

Tacoma National North Slope Historic District

Roger Johnson

April 2003

The odyssey through the bureaucratic web began when Jay Turner completed the research, labeled the photographs, marked the maps and finished the hundreds of pages of documents to complete the nomination of our Historic District to the National List of Historic Places. Two public hearings were required prior to the nomination being forwarded to the Department of the Interior for consideration to be listed.

The first hearing was held by the Tacoma Landmarks Preservation Commission in order to take public comment on the local level. The LPC was involved because Tacoma is a "Certified Local Government" and as such enjoys many advantages but also has to follow rules and procedures set forth by the Federal government, this procedure being one of them. The commission had first to consider if the application fulfilled all the requirements set forth by the Dept. of the Interior, and second if there was any reason why the district would not qualify. Of course the second part was easy because it is already a historic district on the local register. All public testimony was in favor and strongly urged the Commission to forward the nomination to the State office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. The commission had a long comment period, so that everyone who wished to could submit a written comment for the record. Once the comment period had expired the Tacoma Landmarks Preservation Commission unanimously passed the motion to forward the nomination to the state level!



The state office passes the nomination on to the State Advisory Council on Historic Preservation for a public hearing. In this case the hearing was held in late January 2003 in Chehalis in the restored Union Railroad Depot, a very nice restoration and adaptive reuse of a historic structure. Chehalis is a very fine example of a city that has not suffered the wrecking ball. It is worth getting off the freeway and driving into downtown!

The Council consisted of seven preservation experts and three state Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation employees. They considered many nominations besides our North Slope District. All nominations were a verbal description and a short slide presentation of the property. Among others, the council heard about a very large stately hillside barn that is now within a park and is an attraction in its own right. There is only one other example of this type of barn in Washington. The council heard about the abandoned railroad yard at Cle Elum. At one time the rail lines going East and West were electrified and the distribution center, maintenance yard and a classic station were at Cle Elum. All the beautiful

brick buildings are still standing and hopefully have a future. One of the highlights of the hearings was the application of Gaffney's Lake Wilderness Lodge. The "lodge" was built in 1952 and was awarded state and national acclaim (along with the Lever Bldg. in New York City) for its innovative design and use of materials including a three story totem pole that the stairs wrap around! It is now included in a King County park. The Council heard the nominations for several historic districts, one of which is in Vancouver. It is approximately one half the size of the North Slope district and has less than 60% contributing structures; the North Slope has approx. 75% contributing. The Vancouver district is much like ours in that it was the working man's neighborhood during the city's major development years. Unlike our district though, there are very few large homes and no "grand homes". Just like the North Slope, renovation and restoration have again made this neighborhood a much-desired place to live!

The Council heard the Tacoma North Slope Historic District Nomination and was very impressed with not only the size but also the quality of the district. We have a high percentage of contributing structures and many original secondary structures still intact. The council was also very impressed by the nomination documents themselves. The thoroughness and professionalism made a very good impression and made their task much easier.

The process consists of two steps; first the district had to be listed in the Washington Heritage Register and then approved for forwarding the nomination to the Keeper of the National Register in Washington D.C. They quickly voted 100% in favor of listing our historic district in the Washington Heritage Register and for passing the nomination to the Department of Interior for inclusion (after a small review) on the National Register of Historic Places.

Allison Brooks, the State Historic Preservation Officer said recently in a letter to Jay, "Having a property listed in one or both of these registers is an honor. The benefits of State and National Register listing include potential tax credits, property tax deductions and code waivers to protect the integrity of the resource. Listing of a property does not impose federal or state restrictive covenants or easements nor will it result in taking. However, listing in the National Register of Historic Places and/or the Washington Heritage Register does assure protective review of a property should a federal or state action have a potential adverse effect to the property's historic values."

Jay and Julie Turner deserve a 100% vote of Gratitude & Thanks for writing and organizing the nomination and documents! Without them this would not have happened! The city had already said they did not have the resources to take on such a BIG project nor did they want to...

