State of California — The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

PRIMARY RECORD

Primary #: _____
HRI # _____
Trinomial _____
NRHP Status Code: _____
Other Listings _____
Review Code ____ Reviewer _____ Date __ _____

***Resource Name or #:** 185 West H Street
P1. Other Identifier: J.W. Jones House
***P2. .Location: *a. County** Solano
b. Address: 185 West H Street
***c. City:** Benicia **Zip** 94510
d. UTM: N/A
e. USGS Quad: Benicia T2N R3W MDM
***f. Other Locational Data (APN #):** 89-044-38
***P3a. Description:**

An imposing Italianate residence, the house was constructed in the 1870s. It is L-shape in plan with two-full stories. The roof is flat with overhanging eaves that exhibit a plain fascia and an elaborately detailed frieze with oval panels and carved double brackets. Fenestration consists of one-over-two double hung windows with that are vertically emphasized. The window casings are arched at the top and the sills are supported on double brackets like those at the eaves. Narrow, two-story canted bays are found on the west front façade. The lower bay wall has oval panels that repeat the motif in the frieze. The sash and glazing appear to be replacement. The entry door is recessed with narrow sidelights. Pilasters and a bracketed flat pediment frame the porch opening. To the east of the entry is a one-story enclosure tucked into the L at the intersections of the walls. This wing is linked to the entry through the extension of the pediment and the repetition of the double brackets and frieze. The house is clad with clapboard and has quoins at the corners.

P3b. Resource Attributes: HP2
***P4. Resources Present:** ■ Building ☐ Structure ☐ Object ☐ Site ☐ District ■ Element of District
P5b. Description of Photo: Front façade, view north
***P6. Date Constructed/Age:** 1870

P5. Photograph or Drawing (Photograph required for buildings, structures, and objects.)

☐ Prehistoric ■Historic ☐ Both
***P7. Owner and Address:**
Richard Fitzsimmons
185 West H Street
Benicia CA 94510
***P8. Recorded by:**
Carol Roland
Roland-Nawi Associates
4829 Crestwood Way
Sacramento, CA 95822
***P9. Date Recorded:** 11-20-04
***P10. Type of Survey:** ■ Intensive ☐ Reconnaissance ☐ Other
Describe Eligibility Evaluation
***P11. Report Citation:** none
***Attachments:** ☐ NONE ☐ Map Sheet ☐ Continuation Sheet ■ Building, Structure, and Object Record ☐ Linear Resource Record ☐ Archaeological Record ☐ District Record ☐ Milling Station Record ☐ Rock Art Record ☐ Artifact Record ☐ Photograph Record ☐ Other (List):

***Resource Identifier:** 185 West H Street ***NRHP Status Code:** 3D
B1. Historic Name: N/A
B2. Common Name: none
B3. Original Use: Residential **B4. Present Use:** Residential
***B5. Architectural Style:** Italianate
***B6. Construction History:** In the 1950s the house was converted into apartment units which included the enclosure of the porch on the east side of the front façade. The exterior also was clad with asbestos siding. It was rehabilitated in the 1970s by the current owners who based their alterations on historic photographic evidence and physical investigation of the structure.
***B7. Moved?** ■ No ☐ Yes ☐ Unknown **Date:** N/A **Original Location:** same
***B8. Related Features**: none

B9a. Architect: unknown **B9b. Builder:** unknown
***B10. Significance: Theme:** Benicia Downtown District **Period of Significance**: 1847-1940 **Property Type**: Single Family **Applicable Criteria:** A / C
Some histories of Benicia have connected the existing house at 187 H Street with Robert Semple, one of the founders of Benicia. It is clear that the lot at the corner of West H and West Second Streets was owned by Semple and that he did construct a residence there in the 1840s. However, the precise relationship of the existing house and Semple's buildings is less clear.

