

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED APR 01 1975
DATE ENTERED MAY 21 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 Snake Alley Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION *each side of Snake Alley under dome Cobblestone Alley*
STREET & NUMBER Bounded north by Columbia, east by and including Cobblestone Alley,
south by Washington, & east by back property lines of Kidd & Pappas and Church Drive.

CITY, TOWN Burlington VICINITY OF First CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
STATE Iowa CODE 14 COUNTY DesMoines CODE 057

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Not Applicable

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN VICINITY OF STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Des Moines County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER Main Street

CITY, TOWN Burlington STATE Iowa

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Snake Alley on National Register of Historic Places

DATE September 1974 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service

CITY, TOWN Washington, D. C. STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Snake Alley was built in 1894 and consists of 5 half curves and 2 quarter curves over a distance of 275 feet, rising 58.3 feet from Washington to Columbia Streets. The bricks were made locally; the curved limestone curbing is all hand-chiseled, and the bricks were set at a slight uphill tilt, to allow the horses better footing. The alley edge is bordered quite closely by the building fronts, which create a strong vertical element. Looking up the alley, one has the distinct impression of the houses stair-stepping up the hillside. The buildings are also quite close to each other (only 3 ft. between the Rice and Bouquet Houses). This closeness forms interesting exterior spaces or court areas, which reflect the European living conditions and attitudes of the builders of the area.

The hill that both Snake Alley and Cobblestone Alley are built upon is limestone. Much of it was quarried from the site to build the foundations of the local houses and streets. Cobblestone Alley, which is composed of large chunks of the native limestone, is slated for restoration by city groups in 1976.

The Phelps House (1851) was built as a simple two story brick home with limestone block foundation. In 1870 major additions were made: bracketed eaves, side porches, and the Italianate entrance tower with its 2 balconies were added, as was the mansard roof which gives the house the appearance of Second Empire Style. The main house is 2 stories plus the mansard, but then the basements cascade down the side of the alley for another two stories. The original side porch on the west side is currently missing, but plans are being made for its reconstruction.

The Bouquet House (1871) is a simple rectangular building in the style of a row house that fronts closely on the curve of the alley itself. An ornate front porch, reminiscent of the Eastlake tradition was added after the construction of Snake Alley in about 1896. The original construction features a hip roof with detailed cresting and Italianate eave brackets and dentel work. The house is of brick with brick segmental arches above the doors and windows. It has brownstone sills, steps, and foundation cap or stringer. A 1/2 story of exposed basement foundation is of native limestone block believed to be quarried from the site, as it was for many local buildings. The second floor rear addition with two-tiered porch was added prior to 1889. The wood frame kitchen and bay window are currently missing, but are slated for reconstruction as the house is in the process of an interior and exterior historic restoration.

The Fordney House (1845) is another two story rectangular building with strong Italianate influences, and boasts hand-carved eave support brackets, woodwork and inside shutters. The fanlight, and triangular pediments over the front door and two front windows hint strongly at the Pennsylvania townhouse that this home was intended to resemble. It is also of brick with limestone block foundation and brownstone trim. The house was severely damaged by fire in the fall of 1973, and is now being restored. The cupola, roof and chimneys have been completely reconstructed already. Next will be the two porches on the east side, and the flying stairway of brownstone in the front.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Snake Alley was constructed in 1894 because a route was needed to the downtown business area by people living on the hill. Charles Starker's son had seen the vineyard paths in France that were similarly done. He suggested the idea to his father, an immigrant German architect, who then worked with the contractor in the engineering and construction of the alley. The application of the European technology by Burlington's immigrants is exemplary of the many architectural influences left on our community. The 1860 census indicates that 53.0% of the adult population in Burlington was foreign born (mostly German, Swedish and Irish). This nationality mix has had a great impact on the cultural development of the area. Snake Alley was listed in Ripley's Believe It or Not as the crookedest street in the world, and does rival San Francisco's Lombard Street for that honor. The alley was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in September 1974.

The six homes bordering the alley were all standing when the alley was built and provide the Victorian character and feeling of enclosure that makes the street truly an "alley."

The Phelps House (521 Columbia) was built in 1851 by William Garrett, one of the pioneer families of Burlington. The Garrett-Phelps family was in continuous residence except for 1894-1899 when the house was loaned to the Burlington Hospital for their School of Nursing. In 1974, the house was sold by the heirs to the Des Moines County Historical Society with all the original family furnishings. The home is now Burlington's Victorian House Museum and is open to the public.

The Bouquet House (406 Snake Alley) was built by Peter Bouquet in the summer of 1871. He chose that sight to build on because "he didn't want to be up on the hills; he wanted to be close to town where the action was." Bouquet was a German-French immigrant who rose to a respectable position in the community because of his successful cooper shop, at one time one of the largest in the state, located in the downtown. He made additions to his house in about 1896 which included adding the ornate front porch, so that his family could sit and watch the carriages on the recently constructed Snake Alley.

