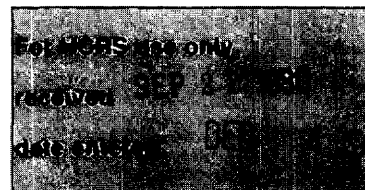


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 Alfred L. Black House  
and/or common Wahl House

**2. Location**

street & number 158 South Forest St. not for publication  
city, town Bellingham vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district 2nd - Swift  
state Washington code 53 county Whatcom code 073

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Ralph Walno  
street & number 158 South Forest Street  
city, town Bellingham vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state Washington 98225

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Whatcom County Courthouse  
street & number Grand Street  
city, town Bellingham state Washington 98225

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Wash. State Cultural Resource Survey:  
Whatcom County has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
date 1979  federal  state  county  local  
depository for survey records Preservation Office, Roeder Home 2600 Sunset  
city, town Bellingham state Washington 98225

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

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

The Alfred L. Black house is a massive two and one-half story residential building designed in the Queen Anne style, but incorporating elements of Richardsonian Romanesque. The structure is single detached, built on three city lots sloping steeply down from the street on which its address is listed. This has allowed the designer to open up the lower floors to the view to the west. The house is basically rectangular with a wing extending from the northwest wall, a porch and three story turret from the southwest wall, and a bay window from the east wall. The entry is masonry Chuckanut sandstone as is the entire first floor. Above that is horizontal clapboard painted a light green. The roof is composition shingle with small dormers facing east and west and a large cross gable on the east rising above a two story bay window. The turret's eight sided conical roof is on the southwest corner.

The first floor of the house contains a library, dining room with parquet floor, kitchen, reception hall and a living room which reaches into the round turret room. The fir woodwork is spectacular, lining the walls and winding up the wide staircase. Leaded art glass windows are used on two interior walls on the ground floor and on the exterior walls east, north and west. The fireplace in the library is beneath a plaster relief frieze. The second floor houses seven of the ten bedrooms and the top floor has two, as well as a trunk room and a large billiard room. The windows in the house that are not leaded glass are either plate or double hung sash. The basement now houses a boiler, laundry rooms, an institutional size kitchen, and entry way to the ballroom. The large ballroom has a raised platform stage, a sandstone fireplace (recently uncovered), two chandeliers, and an oak floor. It is reached by a flight of stairs from above and is enclosed by lead crystal windows and paneled fir walls.

The house has three chimneys, one for each fireplace and one from the kitchen in the northwest corner. There is a smaller back stairway in addition to the main one and the house has an entrance on each side, all on the first floor except the west, which enters the basement. The wide porch wraps around half of the west side on the first floor and meets the main entrance in the middle of the south wall. The turret, porch and majority of window area on the bay side demonstrate the home's orientation to the water view and leave the street side of the building rather ordinary looking. Only the massive looking castle-like entry with its masonry battlements give away the building's size and quality from the street. Looking from the bay however, the house dominates this part of the hill.

The only changes to the exterior of the building have been paint colors and the application of a composition shingle roof. The interior changes include minor work on the plumbing fixtures on the second and third floors, and the remodeling of the ballroom for use as a chapel. This work has already been completed except for some molding which has not yet been replaced. Because the house has been lived in almost continually since it was built very little neglect is apparent.

## 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 checked="" 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1903

Builder/Architect Alfred Lee

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

In October of 1903, after a long campaign for the union of towns on Bellingham Bay, the city of Bellingham was created from the consolidation of the two towns, Fairhaven and Whatcom. In those days by far the best known advocate of consolidation was the mayor of Fairhaven Alfred L. Black. Before the end of that year Black began work on two major projects. One was to become mayor of the newly created city of Bellingham and the other was to build a mansion equal to his soon-to-be office. It was no accident that the mansion was to be built on the old boundary line between the two towns. On December 12, 1903, in a special election, Alfred Black became Bellingham's first mayor. His symbolic home was finished that year as well.

The Black House was designed by Alfred Lee, a local architect responsible for many impressive buildings in the area, among them the Roeder home and the present Whatcom Museum (both listed on the National Register). Besides being one of the largest residential structures in the county, the Black House has seen almost no change structurally or cosmetically. Making good use of the locally ubiquitous Chuckanut sandstone, the two and one-half story building is deceptively large. Although its street address is on Forest Street the house is oriented the other way, toward Bellingham Bay.

In addition to the three full floors and a basement, including ten bedrooms, the building has a large ballroom extending as a wing from the west side. A three story octagonal turret offers a sweeping view of the bay from the southwest corner of the structure and the builders used a striking pattern of leaded art glass in several windows in both interior and exterior walls.

In March 1917 the house was sold to a local merchant, Joseph B. Wahl. At that time Wahl was one of the wealthiest men in the city, owning several businesses including Wahl's Department store. The house became known as the Wahl House in the years following.

Just below the house was the site of the old St. Joseph's Hospital, so in 1957 when the Wahl's sold the house it was natural that the Sisters of St. Joseph purchase it for use as a convent. The only real changes ever made to the house were carried out during the years the Sisters owned it, and they were minor. They added some extra bathroom fixtures and partitions, finished a complete kitchen in the basement and converted the ballroom into a chapel, closing the fireplace off and removing some of the decorative elements. The crystal chandeliers in the ballroom however, were left in place.

In 1963 the house was sold again when the hospital was moved to a new location across town. Dr. John Mumma became the new owner. Recently the house has been purchased and sold. It is currently on the market.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Edson, Lelah Jackson. The Fourth Corner. 1968. Whatcom Museum. Bellingham  
 Polk. Bellingham City Directory. 1905, 1917, 1968, 1979,  
 Roth, Lottie Roeder. History of Whatcom County. 1926. Pioneer Pub. Co. Seattle  
 Turbeville, Daniel E. An Illustrated Inventory of Historic Bellingham  
Buildings. Bellingham Arts Commission. Bellingham.

# 10. Geographical Data

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**  
**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**  
 Quadrange scale 1:24000

Acreeage of nominated property Less than 1 acre  
 Quadrange name Bellingham South

### UMT References

A	10	537215	5397945	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Bellingham Bay Land #2 Plat, Block 102, Lots 25-28. (Assessor's Office)  
 Total Lot Size 120 feet X 165 feet = 19,800 square feet.

### 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 Michael Sullivan/Historic Preservation Planner  
 organization Whatcom County Park and Recreation Board date December 26, 1979  
 street & number 2600 Sunset Drive telephone (206) 733-1231  
 city or town Bellingham state Washington 98225

# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Jeanne M. Welch  
 title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date 9/8/80

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is Included in the National Register	
<u>Bruce W. Boyd</u>	date <u>12/8/80</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest: <u>Emma Jane Saxe</u>	date <u>12-3-80</u>
Chief of Registration	