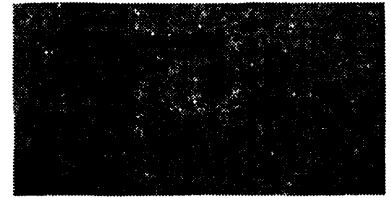


**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Historic Resources of the Wisconsin Veterans Home, King,  
Continuation sheet Waupaca County, Wisconsin Item number 7

Page 2

DESCRIPTION OF THE VETERANS COTTAGES HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Veterans Cottages Historic District is composed of 31 small, neat, white cottages and staff residences located in a five-acre park-like setting on the grounds of the Wisconsin Veterans Home. The large lawns and park near the administration building effectively separate the district from the contemporary institutional buildings nearby. The site of the district is dramatic, rising from a level area at the eastern end of the district, to a ridge at the western edge of the district. This ridge then sharply drops down to the lakefront. According to the home's building inventory, the cottages were built between 1890 and 1925. Some of the later-constructed cottages may be replacements for earlier structures, as an 1893 lithograph from the Wisconsin Blue Book shows most of the cottages in the district already standing before their "official" construction date. In any event, the similarity of type and method of construction, and the fact that a drawing of a cottage plan done by noted Wisconsin architect, William Waters, was located indicates an effort at a planned community, one that was architecturally harmonious and based on master cottage plans.

Cottages 412, 414, 415, 416 probably were originally located south of Marden Avenue, in the area now occupied by the large nursing care buildings. A map from the 1930s or 1940s shows four cottages with these numbers (the numbering system appears to have not changed on this map and today's maps) in this location. There are no buildings on the map in the location that these cottages have today. While these cottages were probably moved, they were apparently unchanged and their location today is an appropriate one since it is close to the other cottages and residences of the complex.

Most of the cottages are simple, front-gabled houses with enclosed porches, clapboard siding, and green asphalt-shingled or metal roofs. Some historic photos show open porches with simple decorative brackets, however, these details were removed when the porches were enclosed. Some larger cottages, especially those used as staff residences, and which are similar to the Waters' cottage design, have side dormers and decorative shingling in the gables and dormers. One house has the size and some Queen Anne type details, although it is not significantly more elaborate than the other houses in the district.

Even though the Commandant's House is in close proximity to the cottages, it was felt that it should be treated as a separate entity within the nomination, as it is much larger, and has much more architectural detail than the cottages and residences. Together, the cottages and residences make an architectural and historical statement that is different than that of the Commandant's House.

Except for the garages in the eastern section of the district, all buildings are contributing to the district. To facilitate discussion of these buildings, they are divided into two groups: small cottages, and large cottages and staff residences.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Historic Resources of the Wisconsin Veterans Home, King,  
Continuation sheet Waupaca County, Wisconsin Item number 7

Page 3

Small Cottages

The small cottages in the district (map numbers 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 223) are fairly uniform in size and type of construction. They are small, usually three-room, one-story, front-gabled forms with clapboard siding. Most have green asphalt-shingled roofs, but a few have green metal roofs. They all have enclosed porches, and a few have small wings (numbers 115, 117, for example). An exception is number 116, which is a one-story cube form with central front dormer. Although these small cottages do not have significant architectural details, they possess a high level of integrity with original doors and windows and interior plans which have been changed only to accommodate updated facilities. The small cottages were an integral part of the historic veterans home, providing an individual dwelling for a veteran and his wife. Because of reduced need and a new care focus, most of these cottages are now vacant.

Large Cottages and Staff Residences

The large cottages and staff residences (map numbers 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 222, 221, 220, 219, 218, 217, 216, 415, 414, 412, 416) are larger, more elaborate houses, many with additions, dormers, and decorative shingles. The large cottages are variations of a master cottage plan done by architect William Waters (see Figure 1). They are simple front-gabled forms, but the front gable is usually decorated with fish-scale shingling and a bank of five narrow windows. These one and one-half story cottages usually have two side dormers with a long, narrow, multi-paned window, above which is a pediment decorated with semi-circular siding (for example, number 220). These decorative features are simple interpretations of Shingle style details seen on larger houses, a style which Waters was familiar with and often used either alone or as an element of a Queen Anne house. The large cottages have enclosed porches, original doors and windows, green asphalt shingle or metal roofs, and in some cases, basements. An exception to this general design is number 104, which is a large, one and one-half story cross-gable form house. The house has a front gable with a pediment and a projecting belt course. Numbers 217, 218, and 219 have the basic cottage design, but have large rear additions. Because they are sited on a hill, the basement story is exposed in some of these cottages. Number 216 is the most elaborate house in the district. It is a one and one-half story building with a two-story rear section. The two-story section has a hipped roof with a rear dormer. The front facade features a projecting gable section and an enclosed porch. There is a clipped gable on the sides of the house as well. Decoration includes wooden lintels above the original windows, decorative stickwork on the front facade, and carved partial "shutter" decorations on each side of the second-story front facade window. As is the case with the small cottages, the integrity of the large cottages and staff residences is high. Even where there are additions or alterations, they do not detract significantly from the original appearance of the district.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Historic Resources of the Wisconsin Veterans Home, King,

Continuation sheet Waupaca County, Wisconsin Item number 7

Page 4

Non-Contributing Buildings

There are two garages (map numbers 308N and 308S), constructed in 1951, within the boundaries of the district. They are simple frame buildings with wooden doors and board and batten siding. Although they blend in well with the appearance of the district, because of their recent construction date, they are non-contributing to the district.

