

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUL 26 1984
DATE ENTERED	SEP 6 1984

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Ward Memorial Hall at Northwestern Branch of National Home for Disabled Volunteers Soldiers (NHDVS)

AND/OR COMMON

Building 41, Theater at Wood Veterans Administration Medical Center

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

5000 West National Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Wood

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF Milwaukee

5

STATE

Wisconsin

CODE

55

COUNTY

Milwaukee

CODE

079

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

Veterans Administration

STREET & NUMBER

810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

VICINITY OF

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Land Management Service, Office of Construction, VA

STREET & NUMBER

810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

VA Historic Sites Survey

DATE

Continuing

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

VA Historic Preservation Office

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Ward Memorial Hall is a Victorian theater situated on the grounds of the Wood Veterans Administration Medical Center in Wood, Wisconsin, one mile west of the Milwaukee city limits. The older buildings at the medical center were part of the Northwestern Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers.

The theater is centrally located on the old wooded National Home grounds on a slight rise. Known today as Building 41, the theater was built in 1881 in a Victorian style and finished in Cream City brick with red brick trim. It is surrounded on three sides by spacious gallery porches of hand hewn timbers and hand wrought nails.

A few yards north of the theater is the track for the Chicago - Milwaukee - St. Paul Railroad and at one time the Soldiers Home at Wood was a stop on the mainline between Milwaukee, Madison and Prairie du Chien. For a while, a portion of the first floor was used as a railroad depot/waiting room for new arrivals and visitors. The west veranda had a ticket office.

ORIGINAL AND CURRENT APPEARANCE - EXTERIOR

The tall two story theater is rectangular with a one story wing on the west for dressing rooms. On either side near the main front entrance there are small protruding polygonal bays with stairways to the inside balcony. An entry pavilion protrudes slightly at the front between the two bays. On either side at the stage end is a small wing with a staircase serving the interior boxes. (See description of interior.)

The steep gabled asphalt roof extends front to rear ending in a front parapet and a hip in the rear. Smaller gables extend over the side wings and polygonal hipped roofs project over the front side bays. All of the gables have decorative carved stone parapets with finials at the tips.

The theater foundation is rough cut stone. The building's exterior is finished in two colors of brick emphasizing the characteristic Victorian style of polychromatic tones. The lighter brick is Milwaukee's local "Cream City" brick and the darker is a standard red. The contrast shows especially in the banding, the brick arches above window and door openings, in checkered pattern in the peak of the gables and in the diamond shaped red brick inserts periodically spaced at the first floor level.

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A one story wood veranda with hipped roof wraps around the front, right side and rear of the theater conforming to the facade's varied planes. The support columns have decorative brackets and capitals; they are spanned by a fancy open lattice railing. The veranda apron is a fine lattice paneling. At two side stairs there are small open gables with ornate bracing. The wide front entry steps are crowned with a clipped gable roof.

The main entry is centered in the front pavilion. The door is recessed in a brick arch. Two similar brick arches with windows flank the doorway. Above the doorway and veranda roof are four two over two light sash windows with stone lintels. Above them is an oblong stone carved with "WARD MEMORIAL HALL". Higher up is a large Palladian window.

On the front wall of each side bay is a round mullioned window surrounded by soldier coursed brick; to the sides are four over four windows with arched transom windows above. The main side windows at the second story level are tall, evenly spaced six over six light sash windows with elliptical leaded glass windows mullioned in a diamond pattern. An elliptical red and Cream City brick arch tops each one. The similarly spaced openings at the first level are occupied by wood panel doors and simple six over six light sash windows.

Above the veranda on the east side wing there is a lovely stained glass window with a life sized figure of General U.S. Grant, mounted on a bay horse. This was used as a decoration during the 1883 National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic at St. Louis, Missouri, and presented to the Home by Ransome Post, No. 131, G.A.R. The 12'-5" x 12'-4" decorative window was installed in its odd off-center position in 1887. A companion window, depicting Abraham Lincoln, was installed in the library of the Western Home Branch in Leavenworth, Kansas.

