-off locales. Palm trees were shipped in to provide an exotic attraction for visitors at the Northwestern Branch. Furthermore, a visitor’s description dubbed poinsettias grown at the greenhouse “Mexican fire plants,” emphasizing the rarity of the plant and its distant origin. Complementing the tropical atmosphere, two “brilliantly plumaged” macaw parrots swung in a cage in the greenhouse to “delight the eye.”<sup>14</sup>

Another bird delighted crowds at the Northwestern Branch. In a patriotic gesture, J. D. Cabeen, a prominent Milwaukeean, presented the Northwestern Branch with a bald eagle. The members named the eagle Joe Hooker—after a general in the Union Army—and called it Joe for short. Joe became a favorite sight among visitors and was “highly prized by the soldiers.” The Home’s

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<sup>12</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 6, 1880, July 5, 1882, and July 5, 1889, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives. Many activities were done repeatedly, especially the concerts and illuminating the grounds with lanterns and fireworks.

<sup>13</sup> Greenhouse photogravure, 1894, VAMC Archives; Postcard of Conservatory, Photograph and Postcard Collection, VAMC Archives; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 19, 1893, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives; *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, September 18, 1900–March 14, 1930* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, n.d.), 109, 137 (hereafter *Proceedings, 1900–1930*).

<sup>14</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 28, 1888, January 22 and February 19, 1893, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 8)

cabinetmaker created a decorative octagonal cage for Joe, which was placed on the peninsula at Lake Wheeler.<sup>15</sup>

Along with Joe's cage, many pavilions lined the shores of Lake Wheeler, providing quaint resting places for people to gather near the water. Rowboats were available to rent at the boathouse for those wanting more active recreation on the lake.<sup>16</sup>

The park-like grounds were popular for picnics. According to the local newspaper, there was "no place [of] resort in or near our city so well adapted for picnic excursion purposes as the grounds of the Soldiers' Home." A soda fountain where visitors could buy ice cream, sodas, and candies further enhanced their outings.<sup>17</sup>

Given the campus's location on the outskirts of Milwaukee, visitors arrived in a variety of ways. For those who did not have horses or private carriages, trains and omnibuses initially provided public transit. In 1889, the Home welcomed 52,238 visitors. Three years later, streetcar tracks were installed along National Avenue, causing the number of visitors to surge as the grounds became more easily accessible. The annual report for 1892 indicated there were 102,592 visitors to the Home. By the turn of the century, an additional streetcar line was in place along the northern boundary of the Home. As a result of increased accessibility, officials reported 309,303 visitors to the Northwestern Branch in 1898.<sup>18</sup>

The growing number of streetcar lines made transportation between the city and outlying areas much easier, influencing patterns of development. Real estate subdivisions sprouted along railroad and streetcar corridors, making rural suburbs increasingly attractive for residents seeking to escape the congestion that characterized urban life. The streetcar allowed residents to enjoy the amenities of Milwaukee without having to live in the city. Nineteenth-century writer Frank J. Scott championed rural suburbs, claiming they retained "all the benefits of rural pleasures, and many of the beauties of park scenery, without relinquishing the luxuries of town life." According to historian David Schuyler, "Scott maintained a romantic hostility toward urban life. He

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<sup>15</sup> "A New Feature at the National Asylum," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 22, 1871, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives; "The National Asylum," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 17, 1871, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

<sup>16</sup> View of the Lake photogravure, 1894, VAMC Archives.

<sup>17</sup> "Items from the Soldiers Home," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 1, 1871, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

<sup>18</sup> *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1889* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1890), 100 (hereafter *1889 Annual Report*); *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1892* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1893), 89, 99 (hereafter *1892 Annual Report*); *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1898* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899), 85 (hereafter *1898 Annual Report*).

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 9)

believed that residence in a city was unacceptable because it deprives people of daily contact with the ‘charms of Nature.’”<sup>19</sup>

The rural suburb was the final iteration of the Picturesque movement. Many suburbs became self-contained villages with similar amenities as the nearby city. The setting, however, was park-like with winding tree-lined avenues and large landscaped lots. No longer did residents need to escape the city’s congestion for pastoral landscapes—they were living in their own private countryside.

Much like a nineteenth-century rural suburb, the Northwestern Branch provided for the needs of its residents within a self-contained setting. Along with general residences and institutional buildings, there were “shops, granaries, and stables scattered here and there,” which gave “one the impression of a busy little village,” according to one visitor. A theater, post office, social hall, billiards room, canteen, chapel, and library rounded out the amenities offered at the Home.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the managers were guided by prevailing notions of architectural and landscape design as well as cultural norms in developing the system of National Homes. They were also influenced by the work of Thomas S. Kirkbride, who wrote the pioneering treatise on a therapeutic approach to the organization of mental health institutions. Published in 1854, Kirkbride’s *On the Construction, Organization, and General Arrangement of Hospitals for the Insane* guided state governments in how they should design mental health institutions to maximize patients’ recuperation. His principles took into consideration the design of the hospital itself, the layout of the grounds, and the overall setting.

Although serving a different contingency, the Northwestern Branch follows many of Kirkbride’s tenets. According to Kirkbride, one of the most crucial components of establishing a successful asylum was carefully selecting a suitable site. Kirkbride maintained that a proper facility should be located on at least one hundred acres of land approximately two miles outside “a town of considerable size,” and “within reasonable proximity to a railroad” and other “good roads.” He also stipulated that the land should be “fertile” and suitable for agricultural pursuits. Furthermore, he stated that “the surrounding scenery should be varied and attractive, and the neighborhood should possess numerous objects of an agreeable and interesting character.” In maintaining a pleasant campus, Kirkbride specified that the grounds “should be highly improved and tastefully ornamented,” and that “a variety of objects of interest should be collected . . . and

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<sup>19</sup> Frank Scott, *The Art of Beautifying Suburban Home Grounds of Small Extent* (New York: D. Appleton, 1870), 29; David Schuyler, introduction to *Victorian Gardens Part I: Suburban Home Grounds by Frank J. Scott*, a reprint of *The Art of Beautifying Suburban Home Grounds of Small Extent* by Frank J. Scott (New York: American Life Foundation, 1982), n.p.

<sup>20</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 28, 1888, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 10)

trees and shrubs, flowering plants, summer-houses, and other pleasing objects should add to its attractiveness.”<sup>21</sup>

The Main Building of the Northwestern Branch followed Kirkbride’s centralized concept of a hospital, housing all functions under one roof. According to Kirkbride, it was “important that the [hospital] building should be in good taste, and that it should impress favorably not only the patients, but their friends and others who may visit it.” Furthermore, he indicated that “the centre building ought to be the prominent feature” within the grounds, and positioned so that advantageous views of the surrounding scenery could be seen from parlors and patients’ rooms.<sup>22</sup>

Even the types of outbuildings present at the Northwestern Branch followed Kirkbride’s example. According to his instructive manual, an asylum should have a barn, a carriage house, a carpenter shed or workshop, and an icehouse to support the institution’s operations. A farm and dairy were also crucial to running the asylum because fresh vegetables and milk were important for patients’ health. He stipulated that “the vegetable garden should be of large size and kept in a high state of cultivation,” and that there should be enough cows “to give an abundant supply of pure milk the entire year to all the patients.” Not only were fresh farm and dairy products good for patients’ health, but running the facilities provided productive labor for patients. Lastly, Kirkbride advocated for the construction of greenhouses: “A small greenhouse will be found useful in connection with the garden, and also as a place of resort for the patients.” Although Kirkbride focused his work on hospital facilities for the mentally ill, his underlying principles bore great influence on the Board of Managers in developing the system of National Homes.<sup>23</sup>

The managers were also influenced by previously established military hospitals in the United States and Europe. The U.S. Naval Asylum was founded in 1811, when Congress passed legislation authorizing its establishment to support disabled and elderly navy and marine veterans in a residential setting. This was the first federally established veterans’ home in the country. Prior to this, veterans’ benefits were in the form of monetary pensions. Philadelphia was chosen for the location, and construction on the asylum began in 1827 after Congress appropriated sufficient funds. It did not open to patients until 1833. Designed by architect William Strickland, the U.S. Naval Asylum was a large Greek Revival building that housed four hundred residents, dining halls, reading rooms, and a chapel. By the 1840s, the centralized building housed three separate navy institutions: the asylum for disabled and elderly officers and sailors, a general naval hospital, and an instructional academy for midshipmen. The Naval Academy was relocated to Annapolis, Maryland, in 1845. John McArthur designed a new Second Empire hospital in 1868 to serve sailors wounded in the Civil War. By the time the new hospital was complete, however, the number of patients requiring medical care had dwindled and the building was

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas Story Kirkbride, *On the Construction, Organization, and General Arrangement of Hospitals for the Insane* (Philadelphia: Lindsey and Blakiston, 1854), 36–38, 52–53.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 53–55.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 11)

converted to use as a residential facility for disabled sailors. The institution was renamed the U.S. Naval Home in 1889.<sup>24</sup>

In 1827, Secretary of War James Barbour advocated for the establishment of a similar facility to serve the medical needs of disabled soldiers in the regular army. His recommendation was based on the establishment of the naval asylum in the United States, as well as the precedent of national institutions in many European countries. England had two prominent military asylums located in or near London: Greenwich Hospital, which served aging seamen, and Chelsea Hospital, which served elderly soldiers. The Hôtel national des Invalides in Paris was another prominent European military asylum that influenced Barbour's recommendation. Congress created the U.S. Military Asylum in 1851 after many years of debate over how the institution would be financed, as well as the appropriateness of another large-scale public institution like those in Europe. Constructed in Washington, D.C., the U.S. Military Asylum was renamed the U.S. Soldiers' Home after 1859.<sup>25</sup> There were major differences between the two U.S. asylums and the system of homes the NHDVS Board of Managers envisioned. Unlike the National Homes, the U.S. Naval Home and the U.S. Soldiers' Home were branch-specific facilities primarily serving career seamen and soldiers. Admission to the U.S. Soldiers' Home required a tenure of twenty years in the army. The Civil War, however, engaged hundreds of thousands of volunteer soldiers, casting out former concepts of military service. The facilities in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., were not adequate to provide care for the unprecedented number of injured veterans following the Civil War.<sup>26</sup>

Under the initial provisions of the NHDVS, admission to one of the National Homes was open to any volunteer soldier who was disabled due to his service in the Union Army. This marked an unparalleled level of veterans' benefits offered by the federal government. National Home membership expanded throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the United States became involved in additional conflicts. By the time the NHDVS was absorbed by the Veterans' Administration in 1930, there were eleven branches scattered throughout the United States. As one of the three original NHDVS facilities, the Northwestern Branch remains a symbol of the United States government's commitment to serving its veterans.

## B. Physical History

### 1. Date(s) of establishment:

The National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers was founded in 1865. Milwaukee was selected as the location for one of three original NHDVS facilities, and the Northwestern Branch opened there in 1867, temporarily utilizing existing farm buildings to house veteran residents and employees. That year, Thomas Budd

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<sup>24</sup> Julin, "NHDVS NHL Context Study," 4–5; Judith Gladys Cetina, "A History of Veterans' Homes in the United States, 1811–1930," (Ph.D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1977), 30–39.

<sup>25</sup> Julin, "NHDVS NHL Context Study," 5; Cetina, "A History of Veterans' Homes," 39–53.

<sup>26</sup> Julin, "NHDVS NHL Context Study," 4–6.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 12)

Van Horne was selected to lay out the grounds. In 1869, the Main Building (Building 2) was constructed. It was a centralized facility that housed members' dormitories, medical offices, the kitchen and dining hall, reading rooms, amusement halls, and managers' offices. The cemetery was the final component of the original concept and was dedicated in 1871.

2. Landscape architect, designer, shaper, creator:  
Thomas Budd Van Horne designed the grounds. He was selected by the NHDVS Board of Managers because of his experience designing military cemeteries at Marietta, Georgia, and Chattanooga, Tennessee. One of Van Horne's primary responsibilities was laying out the grounds with avenues. His circulation system followed the site's rolling topography and established the framework for positioning future buildings. As part of his plan, he selected a prominent hilltop site for the Main Building. Van Horne was also responsible for designing the grounds of the Home cemetery, which was located in the northwest corner of the campus and was dedicated in 1871.

Edward Townsend Mix, a notable Milwaukee architect, designed the Main Building and the Governor's Residence to fit within Van Horne's initial plan. Henry C. Koch was another prominent Milwaukee architect whose buildings framed the landscape as the Northwestern Branch expanded.

The members of the NHDVS Board of Managers also had great influence on the development of the landscape at the Northwestern Branch. Their vision guided the work of Van Horne, Mix, and Koch. The managers stated in their 1869 annual report: "These buildings when finished will be of the most substantial character, fully fitted for all the wants of the inmates, very architectural and beautiful in design. They will make, together with the grounds, one of the finest ornamental places which adorn any city of the United States."<sup>27</sup>

Because the NHDVS was a federal institution, improvements were made as funding became available through Congress. The Board of Managers submitted budget estimates for each of the branches to Congress, which then approved or denied the managers' requests. When requests were approved, Congress granted money to the Board of Managers, who in turn allotted funds to the individual branches. The funding process could take many years, thus making development ongoing. Because of their control over budgetary allotments, Congress played a crucial role in shaping the Northwestern Branch.

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<sup>27</sup> *Report of the Board of Managers of the National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers for the Year 1869* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1870), 3 (hereafter *1869 Annual Report*).

3. Builder, contractor, laborers, suppliers:  
Limited documents specifying builders, contractors, laborers, and suppliers were found through extensive research. Proceedings from the Board of Managers' December 1903 meeting indicate that August Grunze served as contractor for the construction of the new greenhouse at the Northwestern Branch that year. Meeting minutes and annual reports also indicate that officials at the Northwestern Branch employed members residing at the institution as laborers for improvement projects, such as laying avenues, walkways, and gutters, as well as excavating the grounds. Utilizing members as a labor force both helped reduce costs for projects and gave members useful occupation.<sup>28</sup>
  
4. Original and subsequent owners, occupants:  
The Board of Managers was authorized to purchase land outside the city of Milwaukee to establish the Northwestern Branch in 1867. The Board of Managers maintained jurisdiction over the land and improvements therein until the organization was absorbed into the Veterans Administration in 1930. All property was conveyed to the Veterans Administration at that time. In 1989, the Veterans Administration became a cabinet-level office and was renamed the Department of Veterans Affairs, and this agency maintains ownership of the property to this day.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Proceedings, 1900–1930*, 137; *Annual Report of the Northwestern Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, 1877* (Milwaukee, Wisc.: National Home Job Printing Establishment, 1878), 11 (hereafter *1877 Annual Report*).

<sup>29</sup> *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Board of Managers, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, May 16, 1866–April 8, 1884* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, n.d.), 11 (hereafter *Proceedings, 1866–1884*); Gustavus A. Weber and Laurence F. Schmeckebier, *The Veterans' Administration: Its History, Activities, and Organization* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1934), 212; Index to Title Papers, Veterans Administration Medical Center, Wood, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Facilities Management Records, Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (hereafter VAMC).

5. Periods of development:

Development of the landscape at the Northwestern Branch was a continual process influenced by the Board of Managers and funding availability. In “National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers National Historic Landmark Context Study,” historian Suzanne Julin identifies five phases of development based on changes in policies and procedures of the Board of Managers up until the NHDVS was absorbed into the Veterans Administration in 1930. In Julin’s study, the phases are broken down as follows:

- Early Development of the NHDVS: 1865–1870
- Growth of the NHDVS: 1871–1883
- Expansion of the NHDVS: 1884–1900
- New Challenges for the NHDVS: 1900–1917
- NHDVS Era of Change: 1918–1930

The continually evolving landscape of the Northwestern Branch reflected the values of the Board of Managers until that administrative unit was dissolved in 1930. Because the members of the board were the visionaries behind each of the NHDVS branches, the work authorized under their leadership is considered historic for that association. In this report, post-1930 developments in the landscape are considered changes and additions because they were made after the NHDVS was absorbed into the Veterans Administration and do not reflect the intentions of the original organization.

a. Original plans and construction:

**EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE NHDVS: 1865–1870**

Shortly after the NHDVS was established, Milwaukee was selected as the site of the Northwestern Branch. Even before being chosen, the city had a very active citizenry engaged in soldiers’ aid work. The lady managers of the Wisconsin Soldiers’ Aid Society held a fair in Milwaukee in the summer of 1865 to raise funds to build a state institution to care for wounded soldiers returning to Wisconsin. The fair ran for three weeks and the women raised over \$100,000. George Walker, a Milwaukee politician who was appointed to the Board of Managers, proposed that the lady managers use the proceeds of the fair to entice the Board of Managers to select Milwaukee as the site of their northwest facility. His suggestion caused much contention among the women because they had already purchased a plot of land and had plans drawn for their State Soldiers’ Home. George Allen, an advisor to the lady managers, argued in support of establishing a facility for the National Home.

He contended that the money raised at the fair was “barely sufficient” to operate the home the women envisioned and that ongoing operations would be unsustainable with funds from charitable donations or public taxes. In June 1866, the Wisconsin Soldiers’ Aid Society agreed to donate its funds to the National Home on the condition that one of the facilities be located in Milwaukee.<sup>30</sup>

By the end of August, a selection committee consisting of Board of Managers members Frederick Smyth, Lewis Gunckel, and Dr. Erastus B. Wolcott—a Milwaukee native—evaluated potential locations for the Northwestern Branch. The committee members “had a view to the superior healthfulness of the city, the beauty of its surroundings, and its central location.” After the selection committee reviewed several offers for land, they decided on a location just west of the city limits. An article in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* claimed “this location . . . is perhaps the best which could have been selected. It is picturesquely situated, giving a great variety of scenery, as well as a variety of land.” The site comprised nearly four hundred acres and featured rolling hills, valleys, ravines, groves of trees, lakes, and springs. Tracks for the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad bisected the site into northern and southern halves.<sup>31</sup>

The site was selected not only for its landscape features—the selection process was politically and economically motivated as well. Dr. Wolcott, a newly appointed member of the NHDVS Board of Managers, had a substantial conflict of interest on the site selection committee as a director of the Milwaukee and Mississippi (M&M) Railroad. The railroad, which had laid the tracks that ran through the proposed site of the Northwestern Branch in the 1850s, was going through bankruptcy in 1867. It was rescued by Alexander Mitchell, a powerful businessman and investor, who served as president of the Executive Committee of the Wisconsin Soldiers’ Home Society. Mitchell, also a director of the M&M Railroad, merged the failing company into the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, where he was the principal stockholder. The largest parcel needed for the proposed campus was owned by his son, John, who had received the land from his father, and another large tract was owned

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<sup>30</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 6, July 17, and October 21, 1865, and June 15, 1866, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

<sup>31</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 23, 1866, March 1 and March 2, 1867, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives; Map of National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers Near Milwaukee, 1876, VAMC Archives.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 16)

by John Tweedy, Alexander's longtime business associate and yet another director of the M&M.<sup>32</sup>

**Improvements Begin**

Once they decided on a location, the Board of Managers selected Thomas Budd Van Horne to plan the grounds of the Northwestern Branch. Van Horne was a landscape designer and chaplain with the Ohio Volunteer Infantry. He had previously designed military cemeteries at Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Marietta, Georgia, and used the same rural landscape design principles for laying out the grounds of the Milwaukee Home. He selected a prominent knoll to situate the Main Building (Building 2) on so that it would become the focal point of the campus. An article in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* described the impressive site for the future landmark: "It is situated on an eminence about three hundred yards north of the railroad track, and commands a beautiful view of the city and the harbor through the Menomonee flats, and also overlooks the whole of the grounds of the asylum."<sup>33</sup>

In May 1867, a cluster of farmhouses in the northeast corner of the site was used for members' quarters while planning and construction of the main facilities was under way. By August, a larger building was constructed as a temporary barracks until the Main Building could be built to house members. According to the newspaper, "Though intended for only temporary occupancy as general quarters, the present building is by no means temporary in the character of its workmanship. . . . After the permanent asylum [Main Building] is built and occupied, the present structure will be devoted to hospital or other kindred uses."<sup>34</sup>

The Main Building was designed by Edward Townsend Mix, a prominent local architect. It was situated atop a knoll to overlook the rest of the campus as part of Van Horne's plan. Attractive architecture and grounds were intended to instill pride in Home members. Mix's Victorian Gothic design for the building contributed greatly to the picturesque charm of the landscape. In its 1869 report, the Board of Managers commented on the aesthetic of the Northwestern Branch: "These buildings when finished will be of the most

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<sup>32</sup> Index to Title Papers, 1; Kristin Gilpatrick Halverson, "Northwestern Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers Historic District," National Register of Historic Places nomination, ed. Todd Hunter and Patricia Lynch, January 25, 2005, 8:42; Suzanne Julin, "Northwestern Branch, NHDVS," National Historic Landmark nomination, ed. Dena Sanford, Alexandra Lord, and Patty Henry, August 25, 2010, 8:34. The other property owners who sold their land to establish the Northwestern Branch included Henry Williams, Ann Fennell Hathaway (executor), and Charles H. Williams.

<sup>33</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 18, 1867, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

<sup>34</sup> "New Building Approaching Completion," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 28, 1867, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 17)

substantial character, fully fitted for all the wants of the inmates, very architectural and beautiful in design. They will make, together with the grounds, one of the finest ornamental places which adorn any city of the United States.” As an additional enhancement, a fountain was installed east of the Main Building in 1870.<sup>35</sup>

Although Van Horne’s initial concept was outlined in May 1867, he returned to Milwaukee in March of the following year to “direct improvements of the grounds.” Van Horne laid out the road system with respect to the site’s undulating topography. The primary entrance to the campus was in the southeast corner along the existing Mukwonago Road, which is now National Avenue. The new Central Avenue—now General Mitchell Boulevard—wound through the grounds in a serpentine fashion. Dense trees lined the avenue as it climbed past the Main Building and through the northwest corner of the grounds to reach the north entrance at what is now West Bluemound Road. In addition to this winding drive, carriage drives encircled landscape features throughout the campus.<sup>36</sup>

The extensive curvilinear circulation system was characteristic of the Picturesque landscape movement. One of the primary tenets underlying the aesthetic was that movement through the landscape was enhanced by linking a series of scenic vistas. Carriage rides and promenades along meandering lanes underscored another principle of the ideology—pastoral landscapes could provide healthful, recreational escapes for city dwellers. Milwaukeeans were eager to relax and recreate at the grounds of the Northwestern Branch because the bucolic campus provided the city its first major park.

It took several years for Van Horne’s plans to be completely realized, but the Board of Managers persevered, recognizing the importance of improving the grounds to enhance the park-like setting and make them more accessible to visitors. In 1870, the Board of Managers appropriated funds for “finishing the avenues.” An article from April 1871 praised the proposed road, which would extend through the northeast portion of the grounds and open an entrance to Spring Street (now West Wisconsin Avenue). The article claimed the new avenue would “accommodate great numbers who would be pleased to visit the delightful grounds . . . if they could reach them from this favorite Spring Street drive.” The article further commented that the number of visitors to the Northwestern Branch would be “increased very greatly” as a result of the new

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<sup>35</sup> *1869 Annual Report*, 3.

<sup>36</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 13, 1868, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives; 1876 Map of NHDVS; Central Avenue photogravure, 1894, VAMC Archives.

road. The new lane is labeled “to Spring Street” on a later map of the campus.<sup>37</sup>

The Board of Managers also appropriated funds to construct a fence around the grounds in 1870. The fence was highlighted in a newspaper article in April 1871: “The fence will be a good board on the rear and sides but the front, on Elizabeth Street [National Avenue], will be handsomely ornamented. This improvement will add immensely to the general appearance of the already beautiful grounds.” Engravings and photographs of the entrance gate illustrate the rustic structure formed by arching tree limbs and covered in foliage.<sup>38</sup>

Another important component of the grounds was the farm. The Board of Managers envisioned each branch as a self-sustaining village and the farm produced many of the food products served in the dining room. Besides growing fruits and vegetables, the farm also raised livestock and ran a dairy. In 1870 farm products at the Northwestern Branch were valued at \$10,420. Although the precise location of the farm is unclear, farm buildings were situated at the base of the bluff in the northeast corner of the site. Bird’s-eye-view illustrations suggest land along the eastern boundary of the site was used for agricultural purposes as well.<sup>39</sup>

### **GROWTH OF THE NHDVS: 1871–1883**

In 1871, Congress removed restrictions that made many veterans ineligible for membership at one of the national soldiers’ homes. When NHDVS was founded, veterans had to prove that they were honorably discharged from service and that their injuries were related to service in the Union Army. Under the new application requirements, veteran soldiers and sailors of the War of 1812 and the Mexican-American War were eligible for membership as long as they had not served in the Confederate Army and they could prove their injury was service-related. The Board of Managers initiated expansive building programs at the four branches in response to this surge in membership. New facilities at the Northwestern Branch included the pavilion-style Hospital (Building 6), Ward Memorial Hall (Building 41), the Bakery

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<sup>37</sup> *Proceedings, 1866–1884*, 71; “Grounds to Have New Avenue Running Through,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 8, 1871, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives; 1876 Map of NHDVS.

<sup>38</sup> *Proceedings, 1866–1884*, 78–80; “New Fence Will Enhance Appearance,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 5, 1871, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives; Entrance on National Avenue illustration, 1881 souvenir book, VAMC Archives; Garden Trellis photograph, 1880, VAMC Archives.

<sup>39</sup> *Report of the Board of Managers of the National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers*, 41st Cong., 3d sess., 1870, House misc. doc. 45, 5 (hereafter *1870 Annual Report*); Bird’s-eye-view illustration of Northwestern Branch, circa 1870, VAMC Archives.

(Building 10), and a Laundry House (Building 8). In addition to the building program, the grounds of the Northwestern Branch saw many improvements.<sup>40</sup>

One of Van Horne's final tasks as landscape designer was to lay out the grounds for the cemetery, which was dedicated in May 1871. Maintaining the Picturesque character of the rest of the campus, the cemetery site was "a beautiful grove in the northwest corner of the grounds," and included winding roads that led to Spring Lake (later renamed Lake Huston). Photographs of Soldiers' Home Cemetery showed lush greenery surrounding the lake and a rustic bridge over the water. Van Horne was accustomed to designing cemeteries, as he had previously designed military cemeteries in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Marietta, Georgia.<sup>41</sup>

### **Enhancing the Landscape**

After the cemetery was laid out, the managers turned to enhancing the landscape of the main campus with attractive architectural elements. In addition to institutional facilities, many structures built between 1871 and 1883 were outdoor pavilions, bandstands, and shelters. These were built to improve the landscape and recreational experiences of Home members and visitors.

Articles from the *Milwaukee Sentinel* in the summer of 1871 announced the opening of a new feature at the Home grounds: a soda fountain with a picnic pavilion. It was built by a Home member and was described as "tastefully painted and elegantly ornamented." Managed by two other members, the soda fountain provided picnickers with ice cream, candies, and sodas. Although photographs do not reference a specific soda fountain building, it is possibly the structure labeled "restaurant" in an 1881 panoramic illustration of the grounds. A quaint building with a covered outdoor seating area is visible in the background of the illustration. It appears south of the Main Building and west of the bandstand.<sup>42</sup>

The summer of 1871 brought another unique attraction to the Home. In a patriotic gesture, J. D. Cabeen, a prominent Milwaukeean, presented the Northwestern Branch with a bald eagle that the members named Joe Hooker, after a general in the Union Army. Joe became a favorite sight among visitors and "highly prized by the soldiers." The Home's cabinetmaker created an

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<sup>40</sup> Julin, "NHDVS NHL Context Study," 15.

<sup>41</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 13, 1871, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives; Julin, "Northwestern Branch, NHDVS," 7:27.

<sup>42</sup> "A New Feature at the National Asylum," June 22, 1871; "Items from the Soldiers Home," July 1, 1871; General View of the Grounds illustration, 1881 souvenir book, VAMC Archives.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 20)

elaborate cage for Joe. The newspaper described its design: “It will be octagon shaped, with square slats placed perpendicular, and ten feet in diameter. . . . It will be tastefully painted and placed near where his old cage at present stands. When completed it will add greatly to the many attractive things to be seen at this institution.” The cage appears in later photographs on the peninsula at Lake Wheeler.<sup>43</sup>

The annual report of the Board of Managers for 1875 indicated many new structures that were built that year, including a dance hall, an octagonal bandstand, three octagonal “summer houses,” and two outdoor water closets. Additionally, the Spring Street gate house was repaired and enlarged. The dance hall appears adjacent to the soda fountain/restaurant in later illustrations and photographs. It was a large open pavilion with decorative woodwork. During winter months the structure could be enclosed to provide extra sleeping quarters or an assembly room.<sup>44</sup>

The Bandstand (Building 54) was located southeast of the Main Building on a grassy knoll framed by curving pathways lined with trees. The Home band performed at the bandstand four times a week. The managers reported that the “open air” concerts were especially popular on Sunday afternoons, attracting “a very large number of visitors to the grounds.”<sup>45</sup>

The summer houses likely refer to octagonal gazebos visible in later photographs. According to the photographs, identical gazebos with Gothic Revival details and bell-curved roofs were located at the northwest tip of Lake Wheeler and near the farm pond in the northeast portion of the campus. The location of the third summer house is unknown, although several other pavilions were located around Lake Wheeler.<sup>46</sup>

The Greenhouse (also known as the Conservatory) was constructed in 1877 just south of the railroad tracks and north of the Governor’s Residence (Building 39). The site also contained a formal garden with landscape features and walking paths in a circular plan. All plants used for ornamental landscaping throughout the grounds—as well as flowers used to decorative

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<sup>43</sup> “Items from the Soldiers Home,” July 1, 1871; “The National Asylum,” July 17, 1871.

<sup>44</sup> Open Pavilion photogravure, 1894, VAMC Archives; General View of the Grounds illustration.

<sup>45</sup> *1875 Annual Report*, 7; *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Board of Managers of the National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers*, 1875, Microfiche CIS US EXEC MF 1789–1909 NH101-1 to NH101-3, Government Publications, Wilson Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis (hereafter Government Publications Microfiche).

<sup>46</sup> 1876 Map of NHDVS; General View of the Grounds illustration; A Dream Spot on the Lake photogravure, 1894, VAMC Archives; Farm Buildings photogravure, 1894, VAMC Archives; Farm Buildings illustration, 1881 souvenir book, VAMC Archives.

soldiers' graves—were grown there. After the Greenhouse had been in operation for a year, the Board of Managers remarked that it added “greatly to the attractions of the grounds,” contributed “to the enjoyment of beneficiaries, officers, and visitors,” and provided plants for flower gardens and decorative borders “at trifling cost.” Many photographs depict members relaxing on benches in the garden or walking along the garden paths.<sup>47</sup>

### **Infrastructure Improvements**

Aside from the addition of these quaint architectural elements, the physical character of the grounds underwent a tremendous transformation during this period as well. An article described the vast improvements being made during the summer of 1874:

New avenues have been laid out; portions of the groves where the undergrowth was thick and impassable have been cleared, and are thus rendered beautiful; miles of tile drains have been put in; stumps in large numbers have been taken out; acres upon acres, wild and worthless have been reduced to cultivation and are now producing heavy crops; and last but most important of all, an abundant supply of the very finest spring water has been obtained by getting access to a copious spring in the southeastern portion of the Home grounds and bringing it in pipes to a point just east of the main building where it subserves the purpose of furnishing an unfailing supply for all needed uses, and at the same time making a fountain and a beautiful little pond.<sup>48</sup>

The new fountain and pond are visible in maps and photographs. The pond became known as Lake Hincks, named after General E. W. Hincks, governor of the Northwestern Branch from 1872 to 1880. According to a newspaper article, Hincks exhibited “rare executive ability” and was quite popular with the men at the Home. The fountain at Lake Hincks featured a stone-lined rectangular retention pool. It was one of the few formal landscape features on the grounds and contrasted with the undulating form of the rest of the lake. A fire engine house was located at the west end of the lake. Promotional

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<sup>47</sup> List of post fund buildings built prior to 1891, no date, VAMC Archives; Greenhouse photograph, 1894, VAMC Archives; *Annual Report of the Commandant and Treasurer of the Northwestern Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, 1878* (Milwaukee: National Home Job Printing Office, 1879), 11 (hereafter *1878 Annual Report*).

<sup>48</sup> “Soldiers’ Home—Improvements In and Around the Veterans’ Home,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 24, 1874, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 22)

photographs show two wagons at the engine house with the lake in the background.<sup>49</sup>

By 1881 the Home needed an additional water supply. The annual report indicated that an artesian well was bored near the Main Building, providing three hundred and fifty gallons of water every minute. The newspaper announced that an artesian well was proposed for the new Ward Memorial Hall as well.<sup>50</sup>

Not only was getting water to the Home an issue, but managing excess water appears to have been a major concern in the 1870s. Annual reports for 1875–1879 record expenditures for “drainage of home grounds,” including the installation of sewer pipes and stone tiles. In 1875, over four thousand feet of sewer lines were laid. Two years later, another two thousand feet of pipes were laid. Draining the farm was a separate undertaking, as it was located in the northeast portion of the site beneath a steep embankment. According to the 1877 annual report, a substantial portion of the farm’s profits were reinvested in “substantial permanent improvement[s]” at the farm, including drainage systems. Similarly, drains for the hospital meadow were installed in 1878. Another attempt to aid water management included laying stone gutters along the avenues, a multi-year project that began in 1875.<sup>51</sup>

Finishing the avenues was a continual expense in the 1870s as well. In addition to laying stone gutters, Home members laid gravel in the roadways and installed new concrete walking paths. The trails complemented the picturesque grounds and enabled visitors and members to stroll through the landscape. Historic photographs reveal that many of the roads and paths were lined with trees to further beautify the campus. The 1878 annual report indicates there was a major tree-planting campaign that year—four hundred

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<sup>49</sup> 1876 Map of NHDVS; Engine House and Lakes illustration, 1881 souvenir book, VAMC Archives; Undated photograph of engine house, VAMC Archives; No. 44—Lake Hincks photograph, VAMC Archives; “Soldiers’ Home—Improvements In and Around the Veterans’ Home.”

<sup>50</sup> *Annual Report of the Governor and Treasurer of the Northwestern Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1881* (Milwaukee: National Home Job Printing Office, 1882), 16; “Artesian Well Dug for Memorial Hall,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 4, 1881, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

<sup>51</sup> *1875 Annual Report*, 7; *Annual Report of the Northwestern Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, 1876* (Milwaukee: National Soldiers’ Home Printing Office, 1877), n.p.; *1877 Annual Report*, 9–10, 15; *1878 Annual Report*, 11; *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1879* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880), 67–68 (hereafter *1879 Annual Report*).

trees were planted and “protected by tree boxes.” The following year ninety-four trees were planted.<sup>52</sup>

Water features were popular sights at the Home. According to the 1875 annual report, the dam at the foot of the “old lake” was reconstructed. The “old lake” probably refers to Lake Wheeler. Later photographs and maps reveal a dam and a cascading waterfall in the southeast part of the lake where water flows into the creek. Additionally, a fountain by Casper Hennecke and Company was installed in 1878. It was described by the newspaper as “handsome,” but its location was not mentioned.<sup>53</sup>

All of these improvements were coming together to create an idyllic landscape on the outskirts of town. Early predictions of the *Milwaukee Sentinel* were proving true—the Northwestern Branch was becoming a “place of resort” for Milwaukeeans and visitors to the Cream City. The managers reported “not less than sixty thousand” visitors to the Home in 1877. The number of visitors was amplified by transportation improvements. Beginning in June 1882, the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad ran additional evening trains during the summer to give visitors the opportunity to spend “the pleasantest hours of the day” at the grounds. There were also buses that ran “every half-hour from the end of the National Avenue horse-car line to the grounds.” Later that summer, a plan was proposed to extend National Avenue “west to the Soldiers’ Home in a wide boulevard,” and the owner of the streetcar system “promised to extend his streetcar tracks to [the] Soldiers’ Home,” making the grounds even more accessible to visitors.<sup>54</sup>

#### **EXPANSION OF THE NHDVS: 1884–1900**

Near the end of the nineteenth century, another change in the admissions policy dramatically affected Home membership. The Board of Managers recommended to Congress that the NHDVS should extend membership to a broader group of veterans, especially aging veterans who could no longer take care of themselves, even if they could not prove a service-related disability. In 1884, Congress passed legislation that removed the restriction requiring veterans to prove their disabilities were service-related. Admission to the NHDVS became open to any veteran honorably discharged from the Union Army, and any volunteer soldier or sailor in the War of 1812 or the Mexican-

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<sup>52</sup> *1878 Annual Report*, 17; *1879 Annual Report*, 67.

<sup>53</sup> *1875 Annual Report*, 7; Building Number and Location Plan, Veterans Administration, Wood, Wisconsin, August 2, 1944, VAMC Archives; Waterfall on Lake Wheeler postcard, Postcard collection, VAMC Archives; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 14 and July 9, 1878, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

<sup>54</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 18, 1868, June 10, 1882, and July 17, 1882, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives; *1877 Annual Report*, 23.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 24)

American War who had not fought in the Confederate Army, provided he could not support himself due to a disability. Thus, advanced age became regarded as a cause of disability under the new provision.<sup>55</sup>

As a result, applications for membership spiked and the four NHDVS branches were filled beyond their capacities. The Northwestern Branch reported 1,684 members in 1885—an increase from 1,317 members the previous year. The Board of Managers elected to establish two additional facilities—the Western Branch in Leavenworth, Kansas, which opened in 1885, and the Pacific Branch in Santa Monica, California, which opened in 1887. There was also an increasing number of state soldiers' homes to accommodate the growing numbers of veterans requiring care. In 1888, to relieve pressure on the NHDVS branches, Congress passed legislation and appropriated funds that authorized the Board of Managers to pay \$100 for each eligible veteran who was receiving care in a state-run soldiers' home rather than an NHDVS facility. That same year, Congress appropriated funds to construct a new National Home in Marion, Indiana. Despite the new legislation paying for eligible out-of-house veterans to remain at state facilities—as well as constructing three new branches—the managers could not accommodate all the veterans in their overcrowded facilities. Thus, in 1897 the managers opened an eighth branch in Danville, Illinois.<sup>56</sup>

This rapid expansion contradicted the assumptions of the Board of Managers, who anticipated that membership numbers would level out and eventually decrease as the death rate of elderly veterans increased. In an interview in 1888, John Mitchell—the Wisconsin representative on the Board of Managers—was posed with the question of what would become of the Northwestern Branch if it were no longer used as a veterans' home. He indicated that the property would likely “be converted into a public park” when it was no longer needed to care for injured veterans. An interview with Dr. Solon Marks reflected a similar opinion. The prominent Milwaukee surgeon suggested that it was only a matter of years before the national homes would be “without occupants.” He proposed that the grounds should be converted into a zoological garden when there was “no further use of the home for disabled soldiers.” By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the Northwestern Branch was teeming with members.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *Proceedings*, July 1885, Government Publications Microfiche; Julin, “NHDVS NHL Context Study,” 16.

<sup>56</sup> *Proceedings*, July 1885, Government Publications Microfiche; Julin, “NHDVS NHL Context Study,” 18; Cetina, “A History of the Veterans' Homes,” 166–172, 187–189.

<sup>57</sup> Cetina, “A History of Veterans' Homes,” 177–183; *Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1885* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing

### **Building Boom at the Northwestern Branch**

The grounds of the Northwestern Branch reflect this period of expansion. The campus was filling out with buildings to meet the medical, administrative, social, and recreational needs of the Home. Several new barracks and officers' quarters were constructed, as well as a library, recreation hall, chapel, administration building, and canteen.

The new buildings helped frame the landscape and were arranged based on each building's program. The Headquarters (Building 1), Library (Building 3), Social Hall (later renamed Recreation Hall, Building 4), and Barracks (Building 5) were positioned laterally in the center of campus near the Main Building and the Hospital. This was the primary institutional area of the Home. Forming a strong linear core, the buildings' arrangement complemented the landscape with courtyards between many of the new structures.<sup>58</sup>

Officers and civilian staff members had their own quarters, separate from the veteran residents. Many of the dwellings built during this time laid the framework for residential clusters that emerged in later years. The residential clusters were located in the north, southeast, and southwest sections of the campus, apart from the central core of buildings.<sup>59</sup>

The canteen supplemented the recreational cluster that was forming between Lake Wheeler and the railroad tracks. Other buildings in this grouping included the outdoor dance pavilion and Ward Memorial Hall.<sup>60</sup>

Expanding facilities required additional infrastructure. Artesian wells that were dug in 1881 were no longer adequate for the growing water demands of the Northwestern Branch. General Jacob Sharpe, governor of the branch, and John Mitchell petitioned the Milwaukee Public Works Board to extend a municipal water main to the grounds of the soldiers' home. Some commissioners were hesitant to comply, suggesting the federal government had enough money to construct its own water supply and that it "ought not to take the risk of leaving 1,000 men without water, in case the city's supply should fail for any reason." Mayor Emil Wallber, however, agreed with the

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Office, 1886), 2–3; "Grounds to be Used as Public Park When No Longer Needed for Home," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 19, 1888, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives; "Grounds Suggested as Site for Zoo," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 7, 1887, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

<sup>58</sup> Map of Northwestern Branch, NHDVS, 1917, VAMC Archives; Building Schedule at Veterans Administration, Wood, Wisconsin, 1944, VAMC Archives.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 26)

request, stating that the authorities in Leavenworth supplied the new Western Branch in that city with water and Milwaukee should do the same.<sup>61</sup>

It seems to have taken many years after the city agreed, however, before the extension actually occurred. In the meantime, a new artesian well was dug in 1887 to provide water to the Home. The annual report for 1889 reiterated the Northwestern Branch officials' pleas: "The water supply is furnished by two artesian wells. . . . With the city water we could do away with the pumping and be able to establish a system of plugs and pipes which would be of great service in case of fire." The Board of Managers finally allocated \$15,000 for extending the water supply in 1890. After the initial pipes were laid, the system was expanded again in 1892. The final artesian well ceased flowing in 1893.<sup>62</sup>

In addition to the water extension problems, sewage issues also arose. An article in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* exposed several institutions for contaminating the Menomonee River, including the Northwestern Branch. In 1894, the Board of Managers allocated funds "for perfecting a system of sewerage," and by 1895 the Home had an appropriate sewage treatment process. Although the exact system was not described, sewerage beds appear in the northeast portion of the site on later maps and were possibly what was installed in 1895.<sup>63</sup>

That decade also witnessed more visible changes in the landscape, including radical alteration of the lakes at the Northwestern Branch. In the fall of 1893, a portion of land on the Lake Wheeler peninsula was dug out to create an island in the center of the lake. The newspaper chronicled the project: "A force of soldiers is involved in clearing the lake bottoms. Some few changes are being made in the form of the lake. An island will be created in the center and some other picturesque features will be added. Much of the rich soil from the lake bottom has been hauled to the grounds about the new hospital which

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<sup>61</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 7, September 16, and September 17, 1886, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

<sup>62</sup> *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1887* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1888), 83; *1889 Annual Report*, 90; *Proceedings*, July 1890, Government Publications Microfiche; *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1891* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1892), 144; Miscellaneous appraisal report, June 30, 1910, VAMC Archives; *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 22, 1893, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

<sup>63</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 8, 1891, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives; *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Board of Managers, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, July 1, 1884–June 28, 1900* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, n.d.), 571 (hereafter *Proceedings, 1884–1900*); Miscellaneous appraisal report, 1910; 1917 Map of Northwestern Branch.

are being laid out with walks and roads.” The undertaking was completed and the lake was refilled by November. Additionally, Lake Hincks was filled in before 1896, when the quartermaster’s warehouse was constructed in its place.<sup>64</sup>

### **Visitors to the Home**

As the population of the Northwestern Branch was growing, the campus was also solidifying its identity as a Milwaukee destination. An encampment for the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) brought thousands of visitors to the grounds during the summer of 1889. Governor Kilburn Knox ordered new attractions for the grounds in honor of the encampment. Colorful plants were imbedded in the lawn on the south slope of the railroad embankment to spell out “Welcome GAR.” Other patriotic messages were planted as well. At Governor Knox’s house, “Army of the Tennessee” was arranged in a semicircle with the names McPherson, Logan, and Blair below. “Army of the Cumberland” along with the names Thomas, Sill, and Lytle were inscribed on the lawn south of the Main Building. To honor fallen war heroes from the Union Army, the names Grant and McClellan were planted near the entrance to the Main Building and the names Sheridan and Hancock were set across from the Treasurer’s Residence (Building 47). The entire grounds were decorated with flags and Japanese lanterns to welcome guests for the occasion.<sup>65</sup>

In its discussion of the GAR encampment, the newspaper claimed, “The only complaint among the visitors was the lack of streetcar facilities for reaching the Soldiers’ Home, one of the most attractive places of the suburbs and particularly attractive to the visiting veterans. It is the standing puzzle of the time that nobody takes advantage of the opportunity to establish a profitable line to the Home.” Despite the owner promising to do so several years earlier with the expansion of National Avenue, apparently the streetcar tracks were not laid in time for the GAR celebration in 1889. The following year, however, the Milwaukee City Railway began laying tracks for its National Avenue route to West Allis. The company constructed a depot at the south gate of the Northwestern Branch in 1892. Eventually tracks were laid to enter the grounds, as illustrated by a circa 1898 map for the Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Company, which had absorbed the Milwaukee City Railway Company by then. The map shows a secondary line splitting off from

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<sup>64</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 15, October 29, and November 12, 1893, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives; 1917 Map of Northwestern Branch; 1944 Building Schedule.

<sup>65</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 7 and August 23, 1889, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives. The landscaped lettering also appears in several postcards in the Photograph and Postcard Collection at the VAMC Archives.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 28)

the east-west track and turning northward to enter the grounds of the Northwestern Branch.<sup>66</sup>

Opening the streetcar line to the Home caused a surge in the number of visitors. The 1892 annual report recorded 102,592 visitors during the year. That same year, the Board of Managers granted a right-of-way along the northern boundary of the Northwestern Branch to the Milwaukee City Railroad Company for another streetcar line—this one bound for Wauwatosa. The tracks initially ran along the periphery of the property, but in 1898 the Board of Managers granted the company permission to “enter upon the north end of the grounds of the Northwestern Branch.” Like the southern streetcar line, this diversion from the Wauwatosa-bound line is apparent in the circa 1898 route map for the Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Company. The track entered the grounds and followed the Northwestern Branch’s property line bordering Calvary Cemetery. It extended southward before making a sharp turn to the west. An ornate elevated streetcar depot was constructed near the Home’s cemetery, supported by a decorative metal trestle.<sup>67</sup>

The number of visitors tripled after the northern tracks were installed. The Board of Managers recorded 309,303 guests at the Northwestern Branch in its 1898 annual report. In addition to caring for soldiers and veterans, the managers had succeeded in creating a resort destination for Milwaukeeans.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Milwaukee had not yet developed a park system and visitors were attracted by the recreational offerings available at the edge of the city. Guests could wander the grounds, enjoy the picturesque scenery, and partake in picnics and other social events. Lake Wheeler also had a boathouse where they could rent rowboats to pass afternoons on the water. Afternoon concerts by the Home band provided another reason to escape the urban core. In summer months the band performed every day except for Monday, with Sunday promenade concerts drawing especially large crowds.<sup>68</sup>

Guests at the park could be troublesome, however. In her memoir, *Out at the Soldiers’ Home*, Elizabeth Corbett recalled stories of her childhood growing

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<sup>66</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 23 and September 13, 1889, July 18, 1891, and August 15 and October 16, 1892, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives; John I. Beggs, *Map of Electric Railway System: TMER & L Company, c. 1898*, Historical Maps Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, [http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm4/item\\_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/maps&CISOPTR=596&CISOBOX=1&R&EC=1](http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/maps&CISOPTR=596&CISOBOX=1&R&EC=1) (accessed August 1, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> *1892 Annual Report*, 88–89; *Proceedings, 1884–1900*, 481, 757; Street Car Depot and Trestlework, North Side of Grounds photograph, VAMC Archives.

<sup>68</sup> *1898 Annual Report*, 85; Elizabeth Corbett, *Out at the Soldiers’ Home*, 2nd ed. (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1941; Skokie, Ill.: ACTA Publications, 2008), 150–151; page references are to the 2008 edition.

up at the Home. A daughter of the chief clerk and later the treasurer of the Northwestern Branch, Corbett grew up among “the boys in blue.” Her family—like many families of officers and civilian staff—lived in housing provided by the Home. To deter visitors from drifting onto their private lawns, residents would stake signs in their yards proclaiming “private grounds” in both English and German. As Corbett wrote, “Did that stop the general public? It did not. They used to march right past the sign and up the front walk.” She also recalled a favorite “Big Tree” in their lawn—an oak tree with benches built around it. “Trespassers,” as she called the rambling wanderers, would picnic there for lunch. She wittily remarked that “the family was lucky if the visitors didn’t come to the house to borrow a pail for their coffee, or try to start a bonfire in the middle of the lawn.”<sup>69</sup>

In addition to providing an entertaining account of Victorian life at the Northwestern Branch, Corbett’s account offers a glimpse of plant types present at the Home at the turn of the century. Assortments of large trees were planted in groves throughout the campus. Varieties included oak, maple, pine, elm, willow, and box elder. In addition to these large trees, Corbett recalled smaller ornamental trees and vines, including crab apple, thorn apple, cherry, plum, chokecherry, lilac, grapevine, and Virginia creeper. Some plants, including strawberries and raspberries, were grown for their fruit. Shrubs provided additional ornamentation. Corbett’s memoir mentioned bridal wreath bushes, ferns, honeysuckle, weigela, and deutzia. Lastly, there was a diverse assortment of flowers throughout the grounds. They were found both in formal gardens and growing wildly in open fields. The collection of flowers and wild flowers Corbett remembered included calla lilies, violets, snowdrops, geraniums, peonies, roses, pinks, carnations, hepaticas, wild geraniums, black-eyed Susans, columbines, field asters, anemones, lilies of the valley, sweet peas, trilliums, and bloodroots.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Corbett, *Out at the Soldiers’ Home*, 150–151.

<sup>70</sup> Corbett, *Out at the Soldiers’ Home*.

### **NEW CHALLENGES FOR THE NHDVS: 1900–1917**

The turn of the century marked new challenges for the NHDVS. In 1898 the United States became engaged in a war with Spain. At the close of the Spanish-American War, the managers were faced with the dilemma of already-overcrowded branches and a new group of veterans returning from conflicts in Cuba and the Philippines. Although they were not yet legally eligible to do so, many injured veterans applied for admission into the National Home system upon their return. In response, Congress passed legislation in 1900 that opened Home membership to this new band of veterans. The following year it authorized the Board of Managers to establish an additional branch. The new Mountain Branch at Johnson City, Tennessee, was founded specifically to house Spanish-American War veterans and veterans of future wars.<sup>71</sup>

New members admitted under the 1900 provisions were noticeably younger than the general population already in residence at the National Homes. The Board of Managers feared the new group's youth would result in lifelong membership and would drain NHDVS resources. Thus, the managers took a new approach to the tenure of the young veterans, admitting them only on a temporary and conditional basis. According to historian Judith Cetina, "As soon as their condition warranted it, all Spanish veterans, clearly able to care for themselves, were dropped from the home rolls."<sup>72</sup>

Not only did their age present a concern, but the young veterans also brought new diseases back from their foreign campaigns. Tuberculosis, yellow fever, and leprosy were not common at the homes before the new veterans' arrival. Epidemics spread through many of the branches, and tuberculosis rose as the greatest health threat in the first decades of the twentieth century. Isolation in a cool, mild climate was considered the best treatment option for tubercular patients. A few years after the Mountain Branch was established in Tennessee, the Battle Mountain Sanitarium was founded in Hot Springs, South Dakota. Cool mountain climates made both locations well suited for tuberculosis care. The managers constructed facilities specifically designed for treatment of the disease and concentrated tubercular patients at these two branches. Naturally occurring mineral springs near the South Dakota complex were also thought to be beneficial for treating rheumatism and gastrointestinal problems that plagued many of the new veterans.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Cetina, "A History of Veterans' Homes," 354–357; Julin, "NHDVS NHL Context Study," 22–23.

<sup>72</sup> Cetina, "A History of Veterans' Homes," 355.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 361–366; Julin, "NHDVS NHL Context Study," 24.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 31)

Opening the Mountain Branch and the Battle Mountain Sanitarium shifted major construction activity, as well as funds for improvements, away from the other branches. Many of the new buildings constructed at the Northwestern Branch during the first two decades of the twentieth century were officers' and employees' quarters rather than large institutional facilities. The north residential cluster—which, prior to this time, comprised only the Chapel (Building 12) and one dwelling—began filling out with three new officers' quarters. A large Nurses' Dormitory (Building 15) was constructed behind the Chapel as well. Aside from new employee housing, updates were made to existing facilities, including the Greenhouse. Congress allocated six thousand dollars for a new structure. Apparently the amount of funding granted was not sufficient to complete the project, though, because the managers authorized three thousand dollars from the branch's post fund “for the rebuilding and enlargement of the greenhouse.”<sup>74</sup>

#### **Northwestern Branch on the Decline**

Several structures were demolished over the course of the first two decades of the century, perhaps due to a lack of funds to maintain them or because they were no longer needed for home operations. A pest house near the hospital, a chicken house, a carpenter shop, an officers' stable, and a pump shed were all condemned and removed from the property.<sup>75</sup>

The role of the farm also decreased. In 1906, the Board of Managers ordered the Northwestern Branch to cease its dairy operation and sell most of its livestock. By this point, the variety of crops in cultivation had considerably dwindled. In 1877, over twenty different crops were in cultivation at the Northwestern Branch, all of which were “sold” to the branch and used in the kitchen. By 1907, the farm was reduced to ten cash crops, and by 1913, the only farm product “raised and consumed by [the] branch” was flowers from the greenhouse. The 1917 annual report indicates that the farm only comprised sixty acres, a fraction of its original size. Much of the farmland became a pasture. Eventually farm operations ceased altogether and the land was converted to other uses.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> 1944 Building Schedule; *Proceedings, 1900–1930*, 109, 193.

<sup>75</sup> *Proceedings, 1900–1930*, 174, 269, 545.

<sup>76</sup> *1877 Annual Report*, 17; *Proceedings, 1900–1930*, 269; *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1907* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908), 162 (hereafter *1907 Annual Report*); *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1913* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), 120; *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1917* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), 71; 1917 Map of Northwestern Branch.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 32)

Improvements to the grounds appear to be limited to maintenance of existing infrastructure, some of which was approaching thirty years old. The 1904 annual report indicates that “old tar and wooden walks have been replaced by 10,854 feet of cement walks.” The 1907 report suggests similar updates, saying, “There were also 3,800 linear feet of cement curbing and gutters put in place of old and worn-out stone and cobble gutters, adding greatly to the appearance of the Home grounds.” There were miles of avenues and walking paths in need of updates, though, making the process an ongoing appropriations battle. The managers received funds for part of the updates in 1908, but in their 1909 report they stated that completing the system would require an additional ten thousand feet of curbs and gutters, so they requested additional funds. Congress denied their appeal, but the managers repeated their request in 1911, 1913, and again in 1914. It seems that the project was dropped after that point or was completed using monies from the branch’s post fund, which was typically reserved for other purposes. One project that did receive federal funding, though, was installing a new iron fence around the grounds to replace the old wood fence. Congress allocated funds for the new fence in both 1908 and 1910.<sup>77</sup>

Despite the National Home expanding its reach after the turn of the century, the Northwestern Branch showed signs of decline. The anticipated decrease in the population of many of the older branches finally came about as more elderly Civil War veterans died. The shrinking membership, especially at the Northwestern Branch, was so marked that the Board of Managers recommended closing the Milwaukee Home in 1917. The United States’ entrance into World War I that year, however, resulted in an influx of new veterans and drastic changes in the administration of veterans’ benefits.<sup>78</sup>

### **NHDVS ERA OF CHANGE: 1918–1930**

Until World War I, the federal institutions charged with managing veterans’ benefits were the Bureau of Pensions and the NHDVS. At the onset of the

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<sup>77</sup> *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1904* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), 81; *1907 Annual Report*, 145; *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1909* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 129; *Proceedings, 1900–1930*, 327, 407, 453, 528, 581. A report on the post fund from the December 1910 managers’ meeting suggests they began using post fund monies to complete projects that would otherwise receive congressional allocations, such as “improving the walks and roads.” Perhaps after repeatedly being denied funding for this particular project, they resorted to the post fund. See *Proceedings, 1900–1930*, 426–427.

<sup>78</sup> *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, December 4, 1916—June 6, 1930* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, n.d.), 21 (hereafter *Proceedings 1916–1930*).

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 33)

war, however, new governmental programs were necessary to protect American assets and servicemen. In 1914, the Bureau of War Risk Insurance was created under the War Risk Insurance Act to cover American vessels and cargoes against the risks of war. After the United States entered the war in April 1917, the act was amended to also insure officers and crews serving on American ships. A later amendment to the act expanded insurance even further. The newest provision increased pension and compensation benefits to dependents of servicemen who became disabled or died in the line of duty. It also established voluntary life and disability insurance policies for enlisted men and a vocational rehabilitation program for those permanently disabled in military service. Perhaps the most important provision under the new amendment, however, was the expansion of medical benefits. In accordance with the new law, all veterans were eligible for medical treatment and hospital care—not just those residing in a National Home. Thus, new hospitals were built and existing facilities—including NHDVS branches—were expanded to provide medical treatment to World War I veterans.<sup>79</sup>

Three agencies were charged with administering the new system of benefits: the Public Health Service, the Bureau of War Risk Insurance, and the Federal Board for Vocational Education. The Public Health Service was primarily charged with duties related to medical treatment, including a building program for new hospital facilities. A major task of the Bureau of War Risk Insurance was handling insurance and financial benefits due to World War I veterans. Lastly, programs offered through the Federal Board for Vocational Education provided the new young veterans with occupational training so they could enter the workforce with vocational skills after returning from the war. The growing number of bureaucratic entities created a fragmented system that was inefficient at responding to veterans' needs. After congressional review, the three new agencies coordinating World War I veterans' benefits were merged into the Veterans' Bureau in 1921.<sup>80</sup>

Many of the benefits offered by the newly formed Veterans' Bureau mirrored benefits offered through the Bureau of Pensions and the NHDVS. As part of the Veterans' Bureau's hospital-building program, many National Home facilities were reevaluated to meet the changing needs of the new pool of veterans. Returning soldiers had been exposed to disease, trench warfare, and other physical and emotional damage, and needed updated treatment facilities to address these twentieth-century challenges. Many of the NHDVS branches

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<sup>79</sup> Weber and Schmeckebier, *The Veterans' Administration*, 89–92; 212–218; Julin, “NHDVS NHL Context Study,” 26.

<sup>80</sup> Weber and Schmeckebier, *The Veterans' Administration*, 218–227.

instituted ambulatory halls, psychiatric wards, and tuberculosis wings. Aside from the physical changes made at its branches, the control that the Board of Managers had over its facilities was diminishing under new legislation.<sup>81</sup>

### **Northwestern Branch Rebounds**

In 1922, the Northwestern Branch opened a new \$1.2-million-dollar Tuberculosis Hospital (Building 70). Separate from the rest of the campus, the new hospital was the first large-scale departure from the primary core of facilities north of Lake Wheeler. It was intentionally isolated in the southwest portion of the grounds to keep tubercular patients at a distance from other members of the Home. The pavilion-style hospital echoed the design of the older hospital with multiple wings stemming from a central unit, and connected by a long, narrow corridor. The site provided fresh air and open space necessary for the treatment of tuberculosis. Smaller ambulatory wings were constructed near the new hospital in 1922 as well.<sup>82</sup>

The hospital's isolated location required a unique utility connection to bring steam heat from the boiler plant to the north. Rather than tunneling the steam pipes underground—a labor-intensive endeavor that presented many obstacles—an aboveground metal trestle was constructed to carry the pipes. By constructing the aboveground trestle, the Home's engineer avoided tunneling under the creek that ran west of Lake Wheeler. Similarly, the overland trestle could bridge the roadways circling Lake Wheeler and the buildings nearby rather than tearing up the roads to construct a steam tunnel. Lastly, a map dated 1917 shows a dense web of utility connections throughout the central portion of the campus. Instead of interfering with this network, the aboveground trestle bypassed these lines altogether. The trestle carried the pipes to a pump house just north of the hospital, which was also constructed in 1922. From there, pipes were tunneled underground to the central wing of the new pavilion-style hospital.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Julin, "NHDVS NHL Context Study," 25.

<sup>82</sup> 1944 Building Schedule; 1944 Building Number and Location Plan; *Proceedings, 1916–1930*, 201, 218. In their meeting in June 1921, the NHDVS Board of Managers discussed the necessity of building a large tuberculosis unit at the Northwestern Branch. At their meeting in December of the same year, the Board of Managers allotted funds for the construction of a tuberculosis hospital at the Northwestern Branch.

<sup>83</sup> 1917 Map of Northwestern Branch; Plot Plan, Veterans Administration, Wood, Wisconsin, February 23, 1955, Facilities Management Records, Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; 1944 Building Schedule. Utility lines are visible in the 1955 plot plan. The metal steam-pipe trestle is marked "steam line." Building 90 is designated "pump house—high-pressure steam line and traps from central heating plant." The steam line north of the pump house is defined as "overhead," while the line south of the pump house is labeled "underground."

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 35)

Several officers' quarters were also built during this period to house the growing number of staff members required to operate the Northwestern Branch. In keeping with previous precedents, they were grouped in two clusters, each with three duplexes. One group was located between the Tuberculosis Hospital and Lake Wheeler (Buildings 56, 61, and 79). The other was situated along the main road leading to the northern entrance of the campus (Buildings 18, 19, and 62). These were the final houses constructed in the north residential cluster.<sup>84</sup>

Since the early phases of its development, the Northwestern Branch included a greenhouse for the recreational pleasure and occupational therapy of its residents, as well as for growing plants and flowers to landscape the grounds. The original greenhouse, built in 1877, was rebuilt and enlarged in 1903 at its original location just south of the railroad tracks. A new greenhouse was built in 1924 west of Lake Wheeler. Like the original greenhouse, the new structure featured a formal garden in a circular plan. The date of demolition of the original greenhouse is unknown—it was listed on the Home's 1917 map and building schedule, but by 1944 it was removed. A photograph of the glass building dated 1923 suggests the original greenhouse was still in place in the early 1920s. Its demolition possibly coincided with construction of the new greenhouse on the west side of the campus in 1924.<sup>85</sup>

This period welcomed another new addition to the west side of the grounds. Baseball was growing as a popular amusement in the early twentieth century. Supplementing the recreational opportunities available at the Northwestern Branch, the managers authorized monies to construct a grandstand and a ball field in 1921. The baseball diamond was placed in an open field south of the cemetery and north of the railroad tracks. According to a souvenir book from 1924, the "grandstand and bleachers [were] well filled every Saturday afternoon and Sunday" with spectators and Home members who watched amateur baseball teams from around the area compete.<sup>86</sup>

While building programs in the south and west portions of the branch gained steam, activity at the farm in the northeast corner dwindled. In 1919, six acres of the farm were dedicated to growing vegetables and fifty-four acres were

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<sup>84</sup> 1944 Building Schedule; 1944 Building Number and Location Plan.

<sup>85</sup> 1917 Map of Northwestern Branch; 1944 Building Schedule; 1944 Building Number and Location Plan; Soldiers' Home Greenhouse photograph, June 23, 1923, Milwaukee Historic Photos, Milwaukee Public Library Digital Collection, [http://content.mpl.org/cdm4/item\\_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/HstoricPho&CISOPTR=902&CISOBX=1&REC=17](http://content.mpl.org/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/HstoricPho&CISOPTR=902&CISOBX=1&REC=17) (accessed September 4, 2012).

<sup>86</sup> *Souvenir History, Northwestern Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1924* (N.p., 1924), 43; *Proceedings, 1916–1930*, 186; 1944 Building Number and Location Plan.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 36)

reserved for hay. By 1924, no land was being cultivated. Beginning in 1927, the annual report indicated the following regarding its land use: “The reservation comprises 382.25 acres; 150 acres are included in lawns, parks, cemetery, and 7 miles of roadway; no land is used for farming; 30 acres of woods and 4 acres of pasture.”<sup>87</sup>

Changes in operations and facilities at the Northwestern Branch during the 1920s reflected a broader transformation in the federal government’s approach to veterans’ care. The Public Health Service, the Bureau of War Risk Insurance, and the Federal Board for Vocational Training had already been consolidated into the Veterans’ Bureau to streamline the administration of veterans’ benefits. Despite this, delays and complaints persisted. After a series of investigations and hearings throughout the decade, Congress recommended merging the Veterans’ Bureau with the Bureau of Pensions and the NHDVS. In 1930, the Veterans Administration was formed as the federal agency tasked with administering veterans’ benefits. With the exception of handling the retirement of officers and enlisted military and naval servicemen—as well as the operations of the U.S. Soldiers’ Home in Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Naval Home in Philadelphia—the Veterans Administration brought veterans’ benefit programs from the federal government under one entity.<sup>88</sup>

b. Changes and additions:

**Mid-Century Changes**

The post-1930 years held many changes for the former Northwestern Branch after the individual bureaus transitioned into the new Veterans Administration (VA). According to the 1931 Governor’s Report, the NHDVS became the Bureau of National Homes and the branch in Milwaukee became known as the Northwestern Home. Maps from the 1940s and 1950s indicate the facility was later called Veterans Administration Center, Wood, Wisconsin, named after General George Wood, a longtime member of the Board of Managers. For the sake of consistency, the former Northwestern Branch will hereafter be called the Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC). Similarly, major

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<sup>87</sup> *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1919* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920), 69; “Governor’s Report of the Northwestern Branch, NHDVS, Year Ending June 30, 1924,” typescript copy, VAMC Archives, 11; *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1927* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1928), 96. The land-use statement appeared in the 1928, 1929, and 1930 annual reports as well.

<sup>88</sup> Weber and Schmeckebier, *The Veterans’ Administration*, 218–227.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 37)

institutional buildings will be designated by number due to changes from their original programs over time.<sup>89</sup>

As demands for specialized medical treatment continued to rise, the VA authorized construction of a new hospital wing at its Milwaukee center. Completed in 1932, the Hospital Annex (Building 43) was situated between Ward Memorial Hall and Lake Wheeler. The dancing pavilion and employees' quarters that had been on the site were removed to accommodate the new facility. Also located nearby, the canteen appeared on a 1917 site map but was later demolished, possibly in conjunction with the construction of Building 43. A general medical wing was also added to the west side of Building 70. Upon dedication of the new medical wing in 1938, Building 6 was converted to a domiciliary and Building 70 became the general hospital.<sup>90</sup>

New demands in transportation were also on the rise after 1930 as private automobiles became more common. This was true for visitors and Home residents alike. A site map from 1944 shows areas designated specifically for parking for visitors to the Home. Garages and driveways within the residential clusters are also visible on the 1944 map, indicative of increased automobile use for officers and employees of the Home. There was a great surge in garage construction between 1935 and 1941. Prior to this time there were few garages on the campus. Between 1935 and 1941, however, thirteen garages were built—many to store multiple vehicles and serve many employees. The garages were centrally located within the residential clusters throughout the grounds. The largest garage constructed during this period housed sixteen vehicles and was behind the nurses' dormitory and chaplains' residences.<sup>91</sup>

The most pronounced changes in relation to increased automobile use between 1930 and 1960 were the construction of major roads along the periphery of the grounds and the construction of parking lots on land formerly owned by the VA.

By 1944, the VA had developed the northeastern portion of the campus into a recreational area, complete with several baseball and softball diamonds, a ski

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<sup>89</sup> "Governor's Report of the Northwestern Home, Bureau of National Homes, Veterans' Administration, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1931," typescript copy, VAMC Archives; 1944 Building Number and Location Plan; 1955 Plot Plan; "Wood National Cemetery," United States Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemeteries, <http://www.cem.va.gov/CEM/cems/nchp/wood.asp> (accessed August 27, 2012).

<sup>90</sup> Gilpatrick, "Northwestern Branch, NHDVS," 8:49–50; 1917 Map of Northwestern Branch; 1944 Building Number and Location Plan. Although the date of demolition of the Home store is unknown, it does not appear on the 1944 site map. Given its close proximity to the 1932 hospital annex, its site was possibly used as a construction staging area for the new medical facility.

<sup>91</sup> 1944 Building Schedule; 1944 Building Number and Location Plan.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 38)

slide, a toboggan slide, and a wildlife refuge area. Approximately ninety-four acres of land in this area was transferred to Milwaukee County in 1949 for the purpose of constructing the Milwaukee County Baseball Stadium, which was completed by 1955. Land surrounding the baseball stadium was dedicated to parking.<sup>92</sup>

In 1952, the Administrator of Veterans Affairs granted the federal Bureau of Public Roads a right-of-way to build an east-west expressway through the northern portion of the site. Two years later, land in the easement—along with additional land at the bottom of the bluff—was also transferred to Milwaukee County “for highway, motor vehicle parking, and recreational purposes.” The VA conveyed a total of twenty-eight acres of land to Milwaukee County in this transaction. The highway eventually became Interstate 94. As a result of the road construction, Lake Huston was filled in and the north end of the cemetery was separated from the rest of the cemetery.<sup>93</sup>

The transformation of land from rolling hills into roads and parking lots required considerable engineering, especially regarding the creek that ran along the eastern boundary and through the southern portion of the grounds. Stone-lined creeks were constructed throughout the 1930s, but most of the creek was subsequently channeled with concrete walls and culverts and piped underground to accommodate the expansion of 44th Street into the South Stadium Freeway, and later Highway 41. Only a portion of the stone-lined creek remains.<sup>94</sup>

In 1956, the VA transferred four acres in the very northeast corner of the grounds to the City of Milwaukee. The land was already being leased to the Milwaukee Water Works for a water booster station when the conveyance was authorized. A quitclaim deed transferring ownership to the city is dated February 9, 1956. Thus, by the end of 1956, the former Northwestern Branch

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<sup>92</sup> 1944 Building Number and Location Plan; VA Center, Wood, Wisconsin, Plot Plan, February 10, 1949, VAMC Archives; Index to Title Papers, 2; 1955 Plot Plan. Item number 16 in the Index to Title Papers, dated December 23, 1949, identifies a transfer of two parcels of land containing 8.69 and 85.02 acres. The map legend for shading on the 1955 plot plan confirms approximately 93.71 acres transferred in 1949.

<sup>93</sup> 1955 Plot Plan; Index to Title Papers, 3. Items 19–20 in the Index to Title Papers relate to this land transfer. The initial easement was granted May 23, 1952. On August 27, 1954, Congress authorized the VA to convey a tract of land approximating twenty-eight acres to Milwaukee County. A quitclaim deed for the transaction was dated February 24, 1955.

<sup>94</sup> 1944 Building Schedule; Photograph of stone-lined creek, VAMC Archives; Milwaukee Water Works, Plan and Profile of Water Main, August 18, 1932, Facilities Management Records, VAMC; Building Number and Location Plan, Veterans Administration, Wood, Wisconsin, basemap drawn prior to 1957, revisions dated July 25, 1972, Facilities Management Records, VAMC; Engineering Drawing of Milwaukee County Stadium, Main Storm Sewer, March 1956, Facilities Management Records, VAMC.

had conveyed approximately 125 acres to the county and city—nearly one-third of its original property.<sup>95</sup>

### **Milwaukee Gets a New Medical Center**

The United States' involvement in World War II, the Korean War, and other military campaigns necessitated an expansive building program to meet the medical needs of an unprecedented number of veterans in the mid-twentieth century. Nearly one hundred years after its establishment, the former Northwestern Branch went through its most dramatic transformation with the opening of a new medical center in 1966. The new medical center drastically changed the landscape on the southern half of the site.

The ten-story hospital (Building 111) was constructed east of Building 70 and connected to the earlier facility via an extension of the long, narrow corridor connecting the older hospital's six wings. The massive hospital could accommodate thousands of patients seeking care in its clinics and treatment facilities. Looming over the pastoral landscape, the new VAMC required adequate parking for its many visitors and employees. An area stretching along General Mitchell Boulevard just east of the facility was designated "east parking" while a lot north of Building 70 was dubbed "west parking." A small strip of parking south of Building 70 ran along a new road that encircled the medical center. According to a 1972 site map, the parking area along General Mitchell Boulevard could accommodate 1,143 cars, while the lot north of the medical center could fit 733 cars. The narrow lot south of the VAMC had space for 97 vehicles.<sup>96</sup>

Over time additional parking lots have encroached on the historic landscape. Currently there are parking lots north of Building 2, north and west of Building 6, scattered throughout the maintenance area, west of Building 43, south and west of Lake Wheeler, southeast of Building 39, and east of General Mitchell Boulevard.

Lake Wheeler was reoriented as a result of the VAMC and its associated parking lots. The old lake was filled and the new lake was shifted north. Losing its naturalistic form, the new Lake Wheeler resembles a U-shape turned on its side, with a peninsula extending from its western bank. Dense, mature trees cover the sloping knoll to the east and north of the lake. A small grove of trees is along the southwest corner of the lake area, shielding Lake

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<sup>95</sup> Index to Title Papers, 3.

<sup>96</sup> Map of VA Center, Wood, Wisconsin, circa 1969, VAMC Archives; 1957 Building Number and Location Plan with 1972 revisions.

Wheeler from the hospital. The peninsula is planted with a few ornamental trees.

As part of repositioning Lake Wheeler, the creek that formerly flowed from it was rerouted and channeled underground. A small section of the stone-lined creek remains and is visible next to the Cemetery Administration Building west of Lake Wheeler. The creek reappears east of General Mitchell Boulevard in a concrete culvert extending southeast through the south residential cluster. As the creek approaches Highway 41, however, it disappears underground.

On the west side of the campus, the cemetery served as a visual reminder of the facility's military identity. Its rows of iconographic white headstones are emblematic of the mission of the NHDVS and Veterans Administration in caring for American veterans. The cemetery became part of the National Cemetery System in 1973. Between 1974 and 1981, the Administrator of Veterans Affairs transferred approximately forty-six acres of land to the National Cemetery System, which maintains jurisdiction over the land to this day.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Index to Title Papers, 5. Memorandums are dated October 23, 1974, August 30, 1977, and June 10, 1981.

## PART II. PHYSICAL INFORMATION

### A. Landscape Character and Description Summary

The original design of the Northwestern Branch was based on principles within the Picturesque landscape movement, which was popular in the late nineteenth century. Many of these characteristics are present today. Situated on a topographically diverse site, the grounds feature naturally occurring knolls and valleys. The placement of buildings and circulation networks correlated to the undulating topography. Although some of the avenues have been slightly modified over time, many retain their rambling character as they circumnavigate landscape elements. Natural and manmade water features originally enhanced the campus, including lakes, ravines, springs, and fountains.

### B. Character Defining Features

#### 1. Natural features

##### a. Topography

In his Official Bulletin, R. W. Corbett described the grounds of the Northwestern Branch, saying “The grounds contain 490 acres, and a more charming spot could not be found. It is in the midst of a beautiful grove of natural forest trees, while the ground is rolling, so that the ravines and hills have such prominence that it presents a picturesque appearance. There are three natural lakes, which add much to the picturesqueness.”<sup>98</sup>

Today, the distinctive undulating topography described by Corbett is an extremely visible and prominent feature of the campus. High points on campus still shoulder the historic buildings originally placed on them. Several of the most visible slopes are heavily vegetated with heritage trees and have not been modified by human manipulation. Although many of the water features—including ponds, streams and sloughs—have long been filled, buried, manipulated or channeled, the original patterns of hydrology as dictated by the natural landform are still quite visible. The main circulation routes through campus retain their original design, circumnavigating knolls and following valleys through the site. The most obvious alteration to the natural topography by humans is the bisection of the campus by the railroad corridor.

##### b. Vegetation

Lush vegetation enhanced the landscape and was located throughout the campus in intentional groupings of similar species, typical of the Picturesque

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<sup>98</sup> “The Soldiers’ Home,” *Milwaukee Sunday Telegraph*, July 29, 1889, quoted in transcripts of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 42)

movement. Images dating approximately 1890 show trees following the curves of the gravel roads. In some cases, specimen plantings occurred at prominent intersections. Multiple planting beds appear along paths in front of buildings in the historic core in photographs and postcards from the early-twentieth century. Many depict both trees and ornamental plantings following walkways in front of buildings. There are some formal rows of trees, although this condition is atypical.<sup>99</sup>

The Home also featured greenhouses where plants were grown for landscaping the grounds. The original Greenhouse was constructed in 1877 southeast of the Main Building on the southern side of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific (CMSP&P) railroad tracks. It was later called the Conservatory and featured a garden with landscape features in a formal, circular path. The Greenhouse (Building 40) was constructed in 1924 on the southwest portion of the site along the creek. The new structure also featured a formal garden with a circular plan. The date the original Conservatory was demolished is unknown—it was listed on the Home’s 1917 map and building schedule and featured in a photograph dated 1923, but by 1944 it was removed. Perhaps it was removed in 1924 when the Greenhouse was constructed.<sup>100</sup>

Largely comprised of expanses of lawn dotted with mature deciduous shade trees, the campus today retains the picturesque quality of the original landscape. Of the 1,012 total trees surveyed on the overall campus, 313 of them are considered historic trees and fall within the boundary of the Historic American Landscapes Survey. The vast majority of existing trees are not planted with a formal geometry. There is no indication on the site of the formal patterns of trees along roads and walkways depicted in historic paintings of the property. The historic tree species comprise a wide variety, including zone appropriate selections of maple (*Acer* sp.), and oak (*Quercus* sp.). Additional species include ash (*Fraxinus americana*), catalpa (*Catalpa speciosa*), hickory (*Carya ovata*), Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), basswood (*Tilia americana*), willow (*Salix babylonica*) and honeylocust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*). Remarkably, there are no historic coniferous species remaining on the site.

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<sup>99</sup> Soldiers’ Home ca. 1890.006, Corbett Scans folder, VAMC Archives; Soldiers’ Home ca 1890.013, Corbett Scans folder, VAMC Archives; Soldiers’ home ca 1890.016, Corbett Scans folder, VAMC Archives; Historic postcard 106, “One of the Many Pleasure Drives in National Soldiers’ Home, Milwaukee, Wis.,” 1911, VAMC Archives.

<sup>100</sup> Map of Northwestern Branch, NHDVS, 1917, VAMC Archives; Building Schedule, 1944.

Throughout the campus, small groupings of ornamental trees can be found. These well-planned installations are found at road intersections, framing historic buildings, or at the edge of shaded lawns. Typical species used for ornamental purposes include hawthorn, lilac, and crabapple.

Of the two former greenhouse and formal garden sites located on the campus, none of the gardens or associated plantings remain. There are very few perennial gardens on campus today. Two gardens have been planted in the historic caissons that flank the formal fountain east of the Main Building (Building 2). Another garden is maintained west of the Administration Building (Building 1).

In addition to the campus's mown lawns, non-maintained areas largely inhabited with volunteer growth characterize the northeast boundaries. These areas are, in many cases, overrun with buckthorn, box elder, and other successional plant materials.

The margins of the channelized creek located in the southeastern corner of the site are largely unmaintained due to the presence of fencing along each edge. These areas present a departure from the mown lawns north and south of the creek, and contain volunteer willow and box elder along with the occasional buckthorn.

Centrally located, the historic east-west rail corridor bisects the property. Converted into part of a regional bicycle path system, much of the corridor is visually removed from the rest of the property due to the volunteer vegetative growth along much of its edge. This growth is characteristic of the area and contains a number of valuable deciduous trees mixed with the less desirable species of buckthorn and box elder.

Several of the existing buildings have small landscaped foundation gardens. Many of the shrub species in these landscaped areas include traditional favorites such as lilac (*Syringa* sp.), spirea (*Spiraea* sp.), and mock orange (*Philadelphus* sp.).

One field remains on the property, located along the southeastern edge of the site. The field is not mown, but has been managed in recent years as evident by the lack of tree growth.

c. Water

The grounds featured ravines, springs, and both natural and manmade lakes. Historical drainage patterns took advantage of these features. Over time, water courses were altered with channels and culverts, and original lakes were filled in or relocated.

### **Lakes**

A farm pond was located in the northeast corner of the campus. By 1957, approximately 125 acres in the northeast corner were transferred to the local government for building the Milwaukee County Baseball Stadium. On the eastern boundary of the site, 44th Street was expanded to provide better access to the stadium. Storm sewers were constructed and channeled the creek underground to allow for the 44th Street expansion. The site eventually became Miller Park Stadium and the expanded 44th Street became Highway 41.

Lake Hincks, named after General E. W. Hincks, governor of the Northwestern Branch from 1872 to 1880, was originally located on the eastern portion of the campus, just north of the CMSP&P tracks. A formal rectangular, stone-lined water feature and fountain were on the western tip of the lake, between the lake and an early engine house. They appear in an illustration from the Home's 1881 souvenir book as well as in an undated promotional photograph of Lake Hincks.

The cemetery in the northwestern corner of the campus featured a spring-fed lake. Originally called Spring Lake, it was later renamed Lake Huston. In 1952, the Administrator of Veterans Affairs granted the federal Bureau of Public Roads a right-of-way to build an east-west expressway through the northern portion of the site. Lake Huston was filled in for the construction of Interstate 94.

The largest of the four lakes was Ice Lake, later renamed Lake Wheeler after Colonel Cornelius Wheeler, governor of the Northwestern Branch from 1891 to 1914. In 1893, crews of resident veterans dug out the lake bottom and turned the Lake Wheeler peninsula into an island. Undated photographs also show a waterfall at the lake, while site maps indicate that it held fountains. Lake Wheeler was reoriented to accommodate the new Veterans Administration Medical Center in 1966.

### **Creek**

Water from Lake Wheeler feeds the creek that still exists at the southeast corner of the campus. It was channeled underground to accommodate the

1966 medical facility. Water flows through a piped connection from the lake and daylights on the east side of General Mitchell Boulevard through a large, double, concrete box culvert of contemporary poured concrete. The creek continues in the rerouted alignment with concrete slabs lining the banks. A contemporary cross drainage channel lined with poured-in-place concrete empties into the creek from the south. The concrete lining is in fair to poor condition with a few areas that are severely damaged with cracked concrete, most likely due to freeze/thaw ground heaving. There are also areas where the concrete walls and posts have slid, most likely due to soil erosion behind the concrete.

A portion of the original creek remains at the furthest southeast corner of the site and is lined with stone masonry walls laid in a random ashlar pattern. Its appearance is similar to the walls lining the creek near the Cemetery Administration Building. The stone and mortar appear to be in very good condition. It is probable that the stone wall lining was a WPA project performed in 1939, at the same time that the creek on the western side of the campus was rerouted and lined. The creek bends to the north and disappears into a circular culvert, and daylights again further to the north. The banks of the reappearing creek are lined with stone, similar to the portions of the creek that are visible further to the south. The walls appear to be in good condition.

## 2. Spatial Organization

### a. Land patterns

There is a strong integration between the buildings and the landscape. Buildings are clustered on or around landscape features and prominent buildings tend to be constructed on knolls. Thomas Budd Van Horne, landscape designer for the Northwestern Branch, selected a hilltop site for the Main Building so that it would become the focal point of the grounds.

Buildings serving large populations are grouped in a linear pattern in the historic core. Support buildings and significant staff quarters tend to be isolated and scattered throughout the campus. Clustering the buildings created small open spaces or courtyards between them. The 1879 Hospital was designed to have outdoor courtyards between the wings of the building, a principle that was repeated when the Tuberculosis Ward was erected on the southern half of the campus in 1922.<sup>101</sup>

Porches on both the historic institutional buildings and the staff quarters further underscore the strong integration between the buildings and landscape.

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<sup>101</sup> 1944 Building Schedule, VAMC Archives.

In her memoir of growing up at the Home, Elizabeth Corbett recounted, “All the officers’ quarters had fine large porches, where the families fairly lived in summer time.”<sup>102</sup>

b. Circulation

Van Horne designed the pathways to follow the natural, undulating topography. Avenues followed curves around knolls and swept across the landscape in irregular patterns. The setting was much like a park. An illustration from the Home’s 1881 souvenir book shows the park-like grounds with roadways for carriages and walking paths for pedestrians. Originally, the gravel paths were lined with stone gutters. Photographs dated approximately 1890 show the installation of stone gutters as well as an iron railing and trees running alongside the paths.<sup>103</sup>

The central railroad tracks also followed the natural topography and were positioned in a valley, dividing the campus into northern and southern halves. Electric streetcars provided transportation between the Home and the City of Milwaukee. The Grand Avenue Electric Street Railway ran along the northern boundary of the Home while the National Avenue Electric Street Railway ran along the southern boundary. According to an undated souvenir book, cars ran “every ten minutes, making the trip from the Home to the center of the city in twenty minutes and charging but five cents per passenger.” These rail lines made the Home accessible to visitors, who frequented the grounds to enjoy the scenic beauty and entertainment provided by the Home. All of these rail lines were abandoned during the twentieth century. The Hank Aaron State Trail was established in 1999 as a rails-to-trails bicycle trail in the former railroad corridor. In this report the corridor will henceforth be called the railroad right-of-way.<sup>104</sup>

**Site Stairs**

Along the railroad right-of-way near the center of the campus, there are two sets of concrete stairs rising on the north side. One leads up towards the Wadsworth Library, and the other is to the west of the Recreation Hall, leading towards the original Hospital. Based on images dated 1889, the current path is in the same (or nearly the same) location as it was historically.

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<sup>102</sup> Corbett, *Out at the Soldiers’ Home*, 111.

<sup>103</sup> General View of the Grounds illustration, 1881 souvenir book, VAMC Archives; Soldiers’ Home ca 1890.016, Corbett Scans folder, VAMC Archives; Soldiers’ Home ca 1890.013, Corbett Scans folder, VAMC Archives; Soldiers’ Home ca 1890.014, Corbett Scans folder, VAMC Archives.

<sup>104</sup> Souvenir of the National Soldiers Home, Northwestern Branch, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, n.d., VAMC Archives; “13<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Hank Aaron State Trail 5k Run/Walk,” Friends of Hank Aaron State Trail, <http://www.hankaaronstatetrail.org/index.html> (accessed September 18, 2012).

The original steps were most likely wood and were replaced with concrete and metal pipe handrails at an unknown date. Both stairs are in very good condition, although there is significant soil erosion at the west stair.

c. Views and vistas

View sheds in many cases provide a vista of the Main Building, which was situated upon a prominent hilltop overlooking the surrounding landscape. According to one historic newspaper account, “It is situated on an eminence about three hundred yards north of the railroad track, and commands a beautiful view of the city and the harbor through the Menomonee flats, and also overlooks the whole of the grounds of the asylum.” The Main Building remains a prominent visual feature of the historic campus.<sup>105</sup>

d. Water

In addition to natural water features, the grounds also included formal, manmade water features. An ornamental fountain was installed east of the Main Building in 1870. It is the only extant manmade water feature on the grounds. The fountain is a contributing landscape feature from the earliest period of significance of the Northwestern Branch, NHDVS Historic District, and is located directly across from the main entrance to the Main Building.

While the central statue with figurines and basin appear to be the same as seen in an image from an 1889 souvenir booklet, the stone wall encircling the fountain was remodeled and a second outer ring was built in 1936. In the historic image, it appears that the ring was built of rubble rock with short piers at the intersecting corners with planters and either concrete or cut-stone trim at the corners and wall caps. The current walls are composed of limestone laid in a coursed ashlar pattern with stone wall caps. There are small areas of mortar joint deterioration and dirt collection on the surface of the outer ring of stone. There is also a large oak tree between the rings at the southeast corner.

There is a combination of glazed brick and cast-stone memorial pavers laid in the ground between the stone walls. Some of the pavers are stamped with dates as early as 1945, but many date from 2000.

e. Buildings and structures

The historic campus of the Northwestern Branch has a rich architectural history, featuring buildings from the post-Civil War era through the first few decades of the twentieth century. Each era reflected a different architectural

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<sup>105</sup> *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 18, 1867, quoted in transcript of newspaper articles, VAMC Archives.

aesthetic, but underlying similarities help categorize the buildings into the following types.

### **Institutional Buildings**

These buildings facilitated the operation of the Home and included the Main Building, the Hospital, the Administration Building, and the residents' Barracks. They are generally large in scale and constructed of either traditional or "Cream City" brick. Some feature decorative brick patterns. The layout of institutional buildings complements the landscape with courtyards between many of the buildings. Furthermore, many institutional buildings feature long porches. Facilities in the historic core form a linear cluster along the Home's parade ground. The later design of the Tuberculosis Hospital (Building 70) in the southern half of campus echoes many of these early design principles.

### **Recreational Buildings**

Recreational facilities for Home residents include Ward Memorial Hall, Wadsworth Library, the Recreation Hall, and the Chapel. The character of these buildings is less institutional than those designated for members' care and lodging. They are typically small in scale and diverse in architectural style. Construction varies between masonry and frame. Many of the buildings are centrally located between the historic core and Lake Wheeler. Despite being close in proximity to one another, the buildings' spatial layout does not appear to be the result of a concerted design effort.

### **Officers' Quarters**

Officers and civilian staff members had their own quarters, separate from the veteran residents. With the exception of the Governor's Quarters, staff residences are of frame construction and many are duplexes. Single-family houses were typically given to chief members of staff. The architectural styles among the officers' quarters vary and reflect the eras in which they were built. Many early dwellings show popular taste of the Victorian era—the Queen Anne and Shingle styles—and dwellings from the first decades of the twentieth century reflect the Colonial Revival style. Despite the various architectural styles, porches remained a consistent feature. The design of many of the dwellings was possibly from plan books for standardized plans, as was common for military posts.

### **Metal Steam-Pipe Trestle**

A large metal trestle extends from the Power Plant (Building 45) to the former Tuberculosis Hospital at the south side of the campus. It was used historically to carry steam pipes that once heated the 1922 hospital building. The steam pipes are no longer in service. The utilitarian structure has wide-flange

columns periodically braced with vertical members. Three pipes run the length of the trestle, one larger and two of smaller diameter. There also appears to be electrical conduit running underneath the pipes.

#### **Water Meter House**

The current location of the Water Meter House (Building 34) has two concrete pads in the ground. According to a map compiled by GRAEF Engineering, based on historic maps from 1946 to 1956, the Water Meter House was relocated from a previous location slightly further to the northeast.

f. **Small scale elements**

The historic campus of the Northwestern Branch retains several small site furnishings from the late-nineteenth century as well as features from the twentieth century.

#### **Fountain Planters**

Two rectangular flower beds with poured-in-place concrete edges are symmetrically placed to the north and south of the fountain enclosure located across from the Main Building. These appear to be similar to another partially buried concrete feature in the ground near the Wolcott Commemorative Marker at the northeast corner of Lake Wheeler (see below).

In historic images from a booklet of the grounds from 1889, there were artillery caissons located on either side of the fountain. The concrete that remains could be the remnants of foundations for concrete slabs to support the caissons.

#### **Railroad Bridge**

The bridge at the railroad right-of-way is located at the east side of the campus, north of the south residential cluster. The retaining walls of the underpass are constructed of large split-faced limestone in a coursed ashlar pattern. The bridge has a heavy timber stringer structure and contemporary wood railings with vertical steel posts.

The railroad corridor was converted to the regional Hank Aaron State Trail in 1999. There is a plaque located at the southwest side indicating a construction date of 2010, when the heavy timber structure and railings were built. It is probable that restoration of the masonry retaining walls took place at the same time. It is evident that stones have been replaced and repointed. Stones replaced at the corners were cut to match the original profile with a split-faced surface and cut corners. It is unclear why some stones have been replaced and other sections that were formerly stone are filled with concrete.

The guardrails extend toward the east and west of the bridge on both the north and south sides, with horizontal wood planks and caps supported by wood posts set in concrete footings. Outside of the railings are treated landscape timbers. All of the wood is painted dark brown.

### **Spring House**

There is a small Spanish Mission style structure at the northwest corner of Lake Wheeler that appears to be a spring house. There is a drawing of the structure titled “Spring House, Building 58.” According to the 1944 Building schedule, Building 58 was a Spring House that was demolished in 1940. On a map compiled by GRAEF Engineering, drawn from historic maps between 1896 and 1906, Building 58 was located just south of Ward Memorial Hall (Building 41) and there was a “Drinking Fountain” near the location of the present structure. However, in historic images of the lake, there appears to be a different type of fountain structure. The current structure could be a replica or perhaps was relocated to its current site.

### **Hiker Monument**

The Hiker Monument is located to the north of Lake Wheeler and to the south of the intersection of Hines and General Mitchell Boulevards. A placard indicates the monument was erected by the United Spanish American “WI” Veterans Department of Wisconsin Camps and Auxiliaries in 1941.

### **Planter**

There is a small pedestal planter located at the southwest corner of the Barracks (Building 5). The planter is made of cobblestone rocks set in concrete. There is an oddly shaped rock acting as the pedestal; it is sitting on a concrete pad that has additional cobblestone rocks trimming the perimeter.

It is unknown how many of these planters existed and where they were located. There is, however, an image in the booklet titled “Woods Grounds 1889” showing the Governor’s Residence with a planter in the foreground. The planter styles differ, but the historic image shows precedence for this type of free-standing planter on the campus.

### **Flagpoles**

There is a free-standing flagpole west of the Administration Building and south of the Main Building. According to historic images, there has been a free-standing flagpole at or near this location since at least 1916. The 1916 image shows a larger diameter pole than the current aluminum pole. It is unknown when the current pole was set in an eight-sided concrete plinth with pavers set to be stairs at the west side. There is a stamp on the face of one of the brick pavers that says “Kurt Kemnitz 2006 Eagle Project.”

There is also a metal shield set within wood posts at the northeast side stamped with the Great Seal of the United States, which depicts an eagle holding an olive branch in one leg and arrows in the other. It includes the Latin phrase “E pluribus unum” (“out of many, one”).

There is another flagpole at the south side of the Hospital (Building 6) to the southeast of the central entrance. This appears to be a contemporary fixture and is set in a bed of concrete. There are two smaller concrete pads to the east and west of the pole that appear to have been footings for something made of metal, as there is metal remaining at the center of each pad.

There are two flagpoles at the south side of the pavilion on the west side of Lake Wheeler. They appear to be of recent vintage and were most likely installed around the same time the pavilion was constructed.

#### **Retaining Walls**

There is a stone retaining wall to the north of Ward Memorial Hall (Building 41) that runs south of and parallel to the railroad right-of-way. It is approximately 100' in length and terminates at the sidewalk along General Mitchell Boulevard. It appears that the wall had once turned to the north, but that section no longer exists.

Another stone retaining wall—possibly precast stone—runs along the north side of Zablocki Drive and Interstate 94 on the north side of the property. The retaining wall lines the access drive to the cemetery to the north. It appears to be of recent vintage and not from the period of significance.

#### **Gettysburg Address Placard**

There is a copy of the Gettysburg Address stamped onto a metal plate and affixed to a stone that is located to the north of Ward Memorial Hall just west of the Administration Building.

#### **Concrete Post**

At the east end of the site on the south side of the railroad right-of-way, there is a reinforced concrete post that stands approximately 6' tall. This might have been a fence post. Wires might have run through circular holes in the post.

#### **Concrete Pier**

At the east end of the site, north of the railroad right-of-way and south of Miller Park, there is a concrete pier that stands approximately 5' tall. The rectangular pier is approximately 2' x 3' at the top and tapers outward towards the bottom. This pier is located slightly north of the concrete post described above.

**Erastus B. Wolcott Commemorative Marker**

There is a commemorative marker at the northeast corner of Lake Wheeler that was erected in 1972 by the Charitable, Educational, and Scientific Foundation of the State Medical Society of Wisconsin. This marker commemorates Dr. Erastus B. Wolcott, one of the original promoters of the National Soldier's Home in Milwaukee and a founder of the State Medical Society in 1841 and the Medical Society of Milwaukee County in 1846.

**Blue Star Memorial Marker**

This marker at the southwest corner of the Lake Wheeler pavilion is a tribute to the Armed Forces. The date the marker was erected is unknown, but was presumably around the same time that the pavilion appeared (in the 1960s).

**Stone Bases**

Two flat stones were discovered on the grounds: one in the lawn in front of the Main Building, and the other in front of the duplexes in the northern residential cluster. It is likely that these were used as bases for urns, but there are no similar urns on the campus to confirm this.

**Lamp Posts**

Light fixtures are scattered throughout the campus. They are mounted on painted metal posts set on concrete bases. Some of them are showing signs of weathering and fading.

**Benches**

A number of different types of benches are scattered throughout the campus, both permanent and movable. There are permanent benches around Lake Wheeler that have wood seats and backs supported by painted aluminum pipes with 2" diameters. The pipes are anchored by concrete bases buried in the ground.

There are also several moveable wood benches and picnic tables around Lake Wheeler. They appear to be of recent vintage and not from the period of significance.

g. Archaeological sites

Remnants of former structures and elements might offer opportunity for future archaeological investigation.

**Foundation Remnants of the Greenhouse**

Small areas of cream-colored brick appear to be embedded in the ground just south of the railroad right-of-way at the site of the former greenhouse. Additionally, remnants of two piers spaced approximately 20' apart—as well

as remnants of what appears to be a foundation wall—are visible near the tree line.

Also within the tree line, there is a galvanized pipe that appears to be a water pipe. It terminates near the brick remnants with a shut-off valve.

#### **Powder Magazine Ruin**

The Powder Magazine (Building 53) was used to store gunpowder. It was a castellated structure with battered walls and crenulated stone parapets laid in a random ashlar pattern backed with Cream City brick.

Only a small portion of the structure remains as a “ruin” with trees and shrubs growing up within and around the deteriorating walls. There is loose brick and stone at this site and a sign that states: “Please do not remove material from this historic site.

#### **Railroad Track and Siding**

Tracks of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific Railroad bisected the property into northern and southern halves. The location of the railroad right-of-way has remained unchanged throughout the entire period of significance. Railroad tracks were laid in the 1850s, but the elevated railroad grade was built in 1882. The railroad brought veterans and visitors to the Home. The railroad right-of-way was converted into a regional bicycle trail in recent years.<sup>106</sup>

There are remnants of the railroad track siding at the south of the Quartermasters’ Storehouse (Building 20). The tracks are in the blacktopped driveway between the bike path and the building. The exact date the railroad siding was installed is unclear. It does not appear to be present in an image from a 1916 souvenir book.

#### h. Other

##### **Basketball Hoop**

There is a basketball hoop at the south side of the parking lot behind the D-Wing of the Hospital Building (Building 6). It has a rusted backboard supported by an aluminum post embedded in concrete. Its date of installation is unknown. Based on the condition of the aluminum post, it appears to be a recent addition and not from the period of significance.

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<sup>106</sup> Julin, “Northwestern Branch, NHDVS,” 7:23.

**Aluminum Handrails**

Aluminum handrails line miscellaneous sloping sidewalks throughout the campus. They appear to be of recent vintage, are generally in good condition, and do not appear to be from the period of significance.

**Curbs and Gutters**

Historic documents indicate that curbs and gutters during the earlier years of the campus were stone, and that pavement was in many areas brick. No stone curbs and gutters or brick pavements appear to survive. It is likely that they have been repaved or replaced with asphalt and concrete curbs and gutters.

### **PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

#### **A. Drawings, Plans, Maps**

Materials available at Facilities Management Records, Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Administration Medical Center, Milwaukee, Wisc.:

Engineering Flat Files, Graphics Repository.

Land Transfer Files, Facilities Management.

Plot Plan and Building Schedule Files, Facilities Management.

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#### **B. Historic Views, Photographs**

Materials available at Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Administration Medical Center Archives, Milwaukee, Wisc.:

Corbett Scans Collection.

Historic Photograph and Postcard Collection.

Materials available at Milwaukee Public Library, Milwaukee, Wisc.:

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### **C. Primary Sources**

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NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 57)

*Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1909.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910.

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*Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1917.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918.

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*Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1927.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1928.

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NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 58)

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Meeting Minutes available at Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Administration Medical Center Archives, Milwaukee, Wisc.:

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NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS,  
NORTHWESTERN BRANCH  
HALS No. WI-13  
(Page 61)

“A New Feature at the National Asylum.” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 22, 1871.

“New Fence Will Enhance Appearance.” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 5, 1871.

“Soldiers’ Home—Improvements In and Around the Veteran’s Home.” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 24, 1874.

Untitled articles available in newspaper transcripts files, Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Administration Medical Center Archives, Milwaukee, Wisc.:

*Milwaukee Sentinel*. June 6, July 17, and October 21, 1865.

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*Milwaukee Sentinel*. July 18 and October 8, 1891

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#### **PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION**

The Veterans Administration has commissioned this Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) documentation study to comply with a stipulation in a programmatic agreement between the Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Administration Medical Center, the Veterans Integrated Service Network 12, the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Officer, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the National Park Service regarding the construction of four Community Living Center facilities for veteran long-term care within the boundary of the Northwestern Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers Home National Historic Landmark District. The construction will result in adverse effects to the NHL historic district.

Jeff Dulka and Christian Braun of the Facilities Management Department at the Zablocki Medical Center oversaw the completion of this documentation study for the Veterans Administration. Dr. Michele Curran of the National Historic Landmarks Program at the National Park Service's Midwest Regional Office in Omaha outlined the specifications for the report and reviewed the final draft to ensure its conformance to HALS standards.

A team comprising Miller Dunwiddie Architects, Damon Farber Associates (landscape architects), and Hess, Roise and Company (historical consultants), all based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, prepared the documentation study as a subcontractor to Chequamegon Bay Engineering, which has offices in Ashland and Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. Dave Cleary and Nicholas Migan oversaw the project for Chequamegon Bay Engineering. The majority of the narrative report was prepared by Hess Roise architectural historian Jessica Berglin and edited by principal Charlene Roise. Chuck Liddy and Melissa Ekman of Miller Dunwiddie provided descriptions of site structures. Jean Garbarini and Emily Naparalla of Damon Farber Associates prepared the drawings and evaluated existing landscape conditions. They were assisted by Larry Witzling and his associates at the Milwaukee office of GRAEF, who surveyed trees to identify historic specimens. Jerry Mathiason, from Minneapolis, Minnesota, completed the photography as a subcontractor to Hess Roise.

Fieldwork, research, and photography for this study were completed in the spring and summer of 2012.