

4/19/84



**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 Wilford, Abbott, Houses

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number 2121 and 2127 Vallejo Street N/A not for publication

city, town San Francisco N/A vicinity of congressional district 5th Calif.

state CA code 06 county San Francisco code 075

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	N/A 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 type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Jeffrey L. Stern & Susan Bertolli - J. Philip & Donna L. Martin

street & number 2121 Vallejo Street - 2127 Vallejo Street

city, town San Francisco N/A vicinity of state CA 94123

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hall of Records

street & number City Hall

city, town San Francisco state CA 94102

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Architectural Survey
Department of City Planning has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1976 federal state county local

depository for survey records Department of City Planning
450 McAllister Street

city, town San Francisco state CA 94102

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input 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			N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Albert Wilford Houses are two nearly identical adjoining frame residences in an individual variant of Queen Anne style. Set high above and behind the sidewalk on the steep north slope of Pacific Heights in San Francisco, they give the residents views across San Francisco Bay to Marin County and San Pablo Bay, but they have been hemmed in by more recent buildings which begin at the sidewalk on either side. Four flights of steps lead up to each front door, the cliff-like front yard giving privacy and quiet, setting this pair off from their dissimilar neighbors. The two-story-and-basement houses in plan are long thin rectangles with long jogs taken out of the rear (southwest) sides to lighten inner rooms. Inside is San Francisco's standard nineteenth-century plan: hall and stairs leading straight back from the front door to a sequence of rooms; double parlor, dining room, kitchen. The matched facades are unusual in the way they achieve the desired variety of Queen Anne massing on a 23-foot frontage. The roof seems of three pieces: a standard gable, a small echoing gable over the slightly projecting entry pavilion on the left (east) of the facade, and a square-based domical turret roof pierced by echoing window, both of equilateral arches, over the polygonal bay window toward the right (west) of the facade. The main house wall is penetrated at the very right by a narrow two-story recess of no apparent function, and at the entry pavilion by a deep entry recess framed in a Moorish arch and by a similarly deep balcony recess under a round-headed arch. Here lie the only apparent facade alterations. At 2121 Vallejo the Moorish arch has been removed, leaving scars on the square opening (photos 5 & 6). At 2127 Vallejo there is no recessed balcony; probably one existed originally and was subsequently filled in.

Contrasting textures lend additional Queen Anne variety to the facades. The most unusual surface is a broad band of plaster covering scattered small rocks and irregularly scored between them, in effect a large-scale imitation of ostrich-skin leather. This band replaces the more expented cornice and fascia, and over the bay it acts like a drum supporting the domical roof (photo 2). Additional textures are fish-scale shingles on flaring bay aprons, hexagonal shingles on domical roof, ordinary shingles on gable ends and roof, and wide rustic in the balcony and right side recesses. Foliate low reliefs stretch out on either side of male heads above the Moorish and round-headed arches (photos 2-4). Other foliate reliefs fill the arch spandrels. Geometric jig-sawn panels decorate flat pilasters on either side of the bay's windows and the space between pilaster capitals. Above the pilaster course is a zigzag molding. Stubby turned posts support the main arches, one on each side of the second floor arch and two for each end of the Moorish arch, the foot of which appears braced against a wooden pillow (photo 5). The top of each bay window, whether round-headed on the second floor or squared on the first, is given texture by a scalloped awning-shape of stained glass (photos 7 & 8).

(See Continuation Sheet, p. 1.)

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7. DESCRIPTION (cont.):

In spite of these busy textures, the facades are given order by strong verticals at the west side recess and at both edges of the entry pavilion, by the ostrich-leather fascia band and the domical roof.

In the front yard the lowest flights of steps are in the original location on the left (west) side of each lot. Of old concrete matching the sidewalk coping, they may be the original stairs. Above the coping is a virtually intact ornamental iron railing, identical on both properties (photo 9). Between the railing and the house the landscaping presently consists of ivy to hold the slope and a few trees. The third and fourth flights of stairs are at right angles across the lots and up the right (east) sides. Of wood, they and their railings have had to be renewed.

The interiors retain much original ornamentation, duplicated from one house to the other. Both entry halls have matching stair rails and heavy cornices. Throughout the houses, the corner blocks of door surrounds are decorated by a quarter-sunburst motif (photo 14). Originally there were three fireplaces in each house: on the parlor's south wall and on the west walls of dining room and upstairs front room. One parlor mantel has been replaced with an Italianate marble one; the other's dining room fireplace has been removed. The four remaining originals all have elaborate, rather Stick-style wooden mantels and colored tiles around the firebox, with foliate textured tiles at the corners (photos 11-13). Upstairs are curve-topped overmantels with bric-a-brac shelves flanking centered mirrors. As corner brackets and ceiling medallions, pre-molded applied plaster ornaments usually have faces in addition to the more usual foliage, scrollwork and moldings. Most interior doors are five-paneled, with some original hardware. Window surrounds, baseboards and picture moldings are largely intact.

There have been few exterior alterations. Removal of 2121 Vallejo's Moorish arch and 2127's probable balcony have already been noted, as have exterior stair and rail renewals. The paneled front doors of 2127 Vallejo are probably not the original ones. There is a small rear addition at 2127 Vallejo, but both houses still have rear gardens. Basements are variously developed. At 2127 a large steel column has been run from basement to attic for seismic safety in connection with developing living space in the attic; on the first floor it appears as an extra angle of the hall, about the size of a heating duct, inconspicuously sheet-rocked and painted. This house also lost its first-floor newell post, which has been reconstructed on the pattern of 2121's newell.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1890 **Builder/Architect** Albert Wilford

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Albert Wilford Houses are significant for their architecture, a highly unusual variant among the thousands of Queen Anne houses in San Francisco. The ostrich-leather fascia bands and equilateral-arched domical bay roof have not been documented anywhere else, though they certainly fall within the range of typical Queen Anne treatments for rough-textured plaster accents, turrets and generally varied massing. Their designer-builder-contractor-owner-developer was Albert Wilford, who probably made his own inventive mix of the architectural elements he found in the Newsom Brothers' Picturesque California Homes (No. 2, 1887) and in The California Architect and Building News (hereafter CA&BN), especially the William H. Crocker house on California Street, built in 1888 by Curlett & Cuthbertson. (1) A small-scale developer, Wilford is very little known, but among his few houses discovered so far, this pair on Vallejo Street are the most unusual and the most intact.

The houses have received some attention as exotic designs. The San Francisco Planning Department's 1976 Architectural Survey rated them '4' (next to highest) on a 0-5 scale, when 90% of the city's buildings received no rating at all. The surveyor remarked on his form, "Outrageous." Also The Great Houses of San Francisco devotes a page to 2121 Vallejo's domical turret and second floor details. (2)

The houses' developer Albert Wilford had purchased the land by the late 1880s. He owned, in fact, two of the three 50-vara lots (each 137½x137½') on this blockfront, those at the southwest corner of Vallejo and Buchanan and at the southeast corner of Vallejo and Webster, consisting of the modern lots 1-5, 21-23, 14-18 and 51-57 on the enclosed map of Assessor's Block 565. Wilford never touched the block's center 137½ feet. He subdivided the two 50-vara lots into the 23- to 29-foot wide modern lots (except lot 23 and the two condominium conversions). In 1889-1890 he built four houses facing Webster, four on Buchanan and four on Vallejo

- (1) Published in CA&BN, June 1889: facing p. 78; and also in J.C. Newsom, Picturesque and Artistic Homes and Buildings of California, No. 3, 1890: "California Street."
- (2) Curt Bruce (photographs) and Thomas Aidala (text), The Great Houses of San Francisco, New York, 1974, Knopf: 54.

(See Continuation Sheet, p. 2)

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet, page 6.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 0.15

Quadrangle name San Francisco North

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>0</u>	<u>5</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u> <u>1</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>7</u> <u>0</u>
	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

The nominated property is the two city lots on which the houses stand, Lots 21 and 22 in Assessor's Block 565, together being approximately 46 x 137.5 ft. on the south side of Vallejo St. between Buchanan & Webster.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	<u>N/A.</u>	code
-------	------------	------	--------	-------------	------

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	<u>N/A</u>	code
-------	------------	------	--------	------------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Bloomfield

organization (consultant)

date 12 July 1984

street & number 2229 Webster Street

telephone (415) 922-1063

city or town San Francisco

state GA 94115

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 Kathryn Gualtieri

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date July 8, 1985

For HCERS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 8/29/85

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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8. SIGNIFICANCE (cont.):

(two on each of the 50-vara lots).(3) Of these twelve Wilford houses, five have been demolished and three seriously altered; 2654-2658 Webster, 2751 Buchanan, 2121 and 2127 Vallejo survive reasonably intact. Judging from the remains, all certainly had narrow lots, similar plans, two main stories and polygonal bay windows. The Webster Street ones had round-arched door and balcony recesses comparable to 2121 and 2127 Vallejo's, but there is no evidence of any other domical turrets. The complete water dates, partial sales dates, Sanborn map footprints and present building masses all indicate the twelve houses were a single development.

Wilford (1843-1915) was born in Stockholm, Sweden, immigrated to the United States in 1866 and was naturalized in Pennsylvania.(4) In San Francisco directories he appears first in 1871 without occupation, and then not again until 1877. Except for 1880 (liquor saloon), 1883 and 1890 (no listings), directories through 1915 attribute to him various aspects of his developer status. He was a "carpenter" in 1877-1878, 1881, 1884, 1886 and 1888. He was a "carpenter and builder" in 1882, 1885 and 1887. He was a "contractor and builder" in 1889 and 1899, a simple "builder" in 1891-1892, 1896-1898, 1900, 1903, 1908-1909 and 1914-1915. He listed himself as an "architect" in 1893, 1895, 1901-1902 and 1904-1907. He gave no occupation, presumably living on income or real estate sales, in 1894, 1910 and 1912. He sounds like a self-made man. Between years of constant moving, he lived at 3009 Jackson Street 1892-1910. His wife Charlotte had immigrated from Sweden in 1873 and had two sons by a previous marriage. Edward and Louis Brader followed their stepfather as building contractors.

- (3) San Francisco Water Department: Service Installation Requests were signed by A. Wilford for 2660 Webster on 1 June 1889; for 2638-2640, 2642-2644 and 2654 Webster on 29 July 1889; for 2751 and 2753 Buchanan and 2103 Vallejo (then 2715 Buchanan) on 29 March 1890; for 2121, 2127, 2131 and 2133-2139 Vallejo on 24 June 1890; and for 2741 Buchanan on 13 August 1890. These water records are the sole known connection of Wilford to these houses.
- (4) U.S. Census 1910, California, San Francisco, Roll 101, Enumeration District 283, household No. 116; "Deaths: Wilford," San Francisco Examiner, 24 Nov. 1915: 10/5.

(See Continuation Sheet, p. 3)

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (cont.):

Little is known of Wilford's work. CA&BN did not notice him, nor did Architect and Engineer. Sources that do indicate some buildings are Water Department records (subject development, 1889-1890; 1267 and 1273 Fulton Street, 1888 and 1889); newspapers (1352-1356 McAllister, 1902); directory listings (3009 Jackson, before 1892); the San Francisco Realty Directory of 1897 (southwest Fulton and Shrader, demolished); Wilford's McEnery Judgments file No. 18694 (post-1906-fire land claims on 2319 Anza, 126, 130, 135-137 and 136 Eighteenth Ave.); and his probate file #20002 (2244 and 2260 Leavenworth, 1913; 74 Caselli, 1914; and other property in San Francisco, Oakland and Alameda). Further delving may produce more houses. His practice seems to have been to buy plots of land, subdivide, build houses on speculation with himself as contractor, and sell them either outright or on time payments extending a year or more, Wilford retaining title until all was paid. For instance at 2131 Vallejo, where he signed for the water connection on 24 June 1890, the McEnery indicates he bought (or bought back) the house from Clemence E. and Eveline L. Harrison on 13 Nov. 1895, and on 19 Feb. 1902 he made a time contract with the same people for a \$5,000 sale of it on payments of \$10 a month at 7% interest; \$4400 was left yet to be paid in September 1909.

The designs of the various Wilford houses mark him a follower of whatever trend was current and easily sold at the time. In 1888 he built Stick houses with garlanded fascias, in 1902 it was three-story flats with curved bay windows, and in 1913 two-story stuccoed flats over garages. In short, the subject houses are Wilford's only known venture out on a limb of the design tree.

He may have gleaned the ideas from local architectural publications. CA&BN had first noticed Queen Anne designs in May of 1882, printing $2\frac{1}{2}$ columns on "The Architecture of the Renaissance" and the illustration of a country house near Boston. In 1884 and 1885 the magazine published a very few eastern country cottages and many little cuts in Queen Anne style, but almost all the major illustrations showed the local adherence to Stick style. The December 1886 issue gave a "Design for a Country Seat" with CA&BN's first Moorish arch. In the next three years the magazine devoted more and more of its illustrations to Queen Anne houses, including examples of varied massing, Moorish arches, and balconies recessed into the body of the house, all elements of the Vallejo Street designs. Meanwhile S. and J. C. Newsom's first Picturesque California Homes, published in 1884-1885, had advocated largely Stick organization with a multitude of Queen Anne details, like fish-scale shingles,

(See Continuation Sheet, p. 4.)

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (cont.):

flared bay aprons, projecting chimneys and gabled dormers. There was one Moorish arch--on a fireplace. The Newsom's second pattern book of the same title, published in 1887, was thoroughly oriented toward Queen Anne style; it showed towers with echoing window shapes, Moorish arches, recessed balconies. There were many ideas for Wilford.

Even closer to the elements he mixed and matched on Vallejo Street was the William H. Crocker mansion (destroyed 1906) at California and Taylor Streets, by Curlett & Cuthbertson. It had a Moorish arch at the entry, curve-profiled turret roof with echoing window shape, recessed balconies, bay windows and a multitude of textures. J. C. Newsom published an unattributed photograph of it as "California Street" in Picturesque and Artistic Homes and Buildings of California (1890). In June 1889 the same house, properly attributed, had been published in CA&BN, with the comment on p. 79: "The design embraces more originality than is usually observed in such dwellings, inasmuch that it combines six different materials in its exterior, without detracting from the unity of the whole design." Kirker says the house "proved less significant as an original production than as a kind of builder's poster from which regional architects gathered details for their row houses." (5) This seems to be what Wilford did. He may even have derived the "ostrich-leather" texture from Crocker's gables which CA&BN had described as "finished in pebbled plaster on iron laths." (6)

Whatever the design's pedigree, Wilford seems to have had little trouble selling the houses. On 24 June 1890 he had signed for the water supply, an indication the houses were at least under construction, and he recorded their sales on 29 November 1890 for 2127 Vallejo, on 6 December 1890 for 2121 Vallejo, and for at least two other houses in the development in November and December 1890. (7) He may have spent the summer on construction and turned his attention to selling during the rainy season. He sold 2121 Vallejo to Annie J. Gabriel, presumably

(5) Kirker, California's Architectural Frontier, Peregrine Smith 1973: 105 and Plate 53.

(6) CA&BN, June 1889: 79.

(7) San Francisco Chronicle, 30 Nov. 1890: 19/4; ---, 7 Dec. 1890: 19/4; --- 27 Dec. 1890: 9/4; San Francisco Examiner, 4 Nov. 1890: 10/5.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (cont.):

wife of Adolph J. Gabriel, a traveling salesman whom directories list here 1892-1894. The buyer of 2127 was Patrick A. Dolan, a real estate agent who was listed at a different address every year, here in 1891. Dolan sold his house almost immediately to Richard M. Tobin (b. 1866), son of the Hibernia Bank's founder, made a director in 1889 and later Hibernia's president. For Tobin 2127 Vallejo was simply income property; during 1900 he rented it to Joseph O'Hara and in 1904 to Stuart F. Loughborough. By 1906 the house belonged to bookbinder Frank and May C. Malloye, who lived in it and whose descendants finally sold it in 1972. Gabriel sold 2121 Vallejo before 1897, and the next known owner (1901) was John R. Aitken, a lawyer, who turned it over to his own company, California Investment & Finance. Tenants included Charles Simon Levy, another traveling salesman (1900-1904), Joseph Weissbein (1904-1905) and Joseph Vail Selby, manager of the Boston Woven Hose & Rubber Company (1908-1910). The house went through a series of absentee owners until bought by the Youdalls, residents, in 1952. It seems always to have been a single family residence, whereas 2127 Vallejo was converted to three flats in the 1940s and reconverted in 1978 to a single family house with basement apartment.

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9. BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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Eldredge, History of California, 1915, vol. IV: facing 294.

Index to Register of Voters, 1900, Assembly District 41, Precinct 13.

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---, 1904, Assembly District 41, Precinct 10.

---, 1905, Assembly District 41, Precinct 10.

---, 1907, Assembly District 41, Precinct 13.

---, 1908, Assembly District 41, Precinct 13.

---, 1910, Assembly District 41, precinct 13.

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---, file No. 9081 (California Investment & Finance Co.).

---, file No. 16905 (Frank Malloye).

Merry's Block Book, 1894: 165.

---, 1901: 181.

---, 1906: 505.

---, 1909: 505.

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9. BIBLIOGRAPHY (cont.):

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---, Picturesque California Homes (No. 2), San Francisco, 1887.

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---, 1899-1912, vol. III: 296.

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---, 1913-1972, vol. III: 249.

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San Francisco Probate Records, file No. 20002 (Albert Wilford).

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San Francisco Recorder, General Index, vol. 144 (beginning 1 May 1890).

San Francisco Street Directory, 1940.

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9. BIBLIOGRAPHY (cont.):

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---, San Francisco Enumeration District 275, p. 1A (2107 and 2105 Vallejo).

---, 1900 (ms), California, San Francisco, Reel 106, Enumeration
District 235, p. 5B (2105 Vallejo).

