

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Maine	
COUNTY: Cumberland	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON: **Victoria Mansion**

AND/OR HISTORIC: **Morse-Libby House**

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
109 Danforth Street, at Park Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Portland

STATE: **Maine** CODE: COUNTY: **Cumberland** CODE:

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Mrs. Wilbur Aunt, President, Victoria Society of Maine Women

STREET AND NUMBER:
109 Danforth Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Portland** STATE: **Maine** CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Cumberland County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: **Portland** STATE: **Maine** CODE:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey (2 sheets and 17 photos)

DATE OF SURVEY: **1936** Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Division of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **D. C.** CODE: **20540**

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7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Victoria Mansion is a large two-and-one-half brick structure with an irregular main block, a projecting central four-stage entrance tower, and a low hip roof with subsidiary gables. The house is about 62 feet wide and 65 feet deep, with a service wing extending further to the rear. The walls are of brick stuccoed to resemble brownstone ashlar and the elaborate carved trim is of brownstone, except for the bracketed wooden cornice. The corners and angles of the house are prominently marked by rusticated quoins. The roofs are of metal.

The main (south) facade is five bays wide, with offset bays, and is dominated by a centrally-located, projecting square entrance tower that rises in four-stages. The round-arch door in the tower's first story is sheltered by a one-story portico with balustraded roof and two pairs of fully fluted Ionic columns. A larger one-story porch, with matching balustrade and two Ionic columns, extends across the face of the two bays which flank the tower to the west (left). The second-story front of the tower has a large flat-arch window decorated by a classical triangular pediment and framing pilasters. The second-stage of the tower on its west (side) face has a round-arch window. Both faces in the third stage have round windows and the fourth stage is comprised of a belfry story, with three narrow round arched and pilaster windows set in each elevation.

The wide bay to the east (right) of the tower projects forward from the tower and its first-story contains a narrower projecting bay with three narrow flat-arch windows grouped between corner pilasters. Another set of flat-arched triple windows appears in the second story above, the bay, this time crowned by a wide triangular pediment with elaborately carved consoles. The gable roof, which projects over this wide east bay, is bracketed like the main roof, and its end is treated as a pediment. First-story windows are full-length and, except on the south (main) facade, are generally topped by segmental arches and crowned by triangular pediments with consoles. Second story windows are round-arched and topped by prominent segmental pediments with carved brownstone consoles.

The house has a center hall plan. The entrance door in the tower opens into a vestibule, beyond which a 12-foot wide hall, open to the third floor, extends through the house to the rear. In the center of the hall, at about midpoint, is a lavishly carved flying staircase of San Domingo mahogany which rises to a landing lighted by a stained glass window, and then continues upward to the third floor. To the right (east) of the hall are the music room, the dining room with hand-carved panelled walls, and, in the rear, the library. The entire left side of the hall is occupied by a parlor which measures approximately 18 by 32 feet in size.

The interiors are generally decorated in the Louis XV style and are remarkably elaborate. Each room on the first floor is trimmed in a different wood - Brazilian rosewood, walnut, mahogany; every room has an

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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) 1859-63

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 type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <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

Designed by the architect Henry Austin and with extraordinary elaborate interiors by the artist-decorator Giovanni Guidirini, the Victoria Mansion, erected in 1859-63, is one of the finest and least-altered examples in the United States of a large Italianate Villa-styled brick and brownstone town house.

History

Plans for the house, originally intended as a summer residence, were prepared by Henry Austin, architect of New Haven, Connecticut. The elaborate interior ceiling and wall decorations were designed by Giovanni Guidirini, artist-decorator of New York City, who imported 11 Italian artists to execute his plans. Built for Ruggles Sylvester Morse, a New Orleans hotel owner, construction began in 1859 and due to delays caused by the Civil War, was not completed until 1863. Francis D. Little was the builder and the cost of construction is said to have amounted to \$400,000. In 1895 the house was acquired by J. R. Libby, a Portland merchant.

In 1943 the little-altered mansion was donated to the Victoria Society of Maine Women.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Talbot F. Hamlin, Greek Revival Architecture in America (New York, 1944), 161, 175.
 Dorothy and Richard Pratt, A Guide to Early American Homes - North (New York, 1956), 67.
 Arnold Nicholson, American Houses in History (New York, 1965), 52.
 Christopher Tunnard and Henry H. Reed, American Skyline (Boston, 1955), 111.
 Alan Gowan, Images of American Living (Philadelphia & New York, 1964), 318, 322, 323.
 Wendell D. Garrett, Paul F. Norton, Alan Gowans, Joseph T. Butler, The Arts in America, The 19th Century (New York, 1969), 110-111.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	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° 39' 06"	70° 15' 40"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **lot 100 by 200 feet**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **Charles W. Snell, Survey Historian**

ORGANIZATION: **Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service** DATE: **7/29/70**

STREET AND NUMBER: **801 19th Street, N. W.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **D. C.** CODE:

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

<p>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:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Title _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p>_____ <i>Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</i></p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p>_____ <i>Keeper of The National Register</i></p> <p>Date _____</p>
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7. Description

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elaborate rocco plaster cornice gilded with gold leaf. The walls and ceilings are decorated with frescos comprised of painted medallions showing scenes of Italian peasant life. Seven of the fireplaces have intricately carved Carrara marble mantels. The carved panelled doors are 10 1/2 feet high and have silver-plated knobs and hinges. The original and elaborate gasoliers are also still in place.

The lavish decorations are continued on the second and even up through the third floor. The second floor has four bedrooms, a dressing room, and smoking room; the third story contains three more bedrooms and a large billiard room.

The exterior and interior of the house are unaltered. While the overall condition of the structure is excellent, a very serious condition has developed that will cause irremediable damage to the rich interiors unless quickly corrected: The original metal roofs have sprung a series of leaks and considerable amounts of water have begun to work downward. Some damage has already occurred to the plaster on the third floor.

The Victoria Mansion is open to visitors as a furnished historic house exhibit.