

CENTRALIA

WASHINGTON

Downtown and Residential Walking Tour
A guided tour of the architectural history of Centralia



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Corner of South Tower and Main Street



Main and Tower intersection looking west



Tower Avenue looking North



Wilson Hotel, North Tower Avenue

activity in southwest Washington. This event revolved around the dedication of three major buildings whose construction had just been completed. They were the Union Depot, Carnegie Library and Dumon Building.

Centralia's first aviator, Claude Berlin was hired to drop bottles of champagne on each of these structures to lead off the celebration. However, while christening the Union Depot, the bottles damaged many of the newly placed roof tiles.

Centralia's most notable event occurred on November 11, 1919, the date that marked the first Veteran's Day parade in honor of the veterans of the Great War. Patriotism ran high among the newly formed American Legion contingency who were marching in the local parade. A labor movement was gathering followers through the country at this time. Known as the International Workers of the world, they were successful in organizing mill workers and lumberjacks in the Pacific Northwest. During the parade, violence erupted between the I.W.W. ("Wobblies") and Legionnaires as the parade passed by the I.W.W. Hall.

Four Legionnaires were killed. Wesley Everett, one of the "Wobblies" accused of murder, was taken from his jail cell by a mob that evening and the next morning was found hanging from the Mellen Street Bridge; a bridge now known Hangman's Bridge. A statue commemorating the four Legionnaires was erected in Washington Park in 1922. No one was ever tried for the hanging death of Everett.

In the 1920's, Centralia become home to the State's first junior college. Several secondary schools were also built. During this decade of development, the City Hall and Elk's Lodge were built by a notable Pacific Northwest architect named Joseph Wohleb. He is most recognized for his design of the Capitol buildings in Olympia. Other Wohleb projects included the

old Armory Building on N Tower (now a car dealership), and the Centralia Motors Building on West Main Street (still a car dealership).

Other noteworthy buildings constructed at this time were the Fox Theater and the Lewis and Clark Hotel. Important industries included the Centralia Iron Works and the George L Barnes Brass Foundry. Expansion of the strawberry industry as well as egg and poultry production brought some economic diversification to the area. The largest employer, however, remained the lumber industry.

In 1930, a town meeting to establish a relief fund for families left destitute during the Great Depression was formed. Benefit parties, private donation and pledges from organizations built up a cash fund. Business firms and individuals donated bread, milk, furniture, wood, coal and shoes.

Works Progress Administration projects in the Centralia area included improving the fairgrounds, Borst Park, Carnegie Library and City Park. A commission of a mural for the U.S. Post Office by famous Pacific Northwest Artist Kenneth Callahan was completed depicting the area's industries. Other advances were seen in the area of street and dike improvements.

"Pioneer Days" was established by the merchants in the downtown to add color and life to the gray era of the depression. Developed out of the annual Pioneer Picnic at Borst Park, started in 1912, the town would put all their efforts into dressing up the stores like an old frontier town with bark siding. Women would dress up in hoop skirts and the men in beards and gallon hats. The 30's also saw heavy rains and floods, as the Skookumchuck River overflowed in 1935 causing Tower Avenue to flow like a river.

Centralia's Historic Buildings

Historic structures contribute substantially to a city's quality of life and its residents' sense of community. In a very practical way, older generations upon which today's generations can capitalize. Costly new construction is not required when an existing structure can be adapted to a new use. Further, the use of existing older structures lends a sense of stability and character to its surroundings. Centralia has many wonderful structures that, if restored and preserved, would be a great asset to the community.

We are proud to present this guided tour for you as an opportunity to introduce Centralia as an important part of Washington state history. You will see as Centralia evolved, phases of development were defined by building style. A cross section of these styles can be seen in the downtown area. Simple wooden structures dating from the 19th century were replaced by brick and sandstone structures. By the early 20th century, the "Chicago School" style had influenced building shape, massing and décor incorporating simple rectangular shapes and low relief terra cotta ornamentation. Other styles which are visible in the area are various Revival motifs and later Art Deco style which developed in the 1920's and 30's.

Thank you for your interest in the Architectural history of Centralia.





1
First Presbyterian Church—c. 1930
501 West Pine Street

On July 7, 1889 the First Presbyterian Church of Centralia was established with a membership of nine. In 1930 the original structure was razed and the present building erected. The sanctuary had some of the most beautiful stained glass windows in the area depicting various segments of the life of Christ.

