

NO. 1024-0018  
EXP. 10/31/84

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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

For NPS use only  
received JAN 30 1984  
date entered

1. Name

historic Guenther, Richard, House  
and/or common Richard Guenther house, and also as: Oshkosh's first hospital.

2. Location

street & number 1200 Washington Ave. \_\_\_ not for publication  
city, town Oshkosh \_\_\_ vicinity of ~~congressional district~~  
state Wisconsin code 55 county Winnebago code 139

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Dr. Bruce N. and Mary S. Baker  
street & number 1200 Washington Ave.  
city, town Oshkosh \_\_\_ vicinity of state Wisconsin 54901

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Winnebago County Courthouse  
street & number 415 Jackson Ave.  
city, town Oshkosh \_\_\_ vicinity of state Wisconsin 54901

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Intensive Survey of Oshkosh, 1980  
title State Historical Society of Wis. has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
date 1980 \_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local  
depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin  
city, town Madison \_\_\_ vicinity of state Wisconsin 53706

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent int.	deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good exterior	ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Richard Guenther house was constructed in 1888 on the Evans Addition, located in the Northeast area of Oshkosh on the corner of Washington Avenue and Hazel Street. The house was at that time, and remains, one of the largest private residences in Oshkosh.

The residence was designed by architect William Waters and was considered one of the most pleasing to be built under his direction, according to the Oshkosh Sunday Times (December 16, 1888). The home is Queen Anne style with a ground plan measuring 39 by 60 feet. On the southeast corner is an octagon and circular tower rising forty feet from the ground, sixteen feet of it shooting above the roof. The tower forms a bay in the music room on the first floor and the bedroom above. On the third floor, there is a separate small room formed by the tower. The west exposure has a broad two story bay covered with a projecting gable in which is a recessed set of windows. The third floor gable protrudes from the house and is supported by four carved brackets. A handsome porch covers the main entrance and extends around to the west side with a slightly protruding curved section. Above the front portion of the porch is a balcony, a projecting gable, supported by heavy brackets, forming the roof. Between the tower and the porch there is a large plate glass window crowned with a striking stained glass window. Another larger stained glass window is located at the rear of the balcony and provides beautiful daytime lighting for the main stairwell. A cut crystal glass window crowns the large plate glass window on the first floor of the west bay. The shingle designs on the west bay, the tower, and the many gables, provide a variety of interesting surface textures.

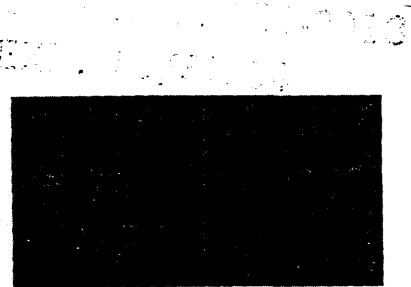
The main vestibule has an ornamental tile floor. The reception hall, 14 X 18 feet, is reached from the vestibule, and the main stairway leads from the reception hall to the bedrooms above. The lower floor is divided into a music room, 16 feet square, a living room, 15 X 21, a formal dining room (originally a library) 14 X 18, a family dining room (originally the main dining room) 14 X 17, a main kitchen 10 X 14 (originally 17 X 14), an auxiliary kitchen 7 X 9, and two baths. The music room and the living room are finished in cherry, the hall, formal dining room, and family dining room are antique oak with the family dining room wainscotted in oak. There is a parquet floor in the family dining room. Three handsome fireplaces grace the first floor. Another fireplace is in the master bedroom on the second floor. The main rooms of the first floor are so planned that they can be thrown into one large reception parlor.

The first floor has been slightly altered to accommodate two baths, reducing the size of the original kitchen and pantry. The second floor landing of the main stairwell, which was originally open, has been enclosed. On the second and third floors, the plans have been altered several times to allow introduction of additional baths and kitchens. The house was divided into as many as five separate units as late as 1964.

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Since that time, the main residence has consisted of the entire first floor, plus half of the second and third floors. Two apartments remain on the second and third floors on the north side and are accessed by the original rear (north) stairwell. Four of the original six fireplaces remain and have been altered only slightly. Most all of the original interior woodwork remains unpainted, unaltered, and in excellent condition.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1913	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
	1888 (construction) <sup>1</sup>	invention		Association with
<b>Specific dates</b>	1888-1913 (period of significance) <sup>2</sup>	<b>Builder/Architect</b>	Jacob Rheiner/ <sup>3</sup> William Waters <sup>1</sup>	notable person and institutions.

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Architecturally significant as a representative example of the Queen Anne period of construction and as a visual landmark, the house also achieves historical significance through its association with:

- . Richard Guenther, the U.S. Congressman and diplomat from Oshkosh, and
- . The Lakeside Sanitorium and the Lakeside Training School for Nurses, both founded by Dr. M. E. Corbett, pioneer medical man in the Oshkosh area.

