

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received OCT 30 1986

date entered DEC 1 1986

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

1. Name

historic George E. Birge House

and/or common N.A.

2. Location

street & number 715 E Street _____ not for publication

city, town Centralia _____ vicinity of

state Washington code 053 county Lewis code 041

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 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"/> in process | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | n/a | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| | | | <input checked="" 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 Steve and Barbara Freeman

street & number 715 E Street

city, town Centralia _____ vicinity of state Washington 98531

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Lewis County Courthouse

street & number 344 West Main Street

city, town Chehalis _____ state Washington 98532

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Washington State Inventory of Cultural Resources has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date November 5, 1979 _____ federal state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

city, town 111 W. 21st Ave., KL-11, Olympia state Washington 98504-5411

7. Description

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The George E. Birge House, built in about 1890, is an excellent example of the Queen Anne style adapted to a small city. The property consists of three lots in Miller's Addition, an older residential area in close proximity to the downtown commercial area of Centralia, Washington. The home faces north and is situated in the middle of a block of well cared for residential properties reflecting late 19th and early 20th century domestic architecture.

The Birge House is a well preserved two and a half story wood frame structure. The house rests on a Tenino sandstone foundation which includes a partial basement and is primarily rectangular in plan. Additions to the rear of the property have increased the length of the original plan but are not intrusive and do not seriously affect the architectural integrity of the structure. During Birge's occupancy the original floor plan was altered in the northeast corner to accommodate an office and enlarge the music room. These one story projections are visible from the primary facade and are compatible with the original design.

The high crossgabled roof boasts a pyramidal roofed turret in the front northeast L. The wood shingles on the roof duplicate the shingles used on the house in the 1920's. The boxed cornice is decorated with a dentil band frieze repeated on the single story portions of the house and on the turret. Several walls with pedimented gables project from the principal structure and contribute to the overall impression of vertical asymmetry.

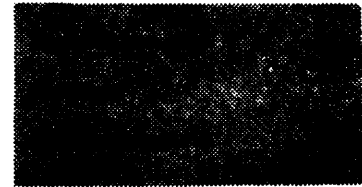
The structure is sided with clapboard accented by endboards, fishscale shingles, decorative moulding in the porch roof gables, and decorative porch posts with curvilinear arches. The shingles are applied as a wide course between the first and second story and as the dominate material in the gables. An open porch runs nearly the entire width of the front facade and features simple turned support posts linked by curvilinear arches. The original balustrade, featuring two rows of spindles, one above the other, was removed and has been recently replicated by the current owners. The main entrance is accentuated by a pair of projecting support posts on either side of modest porch stairs and topped by a pedimented gable inset with curvilinear moulding. The porch's boxed cornice is decorated with brackets and a dentil band frieze. The side porch is linked visibly with the front porch by similarity of design. It features the same pedimented gable opening with decorative moulding, simple turned support posts, and boxed cornice with a dentil band frieze and curvilinear brackets. The original spindlework balustrade is missing from this porch as well and in its place is a boxed railing covered with fishscale shingles similar to the shingles used on the house. This alteration is unobtrusive and does not seriously impact the architectural integrity.

The turret projecting vertically from the main structure is a small room accessed only by a trap door from the second story balcony area underneath. The balcony repeats the first floor porch design with turned support posts and decorative arches.

The majority of fenestration is one over one double hung windows with simple surrounds. Two windows on the first floor serving principal rooms are large single panes with transoms. The front gable contains a single light with simple surrounds sandwiched between wide fishscale shingle courses. The turret contains two six over one windows with plain surrounds. A diamond paned leaded glass window with larger double hung side lights serves the office area on the first floor. These windows, as well as the two double hung sashes in the music room, were added to the house later during Birge's occupancy. A single pane

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of patterned glass lights the stair landing midway between the first and second floor. There are six exterior doors in the structure, five of which are original.

The majority of the doors, with the exception of the front door, are simple with three panels, one above two. The top panel has a moulded rail with recessed glass rounded at the top corners. The bottom side by side panels have moulded rails with a bevelled recessed panel. The two doors accessing the side porch contain patterned frosted glass with a like material in the transoms above. The front door, in contrast to the others, is a decorative entry to the home. It is a single leaf with two panels featuring a transom with a recessed panel of leaded stained glass. The door's top panel is recessed etched glass and the bottom a carved panel with a moulded rail.

Small yet distinctive decorative elements adorn the front facade vergeboards at the gable peaks. A secondary gable on the front facade boasts a moulded bullseye, a design motif repeated in a smaller scale in the porch pediment moulding.

The house is situated on the two northernmost lots while the east lot is dominated by lawn and plantings. Originally painted creamy white with bright red trim, the home now attractively exhibits a predominantly teal blue surface trimmed with cream and accented with wine red and white.² While the current paint scheme does not illustrate the property during the period of significance, it does not detract from the property's integrity of feeling and association with the Birge era. A garden shed, a recent addition, is situated at the back of the property and is screened from the street by foliage.

The interior of the Birge home is in good condition. In the original portion of the house, the floor plan since Birge's occupancy has been little altered through the years except to accommodate a downstairs bath. The windows and doors exhibit their original hardware, beautiful etched brass hinges, knobs, key plates, and latches. Window and door surrounds are simply designed.

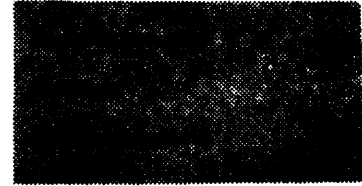
On the first floor, the woodwork, with the exception of the window surrounds in the front parlor, remain unpainted with their original stain and varnish. The entrance hall is dominated by the central staircase which curves to the second floor and is decorated by turned spindles and a large carved newel-post.

The double leaf opening into the front parlor from the entrance hall is missing its decorative brackets. The spindlework frieze is from the period but not original to the house. The front parlor is separated from the back by eight foot paneled pocket doors. An identical set of doors separate the dining room from the back parlor. The back parlor hosts a corner fireplace and built-in glass door bookcase. The bookcase and mantle differ in design from the general woodwork and is suspected to have been added later. A break in the plate rail which lines the dining room walls indicates where a pass-through china cabinet once stood.

The music room is accessed from the back parlor and, as documented by photos, was enlarged during the Birge occupancy.³ The west wall, originally abutting the kitchen, was moved east approximately two feet and the kitchen wall moved west approximately four feet to accommodate a bathroom. The date of the alteration has not been documented but, due to the period fixtures installed, it is suspected to have occurred early in the 1900's.

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The office, off of the music room, was added by Birge. Its east facing wall contains built-in cabinets and a drop leaf desk. Exterior clapboard siding painted creamy white, the original house color, makes up the back inside wall of the cabinets. This, as well as the variation in foundation supports, confirms that the office was added to the house after the initial construction. The woodwork in the office is very similar to the mantle and bookcase in the back parlor. The office contains an exterior door and it can be assumed that George Birge may have conducted some business from his home and customers used this entrance rather than the front door.

The kitchen, modernized by successive owners, does not retain any elements from the Birge era. Access to the additions is through the kitchen. The first addition enclosed a two story rear porch and stairway to the basement. The second addition enclosed another two story porch added to the first addition and now contains stairway access to the second floor. The additions do not negatively impact the principal facade.

The rooms on the second floor are in the same configuration as upon construction. The windows in the south bedroom are not original and date from the period of the first addition. The double hung windows are compatible with the structure's other windows and do not affect the overall architectural significance. The remaining woodwork and hardware, excluding the additions, are original but have been painted. The northwest bedroom accesses the balcony and turret. There is evidence that originally the second floor may have been heated by two wood stoves.

Resource Count:

The George Birge House consists of one contributing property. There are no noncontributing elements included in the nomination.

8. Significance

| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/ | | |
| <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 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 type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation | | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) | | |

Specific dates c. 1890 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The George Birge House is architecturally significant because it is an excellent, well preserved example of Queen Anne architecture adapted to a small city residential setting. Following an informal survey, the George Birge House appears to be one of the finest examples of Queen Anne styling in a residential structure in Centralia.

Historical Background: Originally, the property was associated with one of Centralia's early prominent businessmen and political figures. Lots 6, 7, and 8, defined as the property encompassing 715 E Street, were originally part of 320 acres known as the Holmes Donation Claim, commonly called the Lewis County Farm.⁵ The structure was built in the early 1890s on lots purchased by Lizzie T. Birge in 1893 and first came on the tax rolls in 1894.⁶

Lizzie was wife to George E. Birge, a prominent figure in the lumber industry in and around Centralia as well as serving as city councilman and twice holding the office of Mayor.⁷ George Birge's involvement with numerous lumber companies in Lewis County began following his arrival in the area in 1889 from Clay Center, Nebraska. In partnership with D. Leitch, George Birge organized and operated the Birge and Leitch Lumber Company from 1890 until the mill was sold in 1899 and the machinery moved.⁸ In January 1900, the West Coast Lumber Company was then organized by Birge with J.E. Williams and operated as a "wholesale lumber concern until January 1, 1904."⁹ In addition, from 1891 to 1894, Birge managed the Centralia Lumber Exchange which consisted of three mills and, beginning in 1904,¹⁰ the Lumber Manufacturers Agency which involved ten mills from southwest Washington.

George Birge gained political prominence by being elected to the office of Mayor of Centralia twice, 1894 and 1895, on the Republican ticket. Also, he later continued his political involvement by serving as first councilman in 1904.¹¹

During his lifetime, Birge served as the Commander of the Order of the Knights of Pythias, maintained a membership with the Ancient Order of United Workman, was a stockholder in the State Bank of Centralia, and passed the chairs in both branches of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.¹²

George Birge died at home unexpectedly December 26, 1909, following a bout with typhoid fever and the house at 715 E Street was sold the following year to Byrd Thompson by his widow Lizzie and daughter Mabel.¹³

Since 1979, the property has been owned and lovingly cared for by Steve and Barbara Freeman. Concern for the integrity of the historic structure is very apparent in their rehabilitation efforts. The roof's wood shingles were duplicated from the 1920's roof and recently the front porch spindlework balustrade was replicated. Their interest in the property and its historical significance is shared with Centralia and other owners of old homes by their involvement in the city's recent historic home tour and through several articles regarding their rehabilitation experiences published in the Old House Journal.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Centralia

Quadrangle scale 1:62,500

UTM References

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Verbal boundary description and justification The circa 1890 residential property at 715 E Street, Centralia, Washington, is located on Lots 6,7, and 8, Block 7, of Miller's Addition, Section 5, Township 14 North, Range 2 West, Willamette Meridian.

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 Kay Austin, Historic Preservation Specialist

organization Archaeology & Historic Preservation date August 15, 1986

street & number 111 W. 21st Ave., KL-11 telephone (206) 753-4011

city or town Olympia state Washington 98504-5411

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 Jacob E. Shon

title State Historic Preservation Officer date October 24, 1986

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the National Register date 12-1-86

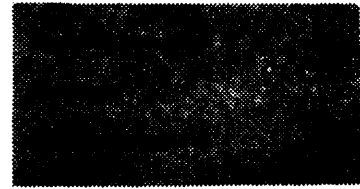
for Melissa Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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National Park Service

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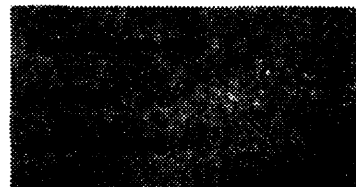
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Architectural Significance: The Birge house illustrates the identifying characteristics of the Queen Anne style with a dominant front facing gable and employing a variety of elements to contribute to the overall asymmetrical appearance. The house is typical of a type of Queen Anne styling which is characterized by a simple crossgabled roof which frequently embraces a turret at one of its ends. Also, the decorative detailing used on the house is identified as a category of treatments identified specifically with Queen Anne such as the turned porch support posts and porch and gable ornamentation. Asymmetry, the hallmark of Queen Anne styling, is illustrated in the Birge house by the irregular ground plan. Slight as the wall projections and insets may be, they as well as other vertical elements such as the lines created by fenestration, endboards, doors, and porch posts all contribute to the disruption of the horizontal plane. In addition, asymmetry is illustrated with horizontal elements by the insertion of wide shingle courses and sill drip moulding on the clapboard walls, the fenestration, decorative cornice, and numerous pedimented gables which break the vertical plane. Further, the decorative porch spandrels, the curvilinear mouldings in the porch roof gables, the curving patterns from the fishscale shingles, and turned porch posts as design elements contribute significantly to the asymmetrical appearance of the house.

Endnotes

1. Centralia News Examiner, p.1.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Pioneer Title Company.
6. Lewis County Records.
7. History of Puget Sound, p. 362.
8. Centralia Daily Chronicle, pp. 1 & 4.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. City Government File.
12. History.
13. Records.

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Pioneer Title Company, abstract, 1937.

Polk Directory, 1910.

Prosser, Col. Wm. Farrand, A History of the Puget Sound Country, The Lewis Publishing Co.,
N.Y., 1903, Vol. II.