

Ernest Bloch House (Newport)

By Cara Kaser

Perched on a high bluff in Newport overlooking Agate Beach and the Pacific Ocean, stands an Arts-and-Crafts, Rustic-style house that was home to composer Ernest Bloch from 1941 to 1959. Built in 1914 for the Asahel Bush family of Salem, the single-story, low-pitched, gabled-roof house was constructed of old-growth fir. Large fir trees and dense vegetation surround the house, and smooth beach rock was used to construct the exterior fireplaces. The original cedar-shake siding, paired multi-pane casement windows, and knee-bracing fit the rugged coastal environment.

The U-shaped plan of the house, deceptively large at nearly 2,800 square feet, consists of a main room, a bedroom wing, and a kitchen wing. Most of the interior rooms have single- and double-thick fir board-and-batten walls, tongue-and-groove floors, and elaborate built-in vanities and dressers. Bloch apparently replaced some ocean-facing multi-pane casement windows with large picture windows during the 1940s or 1950s.

A smaller building constructed in the same style and materials is located just to the northeast of the main house. Although originally used as a carriage house or garage, Bloch transformed the upstairs of the building into his studio. He walked to Agate Beach along a 300-foot-long trail that begins behind the main house.

After Bloch's death in 1959, his wife Marguerite lived in the house until her death in 1963. Soon after, the house was sold to Salem First Baptist Church, its present owner. While a few alterations have been made to the house, including the replacement of the main fireplace, much of it remains unchanged. On February 2, 2009, the National Park Service declared the house nationally significant because of its association with Bloch.

Sources

Geltner, Frank, ed., and Nancy Steinberg. *Ernest Bloch Legacy Project: Composer in Nature's University*. Oregon Coast Council for the Arts/Ernest Bloch Legacy Project, April 2008.

The Oregon Encyclopedia

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