UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Nelson W. Aldrich House

AND/OR COMMON

Nelson W. Aldrich House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

110 Benevolent Street   __NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN   CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Providence   __ VICINITY OF   1

STATE   CODE   44   COUNTY   Providence   CODE   007

Rhode Island

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	X MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	__PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	X EDUCATIONAL	__PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	__ENTERTAINMENT	__RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

Contact: Albert T. Klyberg, Director

NAME Rhode Island Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER
52 Power Street

CITY, TOWN
Providence   __ VICINITY OF   STATE   Rhode Island

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.   City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

Dorrance and Washington Street

CITY, TOWN   STATE
Providence   Rhode Island

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey; National Register (Hope,
Power, Cooke Streets Historic District)

DATE

1962; 1973   X FEDERAL X STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS   Library of Congress; National Register

CITY, TOWN   STATE
Washington   D.C.

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

According to the Historic American Buildings Survey, Nelson Aldrich purchased this three-story, clapboard house in 1902, but as HABS also notes, the Providence city directory shows 110 Benevolent Street as Aldrich's address as early as 1891. Furthermore, biographer Arthur M. Johnson, who researched family papers, states that this is the address "where the Aldriches moved in the early 1890's."[14] In any case, this is the only known extant Aldrich residence other than his Warwick Neck estate, which he began erecting in the late 1890's and retained, like this house, until his death.

This dwelling was built sometime between 1821 and 1827 for Robert S. Burroughs, and it passed through several owners before Aldrich acquired it. After enlarging the house sometime before 1838, Burroughs sold it in that year to Samuel B. Wheaton, who in turn peddled it Samuel B. Tobey in 1846. Samuel M. Noyes bought the residence in 1868 for four times the price it had commanded 22 years earlier, and according to deed records his heirs imparted it to Aldrich in 1902. Whatever the year he bought the dwelling, Aldrich retained it until his death in 1915. It passed subsequently to his wife, then to his daughter, and finally to his son Winthrop, who upon his death in 1974 left the house to the Rhode Island Historical Society for use as a museum. The society has received, for development of the museum, a sizable grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. This may result in the addition of another small wing to the rear of the house because area building codes require public restrooms in public structures, and the historical society prefers attaching a compatible wing to altering the interior configuration of the dwelling.

The greenish-gray-painted dwelling rests on a corner lot, has a stuccoed brick foundation, faces south, and consists of a rectangular main block, two side porches (one of which is enclosed), and three rear wings or extensions. Measuring 45 feet across its five-bay-wide front facade and 41 feet along its four-bay-wide sides, the main block bears a low-pitched hip roof topped by a square, center-placed cupola and four corner-placed, gray-painted, brick chimneys. A modillion cornice with denticulated frieze decorates the roof line and supports a wood, roof railing consisting of alternating wood panels and sets of turned balusters. Wood quoins highlight wall corners, and a plank water table separates lower walls from the foundation.

14
    Arthur M. Johnson, Winthrop W. Aldrich: Lawyer, Banker, Diplomat (Boston, 1968), 6.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW		
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	X_ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
X 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
X 1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	X_POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES **1878-1915**   BUILDER/ARCHITECT   **unknown**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Few men in American history have exercised as much power and wielded as much influence as Nelson W. Aldrich did in his career in the U.S. Senate from 1881 to 1911. As "boss" of the Senate, Aldrich, ably assisted by William B. Allison of Iowa, John C. Spooner of Wisconsin, and Orville H. Platt of Connecticut, exercised control over legislative proceedings to such an extent that he had a veto power over proposed legislation. In the process, according to historian David J. Rothman, he "transformed the Senate until it no longer resembled its predecessors," making it more "similar to the institution that Eisenhower confronted . . . [than] that of Lincoln and Grant."[1] Even a strong President like Theodore Roosevelt had to capitulate to him, says historian George E. Mowry, because "unless he cooperated with the forces led by Aldrich, little if any legislation could be won from an overwhelmingly conservative Congress."[2]

Aldrich was motivated, according to historians Horace S. and Marion G. Merrill, by a belief that "business and government should combine to run the country [but] that business should play the leading role."[3] It was for this reason that he fought measures like the Mann-Elkins Act and the Hepburn Act until their provisions were modified to suit the business community. Aldrich's area of greatest expertise was the protective tariff, and he played an important role in shaping every tariff bill from 1883 to 1909. In 1909 he was largely responsible for passage of the Payne-Aldrich Tariff which maintained high tariff schedules despite an overwhelming public desire that they be lowered. After the Panic of 1907, he was instrumental in enactment of the Aldrich-Vreeland Act for a system of emergency currency which, according to historian Robert H. Wiebe, "began the legislative process

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[1] David J. Rothman, Politics and Power: The United States Senate, 1869-1901 (New York, 1969), 43.

