

IX. HISTORIC HOMES & BUSINESSES

THE CARTWRIGHT HOUSE: “MOUNTAIN HOUSE HOTEL”

D.B. Cartwright, upon settling in the Siuslaw Valley, established its first business when he began building the Mountain House Hotel on south Territorial Road in 1853 (MD-H,113) in 1853. It also served as his home. The building took five years to complete. During that time, Cartwright lived in an old cabin on the property. Oregon Historical Society in its on-line “The Oregon History Project” describes the architecture in detail. “The house was built in a simple Greek Revival style with a symmetrical facade, pedimented end gables, a central entrance and hallway, capped pilasters at each corner, and dentil course below the eaves.” According to Phil Dole, a Lane County architectural historian, “Every element of the two story frame was hand-hewn cedar, massive in size. Studs in the wall were over 7” square; the floor joists were 10” square. The 22-foot tall corner posts were hewn to an L-shaped section so as not to project into the room.”

Cartwright had the cedar timbers used in the building hauled to the location by ox team from the Mulvany “Sash” Mill in Douglas County, ten miles away. These hand-hewn beams were hauled one at a time over a rough Indian trail from the mill. The trip took a full day. The lumber used in the building was soft fir. The nails were square-headed, hand forged, and puttied over to prevent rust.

It is said that Cartwright’s idea was to pattern the outward appearance of the building after Abraham Lincoln’s Springfield, Illinois home.

The original structure was built in an “L” shape and contained fifteen rooms. The main part had living

rooms on both floors along with approximately 9 bedrooms for the family and the hotel guests. The foot of the “L” contained the kitchen with its built-in cupboards, the dining room and two bedrooms.

The kitchen had a trestle table made of planks with benches on each side. Here the family and guests ate. A large dutch fireplace with dutch oven was used to cook the meals and bake the bread.

The house was built to accommodate twelve double beds, but there was only one closet in the whole house. This was situated under the stairs, and was used to store guns.

Special features of the hotel were its fine cabinet work done by D.B. Cartwright himself, its many 12-pane windows, its gables, its elaborate cornices at the eaves and its massive double front door which required a nine inch key to lock it. Porches on both floors ran the full width of the house. Flagstones formed a walkway which led to the front door.

Pegs were driven into the wall close to the door and on these were hung the outer garments and sunbonnets.

There was running water brought to the kitchen by gravity from Crowell Creek on the hill behind the house. A log was hollowed out and put in one end of the kitchen. Water was run into this sink by means of a split and hollowed-out tree trunk, and ran out through an overflow by means of another such “pipe.”

Old-fashioned roses hugged the picket fence which surrounded the yard. Black walnut trees which grew from sprouts or seeds that D.B. Cartwright brought with him from Illinois grew in the yard. It is believed that some of these same trees were cut down during World



The Cartwright House / Mountain House Hotel. (Walling, A.G.; *Illustrated History of Lane County, Oregon*; 1884; Portland, Oregon)