

Historic
Resource
Inventory
CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON



7-012-00546

546 N.E. Twelfth Avenue

Holladays, Blocks 145-148, 165, 166

QUARTER SECTION MAP #: 2931

Kerns

ORIGINAL NAME: Benson High School

ORIGINAL FUNCTION: School

DATE BUILT: 1916

STYLE: Twentieth Century Georgian

ARCHITECTURAL PLANS BY: Naramore, F.A.

ORIGINAL OWNER: School District No. 1

TAX ASSESSOR'S ACCOUNT #: R-39620-8880

ZONING: RHS

Rank I

SPECIAL FEATURES AND MATERIALS:

Exterior of red brick and glazed terra cotta. Terra cotta includes colossal portico in Tuscan order with entablature, cornice with dentil course, pilaster capitals, and round-arched typanum with low relief figures at three main entrance doors. Ornamental wood and plaster work, lighting fixtures in lobby and auditorium.

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SPECIAL F/M - SIGNIFICANT ALTERATION:
Numerous additions, dating to 1965.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Education, Industry, Transportation in association with Simon Benson

Education: In 1915 the Portland School Board accepted wealthy lumberman Simon Benson's offer to build a vocational high school for the young men of Portland and his conditions that the School Board name the school after him and match his \$100,000 gift.

Benson High School was an outgrowth of the Portland School of Trades. The city founded Portland School of Trades in 1867 for the instruction of "problem boys" and "those slow at book learning." Benson has undertaken a different educational role: it offers vocational training and college preparatory courses. About sixty percent of Benson's graduates go to work in a trade while almost forty percent pursue further education in engineering schools. This unusual vocational-academic combination is offered only in New York, Chicago and Portland. Although the Portland School of Trades educated both girls and boys, Benson educated only boys until girls were admitted in 1973.

Industry, Transportation in association with Simon Benson: Benson (1852-1942) was born in Norway, coming to America with his parents in 1868. Settling first in Wisconsin, Benson became a logger and sawmill operator. He came to Oregon in 1879 and engaged in logging in Columbia County. He was the first to use the steam donkey-engine and railroad equipment in logging operations in the Pacific Northwest. He improved living and working conditions for his men and created huge ocean-going rafts to float his timber to the California market.

In 1913 Benson built the Oregon Hotel and later endowed the Benson Polytechnic High School, and furnished bronze drinking fountains for downtown streets. His promotion of good roads and preservation of Oregon's scenic beauties led to the construction of the Columbia River Highway. He was named chairman of the first state highway commission.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Corning, Howard M., *DICTIONARY OF OREGON HISTORY* (Portland, 1956).

Lockley, Fred, *HISTORY OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER VALLEY* (Chicago, 1928).

OREGON JOURNAL, Jan. 18, 1956.

City of Portland Buildings Bureau microform and card files.

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

Portland Public Schools, "Design Origin, Buildings of School District Number 1," Revised 1983.

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ORIGINAL BUILDING PERMIT #: 61549

Present owner as of May 1981: School District No. 1
MAILING ADDRESS: 631 N.E. Clackamas, Portland 97208

No Preservation Funding

Negative: 539-5

Score - Design/Construction: 11
Score - Historical: 10
Score - Rarity: 5
Score - Environment: 10
Score - Integrity: 8
Score - Intrinsic: 11
Score - Contextual: 23
Score - Total: 93

Significant Alterations:

George Jones, 1923, 1930
F. A. Naramore, 1916
Burns, McNeil, Schneider, 1954, 1960, 1964.

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