



## COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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## HISTORIC COMMISSION

*Creating Solutions for Our Future*

### THURSTON COUNTY HISTORIC COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

#### Historic Register Application

**Public Hearing: May 10, 2023, 6:30 p.m.**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81447686497>

Application No: TCHC 22-02 Johnson Whistle Depot East Olympia Grocery

Location: 8245 Rich RD SE, Olympia, WA 98501

Owner: David L. Johnson, Margaret Johnson, Will Johnson  
8245 Rich RD SE  
Olympia, WA 98501

Date Built: 1917

Staff Report Prepared By: Sonja Cady

#### A. Background and Historical Significance:

(Should address topics such as date built, notable historic dates, changes in ownership or function of building, etc.)

Thurston County Community Planning and Economic Development received a complete application for the placement of the Johnson Whistle Depot East Oly Grocery to the Thurston County Historic Register (TCHR). The store was constructed in 1917 and still serves the East Olympia community today. It is located between Rich RD and Diagonal RD, situated very near to the train tracks. The storefront originally was positioned to face the train tracks but was rotated to face Rich RD at an unknown date. Anna B. Smith was the original owner, and it has had many owners since as seen in Attachment D. The current owner is Absarokee Inc. and the application was filed by David, Margaret, and Will Johnson.



On March 28, 2023, the Historic Commission subcommittee and County Staff met with William Johnson, to take photographs of the store. Mr. Johnson stated that since his family has taken ownership, they have reroofed the building with a metal roof, redone the electrical, and made other repairs to the interior. Longtime customers shared with him that there were once cold lockers in the back of the building that the public could use to butcher and wrap meat, and could even rent freezer space. The current location of the kitchen was used as the Post Office for some time. Mr. Johnson added that there are still 4 bedrooms above the retail space that haven't been changed since the 1940's. The bedrooms are only accessible from the roof and through a window, he is hoping to create an access to them in the future.



The awning in the front of the store and gas pumps were removed by the previous owners. The most recent remodel does not appear to have been permitted. In the 1940's the store consisted of 5 buildings, the retail space, a post office, a warehouse for storage, living quarters to the right of the store, and an upstairs apartment with bedrooms per the narrative (Attachment C) written by the son of a former owner, John Brassfield. It does not appear that any of the original materials are intact, but much of the original shape remains, the siding and roof have been replaced, and solar panels have been added.



B. Significant Historical Characteristics:

These are the features that contribute to the property's historical significance which should be maintained and preserved.

Exterior:

- The overall silhouette, mass and structure of the exterior of the building has been altered significantly due to additions and the removal of original features.

Interior:

- The interior of the store shows few of the original features due to additions and updates.

B. Qualifications for the Thurston County Historic Register:

Attachment A of the staff report provides general background about the Thurston County Historic Register and requirements for placement on the register. Attachment B contains the section of the Thurston County Historic Preservation Ordinance which gives the criteria for designation to the register.

There are four categories of eligibility as described in Attachments A and B. The Johnson Whistle Depot East Oly Store relates to those eligibility requirements as follows:

1. **Has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the county, state or nation**  
The Johnson Whistle Depot East Oly Grocery has served the community of East Olympia for over 100 years as a general store and post office among other things. It has been a staple of the community for many years.
2. **At least 50 years old (or lesser age if they are exceptionally important)**  
The store was built in 1917, well over the 50-year criteria.
3. **Has integrity of location (i.e- is in its original location)**  
The store remains in its original location.
4. **Falls into one of the categories in Attachment B:**  
The store fits into category 4, "Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the county's cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering or architectural history;"  
The store reflects social and economic elements of Thurston County as it has served the East Olympia community with general supplies, feed, gasoline, as a Post Office, and a butcher station.



D. Staff Recommendation:

Staff and the Historic Commission subcommittee recommend against placement of the Johnsons Whistle Depot East Oly Store to the Thurston County Historic Register because of the changes to the exterior.

Attachments:

Attachment A: GENERAL BACKGROUND ABOUT THURSTON COUNTY HISTORIC REGISTER

Attachment B: TCC 2.106.040 Thurston County historic register.

Attachment C: Remembrances from John Brassfield

Attachment D: List of Property Owners

Attachment E: Historic Property Report (DAHP)

Attachment F: Application

## ATTACHMENT A

### GENERAL BACKGROUND ABOUT THURSTON COUNTY HISTORIC REGISTER

#### The Process for Designating Properties to the Register

The Thurston County Preservation Ordinance (#8334) in Section 3.B describes this process as follows: Owner approval is required for designation to the register. A public hearing must be held by the Historic Commission with notice given to the public and the owner(s). Appeals to the Commission's designation decision may be made to the Board of Thurston County Commissioners within 30 days.

#### Basis for Decision-Making Regarding Designation to the Register

Criteria for determining eligibility to the Thurston County Historic Register is found in Section 5A of the Thurston County Preservation Ordinance. Properties may be designated if they are:

1. At least 50 years old (or lesser age if they are exceptionally important).
2. Have integrity of location.
3. Are associated with the heritage, culture, and development of the County in at least one of several ways, such as:
  - a. Outstanding examples of earlier architectural styles or construction methods; or
  - b. Associated with important historical events or with persons significant in local history; or
  - c. Comprise a district representative of an earlier period.
  - d. Archaeological sites are also eligible.

THE FULL LIST OF DESIGNATION CRITERIA FROM ORDINANCE #8334 IS ENCLOSED IN ATTACHMENT B.

#### Review of Changes to Historic Register Properties

Properties designated to the Thurston County Register are subject to an advisory review process by the County's Historic Commission when any changes are proposed to exterior architectural features, identified historic interior features of public buildings, or to any proposed demolitions or new construction on the property. The purpose of the review is to try to prevent detrimental alterations to or destruction of significant historic features of the property. Standards guiding the review are the "Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation 1983." Copies are available at the Thurston County Planning Department.

Those features which the Historic Commission will be concerned about are listed in the staff report for each property and will become part of the official register designation action. Compliance with any advice on proposed changes to the historic property is voluntary on the part of the owner or person proposing the change. If, however, changes result in the loss of the building's historic character, the Historic Commission may remove it from the Historic Register after public hearing. The review process for proposed changes to historic properties on the Historic Register is to take no more than 30 days and is tied to application for other existing County permits.

In addition, a property tax exemption for historic renovations requires binding review and approval of the renovation before the tax exemption is granted. A separate meeting to review renovation plans must be arranged for any properties wishing to claim this exemption.

## ATTACHMENT B

### **TCC 2.106.040 Thurston County historic register.**

- A. Criteria for Determining Designation to the Register. Any building, structure, object, site or district may be designated for inclusion in the Thurston County historic register if it has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the county, state or nation; has integrity of location; is at least fifty years old, or is of lesser age and has exceptional importance; and if it falls into at least one of the following categories:
1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of national, state or local history;
  2. Embodies the distinctive architectural characteristics of a type, period, style or method of design or construction, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
  3. Is an outstanding work of a designer, builder or architect who has made a substantial contribution to the art;
  4. Exemplifies or reflects special elements of the county's cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering or architectural history;
  5. Is associated with the lives of persons significant in national, state or local history;
  6. Has yielded or may be likely to yield archaeological information important in prehistory or history;
  7. Is a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance;
  8. Is a building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event;
  9. Is a birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance;
  10. Is a cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events, or cultural patterns;
  11. Is a reconstructed building that has been executed in a historically accurate manner, within a suitable environment and which is congruent with the county's history;
  12. Is a creative and unique example of folk architecture and design created by persons not formally in the architectural or design professions, and which does not fit into formal architectural or historical categories.



## Attachment C

Inside the General store and gas station owned and operated by Morgan and Twila Brassfield from 1943 to 1953. The photo was taken around 1948. Pictured are daughters Coralie and Alice along with Morgan and Twila.

Year: 1948

Donor: John Brassfield

General store and gas station owned and operated by Morgan and Twila Brassfield from 1943 to 1953. The photo was taken around 1948. Daughters Coralie and Alice are standing in front of the store.

Remembrances from John Brassfield: The store is in East Olympia on Rich Road SE (Diagonal Road now), within a couple of hundred feet of the RR tracks. These tracks represent the main line from Seattle to Portland. Only a spur goes into Olympia as it is such a steep hill into town.

In the picture one can see the brand new 1948 Mercury and the old Hudson sitting to the side of the pumps. The two pumps, regular and ethyl, needed to be pumped up by hand after every use. They were drained at night. I pumped them up on the way to school every morning for the entire 10 years we lived there. Between the two pumps are the bulk oil tanks. The oil was pumped into one of those cans with the spout that folded up and down when you were ready to put the oil into the car. As I remember the oil was 30, 40 and 50 weight. Gas was really inexpensive then, if someone asked for \$1 worth, you put in about 4 1/4 gallons.

On the inside, just inside the front door was the cookie cabinet, consisting of three lidded racks. Macaroons, oatmeal, and maybe chocolate chip cookies were in these racks, without any packaging. The Mothers Cookies delivery man would arrive each week and restock the supply. Of course, on each trip out to pump gas, I would grab a handful of cookies.

The building in the back, which you can only see the very end of, was the locker building (cold storage). It had a place where people could butcher their meat (beef, pigs, deer, etc.), then wrap it and place it in a rented locker where it would freeze. This was a popular place, times were difficult farming in the area so a lot of deer poaching went on.

The very back of the store, which one can see a little of in the picture, was the hay and grain part. Also we had chicken feed and the like. I was able to toss around 50# bags of feed by the time I was 10 years old.

The door on the side of the store was where the post office for East Olympia was located. That was so people could get to their mailbox after hours. The mail came on the train at about noon and in the early evening. Either my brother or I would go over to the depot with our bag of outgoing mail and wait for the train. When it came through it would slow down,

## Attachment C

we would throw our sack of mail in the open door of the mail car and they would throw their mailbag out. This was all done at about 30 miles per hour.

The mail that arrived was for Olympia as well as East Olympia. So Christmas time was far different. The train would stop and unload up to 50 bags of mail and packages. There were large carts available for dealing with that much mail. A transfer truck came out from Olympia twice a day to take their mail and any freight into the downtown post office and other locations. Also a bus, actually an extended Chevrolet, came out with any passengers to board the train, and to pick up any passengers going into Olympia.

Hardly anything was packaged back then. All meat was on trays in the cooler. The cheese was placed on a large wheel with a cutter that produced wedges. We had dried apricots in a large barrel. There were a lot of bulk foods, much the same as you see in today's supermarket.

Nearly everyone had an account. We had maybe 100 regular customers, each with an account book. My father was a real softy when it came to people eating and feeding their customers. Several times, I remember we received vehicles (such as that Hudson) in payment of accounts.

The store consisted of five parts. The store itself, the post office (very small), the warehouse where we kept hay and grain as well as inventory, the living quarters (kitchen, dining room, living room, bathroom) called the apartment on the right side of the building, and the four bedrooms which were upstairs. It seemed large enough back then, but a recent visit amazed me at how small everything was.

It provided a comfortable living for our family. In addition, we learned all about the art of "retail", waiting on customers, making change, stocking shelves, and general hard work.

Year: 1948

Donor: John Brassfield

*Sonia Cady*

**Chambers Prairie ( renamed East Olympia) had many shopkeepers!  
Established December 19, 1917**

<b>Anna B. Smith(Mrs. Samuel Smith);</b>	
<b>John H. Fewkes</b>	<b>April 5, 1919</b>
<b>Bessie L. Smith</b>	<b>September 24, 1919</b>
<b>Frank S. Jones</b>	<b>November 2, 1920</b>
<b>William F. McCarthy</b>	<b>July 9, 1921</b>
<b>Frank H. Brown</b>	<b>May 9, 1922</b>
<b>Ralph E. Summers</b>	<b>January 4, 1923</b>
<b>Oscar H. Noll</b>	<b>September 5, 1924</b>
<b>Gertrude B. Reeder</b>	<b>December 1, 1925</b>
<b>Ruth Mills (Mrs. Guy Mills</b>	<b>March 14, 1944</b>
<b>Mrs. Morgan E. Brassfield</b>	<b>February 8, 1945</b>
<b>Bertha Simpson</b>	<b>April 1, 1953</b>
<b>Joseph Wesley Cochran</b>	<b>March 10, 1962</b>
<b>Don Oakland</b>	
<b>Glenn Blaine Gilmore</b>	<b>April 15, 1974</b>
<b>Terry Frederickson</b>	
<b>David and Margaret Johnson</b>	<b>Current</b>

**Partial information obtained from Postmarked Washington Thurston County by Guy Reed Ramsey,  
Published by Thurston County Historic Commission.**

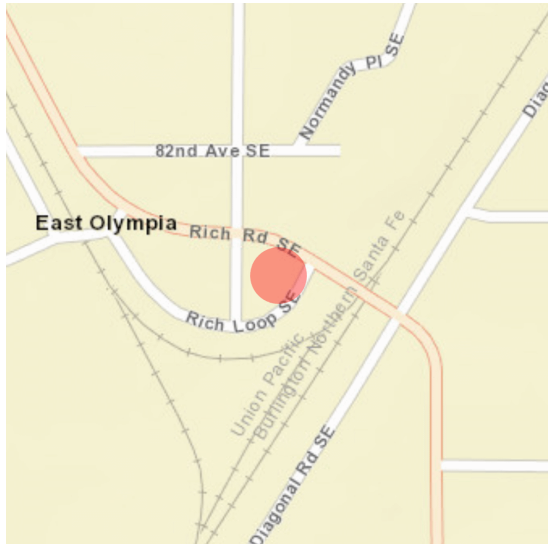


## Historic Property Report

Resource Name:

Property ID: 489343

### Location



**Address:** 8245 83RD AVE SE, OLYMPIA, WA 98501  
**Tax No/Parcel No:** 39900700100  
**Plat/Block/Lot:** Section 17 Township 17 Range 1W Quarter NE NW  
**Geographic Areas:** Thurston County, EAST OLYMPIA Quadrangle, T17R01W17

### Information

**Number of stories:** 1

#### Construction Dates:

Construction Type	Year	Circa
Built Date	1960	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Historic Use:

Category	Subcategory
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#### Historic Context:

##### Category

Architecture

#### Architect/Engineer:

Category	Name or Company
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# Historic Property Report

Resource Name:

Property ID: 489343

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## Thematics:

### Local Registers and Districts

Name	Date Listed	Notes
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## Project History

Project Number, Organization, Project Name	Resource Inventory	SHPO Determination	SHPO Determined By, Determined Date
2011-08-00143, , Assessors Data Project: Thurston County Commercial		Not Determined	



# Historic Property Report

Resource Name:

Property ID: 489343

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## Inventory Details - 7/1/2011

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**Common name:**

**Date recorded:** 7/1/2011

**Field Recorder:** Artifacts Consulting, Inc.

**Field Site number:** 39900700100

**SHPO Determination**

## Detail Information

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**Characteristics:**

Category	Item
Structural System	Wood - Platform Frame
Form Type	Commercial
Cladding	Wood

## Surveyor Opinion

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**Significance narrative:** Data included on this historic property inventory form (HPI) detail stemmed from County Assessor building records imported by the Washington State Department of Archaeology of Historic Preservation (DAHP) into WISAARD in 2011. This upload reduces data entry burden on community volunteers and historical societies participating in the survey and inventory of their communities. The intent of this project is directed specifically to facilitating community and public involvement in stewardship, increasing data accuracy, and providing a versatile planning tool to Certified Local Governments (CLGs).

Project methodology entailed use of the University of Washington's State Parcel Database (<http://depts.washington.edu/wagis/projects/parcels/development.php>) to provide the base parcel layer for CLGs. Filtering of building data collected from each county trimmed out all properties built after 1969, as well as all current, previously inventoried properties. Translation of building data descriptors to match fields in HPI allowed the data upload. Calculation of point locations utilized the center of each parcel. Data on this detail provides a snapshot of building information as of 2011. A detailed project methodology description resides with DAHP. Project team members: Historic Preservation Northwest, GeoEngineers, and Artifacts Consulting, Inc. (project lead).

**Physical description:** The building at 8245 83rd Avenue SE, Olympia, is located in Thurston County. According to the county assessor, the structure was built in 1960 and is a commercial business. The 1-story building has a platform frame structural system. The walls of the commercial form are clad principally in wood.



### THURSTON COUNTY HISTORIC REGISTER APPLICATION FORM

I/We, as owner(s) of the below-named property do agree to place the property on the Historic Register of Thurston County. I/We understand that the property will be subject to an advisory review process by the Historic Commission on any proposed changes to exterior architectural features, to any identified interior historic features, or to new construction on the property or demolition. I/We further understand that compliance with the Historic Commission's advice is voluntary. I/We also understand that the property will be publicized by the County, its location shown on maps of historic resources, and background information published on its historic significance.

Historic Property Name:

The Johnson's Whistle Depot

East

Historic Property Address:

8245 Rich Rd SE.

Oly

grocery

Olympia WA 98501

Owner(s) Name(s):

David L Johnson, Margaret Johnson, Will Johnson

Phone #: 360-491-5167 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner(s) Signature(s):

David L Johnson

Margaret Johnson

Will Johnson

Date:

Nov. 20/2022

**NOTE:** Documentation supporting the historic significance of the above property may be available in the Thurston County Cultural Resources Inventory. Please provide any additional information you have regarding the history of this property.

**PLEASE NOTE: Properties which have been altered substantially from their original exterior appearance ARE NOT eligible for the Heritage Register.**

SEND THIS COMPLETED FORM TO:

Sonja Cady  
Community Planning and Economic Development  
2000 Langridge DR SW  
Olympia, WA 98502