

**Historic Property** Don & Irene Elliot House  
**Inventory Report for** 1603 4th Ave W, Olympia, WA 98501

---

**LOCATION SECTION**

---

**Historic Name:** Don & Irene Elliot House **Field Site No.:** 1327  
**Common Name:** **OAHP No.:**  
**Property Address:** 1603 4th Ave W, Olympia, WA 98501  
**Comments:** OLYMPIA

**County** **Township/Range/EW** **Section** **1/4 Sec** **1/4 1/4 Sec** **Quadrangle**  
**[REDACTED]** T18R2W 15 TUMWATER

**UTM Reference**  
**Zone:** 10 **Spatial Type:** Point **Acquisition Code:** TopoZone.com  
**Sequence:** 10 **Easting:** 506059 **Northing:** 5209875

**Tax No./Parcel No.** **Plat/Block/Lot**  
65500100200 Norton L 2 Block 1

**Supplemental Map(s)** **Acreage**  
.19

**IDENTIFICATION SECTION**

---

**Field Recorder:** ss **Date Recorded:** 1/28/2003 **Survey Name:** OLYMPIA

**Owner's Name:** Michael & Karena Houser **Owner Address:** 1603 4th Avenue W **City/State/Zip:** Olympia, WA 98501

**Classification:** Building **Resource Status** **Comments**

**Within a District?** No Local Register

**Contributing?** Survey/Inventory

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

**DESCRIPTION SECTION**

---

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

**Plan:** U-Shape **No. of Stories:** 1 1/2

**Structural System:** Braced Frame

**Changes to plan:** Intact **Changes to interior:** Intact

**Changes to original cladding:** Intact **Changes to other:**

**Changes to windows:** Slight **Other (specify):**

**Cladding** Brick - Common Bond **Foundation** Concrete - Poured

**Style** Modern **Form/Type** Single Family

**Roof Material** Asphalt / Composition **Roof Type** Gable

## NARRATIVE SECTION

Study Unit

Other

Date Of Construction: 1948

Architecture/Landscape Architecture

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Engineer: Unknown

Property appears to meet criteria for the National Register of Historic Places:

No

Property is located in a historic district (National and/or local):

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

### Statement of Significance

The Donald and Irene Elliott House is historically significant as an intact representative example of post WWII domestic architecture. The home is indicative of a period in time when architects, builders, contractors, and home owners were searching for a new "modern" style of architecture. As such the Elliott House has elements of three styles. Inside, archways reflects a Tudor Revival style, cornice returns and the façade symmetry outside reflect an unmistakable Colonial influence, while the glass block sidelights around the front entry door, hail from the Art Deco period.

The style of the home is referred to as Minimal Traditional. This style appeared just before World War II and continued to be popular into the 1950s. Often described as a compromise style, Minimal Traditional houses often reflect the forms of earlier housing styles, but lack their decorative detailing. Roof pitches are low or medium. The eaves and raking trim are usually close rather than overhanging. Generally built of wood framing, exterior wall cladding may be wood, brick, stone, or a mixture of materials. Most are relatively small houses, usually 1 to 1 ½ stories. In the post war era, when land was cheap, the style was built in great numbers, commonly in large tract developments. The Elliott House is typical of this era.

Inside the Minimal Traditional house was the first child-oriented house design. The lack of servants, nannies, or nearby relatives left housewives with childcare and house keeping burdens. It was hoped that open floor plans, big yards, efficient machinery, and homogeneous neighborhoods of young families, would lighten the burden. With this goal in mind, bedrooms were set apart from the rest of the house; like in the Elliott House. To save floor space and to create the illusion of more room, entry halls and vestibules were often eliminated so that visitors came directly into the living room. Unnecessary partitions and doors, such as those between living and dining areas were also omitted. Large back porches and patios encouraged family activities in the back yard, instead of the front. Due to rigid standardization of building materials and stock sizes, post war building efficiency created eight foot ceiling heights and interior trim became very plain or omitted altogether. The Elliott House boasts many of these new features.

The big change in post war housing was not in the way the exterior of the building looked, but rather in what the building contained. Bathrooms, while small, became easy to use and easy to clean because of plastic counter laminates, built-in porcelain or enameled steel tubs and showers, ceramic tile wainscoting on the walls and floors of nearly seamless linoleum. Kitchens also changed. Although continuous linoleum or laminate countertops were known before the war, they became ubiquitous afterward. Overhead cabinets of painted wood or metal became standard. Gone forever were the hodge-podge of cabinets, worktables, sinks, and stoves on legs. Walls and ceilings gleamed with glossy enamel paint in fresh new colors. Work areas were well planed and illuminated with recessed ceiling fixtures or fluorescent tubes, undercounter lights and big windows. Peninsula and island counters made work easier.

Clean burning, closet-size, heaters were standard eliminating the need for the basement altogether. Smaller laundry machines were moved to more accessible space in first floor utility rooms. The car, which had become a de facto family member with the move to suburbs, now took up a place of honor at the front of the house with its own room, a carport or an attached two-car garage on the side of the house. The Elliott House is one such home with a prominent attached garage, directly accessible from the kitchen.

In 1945 Charles Norton platted a five block area surrounding the Elliott House as an infill project to earlier developments. Within two years, Norton had sold lot 2 of block 1 to Donald and Irene Elliott. Donald Elliott was a draftsman for the State Department of Highways. By 1951, he had advanced to an engineering aid with the department. By 1955, Donald had left the Highways Department and began working as a building plans analyst for the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. He served in that position until he sold the house, at which time he and his wife moved out of town.

Donald and Irene owned the home until 1961 when they sold the property to Robert and Jean Hallett. Robert was a loan officer for the National Bank of Commerce. During their ownership the Hallet's constructed the rear shed dormer and remodeled the attic space into a room. The Hallet's owned the home for just three short years, selling to Elmore and Nelora Borden in 1964. Elmer was a brewer for the Olympia Brewing Company and retired from working there in 1976. The Nelora remained in the home until 2001 when she sold the property to its current owners.

### Description of Physical Appearance

Constructed in 1948, the Donald and Irene Elliott House, located on the west-side of Olympia, is a 1 ½ story Minimal Traditional style home. The home sits towards the front of a 58' x 120' lot creating a large backyard and shallow front yard.

The stick frame dwelling is clad with raked brick veneer, laid in a common stretcher bond with flush joints. A soldier course surrounds the base of the home at the water table, and above the windows and doors. All of the gable ends are clad with twelve inch exposed clapboard siding.

The U-shape plan home is capped with a gable roof covered in green three-tab asphalt shingles. Simple cornice returns, formed by the gutters, are found at the boxed-in eaves. The main façade is dominated by two projecting gable wings and two large picture windows. The living room window measures 5'0" x 8'0", while the window in bedroom 1 is 5'0" x 5'0". Other windows on the home are wood, one-over-

two, double hung sashes in a cottage style arrangement. The rather simple main façade is highlighted by an ornate entry tucked into the corner of a raised concrete porch. Here, a solid maple veneer door is flanked by curving, full-height, glass block sidelights.

The asymmetrical façade of the rear of the home is anchored by a large projecting gable above the kitchen and a wide shed roof dormer, which was added in 1964. On the southwest corner of the home is a raised concrete porch, which was died green to match an original green asphalt roof. The concrete has faded over the years due to sunlight. The rear full-light exterior door off the formal dining room, is flanked by large picture windows allowing light to space. A half-light door to the left of the kitchen wing allows direct access to the garage and laundry room. The backyard contains no significant architectural or landscape features.

Inside is an emerging open floor plan, reflective of the construction date of the dwelling. The living and dining areas have hardwood oak flooring while the bedrooms are laid in maple. The living room space is highlighted by an angled, corner "circulating" fireplace. Manufactured under a variety of names, the "Heatform" fireplace by the Superior Fireplace Company, was a cutting edge product of the 1950s designed to save money on construction costs, and provide for a more effective heating device. The concept used a metal firebox (instead of brick), to circulate air through a surrounding larger metal box via a cool air inlet located on the side of the fireplace low to the floor. This cool air, now heated would exit through a decorative air outlet just above the firebox. While novel in its design, the product never took off, most likely due to the fact that it didn't work as well as it was advertised (see continuation sheet for advertisement of "Heatform" fireplace). The living and dining areas, separated by an arched opening, have lath and plaster walls and moderate size covered ceilings.

The two, 11'6" x 11'0", bedrooms feature his and her's cedar-lined closets, original glass shade ceiling light fixtures and lath and plaster walls. The two rooms are separated by a full bath. Here a period cast iron tub is built into southeast corner of the bathroom and features a round arched opening, reflective of the living/dining room arch. Remodeled in the mid 1970's, the current owners have rehabilitated the bathroom to a period look by the addition of a salvaged wall-hung sink resting on chrome legs, a round vanity mirror, period cylinder style light sconces, and black marmoleum floors all highlighted by black and vanilla colored tile wainscoting.

The kitchen remains original from the time of construction. Simple painted wood cabinets are highlighted by chrome pulls and black Formica countertops with chrome edging. In 2001, a new marmoleum floor was installed by the current owners. Here a 12' wide red boarder follows the cabinets around the edge of the room and is offset by a field of gray. In the southwest corner of the kitchen is a small eating area set aside for a breakfast table. Here, two large windows abutting the corner, flood morning light into the room.

On the second floor are three large rooms. At the top of the stairs is Bedroom 3. The 14'6" x 16'0" room features hardwood oak floors and a pair of one-over-two double hung cottage style windows on the east wall. A small door and a flight of two steps leads to a converted attic room which now serves as a playroom. In 1964, the second owners of the home constructed a large shed roof dormer on the south side of the room, which expanded the space to 17'6" square. Off the playroom, is a small sewing area, which has a single west-facing double hung window.

The home has no basement, but has a deep crawlspace, which is accessed, through the garage. The large attached garage on the east-side of the home, houses laundry facilities, an oil fired furnace and a half bath on the south wall.

**Major Bibliographic References**     Polk Directories, 1949, 1951-52, 1955, 1961, 1962, 1964, 1973.     "Olympians Get Permits for New Houses" The Olympian, Nov. 23, 1947, pg 6     City of Olympia Building Permits: No 8146, No. 7057, No. 3426, No.3521, No. 5021     "Preserving the Past: Homes Built in the 1940s and 50's are Eligible for Historic Status" The Olympian, Jan. 5, 2002, pg 5-6

---

## PHOTOS

---

**Historic Property**    Don & Irene Elliot House  
**Inventory Report for**    1603 4th Ave W, Olympia, WA 98501

---

View of    Front (north) façade  
taken  
Photography Neg. No. (Roll No./Frame No.):



Comments: