

Survey of Historic and Cultural Resources
City of Medford, Oregon
Downtown Commerical Area, Phase I, 1993-94
[Jackson County 029]

Historic Name: **First Natl Bank Building**
Location: **120 MAIN ST E**
City: **Medford, Oregon 97501**
Owner: **Seus, Robert L**
MailAdd **1899 THOMPSON CR RD**

APPLEGATE, **OR 97530**
Addition: **Original Town Plat of Medford**
Block: **20** Lot: **4,vac.** Taxlot: **5100**
T/R/S **371W30BC** Acct# **10369861**
Quadrangle: **Medford [15min]**

Common: **Fashionette Building**
Date of Construction: **c1886/1950**
Original Use: **Commerce:Financial Inst.**
Present Use: **Commerce:Spec Store;Other**
Architect:
Builder:
Style: **Modern:1950s Comm.**
Resource Type: **Building**
Theme: **Culture:20th C. Arch**
Condition: **Good**

Plan: **Rectangular**
Foundation: **Brick**
Roof Form: **Flat, single slope**
Wall Construction: **Brick**

No. of Stories **2.0**
Basement: **No**
Roof Material: **Asphalt;Hot Mop**
Stuct. Frame: **Masonry;Brick**

Primary Window:**Fixed metal display [streetlevel], metal industrial sash at rear**

Exterior Surface: **Brick:Common Bond, Metal Facade. Stucco Rear.**

Decorative Features: **14" dia. "suction cup" pattern metal grill dominates entire facade, recessed storefronts**

Other:

Alterations/Additions: **Facade remodel to Temple Front [1912], Present facade c. 1960. Rear addition [n.d.]**

Landscape Features:
None

Associated Structures: **None**

Setting: **Mid-block, facing north, on Main Street in the core area of the downtown commercial district. Alley to rear.**

Sources

MMT 2-March-1912, Sanborn Fire Maps, City Directorie. JCDeed records 11:260, 50:370, 52:363, 81:626, 83:480.

Photo Roll: **6** Frame[s]: **20a**
Date Recorded: **06/13/94**
Medford Planning Map Code: **CC**
Medford Planning Overlay: **CB** Zoning: **C-C**
Ranking: **Secondary**

Recorded By: **George Kramer, M.S., HP** Ashland, Oregon

Medford Survey ID **21.0**
SHPO NO: **2472**

Survey of Historic and Cultural Resources
City of Medford, Oregon
Downtown Commercial Area, Phase I, 1993-94

MFRNO: 21
HISTORIC NAME: FIRST NATIONAL BANK BLDG
120 MAIN ST E

371W30BC 5100

The eastern portion of this structure was built c.1886 and according to Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps surveyed in August 1888 was in use as a dry goods store. Two stories tall and constructed of brick, the ownership of the building at this time is uncertain but it appears to have been owned by C.W. and F.A. Broback, presumably a portion of the family land retained following the platting of Medford into lots and blocks.¹ Subsequent Sanborn Maps show a variety of uses in the building. In October 1890 the post office was located here, having moved from the building to the east.

In 1904 the Broback's sold the property to J.S. and Martha B. Howard for \$6000.² Following various intervening transactions, the property was acquired by the First National Bank of Medford, apparently sometime prior to 1907, which they remodeled for bank use.³ In 1910 the bank acquired the right to the alleyway then on the west of the building, between the Nash Hotel and subsequently negotiated a party wall agreement with J.T.C. Nash.⁴ In 1912 a completely new facade was commissioned from Besser Brothers Architects, of Seattle and both the old brick building and the new addition [in the alley] were clad with an imposing Classical temple front, complete with soaring Ionic Columns. Elaborately detailed on the exterior, the interior was particularly ornate.

The city has just cause to be proud of the new building, as it is one of the best of its kind in the Pacific northwest.

The counters are Breechie opal, quarried near Genoa, Italy. The base is of a black and gold marble from Abyssinia. . .The vestibule is finished in English vein marble from Knoxville, Tennessee [and] the woodwork is of African mahogany from the Congo Free State and is very beautiful.⁵

The First National Bank of Medford had been founded in 1904, prior to moving to this location. Early officers including W.S. Crowell, Fred Kramer Duell, M.L. Alford and Oris Crawford. Capitalized in the Fall 1909 at almost \$600,000, the bank advertised itself as "the Leading National Bank of the Famous Rogue River Valley."⁶

¹ See JCD 11:260, filed 17-March-1884. Other histories refer to the building as "The Hamlin Building" although no connection to the family was located in ownership records. [See MFRNO 23.1 and 23.2, to the east which were owned by the Hamlin family, possibly resulting in the confusion].

