# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

## 1. NAME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON:</th>
<th>Tank Cottage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AND/OR HISTORIC:</td>
<td>Roi-Porlier-Tank Cottage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2. LOCATION

| STREET AND NUMBER: | 10th Avenue at 5th Street |
| CITY OR TOWN: | Green Bay |
| STATE: | Wisconsin |
| CODE: | 48 |
| COUNTY: | Brown |
| CODE: | 009 |

## 3. CLASSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY (Check One)</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Public Acquisition:</td>
<td>Yes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>In Process</td>
<td>Restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Being Considered</td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Preservation work in progress</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
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<td>Industrial</td>
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<td>Military</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private Residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Specify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

| OWNER'S NAME: | City of Green Bay |
| STREET AND NUMBER: |
| CITY OR TOWN: | Green Bay |
| STATE: | Wisconsin |
| CODE: | 48 |

## 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

| COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: | Courthouse |
| STREET AND NUMBER: | |
| CITY OR TOWN: | Green Bay |
| STATE: | Wisconsin |
| CODE: | 48 |

## 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

| TITLE OF SURVEY: | None |
| DATE OF SURVEY: | |
| DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: |
| STREET AND NUMBER: | |
| CITY OR TOWN: | |
Elongated wood clapboard covered house with a four-columned veranda extending across the front of the central portion of the house. There is a main mid-portion which is the original building, with wings at either end. The architecture is of no conventional style, though the original central portion shows influences of early French construction in Canada and the United States.

The original house, built in 1776, is of wattle construction. It consisted of four willow trees set into the ground, one in each corner, with willow branches set between the corners as upright supports and between them a weaving of boughs, withes and twigs, plastered with mud or clay. Wide, split boards were used to cover the inside walls and provide both supporting strength and warmth. Clapboards or siding were later used to cover the outside.

The flooring of the middle section is original, clearly adzed by hand. Beams and ceiling forming the upstairs floor are also original.

At first there was only a parlor on the left with a huge fireplace and with two small rooms opening off the parlor. On the right was the library from which two rooms led off. The upstairs consisted of two small rooms at the right and one large one at the left. There is a single small, high dormer at the top of the stairs. In 1820 the house remained a simple cabin with a rough stone chimney at one end.

After purchasing the house in 1850, Niels Otto Tank added wings to both ends of the cottage. These were of conventional frame construction and covered with wood clapboards so that the house is so-covered in its entirety.

Following Mrs. Tank's death in 1891, the last occupant to own the house before it became city property, George Rice, put the house into excellent repair, carefully preserving all of the cottage's early characteristics.

In 1908 when the house was moved to its present location, the original building withstood the move without damage but the right wing that Otto Tank had added broke away. It has since been restored and the house today is authentically preserved, with the main central portion being the original 1776 cottage and the wings as they were after being added in the 1850's.
**PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)**

- ☐ Pre-Columbian
- ☐ 16th Century
- ☐ 18th Century
- ☐ 19th Century
- ☐ 20th Century

**SPECIFIC DATE(s) (If Applicable and Known)** 1776; 1812-1815; 1850-1891

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)**

- ☐ Aboriginal
- ☐ Prehistoric
- ☐ Historic
- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Architecture
- ☐ Art
- ☐ Commerce
- ☐ Communications
- ☐ Conservation
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Engineering
- ☐ Industry
- ☐ Invention
- ☐ Landscape
- ☐ Literature
- ☐ Architecture
- ☐ Military
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Sculpture
- ☐ Social/Humanitarian
- ☐ Theater
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Political
- ☐ Religion/Philosophy
- ☐ Urban Planning
- ☐ Other (Specify)

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**Architecture:** The Roi-Porlier-Tank Cottage is Wisconsin's oldest known surviving building. The basic wattled cottage was built in 1776 on the banks of the Fox River by Joseph Roi, a French voyageur. The wattled construction is unique and the house is believed to be one of no more than four or five such structures remaining in this country.

**Military and political:** In 1805 the house was purchased by Jacques Porlier and during the War of 1812 it served as a local headquarters for planning by the British, with whom Porlier's activities were aligned. After the end of the war, however, Porlier swore allegiance to the United States, was forgiven for his British alliances, and was active in public office. He was appointed Chief Justice of the Brown County Court by Governor Lewis Cass of the Michigan Territory in 1820 and served in that capacity until establishment of the Wisconsin territory in 1836.

**Religion/Philosophy:** In 1850 Niels Otto Tank, a wealthy Norwegian missionary, bought the house when he purchased a large tract on the west bank of the Fox River. A Moravian minister, he hoped to establish a communal society there. Disputes over leadership of the community led to the downfall of his plan.

The structure is significant for its antiquity, architectural value, and several prominent roles in Fox River Valley and Wisconsin history. It was moved to its present site in 1908 and is furnished mostly with authentic Tank pieces, many dating back to Mme. Tank's famous Dutch ancestors of previous centuries. The house is situated in a park given to the city by Mme. Tank.

Marked with an Official Wisconsin Historical Marker.


RENNOMINATION OF MOVED PROPERTY

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Roit-Forlier-Tank Cottage
AND/OR COMMON
Tank Cottage (preferred)

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Heritage Hill State Park, 2640 South Webster Avenue
green Bay, Wisconsin 54301

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY
— DISTRICT
— BUILDING(S)
— STRUCTURE
— SITE
— OBJECT

OWNERSHIP
— PUBLIC
— PRIVATE
— BOTH

PRESENT USE
— AGRICULTURE
— COMMERCIAL
— PARK
— EDUCATIONAL
— PRIVATE RESIDENCE
— ENTERTAINMENT
— RELIGIOUS
— GOVERNMENT
— SCIENTIFIC
— INDUSTRIAL
— TRANSPORTATION
— MILITARY
— OTHER:

PRESENT USE
— IN OCCUPIED
— UNOCCUPIED
— WORK IN PROGRESS
— ACCESSIBLE
— YES: RESTRICTED
— YES: UNRESTRICTED
— NO

OWNERSHIP
— PUBLIC ACQUISITION
— IN PROCESS
— BEING CONSIDERED

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME:
State of Wisconsin, Department of Natural Resources, Office of Lands

STREET & NUMBER
4610 University Avenue, P. O. Box 7921

CITY, TOWN
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Brown County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
100 South Jefferson Street

CITY, TOWN
Green Bay, Wisconsin 54301

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE
1960-61

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN
Washington, District of Columbia 20540

FOR NPS USE ONLY
APR 3 1979
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED
6/6/79
DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

- EXCELLENT
- GOOD
- FAIR
- DETERIORATED
- RUINS
- UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

- UNALTERED
- ALTERED
- ORIGINAL SITE
- MOVED

### DATE

1908, 1975

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

Built in 1776, the Tank Cottage is an elongated, clapboarded 1½-story house with a four-columned, hip-roofed front porch. There is a main, gable-roofed midsection, which is the original building, with single-story shed-roofed wings at both ends. On the rear (east) slope of the roof is a single, centrally placed, narrow, gable-roofed dormer. Most of the first story windows are 8/12 double hung sash with heavy, vertical board shutters. All doors are single, 4-paneled, and enframed with architrave trim. The architecture is of no conventional style, although the small dormer is, to some viewers, reminiscent of old French dwellings in New Orleans and Quebec.

The original house was long thought to be of wattle and daub construction, but during the cottage's most recent move it was found that the walls are of a French-type construction common to that period, built of heavy, horizontal planks. Where chinking was needed, the builder filled spaces with a mixture of clay and straw. Personal testimony of Joseph Roi, the builder, indicates that he "built his...dwelling in 1776, sawed his uprights and perhaps the rough enclosing boards with a whip saw, as was the custom of the time and lived in it until Judge Porlier purchased the property in 1805. The neat clapboarding was put over the entire building doubtless by Mr. Tank, when he purchased the place in 1850, and at the same time he enlarged the house by adding a wing at either end." Wide split boards were used to cover the inside walls and provide both supporting strength and warmth. The flooring of the middle section is original, clearly adzed by hand. The beams supporting the ceiling and upstairs floor are also original. Before Tank enlarged the house, there was only a parlor on the left with a huge fireplace and with two small rooms opening off the parlor. On the right was the library, from which two rooms led off. The upstairs consisted of two small rooms at the right and one larger one at the left.

