

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Item number 7

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NAME: E.A. Burnham House
LOCATION: 17 Nickerson Street
OWNER: John & Euphemia Leach
559 Power Road
Pawtucket, RI 02860
CONDITION: Good; altered; original site

DESCRIPTION:

The 1902 E.A. Burnham House is set on a shady corner lot in a late nineteenth-century residential neighborhood located off the westerly side of Broad Street near the Central Falls line. In its overall form, the house is essentially a two-and-a-half-story, hip-with-cross-gable--roofed square, with a short northern extension functioning as a service ell. The building is constructed of wood and its exterior walls are covered with stained wooden shingles, sparsely accented by painted wooden details (bargeboards, finials, panelled beam ends, etc.) of Gothic derivation. A single-story, gabled porch projects beyond the front doorway. Much of the interest of the building's exterior derives from the studied manner in which the gable peaks and bay windows are unexpectedly projected from, or recessed into, the wall planes of each facade.

Most of the windows in the Burnham House are filled with double-hung sash, the upper sash of which are commonly divided in the polygonal patterns common in the early twentieth century. Exceptions are the handsome stained glass windows in the western walls of the dining room and the stairhall. The former is a rather severely beautiful floral design of strongly linear character. The latter is a much more elaborate composition made up of four separate panels: three vertical panels, featuring single oval medallions, form the three sides of a projecting bay window at the staircase landing; an overarching lunette caps the bay with spreading floral tendrils extending from a central vase. The crisp, linear patterning of the dining-room window reappears, as well, in the leaded glass upper panel of the inner front door.

The plan of the house is dominated by the imposing front stairhall, which occupied the whole southwestern corner of the main floor. Behind this stairhall, a narrow central hallway down the building's spine leads to the other first-floor rooms. Elaborate Classical Revival and Colonial Revival mantels, each featuring freestanding columns carrying projected entablatures over over-mantel mirrors survive in two major rooms; intricate parquet floors are common throughout; and the front entry foyer boasts in elaborately embossed composition covering which appears to be Lincrusta Walton. The outstanding interior feature, however, is the front staircase. This rises with a theatrical flourish along the whole western wall of the

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main stairhall. A landing, midway up the run, bows dramatically forward into the hall against a backdrop of colored sunlight flooding in from the stained glass-filled bay window behind. A handsome Colonial Revival railing of varnished hardwood lines the stairs; simple sunken panel work set vertically encloses the space beneath.

Although the building has recently been converted from single-family use into apartments, the changes necessitated by that conversion (blocking off the upper end of the front staircase, inserting a second kitchen into a former end of the front staircase, inserting a second kitchen into a former upstairs bedroom) have had minimal impact upon the building's overall character. The disappearance from storage, however, of the ornamental carved panel which originally filled the porch gable (and which was practically the signature of the building's architect, Albert H. Humes) is a far more serious loss.

Also located on the Burnham House lot (behind the main house and facing toward Hawes Street) is a matching, shingled, one-bay garage. If this structure was actually erected at the same time as the house (and its architectural character certainly suggests that it could have been) this could be one of the earliest garages now standing in Pawtucket.

PERIOD: 1900-
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture
SPECIFIC DATE: 1902
ARCHITECT: Albert H. Humes

SIGNIFICANCE:

The E.A. Burnham House is architecturally significant as a handsomely detailed example of the kind of spacious dwelling erected by Pawtucket's prosperous upper-class residents around the turn of the century. Its matching single-car garage may well be one of the earliest representatives of that particular building type remaining in Pawtucket. The building is significant, as well, as one of the known surviving works of Albert H. Humes, an important local architect and politician.

The present house at 17 Nickerson Street was built for Eugene A. Burnham, partner in Charles A. Luther & Company, pattern makers and machinists, in 1902, replacing an earlier Burnham house on the same site. The architect for the 1902 dwelling-house was Albert Hadfield Humes, a Pawtucket native who had attended Schofields Commercial College in Providence and had spent six years in the offices of William R. Walker & Son before opening his own architectural office in Pawtucket in 1887. From

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that date on, Humes competed rather successfully with the better-known Providence architectural firms for the commissions of large, upper-class residences (and some public and commercial buildings) in Pawtucket, Central Falls, and the surrounding area. The architect also became an important political figure, serving as Mayor of Central Falls in 1903-04, and running (unsuccessfully) as the Bull Moose candidate for Governor in 1912. The Burnham House on Nickerson Street is an example of this important local architect/politician's distinctive personal style in its turn-of-the-century phase.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nominated property is Pawtucket Assessor's Plat 44B, lot 262 and includes the Burnham House, its garage, and their immediate surroundings.

ACREAGE: less than one
LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local
UTM: A 19 301780 4539300

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