[2] George E. Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt and the Birth of Modern America, 1900-1912 (New York, 1958), 122.

[3] Horace S. and Marion G. Merrill, The Republican Command, 1897-1913 (Lexington, 1971), 25.

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9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Johnson, Arthur M., _Winthrop W. Aldrich: Lawyer, Banker, Diplomat_
   (Boston: Harvard University Graduate School of Business Admini-
   stration, 1968).
Link, Arthur S., _Wilson: The New Freedom_ (Princeton: Princeton Uni-
   versity Press, 1956).   (cont.)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____ circa 1 acre.

UTM REFERENCES

A|19| |30,40,0,0| |46,32,9,20| B|__| |__,__,__| |__,__,__|
  ZONE EASTING   NORTHING   ZONE EASTING   NORTHING
C|__| |__,__,__| |__,__,__| D|__| |__,__,__| |__,__,__|

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

   The boundary of the nominated property coincides with the
boundary of the legal lot known as 110 Benevolent Street,
Providence, Rhode Island.

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
George R. Adams, Managing Editor; and Ralph Chrisitan, Asst. Editor

ORGANIZATION   DATE
American Association for State and Local History   April 1976

STREET & NUMBER   TELEPHONE
1400 Eighth Avenue South   615-242-5583

CITY OR TOWN   STATE
Nashville   Tennessee

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE   DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

                                               DATE
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST: DATE
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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All main block windows are set in wood surrounds, and all but
two of those openings are rectangular and flanked by dark-green-painted,
louvered, exterior shutters. With the exception of a palladian window
in the front, second-story, center bay and four first-story openings
on the west side, all first- and second-story windows are six-over-six
sash topped by a wood entablature with dentiled frieze. The entabla-
ture design is repeated over the flanking sections of the palladian
opening. On the third floor, except for a modified palladian window
in the front center bay, all openings have three-over-six sashes with
shouldered architraves.

Sheltering the main block's center-placed front entrance is a
small, one-tier portico formed by two pairs of Doric columns and two
rectangular pilasters supporting an entablature whose dentiled frieze
and modillion cornice match the roof-cornice design. Likewise, atop
the flat-roofed portico a railing copies the one on the main roof,
and creates a balcony. The aforementioned, second-story palladian
window that overlooks the balcony represents an alteration, for origi-
nally, according to Rhode Island Historical Society officials, the
portico had an enclosed second tier.

A 40-foot-long, five-bay, first-floor, hip-roofed veranda repeats
the basic portico design along the west side of the main block. Here
six individual Doric Columns and two rectangular pilasters provide
roof support. A wood railing with turned balusters crosses the lone
south bay and four southernmost west bays. The northernmost west bay
is only partially railed, and through it passes a set of dogleg steps
that provide access to the veranda floor. Apparently an identical
veranda formerly graced the east side of the main block. There now
is a one-story wing with dimensions that match those of the west
veranda and suggest an enclosed porch. It has four east bays, two
of which have a segmentally arched six-over-six sash window. One bay
has a tripartite segmentally arched opening, and one has a small
square window.

Generally, the basic trim and window design of the main block is
repeated in the rear wings and extensions, with the chief exceptions
being the absence of shoulders on third-story window architraves and
the rise of plain, vertical, wood quoins on some wall corners.
Specific dates for these additions are not known. Deed records indi-
cate that part, if not all, of the three-story, L-shaped wing immediately
rear of the main block was added sometime prior to 1850. The wing's
roofline is slightly lower than that of the main block, and there is
no dentiled frieze underneath the cornice, but the two sections' roof

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railings are identical. Affixed to the narrow rear or north end of
the three-story wing is a smaller but similarly laid out two-story
extension with a dentiled, boxed cornice. Lastly, jutting rearward
from the north end of the west veranda, a one-story, hip-roofed ell
fills a space created by the north-south plane of that veranda's west-
ward expanse and the east-west plane of the rear wall of the shorter
portion of the two-story extension. Aldrich added this fourth section
of the house as a ballroom. Highlighting its one north bay and each
of its three west bays is a pair of shuttered, French double doors
topped by a square, two-over-two transom and a wood entablature with
dentiled frieze.

Main entrance to the Aldrich House is a single, four-panel, wood
door under the portico on the south facade. Flanked by sidelights
consisting of one long vertical glass and one short wood panel, and
topped by a semi-elliptical, leaded-glass fanlight, the doorway is
accessible from the street via a short concrete walk and several iron-
balustraded concrete steps. The rear entrance, set in the short
section of the two-story rear extension, is a single, nine-pane, glass-
and-wood door flanked by sidelights, sheltered by a one-bracket-supported
hood, and accessible via four wood steps.

Inside, the dwelling features a central hall plan, with the
corridor extending from the front door through he main block, the
three-story rear wing, and the two-story rear extension to the rear
door. Most walls throughout the house are plaster with ornamental
plaster cornices. Main block walls display wainscoting, and some
upper-story walls exhibit paper coverings. Parquet flooring predomi-
nates in the main block, and plain hardwood prevails in most other
areas. A few pieces of original furniture remain.

Left of the central hall on the first floor are a 17- by 21-foot
front parlor and a 17- by 17-foot rear parlor connected to each other
by a double, sliding door and linked to the hall by individual single,
hinged, transomed doors. Corresponding rooms right of the hall are
a library and dining room, which lack a connecting door. The elongated
east wing contains a bath off the library and a bookshelf-lined alcove
off the dining room. Rear of the dining room is a pantry and kitchen
and beyond that a servants' sitting room. Rear of the parlors and ac-
cessible by a short stair from the hallway is the high-ceilinged, teak-
wood-floored, chandelier-ornamented ballroom.

At the rear of the main-block-section of the central hall, a railed,
turned-balustered, open-string, spiral stair rises to the upper stories,

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where the floor plans are similar to that of the main level. Along the
left wall of the rear portion of the first-story hall, an open, single-
flight stair also mounts to the second floor, from whence a similar one
ascends to the third story. On the second story the front room on
each side of the hall is a sitting room. Rear of each, but separated
in each case by closets and a bath, is a bedroom. Right of the hall
in the rear section of the second floor are a bath and three bedrooms;
left is a bath and dressing room. The third story contains four bed-
rooms in the main block and four in the rear wing.

The Aldrich House sits on a shaded lot flanked on the south and
east sides by a white-painted wood fence. Flagstone walks surround
the dwelling, and an informal garden adorns the west lawn. The grounds,
like the residence, are well maintained.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Aldrich House ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE one

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toward the Federal Reserve System."[4] By 1909 he had begun to advocate what became known as the Aldrich Plan--a proposal for a privately controlled central bank patterned after those of Europe with 25 branches and designed to provide for flexible currency.

After 1909 Aldrich's power began to decline, says Horace S. and Marion G. Merrill, largely because he "failed to grasp the depth and intensity of anger among the voters of the Middle West and the West and misunderstood their champions in the Senate."[5] Also, he came under fire from muckraking journalists and progressives to such an extent, says historian George E. Mowry, that he "came to personify the evils that had afflicted American society during the past decades."[6]

From at least as early as 1902 and possibly as early as 1891, until his death, Aldrich maintained his permanent home in this three-story, greenish-gray-painted, clapboard house. Upon his death it passed to various family members, and when Aldrich's son Winthrop died in 1974, he left it to the Rhode Island Historical Society. It is being used currently as a museum and conference center. There is one other known extant Aldrich residence--a Warwick Neck estate, which he developed and used at the same time he retained this Providence dwelling.

Biography

Nelson Wilmarth Aldrich was born November 6, 1841, in Foster, R.I., to Anan and Abby B. Aldrich. Although his family was poor, they made certain that he received a good common school education. At age 17 Aldrich moved to Providence where he soon obtained employment with Waldron and Wightman, one of the State's leading wholesale grocers. In 1862 he joined the Union Army, but an attack of typhoid fever put a quick end to his military career. Returning to Waldron and Wightman, Aldrich rose rapidly in the firm and by age 24 had become a junior partner. As his fortune grew, he invested in banking, sugar, rubber, traction, gas, and electricity and within a few years was a multimillionaire.

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[4]
    Robert H. Wiebe, Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement (Chicago, 1968), 68.
[5]
    Merrill and Merrill, The Republican Command, 25.
[6]
    Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt, 248.

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Turning his attention to politics, in 1869 Aldrich won election to the Providence Common Council as an independent Republican. He remained on the council 5 years, serving as its president in 1872-1873. Forming an alliance with State Republican boss Henry Anthony, Aldrich was selected as a delegate to the 1872 and 1876 Republican National Conventions. In 1875 he was elected to the first of 2 terms in the State legislature, serving as speaker in the 1876 session.

