

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED SEP 30 1975  
DATE ENTERED NOV 20 1975

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Bruce Memorial Museum

AND/OR COMMON

William Perry Bruce Residence

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Fourth and Main Streets

CITY, TOWN

Waitsburg

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

#5 - Honorable Thomas S. Foley

STATE

Washington

CODE

53

COUNTY

Walla Walla

CODE

071

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<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:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Waitsburg Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER

Box 278

CITY, TOWN

Waitsburg

STATE

Washington

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Walla Walla County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Fifth and Poplar Streets

CITY, TOWN

Walla Walla

STATE

Washington

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Washington State Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

1974

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

CITY, TOWN

Olympia

STATE

Washington

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

EXCELLENT       DETERIORATED  
 GOOD             RUINS  
 FAIR              UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Built in 1883, the W. P. Bruce Residence is a two story frame house located on a corner lot at Fourth and Main Streets in the geographic center of Waitsburg. Waitsburg is a small community in southeastern Washington about 25 miles northeast of Walla Walla.

In terms of its architectural decoration, the Bruce Residence is a strictly symmetrical Victorian Italianate composition of standard details. It has a square plan roughly 40 feet on each side featuring no additions or projections other than a pair of identical bay windows flanking a central entrance portico, and a small back porch. With a low truncated hip roof, the height to width ratio of the elevations gives the simple mass of the structure an almost cubiform appearance.

The house has eight-inch shiplap siding with corner mouldings, a base moulding and water table, a belt fascia at the second floor level, and a wide frieze that includes cornice brackets and raised panels between. These details are used consistently on all sides of the building. The exposed brick foundation follows the projecting bay windows, and is continued out to provide a footing for the entrance portico.

The single story bay windows and the entrance portico divide the front elevation into roughly equal thirds. Although rectangular in plan, the portico is essentially identical in architectural treatment to the proportions and details of the flanking bays. All three are the same height at the floor, arch, and roof; they are approximately the same width; and similarities in decoration include small pediments that interrupt the cornices at the center and crowning ornamental balustrades. The flat-topped arch of the windows is stretched and repeated in corresponding arches over the porch posts.

Use of the flat-topped arch effect is confined to the previously mentioned bay windows and portico. The remaining windows are treated in one of two variations which is used consistently throughout each floor. On the upper floor, the head of the enframingent and the sash itself are curved toward the corners to establish what Marcus Whiffen refers to as a "rectangular arch". On the main floor, these form a stilted segmental arch. The window units themselves are double hung with four over four lights -- except in the front facade, where a single pane is used in every sash.

At the top of each enframingent is a cornice moulding bent into a small pediment of the same proportions as those found on the portico and bay windows. On the cornice of the main roof there is a more substantial pediment directly above the entrance portico and equal to it in width. The cornice brackets below it are doubled on either side as they are at the corners of the building.

The original cresting is gone from around the roof truncation, and a finial is missing from the apex of the front pediment. Also, the chimney caps are deteriorating or gone. With the exception of the removal of a small addition once built onto the kitchen, the exterior is unaltered.

The interior is in an excellent state of preservation. Most of the original furnishings have been removed, including the chandeliers. Every window was once fitted with a set of four indoor shutters in hardwood which could be opened independently for the

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upper or lower portions. These remain in some rooms. Also, there is a single layer of period wall and ceiling paper in the sitting room and elsewhere that is in generally immaculate condition.

Portions of the millwork are said to have been shipped from India, Mr. Bruce's birth-place, including the newel post and handrail of the main stairs. The paneled wainscotting and doors of the formal dining room retain their remarkable handgrained finish. Trim mouldings on the sitting room cornice are surfaced in gold leaf.

The central hall plan has an intriguing simplicity. On the main floor, to one side of the axial hallway is the formal drawing room with the formal dining room directly behind it. On the opposite side of the hallway is the sitting room with the family dining room in back. Between the two dining rooms at the end of the hall is the small kitchen, convenient to both. The upstairs is also bisected by the hall, and divided into four bedrooms -- two on each side -- and a bath.

The house was originally heated by eight wood burning stoves. Only the large drawing room stove is still in place.

The W. P. Bruce Residence is a sophisticated if somewhat standardized work of Italianate architecture that shows considerable attention to stylistic correctness.

# 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES    1883

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The first permanent settlement in the Touchet Valley was built in 1859, by Robert Kennedy, on the north bank of Coppei Creek, near the confluence of the creek and the Touchet River. Kennedy later sold his land to Isaac Levens who built a small cabin 400 yards east of his predecessor on the site of the future town of Waitsburg.

William Perry Bruce came to the Oregon Territory in 1850 and later moved his family to the Touchet Valley and Coppei Creek in 1861. That year he bought land and built a cabin one mile east of Isaac Levens and in 1862 he purchased the claim of Levens, formerly owned by Robert Kennedy. On this delta farm Bruce planted grain and built the first ford in the valley across the Touchet River to provide easier access to his fields. In September, 1863, Bruce's son Edward, age three, drowned and was buried on a long, sloping bunchgrass hillside east of town, a tragedy which began the town cemetery.

Also in 1863, William Perry Bruce donated ten acres of land and invested in a mill owned by Sylvester Wait, which began operations in May, 1865. It was in June of that year that the small town was given the name of Waitsburg, in honor of the man who started the first business there. The third school district in the county was soon organized at Waitsburg and Bruce was on the Board of Directors. He also donated land and money to build the first bridge over Coppei Creek. In 1868 Bruce helped found the Walla Walla Union newspaper and in 1869 he donated three acres of land for a new school. The significance of this school is described in Wait's Mill by Ellis and Elvira Laidlaw:

By 1869, citizens had subscribed \$2,400 for a new schoolhouse, which was built on a three acre lot donated by Perry Bruce and Anderson Cox, where their lands joined south of the village's business district. In spite of plain furnishings and homemade seats and desks, it was the pride of the town and referred to as an Academy. The lot where it stood, fenced and with a stile for entering, was called the Academy block; and the short lane, extending along the north side of the building, was known as Academy Street. The two-story, low-ceilinged frame building, lighted with candles and adorned with belfry and bell was a community center where town meetings, Christmas programs and social gatherings were held.

William Perry Bruce was elected county commissioner for Walla Walla County in 1872. Later the Bruce's shared their home with the Reverend J. H. Adams (Methodist) until his own house could be built, and in 1881 Bruce donated land for the Christian Church where he was a church leader and active officer. It was 1883 when the present residence was built at Fourth and Main Streets on the same block where Robert Kennedy and Isaac Levens had built their log cabins.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Anderson, Florence Bennett. Leaven For The Frontier. Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1953.

Baker, W. W. Forty Years A Pioneer: Business Life of Dorsey Syng Baker, 1848-1888. Seattle: Lowman and Hanford Publishing Company, 1934.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	1	4	1	1	0	6	0	5	1	2	4	3	2	0
ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING							

*0711 OK 1041  
12 22 15*

B 

ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING								

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

Based on information supplied by Robert Wayne Hergert

ORGANIZATION

Waitsburg Historical Society

DATE

March 12, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

Box 278

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Waitsburg

STATE

Washington

# 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Arthur M. Skolude*

TITLE

State Conservator

DATE

September 15, 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Acting

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

*11/20/95*

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

*11.14.75*

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In 1887 Bruce donated six acres of land for an academy to give the young people of the community more advanced training than the common schools provided. This academy was organized by a group of citizens under the auspices of the United Presbyterian Church. Bruce also was on the Hunt Line Railroad Board of Directors and he helped operate a general mercantile store with E. L. Powell. His wife, Caroline, was active in the community and was a charter member of the Methodist Church which used her home as the center of all its early activities. The first community ice cream socials were held in the spacious yard of the Bruce Residence.

William Perry Bruce died in 1888 and his wife Caroline in 1891. The mansion was then occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Henry (Bruce) Abbey, Bruce's daughter and son-in-law. The property remained in the family until 1922 when Mrs. Weller bought the home and used it as the city library from 1931 to 1947.

As a work of architecture, the Bruce residence is significant as a very conventional example of an Italianate Victorian residence, if somewhat restrained in its decorative treatment. The strict symmetry, stilted segmental flat-topped and "rectangular" arches, and pediment forms are all characteristics of the Italianate vocabulary. These are represented here in a design that is essentially undiluted by details borrowed from other styles popular at the time of construction.

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Gilbert, Frank T. Historical Sketches of Walla Walla County. Portland: A. G. Walling Publishing Company, 1882.

Laidlaw, Ellis, and Laidlaw, Elvira Ellan. Wait's Mill. Chicago: Adams Press, 1970.