

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Nininger, Amos and Vera, House

and/or common N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 80 Hargadine Street N/A not for publication

city, town Ashland N/A vicinity of congressional district Second

state Oregon code 41 county Jackson code 029

**3. Classification**

| Category  | Ownership                                   | Status  | Present Use   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district               | <input type="checkbox"/> public             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied        | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied                 | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure              | <input type="checkbox"/> both               | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress           | <input type="checkbox"/> educational                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site                   | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                   | <b>Accessible</b>                                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object                 | <u>N/A</u> in process                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment                |
|   | <u>N/A</u> being considered                 | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted          | <input type="checkbox"/> government                   |
|   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> no                         | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial                   |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> military                     |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> museum                       |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> park                         |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> religious                    |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific                   |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation               |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> other:                       |

**4. Owner of Property**

name Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Thormahlen

street & number 80 Hargadine

city, town Ashland N/A vicinity of state Oregon 97520

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jackson County Courthouse

street & number Eighth and Oakdale Streets

city, town Medford state Oregon 97501

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Ashland Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1974  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Ashland Public Library

city, town Ashland state Oregon 97520

## 7. Description

|   |                                       |   |   |                             |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------|
| <b>Condition</b>                              |                                       | <b>Check one</b>                              | <b>Check one</b>                                  |                             |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good                 | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input type="checkbox"/> altered              | <input type="checkbox"/> moved                    | date <u>      N/A      </u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair                 | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    |   |   |                             |

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

The Amos and Vera Nininger House at 80 Hargadine Street in Ashland was constructed in 1909-1910 by Thomas J. Downing, builder and manufacturer of concrete block. The residence was sold the following year to the Niningers. The one-and-a-half story Tudor Bungalow is one of approximately twelve concrete block structures in Ashland, and one of only five such residences. Rectangular in shape, the house is constructed primarily of concrete block, with stacked block piers supporting a double-tiered porch. Concrete block was used also for the foundation and the retaining wall on the lower edge of the property. Wood is employed as casings for the windows, as applied "half timbering" in the stuccoed gable ends and for the roof framing system including the overhanging eaves on exposed rafters and triangular brackets which are characteristic of the Bungalow style. The Nininger House is located on a hillside and is two stories above grade on the north end. The triangular-shaped lot on which the Nininger House stands is distinguished by a large maple tree which marks the intersection of South Pioneer, Fork and Hargadine Streets and is visible from several points in Ashland. Alterations to the exterior are limited to the enclosure of a section of porch at the northeast corner of the upper story which is matched in materials to the weatherboards used at the rear of the house. On the interior, alterations are limited to the modernization of kitchen and bathroom and the addition of a fireplace in the 1930s. The interior walls are plastered. At the rear of the property stand two outbuildings, a garage and a concrete storage cellar. The storage building is contemporary with the house; the garage was constructed about 1920. A simple wood railing surrounds the roof of the garage. All alterations with the exception of the garage roof rail were done by the Nininger family about fifty years ago.

The Nininger House is located in Section 9, Township 39 South, Range 1 East, W.M., in Ashland, Jackson County, Oregon, on Tax Lot 4900, Assessor's Plat 391E 9 BC.

Including its double veranda, the house is rectangular in plan, measuring approximately 30 x 50 feet. Its longitudinal axis is oriented north to south. The one-and-a-half story house is built of hollow concrete blocks which measure 8 x 20 inches and have a rock-faced surface. The surface of each block is scored in several places which visually divides the block into five sections. The blocks are placed in alternating positions which varies the surface appearance. Concrete lintels are used at window openings.

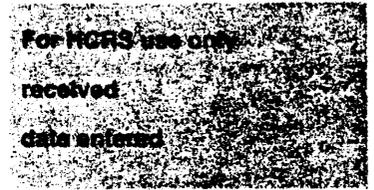
Channel siding is used for exterior walls at the back of the structure, specifically the base of a sunporch and part of the kitchen utility area.

The main volume of the house has a longitudinal gable roof with one minor cross axial gable over a projecting section on the east elevation and an offset gable at the north end. The veranda which wraps around the northeast corner of the house has a shed roof. All gable vergeboards are flared. Present roofing material is composition shingle, and three interior brick chimneys rise from the roofline. The foundation is concrete block with an eight inch sill. The two-story porch is supported by six colossal block piers, and a roughly textured cement and wood rail surrounds the upper level of the porch. The porch ceiling and main floor are wood. The ground level porch floor is cement.

The primary entrance to the Nininger House is on the north end of the east elevation

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 1

and is reached from Fork Street. The front door contains bevelled glass in a multi-light formation. Chicago school windows light the livingroom in east and north elevations. On the east elevation, a large central light is flanked by two one-over-one double hung windows. On the north elevation, the upper level window opening has a large central light with a transom and double hung windows with top lights on either side. On the lower level of the north elevation are one large double-hung window and a three-panelled door with one light. All doors retain screens in old frames. The west elevation has four double hung one-over-one windows and two doors which are panelled and have one light each.

Toward the rear of the west elevation and on the south end wall of the house are two large single-light windows which apparently enclosed an earlier screened porch area. Channel siding covers the south elevation.

The interior spatial arrangement is unchanged. On the main floor are two bedrooms and a sunporch in addition to the living room, kitchen and bath. On the ground level are four rooms which provide rentable living space. Currently, the space is rented to Shakespeare Festival directors. ✓

The interior finish of the house is simple. Plaster walls are trimmed with plain wood baseboard and door and window trim. Door openings from the living room are segmentally arched. The floors are soft wood. Simple cornice molding trims living room walls.

The concrete storage building, approximately 12 x 12 feet in plan, stands directly behind the house. It has a plain door opening, three windows and a hipped roof. The garage, measuring 18 x 24 feet was constructed in 1920 and has a flat, built-up roof and a simple wood rail around it. An expanse of lawn at the front of the building is bordered by narrow flower beds. A large maple tree stands at the north end of the lot. Birch and evergreen trees line the east side. Ivy covers the west exterior wall of the house. A second mature maple tree is at the rear of the property, near the south line. On the west side of the property, a concrete block retaining wall extends the length of the property line, matching the pattern of block used in the house. A wide brick path leads from the north point of the property to the lower level front door.

## 8. Significance

| Period                                    | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below    |   |   |  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric      | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric  | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning     | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499        | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic     | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation           | <input type="checkbox"/> law                    | <input type="checkbox"/> science                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599        | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> economics              | <input type="checkbox"/> literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education              | <input type="checkbox"/> military               | <input type="checkbox"/> social/<br>humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799        | <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> theater                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce     | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy             | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation          |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry    | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)         |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> invention              |   |  |

**Specific dates** 1909-1910      **Builder/Architect** Thomas J. Downing, builder

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The one and a half-story Tudor Bungalow at 80 Hargadine Street in Ashland, Oregon was begun in 1909 as a speculative project and completed in 1910. It is significant as the largest and most prominently sited house in the city having exterior walls constructed of hollow concrete block. Cast in molding machines which produced a naturalistic rock-faced surface, the block was manufactured locally by Thomas J. Downing, a builder whose special product may be seen in at least a dozen buildings and houses and in foundations and retaining walls constructed throughout Ashland between 1909 and 1912. Downing sold the house to Ashland grocer Amos Nininger in 1911. Nininger and his wife, Vera, occupied the house for fifty years until their deaths in 1962 and 1963, respectively. A distinctive feature of the house is the double veranda on east and north sides with its columns of concrete block. A distinguishing characteristic of the block manufactured by Downing is the simulation of coursed ashlar achieved through repetitive use of blocks with false rustication. The pattern creates the appearance of masonry units of varying size laid vertically as well as horizontally. It is a tour de force of tromp l'oeil, but the polite deception is given away in the unvarying regularity of the pattern. The Nininger House occupies a triangular parcel at the intersection of South Pioneer, Fork and Hargadine Streets on the hillside directly above Lithia Park and the theaters of the Oregon Shakespearean Festival. It represents a period of rapid growth in Ashland when new tracts and subdivisions were platted and the hillsides on either side of Lithia Park in Ashland Creek Canyon began to be developed intensively. Minor alterations to the house include enclosure of a section at the northeast corner of the upper level of the veranda, upgrading of the kitchen and bathroom, and addition of a livingroom fireplace in the 1930s. Outbuildings include a detached, concrete storage cellar which is contemporary with the house and a garage added to the property in the 1920s. The Nininger House possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling. It is significant for its association with its long-time occupants, Amos and Vera Nininger and as an outstanding example of the work of Thomas J. Downing, one of the few manufacturers of concrete block in southern Oregon, and whose career in Ashland was brief but productive.

The Nininger House evokes Ashland's rapid development and growth after 1900 when new homes filled newly-annexed additions and tracts. In 1910, a major growth year, residential development expanded to the land near Lithia Park and the hillsides above it, including the Ferguson Tract on which the Nininger House is situated.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas J. Downing moved to Ashland from the Gold Hill area about 1900. He worked first as a lumberman, establishing a successful business, and was chosen as city councilman to replace C.C. Chappell in 1905. An advertisement in the local paper in

<sup>1</sup>Ashland Tidings, January 3, 1910.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Ashland Tidings, 4/13/08, 4/1/09, 12/2/09, 1/3/10, 2/10/10, 4/11/10, 3/6/11.  
 Kahn, Renee, "The American Foursquare," Old House Journal, Vol. X, No. 2, pp. 30-31.  
 McArthur, Lewis L. "The First Concrete Block," unpublished paper on Miracle Block presented to Northern Pacific Coast Chapter, Society of Architectural Historians, Ashland, OR, 10/10/81.  
 Stickley, Gustav, Craftsman Homes, Architecture and Furnishings of the American Arts and Crafts Movement, Dover Publications, 1979.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one  
 Quadrangle name Ashland, Oregon-California Quadrangle scale 1:62500

### UMT References

|   |                   |   |  |   |      |         |          |  |  |
|---|-------------------|---|--|---|------|---------|----------|--|--|
| A | <u>1</u> <u>0</u> | <u>5</u> <u>2</u> <u>3</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>5</u> | <u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>1</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u> | B |      |         |          |  |  |
|   | Zone              | Easting   | Northing   |   | Zone | Easting | Northing |  |  |
| C |                   |   |  | D |      |         |          |  |  |
| E |                   |   |  | F |      |         |          |  |  |
| G |                   |   |  | H |      |         |          |  |  |

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The Amos and Vera Nininger House is located in Section 9, Township 39 South, Range 1 East, W. M., in Ashland, Jackson County, Oregon and occupies Tax Lot 4900, Map Reference 391E 9 BC.

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

|       |            |      |        |            |      |
|-------|------------|------|--------|------------|------|
| state | <u>N/A</u> | code | county | <u>N/A</u> | code |
| state | <u>N/A</u> | code | county | <u>N/A</u> | code |

# 11. Form Prepared By

|                 |                               |           |                      |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| name/title      | <u>Kay Atwood</u>             |           |                      |
| organization    | <u>N/A</u>                    | date      | <u>April 9, 1982</u> |
| street & number | <u>102 So. Pioneer Street</u> | telephone | <u>503/482-8714</u>  |
| city or town    | <u>Ashland</u>                | state     | <u>Oregon 97520</u>  |

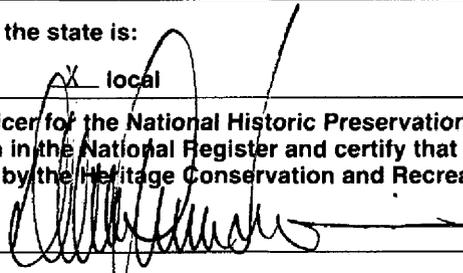
# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date September 29, 1982

For HCRS use only

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

*[Handwritten Signature]*  
 Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the  
 National Register

date 10/29/82

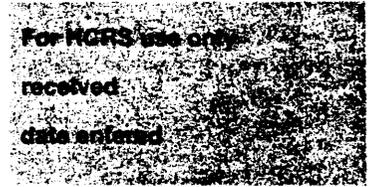
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

April, 1908 announced the construction of a new building where T.J. Downing would sell "lime, cement, patent plaster and cement blocks of all kinds . . ." <sup>2</sup> During the ensuing months, piles of the blocks were made in the preparation for the next building season. An April 1, 1909 issue of the Ashland Tidings read:

T. J. Downing's cement block works is crowded with orders and thousands of the finished products are on hand for structures now underway. The GAR will require blocks in their building enterprise . . . and the material entering into the residence of R.A. Payne on High Street will also be made at the Downing works . . . <sup>3</sup>

By the end of 1909 Thomas Downing had begun a speculative project.

T.J. Downing and an associate are perfecting plans for the erection of a cement block residence at the point where Hargadine intersects with Fork Street . . . an eligible location situated in proximity to Chautauqua. <sup>4</sup>

By February 1910 the house was well underway.

**BIG BLOCK BUNGALOW**

T. J. Downing has underway a commodious bungalow on the corner of the Ferguson tract above the Chautauqua building. The new residence will be constructed of cement blocks, and contain ten rooms, six upstairs and four in the basement in which will be supplied all the modern conveniences. <sup>5</sup>

During the spring of 1910 Downing constructed long sections of concrete work in the rough or broken ashlar pattern to form retaining walls along North Main Street, Scenic and Helman Streets and Hargadine Street. <sup>6</sup> During that year, he and a contractor in Roseburg were the only concrete block manufacturers listed in Polk's 1910 Jackson, Josephine and Douglas County Directory.

