

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED AUG 7 1979  
DATE ENTERED OCT 3 1979

**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

Edward Wells House

AND/OR COMMON

Delta Psi House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

61 Summit Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Burlington

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Vermont

STATE

Vermont

CODE

50

COUNTY

Chittenden

CODE

07

**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"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER
			Fraternity

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Delta Psi Fraternity

STREET & NUMBER

61 Summit Street

CITY, TOWN

Burlington

VICINITY OF

STATE

Vermont

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Burlington City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

Church Street

CITY, TOWN

Burlington

STATE

Vermont

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey

DATE

1977

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN

Montpelier

STATE

Vermont

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<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		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In Burlington, the Edward Wells house is a striking example of the Queen Anne style because of its strong contrasts of materials and forms. The brick and stone building is situated at the northwest corner of Summit and Maple Streets on a lot measuring 300 by 310 feet. Standing at the center of that lot, the house itself is 80' wide, 53' deep, and approximately 45' tall.

The central block of the two-and-a-half story house is three bays wide and two bays deep, the bays being marked by the tall dormers on the steeply-pitched, truncated hip roof. The front (east) elevation is distinguished by a half-timbered cross gable projecting above terracotta consoles and by a Tudor-arched entrance porch. The left (south) facade has a porte-cochère extending 13' from the house and a three-story tower projecting three-quarters from the house at its southwest corner. This cylindrical tower, with its tiers of carved wooden ornament, its flanks of stone, and its conical cap of slate topped with an ornate iron finial, forms the dominant element in the composition. The stone pedestals and wooden latticework balustrade of its rectangular base carry rhythmically into those of the elliptical porch which is the central feature of the rear (west) facade. This one-story porch of seven bays wraps around a projecting pavilion marked by its own hip roof and centrally placed dormer. The north side of the house forms a service wing, 28' by 13', with its hip roof abutting that of the central block. This wing is set back 10' from the front line of the house and is partially screened from the road by an extension of the first-floor wall, which ends with an ogee-curve coping and an ornamental urn.

The solidity of the composition is reinforced by the choice and handling of the materials. The beveled watercourse is of a hard, gray limestone from the Chazy formation, bush-hammered to resemble granite. Above it there rises to the second story a wall of quarry-faced, purple and tan dolomite from the Winooski formation. It is laid in random ashlar with a reddish-tinged mortar matching the redstone sills and lintels. A beltcourse of rowlocks alternating in depth between stretchers marks the transition to the second story wall of purplish-red brick. It is laid in a variation of common bond, with a single course of Flemish bond to every seven courses of stretchers. The bond, together with the flush jackarches and segmental arches above the windows, creates the effect of a taut surface above the rugged stone wall below. The roof of Pennsylvania black slate has five brick chimneys with corbelled caps. One shaft rises alongside the tower, while a squat stack rises above the roof of the west pavilion. Three others rise on the north side: one from the west flank of the service wing roof and one at each corner where the north hip meets the roof deck.

Within the broad expanse of stone wall, the first floor windows are boldly expressed with immense panes of double-hung sash measuring 53 by 41 inches. At the second story the windows are treated in varied shapes. The east elevation has an oriel window beneath the cross gable and three and four-sectioned windows in the other two bays. The south elevation has a tall rectangular bay window, while the west has a polygonal bay window above the porch. All windows above the eaves, including those in the cross gable and tower, have diamond panes set in deep wooden muntins. Each dormer has two narrow double-hung sash with a double row of transom lights above.

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Although the textures and overall bulk of the house are imposing, the use of one-story porches on three sides of the house and of delicate ornament in brickwork, glass, and wood gives a human scale to the whole. The transom lights of many windows are decorated with glass in soft tints. Those of the three-sectioned, stone-mullioned dining room window to the right of the entrance porch have brilliantly colored glass in a pattern of shields and fleur-de-lis. The tall bay window on the south has slender double-hung sash of leaded glass around clear ovals, with a double row of transom lights decorated with escutcheons in bold hues.

The most notable ornament, however, is the profusion of fine woodcarving. Large floral volutes decorate the peaks of the wooden dormers and the cross-gable. The spandrels of the entrance porch and porte-cochère are deeply carved with children's heads and leafy forms, while the paired columns below have a spiralling bas-relief of thistles, sea-shells, crescents, clover, fleur-de-lis and the like. In each pediment of the porte-cochère there is a god's mask with flowing swirls of hair. The one on the east smiles to greet visitors, while the one on the west grimaces to see them depart. Above its first floor windows, the tower is decorated with a wide band of fleur-de-lis and projecting finial forms. Above the second story is a richly carved panel depicting two mythological figures rising from a sea of volutes to face each other across a central lozenge.

The entrance porch floor is finished in red tile with a mosaic border of scrollwork. The entrance door, like the side door, has eight bull's-eye lights set in two rows above two raised panels with bead and reel borders. A paneled vestibule leads into a large central hall from which the principle rooms of the first floor open. This hall is distinguished by a large fireplace raised on a base of red marble. It is treated as an inglenook, with flanking benches which have high, paneled backs ending in a row of turned and carved balusters. The fireplace has a marble surround and a richly carved panel between its mantelshelf and paneled mantelhood.

The entire hall is paneled in golden oak in a raised-field pattern created by applied moldings. Above this 6' high wainscot is a 3' strip of white Lincrusta-Walton fibreboard impressed with a design of thistles. This wallcovering continues up the wall of the staircase to the left of the central hall and decorates the upstairs hall above its 3' high dado. The newel of the stair reaches up to the deeply coffered ceiling and is treated for 6' as a fluted square post which is then carved with ornate floral ornament in the round till it returns to a square ceiling block decorated with carved masks on all sides. The posts of the fireplace inglenook are treated in the same manner.

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The stair itself rises in two runs with a half-turn landing in the bay which projects on the south facade of the house. The first run is enclosed by the wainscot with symmetrically turned and carved balusters reaching to the ceiling. The second run has a closed string with smaller symmetrical balusters set on the diagonal. Within the stairwell a three-sectioned bay window with diamond-paned lights projects from the principle bedroom on the second story.

To either side of the central hall fireplace narrow doors with sliding vertical screens lead into the library, which has a large fireplace with marble surround and mirrored overmantel. Its ceiling is finished in a polygonal pattern of cased beams over diagonal sheathing. Double sliding doors lead left into the music room, which is set into the tower and distinguished both by its elaborately carved mantel above a cast-iron coal grate with yellow tile surround and by its ceiling of applied molding in an octagonal pattern with richly molded plaster cornice.

To the right of the entrance hall is the dining room, finished with a 5'6" wainscot of mahogany divided into panels by an inlay of bead and reel molding. Corner cabinets have double doors of glass set in Tudor-arched frames. A grid of cased beams on the ceiling joins carved modillion blocks at the cornice. The fireplace is treated as a recessed inglenook on a raised tile platform. It has a cast-iron fireback decorated with fleur-de-lis in a diamond pattern. Its tripartite overmantel mirror is flanked by slender colonettes which lead to a Tudor arch above a field of net tracery.

The mansion abounds with fine handcrafted details. Of special note are the elaborate mantels in the second story west bedroom and its adjoining tower sitting-room. Both are of ornately carved pine painted white, with acanthus consoles, overmantel mirrors festooned with garlands, and flanking columns with scamozzi capitals. All the baths and closets have built-in cabinets of pine with brass hardware. The house also has its original electric lighting fixtures which range from chandeliers in the dining room and library to ornate wall sconces treated as figurines, lion's heads, candelabra, and Jacobean crests.

The present owners of the house possess a trunk containing many of the original drawings, including plans, elevations, and details. On the exterior, the house is missing the original wooden stair which descended to grade from the west porch. The steps to the front porch have been replaced. Interior alterations include the removal of the door between the dining room and butler's pantry, the addition of veneer panelling to many of the secondary rooms, and the replacement of one bedroom fireplace surround with modern brick. All other features of the house remain as they were in 1892, creating a Queen Anne style mansion of unsurpassed elegance in Burlington.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

		Architect: E.A.P. Newcomb	
SPECIFIC DATES	1891-1892	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Builder: Alfred B. Fisher Woodcarver: Albert H. Whittekind

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In its bold display of materials and forms, the Edward Wells's house is a superior example of the Queen Anne style, which proudly celebrated the technology and the craftsmanship of the late Victorian era. It also proclaims the pre-eminent position of its original owner, who rose from the position of clerk to become president of one of the world's largest mail-order patent-medicine companies. Thus the mansion is significant both for its architecture and its associations with an era and an individual.

Edward Wells was born in Waterbury, Vermont, in 1835. After attending the Bakersfield Academy, he worked in his father's grist mill in Waterbury. During the Civil War, he served as clerk, first to the quartermaster of the Fifth Regiment of the Vermont Volunteers and then to the quartermaster general of the State of Vermont. After the war he worked as clerk to the State Treasurer until 1868, when he joined the wholesale drug firm of Henry & Co., which had just moved from Waterbury to Burlington.

In 1872, the company was reorganized into three firms: John F. Henry & Co. of New York; Henry, Johnson, and Lord of Burlington; and Wells, Richardson & Co. of Burlington. Originally the latter firm was to take over merely the wholesale side of the drug business, but in 1877 it began manufacturing an artificial butter coloring. Then in 1879, a line of patent medicines was added, and in 1881, the famous Diamond Dyes. By 1886, thirty-six of these dyes were being sold along with other company products through international offices in Montreal, London, and Sydney. In 1882, the company was incorporated as Wells & Richardson, with Edward Wells as president. In 1891, the Burlington Drug Co. was founded to handle the wholesale business while the former company continued in manufacturing.

The phenomenal success of the Wells-Richardson Company was due to Edward Wells' aggressive use of print advertising and mail-order campaigns. Advertising expenditures rose from \$4,000 in 1877 to \$150,000 in 1881, with business earnings jumping from \$200,000 to \$500,000 in the same period. By 1894, the company was sending out thirty million pieces of printed material a year and doing an annual business of two million dollars. The advertising blitz included ads in newspapers and magazines, almanacs, mail-order catalogues, pamphlets, and sales displays.

The catalogues of these years reveal a remarkable line of products ranging from drugs, chemicals, dyes, paints, and varnishes, to brushes, glassware, and soaps. The most popular products were such patent medicines as Kidney-Wort and Paine's Celery Compound, the latter containing extract of coca and 22% alcohol. The 1906 Pure Food

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Amrhein, Joseph, Burlington, Vermont: The Economic History of a Northern New England City, dissertation for the Graduate School of Business Administration, New York University, 1958.
- Auld, Joseph, Picturesque Burlington, Burlington: Free Press Association, 1894. Burlington Free Press, November 20, 1935, "Interview with Albert Whittekind," page 8.
- Carlisle, Lillian, "Albert Whittekind, Woodcarver," Chittenden County Historical Bulletin, Vol. IX, number 3, April, 1974.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Burlington, Vermont

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1, 8 | 6, 4, 2 | 9, 3, 0 | 4, 9 | 2, 5 | 9, 2, 0

B    |    |    |    |    |   

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C    |    |    |    |    |   

D    |    |    |    |    |   

E    |    |    |    |    |   

F    |    |    |    |    |   

G    |    |    |    |    |   

H    |    |    |    |    |   

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All buildings and property bounded by a rectangle formed on the south by the curb line of Maple Street, on the east by the curb line of Summit Street, on the north by the boundary line of the UVM-Grassmount property, and on the west by the extension of

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

the western property line of the Grassmount lot directly south to its intersection

with the northern curblines of Maple Street.

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Peter Hawley

5/25/79

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

220 West Canal Street, #2

TELEPHONE

802/655-0952

CITY OR TOWN

Winooski,

STATE

Vermont 05404

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE X

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

*William B. Priney*

TITLE

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 7-31-79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 10-3-79

ATTEST:

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 10-3-79

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and Drug Act forced these profitable but dubious medicines off the market and initiated the ultimate decline of the company. (See also the Wells-Richardson Complex, listed in the National Register on March 5, 1979.)

With this manufacturing empire as his base, Edward Wells rose to great prominence in the city and the state. He served as president of the Burlington Savings Bank, a Wells family venture which was once the state's third largest bank. He also became vice-president of both the Burlington Cotton Mills and the Burlington Safe Deposit Company. In 1890, he was elected to the State Legislature, where he served as chairman of the banking committee.

Although the Burlington Free Press of July 23, 1886, states that Wells had purchased a plot of land at Maple and Summit Streets, it is not until July 25, 1891, that the paper announces the start of construction. The house was completed by Christmas, 1892, at a cost of \$100,000. The contractor for the construction was Alfred B. Fisher (1831-1911), one of Burlington's most prolific builder-architects. He was architect of the Wells-Richardson store at 127 College Street, of Wells' partner's mansion at 57 S. Williams Street (the A.E. Richardson House), and of Wells' brother's French Second Empire mansion at 158 S. Willard Street (the General William Wells house). Although Fisher had moved to Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1891, he returned to supervise the construction of the Edward Wells house.

The architect whose name appears on the drawings for the house is E.A.P. Newcomb of 35 Pemberton Square in Boston. Born in 1846, Edgar Allen Poe Newcomb was the son of noted Boston architect Levi Newcomb. Having graduated from the Ogdensburg (N.Y.) Academy, he joined his father to build Fenton Hall at Harvard. On his own he was responsible for Boston's Swedish Society Chapel (1883), for the Ames houses at 301-3 and 294-6 Marlborough Street (1877), for houses at 463 and 465 Beacon Street, and for numerous residences in Brookline, Dorchester, Roxbury, and Jamaica Plain. In 1901, he moved to Hokuto, Hawaii, according to the Boston Business Directory of that year.

In contrast to the often frenetic, frame Queen Anne style houses in Burlington, Newcomb designed for Edward Wells an essay in strong forms. This can especially be seen on the rear (west) and left (south) facades, where the elliptical porch, the rectangular stone terrace, the cylindrical tower, the pyramidal roof of the porte-cochère, and the triangular dormers create a stately rhythm. Yet this play of form is subordinate at all times to the mass of the whole, sharply delineated by the ridge lines of the slate hipped roof.

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The house is also a dignified display of materials and a celebration of craftsmanship. The flush brick surface of the second story seems tautly drawn between the rugged wall below and the shining slate roof above. The Victorian pride in technology is evident in the internal elevator (now inoperable), the immense curved panes of glass in the tower, and the electric lights throughout the house. Yet the celebration of handcraft prevails in the profusion of delicate stained glass ornament and especially in the superb wood carvings.

The woodcarver for the house was Albert H. Whittekind (1859-1943). Born in Boston, he was apprenticed at fifteen, executed carvings at the NY Public Library and at St. Luke's Hospital in New York City, and worked for W.W. Norcross of Worcester, the contractors to Henry Hobson Richardson. In 1886, Whittekind was brought to Burlington to carve the elaborate interiors of Richardson's Billings Library at the University of Vermont. (See the University Green Historic District, entered in the National Register on April 14, 1975.) By 1892, he had settled in Winooski, where he established a shop for cabinet-making and decorative finish-work.

For the Wells house, Whittekind executed the carved balusters, posts, fleur-de-lis, diapering, and scroll designs according to sketches by Newcomb. In the bands of mythological ornament on the tower and in the gable ends of the porte-cochère, however, he was left to his own imagination. He was later to repeat many of these floral and mask motifs on houses throughout Burlington, including a house purchased by Wells' brother Frederick at 282 Pearl Street. Whittekind carving can be found also on houses at 376 and 384 College Street; 10, 41, and 301 S. Willard Street; and within the U.S. Post Office and Custom House constructed in 1906 at the corner of Main and Church Streets (see Smith-Goldberg Army Reserve Center, entered in the National Register on November 21, 1972).

Edward Wells died in 1907. In 1895, he had given a half-acre adjoining his lot to the north to the University of Vermont, which had acquired Grassmount, the adjacent mansion. In 1924, Wells' house and its remaining lot were sold to the Delta Psi Fraternity, the present owners. During the intervening years, a row of small houses has been built on property directly to the west. Yet the Wells house still stands today as a monument both to its original owner and to an era when industrialist and architect alike proudly displayed their mastery of materials and their delight in craftsmanship.

Map of the Edward Wells House, 61 Summit Street, Burlington, Vermont, showing its site, plan in outline, and adjoining lots:

