

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	AUG 1 1979
DATE ENTERED	OCT 4 1979

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC William Henry Shobert House

AND/OR COMMON
Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 621 Shobert Lane

CITY, TOWN

Ridgefield

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Washington

VICINITY OF
CODE

COUNTY

Clark

CODE

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 type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input 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 Lloyd M. Chase

STREET & NUMBER
621 Shobert Lane

CITY, TOWN

Ridgefield

VICINITY OF

STATE

Washington 98642

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Clark County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
621 Shobert Lane

CITY, TOWN

Ridgefield

STATE

Washington 98660

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Clark County Cultural Resource Inventory

DATE 1977-78

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS Regional Planning Council of Clark County

CITY, TOWN

Vancouver

STATE

Washington

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Shobert House is located on a broad flat terrace high above the Columbia River floodplain near the southern edge of the town of Ridgefield. The property as it exists today is a small portion of the original Donation Land Claim of Frederick Shobert, and a corner of the present lot reached Lake River, where Shobert's Landing once provided access to the community and even gave it its name for a short time. Situated on slightly more than two acres of property, the farmhouse is isolated from its nearest neighbors and is reached by a long gravel driveway leading from Shobert Lane, a private road connecting to Shobert Avenue, the southernmost east-west street of the town. From its elevated site the house commands a magnificent vista to the west and south, across the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge on the floodplain below to the Columbia River, where ocean-going vessels can be seen making their way upriver to Vancouver and Portland, Oregon.

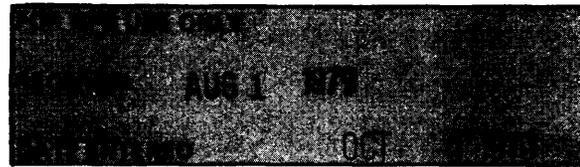
The house is surrounded by lawn, fruit and other types of trees, large and small shrubs, and ornamental plantings. Many of the farm's dependent structures -- a barn, prune drier, chicken coop, and other outbuildings -- have disappeared. There remains near the house a 20' x 30' gable-roofed shed, sheathed in clapboard and wood shingles, which originally was used for fruit and wood storage and as a root cellar.

The Shobert House is a two and one-half story, wood frame structure supported by a brick and concrete foundation. The basic form is a simple rectangle, amplified by projecting two-story polygonal bays on the north and west elevations, and embellished by three open porches -- remnants of the original veranda which once encircled the house. The large hipped roof is interrupted by gables over the two projecting bays and at one end of the east elevation. In 1973 the south elevation was altered by the addition of a large polygonal dining room off the kitchen with a rectangular bathroom unit above.

The house is sheathed in shiplap siding between cornerboards, which has been duplicated in the recent addition. Fenestration is consistent throughout: tall, narrow, rectangular windows of one-over-one light, double-hung sash. Only the central windows of the two bays are exceptional, being wider and consisting of a single sash and transom. Window enframements are wide, plain surrounds with simple lugsills and moulded shelf heads. Half-round windows appear in the three identical gable ends, which are covered with diamond-pattern shingles under a moulded, boxed cornice and wide frieze. The open scrollwork is typical of the "adjustable gable ornaments" found in catalogues of regional millwork manufactures. The three open porches also exhibit such standard decorative details as

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turned posts, grooved balusters, scroll and spindle brackets, and other spindle trim.

The interior retains much of its original character. The stained and varnished woodwork of the first floor remains unpainted and incorporates such features as grooved door frames with decorative corner blocks, picture moulding, and turned balusters. The original dining room (now used as a second parlor) has a plate rail above fir wainscoting, a glass-fronted corner china cabinet, and other built-in cabinetry. Doorknobs throughout the house were positioned only 30" from the floor to accommodate the diminutive Mrs. Shobert, who was 4'10" tall. The opening between the original parlor and dining room has been altered and both of these rooms as well as the hallway have modern floor and wall coverings.

In addition to the spaces mentioned, the first floor also contains a bedroom in the northeast corner; a kitchen which has been remodeled, but which still retains some original cabinetry; a pantry which has been converted to a laundry room with 1/4 bath; and a recently appended dining room which is accessible from the kitchen.

The small but gracious entrance hall is dominated by a straight stairway leading to a narrow second-story hallway giving access to four large corner bedrooms. Two of these have included in their space the upper portion of the two-story polygonal bays and have especially fine views from their windows. Woodwork on this upper floor has been painted throughout and a closet has been added in each bedroom. A large modern bathroom was placed over the new dining room when that addition was made in 1973. An enclosed stairway leads to a spacious unfinished attic.

While the individual elements of the Shobert House are not unique or exceptional, the total composition of substantial house and extensive property on a magnificent site conveys a sense of the success and accomplishments of a pioneer family.

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/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 type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1905-07

BUILDER/ARCHITECT William Henry Shobert

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

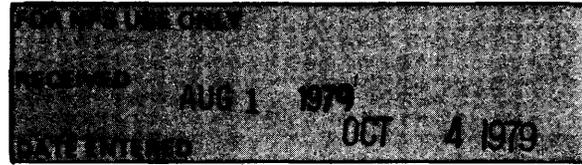
Although there are many small, wood-frame houses in Ridgefield which pre-date the Shobert House, none exhibits the substantial scale, high level of craftsmanship, and richness of detail which distinguishes this residence of a member of one of the town's pioneering families. The Shobert House is a well known landmark in Ridgefield and Clark County and has remained in the possession of family members until very recently. Its eminence is largely due to its builder, William Henry Shobert, an experienced carpenter who was also responsible for the construction of the community (Presbyterian) church and several other local buildings. The Shobert House remains the most significant historic structure in Ridgefield and represents the culmination of the accomplishments of one of its preeminent pioneering families at a time when the town was a flourishing rural river community.

James Carty, an Irishman who had worked for the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Vancouver, was the first Euro-American to settle at the site of the present town of Ridgefield. Arriving in 1839, he built a cabin at the Indian crossing of Lake River. During the period that the Donation Land Act was in force (1850-55) there was an influx of settlers to the area, and claims were filed on most of the land here as elsewhere in Clark County. Frederick Shobert's DLC comprised a half-section encompassing lowlands on both sides of Lake River as well as a portion of the ridge above the river as far east as Gee Creek. The "mud landing" which he established at his cabin site on the east bank of Lake River gave its name, Shobert's Landing, to the small community which was developing along the bottom lands and up on the ridge as well.

More settlers arrived after the passage of the Homestead Act in 1862, and their number increased with the end of the Civil War. Shobert's Landing became a trading and supply center, serving the local farming and logging community. By 1865 it had acquired sufficient importance that a post office was established with the designated name of Union Ridge, since many of the local homesteaders were veterans of the Union Army. A later postmaster from the southern state of Virginia objected to the name and petitioned for a change. Thus, in 1890 the town became known as Ridgefield.

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The story of the settlement of the Shobert family at Ridgefield is fairly typical of the move westward of early pioneers to Clark County. Frederick Shobert and his brother Napoleon had gone to California in 1849 to try their luck in the gold rush. When success eluded them they returned to Illinois, but determined to seek their fortune and future in the Oregon Country. In 1852 they made the trip west by wagon and ox team, Napoleon riding as scout, Frederick and his eldest son Stephen driving the wagon and herding the stock. Frederick's wife Catherine tended to the three younger children, Amanda, Polly, and William Henry, then only three years old. They spent a year in Portland in order to assess the opportunities and then came to settle on the rich floodplain of the Lower Columbia, about two miles upstream from the point where Lake River enters the Columbia. Frederick filed his donation land claim on June 1, 1853, and Napoleon filed on property up on the ridge in October of that year.

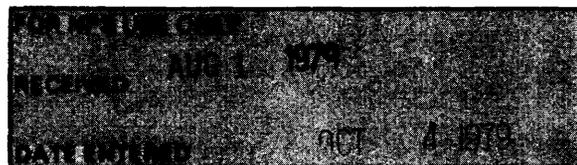
During the succeeding decades the Shobert men, including Frederick's sons, engaged in the typical activities of pioneers on the Lower Columbia. They fished the river from Sauvie Island, using horses to pull the purse seine ashore, and tended fish wheels as far as the mouth of the Columbia. They hunted pheasant, ducks, and geese on the floodplain between Lake River and the Columbia (now the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge), and sold their fish and wildfowl catch at the Portland market. The two or three day trip to Portland was worth the effort since Mallard ducks brought as much as \$2.50 per dozen and feathers were in demand at 50 cents per pound.

Others traveling to Portland, St. Helens, or Vancouver stopped at Shobert's Landing to wait for passage or borrow a boat. There were always delays in connection with river travel and there were occasional strangers arriving. The Shobert home, with additions, gradually became a lodging house. When the steamers began stopping regularly the landing was a place to leave and pick up a shipment. Settlers who were cutting wood for the steamers hauled their cordwood there. Drummers stopped at the Shoberts to show their wares, then hired a horse or made their rounds on foot. One of these was Aaron Meier of the pioneer firm which later became Meier and Frank, now a prestigious Portland Department Store.

Frederick's eldest son Stephen went off to the mines in Idaho during the 1860's but he returned to become postmaster in the Union Ridge settlement in 1873. He opened the first store there in partnership with J. J. Thompson in 1882. The second son, Henry, added carpentry

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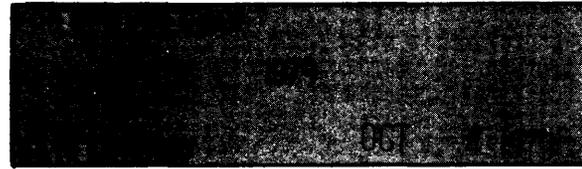
to his skills and built the first church in the community in 1884. His brother Stephen donated the land, and Henry furnished the bell. The church was an important social center as the town gradually developed. One of the first industries was a creamery established by N. C. Hall of Vancouver, who had been impressed by the amount of milk and cream being shipped from the area farms and decided to process the dairy products locally. A chair factory operated on Gee Creek, and in 1897 a steam powered grist mill was built on the slope between the ridge and Lake River. Part of the mill property was taken, however, when a branch line of the railroad came through Ridgefield in 1901. The completion of this branch line, which had been delayed for over a decade, brought the filing of a number of town plats and a period of activity on the part of real estate promoters. The crest of the ridge became the center of development. Neat residences spread out on tree-lined streets from the small commercial center where the store, church, post office, school, livery stable, hotel, and lodge halls were clustered. A local election resulted in incorporation of the town in 1909.

It was in this ambience that Henry began building his second house in Ridgefield. He had married Susan Jane Brinn, daughter of another pioneering family, and they had produced nine children. Family tradition holds that one or more of Henry's daughters helped him in constructing the house, which was to become the showplace of the town upon its completion in 1907. The Shoberts enjoyed many years of residence in their impressive house. They saw the town flourish briefly in the early decades of this century when local lumbering operations were important and dairy farming was profitable. In 1916 the steamboat "City of Ridgefield" was built and launched on Lake River. It ran between Ridgefield and Portland, carrying mainly dairy products. But traffic patterns were changing. River steamers were in less demand as railroads and then modern highways became the preferred transportation routes.

William Henry Shobert lived in the house until his death in 1942 at the age of 93. His wife Susan died in 1948. Their bachelor son Clifford occupied the house for many years until it was purchased in 1973 by a granddaughter, Claudia Shobert Hanke, who partially restored and renovated the building. Many original features were thus retained and the house stands today as a reminder of the significant place of the Shobert family in the history of Ridgefield.

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The Columbian (Vancouver). "Old House a Landmark," November 18, 1973.

Hanke, Claudia Shobert (granddaughter of William Henry Shobert).
Telephone interview, October 14, 1978.

Jones, Roy F. (editor). "Pioneers Came Early to Ridgefield Area;"
"The Shoberts;" "Union Ridge and Ridgefield;" "Railroads;"
"In the Early 1900's." Clark County History. Fort Vancouver
Historical Society, 1:62-72 (1960).

Shobert, Mrs. Edwin (widow of son of William Henry Shobert). Personal
interview, September 6, 1978.