

Historic  
Resource  
Inventory  
CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON

1-005-00620

620 S.W. Fifth Avenue

Portland, Block 62, Lots 7, 8  
QUARTER SECTION MAP #: 3029.5  
Downtown Community Association

ORIGINAL NAME: *Failing Building*

OTHER NAMES: *Gevurtz Building, Six Twenty Southwest Fifth, Gasco Building*

ORIGINAL FUNCTION: *Office, Retail*

DATE BUILT: 1907, 1913

STYLE: *Twentieth Century Classical*

ARCHITECTURAL PLANS BY: *Whidden and Lewis*

ORIGINAL OWNER: *Failing, Henry, Estate of*

TENANTS: *Gevurtz Furniture, Meier and Frank Company, Newberry, J.J. Company  
PP & L, Portland Gas and Coke*

TAX ASSESSOR'S ACCOUNT #: *R-66770-7320, R-66770-7310*

ZONING: *C1Z*

Rank *II*

HISTORIC DISTRICT: *Glazed Terra Cotta (potential)*

SPECIAL FEATURES AND MATERIALS:

*Lower six stories were constructed in 1907, remaining in 1913. Cream-colored glazed terra cotta on upper two stories may have originally been on fifth and sixth floors. Yellowish pressed-face brick manufactured by Gladding, McBean*



739

355

is laid in colored mortar with ruled joints. Sill courses of Tenino stone. Terra cotta decorative motifs include keystone with fish scale design, and window surrounds with laurel leaf design.

*SPECIAL F/M - ORIGINAL REMOVED:*

Columns and spandrels at lower two floors were faced with glazed terra cotta. A marquise ran the full length of both street facades.

*SPECIAL F/M - SIGNIFICANT ALTERATION:*

Ceramic veneer (extruded glazed terra cotta tiles) on lower floors dates from 1951 alteration.

*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.*

*BIBLIOGRAPHY:*

*MacColl, E. Kimbark, THE SHAPING OF A CITY: BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN PORTLAND, OREGON 1885 - 1915 (Portland, 1976).*

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

*Withey, Henry F. and Rathburn, Elsie, editors, BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN ARCHITECTS (DECEASED) (Los Angeles, 1956).*

*Portland Historical Landmarks Commission, inventory form.*

*OREGONIAN, Jan. 1, 1907, p. 2; Jan. 27, 1907; March 31, 1907, p. 30; Jan. 1, 1908, p. 4.*

*Whidden and Lewis, Failing Building working drawings, 1906, 1911, City of Portland Buildings Bureau Microfiche Collection.*

1-005-00620

*Wilding, Failing Building watercolor rendering, 1913, OHS Collection.*

*Oregon Brass Works, Failing Building shop drawings, Oregon Brass Works Collection.*

ORIGINAL BUILDING PERMIT #: 3065, 210942

MAJOR ALTERATIONS: 1937

1951/321922/Glenn Stanton

Present owners, as of May 1980: Harold A. and Jane S. Miller

MAILING ADDRESS: c/o Pacific Six Twenty, 315 Pacific Building, Portland  
97204

No Preservation Funding

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

741

355

OREGON INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTY  
ELLIS LAWRENCE BUILDING INVENTORY  
COUNTY: Multnomah

HISTORIC NAME: FAILING BUILDING, Alterations

COMMON NAME: Newberry Building  
OTHER NAMES:

RESOURCE TYPE: Building  
STATUS: built & survives

LAWRENCE

(JOB#) YEAR: (2082) 1937

(JOB#) YEAR: ( )

(JOB#) YEAR: ( )

FIRST DATE: 1936

DESIGN BEG:

DESIGN END:

CONSTR BEG:

CONSTR END:

LOSS DATE:

ORIGINAL USE: office/commercial

PRESENT USE: office/commercial

SITE: 0.2 acres, approx.

CITY: Portland Oregon

STREET: 620 SW 5th

OWNER: Miller, Jane

315 Pacific Bldg. Portland 97204

TOWNSHIP: 1S RANGE: 1E SECTION: 03

MAP#: 3029.5

TAX LOT: 1S-1E-03-

ADDITION: Portland

ORIGINAL USE:

BLOCK: 062 LOT: 7 & 8 QUAD: Portland

PRESENT USE:

ASSESSOR #: R-66770-7311

THEMES: 20C Architecture

DATA BELOW IS ON LAWRENCE FIRM'S DESIGN AS-BUILT:

ARCHITECT: Lawrence, Holford & Allyn  
ENGINEERS & CONSULTANTS:

CHIEF DESIGNER: unknown

CONTRACTORS:

ARTISTS & CRAFTSMEN:

STYLE: Modernistic

PLAN TYPE/SHAPE:

FOUNDATION MATERIAL:

ROOF/MATERIAL: /

WALL CONSTR:

PRIME WINDOW TYPE:

EXTERIOR SURFACE MATERIAL: ,

DECORATIVE FEATURES/MATERIALS:

STORIES:

BASEMENT:

STRUC.FRAME:

lobby entrance; four bronze doors with transoms topped by a small balcony,  
marble sheathing, cast stone or terra cotta braiding frames entrance

OTHER:

CONDITION: fair

MOVED: not moved

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS (dated):

numerous alts. to bldg; L.H.A. alterations include 10th floor office alt.(1936)  
misc. alts. and lobby alt. (1937), misc. alts (1939), only lobby/entr. extant

LANDSCAPE FEATURES:

none

ELLIS LAWRENCE BUILDING INVENTORY

HISTORIC NAME: FAILING BUILDING, Alterations

ASSOCIATED STRUCTURES:

none

SETTING:

urban commercial core

SIGNIFICANCE OF LAWRENCE FIRM'S DESIGN:

EXTER.DETAILS/CRAFTSMANSHIP: Better than average workmanship and materials.

INTER.DETAILS/CRAFTSMANSHIP: no longer survives

EXTERIOR INTEGRITY: Moderate changes; some original character remains.

INTERIOR INTEGRITY: Major changes; original character lost.

SITE INTEGRITY: Moderate changes; some original character remains.

SETTING INTEGR: Minor changes to character and relationship of surroundings.

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT:

Of the four alterations cited in the Master Index, the lobby/entrance alteration is the only extant alteration. This building is referred to as the Failing Bldg in the Index but should not be confused with the Failing/Postal Bldg. located on SW 2nd. The original Failing Bldg. marquee has been removed and the door pulls and transoms have also been altered. The building has been connected internally with the Newberry building, which was constructed in @1977.

SOURCES/DOCUMENTS: Description (Location)

Exhibit Quality photo, E. Lawrence Collection/U of O Special Coll.;  
Multnomah County Tax Assessor Records;

Polk's Portland City Directory;  
Portland Building Permits

PUBLICATIONS:

SLIDE NO.:

SHPO INVENTORY NO.:

