



Community Planning & Economic Development

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Thurston County Historic Register Nomination Form

This form is required to nominate properties to the Thurston County Historic Register of Historic Places. Type all entries and complete all applicable sections. Contact the Historic Preservation Office with any questions at 360-867-2117.

Staff Use Only LABEL	Date Stamp
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PROPERTY INFORMATION

- Historic Property Name: Schneider Prairie Oak Tree
- Historic Property Address: 6716 NW Sexton Road , Olympia, WA 98502
- Tax Parcel Number: 0926000400

PROPERTY OWNER INFORMATION

Owner: Kacey Lea Magnusson Email:

Address: 6509 37th Lane NW, Olympia, WA 98502

Signature: _____ Date: _____

FORM PREPARER

Name: Shanna Stevenson Phone: 360-798-8778 Email: heritageservicesolympia@hotmail.com

Address: 3515 Kensington Ct. SE City: Olympia State: WA Zip Code: 98501

Signature: _____ Date: August, 2024

NOMINATED ELEMENTS

Please indicate below significant elements of the property that are included in the nomination by checking the appropriate box(es) below. These elements should be described specifically in the narrative section of this form.

Principal Structure Historic Additions Accessory Buildings/Outbuildings
 Site Interior Spaces/Other Historic Landscaping, Fencing, Walkways, etc.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

EXTENT OF CHANGES

Please summarize the changes that have been made to the original plan, exterior, materials, cladding, windows, interior, and other significant elements by selecting the choices below. If the property has been previously documented, these may be indicated on the Washington State Historic Property Inventory Form. These changes should be described specifically in the narrative section of this form.

ORIGINAL MATERIALS INTACT

Plan (i.e.: no additions to footprint, relocation of walls, or roof plan) YES NO
Original cladding/exterior materials YES NO
Windows (no replacement windows or replacement sashes) YES NO
Interior (woodwork, finishes, flooring, fixtures) YES NO
Other elements YES NO

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION NARRATIVE

Describe in detail the original (if known) and present physical appearance, condition and architectural characteristics of the site (context, location), exterior (all four walls), and interior. Please include a list of known alterations and their dates (use additional sheets if necessary)

White Garry Oak Tree.

HISTORICAL OR CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

The County Historic Register recognizes properties that are at least 50 years old (or of lesser age if of exceptional importance), and which are important for one or more of the following reasons:

- xHistorical Importance -- the property is: the site of an historic event with an effect upon society; identified with a person or group who had some influence on society; or exemplifies the cultural, social, religious, economic, political, aesthetic or engineering history of the county.
Architectural Importance -- the property is: (a) an individual building that embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type, period, style or method of design or construction; is the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the county; or (b) a group of buildings that may lack distinction individually but together are easily distinguished as a unit and characterize an earlier era, way of living, and construction of the built environment.
- Archaeological Importance -- the property has yielded or may be likely to yield archaeological information important in pre-history or history.
- Birthplaces, Graves, Cemeteries -- the property is: a birthplace or grave of a person of outstanding historical importance; or a cemetery significant because of its age, distinctive design features or association with historic events or cultural patterns.

HISTORICAL DATA (IF KNOWN)

Date of Construction Other Significant Dates: Identified in Land Survey in 1855
Architects: _____ Builder: _____
Architectural Styles: _____
Materials: _____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Describe in detail the chronological history of the property and how it meets the criteria for the Register of Historic Places. Please provide a summary in the first paragraph that lists the relevant criteria (use additional sheets if necessary). This section should include a

thorough narrative of the property's history, context, occupants, and uses. If using a Multiple Property Nomination that is already on record, or another historical context narrative, please reference it by name and source.

Land surveying was an important step in creating of title to lands in the Oregon Country. Although the federal Donation Land Act of 1850 had promised free land to immigrant settlers, there could be no title until the land was surveyed. Surveying of what is now Washington began in the 1851 but it wasn't until after Washington became a separate territory from Oregon that a Territorial Surveyor and the system of contract surveyors commenced. Jerry C. Olson has written a comprehensive history of land surveying in Washington, which is cited in the bibliography.

The oak tree is a long time landmark in the county. The tree was cited as a "Bearing Tree" in the 1856 survey of the county. The surveyors often noted natural landmarks including trees in setting "corners" or section lines since few other reference points were available. The surveyor, Thomas F. Berry, set a post for a quarter section comer between two white (garry) oak trees which were at that time 18 inches in diameter. The section corner was between Township 19 N 3W Section 34 and Township 18N Range 3 W Section 2. The tree now measures over 60 inches in diameter. The landmarks were important in case the wooden corner posts were lost or stolen, the corner could be readily identified by natural reference points.

The tree at the time of the survey was, according to Berry, on W. H. Puffer's claim. No information is available about W. W. Puffer. Later it was part of the Benjamin F. Cross donation land claim and the property was later known as part of Schneider's Prairie for the Konrad (1818-1903) and Albertina Hanson Schneider (1833-1906) family. Oregon trail pioneers of 1852, they wintered at the Bush Farm in Tumwater before establishing their land claim south of Tumwater in 1853. Schneiders owned land both in Tumwater and Olympia, where they owned an orchard and wharf on the West side of Budd Inlet. From available sources, it appears that Benjamin F. Cross was a local teacher. Cross sold his DLC to Ira Montgomery who sold it to the Schneiders--all in the 1860s. Cross relocated to Walla Walla also in 1864 and gave G. W. French Power of Attorney.

An interesting cultural account comes from 1891 when there was a two-day potlatch Native American gathering on Schneider Prairie for July 4th given, according to the newspaper account, by "Mud Bay Indians," for both the Native American and non-Native Community. It is unknown if the event was near the tree.

Jerry Olson has also researched the areas that were surveyed by Berry, which is available on the website in the bibliography. Berry had contract surveyor work from 1855 to 1863, including work east of the mountains. Olson also provided biographies of the Washington surveyors including Berry, which was originally prepared by Laurence Berry and available on the Olson website. Thomas F. (1819-1866) and Martha J. Henderson Berry came from Indiana overland in 1853. They moved onto a Donation Land Claim near Mima in Thurston County in 1854. They re-located to Walla Walla ten years later. Berry died not long after their move in 1866 and is buried in Milton Freewater, Oregon. Martha (1820-1890) lived on and is also buried in Milton Freewater, Oregon.

Bibliography:

“Oregon and Washington Donation Land Claim Files, 1851-1903,” Washington, D. C.: National archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, 1970. Microfilm at State Library.

Fraser, Don Lee, "Ancient Schneider Prairie oak tree plays major role in history of Washington state," *The Olympian*, Sunday, February 5, 1984, Totem Tidings Magazine, 5,6 cover.

Telephone interviews with Don Lee Fraser, November 5, 1990 and Joe Thurman, November 2, 1990.

Telephone interview with Pat Beehler, November 3, 1990. Telephone interview with Donne Schneider, November 5, 1990.

"Schneider's Prairie Pioneer Story is Told", *The Daily Olympian*, Monday, May 1, 1950, 11.

Deborah Jane Ross, *Konrad and Albertina*, LaVergne, TN: Xlibris Corporation, 2009.

Deborah Jane Ross, *Tales from Schneider's Creek*, LaVergne, TN: Xlibris Corporation, 2014.

“The Olympia District school under supervision of B. F. Cross opens today,” *Overland Press*, November 23, 1863, 2.

“District School,” *Walla Walla Statesman*, September 9, 1864, 3.

“A Peaceful Holiday: Many Seek Novel Pleasure in a Visit to the Indian Potlatch Frolic,” *Morning Olympian*, July 7, 1891, 4.

“Mere Mention,” *Washington Standard*, July 3, 1891, 3.

<https://www.olsonengr.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/A-Brief-History-of-the-General-Land-Office-in-Washington.pdf>

<https://www.olsonengr.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Washington-GLO-Surveyors-Details.pdf>

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<https://www.washingtonruralheritage.org/digital/collection/pioneers/id/217/rec/2>

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/6601374/martha_j_berry