



Name of Property: Northwestern Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS)

City, State: Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Significant Dates: 1866-1930

NHL Criteria: 1

NHL Theme: IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
2. Governmental Institutions

Previous Recognition: 1984 National Register of Historic Places; Individual listing, Ward Memorial Hall
2005 National Register of Historic Places
2008, 1989, 1986 Historic American Buildings Survey

National Historic Context: 2009 *National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers Study*

NHL Significance:

- Established by Congress in 1865 and ultimately encompassing eleven branches across the country, the NHDVS represents a policy of veterans’ benefits that directly influenced the development of a national system for veteran health care in the United States. The NHDVS demonstrates the concern and commitment of the federal government for the well-being of the civilian soldier. The NHDVS evolved over five distinct phases, reflecting changes in policy regarding admissions and medical care before its 1930 incorporation into the Veterans Administration.
- The Northwestern Branch was one of three original NHDVS facilities and represents all phases of NHDVS history, from the beginning and growth of veterans’ benefits after the Civil War to an increased focus on medical and geriatric care after 1900.
- The Northwestern Branch was the first National Home to employ female nurses and to provide separate quarters for elderly members inspiring similar changes in the operations of other branches.
- The Northwestern Branch retains the oldest buildings in the system and a largely intact picturesque landscape. It represents the governing Board of Managers’ emphasis on significant buildings and designed landscapes as sources of security, peace, and comfort, instilling pride for veterans and respect for them among the general public.



- The Northwestern Branch contains property types not found at other Homes. In its evolution, it influenced the manner in which subsequent branches were designed.
- Wood National Cemetery (Soldiers Home Cemetery) is an integral part of the Home, providing a final benefit -- honored burial among comrades.

Integrity:

- The historic core is remarkably intact and has suffered the loss of relatively few key buildings. The core contains six clusters of resource types critical to interpreting the early history of the NHDVS; however, deterioration of materials in some of the key buildings is at a critical point.
- The Main Building is a very rare and original example of the earliest development efforts of the Board of Managers.
- A number of early buildings, service buildings, flower gardens, and agricultural lands, are gone, however, post-1930 development has been largely separated from the core area.

Owner of Property: Federal

Acreeage of Property: Approximately 173 acres.

Origins of Nomination: Via an interagency agreement with the Department of Veterans Affairs Federal Preservation Office (VA FPO), and through a Cooperative Agreement with the National Council on Public History, the NPS contracted for a context study to assess significance and develop NHL nominations.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- Recognition of the NHDVS as a nationally significant resource will help Americans to better understand the commitment of the federal government to its military veterans.
- The successor of this ground-breaking federal policy in veterans care is of current national interest.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Dr. Carson moved, Dr. Murtagh seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (comments received as of 11/17/10):

Ann Pieper Eisenbrown, Chair, Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission

Gwen Moore, U.S. Congress, Wisconsin

Royce A. Yeater, AIA, Midwest Director, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Chicago, Illinois

James A. Duff, President, and Mary Panzer, Vice President, Soldiers Home Foundation, Inc., Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Glenn D. Haggstrom, Executive Director for Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction, Department of Veterans Affairs

Advisory Board Recommendation: