STATE OF OREGON INVENTORY
HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS
State Historic Preservation Office
Oregon State Parks, Salem, 97310



JUL 76

County Hood River

Theme 10-B, 6-A, 9-C

Name
(Common) Neighbors of Woodcraft Retirement Home
(Historic) Columbia Gorge Hotel

Address Rt. 4, Box 120
Hood River, Oregon

Present Owner Neighbors of Woodcraft

(Address)

Original Use hotel

Date of Construction 1921

Physical historical significance:

The building is a three story structure with stucco exterior and a hip roof covered with tiles. The eaves are open and supported by decorative wooden beams. A four story tower with cupola rises in the center of the building and is surrounded by a belvedere at the cupola level. The cupola is octangular and provides views of the Columbia River Gorge. The windows are eight-over-one double hung sash. The hotel is set on a cliff above the Columbia and is surrounded by informal gardens and extensive rock work.

The building was originally known as the Columbia Gorge Hotel. It has 55 guest rooms and a 40 x 76 foot dining room. In 1922 Amos Benson bought the property from his father, Simon, the builder, but there was a foreclosure against the property in 1925. The Neighbors of Woodcraft purchased the property for retirement home in 1952.

In a biography of Henry Thiele published in 1922, Charles Carey noted:

> "Mr. Thiele is now building a hotel of his own on the Columbia highway. He has selected the most beautiful spot on the drive as a site for his hotel, it being situated about a mile and a half from the town of Hood River. It is being built in Colonial design,

Continue back if necessary

Recorded by Stephen Dow Beckham Date 8 July 1976

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office

Please enclose map Township 3 (N) S Range 10 (E) W Section 1

Sources Consulted:

Guppy, Ruth. Interview with Stephen Dow Beckham, 2 July 1976, Hood River, Ore.

(over)

18

and every room has a private bath. The grounds in which the building is located cover about twenty-four acres. The hotel is being built at a cost of two hundred thousand dollars and will be completed by the 1st of May, 1921. There are fifty-five rooms, fifty of which will have baths in connection. This is to be a strictly tourist hotel."

Henry Thiele was born in Hanover, Germany, on April 5, 1882. He emigrated to the United States in 1893 and was later a chef at many hotels. In 1914 he became head chef or chief steward of the Benson Hotel in Portland, Oregon.

Simon Benson was a major investor in this hotel. Benson, speaking at the hotel's grand opening noted: "We have built good roads, and have invited the world to come and view our beauty spots, but until now we have done nothing toward taking care of them after they arrived. With our new hotel we will, in a measure, take care of this."

The hotel was designed by Portland architect Morris H. Whitehouse, a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Elisabeth Walton, writing in 1974, noted: "Whitehouse's scheme for the hotel was Mediterranean in spirit, with white stuccoed walls, red-tiled roof, and a loggia across the south end of the dining room. The plan took the form of an elongated H with a frontage of 185 feet..."

E. E. Newell, Hood River City Engineer developed the landscaping around the building. Newell laid out driveways, walks, lawns, and a veranda for viewing Wa Gwin Gwin Falls where Phelps Creek dropped to the Columbia River. Eventually a nine hole gold course was developed at the site.

Sources: (cont'd)

"Henry Thiele." Carey, Charles H. History of Oregon. Chicago: Pioneer Historical Publishing Co., 1922. vol. 3, 498-501.

Walton, Elisabeth. "Auto Accommodations." Space, Style and Structure. Thomas Vaughan and Virginia Guest Ferriday, eds. Portland, Ore.: Oregon Historical Society, 1974, vol. 2, 519-520, photo.