

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

For NPS use only

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

received JAN 28 1986
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Johnson-Ellis House Number of contributing resources 1
and/or common Same Number of non-contributing resources 0

2. Location

street & number 326 SE 2nd Street N/A not for publication
city, town Pendleton N/S vicinity of Second Congressional District
state Oregon code 41 county Umatilla code 059

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input 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 Robert W. Collins, Jr ., and Michael B. Collins
street & number 326 SE 2nd Street
city, town Pendleton N/A vicinity of state Oregon 97801

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Umatilla County Courthouse
street & number 216 SE 4th Street
city, town Pendleton state Oregon 97801

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Statewide Inventory of Historic Properties has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1985 federal state county local
depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office
525 Trade Street SE
city, town Salem state Oregon 97310

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____ N/A _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Johnson-Ellis House was built in 1899 or 1900 in the Queen Anne style by Joseph F. Connelly, a local real estate developer and sheep rancher. It is of balloon-frame construction. Neither the architect nor the builder are known, but the design is probably from a pattern book. In April 1903, it was purchased by Mary E. (Benson) Johnson, whose home it remained until her death in 1943. Wife of a gold miner, Mrs. Johnson earned extra income by renting out rooms for room-and-board. Her daughter Nona and her husband Rex Ellis, Oregon State Senator, made the house their home and headquarters for various business enterprises from 1929 onward. The house was sold in 1985 to two brothers, Michael Collins and Robert Collins, Jr., who converted the house to their own law offices. Throughout its life the house was well-maintained and remains in excellent condition following recent renovation by Woodwind Building Renovation for Collins and Collins.

The Johnson-Ellis House occupies the west-facing Lot 10 of Block C of the South Addition to Pendleton, Umatilla County, at 326 SE Second Street, a site which is located in a transitional neighborhood on the east side of downtown Pendleton. While small office buildings have been built recently adjoining and across the street from the Johnson-Ellis House, three buildings listed on the Statewide Inventory are located within one block and within view from the front yard. Moreover, the house forms part of a highly-visible block of four historic buildings, three houses and the Methodist Church, which is in full view of eastbound traffic on oneway SE Dorian Avenue, part of Pendleton's primary east-west traffic arterial couplet. The neighboring house on the south was also built by Joe Connelly and echoes the basic form of the Johnson-Ellis House, in simpler style but including a northwest corner turret as well. It is currently being restored.

Although built in the Queen Anne style, the house is compact and was originally almost square in plan. There present dimensions are 35' x 56', which amply fills the middle of the 50' x 100' lot. The basic form of the 1½ story house is a pair of crossed gables forming an "L" whose open NW corner is filled by an octagonal cupola rising over a recessed front porch. The east-west gable faces the front elevation and is slightly lower than the shorter north-south gable, which faces neighboring properties. A single story hip-roof kitchen and two story gabled bedroom wing were added in the rear by the Johnsons c. 1918. The upper floor benefits from the eaves being raised a couple of feet above the floor level affording more usable headroom. The actual floor level is not evident on the exterior. The house contains 2,799 square feet of floor area.

The original house was built on a foundation of rough-cut mortared ashlar of local black basalt, above an unfinished dug basement. The 1918-era additions were built on another type of foundation above a crawlspace which has been replaced by concrete block. The entire house is wood-frame with wood exterior finish and trim. A single slender, square, corbelled brick chimney rises from the furnace in the basement through the left side of the south gable. A kitchen chimney and a central chimney were removed in the 1985 renovation.

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

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

For NPS use only

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Continuation sheet Johnson-Ellis House

Item number 7

Page 2

The house is currently painted in two shades of a greenish-gold, darker above, with white trim and reddish-brown sashes. The lighter shade is also used as an accent in the west gable end. The original finish colors are not known, but for many years the house was painted in a cream-white with no accent color.

The roof landscape of the house is dominated by the original pair of crossed gables which are of a 45 degree pitch. The two-story rear addition continues the east-west gable, but is narrower, setting back a few feet on the north side. The kitchen addition is hip-roofed, as are the projecting bays on the south and east facades. There is only one dormer, a shed-style wall dormer in the SW bedroom that appears to have been added c. 1918. The cupola is crowned with an eight-sided roof of the same pitch as the gables. The hallway from the upper stair well to the cupola is capped with a gabled roof. The roofing was originally wood shingles, but has been replaced with composition shingles.

The Johnson-Ellis House represents a well-developed Queen Anne motif applied to a modest dwelling. The form, finish, and detail work are all quite sophisticated given the size of the house, together with its location outside fashionable neighborhoods and in a small rural city. The small, narrow lot restricted use of an irregular floor plan and limited the degree to which wall surfaces could be varied in depth. Nevertheless, the salient Queen Anne features are all there: asymmetrical facades, steep irregular roofs, a corner "tower," projecting gable ends, variation in wall surfacing patterns, a cutaway bay, simple door and window surrounds contrasted with fancy decoration in the gable ends. This architectural statement generally has not been compromised by either the 1918-vintage additions, nor subsequent modifications.

A number of common design elements are expressed on all facades of the original portions of the house, namely:

A slightly bell-cast watercourse surmounts a flat friezeboard with crown molding encircling the house at the top of the first floor windows, actually forming their lintels. Also, at the level of the porch floor, the ship-lap flares slightly and a round molding is applied to create a water table near the base of the house. A single, additional ship-lap board is found below this, sheathing the top of the basalt foundation.

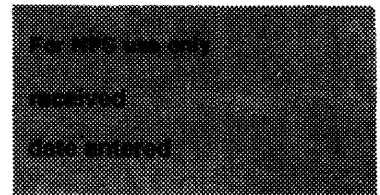
The lower wall surfaces are simple, horizontal, ship-lap siding, while the upper, as well as the gable ends, are sheathed in an alternating dentil pattern of wooden shingles, with a row of scalloped shingles at the watercourse.

Each of the four original gable ends projects and is enclosed by a bell-cast pent, which is broken through by openings for the second-story windows.

The windows are primarily pairs of double-hung, one-over-one sashes which are tall and narrow. The second story windows are smaller than those of the first floor but are of the same proportions.

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

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



Continuation sheet Johnson-Ellis House

Item number 7

Page 3

The door and window surround are all wide, flat boards, with plain sills. The lintels project slightly on either side of the rail boards.

Crown and bead moldings are used extensively: at the eaves, along the gable end pents, on the rakeboards, along the watercourse and water table, along the cornice and sill of the cupola.

The following are the architectural accents of the house:

The west gable end is the most decorated portion of the house. It features a narrow, flat half-circle of trim that arches around the double windows from the curved breaks in the bell-cast pent. Small circles anchor each end of this trim, and within the arch, the shake pattern is of a different type: an offset "pigeon-hole" form. Above the arch, a molded friezeboard cuts across the gable supporting a sunburst molding mounted on ship-lap siding trimmed with ogee-curve boards with bulls-eye medallions.

The bay window on the west facade creates a cutaway corner with ogee-curve brackets decorated with bulls eye medallions and featuring a spool finial at the corner. The large central window is a square, fixed sash with a leaded transom. This bay looks out from the front parlor.

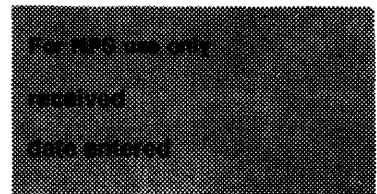
Instead of a full, two-story tower, the tower form is expressed by a colonaded, recessed front porch surmounted by an octagonal cupola sporting a steep, eight-sided roof topped off by a ball-and-cap finial. The cupola is supported by a plain, Tuscan porch column on a double-square based at each of the four outward-facing angles. The upper half of the wall surface of the cupola consists of multi-paned casement sashes that swing inward up to hook on the ceiling. The cupola, which was also screened, then functioned as a sleeping porch. A set of four Tuscan colonettes with double capitals are set at each angle of this window belt. The lower wall surface is sheathed in wood shingles of the typical pattern for the house. The porch below extends part way across the west facade to the bay window, thereby sheltering the original front door, located just to the left of the bay. A second door was located at the back of the porch.

In the north gable end, a triple window, two verticals joined by a multi-paned horizontal, create a unique composition with a detached section of the bell-cast pent.

The architecture of the additions and modifications generally complements the original Queen Anne design. All the additions and most of the modifications were made beginning c. 1916-1918, according to family memories. However, the two projecting bays are not indicated on the 1923 Sanborn maps, so they may have been added later on in the 1920s. Stylistically, all the additions are similar, but a difference in window surrounds and its continuities in the shiplap siding and bead moldings under the eaves indicated at least two separate sets of modifications in the historic era. The exterior changes are as follows:

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

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



Continuation sheet Johnson-Ellis House

Item number 7

Page 4

The extended, but narrower east gable is also asymmetrical and uses return gable ends at two levels, instead of a pent.

The kitchen addition extends no further than the end of this east gable, however, a projecting first floor bay was added on beyond the end of the gable, evidently at a later date.

A shed-type wall dormer was added to the southwest bedroom.

A projecting, straight-sided, multi-windowed bay was added onto the first floor south bedroom.

The second floor windows in the south gable end are not original. The window arrangement is asymmetrical in contrast with the other gable ends, and a row of scalloped shingles has been added overlapping the lintel. The original configuration is uncertain, but use of matching sashes and surrounds indicates the change was made in the historic era.

The wall-surfacing shingles of the additions are applied in a pattern different from the original, namely in regular courses with irregular shingle widths. The ends of the rakeboards on the dormer and back porch are open and curve, whereas the original eaves are boxed. The windows in the dormer, south gable, and south bay match the originals, but those in the east additions are smaller, more square, and in strips of two or three. The lower floor windows are double-hung, one-over-one sashes, while the second story windows are single-pane sashes that drop into slots in the sills to create a second screened sleeping porch. The window surrounds are quite similar to the originals, except that the lintels do not project on the second-story windows.

There is a full cornice molding along the side porch. In general, the architectural forms of the 1918-era additions are in keeping with the Queen Anne style, while the detail work is more Craftsman in feeling.

At the same time as the foundation for the additions was rebuilt, probably in the 1970s, a skirting of vertical Fir-tex was installed below the water table on the additions. At the time of the kitchen modernization, a picture window was installed in the rear wall. The current exterior color scheme dates to the brief tenure of the Newbauer family in 1983-84.

The 1985 modifications are as follows:

Relocation of the front entrance. The original front doors faced west, into Pendleton's prevailing westerly winds. The entry was moved to the north-facing wall on the front porch, utilizing one of the original front door-and-transom sets. The original door locations have been walled in and a single, high window has been installed in place of the forward front door, and a double set of double-hung sashes have replaced the door at the back of the porch.

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

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet Johnson-Ellis House

Item number 7

Page 5

The central and rear chimneys were removed.

The rear picture window in the kitchen was replaced with a double set of double-hung sashes, with false railboards that extend to the water table.

The double window set in the back bedroom was replaced with a triple window set of the same proportions to provide more light in what became a private office.

The 1985 replacement windows are all of the Craftsman type, more square in proportion than those on the original house, but matching those of the 1918-era additions.

The screening was removed on the back porch.

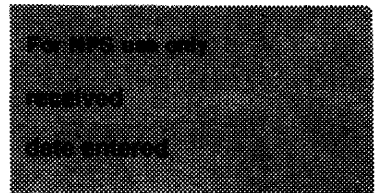
Aluminum-frame storm windows were installed on all the windows except those on the rear facade and the cupola.

Floor plans of the house, with historic-era and 1985 modifications indicated there on are included in this nomination packet. The original room arrangement is quite evident, however, due to use of the home as a boarding house and subsequent double occupancy of the home by Mrs. Johnson and The Ellises, the original and later function of all the rooms are not clear. Downstairs, there were originally two rooms to the left of the stairs, evidently the dining room and kitchen, with three rooms to the right, a formal front parlor, family living room and main bedroom. There may also have been a back porch. During Mrs. Johnson's 1918-era modifications, a new kitchen was added onto the rear, and the wall between the old kitchen and dining room was torn out. This large room was evidently used for boarding house dining. Also, at this time, a back bedroom and bath were added on. When the Ellises moved in, in 1929, they occupied the left half downstairs and the full upstairs. Mrs. Johnson occupied the right side downstairs, and the bath and kitchen were shared. A sink was installed in the south living room for Mrs. Johnson, and it may have been at this time that the bays were added onto the south and back bedrooms. Upstairs, the arrangement of three bedrooms, bath and cupola sleeping porch have remained the same over the years. It is uncertain as to the function of the second floor room in the rear addition. It may have been designed to provide a two-room suite for one of the boarders, and the room could also function as an open-air sleeping porch.

The original interiors were decorated with wallpaper, and wood trim: baseboards, door and window surrounds and staircase balustrade. The appointments were simple in design and finish. The trim boards were flat with molded edges. Downstairs there were bulls-eye corner blocks, but not upstairs. The staircase was the most elaborate interior feature. It occupies a narrow well, turning two corners in its ascent. It is enclosed below the stringers, which are flat and plain. The newel post and corner posts on the balustrade of the staircase and that surrounding the

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

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



Continuation sheet Johnson-Ellis Hosue Item number 7 Page 6

stair well upstairs are all turned spoolwork in the Eastlake style. The balusters are square and plain, with a molded handrail. A recessed panel band of trim lines the top of the stair well. The staircase woodwork was dark stained, while the other downstairs woodwork was natural-stained and upstairs it was painted.

The 1985 renovation program stripped the walls and woodwork. All the walls are now white and the woodwork finished in a natural stain. The design concept of the recessed panel trim of the stair well has been picked up and carried out as a wainscoting below the window sills in each of the private offices. Upstairs, bulls-eye corner blocks were installed to match those downstairs, and handsome book cases have been built into the north bedroom, which is now the library. Throughout the house, trim has been patched and duplicated where necessary. Due to inadequate number of bulls-eye corner blocks in good conditions, they have all been replaced to match throughout the house.

The 1985 renovation transformed most of the rooms into private or secretarial offices, but did not alter greatly the pre-existing floor plan. A hallway was opened between the right and left sides of the house behind the staircase for better traffic flow, and a hallway was built across the back end of the south bedroom to connect the south side offices and provide privacy for the new conference room which occupies most of that room. The former north living-dining room is now a reception area and secretarial office, separated only by a counter. The kitchen is also now a secretarial work room. Upstairs, the north bedroom has been converted to a library, the SW bedroom to an office, while the east bedroom suite remains unfinished, functioning only as a storage area.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below					
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input checked="" 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 1900–1937 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Johnson-Ellis House is a well-preserved late Queen Anne style house of balloon-frame construction, erected between 1899 and 1900. Situated at 326 SE Second Street in Pendleton, Umatilla County, Oregon, the property combines the lingering formal aspects of the Queen Anne style with general decreases in lot size and building verticality that were evident by the turn of the century. A locally significant architectural resource, the building can be evaluated under criterion "c" as a fine and elaborately-textured example of late Queen Anne style in Pendleton. Distinguishing characteristics include: asymmetrical massing, multiple roof forms, highly articulated wall surfaces, a prominent corner turret, varied wall materials and decorative features, and intact interior spaces and finishes.