The Fordney House (516 Washington) was built by Wm. Fordney, a carpenter from McConnellsburg, PA. In 1845, with the help of his brother Adam, who was also a carpenter, Fordney finished his house. Adam built the interior stairway and supervised the apprentices who carved the gingerbread trim on the house. The carpenter business and brother Louis' shoe shop were all on the property in out-buildings (also where the apprentices stayed). As a carpenter-contractor, Fordney supervised the design and construction of many buildings in Burlington, and was greatly responsible for building up the county.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Biographical Review of Des Moines County, Iowa, Chicago: Hobart Pub. Co., 1905, pages 807-808.
 The Legend of Phelps House, Burlington: Chamber of Commerce, 1974, 6 pp.
 Portrait and Biographical Album of Des Moines County, Iowa, Chicago: Acme Pub. Co., 188, pages 385-386.
 U. S. Works Progress Administration Federal Writers' Project, A Guide to Burlington, IA, 2nd Edition Revised, Washington, 1939, page 32.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 10
 UTM REFERENCES

A	1,5	65,96,8,0	4,51,93,6,2	B	1,5	65,97,6,5	4,51,93,4,5
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,5	65,97,0,1	4,51,94,4,7	D	1,5	65,97,9,7	4,51,94,3,8

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

Steve R. and Kathleen L. Brower

December 18, 1974

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

406 Snake Alley

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Burlington

STATE

Iowa

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

Adrian D. Anderson

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 3/26/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Ernest A. Connolly

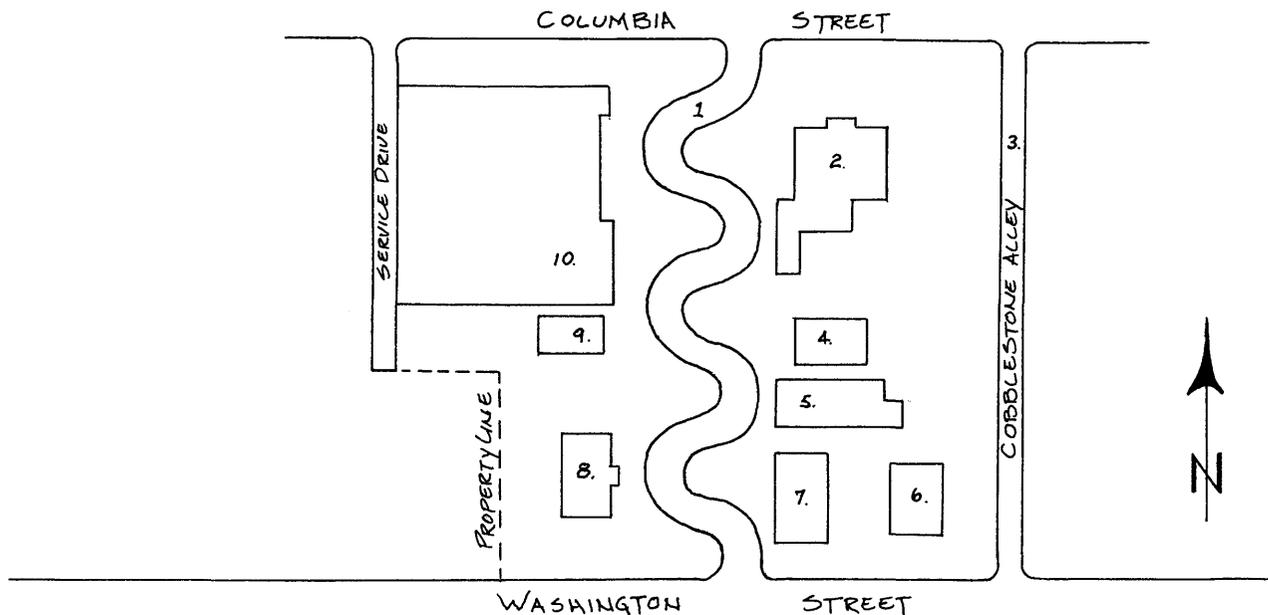
DATE MAY 21 1975

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE MAY 14 1975

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



MAP OF PROPOSED SNAKE ALLEY HISTORIC DISTRICT

1. Snake Alley (1894) is the central feature of the district. It is an unusual engineering feat and has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.
2. Phelps House (1851) is a large, rambling, Victorian estate which borders closely on the alley, helping to confine and orient the views. As a Victorian house museum, it draws many visitors to the area.
3. Extremely steep Cobblestone Alley is composed of large, limestone blocks. At one time a common sight, it is now the better of two such alleys left in Burlington.
4. Rice House (c. 1880) contributes to the continuity of the buildings on the east side of the alley by being close to its neighbors and the alley itself.
5. Bouquet House (1871) is a two story Victorian home in good exterior condition. Its ornate front porch contributes much of the Victorian character on the alley.
6. Fordney House (1845). When the alley is viewed from Washington Street, the Fordney House carries the Victorian flavor down to the adjacent commercial district through its fancy coupola and hand carved trim.
7. Schwartz' Auto Electric Service contributes to the character of the alley only by its physical presence. It helps to keep the continuity of buildings stairstepping down the hillside and makes the alley look narrow and enclosed.
8. Pappas House (c. 1880) is a 1 1/2 story frame home sitting on a one story exposed limestone block foundation with an unusual entrance and bay window. The proximity of the house to Snake Alley establishes the spatial containment of the lower end of the district.
9. Kidd House (c. 1865) is an early 1 1/2 story home that contributes to the continuity of buildings down the west side of the alley.
10. First United Church of Christ (1925). The second brick church on the site, this Gothic Revival type structure helps to keep the alley narrow and enclosed because of its sheer size and closeness to the alley.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

SNAKE ALLEY HISTORIC DISTRICT

Item 9. Major Biographical References

Watkins, Hamilton, K., A Souvenir of Burlington, Burlington: The Journal Co.,
1896, page 8, 32, 58, 71 and 72.