



City of Loveland

Long Range Planning Division

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Loveland City Council Staff Report

From: Matt Robenalt, Long Range Planning Division
Meeting Date: October 7, 2003
Re: Application for Historic Landmark Property Designation

SITE DATA

Address: 746 N. Washington Avenue, Loveland, Colorado

Request: Application for Historic Landmark Property Designation

Historic Name: William H. McCreery House

**Architectural Style
& Form:** Second Empire: Octagonal Mode Variation (Main House)

**Current
Building Sq. Ft.:** Main House = 2427 Sq. Ft.
(measurements by Larimer County Assessor)

Subordinate Structures:
Carriage House = est. 648 Sq. Ft
Chicken Coop = est. 336 Sq. Ft
(measurements provided by Owner)

**Construction
Date:** Original Structure = est. 1888 – 1901
Early Kitchen Addition = est. early 1900's
Subordinate Structures:
Garage/Carriage House = est. 1937
Chicken Coop = est. 1937

Legal Description: Lots 4 Thru 6 & S 21 1/2 FT of Lot 7, Blk 53, Finleys 2nd, Loveland, Colorado

Owner(s): Douglas & Linda Stotz
746 N. Washington Ave.

Applicant: Douglas & Linda Stotz

Application Summary:

On September 15, 2003 the Loveland Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) voted unanimously to recommend that the City Council designate the William H. McCreery House, 746 N. Washington Avenue as a Loveland Historic Register landmark. Approved HPC Resolution No. 3-03 is provided as an attachment.

Larimer County Assessor records identifies the property by the following address: 746 N. Washington Avenue, Loveland, Colorado.

The William H. McCreery House was given landmark status on the National Register of Historic Places (May 2001) and on the Colorado State Register of Historic Places (February 2001).

History:

William H. McCreery was born in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania in 1839. McCreery, a Civil War veteran, was also an ordained United Presbyterian minister. He married his first wife, Martha Marshall, in 1870, and they had three children. In 1874, McCreery moved his family to Colorado's Front Range, with the express purpose of establishing a new United Presbyterian Church. The first location of McCreery's church was established in 1875 in an old school house in the St. Louis settlement on the Big Thompson River. With the construction of the Colorado Central Railroad depot and establishment of the town of Loveland in 1877, McCreery purchased land on the corner of 4th Street and what is now Lincoln Avenue. On this 4th St. property, he proceeded to serve as the architect and general contractor for the construction of the first church in the newly formed town of Loveland. McCreery's second church was eventually replaced with the building that is now the Union Block/Lincoln Hotel, and the congregation's third church was constructed in 1905 at the intersection of 4th Street and N. Jefferson Ave.

In 1879, McCreery gave up his pastoral duties at the church, and retired to his farm in poor health. His poor health, at this time, was attributed to his failed marriage according to neighbors and family members. Upon recovering from his health issues, McCreery reemerged as one of Loveland's pioneer businessmen. He became active in real estate, gold mining and insurance companies. McCreery also served as the Superintendent of Larimer County Schools between 1882-1888, and from 1888-1889 as the conductor of the private school, Loveland Academy.

In 1888, McCreery purchased eight city lots, and based on a variation of an Orson Squire Fowler Octagonal home he observed in Pittsburg, PA, he proceeded to design and build a hexagonal house on four of his eight lots on what is now N. Washington Ave. The home he constructed was a double brick, two-story hexagonal floor plan with a mansard roof and attached tower, and was representative of the Second Empire architectural style popular in the late 1800's in the eastern United States.

McCreery, along with his second wife Julia, lived in the hexagonal house until her death in 1917. At that time, McCreery began renting the home, and eventually sold it to the Conrad Wacker Family in 1919. In June 1926 while traveling on a Union Pacific train to Estes Park for a family gathering with his daughter Mabel and granddaughter Edith, William McCreery was killed when a fire broke out in his train car.

Architectural Description:

The design of the William McCreery home was based on the blueprints of a house in Pittsburgh, PA, which was admired by McCreery. The McCreery House is a unique variation of the Second Empire architectural style, and is characteristic of a form made popular by the Orson S. Fowler Octagonal Movement of the 1850's. The McCreery House is considered a unique variation to the Fowler movement

because it has a hexagonal floor plan, rather than an octagonal floor plan.

The Colorado Historical Society Guide to Colorado's Historic Architecture and Engineering indicates the mansard roof with either concave or straight sides is the key to distinguishing the Second Empire style. Although not very common in Colorado, high style examples exist, most notably the Tabor Hotel in Leadville, the Bloom House in Trinidad, and the Maxwell House in Georgetown. Additional characteristics include a projecting bay or tower extending above the roofline, either contoured or to one side, pedimented windows or molded surrounds, quoins and roof cresting. Cornices are bracketed, reminiscent of the Italianate style. Common elements of the Second Empire style include:

1. mansard roof
2. pedimented windows
3. bracketed windows
4. roof cresting
5. quoins
6. projecting bay/tower
7. molded window surrounds

Examples of the Second Empire style are provided in Photos #1 and #2 below.

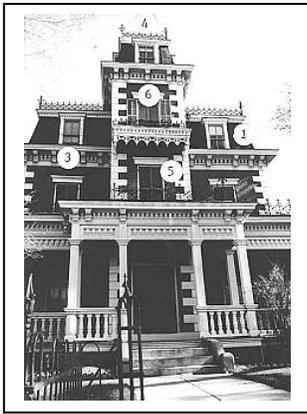


Photo # 1 and #2: Examples of Second Empire architecture. Source: Colorado Historical Society - Guide to Historic Architecture and Engineering.

As the Colorado Historical Society Guide to Colorado's Historic Architecture and Engineering indicates, there are examples of other Second Empire style structures in Colorado. Among these examples are residences with octagonal floor plans. The unique characteristic of the William McCreery home is that its hexagonal floor plan variation demonstrates the versatility of the Fowler octagonal design. See Diagram #1 below. In the publication *The Octagon House, A Home for All* by Orson S. Fowler, he explains the physical characteristics of the octagonal design, which also applies to the hexagonal design. See excerpt below:

An octagon encloses more floor space per linear foot of exterior wall than does the usual square or rectangle, thereby reducing both building costs and heat loss through the walls. Octagons are superior to square houses in increasing sunlight and ventilation and in eliminating dark and useless corners.

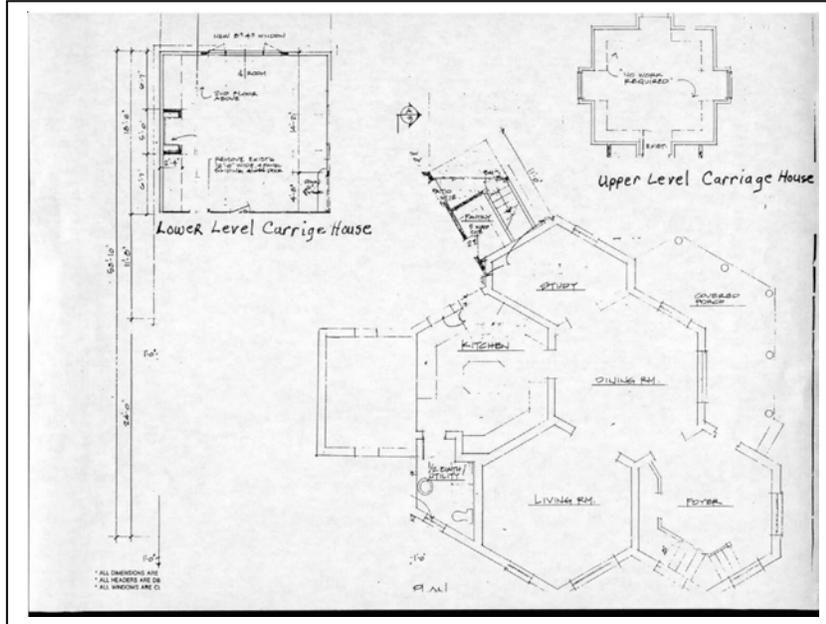


Diagram #1. William H. McCreery House and Carriage House floor plan.
 Source: Colorado Historical Society Compass On-line Cultural Resource Database

The house is constructed on a stone foundation, and is constructed with double brick walls, a wood shingled mansard roof, and three-sided wood-frame wrap-around front porch. A two-story tower of the same design and material was constructed shortly after the house was completed. The site also contains two subordinate structures, a wood-frame two-car garage which is estimated to have been constructed c.1930, and a wood-frame chicken coop. See Photos #3 and #4.

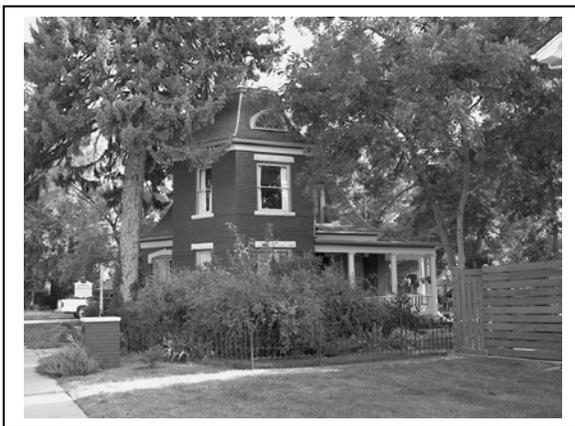


Photo #3. South elevation. Visible features include wood-shingled mansard roof, and two-story tower.



Photo #4. East elevation. Visible features include wood-shingle mansard roof, three-sided wrap-around front porch, and two-story tower.

The McCreery house contains a three-sided wood-frame porch which encloses south and south-east portions of the house. Five Tuscan columns support the gently-sloping porch roof. Windows on the house contain arched keystone lentils and sills with brick relieving arches. The first and second story tower windows contain double-hung sash with stone lentils and sills which indicates the tower was built after the main house was complete. An original leaded glass, fixed, half-window is located on the west elevation of the second story tower wall. Modifications to the original structure, estimated to have occurred in the early 1900's, include a small, single story add-on to serve as a kitchen. The current owners recently converted this add-on into a handicap-accessible bathroom. A shed-roofed enclosure was built on the east elevation to protect the outside basement entrance from the elements. In 2000, a metal handicap ramp was added to the west elevation entrance to comply with building access codes.

The home's interior foyer contains the original white ceramic tiles with the three (3) inlaid McCreery initials ("WHM") at its center. The intertwined initials can be read from two different directions. An original winding staircase leads from the foyer to the second floor. The leaded glass, half-window mentioned above, was designed and placed on the west elevation to spotlight the tiled McCreery initials with filtered afternoon sunlight. Maple Tuscan columns with solid wood balustrades, interior doorways with transoms, archways, a built-in glass china cabinet, and brass hanging light fixtures characterize the interior design features of the McCreery House. Frank and Phyllis Hershman were responsible for much of the home's historic rehabilitation after they purchased the property in 1969. Today, Douglas and Linda Stotz make the William McCreery home their primary residence and open the house for weddings, meetings and gatherings. See Photos #5, #6, #7 and #8.



Photo #5. Ceramic tiles with inlaid McCreery initials "WHM".



Photo #6. Leaded-glass half-window in foyer, which spotlights ceramic tiles with afternoon sunlight.



Photo #7. Maple Tuscan columns with solid wood balustrades.



Photo #8. Interior doorway transoms and archway.

The garage or “carriage house”, a two-story wood-frame structure, mimics the house with a mansard roof. This structure is located northeast of the main house. Sanborn insurance maps indicate a structure near this location as early as 1909, but 1937 Sanborn maps indicate a structure with the exact location as the current garage, thus suggesting an older, and likely smaller structure was replaced with the larger existing garage. Today the garage/carriage house contains a work room and an office. See Photo #9.



Photo #9. Two-story wood-frame garage/carriage house with mansard roof.

A rectangular-shaped, shed-roof wood frame chicken coop is located on extreme northeast corner of the site. According to the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties Register nomination form, the McCreery chicken coop is not only an integral part of the overall site, but it represents a scarce and important structure in Larimer County. In a 1994 Larimer County Reconnaissance Survey of historic resources, chicken coops were identified on only eleven (11) agriculture-related sites. Once common to many properties, they are now a rare feature, and the high physical integrity of the McCreery chicken coop makes this example very unique. See Photos #10 and #11.



Photo #10. Location of chicken coop at northeast corner of property.



Photo #11. Wood frame chicken coop.

Determination of Significance and Integrity

Significance should be used as the starting point in determining eligibility for placement on a historic register. Significance has two distinct attributes – the “area of significance” which answers the question of context, or what is significant about a resource in terms of its association to agriculture, architecture, commerce and industry, education, politics and government, and transportation. The William H. McCreery House is significant for the original owner’s link to the historical contexts of “Cultural Life” and “Settlement” as defined in the Historical Contexts (1997) document by Jennifer H. Strand, Ph.D. for the Loveland Museum Gallery. William H. McCreery was responsible for establishing the third organized church in the Loveland community, and was a pioneer businessman in the community with contributions to the early commercial development of Loveland.

The second attribute of the *significance* of a structure is its “period of significance” which places the resource on a historic timeline and answers the question of when a resource was significant. As noted in a previous section of this staff report, the William H. McCreery House is greater than 50 years old, and represents a unique and varied example of the Second Empire style of architecture. The subordinate structures, which include the garage/carriage house and chicken coop, are also greater than fifty years old. The home, designed and constructed by McCreery, is a rare example of an unusual variation of an architectural style of the mid-nineteenth century.

Integrity refers to the ability of a structure to convey its original design or some later period of significance through the intactness of its historic form, original or historic use of materials, setting and site. Integrity has seven (7) particular aspects: location, setting, feeling, design, materials, workmanship, and association with some attribute of historic significance.

A historic building, for example, that retains its original or historically significant setting with little or no visible modifications that diminish the ability to relate its historic association demonstrates greater integrity than a building that has lost many of physical historical elements. A building with high physical integrity retains the following original or historically significant elements: massing; architectural detail; surface treatment; and windows and doors.

According to the list of features described in the Applicant’s architectural description of the structure, and which is verified by current photographs, the William H. McCreery House and subordinate structures exhibits excellent integrity. The home, designed and constructed by McCreery, is a rare example of an unusual variation of an architectural style of the mid-nineteenth century. The McCreery House retains many of their original features and detailing that characterize it as an example of Second Empire architecture, it is in its original location, and remains in a setting in the neighborhood in which it was originally constructed. The subordinate structures also remain in a setting on the lot where they were originally constructed.

Historic Preservation Commission Recommendation

The William H. McCreery House was designated with landmark status on the National Register of Historic Places (May 2001) and on the Colorado State Register of Historic Places (February 2001).

To be considered eligible for designation as a historic landmark on the Loveland Historic Register, a property must be at least fifty (50) years old and must meet one (1) or more of the criteria for architectural, social cultural, or geographic/environmental significance as identified in Loveland Municipal Code 15.56.090. The William H. McCreery and its subordinate structures satisfy the age requirement and meets the following significant criteria for designation as a Loveland Historic Register landmark of property:

a) Architectural

1. Exemplifies specific elements of an architectural style or period.
2. Demonstrates superior craftsmanship, or high artistic value.
3. Represents innovation in construction, materials, or design.

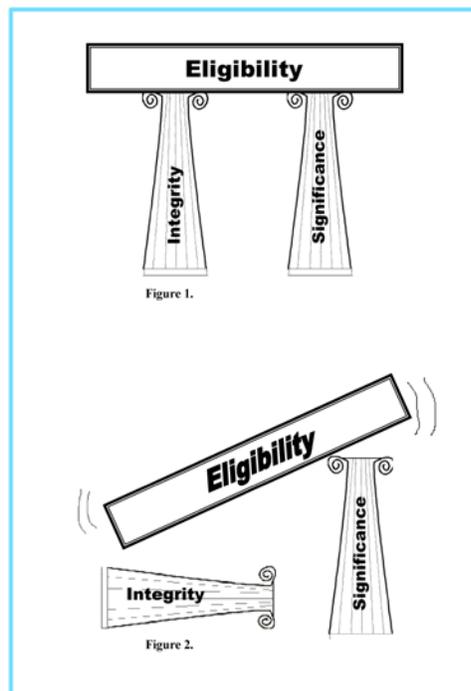
b) Social/Cultural

1. Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic or social heritage of the community.
2. Is associated with notable person(s) or the work of notable person(s).

c) Physical Integrity

1. Shows character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the community, region, state or nation.
2. Retains original design features, materials, and/or character.
3. Retains original location or same historic context if it has been moved.

Given available information for the property at 746 N. Washington Ave., the William H. McCreery House and subordinate structures exhibit both adequate *integrity* and *significance* to support its eligibility for designation as a Loveland historic landmark. This determination is based on the Colorado Historical Society's recommendations for determining landmark eligibility (see Figure 1 and Figure 2, below). The Historic Preservation Commission recommends City Council approval of this request for designation of the William H. McCreery House and site, located at 746 N. Washington Avenue, as a Loveland Historic Register landmark.



Attachments:

HPC Resolution No. 03-05

Site Map, prepared by Staff

Nomination Application submitted by owner