In 1878 Aldrich won election to the U.S. House. Reelected 2 years later, he soon resigned because the Rhode Island Legislature in 1881 elevated him to the U.S. Senate where he was to remain for the next 30 years. In his political philosophy, Aldrich, according to historian George E. Mowry, was "almost a pure Hamiltonian. That wealth should rule the country was almost axiomatic to him; otherwise all security would depart and the hope for progress end."[7]

Aldrich, according to historian H. Wayne Morgan, was a "formidable expert on revenue measures."[8] His area of expertise was the tariff, and he exercised major influence on every U.S. tariff measure from 1883 to 1909. In 1883 Aldrich helped frame the "Mongrel" Tariff and in 1888 led the Republican attack on the Mills bill to lower the tariff. "The counter bill brought forward in the Senate as a party program," says biographer Nathaniel Wright Stephenson, "was largely his work," and it in turn served as the Republican platform for 1888 and the model for the 1890 McKinley Tariff, which he guided through the Senate after raising the rates of the House version.[9] In 1894 his skillful maneuvering and adroitness at parliamentary procedure was largely responsible for preventing any great revision downward in the Wilson-Gorman Tariff. In 1909 he was instrumental in passage of the Payne-Aldrich Tariff which maintained high schedules despite an overwhelming public desire that they should be lowered.

After Republicans regained the Presidency in 1896, Aldrich emerged as the most powerful man in Congress and one of the most powerful in the Nation. Working closely with William B. Allison of Iowa, John C. Spooner of Wisconsin, and Orville H. Platt of Connecti-

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7
Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt, 115.
8
H. Wayne Morgan, From Hayes to McKinley: National Party Politics, 1877-1896 (Syracuse, 1969), 349.
9
Nathaniel Wright Stephenson, "Nelson Wilmarth Aldrich," Dictionary of American Biography, I (New York, 1928), 152.

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cut, Aldrich, according to historian David J. Rothman, "established and clarified the authority that Senate party officers could wield" and "entrenched and tightened personal leadership and party discipline."[10] By 1901 Aldrich was so powerful that even a strong President like Theodore Roosevelt had to defer to his wishes if he wanted to get his legislative program passed. Aldrich fought measures like the Mann-Elkins Act and the Hepburn Act until their provisions were modified to make them acceptable to the business community.

After the Panic of 1907, Aldrich increasingly turned his attention to the problem of inflexible currency. In 1908 he was largely responsible for enactment of the Aldrich-Vreeland Act providing for emergency currency during periods of financial stringency. This measure also created the National Monetary Commission with Aldrich as its chairman to study the currency problem. Aldrich, says his biographer Nathaniel Wright Stephenson, became an "ardent convert to the idea of a central bank" who wanted "to transplant the system of one of the great European banks . . . bodily to America."[11] In 1909 the Commission released what came to be known as the Aldrich Plan-- a proposal for a privately controlled central bank patterned after those in Europe with 25 branches and designed to provide for flexible currency.

After 1909 Aldrich's power began to decline, says Horace S. and Marion G. Merrill, largely because he "failed to grasp the depth and intensity of anger among the voters of the Middle West and the West and misunderstood their champions in the Senate."[12] Also he came under increasing attack from muckraking journalists and progressives, and he soon began to symbolize the evils they were combatting. Partly as a result of this criticism, Aldrich decided not to stand for reelection in 1911.

Even after he left the Senate, Aldrich, according to historian Arthur S. Link, was "still the pre-eminent Old Guard spokesman on financial matters."[13] He continued to advocate enactment of the Aldrich Plan, but the Democratic victories of 1910 and 1912 insured

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10
    Rothman, Politics and Power, 44.
11
    Nathaniel Wright Stephenson, Nelson W. Aldrich: A Leader in American Politics (New York, 1930), 378.
12
13 Merrill and Merrill, The Republican Command, 25.
  Arthur S. Link, Wilson: The New Freedom (Princeton, 1956), 235.

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its defeat. He was highly critical of the Federal Reserve Act, believing the proposed system had been ruined by giving the Federal Government control over the Board and the issuance of currency. On April 16, 1915, Aldrich died in New York City at the age of 73.

CONTINUATION SHEET Aldrich House ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE one

Merrill, Horace S. and Marion G., The Republican Command, 1897-1913 (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1971).

Morgan, H. Wayne, From Hayes to McKinley: National Party Politics, 1877-1896 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969).

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