

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

For NPS use only

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

received JUN 28 1987
date entered AUG 1 1984

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

1. Name

historic Willamette Station Site, Methodist Mission in Oregon

and/or common Willamette (Lee) Mission Site (35 MA 5001)

2. Location

street & number Willamette Mission State Park N/A not for publication

city, town Gervais, Ore. vicinity of Fifth Congressional District

state Oregon code 41 county Marion code 047

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name State Parks and Recreation Division, Oregon Department of Transportation

street & number 525 Trade Street SE

city, town Salem N/A vicinity of state Oregon 97310

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Marion County Courthouse

street & number 148 High Street NE

city, town Salem state Oregon 97310

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1957 onward federal state county local

depository for survey records National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior

city, town Washington state D.C. 20240

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Introduction

The site of the Willamette Station of the Methodist Mission in Oregon (1834-1841) is located in the central Willamette Valley approximately 10 miles (16.1 km) north of Salem, Oregon (Marion County seat and State capital). The site is on the east side of Mission Lake, a former Willamette River channel, in the west $\frac{1}{2}$ of the northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 67, Township 6 South, Range 3 West, Willamette Meridian. The nominated area, approximately 6 acres, constitutes one portion of the original 16-section Methodist mission land claim which was settled in the 1830s by the Reverend Jason Lee and his band of Methodist missionaries. The mission had been organized for the benefit of local native populations.

Archeological excavation carried out at the site in 1980 focused on the main mission house, the center of the Methodists' missionary campaign in the Northwest. The main house site, of primary significance, is situated in riparian vegetation adjacent to Mission Lake. A peripheral site situated 325 feet (100 meters) to the southeast in a plowed area contains evidence of what is thought to be the mission blacksmith's home and shop (secondary significance). The mission house faced southeast with a frontal dimension of 64 feet. Square footage of the entire house (three connected log buildings) is difficult to calculate since the dimensions of one of the buildings are unknown. Approximately 448 square feet (138 sq. meters) of the house-site was excavated in 1980, while 3 test units (32 sq. ft., 10 sq. meters) identified the blacksmith shop locality.

Neither wood structural members nor a foundation of the mission house have survived. The quality of integrity of the house-site was based on the retention of the pattern of architectural features and deposited materials. Disturbance was a factor which affected the archeological context, especially in the blacksmith shop area; however, the two sites were able to accurately convey their historic identity through location, architectural arrangement and/or the types and ages of associated cultural material. The mission site, specifically the main house-site, was not totally excavated. Thus, additional data is potentially present in the unexcavated portions of the house.

Boundary Justification

The missionaries are known to have claimed over 10,000 acres of land during their period of mission work, and most of this land was put to agricultural use. The exact boundaries of this large area are unknown. Three settlement localities are documented, however: (1) the mission headquarters (1834), which is the site under consideration for nomination and which embodies the spiritual, economic and political ideals of the mission, (2) the "hospital" site (1837), which was the center for farm administration and doctoring one mile east of the headquarters (under consideration for nomination on another inventory form) and (3) the Mill Creek site (1841), which represents the relocated mission headquarters that eventually grew to become the city of Salem.

Approximately 6 acres of land are proposed for nomination. No standing structures are encompassed within this area. Included in the nominated area are two archeological sites which have been identified by excavation and analysis to be the main mission house-site, and the site of the blacksmith shop. Since the mission was a complex of houses, out-buildings, shops, etc., additional archeological sites are possibly contained within the area, but their exact positions are unknown.

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The nominated area (see attached map) was first surveyed in 1930 for the creation of a County park to commemorate the Oregon mission. The park boundary was re-surveyed in 1980 once the site parameters were confirmed through archaeological investigation. Mission Lake constitutes the west boundary, and the east boundary bisects agricultural land. The north and south boundaries adequately encompass the extent of the mission compound. This partitioned area of land was legally transferred by Circuit Court order from Marion County to State ownership on May 24, 1982, and is now a part of Willamette Mission State Park. The nominated area reflects the presence and activities of the mission enterprise in Oregon, and should be preserved, maintained and protected as a testimony to the mission endeavor and to the permanency of American settlement in the Northwest.

Environment

The Willamette Valley is bounded by the Cascade Range to the east, the Calapooya Mountains to the south, the Coast Range to the west, and the Columbia River to the north. The Willamette River flows through the valley in a northerly direction to the Columbia River. The Willamette Valley has a modified marine climate with wet winters and warm, dry summers. The basal geology of the Willamette Valley is Eocene to Miocene in age, and is covered by nonmarine sedimentary deposits of Quaternary age. The upper geological strata consist of silty and clayey lacustrine sediments deposited during Pleistocene inundation of the valley. Middle Pleistocene gravels are overlain by sandy silt, and modern floodplain deposits mantle parts of the valley floor. The mission site lies 110 feet above sea level on a broad alluvial flat known as Mission Bottom. Soils closely approximate the Chehalis series: Well-drained haploxerolls on 0 to 3 percent slopes. They have a dark brown (10 yr 3/3) silty clay loam A horizon over a dark brown (10 yr 3/3) silty clay loam B horizon.

A 20 to 30 meter wide strip of riparian vegetation borders the east side of Mission Lake in the vicinity of the mission site. The riparian community harbors black cottonwood, big-leaf maple, willow, and Oregon ash as the main overstory. Blackberry, California hazel, snowberry and thimbleberry comprise the understory shrub species. Numerous non-woody species of herbaceous plants and grasses are also part of the understory. The vegetation type existent at the mission site is typical of a riparian zone affected by flood and fire control. The peripheral mission site area, to the east of the riparian vegetation, is frequently used today for agricultural production.

Archaeological Investigations

Visible above ground surface evidence of the mission house has been nonexistent for many years. Thus, the exact location of the house-site has been, until 1980, a controversial subject. The general location was determined after a literature search was undertaken in 1979 at the request of the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. An archaeological survey to find the specific location was then authorized by the Preservation Office in 1980. Field work was conducted by archaeologists from Oregon State University. Transects were surveyed along the east bank of the 1834 Willamette River channel (Mission Lake) beginning several hundred meters north of Wheatland Ferry landing and

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extending to the southern end of Mission Lake. A low frequency scatter of historic debris on high ground adjacent to Mission Lake defined the only historic site observed during the reconnaissance. An historical marker had been placed on the high ridge close to the lake in 1930 to commemorate the mission settlement.

Eight 1 by 2 meter test units were excavated in the probably mission site vicinity (see attached site plan). Test units were excavated in arbitrary 20 centimeter levels. Soil was screened through quarter-inch mesh screens. Cultural material was recovered to a depth of 45 centimeters, and excavation was discontinued at a maximum depth of 60 centimeters. A total of 449 artifacts were recovered during reconnaissance and testing. An analysis of the datable artifacts indicated an occupation predating 1830. The time frame, location and functional sets of artifacts pointed to the discovery of the actual site of the Willamette Mission.

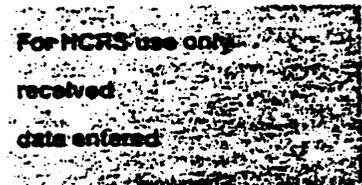
Questions concerning the boundaries of the mission compound, the integrity of the site, the site's interpretive potential, and the possible inclusion of the site on the National Register of Historic Places were posed by the results of the literature search and test excavations. As a consequence, the Preservation Office requested an expanded program of archaeological assessment of the site. This program represented the third and final phase of the Willamette Mission project. Again, Oregon State University archaeologists accomplished the task. Small test units were abandoned in favor of large, open surface excavations.

Based on the preliminary testing program, the least disturbed portion of the site was situated adjacent to Mission Lake in the vicinity of test units E and F. This portion was determined to be the location of the main mission house. A standard Cartesian grid was imposed on the entire site for horizontal control and a datum was arbitrarily set at 100 meters provided vertical control. A 4 by 14 meter excavation block was defined, connecting and extending beyond test units E and F. A second 4 by 8 meter excavation block was established on the edge of Mission Lake north and west of the larger block. The two blocks were eventually connected (Block A). Within each block the basic excavation unit was a 2 by 2 meter square. Excavation was conducted in 10 centimeter arbitrary levels because no well defined stratigraphic units were noted in the test units. All 2-meter squares within a block were excavated simultaneously. Care was taken within each 10 centimeter level to find cultural material in situ and preserve spatial relationships until the same level was complete over the entire block. Once the cultural material was mapped and photographed, the level or feature was removed and excavation continued. All sediments removed from the excavation were passed through quarter-inch mesh hardware cloth to ensure more complete recovery of cultural material.

The site area east of the lacustrine vegetation had been badly disturbed by annual plowing of the fields. Rarely did mission period cultural material exceed 30 centimeters in depth. Plowing over most of the site had exceeded that depth. Further testing employing 2 by 2 meter test units was accomplished in the open field. These units only barely succeeded in defining the probable locations of buildings.

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Archaeological Context

The Phase III archaeological assessment of the site resulted in the excavation of 552 sq. ft. (170 sq. meters) to an average depth of 40 cm and the recovery of 9,093 artifacts. The blacksmith shop was identified in Block C by the discovery of a high percentage of "clinkers" (forge residue). After analysis, it was clear excavation of the mission house-site (Block A) primarily involved exterior spaces such as the "front yard" and a gravel floor area located within the back "L" of the three connected log buildings (see attached map). Excavated interior spaces included the north-east corner of the first mission log cabin (1834) (the bulk of this building site had been excavated in the 1920s), about one-half of the kitchen/dining room cabin (1836), and a portion of the 1839 rear extension building which was used for a school room and dining room.

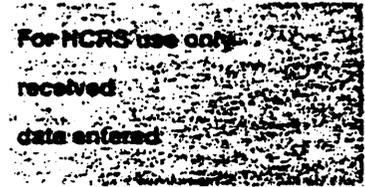
Though small, fragmented, and sometimes corroded, 89 percent of the artifacts were successfully proven to date to the period of mission occupation. Of this total assemblage, 93 percent are classified into known functional categories and presented in the following outline:

Personal Items

| <u>Article</u> | <u>Quantity</u> |
|---|-----------------|
| <u>Clothing</u> | |
| Buttons | (27) |
| Eye-loop button attachments | (2) |
| <u>Adornment</u> | |
| Glass beads | (23) |
| Signet ring seal | (1) |
| <u>Body Ritual and Grooming</u> | |
| Mirror fragments | (6) |
| "Wash" bottle fragments (minimum of one bottle) | (6) |
| <u>Indulgences</u> | |
| Alcohol bottle fragments (minimum of two bottles) | (28) |
| White clay pipe fragments (minimum of five pipes) | (56) |
| Steatite pipe fragment | (1) |
| <u>Pastimes and Recreation</u> | |
| Agates | (249) |
| Petrified wood | (6) |
| Jasper | (53) |
| Other collectible rocks | (24) |
| <u>Ritual</u> | |
| Brass crucifix | (1) |

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Pocket Tools and Accessories

- Pocketknife (1)
- Watch fob (1)

Domestic Items

Furnishings

- Tacks (6)

Housewares and Appliances

- White earthenware fragments (minimum of nine vessels) (1076)
- Transfer-printed earthenware fragments (minimum of 32 vessels) (467)
- Shell-edge earthenware fragments (minimum of 11 vessels) (133)
- Hand painted earthenware fragments (minimum of 11 vessels) (144)
- Yellow ware fragments (minimum of five vessels) (86)
- Redware fragments (minimum of one vessel) (3)
- Porcelain fragments (minimum of two vessels) (5)
- Unidentifiable burned ceramic fragments (153)
- Utilitarian vessel fragments—stoneware and earthenware (minimum of seven vessels) (35)
- Spoons (4)
- Forks (2)
- Knife (1)
- Cast iron vessel fragments (minimum of one vessel) (7)
- Cast iron fragments (157)
- Cast iron cauldron fragments (minimum of two vessels) (2)
- Brass container cap (1)
- Flint strike-a-light (1)

