

Out of the Archives

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Bush house mystery: Who lived where?

by Dr. Jewell Lorenz Dunn, Olympia Branch Researcher

Several articles have been written about the houses of the Bush pioneer families of New Market-Tumwater fame. Recently some questions came up from researchers about the houses of George Bush, his son Owen Bush, and grandson John Shotwell Bush that needed some clarification.

As stated by Kathryn Bush Hackett (daughter of John Shotwell Bush) in a handwritten account to Paul Thomas in 1965, there have been six houses built by the Bush family through the years:¹

"There were six houses built down through the years. First a log cabin, then a split cedar house, next a good house of sawed boards shake roof, glass windows up stairs and real wall papers. This in later years was changed to a entertainment hall where they had plays ect [sic]. At the end of school, also dances, this was in use for many years. Next was a fine house with double fireplaces and two separate up stairs as the family was still large. William Owen desined [sic] the home and a Mr. Barnes built it.

Two other homes were built after the above one all three in the same yard one for John S. and one for the Gastons. The John Bush home is still occupied by one of the daughters and was built in 1889."

Another account of the Bush homes was from Elizabeth Ayer in 1972. She had been a close fiend and neighbor who grew up next door to the Bushes. An exerpt from The Bush Family: Memories of My Childhood, by Elizabeth Qyer, 1972:²

"On either side of the main house Owen had built or helped his children build their homes. The house to the south was



Bush Prairie School House, c. 1880-1950, Washington State Library collection.



William Owen Bush House, Washington State Library Collection.



William Owen Bush House, Washington State Library Collection.

his son John's home: that to the north was daughter Bell's."
[Bell Bush Gaston]

Thanks to the contribution of the Lewis & Verla Paine family, we have a digitized copy of an 8mm film of the John Shotwell Bush house before it was taken down in 1972. The Archives holds copies of still photos documenting the demolition of the John Shotwell Bush house, May 1972 (originals held by Ronald Boyd "Boyd" and Tami Lee [Scott] Paine). The Paines also donated a still photo of the William Owen Bush house after it was moved into the pasture for use as a barn.³ Efforts were made by several groups to save the William Owen Bush house, but none came to fruition. One was led by Helen Shank and the Soroptimist Club. Shank had purchased a small piece of the Bush property. Another crusade to save the Owen Bush house was by led by the Washington State Association of Colored Women's Clubs.

None of the six houses remain intact. There are no identified photos of the log cabin or split cedar house built by George Bush to date.



William Owen Bush House,
Washington State Library Collection.



William Owen Bush House, Lewis and
Verla Paine Collection, Washington
State Archives.



John Shotwell Bush House, Lewis &
Verla Paine Collection (torn down
May 1972).



John Shotwell Bush House, Lewis &
Verla Paine Collection (still, taken
from 8mm film).



John Shotwell house, Washington
State Library collection.

¹Statement provided for Paul Thomas by Kathryn Bush Hackett in 1965 from questions asked pertaining to the Bush family history for University of Washington master's thesis. Copies obtained from University of Washington.

²Copy of page 2, *The Bush Family, Memories of My Childhood* by Elizabeth Ayer, 1972, original held by Ronald Boyd "Boyd" and Tami Scott Paine.

³Lewis & Verla Paine Collection, Washington State Archives SW20150903-01.