

Historic Property McCleary House
Inventory Report for 111 - 21st Avenue SW Olympia, Thurston, 98501

LOCATION SECTION

Historic Name: McCleary House Field Site No.: 890
Common Name: (#34-872) OAHP No.:
Property Address: 111 - 21st Avenue SW Olympia, Thurston, 98501
Comments: OLYMPIA

County Township/Range/EW Section 1/4 Sec 1/4 1/4 Sec Quadrangle
T18R02W 23 SW TUMWATER

UTM Reference

Zone: 10 Spatial Type: Point Acquisition Code: TopoZone.com
Sequence: 0 Easting: 507540 Northing: 5208280

Tax No./Parcel No. Plat/Block/Lot
51100100100 Graingers L1-3 & 8-10 Blk 1

Supplemental Map(s) Acreage
City of Olympia Planning Department .80

IDENTIFICATION SECTION

Field Recorder: Shanna Stevenson Date Recorded: 7/1/1997 Survey Name: OLYMPIA

Owner's Name: Building Industry Association Owner Address: PO Box 1909 City/State/Zip: Olympia, WA 98507

Classification: Building Resource Status: Survey/Inventory Comments:
Within a District? Yes National Register
Contributing? Yes State Register

National Register Nomination: MCCLEARY, HENRY, HOUSE

Local District:

National Register District/Thematic Nomination Name: SOUTH CAPITOL NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORIC DISTRICT

DESCRIPTION SECTION

Historic Use: Domestic - Single Family House
Current Use: Commerce/Trade - Organizational

Plan: Rectangle No. of Stories: 2

Structural System: Brick

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

Cladding Brick Foundation Concrete - Poured
Stone

Style Tudor - Composite Form/Type
Roof Material Metal Roof Type Hip

NARRATIVE SECTION

Study Unit

Other

Date Of Construction: 1923

Architecture/Landscape Architecture

Architect: Joseph Wohleb

Commerce

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 impressive Henry McCleary House in Olympia was built between 1924 and 1925 at a cost of over \$100,000. One of Olympia's finest residences, it is overshadowed in formality only by the Governor's Mansion. The house stands as a personal expression of the wealth and prestige which surrounded one of Washington's great lumber barons. Henry McCleary came west from his native Ohio by way of Idaho in 1890. He had come from a sawmilling family, and gained more experience and capital to work cutting and milling in the area of the present-day town of McCleary, Washington. The town was put on the map in 1905 when McCleary further expanded his operation by taking in a partner and creating what was for decades said to be the world's largest door factory. The firm's business records claim that McCleary and Company conceived and produced the novel idea of the veneer door. The Town of McCleary grew along with its founder's business. Henry McCleary owned the town and ruled benevolently over it - ministering to the needy, directing its politics, and administering his law. The McCleary mill flourished throughout the 1920's and 1930's. By 1941, however, the timberlands were depleted and McCleary sold the town and his lands to the Simpson Timber Company of Shelton and Olympia. The town of McCleary became its own municipality and forest lands around it were replanted. Henry McCleary began a difficult retirement at the mansion in Olympia, where he died two years later in 1943. The McCleary House was rather more grand than its owner, and it is said that he felt uncomfortable among its European antiques and extravagant proportions. Nevertheless, the house plainly demonstrates the opportunity which existed for an ambitious young man in the Washington woods at the turn of the Century. One of the most successful lumbermen of South Puget Sound, McCleary managed to adapt his business to changing needs over several decades, and to create a permanent town out of forest wilderness. McCleary's Olympia estate was an eloquent monument of the self-made man. Today the house is recognized as a fine piece of architecture, both inside and out. Although its interior proportions have been somewhat altered, the graceful staircase, the rich and varied woodwork, the elegant windows and fireplaces are still very much in evidence. The exterior remains in its original state, except for the removal of the porte-cochere at the rear. The modern office complex to the south greatly detracts from the estate as do the flanking paved parking lots, but the north facade and grounds are unaltered and still impressive. In many ways, the McCleary House is an exceptionally fine example of the work of the popular and prolific Olympia architect Joseph Wohleb.

Description of Physical Appearance

In 1923, Henry McCleary commissioned the local architect Joseph Wohleb to design a house which would outdo the adjacent C. J. Lord home, also designed by Wohleb. The result of that challenge is an imposing two-story English Renaissance house of brick and stone. The nominated property lies in the heart of an old and well-maintained residential neighborhood in Olympia. Originally, a landscaped lawn covered the city block on which the house stands. A circular driveway once led to the porte-cochere on the south grounds. That half of the block, to the rear of the Mansion, has been paved over, and a medical office complex constructed on the site. The modern building is an intrusion which detracts considerably from the integrity of the estate. Paved parking lots on the east and west sides of the block are entered from 21st Avenue. Between the lots, the formal front lawn of the estate remains intact. Two huge Cedars of Lebanon flank the central walkway and hide the house from direct view on 21st Avenue. The building itself is basically rectangular in plan, with a slightly recessed two-story service wing appended to the west elevation. Set on a concrete foundation with a full basement, the house is built of the finest materials. Good craftsmanship is evident everywhere, as in the copper sheathing of the truncated hipped roof, and the ornamental copper downspouts. Other appointments are a projecting bracketed cornice of wood and three brick chimneys with cast stone caps. Visually separating the first and second stories is a series of rectangular cast stone panels with inscribed geometric-floral motifs. The house is outstanding for its numerous and beautifully designed windows accented by decorative brickwork. Many are round-arch openings with prominent stone keystones and radiating voussoirs of brick and stone. On the ground story, most have casements with leaded, stained glass transoms. A number of windows have diamond-paned casements. Originally there was a porte-cochere on the south side of the house supported by decorative stone pillars. The balcony above it was further embellished by cast stone panels. The porte-cochere has been removed, as have the south entry's French doors and decorative transom. This entry now houses modern swinging glass doors. The north facade on 21st Avenue is a medley of windows and stone detail. The entire central pavilion is stone-faced and projects slightly from the main body of the house. The recessed entrance is framed with stone pilasters and engaged and free-standing columns. Originally, the formal entry was a double French door with paneled glass. On either side of the pavilion are small arched windows with diamond-paned casements. Over the recessed porch are cast stone panels similar to the ones separating the first and second floors. At second story level above the entrance way are four casement windows with diamond panes. Fine interior details also demonstrate the quality of Wohleb's design. A spacious central reception hall lined with recessed mahogany paneling dominates the first floor. Doors from the hall lead to the former living and dining rooms in the north portion of the house, and a solarium and library in the south. The library housed McCleary's gun collection and is said to have served him as a shooting gallery as well. Opposite the main entrance along the south wall, a graceful elliptical staircase winds to the second floor. At the landing, four arched, leaded glass windows create a gallery effect. The interior as a whole is a showcase of American woods reflecting McCleary's interests and background. The house was furnished with European antiques by Marshall-Field of Chicago. Many of these are still in the possession of the McCleary family. At McCleary's death in 1943, the house was purchased by developers who converted it to apartments designed by Joseph Wohleb. This arrangement was unsuccessful and eventually doctors' offices were made of the apartments. The McCleary Mansion was renovated in 1998 for the Building Industry Association of Washington.

Major Bibliographic References

Green Commonwealth, Stewart Holbrook. Simpson Logging Company, 1945
Interviews with members of the McCleary Family and other Olympia residents. January, 1978

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Out of the Woods; the Story of McCleary. Ernest Teagle. Simpson Logging Co., 1956

PHOTOS



View of North Facade

taken 7/1/1997

Photography Neg. No. (Roll No./Frame No.):

42-8A

Comments: