

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

RECEIVED  
JAN 21 1992

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Bexell, John, House  
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 3009 NW Van Buren Ave  not for publication  
city, town Corvallis  vicinity  
state Oregon code OR county Benton code 003 zip code 97330

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>    </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
James M. Hancock January 3, 1992  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Oregon State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_  
Christine A. Lee 2/26/92  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

---

**6. Function or Use**

---

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

---

---

---

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

---

---

---

---

**7. Description**

---

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals:Tudor (Norman Farmhouse)

---

---

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation reinforced concretewalls wood: shingles; stuccoroof asphalt: composition shinglesother decorative half timberingbrick terrace wall

---

---

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

---

### The John Bexell House

The John Bexell House occupies an approximately 50' x 100' lot on the northwest corner of Van Buren Avenue and 30th Street in Corvallis, Oregon. The long axis of this property runs east/west along Van Buren, and the house faces south onto that street. It was designed by the firm of Bennes & Herzog, of Portland, Oregon, for John and Dena Bexell in 1926. John Bennes, who designed at least 21 campus buildings at nearby Oregon State University, is believed to have been the principal designer of the house. Bexell was Dean of the School of Commerce at then Oregon State College.

The Bexell house is an excellent example of the Tudor Revival style, which was popular in Corvallis in the 20's. The exterior of the house is virtually intact as built. A complete set of marked-up working drawings and specifications (copies of which are included) is in the possession of the current owners, and very few differences are found between these and the house today. One basement window has been enlarged to provide legal fire egress (it is, however, still contained within its original window well); custom-colored removable storm windows have been added to all 36 regular shaped windows; and the exterior paint color has been changed from a light green with darker green trim to a dark red. Several changes have been made to the interior. The kitchen (1964-69) and upstairs bathroom (1980) have been completely reworked, but within their original walls. The full-size basement, which was originally left unfinished with a fruit room and laundry and furnace areas, has been remodelled (1982) to contain a studio, a bedroom, a bath, storage, and laundry facilities. Otherwise, only minor interior alterations and additions have been made.

### Massing

The house is in the form of a simple, single-story block carrying a very steep (16/12) gable roof, with a low, shed-roofed wing extending east along half of the 30th Street elevation. There is an attached, gable-roofed garage on the west. This garage roof is of a lower pitch than the main one, and their ridges are parallel, creating a valley between the two structures. The main house roof is elaborated into usable living space by a complex set of wall dormers on each slope. These dormers are similar and symmetrically disposed with regard

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1b

---

to the north/south roof ridge. They are made up of a shed-roofed central portion sandwiched between two smaller gablet, which are roofed at the same pitch as the main gable. There is a large rectangular, central chimney of combed brick with two flues, rising several feet above the roof peak.

### Siting

The principal block of the house is pushed somewhat east of center on the lot, increasing the size of the more private back yard. This effect is accentuated by the lower sunroom wing and its adjoining terrace, which extend the mass of the house gently east toward 30th Street. The yards on the north and south are minimal because of the strategy of orienting the building on the short axis of the lot.

### Landscape

The back yard is noted as "lawn and garden" on the original plan. Today it is enclosed by a large laurel hedge along Van Buren Avenue, and the surface is mostly paved with concrete and asphalt. Other surviving plantings known to have been made by the Bexells include several large lilacs near the northwest corner of the garage, hydrangeas along the north side of the house, and a laurel hedge enclosing the terrace adjoining the sunroom.

### Construction

The house is of wood frame construction, built on a full, reinforced-concrete basement foundation. The first-floor walls are sheathed in painted, comb-sawn cedar shingles, and this treatment extends up to the sill level of the windows in the gable ends. Above the second floor windows in the gables the wall surface becomes stucco between false half-timbering, applied to imitate traditional structural patterns. The stucco and half-timbering are also incorporated into the two large dormer systems. The roof is very steep (16/12), providing considerable attic space even above the second floor. It springs from the top of the first floor walls, and is currently roofed with composition shingles. There is a gutter, with elaborate scuppers on the east side. While the original specifications call for composition shingles only if the owner was willing to bear the additional expense (!), it is unclear from historic photographs whether this was done. In the section where the main roof joins to the lower-pitched sunroom shed roof, the rafters are curved to visually ease the transition. The barge board also reflects this curve.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

---

### Elevations

South: A large oriel window, centered and supported on decorative brackets, dominates the gable end of the principle elevation. Below, two double casement windows with segmentally arched heads serve the living room. They are separated by about eight feet. To the left is a smaller protruding gabled structure with a round-arched opening which shelters the front porch. The front door here is flanked by eight-light leaded glass side panels and topped by a semi-circular leaded window. To the right is the sunroom with a grouping of two casement windows flanking a fixed panel of lights. The garage front is set back at the left, with a gated opening at its right which serves the kitchen door. The garage closes with a three-segmented bifolding door with small windows in the upper sections of the panels.

East: This elevation is dominated by the expanse of the roof surrounding a dormer system of flanking gablets, and a central shed section. The gablet dormers each have two casement windows, and the central shed has a pair of casements. The lower floor presents a continuous array of windows on both the protruding sunroom wing and the dining room. In the sunroom section there are two fixed panels flanked by casements. In the dining room window sills are much lower, coming within a foot of the floor, with one 18-light fixed panel flanked by casements, giving the illusion of French doors, and the entire array topped by three short windows forming a graceful segmented arch. There is a brick wall, with upswept ends, dividing the terrace north of the sunroom from the east laurel hedge which shields the terrace and the dining room windows from the street.

North: The proximity of the property line makes this the least significant aspect of the house. It is similar to, but simpler than, the front elevation, having no bow window and no sunroom extension. There are paired windows for the dining room, separated by about three feet, as well as paired windows for the breakfast room and kitchen. A small window for the lavatory and an off-center small window for the garage complete the array of windows on the first floor. The second floor bedroom presents three windows and the bathroom one. All of these windows are double-hung. The north side of the sunroom, facing onto the terrace, accesses the outside through a single 18-light French door, flanked by six-light fixed side panels located under a highly decorative pediment.

West: Once again, this is an elevation dominated by the roof of the house with its elaborate dormers. The dormer windows are all casements on this side, one

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

---

looking out from the bathroom and an unmatched pair from the stairwell. The garage wall, with a paired set of double-hung windows off-center toward the left, obscures about half of the lower portion of the house. That portion which is visible contains two small round-headed windows, one a single pane on the porch side wall and the other an elegant 14-light window looking out from the foyer (there is an identical round-headed single pane window on the east wall of the porch).

### Interior

**First Floor:** Just inside the front door is a generous foyer. The front door, painted on the outside, boasts a rich mahogany veneer on the inside which matches the wood of the newel post anchoring the straight-run staircase rising along the outer (left) wall one faces upon entry. A hall along the right edge of the staircase leads to the kitchen through a single panel door. A right turn leads through an archway to the living room, with a fireplace on the inner (left) wall and two large windows on the outer (right) one. The fireplace boasts a mahogany mantel with a Tudor arch framing beige tilework accented by two highly detailed relief tiles, one presenting a castle and the other a pastoral cottage. Identical arched recesses flank the fireplace, the one to the left containing a recessed bookcase with four shelves and the one to the left housing the doors to the dining room. To the east, through a pair of 12-light bifold French doors, is the sunroom, from which one may then exit onto the terrace. A left turn just before entering the sunroom leads through a pair of 18-light French doors to the dining room, which in turn communicates to the left through a swinging door with the breakfast room. This breakfast room is situated on the right and is separated from the passage-way by means of an arched opening echoing the arches in the living and dining rooms. The passage is flanked on the left by a pantry area. Continuing ahead to the west, through yet another arched opening, one enters the kitchen area. There is a small lavatory tucked between the kitchen and the garage. At this nexus, the architect's penchant for doors is epitomized in the juxtaposition of five doorways (seven if one includes the doors to the broom closet and the built-in ironing board). It should be noted that the foyer, main hall, living room, sunroom, and dining room are all finished with elaborate cove and picture molding.

**Second Floor:** The bathroom is located at the head of the stairs in the northwest corner of the house. This floor is further divided by a central east/west hall into two generous bedroom suites, nursery on the left and master bedroom on the right. At the east end of the hall is a small room noted as

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

---

"sewing room" on the original plans. The arches accenting the first floor are repeated on the second in the alcoves leading to the walk-in closets on the east wall in the two main bedrooms, as well as over the bow window on the south wall of the master bedroom. The two bedroom suites are finished with picture molding.

Basement: Remodelled as noted above.

Finishes: Except in the kitchen, the basement, and the upstairs bath - which have been modernized - the original finishes, hardware, fixtures, and trim work are virtually intact. A small broom closet has been removed from the sewing room, the plumbing fixtures in the lavatory have been replaced, built-in cabinets have been added to the alcove reserved for the ice-box by the back door, and paint colors are known to have been changed in some cases.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Education  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1926  
1926-1938  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1926  
1926-1931  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

John Andrew Bexell (1867-1938)

Architect/Builder

John Virginus Bennes (1867-1943)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property 0.13 acres Corvallis, Oregon 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	0
---	---

4	7	7	5	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	9	3	5	1	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

  
 Zone Easting Northing

C 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

  
 Zone Easting Northing

D 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is located in SE $\frac{1}{4}$  NW $\frac{1}{4}$  Section 34, Township 11S, Range 5W, Willamette Meridian, in Benton County, Oregon. It is legally described as Lot 6, Block 1, of Hollenberg's Addition to the City of Corvallis and is otherwise identified as Tax Lot 7900 at said location.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property encompasses the house designed by John V. Bennes for John A. Bexell in 1926 and the entire urban tax lot historically associated with it which measures 50.51 x 114.70 feet in size.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Tamara D. Stehr, property owner, with assistance from David Skilton  
 organization N/A date July 3, 1991  
 street & number 3009 NW Van Buren telephone (503) 758-5029  
 city or town Corvallis state Oregon zip code 97330

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1A

---

The two-story Norman Farmhouse constructed in 1926 for college dean John Bexell and his wife, Dena, at the corner of Van Buren Avenue and 30th Street on the periphery of the Oregon State University campus in Corvallis, was designed by the firm of Bennes and Herzog. The house occupies a 50 x 100-foot lot at the northwest corner of the intersection and faces south onto Van Buren Avenue.

The house is significant under Criterion C as a locally distinguished and well-preserved example of historic period residential architecture in the Tudor Revival, or Norman Farmhouse style. It is a two-story rectangular volume with gable end entry offset to the west side that is balanced on the east by a single-story, shed-roofed wing which is sheltered by the flaring sweep of the main roof slope. The main volume is enclosed by a steeply-pitched gable roof, the ridge of which is perpendicular to the facade. Long, shed-roofed dormers on either side are planked by gabled dormers at either end.

The stylistic character of the house is proclaimed by the shingle-clad facade, which is accented by stuccoed and "half-timbered" gables. The main gable with its close verges is jettied over a central, polygonal second story bay, or oriel which has decorated, stuccoed spandrel. The double-hung windows of the bay have divided lights in upper sashes. These, at present, are covered by storm windows. Tall, double-leaf, or French windows having segmental arch heads light the front living room. The rest of the windows are multi-paned, either round-headed or arranged in banks. Although no true Tudor arch is apparent on the exterior, one hallmark of the idiom is the label molding that finishes the round-headed porch entrance. Eclecticism characteristic of period architecture of this type is evident in the Georgian windows and lunette top light of the front entry.

The interior continues the blend of styles with Tudor, or segmental-arched and four-center arched portiere archways and firebox opening used in combination with a Georgian staircase anchored by a newel post with urn finial. The house, apart from kitchen and bath remodelings and a change in exterior color treatment, is unaltered. The early treatment is reported to have been pale green with darker green trim. At present, the body and trim color are dark brown-red. A gable-roofed, single-bay garage is attached to the west wide of the house, set back from the facade

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1B

plane. Though matching in treatment, it is not counted a separately contributing feature. It is an integral part of the house.

The house holds significance to the university community also under Criterion B for its association with the original owner-occupant. John Andrew Bexell (1867-1938), a native of Sweden, emigrated to America with his family at a young age, was raised in the Midwest and entered into the field of higher education as an expert in business science. He came west in 1903 to head the School of Commerce for Utah Agricultural College at Logan, where W. J. Kerr was the president. In 1908, Bexell followed Kerr to Oregon Agricultural College to assume similar duties as dean of the developing School of Commerce there. He held the post to 1931, building the reputation of his school to national prominence as a pioneer in the development of business methods in farming. He was the author of three widely-used textbooks, including Principles of Bookkeeping and Farm Accounts, which was in its eleventh printing by the time the Bexells moved into their ultimate Corvallis house. The book was the standard authority in the field of agricultural business. Bexell was commemorated on the campus of Oregon State University in the renaming of the Commerce Building, which was designed by John Bennes in 1922. The building was rededicated as Bexell Hall after the dean's death in 1938. The nominated property, the final residence of five in Corvallis occupied by the Bexells, is the one bearing the most important association because it represents the culmination of a distinguished career. It was designed and built just four years before Bexell reached emeritus status. In its spacious living and reception room, it epitomizes the hospitality the Bexells customarily extended to colleagues, students and friends in academic life.

John Bennes, principal in the Portland-based firm of Bennes and Herzog, is thought to have had the leading hand in the building's design. The house plans bearing the firm's title block are dated 1922. John V. Bennes (1867-1943), also raised in the Midwest, is one of the designers of rank in annals of Oregon architecture. He is well known for his several Portland residences that effectively introduced the Prairie style to Oregon. He is noted, too, for much fine work in the tradition of Beaux Arts Classicism for the State System of Higher Education. His Administration Building of 1929 for Eastern Oregon State College in LaGrande is listed in the National Register. Against the backdrop of a significant array of

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1C

---

monumental architecture from his hand on the Oregon State University campus, the Bexell House is a contrasting example in the romantic tradition. It is a comfortable, yet dignified domestic type stylistically appropriate and serviceable for a college dean. The building ranks in the outstanding category of single family houses of the English Cottage/Norman Farmhouse style in Corvallis, based on analysis of local cultural resource data.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1AA

---

### John Andrew Bexell

The "John Bexell House" was built by plans commissioned from the prominent Portland, Oregon architectural firm of "Bennes & Herzog" and dated May 1, 1926. One can presume that John Bexell, Dean of the School of Commerce at Oregon Agricultural College (later Oregon State College and finally Oregon State University) from 1908 to 1931, was well acquainted with John Bennes, architect for more than 30 years at Oregon Agricultural College and designer of at least 21 buildings on that campus between 1909 and 1939. Among the latter's achievements at OAC is counted the "Commerce Building," completed in 1922 and today known as "Bexell Hall." Thus, the lives of the owner and of the designer of the "John Bexell House" are intertwined in more ways than one.

John Andrew Bexell was born in Bexet, Sweden, on June 8, 1867, to Swan Johnson Bexell and Kristina (Anderson) Bexell. His father, a stonemason and farmer, brought the family to the United States in two stages, in 1881 and 1882, settling in Bancroft, Iowa. Young Bexell entered the preparatory school at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, in 1889, becoming a freshman in the regular college in 1892 and receiving his Bachelor of Science degree from that institution in 1895. He thereupon joined the faculty of the Business College at Augustana, serving as a professor of bookkeeping, arithmetic, civics, and later banking. He continued his studies there as well, earning a Master of Arts degree from Augustana in 1901. Bexell remained on the faculty at Augustana until 1903, when he was called to Utah Agricultural College in Logan, Utah, to serve as director of the School of Commerce at a salary of \$1,400.00. Bexell may have left Augustana to further his career, but he would retain a great affection for this prominent Lutheran college, leaving to it in his will the contents of his personal library and provisions for both "The Bexell Scholarship Fund" and "The Bexell Library Fund in Social Sciences." The high regard was mutual, for when Bexell was offered the position in Utah, an April 1903 edition of the Augustana Observer asked rhetorically, "Shall we let Prof. B. leave Augustana? Why, certainly not." And, too, the college would grant him his second honorary Doctor of Laws degree, in 1935.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1bb

---

Bexell remained at Utah Agricultural College from 1903 until 1908. President of that college was Dr. W. J. Kerr, who was later to serve as president of Oregon Agricultural College. These two men would be associates for nearly 35 years. At UAC, Bexell not only organized and developed the seven-year business course there, he also served as secretary of the board of regents and business manager of the college.

In 1908, Bexell was called to Oregon Agricultural College to serve as dean of the School of Commerce, a school which was still in its infancy but, which, under Bexell's able leadership, would grow to be the largest of the ten degree-granting divisions at the College and enjoy national prominence, exercising "constructive influence on the development of commercial education throughout the country." During his first two years at OAC, Bexell also served as manager of the business office, but resigned from those duties in 1910 to devote himself fully to the School of Commerce.

Bexell made his mark not only at OAC, but statewide and even nationally as both an educator and an author. He was a "pioneer in the development of business methods in farming," the central tenet of his work and research being that "there is a business side to every vocation." He published bulletins with the U.S. Bureau of Markets in Washington, D.C., and authored three nationally-distributed textbooks (including Principles of Bookkeeping and Farm Accounts, and First Lessons in Business). Naturally, Bexell was an active member of numerous professional organizations.

When Bexell retired from his Deanship in 1931 (interestingly, his successor also came to Oregon State via Utah), the State Board of Higher Education honored him with an appointment as Dean Emeritus, "in recognition of distinguished service and notable achievements which entitle [him] to relief from the many administrative burdens that [he has] borne with unsparing devotion." Further adulation would follow with the honorary Doctor of Laws degree awarded by now OSC to Bexell in 1932. His achievements and contributions were summarized in laudatory tones in obituaries after his death in Corvallis on February 6, 1938, following a long illness which had kept him bedridden for years (Parkinson's Disease). He was remembered as a "pioneer figure in Oregon higher education." Then-OSC president Peavy, a colleague of Bexell's for 28 years, paid tribute as follows: "He was a steadfast friend, kindly, considerate, just - always in his years of service to Oregon State College he touched in a fine and enduring way the minds and hearts of thousands of young men and women. This achievement, weighed alone, constitutes a valid claim to immortality." Friends and family alike would not soon forget "Uncle Bex." And of course,

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

---

Bexell would achieve a further measure of immortality when it was decided in later years to change the name of his "Commerce Building" to "Bexell Hall."

Bexell was married at the age of 30 to native Iowan Dena Dahn in 1897 at Rock Island, Illinois. Although she never pursued a career in her own right, Dena Bexell appears to have been an exemplary example of that class of devoted wives from an earlier era who managed their households with uncommon zeal and efficiency, ever ready to serve the community and fully support the husband in his chosen career, all the more so in this case as the couple was childless. She was a fastidious homemaker, given to folding the dirty sheets neatly before placing them with the other laundry and to aligning her centerpieces with the aid of a measuring tape. Bexell's devotion to his wife is evident in various drafts of his last will and testament. The couple was prominent in the Corvallis community, often appearing in the local social columns upon the occasion of a trip or other event. (Following her husband's death, Dena Bexell sold the Bexell home on Van Buren Avenue in 1938 and returned to the Midwest to be near relatives. She died on March 25, 1961, in Illinois.

Reportedly, the Bexells lived in at least five different houses in Corvallis. In addition to the subject of this application - their final residence in Corvallis - they are said to have lived at Tyler Avenue and Sixth Street, on Monroe Avenue on College Hill, and at Sixth Street and Harrison, as well as at 762 SW Jefferson (the latter is documented in the Corvallis Cultural Resource Inventory as having been commissioned by Bexell in 1908).

The house at 3009 NW Van Buren - the subject of this application - embodies the success of a prominent professional at the zenith of his career. Bexell turned 60 in 1927, the year the house was likely occupied. The home is relatively large compared to most of its neighbors, and particularly so for an older, childless couple. However, the spacious size of the rooms obviously facilitated the entertaining for which the Bexells were known (teas, receptions, etc.), and the graceful and elegant design details throughout bespoke the owners' positions at the college and in the community. Versatile architect John Bennes' talent was employed in this residential commission to the best advantage of the owners, displayed in a traditional style executed to the highest standards of workmanship (the attention to detail is attested to by the lengthy pages of specifications passed down to the Bexells' niece Elizabeth Ekstrom and in the possession of the present owners). Although most members of the OSU community are today familiar with the name Bexell because of "Bexell Hall," it is with the "John Bexell House" that this dedicated educator left his personal mark on the community with which he and his wife shared so much of their lives.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

---

### John Virginus Bennes

More than any other architect, John V. Bennes defined the character of the Oregon State University campus in Corvallis, responsible in whole or in part for the design of 21 buildings there between 1909 and 1939. His considerable architectural achievements were by no means limited to that campus, however. He also made significant contributions to the Portland cityscape and is known for his outstanding residential designs in a variety of styles.

Bennes was born either in Peru, Illinois, or in Bohemia (now part of Czechoslovakia) and may have been related to Czech president Eduard Benes. In any case, he grew up in the Midwest and received at least part of his education and training in Chicago. He is said to have received part of his architectural training in Czechoslovakia as well. After marrying Annice Smalley of Hoopston, Illinois, in 1899, Bennes moved to Baker City, Oregon a year later, where he practiced as a successful architect. In 1906, he moved on to the challenges and opportunities to be found in Portland.

Although the Bennes oeuvre in Portland would ultimately include a large collection of commercial designs - including the Arthur and Hamilton Hotels, Art Deco apartment buildings, the pioneering reinforced concrete Lowengart Building, contributions to Temple Beth Israel, and the Hollywood Theater - Bennes initially made his mark in Portland with his striking residential designs, becoming that city's principal and foremost exponent of the Prairie School with his designs for the Marcus J. DeLahunt house (1909), the Aaron H. Maegly house (1914), and his own residence in Arlington Heights (1911). In the home he designed for himself, in particular, Bennes not only created an exemplary Prairie Style exterior, but indulged in the theme consistently throughout the interior, even having a personal hand in the creation of the very woodwork.

Bennes' varied and inspired contributions to Portland's architectural landscape and to the Corvallis campus were in part solo efforts and in part the result of fruitful partnerships with a variety of Oregon architectural luminaries, ranging from Erick W. Hendricks and Willard F. Tobey, through Lewis Irvine Thompson, to "Deco King" Harry A. Herzog.

Although actively practicing his craft in Portland during the teens, 20's and 30's, Bennes was equally prolific further south on the campus of Oregon State in Corvallis. While his Portland creations continue to serve as major and minor embellishments to the larger eclectic cityscape, his contributions in Corvallis

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

---

virtually define the character of the campus core, creating an educational landscape which has impressed itself on the minds and hearts of countless students and educators as "The University." Most of his buildings on the campus embody the American Renaissance trend which marked much institutional architecture in those decades. The designs are superbly rendered and include a wealth of detail which continues to delight the public today. Although the elegant and spacious interiors of buildings such as Home Economics and Kidder Hall have sometimes been victimized by subsequent renovations and remodelings, admiring and imaginative observers can picture in the mind's eye their appearance of 60 or 70 years ago. And, of course, with relatively few exceptions, the exteriors continue to exude the reassurance and stability offered by classical symmetry and detail.

Little is known about Bennes' possible contributions to the residential landscape in Corvallis during the 30 years he served as architect for the College. He was certainly a versatile stylist who would have been quite capable of contributing to the design of many of the more elegant homes built by college faculty and administrators in Corvallis during that same period. Historic period styles dominated the building arts during the 1920's, of course, and Bennes is known to have had the skills to successfully run the stylistic gamut at will in his residential designs. The "John Bexell House" which is the subject of this application certainly is an extremely well-executed design, boasting a wealth of elegant detail both inside and out. Unfortunately, the Bennes' archives do not appear to have survived intact anywhere, so it is impossible to accurately assess the scope and nature of his other possible contributions to residential architecture in Corvallis.

Bennes' status as a prominent architect in Oregon is confirmed by his membership in the Oregon Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, in particular by his service to that organization as vice-president in 1920-21 and as president in 1922. Further, he was a member of the Oregon State Board of Architect examiners from 1923 to 1937. He served that body as vice-president in 1923 and 1935, and as president from 1924 to 1933. When the licensing of architects began in Oregon in 1919, Bennes received license number 17 under the grandfather clause.

After retiring, Bennes moved to Los Angeles in 1943, dying there a few months later of illness on November 29, 1943.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

---

### Campus Buildings at OSU designed by John V. Bennes

1909	Production Technology (originally Industrial Arts Complex)*
1911	Amory*
1913	Social Science (originally Dairy Building)*
1913	Batcheller Hall (originally Mines Building)*
1913	Agriculture Hall*
1914	Home Economics+
1915	Men's Gym+
1917	Kidder Hall+
1917	Forestry+
1919	Farm Crops+
1920	Extension Hall+
1920	Graf Hall (Extension Laboratory)+
1922	Bexell Hall (Commerce Building)+
1924	Pharmacy+
1924	Heating Plant+
1926	Women's Gym+
1927	Dryden Hall (Poultry Veterinary)#
1927	Covell Hall#
1928	Weatherford Hall (Men's Dormitory)#
1936	Erma Plageman Infirmary (Student Health)+
1939	Gilbert Hall (Chemistry)+