Cleaning and Maintenance

- Brass sewing thimble (1)

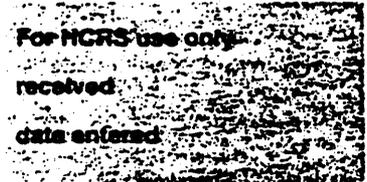
Architecture

Construction Materials

- Window glass fragments (2490)
- Hand wrought nails (185)
- Machine cut nails (659)
- Nail fragments (891)
- Cast nails (2)
- Brick fragments (243)
- Mortar (4)
- Clay daub (160)
- Wood (2)

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Construction Hardware

- Hand wrought iron object (1)
probable identification: door latch bar
- Hand wrought or cast iron object (1)
probable identification: door latch catch
- Hand wrought or cast iron butt hinge fragment (1)
- Hand wrought iron object (1)
probable identification: hook

Commerce and Industry

Agriculture and Husbandry

- Buckles (3)
probable identification: harness buckles
- Wagon bolt (1)
- Whiffletree hook (1)
- Horseshoe nails (6)

Hunting

- Cooper percussion cap (1)
- Lead balls and shot (35)
- Gunflints (9)
- Projectile points (11)
- Scraper fragment (1)
- Lithic debris (64)

Construction and Manufacturing

- Adze blade (1)
- Copper rivets (2)
- Iron rivets (1)
- Nuts (2)
- Washer (1)
- Bolt fragment with attached washer (1)
- Screws (2)
- Punch (1)
- Coal pieces (2)
- Clinkers (311)

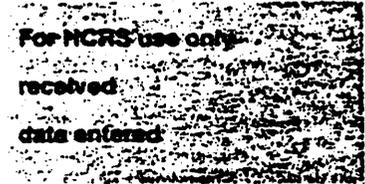
Group Services

Education

- Slate pencil fragments (17)
- Slate tablet fragments (28)

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Unknowns--Metal

Iron

- Unidentified iron implements and objects (11)
- Metal bushing fragments (2)
- Wire fragments (4)
- Thick wire fragment (1)
- Strap iron fragment--width 1/2 inch (1.3 cm) (1)
- Strap iron fragment--width 3/4 inch (2.0 cm) (5)
- Strap iron fragments--width 1 1/4 inch (3.2 cm) (3)
- probable identification: barrel hoop fragments
- Iron chunks (2)
- Concave metal disc with center perforation--
diameter 5/8 inch (1.5) (1)
- Iron sheet fragments (6)
- Conical iron fragment (1)
- Unidentifiable metal fragments (0.58 lbs/0.27 kg) (334)

Lead

- Square lead object with circular perforation--
dimensions 3/4 x 3/4 inch (2.0 x 2.0 cm),
height 3/8 inch (1.0 cm), perforation diameter
3/16 inch (1)
- Lead object with eight longitudinal facets and bore through
center (does not extend complete length of artifact)--
length 7/8 inch (2.2 cm), width 1/4 inch (0.7 cm),
diameter of bore 1/16 inch (0.15 cm) (1)
- Lead sheet fragments (14)
- Lead chunks (2)

Brass

- Brass sheet fragments (3)
- Brass hinge with iron spring (1)
- U-shaped brass artifact (1)
- Brass footed object (1)

Pewter

- Disc fragment (1)

Chrome

- Chrome (veneered) sheet fragment (1)

Unknowns--Glass

- Green glass container fragments (35)
- probable identification: bottle

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| | |
|--|------|
| Clear glass container base fragment with partial pontil | (1) |
| Green glass container fragments (minimum of four containers) | (36) |
| Thin, curved clear glass fragments (including two rim fragments) | (5) |
| probable identification: lamp glass or vial | |
| Thin, flat, rimmed clear glass fragments | (3) |
| probable identification: watch crystal or locket glass | |
| Miscellaneous unidentifiable melted glass fragments | (40) |
| Miscellaneous unidentifiable clear glass fragments | (74) |

Burned Clay

| | |
|--------------|--------------------|
| Clay nodules | 28.40 lbs/12.87 kg |
|--------------|--------------------|

Burned Wood

| | |
|----------|------------------|
| Charcoal | 5.30 lbs/2.42 kg |
|----------|------------------|

The outline shows that artifacts representing activities at the mission relating to the procurement, storage, preparation, serving and consumption of food; grooming; the production and repair of clothing; recreation; and education were found. Items of personal use, lost articles and the vacating of the site in 1841 are reflected in the archaeological record. Intensive research on each artifact category has revealed information on the description, form, function and condition of the artifacts. The period and mode of manufacture, material composition, and possible origins of the items has been researched (Sanders, Weber and Brauner 1982).

Though artifacts represent the bulk of physical evidence of a mission occupation, architectural features were instrumental in determining the architectural plan and orientation of the main mission house. Evidence of two fireplaces, a gravel "floor" (possibly an outdoor area) and a previously excavated (1920s) cellar depression were defined. An 1841 rendition of the house and artifact-type dispersal patterns were also helpful (see attached plan).

Data Limitation

The missionaries relocated their headquarters to present Salem in 1841. Since abandonment of the mission site was anticipated, the archaeological record was affected. Most of the primary refuse (i.e. refuse located in close proximity to the area of its use) materials which were discovered archaeologically are related to the demise of the abandoned house: nails, window glass, bricks and building hardware. Many everyday living items would have been transported to the new location. The lack of large quantities of primary refuse in the site locality indicates debris was deposited away from the house (secondary refuse areas) during day-to-day activities while the site was occupied. Some refuse items discovered in the house area were possibly hastily dropped or discarded at the site during the abandonment process. Another possibility is that these artifacts reflect the activities of occupants who may have used the

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house soon after the missionaries vacated the site.

A portion of the house-site was subject to erosion as evidenced by the abrupt termination of the "gravel feature" at the bank's edge of Mission Lake. A portion of the 1839 mission building was most severely affected. Since the house was on a fairly high ridge, though, little siltment accumulation over the top of the site has occurred, and smearing of the archaeological record has been minimal. Vegetation and rodent burrowing proved to be the primary forces of post-abandonment disturbance at the site. Evidence of disturbance related to the use of the site area as a park between 1930 and 1960 is less clear. Trampling would have an impact on the condition and, to some extent, the location of cultural material. Of perhaps greater importance is the impact of "souvenir hunters" which could possibly have reduced the artifact content of the site and disturbed the spatial relationships of cultural materials. Recreational activities and sporadic use of the area as a dump resulted in a scatter of post-abandonment secondary refuse. There is no evident plow-zone at the site of the mission house, though a deep plow-zone is clearly evident in the peripheral site areas.

Interpretation Plans

Long-term protection is planned for the Willamette mission site. Surrounded by private land on three sides and Mission Lake on the west, the site is inaccessible to the general public. A graphic representation of the mission buildings and an interpretation of the historical and archaeological significance of the site and the artifacts is currently underway. Proposed plans call for a marker clearly pointing to the location and orientation of the three connected mission buildings to be placed on the west side of Mission Lake.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499 | <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900– | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Specific dates 1834-1841 **Builder/Architect** N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Willamette Station of the Methodist Mission in Oregon was established in 1834 by the Reverend Jason Lee, a Methodist minister, the missionary vanguard on the West Coast, and the promoter of American settlement in the Oregon Country. Lee and his small band of missionaries travelled to the virtually unsettled Pacific Northwest to educate, moralize and provide religious and manual instruction to local native populations. The settlement flourished at the chosen site along the east bank of the Willamette River until 1841, when the mission community relocated to present Salem. The missionaries continued a campaign of spiritual reform at the new settlement until 1844, at which time the mission was dissolved. From the mission center in the middle Willamette Valley, subsidiary or satellite stations and outposts were established by the Methodist missionaries under Jason Lee at The Dalles, Clatsop Plains, Nisqually, and at the Falls of the Willamette (Oregon City). The nominated area meets National Register criteria "a," "b" and "d" and has been recognized in the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. The site is significant nationally.

This nomination focuses on the period between 1834 and 1841 when the mission center was located 10 miles north of present Salem. The parcel of land proposed for nomination encompasses the extent of the mission compound. Of primary significance is the site of the main mission house. The mission house was a complex of three connected log buildings, all constructed between the years 1834 and 1839. The buildings served as the center for all domestic, educational, religious and political activities. Jason Lee and the mission schoolteacher, Cyrus Shepard, lived on the premises with a fluctuating membership of Native American charges. The house served as an administrative center for the establishment of satellite mission stations throughout the Columbia Basin. Also, it was in the mission house that Jason Lee hosted community meetings which were organized to encourage the spread of the American government to the Northwest region.

The Willamette mission was the first mission established in the Pacific Northwest. The Methodists arrived in the Oregon Country at a time when both the British and Americans had an interest in national claim to the dominion west of the Rocky Mountains. Prior to 1834, the American contingent was represented by a handful of explorers, fur trappers and traders. Canadian merchants from the North West Company and later the Hudson's Bay Company, moved into the Northwest to effectively adopt and exploit long-range policies for development and control of the region's trade and resources. Fundamental differences arose between British and American fur traders, which ultimately affected the issue of sovereignty. However, the Americans, with the eventual support of missionaries, settlers, and diplomats, effectively offset the British position and opened the way for American colonization and sovereignty in the Northwest. A provisional government was set in motion in 1843 and continued to operate until the Territory of Oregon was created by Congress in 1848. Oregon became a state in 1859.

Jason Lee, one of the most romantic figures in Oregon history, was born on July 27, 1803. After receiving his education at Wilbraham Academy, he was accepted into the New England Conference of the Methodist Church. Lee soon sought an assignment in a missionary field. Several posts were proposed, but the remote Northwest region appealed to him most. Journeying west by an overland route, he preached the first Protestant sermon delivered in the Oregon country on July 27, 1834 in a grove on the west slope of the Rocky Mountains. Continuing west, Lee selected a site for the Oregon mission 60 miles south of the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers. Though the local native (continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Sanders, Judith A., Mary K. Weber and David R. Brauner
 1982 Willamette Mission Archeological Project: Phase III Assessment, Report prepared for the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. Department of Anthropology, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon. (see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 6.0± acres
 Quadrangle name Mission Bottom, Oregon Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|--|---|-------------------|---|--|
| A | <u>1</u> <u>0</u> | <u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>6</u> <u>8</u> <u>1</u> <u>0</u> | <u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>9</u> <u>2</u> <u>2</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> | B | <u>1</u> <u>0</u> | <u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>6</u> <u>9</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u> | <u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>9</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| C | <u>1</u> <u>0</u> | <u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>6</u> <u>8</u> <u>1</u> <u>0</u> | <u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>9</u> <u>1</u> <u>9</u> <u>3</u> <u>5</u> | D | <u>1</u> <u>0</u> | <u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u> | <u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>9</u> <u>2</u> <u>1</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u> |
| E | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | F | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | <u> </u> |
| G | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | H | <u> </u> | <u> </u> | <u> </u> |

Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at a point 28.50 chains south and 5.364 chains east of the Northwest corner of the William Matheny Donation Land Claim #67 and #76, said point being in the Northwest (see continuation sheet)

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

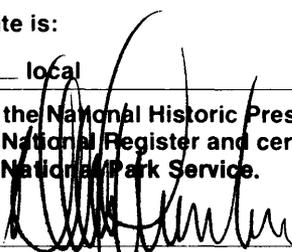
name/title Judith A. Sanders
 organization Department of Anthropology date November, 1983
 street & number Oregon State University telephone (503) 754-4515
 city or town Corvallis state Oregon 97331

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

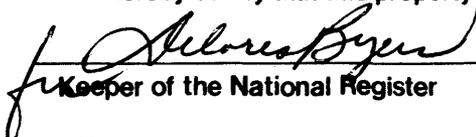
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date June 20, 1984

For NPS use only

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


 Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
 National Register

date 8/1/84

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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population was on a dramatic decline due to exploitation and disease, the missionaries set to work. During the early years, all effort was put to minimal building, subsistence farming, the boarding school, medical service, and preaching. Preaching was a regional endeavor, for a few French Canadian free-trappers and ex-engagés of the Hudson's Bay Company settled the prairie after 1826. Goods relinquished from New York and a minimal dependency on the Hudson Bay Company store at Fort Vancouver were the supply sources the missionaries relied on.

Completion of the first house occurred in the late fall of 1834 (see rendition, cabin on left). Located adjacent to the river and elevated on a slight rise, the building was oriented to the southwest. The dimensions of the one and one-half story log cabin were 18 by 32 feet. Oak logs, hewn on the inside and saddle notched at the ends, were employed in construction. Although possibly relating to availability factors, the missionaries' use of oak may reflect their New England background; oak was the traditional material used for log construction in that region. Fir was used to make the puncheon floors and doors. Glass lights were inserted into window sashes which were hand-carved by Jason Lee. Archaeological evidence suggests that the roofing shakes were split from Western red cedar, a species historically available in isolated pockets in the Willamette Valley. A fireplace and chimney made of sticks, clay and sand were located on the north gable-end of the building. A cellar was situated beneath the structure.

The second building, also a log cabin, was connected to the first building at the north gable-end (see rendition, central cabin). The cabin, completed in 1836, was essential to accommodate an increase in the number of students at the school. Dimensions of the one and one-half story building were 16 by 32 feet. A central fireplace and chimney distinguish this building from the first house. Two front doors were positioned on the resultant "double house," and as evidenced by archaeological investigations (i.e. nail localities), a door leading to the gravel outdoor area in back was situated on the west wall of the cabin. The south portion of the double house building was most likely a kitchen and the other half (not excavated) may have served as a school room/dining room until a third structure was completed for those purposes in 1839.

No first hand descriptions of the third building are known, nor did archaeological evidence supply information. Periodic flooding of the river removed a portion of the site of this building. A rendition executed in 1841 (house on right) suggests the pieces-sur-pieces method of construction was used. This technique was traditionally associated with French Canadians. Since this building was erected in 1839, five years into the mission occupation, use of this construction method may represent a cultural influence from the missionaries "neighbors." The house had a west gable end chimney, sashed windows, and horizontal-board gable faces. It was connected perpendicular to the second cabin by a passageway with a cricket roof designed for efficient water drainage. A gravel floor area was located within the "L" created by the attachment of the second and third buildings. This floor area may have been covered by a roof of some sort, as evidenced by post holes and a high frequency of square nails in the archaeological record. Hinge nails found near the locality of the south wall of the 1839 building suggests a back door was once situated here.

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The missionaries used machine cut and hand-wrought square nails during construction. Numerous varieties of both types, designed for different functional usages, were discovered during excavation. Hand-wrought specimens, possibly obtained from Fort Vancouver or, after 1837, made by the mission blacksmith, include types conjectured to have been used for flooring, molding trim, door and window framing, and finishing work. Clinch nails for batten door construction and spikes for joining heavy structural members such as joists, rafters and puncheon floors were identified. Machine cut square common nails used for light-to-medium construction work, and machine cut shingling and finishing nails were also found. Utilization of machine cut nails at the mission is the earliest recorded use of this nail type thus far in the Northwest. Machine cut nails were imported from east coast markets.

Brick was used in construction of the mission buildings though it is thought at this time only for fireplace repair. This assessment is based on the archaeological distribution of bricks and brick fragments. The bricks are unique in that they are a smaller, hand-produced variety than the typical 2x4x8" brick introduced to the Willamette Valley in the early 1840s. The missionaries were thus possibly the earliest producers of this commodity in the valley.

Window panes may have been obtained from the Fort Vancouver Sale Shop for use in the early buildings, though later, glass lights were probably received from American east coast markets. Door hardware appears to have been hand-wrought on the premises. Clay for daub used in initial fireplace and chimney fabrication was apparently obtained locally.

The material items used in everyday activities at the settlement reflect the missionaries' stance for permanent living in the Northwest. Treasured items and goods were brought from their homes while large quantities of articles were either purchased at east coast markets or were donated to the mission effort. Fragments of ceramic dinnerwares reveal the missionaries used styles of plates and vessels most popular during the second quarter of the 19th century. This is attested by the recovery of a wide variety of transfer-printed earthenware patterns. A specific determination of dinnerware shape and function is prohibited by small fragment size, though cups, bowls, vegetable dishes, plates, platters, and soup plates may be represented and chamber pots may be represented as well. Utilitarian wares common to the period such as crocks, jugs and jars are indicated by the recovery of fragments of redware, stoneware, earthenware and yellow ware. These vessels would have been essential for food preparation and storage. Cooking was accomplished in cast iron vessels.

Iron spoons, knives and two-tined forks were the preferred eating instruments. Glass bottles were a rare commodity. Only a few medicinal bottles, and bottles unidentifiable as to shape and function, were discovered. Evidence of two alcohol bottles was recovered also. Fragile, white clay smoking pipes were most likely obtained at Fort Vancouver. Hunting would have been a common method of food procurement as evidenced by gunflints, lead balls and shot, a percussion cap, and projectile points. The flintlock gun was still in common use in the west in the 1830s.

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The recovery of various construction related items, coal, and clinkers (forge residue) point to manufacturing and blacksmithing activities. Slate tablets and pencils were used in the schoolroom. Glass beads (common trade items) are a good indicator of the presence of Native Americans, though beads were also commonly used by Euro-American women for decoration.

The articles mentioned above were evidenced by the archaeological record. Glimpses of mission lifestyle can also be gained by viewing extensive inventories of imported items. Numerous inventories, letters, diaries and account books have survived.

