

Asahel Bush House

By Virginia Green

In 1878, Asahel Bush (1824-1913)—Oregon publisher, banker, and politician—moved into his new twelve-room house in Salem as a widower with four children, two of whom were attending school in the East.

Now a museum, the two-story wooden building, designed by local architect Wilbur F. Boothby, is typical of the English style adapted by prosperous American merchants and professionals of post-Civil War years. Its Italianate-styled bracketed gable roofs, elongated windows, and *porte cochère* (added after 1900) hint at the elegance cultivated among sophisticated Oregonians of that period.

Front steps lead to a generous veranda. The central hall is dominated by a straight stairway leading to a spacious second floor hall and bedrooms, a bath, and servants' quarters. The parlor, off the central hall, has French wallpaper and a marble fireplace. Opposite the parlor is a sitting room leading to a library and Bush's bedroom and bath. To the rear of the parlor are a formal dining room, butler's pantry, and generous kitchen.

Sally Bush, Bush's second daughter, lived at Bush House until her death in 1946. Her elder brother A.N. Bush returned to the house in 1948, bringing the elevator from his former Salem home, and lived there until his death in 1953.

The Bush House Museum, as it is now called, has been operating since 1953 and is open to the public. Owned by the City of Salem and administered by the Salem Art Association, the house and the adjoining property, including Bush's Pasture Park and a Municipal Rose Garden, are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Sources

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