CURRENT APPEARANCE - INTERIOR

The theater appears two stories in height but actually has three interior levels in the open seating area. Additionally, it has a basement that was used for a short time as a restaurant, but 1895 floor renovations encroached on the space. Originally intended as an assembly hall with a stage at one end and a flat floor, the interior was converted in 1895 to serve as a theater and assumed its present appearance. The sloped floor,

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orchestra pit, balcony and boxes were added at this time, and today the interior remains substantially as it was then.

The raked main floor ends in an orchestra pit in front of the stage. The stage has a standard proscenium, spacious set storage in the heavens (where there is a cat walk) and the original full rope and pin system for flying sets, backdrops and standard scenic curtains. The only new items are a light board and some new foot and spot lights.

Above the orchestra seating there is a steeply raked balcony. The wood seats are pierced with holes spelling out NSH, (for National Soldiers Home) have leather back cushions, wood armrests and wrought iron ornamentation on the top edge of the seatback. The ceiling beneath the balcony is ornate stamped metal. At the rear of the balcony is a projection booth. At the same level is a storage area where antique billboards have been pasted, and subsequently preserved, on the walls. They announce such shows as The Rosary, The Musketeers, and The Golden Girl, A Musical Extravaganza, and such artists as Henry Woodruff, Paul Gilmore, Kelly and Mason and the Whiting Sisters.

The interior walls are finished in plaster painted cream. On the lower level on the side are mural panels framed in wood.

On the sides near the stage there are three tiers of boxes, seating between 3 and 6 people. Three boxes on the first two levels step down towards the stage; the top tier is one long box with a bowed railing. They are enclosed with wood paneled railings, one of which continues around to form the balcony railing. The boxes are framed with ornamental plaster columns and cornices painted blue with gold leafed carved scrollwork in recessed panels. A hidden stair on either side provides access. The back wall of the first level tier has a hand painted mural.

The theater seats 640 people; 326 on the orchestra level, 288 seats in the balcony and the remainder in the boxes.

ALTERATIONS

Very few changes have been made to the theater since it was first constructed. The only noteworthy ones are as follows:

- 1887 Stained glass window, depicting General U.S.

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Grant mounted on a bay horse, was installed in the east wing.

- 1895 Hall was renovated into more formal theater arrangement, new sloped floor, balcony, orchestra pit, fixed seats, upgraded stage, for cost of \$5,233.21.
- 1899 Scenery room added on west side.
- 1904 New asbestos fire curtain installed above stage.
- 1909 New electric wiring.
- 1910 Minor redecorating of theater interior.
- Slate roof replaced with asphalt shingles.
- New projection booth.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1881, 1895

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Henry C. Koch

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Ward Memorial Hall is architecturally significant at the local and state level as a magnificent Victorian style theater. At the state level it is significant for its association with the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. It is eligible for listing on the National Register under criteria A and C.

CONSTRUCTION BACKGROUND

The theater was designed by Henry C. Koch, one of Wisconsin's most prominent architects of the period, who also designed the old hospital Building 6, at Wood, the Milwaukee Grand Opera (no longer in existence) and numerous churches, schools and other public buildings around the state. It was constructed in 1881, by Anton Maulk at a cost of \$22,670.33. At the dedication ceremony in February of 1882, William Tecumseh Sherman of Civil War fame was a guest.

Construction funds came from a bequest to the National Home under the will of Horatio Ward, an American philanthropist from Virginia who became a banker in London. These private funds were used by the Home's managers to provide amenities for the Home branches for which the use of public monies might not be justified. The theater was named after Mr. Ward in recognition of this bequest. Recreational and cultural facilities were provided at most of the Home branches from the Ward bequest.

Ward Memorial Hall was originally built as a recreation hall, with a flat floor and a stage at one end. Before it was remodeled in 1895, the basement level contained a restaurant. The west wing served as a train depot waiting room and the west veranda window was used to sell train tickets. For a time, the main hall was used as barracks to sleep men until their permanent barracks were completed. It also housed the post office and the Home store. After it was remodeled, it was actively used as a theater.

The surrounding community and Home visitors attended the theatrical events along with the Home residents who got in free or for a nominal charge. The officers of the Home had assigned box seats. The theater played host to numerous companies of actors, musicians, lectures and vaudeville performers, including many of the famous of Turn-of-the-Century America.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 ACRE

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 6	42, 044, 1	47, 639, 0, 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Ward Memorial is nominated along with the immediate acre of ground on which it sits. This is justified based on the nearby roadway, railroad tracks and terrain. See accompanying site map for exact boundary.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A			

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE GJORE J. MOLLENHOFF - Historic Preservation Officer
KAREN RONNE TUPEK - Program Analyst (Architect)

ORGANIZATION

Veterans Administration

DATE

5/8/84

STREET & NUMBER

810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.

TELEPHONE

(202) 389-3447

CITY OR TOWN

Washington,

STATE

D.C.

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National State Local .

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Gjore J. Mollenhoff

TITLE Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

5/8/84

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

9/6/84

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The theater is a most impressive and effective use of a Victorian style design in a public, campus setting. It is distinguished by its colorful cream and red polychromatic brickwork, the ornamental veranda, and the impressive stained glass window incorporated into the facade. The attention to detail is evident in the interior decorative plaster work and the wood paneling around the boxes and balcony.

It is one of the oldest existing theaters in Wisconsin and is the best, if not the last, from the Victorian period. Ward Memorial Hall was one of the remaining Victorian theaters visited by the National Park Service in the planning stages for the restoration of Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C.

ASSOCIATION WITH THE NHDVS

The Ward Memorial Hall is significant for its association with the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers and illustrates the scope of facilities provided to the residents.

The importance of the establishment of the National Home Branches for disabled volunteer soldiers in American history and post-Civil War life has been well documented. A synopsis is included in this nomination as back-up material.

What is so significant about the physical remains of these homes is the fact that they reflect a conscious effort on the part of the Home's managers to provide a home-like environment for the members, as the residents were called, and to incorporate them into a form of community life. The managers built a planned community to include all aspects of normal life such as a library, chapel, theater, dining hall, recreation space, medical facility and residential area for staff. At the same time, they encouraged the surrounding community to take part in the Home's activities.

The Ward Memorial Hall not only stands as an example of the high quality of design effort given these planned communities, but

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also as the focal point for the surrounding community's involvement in the life of the Home members, both as visiting theater goers and entertainers.

INTEGRITY

Since 1895, when it was renovated, Ward Memorial Hall has not undergone any major changes. The architectural integrity has not been compromised by any minor changes making the theater more useable. The theater looks today as it did in the early part of this century. It stands as a picturesque reminder of the way of life at the Home.

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In 1865 Congress passed legislation to incorporate a National Asylum for disabled volunteer soldiers and sailors of the Civil War. Volunteers were not eligible for care in the existing regular army and navy home facilities. The Asylum was renamed the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in 1873.

This legislation, one of the last Acts signed by President Lincoln before his assassination, marked the entrance of the United States into the direct provision of care for the temporary versus career military man. This departure from tradition recognized several significant factors:

- The traditional benefits had been pensions and land grants. Land grants had been rendered superfluous by the passage in 1862 of the Homestead Act which made public lands available to all.

- Facilities for the small body of Regulars had been supported through regular payments by the troops and various military "prizes." The Civil War volunteers, usually raised by the States, had made no such contribution and, by sheer weight of numbers, far exceeded the capacity of existing facilities.

- The carnage of the war and deprivations of prison camps had left thousands of shattered and maimed men. Even those not requiring acute medical care could need an extended period of sheltered domicile during their period of retraining or readjustment for civilian life.

- Americans were still a rural, agrarian and labor intensive society. Farmers, teamsters, coopers, recent immigrant laborers, many of them poorly educated and now with an empty sleeve or pant leg, were ill equipped to ever return to their former occupations.

The concept of a National Home or sheltered environment for the large corps of disabled returning from war was contained in a series of recommendations from the Sanitary Commission. These were based upon a study of veterans benefits in major European states by a member of the Commission.

