

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	
DATE ENTERED	10/17/74

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Former North Dakota Executive Mansion

AND/OR COMMON

Old Governor's Mansion (or) Asa Fisher House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

320 Avenue B, East

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Bismarck

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1

STATE

North Dakota

VICINITY OF  
CODE

038

COUNTY

Burleigh

CODE

015

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" 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

State of North Dakota (Director of Institutions)

STREET & NUMBER

State Capitol Building

CITY, TOWN

Bismarck

VICINITY OF

North Dakota

STATE

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds Office, Burleigh County Court House

STREET & NUMBER

514 East Thayer Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Bismarck

STATE

North Dakota

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

North Dakota Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1974

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

State Historical Society of North Dakota  
Liberty Memorial Building

CITY, TOWN

Bismarck

STATE

North Dakota

# 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

The house is a large two and one-half story, mid-Victorian structure, the top floor being a spacious attic. The first floor contains front and rear entrance vestibules opening onto a large central hallway, front and rear parlors, a dining room, a pantry, and a kitchen. A single story utility wing extends to the rear. An open stairway leads from the first floor hallway which gives access to three large bedrooms and a sewing room. Two smaller bedrooms and a bath are accessible from both a second hallway, opening to the first, and a rear stairway leading to the kitchen. Tiled fireplaces are located in the livingroom and the dining room. A carriage house located on the rear of the lot has been converted into living quarters for a caretaker, and an iron fence that originally surrounded the lot has been removed. When interviewed in 1951, the wife of former Governor John Moses (1939-1944) mentioned several changes that had been made to the interior. The attic had been partially remodeled into a recreation room when the house was occupied by Governor William Langer (1933-1934). Mrs. Moses also noted that there had been two fireplaces on the second floor directly above the two existing fireplaces on the first floor. Other changes to the interior of the house or to the grounds have been few and most of the original fabric of the interior is intact.

The original front porch was removed in 1919 and a large, two story, screened porch which exists today was built across the front of the house, substantially altering the the appearance of the front. With the exception of this, removal of iron work from the "widow's walk" on the roof, and one window being replaced with a larger one, the exterior appears much the same as when built. An interview with Mrs. Alvah Warren, step-granddaughter of the builder, appeared in the August 27, 1946 issue of the Bismarck Capitol. Mrs. Warren stated, "The only real change since 1893 is that the porch has been added to the second story. Otherwise, the dormer windows, the chimneys, the garage are much the same." "When I was here the last time---in 1893---the house was out on the prairie. There were no other houses around. There was a dirt road in front of the place."

The only early description of any detail appeared in the Bismarck Tribune of October 3, 1884 while the building was still under construction:

"Asa Fisher's residence is nearly completed. Mr. S. Newton, foreman of the carpenter work, says he will finish next week. The black walnut trimmings and casings are the finest and the most costly in the city. The stairway, which is made of white oak, is to be oiled and polished. All work throughout the building is first class and without doubt the building will be one of the finest dwelling houses northwest of Chicago. The building is to be heated by steam and will have hot and cold water appliances. The plumbers finished yesterday."

# 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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES 1884-1960

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former Executive Mansion was originally constructed in 1884 by Asa Fisher, a prosperous Bismarck businessman. Prior to the relocation of the capitol of Dakota Territory to Bismarck in 1883, the town was a relatively small settlement economically dependent upon the railroad, steamboat trade, and supplying goods and services for military posts, Indian agencies and the few settlers in the area. The establishment of the territorial capitol brought on a short period of rapid expansion in economic activity lasting until about the middle of 1885. As a result of the "boom" spirit and activity, four large mansion-size residences were built in what was then the northern portion of Bismarck in 1884. The Asa Fisher house was one of these.

In 1893, The North Dakota Legislature passed House Bill 87, which authorized a board to purchase or erect a suitable residence for the Chief Executive of the state and to furnish the same. Six thousand dollars was appropriated for the purpose. The board elected to purchase the Asa Fisher residence because the meagre appropriation would not build a new structure, and before the end of May, Governor Eli C.D. Shortridge moved into the home.

The building served as the official residence of the Governors of North Dakota for nearly 67 years. The last Governor to occupy it was John E. Davis whose term of office ran through 1960. A new executive mansion was completed at the southwest corner of the state capitol grounds (on the northeast corner of Boulevard Avenue and Fourth Street) in March of 1960 and on December 31 of that year, newly elected Governor William L. Guy and his family moved into the structure. Since 1961 the former residence has been occupied by offices of the State Health Department. House Bill 1315 of the Forty-Fourth Legislative Assembly, 1975, transfers the custody and control of the building to the State Historical Society of North Dakota for preservation as a historic site effective July 1, 1975. The bill was signed into law on March 14, 1975.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bismarck Capitol, August 27, 1946, "N.D. Governor's Mansion Holds Memories for Washington Woman Who Last Visited It in 1893," P. 1.

Bismarck Daily Tribune, October 3, 1884.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.5165 Acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>14</u>	<u>363735</u>	<u>51185500</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

James E. Sperry State Historic Preservation Officer

ORGANIZATION

DATE

State Historical Society of North Dakota

3/26/75

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

Liberty Memorial Building, State Capitol Grounds

(701)-224-2667

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Bismarck,

North Dakota

# 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

*James E. Sperry*

TITLE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

DATE 3/26/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

4/16/75

ATTEST

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*W. M. ...*

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

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Daniel, Jean Houston, and Price Daniel, Executive Mansions and Capitols of America,  
(Waukesha, Wisc: Country Beautiful, 1969).

State Historical Society of North Dakota, File: Notes of Former Executive Masion.

ITEM NUMBER 11

Walter L. Bailey Historic Preservation Planner  
State Historical Society of North Dakota  
Liberty Memorial Building  
State Capitol Grounds  
Bismarck, North Dakota 58505

3/26/75

(701)-224-2672