

BOLTON STORE
21420 Willamette Drive
West Linn
Clackamas County
Oregon

HABS No. OR-170

HABS
ORE
3 - WELIN,
1 -

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Columbia Cascade Support Office
National Park Service
Seattle, Washington 98104-1060

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

BOLTON STORE
HABS No. OR-170

HABS
ORE
3 - WELLM
1 -

Location: Address is 21240 Willamette Drive, West Linn, OR 97068.

U.S.G.S. Oregon City 7.5' Quadrangle
UTM Coordinates: 5024000mN529650mE

Date of Construction: 1916

Architect: Unknown

Builders: Unknown

Present Owner: Molly Macomb

Present Use: Commercial

Significance: The Bolton Store is significant as the last remaining historic wood commercial building in the old Bolton neighborhood of West Linn. The building is also distinctive as the most intact commercial wood structure from its period in the City of West Linn. The store's exposure along Willamette Drive contributes to its prominence as a visual reminder of the city's commercial legacy. Within Clackamas County the construction is among a limited number of examples of vernacular false front buildings.

The Bolton Store was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places on April 22, 1997.

Report Prepared By: Linda Dodds, Cultural Resource Specialist
Leslie A. Schwab, HABS/HAER Specialist
Oregon Department of Transportation, Environmental Services

Date: November 1999

I. DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

The Bolton Store is a 1 and ½ storey vernacular false front commercial building constructed in 1916. The store is situated at an intersection along the Oswego Highway (Oregon Highway 43) in the Bolton Addition of West Linn, Oregon. The Bolton store is significant as the last remaining historic wood commercial building in the old Bolton neighborhood of West Linn. The building is also distinctive as the most intact commercial wood structure from its period in the City of West Linn.

The Bolton Store is a readily visible landmark in the Bolton neighborhood of West Linn. The West Linn area was first settled in the 1840s, but was not incorporated until 1913. On the north periphery of the new community, Bolton, with a school and at least one store, was one of four separate and distinct neighborhoods that were to form the nucleus of historic West Linn.

The Bolton neighborhood traces its formation to the late 1890s when the Bolton Land Company was created as a speculative venture. Named for local landholders Edward and Pauline Bolton, the company was directed by principals Tom P. Randall and prominent Oregon City banker Edwin G. Caufield. Their business focused primarily on selling lots for housing and for railway use. Once topographically isolated in a rural setting, the context of the store has evolved into a mixed-use area bordering Highway 43.

In their era, America's general stores contributed immensely to the social fabric of the nation. Flourishing until the interwar period, these small business enterprises often provided a meeting place and central communication site for an entire community. The decline of these stores occurred with the development of more expansive markets or grocery store outlets which were facilitated through improved transportation in the 1930s. Specialization of merchandise and technological advancements also contributed to the demise of the country or general store. Though a late example of its type, the Bolton operation, like others, followed these trends.

The Bolton Store is a vernacular false front commercial building situated on Willamette Drive (also known as Highway 43 and The Oswego Highway), occupying Lot Number 7, Block 33 of the Bolton Addition in West Linn, Oregon. The Bolton Store is rectangular in plan, with an end-gabled roof clad in composition shingles. The store consists of a simple 1 and ½ storey wood frame (balloon frame) structure finished in weatherboard siding, with the false-fronted, primary elevation facing Willamette Drive. A substantial concrete foundation accommodates the structure on its inclined lot.

On the primary (Willamette Drive) elevation there are symmetrical features, including two multi-pane display lights at each side of a recessed central entrance. The entrance has recessed panels with a door containing a fixed half-light. A shed-roofed porch projects from the front façade and runs the full width of building, and it is divided into three equal bays. Above, at the second level, are two wood sashed, one-light-over-one, double hung windows. The original configuration of the building is in evidence at the front, side and rear elevations of the building. There is a 1 story addition set back on the west (side) elevation, and appears to date from the 1920s-30s.

The property occupied by the Bolton store has gone through several different ownerships. In 1914, Lot 7 of Block 33 of the Bolton Addition was sold to David and Sarah L. McMillan. Within two years of their purchase the McMillans established a commercial enterprise on the property known as the Bolton Store. Five years later the store was acquired by John M. and Bette P. Rutter, who briefly maintained a retail grocery store on the site before selling in 1922 to longtime owners Anna M and John Lettenmaier.

The Lettenmaiers' store flourished serving the Bolton neighborhood, one of four historic areas within the city of West Linn. Homes in the area were simple cottages belonging to residents who were employed at West Linn's two pulp mills, Willamette Pulp and Paper Company and Crown Paper Company. These workers walked to the mills, threading their way along the uneven terrain to the mills on the river. Beside the road connecting West Linn and Lake Oswego and along the edge of the Bolton neighborhood, the Lettenmaiers' store was ideally situated for foot and local traffic. Longtime residents recall the Lettenmaiers as serious storekeepers who stocked their store with staples such as sugar, flour, canned goods and tobacco. Neighborhood children purchased candy and soda pop at the store and had the opportunity to linger on benches under the covered porch. For larger purchases, perishables or specialty grocery products, residents customarily shopped across the Willamette River, in Oregon City.

The Lettenmaier family held the Bolton Store for 23 years, selling in 1945 to Eilert R. and Sally Borg, who had a telephone installed at the store. The Borgs sold the store three years later to Ray W. and Edna Kopischke, who held the property into the 1950s. Subsequent owners have retained the commercial use of the store.

The Bolton Store is among a dwindling number of similar buildings remaining in Clackamas County. No longer in use as a general store, it is nonetheless serving a commercial purpose. The building exterior remains representative of the vernacular country store genre, with typical design elements shared by other country stores.

II. SOURCES

Awalt, Charles. Telephone interview with Linda Dodds, 31 March 1997.

Clackamas County Cultural Resource Survey. Clackamas County, Oregon 1984.

Clackamas County Historical Society. West Linn vertical files.

Draper, Al. Telephone interview with Linda Dodds, 13 March 1997.

Gates, Michael. Telephone interview with Linda Dodds, 13 March 1997; 31 March 1997.

Lemley, Cynthia. Telephone interview with Linda Dodds, 19 March 1997.

Lettenmaier, Ralph. Telephone interview with Linda Dodds, 13 April 1997.

Lingeman, Richard. Small Town America. New York: Putnam, 1980.

Lynch, Vera Martin. Free Land for Free Men. A Story of Clackamas County. n.p., n.p.:1973.

Stuckey, John D. "Historical Development of West Linn School District." photocopy, December 1974.

III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation has been prepared for the Oregon Department of Transportation, in association with a transportation project which will require moving the resource to the rear of its current lot and property.