Following Mrs. Tank's death in 1891, George Rice, the last occupant to own the house before it became city property, put the structure into excellent repair, carefully preserving all of the cottage's early characteristics. About 1907, when the house was in danger of demolition to make way for an industrial development, Rice offered it to the city, provided that the South Side Improvement Association and the Green Bay Historical Society "would unite in saving the century old home from destruction." This they did, securing an appropriation of $350 from the city council to move the old cottage to Union Park, a property which Mme. Tank had donated to the city before her death. The house was moved there in 1908. During the move the original part of the house and the left wing remained undamaged but the right wing which Otto Tank had added broke away. It has since been rebuilt. The building had originally stood on the west bank of the Fox River in what is now part of Green Bay's industrial area not far upstream from the original site of Fort Howard. Its new siting was on higher ground a few blocks west of the river. It became a National Register property April 28, 1970.

Members of the Brown County Historical Society had been thinking for some time of moving a number of their historically significant buildings to a common site, specifically a portion of state reformatory land in the Town of Allouez which possesses significance itself as the site of Camp Smith in the early days of Fort Howard (c. 1820). In 1960 the Green Bay Press Gazette reported that at a meeting on February 3, the county historical society's proposed historical park received the endorsement of the Brown County Historical Commission. It was stated that "The Historical Society would like a mall development from Webster Avenue to the Fox River. Among the buildings which
SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

PREHISTORIC
1400-1499
1500-1599
1600-1699
X 1700-1799
X 1800-1899
1900-

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

ARCHAEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC
ARCHAEOLOGY-HISTORIC
AGRICULTURE
ARCHITECTURE
ART
COMMERCE
COMMUNICATIONS
COMMUNITY PLANNING
CONSERVATION
ECONOMICS
EDUCATION
ENGINEERING
EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT
INDUSTRY
INVENTION
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
LAW
LITERATURE
MILITARY
MUSIC
PHILOSOPHY
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT
RELIGION
SCIENCE
SCULPTURE
THEATER
TRANSPORTATION
OTHER (SPECIFY) Association

SPECIFIC DATES 1776¹; 1812-1815²; 1850³

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Roi-Porlier-Tank Cottage is significant for its antiquity, architectural value, and several prominent roles in Fox River Valley and Wisconsin history through association with historically important personages.

Architecture: The Tank Cottage is Wisconsin's oldest existing house.⁴,⁵ The basic cottage was built in 1776 on the west bank of the Fox River by Joseph Roi, a French-Canadian voyageur. The construction is typical of cabins built by early French fur-traders. A second unusual, similarly constructed cabin was found in Green Bay in a recent year.

Military, Politics, Law: In 1805 the house was purchased by Jacques Porlier and during the War of 1812 it served as a local headquarters for planning by the British, with whom Porlier's activities were aligned and in whose forces he served as a Captain of Militia and Commissary.⁶ After the war's end, however, Porlier swore allegiance to the United States, was forgiven for his British alliances, and became active in public office. He was appointed Chief Justice of the Brown County Court by Governor Lewis Cass of the Michigan Territory in 1820 and served in that capacity until establishment of the Wisconsin Territory in 1836.

