

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

JUN 13 1988

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

**NATIONAL
REGISTER**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name La Grande Neighborhood Club (preferred)
other names/site number Oregon Railway and Navigation Company Employees Dispensary

2. Location

street & number 1108 "N" Avenue N/A not for publication
city, town La Grande N/A vicinity
state Oregon code OR county Union code 061 zip code 97850

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official *[Signature]* Date May 31, 1988
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. *Patrick Andrews* 7/15/88
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Recreation and Culture/employee reading room
Health care/dispensary, first-aid station
Social/clubhouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Social/clubhouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

20th Century American Movements/Bungalow

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
walls wood/weatherboards
wood/shingles
roof asphalt (composition shingles)
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 1Historical Background

The Old Oregon Trail, or Great Emigrant Road (1843-1884), crossed the southwestern part of Grande Ronde Valley, in eastern Oregon, on its way to the Willamette Valley. Although the pioneers were impressed by the beauty of this valley and recognized its agricultural potential, its isolation was a deterrent to settlement; the first permanent settlers did not arrive until the fall of 1861. In the spring of 1862 they established a town on the Oregon Trail, at the point where it left the valley. This community was named La Grande.

In 1879 Henry Villard, pioneer Oregon railroad builder, organized the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company and began to extend a line eastward from Portland along the south bank of the Columbia River. Its purpose was to intercept northern transcontinental lines then under construction. He later arranged for a link with Union Pacific, branching off at Hermiston to cross the Blue Mountains. Construction was undertaken by both companies and the rails were joined at Huntington in the fall of 1884.

When railroad construction reached the valley that summer, following the Grande Ronde River, La Grande chose to relocate at trackside. This involved a move of approximately 1.4 miles. Daniel Chaplin (1823-1888), one of the community's most progressive citizens and a major landholder, donated 105 acres of land to the railroad for marshalling yards, shops, roundhouse and the other facilities necessary to establish and maintain a division point. He and C.H. Prescott then platted the new town; this area is now known as Chaplin's Addition to the City of La Grande. Five avenues parallel the main line, which is aligned northwest-southeast; two of these, Madison and Monroe, are north of the line. Those south of it -- Washington, Adams and Jefferson -- became, with their associated cross streets, the new business district. Of the three, Jefferson is nearest the line; Adams was developed as the principal commercial thoroughfare. Other streets in the city are aligned with the cardinal points of the compass.

History of Site

C. H. Prescott, of Portland, acted as trustee for Chaplin and was responsible for land sales. It appears that there was also an arrangement with Union Pacific, who evidently also effected sales of lots and other of the property through the trusteeship. Daniel and Hannah J. Chaplin deeded a substantial amount of the property in Chaplin's Addition (including Block 57) to Robert E. O'Brien, trustee (Portland) on July 14, 1883. O'Brien in turn transferred these holdings, together with others in Oregon and Washington, to Prescott (July 2, 1884). On June 24, 1887 Prescott transferred them to another trustee, Theodore Wygant, who in turn transferred them to trustee C. F. Holcomb. On May 20, 1890, Holcomb transferred them to a Boston firm, Henry R. Reed and James G. Harris. Reed and Harris sold Lot 4, Block 57 (Chaplin's Addition to the City of La Grande) to John H. Dillon of Union County on March 15, 1890; this was a Union Pacific Railway Company contract (No. 162). It was recorded in Union County records as a deed on March 8, 1892. Dillon sold the property to Mrs. Ellen Disqua on September 13, 1892; Mrs. Disqua and her husband, Charles, sold it back to him for \$400.00 on March 17, 1898. Dillon (unmarried) then sold the lot to Mrs. Rose Stackland for \$500.00 (September 30, 1899). On January 8, 1907, Mrs. Stackland and her husband, A. M., of Portland, sold Lots 4, 5 and 6, Block 57, to J. A. Thronson for \$700.00 each. Thronson

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 2

and his wife Etta sold the three lots to T. J. Scroggin on July 8 of the same year. T. J. and Maude Scroggin resold the three lots to James Ireland on August 14, 1907 for \$2500.00. James and Mabel Ireland (Portland) sold Lot 4 to F. M. Jackson on September 2, 1911. F. M. and Marie Jackson sold it to W. L. Tucker for \$2,000.00 on June 21, 1912; this suggests that a house had been erected on the property either by the Irelands or the Jacksons. W. L. and Elizabeth Tucker sold the property shortly afterward (September 25) to G. A. Grip; however, no deed was recorded and it appears that the transaction did not go through. The multiplicity of these activities suggests speculation. L. A. and Dessie A. Stoop, of Elgin, acquired an interest in the property at about this time and sold it to Julius Roesch of La Grande on May 8, 1913; this probably represents a loan; Roesch sold it back to them on February 2, 1915. On the following day the Stoops sold it to A. M. Runnels for \$3,000.00; there were liens in the amount of \$1,100.00 against it at the time. On the next day (February 4), W. L. Tucker and O. E. Ryder transferred the property, via sheriff's sale, to Stoop, who had been the plaintiff against them in Circuit Court. He acquired it for \$578.28, the amount of the judgement plus costs. A. M. and Florence D. Runnels resold it not long afterward (April 28) to Ellen Boswell for \$2,000.00; they appear to have sustained a loss of \$1,000.00 on their investment and liens against the property had already risen to \$1,200.00. Boswell was the first long-term owner, retaining the property for a little over twelve years, but the obligations were evidently more than she could manage. On May 18, 1927 Ellen Boswell, widow, sold Lot 4 to C. C. Boswell of McCall, Idaho. On April 6, 1929, Charles and Audmer Playle acquired the property via sheriff's sale through a Circuit Court case against Boswell in which they were plaintiffs; the amount they paid was \$409.25. In another sheriff's sale held the following year (September 2, 1930), Audmer Playle acquired Ellen Boswell's interest in the property for \$183.51. This represented a judgement against her dating from 1926, in which the plaintiff was a local plumbing and heating firm (Fred Spaeth). These transactions suggest one reason why Playle was able to offer the property to the Neighborhood Club for an undisclosed, but very attractive, price. It should also be noted here that Charles and Audmer Playle (father and son) were civic-minded people who would have viewed assistance to the Neighborhood Club as a worthy cause. They owned the local Texaco distributorship and a Texaco station on Adams Avenue, and were prominent members of the community. Audmer and Dorothy Playle were residing in Multnomah County when they sold Lot 4, Block 57 to the La Grande Neighborhood Club on March 26, 1935. The Neighborhood Club in turn conveyed this property to the City of La Grande on May 2 of the same year; this transaction was further clarified by a quitclaim deed to the city dated June 24, 1941. For details see History of the La Grande Neighborhood Club under Statement of Significance.

Description of the Site

The lot that was selected is well drained and slopes gently to the northeast. It is immediately at the foot of an alluvial bench that overlooks the city and valley, on which several important facilities had already been constructed; among these were the Union County Courthouse, Eastern Oregon State Normal School (now Eastern Oregon State College), and the La Grande High School. The site was a desirable location, as it was

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 3

a corner lot in a good neighborhood. Dr. Lee C. Johnson, lifetime resident of the community and local historian, remembers an old house on the property but does not recall whether it burned or ^{was} demolished. It appears that the structure was gone when the Neighborhood Club acquired the property; no mention was made, in club minutes available to this writer, of an existing building.

The Building

The Neighborhood Club building is an attractive, well-proportioned example of the Craftsman Bungalow designed as a clubhouse, and it has survived in almost completely unaltered condition. It is, to this writer's knowledge, the only example of bungalow clubhouse architecture in eastern Oregon. As with many buildings of this general style, it is larger than it appears to be; at 44 feet wide by 72 feet deep, it nearly fills the 60' x 110' lot on which it is sited. There is, however, no impression of crowding. This is due partially to the setbacks (19' - 6" in front and 12' - 4" on the east side) and partially to the three large maple trees on the front parking strip. These replaced several tall fir trees soon after acquisition of the property by the Neighborhood Club.

As originally designed and built in 1914 (see History of the Railroad Club / Railroad Hospital under Statement of Significance), the building housed two separate functions: a large reading room and a medical treatment facility for railway employees. The reading room was the front (or main) section of the building, with the "hospital" to the rear. The two were separated by a transverse hallway with its own entrances on porches at either side of the building. When the Neighborhood Club acquired this building from Union Pacific, the reading room became a meeting room and the hospital area became an apartment for a caretaker. This was accomplished without making any major structural changes.

The building is of conventional balloon-frame construction, with 2" x 4" studs set on 16" centers. Exterior walls on the main floor are finished with clapboarding (i.e., bevel siding) laid six inches to the weather. Gables are sheathed with shiplap and shingled. Eaves are continuous, with a 36" overhang. Unlike the majority of bungalow designs, this example does not incorporate bracketing or exposed rafters. The gable overhang is faired to a triangular cross section and the fairing shingled over, creating a very neat, uncluttered effect; the soffits are horizontal and ceiled with 3½" center-matched lumber beveled on the edges (wainscot stock). These features may have been dictated by the building's original location adjacent to a railroad yard, where horizontal surfaces were more than ordinarily subject to deposits of soot and cinders. The building rests on a raised, poured concrete foundation (42" high at the lowest point of the site, which is the northeast corner). A typically spacious veranda (44' wide by 10' deep) extends across the front, carried on four poured concrete posts and the concrete steps. The roof of this porch is supported by six columns, each 8" square. These are joined to the frieze with simple three-ply brackets measuring 23" x 23" x 5½" thick. Top and bottom rails are made from 3½" x 5" timbers, with the balusters being 1-5/8" x 5" stock and separated by 3" spacing. Overall height of the railing assembly, from floor to top surface, is 31". The central bay, at the steps, is 102"

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 4

wide; the others are each 96" in width. The open space beneath the porch is screened by latticework.

The front (north elevation) entrance door is a 15-light unit typical of later bungalows and compatible with mission furniture, of pleasing proportions and design, and measures 42" wide by 84" high. It is flanked by two 15-light sidelights of similar but slightly different configuration, each 24" wide. The entrance opens directly into the large meeting room (20' x 43'). This area is lighted, in addition to the entrance, by four pairs of double hung sash (8 over 1), each unit measuring 48" wide by 60" high -- one pair at each end of the room and one pair on either side of the entrance. A single 48" x 60" unit at each end of the south wall overlooks one of the two side porches. The south wall is dominated by a massive brick fireplace eight feet wide (opening is 44" wide by 31" high), laid up in elaborate patterns and bearing three inset designs executed on the chimney breast in red, white and green tiles. There is no mantel. The fireplace is flanked by bookcases 84" wide and fitted with glazed (15-light) doors measuring 19" wide by 49" high each. The section of bookcase adjacent to the left side of the fireplace (as viewed from the front) is deepened to accommodate a wood lift (no longer in use); its doors are not glazed and are instead fitted with fifteen panels each. The bookcases are flanked by single-panel doors (36" x 84") leading into the transverse hall. Interior walls and ceilings are lath and plaster; walls in the meeting room are wainscoted (66" in height to top of cap) and are papered above the wainscoting. All interior trim is fir and that in the meeting room and transverse hall are stained dark. The color appears to be Dark Oak. The wainscot consists of framed 18" plywood panels; the cap on the top rail is supported by small sawn brackets fitted at 18" intervals. A corner bench with sloping back and padded seat is built into the northeast corner of the room and is reminiscent in style of the benches provided during that era for inglenooks in colonial revival houses. Storage compartments beneath the seats are accessed through fold-down panels in the front. The casings used in this room are not stock patterns but are built up from four separate mouldings into a composite pattern 6½" wide. Baseboards are plain and are 9½" high. The ceiling in this room is higher (116") than those elsewhere in the building, which are 104", and is fitted with intersecting box beams for decorative effect. These measure 7½" deep by 8½" wide, and are finished off at the ceiling with 3½" crown moulding. The floor in this room is protected with heavy brown battleship linoleum but appears to be center matched fir 3½" wide; flooring elsewhere in the building is either fir or pine.

The transverse hallway, at its east end, is fitted with a 36" 15-light door of the same pattern as that used at the front entrance. This opens onto the side porch. At the west end a similarly located door leads to what was formerly another side porch but was enclosed in 1935 to provide an interior stair to the basement. This door is of the same period as the building but probably not original to its present location; it is a five-panel door with the three upper panels converted to a single glazed opening. Immediately adjacent to this door, in the south wall, is a restroom with two basins and two stalls. The stalls are fitted with louvered privacy doors. Four lockers are installed in the south wall, immediately to the east of the rest room entrance. These are fitted with plywood doors; each has a small screened opening in its upper portion and bears a

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 5

stenciled number (17 through 20), indicating that Union Pacific probably transferred them from some other facility. Immediately east of the lockers is a door leading to the kitchen. This was originally the dispensary; it is fitted with a pass-through opening (108" wide by 12" high) closed by a plywood flap that folds down to form a counter and acts now as a serving area. Doors and trim in the hallway are finished in dark varnish, as noted above; the plaster walls and ceiling are painted and the ceiling is coved, an appropriate sanitary consideration in a health-related facility. A door leads from the south wall of the kitchen into the rest of the hospital area, which now serves as a caretaker's apartment and shares the kitchen with groups renting the meeting room. A short hallway provides access to the several rooms. The two largest of these are currently combined, being separated only by a broad square arch, and form a living area measuring 12' x 24'. These rooms were probably originally separated by a full partition with an ordinary door: the rearmost room has a coved ceiling, suggesting that it may have been set up to handle minor or emergency surgery. Access to the small bedroom is gained from this room (through a small combined hall and closet) and also from the hallway. The bedroom, measuring 7' x 13', is only large enough for a single bed -- all that would have been required for its original function and ample for a single person acting as caretaker for the Neighborhood Club. The separation of toilet from bathtub and sink also indicates the original use of this area as a type of hospital facility. With the exception of the bedroom, doors and trim in the apartment have been painted. Interior doors are five-panel, and are fitted with transom sash. The apartment has a front entrance on the side porch (east elevation) with a door matching the other exterior doors. The windows in these rooms are all double hung sash and occur in several sizes: 36" x 60" (6 over 1); 48" x 48" (8 over 1); and 36" x 36" (6 over 1). The window in the kitchen measures 48" x 60" and is identical to units installed in the meeting room.

The building is not provided with a full basement, but the existing partial basement is large and measures 13' - 5" x 42' - 5". Its floor is approximately 7' below grade, giving it a ten-foot ceiling. Surprisingly, the basement ceiling is finished in lath and plaster. The building was provided with steam heat (standard practice for the railroad) and the boiler, now gas-fired, was originally equipped with a stoker. The central chimney stack, built into the north wall of the basement, contains two flues -- one for the boiler and one for the fireplace. The cast iron radiators in the meeting room are not currently in use, heat being provided in that area by a modern wood stove installed in the fireplace opening. The basement has an outside entrance, accessed by a concrete stairwell, in addition to the interior stair from the enclosed (west) side porch.

Access to the attic is provided by a trapdoor in the transverse hall. Only the raised area, corresponding to the higher ceiling of the meeting room, is floored; flooring is 3½" center-matched pine. No sidewalls, partitions or ceilings have been fitted, but the area would, if finished, be most attractive. It is large (20' x 42') and well lighted. The east and west gables are each provided with four 12-light, 24" x 48" casement sash. The typical shed dormer across the front of the building is 26' wide and fitted with ten 6-light, 24" x 31" casement sash. The front wall of the dormer is five feet forward of the building's front wall and rests on the transverse centerline

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 6

of the porch. This area is a foot lower than the area just described and is not floored. The rear portion of the building has a lower ridgepole in addition to the lower ceiling; the attic space above this living area has been insulated. Rafters are set on 24" centers; the roof, now covered with composition shingles, has been fitted with solid sheathing and is well braced. Structural integrity is confirmed by the roofline, which is still perfectly straight and even.

Additions and Modifications

This is a remarkable example of a rather specialized building that has been reused for another, partially similar purpose without requiring any major changes. There have been no additions. When the building was moved in 1935, its chimney stack was partially dismantled. When it was placed on the new foundation, a base was provided for the fireplace and a new chimney was constructed on what remained of the old one. The porch enclosure (west elevation) could easily be retrofitted to its pre-1935 configuration, but this does not appear to be a desirable step at the present time. The change is in any case minor, is not unsightly, and is not irreversible. The same comments apply to the partition in the living area; the wall could easily be returned to its original state, but such a step does not seem desirable at the present time and its exact original configuration is unknown. This building is not only almost entirely free of the additions and alterations common to older structures used by groups, but is virtually unchanged from its original appearance. Comparison of the photos taken in the meeting room in 1935 and 1986 will serve to emphasize this point. The furniture, wallpaper, fire tools, and other features are the same. The central light fixture has been replaced by a fan, but the others are original. The fireplace has, unfortunately, been painted; again, the step is not irreversible.

Condition

The La Grande Neighborhood Club building is solidly constructed, structurally sound, and is generally in good repair. It has been kept roofed and painted, and maintenance has been reasonably consistent. Items currently in need of attention are relatively minor: a few pieces of loose siding and exterior moulding; some lattice strips at the end of the porch; and other detail work that is normally a matter of routine maintenance. The wooden steps at the side porch should be repaired or, preferably, replaced with concrete. It appears that concrete was the intended material, with wood being fitted as a temporary expedient that was never corrected. The apartment would benefit from careful redecoration but is nonetheless in good condition.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Social history

Period of Significance

1914-1930
1935-1938

Significant Dates

1914
1935

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The La Grande Neighborhood Club building was erected in 1914 as the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company employees' reading room and hospital, or first-aid dispensary, but from 1935 onward, it was the home of a group of leading women in La Grande society whose purpose was to promote education, cultural affairs and civic improvements. The women's group had been formed as a literary club in 1891. It early became affiliated with the National and State Federation of Women's Clubs and expanded its purposes to encompass community service.

The club reached its peak of membership of 450 in the late 1920s, but nonetheless vigorously carried on its activities through the Depression and Second World War. The club's first headquarters was located in specially-furnished basement rooms of the Carnegie Library, which the club had done so much to promote.

When the Union Pacific Railway (parent company to the O.R. & N. Co.) built a new passenger station in 1930, the old Oregon Railway and Navigation Company dispensary was surplus as a matter of course. Thus, in 1935, the well-built, 1½-story shingle and weatherboard-clad bungalow with Arts and Crafts interior, was relocated 13 blocks from railroad right of way to its present site at 1108 "N" Avenue for adaptation as the women's clubhouse. The relocation project was carried out with Depression era grant assistance from the Works Progress Administration. After an initial period of renting meeting space to recoup expenditures, the club made its bungalow accessible to other groups at a nominal rate. To make the expenditure of Federal WPA funds valid, the club was obliged to deed the property in fee simple to the City of La Grande in 1941. During the Second War, Red Cross work was continued by club members, along with the traditional civic projects.

The building has changed little since its relocation in 1935, which date marks the beginning of its historic period of association with the Neighborhood Club. The likely origin of its design is the Architecture Department of the Union Pacific Railway Company, and while it is a noteworthy example of Arts and Crafts bungalow architecture locally, the clubhouse is primarily significant under Criterion A as the first permanent headquarters building of the women's group which historically promoted social welfare in La Grande. So inextricably is the Depression era history of the La Grande Neighborhood Club tied to the bungalow clubhouse at this site, the property withstands the normal exclusion of relocated properties in National Register listings.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Johnson, Lee Carroll, Brief History of Union County, Oregon (La Grande, 1949).
Illustrated History of Union and Wallowa Counties, Oregon (Western Historical Publishing Company, 1902).
McClay, Pearl, History of the La Grande Neighborhood Club (Manuscript, 1947).
La Grande Neighborhood Club. Minutes (selections, transcribed by Roberta Bates, 1987). Manuscript.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acres of property less than one La Grande SE, Oregon 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	1
Zone	

4	1	4	2	9	0
Easting					

5	0	1	9	2	8	0
Northing						

C

Zone	

Easting					

Northing							

B

Zone	

Easting					

Northing							

D

Zone	

Easting					

Northing							

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is located in NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 8, Township 3S, Range 38E, Willamette Meridian, in Union County, Oregon. The nominated property is legally described as Lot 4 of Block 57, Chaplin's Addition to the City of La Grande in Union County, Oregon, and is otherwise identified as Tax Lot 10000 at said location.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property, measuring 60 x 110 feet, encompasses the entire parcel occupied by the La Grande Neighborhood Clubhouse from 1935 onward. The women's civic group relocated the former Oregon Railway and Navigation Company Employees Dispensary (built in 1914) onto this lot for use as its headquarters in 1935.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John W. Evans
organization N/A date August 11, 1987
street & number 806 Main Avenue telephone (503) 963-4719
city or town La Grande state Oregon zip code 97850

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

The La Grande Neighborhood Club spearheaded numerous civic projects during the period of the city's upbuilding, including, most notably, beautification of the railroad passenger station grounds (1907), organization of a public library (1907-1908), fund raising for the Carnegie Library building of 1914, and organization of the community's first Parent-Teacher Associations (1914). The group made regular contributions to the scholarship loan fund established by Oregon Women's clubs to further higher education for young women, and it organized a Red Cross Chapter during the First World War and secured a Public Health Nurse for Union County (1919). Another wartime project was the raising of funds for street-tree plantings on Spruce Street north to Riverside Park as a memorial to veterans of the First War. Closer to the time the club entered into its new clubhouse, it was busy promoting beautification of the city parks (1932-1933).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 2

The La Grande Neighborhood Club is a noteworthy example of bungalow clubhouse architecture in eastern Oregon. It is a particularly fine example of this genre, and unusually well preserved. It is therefore of architectural interest to the region and community in which it is located. Although it has been moved from its original site, the move took place over fifty years ago and does not affect the architectural integrity of the building.

The building is historically significant because of the organizations most closely associated with it: primarily the La Grande Neighborhood Club, a group of women who played a most influential role in the cultural life and civic betterment the community; and secondarily the Union Pacific Railroad, which was the single most important factor in La Grande's early growth and development.

History of the La Grande Neighborhood Club

The La Grande Neighborhood Club is a voluntary association of women in the City of La Grande, Oregon, and is dedicated to education, cultural pursuits, and civic improvement. It was organized in 1894 by seven local homemakers: Anna Brann, Edith Robbins, Mary Elizabeth Cox, Naomi Masterton, Jessie Cavana and Mrs. Robert Smith. These women met regularly to discuss mutual interests and, in September 1894, organized themselves as a literary club. Mrs. Smith, whose first name does not appear in existing histories of the organization, provided initial leadership based on her previous experience in Chautauqua work and girls' clubs.

Meetings of the group were held in the homes of members during the first several years. The first open meeting was held in a small hall on the second floor of a commercial building. Its program was typical of the era and included music, readings, and an address by local rancher, entrepreneur and politician Walter M. Pierce. Pierce was destined to serve, during the course of a long career, as state senator, governor of the state of Oregon, and member of the U. S. House of Representatives.

The club met on alternate tuesdays, a custom that became a tradition. Presidents were originally elected twice a year and, in the beginning, dues were fifty cents per annum. The club chose the local wild syringa as its flower and its colors, derived from that blossom, are yellow and white. The club was visited during the spring of 1895 by Mrs. C. B. Wade, at that time an active clubwoman in Pendleton, who recommended that it become affiliated with the National Federation of Women's Clubs. The club did so in 1896 and became affiliated with the newly-formed State Federation in 1899. During Mrs. Masterton's tenure as president (September 1895 - February 1896) the first Benevolence Committee, providing assistance to the needy, was appointed. In 1896 the dues were increased to \$1.00. The Constitution and Bylaws were first printed in 1898. 1899 was the first year in which officers were elected to serve for a full year's term.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 3

Mrs. Anna Oliver (president, 1900-01) was one of the directors of the first State Board of the State Federation (1899-1902).

The club always engaged in fund-raising activities. Bazaars, teas, and programs by visiting lecturers were among the early efforts. By its tenth anniversary (1904) there were twenty-nine members. In 1907, with forty-three members and \$15.67 in the treasury, the club was able to interest the railroad company in beautification of its depot grounds. In November of that year the principal speaker was Miss Cornelia Marvin, State Librarian. Miss Marvin's talk, "The Free Public Library," was clearly inspirational. A committee was immediately appointed to confer with other organizations in regard to organizing and establishing a public library in La Grande. By 1908 the La Grande Public Library was in operation, due largely to efforts by the Neighborhood Club. During this period the club met in a building (no longer extant) that served as the Community Center and in a room rented from Mrs. John Anthony (1602 Sixth Street; now on the National Register of Historic Places). During the presidency of Mrs. J. D. Stout (1911-12) the club moved into Honan Hall (demolished 1985), a facility built by Mrs. M. F. Honan and dedicated to public use. This building also housed the public library. At this time a fountain was purchased by the club and placed on the high school grounds. No longer extant, it depicted two children with their schoolbooks, a boy and a girl; the boy held an umbrella over their heads to protect them from rain provided by the fountain.

During the following year the club moved to the Commercial Club Room in the new Foley Building (now on the National Register of Historic Places), which had been made available to them on a rent-free basis. When the new Carnegie Library building was completed (1913-14; still in use), the Neighborhood Club provided \$300.00 to furnish club rooms in its basement. It met there for the next thirteen years. In 1914 it assisted and promoted the first Parent-Teacher Association in La Grande (Central School, October 6), followed by another organized at Riveria School later in the year. By 1914-15 there were 130 members and the club was very active. Its first project that year was to feed a convention of stockmen (500 to 600 persons), a major effort that proved financially profitable. The new Y. M. C. A. Building (no longer extant) was in need of furnishings and the club raised \$1,000.00 for that purpose. Additional fund-raising activities during the 1915-17 period furnished dishes and other items for the Y. M. C. A. kitchen, earned \$286.25 for the La Grande Public Library, and provided \$42.05 to the Oregon Scholarship Loan Fund. The latter was established in 1908 for the purpose of assisting worthy girls residing in Oregon to obtain higher education. The idea for this fund originated at a State Federation meeting held in La Grande in November, 1908. This loan fund began with a small nest egg of \$23.00 that remained from the sum raised by the women of Oregon to buy a statue of Sacajawea that stood in the Lewis & Clark Exposition grounds (Portland, 1905). The fund was maintained in succeeding years by contributions from both federated and non-federated women's clubs in Oregon. The La Grande Neighborhood Club was a regular contributor. In 1917 the Children's Story Hour was first promoted by the club in the La Grande Public Library. The program is still an important library service today (1987).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 4

During the World War I years the club was very active. It called a mass meeting April 10, 1917 to organize a local Red Cross chapter, carried on Red Cross membership drives and Liberty Loan Drives, prepared surgical dressings, sent funds to American overseas hospitals, maintained a canteen at the depot to serve soldiers on the troop trains, and conducted an emergency kitchen to feed sick families in La Grande during the flu epidemic. Civic improvement was not neglected; a cleanup campaign was mounted and 115 loads of trash were removed from the city.

During the period 1919-21 the club secured a Public Health Nurse for Union County and raised funds (\$3,864) for an avenue of trees ("Victory Way") from La Grande to Riverside Park, a living memorial to local servicemen. These were the trees planted along North Spruce Street. Mrs. George Cochran, club member, was elected a director of the State Federation. Well known artists were brought in for concerts and a Club Building Fund was established. Fund-raising efforts during the 1920's were largely successful and there were large donations to various charities. Two major state contributions, other than the Scholarship Loan Fund, were the Endowment Fund (money set aside to bear interest that would defray Federation expenses) and the Doernbecker Children's Hospital in Portland. Membership reached its peak of approximately 450 during this period. In 1927-28 the club moved from the library basement quarters, which it had outgrown, to the small ballroom of the La Grande Hotel (Fourth Street at Adams Avenue; no longer extant). Membership dropped to 286 persons, probably because dues had been increased to \$3.00 the previous year. During 1930-31 programs were given at the high school auditorium and at Eastern Oregon Normal School (opened June 1929; now Eastern Oregon State College; original building now on the National Register of Historic Places). A tea was given December 27 in honor of the wives of visiting railway officials who were in La Grande for the formal opening of the new Union Pacific station.

The economic depression of the 1930's brought about further losses in membership, but the club continued to provide programs and to engage in public service. In 1932 and 1933 its Oregon Trail Beautiful Committee provided trees and shrubs for the city's parks. Following closure of the La Grande Hotel the club met in the Sacajawea Hotel (no longer extant). At the November 27, 1934 meeting the president, Mrs. H. G. Avery, presented for consideration by members the possibility of a clubhouse for the organization. When the new railway station was completed in 1930, the Railroad Club (or Railroad Hospital) had become surplus to the needs of Union Pacific; the facilities it had provided were incorporated into the new structure. Mrs. George Cochran had learned of its altered status from her husband, a local attorney for the railroad; she had suggested to Mrs. Avery that the surplus building, a handsome bungalow structure then only twenty years old and in excellent condition, might be made available to the Neighborhood Club. According to the November 27 minutes, "Mrs. Avery acted upon the suggestion and interviewed Mr. Finch, who in turn recommended to the New York office that they make a gift of the railroad hospital to the La Grande Neighborhood Club. The New York office approved the plan, provided the building be moved from its present location by January 1, 1935, and the basement filled and the ground left clean. Mrs. Avery further stated that the flues and fireplace would have to be taken

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 5

out before moving and a new foundation and basement built for heating plant in the new place. The estimated cost of all hired labor would not exceed \$2,000.00. The back part of the building could be made into a small apartment rent free in exchange for upkeep and care of the building."

It should be noted here that, perhaps coincidentally, 1934 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the railroad's arrival in La Grande and that a major celebration had been held in the city that year.

Several available lots were discussed, including one on Adams Avenue that was available to the club as a gift from the city. By December 18 a contract had been signed by the Board of Directors and Union Pacific, and an extension of the deadline obtained from that company, but no decision had been made in regard to a site. A fund drive was undertaken. At the meeting of April 4, 1935 it was decided unanimously that Lot No.4, Block 57, in Chaplin's Addition, located at the corner of Sixth Street and N Avenue (southwest corner of the intersection) was both the most desirable site and the lowest in price of those offered for sale. Purchase was accordingly made, and the property duly conveyed to the Neighborhood Club by its owners, Audmer and Dorothy Playle, on March 26, 1935. This transaction was duly recorded and was reported to the membership at the April 9 meeting. In order for the building to be moved onto the lot at a financial advantage for the club, legal requirements made it necessary to deed the lot over to the city. This was done on May 2, 1935, with the stipulation that "the La Grande Neighborhood Club shall have the right to move onto or erect upon said premises one or more buildings and as long as such buildings are used by said La Grande Neighborhood Club as a club house, said Neighborhood Club shall have the exclusive use and occupancy of said premises and shall have the right to remove said building at any time." (Union County Deeds, Book 95, page 141). Shortly afterward (June 6, 1935) the La Grande Neighborhood Club was incorporated (Record of Articles of Incorporation, Union County, Book 3, page 61).

During the summer of 1935 the building was moved. This was a major undertaking; the new basement had to be excavated, new foundations poured, the building moved thirteen blocks, the old basement filled and the former site cleared and leveled. By July the building rested on its new foundation; minutes from that period make reference to repair of the fireplace, leading this writer to conclude that the chimney was cut down for moving but that the fireplace itself was moved intact and set on a new base. By October 15, when the Neighborhood Club held its first meeting in its new home, the meeting room was quite presentable. A photograph was taken in honor of the occasion (see photo section). Much remained to be done and, at the October 29th meeting, "Mrs. Avery announced that Mr. McAllister assured her that the Club House is to be a P. W. A. [sic] project -- then all work needed to complete the House would be done and it would be ready for rent for parties etc. Suggested an open house to be held New Year's as work to be finished at that time." At the November 26th meeting a letter from the Director of the W. P. A. was read, giving approval of the Club House as a W. P. A. project. Mrs. Avery announced that the \$1,300.00 granted would allow for interior finish, reroofing, yard work, kitchen, interior stairway to basement, kalsomining and painting. A note of appreciation from the club was sent to the Hon. Walter M. Pierce for his

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 6

assistance in getting the Club House approved as a W. P. A. project. By April, 1936, all work had been completed and its furnishings purchased or, in some cases, donated by members. A schedule of rates for rental of the meeting room facilities was established. By 1940 these had been reduced to make the clubhouse available to more people.

On May 19, 1941 the Board of Directors of the Neighborhood Club met with the La Grande City Manager, who had bad news for them. The clause in the club's May 2, 1935 deed to the city, giving it exclusive use of the property, made it technically invalid as a W. P. A. project. The Board was informed that the club must either repay Federal expenditures in the amount of \$668.37 or deed the property to the city in fee simple, i.e., with no strings attached. E. J. Griffith, State Administrator of W. P. A., had recommended in a letter that the latter procedure be followed, since the club is a nonprofit organization. The Board concurred with this recommendation and their decision was ratified at an emergency meeting of the club held on June 2. An appropriate quitclaim deed was accordingly executed on June 24, 1941.

During World War II the club continued its activities as usual, feeling that group and community morale would best be served in this way. The members spent much time on Red Cross work, assistance to hospitals, and participation in War Bond drives. At this time, and in postwar years, the club continued its support of scholarships, the children's hospital, the public library, and various civic projects.

From the time that the building was settled in its new location until the present, the large meeting room has been rented out to other clubs and organizations (and, on occasion, for weddings) for a fee. This practice helps to pay for maintenance on the building. The rooms behind the kitchen, originally the "hospital" portion of the building, have served as living quarters for a caretaker -- as suggested when the building was first proposed. The first "club house mother" was Mrs. May Moran.

Although the 1941 quitclaim deed freed the city of La Grande from responsibility to grant exclusive use of the property to the Neighborhood Club, the city has nonetheless continued to honor its 1935 commitment. The Neighborhood Club has used and managed the building, without supervision by the city, since that date and the relationship has evidently been mutually satisfactory.

The Neighborhood Club has always kept its clubhouse well maintained and in good repair, but any funds raised over and above this responsibility were expended for charitable, cultural, and civic activities. Major remodeling, which often overtakes older buildings, was never attempted. Insufficient funds and dwindling membership, together with increasing recognition of the building's historic and architectural significance, render drastic changes of this nature unlikely. This is, in the present context, very fortunate. The building is virtually unchanged since 1935 and only slightly changed since 1914. It retains in full measure that peculiar charm and sense of shelter found only in bungalow architecture.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 7

The La Grande Neighborhood Club is probably one of the oldest, still viable, women's clubs in Oregon. Its days are undoubtedly numbered, as the traditional women's clubs are rapidly disappearing in favor of more contemporary organizational concepts and activities. It nonetheless represents an age of elegance, taste, and good works that contributed largely to our cultural heritage and should neither be discounted nor forgotten. Its surviving members hope to see their clubhouse appropriately recognized and preserved for the appreciation and enjoyment of others. They have been good stewards and their stewardship has been, in the truest sense, a public trust.

History of the Railroad Club / Railroad Hospital

Henry Villard (1835-1900) had originally hoped to effect a transportation monopoly in the Pacific Northwest, and the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company was one of two major ventures toward that end. In 1881 he also purchased a controlling interest in Northern Pacific, became its president, and completed that northern transcontinental line in 1883. Associated cost overruns, however, proved financially ruinous to him; he was forced out of the presidency and lost much of his fortune. He later obtained financial backing from German interests (1886), enabling him to regain some of his holdings and reenter Northern Pacific as a board member. He retired from the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company in 1891 and continued as chairman of the board for Northern Pacific. When that firm went into receivership in 1893, his railway career came to an end. The O.R. & N. was absorbed by Union Pacific but, as a company within a company, retained its original name for many years thereafter.

In 1914 the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company (by then a part of the Union Pacific) constructed a combination reading room and first aid dispensary for its employees, in conjunction with its La Grande operations. This building, an interesting example of bungalow clubhouse architecture, was sited at the corner of Fir Street and Jefferson Avenue, on the northwest corner of the intersection and fronting on Fir. This orientation, facing east, thus paralleled the tracks and was immediately adjacent to them. As has been noted elsewhere in this nomination, the front, or main, section of the building was a spacious area furnished as a comfortable reading room, with fireplace and steam heat and a supply of books and magazines. Behind the reading room was a transverse hallway with entrances at both ends (from either Jefferson Avenue or the railroad yards), and behind this were office, examination room and/or surgery, a hospital bed, toilet and bath, and a dispensary. Lining the hallway were lockers, a restroom, and a fold-down counter for the dispensary. A nurse was regularly scheduled on duty and doctors retained by the company could see patients at the workplace. It was not a true hospital in that its services did not extend beyond office calls, examinations, first aid and minor surgery.

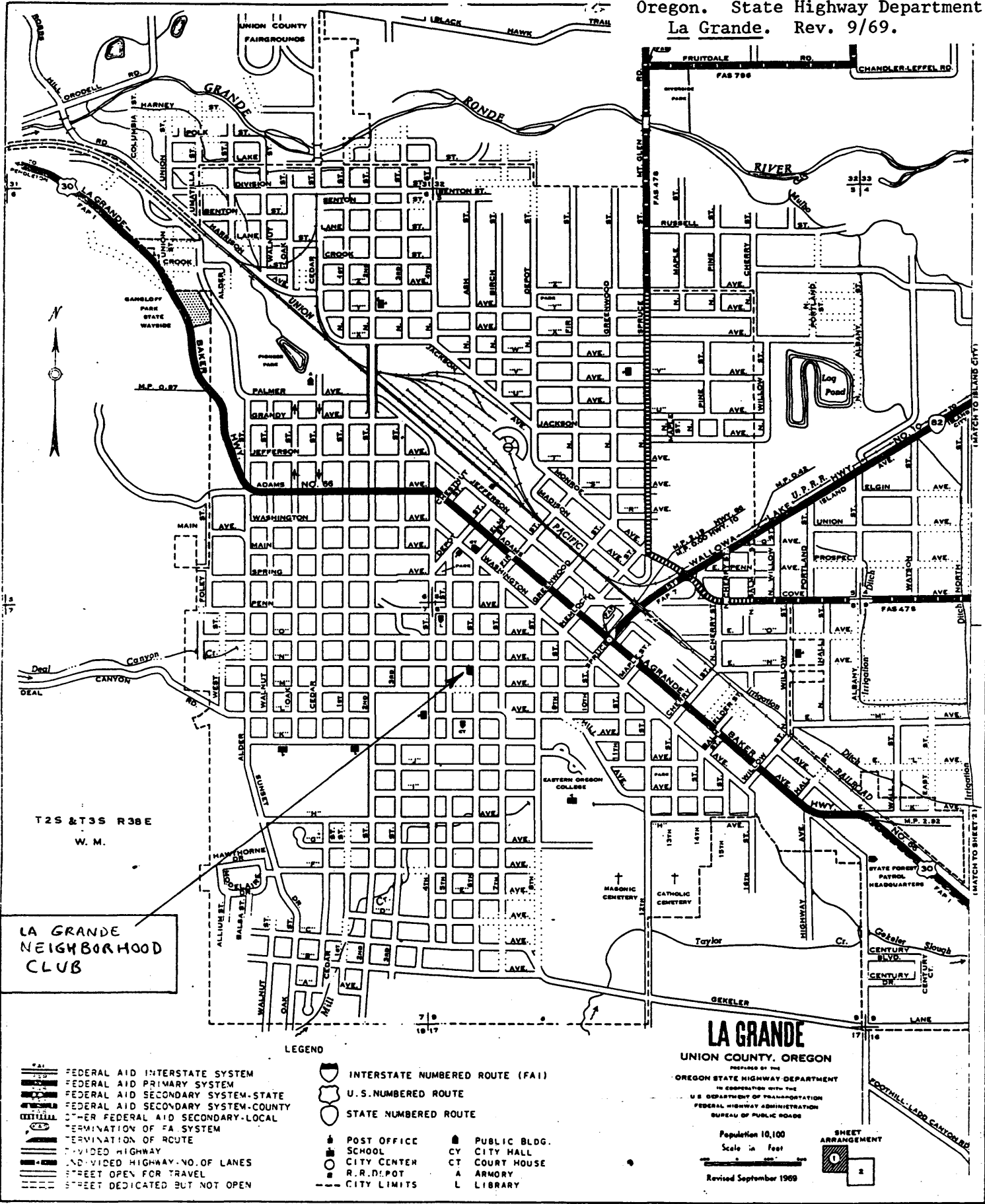
**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 8

Mr. Lou Harris, a retired engineer now in his eighties, recalls that it was built as a conciliatory gesture by the company, following a long, bitter and unsuccessful strike. He adds that the union accordingly expressed hostility toward it, discouraging workers from using the reading room, and that this pleasant refuge was not heavily utilized. Mr. Harris recalls that it was very nice inside and was set up as a good place to relax and read. It has also been stated that meetings of supervisory personnel were sometimes held here, and that the workers' organizations did meet in the facility at times; a reminder of one of them is still there. This is the charter for Grande Ronde Division No.362, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, granted August 17, 1887. It is still housed in its original frame and hangs on the wall of the meeting room, beside the front door.

One of the Neighborhood Club members, Charlene Melton, recalls that when she was a girl during World War I her mother was a Red Cross volunteer. The supplies were kept in the "Railroad Hospital" and her mother went there to return completed articles made by volunteer workers and pick up new materials for her group in Meacham, Oregon. Charlene would be left to sit, legs dangling, on the corner bench. This bench is still very much as it was in 1918-19.

The Architect / Builder

The architect is unknown, but the interior arrangements of the building and some of its design features suggest strongly that it was designed on demand by the Architectural Department of the Union Pacific Railway Company. It was clearly intended from the outset to meet special requirements and was not adapted from a stock item. An inquiry to the Public Relations and Advertising Department, Union Pacific System, elicited a response from research specialist Ken Longe, who reported that the Architectural Department was unable to find any blueprints or general information about the building. No information has yet been located that would indicate whether the building under discussion was unique in the Union Pacific System, or whether it is rather representative of what may have been general practice within that system prior to World War I. In any case, it appears to be a unique survival within its region.



T2S & T3S R38E
 W. M.

LA GRANDE
 NEIGHBORHOOD
 CLUB

LEGEND

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| | FEDERAL AID INTERSTATE SYSTEM | | INTERSTATE NUMBERED ROUTE (FAI) |
| | FEDERAL AID PRIMARY SYSTEM | | U.S. NUMBERED ROUTE |
| | FEDERAL AID SECONDARY SYSTEM - STATE | | STATE NUMBERED ROUTE |
| | FEDERAL AID SECONDARY SYSTEM - COUNTY | | |
| | OTHER FEDERAL AID SECONDARY - LOCAL | | |
| | TERMINATION OF FA SYSTEM | | POST OFFICE |
| | TERMINATION OF ROUTE | | SCHOOL |
| | DIVIDED HIGHWAY | | CITY HALL |
| | DIVIDED HIGHWAY - NO. OF LANES | | CITY CENTER |
| | STREET OPEN FOR TRAVEL | | R. R. DEPOT |
| | STREET DEDICATED BUT NOT OPEN | | CITY LIMITS |
| | | | PUBLIC BLDG. |
| | | | COURT HOUSE |
| | | | ARMORY |
| | | | LIBRARY |

LA GRANDE
 UNION COUNTY, OREGON
 DIVISION OF THE
 OREGON STATE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
 IN COOPERATION WITH THE
 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
 FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
 BUREAU OF PUBLIC ROADS

Population 10,100
 Scale in feet
 Revised September 1969

SHEET ARRANGEMENT

LA GRANDE NEIGHBORHOOD CLUB
 1108 N AVENUE, LA GRANDE, OREGON
 MAIN FLOOR PLAN
 SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"
 POSITION OF LIGHT FIXTURES INDICATED
 IN MEETING ROOM AND FRONT PORCH ONLY
 JOHN W. EVANS 1937