After a period of intense work extending over approximately four years, Thomas Downing moved away from Ashland. Amos and Vera Nininger became new owners of the residence at 80 Hargadine Street. The paper explained:

<sup>2</sup> Ashland Tidings, April 13, 1908.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., April 1, 1909

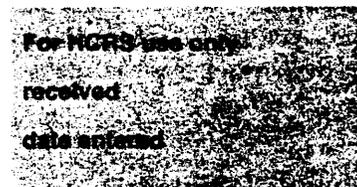
<sup>4</sup> Ibid., December 2, 1909

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., February 10, 1910

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., April 11, 1910

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

A. C. Nininger has exchanged property in Santa Ana California for T.J. Downing's fine residence at the intersection of Hargadine and First Avenue [Pioneer Street]. Possession is to be given within a few months.<sup>7</sup>

Amos Nininger arrived in Ashland in 1884 at the age of two years. His father, Charles E. Nininger, owned several properties in the railroad district including a livery stable, a business block and hotel near the Oregon and California Railroad passenger station. A member of the Dunkard sect, C.E. Nininger also served as pastor of the Ashland Brethern Church. In 1906 Charles Nininger moved to Sams Valley to farm, but retained ownership of his Ashland properties. The same year his son, Amos, married Vera Logan and began work as a grocer in one of his father's buildings on the northeast corner of B Street. His wife, born in Ashland in 1885, was the daughter of Charles A. Logan, Ashland's first permanent photographer, who recorded Ashland through the greater part of two decades.

Until his retirement in 1952, Amos Nininger worked continually to build businesses and progress with changes in Ashland. When railroad traffic decreased, he left the area which depended on travellers and moved his business to the downtown district. In 1922 he opened a restaurant in the bus depot at the corner of Pioneer and East Main Street. His last place of business was a grocery store on C street. Amos Nininger's various locations in business all remain standing. He died in June, 1962, and his wife died in April of 1963. The house on Hargadine Street which the couple occupied for 50 years is the most significant property in Ashland associated with the Nininger name.

The method of construction employed in the Nininger House is of particular interest. Hollow concrete blocks were manufactured in Ashland for a short period of four years, but they were popular with individuals eager to try something new. The blocks were used in several modest residences, some commercial structures, and walls and foundations throughout the community. The Nininger House is unique in size and design in comparison with four other residences of the type.

Concrete block manufacturing evolved with related construction technology and with the builder's interest in cheaper and practical materials.

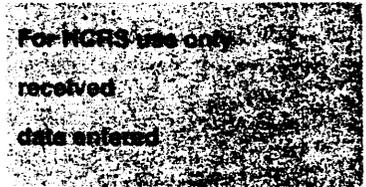
By 1905 America had a well developed technology for making concrete blocks . . . usually hollow for economy, insulation and waterproofing . . . blocks shaped like rough-cut stone became popular as did rusticated varieties with bevelled edges . . . Among the virtues cited for it were durability, fire resistance, and resistance to rot and vermin.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ashland Tidings, March 6, 1911.

<sup>8</sup> Kahn, Renee, "The American Foursquare," Old House Journal, Vol. X, No. 2, pp. 30-31.

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page

3

Pages in Gustav Stickley's Craftsman Homes contain photographs of houses planned for construction of either concrete or hollow concrete blocks.

Believing that a house built of cement or concrete should be exceedingly simple in design, with plain straight lines and unbroken wall surfaces, we have<sup>9</sup> carried out this idea as consistently as possible . . .

In a paper delivered to the Northern Pacific Coast Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians in 1981, Lewis L. McArthur explained that block manufacturing developed as steel bars became economical to produce for re-inforcement. His description of the sources of manufacture included two types:

1) Practical machines that were made by people who knew what they they were doing, and 2) others made by people who had a get rich scheme in mind . . .

Numerous patents were issued for the machines. The Sears Catalogue of 1907 illustrated the Wizard Block Machine with a variety of faces available. The Blakeslee Block and the Miracle Block were other types . . . the variety of sizes of blocks ran between eight inches square to eight by twenty-four inch block.<sup>10</sup>

In communities around the country the block quickly became popular. A survey of Ashland reveals approximately twelve concrete block structures. Five are commercial structures, five are private residences, one is an apartment building, and other a fraternal hall. The Nininger House and only one other house are comparable in size and detail. The other houses are small, and one has been completely covered by other material. The Nininger House retains all of its distinguishing characteristics and the feeling of the period in which it was constructed.

The house has a particularly important association with its setting. At the time of construction, 1909-1910, the Chautauqua structure and surrounding grounds had been welcoming audiences of campers for almost twenty years. The City Park in Ashland Creek Canyon was being planned and developed. In 1935 the first brief series of theater productions began inside the walls of the former Chautauqua Building, and the Oregon Shakespearean Festival was born. The proximity of the Nininger House to this hub of social and cultural life in Ashland makes the house a prominent landmark.

<sup>9</sup>Stickley, Gustav. Craftsman Homes, Architecture and Furnishings of the American Arts and Crafts Movement, Dover Publications, 1979, pp. 24 ff.

<sup>10</sup>October 10, 1981, Ashland, Oregon.