

Oregon Historic Site Form

Sewell Clay Works
 Evergreen & Sewell Rds
 Hillsboro, Washington County

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

address: Evergreen & Sewell Rds apprx. addr
Hillsboro vcnt Washington County

historic name: Sewell Clay Works
 current/
 other names: North Pacific Clay Works

Optional Information
 assoc addresses:
 (former addresses, intersections, etc.)
 location descr:
 (remote sites)

block nbr: _____ lot nbr: _____ tax lot nbr: _____
 township: 1N range: 2 W section: 20 1/4: _____
 zip: _____

PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS

resource type: site height (# stories): _____
 elig. evaluation: _____
 primary constr date: 188 (c.) secondary date: _____ (c.)
 (optional--use for major addns)
 primary orig use: Processing Site
 secondary orig use: _____
 primary style: Not Applicable
 secondary style: _____
 primary siding: _____
 secondary siding: _____
 plan type: _____

total # eligible resources: 1 total # ineligible resources:
 NR status: _____
 NR date listed: _____ (indiv listed only; see Grouping for hist dist)
 orig use comments: _____
 prim style comments: _____
 sec style comments: _____
 siding comments: _____
 architect: _____
 builder: _____

comments/notes: CR-E

GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS

survey project name or other grouping name: Hillsboro Local Inventory Update 2008 2008 Survey & Inventory Project

farmstead/cluster name: _____ external site #: 192/280
 (ID# used in city/agency database)

SHPO INFO FOR THIS PROPERTY

NR date listed: _____
 ILS survey date: _____
 RLS survey date: 7/1/2008
 Gen File date: _____
106 Project(s)



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ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

(Include expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings, and alterations)

Contextual Description:

The site at the southeast corner of Sewell and Evergreen Roads is the location of James H. Sewell's North Pacific Clay Works, often referred to simply as the Sewell Clay Works. A grove of oak trees surround the site.

HISTORY

(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period [preferably to the present])

Historical Significance:

James H. Sewell was born May 24, 1847, the son of English-born immigrants, Henry Sewell and Mary Ann Garrish, pioneers of the 1843 and 1844 immigrations, respectively. James H. was raised on the 526 acre Sewell Donation Land Claim but left to work in Eastern Oregon. He returned in 1870, at the age of 23, upon death of his father, to manage the family farm. He did so successfully, building up the family holdings to 740 acres, engaging in general farming as well as horse and cattle raising.

The origins of Sewell's Clay Works were not a deliberate business venture but rather were based on Sewell's need for a large quantity of drainage tile for the family farm. It is interesting to note that the soil conditions of the central Tualatin Valley that required extensive drainage of farmlands, i.e., a high water table and heavy clay content, included in part a solution to the problem of drainage: clay for drainage tiles. Sewell found that he possessed a significant amount of high quality clay on his own farm. The record is unclear exactly when Sewell began the limited manufacture of drainage tile for his own need, but we do know his original equipment costs were approximately \$30.00 for a second hand tile mill. Sewell's tile producing efforts were quantities of good drainage tile from the high quality clay on his farm, he ordered the best available technology from the east and began manufacturing drainage tile on a large scale.

As of 1893, the North Pacific Clay Works was reported to be the largest such industry in the state and served a national clientele. The record indicates that Sewell was also considering expanding into brick manufacturing at his clay works, but it is not clear if he ever actually did so. It is interesting to note that Sewell was not alone in the clay works industry. There was another tile factory in the Tualatin area (see site #145/516) and at least two brick yards that we know of, those operated by Joe Adams at the site of the present Shute Park and at 5th and Oak Streets in Hillsboro, in the 1880's.

James H. Sewell died on February 11, 1913. His estate was left to his two children, and the record is unclear as to whether or not North Pacific Clay Works was still in operation at that time. In any event, it would seem safe to state that the North Pacific Clay Works has a 15-20 year span of existence at least, and provided a great deal of drainage tile for the agricultural needs of the central Tualatin Valley. It is an outstanding example of the successful agricultural business of the late 19th century founded on the original Donation Land Claim farms of the first American overland pioneers of the 1840's in HGA 4.

RESEARCH INFORMATION

(Check all of the basic sources consulted and cite specific important sources)

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Title Records | <input type="checkbox"/> Census Records | <input type="checkbox"/> Property Tax Records | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Histories |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sanborn Maps | <input type="checkbox"/> Biographical Sources | <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Files | <input type="checkbox"/> Interviews |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Obituaries | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspapers | <input type="checkbox"/> State Archives | <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Photographs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> City Directories | <input type="checkbox"/> Building Permits | <input type="checkbox"/> State Library | |

Local Library: _____ University Library: _____

Historical Society: _____ Other Repository: _____

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Bibliography: Sources Consulted:

Nixon, Birgetta. Hillsboro Argus-Centennial Edition. 1976.

Hillsboro Independent. Sewell Obituary, February 28, 1913.

Hines, Rev. H. K. An Illustrated History of the State of Oregon. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1893, p. 935.