The Congressional solution called for 100 incorporators to guide the National Home. The list of original incorporators, contained in the Act, was a veritable Who's Who of contemporary political, military, financial, publishing, religious and abolition leaders. Included was the Chairman of the Sanitary Commission. The inability to assemble a quorum of such

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scattered movers and shakers forced Congress in 1866 to establish a 12 member Board of Managers to conduct the business of the Home. The original managers were ex-officio, President Andrew Johnson, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and Chief Justice Salmon Chase and, appointed by the Congress, Generals Richard J. Ogelsby, Benjamin F. Butler, Fredrick Smyth, and P. Joseph Osterhaus, the Honorable Lewis Gunckel, Messrs. Jay Cooke, John H. Mortwalder, Horatio B. Stebbins and George H. Walker.

Funds for the operation of the Home were provided by fines and stoppages of pay for courts martial, forfeitures of pay for desertion and monies due and unclaimed for three years. Pensions for disabilities due to Members could be required to be paid to the Home if the veteran had no dependents.

By 1875 the size of and demands upon the Home had so increased that Congress replaced the complicated and uncertain funding system with direct appropriations for the Home. Even when federal funding became available and pensions were no longer assignable to the Home by law, the Managers continued to depend upon pension funds collected through fines, stoppages and limits upon the amounts allotted to pensioners to prevent "squandering" until Congress forbade the practices in 1881.

The Board of Managers were empowered to establish the Home at such locations as they deemed appropriate and to establish those programs that they determined necessary. Members (or residents) of the Home were to be governed by the Articles of War. This provision of the law was not repealed until 1930.

While the Managers included, ex-officio, the President of the United States, the Secretary of War and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, it was not a part of the Executive branch of government. The Home was a unique creation of the Congress. Its budget requests in later years were submitted in conjunction with the War Department. But throughout its existence, until 1930, the Managers consistently defended the Home's independence of the Executive Branch.

Between 1867 and 1929 the Home expanded to 10 Home branches and one sanatorium:

The Eastern Branch, Togus, Maine, in 1867

The Northwestern Branch, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1867

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The Central Branch, Dayton, Ohio, in 1867

The Southern Branch, Hampton, Virginia, in 1870

The Western Branch, Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1885

The Pacific Branch, Santa Monica (Los Angeles), California, in 1888

The Marion Branch, Marion, Indiana, in 1889

The Danville Branch, Danville, Illinois, in 1898

The Mountain Branch, Johnson City, Tennessee, 1901

The Battle Mountain Sanatorium, Hot Springs, South Dakota, in 1902

The Bath Branch, Bath, New York, in 1929
(formerly New York State Soldiers & Sailors Home, est. 1877.)

General Benjamin Butler was the guiding force during the early years of the Home's development, serving both as President and Treasurer of the Board of Managers.

During its life the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers was also known "officially" as the National Military Home and colloquially as the Old Soldiers Home. The formal organizational name was not changed by statute, but the mailing address for most branches became National Military Home, the city and state. In the early days the designation of "old soldier" had no bearing on an individual veteran's age. The appellation was used for all former members of the Union forces from their teens to their seventies.

The immediate priority of the Managers was to provide shelter for the veterans. From this basic need the Home evolved into complete planned communities. Veteran members, organized into companies in the military fashion, lived in barracks and dined in large mess halls. Entrances to the grounds boasted gate houses and federal cemeteries provided the final bivouac. This foundation was augmented by chapels, schools, hotels to house family and other visitors, libraries, beer halls, band stands, amusements halls, theatres, farm buildings, laundries and shops which provided training and employment.

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The scope of facilities, far beyond those then common at military installations appears to constitute the first non-religious planned communities in the country.

The scope of training, education and readjustment activities appears to be the earliest federal venture into large scale rehabilitation programs.

The chapels are reputed to be the earliest non-military construction of religious facilities by the federal government.

