

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
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**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

Nelson W. Aldrich House

AND/OR COMMON

Nelson W. Aldrich House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

110 Benevolent Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Providence

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Rhode Island

VICINITY OF

CODE

44

COUNTY

Providence

1

CODE

007

**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 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 type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> 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**

Contact: Albert T. Klyberg, Director

NAME Rhode Island Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER

52 Power Street

CITY, TOWN

Providence

VICINITY OF

STATE

Rhode Island

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

Dorrance and Washington Street

CITY, TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey; National Register (Hope, Power, Cooke Streets Historic District)

DATE

1962; 1973

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress; National Register

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

# 7 DESCRIPTION

<b>CONDITION</b>		<b>CHECK ONE</b>		<b>CHECK ONE</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE		
<input checked="" 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				

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

According to the Historic American Buildings Survey, Nelson Aldrich purchased this three-story, clapboard house in 1902, but as HABS also notes, the Providence city directory shows 110 Benevolent Street as Aldrich's address as early as 1891. Furthermore, biographer Arthur M. Johnson, who researched family papers, states that this is the address "where the Aldriches moved in the early 1890's."<sup>14</sup> In any case, this is the only known extant Aldrich residence other than his Warwick Neck estate, which he began erecting in the late 1890's and retained, like this house, until his death.

This dwelling was built sometime between 1821 and 1827 for Robert S. Burroughs, and it passed through several owners before Aldrich acquired it. After enlarging the house sometime before 1838, Burroughs sold it in that year to Samuel B. Wheaton, who in turn peddled it Samuel B. Tobey in 1846. Samuel M. Noyes bought the residence in 1868 for four times the price it had commanded 22 years earlier, and according to deed records his heirs imparted it to Aldrich in 1902. Whatever the year he bought the dwelling, Aldrich retained it until his death in 1915. It passed subsequently to his wife, then to his daughter, and finally to his son Winthrop, who upon his death in 1974 left the house to the Rhode Island Historical Society for use as a museum. The society has received, for development of the museum, a sizable grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. This may result in the addition of another small wing to the rear of the house because area building codes require public restrooms in public structures, and the historical society prefers attaching a compatible wing to altering the interior configuration of the dwelling.

The greenish-gray-painted dwelling rests on a corner lot, has a stuccoed brick foundation, faces south, and consists of a rectangular main block, two side porches (one of which is enclosed), and three rear wings or extensions. Measuring 45 feet across its five-bay-wide front facade and 41 feet along its four-bay-wide sides, the main block bears a low-pitched hip roof topped by a square, center-placed cupola and four corner-placed, gray-painted, brick chimneys. A modillion cornice with denticulated frieze decorates the roof line and supports a wood, roof railing consisting of alternating wood panels and sets of turned balusters. Wood quoins highlight wall corners, and a plank water table separates lower walls from the foundation.

14

Arthur M. Johnson, Winthrop W. Aldrich: Lawyer, Banker, Diplomat (Boston, 1968), 6.

# 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1878-1915      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      unknown

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Few men in American history have exercised as much power and wielded as much influence as Nelson W. Aldrich did in his career in the U.S. Senate from 1881 to 1911. As "boss" of the Senate, Aldrich, ably assisted by William B. Allison of Iowa, John C. Spooner of Wisconsin, and Orville H. Platt of Connecticut, exercised control over legislative proceedings to such an extent that he had a veto power over proposed legislation. In the process, according to historian David J. Rothman, he "transformed the Senate until it no longer resembled its predecessors," making it more "similar to the institution that Eisenhower confronted . . . [than] that of Lincoln and Grant."<sup>1</sup> Even a strong President like Theodore Roosevelt had to capitulate to him, says historian George E. Mowry, because "unless he cooperated with the forces led by Aldrich, little if any legislation could be won from an overwhelmingly conservative Congress."<sup>2</sup>

Aldrich was motivated, according to historians Horace S. and Marion G. Merrill, by a belief that "business and government should combine to run the country [but] that business should play the leading role."<sup>3</sup> It was for this reason that he fought measures like the Mann-Elkins Act and the Hepburn Act until their provisions were modified to suit the business community. Aldrich's area of greatest expertise was the protective tariff, and he played an important role in shaping every tariff bill from 1883 to 1909. In 1909 he was largely responsible for passage of the Payne-Aldrich Tariff which maintained high tariff schedules despite an overwhelming public desire that they be lowered. After the Panic of 1907, he was instrumental in enactment of the Aldrich-Vreeland Act for a system of emergency currency which, according to historian Robert H. Wiebe, "began the legislative process

1

David J. Rothman, Politics and Power: The United States Senate, 1869-1901 (New York, 1969), 43.

