

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED FEB 8 1980
DATE ENTERED APR 9 1980

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Swan House and Vita Spring Pavilion

AND/OR COMMON

Swan House and Swan Park Pavilion

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

230 Park Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Beaver Dam

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

STATE

Wisconsin 53916

CODE

55

COUNTY

Dodge

CODE

027

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

__DISTRICT

PUBLIC (pavilion)

OCCUPIED

__AGRICULTURE

__MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE (house)

__UNOCCUPIED

__COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

__BOTH

__WORK IN PROGRESS

__EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

__SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

__ENTERTAINMENT

__RELIGIOUS

__OBJECT

__IN PROCESS

__YES: RESTRICTED

__GOVERNMENT

__SCIENTIFIC

__BEING CONSIDERED

__YES: UNRESTRICTED

__INDUSTRIAL

__TRANSPORTATION

__NO

__MILITARY

__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY (continued)

NAME

Mary M. Swan, George C. Swan

STREET & NUMBER

230 Park Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Beaver Dam

VICINITY OF

STATE

Wisconsin 53916

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Dodge County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Juneau

STATE

Wisconsin 53039

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

1974

__FEDERAL STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

CITY, TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Swan House

The Swan House, a handsome Queen Anne structure, occupies a spacious lot at the northwest corner of Park and Vita Streets in the city of Beaver Dam. The three story house faces south, overlooking other well preserved homes of this pleasant residential district.

The house is irregular in plan, with protruding masses of gables, and bays at the south, west and east sides, and a turret at the southeast corner. It rests on a foundation of coursed ashlar stone. The multiple roof is sheathed with asphalt shingles.

A rounded turret, three stories in height, dominates the southeast corner of the house. Four sash windows, each with curved panes of glass, are symmetrically placed at each of the three stories of the turret. The first two stories are clad with narrow clapboards, while the third story has alternate bands of clapboard and decorative shingles. The tower terminates in a steeply pitched conical roof.

A two story bay at the west corner of the facade partially supports a protruding gable. The gable is enriched with alternating bands of clapboard and fishscale shingles and paired sash windows with a carved scroll motif above. A similar two story bay is found at the north corner of the east side. The west side is marked by a two story shed roofed bay.

Two porches, each with decorative gingerbread balustrades and paired, slender posts are found at the south and east sides of the house. The small entrance pavilion at the facade has a steeply pitched gable roof with wide bargeboards. A carved shield motif, a row of corbeling and a segmental arch accent the gable. A small porch between the entrance pavilion and the turret was removed in 1962. The porch at the east side originally had an enclosed second level. This screened sleeping porch was replaced by a deck prior to 1905. In 1962 the deck was replaced by a shed roof and the entire porch was shortened. A screened porch, nestled in the northeast ell, marks the rear entrance.

Sash windows of various sizes surround the house. The three bays also have large transom windows at each level. Entrances at the north and east sides are very plain. The main entrance is flanked by leaded sidelights. A tall brick chimney with corbeling pierces the roof between the turret and the east gable. A shorter chimney is found at the north gable.

The house is decorated with a variety of wooden trim. Bands of shingles at the gable ends and upper turret level contrast with the regular horizontal lines of the narrow clapboards. Corner boards accent the bays and the turret. Delicately sawn balusters give the porches a light and airy appearance. The tall turret roof is capped with an iron finial.

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 type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) association with prominent person Medicine, Tourism
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1899¹ BUILDER/~~ARCHITECT~~ Carl Sell²

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Swan House and the Vita Spring Pavilion are significant for both their architecture and their association with Dr. George E. Swan, a Beaver Dam philanthropist and the founder of Vita Spring Park. The Swan House is a fine example of the popular late 19th century Queen Anne style. This home is one of the most impressive of Beaver Dam's many charming late picturesque residences. The Vita Spring Pavilion, a remarkably ornate and festive structure, was modeled after pavilions at Waukesha's popular Bethesda and Lithia Spring resort spas. It is also the last vestige of the once flourishing Vita Spring Park complex and its important role as a mineral spring health resort.

Dr. George E. Swan, born in Erie County, New York in 1838 and raised in Greenfield, Ohio, first began the study of medicine in private offices of Owassa and Detroit, Michigan. He graduated from the Homeopathic College of New York City in 1866. After practicing in Indiana and Ohio he moved to Beaver Dam at the request of the retiring Dr. Samuel Thurber. Swan occupied Dr. Thurber's office and home until 1899, when he commissioned a local carpenter, Carl Sell, to build the spacious Queen Anne structure.² The home served Dr. Swan as both dwelling and office, and was furnished with over \$2,000 worth of fine Victorian pieces brought from Milwaukee.

As a supplement to his private practice, Dr. Swan developed medicines for the Parke-Davis Company. In 1876, the year of his arrival in Beaver Dam, he perfected "Swan's Pastilles," a specific for the cure of "female weakness". The cure proved effective, and was marketed at a rate of 3,000 to 4,000 boxes monthly. Also interested in civic affairs, Dr. Swan served one term as mayor of Beaver Dam in 1880, and was elected councilman several times.

Although he was a successful proprietor of a medical business, something of an inventor and a dabbler in politics, Dr. Swan is best remembered for his development of Vita Spring Park. Four years after his arrival in Beaver Dam, Dr. Swan discovered a pure and cold natural spring on the pasture land of Abraham Ackerman, one of the area's original settlers. Impressed by the water's alkaline taste, he quickly purchased the surrounding 10 acres from Ackerman and sent a sample of the water to Gustavus Bode, a Milwaukee chemist. Bode's analysis of the water showed it to be virtually free of undesirable chloride compounds and, in many respects, identical or superior to the waters of the famed Waukesha Bethesda Spring.

1. Beaver Dam Weekly Argus, Feb. 16, 1899, May 25, 1899.
2. Mary M. Swan, interview with Lucille Sell Knoll, April 8, 1979.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached.

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.34 (Swan House) 0.06 (Vita Spring Pavilion) Quadrangle Name Beaver Dam, WI
Quadrangle Scale 1:62500

Swan House:

A 16 351800 4813000
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C

Vita Spring Pavilion:

B 16 352000 48124215
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION (continued)

Swan House--East 76 ft. of South 169 ft. of Lot 5, Block 21, Brower and Ackerman addition, city of Beaver Dam, Wisconsin. Pavilion--That parcel of land in the south-eastern corner of Outlot 91 of the Sixth Ward of the City of Beaver Dam occupied by the spring pavilion and the land extending 10 feet from each side of the structure.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Patricia Mueller, Preservation Assistant

ORGANIZATION

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

STREET & NUMBER

816 State Street

CITY OR TOWN

Madison,

DATE

June 14, 1979

TELEPHONE

608/262-8904

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

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

Richard Murray

TITLE Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

10/16/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Sally G. Oldh

DATE

4/9/80

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

Kristen O'Connell

DATE

3/17/80

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Swan House & Vita Spring Pavilion, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin

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2. Swan City Park
Beaver Dam
Wisconsin (55)
- Second Congressional District
Dodge County (027)
4. Robert H. Kachelski, Mayor
City of Beaver Dam
205 South Lincoln Street
Beaver Dam
- ✓ Wisconsin 53916

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Swan House & Vita Spring Pavilion, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin

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Description (continued)

The interior of the Swan House is elegantly refined and exhibits exceptional craftsmanship throughout. Woodwork is primarily oak, with the first floor living room finished in birch. Sliding wood doors in this room are solid and carefully fitted. Two oak staircases carved with a fleur-de-lis motif lead to the upper stories. Hardwood floors throughout the house are of oak. A parquet floor is found in the entry hall, while the rear hall floor is of inlaid wood. A hand carved oak fireplace graces the first floor tower room. Exposed oak beams accent the hall and dining room ceilings.

The brass hardware throughout the house is original, as are the ornate gas chandeliers in the dining room and parlor. Three marble wash basins, two on the second floor and one on the third, are also original. Interior renovations have been kept to a minimum. In the mid-1950s a partition designed to keep heat on the first floor was installed in the front stairway. A first story pantry has been converted to a bath, and the kitchen has been modernized. The third story with its large ballroom and maid's quarters, is completely intact. Other than a few modern appliances, the house contains most of its original furnishings. Both the interior and the exterior of the home are in excellent condition. A small frame garage at the northeast corner of the lot, built to replace a barn in 1915, is the only other structure on the property.

The Vita Spring Pavilion

The Vita Spring Pavilion, once the focus of the 10 acre Vita Mineral Spring resort spa, is located in the southeast corner of Swan Park, three blocks south of the Swan House. The ornate frame structure is square in plan and one story in height. Twelve square posts support a pyramidal roof surmounted by a cross gable roof. A square cupola with a bellcast mansard roof tops the pavilion. The cupola sides and the gables are clapboarded. The floor of the structure, elevated 6 ft. above the ground, is reached by a flight of wooden stairs at the south side. A balustrade with slender wooden spindles surrounds the raised floor.

A variety of wooden trim provides the pavilion with a decorative and festive appearance. Turned spindle pilasters accent the supporting posts. A frieze of turned spindles surrounds the corners of the structure. The area beneath each gable is accented with a variety of turned wooden ornament. The gable features a complex sunburst motif and denticulated raking cornices. A pierced floral design embellishes the cornice of the cupola, which is also bracketed. Square and triangular

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Description (continued)

brackets, all with turned pendants, surround the pavilion. The cupola is topped by a cast iron eagle.

The pavilion is centered over a mineral spring which once flowed upward through native magnesia rock from a depth of 200 ft. The water was collected in a marble basin, surrounded by Waukesha flagstone, and served across a counter at the ground level of the pavilion. In 1905, the spring was capped and the basin and counters removed.

In 1970, the Spring Pavilion was strengthened and restored. At this time the lower halves of the 12 wooden posts were replaced by 2 ft. square piers of brick and cement. Four additional brick pilings were added at the lower level to help support the raised floor. The large stone basin and counters were also reconstructed.

Although the park retains its area of 10 acres, it has been greatly altered from its former appearance. The majority of the original park buildings--a large hotel, bathouses, a greenhouse and an ornate frame bandshell--were demolished in 1902. These structures have been replaced by play equipment, maintenance buildings, a concrete bandshell and a swimming pool. Two of the three ponds once fed by the mineral spring are now supplied with well water. Only the spring pavilion and many large, graceful trees remain as visual reminders of the Vita Spring Park complex.

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Significance (continued)

Dr. Swan administered the mineral water to many of his patients and pronounced the following scientific opinion upon its merits:

"...I have carefully watched the effects of this water on the hundreds here using it, and the result is conclusive. It does have a specific and peculiar affinity for the kidneys, ureters, bladder, urethra and neck of the bladder, removing all congestions, irritations and inflammations of these structures, and toning them up in a few weeks or months to a complete state of health. Other organs are also benefited, but these so decidedly that I name this water "Vita" (or life)..."³

Thoroughly convinced of the water's health-giving qualities, Dr. Swan began the development of a mineral spring resort spa in 1880. With the help of a Chicago landscape engineer the pasture land was transformed into a lovely park, complete with three ponds for boating and bathing, croquet grounds, tennis courts and a network of winding paths shaded by ivy-leafed arbors. Over 3,000 trees, including oak, maple, basswood and walnut were planted. A charming and ornate pavilion was erected over the spring where the pure water bubbled up at a rate of 6000 barrels a day. Other structures in the park included a four story hotel with long porches and three observatories, several bath houses and a greenhouse to supply hotel guests with fresh flowers daily. "Air Castles" reached by winding stairs were built in some of the larger trees. A bandshell featured two concerts every week.

For one decade the resort, known as Vita Spring Park, flourished. Dr. Swan, an advocate of fresh air and outdoor exercise, encouraged the citizens of Beaver Dam to freely use all of the resort facilities. Paying guests arrived by rail, mainly from the southern states. Many came, not because they were suffering from any illness, but to get away from business cares and the demands of social obligations, and to partake of the new scenery, social contacts and stimulations offered by spa society. Among the outstanding social events at the Vita Park Hotel was the banquet given in 1885 by the Dodge County Bar for James B. Hays, the newly appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Idaho.⁴

Although the resort was immensely popular, the venture did not prove profitable. The hotel was not opened after the season of 1893. In that year Dr. Swan transferred his interests to the development of Crystal Lake Resort, just east of the city. For several years he financed this resort and a steamer, "The Swan", which was available for picnic and fishing excursions on Beaver Dam Lake.

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Significance (continued)

In 1902, the Vita Park Buildings, with the exception of the Spring Pavilion, were dismantled and sold at public auction. Three years later the city of Beaver Dam purchased the park grounds for \$15,000. Swan City Park, much altered from its former appearance, currently serves as a public recreation facility.

Upon his death in 1906, Dr. Swan willed his Queen Anne home to his son, a successful Beaver Dam lawyer. The house is now owned by Dr. Swan's grandchildren, Mary M. Swan and George Campbell Swan.

Footnotes

3. History of Dodge County, Wisconsin, pp. 454.
4. George B. Swan, "Swan City Park," pp. 59.

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Major Bibliographical References

Beaver Dam Weekly Argus, February 16, 1899, May 25, 1899.

Hankes, Steven E., The G. E. Swan House, a Link with the Past, 1975, manuscript in the collection of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

History of Dodge County, Wisconsin, Chicago, 1880, pp. 450-456, 598-600.

Knowlton, Lorna, "Swan Park Was Not Lost," Wisconsin Academy Review, vol. 22, no. 1, December, 1975, pp. 6-9.

Swan, George B., "Swan City Park," Souvenir Program and Centennial History, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, Beaver Dam, 1941, pp. 57-60.

Swan, Mary M., interview with Lucille Sell Knoll, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, April 8, 1979.

Weiss, Harry B. and Kemble, Howard R., They Took to the Waters, Trenton, 1962, pp. 13-15, 22.