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United States Department of Interior  
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Horticultural Hall

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number	330 Broad Street	N/A	not for publication
city or town	Lake Geneva	N/A	vicinity
state Wisconsin	code WI	county Walworth	code 127 zip code 53147

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

*Alicia L. Galt*  
Signature of certifying official/Title  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer-WI

8/24/99  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Horticultural Hall  
Name of Property

Walworth  
County and State

Wisconsin

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register.  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register.  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_ removed from the National Register.  
\_\_\_ other, (explain:)

*Edson H. Beall*

9/29/99

*Jan*  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

#### 5. Classification

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

private  
\_\_\_ public-local  
\_\_\_ public-State  
\_\_\_ public-Federal

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

building(s)  
\_\_\_ district  
\_\_\_ structure  
\_\_\_ site  
\_\_\_ object

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

contributing	noncontributing
1	0
	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
1	0
	total

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

N/A

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

0

#### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/clubhouse

RECREATION AND CULTURE/auditorium

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/auditorium

#### 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Bungalow/Craftsman

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation CONCRETE

walls STUCCO

roof ASBESTOS

other WOOD

#### Narrative Description

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

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Lake Geneva, Walworth Co., WI

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**Description**

Horticultural Hall is a very fine, largely intact Arts and Crafts style combination meeting hall/exhibition hall building. It was completed in 1912 to a design supplied by the regionally well known Chicago architectural firm of Spencer & Powers. The Hall is located close to the heart of the historic downtown commercial core of the nationally known summer resort city of Lake Geneva and it is set on a large 120x172-foot corner lot that comprises the southwest corner formed by the intersection of Broad and Wisconsin streets. The Hall consists of a 34x90-foot rectilinear plan, one-story, gable-roofed building to whose south side is attached an enclosed 90x100-foot one-story landscaped courtyard. The exterior walls of the building are faced in painted stucco decorated with false half-timber work, and the building's corner location gives it two principal elevations. The main entrance is placed on the shorter east-facing Broad Street façade, while the longer north-facing side elevation faces Wisconsin Street. The south-facing side elevation of the building also forms the fourth side of the rectilinear plan courtyard. This enclosed courtyard's three other sides together make up a continuous, 18-foot-wide, one-story arcade, each side of which is covered by a very shallow pitched shed roof. Each side of the three side of the courtyard has a solid outer wall made of concrete block and an inner wall that consists of regularly spaced glazed or screened openings that face onto the courtyard. The Hall was built for the Lake Geneva Horticultural Society, which was founded in 1911 expressly for the purpose of building the Hall, and the Society's contractor was the Lake Geneva firm of Reinert, Malsch, and Baumbach. The Society paid the sum of \$8300.00 for its completed building, which was then used as an exhibition hall and meeting place by other local organizations, the most notable of which were the Lake Geneva Garden Club, founded in 1915, and the Lake Geneva Gardener's and Foreman's Association, founded in 1905; the latter used the Hall as both a social and professional meeting place. Lake Geneva area organizations and private groups continue to use the Hall for meetings and exhibitions. The Hall's present owner is the Geneva Area Foundation, which was created for this purpose in 1948 and which has since maintained the building and its grounds to a high standard with the very active help and support of the Lake Geneva Garden Club.

The city of Lake Geneva has historically served as the commercial hub of the important Wisconsin resort area that evolved around beautiful Geneva Lake, an area that has historically been closely associated with persons having primary residences in the nearby Illinois metropolis of Chicago, located approximately 70 miles to the southeast. Today, the more general distribution of wealth that has occurred since the end of World War II and the triumph of the automobile have brought the Lake Geneva area within the reach of many. The large numbers of tourists who come here and the area's ever-increasing numbers of part time residents now have a year-round economic impact on the area and the city.<sup>1</sup> When the Horticultural Hall was new, however, the resort season centered on the summer months and the area was then nationally renowned for the more than two hundred often lavish estates that ringed Geneva Lake and dotted the surrounding countryside. These estates belonged primarily to Chicago families, some of whom began coming to the Lake in the 1870s, and who included some of the best known names in the Midwest, names such as Allerton, Crane, Morton, Ryerson, Swift, Uihlein, Wacker, and Wrigley. The estates these families created sometimes encompassed hundreds of professionally designed, well-tended acres and the frequently grand summer homes that were built on them were designed by many of the best architects practicing in Chicago and elsewhere in the United States between 1871 and 1940. By 1912, caring for the needs of these families and their guests, and the building, tending, and supplying of their estates had become the principal economic activity of Lake Geneva's year-round residents, especially during the non-winter months, and was perhaps the principal factor in the growth of the city up to this time.<sup>2</sup>

As Lake Geneva grew and prospered during this period, the downtown commercial core that had historically been centered on the intersection of the north-south running Broad Street and the east-west running Main Street expanded with it. Gradually, both the number and the size of the buildings that made up the downtown increased and the city's older frame construction commercial buildings made way for newer ones built out of brick and stone. Also affected by this change were some of Lake Geneva's earliest houses, many of which were originally located adjacent to this commercial core and needed to be either moved or demolished to make way for the new buildings. A prime example of this was the clapboard-clad two-story Greek Revival style house owned by T. J. Hanna, an early Lake Geneva cabinetmaker and undertaker, whose house sat on a piece of land that fronted on Broad Street just two blocks north of the Broad Street/Main Street

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<sup>1</sup> The 1990 population of the city of Lake Geneva was 5979.

<sup>2</sup> The population of the city was 2297 in 1890, 2585 in 1900, and 3079 in 1910, according to the *Lake Geneva News*, March 2, 1911, p. 1.

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intersection.<sup>3</sup> In 1911, wealthy Lake Geneva summer resident Simeon B. Chapin purchased this prime downtown site for the purpose of transferring it to the newly formed Lake Geneva Horticultural Society. The Society was to use it as the site for a new combined meeting place and exhibition hall, to be known as Horticultural Hall. As a result, Hanna's house was either moved or demolished when the site was cleared in preparation for the construction of the new building.

Chapin's chosen site was ideally suited for the purposes of the Society, being flat and possessed of a prime corner location that promised to give the new building both visibility and ease of public access. The Hanna property measured 120x172 feet, an area equal to two of the conventional 60x120-foot lots of the time, and it occupied the northeast corner of a rectilinear city block that is bounded by Broad Street to the east, Geneva Street to the south, Cook Street to the west, and Wisconsin Street to north. The streets that surround this block are laid out on a grid pattern and the Hanna property consisted of the north half of the east end of the block, the south half of which was then (and is still) occupied by the excellent Gothic Revival style Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion (320 Broad Street), completed in 1882 to a design by the Chicago architectural firm of Treat & Foltz.<sup>4</sup> Both sides of Broad Street above (north) and below (south) the Hall are lined primarily with historic and modern commercial buildings. Located behind Broad Street, to the west of the Hall, is a large, historically significant residential neighborhood, while to the east of Broad Street is a similar, though smaller, neighborhood that is more mixed in character in terms of building types.<sup>5</sup>

When the Hall was constructed, it was placed on its site in such a way as to allow the west elevations of the building and its attached courtyard to abut the property line running along the west side of the lot, while the south elevation of the courtyard was placed so as to abut the northerly edge of a narrow, hard-surfaced alleyway that bisects this block longitudinally and separates the Hall property from that of the Episcopal Church next door. Siting the Hall in this manner made it possible to provide a wider than usual amount of lawn in front of both the north and the east-facing main elevations of the Hall. This gave the Hall a better setting and provided it with a larger than normal area within which to place both permanent and seasonal plantings. Today, both the north and the east-facing elevations of the Hall face out onto 30-foot-wide planting areas that feature grassed lawns that are partially shaded with a mixture of mature Maple, Sycamore, and Spruce trees, deciduous and coniferous shrubs planted in beds located adjacent to the walls of the elevations themselves, and mixed perennial and annual flower beds that face onto Broad Street. Concrete curbs edge both Broad and Washington streets in this vicinity and they are separated from concrete sidewalks by broad landscaped parkways. Additional concrete sidewalks also lead up to the front and side doors of the Hall.

As noted above, Broad Street has always been a highly important part of the historic downtown commercial core of Lake Geneva, and it remains so today. The rapid growth of the city after the end of World War II, however, brought considerable redevelopment pressure on this area and has resulted in the demolition of many of the downtown's historic commercial buildings, including several located directly across both streets from the Hall. Fortunately, several of the new buildings that replaced earlier ones on Broad Street are themselves Modern Movement style buildings of some architectural merit, but, overall, the net affect has been the gradual destruction of much of the historic fabric of Lake Geneva's downtown core. The survival of Horticultural Hall and its site, therefore, has been especially fortunate for Lake Geneva and the continued retention of the Hall is a key element in maintaining the historic appearance of Broad Street.

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<sup>3</sup> An old photograph of the Hanna House is reproduced in the book by Pamela Vandemark Vollbracht entitled *Yesterday, Today & Forever: A Pictorial History of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin*, Hurst, Texas: Curtis Media, Inc., 1994, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Crawford, Sharon and Patricia Butler. *Geneva Lake Intensive Survey Architectural-Historical Report*. Lake Geneva: August, 1985, Vol. 2, p. 242.

<sup>5</sup> Crawford and Butler proposed that the residential neighborhood located to the west of the Hall be evaluated as a potential historic district to be known as the Maple Park Historic District. See Crawford and Butler, vol. 2, pp. 232-241.

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Horticultural Hall Exterior Description

Horticultural Hall consists of a 34-foot-wide x 90-foot-deep, nearly rectilinear plan, one-story, gable-roofed main building (herein called the Hall) to whose south-facing side elevation is attached an enclosed 90-foot-deep x 100-foot-wide, one-story, rectilinear plan landscaped courtyard (herein called the Courtyard). The east end of the Hall contains a partially inset 10-foot-wide x 13.5-foot-deep entrance hall that is placed adjacent to a 22.5-foot-wide x 17-foot-deep library room (an attic space is located above these two rooms and a full basement story is located below them). Behind these two rooms is the 32.5-foot-wide x 60-foot-deep auditorium room, which is open to the peak of the gabled main roof. The west end of the Hall consists of a 32.5-foot-wide x 13-foot-deep kitchen space that is sheltered by its own almost flat roof. The exterior walls of the Hall have exterior surfaces that are faced in painted stucco decorated with false half-timber work, and these walls rest on concrete block foundation walls and footings. The foundation walls enclose a full basement story under the easternmost 17 feet of the Hall, which story has a poured concrete floor and consists of two rooms, the smaller of which is enclosed with concrete block partition walls and contains the Hall's furnace. The exterior walls of the remaining portion of the Hall rest on concrete footings that enclose a crawlspace. The Hall features wood frame construction of posts and beams and a hardwood joisted sub-floor that originally supported hardwood floors in the auditorium, library and kitchen.<sup>6</sup> The exterior walls of the Hall are stuccoed and painted an off-white color. These wall surfaces are enframed with exposed wood framing elements and are further subdivided into panels by vertical timber framing elements, all of which are stained a dark brown. These walls are sheltered by the wide, overhanging open eaves of the Hall's gabled main roof. The ridgeline of this roof runs east-west; its slopes were originally covered in wood shingles but are now covered in shingles made of asbestos. Its soffits are covered in stucco, and its leading edge is protected by wide, simply designed bargeboards.

The exterior of the south-facing side elevation of the Hall features the same surface treatment as the building's other principal elevations and, it also forms the fourth side of the rectilinear plan, 90-foot-deep x 100-foot-wide, enclosed Courtyard. The other three sides consist of a continuous, U-plan, 18-foot-wide, one-story arcade, each side of which is sheltered by a very shallow pitched shed roof, has a solid outer wall constructed out of concrete block, an inner wall that consists of regularly spaced glazed or screened openings that face onto the courtyard, and a poured concrete floor laid over gravel. The space that is enclosed by this courtyard is beautifully landscaped and boasts an ever changing display of flowers and shrubs.

East-Facing Main Facade of the Hall and Courtyard

The overall appearance of the main facade suggests a simplified, elegantly proportioned variation of the type of half-timber work that is closely associated with much Arts and Crafts style design. The 34-foot-wide, asymmetrically designed, three-bay-wide main facade of the Hall faces east onto Broad Street and contains the building's main entrance in its left-hand (south) bay. This entrance consists of a pair of original, side-hinged, wood frame, six-light entrance doors that are centered on a 10-foot-wide wall that is inset some 3.5-feet into the main facade. These doors are enframed with wide, simple wooden casework and the surrounding wall's stucco surface is enframed with dark brown-stained wooden framing elements. This entrance is sheltered by an open, square-plan, gable-roofed, 10-foot-wide entrance porch. The roof of this porch is supported at each of its two easternmost corners by a group of three heavy, square timber posts and these posts rest on the porch's poured concrete floor. Placed on either side of the porch between these posts and the main wall of the Hall are short, stucco-clad, solid balustrades having an upper surface covered with a broad wooden board. The ceiling of

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<sup>6</sup> Today, the library floor is carpeted while the kitchen floor is covered in linoleum.

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the porch is flat and is plastered. The lintel that these posts support has a shaped upper edge and the front-facing gable end of the porch above this lintel is clad in stucco and has the words "Horticultural Hall" placed upon it. Like the main roof, the porch roof also has wide overhanging open eaves whose leading edges are protected by wide, simply designed bargeboards and it too has stucco-clad soffits. In addition, the south-facing slope of the porch roof is an extension of the south-facing slope of the main roof.

The middle bay of the east-facing facade of the Hall contains a flat-arched four-window group in its first story that provides light for the library and another four-window group of the same width directly above in the attic story that provides light for the attic. The first story group is enframed with dark brown stained wooden framework and consists of four six-light, wood sash casement windows, above each of which is a square, four-light, fixed transom window. The second story group above is similarly enframed but has no transom windows and uses instead four eight-light, wood sash casement windows. Connecting these two groups are two full-height, vertical, wooden framing elements that run along the outsides of both groups from the base of the facade up to the eaves. Three additional vertical elements are placed on the wall surface between the two groups and in the main gable end above the second story group; their placement corresponds to the position of the mullions between the windows in each group.

The right-hand (north) bay of the east-facing main facade of the Hall has no openings and is instead divided into three equal-width, full-height panels by two vertical wooden framing elements that run from the base of the facade up to the eaves.

The 100-foot-long east-facing elevation of the Courtyard portion of the east-facing facade of the Horticultural Hall consists of a solid, approximately nine-foot-tall, concrete block wall that is painted in an off-white color and topped with a simple wood cornice. There are no openings of any kind in this wall nor is there any decoration applied to it, and much of its length is partially or completely hidden from view by the trees and shrubs that are planted in beds in front of it.

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North-facing Side Elevation of the Hall

The asymmetrically designed north-facing side elevation of the Hall faces onto Wisconsin Street and consists of the side elevation of the Hall and of its attached kitchen ell. This 90-foot-long elevation can be roughly divided into three unequal-width segments. The first (easternmost) segment has been differentiated from the two other segments by having the eave of the main roof above it be extended further down than the eave above the other two segments. This first segment contains a flat-arched four-window group to the left (east) that provides light for the library. This four window group is identical to the one around the corner on the main facade, it also being enframed with a simple dark brown-stained wooden frame and filled with four original, six-light, wood sash casement windows, above each of which is placed a square, four-light, fixed transom window. The wall surface placed directly beneath this window group is divided into four equal width stucco-clad panels by the use of five vertical wooden framing elements whose placement corresponds to the two ends of the group and to the position of the three mullions that separate the windows. To the right (west) of this group is a single flat-arched window opening that provides light for a rest room. This window contains a pair of four-light, wood sash casement windows and it also has two vertical wooden framing elements that extend down to the base of the wall from its lower corners. In addition, the red brick chimney mass that serves the Hall's furnace and the fireplace in the library is placed on the north-facing slope of the main roof between the two window groups.

The upper half of this elevation's middle segment consists of a continuous band of twelve casement windows that are placed so high up on the main wall surface that their upper framing elements touch the base of the overhanging eave that shelters it. This twelve window group, which is also simply enframed in dark brown-stained wood, helps light the auditorium inside. Originally, each of these windows consisted of a ten-light, wood sash casement window, but these were replaced in 1990 by modern eight-light double glazed versions of similar appearance. The wall surface directly below these windows makes up the lower half of this segment and it is divided into twelve equal width, stucco-clad panels by thirteen vertical wooden framing elements whose placement corresponds to the two ends of the group and to the position of the eleven mullions that separate the windows.

This elevation's right-hand (westernmost) segment's only feature is a pair of wood, fifteen-light French Doors placed at its western end. These doors provide a side entrance into the auditorium and they too are simply enframed with dark brown-stained wood boards. The stucco wall surface above the doors, which is enframed by two vertical elements that extend upward from the corners of the doorframe.

The one-story kitchen ell spans the entire rear width of the Hall and its thirteen-foot-wide north-facing side elevation lies in the same plane as the wall surface of the north-facing side elevation of the Hall (which it continues). The ell's wall surface is also clad in painted stucco and is enframed with dark-brown stained boards. The only opening on its surface is a single flat-arched entrance door opening that contains a single wood entrance door, now obscured by a modern aluminum storm door that has been painted white.

West-Facing Rear Elevation of the Hall and Courtyard

The lower portion of the west-facing rear elevation of the Hall consists of the west-facing rear elevation of the 34-foot-wide kitchen ell. This elevation is clad in unpainted concrete block and its only opening is a group of four small casement windows that is set high up on the wall at the north end of the elevation and which provide light for the kitchen. Placed on the nearly flat roof of this ell are large, sheet metal exhaust hoods that ventilate the kitchen stoves. Visible behind these hoods is the rear elevation of the Hall itself. Like all the other elevations of the Hall, this one (which is that portion of the rear elevation of the auditorium not covered by the kitchen ell) is also divided into stucco-clad panels by dark brown-

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stained vertical boards; but, its most notable feature is a quadruple window group placed high up in the gable end. This group contains four multiple light casement windows whose upper portions are combined and raked in such a way as to permit them to form an isosceles triangle whose raking angles exactly imitate the pitch of the slopes of the main roof above. Originally, these windows helped light the auditorium, but in recent years their inner surfaces were covered over when some of the auditorium's interior wall surfaces were resurfaced with sound-absorbent material. Consequently, although the windows themselves are intact, they no longer provide any light for the interior.

The 100-foot-long, west-facing elevation of the Courtyard portion of the west-facing rear elevation of Horticultural Hall consists of a solid, approximately nine-foot-tall, concrete block wall that is painted and topped with a heavy, simple, wood cornice. There are no openings of any kind in this wall, nor is there any decoration applied to it, and its length faces onto a narrow concrete walkway that runs parallel to the entire length of this elevation.

**South-facing Side Elevation of the Hall**

As noted earlier, the south elevation of the Hall forms one of the four walls of the courtyard. Both the east and west ends of this elevation are covered by the attached eighteen-foot-wide east wing and by the west wing of the Courtyard. The remaining portion in between the two wings is that portion that faces into the courtyard itself and it is very similar in design to the middle segment of the north-facing elevation which lies opposite it and which was described earlier. There is, however, one significant difference. On the south elevation, the middle four of the twelve windows found on the north elevation were replaced with three wooden, eight-light French doors, above each one is a nine-light transom. This group is enframed with simple dark brown-stained wood and the doors open out onto a flagstone terrace located in the courtyard. Flanking this center group are two groups of four casement windows each that are identical to the ones on the north elevation. These groups are also placed so high up on the main wall surface that their upper framing elements touch the base of the overhanging eave that shelters them; they too are simply enframed in dark brown-stained wood. They also help light the auditorium inside, and, originally, each of these windows was also a ten-light wood sash casement window that has now been replaced by a modern, eight-light, double glazed version of similar appearance. In addition, the wall surfaces located directly below these eight windows are divided into eight equal width stucco-clad panels by nine vertical, wooden framing elements whose placement corresponds to the two ends of the groups and to the position of the six mullions that separate the windows.

**South-Facing Side Elevation of the Courtyard**

The south-facing side elevation of the Courtyard faces onto the alleyway that separates the Horticultural Hall property from the Episcopal Church next door. This 90-foot-long elevation consists of a solid, approximately nine-foot-tall, concrete block wall that is unpainted and is topped with a simple wood cornice. No decoration is applied to this elevation and its only major opening is located at its extreme west end and consists of a Tudor arch double door opening that is filled with two heavy doors made out of vertical boards. The head of this arched opening is outlined by a row of header course bricks made out of concrete; otherwise the opening is without ornamentation.

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Horticultural Hall Interior Description

Like the exterior, the interior of the Hall is in an essentially intact state, thanks largely to the care that has been taken by the organizations that have been responsible for its maintenance. Such changes as have occurred have been done in order to modernize and update certain features of the Hall and to reduce the expense of maintaining and heating it. The first significant change occurred in 1953, when the library room was completely modernized and attained its present appearance. Subsequently, the only important changes occurred in the 1980s, when the north, south, and west interior walls of the auditorium were surfaced with removable panels of sound-absorbing material that were placed in between the exposed wood framework of the hall and on top of the original plastered panels that this framework enframed. At the same time, most of the original casement windows in the auditorium were replaced with modern, energy efficient ones of similar design.

Entrance Hall

The principal entrance to the Hall is the one that faces east onto Broad Street. This entrance is sheltered by the gable-roofed entrance porch described earlier and one approaches it via a broad concrete sidewalk that intersects with the main sidewalk. Upon passing through the double six-light entrance doors, one enters into the 13.5-foot-deep x 10-foot-wide entrance hall.<sup>7</sup> Directly in front of the visitor on the hall's west wall are three six-light, side-hinged, wood French doors that lead into the auditorium.<sup>8</sup> To the right (north) as one enters are a pair of three-panel doors that date from the 1953 remodeling and which open into the library. Just beyond these doors is a single door opening that contains its original one-panel door and which opens onto a stairway that leads down to the basement story of the Hall. Placed opposite this door on the left (south) wall is another single door opening that contains an original one-panel door and that opens into the east wing of the Courtyard. The floor of this room originally consisted of narrow hardwood boards that have now been covered over with modern vinyl floor covering designed to resemble brick. The walls and ceiling are plastered and the walls are enframed by simple wooden baseboards, square-edge corner boards, and by a simple square edge picture molding that encircles the room several inches below the junction of walls and ceiling. The overall effect achieved by enframing the walls of this room with wood moldings is very similar to the effect achieved on the exterior of the Hall through the use of half timber work. Originally, this effect was heightened when the room's walls were painted a cream color and the moldings were stained a dark brown.

Library

The 22.5-foot-wide x 17-foot-deep rectilinear plan library is accessed from the entrance hall through a pair of wooden three-panel double doors that replaced the original, wooden, six-light French doors in 1953, when the library was remodeled. The principal features of this room are the double entrance doors, located on the south wall, two four-window groups, located on the east and north walls, respectively, and a fireplace, which is located on the west wall. Originally, this room featured a hardwood floor and plastered walls and ceiling. These walls were partially enframed with simple square-edge baseboards and with a square-edge picture molding that encircled the room at the same level as the upper element of the square-edge casing that enframed the double doors, which was positioned more than a foot below the junction of the walls and the ceiling. Simple square-edge corner boards were also placed in the northeast and southeast corners of the room at opposite ends of the east wall and still more square-edge boards were used to form the casework that enframed the

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<sup>7</sup> These doors still have their original hand-hammered metal hardware.

<sup>8</sup> The two left-hand doors are actually a bi-fold pair that can be folded flat against the south wall of the room, thus enabling almost the entire west wall to be opened for ease of moving objects into and out of the auditorium.

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window groups on the east and north walls.<sup>9</sup> On the west wall, the lower halves of the wall surfaces on either side of the centrally placed projecting chimney breast of the fireplace were both filled with built-in half-height bookcases, each of whose books were protected by two pairs of glazed, eight-light casement type doors. The massive, simple, brick-clad lower half of the fireplace was surmounted by a plain wood mantelshelf, and the plastered wall surface above it sported a rectangular frame made of square-edge boards that was similar in appearance to a large picture frame. Lighting for the room was supplied by wall sconces placed on either side of both window groups and on either side of the upper half of the chimney breast. The overall appearance of the room was typical of Arts & Crafts style practice in being reminiscent of simplified designs associated with historic half-timber design of English origin.

Today, however, the only elements of the 1912 interior in this room that have survived intact are the two window groups and the windows they contain. When the library was modified in 1953, its interior was almost completely redone. The floor was covered with a vinyl material, the ceiling was lowered, and the walls were covered in thin blond plywood paneling whose surface was raked with very narrow vertical striations. This same plywood covering was also put to use covering the room's new paneled double entrance doors, the two new bookcase units that replaced the ones that had originally flanked the now remodeled fireplace, a new bookcase unit that was attached to the south wall, and a new door to the right of the fireplace that gave access to a bathroom that is also accessible from the auditorium. Even the edges of a large new fluorescent ceiling light unit that was centered on the newly suspended ceiling were also covered in this material. The resulting modernized interior bore little resemblance to the original one and it is largely intact today, although the floor has now been carpeted.

#### Auditorium

The principal room of the Hall is its 34.5-foot-wide x 60-foot-deep auditorium. This impressively scaled room is open from its floor to the ridge beam of its cathedral-like ceiling and it was designed to house a wide variety of events, including meetings, dances, exhibits, concerts and the like. The walls of this room are treated like those already described, being divided into panels by the use of simple exposed wood elements that enframe each wall and subdivide it into smaller sections as either need or the aesthetic sense of the architect dictated. Each wall is enframed by baseboards, corner boards, and a cornice, all of which consist of simple square-edge boards that were originally stained a dark brown. In addition, the north and south side walls are both divided into five identically spaced panels by four massive, slightly projecting vertical timbers, each of which has its opposite number placed directly across the room. Attached to the upper portion of each of these timbers is a massive concave timber brace that functions as part of the support system for the massive solid timber construction scissors trusses that spring from them. These four trusses support the roof of the auditorium and they are the room's predominant visual elements.

The upper halves of the three central wall panels on the north side of the room, created by the placement of the vertical timbers on that wall, each contain a four window group of the type described earlier. The corresponding right-hand and left-hand upper halves of the wall panels on the south wall opposite each contain a four window group as well, but the middle panel is filled with three French Doors that are surmounted by transom lights. In addition, a flat-arched double entrance door opening that contains the side entrance/exit to the auditorium is placed on the left-hand (west) wall panel on the north side of the room, and another similar door opening is placed in the left-hand (east) wall panel on the south side of the room and opens into the east wing of the Courtyard.

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<sup>9</sup> All of these elements were originally stained a dark brown.



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Kitchen

The kitchen space in the ell behind the auditorium has been largely remodeled and modernized and it now contains little of historic value. It is frequently used by organizations that are making use of the Hall.

Courtyard

Three wings arrayed in a U-plan surround the Hall's enclosed courtyard. These wings each consist of utilitarian unheated and unpartitioned display spaces that were intended for seasonal use only. All three have bare poured concrete floors, solid outer walls of unpainted concrete blocks, and ceilings that consist of the exposed rafters that support the slightly sloping shed roofs above, the decking of which is also visible. In contrast, the inner walls of these wings are open and consist solely of timber framing that supports the roofs and divides the inner wall of each wing into multiple bays that are filled in diverse ways. The inner wall of the west wing, for instance, is five-bays-wide and the first, third, and fifth bays are each filled with a heavy wood framed storm window unit that contains four lights, above which is a four-light transom, while the second and fourth bays each have outward-swinging side-hinged doors placed in them instead of window units. The five bays of the east wing, in contrast, all contain screened units, as do those in the south wing. In addition, the Tudor-arched double door opening that opens out onto the alleyway that borders the south side of the courtyard is placed in the extreme west end of the exterior wall of the south wing. The Courtyard wings are in largely original condition, despite damage to the southwest corner of the courtyard caused by a fire in 1953.<sup>10</sup> The only change that has affected them since that time has been the laying of indoor-outdoor carpeting over the west wing's concrete floor.

The courtyard itself consists of a large, 90-foot-long x 60-foot-deep rectangular lawn that has cultivated flowerbeds around its perimeter and a raised flagstone terrace across its north end. Ever since it was first built, this area has been the scene of an ever-changing seasonal planting display that was originally the responsibility of members of the Gardeners' and Foreman's Association, later taken over by members of the Lake Geneva Garden Club. Consequently, the courtyard has undergone innumerable transformations during its lifetime. The continual evolution of these plantings was intended from the first to be an integral part of the educational mission of the Hall, as was the continual evolution of the plantings that ornament the exterior of the Hall. Therefore, none of the many planting plans that have been wholly or partly implemented within or around the Hall during its lifetime should be thought to have greater historic merit than any other, since that was never the intent of the building's founders or its subsequent owners.

Integrity Analysis

Although changes have been made to the Hall during its lifetime, most of them affect only the interior of the Hall and they are cosmetic in nature and can be easily reversed if so desired with the aid of competent professional advice and the surviving historic photos of the original interior. The only alterations to the building that are visible from the outside are the modern replacement casement windows in the auditorium. Otherwise, the Hall still looks strikingly like the historic photos taken shortly after its construction.<sup>11</sup> This high degree of integrity is further enhanced by the excellent state of the building and the high standard of maintenance that has been employed in achieving this state.

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<sup>10</sup> *Lake Geneva Regional News*, July 16, 1953, pp. 1 & 9 and July 23, 1953, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> These historic photos are kept in the Hall in the archives of the Geneva Area Foundation.

Horticultural Hall  
Name of Property

Walworth  
County and State

Wisconsin

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Social History

### Period of Significance

1912-1949

### Significant Dates

N/A

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Spencer & Powers/Architects

Reinert, Malsch & Baumbach/Builders

### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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**Significance**

The building known as Horticultural Hall is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its local significance under National Register (NR) criteria A and C. More specifically, the Hall is being nominated for its associations with the NR significance areas of Social History and of Architecture, themes that are also identified in the State of Wisconsin's *Cultural Resource Management Plan* (CRMP). Research into the significance area of Social History confirmed that the Hall is locally significant under NR criterion A as the only building in Lake Geneva that is directly associated with the activities of the Lake Geneva Gardener's and Foreman's Association, a membership organization founded in 1905 and comprised of the head gardeners and foremen of the numerous large estates that once ringed Lake Geneva. The same research also confirmed that the Hall is the only building in Lake Geneva that is directly associated historically with the Lake Geneva Garden Club, a highly important social organization founded in Lake Geneva in 1915, whose members were also closely associated with these same estates. Additional research into the significance area of Architecture centered on evaluating the Hall using the Arts and Crafts Study Unit of the CRMP's Architecture Theme section.<sup>12</sup> The results of this research is detailed below and confirms that the Hall, which was designed by the Chicago architectural firm of Spencer and Powers, is locally significant under NR criterion C as an excellent, highly intact example of the Arts & Crafts style.<sup>13</sup> The Hall is a very fine, half-timber-clad, somewhat stylized example of the Arts & Crafts style, which in this case was applied to an unusual but highly appropriate building type. Robert C. Spencer, Jr., the principal design partner of Spencer & Powers, was an important early member of what later came to be called "the Prairie School," and he is best known today for his associations with this "School" and for his highly important friendship with Frank Lloyd Wright. But Spencer was also an historically significant architect in his own right whose impressive Prairie School style and Arts & Crafts style suburban and country residences were especially well known in his day. Several of Spencer's designs are known to have been constructed in the Lake Geneva area, and Horticultural Hall is one of the finest of those that have so far been identified.

Horticultural Hall was built in 1912 to serve as an exhibition hall and club room for the Gardeners and Foreman's Association. Its \$8,500 construction cost was paid for by the Lake Geneva Horticultural Society, a stock-holding organization made up mostly of Lake Geneva summer residents that was formed in 1911 expressly for the purpose of constructing and owning this building. Once it was finished the Gardeners and Foreman's Association was given the use of the building, which used it for social events, lectures, and the several annual flower exhibitions it organized and sponsored. When the Lake Geneva Garden Club was formed in 1915, the Hall was found to be a congenial venue for its numerous public and private events, many of which, not surprisingly, complimented the activities of the Association. Over the years, the Hall has been the site of countless private and public social events, many, but by no means all, of which have been related to gardening, and it continues to be used for such purposes today.

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<sup>12</sup> Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). *Cultural Resource management in Wisconsin*. Madison: Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986, vol. 2, 2-23 (Architecture). Social History was chosen as the appropriate significance area for the Hall using Criterion A because the history of the Hall is so closely related to the history of two prominent Lake Geneva social and professional organizations. No study units for these types of organizations are currently available in the CRMP, however.

<sup>13</sup> Bid Proposals and Accepted Contract for Horticultural Hall. Archives, Geneva Area Foundation.

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**Historic Context**

A detailed overview of the history of the city of Lake Geneva and of the land surrounding the lake is included in the *Geneva Lake Intensive Survey Architectural-Historical Report*.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, this information will not be repeated here except as is necessary to place Horticultural Hall into its appropriate historic context.

By 1911, when the construction of Horticultural Hall was begun, Lake Geneva was one of the best known resort areas in the Midwest and also one of the most exclusive. Thanks to the more than two hundred country estates that then ringed the shores of beautiful, nearly eight-mile-long Lake Geneva and dotted the surrounding countryside, Lake Geneva had become one of an extremely select handful of similar areas in the United States that were known primarily for being the rural preserves of the wealthy.

Probably the city that spawned the greatest number of country houses was the most urban of all, New York. They were to be found by the hundred on Long Island, by the scores on the banks of the Hudson, by the dozen in the northern half of New Jersey. But New York was far from alone: nearly every great city inspired some of its citizens – often the ones who had most profited by it – with the urge to withdraw into the country. Boston's North Shore, Philadelphia's Main Line, Pittsburgh's Sewickley Heights, Cleveland's Chagrin Valley, and Chicago's Lake Forest and Lake Geneva bear witness to the phenomenon.<sup>15</sup>

That places like Lake Geneva evolved when they did was due in large part to the enormous growth of the nation's railroad network after the Civil War. This growth transformed the nation and the profound nature of the changes that it brought about can be illustrated by the seemingly simple new fact that now, for the first time, anyone who could afford the price of a ticket could travel quickly and in comfort from one of the nation's growing metropolitan areas into the rural areas surrounding it and then return again with equal ease. What this really amounted to was a revolutionary new freedom to travel. Not surprisingly, the members of the general population that had the most to gain from this newfound freedom were also the richest and their use of this freedom soon found expression in the widespread development of resort areas that catered to this new railroad-bound elite. A similar development also resulted in what is now sometimes referred to as "the country house era" of American residential architecture. A desire to spend at least a part of one's time in the country, away from the stresses of the city, was hardly new, of course, but the practical difficulties and the inconvenience inherent in traveling very far outside any American urban area prior to the advent of reliable railroad travel effectively prevented most people from doing so. This meant that country houses built before the Civil War in America were usually the principal residences of their owners, and the income derived from the estates they sat on was most often at least part of the source of the wealth that the house represented. After the war, however, this began to change. Unlike the country houses of the past, the new country house built between 1865 and 1940 was seldom the principal residence of its owners, it being instead a place where a person of means, who was essentially an urban dweller, could go with his or her family and relax, whether for a weekend or a season. In his recent book on the subject, *The American Country House*, Clive Aslet quoted Barr Ferree, editor of *Scientific American Building Monthly*, as saying in 1904 that:

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<sup>14</sup> Crawford, Sharon and Patricia Butler. *Geneva Lake Intensive Survey Architectural-Historical Report*. Lake Geneva: August, 1985.

<sup>15</sup> Aslet, Clive. *The American Country House*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, p. 22. Milwaukee had a similar area of its own centered around Lake La Belle and Fowler Lake in the city of Oconomowoc, which is located to the west of Milwaukee in Waukesha County. The best source of information on this area is Jean Lindsay Johnson's book *When Midwest Millionaires Lived Like Kings*. Milwaukee, 1981.

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Country houses we have always had, and large ones too; but the great country house as it is now understood is a new type of dwelling, a sumptuous house, built at large expense, often palatial in its dimensions, furnished in the richest manner and placed on an estate, perhaps large enough to admit of independent farming operations, and in most cases with a garden which is an integral part of the architectural scheme.<sup>16</sup>

Aslet then goes on to state that:

The reference here to the estate is important. The American country house stands on its own land, beyond the suburbs and other planned developments, out of sight of other houses, possessing at least the appearance of an independent, possibly self-sufficient, landed life, even though the money that supported it never came from the land. All this might be possible on as little as twenty acres.

Most owners wanted either to be within striking distance of a major city or to establish themselves in an area already known for its country houses, where there would be no shortage of congenial company. But that they were striving to create "an all-round country place" is indicated, not just in the size of their houses, but in the variety of other structures that went with them. In some cases the complete kit included lodges, stables, garages, gazebos, terraces and other garden architecture, glass houses, sports buildings, workers' cottage, model farm...<sup>17</sup>

All of these things and more could be found on the estates being constructed in Lake Geneva after the turn of the century.

Three circumstances favored Lake Geneva's becoming a resort area. The first was the sheer beauty of the place, the lake being long and narrow and surrounded by gentle hills and woods. The second was its close proximity to Chicago, and the third was the fact that a railroad reached it at an early date. An account of the history of Lake Geneva written in 1932 encapsulates the resort aspect of its history up to the beginning of the construction of Horticultural Hall in 1911.

The lake first attracted the attention of Chicago investors soon after the railroad was completed in 1856, and fishing parties began to come for the famous "Cisco Run." The fishing is always good, but when the run is on, the lake is alive with the small herring-like fish known as "Cisco."

The first permanent summer house was built by Dr. Philip Maxwell, in 1856. He paid twenty-five dollars an acre for his location and advised his son to buy all he could get at that price. Like most advice it was not followed, and an easy fortune slipped through the son's hands. The time came when ten times that price for a front foot, would have been a bargain. Shelton Sturgis, of Chicago, bought a ninety-acre tract on the west shore of Geneva Bay, and, in 1870, built a large home. When the estate was landscaped, and winding drives and an ornate gateway completed, it was the wonder of the countryside.

In 1872, Julian Rumsey built a "spacious and handsome residence" on the east shore of the bay. The description is borrowed from an early recorder, and doubtless was true in its day of what was one of the first homes on the lake. Comparing the two-story frame building with the "million-dollar white marble palace" built by Otto Young forty years later [Younglands, 880 Lakeshore Dr. (1899-1901), NRHP 9-18-79], Mr. Rumsey's "spacious and handsome residence" seems modest indeed.

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<sup>16</sup> Aslet, Clive., Op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Pp. vi, 20.

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G. L. Dunlap built about the same time as Mr. Rumsey, and adjoining the Rumsey estate. N. K. Fairbank and Levi Z. Leiter bought in the vicinity of the Sturgis home and built homes and laid out grounds on the west side of the bay, beyond the village. They were located in 1874 and 1879 respectively. By 1880, the north and east shores of the lake were entirely in the hands of non-residents, mostly Chicago capitalists, whose summer homes lined the lake.

These early summer residents were of distinct advantage to the town and village of Geneva. They gave liberally to the support of churches, roads and all civic improvements. The Episcopal Church [320 Broad Street, next door to Horticultural Hall] owed its beautiful building largely to their generosity. The first fish hatcheries were the project of Mr. Fairbank, who gave the land on which they were located. The city library [non-extant] and park were the gifts of Mrs. Sturgis.

About the south and west shores were found several clubhouses with cottages adjoining, where people from the same locality built their cottages in groups. Englewood Club, Elgin Club, Harvard Club, Bon Ami, from Chicago, and the Belvidere Club were, with the exception of the Elgin Club, on the south shore. Camp Collie was on the west bank of Williams Bay, and was established for ministers and their families.

The places open to the public before 1890 were the Pishcotaqua Hotel, on the north shore, Porter's Park, at the head of the lake, Russel's Park, Marengo, Kaye's Park and Warwick on the south shore. The whole southern part of the county picnicked at these parks, usually Porter's or Kaye's, and gay groups of young people chartered one of the many steamers for "moonlight excursions."

The next twenty years saw the period of greatest development at Lake Geneva. The south and west sides filled with residences, most of the public places were acquired by private interests, and the lake became more of a millionaires' playground, and less a recreation place for local people.<sup>18</sup>

By 1910, Lake Geneva's some-time nickname of "The Newport of the West" was well deserved. When construction began on Horticultural Hall the following year, a new generation of country houses was also in the process of construction, and additional examples would continue to be built until the advent of the Great Depression in 1929 brought the era to a close. Lake Geneva struggled through the Depression years as best it could, but by the start of World War II the heyday of the country house era was over. In the years that followed the war, many of the old estates were broken up, the big houses on these properties were frequently demolished, and the land was then recycled for new housing developments that gave many more people a chance to have a part-time or full-time Lake Geneva address. Never-the-less, many remnants of the country house era still exist today and some of the estates and their country houses are still extant as well, albeit on reduced acreage, and are still the cherished homes of Chicago's and the Midwest's elite.

### Social History

A detailed overview of the social history of the city of Lake Geneva is included in the *Geneva Lake Intensive Survey Architectural-Historical Report*.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, this information will not be repeated here except as is necessary to place Horticultural Hall into its appropriate historic context.

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<sup>18</sup> Gregory, John G. *Southeastern Wisconsin: A History of Old Milwaukee County*. Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1932, vol. II, pp. 749-750. The city of Lake Geneva is located at the far eastern end of the lake, Williams Bay is located at the west end.

<sup>19</sup> Crawford, Sharon and Patricia Butler. *Op. cit.*, Vol. 1, pp. 71-81.

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Horticultural Hall is being nominated to the NRHP for its local significance under Criterion A (History) because it is the building that is historically most closely related to the Lake Geneva Gardeners and Foreman's Association and to the Lake Geneva Garden Club, two complimentary organizations that have played a significant role in the social life of Lake Geneva and the surrounding area in the twentieth century. The Lake Geneva Garden Club was founded in 1915 by area women having an interest in gardening and in civic beautification and it is one of the earliest Midwest chapters of the Garden Club of America, which had been founded in Philadelphia in 1913.<sup>20</sup> The Garden Club was and is an important force in the social and civic life of the Lake Geneva area and is one of the area organizations that has been most closely associated with both women and with gardening and civic betterment. The Lake Geneva Gardeners and Foreman's Association was founded in 1905, and was a professional organization made up of the head gardeners and foremen of the area's numerous estates. This organization is of special interest because it is the only one of its kind that is known to have existed in Wisconsin.