In the early part of the 1830s, the missionaries became assertive in the role of moral affairs and political undertakings in the French Prairie areas. Their influence was instrumental as they were the largest body of organized Americans. Lee, with assistance from William A. Slacum (U.S. Navy purser commissioned to perform an extensive political and physical assessment of the Northwest region in 1836) persuaded neighboring settlers to join in forming the Oregon Temperance Society. The purpose of the Society was to discourage the manufacture, sale and use of alcoholic beverages. Pleased by the missionaries quest for American sovereignty, Slacum also facilitated the missionaries first economic venture. A joint stock company was formed to drive cattle from California to the Oregon country in order to provide capital and subsistence for the area. Lee travelled to the east coast in 1838 with a petition in hand to request consideration for American jurisdiction over the Northwest territory. Early Provisional government meetings began to be held at the settlement in 1835 and between that year and 1841, the "heart and the soul" of the earliest efforts to form a political organization were to be found at the Methodist mission. These attempts toward community solidarity, economic diversification, and promotion of American government reveals the missionaries' vision of American settlement and jurisdiction in the region.

The latter part of the 1830s saw the missionaries in their most productive period. Actions to spread the Methodists' word of good and order were set forth; the number of missionary personnel and laymen were increased; and secular operations were enlarged to make the mission more self-sustaining. Lee sought to extend the mission effort with stations at the Dalles, the Clatsop Plains, and in the Cowlitz and Umpqua regions. A hospital was erected one mile east of the mission house. The building was the missionaries' first frame structure as well as being the first American hospital erected in the territory. The hospital was put to best use, however, as a dwelling, and it became the administrative center for the extensive mission farm. Plans were also underway to move the mission community 10 miles south to Mill Creek. Houses, schools, mills, stores etc. were to be erected here with the help of skilled personnel who arrived at the settlement via the Lausanne as part of the "Great Reinforcement" in 1840. Others on board were sent to assist at the various mission stations established throughout the Columbia basin.

Numerous individuals who arrived with the 1837 and 1840 reinforcements achieved prominence in Oregon governmental affairs (many voted to organize the Provisional Government in 1843). Also, many of the men were on the Board of Trustees of the Oregon Insitute, which became Willamette University in 1853. Alanson Beers, mission blacksmith and farmer, became a member of the Provisional Government Executive Committee;

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Dr. Ira Babcock, mission doctor, served as Provisional Government Probate Council member; and George Abernethy, mission steward and later prominent Oregon city merchant, became the Provisional Governor of Oregon. Others who achieved notoriety during the Oregon settlement era were: Hamilton Campbell, Oregon's first "architect;" Rev. Gustavus Hines, explorer and author of Oregon History; Rev. Lewis H. Judson, mission cabinetmaker, who relinquished his Mill Creek claim when the original plat of Salem was laid out; Rev. Josiah Parrish, blacksmith, became an Indian Agent for the United States; Margaret Smith Bailey, teacher, became a journalist and leading Oregon feminist; and Dr. Elijah White, mission doctor who later became Sub-Agent of Indian Affairs in Oregon.

Numerous ministers who helped to spread the Methodist word throughout the territory were Jason Lee, Daniel Lee, Joseph Frost, David Leslie, W.H. Kone, J.P. Richmond, H.K.W. Perkins, Henry Bridgman Brewer, Alvan R. Waller, and Hines, Judson and Parrish. For a time the Methodist mission operation in the Pacific Northwest was the single largest missionary endeavor in the world. The Methodists were the wellspring of church organization on the west coast.

Disillusionment prevailed at the mission soon after the arrival of the Great Reinforcement due to the declining number of local native Americans, and a poor opinion of Jason Lee's administration of the mission. The unsavory living conditions at the Willamette settlement were alleviated by the move to Mill Creek in 1841. Internal conflicts and financial distress on top of dissatisfaction with Lee, sickness and a dwindling student population, caused the closure of the mission in 1844. Lee was in the east when he learned of his exoneration by the Mission Board, and never returned to Oregon. Reverend George Gary was commissioned to the settlement to dissolve the Willamette Station.

Once the missionaries had relocated to present Salem, the mission house along the bank of the Willamette River fell into disrepair. Abandoned and forgotten, the buildings slowly gave way to the ravages of time. Interest in their history was revived in the early part of this century by Robert Moulton Gatke, a Willamette University history professor. Though Gatke knew the exact location of the buildings and even dug in the cellar of the first cabin in the early 1920s, any documentation of his endeavors, except brief, fairly un-informative references, is unknown. His work led to the formation of a county park, with Willamette University as trustee, to memorialize the area. Upkeep on the park was difficult and the park was eventually abandoned altogether in 1960. Interest in the mission site was rekindled in 1974 by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. At that time, the mission site area was under consideration for inclusion in the creation of Willamette Mission State Park. Acquisition of the site by state officials was initiated, but first a program to pinpoint the exact location of the mission house and peripheral site areas was necessary. This was begun in 1979 by agreement between the State Historic Preservation Office and Dr. David Brauner, Oregon State University archaeologist. A three-phase historical and archaeological project began in 1979 and has culminated in the completion of a comprehensive document on the history, archaeological content, and analysis of the mission (Sanders, Weber and Brauner 1982).

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Archaeological assessment of the mission site contributed substantially to the historical record of the mission and to a broader understanding of cultural transition of the frontier. The sample of material recovered at the site graphically reflects the political viewpoints of the missionaries as far as the Oregon territory was concerned. The mission established its own supply network linking the western mission with the eastern states. Lack of recovered British items upholds the missionaries' claim of independence from the Hudson Bay Company. The missionaries made an attempt to establish a lifestyle in Oregon that was similar to the world they left behind.

