

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED **MAR 17 1976**
DATE ENTERED **APR 21 1976**

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

W.A.
 HISTORIC AND/OR COMMON
Oysterville Historic District

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

WA 103

CITY, TOWN
Oysterville

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE
Washington

___ VICINITY OF
CODE

3rd - Don I. Bonker
COUNTY CODE
Pacific 049

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Multiple Ownership

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Pacific County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

South Bend

STATE
Washington

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Washington State Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

1974

___ FEDERAL STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission

CITY, TOWN

Olympia

STATE
Washington

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 town of Oysterville is a small community with a population of about 70 located on the inner shore of the Long Beach Peninsula twenty miles north of the Columbia River estuary. The peninsula is a flat, narrow strip of land 28 miles long and one and one-half miles wide separating Willapa Bay from the Pacific Ocean.

Once known as Shoalwater Bay, its protected shoreline is an ideal breeding environment for oysters, hardshell and softshell clams and Dungeness crabs. Many species of salmon spawn in the eight tributary streams, and other edible fish from anchovies to sturgeon are abundant in the bay itself.

The Oysterville historic district consists of fifteen buildings with historic and architectural significance including ten residences, a church, a courthouse and a cannery. This is all that remains of a once thriving community that was the seat of Pacific County from 1855 to 1892.

When Oysterville was platted in 1854 a fairly regular grid of square blocks was established adjacent to the beach. Of the original townsite, Front Street is now under water at high tide, and First Street and Main Street, which are the next rights-of-way inland, are abandoned over half their length. All but a few of the surviving buildings are located on Fourth Street some distance from the tidelands.

The bay itself is very shallow. At an extreme ebb tide more than half its 70,400 acres becomes a sea of mud, sand and gravel flats. The water is then actually miles out from the nearest dry land. When it starts backs in, the incoming tide advances faster than a man can walk.

In the 1860's ten or fifteen families and roughly 150 persons were year-round residents of Oysterville. A row of houses, general merchandise stores and bars occupied Front Street where they were convenient to the oyster beds which served as the principle source of income for the townspeople. These were simple frame structures built on piling or floats to raise them above high tides that occasionally flooded across the unprotected and ill-defined shoreline. An extraordinarily high tide in 1866 is said to have carried away sixteen to eighteen houses.

In 1872 Oysterville consisted of about 30 homes plus the Pacific House, the Stevens Hotel, the County Courthouse, a school, church and several businesses. The Pacific House was built by Richard Carruthers before 1872, and when court was in session as many as 250 people were served in a single day. During its most prosperous years prior to 1889, the town had a newspaper (first in the county), a boat shop, four general stores, a barber shop and a sail maker.

The only primary historic structure in Oysterville not located on Fourth Street is the Captain Stream House (1) one block closer to the bay on Main Street between Pacific and Clark Streets. It is a delicate one and one-half story frame cottage built in January 1878. The ridge of its gable roof runs parallel to the road, and a small central dormer interrupts the cornice above the front entrance - - which is flanked by double hung windows with six-over-six lights. A shed roof verandah extends across the facade supported on turned posts with jig-saw brackets, and the back of the building is extended into a one-story perpendicular gable. The gable ends are embellished at the apex by

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAR 18 1976
DATE ENTERED APR 21 1976

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

jig-sawn triangular inserts. The Captain Stream House is essentially unaltered.

The D. C. Stoner House (2) at the intersection of Fourth and Pacific Streets is a traditional two-story farmhouse on a "T" shaped plan with a verandah sheltering three sides. The porch posts are a carpenter's approximation of Classic Revival columns - boxed with cushion blocks and simple moldings. Straight shingle siding is used on all exterior wall surfaces except the gable ends, which have variegated shinglework above the eaves level. D. C. Stoner built the house in 1905 soon after his marriage, and he and his wife lived there the remainder of their lives. It is little altered on the exterior except for a small, one-story addition and a glassed-in section of the porch.

Directly across Fourth Street is the Greenman House (3) which was assembled from pieces of two other buildings moved to the site. It incorporates part of the old Swan Hotel, built in the late 1860's. The result is a one and one-half story architectural hodgepodge with intersecting gable wings - one with shiplap and the other with clapboard siding. The gable end facing the street is pedimented, the tympanum being surfaced in intricate variegated shingle patterns. This building is in serious disrepair and will probably be demolished.

At the corner of Fourth and Division Streets stands the R. H. Espy House (4) built in 1871 by one of the two men who founded Oysterville in 1854, Robert Hamilton Espy. It is a simple "T" plan two-story farmhouse with clapboard siding and alternating bands of diamond butt and fishscale shingles in the upper portion of two gable ends. There is a one-story bay window facing the water and a verandah-balcony combination that extends along opposite sides of the building following the inflection of the plan. The windows have a double-hung sash divided by a single vertical mullion. A wing was added to the house in 1896, at which time there were other modifications to the exterior probably including the bay window and verandah. The present occupant is R. H. Espy's youngest son Cecil who is now in his eighty-eighth year. He sleeps in the same room and in the bed in which he was born.

Facing the bay at the corner of Fourth and Merchant Streets is the John Crellin House (5) - a one and one-half story rural Gothic farmhouse built in the late 1860's. It has intersecting gables on a "T" shaped plan and a small ornamental gable interrupting the cornice of the north wing directly above a lancet window. There are decorative bargeboards sawn in an intricate design on each gable end. The remaining windows are double hung with four-over-four lights. There have been additions and modifications to the back of the building and a small porch is missing, although these changes do not seriously detract from its architectural appearance. The Crellin House was built with redwood lumber shipped from San Francisco on returning oyster schooners. Crellin himself was a pioneer merchant who also profited in the early oyster business.

Off Fourth Street near the west end of School Street is the one-room Oysterville Public School, District #1 (6). The present building was constructed in 1907 after an earlier school was destroyed by fire. It is a one-story shingle sided structure with a gable roof and a parallel gable extension at the rear. An attached hip roof porch, enclosed on either

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAR 17 1976

DATE ENTERED APR 21 1976

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

end and open at the center, partially covers the front gable at the entrance. A small belfry sits on the ridge of the roof directly above.

Near the intersection of Fourth and Clay Streets is the Tom Crellin House (7) completed in 1869. It is identical to the John Crellin house built a few years earlier by his brother in terms of its plan and basic elevations, although the close resemblance is disguised somewhat by differences in fenestration and decorative treatment. Bay windows have been added on two sides, windows are paired on the second story and their surrounds include a more elaborate gabled cornice. The bargeboards are wider and sawn in a more open pattern. This house is essentially unaltered except for an attached one-story shed and the addition of a chimney and fireplace. Period wall and ceiling paper with complimentary frieze and border designs is still hanging in the parlor. This house would appear to be one of the better preserved examples of the "Cottage Orne" in Washington state.

Across Fourth Street from the Tom Crellin House is the Oysterville Baptist Church (8) built in 1892. It is a small gable roofed building on an "L" shaped plan with its steeple and main entrance set into the inside corner. On the tower there is a transition from shiplap to shingle siding above the first floor marked by gablets and a band of fancy butt shingles. The belfry has been enclosed to protect it from weather, although the structure is otherwise unaltered on the exterior.

South of the church is the W. D. Taylor house (9). It is a simple "T" plan farmhouse of one and one-half stories built in the early 1870's. A shed roof verandah supported on turned posts extends along the front of the building and continues straight across the gable end of the short perpendicular wing.

Beyond the Taylor House on Fourth Street is a building said to be Oysterville's first Pacific County Courthouse (10). Its appearance has changed somewhat with reroofing in composition shingles, minor alterations to the full length front verandah (sheltered under the main roof overhang) and the construction of a new chimney. The Courthouse is a small one-story rectangular structure with six-over-six light double hung windows and a single low gable. It was reportedly built in the early 1860's and served as the county courthouse until replaced by a larger structure several years later.

The Ned Osborne House (11) is roughly one block south of the Courthouse. This is a one and one-half story building with a perpendicular one-story wing and shed roof porch. Built in 1873 it is the simplest of classic revival houses with four separate double-hung windows on the gable elevation spaced in a carefully proportioned strict symmetrical arrangement. Osborne was born in Kalmer, Sweden which was also the birthplace of Charles Nelson, Sr. These two men sailed together in their youth and settled in Oysterville where they built neighboring houses.

The Charles Nelson House (12), furthest south in the historic district, is a tiny three-room one-story cottage also built in 1873. A small addition has been built on at the

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAR 17 1976

DATE ENTERED APR 21 1976

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

front extending slightly more than half the facade into a shed roof wing.

The secondary historic structures include a disused dairy barn and an oyster cannery. The barn (A) is a rectangular plan frame building with a bow roof (no cupola), shingle siding on the end walls and shiplap siding elsewhere. It was built in 1933 as part of a small dairy operation at the north edge of town. The other farm buildings have since been removed.

The cannery (B) is a one-story gable roof structure on piling just east of the barn extending out over the Willapa Bay tidelands with only one end on dry ground. Although the cannery was not built until 1940, it is the last vestige of the oyster industry in the historic district. Also, the partnership that built the cannery, Glen Heckes, Roy Kemmer and Ted Holway, is credited with a number of discoveries and innovations now recognized as common practice in commercial oystering - including plankton analysis, boom dredging and other techniques.

There are only two major buildings within the historic district that can be strictly classified as intrusions. These are a new one-story fire station (X) no larger than a small garage and a nearby two-story flat-roofed duplex (Y) probably built in the early 1960's. These are located in the northern third of the district where they do not detract from the nucleus of historic structures along Fourth Street a few hundred yards to the south.

In addition, there are eight early twentieth century cottages and one residence (C-K) fairly evenly distributed throughout the district. These are anonymous place holders similar in size and site relationships to the neighboring historic buildings. They all pre-date 1940.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAR 17 1976

DATE ENTERED APR 21 1976

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 5

Primary Structures

1. Captain Stream House (1878) - West side of Main Street, north of Pacific.
2. D. C. Stoner House (1905) - Fourth and Pacific Streets, southeast corner.
3. Greenman House (includes the Swan Restaurant, late 1860's) - Fourth and Pacific Streets, southwest corner.
4. R. H. Espy House (1871) - Fourth and Division Streets, northeast corner.
5. John Crellin House (late 1860's) - Fourth and Merchant Streets, northeast corner.
6. Oysterville Public School (1907) - School Street.
7. Tom Crellin House (1869) - Fourth and Clay Streets, northeast corner.
8. Oysterville Baptist Church (1892) - Fourth Street at the foot of Clay Street.
9. W. D. Taylor House (early 1870's) - west side of Fourth Street, south of Clay Street.
10. Old Pacific County Courthouse (early 1860's) - west side of Fourth Street, south of Clay Street.
11. Ned Osborne House (1873) - west side of Fourth Street, second from south end.
12. Charles Nelson House (1873) - south end of Fourth Street, west side.

Secondary Structures

- A. Dairy Barn (1933) - north end of Main Street, west side.
- B. Oyster Cannery (1940) - north end of First Street, east side.

Other Structures

- C. Frame House (c.1915) - north end of Fourth Street, east side.
- D. Frame Cottage (c.1910) - near north end of Fourth Street, east side.
- E. Frame House (c.1920) - Main and Pacific Streets, northwest corner.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAR 17 1976
DATE ENTERED	APR 21 1976

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 6

- F. Frame House (c.1930) - Fourth and Division Streets, northwest corner.
- G. Frame House (c.1890, altered) - Fourth and Division Streets, southwest corner.
- H. Frame Cottage (c.1900) - Fourth and Division Streets, southeast corner.
- I. Frame Cottage (c. 1915) - School Street, south side.
- J. Frame House (c.1930) - Fourth and School Streets, southwest corner.
- K. Frame Residence (c.1930) - east side of Fourth Street, south of Clay Street.

Intrusions

- X. Fire Station (1975) - Fourth and Pacific Streets, northeast corner.
- Y. Duplex (c.1966) - Main Street, east side.

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"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

For centuries the Willapa Bay tidelands near the present site of Oysterville were a traditional camp of the Chinook Indians who gathered and ate oysters growing there in abundance along the shoreline. A portion of the harvest was strung together and dried as a method of preserving it for consumption later in the season. Dried oysters were generally considered a form of currency.

The town of Oysterville was founded in April of 1854 by I. A. Clark and R. H. Espy who had been guided to the oyster beds by an Indian named Nahcotte (pronounced Nah'-kah-tee). Espy had worked in the area the previous year selecting and cutting timber for shipment to San Francisco where there was a great demand for uniform piling suitable for wharf construction. He became acquainted with Nahcotte and made arrangements to join him in the following Spring to locate a place the Indian had described where shellfish were extremely plentiful. At the time there was also a lucrative market in San Francisco for oysters - a popular imported delicacy not found there naturally.

Espy was born February 10, 1826 in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. At the age of 15 he was apprenticed to a tailor but worked at that trade only four years. In 1845 he left for Wisconsin, and in 1852, travelled overland to the Pacific coast arriving at The Dalles, Oregon on August 27th. He worked driving an ox-team hauling freight between the Upper and Lower Cascades, wintered in a logging camp, and the following Spring, continued on to Astoria where he was employed in a sawmill. That summer Espy met Nahcotte while cutting piling in Pacific county, but returned to Astoria for the winter where he built a cabin and supported himself beachcombing. That winter he apparently met Isaac A. Clark, a young man recently arrived from California where he had some limited success working the gold fields. Originally from New York, Clark was also a tailor who lived for a time in Wisconsin and both men had strong religious convictions.

Together with I. A. Clark, Espy set out to keep his appointment with Nahcotte. They traveled on foot and by canoe but some distance from their destination they were engulfed in dense fog that would have prevented further progress had Nahcotte not heard them splashing along in the stillness and signalled by thumping repeatedly on a hollow stump with a spruce knot. They followed the sound as there were no visible reference points to navigate by and eventually they arrived at Nahcotte's camp.

The oyster beds proved to be exceptional. Clark and Espy both filed donation land claims and Clark promptly platted a townsite. They built themselves a log cabin with the assistance of the Indian population already living there.

Oysters were loaded in a canoe and shuttled across the bay to Bruceport where there was an existing oyster exporting operation (founded in 1851 when a schooner loading a cargo of oysters there was burned to the waterline and sunk by the disgruntled ship's cook who escaped in a rowboat leaving the captain and crew marooned). Soon ships came directly to

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Espy, Julia Jefferson. "The Espy Family", The Sou'wester, Pacific County Historical Society, Raymond, Washington. Vol. IV, No. 1, Spring 1969. pp. 8-11.

Gile, A. L. "Native Son Tells Oysterville History", The South Bend Journal, South Bend, Washington. August 5, 1954, pg. 3.

(continued on attached sheet)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. 80 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,0	42,14,6,0	5,15,56,0,0	B	1,0	42,14,6,5	5,15,47,6,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,0	42,09,8,0	5,15,47,6,5	D	1,0	42,10,0,0	5,15,56,0,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Oysterville Historic District encompasses an area of approximately 80 acres in portions of Township 12 North, Sections 3 and 10 of the Willamette Meridian. This includes an area in the town of Oysterville defined by a line running north and south midway between Fourth Street and the Peninsula Highway and lines running east and west at points 800 feet north and 2000 feet south of Pacific Street. Also included is a rectangular area along School Street extending 200 feet on either side of the right of way and continuing westward 100 feet beyond the Peninsula Highway.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Jacob Thomas and Dale Espy Little

ORGANIZATION

Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 1128

TELEPHONE

753-4116

CITY OR TOWN

Olympia

STATE

Washington

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

Arthur M. Skolnik

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

March 4, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Acting

David P. ...

DATE

4/21/96

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

Shirley ...

DATE

4-19-76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAR 17 1976
DATE ENTERED	APR 21 1976

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Oysterville from San Francisco. The price was one dollar in gold for a bushel basket paid on delivery to the schooner which had an average capacity of between 1,200 to 2,000 baskets. Oystermen would frequently trade their payment for supplies arriving on the same ship. Chinook Indians were employed to gather, cull and pack the harvest which amounted to 50,000 baskets a year taken from Shoalwater Bay, most of which came from Oysterville.

For the first few years, the beach was open territory for oyster pickers, but soon it became necessary to divide the tidelands into restricted tracts called "whacks" with eight acres set aside for ships at anchor while loading. Eventually, the cash price rose to a dollar and a half a basket.

Clark operated a store, and in 1858 was appointed postmaster. Espy continued in the oyster business until he was incapacitated by an illness in 1859. After working a year as light-keeper of the Shoalwater Bay lighthouse and then mining unsuccessfully in the Blue Mountains, Espy entered into a prosperous partnership with Warren and Company of San Francisco - later known as the Morgan Oyster Company.

In 1855 an election was held which transferred the Pacific County seat to Oysterville. At the time the town had fewer than twenty residents. For several years there was no courthouse let alone a jail to confine prisoners. Espy, as constable, temporarily boarded a suspect in his cabin who was being held awaiting trial for murder.

Oysterville retained the county government until 1892 when another election moved the courthouse to South Bend, then a booming community soon to be the terminus of a branch line of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Immediately following the vote, election fraud was charged and an injunction prevented the actual transfer of records pending a judgment. On February 5, 1893, the courthouse was "kidnaped" by an inebriated mob of 85 men from the rival settlement who broke into the building and carried off its contents. Although election violations were eventually proven South Bend was by then generally recognized as the county seat.

In 1863 the first public school in Pacific County was erected at Oysterville. A holiday was declared for everyone and a large volunteer work force assembled to frame in the structure. Some years later, soon after the county seat was lost to South Bend, Peninsula College was organized at Oysterville and the abandoned courthouse became its instructional and administrative headquarters. The college functioned only two years before it closed permanently. The old building finally collapsed during a windstorm in 1916.

Overland transportation to and from Oysterville was very difficult prior to the construction of a road in the late 1860's one and one-half miles across the width of the peninsula from the bay to the weather beach. Shortly after it was completed a stage service from Ilwaco to Oysterville began operations running 20 miles along the beach on a schedule determined by the tide table. For years the coach was little more than a buckboard covered to protect the passengers from salt-spray and the weather. It was drawn by a team of up to eight horses in the late 1870's. The Loomis Stage had only five seats but occasionally as many as twenty passengers rode the coach - most of them clinging to the outside.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAR 17 1976

DATE ENTERED APR 21 1976

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

3

Severe weather and in particular freezing temperatures killed a large number of oysters during the winter of 1853-54. An even colder winter was experienced in 1861-62 which nearly destroyed the entire oyster population, although in a few years the survivors had reproduced to their original numbers.

The Willapa Bay oyster business was harder hit by the planting of eastern seed oysters in San Francisco Bay made possible by the transcontinental connection of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads in 1869. John Morgan, an oysterman from the east coast, transplanted a carload of seed stock from Newark Bay, New Jersey. Morgan's operation was sophisticated and extremely successful. He started the seed stock at the protected south end of the bay, and after three years moved them closer to the mouth where tidal action improved the concentration of food organisms and rapidly fattened the oysters. Shoalwater Bay oysters - smaller and milder in flavor - continued to be shipped to San Francisco although the market shrank permanently.

Freezing weather and disease further reduced the oyster population in the 1880's with the blight being attributed to pollution and parasites. For commercial purposes they were too few to trouble with. Japanese oysters were planted, but these too succumbed to disease. In 1896 Meinert Wachmuth, a German immigrant, methodically experimented with growing eastern oysters on the bay. Although his own operation was successful, it apparently did not revolutionize the industry which continued to decline.

In the 1930's, large Japanese oysters were reintroduced to the tidelands of Willapa Bay and they prospered. The cannery, which is still standing on the beach near the north edge of Oysterville, was completed in 1940 and a cooperative agent was employed to market the product. Finally, a combination of economics, cut-throat competition and transportation problems (the demise of the Railway Express System) contributed to the cessation of all commercial oyster operations at Oysterville.

Oysterville has been reduced by winter storms and natural decay to a small collection of residences and other buildings, most of which were constructed in the late 1860's and early 1870's. A significant percentage of the town's original fabric remains as evidence of a once prosperous community that developed as a result of one of Washington Territory's earliest industries. The harvest was originally confined to a limited number of locations where the oysters grew in natural abundance. This has contributed to the rarity of surviving structures that were associated with the industry during the territorial period. Oysterville also includes a few exceptional examples of Rural Gothic architecture which lend an interesting visual quality to the streetscape.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED **MAR 17 1976**

DATE ENTERED **APR 21 1976**

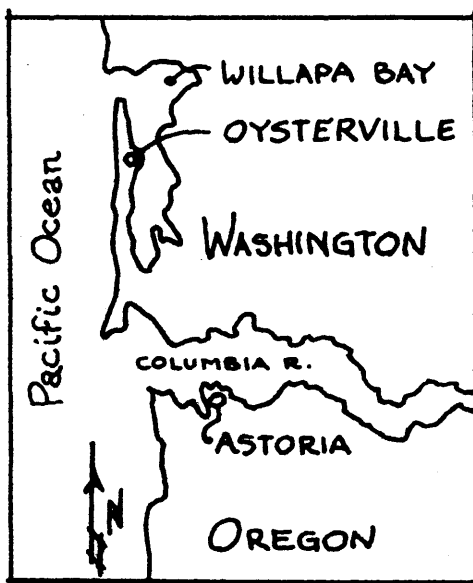
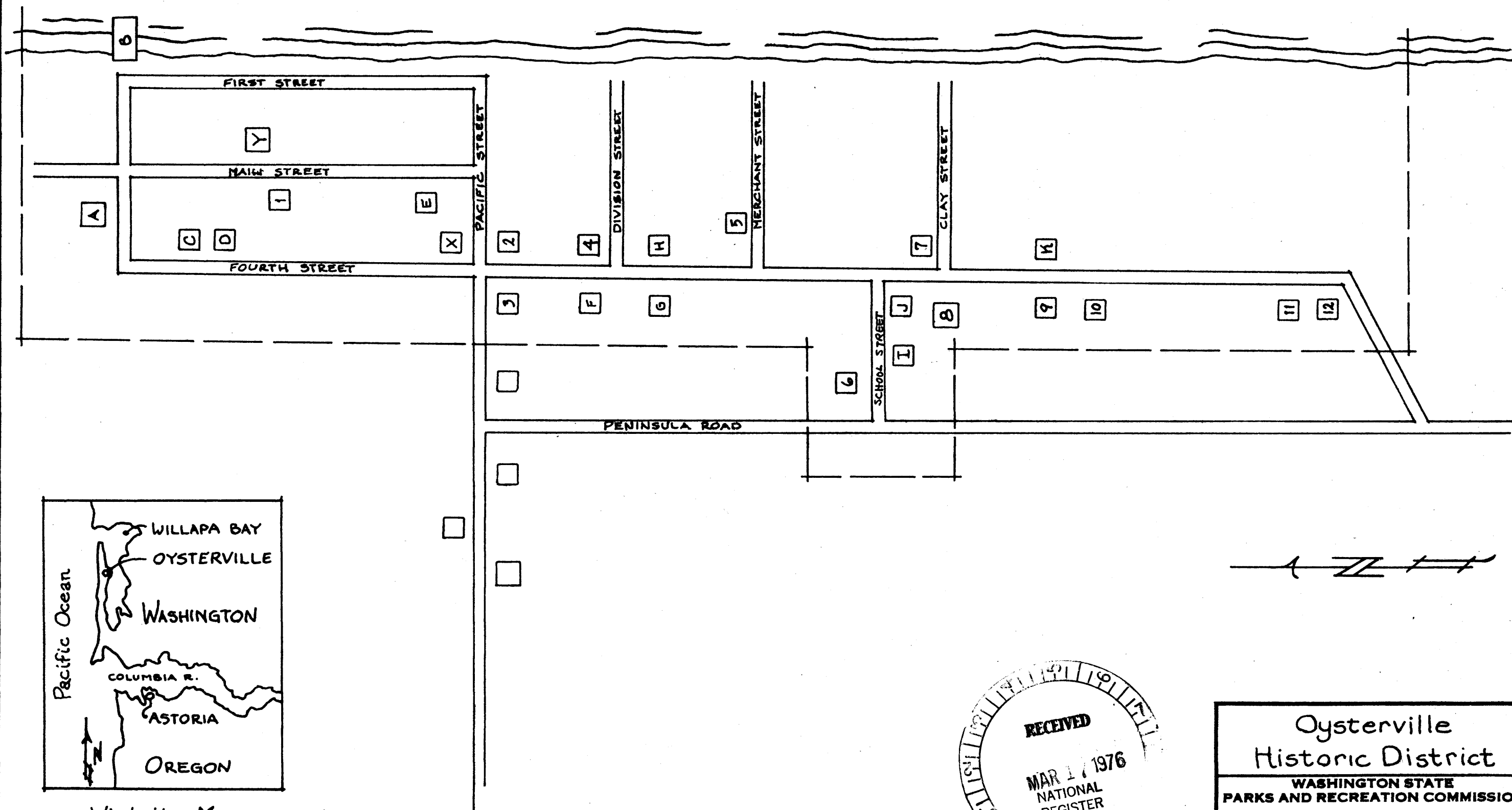
CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

McDonald, Lucile. Coast Country, A History of Southwest Washington, Binford
and Mort, Portland, 1966.

Nelson, Charles. "Shoalwater Bay", The Sou'wester, Pacific County Historical
Society, Raymond, Washington. Vol. II, No. 4, Winter 1967. ppg. 63-66.

~ Willapa Bay ~



Vicinity Map



<h3>Oysterville Historic District</h3>	
WASHINGTON STATE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION	
DRAWN BY J.T. DATE 1976	SCALE None DRAWING NO.