1. Name
historic Elkins, Senator Stephen Benton, House
and or common Halliehurst

2. Location
street & number Davis and Elkins College campus
state West Virginia county Randolph

3. Classification
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4. Owner of Property
name Board of Trustees of Davis and Elkins College
street & number Davis and Elkins College

5. Location of Legal Description
courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Randolph County Courthouse

6. Representation in Existing Surveys
title National Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date June, 1982

For NPS use only
received date entered

For NPS use only
received date entered
### 7. Description

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

Halliehurst, designed by Charles T. Mott, is a large baronial house, built in 1890 for U.S. Sen. Stephen Benton Elkins, a lawyer, businessman, and politician. Its size and elaborate detailing directly reflect Elkins' wealth and influence, as does its location in Elkins, a town that grew up because of the business enterprises of Elkins and his father-in-law, U.S. Sen. Henry Gassaway Davis.

Halliehurst's three main floors are capped by a steep hipped roof punctuated with towers, turrets, dormers, and chimneys. The central block, in addition to those towers, has a porch surrounding much of the first floor. On the south side of the house, this porch extends to a portico two stories high around a central, flat-roofed tower. The portico's columns are among the most prominent features of the south side of the house. On the east side of the building, a service wing balances the porch.

The house stands on a stone foundation. The first floor exterior of the central block is faced with wooden siding. Shingles cover the exterior of the other two floors and the service wing. The original slate roof was replaced in the late 1960s with an asphalt shingle roof.

Halliehurst's interiors are more ornately detailed than its exterior. Especially noteworthy are carved mantels in the main hall and library, stained glass, and the main staircase and balustrade. Upper floors are less elaborate but still retain a great deal of original woodwork which reflects careful craftsmanship.

The house was a major commission for Charles Mott, who practiced in New York City between 1885 and 1912, and became a member of the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects in 1894. The September 19, 1891, issue of American Architect and Building News included drawings of his designs for the house. These show the exterior of the house essentially as it was built. Interior sketches of the dining room show decorative and wall finishes which do not exist today. The porch mentioned above was added to the house in 1904; it seems likely that this was Mott's work, because Mott continued to work with Elkins on building projects in the years after Halliehurst's construction.

In 1923, Hallie Davis Elkins, widow of Sen. Stephen Benton Elkins, deeded Halliehurst and approximately 60 acres of land to Davis and Elkins College. This gift was in keeping with her family's long-term interest in the college, which is named after Senators Davis and Elkins and was founded with their support. The college trustees then decided to establish a new campus and new buildings on this land. Halliehurst subsequently served a variety of college functions over the years. It has provided dormitory and classroom space, and once was the home of the college president. Beginning in 1925-26, it was used as dormitory space for women, a use discontinued in the early 1930s and then later revived. A chaplain's office, college radio station, dispensary, and Presbyterian Guidance Center have also been housed here. For a time, the service wing housed the Student Union before present-day Benedum Hall was built. In the early 1960s, the college began conversion of Halliehurst's basement for use as a fallout shelter.
Despite these multiple uses, the house retains the vast majority of its original fabric, inside and out. Repairs to Halliehurst and installation of a new heating system were carried out soon after Mrs. Elkins deeded the house to the college. As noted above, the slate roof has been replaced. A porte-cochere on the north side of the house is now gone. Ironwork from it remains and there are plans to replace it. Water damage led the college to remove ceiling paintings and murals in the library, dining room, and drawing room. A few windows have been altered for purposes of fire escapes. The kitchen was altered to serve college needs, and most of the original lighting and heating fixtures have been replaced. Many original plumbing fixtures have also been removed.