The artifact assemblage constitutes a highly significant time-marker for northwest archaeology. The site consists of only one significant historical component, representing a tightly dated seven-year occupation--the mission. The mission site is one of a few early historic sites in the northwest occupied by Americans. The archaeological record supplies information on early building practice and types of articles used during the frontier period. The available archaeological data provide considerable insight to the standard of living the missionaries were compelled to uphold in the remote northwest region. Also, the presence of American goods in the Willamette in the 1830s has implications for areal archaeological research. The brick and nails are examples of enlightened information on the types of goods available in the valley after the missionaries arrived. A network of cultural associations, such as architectural influence and supply sources, could be formulated between the mission, Fort Vancouver and the French Prairie settlers. Since the time frame involved is the pre-Willamette Valley settlement period, this could be a highly significant project.

Only a limited area of the site of the mission house was excavated. Thus the potential for gathering additional data on mission life exists. Wells, privies and dumps may occur in the area peripheral to the mission house. Considered to be primary refuse areas, these types of features, if present, can yield additional significant data on material culture. Possibly sites of houses and outbuildings, manufacturing localities and activity areas could also be discovered. The community patterning of activities could then be deciphered.

During their brief 10 year stint of spiritual, moral, political and educational activities, the missionaries stand out as Oregon colonizers. Promotion of Northwest immigration and influence towards an orderly development of government are significant and lasting contributions. By 1843, the year the Provisional Government was organized, about 850 immigrants, many garnered through Lee's American tour in 1838-1840, had reached the Oregon country. Most settled in the Willamette Valley. Thus the years of settlement promotion and political limelight for the Oregon country are embodied at the mission site, for it was here that the seed which was to become Oregon was planted and nurtured.

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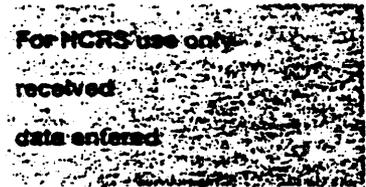
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Walton, Elisabeth Brigham

1965 Mill Place on the Willamette: A New Mission House for the Methodists in Oregon 1841-1844. M.A. Thesis, University of Delaware.

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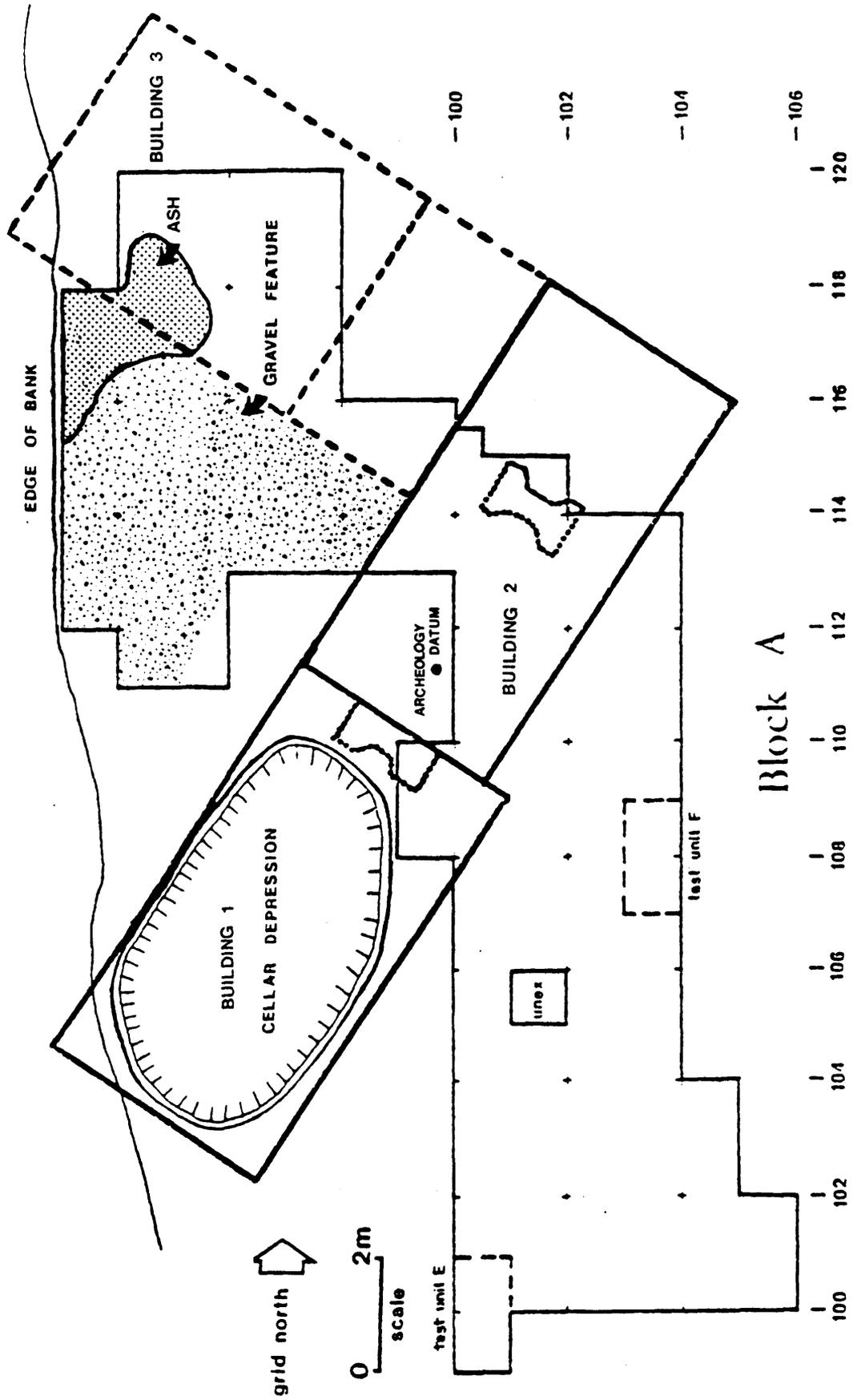
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¼ section, section 3, Township 6 south, Range 3 west, Willamette Meridian, and the true point of beginning; thence S 89° 53' 30" E 97.98 feet; thence N 68° 11' 30" 233.44 feet; thence S 21° 51' E 659.95 feet; thence S 68° 11' 30" W 513.36 feet; thence to the true point of beginning.

WILLAMETTE MISSION SITE

35MA5001



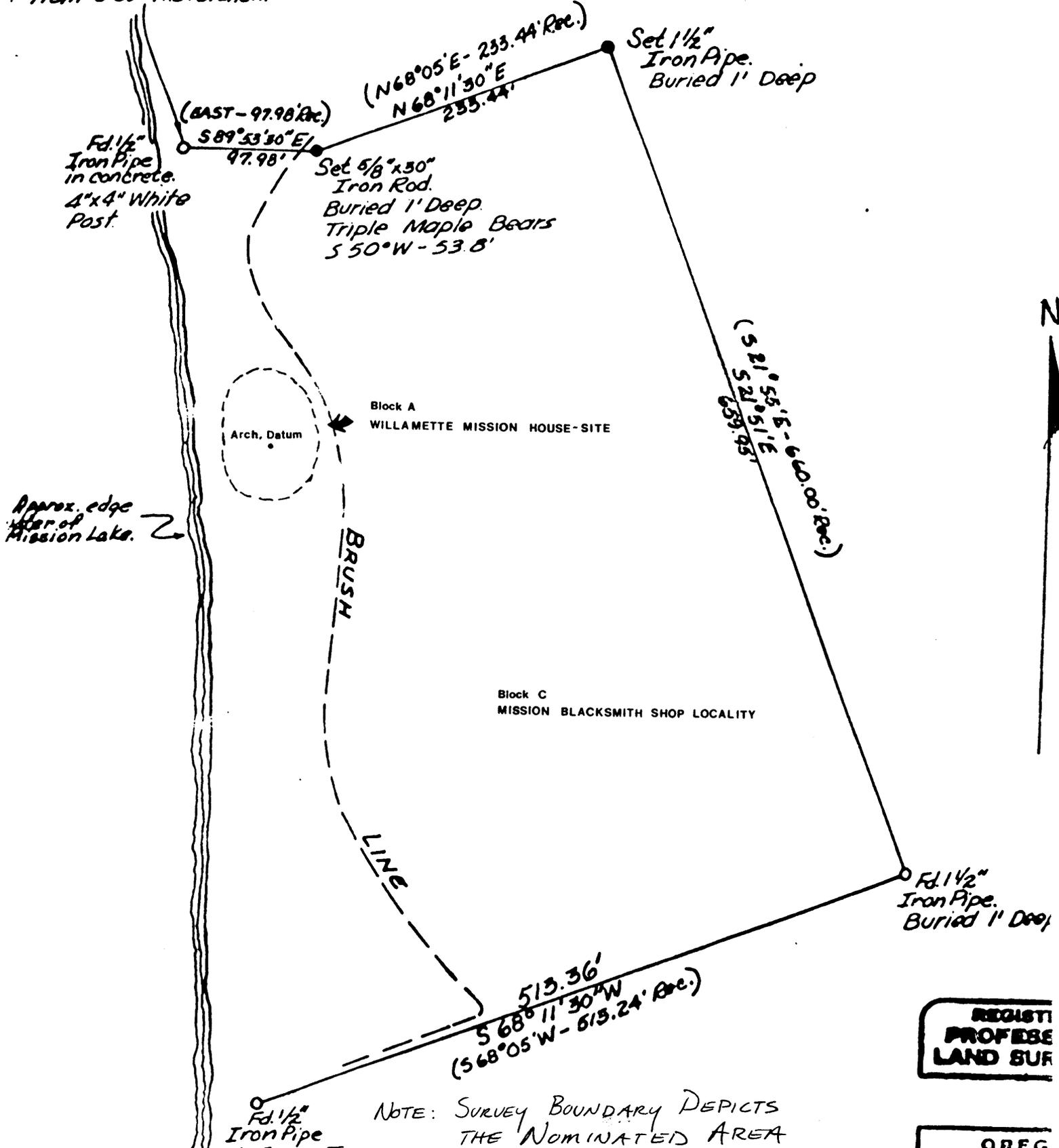
The postulated position of the main mission house in relation to the 1980 excavation.

OREGON STATE PARKS & RECREATION DIVISION
 WILLAMETTE MISSION STATE PARK
 BOUNDARY SURVEY
 JASON LEE MISSION SITE NW⁴ SECTION 3.
 T. 6 S., R. 3 W.W.M.
 MARION COUNTY

South $\frac{1}{4}$ 5368 Ch. East
 W. Cor. of William
 D.L.C. No. 67 & 76 —
 From 6-69 A.D. Graham

SCALE 1" = 100'

JANUARY 26, 1981



F.d. 1/2" Iron Pipe in concrete. 4"x4" White Post.

(EAST - 97.98' Rec.)
 S 89° 53' 30" E / 97.98'

(N 68° 05' E - 233.44' Rec.)
 N 68° 11' 30" E / 233.44'

Set 1 1/2" Iron Pipe. Buried 1' Deep

Set 5/8" x 30" Iron Rod. Buried 1' Deep. Triple Maple Bears S 50° W - 53.8'

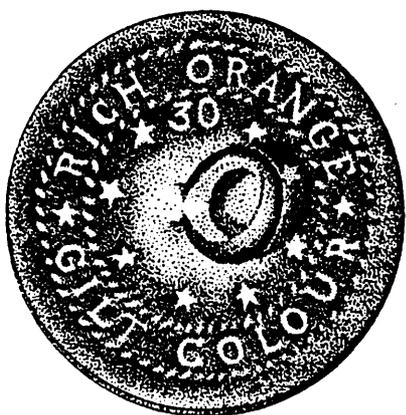
(S 21° 55' E - 620.00' Rec.)
 S 21° 51' E / 629.95'

F.d. 1/2" Iron Pipe. Buried 1' Deep

513.36'
 S 68° 11' 30" W / (S 68° 05' W - 613.24' Rec.)



HANDWROUGHT SQUARE NAILS
FROM THE WILLAMETTE MISSION



LOOP-SHANK BUTTONS FROM THE WILLAMETTE MISSION