

**Historic Property** Mowell House  
**Inventory Report for** 200 Southeast Union Olympia, Thurston, 98501

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**LOCATION SECTION**

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**Historic Name:** Mowell House **Field Site No.:** 913  
**Common Name:** (#34-753) **OAHP No.:**  
**Property Address:** 200 Southeast Union Olympia, Thurston, 98501  
**Comments:** OLYMPIA/OLYWOMEN

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

**UTM Reference**  
**Zone:** 10 **Spatial Type:** Point **Acquisition Code:** TopoZone.com  
**Sequence:** 0 **Easting:** 507170 **Northing:** 5209320

**Tax No./Parcel No.** **Plat/Block/Lot**  
78506300700 Sylvester L7 Blk 63

**Supplemental Map(s)** **Acreage**  
City of Olympia Planning Department .19

**IDENTIFICATION SECTION**

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**Field Recorder:** Shanna Stevenson/Tom C **Date Recorded:** 10/17/1985 **Survey Name:** OLYMPIA

**Owner's Name:** Wash St Council of Police **Owner Address:** 200 Union Ave SE **City/State/Zip:** Olympia, WA 98501

**Classification:** Building **Resource Status** **Comments**  
**Within a District?** Yes Survey/Inventory

**Contributing?**

**National Register Nomination:** 0  
**Local District:**  
**National Register District/Thematic Nomination Name:** 690

**DESCRIPTION SECTION**

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

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

**Structural System:** Balloon Frame

**Changes to plan:** Moderate **Changes to interior:** Unknown  
**Changes to original cladding:** Moderate **Changes to other:**  
**Changes to windows:** Moderate **Other (specify):**  
**Cladding** Wood - Clapboard **Foundation** Concrete - Poured  
**Style** American Foursquare **Form/Type**  
**Roof Material** Asphalt / Composition **Roof Type** Hip

**NARRATIVE SECTION**

<b>Study Unit</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Date Of Construction:</b> <u>1907</u>
<u>Architecture/Landscape Architecture</u>	<u>Women's History</u>	<b>Architect:</b>
<u>Education</u>		<b>Builder:</b>
		<b>Engineer:</b>

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** Another of the substantial downtown houses which still retain their place in Olympia as symbols of the turn of the century cityscape. The Mowell house stands at a corner of considerable historic import in Olympia. His was the location one of the earliest schools of higher learning in Washington Territory, first organized in 1856 under the auspices of the Methodist-Episcopal Church. Originally called the Puget Sound Institute and changed in 1856 to be the Puget Sound Wesleyan Institute, the school was founded by local leaders George Barnes, Daniel Bigelow and others. The school could boast 60 students and the organizers hired Hall and Taylor to build a suitable structure in the Greek Revival style. The building housed the school until 1861 when it reorganized and moved to another building at Olympia Street and East Bay Drive. County commissioners who had yet to find a permanent home, purchased the structure in 1862, for a courthouse which was remodeled with courtrooms and offices in 1862. In 1871, the courthouse was leased for three years to Mrs. Churchill and Miss Pamela Case for a Girl's Seminary. Because many thought the building, reached over ungraded streets, wooden sidewalks and through woods, too remote from town for the convenience of county business, the county traded the property in 1875 for the town school which was at Legion and Franklin, closer to downtown. The sites were exchanged for \$300. That year also marked the creation of the Olympia School District as a separate entity. In 1884 two wings were added to the building, now called the Central School and in 1886, a high school course of study was inaugurated in Olympia schools. In 1891 the school building was abandoned because of the construction of other new school facilities and the building was later leased. In 1906 the school district sold the property to Dr. Mowell for \$2000 and he moved the school building to corner of Adams and Union where it now stands.

An Idaho native who grew up in Tumwater, Ada Sprague Mowell was a long-time teacher in public schools in King County, Skagit City, Littlerock, Hoquiam, Tumwater and Olympia and principal of Lincoln School. After her marriage to Dr. John Mowell in 1898, she became active in community affairs.

She was the only woman member of the Thurston County Council of Defense and actively worked with the Red Cross. She organized and headed the Minute Women who assisted in the war effort. The women assisted in the sales of Liberty bonds and helped with the Hooverizing campaign to save sugar, flour and all cereals. They collected \$.10 per individual per month and conducted local censuses to accomplish this work. They also distributed propaganda materials to locals. Mrs. Mowell organized women by school district. Their work continued after the war into the 1930s.

Mrs. Mowell was a longtime member of the Olympia Woman's Club and helped get the Carnegie Library built in Olympia. She also led the effort to clean up the Union/Pioneer Calvary Cemetery in Tumwater during the 1920s. She continued to serve the community until her death in 1953.

**Description of Physical Appearance** This is a rectangular, two-and-one-half-story wood frame structure built in the Foursquare style on a poured concrete foundation. Its hip roof is covered with composition shingles and has broad eaves with exposed rafters; it is broken by wide hip-roofed dormers on the front (south) and west facades. A one-story, hip-roofed porch wraps around the south and east facades; it is approached by a newer ramp with metal railings. The porch has been enclosed, except for a small area sheltering the double front entry doors. The aluminum and glass doors are a later addition. At the southwest corner is a one-story square bay with a broad overhanging roof. Fenestration includes wide double-hung sash with two-over-two lights, and wide single-hung sash with diamond-paned transoms, with smaller single-hung sash with two-over-two lights, and wide single-hung sash with diamond-paned transoms, with smaller single-hung sash in the dormers. The rear wall has a squared bay with a broad overhang, and a newer fire escape. The building is used as offices.

**Major Bibliographic References** Prosser, William, History of the Puget Sound Country, Lewis Publishing Co. New York, 1903.  
Information from the Daughters of the Pioneers Files, Obituary for Ada Sprague Mowell, Daily Olympian, January 7, 1953, pg. 14.  
Hunt, Hubert, Washington West of the Cascades, S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1916.

Stevenson, Shanna "First private school building here stands as monument to education," The Olympian/Neighbors Edition April 24, 1985.

**PHOTOS**



View of South Facade  
taken 10/17/1985  
Photography Neg. No. (Roll No./Frame No.):  
27-36A  
Comments: