

EDGEWOOD FARM

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National Register of Historic Places

Wayne Morse Farm was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1999, through the combined efforts of WMHPC, the City of Eugene Historic Preservation office and graduate students in the University of Oregon Historic Preservation Program. UO students Leslie Heald and Corey Jimenez researched and prepared extensive materials for the application as well as presented it to the Oregon State Historic Preservation Board. The National Register plaque was unveiled during the WMHPC 2000 Historic Preservation Month Open House. The success capped a 20 year effort to list the property begun by Mildred Morse.

Building A Dream: How Edgewood Farm Came to Be

Wayne Morse Family Farm began as Wayne and Mildred Morse's dream on their first weekend in Eugene in September 1929. He'd come to teach at the UO Law School and was looking for acreage where the couple could raise a family and enjoy their love of animals and the outdoors. Law School Dean Charles Carpenter steered them to College Crest then a rural area outside Eugene's city limits where many UO faculty and local businessmen had small ranches and horse stables.

One piece of property – 4 acres owned by Luella Carson – caught their eye. Wayne and Mildred wanted to purchase it, but savings set aside in a Minneapolis home loan society were wiped out by stock market failures. The couple regrouped, resumed saving and bought the Carson parcel in 1932. Additional parcels were added in 1935 and 1936 to create the almost 27 acre farm property we see today – named Edgewood Farm by the family.

The property presented challenges: the land was badly overgrown with brush and poison oak, and water service was not available on College Crest. Wayne built a white fence resembling those around farms in their native Wisconsin, set 102 Angora goats to graze, and cleared the land. A New Deal grant brought water to the area. When they were ready to build, the couple asked UO architecture professor Wallace Hayden, whose work they greatly admired, to prepare the design.

A festive open house in September 1936 celebrated completion of the home. It was the second house built after the Depression in Eugene, and those who worked at the site were grateful for the jobs. The cost of the house in 1936 dollars was \$1,551.

Edgewood Farm

Edgewood Farm is located on Crest Drive in Eugene's South Hills, and named for Wayne Morse's prized stallion, Edgewood Willamette Bourbon. It consists of 26.55 acres of woods (maple, Douglas fir and oak), former pastureland and orchards as well as several structures. The Morse family home is the primary structure, with 3 auxiliary buildings: a double garage and stables/tack room built by the family and a picnic shelter later added by the City of Eugene. Wallace Hayden designed all the original structures on the farm and consulted with the City of Eugene on the design for the park's picnic shelter.

When the Morse family first lived on the farm, they raised prize winning American saddle horses, Angora goats, Romney sheep and several breeds of dogs, Dalmatians, Collies and Border Collies. The three daughters learned to breed and show various kinds of poultry as their father had done during his youth in Wisconsin. The family entered competition in state and county fairs throughout Oregon and the East Coast. Two riding ovals were built for the family to practice their riding skills. The Morses were co-founders of the Eugene Hunt Club and participated in horse shows wherever they lived. College Crest

was often referred to as "Horse Hill" because so many residents kept horses. The riding ovals later were removed when Wayne Morse began to breed Devon cattle.

Above the house adjacent to the present-day picnic shelter was a small orchard with cherry and filbert trees. During harvest time, neighbors and others in the community would help the family pick produce which was sold to the Eugene Fruit Cooperative. U.S. Senator Paul Simon of Illinois, who grew up in Eugene, recalled joining in cherry harvests at Edgewood Farm. The orchard was removed so the second riding oval could be built in 1955.

Along the original drive to the house were the double garage and the stables, shingled like the main house. The garage housed the family automobile and a horse buggy. The stable was one and a half stories, with a tack room and fireplace, bathroom and shower, stall and manger area. Adjacent were a paved paddock and fenced stable yard. Neither building is open to the public: The garage is used by the City for storage and the stable has been used by the Willamette Wildlife Rescue Center since 1988.

Title to the farm transferred to the City of Eugene in 1976. A gala dedication of the Park was held in 1979, with Mildred Morse attending. Additions on the property have included a picnic shelter in the style of existing farm buildings (1982), a parking area (1985), and a fenced off-leash dog park in the lower east pasture (1991).

The Morse Family Home

Wallace Hayden designed a Colonial Revival home for the Morse family, a popular style in the 1930s. It was set in a grove of trees off a circular driveway from Crest Drive. It faced southwest, and, at the time when surrounding trees were shorter, the family could see buildings at the University of Oregon from their front lawn. The house was asymmetrical, with 2 main floors that tiered up off a stair wall, as well as a large attic and basement. The Morse home's low pitched gabled roof, interior brick chimney, small paned windows with sidelights and shingled exterior were elements of Colonial Revival style.

Mrs. Morse, a home economics major at the University of Wisconsin and former staff writer at the New Delineator magazine in NYC, worked closely with Hayden. The house was filled with unique conveniences. Closets were lined with cedar, had special fittings for shoes and were adjustable for children. Scenic views of the property were available from the home's many windows, an acknowledgement of the family's love of animals and the outdoors. Dumbwaiters brought wood and groceries to the fireplaces and the kitchen. Free standing bookcases in the living room and study were often rearranged as the children grew up and furniture was added. Storage cabinets and closets were plentiful.

The home's first floor is open to the public and contains the entry hall, living room, dining room, kitchen with a breakfast nook, Senator's study, bathroom and two fireplaces. Off the kitchen is a small porch with stairs down to the lawn. The Senator's study originally was a music room and playroom for the Morse daughters. In the hall adjacent to the main floor bathroom is a small telephone niche. Originally the space was large enough to accommodate a chair but was reduced when the bathroom was renovated for accessibility.

The family had most meals in the breakfast nook which faced the pasture and afforded Morse with a view of his livestock and horses. Mrs. Morse requested many conveniences for her kitchen: A cooling pantry for canned goods with an interior light that came on when the door was opened; cabinets above the main counter with access from both sides; dry ingredient drawers lined with tin for flour and sugar; a baking counter (since replaced by the dishwasher); an ironing board built into the wall; a dumbwaiter for delivering ice and groceries (replaced by the refrigerator niche).

From the entry hall stairs led down to the garage. Soon after the family moved in they realized the garage brought drafts of cold air into the main floor of the house. They built a separate double garage and converted the space into a rumpus playroom room for their daughters. Toys and games were stored in a large cabinet (now housing video equipment).

The remainder of the home – the half floor up from the entry and second floor of the house -- is closed to the public. The half floor was a bedroom with attached bath. The second floor originally had 5 bedrooms and two bathrooms. The master suite included rooms for Wayne and Mildred, a fireplace, plentiful bookcases, cabinets and closets for clothes and Mrs. Morse's sewing necessities, and a bathroom. The daughters had separate bedrooms and shared a second bathroom on the upper floor. Off one of their bedrooms was a walkout deck. A laundry chute from the upper floor hall dropped dirty laundry into the basement.

The Morses made no major changes to the home until 1957 when Mrs. Morse redecorated the main living spaces for Judith Morse's wedding. The main floor fireplace surrounds were resurfaced, hardwood floors were covered with brown wall to wall shag carpet, and new furniture and drapery were purchased.

When the Farm transferred to the City of Eugene, the home's upper floor was remodeled to accommodate the Park Caretaker and eventually an office for the Wayne Morse Historical Park Corporation. The City subsequently assisted the WMHPC in transforming the former rumpus room into an exhibit area.

Beginning in 1995 the City embarked on several restoration projects, replacing the home's original wood shingle siding for lead paint abatement as well as all window sashes, providing new electrical wiring and painting the home's interiors. Continuing maintenance has included refinishing the original wood floors, re-siding and re-roofing auxiliary buildings, making adjustments for accessibility and replacing the home's furnace.

(Sources for the above include WMHPC files, Morse family interviews and the 1998 National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Wayne Morse Farm prepared by Leslie Heald and Corey Jimenez, graduate students in the University of Oregon Historic Preservation Program.)