The creation of Horticultural Hall represents in many ways an age and a way of life that has now almost vanished. Today, when the gardening needs of even the largest surviving Lake Geneva estates are mostly taken care of by professional landscape services that serve a number of such places, the time when a country estate possessed its own head gardener, preferably of English or Scottish origin, who ruled over a staff of under gardeners has all but faded from memory. In 1911, however, such men (and they were all men in those days) were so common as to be stock figures in popular fiction and they stood at the top of the social pyramid of those whose work it was to keep the larger country estates running.<sup>21</sup> So essential were such men that architects regularly incorporated a separate house for the gardener or head gardener into estate plans of the day, and the services of the best of these men were highly prized by the owners of these estates and were sometimes the object of keen competition among them. Of equal importance on the larger estates was the estate foreman, whose work might encompass not only the execution of plans laid out by the head gardener, but also the management of all estate maintenance as well, which could be a formidable task. Both positions were highly skilled management positions by the turn of the century and those who held these positions were becoming increasingly professionalized as the new century began. Some idea of the need for such persons may be gained from the following excerpted descriptions of some typical Lake Geneva estates as they existed in the first two decades of this century.

In 1885 Mr. Conrad Seipp purchased the beautiful headland known as Black Point [580 S. Lakeshore Dr., NRHP 4-3-86] and built the noble house from whose lofty observatory may be seen almost the entire area of the Lake, the only point on its shores from which so extensive a view may be had. The surrounding grounds, originally rough and cut by ravines, have been modeled into graceful slopes and densely wooded with superb trees, all of which have been placed by Mr. Seipp's heirs, his daughters, Mrs. Otto Schmidt and Mrs. Henry Bartholomay being the present [1922] owners.

Another early and beautiful home is situated on the northern point of The Narrows, that of Mrs. S. W. Allerton, whose beautiful greenhouses have become widely famous for the roses to which the larger portion of their

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<sup>20</sup> Griswold, Mac and Eleanor Weller. *The Golden Age of American Gardens*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991, pp. 16-17. This book is a brilliant and beautifully illustrated national overview of the entire estate gardening era and includes a section that discusses Lake Geneva's place in this now largely vanished world.

<sup>21</sup> The "autocrat of the garden" who ruled the grounds of Blandings Castle in many of P. G. Wodehouse' novels was only one of many examples to be found in the popular fiction of the twenties and thirties.

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innumerable beds are devoted and from which not less than thirty thousand blooms have been cut in a single season!

The most notable early development along the southwestern shore of the Lake was that of the E. E. Ayer estate, "Fairoaks," begun in 1875 and continuously added to and beautified with each succeeding year. Extending from the shore of the Lake to the heights of the hills far to the southward, the resultant private park contains 8 miles of driveways, while the varied tastes and interests of its owner have made the residence the repository of one of the most beautiful and varied collections of objects of art and of historical interest in all America.

Another private park, in this case including a most perfect little individual golf course, is the F. D. Countiss place on the south shore between Duck Hole and Button's Bay. Amid the immense trees of this large property and near the South Shore road stands the buildings which, when it was the property of the late James H. Moore, were famous throughout the Middle West for housing more than fifty splendid horses, whose quality and care was their owner's hobby.<sup>22</sup>

By 1905, the more than two hundred estates in the Lake Geneva area required a considerable seasonal and year-round work force whose job it was to maintain and improve them and a sizable body of men was also needed to supervise and direct their work. In the spring of that year an announcement in the local paper notified the public that these men were forming an association.

The gardeners of Lake Geneva have decided to form themselves into an association. For this purpose a meeting has been called for Saturday night of all representatives of the craft in the vicinity. The object of the association will be to promote a better and more general acquaintance with the latest and up to date methods of the art by mutual conference and discussion and to encourage a greater enthusiasm for giving Lake Geneva the finest country seats to be found in the western country.

Mr. A. J. Smith foreman for J. J. Mitchell and in charge of the grounds and conservatories of Ceylon Court [non-extant], is heading the movement. The Gardeners, however, of the whole lake are supporting the project with an interest which augurs certain success. It seems now quite certain that the Association will start out with a new membership of between 40 and 50 members. One of the undertakings of the Association when organized will be to have an annual chrysanthemum show in Lake Geneva. This event will take rank with our annual Poultry Show and will give another counter event to give interest and a drawing card to our city during the winter.<sup>23</sup>

By the next week, the proposed organization was a reality and thirty-one charter members were enrolled in what was called The Lake Geneva Gardeners and Foremen's Association. A newspaper account of the meeting gave its purpose as follows:

The object of the club will be to promote the interests of gardening, horticulture and in fact all lines of plant work by discussion and an interchange of ideas and methods. Probably no class of men have a broader field for work along educational lines than the gardeners of this community engaged as they are in the extensive culture of plants and having the means at hand to develop new varieties as well as to prove theories by experiment.

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<sup>22</sup> Jenkins, Paul B. *The Book of Lake Geneva*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922, pp. 182-183. More details about each of these estates can be found in the corresponding chapters of *Lake Geneva: Newport of the West*, written by Ann Wolfmeyer and Mary Burns Gage, published by the Lake Geneva Historical Society in 1976.

<sup>23</sup> *The Lake Geneva News*, March 2, 1905, p. 1.

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Mr. A. J. Smith stated the object of this meeting. He said in part that the object is strictly in interest of gardening and it must be distinctly understood by every one that there will be no trade unions attached to this organization. The object is to unite in one body and furnish each other with reliable information pertaining to gardening, to read papers on different subjects for general discussion and to exhibit anything unusually good in fruits, flowers, or vegetables. To invite to our membership visitors and to meet here twice a month to discuss seasonable work.<sup>24</sup>

Later in the month of March another newspaper article briefly noted that the Association members were busy helping to organize the coming Mid-Summer Fair. This was done in conjunction with members of the Lake Geneva Fresh Air Association, a local philanthropic group that had been established in 1887 to found and subsequently support the Holiday Home Camp, which was located on the lake shore at the west end of the lake and existed for the benefit of "unfortunate children from the Chicago area." This event was subsequently held on the grounds of the Levi Z. Leiter estate on the north shore of the lake, just to the west of the city of Lake Geneva, and it was both a social and a financial success.<sup>25</sup> Money was raised by auctioning off prize examples of locally grown flowers, fruit, and produce and the success of this affair ensured that there would more such fairs in the future. This fair turned out to be important for the future Horticultural Hall as well. By creating a public event that centered on gardening, the friendly rivalry that had already existed among the various estate owners and their employees to see who could raise the best or most exotic fruits, flowers, or vegetables finally found an acceptable outlet. The only difficulty was that since the fair was held outside, it was exposed to the vagaries of summer weather, which was a potentially serious problem since the amount of money raised for the Holiday Camp was the ultimate measure of the fair's success. Thus was born the need and the desire to have an indoor site for the fair, which soon resulted in exhibitions being moved indoors to local venues such as the Whiting Hotel [non-extant] and various local churches. The final solution, however, lay several years in the future with the creation of Horticultural Hall.

By 1910, the Mid-Summer Fair had become an annual event, as had floral shows organized by the Gardeners and Foremen's Association, and the Association itself had exceeded its members' expectations. Late in the year, a brief history of the Association appeared in the December 1910 issue of the *Wisconsin Horticulture Magazine*.

With the permission and co-operation of our employers, the moral support and good will of the people of Lake Geneva, we have accomplished a great deal more than we anticipated. We are just passing our sixth Chrysanthemum Exhibition and every one of these shows has been a success both in patronage, appreciation and financially. The friendly rivalry and competition amongst the members grows keener every year.

The purpose for which this society was organized was strictly educational and the seven years existence of the society shows very plainly at our exhibitions the value of the work. We have doubled our entries and show a better grade of exhibits. It is not the question now, as it used to be, can we fill the hall? The question has reversed itself, can we get into the hall after the exhibits are staged. If the purchase of the Whiting house property had not passed into history so suddenly it is quite possible our exhibitions at this time would have been presented to you in a building suitable for the occasion.

Our society has a roll of 48 active members, 37 honorary members and 31 associate members, making a total of 116 members. The six exhibitions given by our society to the people of Lake Geneva have cost \$3500, while the receipts amounted to \$4700, leaving a balance of \$1200 for the six exhibitions. Our society is a branch of the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. March 9, 1905, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Lake Geneva Regional News*. July 22, 1976, p. 9. This article contains a good account of the 1905 Mid-Summer Fair.

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State Horticultural Society which has a membership of 1400. We are represented by two of our members on the Executive Board.

In the past year we have distributed over two thousand plants to the school children with the object of creating a love for flowers. We have paid to the children over \$300 in premiums, thus adding a more lively interest in the growing of plants. We are satisfied with the experiment and hope to continue.<sup>26</sup>

The story of the Whiting hotel property mentioned above is a notable sidelight to the history of Horticultural Hall. By 1911, Lake Geneva was very desirous of getting modern hotels to replace its aging ones, including the Whiting, which was located on the lakeshore near the downtown. The Gardeners Association, meanwhile, hoped that the site of the Whiting might instead be reused as the site for a new hall for their association. The lure of a new hotel proved to be stronger, however, and the site was given to the promoters of a new hotel instead. This proved to be the Lake Geneva Hotel designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, which was built on the Whiting Hotel site in 1911 and continued in use until it was demolished in 1970.<sup>27</sup>

By March of 1911, rumors about a new building to house the Association were floating about Lake Geneva and these rumors crystallized on March 3, when a headline in the newspaper announced that a new building was "assured."

A letter from S. B. Chapin states that he has conveyed to the Lake Geneva Horticultural Society the south 120 feet of the lots on the corner of Broad and Wisconsin streets, for \$3500. That will give the society a parcel of land 120x120 feet in a very desirable location, on which, we understand, a beautiful new building will soon be erected, so they will have a place in which to hold their annual flower shows, and for such other purposes as may be deemed expedient. We understand that the plans of the building are about completed and that they will call for a structure of architectural beauty, admirably adapted for the purpose which it is designed.<sup>28</sup>

Simeon B. Chapin was a highly successful banker and broker who was born in Milwaukee in 1865 and whose primary residence was in New York City. Chapin was known as one of Lake Geneva's most generous men and his name could be found attached to most of the philanthropic activities of his day that benefited the area. He was also a man whose hobbies provided him with a first-class appreciation of the value of expert help in gardening and in estate management.

One of the largest areas under any one ownership in the Lake country is composed of the properties of Mr. S. B. Chapin, of New York City, who spends much of the year in this western home. From near The Narrows his many acres run northward to include a considerable portion of the shore of Lake Como. Around the residence they

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<sup>26</sup> "A Brief History of the Lake Geneva Gardeners and Foremen's Association." *Wisconsin Horticulture Magazine*. December, 1910, p. 7. A surviving copy of the 1910 By-Laws of the Association in the archives of the Geneva Area Foundation shows that: active members were professional gardeners, market gardeners, florists, superintendents or foremen of parks, cemeteries or private estates; associate members were nurserymen, seedmen, and editors or publishers of horticultural papers, or any other person interested in any degree in the promotion of horticulture; and honorary members were owners or lessees of private estates and other interested persons.

<sup>27</sup> See: *The Lake Geneva News*, August 18, 1910, p. 1; November 9, 1911, p. 1 (the latter has a good illustration of the rendering of the proposed new Wright-designed hotel); August 8, 1912, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> *Lake Geneva Herald*. March 3, 1911, p. 1.

