NPS Form 10-900 (Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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NAT. F	REGISTER OF H	IISTORIC PLA	ACES	

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name <u>Wilson, Blanche A., House</u>	<u></u>
other names/site number <u>Centennial House; 5AM173</u>	
2. Location	
street & number <u>1671 Galena St.</u>	[N/A] not for publication
city or town <u>Aurora</u>	[N/A] vicinity
state <u>Colorado</u> code <u>CO</u> county <u>Adams</u> code <u>001</u>	zip code <u>80010</u>
3. State/Federal Agency Certification	
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for reg National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements see In my opinion, the property [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recomm considered significant [] nationally [] statewide [X] locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)	certify that this [X] istering properties in the et forth in 36 CFR Part 60. end that this property be
Signature of certifying official/Title State Historic Preservation Officer State	Date 30, 1996
State Historic Preservation Office, Colorado Historical Society State or Federal agency and bureau	
In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)	
Signature of certifying official/Title	Date
State or Federal agency and bureau	
4. Național Park Service Certification	
I hereby certify that the property is: Signature of the Keeper //	Date
Ventered in the National Register	11.7.99
[] determined eligible for the <u>Entered in the</u>	(
National Register See continuation sheet [].	
Image: Image of the state o	
[] removed from the	<u></u>
[] other, explain See continuation sheet [].	

OMB No. 10024-0018

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box) [X] building(s) [] district [] site [] structure [] object	Number of Resources within Property (Do not count previously listed resources.) Contributing Noncontributing		
[] private [X] public-local [] public-State [] public-Federal		_1	0	buildings
		_0	0	sites
		0	0	structures
		0	0	objects
		_1	0	Total
Name of related multiple listing. (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multi		Number of or resources put the National	reviously liste	əd in
N/A		0		
6. Function or Use				
Historic Function (Enter categories from instructions) DOMESTIC/single dwellin		Current Function (Enter categories from inst RECREATION	ons ructions) AND CULTUF	RE/museum
7. Description Architectural Classificati (Enter categories from instructions) LATE VICTORIAN/Queen		Materials (Enter categories from inst foundation_BRI		
		walls <u>BRICH</u> roof <u>WOOD: sh</u> other	ingle	
			· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) Wilson, Blanche A., House

Name of Property

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.)

[X] A Proper 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.

[X] 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic 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):

[] premin requested] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been

[] 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

#

Adams County, CO County/State

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Periods of Significance 1890 - 1893

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above). N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Uriknown

Primary location of additional data:

- [X] State Historic Preservation Office
- [] Other State Agency
- [] Federal Agency
- [] Local Government
- [] University
- [X] Other:

Name of repository: Aurora History Museum

Wilson, Blanche A., House		Adams County, CO County/State			
Name of Property		Coun	ty/State		
10. Geogi	raphical Data	1			
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13 1. Zone	511220 Easting	4399120 Northing	2. Zone	Easting	Northing
3. Zone	Easting	Northing	4. Zone	Easting	Northing
			[] See c	ontinuation s	heet
Verbal Bo (Describe the bo	oundary Des	Cription ty on a continuation sheet.)			
Boundary (Explain why the	Justificatio	n cted on a continuation sheet.;)		
11. Form	Prepared By	,			
name/title	Dawn M. Ca	aillouet			
organizatio	on	<u></u>		date <u>Ma</u>	<u>irch 1, 1996</u>
street & n	umber <u>4573</u>	Everett Ct.	teleph	one <u>303-492</u>	2-3405
city or tow	n Wheat Ric	lge	stateCO	zip code	80033
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Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018). Washington, DC 20503.

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Wilson, Blanche A., House Adams County, Colo.

DESCRIPTION

The 1890 Blanche A. Wilson House (now known as Centennial House), is a 1,200 square-foot, two-story, brick, Late Victorian Queen Anne house built on a square plan with a vertical orientation and asymmetrical composition. The steep, irregular, wood-shingled roof has intersecting gables. The open front porch has a gable roof with a pediment. A secondary enclosed entry porch, pantry, and basement stairwell occupies a hipped-roof rear extension. Exterior window sills and front and back door thresholds are rhyolite from a Castle Rock, Colorado, quarry.

The Wilson House is still located where it was built, fronting east onto Galena Street (formerly Hathaway Street, the first street in the town of Fletcher--now Aurora). The house is situated on 2+ plotted lots (0.6 acres) on the southwest corner of Galena and 17th Streets. The front and side lawns are open (the north-side lawn abutting 17th Street is wider); the much larger back yard, which extends to an alley, is enclosed by a chain link fence on three sides and a wood fence on the south (the neighboring house's lot line).

The original materials used to construct the house are in good condition; the building exterior is very close to its original design. The one significant alteration was to the porch which has now been reconstructed closer to what is believed to be its original design. The interior had been modified in the 1940s to accommodate two families, one upstairs, one downstairs. The double pocket doors separating the entry hall from the parlor were sealed off. An upstairs bedroom was converted to a kitchen and a downstairs storage area was made into a bathroom. In 1990-91 when the City of Aurora acquired the house, it was returned to a single family dwelling close to the original configuration. The upstairs kitchen was redone as a bedroom, but the downstairs bath was retained. The double pocket doors from the entry hall to the parlor were not opened up again because a heating duct had been added in this part of the wall.

The house is constructed of low-fire red brick (now painted cream) laid in common bond, reinforced with full dimension lumber using square nails. The wood trim is painted coral (during the restoration of the house, the color combination of cream and coral showed up in all paint samples taken; the assumption is that these were the original colors used to paint the brick and trim). The shallow three-foot-deep foundation is of mortared red brick which has seriously deteriorated. The original basement was only large enough for the furnace; a later owner excavated the full basement and covered the raw earth with concrete. One-half of the foundation (the south and east walls) was stabilized by the City of Aurora. Now the north and west walls need replacement and stabilization and plans are to build a new foundation underneath the original brick. There is an outside entrance to the cellar on the back, southwest elevation.

Decorative patterns in the brick include belt courses, dentils and, on the south elevation, a rectangular chimney panel of bricks set in dog-tooth courses. A belt course water table surrounds the house level with the sills on the east and south facades. A second belt course runs level with the second-story sills. On the east facade a corbeled brick belt course divides and flanks the paired windows even with the bottom of the window arches. Another east facade belt course midway between the first-story window arches and the second-story sills is visually supported by brick rowlock dentils.

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Wilson, Blanche A., House Adams County, Colo.

Segmental arches are used over the first floor doors and windows and are capped by rowlock hoods.

The majority of windows are one-over-one, double-hung sashes with stone sills. The paired first floor windows on the east facade are arched. The second-story windows have straight arches with sandstone sills. The windows on the east and north elevations intersect the gable ends and on the south elevation one of the upper windows extends through the eave and is protected by a gable-roofed dormer.

The gable ends are finished with round fish scale and angle cut shingles and have plain verge boards. The front gable end contains a dentiled frieze across the top of the window. The north gable end is intersected by an off-center window and the decorative shingles in the upper gable end give way to vertical bead board. The eaves are projecting, plain, with boxed cornices. A front-facing, intersecting, gabled dormer features a diamond-shaped window. There are two brick chimneys on the roof, one on the south side and one on the west.

The front porch, which was reconstructed closer to its original configurations in 1990-91, has a wood plank floor. The stone steps are not original and are not dressed correctly or set properly. The steps will be replaced following the prototype design on another Fletcher house on Galena Street; these steps are bordered with a parallel linear pattern, and the ends are rusticated. The wood support columns of the porch are square and feature lace-like fan brackets in the upper corners. Balustrades are dimensional lumber with alternating cross pieces between balusters. A dentiled frieze runs across all three sides of the porch. The pediment of the gabled porch roof is finished with fish scale shingles. The original porch had been altered (probably in the first two decades of this century when Tuscan columns became the fad in this area) to include an entry pad, concrete steps and Tuscan columns. The recent reconstruction of the porch was based primarily on ghosts that existed on the house (i.e., for the railing) and on porch details from two other Fletcher houses on Galena Street. The ghosts matched measurements from a second-story porch on one of these houses, and the railing infill was taken from this house (2083 Galena Street). The design of the fan brackets came from a second Fletcher house (2074 Galena Street).

