

Bigelow Historic District:
Olympia Avenue
Walking Tour

Walk among some of Olympia’s oldest homes in this tiny, pristine historic district. With their neighbors, the 15 residences featured on this tour represent 140 years of Olympia’s architectural and cultural history.

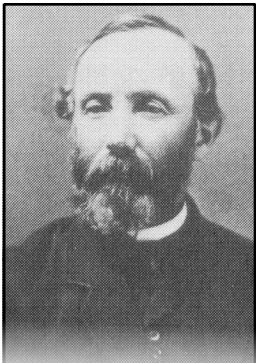


Olympia Pioneers: Mrs. Ruddell and Her Daughters
Seated: Mrs. White-Bigelow and Mrs. White-Ruddell. Standing: Mrs. White-Dunbar and Mrs. White-Byrd. Photo courtesy of Washington State Historical Society and Thurston County.

John Swan:
Father of Swantown

Scotsman John M. Swan, lured west by the 1849 gold rush, sailed down Puget Sound in 1850 to claim 317 acres of fir, hemlock and cedar in the young city of Olympia. His donation land claim was north of city founder Edmund Sylvester’s plot. By 1859, Swan had platted 30 acres of cleared land as Swan’s Addition. “Swantown” encompassed Olympia Ave. and became one of the city’s earliest residential districts.

Swan became a noted nurseryman, real estate developer, shipbuilder and occasional politician, serving as Thurston County Commissioner from 1876 to 1882. He also served as the Washington Odd Fellows’ first grand master. He died at the brotherhood’s home for the aged in 1904.



John Swan: Lured
north to Olympia by the
promise of land.

Workingman’s Hill:
Entrepreneurs on the Eastside

While the pioneers of the 19th century built ornate Queen Annes, mill workers and merchants of the 20th century built bungalows and cottages, leading to Olympia Avenue’s eclectic mix of housing. Many early residents worked for the nearby Olympia Veneer Company, the world’s first 100 percent worker-owned plywood co-op. Others joined Washington Veneer, another local mill.

Started in 1921 by J. J. Lucas and Ed Westman, Olympia Veneer was financed through the sale of \$500 shares. Some workers paid for their shares by physically building the mill. Eventually, Olympia plywood began appearing in wooden doors, in the floorboards of automobiles, and in ironing boards. Plywood became a major local success story, and an important part of Olympia’s economy.

Olympia Veneer expanded throughout the Northwest before the Olympia location was sold in 1947. Some younger mill buildings still stand.

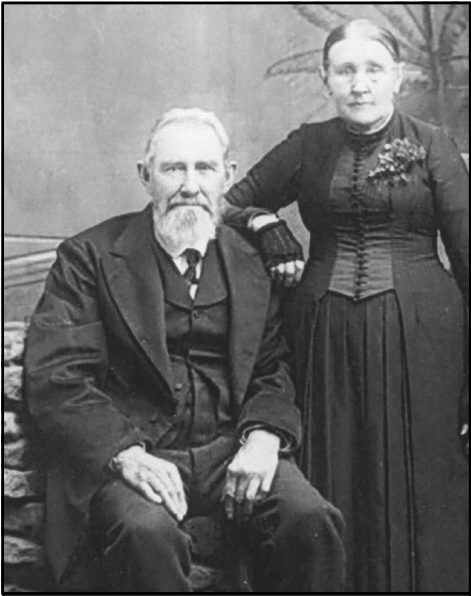


1879 Bird’s Eye View of East Olympia and Tumwater
Courtesy of Washington State Archives

1. 901 Olympia Avenue
The Ruddell House (1866)

This unusual saltbox with its long, sloping roof is the oldest house on Olympia Avenue, dating from approximately 1866.

Stephen Ruddell came west to Chambers’ Prairie, in modern day Lacey, in 1851. In 1852, he attended the Monticello Conference, joining 43 other pioneers in asking Congress to recognize the land north of the Columbia Gorge as a new territory. In Olympia, Stephen served as Thurston County Assessor, County Commissioner, and as a member of the House of Representatives. Margaret was from a pioneering family and lost her previous husband in the Indian Wars. The couple built their house near Margaret’s eldest daughter, Ann Elizabeth White Bigelow, who lived in the famous Bigelow House on Glass Ave. Margaret’s daughters, Clara White Dunbar and Mary White Byrd, soon followed.



Stephen and Margaret White Ruddell:
pioneers and early Olympia Ave. residents

2. 907 Olympia Avenue
The Robbins/Mallett House (1915)

E. J. Robbins built this fine two-story Craftsman home, including details like a covered porch and wide, bracketed eaves, as well as decorative shingles on the second floor.

E. J. came to Olympia with his family in 1881 and built a number of properties in Olympia’s Eastside neighborhood. He and his wife, Buelah Pulsifer Robbins, appeared to live in this house only briefly before moving downtown and selling to William and Minnie Mallett in 1924.

3. 1005 Olympia Avenue
The Rudkin House (1891)

This graceful Queen Anne includes an adorned wrap-around porch, wide bay window and grouped Ionic and Corinthian columns, seen at right. Note the carved brackets, added gables, and leaded glass windows.

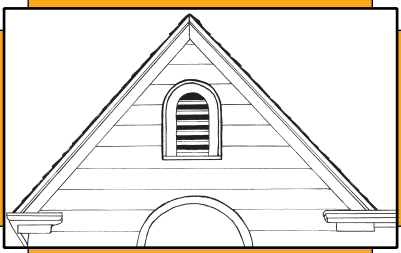


It’s believed that J. R. and Jane Pattison built this house and sold it to Justice Frank Rudkin and his wife, Pearl Morford, in 1905, the year Rudkin joined the Washington State Supreme Court. Frank served as chief justice between 1909 and 1911, then served in federal court, and was tapped by

President Harding in 1923 to join the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. He served until his death in 1931.

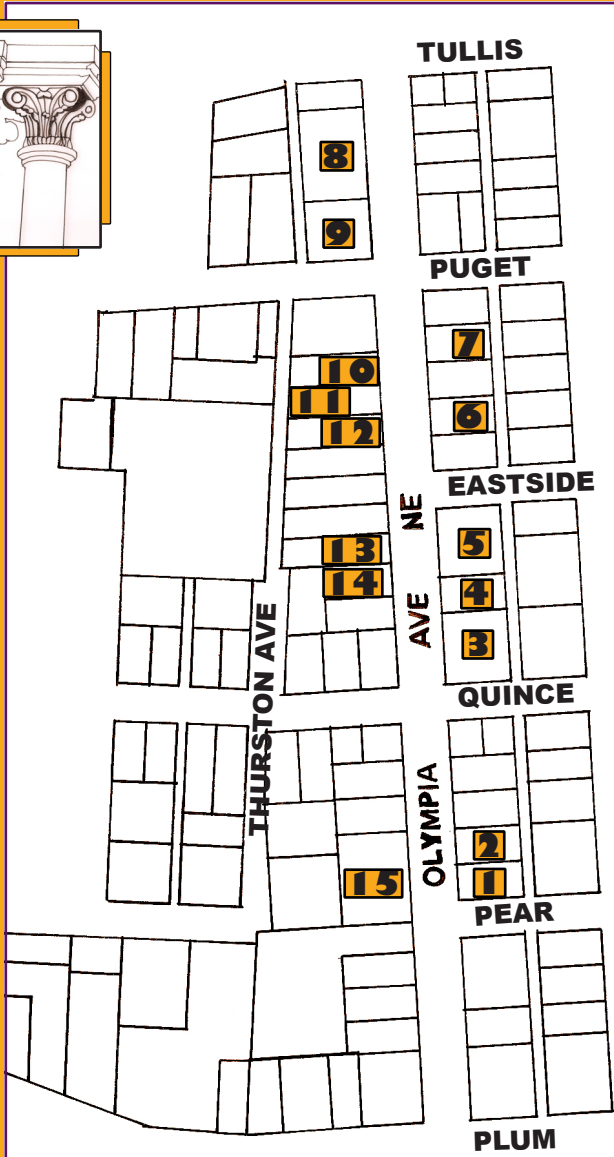
4. 1015 Olympia Avenue
The Carlson House (1937)

This Tudor cottage was built in 1937. Its front facade is defined by gable projections with steeply pitched roofs and delicate cornice returns, as seen below. Arches appear in the doorway, an upper story window and in the small wooden vent above the entry. Generous picture windows stretch nearly floor to ceiling. The detached garage includes similar details.



Henry and Edna Carlson built this house in 1937. Henry was a gluer for Olympia Veneer.

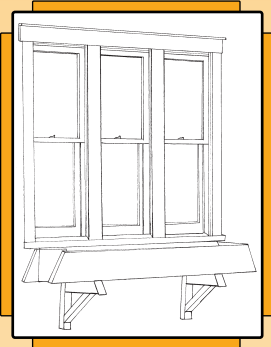
Bigelow Historic District:
Olympia Avenue



5. 1023-25 Olympia Avenue
The Agnew Duplex (1926)

This well-proportioned duplex incorporates the major features of a Craftsman bungalow, and then doubles them. Porches, windows and entries are identical. Wide eaves, brackets, banks of double hung windows and layers of wood trim are mirrored, as are charming flower boxes, seen at right.

J. and Elsie Agnew, who owned the Star Laundry and the City Dye Works, built this duplex in 1926 and lived in the western half. By 1932, the Agnews were renting to a mill worker from Olympia Veneer.



6. 1107 Olympia Avenue
The Jacobsen House (1926)

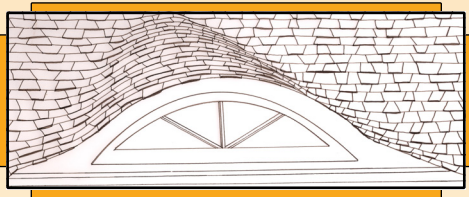
This Colonial Revival Cottage is similar to a style popularized by the Tumwater Lumber Mills. Symmetry is key. Note the pair of tripartite windows flanking the entry and the sidelights flanking the door. A graceful arched pediment, paired Tuscan columns and classical cornice returns emphasize the central bay.

Alfred and Ella Jacobsen bought this property in 1926 and had moved in by 1927. Jacobsen worked for Washington Veneer.

7. 1125 Olympia Avenue
The Erickson House (1925)

This fine Tudor cottage incorporates gables, cornice returns and echoing arches. This house has an added eyebrow dormer, which includes a delicate fan window, as seen below.

Frank and Anna Erickson are the first known residents, appearing in city directories in 1927. Frank was a mill worker with Olympia Veneer.



8. 1212 Olympia Avenue
The Donoghue/McCaughan House (1926)

This Dutch Colonial house has some classical details rare to Olympia Avenue. Tucked away on its wooded lot, it features a distinctive Dutch gambrel roof and brick pilasters. It also incorporates wide, fanning muntins in its arched windows.

It appears that Alvena and Roy Donoghue built the house in 1926. Roy was a mill worker, though his employers are unknown. The house was then sold to the McCaughans in 1932. The house stayed in the family for many years.

9. 1202 Olympia Avenue
The Funk House (1892)

An excellent example of Queen Anne style, the Funk House includes decorative flourishes on every floor, around every opening, and on every inch of its impressive exterior. Wrought iron cresting lines the roof, which incorporates numerous gables with elaborate cornices and returns. The exterior is clad in various shingle styles, as depicted below, and features delicate sunbursts and rosettes.

The house was originally built for Brad and Anna Pattison Davis, but was bought by George and Goldie Robertson Funk in 1906. George was a prosecuting attorney and city councilman and is remembered for spearheading the legislative



fight that brought state offices back to Olympia after they'd crept northward into Seattle in the early 1950s. He was 87 years old at the time.

Goldie, who married George in 1899, was a teacher, principal, and noted advocate for women's rights. She published articles in national publications like McCalls and Ladies Home Journal. She was dedicated to the Olympia Women's Club, one of Olympia's most prominent civic groups.



Goldie Robertson Funk, her husband George, and their children.
Photo from "Women in Olympia History."
Originally used courtesy of Norma. J. Kinney.

10. 1118 Olympia Avenue
The Dunbar House (1892)

The Dunbar House is a pioneer style home with a graceful front porch. The porch roof has been ornamented with delicate mill work under the eaves, and pretty fish scale shingles adorn the central gable. This house was built at roughly the same time as the elaborate Queen Annes but presents a cleaner, simpler facade.

The Dunbar House belonged to Judge Ralph Oregon Dunbar and his wife, Clara White Dunbar, until 1899. Ralph was an honored Supreme Court Justice who served as Chief Justice three times. Like his neighbor, Frank Rudkin, Dunbar had a long legal career, serving as a prosecuting attorney in several Eastern Washington counties. Clara, an avid member of the Congregational Church, was one of the pioneering daughters of Margaret White Ruddell, who lived at 901 Olympia Avenue.

11. 1112 Olympia Avenue
The C. S. Reinhart House (1891)

This remodeled Colonial Revival has a classical pediment over the entry, matching gabled dormers, and numerous divided windows, especially on its sunny western addition. The single story addition dates from 1937 and has gained its own historic status.

This house was built by Caleb Reinhart and his wife Clara. Caleb was a native Olympian born in 1856 at the end of the Indian Wars. His grandfather was Washington's first territorial treasurer. With his neighbor, Ralph Dunbar, Reinhart owned the Klickitat Sentinel, a Goldendale newspaper, in the 1880s. Dunbar left to join the Supreme Court and soon after, Reinhart came to Olympia to clerk for the Supreme Court and to study law. He later served three years as mayor of Olympia and was president of Olympia National Bank. He picked up the nickname "Cap" for his distinguished service as captain in the National Guard.

Anna Reinhart Stanford, one of the Reinhart children, grew up in the house and was a founding member of Eenati, Olympia's second oldest women's club. She attended the University of Washington and then graduated from Stanford University in 1906, before returning with her husband to teach art, history and drafting in Olympia. After designing a home for her own family, Anna was widowed in 1921 and returned to Olympia Avenue to live with her parents. She retained her interest in architecture and regularly bought and sold real estate. She sold the house on Olympia Avenue in 1956, more than 20 years after her father's death.

12. 1106 Olympia Avenue
The Byrd/Ross House (1891)

One of Olympia Avenue's most ornate homes, the Byrd/Ross House shows off many of the decorative details that mingle in the Queen Anne style. Mill-work decorates both balconies and appears under chamfered corners. The elaborate cornice is decorated with dentil work and the roof with cresting.

This house was built by George and Mary White Byrd. Mary crossed the Oregon Trail in 1851 with her family and built near her sisters and her mother on Olympia Avenue. George Byrd was instrumental in Tacoma's development and appears to have spent much time there.

The house has ties to other noted neighbors. It was owned by Mrs. John C. Ross in 1906, and then by Caleb Reinhart, who held onto it for a short time before selling it back to Mrs. Ross in 1909 after she was widowed and remarried. Interestingly, Cap Reinhart repurchased the house again in 1921, the year his daughter Anna lost her husband and moved home.

13. 1020 Olympia Avenue
The Turner House (1908)

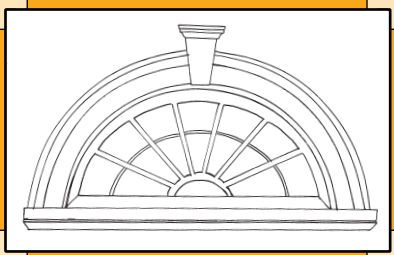
This Craftsman bungalow features a hipped roof with hipped roof dormers. The porch is sheltered by deep eaves with exposed rafters and wide brackets. While the recessed porch is clad in drop siding, the projecting surround and the dormers are elegantly clad in wood shingles.

Carpenter E. A. Ford and his wife Mollie bought the property in 1905 and may have built the house right before selling it to Catharine A. Turner in 1908. Other notable owners included John and Wendla Svern, who were original stockholders in Olympia Veneer.

14. 1018 Olympia Avenue
The Sparks House (1904)

This Queen Anne cottage incorporates many familiar details, including the large projecting gable, elaborate cornice and decorative windows. A beautiful fan window surrounded by hexagonal shingles (depicted to the right) faces the street, and the western façade features a palladian window. The house includes fewer stories than its vertical Queen Anne neighbors, but incorporates much of the craftsmanship and woodwork of the Queen Anne style.

Charles and Avis Sparks built this house in 1904. City directories identify Charles as a clerk.



15. 902 Olympia Avenue
The Guyot House (1927)

The Guyot house, while important to Olympia's history, is somewhat hidden from the street by foliage. Note the elaborate wrought iron gate and the house's historic marker. The house is a fine one and a half story Craftsman bungalow with projecting porches, as shown in the historic photo below.



Assessor's Photo of the Guyot House

Built in 1927, the house sits adjacent to the site of the original Dobbins house. John H. Norris built the home and Dobbins' daughter, Nettie Dobbins Guyot, moved in with her family during 1932. The house stayed in the Dobbins Guyot family for more than 50 years. Nettie's daughter Grace lived here until she sold the property in 1986.



City of Olympia
Historic Preservation Office
For more information, contact the
City of Olympia: (360) 753-8314
or visit the webpage:
www.olympiawa.gov/historic.
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