² JCD 50:370.

³ See L. Scott Clay, "Medford Walk", unpublished research on various downtown Medford buildings.

⁴ JCD 81:626 and 83:480.

⁵ "Splendid New Home of First Nat'l is Open," *Medford Mail Tribune*, 2-March-1912, 1:4.

⁶ Polk's Jackson, Josephine and Douglas County Directory, 1910, 97.

Survey of Historic and Cultural Resources
City of Medford, Oregon
Downtown Commercial Area, Phase I, 1993-94

The First National Bank continued in this location for the next forty-one years. "In 1935 the bank merged with First National Bank of Portland, later First National Bank of Oregon, today First Interstate Bank."⁷ Various remodelings, in 1936 and again in 1941, apparently substantially changed the interior character of the bank although this is not entirely clear. In 1954 the bank moved west to the corner of Main and Front and a new structure designed by Church, Newberry and Roehr, of Portland.⁸ It remains in that location at the present under the First Interstate name.

In the mid-1950s, following the removal of the bank, the exterior of the building was substantially altered via the demolition of the temple front detailing and the modernization of two storefront entryways. A large sheetmetal facade, consisting of a field of approximately 14" diameter disks covers the majority of the facade and gives the building its popular name as "The Bathmat Building."⁹

During the late 1950s and into the present, various small retail and professional uses have occupied the "Bathmat Building." Notable long-term tenants included both Brainerd's Photography Studio and Camera Shop, "The Fashionette," and Mode O' Day, both retail women's apparel stores. In the mid-1960s the building returned, for a short time, to banking uses as an early location of Crater Bank.

The First National Bank Building is one of the oldest commercial structures standing in downtown Medford. Although various recent studies have suggested the potential of removing the 1950s-era facade and returning the building to a more historic appearance based on the 1912 remodel, the present facade, approaching 40 years of age, is an intact and locally appreciated example of a modern style. While the First National Bank Building does not currently reflect its original appearance nor 1912 remodel, its present exterior is considered compatible with the Medford streetscape and has growing significance in its own right.

⁷ Clay, op cit.

⁸ *Medford Mail Tribune*, 20-December-1953, 1:4-5.

⁹ This name derives from the obvious similarity to a rubber bathmat where the disks mimic the suction cups. This also leads to the adage that should the facade ever fall off it would be impossible to remove from Main Street, having attached itself securely to roadway.

**Survey of Historic and Cultural Resources
City of Medford, Oregon
Downtown Commerical Area, Phase I, 1993-94**

Historic Name: **First Natl Bank Bldg**
 Location: **120 MAIN ST E**

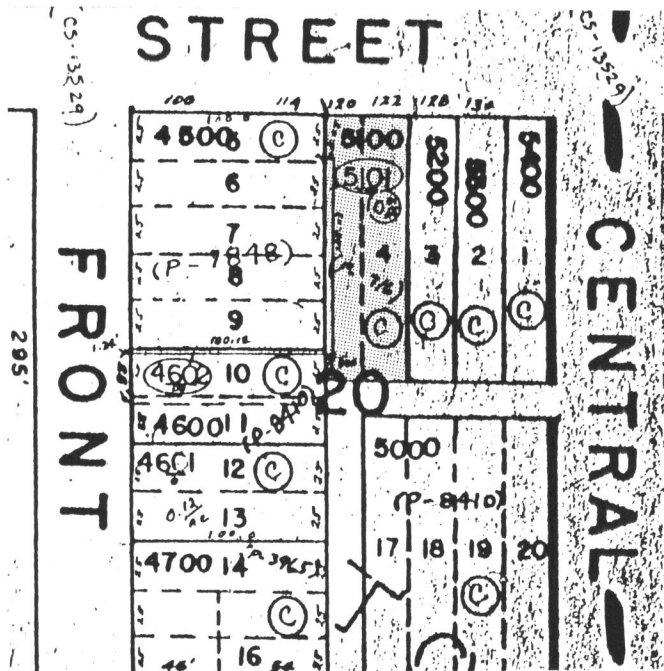
Common: **Fashionette Building**
 Date of Construction: **c1886**



[Vertical Photo mounted in Horizontal Orientation]

Photo Roll: 6

Frame: 20a



GRAPHIC SOURCES: Jackson Cty Assessor Plat, annotated location map

Ranking: **Secondary**

Medford Survey No. 21.0
 SHPO NO: 2472