The property also meets criterion "b" for its association with two notable Pendleton residents, Mary E. Benson Johnson and her son-in-law, former state senator Rex Ellis. Mrs. Johnson, who occupied the house for forty years, is best remembered as the author of the first locally-produced history of Umatilla County, Reminiscences of Oregon Pioneers. Though Reminiscences was not published until 1937, work on the book was in progress in the house more than fifty years ago. Her son-in-law, Rex Ellis, was a local entrepreneur and ultimately served District 19 as state senator for 18 years (1936-1954). The historic period of significance, thus, has been extended one year to encompass the publication date of Mrs. Johnson's water-shed local history and commences with her son-in-law's long and distinguished career in state politics. These associations meet National Register criteria for exceptional significance at the local level. Following Mrs. Johnson's death in 1943, the house continued to be the home of Mrs. Johnson's daughter and son-in-law, Nona and Rex Ellis. It was occupied by Nona Johnson Ellis until 1983.

Mary E. Benson Johnson lived in the house from 1903, shortly after it was built, until her death in 1943. The 1936 Round-Up Souvenir Edition of the East Oregonian called her "Umatilla County's oldest living pioneer" and featured an article about her life. She was a colorful, generous lady, and was endeared to Pendletonians as "Aunt Molly." Born in Trenton, Missouri in 1858 to Mr. and Mrs. Jessee Benson, she came west by wagon train with her family in 1864. First settling at Umatilla Meadows near Echo, the family raised vegetables for the mining camps. Six years later, part of the family moved to Birch Creek near Pilot Rock, where during the 1878 Bannock-Piute Indian Wars, Mary became a heroine by rescuing a child during an Indian attack. In 1879, Mary married Winslow Johnson, a placer gold miner whom she had met in the Granite district five years earlier. Winslow was quite successful with his North Fork and Crane Creek mines in the John Day River basin. Mary told of riding the stage to Pendleton with several thousand dollars of gold

9. Major Bibliographical References

Interview of Nona Ellis by John Collins, 1985
Interview of Mary Ellis Harris by Steve Randolph, 1985
Umatilla County Mortgage & Deed Records
East Oregonian, February 17, 1972, April 13, 1943, 1936 Round-Up Souvenir Edition
Umatilla County Title Company Abstracts; Capitol's Who's Who in Oregon, 1947-1948.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Pendleton, Oregon

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	1	3	6	1	1	1	0	5	0	5	8	9	4	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

B

Zone		Easting						Northing						

C

Zone		Easting						Northing						

D

Zone		Easting						Northing						

E

Zone		Easting						Northing						

F

Zone		Easting						Northing						

G

Zone		Easting						Northing						

H

Zone		Easting						Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification The Johnson-Ellis House occupies Lot 10 of Block C of the South Addition to Pendleton, Umatilla County, Oregon, a parcel measuring 50 x 100 feet.

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

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Steve Randolph, Planning Consultant

organization N/A

date September 2, 1985

street & number Star Route Box 845

telephone (503) 278-0366 or 276-7111 ext.253

city or town Pendleton

state Oregon 97801

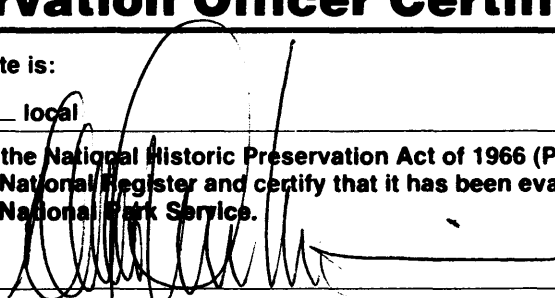
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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 January 16, 1986

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

for William B. Bushong
Keeper of the National Register

date 3/14/86

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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

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received

Date entered

Continuation sheet Johnson-Ellis House

Item number 8

Page 2

dust concealed in her clothing. To provide better schooling for their three daughters, the Johnsons moved to Pendleton, but would return to the mines in the summers.

Evidently Mary was of a free and independent spirit for in 1903 she purchased her new home herself and it was recorded solely under her name. Moreover, since Win was often working in the mining camps, she opened a boarding house in her home. She had a high reputation, and many an up-and-coming young person started their careers in Pendleton while staying in her house. Mary's most important claim to fame is that almost single-handedly she compiled and edited Reminiscences of Oregon Pioneers, (East Oregonian Publishing Company), the first locally-produced book about the history of Umatilla County. Mary was a charter member and past-president of the Pioneer Club, and chairman of the history committee. The East Oregonian noted that "it is fitting that the oldest of pioneers should lead the way in this worthy project." She was also for 64 years an active member of the Baptist Church and for 25, Grand Treasurer of the Eastern Star.

One of Mary's daughters, Nona, married Rex Ellis. Nona was quite a businesswoman in her own right, operating first a knitting shop, and then the Frazier-Ellis Store, one of Pendleton's finest lady's apparel shops. She and her husband, Rex, moved into the Johnson-Ellis House with her mother in 1929, six years after they were married. Nona lived there until 1983, when she entered a nursing home.

Rex Ellis came to Pendleton in 1919 to run a Dodge car dealership which became known as Ellis-Schuller Motors. He was born in 1893 in Letts, Iowa, and obtained experience in the auto industry in Detroit. He was a diversified businessman, becoming involved in mining interests in the Bourne district, building offices, opening a cocktail lounge, bowling alley, and smorgasbord, and promoting a major irrigation project at Patterson Ferry in north Morrow County. Rex was elected to the Republican ticket as state senator for District 19 in 1936, a position he held from 1936-1954, a period of 18 years. In office he was noted for his efforts to establish the University of Oregon Medical School and for his opposition to reapportionment. He died February 16, 1972.

The Johnson-Ellis House may well have been built by Joe Connelly as his own home. Up until 1899 the lot was evidently part of the site of a livery stable that Connelly had purchased in 1887 for \$1300. The house appears to have been built between March, 1899 when a \$1000 mortgage on the livery stable was paid off, and an \$800 mortgage was taken out in August, 1900, perhaps to complete the house. Mary Johnson bought the house on April 10, 1903 for \$2000, and it remained the Johnson-Ellis family home until 1983. In the summer of 1985, the house was converted to the Colins & Collins law office.

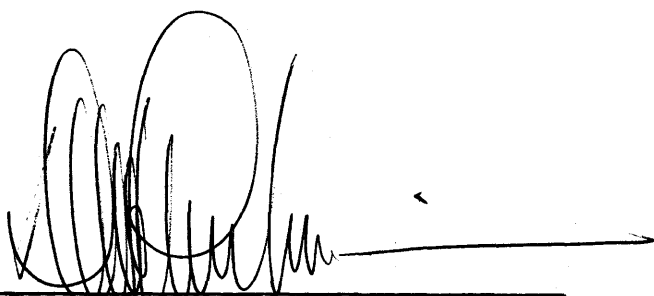
**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only
received SEP 12 1986
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Continuation sheet JOHNSON-ELLIS HOUSE Item number 8 Page 3

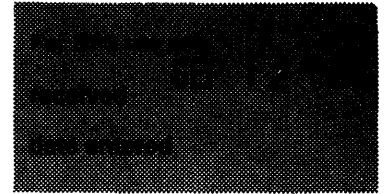
Following is supplemental information in support of the statement that the Johnson-Ellis House, 326 SE 2nd Street, in Pendleton, Umatilla County, Oregon, meets National Register criterion "b," primarily, for its association with Mary Benson Johnson, compiler and editor of the first history of Umatilla County, which was published under the title Reminiscences of Oregon Pioneers in 1937. Mrs. Johnson's work on the watershed compilation of local history was in progress from 1919, the year of the founding of the project sponsor, the Pioneer Ladies Club, to the date of publication, a period of 18 years which coincides with the historic period of Mrs. Johnson's occupancy of the house on SE 2nd Street. The Pioneer Ladies Club, of which Mrs. Johnson was a charter member, left an important organizational legacy as well, as it was the forerunner of the Umatilla County Historical Society.



Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
September 9, 1986

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet JOHNSON-ELLIS HOUSE Item number 8 Page 4

ADDENDUM: REMINISENCES OF OREGON PIONEERS

The book entitled, Reminiscences of Oregon Pioneers, was published in 1937 by the Pioneer Ladies Club of Pendleton, Oregon and the East Oregonian Publishing Company, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of Umatilla County. Although small in size, the book is of incalculable importance to Umatilla County. Simply stated, it is the first, most significant, and most comprehensive local history book ever published about the county. Moreover, most of the ninety-five family histories contained in its 255 pages are related by the pioneers themselves. Every local history book written since has drawn heavily on this compendium of primary source material.

The only other known published histories of the County prior to this time are a brief chapter in Frank Gilbert's, Historic Sketches of Walla Walla, Whitman, Columbia, and Garfield Counties, Washington, and Umatilla County, Oregon, published in Portland by Walling and Co., in 1882, and William Parson and W.S. Schiach's, An Illustrated History of Umatilla County and of Morrow County, published by W.H. Lever, in 1902. Unfortunately, this latter work, in spite of its elaborate title, was a serial publication and dwelt on Indian life and the 1878 Indian uprising far more than the details of early settlement in the County.

Undoubtedly, the local newspapers have published a larger volume of primary and secondary history over the years in individual articles and special editions. However, these journals have not yet been indexed, so historical research in them is very cumbersome, indordinately time-consuming, and truthfully quite hit-and-miss. Therefore, Reminiscences, remains singularly important as the only major accessible source of primary materials about the history of Umatilla County.

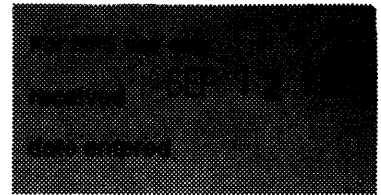
Mary Benson Johnson was directly responsible for compiling and editing Reminiscences, a work that encompassed some 18 years of dedication. Throughout the book, there are "editor's notes" providing background information to amplify the personal remembrances, and there are some thirty poems, articles, newsworthy tidbits, and short articles that Mary gathered or wrote herself. Of particular significance to this nomination, is the fact that many of the pioneer interviews were actually conducted in Mary's home, the Johnson-Ellis House, and many of the History Committee work sessions were held there as well.

The importance of Mary Benson Johnson's contribution to this very important book is best revealed by the following "Tribute" written by her peers and printed opposite the Table of Contents in Reminiscences:

"There have been several important contributing factors to the success of this volume of reminiscences. During the entire period of preparation the members of the Pioneer Club have been keenly interested and consistently cooperative with the history committee. The burden of the work has fallen upon Mrs. Mary E. Johnson,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet JOHNSON ELLIS HOUSE Item number 8 Page 5

the chairman of the history committee for the past fifteen years. During this time, she has worked unceasingly in gathering and filing material for this book. Some of the autobiographical sketches contained parts of interviews. Mrs. Johnson arranged for many of the meetings of the pioneers. The interviews were often given at her home.

Mrs. Johnson has written many letters to former residents of Umatilla County and has done an immense amount of research so necessary in compiling an authentic history. The success of this venture has depended largely upon her first hand knowledge of the early history of Umatilla County and her devotion to the cause of preserving the annals of our pioneer life."

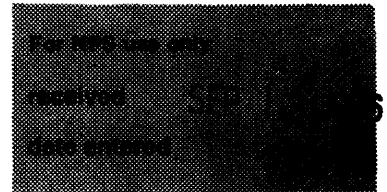
Recently, Jean Stover-Hale, today's historian of the Pioneer Ladies Club, shared notes she had made from the club's minute books covering a time period from 1926-1956. As early as April 1926, Mrs. Johnson was mentioned as having given "a very interesting talk on gathering data concerning pioneer days of Pendleton and Umatilla County." At each meeting, one or more persons would give their personal reminiscences or would read a letter from a pioneer or some pertinent article. Guest speakers were common, and the East Oregonian was enlisted to help advertise the clubs activities and thereby elicit more pioneer stories. Gathering of historical information was the primary project of the club, and the material seems to have been published in a newsletter called "We Blow Our Own Horn," for which Abbie Mays and Mary Johnson were editresses.

On 3 Mary 1931, Mrs. Johnson gave a talk about ways and means of getting the history they were gathering into print. No mention is made of the date the publishing of a book was actually approved, but a "pioneer book" was in the mill by at least 1934 when Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Stillman, and Mrs. Cornielson were appointed to "get more material to finish the book." On 2 June 1936, Mr. Worthy of the E.O. met with the club to discuss the particulars of the new book. There were to be 1000 copies printed; it was to measure 5 1/2 x 8 1/2; and it was to be cloth bound and contain 250 pages. The Vert Fund would make \$500 available, and Mrs. Johnson was appointed to the committee to look after the details. The new book would cost 75 cents per copy. By 17 September 1937, Reminiscences was finished and on sale for 50 cents to members. The club gave a vote of thanks to Mrs. Johnson, and twenty-seven copies were sold that first day.

By 1 February 1938, Mrs. Johnson reported that the costs of publishing had been met and that from then on there would be a dividend from sales. She noted it was being "favorably received" and that a Chicago library had written for a copy. The price went up to \$1.69 for members, and \$2.25 for the general public. It was placed on sale in Frazier's Book Store on Main St., Pendleton. By November of 1938, sales totalled \$917.12, of which \$38.81 was royalty to the club. Sales continued to be reported as late as January 1942, when \$296 in the book fund was used to buy a \$400 U.S. Govt. bond to help the new war effort in true patriotic fashion. During this time the New York City Library and the Minnesota Historical Society were two identified book customers. Reminiscences thereby obtained some national exposure in addition to the popularity it was enjoying locally. The Verts, Scottish-born local philanthropists, would have been pleased with the success of the publication they underwrote.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet JOHNSON-ELLIS HOUSE Item number 8 Page 6

ADDENDUM: THE PIONEER LADIES CLUB OF PENDLETON

The Pioneer Ladies Club, sponsors of Reminiscences, was founded on 5 February 1919 by Mrs. John Vert, with the object of:

"To renew and extend acquaintance, promote sociability, and collect from living witnesses such history of Pendleton and Umatilla County as the club may deem worthy of preservation."

The 103 charter members of the club, Mary Benson Johnson included, represented most of the leading families of the county. The club was singularly endowed for its stated objective because most of the august ladies were pioneers themselves, largely children that came overland via the Oregon Trail with their parents. Formation of the club had been precipitated by a luncheon given at the old Hotel Pendleton several years earlier for the aged mothers who were the adults that had crossed the prairies. By 1919, they had all died, and their daughters were concerned that their stories would not be lost, but would be perpetuated.

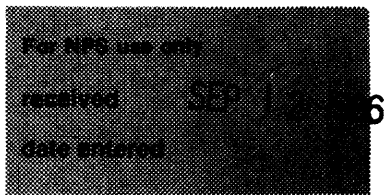
It should here be noted that the Umatilla County Historical Society was not founded for several decades after the Pioneer Ladies Club, so in their efforts to gather the history of the County, the Ladies were indeed the predecessors of a county-wide historical organization. And indeed, this was their primary function, the gathering of historical information. While the social occasions were very much important as well, the ladies devoted considerable time and energy to fulfilling their "objective." There were history reports, readings, or guest speakers at every meeting, and 18 years after the founding of the club, all their work was published in Reminiscences of Oregon Pioneers.

Following publishing of their book, the club continued to gather and report historic information in their newsletter. In the late 1930's the club had approximately 200 members, and even through the 1950's, attendance averaged seventy. Meetings were originally held monthly, but by the 50's had become quarterly. Today, meetings are even more infrequent, but the club is still active, though quite small. The primary function now is for the ladies to model antique dresses and ride in a carriage in the Westward 'Ho parade during Pendleton's Round-up. This is a long-standing role, dating back at least to 1938.