Each window cost \$600 and was donated as a memorial. This church exemplifies the “Gothic Revival” style architecture. This form of architecture was very popular for secular architecture in the early part of the 20th century. The castle-like motifs of the roof line and the use of stained glass windows recalled English Medieval architecture. Windows usually had a high pitched and deep recessed configuration that kept water from running down the face of the opening.

The congregation has relocated to 1227 Harrison Ave. (Harrison Square Presbyterian Church) and the stained glass windows are on display at that location.

Washington Park—c. 1881-1912
Corner of Main and Pearl Streets

George Washington, Centralia’s founder, set aside one block of his claim in 1881 and designated it a “Public Square” to be used by the residents of Centralia for recreation and use of public buildings. Also known as “City Park,” the land now houses the 1912 Carnegie Library as well as “The Sentinel” monument commemorating the four American legionnaires killed in the Centralia Massacre of Nov. 11, 1919. The bandstand was built in the early 20th century.



“The Sentinel”, Washington Park



A Brief History of Centralia and George

Washington Our Founder

At the 1845 session of the Washington Territory legislature, the district was divided. All lands west of the Cowlitz River and north of 54 degrees-40 minutes were given the name of Lewis County in honor of the explorer Meriwether Lewis. The remainder of the district was then named Vancouver County.

This same year, Waunch’s Prairie, just north of the present Centralia limits, was settled by George Waunch. His was the earliest donation land claim in the area in the early 1850’s, three claims located on what was known as “Indian Prairie”: James Cochran, William Holmes and Noah Kritzer claims. All of these claims comprise what is now the City of Centralia. The real found of Centralia, however, was a mulatto ex-slave by the name of George Washington, who had been raised by the Cochran Family.

George, being a man of foresight, saw the opportunities the railroad would bring to the area and donated a share of his land to lay out the town of Centerville. George, his wife and stepson planned the layout of the city that was originally four blocks square. They named the streets after trees and minerals.

George named the city Centerville, as it was the halfway point between the north and south railroad terminals at Kalama and Tacoma. The name was later changed to Centralia, due to confusion of mail service with another Centerville in eastern Washington. The name Centralia was recommended by a newcomer to the area from Centralia, Ohio.

Parts of Centralia were platted by 1875,

and by 1884 the town’s population had reached 200. By 1886 the population had grown to 325 and a town government had been established. The railroad brought a building boom to Centralia in 1889. The



population soared by 3200 and boom was followed by bust; in 1893 the economy of the nation was in a recession.

Centralia felt the effects as the railroads stopped building. Lack of jobs forced an exodus of citizens. During the recovery phase 16 years later, the streets were paved and D Street was joined to Pearl, making it possible to travel from the north to the south end of town.

In 1900, the corner of Magnolia and Tower was considered too far from

the business section to be useful for business purposes. However, seven years later the same corner was the very heart of the business section. The new bank, the Union Loan and Trust Company occupied that corner. The Field and Lease Bank also had its origins during this era. Coal mining and lumbering were the dominant economic base of the area. In 1906 there were six coal mines shipping from the Centralia area. Of the seven sawmills in Centralia in 1910, the largest was the Eastern Railway and Lumber Company organized in 1903 by S.A. Agnew.

A celebration of Centralia’s prosperity, the “Hub City Festival” was developed in 1912 to recognize the area as the center of

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Frank D. Harm Home—c. 1900 726 “E” Street

The structure is a fine example of “Queen Anne” styling with the three dominant turrets on the second floor. Yet another early lumber baron, Frank D. Harm was involved in the organization of numerous lumber and timber companies. The most notable of these were the Centralia Fir Door Factory and Pacific Lumber Company. The Harm family occupied the home from 1900-1939, which makes this time period the home’s most significant historic period of ownership.



Tower Avenue looking south



Corner of Tower and Locust looking north



Corner of Magnolia and Tower Avenues, looking south.



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U.S. Post Office—c. 1937 214 W Centralia College Blvd.

Constructed at a cost of \$96,000 and dedicated in 1937, this is one of Centra-

lia’s few Art Deco buildings. This utilitarian style can be found most notably in the relief work over the main entrance to the building.

This building’s most valuable feature is an interior wall mural which depicts Centralia’s early agricultural and logging heritage. Famous Northwest Pacific Artist Kenneth Callahan was commissioned by the Works Progress Administration to

Elks Lodge 201 S Pearl Street

Joseph H Wohleb, the architect of this building, is more well known for Mission-Revival. The building served as an Elks Lodge from 1920 until 1986 when it was sold and redeveloped into the Centralia Square Antique Mall complex. Also located in this building is the popular *Berryfields* Restau-

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rant—a favorite lunch spot for many and within easy walking distance from the downtown.

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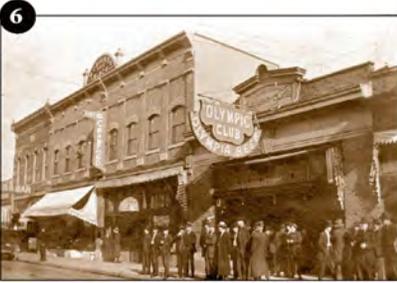
Field and Lease/Robinson Buildings 105 N Tower Ave.

These two connecting buildings are significant as the best examples of Victorian commercial architecture constructed downtown. The projecting bay windows are typical of this period. The Field and Lease building takes in the entire corner

of N Tower and Main Streets. It was constructed in 1897 using the Tenino Sandstone. The building’s most well known occupant was Ella Field, a milliner and hairdresser. Notable architectural features include an ornate tin cornice, tile entry ways and the use of patterned brick as detailing.

Joseph Robinson, a prominent early Centralia businessman, had the northern building (facing Tower Ave.) constructed at a cost of \$10,000. The early Masonic Headquarters were in the 2nd floor space, with the lower portion reserved for retail.





Olympic Club—c. 1908
112 N Tower Ave.

Originally erected in the late 1800's the Olympic Club was rebuilt to its current state in 1908 after fire damaged the original structure. The saloon is paneled with mahogany and cherry wood and decorated with Tiffany-style shades. French beveled windows and the large outdoor cigar case still remain intact. Many of the original furnishings: the coal burning stove, oak pool tables and other fixtures of bygone

eras are there to enjoy.

The sign above the main entrance still proclaims "Ladies Patronage not solicited." This sentiment is from the days when the Olympic Club was a private men's club and women were not to be seen on this side of Tower Ave! During Prohibition, bootleg liquor was stored in false bottom pickle barrels in a secret basement. Under a layer of decades old dust and smoke, the Olympic Club remains virtually intact. This site is on the National register of Historic Places.

The bar and hotel are owned and operated by *McMenamin's* whose goal is to preserve historic structures in Washington and Oregon, restoring them to their former glory and usefulness

Union Depot—c. 1912
210 Railroad Ave.

The Union depot serves as a reminder of the boom Centralia experienced during the early 1900's. Between 1900 and 1914, the population increased almost 400%. By 1914, 44 passenger trains and 17 freight trains passed through Centralia daily. The first depot was built in 1880 by Northern Pacific Railroad and sat on the northeast corner of Main and Railroad Avenues. The small wood framed building was followed by a larger wood building in 1905 known as 'Noah's Ark' due to its architectural design. This depot was located at Railroad and Third. The third and final depot, which still stands today, was constructed of brick in 1912.

When the building was dedicated,



Claude Berlin, Centralia's first aviator, flew over the city and dropped a bottle of champagne on the building, breaking a few tiles on the roof.

The brick structure is an excellent example of an architectural style of depots commonly found in medium-sized towns. The fine brick ornamentation, interior woodwork, tiling and oak benches remain intact. Stenciled warnings along the exterior base of the building stating "Don't Spit" can still be seen today.



Thomas-Hackney-Williams Home—c. 1908
627 N Pearl St.

Prominent lumberman William Thompson and his family moved to Centralia from Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1907. Once in Centralia, Thompson acquired the controlling interest in Lincoln Creek Lumber at Galvin and became its President. He bought the property on which the house is now located and completed the structure in 1908. The house was sold to physician Frederick J. and Mae Ora Hackney for \$6350 in 1919. In

1928 the Hackneys remodeled the home. Folding doors from the front entry were removed. The large sliding doors between the parlor and living room were also removed. A new oak floor was installed downstairs and the entrance hall and upper hall walls were recovered. In 1963 Dr. Hackney's widow sold the house to James and Loraine Williams. Mrs. Williams lived in the home until her death. The home was sold in 2012.

The sub-type styling for this home is known as Free Classic styling, recognized by the classical columns rather than the turned post look of the 'spindle work' style of Queen Anne architecture. Porch support columns are grouped together and it has a foundation of Tenino sandstone. The home features an elaborate leaded and beveled glass door and side lights, dark fir woodwork, hardwood floors and a mahogany fireplace.

Woody Home—c. 1906
522 N Rock Street

Not much is known about the origins of this "working man's" home. Its most notable residents included the Woody family who owned and operated the Mountain View Cemetery during the 1930's. Temporary cement and marble headstones were recycled as gardening materials and recent owners, Kick and Kyle Castellano unearthed many new stones.

This "hipped roof" subtype of Craftsman styling makes up less than 10% of these types of homes. Typical to the exterior modeling is the short, square columns that rest upon a massive porch, and exposed roof rafters. This style was very popular from 1903 until 1915. This style incorporates the use



of natural materials, such as wood and stone. The interior of this home features the typical Craftsman interior, with predominant woodwork and the original brass and stained glass light fixtures.

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Gilchrest Home—c. 1880 **114 W Walnut Street**

This residence stands as a Centralia landmark because of its architectural styling (though modified) as seen in its skylight and iron fence landscape detailing. The alterations to the home were made in 1886 by its owner Charles Gilchrist, who added the bay window, porch, gables and skylight.

Mr. Gilchrist was a prominent Centralia businessman and first Vice-president/Manager of the United States National Bank until 1914 when he entered a guilty plea to embezzlement charges.

In 1927, the house was purchased by the Gallagher family who lived there for many years, preserving the interior much as it was originally built.

Evans Home—c. 1910 **826 S Pearl Street**

Thomas Evans and his wife, America, borrowed \$900 to construct this home on May 25, 1910, but failed to repay the loan and lost the house. The home itself has no historical significance in its history of ownership, but is a good example of a “working man’s” home which could be constructed from plans offered through various catalogues and publications.

This style of post-Victorian domestic architecture (Princess Anne) was popular between 1900-1920. It is known for using fewer siding materials than the Queen Anne house and by eliminating this ornamentation, the house looked modern. The Princess Anne retained much of the building mass as the parent Queen Anne style, but it was cheaper to build and easier to maintain.



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Union Loan and Trust—c. 1907 **305 N Tower Avenue**

The Union Loan and Trust building, designed and built in 1907, was occupied by one of the leading financial institutions in the area in the early 1900’s. The bank occupied the south half of the building

with professional offices located on the second floor. The basement housed the Daily Chronicle newspaper.

The third floor was home to the Elks Club, prior to the construction of their own building in 1920. They dedicated the new hall on July 24 & 25th, 1908 after \$6,000 worth of interior design work. This floor remains virtually intact and boasts a pool room, ballroom and lounge with a massive timber, brick and leaded fireplace still in working condition. Local legend has it that the third floor was the site of the “kangaroo court” where Wesley Everett was tried after the Centralia Massacre. It was the last place he was seen alive before his lynching by a local mob.

Farmers Merchant Bank—c. 1913 **327 N Tower Avenue**

This former bank building represents a style known as “Beaux Arc Classicism.” This is seen in the decorative Roman arch insert with a clock and terracotta garlands. The exterior of the building is coated in glazed terra cotta. Interior remnants from its banking days are evident in the marble-paneled walls, a wall office with its original woodwork, money vault and bank clock. The building has served many purposes through the years including occupancy by a bank, bakery, telephone company office, chamber of commerce and the printing shop. The upper floor, once used as an office, is now apartments.

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Centralia City Hall—c. 1921 118 W Maple Street

City Hall is another building designed by architect Joseph Wohleb. The building's structural integrity and Wohleb's attention to producing a serviceable and safe building has allowed this public building to stand now as it did in 1921. The variegated color brick and unique exterior lighting stand out in the district.

City Hall stands on the original location of the second city jail, which was made out of concrete in 1910. The original jail, built with plank construction, was located on the northeast corner of Magnolia and Tower Avenue.



Masonic Building—c. 1923 218 N Pearl

This handsome three-story building was dedicated as the new home of the Centralia Masonic Lodge No. 63 on April 7, 1923. Built at a cost of \$75,000, the structure houses retail space on the first floor and offices and a social hall on the second floor. The third floor is reserved for lodge purposes. Designed by architect Dennis Nichols of Vancouver, Washington, the project was taken over by W.E. Farr after Nichols' sudden death.

The entrance columns, posts, balusters and rails are the best quality cast stone. The exposed brick work on the building's façade are faced with "Washington brick Lime" and "Sewer Pipe Company" brick. "Joseph's Coat" finish was added to the brick to give it slightly variegated



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shades of color. Interior building materials consist of maple and fir. The entire project used the finest of building materials with close supervision given to every detail. This is one of Centralia's most stately commercial buildings.

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Flewelling Home—c. 1908 314 N Iron Street

Abraham Flewelling was an influential early Centralia businessman, a real estate broker for Milwaukee Land Company and the Victory Coal Mining Company. His home was the center of social activity in early Centralia.

The Flewellings came to Centralia in 1908 and had a French architect design this home. Its most notable feature is its overall "Greek Revival" styling as seen in its colossal portico with columns which supports a low pitched pediment. This style mimics the architecture of Greek temples. The foundation and chimney are made of Tenino sandstone. It also features accents of leaded, beveled glass.

Emory Kniskern Home—c. 1905 311 N Iron Street

This "Italianate" style home is notable for its beveled leaded glass and handsome entry that is flanked by matching 18-pane sidelights.

The home was built in 1905 or 1906 for Dr. Emory L. Kniskern and his wife, Nellie. Kniskern was a prominent citizen and specialist in eye, ears and throat medicine. The home was built from mail order plans, which were very popular and could be purchased through such companies as Sears and Roebuck.

The home was once an "estate" together with the Dysart home at 319 N Iron. A garden separated the two homes.

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Guerrier Mansion—c. 1906
402 N Rock Street

This home is an excellent example of “Italianate” styling which is also seen across the street in the Johnston

Home. It has two cupolas which protrude from its hipped roof, and ornate brackets which support the overhanging eaves. There are two balconies upon which the upstairs master bedrooms opens. They are highlighted with decorative geometric designed railings. The porch is supported by Doric porch columns. The home is now operated as a B&B, “*Candalite Mansion*”.

Dysart Home—c. 1903
319 N Iron Street

This home and the 1913 addition were designed for the Dysart family by G.N. Bullard, a prominent Tacoma architect who also designed commercial buildings in the downtown. George Dysart was a respected lawyer who represented the local lumbermen’s interests. He was instrumental in organizing such lumber companies as Easter Railway & Lumber Company and the Salzer Valley Lumber Company which were landmarks in the industrial development of the area.

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Fox Theater—c. 1930
119 S Tower Avenue

The Fox Theater has been a fixture in downtown Centralia since it opened September of 1930. The Fox showcased first-run films, Fox Movietone newsreels and the best-known vaudeville performers of the day. It was billed as “the finest playhouse between Portland and Seattle.”

Originally the smallest of the Twentieth Century Fox chain of movie theaters, the structure was built by W.T. Butler Company of Seattle at a cost of \$200,000. Over the decades, the Fox has had a number of local, regional and national owners.

In 1982, American General Luxury Cinemas converted the building to a triple-screen facility by dissecting the balcony to form two, 250-seat screening rooms and retaining the 500-seat main auditorium. The last movie was shown in 1998.

The Fox is currently owned by the City of Centralia, which bought the landmark to preserve it as a mainstay in the revitalization of downtown Centralia. In offering the theater for sale, the City made a few stipulations to a future owner. The buyer must restore the building in the manner of its original design as well as apply for and maintain a listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Also, the building must be used as a “facility for entertainment, hospitality or meetings and conferences.”

In 2008 Scott White, a young man raised

in Centralia who had gone on to a career in entertainment with Disney, returned home and determined to restore the Fox to its former glory. Working in conjunction with the City of Centralia, Scott has formed a non-profit organization, “Historic Fox Theatre Restoration”, committed to the complete restoration of the theatre and the revitalization of Historic Downtown Centralia.

Much work has been done—more work needs to be done—but they offer an annual film series with the help of local sponsors to raise the funds to do the work of restoring the theater. Below, the new blade sign lights the way to the downtown. Work continues on the marquee.



Eddie Zollman at the Balcom &Vaughan 2/10 pipe organ

Wilson Hotel—c. 1914
328 N Tower Avenue

Located on the South east corner of North Tower and Maple, this three-story brick building was built in 1914 at a cost of \$50,000. All windows are one-over-one double hung sash. The front façade of the building has only been altered by the addition of an awning. The roof is flat with a projecting metal cornice. The building is three stories high with a deep basement, constructed so as to make the addition of three more stories possible (this was never done).

The interior of the hotel was finely finished. The walls have oak molding complemented by a terrazzo floor and tile fireplace. The iron grill rail and the oak reception desk are original.



Named after its first proprietor, C.R. Wilson, the Wilson Hotel was constructed by the Robinson Brothers of Centralia. The hotel was described as the finest and most modern between Tacoma and Portland, a handsome addition to Centralia's business district. It is a good example of the Chicago style, modified for the small town.



Stahl Home—c. 1900
703 "E" Street

Not much early history is documented on this turn-of-the-century home. It's most recognized resident is Philip R. Stahl, who first occupied the home in 1922. Stahl began a pharmacy after purchasing the Virges Drug Company. He later constructed a new building on Tower Avenue for the drug store.

A fine example of the "free classic" form of late Queen Anne architecture, this home features an extensive wrap-around porch, columns of Ionic design, and a three-sided bay window. The windows are leaded and beveled with stained glass panes in the center of the bay projections.



Johnston Home—c. 1908
411 N Rock Street

Mr. B.H. Johnston constructed this home after coming west in 1907 from Mendota, Missouri. He purchased a local coal mine and operated it many years. He is most noted for founding and building the town of Mendota, which was located near his mine in the Big Hanaford Valley beyond the site of today's steam plant.

This home is built in the Italian Renaissance Revival style, with low-pitched roof and recessed entry porch. Common exterior decorative elements include a pediment window, classical door surrounds, and molded cornices. This style is found in early 20th century houses through the country and declined in popularity by the 1930's.



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F.A. Martin Home—c. 1900
729 Washington Avenue

This Queen Anne home features leaded glass, a two-sided bay projection and ornate molding. The home was built for F.A. Martin, who became owner of the H.H. Martin Lumber Company upon the death of his father in 1902. This company was one of the largest with saw and shingle facilities, a factory, railroad and a logging camp which employed 150 men. Frank Martin married F.B. Hubbard's only daughter, who land adjoined Martin's.

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Birge Home—c. 1894
715 "E" St.

This house was built for George and Lizzie Birge around 1894. Birge, a prominent lumberman, was responsible for organizing the West Coast Lumberman's Association. This group of 10 mills made up the largest wholesale marketing firm in the country at that time. Mr. Birge served as mayor of Centralia for six years in the late 1800's. The present owners, Tom and Mary Jones, have done extensive restoration to the home.

This two-story residence is a good example of the Queen Anne style known as "spindle work" as seen in the use of ornate detailing. Fish-scale shingles, multiple gabled roof, turned posts and other gingerbread ornamentation define this style. A dominant feature is a square turret capped with a pyramidal roof.



Centralia's Historic Homes

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Borst Home—c. 1865
Borst Park

The great white house with green shutters and a balcony, built in the early 1860's, was the pioneer home of Joseph and Mary Borst. Considered the finest house be-

tween Forts Steilacoom and Vancouver, the house was built as a reward for the harsh conditions under which she had to live. Others say it was a promise Joseph made to Mary in order to get her to marry him.

The home's Greek Revival architecture was the dominant style of American Architecture from 1830-1860. This is evidenced by the wide band of trim and the home's rectangular, two-story layout. The home is open for tours one Saturday per month, April through December. Check the city's website for the current schedule: www.cityofcentralia.com

F.B. Hubbard—c. 1908
717 Washington Avenue

F.B. Hubbard moved to Centralia from Doty in 1900 and formed the McCormick Lumber Company with Harry McCormick. He later formed the Rock Creek Lumber Company, selling his interests in both these enterprises in 1905. In 1903, Hubbard, along with C.S. Gilchrist and George Dysart, formed the Eastern Railway and Lumber company, one of the largest mills in SW Washington. The massive "Bungaloid" features a turret on the north which gives this building prominence in the neighborhood. The unmodified home features three fireplaces, cedar-lined closets, and a unique kitchen doorbell which, when activated, indicates which entrance guests are using.

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