National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms* Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Wa	wbeek, The Horace	A. J. Upham Res:	idence	
and/or common	Camp Wawbeek			
2. Loca	ation			
street & number	r N9888, Highway	13		$\underline{n} \cdot \underline{a}$ not for publication
city, town Wi	sconsin Dells	<u>n.a</u> .vicinity	of	۸
state WI	53965 c	ode ⁵⁵ co	ounty ^{Columbia}	code ⁰²¹
3. Clas	sification			
Category district _X building(s) structure site object \	Ownership public private both Public Acquisition in process being considered X n.a.	Status X occupied unoccupied work in prog Accessible yes: restricted X no	ed government	<pre> museum park private residence religious scientific transportation other: Charitabl</pre>
	r Seal Society of			
name Easte street & number	0700.14	, / · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		• ·
city, town	Madison	<u>n</u> .avicinity	of stat	te WI 53711
<u>5. Loca</u>	ation of Le	gal Descri	ption	
courthouse, regi	stry of deeds, etc.	olumbia County Co	ourthouse	
street & number	400 DeWit	t Street		
city, town	Portage		stat	te WI 53901
6. Rep	resentatio	n in Existir	ng Surveys	
title Wisconsir	n Inventory of His	toric Places has t	nis property been determined	eligible? yes _X no
date 1985			federal	state county local
depository for su	urvey records Sta	te Historical So	ciety of Wisconsin	
	adison, WI		stat	te 53706

JUN 19 19

7. Description

Condition excellent deteriorated good ruins fair unexposed	Check one unaltered _X_ altered	Check one X_ original site moved date
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Wawbeek, the Horace A. J. Upham summer house, is a large one and a half story Shingle style residence situated on the westernmost portion of a high ridge in the center of the 400 acre estate of which the house is the focus. The dominant feature of the building is a three-story stone tower on the west facade. This tower overlooks the nearby village of Wisconsin Dells and the surrounding Wisconsin River Valley and was a prominent local landmark before the trees around it grew up which now shield it from the view of passers-by on nearby Highway 13. Wawbeek is one of the few large estates built in the Wisconsin Dells region around the turn of the century. In 1919 a local paper called Wawbeek "one of the finest estates in this whole section...An elegant residence, imposing, handsome, almost palatial."

The main block of the house is one and a half stories high, is of frame construction and is rectilinear in plan. As originally built the house is very simple in composition, having a large gable roof whose two broad slopes extend down on the east and west facades to just below the first floor window heads. The north and south facades are formed by the gable ends. Due to the very narrow width of site at this point, the north and south facades are considerably longer than the east and west facades. The whole of the exterior of the main block is covered in Washington Cedar shingles which were later painted. The building rests on₂^a massive foundation of random ashlar, pink-tinged sandstone quarried on the site. This stone was also used in the chimney on the north facade and the three-story tower on the west facade.

The north facade is dominated by a massive buttressed chimney constructed of the same random ashlar stone as the foundation. This chimney bisects the north facade and rises through the apex of the gable end. The first floor of this facade has two one-over-one light windows, one on each side of the chimney mass. These windows were originally duplicated on the second floor above of which the left one survives. The windows have simple architrave casings surmounted by a cornice with the upper light being divided by diamond paned muntins. A shed roof veranda extends across the western two-thirds of the facade. Massive paired square wooden posts with simple capitals support the roof of the veranda and rest in turn upon a solid stone balustrade formed by an upward continuation of the foundation wall.

The veranda, with its wide, overhanging eave and rounded, projecting rafter ends, continues around the west facade and fans out to form the base of the most unusual feature of the house, a three story tall stone tower attached to the main block of the house on the west-facing facade. The tower has a corbeled parapet as a termination and the flat roof of the tower served as a lookout perch from which Mr. Upham used to survey the spectacular view extending some 40 miles in all directions. There are three jack-arched, double hung windows in each of the first two floors of the tower and four round-arched double hung windows on the third floor. The tower is attached directly to the main block on the first floor and to a very large, gable roofed dormer on the second floor which the tower bisects. There is a group of two diamond paned casement windows on either side of the tower in the gable end of the dormer.

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The south facade of the house is essentially identical with the north facade except that there is no chimney block on this facade and the veranda on this facade is filled in with single pane casement windows which form the south wall of the living hall within.

The east facade has undergone the most alterations of any of the facades. Originally the first floor served as the kitchen entrance, the main entrances being from the verandas. There was also a large cross gable dormer without side walls set in the roof slope that dominated the east facade. However, the success of Wawbeek as a summer home put a serious strain on the guest room capacity. All three of the tower rooms and a sleeping porch above the veranda on the south facade had been converted to bedrooms. Finally, in 1906, Mr. Upham commissioned Alexander C. Eschweiler, Sr., the architect of the original building to add a wing on the east facade containing two more bedrooms, a bathroom and an enlarged kitchen and dining room. The effect of the new additions was to enlarge the second floor dormer on the east facade, making it identical with that on the west facade; add a large L-shaped, flat roof kitchen wing onto the first floor of the east facade; and create a new oriel bay above the veranda on the north side for use as another bedroom.

The floorplan of Wawbeek is open and informal, reflecting the casual and active lifestyle of the Upham family. The house was essentially a place where family and guests gathered when they were not outside. Consequently there was little need for a formal floor plan. The first floor consists largely of a very large 40' x 40' living hall which served as the center of indoor activity. The dominant feature of this room is a very large red brick fireplace set into the north wall. The fireplace has a segmented arched opening and is unadorned with decoration. The fireplace is flanked by a single window on each side, both having built-in window seats. There is also a large built-in bench seat set at right angles to the left of the fireplace group forming a semi-enclosed inglenook. The flooring of the room is maple and the ceiling of the room is made up of simple white pine panels set between the girders and beams of the ceiling forming a deeply recessed grid pattern. Several of the original wrought iron and art glass lighting fixtures are still in evidence in this room and there is a built-in sideboard in place on the east wall of the hall and behind which is the original pantry, kitchen, and various other service rooms.

The full width of the west end of the hall serves as the main stair hall for the house, the ceiling here being open to the beamed roof two floor above. The first landing of the stairway is just behind the inglenook and from there the stair rises around the perimeter of this large rectangular space, forming a balcony across the western end of the hall and terminating finally in a second floor balcony which faces the first across the breadth of the stair hall. The whole of the stairs has a simple balustrade with turned spindles and octogonal newel posts. A final run of stairs leaps across the breadth of the stair hall from the second floor balcony to a door set high in This stair leads to the third floor bedroom in the tower and west wall of the house. from there out onto the roof.



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The second floor consists entirely of bedrooms and bathrooms opening off a central hallway which opens onto the balcony. These rooms are all intact and have plain paneled walls whose woodwork was all painted at a later date. The north facing bedroom is the original master bedroom and has a massive, floor-to-ceiling brick fireplace with a tudor arched opening and an otherwise unadorned surface. Currently, the house is used as a dormitory for camp counselors with the first floor being given over to entertainment facilities for handicapped children and adults.

There are several other buildings on the grounds of Wawbeek which have associations with the Upham family but none of them retain the same degree of integrity and the importance that the main Upham house does. In addition, the creation of the necessary facilities for running a large camp for the handicapped has resulted in numerous buildings being built upon the crest of the hill. While these buildings have an historical importance of their own they mostly postdate 1938, the year that the camp was given to the Wisconsin Association for the Disabled, and thus, are considered as intrusions for the purpose of this nomination.

²Davis, Elizabeth Upham, <u>Just Another Biography</u>, privately printed, ca 1979, page 14.

⁴Comparisons with buildings of the same type and quality within the Wisconsin Dells area have proven to be extremely difficult. The Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places survey of this area is largely limited to a windshield survey which was not able to inventory Wawbeek or similar structures as such buildings are either private or not visible from public roads. Research in the Dells area turned up no record of buildings of a similar size or scope. Most summer homes in the Dells seem to have been built within the village and were urban rather than country homes. Thus, it has not been possible to formulate a good basis for comparison. Similarly it has proven difficult to make comparisons between other Shingle style or early works by Alexander Eschweiler. It has proved impossible to compare Eschweiler's innumerable residential designs because of the very fine quality of his whole output, designed in a wide variety of styles. It seems probable, however, that Wawbeek is one of Eschweiler's earliest country house commissions, and is thus important as one of the earliest identified designs by one of Wisconsin's pre-eminent architects.

Comparisons between Wawbeek and other buildings associated with Upham's life in Milwaukee have also proven difficult, but for other reasons. Research has shown that only two of the several residences and office buildings associated with Upham's private and public life in Milwaukee survive. The first extant building is Upham's last Milwaukee residence, built by him in 1911 at 3109 N. Lake Drive and also designed by Alexander C. Eschweiler. The second extant building is the Wells Building at 324 E. Wisconsin Ave., constructed in 1901, designed by Henry C. Koch, and from 1901 until

(continued)

¹Kilbourn Weekly Events, August 28, 1919.

³Alexander C. Eschweiler Collection, Wisconsin Architectural Archives, Milwaukee Public Library.

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his death in 1919, the site of Upham's law office. Taken together these three buildings show what would seem to be the typical pattern of the time: office, city home, country Moreover, each of these buildings retains considerable architectural merit. And home. yet, the biographies written by his wife and daughter suggests that of the three, Wawbeek was the building they most closely associated with Upham. Wawbeek is also the building most closely related to what has become perhaps Upham's most enduring legacy to Wisconsin, the retention in its natural state of 700 acres of highly important land located in the immediate vicinity of heavily developed Wisconsin Dells. This acreage is divided into two parcels: the 400-acre area known as Camp Wawbeek, and the 300-acre area known as Blackhawk Island and Camp Upham Woods. Upham purchased the latter around the turn of the century (after summers at Wawbeek for a decade) in order to save it from commercial exploitation. Upon the death of Mrs. Upham in 1936, Camp Wawbeek was deeded to the Easter Seal Society by Upham's heirs who, in turn, deeded Blackhawk Island and the land now called Camp Upham Woods to the University of Wisconsin in 1941, who use the land as the State 4-H camp and as a nature training center.

8. Significance



Wawbeek is locally significant as one of the finest and most intact turn-of-the-century summer homes remaining in the famous resort area of Wisconsin Dells. This house is significant for its connections with its builder, Horace A. J. Upham, a leading Milwaukee lawyer, businessman and philanthropist, and is architecturally significant as an early design by Alexander C. Eschweiler, Sr., "one of Milwaukee's most distinguished architects."⁴

Architecture

In 1896 Horace A.J. Upham (1853-1919), his wife Mary Greene Upham (1860-1935) and their two children spent their summer vacation in the village of Kilbourn (now Wisconsin Dells), Wisconsin, long a favorite vacation spot of the Greene Family. One of their favorite pleasures was daily walks to the top of a nearby hill overlooking the village and the Wisconsin River Valley. This hill and the 400+ acre farm of which it was a part were offered for sale in 1897 and the Uphams purchased it with the intention of making it their summer home. They named the property "Wawbeek" after the rock which threatened Mudjkewis, the West Wind, in Longfellow's poem "Tale of Hiawatha".

Upham decided to build on the western end of the hill on his property in 1899. He chose as his architect Alexander C. Eschweiler, Sr. (1865-1940) who would become one of Milwaukee's finest architects, but who was then a relative newcomer to architectural practice. Eschweiler was born in Boston in 1865 and moved to Milwaukee with his family in 1882. There he attended Marquette College and Cornell University in New York, from which he graduated in 1890. He returned to Milwaukee and worked in the offices of various local architects until 1892 when he formed his own firm. His "first large residential commission"⁵ was the Milwaukee residence of Col. Howard Greene at 1831 North Cambridge Ave. (extant). Col. Greene was the president of the Milwaukee Drug Co. and a brother of Mrs. Upham. Eschweiler quickly developed a reputation as an able designer and in 1897 he achieved his first prominence by winning a design competition for the first buildings of the newly created Milwaukee-Downer College campus, one of whose board members was Mrs. Upham. Merrill and Holton Halls (NRHP), the first buildings of the winning design, were ready for occupancy in 1899, by which time Eschweiler was well known to the Upham family and was a logical choice as the architect of their new house.

Construction on the Shingle style house and two, 2-story, shingle covered, octogonal water towers (non-extant) began at Wawbeek in 1899 and the Upham family first occupied their new home in the summer of 1900. The local paper stated that "Mr. and Mrs. Upham are now occupying the handsomest, most attractive summer house in the northwest" and Wawbeek quickly became the favorite residence of the Uphams.

