

**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 Watts, James Grant, House

and/or common Scappoose City Hall

**2. Location**

street & number 206 SE 1st Street \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Scappoose \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district 1st

state Oregon code 41 county Columbia code 009

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name City of Scappoose, Elizabeth E. Huser, Mayor

street & number PO Drawer "P"

city, town Scappoose \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state Oregon 97056

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Columbia County Courthouse

street & number \_\_\_\_\_

city, town St. Helens \_\_\_\_\_ state Oregon 97051

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Scappoose City Landmark has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date February 19, 1980 (Resolution #183)  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records City Hall

city, town Scappoose \_\_\_\_\_ state Oregon 97056

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

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

The sizable 2½ story wood frame house built for James Grant Watts in Scappoose in 1902 is a well-preserved, comparatively simply-finished, late example of the Queen Anne Style. It occupies a conspicuous site at the heart of town on a full city block on which some period plantings remain and which fronts both the Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railroad and Highway 30 (the Columbia River Highway). This, the house of the town's first mayor, is regarded the most stately house in Scappoose, and it is among the oldest now remaining in the incorporated area of what was an early farming settlement on the lower Columbia River.

Asymmetrical but essentially rectangular in plan, the house measures 29 x 46 feet, including front and rear porches. It is oriented west to east, and its west, or front elevation faces the railroad and highway. The central volume of the house is hip-roofed. Projecting sections on south, west and north elevations and the rear stem are gable-roofed. The roof cover is now composition shingles. Originally, two brick fare-top interior chimneys broke the roofline on the north and south slopes. The latter appears to have been rebuilt recently with a straight stack and corbelled necking.

Gable ends are shingled, and a wide belt course of shingles encircles the house between first and second stories. Otherwise, exterior walls are clad with shiplap siding. The ground story of the north projecting section is a slant bay window which lights the diningroom. Elongated window openings are fitted with double-hung sash with one over one lights. The walls are trimmed with simple corner boards and architrave and frieze at the top of the second story. The most distinctive features are varied vergeboard decoration and the shed-roofed veranda with railing, chamfered posts and frieze and brackets of spoolwork which extends the width of the front and wraps around the southwest corner of the house. A similar porch 6 feet in depth extends across the rear face. Access to the front porch is provided by concrete steps aligned with the front door, slightly offset from the center of the facade.

Little change has occurred to the exterior aside from the loss of pierced vergeboard decoration from the gable of the front elevation and removal of a detached well tower from the rear of the house. A minor, but nonetheless apparent change occurred to the membering of the attic window of the front gable which originally had nine lights over one, and which now has six fixed panes.

All original door and window trim--primarily natural finished redwood--is intact with hardware. Two leaded stained glass windows light the entry stairhall, and the staircase and wainscoting of the entry hall are natural-finish oak. Interior wall finish is lath and plaster

The ground story floor plan consists of an entry stairhall on the south and a front parlor and diningroom on the north connected by sliding doors. The diningroom and the library, or back parlor behind the stairhall, contain chimneypieces which ceramic tile surrounds. The remainder of the ground story is made up of a kitchen/service area, bathroom, and back stairway to the second story and basement. The basement, originally with dirt floor, was finished in concrete at the time the central heating plant was installed in 1948. The kitchen appears to have been remodeled in the 1950s. Electrical wiring was brought up to code for public building use in 1974. At the same time, the basement ceiling was sheetrocked and the furnace sealed off. A fire door was installed at the top of the front stairway, but it is not visible from the entry hall.

The second floor plan consists of four bedrooms and a rear service room and bathroom arranged around a central corridor.

## 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ 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 type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1902

Builder/Architect Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The commodious 2½ story house in the late Queen Anne vernacular style built for James Grant Watts in 1902 occupies a full city block with period plantings fronting the Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railroad and Columbia River Highway in the small lower Columbia River farming community of Scappoose. Thought to have been named for the Chinookan word meaning "gravelly plain," Scappoose was an early settlement in Columbia County. Members of the Watts family arrived on the scene as early as 1852. The town was not incorporated, however, until 1921, and James Grant Watts was elected first mayor and served two terms. This, the last house occupied by J. G. Watts and his family, is on land once a part of the 640-acre donation land claim of Watts's grandfather, William Watts, and it is significant to Scappoose both as the only intact building associated with the pioneer Watts family remaining in town, and as one of the oldest--if not the oldest--and best-preserved of the community's historic houses. It was acquired by the City of Scappoose in 1969 and operated as a rental property until 1974. Since 1975, the opening of the Bicentennial era, the house has been jointly occupied by the City and the Scappoose Historical Society, which group was responsible for its renovation with American Bicentennial Commission funds for use as a history museum and city hall for the community of 3,150. On February 19, 1980, by resolution of the City Council, the house was declared a Scappoose Historical Landmark. Thereafter, the house was adopted by the Columbia Herald, a weekly newspaper published in Scappoose, as the masthead logogram. The J. G. Watts House is, in fact, the community's historic governmental building. Because there was no city hall in 1921 when the town was incorporated, public business was conducted at the house of the Mayor, who had pushed for incorporation. The Watts House also doubled as a library after a fire destroyed the building serving as a library in 1929. The house continued as Scappoose's public library building until new quarters were obtained in 1959.

James Grant Watts (1864-1956) was the son of James Washington Watts (1835-1872), who arrived on Scappoose Plain in 1852--as a boy of 17--with his father, William Watts, his step-mother and several brothers. James Washington Watts married Elizabeth Nessley of a pioneer family in a neighboring community in 1861. Their second son, "Grant," as he was often called, was educated in local schools and graduated from Portland High School in 1888. Upon his return to Scappoose, young Watts opened a mercantile business with his brother-in-law, D. W. Price. He was elected County School Superintendent and served in that capacity for eight years. In 1890 he married Rose Ewing, a teacher who had come to her Columbia County post from Iowa. In 1898 Watts was elected County Clerk. He served in the latter capacity until 1902. The house which is the subject of this nomination is associated with the later life of James G. Watts--the period during which he returned to operating his general store and achieved the apogee of his public career as Scappoose's first mayor. Creation of a modern water system was a legacy of Watts' mayoral administration.

James G. Watts' great uncle, Benjamin Watts, who kept a trail log for the period 1849-1852, was the first member of the Watts clan to settle on Scappoose Plain. Having emigrated, as did J. G. Watts' grandfather, William Watts, from Kentucky via Missouri, Benjamin Watts acquired and earlier established donation land claim in 1852.

William Watts' second son, and J. G. Watts' uncle, John William Watts, moved to Lafayette in neighboring Yamhill County within five years of his arrival at Scappoose and pursued a dual

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Trail Log, 1849-1852, of Benjamin Watts, great uncle of James Grant Watts.  
 Interview with James and Irene Watts, 729 SE 6th St., Scappoose, OR, son and daughter-in-law of James G. and Rose Watts, 1980.  
 "Pioneers of Columbia County, Oregon," Columbia County History (St. Helens: Columbia County Historical Society), Vols. 1, 9 and 14, including note on James Grant Watts.

# 10. Geographical Data

**UTM NOT VERIFIED** (see continuation sheet)  
**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

Acreege of nominated property less than one (200x200')  
 Quadrangle name Chapman, Oregon Quadrangle scale 1:24000

**UMT References**

A	Zone <u>10</u>	Easting <u>5096810</u>	Northing <u>51061671610</u>	B	Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

**Verbal boundary description and justification**

Lots 1 through 8, inclusive, Block 5, Greenwood Addition, City of Scappoose, Columbia County, Oregon.

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

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary Pintarich

organization Scappoose Historical Society date March 1, 1980

street & number Rt. 1 Box 606-B telephone 503/543-7478

city or town Scappoose state Oregon 97056

# 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 [Signature]

title Deputy SHPO date September 24, 1980

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>Carl D. Skell</u>	date <u>11-28-80</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest: <u>[Signature]</u>	date <u>11/26/80</u>
Chief of Registration	

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

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

Watts (James Grant) House

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

1980

career as physician and preacher. He earned the nickname "Foghorn" in the Oregon senate, but he achieved greatest notoriety when he was elected a Presidential elector on the Republican ticket in 1876 while also serving as postmaster of Lafayette. Oregon's Governor LaFayette Grover, a Democrat, contested the legality of an elector holding two federal offices at the same time. The issue became a cause celebre, but a special electoral commission in Washington, D.C. validated the Republican electoral votes, and the decision is said to have given Watts the distinction of casting the decisive vote for Rutherford B. Hayes.