

Oregon Historic Site Record

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME			
address:	641 NW 4th St Corvallis, Benton County	historic name:	Gorman, Hannah & Eliza, House
assoc addresses:		current/other names:	Polly, Peter, House
location descr:		block/lot/tax lot:	11/10, 1/2 of 11 / 2300
		twshp/rng/sect/qtr sect:	11S 5W 35 DB
PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS			
resource type:	Building	height (stories):	1.5
elig evaluation:	eligible/significant	total elig resources:	1
prim constr date:	c.1857	second date:	c.1866
		total inelig resources:	1
		NR Status:	Individually Listed
		date indiv listed:	02/24/2015
primary orig use:	Single Dwelling	orig use comments:	
second orig use:		prim style comments:	
primary style:	Gothic Revival	sec style comments:	
secondary style:	Vernacular	siding comments:	wood shiplap and clapboard; decorative shingles on south elevation
primary siding:	Horizontal Board	architect:	Unknown
secondary siding:	Shingle	builder:	Unknown
plan type:	Side Passage/Entry		
comments/notes:			
Upright-and-wing form with early section (wing) constructed circa 1855; addition (upright) constructed circa 1866. Detached garage of 20th century construction.			
GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS			
Survey/Grouping Included In:	Type of Grouping	Date Listed	Date Compiled
African Americans in Oregon, 2014	Thematic Grouping		
Corvallis Central Multiple Neighborhoods Survey 2012	Survey & Inventory Project		2012
Corvallis Downtown North Neighborhood Survey 2012	Survey & Inventory Project		2012
Settlement-era Dwellings, Barns & Farm Groups the the Willamette Valley, Oregon	Survey & Inventory Project		2013
SHPO INFORMATION FOR THIS PROPERTY			
NR date listed:	02/24/2015	106 Project(s):	None
ILS survey date:		Special Assess Project(s):	None
RLS survey date:	02/27/2013	Federal Tax Project(s):	None
ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION			
<i>(Includes expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings and alterations)</i>			
<p>The circa 1857-1866 Hannah and Eliza Gorman House is located at 641 NW 4th Street in Corvallis, Benton County, Oregon. Sited mid-block on a 75' x 100' city lot, the modest 925-square-foot building comprises two volumes built in two phases creating an upright-and-wing form with Gothic Revival stylistic influences. The earlier volume is the vernacular one-story, single-cell (one room) wing, built of stud-wall construction by or for the Gormans circa 1857. The Gothic Revival 1½-story front-gabled upright was built using the box construction method about 1866, and was attached to the north wall of the wing, creating the "upright-and-wing" building form seen today (Photo 1). A non-contributing, twentieth century garage is the only other building on the property. The site is simply landscaped with street trees, lawn, and foundation plantings. Although there have been some alterations to the building, most dating to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the house retains integrity from its period of significance, circa 1857 to circa 1866, in the areas of design, workmanship, feeling, location, and association. Integrity of location, design, feeling and association is high. In the area of workmanship, the building displays a surprising level of historical integrity that is visible in the spaces not ordinarily seen by a casual viewer, namely the building's structural makeup, which is visible in the attic and storage spaces, and the substructure. In these areas the vernacular character of the building's method of construction is intact and clearly evident. Some later nineteenth and twentieth century alterations, such as window and siding replacements, have somewhat impacted the building's material integrity, but not to the degree that the building cannot convey its period of construction and significance. Its setting has evolved over 160 years, but remains residential in character. Overall, the Gorman house appears much as it did during the Gormans' time of residence, retaining its historic mid-nineteenth century location, form, and plan, as well as a number of its original interior and exterior architectural features.</p>			
HISTORY			
<i>(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period - preferably to the present)</i>			
<p>The circa 1857-circa 1866 Gorman House is locally significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of Exploration/Settlement as one of only a handful of pioneer-era houses remaining in the community of Corvallis. Once common in this urban setting, today only six settlement-era dwellings remain in the Corvallis city limits, and just fourteen survive throughout Benton County. The Gorman House is also significant at the statewide level under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage for its intimate association with Oregon's black pioneer history. The house is the only identified extant residence in Benton County that was owned and occupied by former African American slaves who crossed the Oregon Trail during the settlement period. Further, current research suggests that it may be the oldest extant dwelling in Oregon that was originally owned, during the pioneer period, by African American overland emigrants. Having been freed from bondage, Hannah and Eliza Gorman, mother and daughter, both unmarried, purchased the property and built the subject house during a period in which Oregon's exclusion laws prohibited African Americans from owning property. As such, the building stands as an important primary resource embodying the struggles and triumphs of African American pioneers during Oregon's settlement period. Although not being nominated under Criterion C, the wing portion of the house may have significance architecturally as a rare surviving example—perhaps the only surviving Oregon example—of a house built by or for former slaves in the form common to slave housing in the Eastern States during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Preliminary study suggests that the one-story portion of this building is similar in dimensions, form, and design features (such as window, door and fireplace elements) to the single-cell slave dwellings found in Missouri and states further east. The building is not currently being nominated under Criterion D in the areas of Exploration/Settlement, Ethnic Heritage or Archaeology, although the property appears to have the potential to yield information in these areas, specifically relative to the lives of Oregon's early black pioneer residents—women in particular—during the pioneer period and the era of exclusion laws. Preliminary study of the property, including archival research and surface reconnaissance, suggests that there is reasonable probability that the site could yield information important to the early history of black pioneers in Oregon. This information is potentially archaeological and is also architectural, in that the form and structural makeup of the building itself may reveal information about building methods and architectural forms that migrated across the continent with African American pioneers. The period of significance of circa 1857-1875 reflects the initial construction date of circa 1857 (the one-story wing), embraces the second phase of construction in circa 1866 (the 1½-story upright), and closes with the sale of the property by Hannah Gorman to Peter Polly in 1875. The building is in fair condition, and retains sufficient historical integrity to convey its period of construction, essential historic appearance, and historical associations.</p>			