Religion/Social/Humanitarian: In 1850 Niels Otto Tank, a wealthy Norwegian missionary, bought the house when he purchased a large tract of land on the west bank of the Fox River. A Moravian minister, he tried to establish a communal society there. Disputes over leadership of the community and ownership of land led to the downfall of his plan.⁷

1. Martin, 4
2. Ibid., 5-6
3. Ibid., 4
4. Perrin, Historic Wisconsin Architecture, 34
5. --- Wisconsin Architecture, 46
6. Martin, op. cit., 5
7. Ibid., 10-11
**MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

- "Historical Data and Inventory of Roi-Porlier-Tank Cottage," Typescript, Green Bay, April 23, 1958
- "History Afloat," Exchange, 18(2):4-6, July, 1976
- Letter, Governor Patrick J. Lucey to Miss Dorothy Wendels and Mrs. H. C. Rood, Sept. 9, 1975

**GEOPHYSICAL DATA**

- **ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY**: 0.6
- **QUADRANGLE NAME**: De Pere, Wis.
- **QUADRANGLE SCALE**: 1:24000
- **UTM REFERENCES**:
  - A
    - ZONE: 16
    - EASTING: 417610
    - NORTING: 492500
  - B
    - ZONE: 16
    - EASTING: 492500
    - NORTING: 161000
  - C
    - ZONE: 16
    - EASTING: 161000
    - NORTING: 417610
  - D
    - ZONE: 16
    - EASTING: 161000
    - NORTING: 492500
  - E
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    - EASTING: 417610
    - NORTING: 417610
  - F
    - ZONE: 16
    - EASTING: 492500
    - NORTING: 161000
  - G
    - ZONE: 16
    - EASTING: 161000
    - NORTING: 492500
  - H
    - ZONE: 16
    - EASTING: 417610
    - NORTING: 417610

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Sited on an undelineated lot approximately 175' x 150' in the lower (western) part of Heritage Hill State Park, P.C. 19, Town of Allouez, Brown County, Wisconsin

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>CODE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**FORM PREPARED BY**

**NAME / TITLE**

Donald N. Anderson, Historian & Registrar, Historic Preservation Division

**ORGANIZATION**

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

**STREET & NUMBER**

816 State Street

**CITY OR TOWN**

Madison

**STATE**

Wisconsin

**STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

- NATIONAL ___
- STATE X
- 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.

**TITLE**

Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

**DATE**

3/26/79

**FOR NPS USE ONLY**

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

**DATE**

6-6-79

**ATTEST**

Bill LeSuer

**DATE**

6/4/79

**CHIEF OF REGISTRATION**

[Signature]

[Signature]

[Signature]
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

TANK COTTAGE, Green Bay, Wisconsin

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 6 PAGE 1

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places
1970
State Historical Society of Wisconsin
Madison

State
Wisconsin 53706
have been recommended for transfer...are the Henry Baird Law Office on the courthouse lawn, East Moravian Church, and the Fort Howard buildings.\textsuperscript{9} (The Tank Cottage was later added to the list.) Two important considerations were the facts that except for the Moravian Church, all of the buildings had been moved at least once in order to save them, and that they were not receiving adequate care, maintenance, and protection from vandalism. As the historical park concept developed further, it won approval in a local referendum. It also received the support of the State Historical Society\textsuperscript{10} and of the Wisconsin governor. Governor Patrick Lucey referred specifically to the advantages of moving the historic structures to the park "in which their interpretation, operation, maintenance and security can be handled more efficiently," and said he hoped that community residents who had expressed reservations would give the park "the support which will make it a major cultural resource of the Green Bay community and the state."\textsuperscript{11}

A series of events and cooperative efforts between state agencies and both local government and private agencies in Green Bay and Brown County made possible and gave impetus to the establishment of a permanent site for Green Bay's historic buildings, to be known as Heritage Hill State Park. In 1971 the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services transferred ownership of the needed acreage of state reformatory property to the Department of Natural Resources, which operates the state park system. Governmental and historical agencies of Green Bay and Brown County formed Heritage Hill Foundation, Inc., which worked cooperatively with the Bureau of Parks and Recreation of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in the planning and development of Heritage Hill State Park as a Wisconsin American Revolution Bicentennial project. During 1975 and 1976, ownership of the Baird Law Office, Cotton House, Tank Cottage, and the Fort Howard buildings (hospital, ward building and officers quarters) was transferred to the State and those buildings not already on the park site were moved there. The Cotton House, which overlooks the entire park from the top of the hill, did not have to be moved. The historic Roi-Polier-Tank Cottage was moved from Union Park to the Fox River and then successfully barged about four miles south to Heritage Hill State Park.\textsuperscript{12} It was sited at the lower end of the park where it faces westward toward the river.

A small, single-story structure called the bake oven house, which had been presented to the city by descendants of the Christian Schwartz family in 1938 and placed on the Tank Cottage grounds in Union Park, was moved to Heritage Hill along with the house. Although this is an authentic, perhaps locally important building in its own right as a structure associated with an early Green Bay family, it has no historical relationship to the Tank Cottage. After the move to Heritage Hill State Park, however, this structure was physically attached to the rear of the left wing in such a way that a small part of the front gable end fits against the back wall of the left wing, and one of its verges intersects the edge of the wing's shed roof (see photos). A doorway was made in the rear wall of the wing to open into the bake oven house.

While this intrusion cannot be justified, it can be explained on the basis of ill-advised opinions given to the Department of Natural Resources in response to their inquiring whether the bake oven house should be attached to the Tank Cottage. Although
the two structures will probably be left as they are, the intrusion on the integrity is confined to a very small area and is relatively minor. Mr. Tank originally constructed the left wing as a dining room and kitchen, and old photographs of the cottage on its original site show a separate structure at the left rear corner of the house that may have served as a summer kitchen. The current situation is not entirely bad, therefore, since it closely approximates a historically correct visual effect. The bay window at the north end of the cottage, which obstructs part of the view of the small building at the northeast corner, is part of the original wing construction of the early 1850s.

Although the Tank Cottage is not as close to the Fox River as it was originally, its new, permanent siting more closely simulates the original than did that at Union Park. The house faces the river, albeit from the opposite bank, and, since it had already been moved once, it suffers no greater adverse effect on its historical integrity than it did when first moved in 1908.

Whereas the new setting of the Tank Cottage is on land that possesses historical significance as part of the site of Camp Smith, a short-lived military post begun in 1820 as an offshoot of Fort Howard, the intrusion of the cottage and other historic buildings cannot be said to have an adverse effect. For many years prior to the establishment of Heritage Hill State Park, the area of onetime Camp Smith which the Tank Cottage now occupies was a hay field of the Wisconsin State Reformatory. The area immediately surrounding the house is now lawn. At the rear of the house is a cover of tall grass which is left in a more or less natural state, with rail fences zigzagging through some of the grass.

What now remains of the old Camp Smith site slopes westward from a crest along South Webster Avenue down to the east bank of the Fox River, a distance of some 2600 feet. Before the creation of Heritage Hill State Park, the Cotton House, which is situated at the eastern (upper) area of the park and faces westward, had an imposing view of the river. (See aerial photograph of the park site before development.) While creation of the park did not obstruct this view, it did introduce a visual intrusion. Mitigating against the seriousness of this intrusion is the fact that the Cotton House itself was moved to its present site in 1941, taking it out of its own original context. On its original location about a mile north of Heritage Hill, the Cotton House did not have the clear overview that it has now. Like the other historically significant buildings moved to Heritage Hill State Park, the Cotton House was saved from eventual loss by destruction, neglect, or vandalism.

1. Martin, 1, 2, 4
2. Ibid., 7
3. Ibid., 2
4. Ferrin, Wisconsin Architecture, 46
5. Personal observation
6. Martin, op. cit., 2, 4
7. Ibid., 18
8. Ibid.
11. Lucey to Wendels and Rood, Sept. 9, 1975
12. Exchange, July 1976, 4
13. Martin, op. cit., 12
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

TANK COTTAGE, Green Bay, Wisconsin

CONTINUATION SHEET


Resolution, Board of Curators, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Feb. 23, 1974

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet

PROPERTY NAME: Tank Cottage

REFERENCE NUMBER: 70000028
STATE: WI
COUNTY CODE: 0009

New street address is 2640 South Webster Avenue

SIGNED: SHPO OR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE
DATE: 2/13/86