

**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 Louis Beckwith House

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number 1311 South Duff Drive N/A not for publication

city, town Mitchell N/A vicinity of congressional district Second

state South Dakota code 46 county Davison code 035

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input 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 Friends of the Middle Border Museum (building) Dakota Wesleyan University (land)

street & number 1311 South Duff Drive

city, town Mitchell N/A vicinity of state South Dakota 57301

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Davison County Courthouse

street & number 200 E. 4th Street

city, town Mitchell state South Dakota 57301

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Downtown
title Historic Sites Survey-Mitchell has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1975 federal state county local

depository for survey records Historical Preservation Center

city, town Vermillion state South Dakota 57069

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good (interior) ruins		<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved date 1976
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair (exterior) unexposed		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> restored	

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Louis Beckwith residence is a late Italianate house, restored to its original condition on the interior with plans completed for the exterior work. Its plan is one common to Italianate houses: the entrance is a stairhall placed to one side of the front parlor; across the center are the back parlor and library; and at the rear are the dining room and kitchen, which originally had an adjoining back stair. The second floor has five chambers connected by a central hall. A small sewing room is located above the entrance hall. The chambers over the rear parlor and dining room are connected with wide double doors to form a sitting room and bedroom suite. A small room at the west end of the hall which served as a dressing room for this suite was later converted into a bathroom. The last Beckwith children to live in the house converted the entire second story into an apartment; the museum has restored the front two bedrooms and the front stairhall. The north and west rooms are still used as an apartment, with outside access provided by the original back stairway which runs between the two north rooms.

On the exterior, the remaining work consists of restoring the house to its three color paint scheme which was a light sage green, ox-blood red and forest green. The rectangular-shaped house has a projecting semi-octagonal bay on each side facade. Surmounted by a hipped roof, the house also has a slightly recessed entrance bay along the three-bay front facade. A gabled roof covers the projecting two bays. Wrapped around three sides of the house is a highly ornamented porch, with hipped roof, wrought iron cresting, turned posts, brackets and latticework. The semi-octagonal bays are not covered by the porch; instead a hood mold covers the window on the first floor. The hood mold is supported by stylized brackets inset with perforated wheels. Each semi-octagonal bay has a small window gable on the roof. A small porch off the kitchen was later enclosed but has been re-opened and will be infilled with lattice. The only extensive change to the exterior was in the central section of the north wall where both windows of the library had been removed and an incompatible window substituted. This work was reversed.

In the interior extensive work was required for the restoration. The entrance hall had been remodeled when the upstairs was converted to an apartment, but the stairway was opened up again and the Italianate newel and banister were salvaged. Extensive amounts of woodwork in the library were replaced after the removal of the modern window and a Murphy bed. The kitchen was restored to its original appearance with a woodburning stove and a dry sink. Discovery of original paint inside a high cupboard in the pantry dictated the selection of paint colors. The house had no fireplaces and limitations of budget precluded the replacement of two chimneys, one on the west side between the kitchen and dining room and a second on the south side between the two parlors.

Chinoiserie screens installed across the top of the three large double doors were restored. They were purchased in 1891 from a Japanese craftsman in Cincinnati (according to newspaper accounts) and came with five matching freestanding screens, one of which remains in the house. Half of the screen between the front and back parlor was lost when the opening had been reduced to a single door, and was carefully duplicated when the double doorway was restored. One of the original valances and the tassels and trim of the others from the front parlor were discovered and these were carefully duplicated and rehung. Several large pieces of the Beckwith's furniture have been acquired and placed in the original position, and the rest of the furnishings are appropriate to the period and region.

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receive 1
date entered

Louis Beckwith House

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

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Careful attention also has been given to the siting and surroundings of the house to minimize the impact of the move. The house was faced in the same direction that it originally stood, and it has been surrounded with hundreds of plantings common to the period which serve both to blend it into its new surrounds and also to buffer it against intruding elements in the vicinity.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) history of community
<input type="checkbox"/> invention				

Specific dates 1886 Builder/Architect NA

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Beckwith House is significant in the area of architecture and the history of Mitchell. Built in 1886, this was the first house of significant size and elegance in the city. The Italianate styling, late for the 1880's, reflects the cultural associations brought to Dakota by the Beckwiths. For its early date, the design and craftsmanship are refined and well executed. The house embodied the aspirations and optimism which the Beckwiths brought to Mitchell.

The plan is common to Italianate houses, and the ornament is decidedly Italianate, although slightly modified by Eastlake tastes. (The porch columns, for instance, are more Eastlake in feeling than would have been found earlier with a bracketed villa.) While the design is a definite holdover from earlier fashion, the original paint scheme, currently being restored, is a pure example of the late 1880's. The interior also incorporates significant features from both periods: the woodwork of the newel and ballustrade and the window and door casings are typically Italianate, as are the restored cloth and valances on the front parlor windows. These contrast with the elaborate Chinoiserie screens installed in the doorways in 1894 as a measure to update the interiors to Queen Anna taste.

Louis Beckwith, who came to Mitchell in 1882, was one of the first settlers of the town. He established significant real estate and commercial holdings and became one of the most prominent businessmen in Mitchell. He is best known for his work with L. O. Gale in promoting the first Corn Belt Exposition in 1892, a classic example of frontier boosterism. The original Corn Palace, site of the Exposition, stood on the corner of Lawler and 4th, immediately behind the Beckwith House. Although no single event of historical significance is associated with the site, the house did serve for years as one of the primary social centers in central South Dakota because of the wealth and prominence of the family. Early newspapers are filled with accounts of parties and gatherings at the Beckwith House, including details of food served and lists of songs performed. The recent restoration of the interiors has recreated the original elegance of the house, carefully mixing original Beckwith furnishings with period pieces, using documentary evidence extensively as a guide. Remnants of original valances from the front parlor and other decorative details which had been removed were recovered and restored.

The house remained in the Beckwith family until 1976, when the land was sold for development. Local concern was raised over the future of the house, but the developers could not be persuaded to choose a different site. In an effort to save the structure, though with some reluctance, the Friends of the Middle Border moved it onto their museum property and accepted the responsibility for undertaking the extensive restoration.

Its original site, directly behind Main Street, was once a residential district around the Court House Square but encroaching commercial development from Main Street had totally destroyed the context of the house and the Beckwith house was the last residence to remain in the area. This house was listed on the National Register as part of the Mitchell Historic Commercial District in June, 1975. It is now being renominated as an individual site.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 07-27-2001 BY 60322 UCBAW/STP

9. Major Bibliographical References

Daily Republic, April 12, 1972.

Transcript of interview with Grace Beckwith Walwrath (1886-1973), December 10, 1966.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property one

Quadrangle name Mitchell

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	4	5	7	18	3	0	5	4	8	3	8	5	1	1	0
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 lot lines of the property form the boundary of the site located in the east 1/2 of Block 27, and the adjoining half of Hurst Street, in the University Addition to the City of Mitchell.

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title William Anderson, Friends of the Middle Border

organization John Burrows, Historical Preservation Cen. date 16 Mar 82

street & number University of South Dakota telephone 605-677-5314

city or town Vermillion state South Dakota 57069

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 James R. Fishburne

title Director, Office of Cultural Preservation date May 3, 1982

For HCERS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>Melvin Byrum</u>	date <u>7/1/82</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	