In 1904 Mrs. Upham and her brother, Col & Greene, gave the important mineral and fossil collection of their late father, Thomas Arnold Greene, to Milwaukee-Downer College as

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical	Data			
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Verbal boundary description and ju	stification			
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List all states and counties for pro	perties ove	rlapping state or cou	unty boundaries	
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11. Form Prepare	d By			
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<u> </u>			A	
organization for the owners		date		
treet & number 212 Highland Av	enue	tele	phone (608)238-	3010
ity or town Madison		stat	te WI 53705	
12. State Historie	c Pres	ervation C	officer Ce	rtification
he evaluated significance of this prope	erty within the	state is:		
national	state	local		
As the designated State Historic Preserv 65), I hereby nominate this property for Inccording to the criteria and procedures State Historic Preservation Officer signa	r inclusion in s set forth by	the National Register a	nd certify that it has I	f 1966 (Public Law 89– been evaluated
the DIRECTOR OF HISTORY	C PPESE	PUNTIN	date -	APRIL 24, 19
For NPS use only I hereby certify that this property is Allowerstern	s included in Ent		date	6-19-85-
Keeper of the National Register	Mat	THE LET OF		
Attest:			date	
Chief of Registration				

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well as funds to build a museum building to hold it. Following what was by then a family practice, they commissioned a new Milwaukee residence for themselves at 3109 N. Lake Drive (extant) also designed by Eschweiler. By this time, Eschweiler had joined the front rank of architects practicing in Milwaukee. Eschweiler practiced alone until 1924 when he formed a partnership with his three sons under the name Eschweiler and Eschweiler. He continued his practice with them until his death in 1940.

In his 48 years of practice in Milwaukee, Eschweiler designed many outstanding buildings in a variety of styles. Three of the best known are the Art-Deco Style Wisconsin Gas Co. Building (1929), 626 E. Wisconsin Ave., the Wisconsin Telephone Co. Building (1930), 735 North 5th Street, and the Bankers Building (1928) at East Wisconsin Ave. and North Water Street. He was also well-known for his pagoda style filling stations built for the Wadham's Oil Co. between 1917 and 1930. Regardless of style or building type "few architects could lay claim to as many consistently well designed buildings as A.C. Eschweiler and the architectural firm he founded."

Wawbeek is one of Eschweiler's earliest designs and it is a fine example of an informal, turn-of-the-century summer home designed around an informal family life style. The value of the house is strengthened by the largely original condition of both the interior and exterior of the house. The first floor in particular needs only the removal of later paint on the walls and ceiling and the addition of period furniture to return the house to its original condition.

Association with Significant Person

Horace A. J. Upham (1853-1919) was the youngest of ten children born to Don A. J. and Elizabeth Jacques Upham. The Uphams were early pioneers of Milwaukee, reaching there in 1836. Don Upham practiced law, became a member of the Territorial Legislature in 1840, president of the State Constitutional Convention of 1846 and was twice elected mayor of Milwaukee in 1849 and 1850.

Horace A. J. Upham was born in Milwaukee in 1853, graduated from the University of Michigan in 1875 and was admitted to the Bar in 1877. He became a member of the firm of Wells and Brigham, one of the oldest firms in Milwaukee at the time. This firm was a well-known specialist in commercial, corporate and real estate law and Upham was successful there from the first. He became legal representative and manager of the extensive business interests of Daniel Wells Jr., brother of Charles J. Wells, Upham's law partner, and his success in this relationship led to numerous other positions of trust and responsibility. Upham became associated with Wells in many of the latter's business interests including lumber and related activities in northern Wisconsin and Michigan. These interests included involvement with the Isaac Stephenson Lumber Co., the N. Ludington Co., the Peshtigo Lumber Co. and numerous others, notably the planning, promotion and building of the Escanaba and Lake Superior Railroad. While serving his clients' interests, Upham became an expert in all phases of real-estate law and was regarded as an authority on long-term building leases. Upham was responsible for overseeing the building of the Wells Building, the Stephenson Building, and the Milwaukee Athletic Club Building for his various clients.

