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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NOV 2 1988

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Wardner, James F., House  
other names/site number "Wardner's Castle" (common name)

2. Location

street & number 1103 15th Street  not for publication  
city, town Bellingham  vicinity  
state Washington code WA county Whatcom code 073 zip code 98225

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

*Carol E. Johnson* Oct. 12, 1988  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Washington State Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

*Alvares Byen* Entered in the National Register 12/1/88

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Shingle Style

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation sandstonewalls shinglewoodroof shingleother wood

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

The James F. Wardner House is a large Shingle Style residence situated on the crest of a hill rising above the commercial center of the late 19th century town of Fairhaven, now a part of the city of Bellingham, Washington. Designed in 1889 by the Spokane architect Kirtland K. Cutter, the house was constructed in 1890 and was immediately dubbed "Wardner's Castle," due, no doubt, to its prominent siting, its corner octagonal tower topped by a crown-shaped finial, and the flamboyant personality of its aspiring owner. The exterior of the building is essentially intact, except for alterations to the veranda on the south elevation and the loss of two chimneys. The interior is also well preserved, retaining original millwork, mantelpieces, art glass and hardware, but the kitchen and bathrooms have been extensively altered. The original carriage house, once located to the rear or east of the residence, has been demolished and replaced by a modern garage.

The imposing presence of the Wardner House dominates the early Fairhaven residential district, which rises above the original townsite on the shores of Bellingham Bay. The irregular massing of the two and one-half story building is emphasized by an array of intersecting hipped and gabled roofs, projecting window bays, and a three-story octagonal corner tower. A wide veranda encircles the west and south elevations, although the southern section has been enclosed by a modern window wall to form a sunroom. A broad round arch spans the driveway of the porte-cochere, which carries a large gable-roofed porch at the second story. An exterior pathway flows from this porch in the form of a continuous open balcony that meanders around window bays and faceted turret to the far rear corner of the house, affording expansive views of the town and bay to the south, west and north.

The house is irregular in plan, with a foundation of local Chuckanut sandstone that encloses a partial basement. Access to this basement level is provided only by an exterior door on the south side. Most of the first story is sheathed in beveled horizontal cedar siding. The porte-cochere arch, balcony railings, and remainder of the upper stories are covered with wood shingles, the courses following the faceted planes of bays and recesses, continuing unbroken around corners, and rippling outward in "eyebrows" over upper-story windows. The roof planes are also covered with wood shingles, and the open eaves display the curved edges of exposed purlin and rafter ends. Most of the windows are double-hung, with multi-paned upper sashes and single light lower sashes, although the tower windows and some casement windows have diamond pattern wood muntins.

The main entrance consists of a wide paneled door, with a central panel of beveled glass, which also fills the transoms above. Entry is to a central hall with an opening to the reception room (now the library) on the left and the library (now the music room) on the right. The fireplace in the reception room is faced with mottled blue and white glazed ceramic tile. The pine mantelpiece is carried on slender fluted pilasters and boasts

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finely carved garlands and a delicate dentil row, all of which, according to the architect's instructions, were "to be finished in white and gold of Louis XVI style." Though not originally planned, at some early date built-in bookcases were added to this room, converting it to a library. The bookcases replicate the molding and dentils of the fireplace and these, along with window and door frames, picture and base molding, have all been painted a uniform cream color.

The library is a bright room, filled with natural light from the four windows of the octagonal corner tower. It contains a corner fireplace (presently hidden by furniture) and handsome millwork, including a spindlework screen that spans the upper width of a large flat archway opening to the parlor. Presently used as a dining room, the parlor is an ample rectangular space that originally contained windows or possibly French doors to the veranda on the south. A previous owner had crudely enclosed this portion of the veranda for use as a workshop. The present owners have remodeled this enclosure as a sunroom extension of the dining room. The large opening from this room to the original dining room (now the parlor) once contained another spindlework screen. This has been removed and the opening closed with heavy double doors from a demolished local school in order to conserve heat. The original dining room has millwork consistent with the rest of the house, but also has a ceiling enhanced by boxed beams in a grid pattern. The pressed tin ceiling covering is a recent addition, as is the antique German carved wood chimneypiece, replacing a modern one that had been installed by a previous owner.

All of the fireplaces are faced with ceramic tiles of various colors except for the hall fireplace, which has dark red brick beneath a carved oak mantel. Given the large number of fireplaces, Cutter provided an interesting design solution by creating a triangular chimney core at the juncture of hall, library and parlor, so that the fireplaces of these three rooms share a common chimney. Another distinctive feature is found in the large stair landing located between the reception room and dining room. Paired casement windows of art glass open from the landing to each of these rooms, providing relights and air circulation as well as an unusual spatial perspective and visual delight.

