

Historic Property Meyer House
Inventory Report for 1136 East Bay Drive Olympia, Thurston, 98506

LOCATION SECTION

Historic Name: Meyer House Field Site No.: 815
Common Name: Harbinger Inn (#34-841) OAHP No.:
Property Address: 1136 East Bay Drive Olympia, Thurston, 98506
Comments: OLYMPIA

County Township/Range/EW Section 1/4 Sec 1/4 1/4 Sec Quadrangle
TUMWATER T18R02W 14 SE TUMWATER

UTM Reference
Zone: 10 Spatial Type: Point Acquisition Code: TopoZone.com
Sequence: 0 Easting: 508320 Northing: 5210960

Tax No./Parcel No. Plat/Block/Lot
74400200100 Simensons/Block 2/Lots 1 and 2 Tract S BLA 021135

Supplemental Map(s) Acreage
City of Olympia Planning Department < one

IDENTIFICATION SECTION

Field Recorder: Shanna Stevenson Date Recorded: 7/1/1992 Survey Name: OLYMPIA

Owner's Name: Art Foley Owner Address: 2109 E Bay Drive City/State/Zip: Olympia, WA 98506
Classification: Building Resource Status Comments
Within a District? No Survey/Inventory
Contributing? National Register
State Register
Local Register

National Register Nomination: 0
Local District:
National Register District/Thematic Nomination Name:

DESCRIPTION SECTION

Historic Use: Domestic - Single Family House
Current Use: Domestic - Hotel

Plan: Square No. of Stories: 2 1/2

Structural System: Concrete - Block

Changes to plan: Slight Changes to interior: Slight
Changes to original cladding: Intact Changes to other:
Changes to windows: Slight Other (specify):

Cladding Concrete Foundation Concrete - Block
Style Form/Type
Roof Material Asphalt / Composition Roof Type Gable

NARRATIVE SECTION

Study Unit	Other	Date Of Construction: <u>1910</u>
<u>Agriculture</u>		Architect: <u>Victor Meyer</u>
<u>Other</u>	<u>Cultural Maritime Resources o</u>	Builder:
		Engineer:

Property appears to meet criteria for the National Register of Historic Places: No

Property is located in a historic district (National and/or local): No

Property potentially contributes to a historic district (National and/or local):

Statement of Significance The Victor E. Meyer House is significant for its use of artistic concrete block as a building material. Although widely used in other parts of the state, the Meyer House is the sole example of artistic concrete block construction in Olympia. The house is notable for its eclectic architectural quality and unusual access tunnel and water system. The house was built in 1910 by Victor E. Meyer, a plumber, contractor, and machinist. Meyer lived in the house with his wife Lena and their two sons, a civil engineer and a plumber. This range of expertise is evident in the construction of the house. The elder Meyers came from Germany in the 19th century to Olympia by way of Nebraska. The Meyers left Olympia and in 1924 Emma Riddle opened a massage and treatment center there called the "Riddle Nerve Sanitarium" or "Nervatorium," and creating a boarding house arrangement on the upper two floors. The house was renovated in 1984. The construction of the house is unique in Olympia and represents a distinct phase in the history of concrete technology before the material was considered a valid architectural element. Artistic concrete block as in the Meyer House was used from 1870 to about 1920 with most of its popularity coming in the 1900-1910 period. Its low cost imaginative qualities appealed to builders who sought the elegance of stone at a price within reach of many. The block was made in a mold by a dry tamp process in which a relatively dry mix was put into the mold machine and rammed down as it was filled. The face of the block was given its cut masonry quality from either a side face or down face system which produced the simulated stone surface. The machines were available from a number of companies, including Sears and Roebuck. The material produced a convincing stone imitation and after 1910 the shift was toward dressed stone rather than the pitched face exemplified in the Meyer House. Faced block was later made of two different materials. The decline in the use of artificial stone although refined to include a number of surfaces, was accompanied by the use of concrete as an architectural material in its own right. Concrete no longer had to appear as stone to be accepted.

Description of Physical Appearance The Victor E. Meyer House is a large two story building impressively sited on the eastern slope of Olympia's Budd Inlet, the southern extremity of Puget Sound. It is noteworthy for its concrete block construction as well as the monumental columns flanking the entry and rising to support a balcony at the eave line. The house is rectangular in plan with a full basement rising to a hipped roof; it is oriented to the west. It has a poured concrete foundation and basement, and its two stories are constructed from artistic concrete block, or concrete block manufactured to imitate building stone. Darker block from a belt course along the top and bottom of the window openings on the first and second floors, and forms quoins contrasting with the lighter concrete of the main structure. The stone is also used in a checkerboard type pattern alternating the dark and light blocks with open spaces on the balustrade of the verandah which extends around the side of the house to the south. The second floor balcony is set off by a balustrade marked by ornamented square piers rising above the slender turned columns which rest upon the first floor balustrade. Rounded stairs lead to the centrally placed entry which as a rounded portico supported by columns; it engages the second floor balcony. The doorway is topped by a transom. Larger column flanking the front entry reach to the third floor balcony which is fitted with a balustrade featuring ornamentation similar to that on the second floor. Pedimented gables top single dormers on each side of the roof with a double window on the main facade. Each as a sunburst design in the pediment, sash windows, and fish scale shingles on the sides. The only major exterior alteration is the extension of the front dormer across the roofline. The date of the modification is unknown. Interior woodwork includes oak room dividers, pocket doors, and a fir stair baluster. The kitchen and pantry area has been renovated and windows filled at the rear of the first floor. Some other interior elements such as a built-in buffet have been removed. Main level floors have an interesting arrangement with sides of maple and center, which would have been covered by a rug, or fir. An art glass window lights the landing between the first and second floors. Major renovations on the interior include the installation of bathrooms, closets, and room dividers in the ten rooms of the upper two floors. The house has a unique water system which was in operation until city water was supplied in the early 1970's. An artesian well on the hillside above the house drains into a corner of the basement and is transported through a cement viaduct into a storage pool equipped with a pump. Extensive drain fields are under the basement and water still flows freely through its viaduct. A puzzling feature of the house is a tunnel which leads from the bank above East Bay Drive into the basement of the house. Many theories for the existence of the concrete lined tunnel have been advanced from coal chute to boat storage but none satisfactorily explains its installation. Given the steeply sloping site and lack of access to the rear of the house, it may have been built to provide service entrance.

Major Bibliographic References Ann Gillespie "Early Development of the Artistic Concrete Block: the Case of the Boyd Brothers," Association for Preservation Technology, Volume XI, No. 2., 1979, pp. 30-52
Alice Watts, "Green Mansion, Daily Olympian, May 19, 1973, "Month" Magazine sec.

PHOTOS



View of West Facade
taken 9/1/1997
Photography Neg. No. (Roll No./Frame No.):
 43-10
Comments: