

Historic  
Resource  
Inventory  
CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON.

0-010-00610

610 S.W. Alder Street

Portland, Block 178, Lots 1-3  
QUARTER SECTION MAP #: 3029.5  
Downtown Community Association

ORIGINAL NAME: Selling Building  
OTHER NAMES: Oregon National Building

ORIGINAL FUNCTION: Office, Retail

DATE BUILT: 1910

STYLE: Twentieth Century Classical, Twentieth Century Italian Renaissance

ARCHITECTURAL PLANS BY: Doyle and Patterson

ORIGINAL OWNER: Selling, Ben, Moore, C.S., Moore, R.S., Blum, Moses  
TENANTS: Nau's Modern Prescription Drug Store

TAX ASSESSOR'S ACCOUNT #: R-66771-8220  
ZONING: C1Z

Rank II

HISTORIC DISTRICT: GlazedTerra Cotta (potential)

SPECIAL FEATURES AND MATERIALS:  
Buff-colored brick with cream-colored glazed terra cotta decoration.  
Florentine windows at upper two stories. Double hung windows with wood sash  
below. Decorative glazed terra cotta roof cornice with modillions.



*SPECIAL F/M - ORIGINAL REMOVED:*

*Terra cotta facing at ground floor. Shop fronts with prism glass above transom bar, plate glass and wrought-iron grilles below. Cast-iron and glass entrance marquee decorated with light bulbs. Marble wainscotting, ornamental plaster work, cast-iron stair with marble treads, leaded glass window, bronze elevator doors, and bronze lighting. Fixtures in building lobby.*

*AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture*

*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, cast stone 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.*

*The Selling Building was the first office building designed by the architectural firm of Doyle and Patterson. On a 70' x 125' lot at the southwest corner of Alder and Sixth, it was originally flanked by two Richardsonian buildings, the Marquam Building to the south, and the Oregonian Building across the street to the north. Developers were Ben Selling, C.S. and R.S. Moore, and Moses Blum. James Stewart and Company were the general contractors. The terra cotta was supplied by Gladding, McBean and Company.*

*The basic structure is a riveted steel frame with a concrete slab. A light court runs along the west wall. Nau's Prescription Drug Store was the original ground-floor tenant. The original street level windows were divided into two parts: a large pane of glass below and a somewhat smaller area of prism glass above. Small awning-type windows were set into the upper portion. Below the sidewalk windows were wrought-iron grilles. Columns and spandrels on the lower three floors were faced with cream-colored glazed terra cotta. The main body of the building is faced with buff-colored Normandy brick. Florentine style windows at the upper two stories are also executed in terra cotta, as is the roof cornice.*

*An unusually attractive cast-iron and glass canopy, decorated with light bulbs and with a large "S" on its face hung over the main entrance. This canopy had by 1934 already been removed. As originally built the lobby included marble wainscotting, ornamental plasterwork, and a cast-iron stair with marble*

treads. The stair window was of leaded glass. Elevator doors were bronze, and bronze fixtures with red and glass ball lights indicated the elevator's direction of travel.

The building's corridors were lined with marble wainscoting. Partitions had glass relights and transoms. The Phillipine mahogany was supplied by Hanford and Sutthoff of Seattle.

In 1931 the entire retail base was redone in the Art Deco mode for the Lerner store. A subsequent remodeling for the same tenant completely obliterated the original construction. The entrance and lobby were first remodeled in 1937 under the direction of architect Harry A. Herzog. Herzog was also architect for the small 1934 shop front, produced by Oregon Brass Works, that is still in existence just to the left of the main entrance. In 1958 automatic elevators were installed and the corridors and other public spaces were renovated. The main entrance was remodeled again when the "modernization" was completed in 1966.

*BIBLIOGRAPHY:*

City of Portland Buildings Bureau microform and card files.

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

Gladding, McBean and Company job list, Gladding, McBean and Company Collection, Lincoln, California.

Portland Historical Landmarks Commission, inventory form.

Vaughan, Thomas and McMath, George, *A CENTURY OF PORTLAND ARCHITECTURE* (Portland, 1967).

Selling Building, alteration photograph, 1934, Oregon Brass Works Collection.

PORTLAND ARCHITECTURAL CLUB YEARBOOK, (1910, 1913).

Selling Building, exterior photographs, OHS Collection.

Doyle and Patterson, Selling Building working drawings, 1910, City of Portland Buildings Bureau Microfiche Collection.

OREGON JOURNAL, July 15, 1966, sec. 5M, p. 7.

Herzog, Harry A., Alterations and Additions to Selling Building, working drawings, 1937, City of Portland Buildings Bureau Microfiche Collection.

ORIGINAL BUILDING PERMIT #: 22710

15

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0-010-00610

MAJOR ALTERATIONS: 1931

1934/Harry A. Herzog

1935/230987

1937/247148/Harry A. Herzog

Present owners, as of May 1980: Ralph D. and Bernice W. Schlesinger  
MAILING ADDRESS: 01425 S.W. Mary Failing Drive, Portland 97219

No Preservation Funding

Negative: 122-19

Score - Design/Construction: 14

Score - Historical: 3

Score - Rarity:

Score - Environment: 8

Score - Integrity: 8

Score - Intrinsic: 17

Score - Contextual: 16

Score - Total: 75.5

16

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