

Historic  
Resource  
Inventory  
CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON.



3-020-00931

931 N.W. Twentieth Avenue

Couch's, Block 285, Lots 1, 2  
QUARTER SECTION MAP #: 2927  
Northwest District Association

ORIGINAL NAME: Bretnor Apartments

ORIGINAL FUNCTION: Apartment House

DATE BUILT: 1912

STYLE: Streetcar Era Apartments  
Rank III

ARCHITECTURAL PLANS BY: Claussen and Claussen

ORIGINAL OWNER: Barrett Estate

TAX ASSESSOR'S ACCOUNT #: R-18022-8480

ZONING: C2

SPECIAL FEATURES AND MATERIALS:

Flat roof. Cornice with block modillions and dentil frieze. Polygonal bay windows. Hoods with cast-iron decorative brackets at tops of bays. Exterior finish of brick, with decorative brickwork between first and second stories. Rusticated first story and rusticated raised basement. Quoins at corners.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

905

2914

3-020-00931

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

City of Portland Buildings Bureau microform and card files.

Portland City Directory (Portland, Oregon).

Multnomah County Tax Assessor records, microform, automated data files, and card files (Portland, 1980).

OLD ADDRESS: 215 Twentieth Street North

ORIGINAL BUILDING PERMIT #: 37644

Present owners, as of May 1980: Fred E. Joseph (One-sixth), Kurt W. Joseph (One-third), Mary A. Lehman (One-third), Gertrude Joseph (One-sixth)

MAILING ADDRESS: 620 S.W. Moss Street, Portland 97219

No Preservation Funding

Negative: 566-33

Score - Design/Construction: 6

Score - Historical: 0

Score - Rarity: 0

Score - Environment: 6

Score - Integrity: 10

Score - Intrinsic: 6

Score - Contextual: 16

Score - Total: 37

966

2914

OREGON INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM  
COUNTY: MULTNOMAH COUNTY

HIST. NAME: Bretnor Apartments  
COMMON NAME:  
ADDRESS: 931 Northwest Twentieth Avenue  
CITY: Portland  
OWNER: Bulkley, Jonathan D. & Honor M.  
ADDRESS: 1145 Clement St., San Francisco,  
CA 94118

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1912  
ORIGINAL USE: Domestic: multiple dwelling  
PRESENT USE: Domestic: multiple dwelling  
ARCHITECT: Claussen and Claussen  
BUILDER:  
THEME: Culture: 20th Century Architecture  
STYLE: Jacobethan

T/R/S: TIN R1E S33  
MAP NO.: 2927 TAX LOT: NA  
ADDITION: Couch's Addition  
BLOCK: 285 LOT: 1, 2  
ZONE: RH QUAD.: Portland  
ASSESSOR NO.: R180228480

RESOURCE TYPE: Residence: single family  
CONDITION: Excellent  
MOVED (DATE):

Old Address: 215 20th Street, N.  
RANK: Portland Landmark; National Historic  
Register

PLAN TYPE/SHAPE: Rectangular  
FOUNDATION MATERIAL: Concrete  
ROOF FORM & MATERIALS: Flat  
WALL/FRAME: Brick  
PRIMARY WINDOW TYPE: 4/1 double-hung wood sash  
EXTERIOR SURFACING MATERIALS: Brick, clinker; cast stone

NO. OF STORIES: 4  
BASEMENT: Yes, round basement

DECORATIVE FEATURES: Cornice with block modillions and dentilated frieze; polygonal bay windows, hoods with cast-iron decorative brackets at tops of bays; decorative brickwork between first and second stories; rusticated stone basement level and first story; quoins at corners; marble tiled entrance.

EXTERIOR ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS (DATED): None

NOTEWORTHY LANDSCAPE FEATURES: Building abuts sidewalk.

ASSOCIATED FEATURES: None

SETTING: The building is corner-sited, located on the west side of N.W. Twentieth Avenue and N.W. Lovejoy Streets, moderately busy two-lane arterials. A large vacant lot is to the south. The area is characterized as primarily residential.

RECORDED BY: Donovan and Associates  
Prohaska and Associates

SHPO INVENTORY NO.:  
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

"The 1012 Brentor Apartments are located at 931 N.W. Twentieth Avenue on lots 1 and 2 of Block 285 in Couch's Addition in Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon. Designed by the architects Claussen & Claussen for the Barrett Estate, it was apparently the first apartment designed by them. The building is four stories plus a basement and executed in the late 19th and 20th century revivals. The building received a Rank II rating in the Portland Historic Resource Inventory. The Brentor is [significant] as an excellent example of the apartment work by the Portland architect firm of Claussen & Claussen. The building is in excellent condition and retains a high degree of integrity."

HISTORY OF PROPERTY

The subject property "was one of the first apartments to be built in the immediate area. The Willamette Heights streetcar line on Twenty-First Avenue was a double block away, as was the north end of the neighborhood shopping district on Twenty-First.

Designed by the architects Claussen & Claussen, it was apparently the first apartment designed by them, one of many over the next 10 or 15 years. In 1915, William E. Claussen (*American Architect*, June 23, 1915; the article is mistakenly attributed to 'Walter' Claussen), one of the brothers in the partnership, published in the national architecture magazine, *The American Architect*, an article on apartment design entitled 'Two and Three-Room Apartments of the Pacific Coast.' The article deals with the apartment designs developed on the West Coast, particularly with beds which can be rolled under closets by day such as were used in Claussen & Claussen's 1915 Brown Apartments. The Brentor, however, predated their use of these roll-away beds."

"The Brentor Apartment Building is located in the Nob Hill neighborhood in Portland. This area was part of Captain John H. Couch's land claim. Couch was a Massachusetts seaman who first came to Oregon in 1840. Portland was not much more than a simple clearing in the wilderness at that time. He returned to the area in 1845 and claimed an area of land bounded by the Willamette River and N.W. Twenty-first, Ankeny and Thurman-donation land claim #52. Couch chose this territory because he felt it had the greatest potential for the shipping and commercial industries. The total claim was perfected in 1849 to include 640 acres. In 1850, Couch sold one-half his interest in the claim to George Flanders.

The Couch family settled in the claimed area setting aside 13 acres for the Couch estate and orchard. The first residential houses were built north of A and B streets. The commercial district was near the water in the 1850s and was expanding northward. The first residential district was centered along Fourth and Fifth streets. Couch decided to move north as the city began to grow. Large, double blocks were given to the Couch children and the area between Sixteenth and Twenty-Sixth began to develop into an area of elegant homes. People moving into the area were the successful merchants, doctors, and other professionals who had taken advantage of the opportunities that existed in the young city of Portland. The Nob Hill area was an isolated area of the city with the Couch family creating their own New England style niche in the neighborhood.

The early years of the twentieth century were a time of rapid growth and development in Portland. The city's population more than doubled between the years 1900 and 1910 from 90,000 to

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212,000. This growth surge was due in part to the 1905 Lewis and Clark World's Fair, which gave the city international exposure it had not previously known.

Much of the population growth in Portland was absorbed in Nob Hill, an area which had previously been distinguished by its stately mansions, owned by many of the city's leading families. Some of these mansions still remain, including the Ayer-Shea residence and the George Heusner residence, both on the National Register. However, many of the mansions were replaced in the first two decades of this century by apartment houses and other developments.

The area became, and remains to this day, an intensely urban concentration of residential, commercial, and institutional uses. It boasts a number of properties listed or eligible for the National Register. Besides the mansions listed above, these include the Ormonde Apartments, the Campbell Hotel, Trinity Episcopal Church, and the Belle Court Apartments.

Newspaper articles from the period testify to the apartment house boom which occurred in Portland around the years 1910-1913, and which was focused in Nob Hill. These articles also speak of a growing sophistication on the part of the public, which expected a high degree of quality in apartments. Real estate prices began to climb and apartment buildings were the wave of the future. Apartment buildings were virtually non-existent before 1904.

W.L. Morgan, Portland architect and contractor, built what was reported to be the first apartment building in the city in 1904 at what was then the southeast corner of Sixteenth and Jefferson. The apartment building had 13 rooms and was opened in June of 1904. Morgan built two other apartment buildings at northwest Fifteenth and Everett and the apartments rented immediately. In 1905 there were only three or four frame apartment houses in Portland. In the Nob Hill area, apartment buildings sprang up around the streetcar lines on Nineteenth and Twenty-first avenues. This area became the most densely populated district in the state. By 1910, an article in the *Oregonian* reported that Nob Hill was an area where 'the building is most marked' and was being built up with fine apartment structures.'

During the 1920s and 1930s, long-time residents of the area continued to move away as older homes were being replaced and more homes were converted into apartment dwellings. With the advent of the automobile, the need to live close to the downtown area diminished and people began moving away from the city center. In the 1940s and 1950s inner-city problems, such as theft, traffic, and vandalism were on the increase in the Nob Hill area.

The 1960s and 1970s saw a re-birth of the neighborhood, families were moving back and older homes were being restored. The Northwest District Association was created in an effort to restore the neighborhood. The elegant days of the late 1800s are long gone, but historically and architecturally significant structures in the Nob Hill district still exist. This character is preserved through the residences and apartment houses that were built during this period."

#### ARCHITECTS

"H. Fred Claussen, with his brother William E. Claussen, practiced architecture in Portland from 1908 to 1942.

Claussen was born in Chicago about 1880 and was educated in Chicago. In 1908 he came to Portland with his brother and established the firm of Claussen & Claussen which continued until

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the death of his brother in 1950. Claussen received license no. 45 under the 'grandfather's clause' when Oregon began licensing architects in 1919. Claussen was a member of the Portland Architectural Club in 1909 and 1910.

Claussen & Claussen had a busy practice and were architects for a number of important downtown Portland buildings including the Roosevelt Hotel (1925); the Old Heathman Hotel (1926); the Alderway Building (1928); and the Loyalty buildings (1929). They were also architects for the Laurelhurst School; Holman Transfer Company (1916); the Brown Apartments (1916); the Wilmar Apartments (1916); the Newton Apartments (1924); and the Adcox Trade School (1928). Longtime prominent contractor Guy Jolivette, of Reimers & Jolivette, said that Claussen & Claussen were very proud of their details, and that if you wanted to please them you would carry out the details exactly as shown.