Over the years, the ladies have even had fashion shows and have appeared in full regalia at special events. During World War II, the ladies also actively helped out the USO and raised money for the Salvation Army's "Doughnut Hut" at the train depot. They also put on a big spectacular for the unveiling of a portrait of Senator Pendleton, for whom the town was named, including hosting of the Senator's granddaughter for the occasion. Their most unusual project, however, was a fat salvage drive during the war. Though their numbers have diminished and their activities been curtailed, we of Umatilla County are eternally indebted to the Pioneer Ladies Club of Pendleton for preparing and publishing Reminiscences of Oregon Pioneers and for paving the way for the Umatilla County Historical Society.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet JOHNSON-ELLIS HOUSE Item number 8 Page 7

ADDENDUM: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

HISTORY OF THE BENSON FAMILY AND
BIOGRAPHY OF MARY BENSON JOHNSON

Mrs. Mary Benson Johnson, known affectionately in Pendleton as "Aunt Mollie," was an active member of an early Umatilla County pioneer family. While never attaining great wealth or power, she distinguished herself by her kindness and involvement in her community. Her crowning achievement, in retrospect, was the compilation and editing of Reminiscences of Oregon Pioneers, a personal history of Umatilla County as shared directly by ninety-five pioneers or members of their families. Included in its pages are stories by Mollie and four members of her family, which reveal through their lives a vivid picture of pioneer Umatilla County.

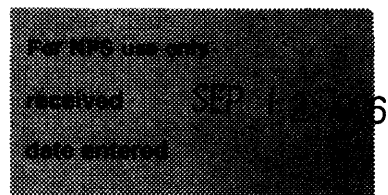
In April, 1864, during the height of the Civil War, a wagon train left the farming community of Trenton, in north-central Missouri. The sixty wagons were bound for northeastern Oregon under the direction of Jesse Benson, their captain and father of Mary Benson Johnson. Accompanying Jesse was his wife Emily (White) and their five children, Oscar, Thomas, Julia, Mary (age 6), and Willy. Thomas, better known as T.C., recalled that the children thought of the trip as one long holiday and that a tame ox named "Whitey", together with the family milk cow, pulled the Benson wagon. He felt that "the experience of pioneering had its attractions for those adventurous spirits who sought a home in the great, fertile Oregon Country."

The overland trip was remarkable in that not a single head of stock was lost, nor were the Indians troublesome, although they often followed the train. Smaller wagon trains that year did not fare so well, and the Benson group encountered those who had been robbed of all their stock and possessions. T.C. remembered the crossing of the Platte River, in Nebraska, which took a week, and required calking the beds and floating them across. Later on in the trip, a week was spent at Ft. Boise, while Mrs. Benson gave birth to their sixth child, Edwin, who was nicknamed "Little Idaho" in honor of his place of birth.

Arriving in the Powder River valley of eastern Oregon, the Benson wagon train began disassembling as several families stayed in the Baker City area to settle permanently, this being a gold-mining district. Others left the group near Union in the Grande Ronde Valley, further north, where the Bensons also visited friends. They then crossed the Blue Mountains, via Meacham, reaching their final destination, the Umatilla Meadows, where relatives had already settled. The Meadows was a fertile, but marshy, bottomland district along the lower Umatilla River, only about ten miles from its confluence with the mighty Columbia River. The Bensons arrived there, near what is now the town of Echo, just two years after Umatilla County had been created, and only four to five years after the initial permanent settlement had taken place. At this time there were only 1800 permanent residents in the

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National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet JOHNSON-ELLIS HOUSE Item number 8 Page 8

County, and over half of them lived at Umatilla Landing. This thriving port served the gold mines of eastern Oregon and southern Idaho, and was a true "boom town", a tent city. The remaining settlers, numbering perhaps 800 were scattered thinly throughout the rest of the County, though concentrated along the rivers and streams.

The winter of 1864-65 was spent in a log cabin in the Meadows. It had a dirt roof constructed of split cottonwood logs overlaid by tule rushes and then sod. T.C. recalled that the next spring wildflowers sprouted and bloomed on the roof, "making a pretty sight." That roof also leaked horribly during heavy spring rains, but Mary notes that the little cabin was indeed "home" for the weary travelers. The cabin was located near the sites of Ft. Henrietta (1855) and the first local Indian Agency (1851-55). These outposts of civilization were located at the point where the Oregon Trail crossed the lower Umatilla River, and were destroyed during the Cayuse Indian War. The nearest school was located across this river, to the north, reached by a footbridge, or a ferry during high water. This district of northwestern Umatilla County was the first to be settled due to the lush pastures, and throughout the pioneer era, remained an active and important community, though no towns developed until the coming of the railroad in 1881.

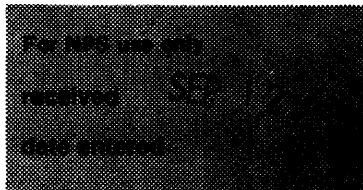
In the spring of 1865, Mary's younger brother Willy died, but the family prospered financially as Jesse entered into a partnership with his brother-in-law to raise vegetables, seemingly an unusual crop in this wilderness. But with the Idaho and Oregon gold rushes in full swing and the main supply routes passing through Umatilla County across or near the Meadows, raising vegetables was a brilliant idea. The partners sold their produce directly to passing freight teams or took it to nearby Umatilla Landing, the bustling transshipment point on the Columbia River. This business they continued for seven years.

As was typical of pioneer families, the Bensons did not settle permanently at the Meadows. Edwing recalls that when he was five, in 1869, the family moved across the river to the Bob Lansdale ranch, the "Ten Mile House" on the main freight and stage route from Umatilla Landing to the top of the Blue Mountains, and thence to points south and east. (This "Ten Mile House" was located on what is now the grounds of the Union Pacific's Hinkle railyard) With a child's fascination, he remembers the long pack trains, the high prairie schooners joined together in threes pulled by sixteen mules, and of course the stage coaches that would arrive and depart with great flourish. He and Mary attended school there and one of the teachers was their older brother Oscar, or O.O. Benson, the first of the Benson children to start out on his own.

Later, the family moved on up the road to "Twelve Mile House," now the townsite of Stanfield, and still just across the river from the Meadows. Then, in 1870, their mother Emily died. They buried her in the old Foster Cemetary, moving Willy's body to join hers. The next year they moved away. The new Benson home was thirty-five miles to the southeast, on E. Birch Creek, in the foothills of the Blue Mountains, about five miles upstream from Alta, predecessor to the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet JOHNSON-ELLIS HOUSE Item number 8 Page 9

town of Pilot Rock. This was sheep and cattle country astride freight routes to the Baker and Granite mines that skirted to the south of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Oregon Trail. At this juncture, both T.C. and Oscar left home, Oscar to teach (apparently), and T.C. to go into the stock business. He joined up with members of the Robbins family back at the Meadows. Julia, Mary and Edwin remained at home, attending school at Alta, and then in 1872 and 1873, in Pendleton, during which time Mary made acquaintance with schoolmates which were to become her dearest friends. Mary evidently then passed the exams for schoolteaching, and during the mid-1870's became "school-marm" on Birch Creek.

In May 1873, Julia married Thomas Benton Wells, who also had come across the Oregon Trail in 1864, from Iowa. His family had settled in the wide Walla Walla Valley in the northeastern part of the County, along the Washington stateline and not far from Dr. Whitman's ill-fated mission. Benton was serving as a Sheriff's deputy at the time, but soon moved his new family up into the Birch Creek country as well, to engage in stock raising. He and Julia were blessed with four children.

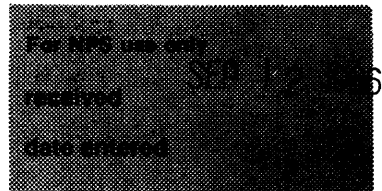
T.C. was the next to be married. In 1875, he took his partner's sister, Ella Robbins, as his bride. He was now in the butchering business as well as stock raising and was running a daily meat wagon from the Meadows to Umatilla Landing. Following a serious injury to his hand (his gun exploded), Jonathan Raley suggested that T.C. run for County Assessor. He did, and "thanks to his friends" was elected. However, his new work took him away from home much of the time, so he moved his wife and new baby boy from their ranch at the Meadows to live with his family up Birch Creek.

During their childhood on Birch Creek, Mary, known to friends as Molly, together with others in her family joined Eli Gilliam's singing school at Alta. Along with spelling bees and debating societies, singing schools were among the most popular social organizations in Umatilla County during that era: Mr. Gilliam, an accomplished tenor, rode on horseback all over the County to coach classes in four different communities. Since he lived at Alta, some forty-five miles from his most distant class at Umatilla Landing, his hometown class received a degree more attention and coaching. Indeed the Alta class was very proficient, being asked to provide music on special occasions, a coveted honor. So it was not surprising that the Alta Singing School was asked to come and compete with the Meadows class at a big Centennial celebration planned at this downriver community on the 4th of July 1876. Molly and her classmates got up early that holiday morning, and traveled the thirty-five rough miles in a horse-drawn wagon. In spite of the long, hard ride, the Alta class was in fine form, and, or course, walked off with the top honors.

During the Bannock Indian raids of the summer of 1878, the Benson family was living on the ranch up Birch Creek, twenty-five miles from the nearest sizable community, Pendleton. T.C. was at the Meadows, however, and when the raiders neared Umatilla County, he helped families evacuate to Umatilla Landing. He was on the crew that built a "fort" at the Kunzie family's stone warehouse, using stuffed woollacks as barricades (no shots were ever fired on the fort,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet JOHNSON-ELLIS HOUSE Item number 8 Page 10

and it is a good thing, for it was afterwards discovered that the woolsacks proved to be no deterrant to a speeding bullet!). With things secure there, he made a fast trip up to Birch Creek to get Molly, Edwin, and the Gilliam family. T.C. recalled that night's events as follows:

"We drove to Pendleton during the night and on the way encountered a band of Indians. We believed them to be hostiles. There were about a dozen wagons in our party and ours was in the lead. Our driver stopped the horses and called out 'They are going to attack us. Get out and get behind the wagon.' My sister, Molly, was the first one out, and the only one. For as she was attempting to help a child out, a voice from the wagon behind us yelled, 'Drive On.' Our driver started the horses at a rapid pace. Hastily restoring the child to its mother, my sister had barely time to clutch the end gate of the wagon, and there she hung shouting at the top of her voice. We traveled for some distance before she could make the driver understand her predicament. This incident happened near the McKay damsite."

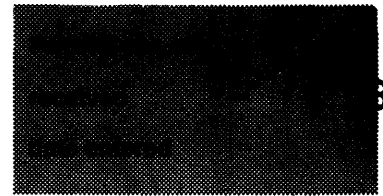
Molly stayed on in Pendleton with friends during the rest of the Indian troubles, but T.C. sent his wife, her sister, and his brother Edwin down the Columbia River by steamboat to wait things out with relatives in the Willamette Valley. During this time, the estimated 4500 residents of the County vacated the rural areas, congregating in forts in four of the towns, and many like Ella Robbins Benson, fled the area altogether for several months until things had quieted down for certain.

In the fall of 1878, Molly enrolled in Professor J.C. Arnold's high school in Pendleton. Prof. Arnold was a man of considerable ability. He took great pride in his school and singular interest in his pupils, although Molly recalls that "girls were often disappointing to him for he often said that when he got them on the way of becoming real scholars they would spoil it all by getting married, which ended their school days." Molly must have been a good student, for she attended for two terms. She was editress of the school newspaper and was active in social activities. On 7 April 1879, the Pendleton High School staged an "Exhibition" at Milarkey's Hall (on the National Register!). Molly read an excerpt from her paper and performed in a "farce--red frizette" as Miss Gray, a "common pupil." Her elder brother Oscar, evidently a teacher at the school, also performed in a drama that night as Mr. Raymond, a "wealthy merchant from the City." Molly and three other students served as a committee to dispose of the net receipts, of which \$15 was reserved for purchase of school journals for the participants, anything being left over to be distributed equally to the three Sunday Schools active in the community.

During the summer of 1874, Molly had gone up to visit friends in Granite, a mining community in the Elkhorn Mountains of Grant County, west of Baker City, and over a hundred miles south of her home. The Tabors were friends from the Birch Creek area who had gone to Granite to run a hotel. While there, Molly met Winslow Johnson, a placer miner. Following her 1879 school term, in December of that year, five years after they had met, Molly and Win were married.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



86

Continuation sheet JOHNSON-ELLIS HOUSE

Item number 8

Page 11

The newlyweds returned to Granite, living with the Tabors until spring, whereupon they went up to Win's mine on the North Fork of the John Day River, nine miles away. The hydraulic placer mining operation fascinated Molly, and she always claimed the largest nuggets that would be washed out. The gold was of high quality bringing \$18/ounce, but the mining operation was expensive. Molly described the placer mining technique as follows:

"Water for working the mine was taken from this river in a ditch nine miles long. This was the longest ditch ever known in that mining district and carried a large volume of water. Iron pipe, large enough for a man to crawl through, supported by heavy timbers, was used as a part of the ditch across a gulch. It was one man's duty, during the mining season, to patrol the ditch to see that it was kept in order. I liked to watch the mining. It was interesting to see a giant stream of water wash down a mountain of dirt and rocks, and then--it was more interesting to see the men take out the gold which had been washed into boxes made for the purpose."

In a few years, Win sold that mine and purchased the Crane Creek mine, three-miles closer to Granite and on level ground. Here the gold was not entirely free from rock, so only brought \$14/ounce, but it was easier and therefore less expensive to mine. Win and Molly made a fine living from these mines. They made a practice of sending the gold to the mint as soon as it was worked out of the dirt and rock. Very often, Molly was the courier, carrying the gold dust to Baker City by stage, and then on to the firm of Rothschild & Bean in Pendleton by the railroad. Her technique was quite gutsy, for rather than transport the gold in a locked box, she chose to be less obvious, and concealed the precious dust in her clothing and on her person, usually several thousand dollars worth at a time! When interviewed about this in 1936, Molly just smiled, and commented that "There was no danger in those days. I thought nothing of carrying a lot of gold dust, for you know it doesn't take much gold to weigh out \$1000."

The Johnsons lived at the mines several winters as well as summers. Molly even enjoyed the winters in those mountains. She recalled that people were quite sociable and would travel for miles on skis, just to visit. She even learned to ski (!), and found it to be "great sport."

Meanwhile back on Birch Creek, T.C. and Ella had bought a place in California Gulch after he finished his work as Assessor, probably around 1879. They built a small house on the valley floor and commenced stock-raising. The following summer a cloudburst sent a wall of water rushing down the gulch, catching the unknowing family at the dinner table. The parents grabbed the two children into their arms, and waded through waist-deep water to safety. They watched in horror as the house was swept away, only to become entangled on newly-set fenceposts a short distance downstream. However, the house was so badly damaged that they had to build a new one, on higher ground of course.

Ella recalls that pioneer life was not all drudgery, but that it was always fraught with dangers. Each summer the related families would make a pilgrimage

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet JOHNSON-ELLIS HOUSE Item number 8 Page 12

to the nearby mountains to cut firewood for the winter. The men would also hunt and fish, and the women and children would gather huckleberries. Since it was such a break from the normal routine, and in such a lovely setting, the whole undertaking was regarded somewhat as one big picnic. One morning, Ella rode out with her baby on her trusted old horse Colonel to a particularly fine berry patch. She put the babe on a blanket in the middle of a clearing, took her tin pail, and went merrily among the low bushes, collecting the pungent purple berries. After a while, she noticed the brush snapping and crackling behind her. This kept up for quite some time, and she wondered how one of their cows had strayed this far up on the mountain. On returning to camp, she told her brother about the stray cow. He went off to round her up, since the other cattle were way down in the valley. Later that day, he came back to camp announcing that Ella's "stray cow" had instead been a brown bear, which he in turn shot, right in the middle of Ella's berry patch.

Later in the 1880's, T.C. secured a contract to supply meat to the operators of the government boarding house, during the construction of the canal along the Columbia River at the Cascades, far distant from Umatilla County. This became so profitable that the family moved on down to Cascade Locks, and T.C. ran a meat market as well.

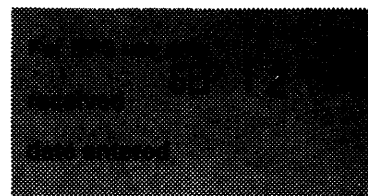
Back on Birch Creek, the Benton Wells family was not faring so well. During the severe measles epidemic of 1882-3, Julia contracted the often-fatal disease, and then so did her only son. They both died and were buried at Pilot Rock, which had usurped Alta as the district's town. Her husband Benton sent their three young daughters to live with his parents, until, two years later he remarried.

Molly and Win had been having children too, three daughters. To secure a better education for them, they bought a house in Pendleton in 1886. Winters were spent there, but mining and the mountains were in their blood, and along with Win, Molly and the girls returned to the Granite district each summer.

The 1890's saw the completion of a process begun in 1871, namely the slow, but certain dispersal of the Benson children, and an abandonment of the country for the "better life" in town. The first to go was Oscar, who was a teacher, and of whom we have no mention after 1879. Then T.C. moved back to the Meadows, but eventually rejoined his family on Birch Creek. Molly left in 1879 for the Granite mining district, and then returned to the County, to Pendleton in 1886. Coincidentally, it was in 1886 that father Jesse Benson, passed away, at the age of 64, and was buried near his daughter Julia. About that time, T.C. and Ella left for better prospects at Cascade Locks, and in 1891, the big city of Portland. Julia's husband, Benton, lived on the ranch for several years after her death, and then, he too moved his family to Pendleton to take advantage of the better educational opportunities for his children. Perhaps Edwin was last; at any rate, by 1896 he was living in the Willamette Valley, and that year married Lelah Carr of Carlton.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet JOHNSON-ELLIS HOUSE Item number 8 Page 13

The 20th century brought further advancement for the Benson children. T.C. became a livestock buyer in Portland, eventually ending up in that capacity with the Swift & Co. In 1908, he went into the livestock commission business with his son Arthur. He was forced to resign from active business in 1924 due to ill health, and was by that time the oldest, and perhaps most experienced member of the Portland Union Stockyards. Back in Pendleton, Benton Wells, Julia's husband, continued in stock raising, but became keenly interested in politics and civic advancement as well. He was a Mason and served as Grandmaster of the IOOF. He died in 1920. The youngest, Edwin, and his wife Leah produced three children and lived their lives on the west side of Oregon, and then at Stevenson, Washington. Edwin noted that from their home on the north bank of the Columbia River, they had a full view of the portage route he had taken around the Cascades when he had been sent down the Columbia River to safety during the 1878 Indian uprising, some fifty years earlier.

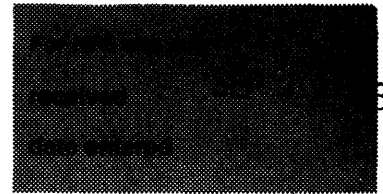
As for Molly Benson Johnson, her life appears to have been fulfilling and successful. Mining had been profitable for Win and her, and in 1903, she bought the house that is the subject of this nomination. While not a mansion, it was nonetheless a substantial and fashionable home, perhaps reflective of Molly's good education. Moreover, as appears to have been not all that uncommon in those days, the house was purchased in her name only. Molly appears to have started spending more time in Pendleton, and according to tradition began taking in boarders to keep her occupied while Win was away at the mines. Hers was a very respectable operation, and at least one up and coming young professional spent his first few months in Pendleton at her home, namely E.B. Aldrich, long-time editor of the East Oregonian newspaper. Undoubtedly this sideline became more important after Win's death in 1913.

Molly was also very active civically. For 64 years, she was a member of the Baptist Church, and for 25, Grand Treasurer of the Eastern Star. She was a charter member and president of the Pioneer Ladies Club, and was also active in the Past Matrons and Spizzerinktum clubs. It was her involvement with the Pioneer Ladies Club for which she is most remembered today, some 43 years after her death. Beginning with the formation of the club in 1919, and with increasing intensity and dedication for the next 18 years, Molly helped gather the early history of Umatilla County directly from the mouths of the other living pioneers. She became the compiler and editress of the club's premier effort, the publication in 1937 of Reminiscences of Oregon Pioneers, from whose pages most of this story has been drawn. And, significantly, it was in her home, that many of the pioneer interviews were conducted and that many of the History Committee work sessions took place.

In 1936, the East Oregonian honored "Aunt Molly" with a special article in that year's Round-up Souvenir Edition, noting that "Mrs. Winn Johnson Holds Honor Among Pioneers." At the end of a colorful story of her life was described her devotion to "collecting copy for a book of pioneer stories to be published soon." The paper felt that "It is fitting that the oldest of pioneers should lead the way in this worthy project." In closing, they also added that "most everyone in Pendleton knows the kindly white-haired lady who is very interested in the life of the community."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



86

Continuation sheet JOHNSON-ELLIS HOUSE Item number 8 Page 14

Molly passed away on 13 April 1943, at the age of 85, having lived in Umatilla County for 79 of its 81 years. The East Oregonian honored her with a front page obituary and these fitting words "Her passing marks that of one of Umatilla County's grand old pioneers; everyone knew and loved "Aunt Molly" Johnson, from her childhood to the last years of her life." The article went on to describe her heroics during the 1878 Indian uprising, and to then note that "It was not only as a prominent figure in pioneer history that Mrs. Johnson played a part." The obituary recounted her civic participation, praising her efforts as chairman of the Pioneer Ladies Club, for "the burden of the work of compiling 'Reminiscences of Oregon Pioneers' fell upon her and she worked unceasingly in gathering and filing material for the book..." Thus was laid to rest Umatilla County's oldest and, at the time, best known pioneer, Mary E. Benson Johnson.