While each of these indicates a new direction in Federal programs, the National Home made one much more significant departure in federal programs. Eligibility for admission to the Home was based upon a disability contracted as a member of the volunteer forces of the Union. Membership in the Home was available equally to white veterans and former members of the U.S. Colored Troops. Eighty years before the United States military forces were integrated, white and black veterans lived together as members of the National Home. The style of integration was rudimentary by today's standards. When numbers permitted there were separate barracks and separate tables in the dining hall in the early years. But it was the same meal, the same dining hall, the same uniform and the same Home.

The National Home was never a static organization. Throughout its existence the Managers looked for innovative means to provide for the members.

By the enabling legislation, admission to the Home was limited to volunteers disabled as a result of the Civil War. But when the Northwestern Branch at Milwaukee opened, veterans of the War of 1812 were admitted according to an agreement with donors to the Home that all members of the Milwaukee Soldiers Home would be accepted. While facilities were being acquired and constructed the Managers provided "out of door" relief funds to disabled soldiers to tide them over until housing was ready for them.

In 1871 admission was opened up to veterans of the War of 1812 and the Mexican War. In 1884 a disabled veteran need no longer prove that his disability was a direct result of service. He need only prove his disability was not incurred in service against the United States.

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Uniforms for staff and members were available to the Home from military surplus. So were field pieces and ammunition for ornamentation of the grounds and the firing of salutes. The Home attempted to operate a shoe manufactory to supply all the members and teach a trade. This was not successful. But the knitting of stockings for all members at the Central branch was a successful operation. In time the Central branch also developed a printing plant which printed all official reports and documents for the Home. Farming operations at all of the branches supplied significant amounts of the ration and a brick factory at the Western Branch provided most of the brick used in the initial construction at that Branch.

By 1888 Congress had authorized the Managers to make payment of \$100 per annum to an approved state veterans home on behalf of each veteran residing in state facilities who was otherwise eligible for admission to the federal Home. This practice continues today in per diem payments by the VA on behalf of veterans in State Veterans Homes and VA grants for specific categories of construction at State Homes.

In 1900 admission was extended to all honorably discharged officers, soldiers and sailors who served in regular or volunteer forces of the United States in any war in which the country had been engaged and who were disabled, who had no adequate means of support and were incapable of earning a living. As formal declarations of war were not the rule in the Indian Wars, Congress specifically extended eligibility for the Home to those who "served against hostile Indians" in 1908. Veterans who served in the Philippines, China and Alaska were covered in 1909.

Following World War I a new government agency, the Veterans Bureau, was created to provide for the hospitalization and rehabilitation of this much younger group of veterans. Not only were their numbers in excess of the capacity of the National Home to absorb but, by the second decade of the 1900's the reputation of the National Home had dimmed considerably. No longer was it the creative institution being lead by the most prominent names in military affairs. It had truly become an old soldier's final resting place, publicly criticized for poor management, bad food, favoritism for the officers over the needs of the members and a lack of concern for the human needs of its charges.

In an almost last gasp effort to overcome the criticisms and correct the difficiencies, the Home undertook a major new construction program for modern hospital facilities and additional quarters for expanded staffing.

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During the Twenties the Veterans Bureau requested authority to construct and operate facilities for World War I veterans at various National Home Branches. In a final assertion of its independence from the Executive Branch, the Home claimed that title to the property of the Home was vested in the Home as a federally created institution but not directly in the federal government. The Home won this battle but lost the war for survival.

By 1930 the dwindling numbers of Civil War and other pre-World War I veterans, the scandals of the Veterans Bureau under the brief administration of Director Charles Forbes and the need to eliminate duplication and confusion in the delivery of veterans benefits had created a new climate. Congress authorized the President to combine all veterans benefits into one agency. The National Home, the Veterans Bureau and the Pension Bureau were combined into the United State Veterans Administration by President Hoover in July of 1930.

The Home continued briefly to maintain a distinct identity as the Home Service of the VA. But the construction of new home or domiciliary facilities by the VA, a uniform admissions policy for all VA facilities, and the passage of "The Boys in Blue" brought the inevitable final chapter to a close.

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