

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received APR - 6 1983  
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Ahlf, John and Susanna, House

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number 762 NW <sup>6th St</sup> Sixth Street N/A not for publication

city, town Grants Pass N/A vicinity of Second Congressional District

state Oregon code 41 county Josephine code 033

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
	N/A being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
			<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Ms. Joan Wood

street & number 375 NE Ausland Drive

city, town Grants Pass N/A vicinity of state Oregon 97526

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Josephine County Courthouse

street & number Sixth Street

city, town Grants Pass state Oregon 97526

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Statewide Inventory of Historic Properties has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1982  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Salem state Oregon 97310

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<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 <u>    N/A    </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The John H. and Susanna Ahlf House at 762 NW Sixth Street in Grants Pass was designed by Medford architect I. A. Palmer. The house was constructed in 1902 on property encompassing two city lots. Designed in the Queen Anne style, it exhibits the distinctive characteristics of the style, including an asymmetrical plan, a multiplicity of gables and polygonal bays, a double porch or veranda, and flared belt course of patterned shingles. The wood frame house stands on a high basement and rises two-and-one-half stories. The house is rectilinear in plan and measures approximately 36 by 58 feet, its main axis oriented south to north. Eaves overhanging the exterior walls are bracketed. Additional decorative details include dentil molding, ornate bargeboards and etched glass window panels. The principal facade of the Ahlf House faces south, but the most visible elevation is on the east, facing Sixth Street. The building stands on a rise of ground about 75 feet from the east property line. Surrounded by an expanse of lawn covering both lots, the Ahlf property has mature plantings and large deciduous and evergreen trees. The small cinder block building near the southeast corner of the property was constructed about 1955. It does not obscure the visual effect of the large house which is upslope from NW Sixth Street. The Ahlf House has been inhabited by renters, occupying four units, since the mid 1950s. Interior spatial arrangements have remained intact, however, and doors merely closed to divide living spaces from each other. With the exception of two rooms which have temporarily lowered ceilings, all original ceiling heights remain. A porch on the north elevation of the house was enclosed at an early date with materials which matched the original exterior finish. A small bathroom has been enclosed on the north elevation. The front porch railing was replaced with wrought iron, and roof deck cresting once may have existed. None of these changes have compromised the essential integrity of the Ahlf House.

The John and Susanna Ahlf House occupies portions of Lots 5 and 6 of Block F, Bourne's First Addition to Grants Pass. In the near vicinity are Newman United Methodist Church, the Grants Pass City Hall, the Michael Clemens House at 3rd and A Streets, and the George Calhoun House at Fifth and A Streets. The church and the two houses are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The hip-roofed, two-and-one-half story house has a concrete basement and is clad with eight-inch channel siding. A two-story veranda, or double piazza, is located at the southeast corner of the building. The west, south, and east elevations each have a full-height polygonal window bay crowned by gables. The roof cover is of wood shingles; a flared belt course of fish scale shingles encircles the house between the first and second stories. A flare-top chimney rises from the center of the house. In each facet of the hipped roof is a hip-roofed dormer window with six lights in the upper sash.

On the east elevation, the polygonal window bay contains large windows flanked by double-hung windows with one-over-one lights. A pedimented gable crowns the bay window. Decorative brackets top the bevels of the bay. Exterior corners have cornerboards on this elevation as on all others. The eaves overhang is bracketed above a frieze board and dentil band. Bargeboards of gables are decorated with scroll sawn ornament. Typical windows are double-hung with one-over-one light. The basement has windows and a grade-level entrance with segmental arch heads. The primary entrance on the east elevation has a glass and panel door with top light. This front door is decorated with small pilasters and scalloped wood trim. Additional decorative characteristics include bevelled glass and etched glass in the window bays, dentil molding and inset panels in the spandrels of window bays. The double veranda at the southeast is supported by turned posts.

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The west elevation contains the same bay design described previously. A small shed-roofed overhang shelters a basement entrance on this elevation. On the north (rear) elevation is an enclosed porch in which exterior finish materials match treatment of the original volume. One straight flight of rear stairs reaches the upper level of the porch addition on the north elevation. A narrow band of horizontally sliding windows runs across the north wall under the eaves. On the lower level a channel sided, shed-roofed extension projects under the stairs. This elevation is not visible from Sixth Street.

The interior of the Ahlf House is organized on a central hall plan with rooms of varying sizes on either side. Two doors lead from the entry hall to a lower apartment. The doors have five panels, with molded architraves and ornamented corner blocks. The ceiling in the hall, as in other rooms throughout the building, is ten feet in height. A closed-string dog-leg stair rises to the second level at the southeast corner. Carved newell posts stand on the first and second levels of the staircase. The turned balusters are topped by a molded handrail. Downstairs rooms which were used as parlor and dining room space currently make up a lower apartment. The dining room includes a large built-in cabinet/cupboard. Sliding pocket doors give access to principal downstairs rooms. A dumb waiter in the dining room provided for delivery of food prepared in a summer kitchen in the basement. Ceilings in the two parlors have been lowered to eight feet with reversible materials. Doors have five panels throughout. On the upper floor, four bedrooms are arranged around a long central hall. Doorways have transoms. An original bath with separate water closet remains intact. The attic is unimproved. Kitchen space has been incorporated into the floor plan without altering the original interior spatial arrangement. All upper floor rooms have ten foot high ceilings.

Other buildings on the property include three small single-story bungalows along the western lot line. Two are rentals; a third provides storage. The southernmost building measures approximately 26' by 14', the middle structure, used for storage, measures approximately 10' by 18', and the northernmost measures approximately 12' by 15'. All are rectangular in plan, gable-roofed, of frame construction, and date from the 1920s. One rental unit has channel siding, the other lap siding. All have wood doors. The southern unit has horizontal sliding, single-light windows, the northern structure has small multi-light horizontal sliding windows. On a separate tax lot on the east property line fronting Sixth Street stands a one-story cinder block building measuring approximately 32' by 16'. It has a flat roof, glass door and glassed in front elevation. A limited hard-surface parking area is adjacent to the building.

A driveway leads from the commercial inholding to the rear of the Ahlf House. Cars are not readily visible from the street. A circular cement walk leads around the south and east elevations of the house, joining steps and a cement walk leading from NW Sixth Street. The lawn is grass and clover. Large cedar and maple trees are planted over the property. Laurel hedges and rose bushes are typical. Shasta daisies line the central cement walk.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1902 **Builder/Architect** I. A. Palmer, architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The large, 2 1/2 story Queen Anne style house on a basement story partially above grade which stands at 762 NW Sixth Street in Grants Pass, Oregon, was built in 1902 for local meat packer John Henry Ahlf, who had just become area representative of Armor and Company, the giant packing firm headquartered in Chicago. J. H. Ahlf, a German emigrant, settled in Grants Pass in 1885 and began his career there as a butcher. He and his second wife, Susanna, occupied the house, conspicuously sited on a generous double lot on a major thoroughfare, from the time the house was completed to their deaths in 1932 and 1940, respectively. Ahlf married his second wife at about the time the house was constructed, sometime between 1900 and 1904. The sizable house reflects the financial and social status of its original occupants. Among houses in Grants Pass built prior to the First World War, it has no equal in terms of scale. Its design is attributed to Issac A. Palmer, noteworthy as one of three draftsmen in the first architectural firm to be established in nearby Medford. In 1896, after his associates dispersed, Palmer opened his own office in Medford and centered his practice there through the turn of the century.

The Ahlf House remained in the ownership of Ahlf heirs until 1946. From the 1950s onward the house was used as an apartment building of four units with comparatively little impact upon interior space as a consequence. Among the few minor modifications to the exterior which have occurred over the years are, replacement of wood porch stair railings with wrought iron railings, probable loss of roof deck railing or cresting, and enclosure of a rear porch on the north end at an early date. Because of later commercial development along Sixth Street and the intrusion of a small cinder block shop building at the east property line in 1955, particular attention is given to the neighborhood setting in the accompanying documentation. The pattern of mixed land use along NW Sixth Street was set over 50 years ago when the thoroughfare became a link in the Pacific Highway and auto courts and gasoline stations grew up in response. The Ahlf House is not isolated from residential property, however, as a residential neighborhood lies to the west. Owing to the size of the house and the ascending grade of the lot, the primary elevation fronting Sixth Street is not obscured by the shop building. On the west side of the property, unseen from the public right-of-way, are three, small, single-story frame buildings dating from the 1920s, which are used for storage and as rental housing. Future plans of the current owners call for converting existing apartment units in the house to office space.

The John and Susanna Ahlf House is locally significant under National Register criterion "c" as the largest and among the best preserved examples of residential architecture in the Queen Anne style in Grants Pass. With its asymmetrical plan, multiplicity of dormers and polygonal bays, double veranda, decorative belt courses of patterned shingles and dentil moldings, and with the applied ornament decorating its gable bargeboards, the house embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Queen Anne style. It is noteworthy as a documented work of I. A. Palmer, successor to the first architectural firm of record in Medford, largest city in the Rogue River Valley. The house is significant also under criterion "b" for its association with J. H. Ahlf (1856–1932), a leading businessman in the Rogue River Valley during most of the 30 years preceeding his retirement in 1916. The house was described as a prime property in the Grants Pass Cultural Resource Inventory prepared in 1981 by the Mayor's ad hoc Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Ferriday, Virginia Guest, "Regional Setting", Space, Style and Structure, Volume II, Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1974.

Grants Pass Courier, February 19, 1886; May 17, 1886; September 2, 1887.

Grants Pass, Mayor's Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation, Inventory Summary, October, 1981 (continued)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Grants Pass, Oregon

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A 

1	0	4	7	3	4	7	0	4	6	9	9	0	7	5
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The John and Susanna Ahlf House is located in Section 17, Township 36 South, Range 5 West, W.M., in Grants Pass, Josephine County, Oregon. It occupies portions of Lots 5 and 6 of Block F of Bourne's First Addition and is otherwise described as Tax Lot 3100. A small commercial inholding at the east line of the property

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

(continued)

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kay Atwood

organization N/A

date August 4, 1982

street & number 102 South Pioneer

telephone (503) 482-8714

city or town Ashland

state Oregon 97520

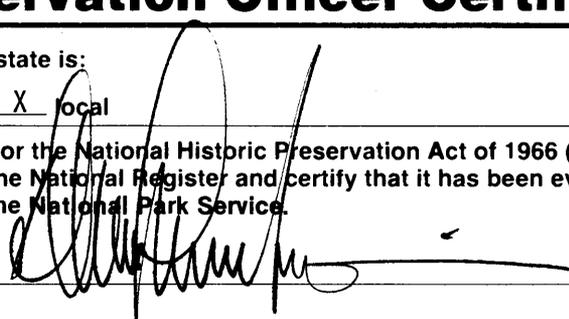
## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature ✓



title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

date 3-23-83

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date

5/9/83

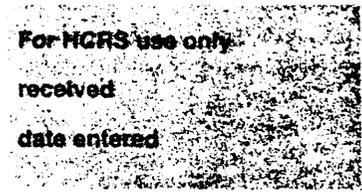
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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John Henry Ahlf was born February 27, 1856, in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. In 1882 he emigrated to America and worked as a butcher in Davenport, Iowa. In 1884 he moved to Roseburg, Oregon, where he worked three years, and then opened a small meat market. In 1885, Ahlf came to Grants Pass, where he constructed a meat market on G, or Front Street. The Grants Pass Courier recorded the establishment of his business and its growth.<sup>1</sup>

Twelve years later his business was destroyed in a disastrous fire in September, 1899. He rebuilt immediately and continued the retail meat trade. In 1900, Ahlf sold his meat market and concentrated efforts in his pork packing business located in a large brick packing house near the railroad. In July, 1902, John Ahlf became the representative of Armor and Company of Chicago and worked as the area manager for the rest of his career. He served as Grants Pass city councilman for one term and worked with the local board of trade. Ahlf and his first wife, Caroline Richoff, were the parents of two sons. His second wife, Susanna Gatherman, was born in Vienna, Austria on May 19, 1863. She moved to Oregon at the age of nineteen and lived here until her death on March 20, 1940. The pair were married sometime between 1900 and 1904. John Henry Ahlf died November 25, 1932.<sup>2</sup>

One month after Ahlf's appointment as local supervisor for Armor and Company, the local paper announced that the merchant was planning a new home.

J. H. Ahlf, a prominent citizen of Grants Pass, was in Medford a few days since and while there arranged with I. A. Palmer, the architect, for plans and specifications for a handsome residence...<sup>3</sup>

Work began immediately and the building was again mentioned in the newspaper.

The foundation of the new Ahlf residence on upper Sixth Street is completed, or nearly so. Plans for this handsome residence have been drawn by Isaac Palmer of Medford...<sup>4</sup>

The late Queen Anne structure was the largest house constructed in the town at that time, and remained so through the years. The family retained ownership until 1946, when the property was sold. Three owners are recorded for the J. H. and Susanna Ahlf House between 1946 and 1976, at which time it was purchased by the current owners. Title company records indicate that the house was used as apartments from the mid 1950s on.<sup>5</sup> The separate tax lot on which a small building stands was apparently set apart in 1951.<sup>6</sup> In a local historic buildings survey, the Ahlf House was given a high rating and listed as exceptionally significant to the community.<sup>7</sup>

Little is known about the training and background of the architect, Isaac Palmer, except that he came to the Rogue Valley from Portland late in 1894 or early 1895 to become a draftsman for W. J. Bennet, who opened the first architectural practice of record in Medford, largest city in the Valley. Palmer's fellow draftsmen in the Bennet office were D. W. Terwilliger, also a Portlander, and George Gove. Between 1894 and 1896, the Medford Mail credited Bennet's firm with designs for over 30 buildings of all kinds in southern Oregon, at locations ranging as far north as Roseburg and as far south as Yreka and Sisson (Mount Shasta), California. In 1896, Palmer's associates dispersed. Bennet moved to Yreka; Terwilliger moved to Pasadena; and Gove settled in the vicinity of Prospect in the Cascade

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mountains northeast of Medford. Palmer, however, remained in Medford, opened his own office, and pursued a practice which evidently embraced Grants Pass and other locations in the Rogue Valley.<sup>8</sup>

Within the bounds of the nominated area of a little over half an acre, the setting of the John and Susanna Ahlf House is composed of a large expanse of lawn, garden and trees. Three small outbuildings on the west property line are not visible from the street. Near the southeast corner of the property stands a single-story cinder block building approximately 16 by 32 feet in plan. While the 1955 structure does not contribute to the setting, it has provided a means of income for the owner to date, and may not be retained indefinitely. Nor does it obstruct the view of the Ahlf House from NW Sixth Street. The small commercial inholding on its separate tax lot is not included in the nominated area. The broader setting of the Ahlf House was altered through years of growth and development along NW Sixth Street, a major north-south thoroughfare. The environment changed dramatically in the early 1920s.

... The Northwest... took the lead when Oregon became both the first state to institute a gasoline tax and the first state west of the Mississippi to have a paved highway running its entire length (the Pacific Highway in the Willamette Valley was completed in 1922).<sup>9</sup>

Sixth Street in Grants Pass became part of the state highway system, leading from a route south of the Rogue River, across a concrete bridge and through the center of town, and extending north until it joined the road to Portland. Thousands of tourists passed through the community each summer and, on North Sixth Street, the first auto courts, restaurants and garages were erected to serve the visitors who poured through Grants Pass. The first auto court was built in 1925, and a 1930 Sanborn map shows many more existing along the thoroughfare.<sup>10</sup> This pattern was evident throughout the west.

The development of statewide and interstate road systems for automobile traffic and the improvement of road building technology in the 1920s ushered in an era of unprecedented public mobility across the country. Whether in the pursuit of pleasure or business, American motorists travelled well-armed with road maps and pamphlets, modern day versions of emigrant guide books, which listed reliable hotels and the location of auto camps and roadside rest areas...<sup>11</sup>

Today the tourist cabins on NW Sixth Street are called motels, but some of them date from initial development of the 1920s and 1930s. A gas station on the northwest corner of NW Sixth and A Streets has replaced an older garage-service station. A restaurant has taken the place of a diner. The pattern, however, of intermixed residences and commercial businesses serving the travelling public, was set over fifty years ago and has remained consistent since that time.

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When zoning was instituted in Grants Pass during the 1950s, the areas was zoned general commercial and tourist, called G-C. In the 1960s it was called C-1 commercial, and the 1972 designation was C-3. The original zoning choice merely reflected the business and travel pattern that had been set thirty years before, first with a route to the stage road, then after with automobile traffic on the Pacific Highway. The Sixth Street route has always been a central one to Grants Pass, and the Ahlf House has occupied a highly visible position on it. The residence faces the commercial street but is essentially sandwiched in between Sixth Street and residentially-zoned Fifth and Fourth Street area, which lies behind it. Fifth Street, for example, which contains many homes of a comparable vintage, is zoned Residential 1-6, which means single family homes up to 6000 square feet. With such close proximity to older residences, the Ahlf House and others within the near vicinity are not totally isolated or engulfed by commercial structures. The present setting of the house is consistent with the development which has been occurring over a period of fifty years.

- <sup>1</sup> Grants Pass Courier, February 19, 1886; May 7, 1886; September 2, 1887.
- <sup>2</sup> Portrait and Biographical Record of Western Oregon. Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company., 1904. page 371.
- <sup>3</sup> Rogue River Courier, August 14, 1902.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., August 20, 1902.
- <sup>5</sup> Josephine County Title Company Records, Block F, Lots 5 and 6.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> City of Grants Pass Cultural Resource Inventory, Mayor's Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation, October, 1981.
- <sup>8</sup> L. Scott Clay, National Register Nomination Form for the Wilkinson-Swem Building, Medford, Jackson County, Oregon, January 20, 1982.
- <sup>9</sup> Virginia Guest Ferriday, "Regional Setting", Space Style and Structure, Volume II, Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1974, page 443.
- <sup>10</sup> Sanborn Map, Grants Pass, Grants Pass Fire Department collection.
- <sup>11</sup> Elisabeth Walton Potter, "Auto Accomodations", Space Style and Structure, Volume II, Portland: Oregon Historical Society, page 518.

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Josephine County Title Company Records.

Portrait and Biographical Record of Western Oregon. Chicago: Chapman  
Publishing Company, 1904.

Potter, Elisabeth Walton, "Auto Accomodations" Space, Style and  
Structure, Volume II. Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1974.

Rogue River Courier, August 14, 1902; August 20, 1902.

Sanborn Map, Grants Pass, 1907, 1930.

Clay, L. Scott, National Register Nomination Form for the Wilkinson-Swem  
Building, Medford, Jackson County, Oregon, January 20, 1982.

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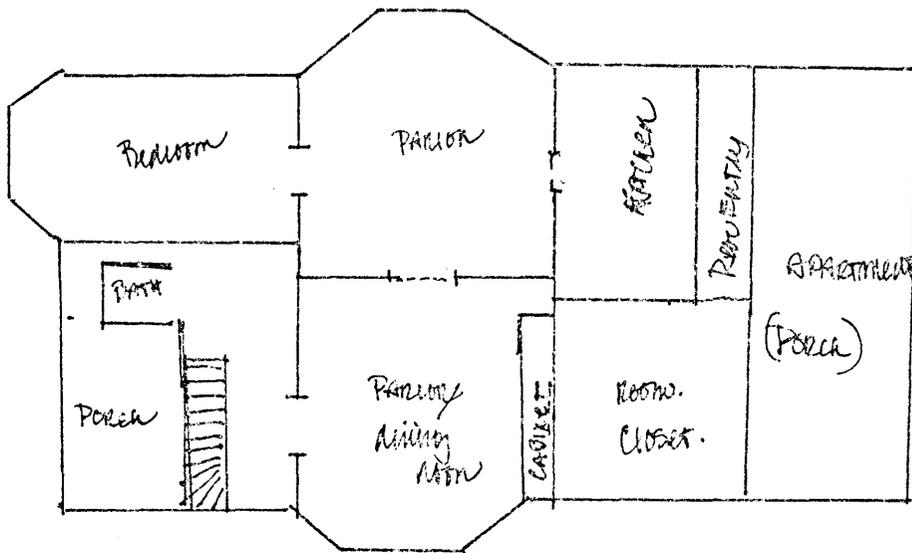
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measuring essentially 37 by 40 feet, is a separate tax lot and is not included in the nominated area. The nominated area encompasses 24,650 square feet, more or less, and includes, along the west property line, three small bungalows of frame construction built and occupied as rental units and storage buildings since the 1920s.

John H. & Susanna Attil House  
Grants Pass, Oregon

First Floor



2nd Floor

