

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



1983

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Mohler, William E., House

and/or common "Hill Grove"

2. Location

street & number 819 Pennsylvania Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Saint Albans N/A vicinity of [redacted]

state West Virginia code 054 county Kanawha code 039

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A 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 Covenant Presbyterian Church

street & number 819 Pennsylvania Avenue

city, town Saint Albans N/A vicinity of state West Virginia

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kanawha County Courthouse

street & number Court and Virginia Streets

city, town Charleston state West Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

### Check one

deteriorated  
 unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The William E. Mohler House, or "Hill Grove", stands on the center of a corner lot, at the corners of Pennsylvania Avenue and Kanawha Terrace, overlooking the business district of Saint Albans, Kanawha County, West Virginia.

The house is a 2½-story rectangle,<sup>1</sup> with a corner tower, resting on a massive raised basement of rusticated stone with rock-face finish. The house is a good example of Late Victorian Eclecticism, with elements of the Queen Anne style predominant. One of the most significant of these elements is the large corner turret with its conical cap. The residence is surmounted by a complex roof of multiple gables, with four colossal paneled brick chimneys with corbled caps which soar above the roof level. A recessed balcony opening off of the ground ballroom, is set within the front gable, which contains simulated English half-timbering. Queen Anne embellishments also include wooden finials and drops at the roof ridges and occasional gabled dormers. Ornamental bracketing and open rafter ends are found in the eaves. Another typically Victorian exterior feature is the wrap around veranda which contains delicate wooden spindlework. Most of the windows, 2 over 2, are surmounted by stone lintels. One second story bay window features tiny leaded inset panes and one window, on a side elevation, is of stained glass.

The William E. Mohler House contains (including the basement) thirteen rooms, six of which are bedrooms. The grand ballroom on the upper most floor is now used by the church as a sanctuary. The open, central staircase is a masterpiece of Victorian interior detail, having delicately turned walnut spindlework and finely carved square newel posts. The eight fireplaces in the house are framed by a variety of mantelpieces, ranging from marble, with terra cotta friezes, to mahogany with carved pilasters. Floors are oak throughout, as is much of the interior woodwork, with some walnut.

The Dining Hall contains a built-in oak china cabinet which covers one entire wall. Interior door design alternates from four to six panels.

There is a two-story garage of brick composition adjacent to the house.

Most of the property is still surrounded by the original wrought-iron decorative fence.

The William E. Mohler House, largely unchanged since its construction at the turn-of-the-century, is unquestionably Saint Albans' finest extant examples of Queen Anne style Victorian architecture.

<sup>1</sup> The Mohler House features outstanding pressed, Roman-style red brick facades.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) local history
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** c.1900–1901 **Builder/Architect** Attributed to Davidson Brothers,  
Wayland Davidson, Architect

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The William E. Mohler House, located at an important intersection overlooking the downtown business district of Saint Albans, Kanawha County, West Virginia, is significant as the preminent example of Queen Anne-style Victorian architecture in the city of Saint Albans.<sup>1</sup> It is also significant as the home of several individuals who have played prominent roles in the history of the area.<sup>2</sup>

Explanatory Notes

1. The William E. Mohler House, or "Hill Grove", as he called it, stands majestically at the intersection of Kanawha Terrace (the city's only through residential Avenue) and Pennsylvania Avenue, on a small hill that overlooks St. Albans' oldest section. The rounded turret with its conical cap, impressive multiple gables decorated with vertical wood banding, soaring corbeled chimneys, and, most especially, the rich detail of exterior decorative wood elements give this thirteen room residence a Victorian flavor, the quality of which is unparallel in West Virginian's 14th most populace municipality. As Mr. Mohler was president of the area's largest lumber company, he spared no expense in providing the finest of woods for the house, as is evidenced by the richness and high quality of the woodwork on both the interior and exterior of the house. (For a more detailed description of the architectural elements of "Hill Grove", see Part 7).

The design of "Hill Grove" is attributed by architectural historian R.S. Collins to the Davidson Brothers, a prominent Charleston firm of the early 20th century, though this cannot be firmly established at this time. Wayland Davidson would have been the designing architect. Collins attributes the design to this firm based on comparisons with existing Kanawha County residential landmarks of the same period and knowledge of the architectural history of the area, especially the fact that "Hill Grove" is, architecturally, a "duplicate" of the house (now demolished) of prominent Charleston merchant Charles K. Payne, known to be in close proximity to other Charleston residences designed by the Davidson Brothers.

2. "Hill Grove" was constructed in either 1900 or early 1901 (more probably the earlier year) by William E. Mohler for use as his principal residence. William E. Mohler (1852–1935) was an individual with many and diverse financial interests, as well as being active in civic and philanthropic endeavors. Founder and president of the Mohler Lumber Company, he also sat on the board of directors of several area banks and had large financial interests in numerous area business concerns, including presidency of the Saint Albans Water and Electric Company. Indeed, historian Laidly (see Part 9) attributed much of the prosperity of the Saint Albans area to William E. Mohler. Mohler's financial interests were not, however, limited to the Saint Albans area, as his business dealings extended to mining interests in Mexico. "Hill Grove" was one of

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Ellis, Garland H., Saint Albans, West Virginia, It's Origin and Development, Dawson Printing Co., Saint Albans, WVa., 1977.  
 Hereford, H.R., Early History of Saint Albans, C.D. Hereford, Saint Albans, WVa., 1950.  
History of West Virginia and West Virginia Biography, American Historical Society,

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 250' x 3 00'

Quadrangle name Saint Albans

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000'

### UMT References

A 

1	7	4	2	6	9	2	0	4	2	4	8	6	8	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 William E. Mohler House occupies the center of two city lots, designated St. Albans City Lots 157 and 157.01. The property is situated on the southwest corner of the intersection of

### 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 Michael J. Pauley, Historian, and W. Neil Richardson, Vice President-Historical Society  
Historic Preservation Unit and Rodney S. Collins, Architectural Historian  
 organization Department of Culture and History date December 1, 1982

street & number The Cultural Center, Capitol Complex telephone 304/ 348-0240

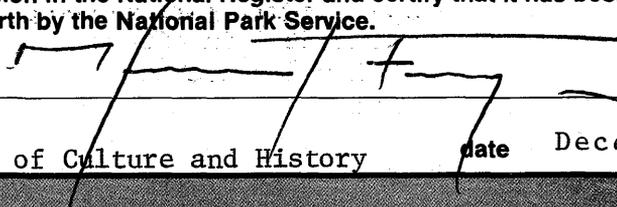
city or town Charleston state West Virginia 25305

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

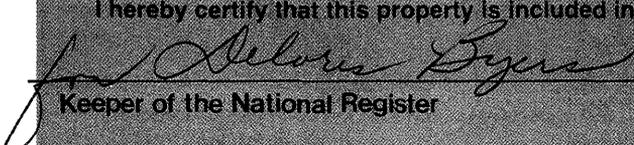
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Commissioner, WVa. Department of Culture and History date December 3, 1982

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

  
 Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the National Register date 2/10/83

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief of Registration

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thirteen private residences in Saint Albans that were owned by Mr. Mohler.

William E. Mohler was also active in local politics, and served for two decades as a Republican member of the Saint Albans City Council. He was widely known for his many charitable and philanthropic activities.

After the death of William E. Mohler in 1935 the house was occupied for several years by his widow, Mary Alexander Mohler, who moved from the house around 1940 due to failing health.

During World War II "Hill Grove" was leased to the National Youth Association, who used it as housing for 95 young women who were working at the Naval Ordnance Plant in South Charleston.

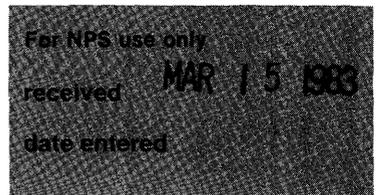
In 1947 the house was occupied by Ruth Mohler Phillips, youngest daughter of William E. Mohler, and her husband Colonel Walter C. Phillips. The Phillips' had been married in "Hill Grove" in the 1920's. Walter C. Phillips is an individual significant to American history, in that he served as Chief of Staff to U.S. Army General William Short at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and, was serving in that position on December 7, 1941 when Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese. Colonel Phillips played a conspicuous part in that event, which catapulted the United States into World War II.

After the death of Colonel Phillips in 1964, Mrs. Phillips sold the house (1965) to the Church of the Trinity. Now the Covenant Presbyterian Church, "Hill Grove" has been used as a church since 1965.

"Hill Grove", built by the prominent merchant and civic leader William E. Mohler, is a building of noteworthy significance in Saint Albans, West Virginia and is, justly, regarded as a "landmark" by most of the city's community.

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Builder/Architect

The Mohler, William E., House, of St. Albans, Kanawha County, West Virginia, was built from plans produced by the architectural firm of Yost and Packard of Columbus, Ohio. An earlier attribution of the house to the firm of Davidson Brothers of Charleston, is in error.

The Mohler House is known to be the twin of the Charleston home of turn-of-the-century merchant Charles K. Payne. This fact is established by a picture of the architectural rendering of the Payne House appearing in the Charleston Century Chronicle of 1901 (a city directory). Comparison of current photographs of the Mohler House with this Century Chronicle rendering, and oral history data provided by Mrs. Lee Kenna of Charleston (March 1983), a granddaughter of William E. Mohler, firmly establishes the historical and design relationship between the two houses. The Payne House, demolished in the mid-20th century, was built in 1897 from the plans of the Columbus, Ohio, architectural firm of Yost and Packard. Floor plans surviving from the construction date of the Payne House and obtained recently by Mrs. Kenna, document the date of design and the architect.

The original Payne House plans were obtained from Mr. Payne by personal friend William E. Mohler about 1900. Mohler hired his own builder and duplicated the Payne House using the Yost and Packard plans. According to family recollections, this incident angered the architects who received no remuneration for the use of their plans.

Architects Yost (Joseph Warren, 1847-1923) and Packard (Frank L.) were partnered from 1891 until about 1900 in a firm operating out of a central office in Columbus, Ohio. Yost and Packard found a ready market for their services in West Virginia and obtained major commissions throughout the state during the 1890's.

Bibliography

- Century Chronicle, 1901. (Charleston, West Virginia City Directory)  
Interview: Rodney Collins and Mrs. Lee Kenna, March 8, 1983.  
Wodehouse, Lawrence. American Architects from the Civil War to the First World War. Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research Co., 1976.

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- New York and Chicago, 1923.
- Laidley, W.S., History of Charleston and Kanawha County, Richmond - Arnold Publishing Co., Chicago, Ill., 1911.
- Murad, Vonajeau, "History of the Mohler House", unpublished paper, Historic Preservation Unit File, WVa. Department of Culture & History, Charleston, 1982.
- "Oral Interview with Rodney S. Collins, architectural historian", by Michael J. Pauley, Charleston, WVa., Nov. 5, 1982.
- Toland, John, The Rising Sun; the Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936-1945, New York, Random House, 1970.

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William E. Mohler House,

Continuation sheet St. Albans, Kanawha Co. Item number 10

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date entered \_\_\_\_\_

Item 10, Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

Pennsylvania Avenue (N-S) and Kanawha Terrace (E-W). The property extends 250 feet from said intersection south along the west side of Pennsylvania Avenue to the end of the iron rail fence; thence 300 feet deep (west); thence 250 feet north to Kanawha Terrace; thence 300 feet east along Kanawha Terrace to its intersection with Pennsylvania Avenue.