

Peter N. Kyros

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Maine</b>
COUNTY: <b>Cumberland</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE <b>DEC 31 1974</b>

1. NAME

COMMON:  
**Beckett's Castle**

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
*H Me 77*

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Cape Elizabeth, Maine**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
**1st**

STATE:  
**Maine**

CODE:  
**23**

COUNTY:  
**Cumberland**

CODE:  
**005**

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
**Walter Thomas**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**119 Neal St.**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Portland**

STATE:  
**Maine**

CODE:  
**23**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Cumberland County Registry of Deeds**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Federal Street**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Portland**

STATE:  
**Maine**

CODE:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

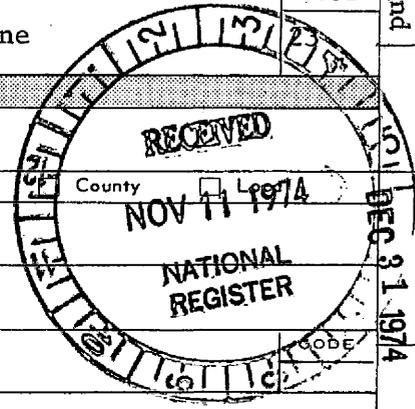
TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:  
 Federal  
 State  
 County \_\_\_\_\_ 1974

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
STATE:



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

On a rise above the Cape Elizabeth shore stands Beckett's Castle, a picturesque Gothic cottage of a century ago. Designed and built by the Portland literary figure Sylvester Beckett for his summer residence, the Castle was begun in 1871 and finished in 1874. Beckett constructed the cottage from local gray field stone largely with his own hands.

Beckett's Castle is a rectangular, gable roofed structure of two stories with a square three story tower. Located at the southeast corner of the facade, the tower is the most prominent feature of the cottage. The tower is comprised of three sections, each of which is slightly smaller than the one below it. Each section is divided by a horizontal stone course. On the facade or south wall of the tower, the first section contains an arched doorway which is enframed by rustication. The second section of the facade has a diamond shaped window, while the third has an arched double window.

On the east wall of the tower, the first section contains a single window, the second section a diamond shaped window and two small single ones, and the third section an arched double window. No window is located on the first section of the tower's west wall. Above this appears a second and third section window arrangement identical to that on the east wall. The north tower wall has no windows.

The top of the tower is surrounded by a large, simple stone dentil molding. Above this is a low hipped roof observation cupola. Constructed in the early twentieth century, this cupola has two horizontal double windows on each side.

The facade or south wall of the cottage possesses a large three part window on the first story. Over this window is a small arched window located within a sharply pointed gable. This gable and those formed by the roofline of the east and west walls have an overhang which is ornamented with simple wooden brackets. Above and to the right of the facade gable is a small triangular dormer. Directly above the dormer is a brick chimney which is located at the peak of the cottage roof.

The east wall contains two three part windows on the first story. Originally, its second story had two single windows with an open balcony in front of them. This balcony was rebuilt with an enclosed porch in the early 20th century. Above the enclosure is a diamond shaped window in the gable.

The west wall has less architectural detail than the facade and east walls. There are no windows on the first story, three single windows on the second story, and a diamond shaped window in the gable.

The west wall has less architectural detail than the facade and east walls. There are no windows on the first story, three single windows

(See Significance Sheet)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Maine	
COUNTY Cumberland	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	DEC 31 1974

(Number all entries)

7. Description

1.

on the second story; and a diamond shaped window in the gable.

On the north wall, there is a simple one story frame addition constructed in the early 20th century. Two triangular dormers project from the north slope of the gable roof.

The interior of Becketts's Castle is characterized by restrained period woodwork. A parlor and dining room are located on the first floor of the cottage, while the frame addition at the rear serves as a kitchen. Four small bedrooms are found on the second floor. The interior of the tower is devoted mainly to a staircase which leads to the observation cupola at the top.

Beckett's Castle embodies the romantic aspirations of a nineteenth century provincial man of letters. Sylvester Beckett made no pretense at creating an elaborate and architecturally correct Gothic Revival home. Instead, he chose to build an engagingly simple stone structure of his own design. Shortly after Beckett's death, his friend Edward Elwell eulogized Beckett and his cottage in the following verse:

and still the tower upon the crag,  
Will look out o'er the sea,  
and still kind hearts, who from it gaze,  
Will think, old friend, of thee."

After a century, Beckett's Castle continues to retain its distinctive appeal.



**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1871-74

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>Recreation</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  |   |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

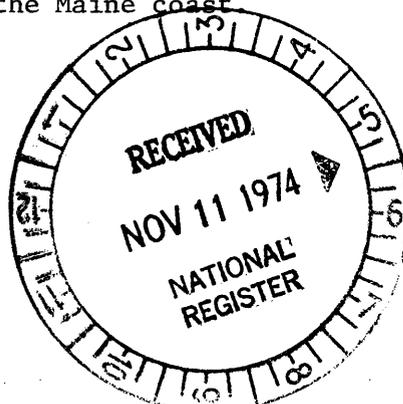
Beckett's Castle is significant as an early example of recreational building in the years when seashore property first came to be appreciated as an area suitable for amusement and relaxation. It is also of interest because of its builder and his circle.

Sylvester Blackmore Beckett was born in Portland, Maine, May 16, 1812, the son of English parents. Although never attending college, he acquired a fine classical education and became a prominent journalist and articulate writer. He was admitted to the bar in 1859 and spent much of his time administering and settling estates. Beyond this he was an artist, poet, litterateur and amateur ornithologist of some distinction.

He was an eminently social, kind-hearted, companionable man. He planned and built, largely with his own hands, this tasteful stone cottage on the shore of Cape Elizabeth which was known from the beginning as Beckett's Castle and became a favorite haunt of Portland literati. Invitations to the social gatherings held there were highly prized and guests were served expansive dinners cooked in primitive fashion in a large fireplace.

At his death on Dec. 2, 1882, the cottage passed into the hands of his only surviving child, Mrs. George W. Verrill whose son sold it to Col. Walter Singles. It is now owned by the Colonel's grandson.

Beckett's Castle, with all its quaint charm, exemplifies the quiet gentility of bygone era along the Maine coast.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

William B. Jordan, History of Cape Elizabeth, Portland, 1965  
 Twenty-third Annual Report of the Proceedings of the Maine Press  
 Association, Bar Harbor, 1886  
 The Portland Transcript, December 9, 1882

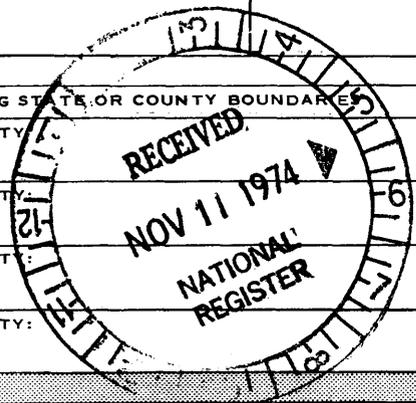
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES							
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE			LATITUDE			LONGITUDE	
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	43°	36'	55"	70°	12'	42"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"						
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"						

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:  $\frac{1}{2}$  Acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. Architectural Historian  
 Frank A. Beard, Historic Preservationist

ORGANIZATION: Maine Historic Preservation Commission DATE: 10-23-74

STREET AND NUMBER: 31 Western Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Augusta STATE: Maine CODE: 23

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: James H. Mundy  
 Title: State Historic Preservation Officer  
 Date: November 6, 1974

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

A. R. W. [Signature]  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: DEC 31 1974

ATTEST: [Signature]  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: DEC 31 1974