

Elizabeth Constable and John Quincy Adams Young House



The only early photo of the house is dated between 1885 and 1888 based on the apparent age of Rose Reeves (at left) and the child, Mable Young, who are identified by inscriptions on the original photo in the historical collections of Washington County. Note the small room on the west end of the front porch, which was added while the structure served as a general store and the first Post Office for Cedar Mill from 1874 through 1881.

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Box-built vernacular saltbox house, constructed between 1863 and 1869. Added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2008

John Quincy Adams Young (1828-1905) immigrated to Oregon with his family, losing a brother in the Whitman Massacre at Walla Walla in 1847. In 1869, with a business partner he bought a sawmill that had operated since the mid-1850s here at the falls of Cedar Mill Creek. Young, his wife Elizabeth Constable Young, and their five children then lived in this house, which may have been built on the site of an older structure as early as 1863.

The house is constructed with 1 ¼ inch by 11-inch vertical boards nailed edge-to-edge to a hewn sill and a heavy top plate. The boards were then covered with horizontal lapped siding. Vertical board construction was popular with local Native Americans and Oregon immigrants when timber was abundant. Unlike Native American longhouses, the Young House is relatively square, and its roof has one slope longer than the other, covering two rooms upstairs and four below in a traditional Cape Cod saltbox form. Like many of its contemporaries in the Pacific Northwest, it has a dirt-floor cellar and wallpaper on interior walls.

By 1874 Young had sold his interest in the sawmill and become the first postmaster of the burgeoning community he christened Cedar Mill. He added a covered porch across the front and enclosed a small room on its west end that served as the post office until 1881. The heritage apple, pear, and hickory trees on the current .57-acre lot were probably planted during this era when a large orchard stood west of the house. In 1874 Young built a larger home (now lost) on 280 acres he bought across Cornell Road, which had been developed after 1868 to provide direct access to Portland, seven miles east, for the mill and nearby farms. Young then converted this house to a general store.

Young prospered as a farmer and businessman, becoming an active member of Wesley Chapel, Oregon Historical Society, and Oregon Pioneer Association. A founder of the Leedy Grange, he served as Justice of the Peace and was a Washington County Commissioner from 1898 to 1902. His wife gave birth to six more children (three of whom died young) and served the community as a midwife and healer.

Throughout the 20th century the Young House was altered very little, retaining its saltbox form and many original materials, including some historic wallpaper. In 2005 THPRD acquired it to save it from demolition. In 2008 it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Today THPRD is working with Friends of J.Q.A. Young House to revitalize the only extant architecture from the early lumber mill that gave the community its name. The Young House is the oldest building in Cedar Mill and one of the oldest structures in Washington County.

Compiled by Michael W. Panhorst, 4 January 2022, from sources including the National Register of Historic Places nomination and “The Life of John Quincy Adams Young,” by Eberhard Jaeckh, which was “compiled from various sources, including ‘Life Sketches by John Q. A. Young, 1889,’ extracted from the biography of John Quincy Adams Young, which was transcribed by his daughter Mable Young McIlwain.” Mable (born 1882) is the small child pictured in the historic photo above.