Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries – complete applicable sections)

STATE: Oregon
COUNTY: Clackamas
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY NUMBER | DATE: FEB 12 1974

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Oregon Iron Company Furnace
AND/OR HISTORIC: Oswego Iron Company Furnace

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: George Rogers Park — Oregon First Congressional District
CITY OR TOWN: Lake Oswego — Representative Wendell Wyatt

STATE	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Oregon 97034	41	Clackamas	005

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☐ District ☐ Building	☒ Public	Public Acquisition:	☐ Occupied	Yes:
☐ Site ☒ Structure	☐ Private	☐ In Process	☐ Unoccupied	☐ Restricted
☐ Object	☐ Both	☐ Being Considered	☐ Preservation work in progress	☒ Unrestricted
				☐ No

PRESENT USE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

☐ Agricultural	☐ Government	☐ Park	☐ Transportation	☐ Comments
☐ Commercial	☐ Industrial	☐ Private Residence	☒ Other *(Specify)*	
☐ Educational	☐ Military	☐ Religious	~~Monument~~	
☐ Entertainment	☐ Museum	☐ Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: City of Oswego
STREET AND NUMBER:
CITY OR TOWN: Lake Oswego
STATE: Oregon 97034
CODE: 41

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Clackamas County Court House
STREET AND NUMBER:
CITY OR TOWN: Oregon City
STATE: Oregon 97045
CODE: 41

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Statewide Inventory of Historic Sites and Buildings
DATE OF SURVEY: 1970 ☐ Federal ☒ State ☐ County ☐ Local
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Parks and Recreation Branch
STREET AND NUMBER: Oregon State Highway Building
CITY OR TOWN: ~~Salem~~
STATE: Oregon 97310
CODE: 41

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☐ Excellent	☒ Good	☐ Fair	☐ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☐ Unexposed
	(Check One)		(Check One)			
	☒ Altered	☐ Unaltered	☐ Moved	☒ Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL *(if known)* PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In 1865 at Oswego, a small town on the Willamette River six miles south of Portland, H.C. Leonard, H.D. Green, and William S. Ladd formulated plans for the construction of the first blast furnace and iron foundry in the Pacific Northwest. A Connecticut builder, G.D. Wilbur, was employed to erect the furnace in style similar to one at Lime Rock, Connecticut. The company used locally-mined iron ore from Iron Mountain near Oswego and, for fuel, charcoal manufactured on the spot.

In May 1865 ground was broken for the furnace, but the structure was not in operation before August 1867. The furnace was constructed of hewn basalt and was 32 feet high, 34 feet square at the base, 26 feet square at the top. The blowing engines were driven by water power. The construction cost was $126,000. The first production was begun on August 24, 1867, on which day six tons of metal were poured. The average capacity of this blast furnace was eight tons per day. Two and a half tons of limonite ore dug near the furnace produced one ton of pig iron.

Operating through subsequent years under various names and managements, the furnace was abandoned in 1885. Today the only vestige of the Oregon Iron Company operation is the furnace, which is preserved by the City of Lake Oswego as an historical attraction in George Rogers Park.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

☐ Pre-Columbian	☐ 16th Century	☐ 18th Century	☐ 20th Century
☐ 15th Century	☐ 17th Century	XX 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) *(If Applicable and Known)* 1866-1885

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Aboriginal	☐ Education	☐ Political	☐ Urban Planning
☐ Prehistoric	☐ Engineering	☐ Religion/Philosophy	☐ Other *(Specify)*
☐ Historic	☒ Industry	☐ Science	
☐ Agriculture	☐ Invention	☐ Sculpture	
☐ Architecture	☐ Landscape Architecture	☐ Social/Humanitarian	
☐ Art	☐ Literature	☐ Theater	
☐ Commerce	☐ Military	☐ Transportation	
☐ Communications	☐ Music		
☐ Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The first pig iron produced west of the Rocky Mountains was smelted in the Oregon Iron Company furnace on August 24, 1867. The foundry provided material for the cast iron fronts of the important buildings of the day in Portland and other West Coast cities. Ore was mined from Iron Mountain west of Oswego and was transported to the furnace by oxen, and later by narrow gauge railroad. The operation was fueled by charcoal and water power provided by Oswego Creek.

The Oregon Iron Company of Oswego had an up and down career. Troubles beset the company, forcing frequent closures of the operation. The cost of manufacturing the pig iron was so high that the industry had difficulty competing with Eastern-made pig iron, and ultimately the local operation was discontinued.

In the early days of Oregon's statehood freight rates were high. There was a great demand for steel products, and Oregonians felt that the progress of the state was being impeded by nearly prohibitive rates on rails, sawmill machinery and other heavy hardware. As a consequence, Oregon was the first Western state to urge the mining of iron ore and its smelting and manufacture into pig iron.

In 1862 a blacksmith at Oswego smelted iron ore found in the vicinity of Oswego and made a pick and also made horseshoe nails from the iron he had smelted. This led to the formation of the Oswego Iron Company, with a capital of $500,000. Its promoters and chief stockholders were William S. Ladd, H.C. Leonard and H.D. Green. On May 13, 1865, at a meeting of the stockholders W.S. Ladd was elected president; H.C. Leonard, Vice-president; and Henry Failing, Addison M. Starr, John Green and Henry D. Green, Directors. G.D. Wilbur of Connecticut was employed to build a furnace at Oswego similar to the one at Lime Rock, Connecticut. In May 1865 ground was broken for construction. In August 1867 the first casting of iron west of the Rockies was made. The following month saw fifty tons of Oswego iron shipped to San Francisco on the ship Montana. By October 1867 the company had manufactured 224 long tons at a cost of $29 per ton. By 1869, 2400 tons of pig iron had been turned out at Oswego.

After but a few months trouble began to cripple the operation. A dispute over water rights on the Tualatin River was the crowning blow. Operations ceased on April 8, 1869. A group of Eastern capitalists bought the company and reopened the foundry in the spring of 1874. Iron for the foundries of Portland and San Francisco was produced satisfactorily, but a competitive price was not maintained, and once again the foundry closed its doors. To satisfy a judgment of creditors, the properties of the Oregon Iron Company were sold at sheriff's sale in 1877. L.B. Seeley and E.W. Crichton were the purchasers. The pair reformed the Oregon Iron Company, and improvements were

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Blakely, Frances, "Oswego Area's History Full of Romantic Lore," Oregon Journal (January 17, 1956), Sec. 2, p. 1.

Corning, Howard McKinley, ed., Dictionary of Oregon History, (Portland: Binfords Mort, 1956) 29.

Goodall, Mary, "Markers of the Makers of Oregon History," Clackamas County Historical 1961 (West Linn, Oregon: Clackamas County Historical Society, 1961), 44.

_____, "The Iron Foundry at Oswego," Oregon Historical Landmarks, (Portland: Oregon Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, 1957) 16-17.

Lockley, Fred, "Impressions and Observations of the Journal Man," Oregon Daily Journal, (May 20, 1933), 4.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA (Continued)

CORNER	LATITUDE DEGREES	LATITUDE MINUTES	LATITUDE SECONDS	LONGITUDE DEGREES	LONGITUDE MINUTES	LONGITUDE SECONDS
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"

OR

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES

LATITUDE DEGREES	LATITUDE MINUTES	LATITUDE SECONDS	LONGITUDE DEGREES	LONGITUDE MINUTES	LONGITUDE SECONDS
45 °	24'	40 "	122 °	39 '	34 "

10/526660/502845

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 4.52

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: ~~Paul B. Hartwig, Assistant Park Historian~~

ORGANIZATION: Oregon State Highway Division

DATE: October 1973

STREET AND NUMBER: Oregon State Highway Building

CITY OR TOWN: Salem

STATE: Oregon 97310

CODE: 41

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☐

Name George McBaldwin

Title ~~Director of Transportation~~

Date 11/20/73

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 2/12/74

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date 2-11-74

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Oregon	
COUNTY	
Clackamas	
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(Number all entries)

Oregon Iron Company Furnace

5. Location (Continued)

The Oregon Iron Company Furnace is located in NW ¼ SW¼, Sec. 11, T. 2 S., R. 1 E., of the Willamette Meridian, Clackamas County, Oregon.

8. Significance (Continued)

made, including the building of a narrow-gauge railroad to haul the ore, and the opening of a new mine.

This second company operated until 1882, when the Oregon Iron and Steel Company was incorporated to take over the business. The power behind the project was Simeon G. Reed, a capitalist whose name is perpetuated in Oregon through Reed College, the institution he helped to finance.

In the fall of 1885 operations were again suspended.

In 1888 the Oregon Iron and Steel Company resumed operation but abandoned the old furnace and constructed an entirely new plant. The new company was to encounter many of the same difficulties which led to the failure of the earlier corporations, and it ceased operation in 1894.
All that remains of the original plant is the furnace.

9. Major Bibliographical References (Continued)

Samuel, L., "Iron Manufacturing at Oswego," West Shore (1889), Vol. 15, No. 178, 232-238.

Treasher, Ray C., "Oregon's Iron Industry," Geological Society of Oregon Country (October 25, 1941), Vol. 7, No. 20, 184-186.