

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received **APR 5 1982**
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Mary Lee Davis House (AHRS SITE NO. FAI-036)

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 410 Cowles Street not for publication

city, town Fairbanks vicinity of Alaska at large

state Alaska code 02 county Fairbanks Division code 090

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: <u>Period home</u>

4. Owner of Property

name Randall and Deborah Wallace (907) 456-7358

street & number 410 Cowles Street

city, town Fairbanks vicinity of Alaska state Alaska 99701

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. North Star Borough Recorder's Office

street & number 520 5th Avenue

city, town Fairbanks state Alaska 99701

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Fairbanks: A Historical Building Survey by Janet Matheson
title: Alaska Heritage Resources Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date November 1978; *October 31, 1979 federal state county local
City of Fairbanks, 410 Cushman Street

depository for survey records: *Alaska Division of Parks, 619 Warehouse Drive, Suite 210

city, town Fairbanks/*Anchorage state Alaska 99701/*99501

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Mary Lee Davis house (32' x 48') is a privately owned, one and a half story, framed bungalow that was probably constructed in 1906. Set in an urban environment and oriented southeast on Cowles Street, it is bordered by Fifth Avenue to the southwest and by private residences to the northwest and northeast. A large front lawn with birch trees fronts the house.

The house has five rooms on the ground floor and three rooms on the second floor. A two-car garage (20' x 20') is attached to the main structure, and a small greenhouse (10' x 13') is behind the house and garage. All three buildings were constructed contemporaneously.

The exterior of the house has wood-drop siding, overhanging eaves, and plain fascia boards. The second story has two hip-roofed dormers covered by a low hip tin roof. The house is double framed and insulated with six inches of sawdust.

The front (southeast) facade of the house has a full-length (8' x 32') closed verandah. The tin roof overhangs the verandah and is supported by three thick, square columns with ornamental brackets. Three straight stairs lead from the front yard to the verandah.

All facades of the house have flat, single-pane, storm-sash, leaded glass windows with plain trims. The front (southeast) facade has a large sash and decorative transom window and the southwest facade has a larger four-sash casement window.

Many unique decorative and functional features are built into the house. Oak is used for the floors, interior trim, and doors. Open bookshelves surround a ceramic-front, open-hearth fireplace. Functional features include a coal furnace, vacuum system, and cellar ash-chute. The house has always had indoor plumbing and elaborate porcelain fixtures in the bathrooms.

No major alterations have been made on the house; with minor exceptions, it still has the original architectural characteristics. The leaded glass front door has been removed, but its ornamental lead glass side panels remain. Also, a first-story window on the southwest side of the house has been lowered.

Boundaries are based on existing Fairbanks townsites; the Mary Lee Davis house and property is Lot B1 in Block 63.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" 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 1906–1916

Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Mary Lee Davis house embodies an architectural style rare in the gold rush town of early Fairbanks. It was a large framed bungalow, which was anomalous among predominately log cabins. This architectural style was, at the same time, representative of the few prosperous Fairbanksan homes (e.g. Falco Joslin House, constructed in 1904; the Wickersham House, constructed in 1904; and the R. C. Wood House, constructed in 1908). The Davis house is a significant element of early Fairbanks history because of its association with persons who have contributed to the development of the city.

The house was one of the largest and most fashionable homes in Fairbanks. It was set back from the street by a large lawn planted with birch trees, a landscaping idea then new to Fairbanks. Oak floors, oak bookshelves, an open-hearth fireplace, a built-in vacuum system, and a cellar ash-chute were innovations first seen in Fairbanks in the Davis home. The Davises were also the first in Fairbanks to change from wood heat to coal heat. The bathrooms are complete with porcelain fixtures and are considered palacial (Cameron 1930: 176).

To construct the house, garage, and greenhouse, materials and builders were brought from Seattle, Washington, sometime between 1906 and 1916. The southwest facade bears a plaque dated "1906", but there are conflicting reports concerning the actual construction date. Contradictory information exists concerning the early owners as well. The best evidence suggest that a miner and his wife initially contracted to have the house built, but before the house was finished, the husband died and his wife returned to Seattle. Mary Lee Davis and her husband bought the incomplete house, finished it, and added many of its unique features (Davis 1931). Mary Lee Davis wrote four books and several articles in which she mentions the house and life in Alaska. Her writings may have contributed to the surge of immigration to Fairbanks from the United States during the Depression.

After residing in the house for eight years, the Davises moved. The Fairbanks Exploration Company purchased the home from the Davises and used it to accommodate company executives and their families. The Fairbanks Exploration Company (known as the F. E. Company) was an influential mining firm in early Fairbanks. In 1924, Hammond Consolidated Gold Fields and U.S. Smelting, Refining and Mining Company merged to form the F.E. Company. This company ushered in a revival of mining, and thus economic solvency, after a decline in the early 1920's. The F.E. Company was the major employer in Fairbanks, and approximately in 1927, it built stores, roads, and a powerhouse, which all contributed to the permanence of Fairbanks (Monahan 1959). At this time, the Mary Lee Davis house was a showplace where F.E. Company parties and gatherings took place, and many Fairbanksans still remember visits to the house. Since 1946, the house has had 11 owners (Wallace and Wallace 1979: personal communication).

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet.

10. Geographical Data *UTM - ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED*

Acreage of nominated property 9,110 square feet

Quadrangle name Fairbanks

Quadrangle scale 1: 24 000

UMT References

A

0	6	4	6	5	4	8	0	7	1	9	1	0	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Mary Lee Davis House is on the Fairbanks Townsite Block 63, Lot B1; it is bordered to the southeast by Cowles Street, to the southwest by 5th Avenue, and to the northeast and northwest by private residences.

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 Carol A. Rawlinson, Research Associate

organization Cooperative Park Studies Unit

date April 20, 1979

street & number University of Alaska

telephone (907) 474-7050

city or town Fairbanks

state Alaska 99701

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

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date March 22, 1982

For NPS use only

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

for

date 8.31.82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet

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The Mary Lee Davis house incorporated an innovative architectural style characteristic of prosperous Fairbanksan homes. Its exterior drop-siding was a standard pattern in early Fairbanks. The house is large with high ceilings, and has beautifully decorated windows, a tin roof, and sawdust insulation. The house is unique, however, because it is the oldest frame house in Fairbanks still occupied, and has its original coal furnace and porcelain bathroom fixtures. Fairbanks saw many "first" (e.g. open-hearth fireplace, cellar ash-chute, and vacuum system) in the Davis home. Because of its association with influential people, the house is included in the Fairbanks walking tour sponsored by the Tanana-Yukon Historical Society. The owners often invite tourists into the house to see the interior which they are refurnishing in the style of early 1900's.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Bunnell Collection

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1930 Uncle Sam's Attic. Boston: W. A. Wilde Company.

1931 We are Alaskan. Boston: W. A. Wilde Company.

Matheson, Janet

1978 Fairbanks: A City Historic Building Survey. City of Fairbanks.

Monahan, Robert L.

1959 The Development of Settlement in the Fairbanks Area, Alaska: A Study of Permanence. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Montreal: McGill University.

Residential Appraisal Report

1977 North Star Borough Recorder's Office, Fairbanks, Alaska.

Tanana-Yukon Historical Society

1977 Ghosts of the Gold Rush. Fairbanks, Alaska.

Wallace, Randall and Deborah

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