\* Bennes & Hendricks

+ Bennes

# Bennes & Herzog

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 6

---

House Ownership

1. BEXELL, John A. & Dena S.
2. ZIEFLE, Adolph & Cresence F., purchased June 25, 1938, from Dena Bexell, for \$10 [sic!], per Deed #25890, Bk 92 - Pg 353.
3. MITCHELL, Ruth & Perry, purchased July 7, 1964, from Ragnvald G. Flood, guardian of Cresence Ziefle, widowed, for \$13,300, per Deed-Guardian, Bk 191 - Pg 667, Inst.# 61204.
4. NELSON, Ronald J. & Lee R., purchased January 14, 1970, from Ruth & Perry Mitchell, for \$24,900, per Warranty Deed M-17253, Inst.# 1325.
- 4a. CARY, Frank A., granted half March 3, 1976, by Lee Nelson, for \$0, per Deed-Estate by the Entirety M-63659, Inst.# 59358.
5. EDWARDS, James Michael & Barbara George, purchased August 6, 1977, from Lee & Frank Cary, for \$56,000, per Warranty Deed M-83544, Inst.# 81539.
6. GOESCH, Tamara D., purchased October 15, 1981, from Barbara & James Edwards, for \$113,900.00, per Warranty Deed M-32897-81, Inst.# 29926.
- 6a. STEHR, Christian P., granted half May 6, 1986, by Tamara D. Stehr who took title as Tamara D. Goesch, for \$0, per Deed-Estate by the Entirety M-76997-86, Inst.# 070567.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

---

### Bibliography

Bergendoff, Conrad John Immanuel, Augustana...a profession of faith; a history of Augustana College, 1860-1935, Rock Island, Illinois, Augustana College Library, 1969.

Bosker, Gideon, Frozen Music: A history of Portland architecture, Portland, Oregon, Western Imprints, the Press of the Oregon Historical Society, 1985.

Clark, Robert Carlton, Willamette Valley Oregon. 1927. Vol. III, p. 683.

Clark, Rosalind, Architecture Oregon Style, Portland, Oregon, Professional Book Center, Inc., 1983.

Ekstrom, Elizabeth, niece of John and Dena Bexell. Interview with author, Corvallis Oregon, May 1986.

Ferriday, David, owner/resident of Arlington Heights Bennes home. Interview with author, Portland, Oregon, June 1991.

Perry, Ruth, co-owner of John Bexell House, 1964-69. Interview with author, Corvallis, 1990.

Perry, Ruth, "The Prize."

Ritz, Richard, consultant for Carrie L. Russell Residence registration form. Interview with author, Portland, February, 1991.

Tolin, Nancy, grandniece of John and Dena Bexell. Interview with author, Corvallis, 1990.

Vaughn, Thomas, A Century of Portland Architecture, Portland, Oregon, Oregon Historical Society, 1967.

"Alumni Notes," Augustana Observer. April 1903.

Augustana Alumni Register, Augustana College and Theological Seminary, Rock Island, Illinois, Rock Island, Illinois, Alumni Association, 1924.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 2

---

Augustana College Catalogs, 1890/91 - 1903/04, Augustana College Library.

Augustana Observer. April 1903, page 57.

Benton County records, deeds, and map.

Blueprints, John A. Bexell House, 3009 NW Van Buren/Corvallis Oregon,  
Bennes & Herzog, 1040 Cham. of Comm. Bldg., Portland Oregon, 5/1/26.

"Building History Information," OSU Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

"Chronological Record of OSU Design Projects and their Design Firms," OSU  
Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

"Commerce Dean Arrives," The Oregonian, October 8, 1931.

Construction contract for basement remodeling, July 26, 1982.

"Dr. J.A. Bexell, Dean Emeritus at OSC, Gets Honor," June 4, 1935.

History Cards for John Andrew Bexell, OSU Archives, Corvallis, Oregon.

"Impressive Last Rites Held Today for Late Dean Bexell," 1938.

Inventory No: 603B, Corvallis Cultural Resource Inventory Form.

Last Will and Testament, John Andrew Bexell, April 1, 1930.

"Locals," Daily Gazette Times, Corvallis, Oregon, 1927.

Obituary (John V. Bennes), The Oregonian, November 30, 1943.

"O.S.C. Dean Dies of Long Illness." February 6, 1938. Obit., OSU Archives.

"Pioneer O.S.C. Deans Honored," The Benton Independent, Corvallis, Oregon,  
August 6, 1931.

Registration form for Carrie L. Russell Residence, July, 1990.

Specifications, John A. Bexell House.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   9   Page   3  

---

Swedish-American newspaper clipping (in Swedish), from the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center, Linder File, courtesy of Augustana College Library, undated and 12/5/08.

Town & Country Realty sales sheet, 1980.

Will of John Andrew Bexell, April 26, 1930.