The second floor contains four bedrooms, with the same high quality millwork, tiled fireplaces with carved wood mantels, and unobstructed views through generous window bays. The large original bathroom has been renovated and includes period fixtures. An additional bathroom has been converted from closet space. The third floor, which is more utilitarian in character, contains a spacious open hall, two enclosed rooms, storage areas, and the top level of the corner tower.

Considering that the house is almost 100 years old, it has retained its integrity to a remarkable degree. The Wardner family lived there for only a short time. In the intervening years the building has been mostly occupied as a single family residence, but it has also served as a boarding house and a restaurant. However, except for those changes already noted, the building remains essentially intact. Historic photographs, both of the exterior and interior, show a dwelling little different from the one we see today.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1890-1893

Significant Dates

1890

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Wardner, James F.

Architect/Builder

Cutter, Kirtland K.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The James F. Wardner House is significant because of its association with one of the prominent figures in the development of the town of Fairhaven and as an early example of the Shingle Style in the Pacific Northwest as interpreted by Kirtland K. Cutter, one of the premier architects of Washington State. Wardner, an ambitious entrepreneur who acquired his wealth in lumber, mining and real estate, but who also dabbled in innumerable other ventures throughout the United States and abroad, is counted among a small group of men who were the creators and developers of the Fairhaven boom in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Ambitious and enterprising, Wardner was for a brief period a major player in the town's rapid development and, upon his departure, left it a prominent residential landmark, "Wardner's Castle." As designer of the house, K.K. Cutter provided the grand mansion that Wardner desired while at the same time bringing to the Northwest his own interpretation of the Shingle Style, creating one of the earliest known examples in the region.

Like many other shoreline communities of Western Washington in the 1880s, Fairhaven experienced the euphoric anticipation of becoming a railroad terminus. Though early claimants had arrived in the 1850s, Fairhaven had remained a quiet settlement presided over by Dan Harris, who platted the original townsite in 1883. By then railroad fever was already rampant up and down the coast as rival lines competed for routes and financing while seeking terminal sites that, not incidentally, provided lucrative profits from land sales. When Nelson Bennett and his colleagues arrived in Fairhaven the various rail route schemes were focused on the small community on Bellingham Bay. Purchasing the townsite from Harris, the promoters formed the Fairhaven Land Company in November of 1888 and incorporated the Fairhaven and Southern Railway in December of the same year. Their intent was to construct a railroad from the Canadian border to the Columbia River and to connect this coastal route to the transcontinental lines of the Canadian Pacific, the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern. Bennett had already won fame as a contractor for the Northern Pacific, especially for his achievement in boring the difficult tunnel at Stampede Pass. His reputation was such that the announcement of his railroad project at Fairhaven touched off a real estate boom.

Several men associated with Bennett played significant roles in the town's development. One of these was James F. Wardner, an ambitious promoter who traveled incessantly seeking quick fame and easy fortune and who seemed to leave his mark wherever he alighted. Born in Milwaukee in 1846, he had served in the Civil War as a hospital steward. Following the war

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

- Cutter, Kirtland K. Letters to James F. Wardner dated December 9, 1889 to March 16, 1890. Copies in collection of Henry Matthews, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington.
- Edson, Lelah Jackson. The Fourth Corner. Highlights from the Early Northwest. (Bellingham: Whatcom Museum of History and Art, 1968).
- Fairhaven Illustrated. (Chicago: Baldwin, Calcutt & Blakely, 1890).
- Schmeltzer, Michael. "The Cutter Mystique," Washington Magazine, March-April, 1985, pp. 49-57.
- Turbeville, Daniel E., III. "An Illustrated Inventory of Historic Bellingham Buildings, 1852-1915." Bellingham Municipal Arts Commission, 1977.
- Wardner, James F. Jim Wardner of Wardner, Idaho; by Himself (New York: Anglo-American Publishing Company, 1900).

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A 1 0 5 3 7 0 1 0 5 3 9 6 5 0 0

Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_

Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 except the East 90 feet thereof; and Lots 34, 35, 36, 37 and 38 in Block 92, "Plat of the Fairhaven Land Company's First Addition to Fairhaven, Washington," now a part of the consolidated City of Bellingham, Whatcom County, Washington, according to plat thereof recorded in Volume 2 of Plats, page 16, in the Auditor's office of said

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the city lots that have historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Shirley L. Courtois

organization Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation date July 1988

street & number 111 W. 21st Ave., KL-11 telephone (206) 753-4011

city or town Olympia state WA zip code 98504-5411

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he traveled the continent from New York to San Francisco working at a great variety of jobs and gaining a reputation for shrewdness and self-promotion. His wealth was acquired in the silver and lead mines of the Coeur d'Alene, but his reputation was made when he arrived at a mining camp site in Idaho, named it Wardner, by his own account "corralled all the corner lots," and made \$10,000 profit in four weeks. In the 1880s he settled briefly in Spokane, which he evidently found very much to his liking. In his autobiography he observed: "From a social point of view, I will say that the man who has once resided in Spokane will never claim any other place as his residence."

Yet Wardner was soon lured away. In 1889, while riding the Northern Pacific from Spokane to Helena, he met Nelson Bennett, who told him of the plans to make Fairhaven a great metropolis. True to his nature, Wardner immediately turned back and headed for the coast, intending to get in on the ground floor of the new development on Bellingham Bay. At Fairhaven he continued the pattern of past successes by his timely acquisition of 135 lots, which he soon sold, making a tidy profit of \$60,000 in 60 days. Inclined to make a greater local impact, he organized the Fairhaven Water Works Company and the Fairhaven Electric Light Company. He invested in the Fairhaven National Bank and became its president. Purchasing nearby timber rights, he became partners with J.H. Bloedel in the Samish Lake Logging and Milling Company. The two men were also partners for a time in the Blue Canyon Coal Mine, but Wardner later sold his interests in the mine to raise capital for other ventures.

When Wardner decided to build a family home in Fairhaven he chose the most prominent residential site, a corner parcel at the crest of the hill overlooking the townsite and the bay. To design his distinctive residence he chose Kirtland K. Cutter, an innovative young architect from Spokane whom Wardner had met during his stay there. Cutter, born in 1860 to a wealthy Ohio banking family, had arrived in Spokane in 1886 after attending the Art Students' League in New York City and studying painting and sculpture in Paris, Florence and Dresden. Although he had never undertaken a formal course of architectural training, Cutter became the Northwest's preeminent turn-of-the-century architect, producing designs of great range noted for their imaginative eclecticism. His reputation was not confined to his regional prominence, however. He designed Andrew Carnegie's summer retreat in the mountains of upstate New York; Kirtland Memorial Hall, a Neoclassical building named for his grandfather at Yale University; the mammoth log-and-stone Idaho State Pavilion at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, which he later reproduced for a country estate in England; and dozens of other buildings throughout the United States. Cutter received national awards from the American Institute of Architects for his residential work in southern California, where he lived and worked from 1923, when he left Washington, until his death in 1939 at the age of 79.

At the time he designed the Wardner House in Fairhaven, Cutter was a young practitioner of 29 who had produced several residential projects in Spokane, including the F. Rockwood Moore House and the James N. Glover House (National Register, 1973), that displayed his penchant for picturesque half-timbered designs in the mode of English country manors. The Wardner House, however, represents one of the earliest appearances of the Shingle Style on the Northwest coast. With its lack of ornamentation and continuous shingled wall surfaces unifying bays, turrets, gable ends, balcony, veranda and porte-cochere, the house exhibits an impressive degree of assimilation of a relatively new East Coast idiom. In its siting and the placement of a large open porch over an arched porte-cochere it bears some superfi-

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cial resemblance to "Kragssyde," the summer cottage of G.N. Black on Massachusetts Bay designed by Peabody and Stearns and published in American Architect in 1885. The manipulation of interior spatial perspectives also attests to Cutter's interest in recent innovations of Eastern architects. Thus, the personalities of an enterprising client, willing to take risks, and a young enthusiastic architect, eager to experiment with new design concepts, combined to create a fascinating example of early Northwest Shingle Style.

In Fairhaven Wardner was a recognized public figure because of his real estate dealings and his involvement in so many aspects of the town's commercial life. He quite enjoyed his public image as a flamboyant, self-made man, financially shrewd and aggressive. He was in some ways profanely ostentatious, and, as his anecdotal autobiography attest, he had an immense appetite for living high and moving fast. In his short period of residency he left his mark on Fairhaven, but when the panic of 1893 caused him heavy losses, he liquidated his holdings and sailed for South Africa, seeking new ventures.

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county and state. Together with the vacated alley lying adjacent to the above described tracts; together with the South 10 feet of vacated Knox Avenue lying adjacent to the above tracts.