

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUN 10 1976
DATE ENTERED OCT 8 1976

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

ph
H. H. Bennett Studio

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

215 Broadway

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Wisconsin Dells

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd

STATE

Wisconsin 53965

CODE

55

COUNTY

Columbia

CODE

021

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Ruth Bennett Dyer and Jean Dyer Reese

STREET & NUMBER

215 Broadway

CITY, TOWN

Wisconsin Dells

VICINITY OF

STATE 53965
Wisconsin

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Columbia County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Portage

STATE
Wisconsin 53901

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Wisconsin's Historic Preservation Plan, Volume II: The Inventory

DATE

1974

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

CITY, TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The H. H. Bennett Studio was constructed in 1875, ten years after its founder purchased a tintype studio business in Kilbourn City. It was built as a commercial photographers studio and its arrangements reflect the phases of a business enterprise, sales, studio portraiture, wet process developing, and contact printing of stereoview negatives; the one out of studio phase, taking the landscape photographs is documented in the pictures themselves.

The original red brick single story facade consisted of a central transomed double door with a two over two double hung windows on each side. Brick mouldings delineated the roof line and a false front is surmounted by heavy moulded wood or sheet metal side cornices and a open bottomed gable or pediment with the same profile. The exterior decorative scheme was so simple that attribution to any of the styles of the day is difficult, but it probably would have been considered "Renaissance" revival when it was built.

Over the years changes in the building occurred as the business demanded them. Bennett devised a rotating glass printing house that was installed on the roof of the building. The gallery or sales room was continuously modernized to attract customers. By 1910 it sported the heavy beams emblematic of the Arts and Crafts Movement along with the original display cases which are retained to this day. Finally in 1918 -- ten years after his death -- the facade was remodeled by his wife and former partner Mrs. Evaline Bennett. It was rebuilt in up to date Old English or Tudor style with a half timbered stucco gable surmounting a recessed central door and two plate glass windows. Narrow display cases let into the thickness of the side walls of the building utilized the remaining facade and replaced the free standing display kiosk which had stood in front of the building.

Today the building retains its 1918 facade surrounded on one side and the back by extensions. The original layout of the interior remains, however. The old gallery still functions as an exhibit space for H. H. Bennett's work and a wide door that had been opened into an adjoining gift shop has now been closed. The original "Artistic" Eastlake Style cases still show Bennett views and serve as an introduction to the museum that occupies the old studio and dark room areas. Here H. H. Bennett's cameras, mounting equipment, and the wet plate process are shown together with the props that were used in portrait sittings.

A new temperature humidity controlled vault for the negative collection has just been finished behind the original studio building, and plans exist for the restoration and preservation of the revolving solar printing house. The first will guarantee the preservation of the body of Bennett's work while the second will further amplify his reputation for ingenuity.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Photographic history
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1875

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The H. H. Bennett studio is the oldest operating photographer's enterprise in the state. It houses the work of Henry Hamilton Bennett,* his wife and partner, and two generations of his successors. By preserving the original facilities that were used when the studio was built it provides several unusual opportunities for understanding the way commerce and artistic creativity were interwoven in late 19th century America.

The studio itself shows the conditions late 19th century portraiture demanded. The dark room demonstrates the technical problems that beset early wet plate photographers and the galley gives visible evidence of the value turn-of-the-century Americans placed on photographs themselves. Together the site and the collection comprise a significant record of Wisconsin and documents the forceful role photography has taken in the way we view the world.

In 1861 during his Civil War Service, Bennett was wounded in the hand. The injury may have been influential in his decision to purchase a small tin-type studio in Kilburn City, Wisconsin, rather than follow the family trade of carpentry. He concentrated on producing stereo views for the then popular forerunner of both radio and television. Almost every family had a stereographic viewer and hundreds of thousands of these views of scenic wonders and major events were sold by publishing houses as well as individual studios. The views were ordinarily original contact prints mounted on cards for use in the magnifying viewer.

The use of contact prints meant the photographic quality was high -- better than any form of image we usually experience, but caused great technical problems. Bennett moved into this competitive market with sensitivity and spectacular views of the Dells of the Wisconsin River and Devil's Lake in the Dells area. The views were instrumental in promoting infant tourism. They sold well but he chose to expand his offerings -- and in doing so left a major documentary record. Perhaps most important, he pioneered in the development of something very like the modern picture essay -- for instance his coverage of a lumber raft trip down the Wisconsin River goes beyond simple documentation to show

*Bennett's work has been selected for several major exhibitions including the photographer in the American Landscape Museum of Modern Art 1963 and numerous publications.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Robert Wells, Milwaukee Journal, Sunday picture journal, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. May 2, 1965.
 Paul Vanderbilt, H.H. Bennett exhibition, 1843-1908, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. January-March, 1965.
 John Sarkowsky, The Photographer in the American Landscape, Exhibition Catalogue, Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York. 1963.
~~Tracy Atkinson, Bennett, Steichen, Metzker, The Wisconsin Heritage Photography Exhibition Catalogue, Milwaukee Art Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1970.~~

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than 1.0

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 6	2 7 6 1 7 0	4 8 3 4 0 9 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

George Talbot, Curator Iconographic Collections

ORGANIZATION

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

March 25, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

816 State Street

TELEPHONE

608-262-2283

CITY OR TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

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

James Norton Smith 5/21/76

TITLE

Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

10/8/96

DATE

10/7/76

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Statement of Significance (continued)

how all the aspects of raftsmen's life fit together. In this Bennett was far in advance of his peers who contented themselves with stiffly posed reenactments of "interesting" incidents. He also covered the Milwaukee water front; the homes of merchants and manufacturers; the Winnebago Indians and at least three world fairs, 1876, 1893, 1904. A superb craftsman who wanted to show "what things were really like," he devised ways of involving his viewers in the image with men caught in mid air jumping across chams, smoke boiling up from sail steamers in the harbor and casual loungers in the streets.

With great mechanical ingenuity he devised new lens mounts, high speed shutters, a revolving printing house to follow the sun and exposed all those thousands of glass plates to make stereo contact prints and stereoview mounters and trimmers to feed the expanding stereo market.

Perhaps the most unusual thing about all this is that Bennett's work is preserved virtually in totality. His stereo views are of course distributed across the world but all his negatives for not only stereos but panoramic landscapes, post cards, and portraits, as well as the work of his successors are held at the studios along with his cameras and other inventions, offering the unique combination of an almost complete collection of the work of a great photographer held in the actual space he worked in.