

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 HENRY SPENCER SMITH HOUSE

and/or common American Can Guest House

2. Location

street & number 706 East Forest Avenue not for publication

city, town Neenah vicinity of congressional district

state Wisconsin code 55 county Winnebago code 139

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Dr. George W. and Ila F. Arndt

street & number 706 East Forest Avenue

city, town Neenah vicinity of state Wisconsin 54956

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds
Winnebago County Court House
street & number 415 Jackson Street

city, town Oshkosh state Wisconsin 54901

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1977 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 type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<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 Henry Spencer Smith House is located in the industrial city of Neenah on the south side of Doty Island. Situated in a quiet residential neighborhood of large, older homes set back on spacious grounds, the Smith house dominates a central location between the rival communities of Neenah and Menasha.

The building sits on foundations of quarry-cut ashlar limestone and is of frame construction. It stands two stories on the south side and three stories on the north. The first floor is clapboard while the second and third floors are shingled. A three story circular tower divides the south facade, a one story conservatory projects from the east facade, and an extensive veranda wraps around the southwest corner. The roof and conservatory skylights are covered with asbestos shingles, and there are four red brick chimneys.

Decorative details incorporate Queen Anne, Shingle Style and Colonial Revival features. On the first floor the veranda has spool spindle balusters, Tuscan columns and exaggerated dentils. On the second floor the tower windows are crowned by a garlanded bas relief frieze, as is a nearby bow window. The second and third floors are covered in variegated shingles, except in the southwest and southeast gable ends where the shingles are wave-patterned. On these same gable ends are belts of plain shingles framed by rows of sawtooth shingles. In the southwest gable is a palladian window and in the southeast are two pilastered windows. Other decorative features include a bracketed cornice on the south facade and numerous beveled and leaded windows on the first and second floors. A stained glass window grouping between the first and second floors is initialed "H. S. S."

The interior, while altered, is noteworthy for its unbroken flow of rooms comprising two thirds of the first floor. In addition to a parlor and sitting room flanking the front hall, there is a music room and conservatory, behind which is the library, dining room and billiard room. All are connected by double doors. Of these rooms, the most remarkable is the conservatory, the only one in either Neenah or Menasha. It connects with the music room through french doors with side lights, both leaded in the Arts and Crafts style. The room also features mosaic floor tiles, cherry woodwork, beveled windows and bronze tulip sconces. The second floor consists of seven bedrooms and baths, the third floor features a ballroom, reception hall, and servant's quarters.

The original house was enlarged to its present size by the Smith family. Changes made by subsequent occupants include the partial enclosure of the veranda, the removal of the rear porch, the relocation of a rear service stairway, the construction of a firewall in the second floor hall, the temporary division of the ballroom, and the roofing of the conservatory skylights.

A concrete block garage is also included on the property.

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 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-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		
				Associated with prominent citizen
Specific dates	1892 ¹ - c. 1925	Builder/Architect	William Waters ¹	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Henry Spencer Smith House is associated with a prominent local industrialist who contributed to the social and economic development of Neenah and Menasha. Henry Smith (1857-1941) was secretary, vice-president, and chairman of the board of Menasha Wooden Ware Company (now Menasha Corporation) during the years in which the company became the largest employer and single most important industry in Menasha.

Henry Smith was the second son of pioneer industrialist and philanthropist Elisha D. Smith (1827-1899). Elisha Smith came to Menasha in 1850 and purchased a small pail factory, incorporated as Menasha Wooden Ware Company in 1875. As a young man, Henry Smith became involved in his father's business making pails, barrels, and tubs as a line of packaging for flour, butter, candy, and other foodstuffs. In 1880 he joined his brother, Charles R. Smith (1855-1916) as director of the family company and in 1881 was elected secretary. At his father's death, Henry Smith assumed the vice-presidency, becoming chairman of the board in 1916.²

Menasha Wooden Ware Company experienced its most dramatic growth under the management of the founder's sons. After Elisha Smith retired in 1894, the company expanded out of Wisconsin and Illinois and into Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Idaho, Oregon, Utah, New Mexico, and Canada. These holdings were largely in the form of vast tracts of timberland, acquired by Henry Smith as purchasing agent to meet the company's demand for 27,000,000 feet of lumber annually.³ By the turn of the century, the Menasha plant was one of the largest manufacturing sites in the state, utilizing one hundred acres in production and employing 1,000 people, the equivalent of one out of every seven residents in Menasha.⁴ By World War I, Menasha Wooden Ware had diversified into lumber, coal, iron, furniture, and paper and was locally believed to be one of the largest manufacturers of wooden ware products in the world. Unquestionable, it was the single most important company in Menasha.

In addition to being the largest employer in that city, Menasha Wooden Ware Company provided its owners with substantial wealth, enabling them to benefit the social and cultural climate of the community. Before his death, Elisha Smith presented the city of Menasha with a magnificent library building and a twenty-five acre park. In his will, the bulk of his estate was left in trust to benefit the community, missionary efforts, and various Wisconsin colleges including Lawrence, Beloit, Ripon, and Downer. Local beneficiaries included the First Congregational Church of Menasha and the poor of that city. Henry Smith and his brother gave direction to this local and state-wide generosity as the sole trustees of their father's foundation.⁵

9. Major Bibliographical References

UTM NOT PRINTED

See Continuation Sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 1 acre

Quadrangle name USGS - Neenah, WI.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	6	3	8	4	4	0	0	4	8	9	3	8	6	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H

Zone				Easting				Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

Assessor's Plat of the Plat of the Fifth Ward, East of Fifth Street, Block 7, Lot 14.

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 Peter James Adams

organization date 4-27-82

street & number 537 E. Wisconsin Avenue telephone 414 722-1422

city or town Neenah state Wisconsin 54956

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 Mewey

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin date 4/4/82

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register of Historic Places.

Alma Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the National Register date 6/25/82

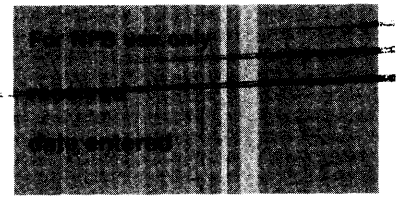
Attest: date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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007 12/31/84



Continuation sheet

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Henry Spencer Smith House (continued)

In 1892 Henry Smith began construction of a substantial yet unpretentious home on East Forest Avenue in Neenah. Designed by noted Oshkosh architect William Waters, the house combined Late Queen Anne and Shingle Style architecture with Colonial Revival features. In the ensuing years, the house grew to three times its original size, taking on a grandeur similar to the designs of McKim, Mead & White. Despite its strong, harmonious impact, the house is not architecturally significant. Waters may not have been responsible for the numerous later additions, and other less altered examples of Late Queen Anne/Shingle Style architecture exists in Neenah (George O. Bergstrom House, 570 E. Wisconsin Avenue; Gilbert-Lachmann House, 1010 East Forest Avenue).

The house is nevertheless a pivotal property in a potential historic district. By the 1890's, Neenah had not one but two prestigious neighborhoods: one around Riverside Park, the other on the east end of Doty Island. The latter developed on East Forest Avenue as a neighborhood of Menasha industrialists who wanted to live in proximity to their Menasha milling interests and the social milieu of Neenah. The district contains ten mansions constructed between 1882 (Syme-Gilbert House, 910 East Forest Avenue) and 1919 (Bacon-Johnson House, 1002 East Forest Avenue). At the center of this district are the Charles R. Smith House (NRHP: July 16, 1979) and the Henry Spencer Smith House.

These two brothers married a few months apart and built their homes near one another a few years later. Both men also enlarged their homes, almost in competition. Ultimately, Henry Smith's house was the larger of the two with nearly forty rooms and more than 17,000 square feet of space.⁶ A music room, a tiled conservatory, and a third floor ballroom with an adjoining reception hall make the Henry Spencer Smith House one of the largest and most sumptuous residences in a city noted for the conspicuous consumption of its industrial leaders.

¹Oshkosh Daily Northwestern; March 4, 1892; p. 4, col. 1.

²One Third Crew, One Third Boat, One Third Luck; pp. 31, 39 and 60. The Daily News; September 17, 1932; p. 1, col. 4.

³Spencer Smith to Mowry Smith, Jr.; October 24, 1973. One Third Crew, One Third Boat, One Third Luck; p. 56.

⁴Factories in the Valley; p. 178.

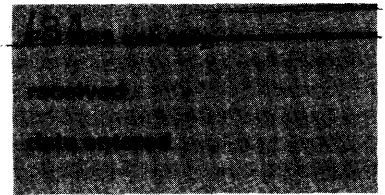
⁵Oshkosh Daily Northwestern; September 27, 1899; p. 1, col. 4.

⁶Haase Agency listing sheet; 1967.

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Continuation sheet

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Henry Spencer Smith House

Glaab, Charles N. and Larsen, Lawrence H.; Factories in the Valley: Neenah-Menasha, 1870-1915; The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1969, Madison, Wisconsin.

Mowry, William A.: The Descendants of John Mowry of Rhode Island; Reston & Rounds Co., 1909; Providence, Rhode Island.

Smith, Mowry Jr. and Clark, Giles; One Third Crew, One Third Boat, One Third Luck; The Menasha Corporation Story, 1849-1974; George Banta Company, 1974, Menasha, Wisconsin.

Titus, William A.; History of the Fox River Valley, Lake Winnebago and the Green Bay Region; S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1930; Chicago, Illinois; three volumes.

Daily Neenah Times; January 3, 1942; p.3, col. 5.

The Daily News; September 17, 1932; p. 1, col. 4.

Oshkosh Daily Northwestern; March 14, 1892, p. 4, col. 1.

Oshkosh Daily Northwestern; September 27, 1899; p. 1, col. 4.

Spencer Smith to Mowry Smith, Jr.; October 24, 1972; Elisha D. Smith Public Library, Historical Collections; a letter from Henry Smith's son to his cousin.

Nancy Kimberly DesMarais; June 5, 1980; an interview with Henry Smith's grand-daughter.

Charles R. Smith House Nomination; July 16, 1979.