

Joseph Libbey House
308 North Main Street
Coupeville
Island County
Washington

HABS WA-272

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JOSEPH LIBBEY¹ HOUSE

HABS NO. WA-272

Location: 308 North Main Street, Coupeville, Island County, Washington
Lat: 48.216313, Long: -122.686531 (Google Maps)

Significance: The Libbey House is listed as contributing to the *Central Whidbey Island Historic District* (1998 update) under National Register criterion A, for its association with early Euroamerican settlement in the Pacific Northwest and the Donation Land Claim Laws, in the period between 1850 and 1870.

This property is also significant under National Register criterion C, because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of architectural expressions and methods of construction that represent the period of early Euroamerican settlement in the Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve beginning in the 1850s through 1870. It is a unique building style in the area and remains the only example of Gothic Revival. It retains integrity of location, materials, design, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Description: The Joseph B. Libbey house is a vernacular Gothic Revival residence that sits on the west side of Main Street in Coupeville, Washington approximately 3/10 of a mile south of Penn Cove. Main Street is the primary connection between the town of Coupeville and Ebey's Prairie, to its south, the home of fertile and active farm land. The Libbey House once sat on a large acreage with fruit trees, gardens, a picket fence, and outbuildings. It now sits on 1.5 acres and is flanked by mid-century commercial construction with paved parking lots that compromise its historic setting.

The property has very few landscape features. The building is accessed from Main Street via a narrow poured concrete sidewalk that leads to the front door and branches off to the south and continues to the covered porch on the south side of the house. From there a small poured concrete spur runs due south to the edge of the property where a gate once opened in the surrounding picket fence. At the back of the house are two more poured concrete sidewalks that lead from the back porch door west and southwest and end less than 15'-0" away from the house where an outbuilding once stood. There are two shrubs in the southeast corner of the lot and a cluster of lilacs north of the house. Between the house and the lilacs is a poured concrete cistern.

The Libbey house has a wood frame set on a post and block/stone foundation. The building is L-shaped (26'-0" x 30'-0") and clad in wood lap siding with corner boards. The main (east) portion of the house is one and one half story building with a side gable roof clad in asphalt shingles and a centered, front gabled dormer. One brick, corbelled chimney sits north of the dormer at the roof peak.

¹ The name is also seen spelled "Libby." However, cemetery and county records show it spelled with the E.

The building has a four-paneled, centered, front door with side lites and a poured concrete stoop. On either side of the front door is a single pane, vinyl window opening with vinyl muntins pressed between the layers of glass to form an 18-lite opening. The door and windows have simple, wood trim surrounds. The front stoop is covered by a flat-roofed porch supported by wood posts with decorative brackets. The porch has a simple, posted handrail with wood slats and a decorative 'X' at the center. It is accessed from the top floor by a door centered in the dormer with a gothic arch and six lites.

The north and south walls are identical. They have two centered window openings, one on the ground floor and one in the gable end. All four windows have wood trim and sills. The gable end windows have a gothic arch with an 8-lite wood sash. The bottom half of the opening is covered with a wood screen with six, vertical, square posts. The ground floor windows have single pane, vinyl window openings with vinyl muntins pressed between two layers of glass to form an 18-lite opening.

A one-and-one-half story addition was added to the southwest corner of the building. It has a gable roof clad in asphalt shingles; the walls are clad in lap siding with corner boards that match the siding on the original house. This addition has an unadorned brick chimney on the east end of the roof gable. The chimney is thinner and taller than the chimney on the main house. The addition has single window openings on the north and south walls. The south window is a single pane, vinyl window with vinyl muntins pressed between the layers of glass to form a 15-lite opening. The window on the north has wood, double-hung, six-over-six lite sashes and a simple wood trim and sill. This addition also has a gable end window on the west side that matches the window on the north wall. These three openings are wider and shorter in proportion than the windows on the original Gothic Revival house, helping to distinguish this portion of the house from the original.

A one-story addition sits at the southwest corner of the first addition. It has a gabled roof running east-west clad in asphalt shingles with a brick chimney on the west end. The addition is clad in horizontal shiplap siding that is a wider profile than the rest of the building. On the north end of the addition is a shed roof that covers an enclosed porch. The porch is accessed through a wood door on the west wall. The door has a single lite and single wood panel below. It is accessed via two wood steps with a square post hand rail. The door has a simple wood trim and sill. The north wall has 10 screened openings that run the length of the wall. The south wall has one central window opening with a single pane, vinyl window with vinyl muntins pressed between layers of glass to form a 15-lite opening. The window has a simple wood trim and sill. On the east, the addition has a poured concrete stoop with a simple, hipped shed roof covered in asphalt. There is a wood door with four lites, two panels, and simple wood trim; it is accessed with one poured concrete step.

The last addition was added to the west wall of the previous addition. It has a shed roof covered in asphalt shingles and sits on a poured concrete and post-on-pier foundation. The walls are clad in shiplap siding with corner boards. The west wall has two openings

with wood sills and trim. On the south end of the wall, the opening is covered in a heavy screen. On the north end of the wall is a small 3-over-1 single sash.

History: The house was built in 1870 by John Alexander Jr., son of Coupeville Donation Land Claim holder, John Alexander Sr. and wife, Frances (Sharp) Alexander. John Sr., Frances, and three sons (William, age 14; John Jr., age 12; and Joseph, age 2) came to the Pacific Northwest by wagon train from Illinois between May and October 1851. They moved to Whidbey Island in June 1852. A fourth son, Abram Lansdale Alexander, was the first white boy born in the Puget Sound area, November 13, 1852.²

John Alexander Jr. married Anna Lanning in 1870, the same year he constructed the house. John Jr. and Anna lived in the house for seven years before selling to newlyweds, Joseph Barstow Libbey and Marietta³ Cook.

Joseph Barstow Libbey came to Whidbey at age nine with his mother, Sarah Ann (Barstow) and older brother, George Barstow, to join his father, Samuel Libbey. Samuel Libbey was a Donation Claim holder of 320 acres on the west side of Whidbey Island at Point Partridge. Joseph and George grew up on the farm; however, Joseph's passions were for business and public service, not farming.⁴

From 1878-1890 Joseph B. Libbey served as Island County Treasurer, Auditor, and Postmaster. He married Marietta Cook, daughter of Ebey's Prairie settlers, Cyrus E. and Sadie M. Cook, on February 22, 1877. That same year he bought the Gothic Revival home on Main Street from John Alexander Jr.

Joseph and Marietta raised four children (Howard Barstow, 1880; Clara Barstow, 1883; Sarah Jessie, 1885; and Leona Marietta, 1887) in the house. It was during this time that the additions were added to the southwest corner of the house. The first addition came when the original kitchen was converted into a parlor, and a new kitchen and bathroom were added. The second was originally an open porch that was enclosed to add pantry and laundry rooms.⁵

In 1904, their eldest son, Howard B., married Lydia McCaslin. At this time, Joseph B., by then a widower, moved with his grown daughters to Everett, leaving the house to Howard and Lydia.⁶ This next generation lived in the house with their five kids: Harold, Esther, Joseph W., Calvin, and Jessie. After Howard's death in 1921, and his father's in 1922, the home was inherited by Calvin Libbey.⁷

² Jimmie Jean Cook, A Particular Friend, Penn's Cove: A History of the Settlers, Claims and Buildings of Central Whidbey Island (Coupeville, WA: Island County Historical Society, 1973), 35-37.

³ Marietta's name is also found spelled as "Mary Etta."

⁴ A Particular Friend, 70-72. And Children of the Pioneers (Coupeville, WA: Whidbey Island Chapter #6 of the Daughters of the Pioneers of Washington, 2007), 77-84.

⁵ Sally Hayton-Keeva, Ancestral Walls: Old Abodes of Central Whidbey Island (Coupeville, WA: Sagn Books, 2003), 38.

⁶ Children of Pioneers, 86.

⁷ Particular Friend, pp. 70-72. And Children of the Pioneers, 77-84.

The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974 as part of the *Central Whidbey Island Historic District*. It stands in the Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve, a non-traditional unit of the National Park Service (NPS).

The Reserve was established by Congress in 1978 as a non-traditional NPS unit based on partnerships. The legislation called for the Reserve to be managed by a unit of local government. Administration and management of the Reserve is the responsibility of the Trust Board of Ebey's Landing NHR, which is the unit of local government created by a cooperative planning process between the NPS, the state, county, town governments and the residents of the Central Whidbey Island community...The group promotes sound preservation practices and serves as an advocate for the rich and diverse natural and cultural resources of the Reserve.

Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve is the first unit of its kind within the National Park system. Congress intended that the Reserve would remain largely under private ownership. To ensure that the riches of the Reserve are protected for future generations, the NPS purchases development rights to key sites including portions of the original Ebey donation land claim. The NPS continues to work cooperatively with Washington State Parks, Island County, and the Town of Coupeville for the on-going protection of the historic rural landscape. Most of the land in the Reserve is privately owned. There are two state parks within the boundaries of the Reserve, Fort Casey and Fort Ebey state parks. Coupeville is the county seat for Island County government, and serves as a hub for tourist activities as well as holding town and county government offices, the island's hospital, and other special services and businesses.⁸

Calvin Libbey continued to own the property until 1995 when it was passed to Anna M. Libbey. Between 1995 and 2003 it was owned and lived in by Libbey family members. On February 24, 2003 a Warranty and Grant Deed between "George R. Libbey et al" and Meyer Properties was filed with the Island County Assessor for \$292,500. At this point, the building sat empty. The final record on file with the County is from June 25, 2008 when the property passed from Meyer Properties to Theodore L. Clifton through a Warranty and Grant Deed with a sales price of \$340,895.⁹

The building currently has an uncertain future. Its owner would like to build a road through the site and develop the land behind it. This documentation was done in an attempt to capture the Libbey House on its original site, even though its setting is compromised already by encroaching development.

⁸ National Park Service, Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve, <http://www.nps.gov/archive/ebla/lpp/lpp1.htm>. Website accessed August 2013.

⁹ Island County Assessors, <http://assessor.islandcounty.net/propertyaccess/Property>. Property ID: 7090344. Website accessed August 2013.

Sources:

1. *Building and Landscape Inventory: Part C*. Seattle, WA: Cultural Resources Division, National Park Service, Pacific Northwest Region, Summer 1983, reprinted in 1995.
2. Children of the Pioneers. Coupeville, WA: Whidbey Island Chapter #6 of the Daughters of the Pioneers of Washington, 2007.
3. Cook, Jimmie Jean. A Particular Friend, Penn's Cove: A History of the Settlers, Claims and Buildings of Central Whidbey Island. Coupeville, WA: Island County Historical Society, 1973.
4. Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve. <http://www.nps.gov/archive/ebla/lpp/lpp1.htm>. Website Accessed August 2013.
5. Hayton-Keeva, Sally. Ancestral Walls: Old Abodes of Central Whidbey Island. Coupeville, WA: Sagn Books, 2003.
6. Island County Assessor. <http://assessor.islandcounty.net/propertyaccess/Property>. Property ID: 7090344. Website Accessed August 2013.

Historian: Anne E. Matsov, Historical Architect
Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve
162 Cemetery Road
PO Box 774
Coupeville WA 98239
anne_matsov@nps.gov

August 2013



Joseph B. Libbey House at 308 North Main Street, looking north to Penn Cove, ca.1900.

Note: House is behind buggy.

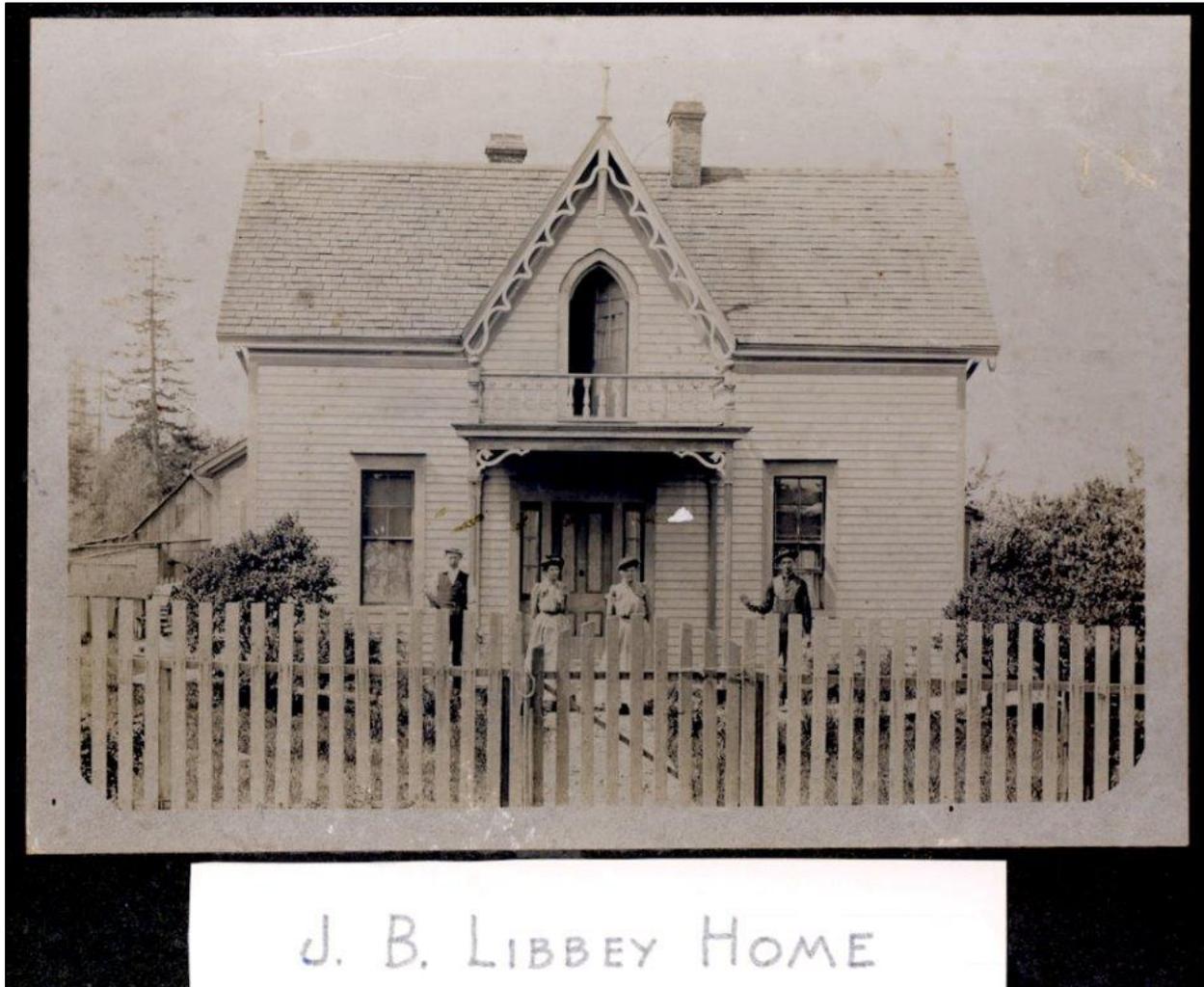
(photo courtesy of the Island County Historical Society)



Joseph B. Libbey House at 308 North Main Street, looking north to Penn Cove, ca.1900.

Note: House is behind power pole on left of image.

(photo courtesy of the Island County Historical Society)



Joseph B. Libbey House at 308 North Main Street, looking west, May 1904.

Left to Right: Charlie Davis (Clara's fiancé), Clara Libbey Willard, Leona Libbey Little, and Howard Libbey.

Note: Outbuilding on far left is no longer standing.

(photo courtesy of the Island County Historical Society)



Joseph B. Libbey House at 308 North Main Street, looking north to Penn Cove, September 18, 1946.

Note: Front porch, picket fence, and gable end decorations are removed; couple standing on side porch.

(photo courtesy of the Roger Sherman Collection)