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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name The Elms

Other names/site number Boardman J. Stevens House, George. W. Richards House

### 2. Location

street & number 59 Court Street  not for publication

city of town Houlton  vicinity

State Maine code ME county Aroostook code 013 zip code 04730

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

[Signature]  
Signature of certifying official

6/3/09  
Date

[Signature]  
State Historic Preservation Officer  
Title

Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_ removed from the National Register

\_\_\_ other (explain:)

[Signature]  
Signature of the Keeper  
Edson H. Beall

Date of Action  
7-22-09

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- X private
public - Local
public - State
public - Federal
private

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- X building(s)
district
site
structure
building(s)
object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Table with columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, buildings, sites, structures, Objects, buildings, Total. Values: Contributing 1, Noncontributing 0, Total 1.

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

NONE

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC / Single dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC / Single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN / Second Empire

LATE 19TH C. EARLY 20TH C. AMERICAN

MOVEMENTS / Craftsman

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: BRICK

walls: WOOD / WEATHERBOARD

WOOD

roof: ASPHALT

other: GLASS

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

C. 1872 – C. 1912

**Significant Dates**

C. 1872

C. 1906-1912

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

**9. Major Bibliographical References****Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)**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  
 Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** .44 acres  
 (do not include previously listed resource acreage)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>19</u>	<u>589569</u>	<u>5107930</u>	3	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>	4	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundaries of the nominated property are fully described by the Town of Houlton tax map number 40, lot 1.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The above cited boundaries represent the full extent of the property currently associated with the nominated property. While the original urban lot on which The Elms was constructed was wider than it is currently, the reduction in lot size has not adversely affected the historic integrity of the architecture.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Christi A. Mitchell  
 organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date 26 January 2009  
 street & number 55 Capitol Street telephone (207) 287-2132  
 city or town Augusta state Maine zip code 04333-0065  
 e-mail Christi.mitchell@maine.gov

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance reflects the approximate years in which the subject property obtained its stylistic characteristics. Based on research the house was originally constructed c. 1872 in the Second Empire style for Boardman J. Stevens and his family. Sometime after the house was purchased in 1902 by Jennie Richards, she and her husband, George W. Richards undertook several substantial and noteworthy renovations and introduced Craftsman features on the interior of the building. Based on Sanborn maps, these renovations occurred between 1906 and 1912. Thus 1912 has been chosen as the date by which the Craftsman features were most likely installed.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The Elms is one of several elegant and stylish Second Empire style houses that were built in Houlton in the 1870s, but it may be the only one that is an elegant and stylish example of Craftsman style architecture as well. The single family wood frame house is located on a broad, tree-lined street that leads toward the Aroostook County governmental buildings two blocks to the east. Built circa 1872, the tall, rectangular building features a bell-curve mansard roof punctuated with decorative arch-top dormers, paneled cornered pilasters, decorative hoods over tall windows, and highly ornamented cornices. A pair of large bay windows are located behind the full width porch on the front facade. On the interior a few of the Italianate-era details are extant, including tin ceilings, thick paneled doors, moulded door and window trim and decorative panels under the bay windows. However, most of the interior was substantially renovated circa 1906-1912 in the Craftsman Style, and features of note include leather-embossed wall coverings, high paneled wainscot, art glass windows, original mica or Tiffany lighting fixtures, a period kitchen and pantry and an early bathroom with walls of highly figured mahogany. As such, this property embodies the distinctive characteristics of two architectural styles: the Second Empire style on the exterior and Craftsman on the interior. The Elms is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C for architecture.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance)

The Elms is an excellent example of Second Empire style frame house from c. 1872. The exterior of the house retains its overall integrity of design, materials, workmanship, setting, location, association and feeling from its period of construction, the first of two periods of significance for this property. The only significant alterations to the Second Empire period are the loss of the eastern chimney stack, and the replacement of what was presumably a slate roof with composition shingles. Also, based on the footprints of the house drawn on Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for 1906 and 1912, a shallower front porch was enlarged at some point during this period. The interior of the house is also an excellent example of the Craftsman style that emerged after the turn of the twentieth century. Again, between 1906 and 1912 much of the first floor of this property was remodeled, and Craftsman era fixtures and finishes were installed. A new library was constructed, which included a faceted window with art-glass tulips, fireplace surrounds were retained with terracotta ornamentation and the dining room and upstairs bathroom remodeled with figured hardwoods. Not surprisingly these two stylistic periods reflect the tenure during which two of Houlton's more successful businessmen, Boardman Stevens and George W. Richards.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

The town of Houlton in Aroostook County was settled c. 1807 and incorporated as a town in 1831. In 1839 Aroostook County was formed and Houlton designated as the county seat. Houlton steadily became the center of commercial, manufacturing, agricultural and civic functions for the southern portion of the county, and its population steadily increased from 579 residents in 1830 to just over 2000 in 1860, and then doubled again by 1890. Located on the international boundary with Canada, part of Houlton's prosperity can be linked to its location and function as a transportation hub (rail and road), and part due to the growth of agricultural activities in Aroostook County. By the time George Varney's Gazetteer of Maine was published in 1882 the village was described as having "many handsome residences, and there are several well-shaded and very attractive streets." (Varney, page 284).

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

The Elms is a two-and-a-half story c. 1869 Second Empire style house located on Court Street, one of the main residential thoroughfares in the Aroostook County, Maine town of Houlton. The property, which is also referred to as the Boardman J. Stevens House or the George W. Richards house after two of its former owners, is situated on a deep urban lot in a neighborhood of wood frame houses that date from the mid-nineteenth century through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although no architect has been identified, the manner in which the building exhibits the details and characteristics of the Second Empire and Italianate styles suggest that the property may have been the work of one of the state's design professionals. The house has a bell-curve mansard roof punctuated with decorative arch-top dormers, a full-width front porch, paneled cornered pilasters and paired porch supports, decorative hoods over tall windows and highly ornamented cornices. The interior of the house features some original Italianate-era details, including thick paneled doors and high-profile trim around the doors and windows, but several rooms, including an original bathroom finished in magnificent figured mahogany and an intimate library, were renovated in the Craftsman style after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The large house is rectangular in plan with a two-story ell off the west elevation, has a full basement, formal entry, diningroom, double parlor, library and kitchen on the first floor, five bedrooms on the second floor and three bedrooms under the mansard roof. At various times in its history, including the latter decades of the twentieth century, the property was used as a boarding house and many of the rooms are marked with a room number. Unfortunately, an early carriage barn that matched the house stylistically and was attached to the southwest end of the ell is no longer extant.

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**Narrative Description**

The Elms is located on the west side of Court Street, about one quarter mile south of the Court House in the center of Houlton. The primary elevation faces the street, and a neat grassy lawn separates the house from the sidewalk and street, about 25 feet to the east. The lot upon which the building sits is approximately 80 feet wide by 270 feet long, and a dirt driveway is positioned along the north side of the property. A concrete walkway bisects the lawn and provides access to the house. The front portion of the building measures 39 feet wide by 28 feet deep; attached to the center of its western elevation is a 36 feet long, two-story ell with a rear-gable roof. A one-story enclosed porch and one-story faceted projection extend off the south side of the ell, and a two-story squarish projection measuring five-by-seven feet is tucked into the northeast junction of the house and ell. This projection has a single pitch roof which extends from the peak of the ell roof. On the front of the house is a full-width attached porch with a flattened hip roof. The house is clad with painted clapboards and has an asphalt roof. There are three brick chimneys presently. The largest of the chimneys is positioned at the middle of the south wall of the main house and emerges through the lower slope of the roof. Another chimney on this elevation rises along the south side of the ell, in the corner between the library and kitchen (and is enclosed on the first floor within the porch). The third chimney pierces the centerpoint of the ell's ridge. A fourth chimney, now removed below the roof, emerged from the ridge of the roof midway between the east and west elevations. Based on historic photographs and maps it appears that the front porch, enclosed side porch, faceted south side room and the two-story projection in the northwest corner were added to the house between 1906 and 1912.

The front façade of the house is three bays wide. At the center of the first floor is a varnished hardwood door inset with an oval, beveled-glass window over a paneled base. Above and to either side of the door are a glass transom and sidelights, each with a single pane of beveled glass. Under the sidelights are small raised panels set in a frame of egg-and-dart moulding. A wooden storm door is attached to the exterior and is marked with a metal plate that states "E. T. Burrowes Co. Portland, Me. Pat. June 9, 1903." To either side of the front door are three-sided bay windows. The side facets of the windows have one-over-one wooden sash with slightly arched upper stiles. The sash in the middle bay have a two-over-two light configuration, also with arched tops. Under the sash the deep window sills are underscored by wooden modillions, while inset oval-shaped wooden panels mark the base of each bay. Above the windows and the door a wide cornice with bed moulding, frieze and crown moulding extends across the façade and returns along the interior of the porch eaves. The porch projects from the façade approximately eight feet and is supported on brick piers, partially obscured by wooden laticework. Directly in front of the door three granite steps lead to the wooden deck. The steps are flanked by rough-quarried granite pillars and side walls, topped with granite capstones and set with mortar laid with a bead.

The front porch is supported by pairs of half height columns set on paneled box bases to either side of the steps. The square columns are decorated with recessed chevron-shaped panels. Three of these columns are grouped at each

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exterior corner of the porch, while a single, engaged column is positioned at the rear of the porch, against the front wall of the house. Turned balusters are positioned between upper and lower rails between each of the paneled boxes under the porch supports. Within the porch, the ceiling is coffered with elongated rectangular panels. The eaves of the porch are decorated with a boxed cornice, elongated modillions under the soffit and dentils at the top of the frieze. A photograph taken c. 1912 indicates that the flat portion of the porch roof had at that time featured a balustrade with balusters, rails, and boxed stiles that matched or echoed the details below.

The second floor has three windows evenly spaced across the façade. Each bay contains two-over-two wooden sash topped with bracketed hoods. The upper sash of the middle window has an arched top. The corners of the house are marked with tall, wide pilasters decorated with two elongated oval panels. (On the north and south elevation a recessed circle positioned level with the porch roof separate the two ovals.) As with the porch, the overhanging eaves of the house are decorated with modillions and dentils. The two planes of the roof are separated by a moulded wooden curb. The upper roof plane is low pitched and the four sides terminate at a short, north to south oriented ridge. The lower plane features a *cyma reversa* curve with the lowest edge flaring to the overhanging eaves. Three segmental arch dormers extend from the lower roof plane; each have short, two-over-two light sash with arched top sash and brackets under the dormer arches. The base of the window frames have flared wooden trim decorated with trefoils.

Both the north and south elevations of the front portion of the house are two bays wide, and feature details similar to those found on the façade: decorative pilasters at the corners, segmental arch dormers, modillions and dentils at eave level and bracketed hoods over the windows. Wooden water table is evident on these elevations at the base of the clapboards, and small basement window sash are positioned between the granite foundation stones on each side. On the south elevation the first and second floor windows both contain two-over-two sash. The easternmost windows on the north elevation match those on the south. In the western bay, on the first floor, are a pair of sash set in a shared frame. Above this is a short window bay that has been covered over with wooden boarding. The western wall of the main house contains a two-over-two window on the first floor north of the ell, and a two-over-two window on the second floor south of the ell, and two segmental arch dormers on the roof. The remainder of the rear wall is obscured by the ell and small additions.

There are two-light windows on each floor of the west wall of the projection set in the corner between the ell and the house. While the ell contains a full two stories, its elevation is approximately three feet lower than the front portion of the house. The eaves of the ell also feature modillions and dentils, although because the roof overhangs the side walls to a lesser degree the trim elements are smaller in scale. The grade on the western side of the house descends slightly towards the west and thus the foundation is higher towards the back end of the building. The western wall of the ell contains a single two-over-two window on each floor, both positioned snug against the corner projection. Also on the first floor is a wood paneled door which opens about four feet above grade (whatever stairs or deck fronted this door have been removed). The narrow west elevation of the ell has a two-over-two light window on the second floor, and a fixed, six light sash and a two-over-two light sash on the first floor. Narrow trim boards topped with cornice returns mark the corners of the ell. A low, shed with a single-pitched corrugated metal roof and plywood walls spans the western end of the ell and provides a small workshop space and entrance to the basement. This shed was added sometime after 1935 and is poor condition; it will be removed in the near future.

The south side of the ell can be divided into three sections: the enclosed porch, the faceted projection and the main ell. Only the three bay second floor of the main section of the ell is visible from the exterior; each bay contains a two-over-two light sash window located tight against the frieze board. On the first floor level is the eight bay enclosed porch, which is approximately seven feet wide. At the far western end of this porch is a broad wooden door, set at grade and topped with a four light transom. This door features three long, narrow panels topped with two square panels – this is a very similar pattern to that found on the front door of the carriage shed in a photograph dated c. 1902. Extending eastward from the door are three windows, a wood and glass door and then three more windows. Each of the windows are

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comprised of a single bottom sash topped with a vertically-oriented three-light sash. Recessed rectangular panels decorate the wall beneath each window; a similar panel is located in the bottom third of the door. The door also contains three vertical glass panes above a single pane, and above the door a narrow four-light transom is set into the frame. As with the front porch the foundation of the enclosed porch is covered with wooden lattice. Three old wooden steps lead to the side door.

At the east end of the porch is the faceted projection which contains the library. This unusually shaped room occupies the space between the eastern end of the porch and the west wall of the main house and extends about five feet south beyond the south wall of both the porch and the house. Built with a flat roof, and a brick foundation, this section contains a narrow window in each of the bays. The almost square upper sash of each window is fixed and contains a trio of stylized tulips executed in stained glass. Below the window bays are additional recessed wooden panels, and the foundation directly below them is ornamented with a pattern of recesses that mimic the panels. Although both the enclosed porch and the faceted room have overhanging roofs, neither contain the decorative modillions or dentils found on the rest of the house.

On the first floor, the interior is bisected by a central hall that runs through the front block of the house and leads into kitchen and back bedrooms. South of the hall is the full width parlor, and the northwest corner of the main block is occupied by the dining room. The northeast quadrant is an open entrance hall, which features a bay window, parquet floor, and a keystone-arched marble fireplace surround against the west wall. The two run staircase has figured oak base panels, several styles of turned balusters and carved sunbursts on the pillared newel posts. A coffered tin ceiling yields to a tin cornice at the top of the papered walls. A similar pattern is found on the ceilings and walls of the living room. This room also has a parquet floor. The centerpiece of the room is the brick and terracotta fireplace centered on the south wall. The tall surround has a brick face with applied terra cotta egg-and-dart moulded ornamentation that form several long, mantle-like rows at eye-level. Above these is a rectangular panel of multi-hued terra cotta semi-spherical tiles, and below is a larger panel featuring smaller tiles in shapes that resemble interlocking, stylized bones. To either side of the firebox, now blocked are acanthus leaf tiles. Both the living room and dining room have thick wooden moldings around the doors and windows, as well as baseboard and wooden panels under the windows.

The diningroom has narrow maple floors, and a patterned tin ceiling with a built up border/cornice. Paneled wainscot of figured oak marks the walls, and there are two built in cupboards, also executed in figured oak and a pass-through panel to the pantry. At the center of the room is a large, period Tiffany chandelier. It is interesting to note that the swinging door to the pantry is of figured oak, while the door to the hall is grain painted to resemble figured oak, thus allowing the earlier, Second-Empire era door to match the Craftsman-style room.

West of the living room is the library. This south, exterior wall of this room has five, short facets, each with an art-glass window. Chest-high, paneled, oak wainscot is topped by a wide chair rail. The walls above the paneling are clad with what appears to be embossed leather. The ceiling features coffer beams cased in oak and separated by plaster fields. Several Craftman style iron and mica sconces are positioned on the walls, and a matching fixture is centered in the room. The fireplace in the library has brick cheeks and an oak surround with three panels positioned above a narrow mantel. Positioned between the fireplace and the north wall of the room is a built-in secretary, with leaded glass cabinet doors. The door to the back hallway also features leaded, beveled glass in a rectilinear geometric pattern. As with the dining room the library has maple floors and varnished trim. Throughout the first floor the wall paper appears to date from the early decades of the twentieth century.

The footprint of the library lies partially within the original footprint of the ell, and partially within a circa 1906-1912 addition. North of the library is a back hall, also remodeled at this time, and containing walnut trim and beadboard wainscot, a tin-ceiling and maple floors. A narrow watercloset with a bubble glass door and early porcelain fixtures is



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located off the hall. Behind this hall is the large kitchen, which retains a large slate sink, varnished pine cabinets, maple floors, plaster walls and a tin ceiling. Six-light French doors lead to the enclosed porch. Between the kitchen and the dining room is a small pantry with beadboard or paneled glass and wood cabinets. The far western portion of the ell includes a back stair, cellar stair, and a small bedroom with plasterboard walls and a linoleum rug over the painted pine floor.

The second floor of the house has bedrooms in all but the northeast quadrant of the main house, and two additional bedrooms over the ell. The front bedrooms and front hall are finished with parquet floors (installed over an earlier floor), and thick trim around the windows and doors. The paper on the walls of the front hall is an embossed floral design that also appears to have been executed on leather. A wide doorway links two bedrooms on the south elevation en suite, and an ornate, painted slate fireplace is situated in the southwest corner of the southern room. A portion of the northern roof of the suite is now occupied by a large walk-in closet. Previously, a sleeping porch was located over the library, and access to this outdoor room was gained through the west window in this room.

The northwest corner is occupied by the stairs to the third floor and a magnificent period bathroom with an early twentieth-century tub and sink. Affixed over the tub are a showercurtain holder/ showerhead executed in brass. The walls of this room are decorated with paneled wainscot which appears to have been fashioned from a figured mahogany with a high degree of natural luster. The doors and trim were manufactured from this same wood and it was also used in the built-in cabinets located under the third floor stair. Remnants of a parquet floor remain, but due to water damage from the old toilet, much of the floor (and the toilet) have been removed.

Neither the two bedrooms over the ell or the bedrooms on the third floor are particularly noteworthy from a stylistic perspective. The third floor rooms have painted pine floors, and plaster walls and ceilings. There is a large floor to ceiling wardrobe in one room and the doors of this unit feature late Victorian-era knobs and locks. Some of the exterior walls feature paper that is similar to that found on the first floor, suggesting that these rooms might have been finished by, or during, the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The easternmost of the back bedrooms has a hardwood floor, stock mouldings with bulls-eye corner blocks, and plaster walls and ceilings. The western bedroom is finished with flat stock trimming the windows and doors, but is otherwise similar to the room to the east. A long hallway leads from the main second floor hall through to this last bedroom: opening north of this hall is a small room with cedar walls and lots of coat hooks. This is the room over the pantry, and the east wall of this room features painted clapboards, indicating that this is a small addition to the house.

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Court Street commences at Market Square, the commercial center of town, before passing the 1859 County Courthouse and traveling south into residential neighborhoods. Portions of Court Street were platted into houselots lots as early as 1838, and by the time the 1877 Atlas of Aroostook County was published substantial homes lined the first three blocks of Court Street. In 1872 Boardman J. Stevens bought a building lot "with all the building rocks thereon" from Jonathan and Betsey Green for \$600, the same price they had paid a decade earlier for the property. Between then and 1877 Stevens built a substantial Second Empire Style house. Stevens and his two brothers had come to Houlton several decades earlier, and Boardman had established a successful boot and shoe business on Market Square. He and his wife lived in the property until after his death c. 1884. Over the next ten years the property was tied up in probate court, first in the estate of Stevens and then as part of the estate of his executor, James Frank Holland. In 1895 the property was sold to Ellen and Merchant Philbrook. In the 1900 census Mr. Philbrook was listed as an "ex Hotel Keeper," and in addition to the three members of the Philbrook family there were four boarders and two servants listed in the household. In 1901 the Philbrooks sold the property to Jennie F. Richards, wife of George W. Richards.

George W. Richards was one of the most successful merchants and entrepreneurs in Houlton at the turn of the twentieth century. The following summary of his achievements was topic of a newspaper article "The 'Good Old Days' For Houlton Produced 'Merchant Princes'," written by Charlotte Lenentine Melvin for the *Pioneer Times* in 1976:

George...after being educated in the public schools in Van Buren and Fort Fairfield, came to Houlton in 1875, becoming a clerk at the store of E. Merritt & son... After three years he went to work for Hudson Frisbie in the drygoods business. Frisbie had been in business in Houlton since 1860 and was probably the most prominent and enterprising Houlton merchant of his day, as his ads in the local newspapers demonstrate. George Richards, like others who worked for Frisbie, recalled that he learned many of the tricks of the trade while working there.

Like most other workers of the day, he saved while he worked, hoping to start a little business of his own. This he did in 1886 with a store on the southwest corner of the square...With a partner (at that date, Samuel Boothby, of Portland), he operated under the name of G. W. Richards and Company.

Their business prospered; according to the Aroostook Times, their "syndicate" owned four stores by August 1891. Of the stores in which he had an interest then or later, one was W. B. Youland Company, the largest dry goods company in York County. Another was the Syndicate Dry Goods Company in Presque Isle...As time went on, he bought out his partners and when Mr. Frisbie was no longer in business, Richards first leased and then (1917) that store. His sale to celebrate that transaction was the largest single day's business in the history of the County according to the newspapers...

As befitting a prosperous merchant, Mr. Richards bought a fine home, "The Elms," on Court Street and his family moved in Houlton's "high" social circles. An article in the "Turf, Farm and Home" journal in 1908 described his home and store, comparing his favorably with the best dry goods stores in Portland and said that in such lines as furs it ranked with any store in Maine. (Melvin, 1976).