### Architectural Significance

Significant as a representative example of the Queen Anne period of construction, the Guenther house incorporates the massing and plan arrangement typical of that style. Among the number of examples of its period in the city, the Guenther house is one of the most substantial and best preserved Queen Annes, retaining its exterior and most of its interior integrity and distinction. The exterior of the house lends itself to striking restoration due to the many fine details which can be restored, replaced, and highlighted. The interior woodwork represents the best craftsmanship of the day and remains in excellent condition.

William Waters practiced in Oshkosh and surrounding environs from 1867 to his death in 1918.<sup>4</sup> Prior to his arrival in the city, he had attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York. His arrival in Oshkosh coincided with a period of prosperity and growth which resulted in a market for his commercial and residential designs. Apparently the most prolific and popular architect in the city, and successful throughout the region, Waters' commissions included residential, religious, commercial and institutional projects. Within Oshkosh, he designed the Grand Opera House well-known for its remarkable acoustical qualities; the first building of the Oshkosh State Normal School; the Oshkosh Public Library; the Algoma Boulevard Methodist Church which is on the National Register of Historic Places in America; the home of suffragist Jessie Jack Hooper, recently assigned a place on the Register; the Wisconsin Building at the Columbian Exposition; and, in cooperation with a colleague, a new high school building at Oshkosh. The Waters list of buildings designed is impressive including structures at Phillips, Wautoma, Waupaca, Ripon, Sheboygan Falls, Shawano, and Marshfield, Wisconsin. At the San Francisco Exposition, he won international recognition for his plans of the Oshkosh Public Library.<sup>5</sup> It appears that Waters' work is becoming steadily the subject of increasing interest at Oshkosh today.

The interior of the home is especially impressive due to the fine craftsmanship of the master builder, Jacob Rheiner. Rheiner divided the four

(continued)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Class Yearbook, Mercy Medical Center School of Nursing, 1924 and 1982, available at Mercy Medical Center, Oshkosh.  
Daily Northwestern, Oshkosh, March 29, 1888, April 5, 1913, December 15, 1917, and September 6, 1926.  
The Sunday Times, Oshkosh, December 16, 1888.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .436

Quadrangle name OSHKOSH, WIS

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UMT References

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 Zone Easting Northing

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** Lot thirty-four (34) of Block thirty-seven (37) in EVANS ADDITION to Oshkosh City, Wisconsin, in the Eleventh Ward, City of Oshkosh, excepting therefrom the North One Hundred Twenty (120) feet, front and rear, thereof, and also excepting therefrom the South Ten (10) feet,

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries** (see continuation sheet

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. Bruce N. Baker/Professor of Management

organization University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh

date November, 1983

street & number 1200 Washington Ave.

telephone 414/426-1606

city or town Oshkosh

state Wisconsin 54901

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Historic Preservation Division, SHSW

date JAN. 25, 1984

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in National Register

  
Keeper of the National Register

date 3/1/84

Attest:

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
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rooms  
principal first floor/ with fine crafted, nine-foot-high sliding doors made of cherry wood. The doors, when opened, provide for a very large reception area, suitable for a U.S. Congressman of that time. The other oak and cherry doors, oak wainscotting, fireplace mantels, and other interior trim provide a combination of craftsmanship that would be virtually priceless if reproduced today. Most amazing, is the excellent condition of most all of the woodwork which has never been painted or badly scratched.

Historical Significance

The Guenther house achieves historical significance through association with:

- . Richard Guenther, the U.S. Congressman and diplomat from the area who had the house built as his residence, and
- . The Lakeside Sanitorium and the Lakeside Training School for Nurses, both founded by Dr. M. E. Corbett, as the first hospital facilities and the first training school for nurses, respectively, in the Oshkosh area.

Richard Guenther can be considered the leading citizen of Oshkosh during the period, 1880-1886, when he was the U.S. Congressman from the Sixth District of Wisconsin. He gained higher levels of prominence when he served the Second District of Wisconsin as their Congressman while still living in Oshkosh, and when he served in several diplomatic posts from 1888 to 1893 and from 1898 to 1912.

In 1887, he arranged for architect William Waters to design the herein nominated house which was built in 1888 and is now commonly referred to as the Richard Guenther house. The house was Guenther's principal residence from 1888 until 1906 when he leased it to Dr. M. E. Corbett.

Guenther was born in Potsdam, Prussia on November 20, 1845, the youngest of eleven children. He studied pharmacy in the Royal Pharmacy at Potsdam, and an incident in this connection was a deciding factor in his coming to America. Mr. Guenther was to have joined the army in Prussia on finishing his studies at the pharmacy. At the time of his concluding examinations, however, he was severely burned by an explosion in the laboratory, and declared unfit for military service. He then left Germany for New York. There he and Robert Johnson founded a medical bandage industry which grew from humble surroundings to the now world-renowned firm of Johnson & Johnson, one of the greatest medical supply manufacturers in the world. The western frontier soon beckoned Guenther and he moved to Wisconsin, settling at Fonddu Lac for a brief time and then coming to Oshkosh to go into business.<sup>6</sup>

Guenther's drug store was one of the prominent business houses of early Oshkosh, located first on Main Street between Otter and Waugoo, then at

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Main and High, and later at two other downtown Oshkosh locations. Guenther's first political experience entailed terms as school commissioner on the local Board of Education in 1874 and 1875. In 1877 he became a candidate for the office of State Treasurer and won that office by a large plurality margin then, and two years later in 1879.