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Upon the death of Daniel Wells, Upham was named Wells' executor and trustee for what, at an aggregate of \$15,000,000, was "the largest estate ever probated in Wisconsin"^o up to that time. Trust work began to occupy an ever increasing amount of Mr. Upham's time, so much so that in 1919 one newspaper stated that Upham was "credited with being executor and manager of the largest financial interests in the state, if not the entire country. Among the large estates under his charge are those of Daniel Wells, Isaac Stephenson, John Plankinton, Frederick Layton and several others." At the time of his death, Upham was president of the J. Stephenson Co. Trustees, president of the Escanaba and Lake Superior Railroad, president of the Marinette and Menominee Paper Co. and was a director of a dozen other firms. He had also served as president of the board of trustees of the First Unitarian Church of Milwaukee for 25 years and was a director of the Layton Art Gallery and other service organizations.

Horace Upham died at Wawbeek in 1919. Several years after his death one of Upham's biographers spoke of Wawbeek and of the role it had played in Upham's life: "At his country home near Kilbourn, Wisconsin most of the hours he (Upham) felt he could give from active business were spent. He loved the simple life among the Wisconsin hills and was always eager to share its hospitality with his friends."¹⁰ Mrs. Upham continued to summer at Wawbeek surrounded by children, relatives and friends until her own death in 1935. In 1938 her daughters gave Wawbeek to the Wisconsin Association for the Disabled as a summer camp for disabled children and adults which (now called Camp Wawbeek) it remains to this day.

In a biography of her mother written the year after the Wawbeek gift, the Upham's eldest daughter, Elizabeth Upham Davis (1890 -) spoke eloquently of the place Wawbeek had played in the lives of the Upham family when she wrote: "The happiest days of the year to Mary and Horace Upham and their children were those spent at Wawbeek with their friends. ... It was Mary and Horace Upham's pleasure to share with family, relatives and friends their deep conviction that Wawbeek was a sanctuary, a place to think deeply, feel spiritually, and gain inspiration to carry on life's problems. Here there was time to evaluate changing social conditions, the trends of thinking, time to read aloud, to study the stars and rocks, time to garden, to love nature, time to create in painting and writing, and time to enjoy family and friends. Time to live! This was the environment Mr. and Mrs. Upham believed ideal for the growing family which had come to include nieces and nephews as well as daughters."

¹Cornerstone of building, inscribed June 5, 1899.

²Alexander C. Eschweiler Collection, Wisconsin Architectural Archives, Milwaukee Public Library.

³Ibid.

 ⁴Perrin, Richard W.E., <u>The Architecture of Wisconsin</u>, Madison, Wisconsin, 1967, page 84.
 ⁵Davis, Richard S., <u>50 Years of Architecture</u>, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1943, unpaginated.
 ⁶<u>Kilbourn Mirror-Gazette</u>, June 16, 1900.

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⁷Perrin, Richard W.E., <u>Milwaukee Landmarks</u>, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1968, revised 1979, pages 112-113.

⁸Usher, Ellis Baker, Ed., <u>Wisconsin:</u> Its Story and Biography 1848-1913, Chicago, Illinois, 1914, v. 5, page 1212.

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¹⁰Bruce, W.B., <u>History of Milwaukee City and County</u>, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1922, v. 2, page 75.

¹¹Davis, Elizabeth Upham, <u>Mary Greene Upham, 1860-1935</u>, privately printed, ca. 1938, pages 6-7.



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9.

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pages 208-230.

Kilbourn Mirror-Gazette, April 29, 1899; December 23, 1899; June 16, 1900.

- Perrin, Richard W. E., <u>Milwaukee Landmarks</u>, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1968, revised 1979, pages 112-113.
- Upham, Mary Greene, <u>Horace A. J. Upham: A Biographical Sketch</u>, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1922.

10. Geographical Data (Verbal boundary description and justification);

The boundaries of the nominated property consist of a line drawn ten feet outside the perimeter of the building. The property is located in T13N, R10E in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 3 and is located as follows: Beginning at the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ corner of Section 3, thence south along the section line dividing sections 2 and 3 to a point 1400' south of the point of beginning, thence west 200' to the perimeter of the nominated property.