Of the histories that discuss this issue , Robert Bruegmann's, *Benicia, Portrait of an Early California Town*, is perhaps the most authoritative. It includes an extensive discussion of the city's early architectural history and relies heavily on primary records. Bruegmann indicates that Semple built a 40 X 18 foot adobe for William Tustin in Block 7, lot 12, in the town of Benicia in 1847. Tustin himself described his house as a two room house with a roof that was half thatched with tules and half shingled. Bruegmann notes that historians LeNoir Miller (*Benicia's Early Glory*) and Charline Erwin ("A Man of Firsts" in the *Benicia Historical Society Gazette*, March 1976) both place Tustin's house in block 20, lot 13, at the corner of West H and West Second Streets. Bruegmann also points out that the *History of Solano* County (1879) identifies two houses belonging to Semple: 1)an adobe which was later incorporated into the house of Jerry O'Donnell,.[1] and 2) a frame house which, was occupied by S.C. Gray with the attic used by Semple. [2] According to the 1879 *History*, the former building (house of Jerry O'Donnell) was still standing in 1879, contemporaneous with the Jones House. The *History* also indicates that the latter Semple building was eventually owned by Mrs. J.W. Jones, but was occupied by George A. Hastings. Thompson and West, who included a lithograph of the Jones house in their 1878 *Historical Atlas of Solano County*, make no mention of it being associated with Semple.

These varying accounts leave open the question as to which of the Semple's houses may have occupied the lot at the corner of West H and West Second Streets. It is doubtful that either of the early Semple houses could have taken the form of the house identified in the late 1870s with J.W. Jones. However, it is possible that the Jones house incorporated all or a part of an earlier building. The 1886 Sanborn Insurance map shows the house as having several rear sections and attached sheds. Additional research in the county property records might further clarify this issue.[3] Such detailed research was outside the scope of this study, but given Semple's importance in the history of the City, it is a research issue that would be useful and informative to pursue in the future.

The current house is a fine example of an Italianate residence. The house belonged to J.W. Jones, a judge, and was one of the larger and more stately homes constructed in Benicia up to the 1870s. The drawing of the house which appears in Thompson and West, shows a large formal garden/grounds on the lots to the east. The 1886 Sanborn Map shows the footprint of the house with number of attached and adjacent rear structures where there is now a two-story addition.. In the 1950s the house was subdivided into apartment units, the porch was enclosed, and the exterior was clad with asbestos shingle. The current owners have rehabilitated the house based on historic lithographs and photographs. They have removed the asbestos cladding and restored the envelope of the house with its

[1] For a full discussion of the houses associated with Semple see Bruegmann,, page 6 and "Notes on Chapter 1," footnotes 15 and 16, page 138.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Such an investigation was outside the scope of work of the current survey since the existing house is eligible for listing solely on the basis of its architectural merits. However, further research would enrich the historic record and might contribute to eligibility under Criterion B for association with an individual of historic importance.

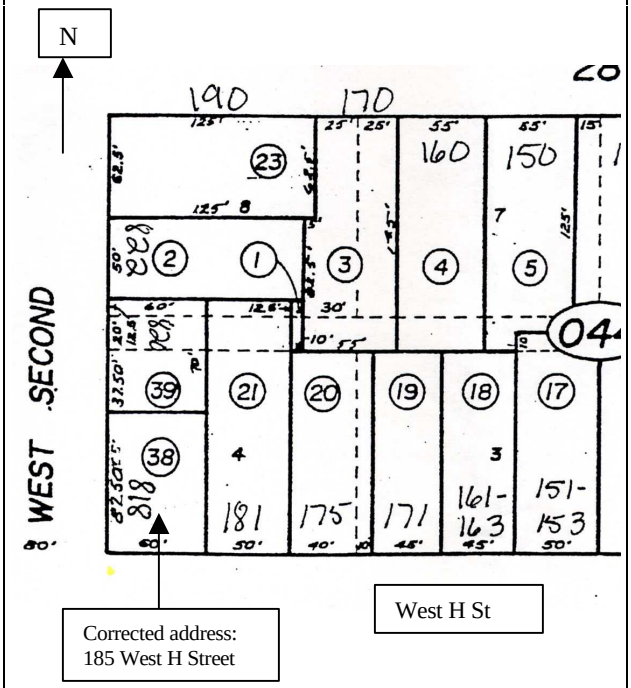
original detailing. The porch enclosure has not been not reversed and the windows have been replaced within the original openings. Although the house does not include all the features of the 1870s building, it has been carefully rehabilitated in such a manner that it reflects the significant aspects of its historic appearance and character. This is particularly true in regard to the elaborate architectural details in the eave brackets and cornices. The house demonstrates integrity of design, workmanship, materials, setting, and location. The grounds shown in the Thompson and West drawing were in-filled in the 1920s with two Craftsman Bungalow houses. The house is listed as a possible contributor to the historic district. It is eligible for listing on the basis of its association with Jones and for its architectural merit. It should be moved to contributing status. It might also be considered for Landmark status in the light of its outstanding architectural character and potentially because of its association with Robert Semple.

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: N/A

B12. References: McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred Knopf (1986); Bruegmann, Robert. *Benicia Portrait of an Early California Town: An Architectural History* (San Francisco: 101 Productions (1980); Thompson and West, *Historical atlas of Solano County, California*. San Francisco: Thompson and West (1878); Wood, Allen and Co. History of Solano County. San Francisco: Wood, Allen and Co.(1879); Sally Woodbridge and Cannon Design Group. *Benicia, California: Downtown Historic Conservation Plan*. City of Benicia, (1990); Sanborn Map Benicia, CA. 1886; 1986 Benicia Historic Inventory form.

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

(Sketch Map with north arrow required.)



Remarks: N/A

B14. Evaluator: Carol Roland, Ph.D.

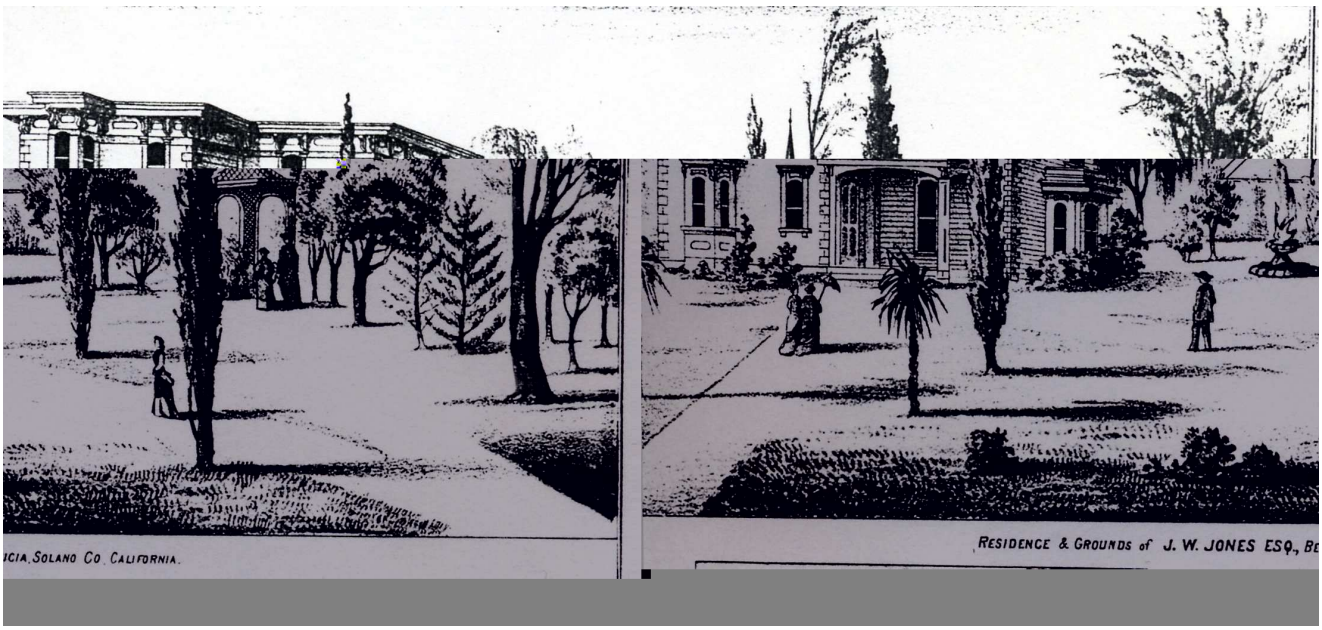
Roland-Nawi Associates: Preservation Consultants
4829 Crestwood Way
Sacramento, CA 95822

B 15. Date of Evaluation: 11-22-04

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

Resource Identifier: 185 West H Street

X **Continuation** O **Update**



Lithograph from Thompson and West, *Historical Atlas of Solano County*, 1878

(This space reserved for official comments.)