THE END

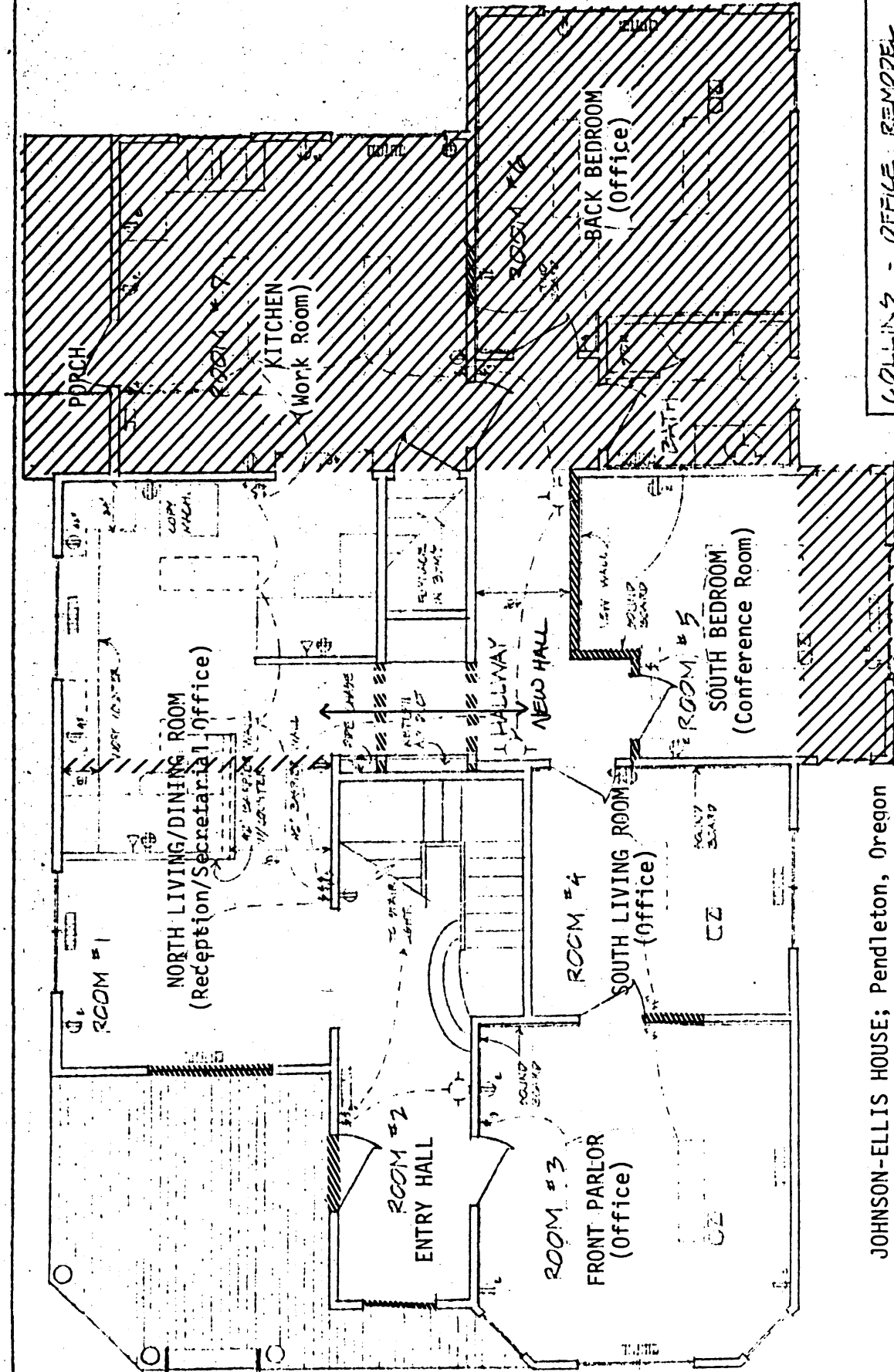
BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Conversations with: Mike Forrester (grandson of E.B. Aldrich)
Nona Ellis (daughter of Mary Benson Johnson)

East Oregonian: 1936 Round-up Souvenir Edition (mid-September 1936).
13 April 1943

Reminiscences of Oregon Pioneers; ed. Mary E. Benson Johnson; Pendleton, Oregon; Pioneer Ladies Club and East Oregonian Publishing Co.; 1937.

Pages 102-106: Reminiscences of Thomas Benson
Pages 107-109: Experiences of a Pioneer Woman (Ella Robbins Benson)
Page 155: Autobiography of Mrs. Douglas Belts
Inserted program between pages 202 and 203
Pages 232-234: Memories (Mary E. Benson Johnson)
Pages 235-236: Pioneer Days (Edwin Benson)
Pages 237-238: The Wells and Jordan Families (Mrs. I.U. Temple)
Pages 248-251: The Old Singing School (W.A. Gilliam)



JOHNSON-ELLIS HOUSE; Pendleton, Oregon

1 MAIN FLOOR - PROPOSED

SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

Historic-era Changes

1985 Changes

COLLINS - OFFICE REMOVAL
 SEE 2ND FLOOR PLAN, OREGON

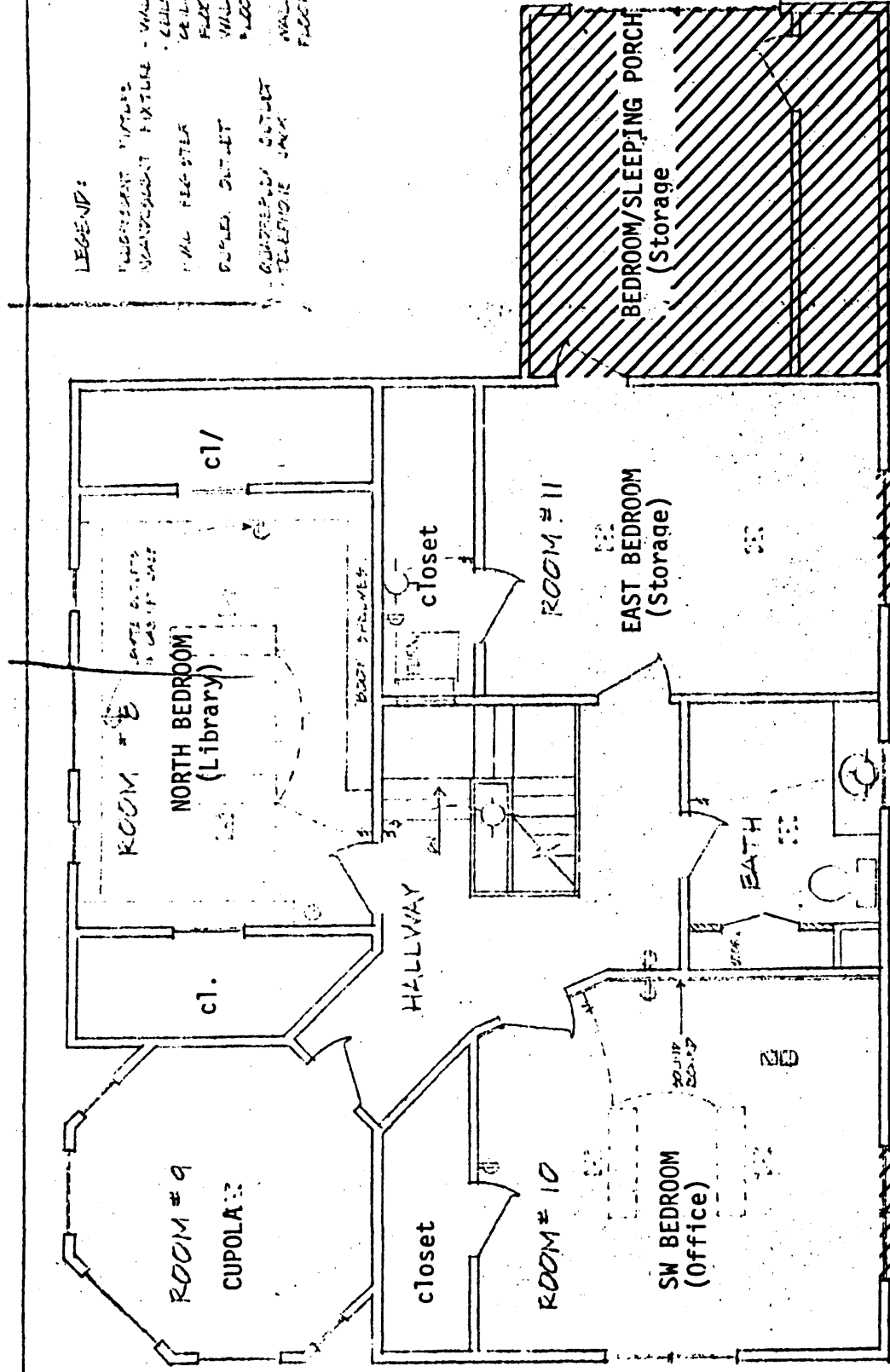
DATE
 1-18-85

PAGE
 1 OF 2

WOODHID BUILDING & RENOVATION
 522 NORTH 4TH ST
 PENDLETON, OREGON 97801
 (503) 275-1876

LEGEND:

- FURNITURE PLACEMENT
- WALL
- CEILING
- FLOOR
- WALL
- FLOOR
- WALL
- FLOOR
- WALL
- FLOOR



JOHNSON-ELLIS HOUSE; Pendleton, Oregon

Historic-era Changes

COLLINS - OFFICE REMODEL

DATE
1-10-65

1985 Changes

DE SM PENDING, OREGON

PAGE
2 OF 2

1 SECOND FLOOR - PROPOSED

2 SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

WOODRUFF BUILDING & RENOVATION
310 1/2 W. 11th St.
PENDLETON, OREGON 97801
(503) 276-1476