



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

700 Third Avenue · 4th floor · Seattle, Washington 98104 · (206) 684-0228

LPB 265/95

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

Name and Address of Property: **Log House Museum Building**
3003 61st Avenue SW

Legal Description: Sea Shore Addition, Block B, Lots 1 & 2.

At the public hearing held on October 18, 1995, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Log House Museum Building as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standards for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

- C. *It is associated in a significant way with the significant aspect of the cultural, political or economic heritage of the community, city, state or nation*
- D. *It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or of a method of construction*
- F. *Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the city and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or the city;*

Description

Setting

The "Birthplace of Seattle Log House Museum" is situated on the southwest corner of 61st Avenue SW and SW Stevens Street in the community of Alki in West Seattle. The small log building is part of an intensely developed, mixed-use neighborhood. One block to the north, fronting on Alki Avenue and the shoreline of Puget Sound, are two-story commercial structures. To the immediate north, south, and west are modest single-family dwellings, most

dating from the 1910s and '20s. A multi-storied apartment building stands across 61st Avenue to the east.

The Log House Museum is visually and historically linked to the Alki Homestead Restaurant, a larger and grander log residence now located one-half block to the north at 2717 61st Avenue. The restaurant originally known as Fir Lodge was completed in 1903-04 as the suburban home of William and Gladys Bernard. The museum stands on a site which was once part of the Bernard estate. This miniature variation on the larger mansion is believed to have been an outbuilding or dependency of Fir Lodge.

Today the Log House Museum occupies lots 1 and 2 of Block B in the Sea Shore Addition. The building has a 61st Avenue street address, but it is oriented to the north and fronts onto Stevens Street. The narrow setback on both streets is filled with lawn and some minimal foundation plantings. To the rear is a small back yard with a concrete pad and a wood-frame shed-garage of relatively recent (c.1960) construction. The yard is fenced along 61st Avenue between the house and garage. A single fir and a few birch trees are the site's only remaining landscape features.

Current Appearance

The dwelling which now hosts the Log House Museum is a one and one-half story building of sturdy logs - some 24 inches in diameter - on a cement block foundation. There is an unfinished dugout basement accessible from the back yard. The basic footprint of the structure measures 31 by 41 feet, with a 4-foot deep kitchen addition to the west side. One of the most distinctive features of the building is its broad hipped roof with hipped dormer windows on all four faces. Double dormers occur on both the north and south elevations. Each dormer consists of original paired, double-hung sash with multiple panes. Composition shingles now cover all roof surfaces.

The building's primary entrance is accessed from a flight of poured concrete steps. These lead to a recessed verandah, 8 to 9 feet in depth, which wraps around both the north and the east sides of the house. The porch is sheltered by the overhang of the hipped roof, supported by eight heavy upright logs left in their natural rough-cut state. Wood latticework forms a skirting around the entire verandah. The doorway retains an early decorative surround with sidelights above molded paneling. Visible at close range from the verandah are four original windows with unusual fixed, multiple-pane sash. These windows are identical in design to those that appear in the early record photographs of Fir Lodge.

The rear of the house is accessible both from verandah stairs and from the kitchen addition door. Along this elevation, composition shingle siding has recently been removed. Two windows occur on this wall, one of them a 1940s-style replacement. The shed-roofed kitchen addition, of inferior log construction, is most visible from this vantage point. This wing was in place by 1937 as a 4 by 19-foot porch, according to King County Assessor's records.

The interior of the museum retains some of its early rustic character, but shows evidence of 90-some years of family remodeling projects. The living room has kept its original spatial configuration, including the primary kitchen partition wall. A coat closet has been added at the base of the stairs - inside are the remains of early lath and plaster. Plaster walls in the living room proper are very likely original, although the surface texture has been updated, probably in the 1940s or '50s. Varnished log ceiling beams, fir baseboards, plate rails, and window surrounds are all in place, and are all close replications of features found on the interior of Fir Lodge. The painted brick fireplace and fir mantelpiece, according to oral sources, are not original.

The kitchen has undergone some incompatible change over the years. All of its features, including fixtures, finishes, and woodwork appear to post-date 1965. The exceptions to this may be the 1930s or '40s cabinetry, sink, and window on the south wall. The c.1970 kitchen addition to the west resulted in the removal of the original exterior log wall. The ornamental window, door, and wooden columns were salvaged at a later date from other old buildings.

The upstairs of the Log House Museum has received perhaps the greatest degree of alteration. Four bedrooms remain. A second bathroom was added in the early 1970s. Carpeting, wall board, and recent fixtures and finishes have reduced its historic integrity. Elements of early woodwork and lath and plaster walls can be found in closets and under eaves.

Early Appearance

Although Fir Lodge itself was surprisingly well-documented by professional photography and newspaper descriptions at the time of its construction, no such records exist for the outbuildings on the property. Contemporary written accounts do not mention dependencies. In one exterior view taken by the Bernard's photographer, however, a small log house clearly appears behind the larger residence, slightly to the southwest. Its massing, roof dormers, and open verandah mimic the mansion. This little building (now demolished) also appears in a 1908 Baist's Atlas and a 1912 Kroll map, the earliest maps of the area to depict structures.

Bernard family tradition and long-standing local tradition in the Alki community hold that another small log dwelling, the Log House Museum at 61st Avenue and Stevens Street, was also part of the Bernard estate. Certainly the form and massing of this little house, its method of log construction, its windows, interior fir trim, and ceiling treatment echo that at Fir Lodge. The extant museum house, and the outbuilding visible in the c.1904 photograph mentioned above, also appear strikingly similar in proportions and massing.

The earliest image of the Log House Museum located to date is the 1937 King County Assessor's photo. Much can be gleaned concerning its early appearance from the photo and record card data. In 1937, the house was listed at 6100 W. Stevens Street. The street address changed in later years, but the orientation of the house to the north remained the same. In materials and massing, the building looks now as it did then.

At that time, the foundation consisted of wood posts on concrete blocks and the roof was clad with wood shingles. There was a roofed kitchen porch and, at the rear of the lot, there was a 12 by 24-foot single car garage and a 4 by 12-foot shed. These outbuildings stood further back from 61st Avenue than they do today. The verandah was different in minor detail: its skirting was of vertical board, likely tongue-in-groove siding; steps were wooden with wooden planter boxes; and porch railings had a greater number of upright members.

The interior of the dwelling in 1937 included four bedrooms and a bath, plaster walls, and fir floors. The fireplace is described as brick, although two separate informants, one who lived in the house in 1931 and one who visited in the late 1970s, recall the fireplace as cobblestone, similar to the fireplace at Fir Lodge. The house boasted a wood stove, a hot water tank, one sink, and one toilet. Further changes were recorded after subsequent visits from the King County Assessor. By 1962, there was a new garage 12 by 32 feet in dimension, a gas furnace, and one new hardwood floor.

Statement of Significance:

In June of 1903, Gladys Bernard acquired the eastern one-half of Block 13, Plat of Alki Point, along with a strip of beach front across Alki Avenue, for the sum of \$2,500. The undeveloped property was a long, narrow tract of land that extended from the shoreline all the way south to what is now Admiral Way. It included the site where the Log House Museum now stands. According to family tradition, the Bernards continued to camp at Alki (or to stay in the Stockade Hotel, as another source claims) while their new home was under construction, in the summer of 1903. By 1904, the Bernards had taken up residence there. Their address is given in the city directories of 1904 and 1905 as Alki Point, and in 1906 as "Fir Lodge" at Alki Point. (*See Fir Lodge/Alki Homestead nomination for further information on the Bernards*).

During their brief stay at Alki, the Bernards must have relied on horse and carriage transportation to the West Seattle ferry dock. Street car service did not reach Alki Point until 1907. According to a list of registered automobile owners in the state of Washington (appearing in the *Official Automobile Road Book of Western Washington*), as of 1909, William Bernard did not own a motorcar. This lends credence to the often-heard reference to the Log House Museum as the Bernard's "carriage house." Certainly the house itself has always been a residence, but a barn or stable may well have been adjacent to it, and a hired man housed in the log dwelling.

For unknown reasons, the Bernards did not remain at Fir Lodge for long. Ownership records indicate that Gladys Bernard sold the property for \$16,000 in December of 1906. The original Fir Lodge tract was replatted, sold off, and built-up rather rapidly. While the Bernard house itself went to the Seattle Auto Club, lots to the north and south of the mansion were purchased, logged, and developed.

The Alki Investment Company sold lots 1 and 2 of Block B to one Tiney (or Teney) Griffith

in June of 1908. After a five-year sale to another party between 1913 and 1918, Tiney Griffith regained title to the property and held it for thirty more years. Griffith was in ownership in 1937 when the King County Assessor paid a visit. During that time period, when it appears on maps as the Alki Tavern, Griffith also owned Fir Lodge. Since 1948, the Log House Museum has experienced a series of owners and occupants, until its purchase by the Southwest Seattle Historical Society in 1994 for use as its new museum.

At the turn of the century, American tastes in architecture began increasingly to encompass a nostalgic look back at styles of an earlier time. Revivalist themes in domestic design, including colonial, Spanish, Tudor, and gothic again found favor among homeowners. The trend was to continue well into the 1920s, overlapping with the more modern craftsman bungalow movement. On the East Coast, the revival of log construction in certain forest or mountain settings, was a part of this new-found appreciation of the American past.

In the West, however, authentic log construction born of necessity was a very recent chapter in architectural history. In rural areas, it was still occurring with regularity, and in young cities, most home-builders were anxious to move on to milled wood-frame construction with the sophistications and refinements of "style." The Rustic Style, as such, was only beginning to be expressed in the great railroad hotels of Glacier, Banff, Yellowstone, and the Grand Canyon. Within the National Park system, the style did not reach its greatest formal and philosophical definition until the 1920s.

These considerations make architect Fred L. Fehren's design for the William and Gladys Bernard estate all the more startling. Although Fir Lodge and its remaining dependency, the Log House Museum, appear to fit squarely within the genre of the Rustic Style, they are surprisingly early examples of the type in this region. Their compatibility within a wooded setting, their use of all natural materials and finishes, and their rustic interior detail, all strongly suggest the possibility of an East Coast prototype.

In another sense, the Bernard estate is typical of its time and place. In the early years of the century, wealthy Seattle businessmen and industrialists began to seek out scenic, out-of-the-way locations for the construction of second homes. Some, like the founders of The Highlands near Richmond, intended to make these mansions their primary residences. Others, like the owners of early estates on the shores of Mercer Island, planned to make a seasonal escape from the city. In West Seattle, after 1907, prosperous families bought up view property overlooking the Sound along Beach Drive south of Alki, and at Fauntleroy, where a small cluster of summer cabins gave way to an exclusive enclave of waterfront homes. The Bernard property, including Fir Lodge and its dependencies, was the first and most substantial of such estates to appear in the resort community of Alki.


Summary

The "Birthplace of Seattle Log House Museum" is a recent name for this small but distinctive log residence on Alki Point in West Seattle. For most of its ninety years, it has served as a family home under an ever-changing sequence of ownership. It is primarily known, however, for its purported association with Fir Lodge, now the Alki Homestead Restaurant. As such, the little house-turned-museum shares in the social, cultural, and architectural significance of that familiar local landmark. The Log House Museum is believed to have been built in the years 1903-04 as an outbuilding in support of Fir Lodge, the rustic country estate of Gladys and William Bernard. Both the Bernards were productive and prominent members of Seattle society in the early 20th century. The property also serves, in conjunction with Fir Lodge, as an early regional example of Rustic Style architecture, and represents a growing predilection among Seattle's elite for suburban homes on the fringes of the city.

The features of the Landmark to be preserved, include:

The entire exterior of the building, including the roof and excluding the rear kitchen addition; the first floor interior, excluding the kitchen and bathroom; and the site, excluding the existing garage/shed.

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