

Oregon Historic Site Record

| LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME | | | | | | | | | | |
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| address: | 123 NE 3rd Ave Portland, Multnomah County (97232) | | | historic name: | Powers, Ira F, Warehouse and Factory | | | | | |
| assoc addresses: | | | | current/other names: | Convention Plaza Building | | | | | |
| location descr: | | | | block/lot/tax lot: | 68 / 2600,2700,2800 | | | | | |
| | | | | twshp/rng/sect/qtr sect: | 1N 1E 34 | | | | | |
| PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS | | | | | | | | | | |
| resource type: | Building | height (stories): | 3.0 | total elig resources: | 1 | total inelig resources: | 0 | | | |
| elig evaluation: | eligible/significant | | | NR Status: | Individually Listed | | | | | |
| prim constr date: | 1925 | second date: | | date indiv listed: | 08/31/2011 | | | | | |
| primary orig use: | Warehouse | | | orig use comments: | | | | | | |
| second orig use: | | | | prim style comments: | | | | | | |
| primary style: | Commercial (Type) | | | sec style comments: | | | | | | |
| secondary style: | Vernacular | | | siding comments: | | | | | | |
| primary siding: | Concrete: Other/Undefined | | | architect: | Claussen & Claussen Architects | | | | | |
| secondary siding: | | | | builder: | | | | | | |
| plan type: | | | | | | | | | | |
| comments/notes: | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5/27/10: potential tax project with Beam Development; 5 story elevation on the west side. See ILS tab for additional information. | | | | | | | | | | |
| GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS | | | | | | | | | | |
| Not associated with any surveys or groupings. | | | | | | | | | | |
| SHPO INFORMATION FOR THIS PROPERTY | | | | | | | | | | |
| NR date listed: | 08/31/2011 | 106 Project(s) | | | Special Assessment | | | Federal Tax Program | | |
| ILS survey date: | | SHPO Case | Date | Agency Effect Eval | Status | Term | End Yr | Status | Start | Compl |
| RLS survey date: | | | 04/30/2002 | No Effect | Closed | 1st | 2023 | Complete | 04/01/2011 | 2015 |
| Gen file date: | 05/27/2010 | | | | | | | | | |
| ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>(Includes expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings and alterations)</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>The Ira F. Powers Warehouse and Factory is set on a 1.18-acre steeply sloping bank, the building is three stories on the east, and five stories on the west. It was built as an industrial building at the north end of the Central East Side Industrial Center with convenient rail and vehicle access. Designed by architects Claussen & Claussen, the building's relatively simple appearance belies a surprisingly complex design. Completed in 1925, the building may be characterized as late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century American Movements - Commercial Style, but with strong Romanesque and modernist influences. It features a painted concrete exterior with flat roof and decorative cast-stone trim. At the center of the east facade is a two-story mass rising above the parapet that once housed a water tank. Fenestration is regular and generally symmetrical; windows were originally multi light steel-sash. The interior has two structural systems: the north third is reinforced concrete; the southern two-thirds is heavy timber. As built, the building had an open floor plan with wood floors and exposed ceiling rafters. In 1943, the building was converted to defense-worker housing and then reconverted after the war back to warehouse use. In the early 1980s, the building was adapted for office use. The primary alteration at that time was the removal of the multi light windows and the installation of new thermal-pane glass into existing window openings. Other changes included a new central entrance with canopy on the west facade, ADA access on the south facade, and a new canopy on the east facade. Interior modifications were laid over the structural grid with dropped-tile ceiling hiding the rafters, wall-to-wall carpet hiding the warehouse floors, and partitions dividing the open floor plan. Despite these changes, the building retains sufficient character to convey its historic values.</p> | | | | | | | | | | |
| HISTORY | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period - preferably to the present)</i> | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>The Powers building is significant as one of the last major remnants of the city's once-prominent furniture industry. It was constructed in 1925 as a warehouse and factory for the Powers Furniture Company. At the time, Portland considered itself the "Grand Rapids of the Pacific" with an industrial output of \$6,000,000. Although not the largest furniture enterprise in the city, Powers was the oldest. It was also one of the larger and lasting enterprises within the industry. As constructed, the warehouse illustrates the industry's aspirations and sophistication. The building is also one of the last remaining resources associated with the industry. No furniture manufacturing-related resources are presently included in the National Register and most of these buildings have long since disappeared. Of the 26 furniture makers in business in 1935, 15 of those structures have been demolished. Of the larger manufacturers, only three remain: Powers, Doernbecher, and Barnard. The Doernbecher site has been adapted as a storage building. The Barnard Furniture site is now part of the Widmer Brewery. Both have substantially less integrity than the Powers building. The building is also significant as a remnant from Portland's World War II home-front experience. In 1943, the building was converted to a war-time reception center and defense-worker dormitory. Illustrating the size of the housing shortage, the Housing Authority of Portland converted the building into a warehouse for workers. Modifications were limited to partial-height wood partitions along the structural grid to create "rooms" of 14-16 beds with the warehouse floors and exposed rafters. A clear span area on the third floor north was dedicated for 'recreation' but with few changes. Showers were communal and the building had no food service. The Powers Dormitory was one of three dormitories built in the Portland metropolitan area, the other two being new construction. It is the only one that remains. The World War II housing crises and development is detailed in the 2003 Historic Context statement "The WWII Homefront in Portland-Vancouver: Defense Workers Housing Projects: A Historic Context Overview." The following history is from a 2009 "Reuse Analysis Study" prepared by Sera Architects for PDC and Beam Development (p. 32). "HISTORICAL BACKGROUND Convention Plaza History Ira F. Powers Furniture 1925 "The Convention Plaza Building [current name of the building] was designed by Claussen & Claussen Architects. It was originally built in 1925 for the owner, Ira F. Powers Furniture at a cost of \$250,000. At that time the building was considered a 4 story, Class V, Grade 2 warehouse. The original layout was open plan and contained 2 freight elevators, 2 egress stairways, toilets and a wooden chute from the second floor to first floor. The northern 3 structural bays were the garage area. The garage area is a concrete & steel structure with ramped slabs, presumably for furniture transportation and loading/unloading purposes. From the south, the remaining 7 structural bays were made of heavy timber construction and used for storage. Conversion for War Housing 1929 In 1929, the architectural firm Glen Stanton + Hollis Architects produced construction documents titled "Conversion for War Housing" planned in the building for the client, The National Housing Agency. Other Tenants Sears Roebuck Co. 1948 Pacific Mutual Life Insurance 1952 Pacific Maryland Cone Co. 1952 Maryland Oregon Enterprises 1954"</p> | | | | | | | | | | |
| RESEARCH INFORMATION | | | | | | | | | | |
| Title Records | Census Records | Property Tax Records | | | Local Histories | | | | | |
| ✓ Sanborn Maps | Biographical Sources | SHPO Files | | | ✓ Interviews | | | | | |

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| Obituaries City Directories | ✓ Newspapers Building Permits | ✓ State Archives State Library | ✓ Historic Photographs |
| Local Library: | University Library: | | |
| Historical Society: | Other Respository: | | |
| Bibliography: | | | |
| Major Bibliographical References Carron, Christian G., Grand Rapids Furniture: The Story of America’s Furniture City. Grand Rapids, MI: The Public Museum of Grand Rapids, 1998. City of Portland Office of Planning & Development Review microform and card files. Ferriday, Virginia Guest, et. al. Historic Resources Inventory of Portland. Portland, OR: City of Portland, 1984. Fredgant, Don. American Manufactured Furniture. Altglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, Ltd., 1996. Gaston, Joseph. Portland, Oregon: Its History and Builders. Chicago, IL: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1911. Heritage Consulting Group historic Portland research files. Kramer, George, The WWII Homefront in Portland-Vancouver: Defense Workers Housing Projects: A Historic Context Overview (unpublished; Portland, OR: Housing Authority of Portland, January 2003). MacColl, E. Kimbark. Merchants, Money & Power. Portland: Georgian Press, 1988. MacColl, E. Kimbark. The Growth of a City. Portland: Georgian Press, 1979. MacColl, E. Kimbark. The Shaping of the City. Portland: Georgian Press, 1976. Maben, Manly. Vanport. Portland, Oregon: Oregon Historical Society. 1987. Oregon Journal Oregonian Portland Tribune Polk’s Portland, Oregon City Directory. Portland, OR: Polks. Ritz, Richard E., FAIA. Architects of Oregon. Portland, OR: Lair Hill Publishing, 2002. Sanders, Richard, Glimpses from the Past: The Housing Authority of Portland: Fifty Years of Building a Better Community. Portland, OR: Housing Authority of Portland, 1991. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Portland, Oregon | | | |