In the national election of November 1880, Mr. Guenther was the Republican candidate from the Sixth District for the Forty-seventh Congress. He won that election and served two more terms in Congress from the Sixth District. Then the Congressman was nominated by Republicans of the Second District in an effort to turn the tide in that strong Democratic district. Mr. Guenther scored one of the signal triumphs of his career that year, carrying the Second District with a triumphant majority of 4,200 over Representative Delaney, the Democrat, of Fond du Lac. This was the first instance in the political history of the United States where a member of Congress represented a district in which he did not live, Mr. Guenther living in Oshkosh but representing the counties of Fond du Lac, Dodge, Washington, and Waukesha, the Second District.

In 1888, Mr. Guenther declined a renomination for Congress to accept the Consul Generalship in Mexico City. He remained in Mexico City until 1893. Returning to Wisconsin, Mr. Guenther became a member of the State Board of Control. He served from 1895 to 1899 in that capacity, being president of the board the last two years of his service. During this period, he again resided in the house he had built in 1888.

Mr. Guenther became a national figure of importance as American Consul General at Frankfurt-on-the-Main, Germany. He received this appointment in 1898, and served until 1910. He was then appointed Consul General to Cape Town, South Africa. A bladder illness contracted in Africa eventually resulted in his death in Oshkosh on April 5, 1913.

Mr. Guenther was recognized as a man of exceptional ability as a public official. His manner stamped him plainly as a thorough gentleman, forceful and convincing in debate and of a powerful mind.<sup>6</sup> Guenther's daughter lived in, and retained ownership of, the house for several decades after her father's death.

The second way in which the Guenther house attains historical significance at the local level is through its role as an important first facility in community development and medicine for the Oshkosh area. In 1906, Dr. M. E. Corbett established the Lakeside Sanatorium and Lakeside Training School for Nurses in the Guenther house. It was the first hospital in Oshkosh, treating all kinds of cases, but it was especially known as a maternity hospital. The Lakeside Training School for Nurses was also the first nursing school in the area. The Lakeside Sanatorium and the Lakeside Training School for Nurses remained in the Guenther house until 1913, when Dr. Corbett moved both institutions into new, larger facilities

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which he had built a few blocks away on Hazel Street. That building was, in turn, the beginning of Mercy Medical Center and Mercy Training School for Nurses. Mercy Medical Center is the current hospital serving Oshkosh and environs. Thus, the Guenther house was not only the site of the first hospital in Oshkosh, but also represents the beginnings of the current regional hospital in Oshkosh.<sup>7</sup>

The hospital which Dr. Corbett founded in the Guenther house had a twenty bed capacity and included a small operating room. Water was boiled in copper kettles on a gas plate in a small service room on the first floor. Student nurses carried the boiled water in covered pitchers to the operating room. Patients were carried to and from surgery on stretchers. Meals were prepared in the basement kitchen and carried on trays to the upper floors via two flights of stairs.

The first class of three graduated from the Lakeside Training School for Nurses in 1908. Classes were held in the Guenther house, when time permitted, during the day and in the evening. Most of the education was "on the job training." The course was initially two years but in 1910 it increased to three years. In 1912 the Lakeside Training School for Nurses (still located in the Guenther house) earned accreditation by the State of Wisconsin.

In 1913, both the hospital and the nurses school were moved to the new facility established by Dr. Corbett. After a few years, Dr. Corbett found the responsibility rather heavy and asked the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother to take over Lakeside Hospital in 1918. It was renamed Mercy Hospital. In 1968, the State of Wisconsin accepted proposed articles of incorporation and the hospital became Mercy Medical Center. The school also adopted the new name. In 1982, the last class was graduated from the school.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Sunday Times, Oshkosh, December 16, 1888, p.5.

<sup>2</sup>See footnotes 1,3,5,6,7,8.

<sup>3</sup>The Northwestern, Oshkosh, March 29, 1888, p.7.

<sup>4</sup>Obituary for William Waters, Wisconsin Necrology, Vol. 16, p. 132.

<sup>5</sup>Oshkosh Daily Northwestern, December 15, 1917.

<sup>6</sup>Obituary for Richard Guenther, Daily Northwestern, Oshkosh, Apr. 5, 1913.

<sup>7</sup>Class Yearbook, Mercy Medical Center School of Nursing, Oshkosh, 1924.

<sup>8</sup>Class Yearbook, Mercy Medical Center School of Nursing, Oshkosh, 1982.



**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
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received

date entered

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Verbal boundary description and justification (continued)

front and rear, of the North One Hundred Thirty (130) feet, front and rear,  
of the West Seventy-four (74) feet thereof.