Claussen died at Portland after a long illness on April 1, 1942, at the age of 62.

William E. Claussen, with his brother H. Fred Claussen, practiced architecture in Portland from 1908 to 1950.

Claussen came from Chicago to Portland with his brother in 1908 and established the firm of Claussen & Claussen which he continued, after the death of his brother in 1942, until 1950. It is not known whether he was younger or older than his brother.

He received license no. 46 under the 'grandfather's clause' when licensing of architects commenced in Oregon in 1919. Claussen died in 1953."

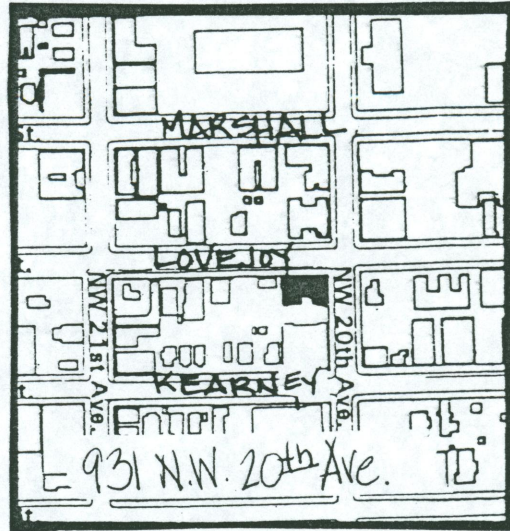
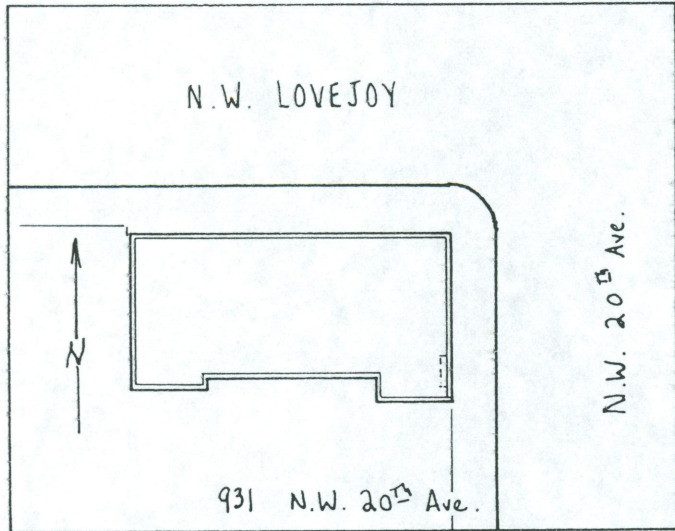
Sources: *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form*, John M. Tess, 1990

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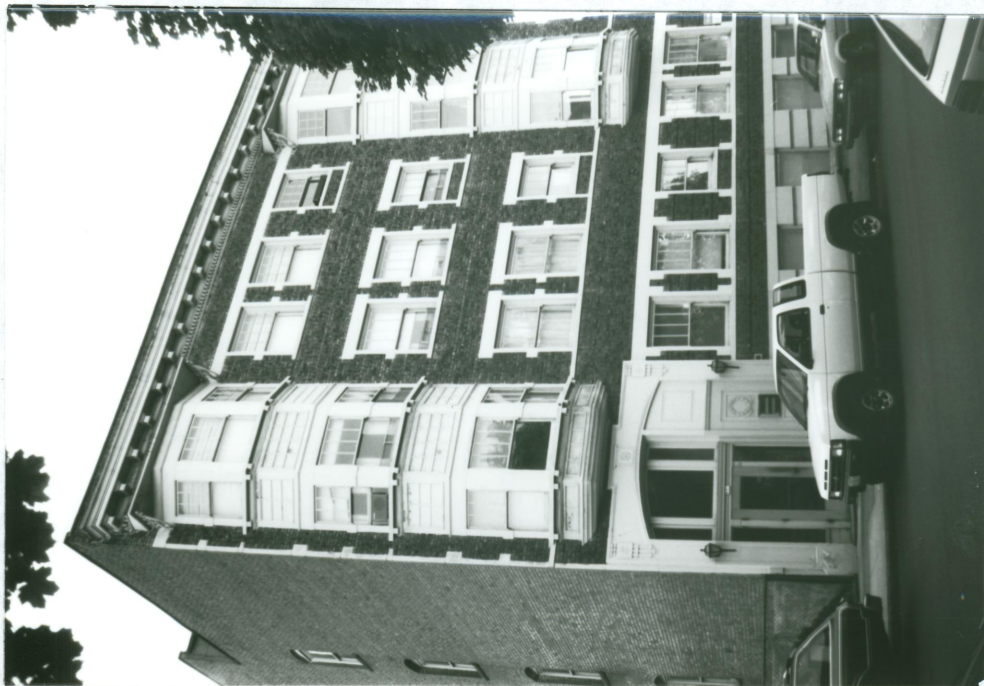
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