

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

THE STODDARD HOUSE IN SILVER CITY

Number 553

December 1981

The Stoddard House is a famous example of the Queen Anne style of architecture, with the use of "gingerbread" ornamentation. This home stands out today as it did when it was built as a large, ornate, and uniquely elaborate structure. It is out of the ordinary because of its grand scale and elaborate detailing when compared with most of the buildings in Silver City. Yet the house is as much a part of Silver City as any other because of its visual warmth and unusual appeal.

The house we see today was not completed until 1895. The first house on the site was a small wood-frame structure of one story and two to three rooms. It was built prior to the autumn of 1868. This house was either greatly remodeled or removed and replaced with a large two-story structure between 1885 and 1889.

The larger house had a flat front-porch roof and board-and-batten siding. It appears to be the main part of the present house. During the autumn of 1892, the board-and-batten siding was replaced with horizontal siding, probably shiplap. The side bedroom additions were constructed in the autumn of 1895, and the ornate and elaborate detailing was added then as well.

It is not known who actually constructed the smaller house.

It may be assumed that Jack Stoddard supplied the lumber and much of the labor for the additions after 1885. The fine carpentry on the 1895 house was done by a German-born carpenter and wood carver, Otto Patscheck. He is responsible for both manufacture and installation of the decorative wood trim. Patscheck also did the ornamentation on the Lippincott building in Silver City, and he made a massive, beautiful ore-specimen cabinet for Colonel W. H. Dewey (now on display at the Owyhee County Historical Complex).

The interior of the house was once richly furnished and elaborately decorated. Most floors had carpets or decorative area rugs, while the walls and ceilings were covered with fine wallpaper. Some of the interior woodwork was "hand grained." The most noteworthy interior decoration was a chandelier from Paris. The original owners were married beneath it in 1870. There was also marble-topped furniture throughout the house.

The builders of the large house were John W. (Jack) Stoddard and his wife, Mary Ann. Stoddard was born in Dubuque, Iowa, November 28, 1847. He enlisted in the 21st Iowa Infantry and fought in the Civil War. In 1868 he came to Owyhee County and

engaged in numerous ventures, including camp cook, Indian fighter, prospector, miner, carpenter and interior decorator, stockraiser, sawmill operator/owner, freighter, and--in retirement--storyteller.

Stoddard was a miner and prospector at heart but was seldom able to earn a stable income in mining. He is best known as the discoverer of the Wagontown (later called Delamar) mines in 1875.

He was forced to sell his interest in the property before it was developed. In later years he tried to develop the Morning Star and Potosi mines without significant financial rewards.

Stoddard was able to fall back on his lumber and carpentry when he had to. His work as a carpenter and painter, and especially as a wallpaper hanger, was excellent and well recognized.

Mrs. Stoddard, the former Mary Ann McMahan, was born in Tamaqua, Pennsylvania, April 12, 1854. She moved with her parents first to California and then to the Owyhee mines. She married Jack Stoddard September 18, 1870, in Silver City and the ceremony was described as the finest thus far in the Owyhees. She was a gracious hostess and socially active in the community.

She also was an enthusiastic partner with her husband in many of his ventures, and they raised two sons, George F. And William J.

Jack and Mary Ann Stoddard were among the few families who remained in Silver City after World War I and the decline in mining activity. They have been described as being always optimistic, generous to a fault, and most of all firm believers that Silver City was a place of infinite promise. They died within about four weeks of each other in December 1934 and January 1935.

Compiled by William P. Statham