

Oregon Historic Site Record

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME			
address:	1120 SW 5th Ave Portland, Multnomah County	historic name:	Portland Public Service Building
assoc addresses:		current/other names:	Portland Building
location descr:		block/lot/tax lot:	57 / 1-8
		township/rng/sect/qtr sect:	1S 1E 3
PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS			
resource type:	Building	height (stories):	17.0
elig evaluation:	eligible/significant	total elig resources:	2
prim constr date:	1982	NR Status:	Individually Listed
	second date:	date indiv listed:	10/25/2011
primary orig use:	Business	orig use comments:	
second orig use:	Department Store	prim style comments:	
primary style:	Post-Modern	sec style comments:	
secondary style:		siding comments:	
primary siding:	Brick: Other/Undefined	architect:	Graves, Michael
secondary siding:	Terra Cotta: Other/Undefined	builder:	
plan type:			
comments/notes:			
GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS			
Not associated with any surveys or groupings.			
SHPO INFORMATION FOR THIS PROPERTY			
NR date listed:	10/25/2011	106 Project(s):	None
ILS survey date:		Special Assess Project(s):	None
RLS survey date:		Federal Tax Project(s):	None
ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION			
<i>(Includes expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings and alterations)</i>			
<p>The Portland Public Service Building, known universally as the Portland Building, is a boxy, fifteen-story building in the center of downtown Portland, Oregon. The building occupies a full 200 by 200-foot city block and is surrounded on all sides by the urban development of Portland, including Portland's City Hall on the next block to the south. There are two single-block city parks to the east and southeast of the Portland Building, both with a variety of leafy mature trees. The Portland Building is a surprising jolt of color within the more restrained environment of nearby buildings, with its bright-green tile base and off-white stucco exterior accented with mirrored glass, earth-toned terracotta tile, and sky-blue penthouse. The building is also notable for its regular geometry and fenestration as well as the architect's use of over-scaled and highly-stylized classical decorative features on the building's facades, including a copper statue mounted above the entry, garlands on the north and south facades, and the giant pilasters and keystone elements on the east and west facades. Taken together, the use of color and applied ornament give the building a feeling of monumental mass and dynamic dimension despite the relatively uniform face of the exterior walls. The building was completed in 1982, but the design of the building was not fully realized until the installation in 1985 of "Portlandia," a classically-garbed hammered-copper monumental statue set on a centered two-story pedestal at the main entry on Fifth Avenue. Only the interior lobby and the second floor public spaces were designed by Graves, and these spaces exhibit his characteristic use of earth-tones and stylized and exaggerated classical elements, such as the tile wainscot and trim around doors and entries. While the exterior has not been significantly changed since construction, the lobby has been altered and the other Graves-designed interior spaces at the second floor were extensively modified. The building and the statue are counted as separate contributing resources.</p>			
HISTORY			
<i>(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period - preferably to the present)</i>			
<p>Constructed in 1982, the Portland Public Service Building is nationally significant under Criterion C, Architecture, as the notable work that crystallized Michael Graves's reputation as a master architect and as an early and seminal work of Post-Modern Classicism, an American style that Graves himself defined through his work. When the Portland Building project was awarded to Michael Graves in 1980 the design immediately ignited a national conversation about Post-Modern architecture in trade magazines such as Architectural Record and Archetype, and general national publications such as People, Time, and Newsweek. The fifteen-story monumental structure was ground-breaking for its rejection of "universal" Modernist principals in favor of the bold and symbolic color, well-defined volumes, and stylized- and reinterpreted-classical elements such as pilasters, garlands, and keystones to create a building that was physically and symbolically tied to place, its use, and the Western architectural tradition. Though not yet 50 years old, the building meets the requirements of Criteria Consideration G because it is exceptionally important as one of the first large-scale manifestations of a new architectural style coming on the heels of the Modern movement. The Period of Significance begins in 1982 when the Portland Public Service Building is completed and extends to 1985 when Graves's design intent was fully realized with the installation of the Portlandia statue.</p>			
RESEARCH INFORMATION			
Title Records	Census Records	Property Tax Records	Local Histories
Sanborn Maps	Biographical Sources	SHPO Files	Interviews
Obituaries	✓ Newspapers	State Archives	✓ Historic Photographs
City Directories	Building Permits	State Library	
Local Library:		University Library:	
Historical Society:		Other Respository:	
Bibliography:			