

**Historic
Resource
Inventory**
CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON



3-003-00120

120-136 N.W. Third Avenue

Couch's, Block 18, Lots 5-8
QUARTER SECTION MAP #: 2929.5
Downtown Community Association

ORIGINAL NAME: Merchants Hotel

ORIGINAL FUNCTION: Hotel, Retail, Office
OTHER FUNCTIONS: Restaurant

DATE BUILT: 1880

STYLE: High Victorian Italianate

ARCHITECTURAL PLANS BY: Williams, Warren H. (?)

ORIGINAL OWNER: Nicolai, Louis
TENANTS: Oregon Cracker Co.

TAX ASSESSOR'S ACCOUNT #: R-18020-1160, R-18020-1120
ZONING: C1Z5

DESIGNATION: National Register, Landmark
HISTORIC DISTRICT: Skidmore/Old Town

SPECIAL FEATURES AND MATERIALS:

Brick building with stucco finish and cast iron and wood trim. Round arches and stilted flat arches. Label moldings and pronounced keystones. Quoins. Decorative cornice above storefronts. Built in two parts: Third Avenue section, 1880, and; Second Avenue section by 1884.

+29 117 1163 550

*SPECIAL F/M - ORIGINAL REMOVED:
Cornice.*

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Ethnic Groups, Industry, in association with Louis Nicolai, Commerce, Development in association with William Naito

Architecture: This building had one of Portland's earliest hydraulic elevators. "The Willamette Iron Works" produced the iron and its mark appears on several of the pilaster columns. The iron pilasters were one of the most popular patterns in the City. The design was used extensively by Warren Williams. The pilasters are over 16' tall and 1'11" wide with female heads at the level of the 12' shop doors. Classified of primary significance to district.

Ethnic Groups: Following World War II this building became the hub of Portland's Japanese community.

Industry, in association with Louis Nicolai: Nicolai was born in Saxony, Germany in 1838. He came with his parents and brothers to Michigan in 1853 and Portland in 1868. The brothers established an extensive saw mill operation in Beaver Valley and later in Albina. A planing mill was operated in Portland which specialized in sashes and doors. The brothers made large real estate investments in Portland.

Commerce, Development in association with William Naito: Naito was born in Portland and received a B.A. from Reed College and an M.A. from the University of Chicago in 1951. In 1953 he entered the family's successful import business, Norcrest China. During the 1950's and 1960's, with his brother Sam, he bought old buildings in the Skidmore-Old Town district and began renovating them, giving Portland a renewed appreciation of its architecture and historic resources in the process.

The Dekum building, Merchants Hotel and Galleria are three of the Naito's better known projects. Their pragmatic restoration work has helped make preservation successful in Portland. William Naito was president of Art Quake; vice president of the Chamber of Commerce; and a board member of the Federal Reserve Board of San Francisco, Portland Art Association, Major's Performing Arts Committee, and association for Portland Progress.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

120-136 N.W. Third Avenue, early photographs, Portland Fire Department Collection.

Hawkins, William John III, THE GRAND ERA OF CAST-IRON ARCHITECTURE IN PORTLAND, (Portland, 1976).

Merchants Hotel, vertical file, OHS Collection.

OREGONIAN, August 14, 1968, p. 22

OREGONIAN, December 7, 1968, p. 15

130 118 1164 550

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Gaston, Joseph, PORTLAND, OREGON: ITS HISTORY AND BUILDERS (Chicago, 1911).

Guernsey, "An Indomitable Duo Reshapes Portland," HISTORIC PRESERVATION.

OLD ADDRESS: 55 [redacted] Second Street N.

MAJOR ALTERATIONS: 1974/498580/Farr Biggerstaff

1974/486666/Farr Biggerstaff

1976/500558/Miller-Cook-Tollen

1981/154502/Crisco Products Inc.

Present owner as of May 1981: Skidmore Development Co.

MAILING ADDRESS: 55 W. Burnside Street, Portland 97209

Special Property Tax Assessment

Negative: 510-3A

131 119 1165

550