The earliest graphic record depicting the Elms house is the 1877 Aroostook County Atlas map of Houlton, which shows the Boardman J. Stevens House as house and rear ell facing Court Street. No carriage house is shown, but this does not necessarily indicate that the carriage house had not been built, as this appears to be a consistent omission for all the houses in the neighborhood. The carriage house is clearly visible in the 1894 birds-eye map of Houlton, topped by a

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Name of Property THE ELMS

County and State AROOSTOOK COUNTY, MAINE

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)  
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Section number 8 Page 3

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cupola, but the front porch is not clearly visible. That a front porch was extant in 1906 is evident on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map, sheet 8, drawn in July of that year, but the faceted library room on the south side of the ell was not. By the next edition of the map, in August of 1912, the front porch had been widened, the library constructed and the porch along the south side of the ell was reconstructed and widened. A pair of photographs in the collections of the Houlton Historical and Art Museum depicts the home of G. W. Richards at the Elms. Two tall trees, presumably elms, grow along the street in front of the house. In the photograph from c. 1902 the family poses in a carriage and a cart in yard on the south side of the house. Taken before the alterations, in this photograph the side porch is supported with Roman Doric porch supports, and what appears to be a spindlework band under the eaves. The second photograph, showing the front of the house, was taken several years later, after the front porch was widened. Both the front porch and the side porch and library room feature the same paneling under the windows, suggesting that they were altered at the same time more or less. These exterior alterations, especially the addition of the faceted library room, also provide the reference point for when the Craftsman style updates were made to the interior of the building.

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Photographs:**

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Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** The Elms  
**City or Vicinity:** Houlton  
**County:** Aroostook **State:** Maine  
**Photographer:** C. Mitchell  
**Date Photographed:** 22 September 2008  
**Description of Photograph(s) and number:** East facade; facing west.  
1 of 8. ME\_Aroostook\_The Elms\_001.tif

**Name of Property:** The Elms  
**City or Vicinity:** Houlton  
**County:** Aroostook **State:** Maine  
**Photographer:** C. Mitchell  
**Date Photographed:** 11 June 2008  
**Description of Photograph(s) and number:** South elevation, showing ell, porch and library addition; facing northeast.  
2 of 8. ME\_Aroostook\_The Elms\_002.tif

**Name of Property:** The Elms  
**City or Vicinity:** Houlton  
**County:** Aroostook **State:** Maine  
**Photographer:** C. Mitchell  
**Date Photographed:** 11 June 2008  
**Description of Photograph(s) and number:** Interior, front hall; facing southwest.  
3 of 8. ME\_Aroostook\_The Elms\_003.tif

**Name of Property:** The Elms  
**City or Vicinity:** Houlton  
**County:** Aroostook **State:** Maine  
**Photographer:** C. Mitchell  
**Date Photographed:** 11 June 2008  
**Description of Photograph(s) and number:** Interior, dining room; tin ceiling and cornice, period wall paper and oak wainscot. Facing northwest.  
4 of 8. ME\_Aroostook\_The Elms\_004.tif

**Name of Property:** The Elms  
**City or Vicinity:** Houlton  
**County:** Aroostook **State:** Maine  
**Photographer:** C. Mitchell  
**Date Photographed:** 11 June 2008

**THE ELMS**

Name of Property

**AROOSTOOK COUNTY, MAINE**

County and State

Description of Photograph(s) and number. Interior, living room, brick and terra cotta fireplace; facing southeast.  
5 of 8. ME\_Aroostook\_The Elms\_005.tif

Name of Property: The Elms  
City or Vicinity: Houlton  
County: Aroostook State: Maine  
Photographer: C. Mitchell  
Date Photographed: 11 June 2008

Description of Photograph(s) and number. Interior of library, west wall and cased ceiling beams.  
6 of 8. ME\_Aroostook\_The Elms\_006.tif

Name of Property: The Elms  
City or Vicinity: Houlton  
County: Aroostook State: Maine  
Photographer: C. Mitchell  
Date Photographed: 11 June 2008

Description of Photograph(s) and number. Interior of library, east and southeast walls showing Craftsman period  
gixture, embossed wallpaper, high-paneled wainscot and stained glass windows.  
7 of 8. ME\_Aroostook\_The Elms\_007.tif

Name of Property: The Elms  
City or Vicinity: Houlton  
County: Aroostook State: Maine  
Photographer: C. Mitchell  
Date Photographed: 11 June 2008

Description of Photograph(s) and number. Interior, second floor bathroom with figured mahogany paneling;  
facing north.  
8 of 8. ME\_Aroostook\_The Elms\_008.tif

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

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