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form superb lawns, while their northern meadows and fruit orchards surround the great barns where live the beautiful Swiss brown cattle which every passing motorist notes with admiration.<sup>29</sup>

The Lake Geneva Horticultural Society, to whom Chapin deeded the land on Broad Street, was a corporation that had been formed on January 19, 1911, with the express intention of building and owning the building that came to be known as Horticultural Hall. Money was raised for the site acquisition and construction through the sale of 200 shares of stock at a price of \$200 per share. The purchasers of this stock were almost all summer residents of the lake who were motivated by a desire to advance the state of gardening and horticulture in the area.

Its [the corporation's] entire activities have consisted in purchasing a site and building thereon a building named and called Horticultural Hall, and in maintaining and furnishing said building for local flower shows, horticulture and other educational exhibits, a meeting place for the members of the association, and for the members of the Lake Geneva Gardeners and Foremen's Association with a view to encouraging and stimulating horticulture in all its branches, and fostering an increased love of horticulture generally among the people, holding meetings of various kinds for the purpose of promoting the general welfare, and especially and predominantly, horticulture, agriculture, and allied interests and all without profit to any shareholder or individual. The income is derived from donations from individuals, the occasional renting of the building for occasions of gatherings, horticultural and other exhibitions of interest. The income is used in payment of insurance, taxes, repairs and upkeep of the building.<sup>30</sup>

The first president of the Horticultural Society was Charles L. Hutchinson, who was one of the most prominent lake residents of his time.<sup>31</sup> Hutchinson was born in Massachusetts in 1854 and moved with his family to Chicago at the age of two. He became a banker and was ultimately the president of the Corn Exchange National Bank in Chicago, which he helped found, but he was perhaps best known in his own right for his affiliations with the arts world, having been in 1911, the president of the Chicago Art Institute for more than 25 years, president of the American Federation of the Arts, and a member of the board of literally a host of arts-related organizations, being even an honorary member of the American Institute of Architects. At the time of his connection with the building of Horticultural Hall, however, Hutchinson was perhaps even better known as the husband of Frances Hutchinson, whose books about their beloved Lake Geneva estate "Wychwood," were then making their name well known in gardening circles nationally as champions of a more natural approach to gardening.

A recent publication dealing with the most notable private residences of America has singled out one of the homes on the shores of Lake Geneva as most worthy of detailed description and illustration. This is the Charles L. Hutchinson property on the north shore, known as "Wychwood." Designed throughout by the Olmsteds, no place on the Lake has had more thought and care bestowed on every detail, from the first inception of the home to the present perfection of maintained natural beauty. Unlike some artificially arranged grounds, Mr. and Mrs. Hutchinson have from the first kept almost unaltered the natural aspect of the forest which embowers the home.

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<sup>29</sup> Jenkins, Paul B. Op. Cit., p. 186. See also Wolfmeyer and Gage, pp. 57-59. By 1930, Chapin owned no less than five separate farms in the area besides his residential estate, each of which was devoted to a separate stock-raising specialty.

<sup>30</sup> Affidavit from charter board member William P. Longland, dated February 5, 1938, kept in the archives of the Geneva Area Foundation. Also includes the Articles of Incorporation and the By-Laws of the Corporation.

<sup>31</sup> Hutchinson's name and title are shown on the bid proposals and on the accepted contract for Horticultural Hall. Archives, Geneva Area Foundation

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The very approach and driveway through the grounds is a perfect bit of woods road, surrounded by a wonderful development of wild flowers, on which both Mr. and Mrs. Hutchinson are recognized authorities.<sup>32</sup>

With the sale of stock a success, Hutchinson, Chapin and other members of the Horticultural Society set about constructing a building to house those usages set forth above. By September of 1911, local newspapers were announcing that plans for the new building had been perfected and within days the winning bidders, the Lake Geneva contracting firm of Reinert, Malsch, and Baumbach, had begun excavating the site preparatory to beginning construction of the building itself.<sup>33</sup>

By December, the Hall had been roofed and enclosed and by May of the following year, the grounds were being graded under the direction of William Longland, the foreman of the Hutchinson's estate, and the interior was almost ready for use.<sup>34</sup> On June 15, 1912 the Gardeners and Foremen's Association used the opening of their annual Peony Show to hold an informal grand opening of the Hall.<sup>35</sup> Two months later, the Association was busy staging the annual Mid-Summer Fair and the newspapers were quick to note that "The ample room which the new horticultural hall gives for the staging of an exhibition, adds much to the beauty of the show."<sup>36</sup> One week after that an announcement stated that the Association was giving a dance in the Hall, which was duly reported as having been a rousing success, with over 100 tickets sold. In November, the Hall was once again humming with the annual chrysanthemum show and 1913 saw the Association hosting a Peony show in June, the Midsummer Bazaar in July, followed a week later by the annual Gladiolus exhibition, and by the Dahlia exhibition in October. All these shows were subsequently reported as being well attended and successful, so it appears that the Association's new Hall was having its desired positive impact on the community from the first.<sup>37</sup>

Events such as the ones described above were held on a regular basis for many years, but just the activities of the Association alone were not enough to fill the Hall's calendar. In 1915, help came in the form of a new Lake Geneva organization dedicated to Horticulture. This was the Lake Geneva Garden Club, founded by both summer and year-round residents of Lake Geneva. It was based on the model promulgated by the Garden Club of America, which had been founded in Philadelphia in 1913 with the credo: "The objects of this association shall be: To stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening among amateurs, to share the advantages of association through conferences and correspondence, in this country and abroad; to aid in the protection of native plants and birds; and to encourage civic planting."<sup>38</sup> The founders of the Lake Geneva Club were Mrs. Hutchinson, Mrs. Allerton, and Mrs. Swift, whose collective social importance was sufficient to get the club going in May of 1915.<sup>39</sup> By October of the same year the Club had joined with the Gardeners and

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<sup>32</sup> Jenkins, Paul B. Op. Cit., p. 185. See also Wolfmeyer and Gage, pp. 47-59.

<sup>33</sup> *The Lake Geneva News*, September 14, 1911, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> *The Lake Geneva News*, May 23, 1912, p. 1, 3.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, August 8, 1912, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Efforts to identify other organizations similar to the Lake Geneva Gardeners and Foreman's Association have so far been unavailing. A clue to the existence of other kindred organizations, however, is contained in a single article in the November 13, 1913 issue of *The Lake Geneva News*, which reported on the annual Chrysanthemum show and noted that "To stimulate endeavor in the production of flowers the Gardeners Chronicle of America offered a silver and cut glass vase for the most meritorious exhibit grown by a member of the National Association of Gardeners. This beautiful trophy was won by Wm. P. Longland gardener for Chas. L. Hutchinson of "Wychwood." What the Garden Chronicle of America or the National Association of Gardeners were has not yet been discovered.

<sup>38</sup> Goodman, Ernestine Goodman. *The Garden Club of America: History 1913-1938*. Philadelphia: 1938, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> *The Lake Geneva News*, May 13, 1915, p. 1.

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Foremen's Association to sponsor that year's annual Mid-Summer Fair and they continued to collaborate together on this and other such events as long as both were in existence.

The Lake Geneva Garden Club was originally limited to 100 members, most of who lived around the shores of Lake Geneva. Mrs. Frances Hutchinson was the guiding spirit of the Club during its early years and her national reputation as a plants woman and conservation advocate was ultimately recognized by the Garden Club of America's Frances K. Hutchinson Memorial Award, which was established in 1940.<sup>40</sup> The Lake Geneva Club joined the Garden Club of America in 1920 and has been affiliated with it ever since. Since its founding, the Club has organized and hosted literally hundreds of events in the Hall and has come to be its primary benefactor. Scrapbooks kept by the Club that chronicle events held in the Hall take up a whole shelf in the archives of the Geneva Area Foundation. They are still kept in the Hall and amount to a record of the social events and garden related events that took place in Lake Geneva from the 1920s to the present.

In 1991, Heidi Vaughan, a local resident, wrote a fine capsule summary of the Hall from the time that the two organizations joined forces to utilize and support the Hall and this summary is copied below.

In 1915, the lake shore ladies founded the Lake Geneva Garden Club under the auspices of Mrs. Charles L. Hutchinson. She and her husband had developed their home, Wychwood, into one of the most important flower preserves in the midwest. The Lake Geneva Garden Club supported Horticultural Hall since those early years, and it became the location of their well-known flower shows and other benefits.

By 1947, many of the original stockholders had moved away from the Lake Geneva area, and the original shares of stock had been mislaid, become property of their estates, or lost. It had become increasingly difficult to obtain a quorum of stockholders necessary to conduct Horticultural Society meetings. However, a few of the lake shore residents who had at heart the best interests of Horticultural Hall and the ideals for which it was conceived, decided to reorganize the Society into a foundation. "... The Horticultural Society undertook the responsibility of tracing down the outstanding shares of stock. By 1951, the last of the shares had been turned in or released by the estates, and [the] Geneva Area Foundation was organized.

[The] Geneva Area Foundation became a charitable foundation managed by a Board of Trustees and a Board of Governors. They established a library, which was furnished as a reference center on horticulture. Many of the splendid books were donated by friends of the Foundation or members of the Geneva Garden Club. Under the direction of the Geneva Area Foundation, the Lake Geneva Garden Club, and the Gardener's and Foremen's Association, the hall was used for meetings, flower shows, rummage sales, antique shows, weddings, American Legion meetings, headquarters of the Red Cross bloodmobile plus an assortment of other civic and low profit activities.

As the years went by, the funds from donations and funds from rentals dwindled. The building deteriorated and in some respects fell below standard as far as the public inspection was concerned. The Gardener's and Foreman's Association died out [in 1976] leaving the Lake Geneva Garden Club as the sole supporter of Horticultural Hall. The Garden Club began the slow and arduous task of rescuing the failing beauty, abandoned by her sponsors, with proceeds from their annual fund raising efforts. The club members gave as much in labor as in dollars by,

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<sup>40</sup> An excellent overview of the importance of the Hutchinson's to the history of gardening in America can be found in the previously cited *The Golden Age of American Gardens* by Griswold, and Weller, pp. 279-281.

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sweeping floors, raking leaves, hauling out trash planting weeding, and grooming the gardens. With funds from the Garden Club, the kitchen was completely renovated, requiring new plumbing, wiring, and food service equipment. The roof was repaired, the inside painted, chairs and tables purchased, and the outside walkways screened.

In 1990, the question was brought up again as to what to do with Horticultural Hall. ... After lengthy meetings and discussions, a vote was taken and decided that Geneva Area Foundation needed to reorganize. In the fall of 1990, a new Horticultural Hall board was elected consisting of three trustees from the Garden Club and a board consisting of distinguished residents of the area. This new board attacked its responsibilities with new energy and with substantial financial help from the Garden Club. Major renovations took place including a new heating and air conditioning system, insulation, and new windows and doors which enable the Hall to be open all year round for rentals.

Today, [1991] Horticultural Hall stands on the threshold of a new future. The aims of the new governing body have not changed from those of the original founders – to provide a center for educational, horticultural or social meetings for everyone in the community of the lakes area.<sup>41</sup>

That the Hall has survived reflects credit on many people and this survival is due in no small part to the continuing interest of later generations of some of the families who founded it. Harry Hartshorne, a grandson of Simeon B. Chapin, to name just one, has been an important supporter of the Hall for many years and remains a trustee to this day. Another, Helen Wrigley – Mrs. Philip K. Wrigley – took an extremely active role in the operations of Horticultural Hall, especially in the 1947-1952 period; her support of the operations of Horticultural Hall continued until her death and has been continued, thereafter, by the Wrigley Family Foundation.

These and other people who have invested so much in Horticultural Hall continue to try to find an appropriate new role for it today. The Hall continues to be used for everything from Garden Club shows to weddings and it is still in very good but underutilized condition. The historic importance of the Hall was recognized in 1985 by the authors of the *Geneva Lake Intensive Survey Architectural-Historical Report*, who believed that the Hall should be the centerpiece of what they proposed as the Horticultural Hall Historic District.<sup>42</sup> The present nomination also recognizes this historic importance and is therefore nominating the Hall to the NRHP under Criterion A at the local level because the Hall is the only surviving intact historic resource that has been closely identified with either the Lake Geneva Garden Club or the Lake Geneva Gardener's and Foremen's Association, two highly important social organizations in the twentieth century history of Lake Geneva and the surrounding area. A common interest in gardening and horticulture was one of the few things that could bring the summer residents and year-round residents of Lake Geneva together on a regular basis and these two organizations provided the venue whereby this valuable social interaction could take place and where people of two very different worlds could interact on something like an equal footing.

#### Architecture

Horticultural Hall is being nominated to the NRHP under Criterion C at the local level because it represents a highly intact example of sophisticated Arts & Crafts style design, as applied to an unusual resource type for Wisconsin, that of an exhibition hall and meeting hall. The Hall is also of architectural significance as one of the few known documented

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<sup>41</sup> Vaughan, Heidi. "Horticultural Hall. A Grand Old Lady." *Lake & Country Magazine*, Spring/Summer 1991, pp. 5-7. This article is also illustrated with very fine historical pictures of the Hall.

<sup>42</sup> Crawford, Sharon and Patricia Butler. Op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 242-247.

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Wisconsin projects of the Chicago architectural firm of Spencer and Powers. Robert C. Spencer, the design partner of the firm, was a regionally well known architect in 1911. He had completed a series of notable suburban and country estates in the Chicago area and elsewhere in Illinois and in Indiana, including several done in collaboration with the celebrated landscape architect Jens Jensen. One of the earliest members of what was later called the Prairie School, Spencer is best known today for his friendship with Frank Lloyd Wright, but his own work was of a high quality and deserves to be better known because it represented a very personal response to the architectural innovations that surrounded him in Chicago as he achieved maturity as an architect.

Robert Closson Spencer, Jr. (1864-1953) was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He first attended the University of Wisconsin, from which he graduated with a Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering degree in 1886 and, it is believed, an acquaintance of Frank Lloyd Wright, who was also a student in the Engineering Department at the time. Spencer then studied architecture at M.I.T. in Cambridge, Massachusetts, from 1888-1890. While attending M.I.T., Spencer also worked in the architectural offices of Wheelright & Haven, and the offices of Shepley, Rutan, & Coolidge, both in Boston. He then left for Europe for two years as the sixth recipient of the prestigious Rotch Traveling Scholarship. Upon returning, Spencer went back to work for Shepley, Rutan, & Coolidge, who sent him to their office in Chicago in connection with the construction of the firm's design for the Chicago Public Library. In 1895, Spencer left this firm to begin a practice of his own, which he continued until 1905, when he affiliated with Horace S. Powers (1872-1928) in the firm of Spencer and Powers; 1905 also being the same year that he joined the A.I.A. His practice with his new partner lasted from 1905 until 1923, after which he again practiced on his own until 1928, when he became an associate professor at Oklahoma Architectural & Mechanical College in Stillwater, Oklahoma. From 1930-1934, Spencer was on the faculty of the School of Architecture and the Allied Arts at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida, and he afterwards painted murals of historic Florida houses for the Federal Government from 1935-1938. Subsequently, Spencer retired to Arizona, and he died in Tucson in 1953.<sup>43</sup>

The simple outline of Spencer's career given above, however, gives little hint of his varied and productive career as an architect, writer, and inventor.

Early in his career Spencer came under the influence of Louis Sullivan and joined three other young radicals, Frank Lloyd Wright, Dwight Perkins and Myron Hunt, in a common pursuit of a new architecture. Spencer's style, strongly influenced by the English Arts & Crafts Movement, emerged with the Orendorff house (Canton, IL) in 1902. Spencer softened the simple geometric forms and rectilinear detailing of his stucco houses by the use of elegant stained glass windows with motifs based on native Midwestern flora. He closely followed the foreign press and became an important disseminator to American popular journals of the English and German domestic revivals.

In 1900 he wrote one of the first important articles on his friend Frank Lloyd Wright, which was published with illustrations in the Boston-based periodical *Architecture Review*, and the following year he began producing articles published during the next 15 years in *House Beautiful*, *Architectural Record*, *Brickbuilder*, *Suburban Life*, and *American Homes and Gardens* that explained in simple terms the goals of the Prairie School.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Freely adapted from Spencer's biographical entries in *Who Was Who in America, vol. V, 1969-1973*, Chicago: Marquis Who's Who, Inc., 1973, p. 682; and *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (1958 Volume).

<sup>44</sup> Kruty, Paul. "Spencer, Robert C(losson)." *The Dictionary of Art, Vol. 29, Sodermark to Summerson*. London; Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1996, p. 382.

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The Arts and Crafts style referred to above had its origins in the work of English architects and designers such as Charles F. A. Voysey and M. H. Baillie Scott, both of whom reacted to the excesses of the Victorian period and sought a new approach, especially in residential design, by using simplified elements found in traditional English cottages and the smaller English manor houses to produce a comprehensive design vocabulary in which simplified exterior and interior elements were designed to work together. True American examples of this style are almost invariably residential buildings that imitate many of the features of these English prototypes. Forms were simple, with minimal decoration beyond the use of small, asymmetrically placed multi-paned windows. Wood was used extensively in the interiors, and shingle roofs are typical, sometimes padded at the edges to resemble thatch. Exteriors were almost always either wholly or partially surfaced in plain or painted stucco.

Identifying Wisconsin buildings which are true examples of the Arts and Crafts style provides a good illustration of the problems which confront architectural historians when dealing with a style whose specific design characteristics are still being evaluated. The English Arts and Crafts movement had a considerable influence on several American styles besides the American version of the Arts and Crafts style itself, including the American Craftsman style, Bungalow style, and the Tudor and Elizabethan Revival styles (and their subtype, the English Cottage Revival style). While pure examples of the Arts and Crafts style are uncommon in Wisconsin outside of its largest cities, buildings sharing important characteristics of this style can be found in many examples of the other styles mentioned above, making identification difficult. Eventually, it will be possible to catalog the fine distinctions between styles that are necessary to properly distinguish between them, but for now, stylistic definitions must take into account the interrelatedness of the features these several styles sometimes share. At this time the most important distinguishing characteristics of Wisconsin buildings designed in the Arts and Crafts style are partially or totally stuccoed wall surfaces, frequently with some apparent half timber work visible, an informal "English" appearance, and the almost exclusively residential character of these buildings.

By the time Spencer submitted his design for Horticultural Hall in 1911, he had already made a name for his firm as a designer of elegant English-influenced Arts & Crafts style suburban and rural country houses located primarily in Illinois and Indiana. All of these houses shared a strong stylistic continuity, whether they were built in 1894 or in 1910, as witness the early half-timber-clad Tudor Revival style J. Stanley Grepe house in Evanston, Illinois, built in 1894; the quite similar Orendorff house at Canton, Illinois, built in 1903; or the more-Prairie School Style-influenced Magnus House in Winnetka, Illinois, built in 1905.<sup>45</sup> Each of these houses makes use of half-timber work infilled with stucco, each makes extensive use of casement windows, each makes use of octagonal elements somewhere on its exterior, and each has wide overhanging eaves. While a trend towards greater horizontality and greater simplicity in detailing is noticeable over time, not even the passage of ten years and close exposure to the most radical ideas then current in American architecture appear to have greatly altered the ideas that made up the core of Spencer's thinking about residential design.

The total amount of work Spencer did in the Lake Geneva area is still a matter of considerable speculation. His earliest known project in the area was the gardener's lodge he designed for the Charles A. Stevens estate on nearby Lake Delavan, built in 1901-02. It was a small, stucco-clad complex of mostly one-story elements that was one of Spencer's most

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<sup>45</sup> For the Grepe House, see Paul Kruty's "Wright, Spencer, and the Casement Window," *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 30 #2-3 (Summer-Autumn), 1995, p. 108. For the Orendorff and Magnus houses see; Brooks, H. Allen, *Prairie School Architecture: Studies from the Western Architect*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975, pp. 191-219. This last source contains a reprint of the special issue of the *Western Architect* published in April 1914 devoted to the work of Spencer & Powers.

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complete essays in the Prairie School style.<sup>46</sup> His next area project is believed to have been the gatekeepers lodge at "Wychwood," the well known Geneva Lake estate of Charles L. and Frances Kinsley Hutchinson. Wychwood was the subject of several books written by Mrs. Hutchinson, one of which, *Our Country Home* (A. C. McClurg & Co., 1907), contains a large number of illustrations, including some of other outbuildings on the estate designed in the Prairie School style.<sup>47</sup> No actual documentation has yet been found that links Spencer directly to these buildings, but there are some interesting points in favor of this contention. The no longer extant main house at Wychwood was built between 1902 — when Spencer had just finished the Stevens gardener's lodge on nearby Lake Delavan — and 1905, the design having been furnished by Spencer's old firm of Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge. The Tudor Revival style design of the original residence, and especially its landward side, makes striking use of a two-story half-timber clad polygonal stair tower, a design element that recurs in one way or another in practically all of Spencer's residential designs beginning as early as 1894.<sup>48</sup> In addition, Mr. Hutchinson was the president of the board of the Lake Geneva Horticultural Society when Spencer's design was chosen for Horticultural Hall and he was also a confidante of the members of the board of the Lake Geneva Country Club when Spencer's design for the club's new clubhouse (extant) was approved in 1915. Finally, Spencer's biographical entry in the volume of the *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* published in 1958, five years after Spencer's death, states that "he [Spencer] was particularly well known for his designs for country homes, including those for Charles L. Hutchinson and Harlow N. Higinbotham." Since Hutchinson's only identified country house was Wychwood, what was Spencer's connection to it?

Whatever the eventual story may be, Spencer's elegant half-timber clad design for Horticultural Hall fits beautifully into what is known of his work up to that date. This design is also an almost textbook example of Arts and Crafts style design, containing as it does all the elements of the style listed earlier. Even the intended purpose of the Hall is compatible with the Arts and Craft movement's interest in the natural world and gardening.

As noted earlier, the winning bid for the Hall was tendered by the Lake Geneva firm of Reinert, Malsch, and Baumbach. This firm was a prominent one in the city and was both a manufacturer of various types of concrete products and a well established contracting firm, a common combination in the period when concrete block was just coming into use and was made locally rather than shipped from afar.<sup>49</sup> By September 8, 1911, the newspapers were announcing that the plans for the Hall had been perfected and that Reinert, Malsch, and Baumbach were to start their work as soon as the surveyor had done his work.<sup>50</sup> A week later ground was broken, the paper noting that "The architecture of this building will be the panel effect with rough cast finish. On the south will be a court 90x100 the walls of which will be cement block. The building will be heated by steam and electric lighted and will have all the modern conveniences."<sup>51</sup> A week later the paper noted that "The cement is being mixed by machinery. That is the first time a machine has been used on a building in Lake Geneva."<sup>52</sup> By November 17, the workers had the original wood shingle roof on the building, and by December 7, the building had been enclosed and work had begun on the interior. The completed building was a source of pride for the whole community and the local paper, commenting on the Gardeners and Foremen's Association's previously desired site

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<sup>46</sup> Brooks, H. Allen, *The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and His Midwestern Contemporaries*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972, p. 59.

<sup>47</sup> One of these outbuildings, which was not pictured, was the first of several contiguous boathouses, and it is still extant.

<sup>48</sup> Photos of this feature can be seen in both the previously cited *The Golden Age of American Gardens* by Griswold, and Weller, p. 281, and the previously cited *Lake Geneva: Newport of the West*, by Wolfmeyer and Gage, p. 49.

<sup>49</sup> *The Lake Geneva News*, January 26, 1911, p. 1. A good article about the firm.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, September 8, 1911, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, September 14, 1911, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> *The Lake Geneva News*, September 22, 1911, p. 5.

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Lake Geneva, Walworth Co., WI

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on the lake that was now the site of the new Lake Geneva Hotel, stated that "The Horticultural Hall stands upon as good, if not a better lot and beautifies a part of the city which surely needed improvement."<sup>53</sup>

Today, the Horticultural Hall is a much loved local landmark. Consequently, the Hall is being nominated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for its architectural significance because it is an excellent example of the Arts and Crafts style as applied to a public meeting place. Elements of the style, as seen here, include the use of stucco, half-timbering, casement windows, the heavy framing of the front porch, and the exposed trusses on the interior. The building is further significant as the work of Robert C. Spencer Jr., a regionally known architect who is closely associated with the birth of the Prairie School style. Spencer was one of the most prominent spokesmen for the new style and he was also the designer of numerous excellent buildings throughout the Midwest that incorporated many of its principles into designs that reflected both his essentially conservative nature and his willingness to go beyond it. At the Horticultural Hall this approach to design is evident in the use of a rectilinear grid of half-timbering to organize the façade and in the horizontal bank of windows. However, this geometric ordering is softened by the addition of the entrance porch, which makes use of heavy timbers and repeats the front-gabled roof on a smaller scale. The scale of the building is thereby reduced and the porch creates both a welcoming and sheltering entrance to the building and a point of visual interest.

In conclusion, Horticultural Hall is significant for its association with the activities of the Lake Geneva Gardener's and Foreman's Association and with the Lake Geneva Garden Club. The building is further significant as an example of the work of architect Robert Spencer, whose work blended historical elements with the rectilinear surfaces of Prairie Style architecture. The building is highly intact and in very good condition and it is still used for the same purposes for which it was designed.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, August 8, 1912, p. 1.



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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Lots 1 and 2, Block 17, of the Village of Geneva (now City of Lake Geneva), Walworth County, Wisconsin.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundaries set forth enclose all the land historically associated with the Horticultural Hall.

Horticultural Hall  
Name of Property

Walworth  
County and State

Wisconsin

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

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

**Photographs** Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

### Property Owner

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

<b>name/title</b>	Ms. Christi Moritz/President	<b>date</b>	1999
<b>organization</b>	Horticultural Hall	<b>telephone</b>	414-248-4382
<b>street &amp; number</b>	330 Broad Street	<b>zip code</b>	53147
<b>city or town</b>	Lake Geneva	<b>state</b>	Wisconsin

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

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

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Section <sup>Photos</sup>Page 1 Horticultural Hall  
Lake Geneva, Walworth Co., WI

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PHOTOS

Items a-d are the same for photos 1 - 12.

Photo 1

- a) Horticultural Hall
- b) Lake Geneva, Walworth County, WI
- c) Timothy F. Heggland, February 24, 1999
- d) State Historical Society of Wisconsin
- e) Broad St., View looking SSE
- f) Photo 1 of 18

Photo 2

- e) View looking W
- f) Photo 2 of 18

Photo 3

- e) View looking W
- f) Photo 3 of 18

Photo 4

- e) West elevation, View looking W
- f) Photo 4 of 18

Photo 5

- e) North elevation, View looking SW
- f) Photo 5 of 18

Photo 6

- e) Detail of North elevation, View looking SW
- f) Photo 6 of 18

Photo 7

- e) Main entrance, View looking W
- f) Photo 7 of 18

Photo 8

- e) Library, View looking SE
- f) Photo 8 of 18

Photo 9

- e) Entrance vestibule doors, View looking W
- f) Photo 9 of 18

Photo 10

- e) Auditorium, View looking W
- f) Photo 10 of 18

Photo 11

- e), View looking N
- f) Photo 11 of 18

Photo 12

- e) West range of courtyard, View looking W
- f) Photo 12 of 18

Photo 13

- c) Photographer unknown, ca.1912-1913
- d) Geneva Area Foundation
- e) South elevation of Auditorium, View looking N
- f) Photo 13 of 18

Photo 14

- c) Photographer unknown, ca.1912-1913
- d) Geneva Area Foundation
- e) Library interior, View looking SE
- f) Photo 14 of 18

Photo 15

- c) Photographer unknown, ca.1912-1913
- d) Geneva Area Foundation
- e) Library interior, View looking NE
- f) Photo 15 of 18

Items a, b and d are the same for photos 16 - 18.

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Photo 16

- a) Horticultural Hall
- b) Lake Geneva, Walworth County, WI
- c) Photographer unknown, ca.1912-1913
- d) Geneva Area Foundation
- e) Auditorium, View looking E
- f) Photo 16 of 18

Photo 17

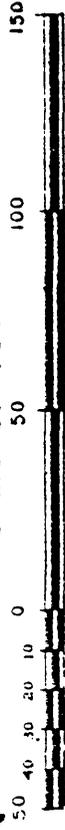
- c) Photographer unknown, ca.1951
- e) Auditorium, View looking E
- f) Photo 17 of 18

Photo 18

- c) Photographer unknown, ca.1951
- e) Auditorium, View looking W
- f) Photo 18 of 18

8" W. P. E.

Scale of Feet.



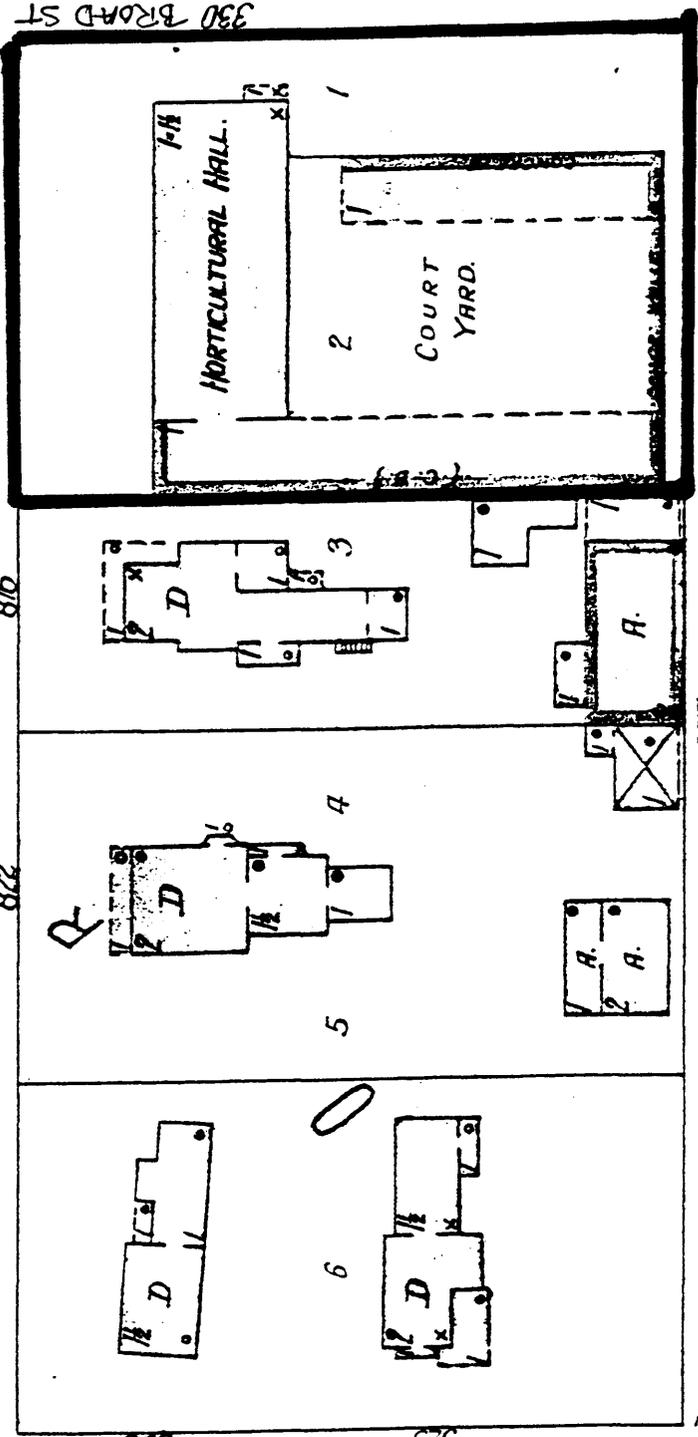
Copyright 1928 by the Sanborn Map Co.

8" W. PIPE WISCONSIN

(71)

816

822



330 BROAD ST

HORTICULTURAL HALL.

COURT YARD.

17

80'

HORTICULTURAL HALL

330 BROAD STREET

LAKE GENEVA, WAI. WORTH COUNTY

WISCONSIN

boundary

TO SCALE



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