RESEARCH INFORMATION

Title Records	✓ Census Records	Property Tax Records	Local Histories
Sanborn Maps	Biographical Sources	✓ SHPO Files	✓ Interviews
Obituaries	✓ Newspapers	State Archives	Historic Photographs
City Directories	Building Permits	State Library	

Local Library:

Historical Society: Benton County Historical Society

University Library:

Other Repository:

Bibliography:

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Deed of Title, ½ interest in Lot 5, Block 11, Dixon's 2nd Addition. November 1858. Louis Belfile to Eliza Gorman. Deed of Title, Lot 10, Block 11, Dixon's 2nd Addition. May 4, 1866. Hiram Gorman to Hannah Gorman. Quit Claim Deed, Lots 10, 11 & 12, Dixon's 2nd Addition. March, 25 1875. Hannah Gorman to Peter Polly. Deed of Title, Lots 5, 10, 11, 12, Dixon's 2nd Addition. March, 30 1875. Benton County Historical Museum files. Benton County Historical Society. "Online Timeline." http://www.bentoncountymuseum.org/timeline/print_timeline.cfm Accessed June 2014. Blaine, David. Letters and papers of Rev. David E. Blaine and his wife Catharine... Seattle, 1853-1856, Oregon, 1856-1862. Seattle: Historical Society of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the Methodist Church, 1963. Bosco-Milligan Foundation. "Cornerstones of Community: Buildings of Portland's African American History." Portland, Oregon: Bosco-Milligan Foundation, August 1995. Carter, Liz. 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Formerly with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Joseph McGill is intimately familiar with slave housing through his work on the "Slave Dwelling Project," an effort to elevate the visibility and importance of remaining slave dwellings in the U.S. Thorp, Randall. Personal communication with author, September 2013 and May 2014. Mr. Thorp is a descendant of Major John Thorp, with whom the Gormans traveled from Missouri to Oregon.