

# Forest Grove Historic Resource



## 1817 CEDAR STREET - Webster/Thomas House

### Description:

This is a 1-1/2 story, wood-framed, asphalt-clad vernacular farmhouse single-family residence with a composition shingle covered gable roof. It has one-over-one double-hung sash windows. Its architecture is distinguished by the primary facade being the gable end that has two one-over-one double-hung sash windows in the gable above a dropped hip porch roof. Four boxed columns rising from a balustrade support porch roof. One-story wing with gable roof added to the south side. Small, second dwelling appears to be in the rear yard.

### History:

The house at 1817 Cedar may have been moved in the 1910s from the adjoining lot now occupied by the house at 2307 18th Avenue. Edward Webster owned the entire southwest portion of the block on which the houses at 1817 Cedar Street and at 2307 18th Avenue now stand. As late as 1912, only an outbuilding (possibly a small barn) stood on the site of the 1817 Cedar Street house. To the south, on the site of the present 2307 18th Avenue house, stood a house whose footprint is nearly identical to the house now at 1817 Cedar Street. This irregularly shaped vernacular farmhouse style dwelling may have been built by Edward Webster and moved by a later owner. Edward Webster owned this portion of the block until March 1895. Little is known about Webster at present (1912 Sanborn Company map of Forest Grove).

In March 1895, Mary E. Thomas bought this large lot. Mary B. Thomas and her husband, Arthur B. Thomas, reportedly lived on this block around the turn of the nineteenth century. The Thomas family and their descendents continued to own the 1817 Cedar Street property until 1946. Mary B. and Arthur B. Thomas may have been responsible for moving this house in the 1910s to its present location from the adjoining southern parcel to make way for the construction of the present 2307 18th Avenue Bungalow style house. (Moving houses was not an uncommon activity throughout Oregon in the 1800s and early 1900s.)

Arthur B. Thomas, a native of Cascade, Iowa, born in 1848, enlisted in Company L, First Iowa Volunteer Cavalry and fought in the Civil War when only a teenager. Immediately after the war, he engaged in the general merchandise business in Des Moines, Iowa. He soon moved this business to nearby Ames, Iowa, where he operated this business with his brother, A.C. Thomas, for the next twenty years. The destruction of this store by fire influenced the Thomas couple to move to Forest Grove, Oregon, around 1890. Thomas opened a successful general merchandise store in Forest Grove, that he operated with Edwin B. James under the name of Thomas & James general merchandise, until 1905 when he took up real estate. It is said that in 1905 Thomas traveled to the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland, selling cherries and encouraging people to move to Forest Grove and buy land. In 1910 the Thomas couple no longer lived on this block (the location of both 1817 Cedar Street and 2307 18th Avenue properties) but had moved to a new location on 18th Avenue. By 1910, A.B. Thomas had bought an orchard; he engaged in fruit farming until around 1930. Arthur B. Thomas died in 1936 at age eighty-eight. Mary E. Thomas, A.B. Thomas's third wife, preceded him in death (Oregon Journal, March 6, 1936; "Board of Trade edition, Washington County News, April 1908; "Washington County Cultural Resources Inventory form for 2307 18th Avenue property, 1983).

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In 1946 the Mary E. and Arthur B. Thomas heirs and their spouses (Dorothy and Edward Pea, Horace E. and Georgia L. Thomas, and Ida M. and J.R. Caple(s)), sold this property as well as the 2307 18th Avenue property to James C. and Jessie Reiley who owned this house from 1946 to 1958.