2

George E. Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt and the Birth of Modern America, 1900-1912 (New York, 1958), 122.

3

Horace S. and Marion G. Merrill, The Republican Command, 1897-1913 (Lexington, 1971), 25.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Johnson, Arthur M., Winthrop W. Aldrich: Lawyer, Banker, Diplomat (Boston: Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration, 1968).  
 Link, Arthur S., Wilson: The New Freedom (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956). (cont.)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY circa 1 acre.

UTM REFERENCES

A	19	30 10 0 0	46 32 19 20	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the nominated property coincides with the boundary of the legal lot known as 110 Benevolent Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

George R. Adams, Managing Editor; and Ralph Chrisitan, Asst. Editor

ORGANIZATION

American Association for State and Local History

DATE

April 1976

STREET & NUMBER

1400 Eighth Avenue South

TELEPHONE

615-242-5583

CITY OR TOWN

Nashville

STATE

Tennessee

# 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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All main block windows are set in wood surrounds, and all but two of those openings are rectangular and flanked by dark-green-painted, louvered, exterior shutters. With the exception of a palladian window in the front, second-story, center bay and four first-story openings on the west side, all first- and second-story windows are six-over-six sash topped by a wood entablature with dentiled frieze. The entablature design is repeated over the flanking sections of the palladian opening. On the third floor, except for a modified palladian window in the front center bay, all openings have three-over-six sashes with shouldered architraves.

Sheltering the main block's center-placed front entrance is a small, one-tier portico formed by two pairs of Doric columns and two rectangular pilasters supporting an entablature whose dentiled frieze and modillion cornice match the roof-cornice design. Likewise, atop the flat-roofed portico a railing copies the one on the main roof, and creates a balcony. The aforementioned, second-story palladian window that overlooks the balcony represents an alteration, for originally, according to Rhode Island Historical Society officials, the portico had an enclosed second tier.

A 40-foot-long, five-bay, first-floor, hip-roofed veranda repeats the basic portico design along the west side of the main block. Here six individual Doric Columns and two rectangular pilasters provide roof support. A wood railing with turned balusters crosses the lone south bay and four southernmost west bays. The northernmost west bay is only partially railed, and through it passes a set of dogleg steps that provide access to the veranda floor. Apparently an identical veranda formerly graced the east side of the main block. There now is a one-story wing with dimensions that match those of the west veranda and suggest an enclosed porch. It has four east bays, two of which have a segmentally arched six-over-six sash window. One bay has a tripartite segmentally arched opening, and one has a small square window.

Generally, the basic trim and window design of the main block is repeated in the rear wings and extensions, with the chief exceptions being the absence of shoulders on third-story window architraves and the rise of plain, vertical, wood quoins on some wall corners. Specific dates for these additions are not known. Deed records indicate that part, if not all, of the three-story, L-shaped wing immediately rear of the main block was added sometime prior to 1850. The wing's roofline is slightly lower than that of the main block, and there is no dentiled frieze underneath the cornice, but the two sections' roof

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railings are identical. Affixed to the narrow rear or north end of the three-story wing is a smaller but similarly laid out two-story extension with a dentiled, boxed cornice. Lastly, jutting rearward from the north end of the west veranda, a one-story, hip-roofed ell fills a space created by the north-south plane of that veranda's westward expanse and the east-west plane of the rear wall of the shorter portion of the two-story extension. Aldrich added this fourth section of the house as a ballroom. Highlighting its one north bay and each of its three west bays is a pair of shuttered, French double doors topped by a square, two-over-two transom and a wood entablature with dentiled frieze.

Main entrance to the Aldrich House is a single, four-panel, wood door under the portico on the south facade. Flanked by sidelights consisting of one long vertical glass and one short wood panel, and topped by a semi-elliptical, leaded-glass fanlight, the doorway is accessible from the street via a short concrete walk and several iron-balustraded concrete steps. The rear entrance, set in the short section of the two-story rear extension, is a single, nine-pane, glass-and-wood door flanked by sidelights, sheltered by a one-bracket-supported hood, and accessible via four wood steps.

Inside, the dwelling features a central hall plan, with the corridor extending from the front door through the main block, the three-story rear wing, and the two-story rear extension to the rear door. Most walls throughout the house are plaster with ornamental plaster cornices. Main block walls display wainscoting, and some upper-story walls exhibit paper coverings. Parquet flooring predominates in the main block, and plain hardwood prevails in most other areas. A few pieces of original furniture remain.

Left of the central hall on the first floor are a 17- by 21-foot front parlor and a 17- by 17-foot rear parlor connected to each other by a double, sliding door and linked to the hall by individual single, hinged, transomed doors. Corresponding rooms right of the hall are a library and dining room, which lack a connecting door. The elongated east wing contains a bath off the library and a bookshelf-lined alcove off the dining room. Rear of the dining room is a pantry and kitchen and beyond that a servants' sitting room. Rear of the parlors and accessible by a short stair from the hallway is the high-ceilinged, teak-wood-floored, chandelier-ornamented ballroom.

At the rear of the main-block-section of the central hall, a railed, turned-balustered, open-string, spiral stair rises to the upper stories,

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where the floor plans are similar to that of the main level. Along the left wall of the rear portion of the first-story hall, an open, single-flight stair also mounts to the second floor, from whence a similar one ascends to the third story. On the second story the front room on each side of the hall is a sitting room. Rear of each, but separated in each case by closets and a bath, is a bedroom. Right of the hall in the rear section of the second floor are a bath and three bedrooms; left is a bath and dressing room. The third story contains four bedrooms in the main block and four in the rear wing.

The Aldrich House sits on a shaded lot flanked on the south and east sides by a white-painted wood fence. Flagstone walks surround the dwelling, and an informal garden adorns the west lawn. The grounds, like the residence, are well maintained.

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toward the Federal Reserve System."<sup>4</sup> By 1909 he had begun to advocate what became known as the Aldrich Plan--a proposal for a privately controlled central bank patterned after those of Europe with 25 branches and designed to provide for flexible currency.

After 1909 Aldrich's power began to decline, says Horace S. and Marion G. Merrill, largely because he "failed to grasp the depth and intensity of anger among the voters of the Middle West and the West and misunderstood their champions in the Senate."<sup>5</sup> Also, he came under fire from muckraking journalists and progressives to such an extent, says historian George E. Mowry, that he "came to personify the evils that had afflicted American society during the past decades."<sup>6</sup>

From at least as early as 1902 and possibly as early as 1891, until his death, Aldrich maintained his permanent home in this three-story, greenish-gray-painted, clapboard house. Upon his death it passed to various family members, and when Aldrich's son Winthrop died in 1974, he left it to the Rhode Island Historical Society. It is being used currently as a museum and conference center. There is one other known extant Aldrich residence--a Warwick Neck estate, which he developed and used at the same time he retained this Providence dwelling.

Biography

Nelson Wilmarth Aldrich was born November 6, 1841, in Foster, R.I., to Anan and Abby B. Aldrich. Although his family was poor, they made certain that he received a good common school education. At age 17 Aldrich moved to Providence where he soon obtained employment with Waldron and Wightman, one of the State's leading wholesale grocers. In 1862 he joined the Union Army, but an attack of typhoid fever put a quick end to his military career. Returning to Waldron and Wightman, Aldrich rose rapidly in the firm and by age 24 had become a junior partner. As his fortune grew, he invested in banking, sugar, rubber, traction, gas, and electricity and within a few years was a multimillionaire.

4

Robert H. Wiebe, Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement (Chicago, 1968), 68.

5

Merrill and Merrill, The Republican Command, 25.

6

Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt, 248.



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Turning his attention to politics, in 1869 Aldrich won election to the Providence Common Council as an independent Republican. He remained on the council 5 years, serving as its president in 1872-1873. Forming an alliance with State Republican boss Henry Anthony, Aldrich was selected as a delegate to the 1872 and 1876 Republican National Conventions. In 1875 he was elected to the first of 2 terms in the State legislature, serving as speaker in the 1876 session.

In 1878 Aldrich won election to the U.S. House. Reelected 2 years later, he soon resigned because the Rhode Island Legislature in 1881 elevated him to the U.S. Senate where he was to remain for the next 30 years. In his political philosophy, Aldrich, according to historian George E. Mowry, was "almost a pure Hamiltonian. That wealth should rule the country was almost axiomatic to him; otherwise all security would depart and the hope for progress end."<sup>7</sup>

Aldrich, according to historian H. Wayne Morgan, was a "formidable expert on revenue measures."<sup>8</sup> His area of expertise was the tariff, and he exercised major influence on every U.S. tariff measure from 1883 to 1909. In 1883 Aldrich helped frame the "Mongrel" Tariff and in 1888 led the Republican attack on the Mills bill to lower the tariff. "The counter bill brought forward in the Senate as a party program," says biographer Nathaniel Wright Stephenson, "was largely his work," and it in turn served as the Republican platform for 1888 and the model for the 1890 McKinley Tariff, which he guided through the Senate after raising the rates of the House version.<sup>9</sup> In 1894 his skillful maneuvering and adroitness at parliamentary procedure was largely responsible for preventing any great revision downward in the Wilson-Gorman Tariff. In 1909 he was instrumental in passage of the Payne-Aldrich Tariff which maintained high schedules despite an overwhelming public desire that they should be lowered.

After Republicans regained the Presidency in 1896, Aldrich emerged as the most powerful man in Congress and one of the most powerful in the Nation. Working closely with William B. Allison of Iowa, John C. Spooner of Wisconsin, and Orville H. Platt of Connecticut,

<sup>7</sup>  
Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt, 115.

<sup>8</sup>  
H. Wayne Morgan, From Hayes to McKinley: National Party Politics, 1877-1896 (Syracuse, 1969), 349.

<sup>9</sup>  
Nathaniel Wright Stephenson, "Nelson Wilmarth Aldrich," Dictionary of American Biography, I (New York, 1928), 152.

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cut, Aldrich, according to historian David J. Rothman, "established and clarified the authority that Senate party officers could wield" and "entrenched and tightened personal leadership and party discipline."<sup>10</sup> By 1901 Aldrich was so powerful that even a strong President like Theodore Roosevelt had to defer to his wishes if he wanted to get his legislative program passed. Aldrich fought measures like the Mann-Elkins Act and the Hepburn Act until their provisions were modified to make them acceptable to the business community.

After the Panic of 1907, Aldrich increasingly turned his attention to the problem of inflexible currency. In 1908 he was largely responsible for enactment of the Aldrich-Vreeland Act providing for emergency currency during periods of financial stringency. This measure also created the National Monetary Commission with Aldrich as its chairman to study the currency problem. Aldrich, says his biographer Nathaniel Wright Stephenson, became an "ardent convert to the idea of a central bank" who wanted "to transplant the system of one of the great European banks . . . bodily to America."<sup>11</sup> In 1909 the Commission released what came to be known as the Aldrich Plan-- a proposal for a privately controlled central bank patterned after those in Europe with 25 branches and designed to provide for flexible currency.

After 1909 Aldrich's power began to decline, says Horace S. and Marion G. Merrill, largely because he "failed to grasp the depth and intensity of anger among the voters of the Middle West and the West and misunderstood their champions in the Senate."<sup>12</sup> Also he came under increasing attack from muckraking journalists and progressives, and he soon began to symbolize the evils they were combatting. Partly as a result of this criticism, Aldrich decided not to stand for reelection in 1911.

Even after he left the Senate, Aldrich, according to historian Arthur S. Link, was "still the pre-eminent Old Guard spokesman on financial matters."<sup>13</sup> He continued to advocate enactment of the Aldrich Plan, but the Democratic victories of 1910 and 1912 insured

<sup>10</sup>

Rothman, Politics and Power, 44.

<sup>11</sup>

Nathaniel Wright Stephenson, Nelson W. Aldrich: A Leader in American Politics (New York, 1930), 378.

<sup>12</sup>

Merrill and Merrill, The Republican Command, 25.

<sup>13</sup>

Arthur S. Link, Wilson: The New Freedom (Princeton, 1956), 235.

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its defeat. He was highly critical of the Federal Reserve Act, believing the proposed system had been ruined by giving the Federal Government control over the Board and the issuance of currency. On April 16, 1915, Aldrich died in New York City at the age of 73.

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Merrill, Horace S. and Marion G., The Republican Command, 1897-1913 (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1971).

Morgan, H. Wayne, From Hayes to McKinley: National Party Politics, 1877-1896 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969).

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Stephenson, Nathaniel Wright, Nelson W. Aldrich: A Leader in American Politics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930).

\_\_\_\_\_, "Nelson Wilmarth Aldrich," Dictionary of American Biography, I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), 151-58.

Wiebe, Robert H., Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968).