College functions were moved out of the building in 1982 because of concerns about fire safety. Since that time, the college trustees and administration have done repair work on the exterior of the house and have developed specifications for installation of a sprinkler system.
Halliehurst was the summer home of U.S. Sen. Stephen Benton Elkins from the time of its construction in 1890 until his death in 1911. A wealthy lawyer and entrepreneur, Elkins became a major figure in Republican presidential politics of the 1880s. His second marriage, to the daughter of prominent West Virginia businessman and politician Henry Cassaway Davis, gave him opportunities to join with his father-in-law in rail, coal, and timber enterprises. These played a major role in exploitation of West Virginia’s natural resources and added to Elkins’ personal wealth and political influence. As a supporter and campaign manager of James G. Blaine, Elkins established himself as an influential member of the Republican party and as a “president-maker.” He played a key role in Blaine’s 1884 bid for the presidency. Elkins, as a trusted Blaine advisor, was also a principal in the maneuvering that led to the nomination of Benjamin Harrison for the presidency in 1888, when Blaine chose not to run. Elkins subsequently served as Harrison’s Secretary of War. He became a Senator from West Virginia in 1895, serving in that capacity until his death. On the Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce, he was a major figure in negotiation of railway legislation subsequent to the passage of the Interstate Commerce Act, sponsoring two bills that bear his name, an anti-rebate bill of 1903 and the Mann-Elkins Act of 1910. He was chair of that committee at a time when it was one of the most important committees in Congress, and when railroad legislation was a major aspect of the development of federal regulatory practices. Elkins is thus one of the pre-eminent examples of the influence of wealthy businessmen in late 19th-century politics, and one of the architects of federal railroad policies.

Halliehurst reflects Elkins’ interests in West Virginia commerce and in national politics. Elkins built Halliehurst as his business and railroad interests in West Virginia were expanding. The house site was chosen because of its proximity to a planned terminal for one of Elkins’ railroads. Halliehurst also represents Elkins’ political need to be identified with one geographical area after a career that had led him from Missouri to New Mexico, Washington, D.C., and New York, and finally to adoption of West Virginia as his home state. As early as 1881, it was apparently becoming clear that political appointments would be difficult to obtain until he was perceived as a man with political strength rooted in a single geographical area. His varied financial activities and interests across the nation had given him a certain flexibility in political maneuvering in the Presidential nominations of the 1880s, but his decision to be identified with West Virginia made him a member of the established Republican “Old Guard” in the Senate. His move to West Virginia, represented by his establishment at Halliehurst, “was an integral part of the process by which the political and economic resources of West Virginia were marshalled in the service of a national economy in process of industrialization and centralization.”

After Elkins built Halliehurst and his father-in-law built the adjacent mansion known as Graceland, the family's summer estate at Deer Park in Garrett County, Maryland, became less important in family activities. The Deer Park estate had been the scene of some important political negotiations, but the Elkins cottage there no longer stands. Elkins also maintained a residence on K Street in Washington, D.C., which does not survive today.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Stephen Benton Elkins was born in Perry County, Ohio, in 1841. He grew up in Missouri, where he studied law. Following his admission to the bar, he moved to New Mexico in 1864. There he profited from land and mining investments, and also became active in territorial politics. He served as a territorial representative to Congress from New Mexico in the 1870s. While in Congress, he developed a friendship with James G. Blaine.\(^2\) During this period, he established a residence and office in New York to pursue his legal and business career. He also married Hallie Davis, daughter of Sen. Henry Gassaway Davis of West Virginia, and went on to become a partner in Davis' coal and railroad enterprises.

Elkins first distinguished himself on the national political scene as an ally of James G. Blaine and organizer for Blaine's bids for the presidency. At the 1880 Republican national convention, he worked for Blaine's nomination, gaining Blaine's confidence in his abilities as a political organizer. Elkins' maneuverings at the 1884 convention were a major factor in securing the Republican nomination for Blaine. In recognition of Elkins' skills, Blaine used him as manager of his presidential campaign that year. Elkins was also a member of the executive committee set up by the Republican national committee to run the campaign. According to one historian of Republican party politics of this era, Blaine and Elkins exercised more influence in organization of the national committee than any preceding Republican candidacy.\(^3\) They accomplished this in an era of "machine" politics, when the national committee exercised more power than it does today. Despite Blaine's defeat, Elkins in this 1884 campaign gained "a national reputation as a political strategist that... played an important role in his translation from New Mexico to West Virginia in later years."\(^4\)

In 1888, Elkins again worked for Blaine's nomination for the presidency. This time, though, Blaine was reluctant to be a candidate. Blaine's colleagues, especially Elkins, worked to create a groundswell of support within the party that would overcome Blaine's objections to being nominated. In doing so, Elkins played a leading role in complex negotiations aimed at a unanimous "draft" nomination for Blaine, or, failing that, nomination of someone indebted to Blaine and his supporters. This strategy brought Elkins to discuss the nomination with Benjamin Harrison, who was not


\(^3\) Ibid., pp. 86-7.

\(^4\) Williams, p. 74.
allied with Blaine's opponents in the party, and whose strength in Indiana could aid Blaine in the event of a "draft" movement, or at least help to prevent Blaine's enemies from taking over the convention. Elkins was the principal liaison between Harrison and the Blaine supporters.5 Harrison succeeded in winning the Republican nomination, and subsequently the Presidency, in the 1888 election.

Following Harrison's election, Elkins continued to act as a link between Harrison and Blaine. His efforts were rewarded in his appointment as Harrison's Secretary of War, in 1891. Elkins served in that capacity until the end of Harrison's term.

In 1895, Elkins entered Congress as a Senator from West Virginia. By this time, he and his father-in-law were among West Virginia's wealthiest and most powerful citizens, because of their varied coal, railroad, and timber enterprises. Elkins' activities in the Senate reflected his interest in national policies on trade and transportation. Notably, he was involved in several major pieces of legislation that supplemented the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887. Court decisions had minimized the power of the Interstate Commerce Commission, established by that act, to effectively carry out the law's provisions against rebating and other discriminatory practices used by railroad companies in setting rates. The Elkins Act of 1903 was the first amendment to the Interstate Commerce Act. Specifically intended to discourage rebating, it prohibited deviations from published rates, but Elkins and his fellow "railroad senators" on the Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce did not in this act give the ICC powers in the rate-setting process.7 Not until passage of the Hepburn Act, in 1906, did the ICC get authority to investigate and lower railroad rates, upon complaints by shippers.

Continued resistance by the railroads to federal regulation led to passage of the Mann-Elkins Act of 1910. This law, sponsored by Senator Elkins and Representative James R. Mann, gave the ICC authority to suspend general railroad rate increases on its own initiative, pending investigation, and placed responsibility for proving the reasonableness of original rates and increases on the railroads. It also defined telephone, telegraph, and wireless companies as common carriers, thereby bringing them under ICC jurisdiction.

Elkins has been called "one of the late nineteenth century's most successful businessmen-politicians."8 As a Republican activist, he played an important role in two presidential elections. As a Senator, he had interests that reflect the complex interrelationships between industry and politics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

**WORKS CONSULTED**

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Lambert, Oscar Doane. Stephen Benton Elkins: American Foursquare. Pittsburgh,


Marcus, Robert D. Grand Old Party: Political Structure in the Gilded Age,

Pedersen, Ralph. National Register Inventory-Nomination Form "Senator Stephen

Ross, Thomas Richard. Davis and Elkins College 75: The Diamond Jubilee History.

Vargo, Rodney. "Halliehurst Hall." Undergraduate paper, Davis and Elkins
College, 1970.

Williams, John Alexander. "New York's First Senator from West Virginia: How
Stephen B. Elkins Found a New Political Home." West Virginia History

Williams, John Alexander. West Virginia and the Captains of Industry.
9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 3/4 acre
Quadrange name Elkins, West Virginia

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Please see continuation sheet.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Laura Feller, staff historian, based upon National Register study by Ralph Pederson
organization National Park Service, History Division

date March 13, 1988
street & number 1100 L Street, N.W. (P.O. Box 37127)
telephone (202) 343-8167

city or town Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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

date

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration
Sen. Stephen Benton Elkins House
"Halliehurst"
USGS Elkins Quadrangle, 7.5 minute series
UTM reference: 17/599 920/4309 510
Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

Beginning at a point where an imaginary north-south line 30 feet east of Halliehurst's east side (midway between Halliehurst and the Jennings Randolph Hall library) intersects the south side of the campus belt road directly north of Halliehurst, proceed south along that imaginary line to a point 100 feet south of Halliehurst's southern facade. Then proceed westward to a point in line with the eastern edge of the driveway on Halliehurst's west side. Proceed north to the campus belt road, along the east side of that driveway, and then eastward along the south side of the campus belt road back to the point of beginning.

This boundary encompasses Halliehurst, and only a small part of the grounds of the house. Although the grounds of Halliehurst were extensively planted for the Elkins family, this boundary includes the house alone, because the construction of new college buildings, such as Benedum Hall and the Jennings Randolph Hall on either side of Halliehurst, have altered the original landscape plan.