Some original features inside the house are the furnace, converted by a later owner from coal burning to gas; wainscotting in the kitchen; the oak railing and balusters of the stairway from the first to the second floor; brass door knobs; and decorated door hinges.

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SIGNIFICANCE

The Blanche A. Wilson House is considered to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of settlement. This was the first house built for developer Donald Fletcher in the town of Fletcher (later renamed Aurora) which he founded, along with the financial participation of others, at the beginning of Denver's turn-of-the-century suburban movement. Fletcher was a prominent real estate developer with related investments in local water companies and streetcar lines. He was president of the Denver Chamber of Commerce in 1888 and later became president of the group that founded Fairmount Cemetery. The town he founded eventually grew to become Colorado's third largest city.

The Wilson House is also considered to be eligible under Criterion C. It has the distinctive characteristics of the Queen Anne style. Fletcher built a large number of two-story Queen Anne style houses in Aurora. Of the eleven houses that remain, the Wilson House best retains its historic exterior architectural integrity.

DONALD FLETCHER AND THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF THE FLETCHER COMMUNITY (AURORA)

Donald Fletcher's involvement with the early growth of Denver is typical of many late 19th century speculators, developers and promoters. He pursued interests in real estate, water companies and streetcar lines to avail himself of the opportunities each offered for financial gain in a rapidly growing community. His involvement in mutually supportive activities involving land, water and transportation mirrors the pattern of many early Denver area promoters and developers. Born in 1849 in Canada, Fletcher received his education both in Canada and the United States and practiced as a Presbyterian minister in Illinois before moving to Colorado in 1879. Reports over the next two years place him in a series of Colorado communities as an officer of a local fire department, a director in a gold mining company, and as a clerk for the Rio Grande Railroad. In 1882 he moved to Denver with his wife and three children. He participated in a number of real estate transactions and apparently did well enough by 1890 to fund the construction of a substantial house on Grant Street in Denver's Capitol Hill neighborhood. The house no longer exists.

Fletcher was an active member of the Denver Chamber of Commerce from its 1884 inception, serving as its president in 1888. He also served as a member of chamber committees on railroad construction and commerce. In the 1880s the State Legislature reinstituted the Board of Immigration to encourage settlement in Colorado and elected Donald Fletcher as its president.

Fletcher spread his real estate activities across Denver. He invested in West Denver, Capitol Hill, and Montclair in addition to his key role in the establishment of his namesake town east of Denver. He helped acquire the land and establish the operation of Fairmont Cemetery and was the organization's first president. Fletcher also participated in the platting of a Pueblo, Colorado, subdivision known as Pueblo Heights.

In addition to his real estate ventures, two other activities related directly to the eventual founding and growth of the Town of Fletcher. His involvement with the organization, funding and

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operation of streetcar lines and water companies occurred as he acquired land and built the first houses in Fletcher. The first of these related activities was the founding of the E. Denver Water Company and the second was his involvement in the founding and operation of the Colfax Avenue Railway Company.

SETTLEMENT OF FLETCHER (AURORA)

During the prosperous period of the late 1880s Donald Fletcher, Samuel Marsden Perry and Thomas S. Hayden began to buy the land that they eventually platted as the Aurora, Fletcher's Colfax Avenue Park, New England Heights, Boston Heights, Colfax Villa, Colfax Square, and Brooklyn subdivisions. They purchased part of this land from the Platte Land Company subsidiary of the Colorado Land & Investment Company which originally purchased the land from the Union Pacific Railroad Company. The property which includes the site of the Wilson House and the Town of Fletcher was originally conveyed to Samuel Birch on December 15, 1871, by a U.S. patent.

In 1890 the Colfax Trust Company (Donald Fletcher and partners) replated an area of this section as Aurora subdivision, and on April 30, 1891, Donald Fletcher incorporated the Town of Fletcher. The new town extended from present day Yosemite Street on the west to Peoria Street on the east. Its northern boundary was 26th Avenue and its southern was Sixth Avenue. It encompassed about four square miles.

In 1890, Fletcher began developing Hathaway Street (now Galena Street), the oldest development in Aurora. The Wilson House at 1671 was the first of at least 14 two-story, brick, Queen Anne style houses that he had constructed on Hathaway between 1890 and 1892 (the exact number of houses that Fletcher built or that have survived is still being researched). Fletcher offered new residents several different house models in three sizes (two-story, one-and-one-half story, and one-story) but many had the same architectural features and interior fittings. Hathaway was the first real street in an area surrounded by ranches and farms. This well-developed street appears to have been a part of an overall town development plan that included smaller and less pretentious houses on other streets, some of which had previously-built rural structures already in place.

The full extent of Donald Fletcher's involvement in the design of his model houses is unclear. No record exists indicating he actually designed each structure. While the surviving houses are generally sturdy and serviceable, some awkward interior design features, the use of standard mill work materials, and the lack of high style exteriors hint that local carpenters and masons may have been responsible for creating the designs under Fletcher's supervision. The variations between houses also suggests that individual property owners may have influenced final designs. It is clear that Fletcher was responsible for actively developing the Town of Fletcher through the promotion and sale of lots and the erection of the first single family houses.

In a related bit of promotion, Donald Fletcher organized the East Denver Water Company to bring water from a reservoir at Coal Creek, east of Aurora, to Montclair, a community between Aurora and Denver. He received authorization from the Montclair Town Council in 1890. When the Denver Union Water Company convinced Montclair to purchase water from them, Fletcher turned to his namesake town as a potential customer. At their initial organizational meeting on May 27, 1891, the

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Town of Fletcher Original Boundaries



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Wilson, Blanche A., House Adams County, Colo.

Fletcher Town Council voted to purchase Donald Fletcher's water company. They raised the \$150,000 purchase price by issuing a series of \$1,000 bonds. The heavy indebtedness put the city in a precarious financial position not fully remedied until the 1930s.

A water line from East Colfax Avenue north to 26th Avenue made it possible for all the houses on Hathaway Street to have indoor plumbing. Thus the area became known as "Upper Aurora" or "Silk Stocking Row."

Donald Fletcher also pursued interests in mass transit that improved the marketability of the Fletcher lots. Denver established its first horse car service in 1867 but cars only traveled within the core urban area. In 1886, owners of undeveloped property on Colfax east of Capitol Hill and along South Broadway paid the Denver Tramway Company a cash bonus of \$200,000 to extend the existing cable car line to their areas. Among the East Colfax property owners who raised \$80,000 was Donald Fletcher. The cable line soon expanded east to City Park but was still several miles short of the future Fletcher townsite. In September of 1889, Fletcher, Perry and others incorporated the Colfax Avenue Railway Co. with franchise money from the City of Denver. They planned a cable car line from the intersection of East Colfax Avenue and York Street to the eastern edge of the city. By January of the following year, Fletcher secured a right-of-way down Colfax from the Montclair Town Council. The line was built and eventually extended to Hyde Park (Quebec Street) with an extension to Fairmont Cemetery.

In 1891 the Colfax Avenue Railway Co. slipped into insolvency and was reorganized as the Colfax Electric Railway Co. with Perry as president. The new firm replaced the cable line with an electric system in 1893 and extended the line as far east as Lynn (now Dallas) Street. Reports in March of that year show Donald Fletcher serving as company president, Perry as vice-president, general manager and secretary, and Hayden as treasurer. The houses built by Fletcher in the early 1890s were close to the Colfax streetcar line. Short carriage rides brought those living on Hathaway (Galena) Street to the cars for the ride to downtown Denver.

The real estate boom in Fletcher reached its peak in 1892. In that year the value of a single undeveloped town block was \$400,000 and two-story houses were selling for \$3,500 with a ten-year mortgage at seven percent interest. Company advertisements trumpeted "rapid transit," "pure water, " and "electric lights."

The prosperity of 1892 turned to bust when the Silver Crash of 1893 plunged Colorado and the nation into depression. Town lots once worth thousands sold in 1897 for \$100.00. Donald Fletcher lost much of his fortune including his interests in the new town. Samuel Perry managed to hold on to his Aurora property and continued its development when prosperity returned in the early 1900s. Fletcher remained active in Denver business circles until at least 1894. He left Denver in late 1894 or 1895 and died in California. In 1907 residents of Fletcher petitioned the state to change the town's name to Aurora.

Although his association with Aurora was brief, Donald Fletcher's construction of the community's first houses and his efforts to provide water and transportation services got the town off to a good start. He established the core of a successful community that weathered the 1890s depression and eventually grew to become Colorado's third largest city.

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Wilson, Blanche A., House Adams County, Colo.

WILSON HOUSE OWNERS

On December 1, 1890, Blanche A. Wilson bought the house at 1671 Hathaway for \$3,500 for which she received a Special Warranty Deed from the Colfax Trust Company. Wilson's husband, M. W. Wilson, was a participant at the first meeting of the Town Trustees and was appointed to the finance and water committees.

When the Wilsons moved to Ohio in March 1894, they sold the property to Charles M. Truck (or Turck; name spelled differently in various documents) for \$2,500. When Truck was unable to repay a debt in 1898, the property was deeded to Paul and Marie Boldt. The property remained in the Boldt family until 1946 and then had four owners between 1946 and 1950. It was acquired by the City of Aurora on April 4, 1990, after having been vacant for over 10 years because the owner was in a nursing home.

The Centennial House is now a historic house museum, refurnished generally in the period of 1890 (the kitchen has been furnished in 1950s style). The museum is open anytime for general and school tours and special events and to the general public on weekends.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Queen Anne style was the most ornate architectural style of the Victorian period in Colorado and was popular between 1880 and 1910. The Wilson House epitomizes the vernacular Queen Anne style with its vertical orientation, asymmetrical massing, contrasting use of brick and wood, shingled gables and decorative detailing. It is the only Queen Anne style building in Aurora that retains its historic architectural integrity.

Donald Fletcher contracted for the construction of at least 20 houses in the Fletcher community between 1890 and 1892. He offered buyers a variety of models in three basic sizes -- two-story, oneand-one-half story, and one-story. He built 14 two-story, brick, Queen Anne style houses on Galena Street. Of these 14 houses, 11 remain, and the Wilson House is the oldest and the only surviving example of its model. Its exterior is the nearest to the original appearance of the two-story Queen Annes, retaining the original brick construction with decorative elements, rhyolite window sills and door thresholds, the intersecting gables finished with fish scale shingles, wood and brick friezes, and the projecting, plain, boxed cornice eaves. No additions have been made to the house. The one recent change was the modification of the entry porch which has been reconstructed to resemble what is believed to be the original design.

The other ten Fletcher-built houses on Galena have undergone varying degrees of exterior changes. On several of the houses stucco has been applied over the brick, obliterating the arches above the windows. Doric columns have been added to create wrap-around first and second-story porches on one house. On other houses the gabled roofs over the entry porches have been replaced with shed roofs, or the porch porticos have been removed leaving only pads and steps. Additions have been added to fronts, sides or backs of many Fletcher houses. On one total remodel, the house was converted to a full-width front gable, no longer recognizable as a Fletcher style.

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Wilson House Adams County, Colo.

The Wilson House remains the single best example of Donald Fletcher's two-story Queen Anne house design, and as the first house constructed by him in the new town of Fletcher, is most closely associated with him and the birth of what became Aurora. The 1890-1893 period of significance includes the time from the construction of the Wilson House to the end of Fletcher's direct involvement with the community.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Blumenson, John J.-G. *Identifying American Architecture*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1981.
- Hunt, Rebecca A. Aurora Colorado Historical Context Study. Unpublished manuscript, Aurora History Museum, City of Aurora, 1995.

McAlester. Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1990.

Pearce, Sarah J. A Guide to Colorado Architecture. Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1983.

Tate, Marcia J. and William H. Inventory record for site 5AM173. Powers Elevation Co., Inc., 4/29/1990. Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

Centennial House Aurora Landmark file, Aurora History Museum

Docents tour guide for Centennial House

Rickey, Nan. Interviews conducted by Dawn M. Caillouet at the Aurora History Museum.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 47-48 and north part of 46, Block 45, City of Aurora, Adams County, Colorado.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Wilson House.

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PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to photographs numbers 1-5:

Name of P	roperty: Wilson House ocation: Aurora, Adams County, Colo.	
	grapher: Dawn Caillouet	
	gatives: Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation	
Photo No.	Information	
1	East and north elevations, view to the southwest.	
2	West elevation, view to the east.	
3	Porch detail, east facade, view to the southwest.	
4	North elevation, view to the southeast.	
5	South elevation, view to the northwest.	