

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received **DEC 27 1982**
date entered

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

1. Name Alvin Bushnell Bell House

historic Alvin Bushnell Bell House

and/or common Kee House

2. Location

street & number 310 Quimby Street ___ not for publication

city, town Ida Grove ___ vicinity of

state Iowa code 19 county Ida code 093

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a 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

name Patrick & Frances Kee

street & number 310 Quimby Street

city, town Ida Grove ___ vicinity of state Iowa 51445

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Ida County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Ida Grove state Iowa

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		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input 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

The 2 1/2-story Bell House occupies a large lot in a quiet, old Ida Grove neighborhood. Of wood frame construction, its exterior walls are sheathed in wooden clapboards and aluminum siding (now in the process of being removed), and they rest on a rusticated stone foundation over a partially raised basement. Windows are generally of the one-over-one wood sash variety and are set in rectangular surrounds. The edifice is capped with a wood shingled, high hipped, cross gabled roof that is pierced by a large central chimney stack with a corbelled cap and a smaller inside end chimney with a corbelled cap at the rear.

Like most Queen Anne houses, this one has a variety of decoratively rich exterior ornamentation. The front dormer, whose aluminum siding has recently been removed, features art glass and a combination of diamond, rectangular, and round cut shingles. A peek under the aluminum siding has shown that the house is banded with shingles and that its gables feature decorative shingling as well. The bay window on the south side of the house is finished decoratively in stick and bias stick panels. The house's verge boards are highly decorative and fret work and scroll work adorn the pediments.

Inside, the house has eight principal rooms located on two floors. Except for the removal of a dumb waiter around 1920, there has been little interior change. The woodwork is original and includes pocket doors, Barber's Design No. 57 oak staircase, a portierre work grill in the bay window, floors of parquet and patterned oak, and oak wainscoting. Some of the original lighting and plumbing fixtures remain as well.

Currently, this structure is undergoing restoration. The interior work appears to be virtually complete. On the exterior, most of the aluminum siding remains to be removed. The owner is now in the process of doing this and will repair the siding and trim where necessary and paint it in an authentic color scheme. The owners also plan to restore the front porch and put the decorative fretwork and spindles back up that were taken down when part of the porch was removed around 1950. Apparently, the second story porch and the rear porch are to remain enclosed.

At the rear of the Bell House is a one-story caretaker's shed (not included in nomination) which was moved from the cemetery in Glidden, Iowa in 1979. Of wood frame construction, this cross gabled edifice features highly decorative shingle and scroll work and appears to be of the same vintage as the house. Plans are to restore this structure faithfully as well.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1895 **Builder/Architect** Thomas & Wm. Bassett, George F. Barber, Arch.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Alvin Bushnell Bell House, currently undergoing restoration, is one of the finest extant examples of vernacular Queen Anne architecture in Ida Grove and Ida County. The structure bears similarities to a design by George Franklin Barber, perhaps the most outstanding "mail order" architect of the late 19th century, and it is ample proof of the ability of he and his firm to take a basic catalog design and adapt it to please the desires and whims of clients both in this country and abroad. According to Barber, "all over America, the idea is spreading that a new building must be original, not thereby meaning a freakish departure from well-known principles of design, but one planned originally for the owner."¹

George Franklin Barber, a self-taught architect, had begun practicing architecture in DeKalb, Illinois in the mid-1880's. Although he had published two catalogs of his designs in DeKalb, he did not concentrate on a mail order practice until after his move to Knoxville, Tennessee in 1888 because of poor health. In 1891 he published Cottage Souvenir No. 2, a collection of 59 designs, which received widespread attention and marked the beginning of his mail order practice on a national basis. To attract customers, Barber advertised widely in trade publications and popular literary and women's magazines. When individuals purchased one of his catalogs, they received a detailed questionnaire and sketch sheet so that Barber could provide them with plans for a custom-designed house. Barber furnished his clients not only with a full set of working drawings, but complete specifications, contract blanks, color charts, and price lists of bills of material for the house. Barber's approach proved highly successful, and prior to his death in 1915, his firm is believed to have produced some 20,000 sets of drawings from more than 800 designs. From surviving evidence, it appears that most of his clientele was drawn from the rising middle class. One testimonial publication included the vice president of a small town bank; a railroad company treasurer; a hardware company executive; young attorneys and doctors; planters; and an oyster packer.

Alvin Bushnell Bell fit the profile for the typical Barber customer. Born in Indiana in 1848, he moved to Ida County in 1880 to engage in farming. A few years later, he and his family left the farm and moved to Ida Grove where he bought and sold livestock. Bell, whose judgement of livestock was said to be equal to that of anyone at the Chicago Stockyards, became one of the most successful livestock dealers in northwest Iowa, and by 1894 had begun purchasing land for what eventually became the 1,200 acre Bell Ranch outside Ida Grove.

Around this same time, Bell decided to build a new home as well, and he obtained a copy of George F. Barber's latest house catalog. After corresponding with Barber's firm and consulting local builders Thomas and William Bassett, Bell obtained the plans for the house he desired. In 1895, the Bassetts constructed the house, and Bell and his family moved in.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet, Item #9, page 1

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Ida Grove

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	2	9	6	3	2	0	4	6	9	1	6	3	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

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D

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Verbal boundary description and justification

From SE corner Lot 6, Block 22, First Addition, north along west line of Quimby St. 26.58' to pt. of beg., north 63.92', north 89°50' through center Lot 5, 150' to point on west side of Lot 5, south 0°04' east along westerly lines of Lots 5 & 6 for 51.3', north 89°56' for 40', south 64°34' east 30', south 89°50' east 82.9' to place of beginning

state Iowa code 19 county Ida 093

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator

organization Iowa SHPO

date December 8, 1982

street & number Historical Building, East 12th and Grand Avenue,

telephone 515-281-4137

city or town Des Moines

state Iowa 50319

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

John A. Anderson

title Executive Director Iowa State Historical Department

date November 24, 1982

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the National Register

date 1/27/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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To a substantial degree, the Bell House is a much simplified version of Design No. 56 in Barber's Cottage Souvenir No. 2. Barber had developed this design for D.J. Egleston of Knoxville, Tennessee and its most prominent exterior feature was a two-tiered open portico featuring elaborate trim and capped with an open turret. For Bell, Barber eliminated most of the upper tier except for a small shed roof porch, the turret, and some of the more elaborate fretwork and balustrades. On the left side of the house, Barber reduced a two-story projecting bay to a one-story one while on the right side a similar bay is retained but is greatly reduced in width. Except for these and a few other relatively minor variations, the Bell House closely resembles the Egleston house in basic layout, roof shape, and trim design. Inside, the Bell residence has a stairway which appears to be a replica of the one in the Eglestone house and which appears as Design No. 57 in Cottage Souvenir No. 2.

Bell continued to live in his Barber-designed house until his death in 1921. After moving into it, he appears to have grown in wealth and stature in the community. His landholdings continued to grow, and he moved from the buying and selling of livestock into other areas of commercial endeavor. As a sideline to his livestock business, he began dealing in meats, fresh oysters, game, hides, tallow, and furs. In addition, he was in the furniture business as well. Toward the end of his life, he entered politics and served as a county supervisor and mayor of Ida Grove.

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¹Quoted in George F. Barber, The Cottage Souvenir No. 2, 5.

George F. Barber, The Cottage Souvenir No. 2, (Watkins Glen, N.Y.: American Life Foundation, 1982 with introduction by Michael A. Tomlan). Originally published in 1892.

Ida County Pioneer, August 10, 1921.

Interviews conducted by Patrick Kee with Lelah Dessel (1976); Theo. Murphy (1979); Anna Johnson (1976); Bill Suiter (1978); Curt Jeffries (1978); and Pam Turin.

Old House Journal, February, December, 1980.