

PHO 699837

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED MAR 6 1979
DATE ENTERED JUN 14 1979

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 Laura Richards House

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 3 Dennis Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN Gardiner

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

1st

STATE Maine

CODE 23

COUNTY Kennebec

CODE 011

CLASSIFICATION

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

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Laura Elizabeth Richards Wiggins

STREET & NUMBER 3 Dennis Street

CITY, TOWN Gardiner

VICINITY OF

STATE Maine, 04345

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Kennebec County Registry of Deeds,

STREET & NUMBER 95 State Street

CITY, TOWN Augusta

Maine

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
XX <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	XX <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	XX <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Laura E. Richards House in Gardiner, Maine is a very fine Federal style residence, dating from c. 1810.

The house, which faces east, is of frame construction with 2½ stories, hipped roof, clapboard siding, denticulated cornice, and two internal end chimneys. The central facade entrance reflects the center-hall plan of the building.

The entrance features a pilastered and entablatured doorway with delicate fan-light and sidelights. The door has eight recessed panels. The five-bay facade's fenestration, as elsewhere, is 12/12. A shed-roofed central dormer in the facade half-story contains 2 sin gle-sash windows, each with four panels.

Attached to the rear (west side) of the house is a 2½-story ell, similar in design to the house. Two chimneys are present, along with a hooded entrance facing south. A one-story porch, supported by Doric columns, is attached to the north side of the ell. The ell's most conspicuous feature, however, is the half-story which is inset from the walls of the ell and amount to a very large monitor.

A frame carriage-house is attached to the west end of the ell. This, too, is 2½ stories high, and it features a lunette window in the half-story facing east.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input 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 c. 1810

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This substantial Federal house, the finest of its style in Gardiner, derives its principal significance as the home of Laura E. Richards, author and poet, primarily known for her books for children.

Born in Boston in 1850, she was the third daughter and fourth of six children of parents distinguished for their fervent humanitarianism and leadership in public causes. Her father was Samuel Gridley Howe, champion of the Greek War for Independence and founder and lifelong director of the Perkins Institution for the Blind and of the Massachusetts School for the Feeble Minded. Her mother was Julia Ward Howe, author of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Mrs. Richards referred to her childhood as "cradeled ... in poetry, romance and philanthropy."

Married to Henry Richards, Harvard graduate and architect, in 1871. Laura enjoyed seventy-one years of married life, during which time the couple became parents of seven children.

Richard's architectural career was brought to a halt by the financial depression in 1876 and that year the family moved to Gardiner, Maine, founded by his great-great grandfather, Dr. Sylvester Gardiner. His grandfather was Robert Hallowell Gardiner, builder of the great Tudor mansion, "Oaklands," in 1836 (N.R. 7/27/73). While her husband helped run the family paper mill, Laura, busy raising children, began her writing career. The family in 1878 purchased and moved into the Yellow House, as they called it. This house had been built by Ebenezer Byram about 1810 on land purchased from Robert Hallowell Gardiner. It was to be the Richards' home for sixty-five years.

Mrs. Richards first literary efforts, poetic jingles for children, had appeared in St. Nicholas Magazine in 1873 and her first volume, Five Mice in a Mouse-Trap, a collection of short stories, was published in 1881. In 1885 and 1887 appeared the two perennially endearing "Toto" books. Happy and fun-loving by nature, she found delight in writing nursery and nonsense rhymes which were published as In My Nursery (1890), The Hurdy-Gurdy (1902), The Piccolo Player (1906), and Tirra Lirra (1932).

As her children grew older she turned to writing books for young girls which made her literary reputation. The most famous of these was Captain January (1890) which sold 300,000 copies and was twice filmed, once as a vehicle for Shirley Temple. The writings she considered her best work were two volumes of charming and poignant fables, The Golden Windows (1903) and The Silver Crown (1906).

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Actually, her most substantial literary works were inspired by veneration for her parents. In 1906-9 she published a two volume edition of Letters and Journals of Samuel Gridley Howe, and in collaboration with her sister Maud Howe Elliott she wrote Julia Ward Howe (1915), awarded the first Pulitzer Prize for biography.

As late as 1940 she published a fine poem celebrating the heroism of the British at Dunkirk and continued to write almost until her death in 1943 at the age of ninety-three.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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As an architect, Henry Richards took great interest in the Yellow House and devoted considerable time and effort to restoring its Federal features which had suffered some loss prior to his ownership. It is impossible to ascertain exactly the extent of his work although it is known that the half story inset addition atop the ell was designed by him. The house has been unchanged since his occupancy ended.