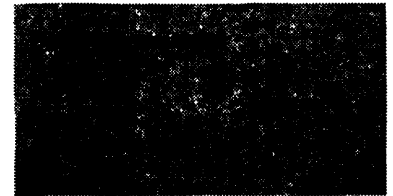
Of the 33 buildings in the district, 31 (94%) are contributing, and 2 (6%) are non-contributing.

Building Inventory

Each building number is included in the descriptions above and on the previous page. All buildings are part of the Wisconsin Veterans Home and have the same owner.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Historic Resources of the Wisconsin Veterans Home, King,  
Continuation sheet Waupaca County, Wisconsin

Item number 8

Page 3

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VETERANS COTTAGES HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Veterans Cottages Historic District is significant because it reflects an important historic focus of the veterans home: individual residences for a veteran and his wife in a community-like setting. It is also significant because the larger cottages were all built from a basic cottage design done by the noted Wisconsin architect, William Waters. Also, the cottages, together, because of their similarity of type and method of construction, form a good example of a turn-of-the-century planned community which has a high degree of integrity and level of preservation.

Dr. F. A. Marden, GAR member and "founding father" of the veterans home, envisioned the home to be a community of cottages where veterans and their wives would live out their elderly years. It was said of Dr. Marden's "cottage plan," "he believed that a cottage for two persons was just what was wanted for an old soldier and his wife." That these cottages would also be cheap and therefore easily funded by individual GAR posts was only slightly considered (although in reality it was probably of great importance).<sup>11</sup> The cottage district represents this ideal, as it did provide individual housing for veterans and wives in full force up to recent years. In fact, there are still some elderly residents living in some of the cottages in the district. It is also significant that houses for staff members were located in the same area as the members' cottages. It was probable that married staff were housed purposely with members, further cementing the "community" ideal of Dr. Marden.

William Waters designed several buildings for the veterans home, and while it cannot be officially documented, it is likely that he had an input into the total architectural appearance of the home. Historic photos (when all the frame buildings were still in existence) show a remarkable similarity in the design of the buildings of the historic home. In any event, a lithograph of a cottage plan attributed to Waters was located and although the larger cottages are not identical to the plan, they are variations on the basic design. The shingled gables and dormers, small-paned windows, and overall form of the larger cottages all conform to the Waters design. Waters was a successful regional architect who gained state-wide fame by designing the Wisconsin Building for the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. He practiced in the Queen Anne and Shingle residential style, and his cottage design shows the Shingle influence. <sup>12</sup>

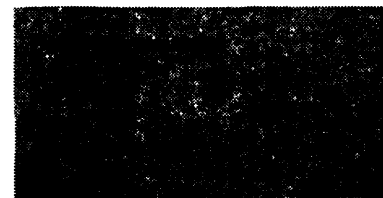
There are no records to show that the veterans home was a planned community on the scale of famous turn-of-the-century planned communities (Pullman, for example), but an obvious attempt was made to make all the structures on the home grounds compatible. Again, historic photos show this most dramatically. The district, as a whole, is a significant example of this attempt, as the similarity of the cottages, both large and small, is obvious.

Although the district is probably most in danger of demolition, due to perceived maintenance problems and the changed focus of the home discussed earlier, it is an important element of the historic veterans home. Although there have been alterations to the houses, the fact that each has its original siding, windows, doors, and mostly intact floorplans makes the district's level of preservation and integrity very high. It is hoped that future development of the veterans home will accommodate at least some of these significant structures.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Historic Resources of the Wisconsin Veterans Home, King,  
Continuation sheet Waupaca County, Wisconsin Item number 9&10



Page 1

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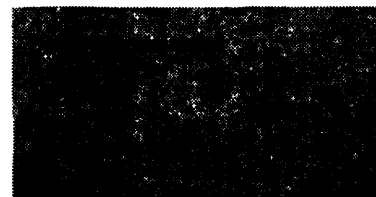
**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION FOR VETERANS COTTAGES HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Beginning at the intersection of the right of way lines of Marden Avenue and Bragg Avenue, then north along the right of way line of Bragg Avenue to an east-west line extending approximately 10 feet from the southern facade of Cottage 223, along this line to the intersection with a north-south line extending approximately 10 feet from the east (rear) facades of Cottages 223, 222, and 221, along this line to the intersection with an east-west line running along the right of way of N. Drive, then east along this line to the intersection with a right of way line running along Mitchell Avenue, then north along this line to the intersection with a east-west right of way line running along the frontage road in front of Cottage 416, then west along this line to the intersection with a north-south right of way line running along a frontage road behind Cottages 219-216, along this line north to the intersection with a east-west line extending approximately 10 feet from the northern facades of Cottages 116 and 216, then along this line to the intersection with a north-south line extending approximately 10 feet from the east (rear) facades of Cottages 116-119, along this line to the intersection with a right of way line running along Wright Avenue, along this line to the intersection with the right of way line on Marden Avenue to the point of beginning.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Historic Resources of the Wisconsin Veterans Home, King  
Continuation sheet Waupaca County, Wisconsin      Item number      10



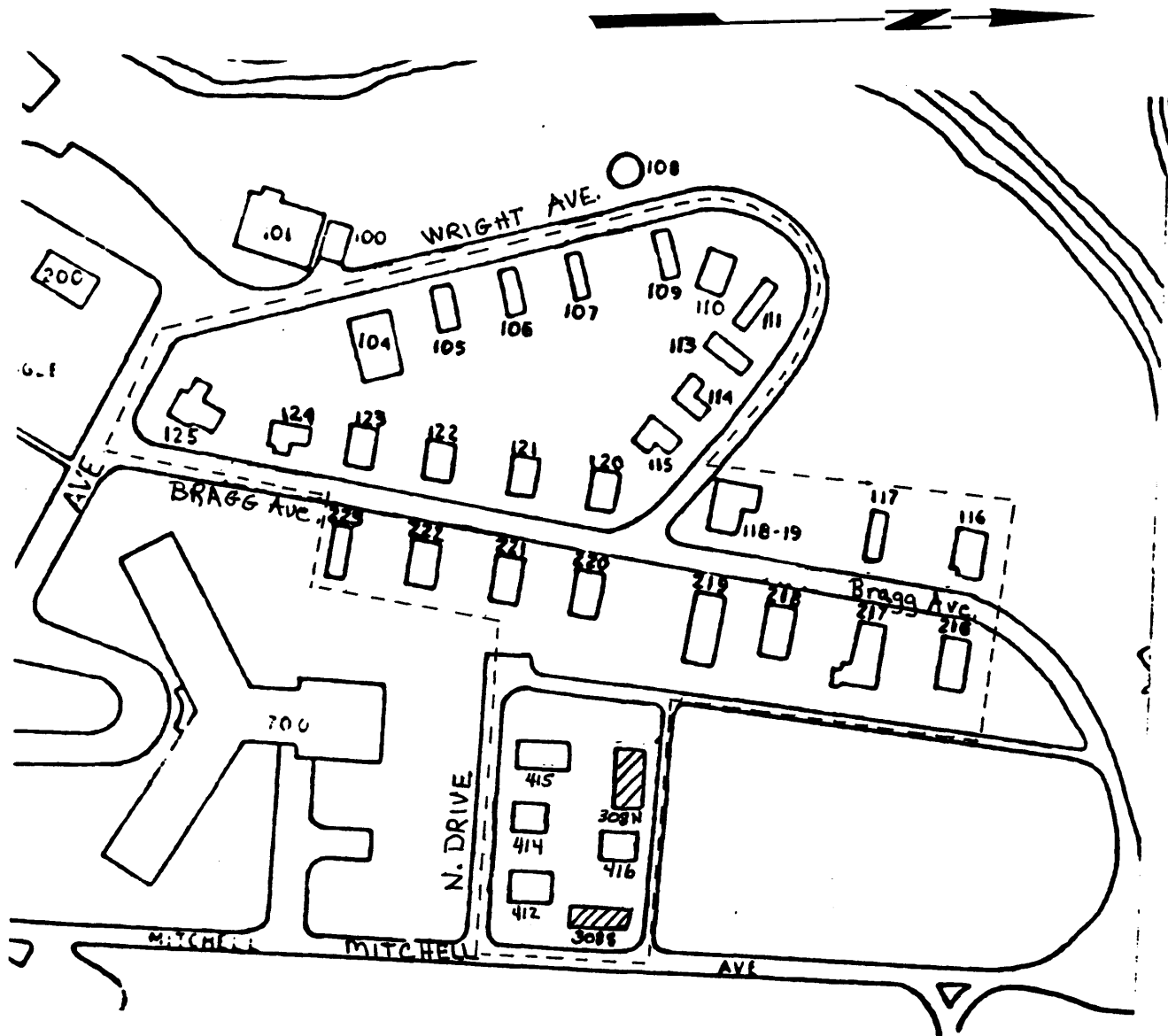
Page 2

UTM REFERENCES FOR THE VETERANS COTTAGES HISTORIC DISTRICT (Item A on USGS Map)

Beginning with the northeastern most point:

1. 16/329120/4911640
2. 16/329120/4911580
3. 16/329160/4911580
4. 16/329160/4911540
5. 16/329100/4911540
6. 16/329080/4911460
7. 16/329080/4911460
8. 16/329040/4911440
9. 16/329000/4911460
10. 16/328990/4911590
11. 16/329060/4911560
12. 16/329080/4911640

VETERANS COTTAGES HISTORIC DISTRICT



map not to scale

Key:

- = Contributing Buildings
- ▨ = Non-Contributing Buildings
- - - District Boundaries

