

STATE OF OREGON INVENTORY
OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
State Historic Preservation Office
Oregon State Parks, Salem, OR 97310



County Multnomah

Theme _____

Name
(Common) John F. Shea House

(Historic) Ayer-Shea House

Address 1809 N.W. Johnson Street
Portland, Oregon

Present Owner BiT-Tel Investment Company

Address PO Box 2769 Portland, Oregon 97208

Original Use One Family Residence

Date of Construction 1892

Physical description of property and statement of historical significance:

In 1892, the architects Whidden & Lewis designed the John F. Shea house. The house exemplifies the Neo-Colonial style, which typified the Colonial Revival period that occurred in the Nob Hill district of Portland between the years 1890-1910.

Currently amidst a commercially zoned neighborhood, the residential, 2½ story, rectangular wood frame colonial, represents the expertise of the architects Whidden & Lewis.

The house has a brick foundation, wood siding and trim, and a double pitched roof, originally made out of wood shingle. The interior has plaster walls and ceilings and oak wood work throughout the house.

On the exterior, the house typifies the Neo-Colonial architecture with its bow and dormer windows, central portico with free-standing columns, ornate cornice wood work, and two brick chimneys, which all add to its symmetrical presence. On the interior, the house typifies the style with its large spacious rooms, brick fireplaces, and large central staircase.

(continued)

continue on back if necessary

Recorded by _____ Date _____

Sources consulted (continue on back if necessary):

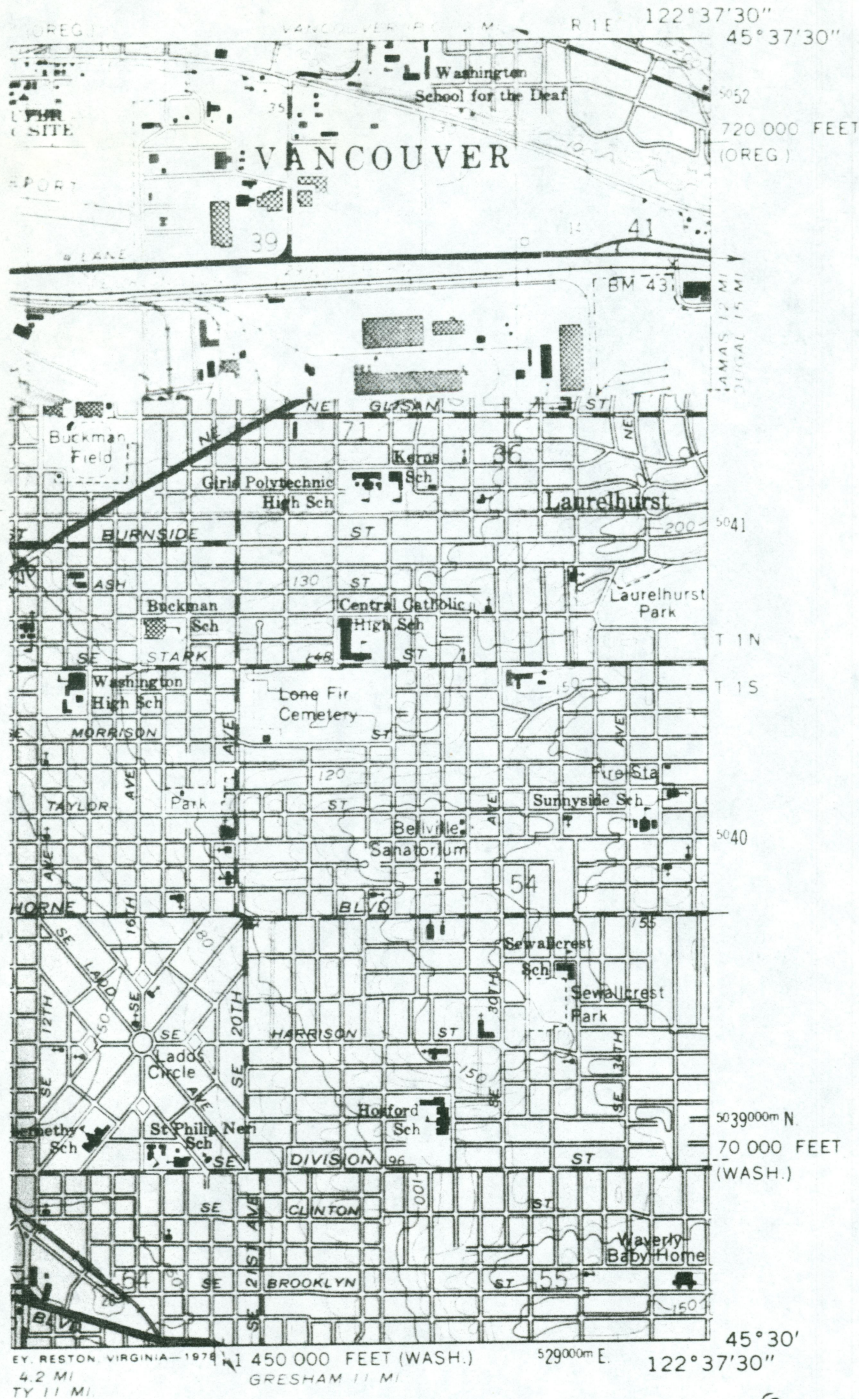
Bibliography provided on separate sheet.

Please enclose map. Township _____ N _____ E
(Included) S _____ W Section _____

NE ¼ Sec. 33 1N1E

PORTLAND QUADRANGLE
 OREGON-WASHINGTON
 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
 SW 4 PORTLAND 15 QUADRANGLE

1474 II NE
 (ORCHARD ST)



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Heavy-duty Light-duty
- Medium-duty Unimproved dirt
- Interstate Route
- U. S. Route
- State Route

(GLADSTONE)
 1474 I NE

AYER - SHEA HOUSE
 PORTLAND, OREG.-WASH.

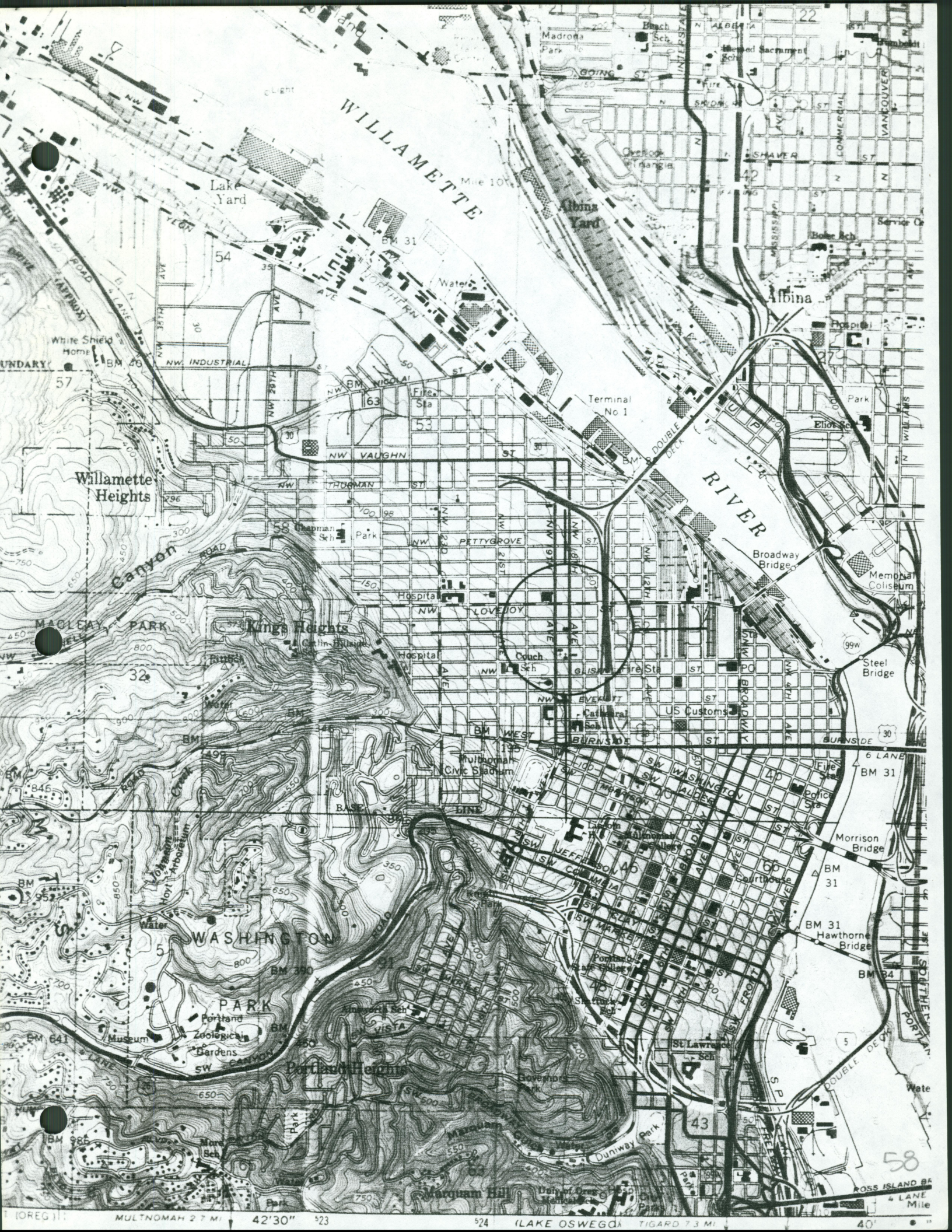
SW 4 PORTLAND 15 QUADRANGLE
 N4530-W12237.5/7.5

piled from aerial photographs
 nformation not field checked

1961
 PHOTOREVISED 1970 AND 1977
 AMS 1475 II SW-SERIES V892

n of urban areas

10/524325/50415 25



Historic
Resource
Inventory
CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON



2-456-01809

1809 N.W. Johnson Street

Couch's, Block 177, Lots 1, 4
QUARTER SECTION MAP #: 2928
Northwest District Association

ORIGINAL FUNCTION: Residence
OTHER FUNCTIONS: Apartment House

DATE BUILT: 1892

STYLE: Colonial Revival

ARCHITECTURAL PLANS BY: Whidden and Lewis

ORIGINAL OWNER: Ayer, Winslow B.
OTHER OWNERS: Shea, John Francis

ZONING: M3S

DESIGNATION: Landmark
HISTORIC DISTRICT: Nob Hill (potential)

SPECIAL FEATURES AND MATERIALS:

Hip roof with pedimented dormers. Decorative roof cornice has scroll modillions and fret band. Semi-circular entrance porch with Tuscan columns and roof railing with urns on square posts. Symmetrical two-story semi-circular bay windows.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Industry, Humanities in association with Winslow B. Ayer.

371

2610

2-456-01809

One-over-one, double-hung windows with head cornices, some with swag-decorated friezes. Louvered wood shutters. Brick foundation and chimneys.

SPECIAL F/M - SIGNIFICANT ALTERATION:

Exterior stair, rear addition, and detached garage added.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Industry in association with John F. Shea and Winslow B. Ayer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Marlitt, Richard, Notes, 1983..

Gold, R. Ilise, Bit-Tel Investment Company, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1981.

Present owners, as of May 1980: Bit-Tel Investment Company
MAILING ADDRESS: P.O.Box 2769, Portland 97208

No Preservation Funding

Negative: 103-5

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture,
Winslow B. Ayer.

Industry, Humanities in association with Winslow B. Ayer: Ayer was born in Bangor, Maine and attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He came to Portland in 1883 and organized the Portland Cordage Company and later the Eastern and Western Lumber Companies. He was president of the Library Association and director of the Portland Art Association. He led the drive to create the Portland Public Library and donated \$300,000 to the library building fund and left \$900,000 to the Portland Art Museum in his will. He also supported the adoption of the 1913 city charter which created the commission form of government.

Industry in association with John F. Shea and Winslow B. Ayer. Shea was one of the original contractors of the Hoover Dam.

OREGON INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM
COUNTY: MULTNOMAH COUNTY

HIST. NAME: Ayers-Shea House
COMMON NAME:
ADDRESS: 1809 Northwest Johnson Street
CITY: Portland
OWNER: Galitzki, Pearl G. & Bernard I.
ADDRESS: 2874 NW Cumberland Rd, Portland,
OR 97210

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1892
ORIGINAL USE: Domestic: single dwelling
PRESENT USE: Domestic: multiple dwelling
ARCHITECT: Whidden and Lewis
BUILDER:
THEME: Culture: 19th Century
Architecture/Humanities
STYLE: Colonial Revival

T/R/S: T1N R1E S33
MAP NO.: 2928 TAX LOT: NA
ADDITION: Couch's Addition
BLOCK: 177 LOT: 1,4
ZONE: EXd QUAD.: Portland
ASSESSOR NO.: R180216170

RESOURCE TYPE: Residence: single dwelling
CONDITION: Excellent
MOVED (DATE):

PLAN TYPE/SHAPE: Rectangular
FOUNDATION MATERIAL: Concrete w/stucco
ROOF FORM & MATERIALS: Hip, gable
dormers/composition shingles
WALL/FRAME: Wood frame

Old Address: 583 Johnson
RANK: Portland Landmark; National Historic
Register

NO. OF STORIES: 2 1/2
BASEMENT: Yes, raised

PRIMARY WINDOW TYPE: 1/1 double-hung wood sash
EXTERIOR SURFACING MATERIALS: Lap siding, wood

DECORATIVE FEATURES: Deep eaves with modillions and dentilated frieze; return gabled dormers with cornice mold; iron balusters on roof; rounded balcony with stick balusters; wide cornerboards; windows with shelf cornice, simplified classical surroundings; keystones; main porch with classic columns, entablatures, attached columns, stick balusters; wide stair with iron railing; double semi-circular bay windows flank central front bay.

EXTERIOR ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS (DATED): Storm windows, converted to multi-family dwelling, date unknown.

NOTEWORTHY LANDSCAPE FEATURES: Mature deciduous street trees; tall hedge; small front yard, parking lots at west and north sides.

ASSOCIATED FEATURES: None

SETTING: The house is located on the north side of N.W. Johnson Street, a quiet two-lane arterial. The parcel is large, facing N.W. Johnson Street, on the corners of N.W. Eighteenth Avenue and N.W. Johnson Street. The area is characterized mainly as mixed use.

RECORDED BY: Donovan and Associates
Prohaska and Associates

SHPO INVENTORY NO.: P-280
DATE: August 1991

2610

OREGON INVENTORY OF HISTORIC RESOURCES
HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM
COUNTY: MULTNOMAH COUNTY

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

"The two-and-a-half-story, weatherboarded frame house at the northwest corner of Johnson and 18th Streets in Northwest Portland was built in 1892 and is among the earliest houses in the Colonial Revival Style to have been erected in the city.

The architects were William M. Whidden and Ion Lewis, who were trained at MIT. While Whidden launched his career with the New York firm of McKim, Mead and White--foremost exponents of the Colonial Revival, Lewis was associated with Peabody and Stearns in Boston. Only the Trevett-Nunn House and the Milton w. Smith House--both completed in 1891--are earlier buildings in the Colonial Style still standing in Portland. Both were designed by Whidden and Lewis, and both have been entered into the National Register.

The house of 1892 was built in the fashionable Nob Hill residential district for Winslow B. Ayer, wealthy lumberman and patron of the arts who occupied the property until 1904, when a Jacobethan Style house--also by Whidden and Lewis--was completed for his use nearby. The subject property was occupied by successful plumbing contractor John F. Shea from 1915 to 1926.

With its hipped roof, symmetrical façade, lapped weatherboards, and shutters; its classical portico and cornice, oval window, and pedimented dormers with double-hung sash with six over six lights, the Ayer-Shea House embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Neo-Adamesque, or Colonial Revival Style. Moreover, it is a distinctive example of its style in Portland and Oregon as a whole because of its façade with formally placed, two-story semi-circular window bays and cylindrical-shaped portico which are reminiscent of Federal period archetypes by Benjamin Latrobe and Alexander Parris. Nevertheless, the house is essentially a reflection of the contemporary work of McKim, Mead and White.

At least one house similar in organization and many details--namely, the three-story brick masonry Lathrop House in Chicago, Illinois--was produced by the New York firm in the same year. Although its condition is currently run down and the portico balustrade with its urn finials is missing, owing to a lapse in maintenance in recent years, the Ayer-Shea House is substantially intact. Some interior remodeling occurred during the years it served as the headquarters of the Christian Community of Portland and was operated as a youth hostel. However, the important spaces and features, such as the main staircase, elaborate wood trim and chimney pieces, are unaltered. Interior modifications were limited to the addition of bathrooms, semi-enclosure of the second-story stair landing, subdivision of the master bedroom, and sealing off the stairway to the topmost floor. Exterior changes are minor in nature and confined to side and rear elevations where they are unobtrusive. These include addition of a semi-detached garage on the east elevation, and possibly the addition of a rear porch deck and railing and the outside stairway/fire escape on the west elevation. Current owners, who acquired the property in 1981, plan to restore the house for office use" (*National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form*).

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COUNTY: MULTNOMAH COUNTY

The Ayer-Shea House is significant to Portland as an outstanding example of the Colonial Revival Style by the distinguished firm which introduced the style to Oregon. It possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association with leading Portland businessmen of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP HISTORY

- 1913 Z.H. and T.W. B. London deeded the property to Anna M. Shea on September 18, 1913. Joseph Shea died in 1927.
- 1913-1944 Anna Shea deeded lots 1 & 4 to J.F. Shea Investment Company on September 8, 1928. The Shea Investment Company deeded the property to Ida Nickerson, a single person in 1944. Nickerson sold lot 1 in 1945 to Lynn and Mark McCoy

OWNERS BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Winslow B. Ayer (1860-1935), for whom the subject property was built, amassed a fortune in the lumber industry. He arrived in Portland from New England in 1883, and, following a brief association with the J.K. Gill Company, he founded the Portland Cordage Company. In 1895, he formed the amalgamated Eastern and Western Lumber Company, which he headed as President for many years. Ayer was prominent in civic as well as business affairs. He was a founder and President of the Library Association of Portland, remembered for his establishing a pension system for library employees; a member of the Oregon State Library Committee, and a member of the Board of Regents of the State Normal School. A knowledgeable collector, he was an influential trustee of the Portland Art Association. He is honored still for his bequests of \$250,000 each to the Portland Art Museum and the Multnomah County Library. In 1904, having occupied his house at 18th and Johnson for twelve years, Ayer moved to a larger house at 19th and Johnson, designed by Whidden and Lewis in the Jacobethan Style. Nineteenth Street was the most fashionable street in the Nob Hill district from the 1880s to 1930.

T.W.B. London resided in the Ayer House at 18th and Johnson from 1905 to 1912. London was an executive of Balfour, Guthrie and Company, leading grain exporters with branch offices in San Francisco, Tacoma and Seattle.

The house appears to have stood vacant in 1913 and 1914, but was acquired in 1915 by John F. Shea (1856-1926), another prominent citizen who contributed to the up-building of Portland in the Progressive Era. Shea was a native of Ohio. After finishing his training at Dayton University, at the age of 21, he headed west. Settling first in San Francisco, he worked in a managerial capacity for Dunnerberg Plumbing Company. Following his entrepreneurial instinct, he chose the city of Portland in which to open his own plumbing company. His first shop was at the corner of Sixth and Washington. After ten years, he built another outlet at Second and Ankeny Streets where the enterprise prospered until Shea's death in 1926. In 1906, Shea had broadened his scope and

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COUNTY: MULTNOMAH COUNTY

entered the field of contracting. His firm installed the plumbing in many of Portland's finest residences and public buildings. He was married in 1880 to Anna M. McGinn, a native of Portland. They had nine children. Shea is remembered for the quality of his work, good management and ethical standards."

ARCHITECTS

"William Whidden and Ion Lewis made up Portland's foremost architectural firm from 1890 to 1910, though the firm continued in business past Whidden's retirement in 1920 until Lewis' death in 1933. Both men were educated at M.I.T. and launched their careers on the East Coast-- Whidden with the prestigious New York firm of McKim, Mead and White, and Lewis with Peabody and Stearns in Boston. Whidden also was trained in Paris at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. He was sent to Portland by his employers to oversee construction of Henry Villard's Portland Hotel in 1883. When the project was halted by the collapse of Villard's financial empire, Whidden returned to the East Coast. In 1888, the unfinished hotel project was rescued by a local syndicate, and Whidden was hired to finish the work. In 1889, Whidden was visited in Portland by his M.I.T. classmate, Ion Lewis, who was persuaded to stay on and enter into the partnership with Whidden which was established in 1890.

Whidden and Lewis were responsible for most of Portland's finest buildings of the turn-of-the-century period. It was they who introduced up-to-date architectural fashions to Portland. In addition to their residential work in the Colonial Revival Style, the firm introduced in their Portland City Hall (1892-1895) the Renaissance Revival Style exemplified by McKim, Mead and White's New York City Houses for Henry Villard (1882-1886) and the Boston Public Library (1888-1892)" (*National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form*).

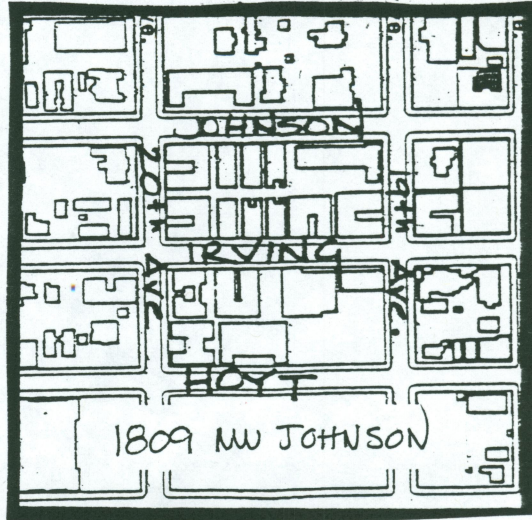
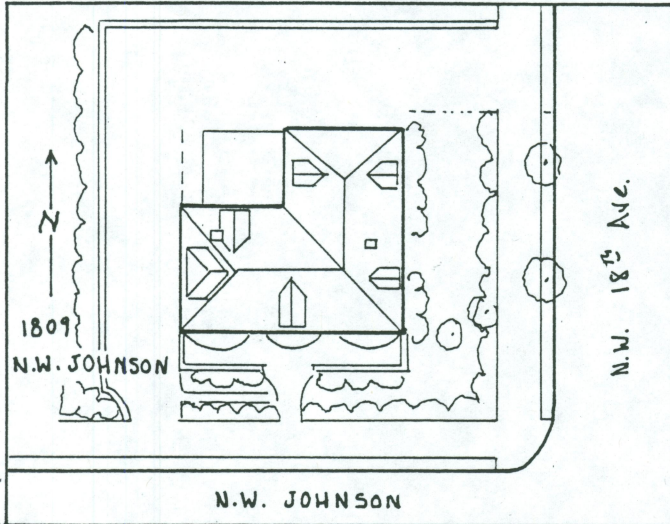
Sources: *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form*, by: R. Ilise Gold, 1981

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DATE: August 1991

OREGON INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM
COUNTY: MULTNOMAH COUNTY

ADDRESS: 1809 Northwest Johnson Street



NEGATIVE NO.: Roll 3 #12

DATE: 5/1/91



RECORDED BY: Donovan and Associates
Prohaska and Associates

SHPO INVENTORY NO.: