

Address: 21 Sheridan Street

Approximate/Documented Date of Building: 1903

Surveyed: 8/17/2018

Historic Name: John Ford boyhood home

Landmark, Contributing or Noncontributing: Landmark



Introduction

21-23 Sheridan Street was a boyhood home of John Ford. The noted movie director was born John Feeney at Cape Elizabeth. In 1897 the family moved to Portland and a series of rental accommodations, first at Danforth Street and then at 65 Monument. In 1905 the family moved to this triple decker on Sheridan and lived there until 1917. John was a football hero at Portland High School and in 1914 followed his brother Francis to Hollywood. The Feeney brothers changed their name to Ford and John went on to direct such classic films as "The Informer" (1936) "Stagecoach" (1939), "The Grapes of Wrath" (1940), and "The Searchers" (1956). The building's Landmark classification is based on its association with John Ford.

The building is a classic triple-decker built in 1903. Triple deckers were built in significant numbers on Munjoy Hill at the turn of the twentieth century and proved to be an important building type in providing affordable housing for Portland's growing population, especially immigrant population. Triple deckers allowed for higher density on a narrow building lot. While accommodating a greater number of units, the triple decker also offered numerous amenities such as a generous floor plan, projecting bays, large windows and, oftentimes, decks for each unit. (From the 1924 photo, it appears the 21-23 Sheridan did not include decks.)

21-23 Sheridan exhibits all the typical elements associated with this building type: a tall, narrow building form; a front porch supported by columns and positioned at the side of the façade; a large faceted bay window that extends the full height of the building; a deep overhanging cornice and generous-size windows. Given the fairly steep grade of Sheridan Street and the building's high foundation, the front porch is located well above the street and is accessed by winding steps.

Alterations and Additions since 1924

21-23 Sheridan remains in well-preserved condition. Although some architectural details are difficult to discern from the 1924 photo, it appears that many of the original details remain. These include the recessed panels at the base of the front bay, the pilasters flanking the bay windows, the front porch's square columns with recessed panels, and the denticulated cornice. Windows remain 2-over-one, however at least some of the windows are vinyl replacements.

Some changes are evident. For example, on the south elevation the single windows near the front corner of the building are now paired. More obvious is the addition of a three-level porch off the south elevation. Interestingly, the porch addition is consistent with what many triple-deckers featured as amenities when they were built. The changes are compatible with the original character of the building and do not diminish its historic integrity.