

Historic
Resource
Inventory
CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON.



0-936-00921

921 S.W. Washington Street

Portland, Block 215, Lots 1-8
QUARTER SECTION MAP #: 3029.5
Downtown Community Association

ORIGINAL NAME: Pittock Block

ORIGINAL FUNCTION: Office, Retail

DATE BUILT: 1914, 1923

STYLE: Twentieth Century Classical

ARCHITECTURAL PLANS BY: Doyle and Patterson

ORIGINAL OWNER: Pittock, Henry, Pittock Block Incorporated

TENANTS: Northwestern Electric Company, Owl Drug Company, Regal Shoe Store,
Durham and Bates, Union Pacific R.R., Corps of Engineers

TAX ASSESSOR'S ACCOUNT #: R-66772-3060

ZONING: C1Z

Rank II

HISTORIC DISTRICT: Glazed Terra Cotta (potential)

SPECIAL FEATURES AND MATERIALS:

Smooth-faced, buff-colored brick with cream-colored glazed terra cotta ornament. Double-hung windows at upper floors. Decorative motifs include antefixae, dentils, and cartouche. Terrazzo floor and marble wainscoting remain beneath recent decoration in interior arcade. North half completed in 1923.

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SPECIAL F/M - ORIGINAL REMOVED:

Store-fronts with marble base, cast-iron grilles, and transoms. Classical treatment at main entrance. Wrought-iron lanterns.

SPECIAL F/M - SIGNIFICANT ALTERATION:

Glazed terra cotta painted.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Communications, Industry, Development, in association with Henry L. Pittock as site of his house.

Architecture: Glazed terra cotta was used as an exterior sheathing material and for individual decorative elements in buildings in Portland from about 1900 to 1930. Terra cotta blocks (which are similar in size and configuration to concrete blocks but have decorative glazed faces) were made by pressing fine clay into plaster molds. The clay blocks were then glazed, dried, and fired.

Because terra cotta was fireproof, lightweight and, compared to carved stone, inexpensive to produce, it was the favored material for the large commercial structures built during Portland's era of rapid growth. However, caststone ornament (concrete), developed in the late 1920s, was even less expensive, and gradually gained popularity over terra cotta. Later, with the introduction of mass-produced aluminum and glass-wall systems, the use of decorative masonry ceased altogether.

Although most glazed terra cotta buildings in Portland are found in and around the downtown retail core, there are numerous schools and apartment buildings with glazed terra cotta decoration scattered throughout the metropolitan area.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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

City of Portland Buildings Bureau microform and card files.

Doyle and Patterson, Pittock Block working drawings, 1914, City of Portland Buildings Bureau Microfiche Collection.

Doyle, Albert E., Pittock Block working drawings, 1923, City of Portland Buildings Bureau Microfiche Collection.

Forrester, Steve, "Pittock Pegged Rent Right," WILLAMETTE WEEK, Aug. 30, 1976, p. 1.

Vaughan, Thomas and Ferriday, Virginia Guest, editors, SPACE, STYLE AND STRUCTURE: BUILDING IN NORTHWEST AMERICA (Portland, 1974).

Pittock Block, exterior photographs, OHS Collection.

OREGON JOURNAL, July 29, 1975; Sept. 21, 1966.

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OREGONIAN, Feb. 27, 1907, p. 14; July 23, 1907, p. 16; Jan. 1, 1914, sec. 1, p.16.

THE PACIFIC COAST ARCHITECT, 5:3 (June, 1913).

Baker, Fred C., recorded interview by Janet Charlton, George McMath, and Anne Murphy, 1979, Janet Charlton Collection.

MAJOR ALTERATIONS: 1923/A.E. Doyle

1936/A.E. Doyle

1960

Present owners as of May1980: Henry L. Pittock et al

MAILING ADDRESS: The Gilley Company, 900 S.W. Fifth Avenue #1939, Portland 97204

No Preservation Funding

Negative: 122-5

Score - Design/Construction: 11

Score - Historical: 7

Score - Rarity:

Score - Environment: 10

Score - Integrity: 10

Score - Intrinsic: 18

Score - Contextual: 20

Score - Total: 83

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Communications, Industry, Development, in association with Henry L. Pittock as site of his house.

Pittock was born in London, England in 1836 and came to America with his parents in 1839. He attended the University of Western Pennsylvania and learned the printing trade from his father. He came to Portland in 1853 and was soon employed by the Weekly Oregonian. He worked as printer, business manager and part-time editor until acquiring ownership in settlement for back wages. He started the daily edition in 1861. He helped found the paper industry in Oregon and pushed the Oregonian to its position of prominence. He invested in various enterprises and real estate in Portland. He died in 1919.

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