

DEC 3 1980

NOMINATION: Historic Resources of Challis (Partial Inventory: Architectural Properties)SITE NAME: Penwell House SITE # 3LOCATION: North Avenue, Challis, IdahoOWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: Douglas and Toni Meyers, Box 129, Challis, IDQUADRANGLE AND SCALE: Challis 15 minute ACREAGE: less than oneVERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: The nomination includes the Penwell House and the property on which it stands, lots one and three in block 8, Challis, Idaho.UTM(S): 11/7,20,150/49,31,650DATE OR PERIOD: ca. 1896 EVALUATED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: localAREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: architecture
good condition altered original site

DESCRIPTION:

The two-story Penwell House combines Italianate and Queen Anne decoration with a half-Georgian facade that is complicated by cross gables and a one-story hipped rear section. The lower story features an Italianate-roofed porch supported by square posts with scrolled and leaf-cut brackets. On the west wall another Italianate roof overhangs a similarly bracketed and paneled bay window.

The upper story rises in several gables filled with diamond designs figured in thin diagonal lath. At the corner eaves, brackets accent the meeting of roof and wall. The whole, sheathed in thin clapboards, is presently painted white with black shutters.

The roof, shingled with asphalt, retains its flashing and knobs, but the balustrade that once topped the central mansard has been removed. Other alterations include a one-story side addition, stoop railings, and aluminum windows that forced the re-setting of the shutters (townspeople insist that the shutters are original to the building).

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Penwell House is nominated in spite of its unfortunate alterations because it was and is the only one of its kind in Challis. No other Challis home is so large, so ornate, or so pleasing in design. Furthermore, the alterations are reversible, should the owners care to commit themselves to a restoration. The house is known locally as "the mansion," because of its unusual size and elaboration.

Oscar E. Penwell was living in Challis and active in the I.O.O.F. before 1896, when he purchased the property. The exact date of construction is not known. Listed in the 1880 census as a farmer born in Indiana, Penwell spent a few years of the 1890's following the Klondike gold rush. By 1900 he and his family no longer lived in Challis, and in 1909 the land and house were sold for delinquent taxes. Townspeople believe the building to have been patterned after houses in Indiana, Penwell's home state, and the Italianate influence does have Midwestern parallels.