355

RESEARCH BY: S. Igleheart

RECORDED BY: K. Lakin

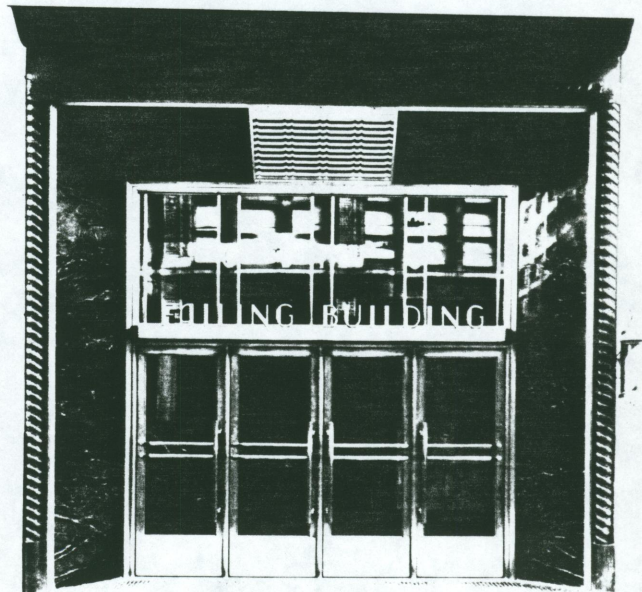
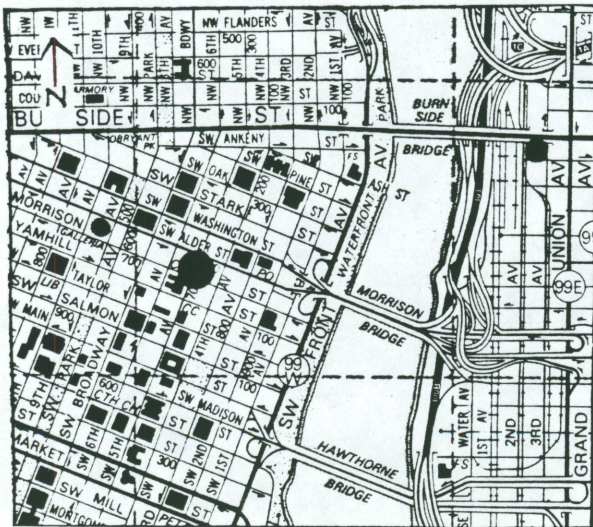
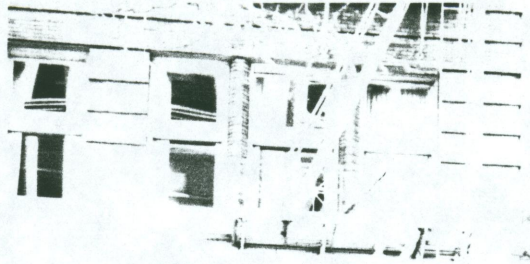
DATE: 02/08/89

DATE: 02/04/88

ELLIS LAWRENCE BUILDING SURVEY  
HISTORIC NAME: FAILING BUILDING, Alterations

RECENT PHOTO  
NEGATIVE #s:  
SIR2, #17

*First # above  
is upper-right  
photo; second #  
is just below.  
If no # above,  
see sources at  
bottom of page.*



OREGON INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTY  
ELLIS LAWRENCE BUILDING INVENTORY

EVALUATION

HISTORIC NAME: FAILING BUILDING, Alterations

<u>INTEGRITY OF:</u>	<u>NUMERICAL</u>
1. EXTERIOR: Moderate changes; some original character remains.	3
2. INTERIOR: Major changes; original character lost.	0
3. SITE: Major changes; original character lost.	0
4. SETTING: Minor changes to character and relationship of surroundings.	3
<b>INTEGRITY TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>

<u>DISTINCTION OF:</u>	
1. EXTERIOR DETAILS & CRAFTSMANSHIP: Better than average workmanship and materials.	3
2. INTERIOR DETAILS & CRAFTSMANSHIP: no longer survives	0
3. STYLE: (Modernistic) It has distinctive features of its identified style. Compared to Lawrence's other surviving Oregon buildings, this style is one of few (5 or less) in its city/town or rural area.	2
4. ORIGINAL USE: (office) Compared to Lawrence's other surviving Oregon buildings, this use is one of several (6 or more) in its city/town or rural area.	2
5. ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN: Compared to Lawrence's other surviving Oregon buildings, this design is average quality and significance. Is it part of an ensemble of surviving buildings by Lawrence? Lawrence building(s) nearby; but arrangement is not ordered. Are structural or technical aspects of the design significant? Of little significance.	0
6. LAWRENCE'S PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE DESIGN PROCESS: Lawrence was probably chief designer, though little evidence	6
<b>DISTINCTION TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>

<u>EDUCATIVE OR ASSOCIATIVE VALUE:</u>	
1. HISTORIC EVENTS OR ACTIVITIES: No known association with historic events or activities.	0
2. HISTORIC PERSONS: No known association with a significant historic person.	0
3. SYMBOLIC ASSOCIATION WITH AN IDEAL, INSTITUTION, OR POLITICAL ENTITY: No known significant symbolic association.	0
<b>EDUCATIVE OR ASSOCIATIVE TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>

**GRAND TOTAL**                      **26**

**RANK:**                      **COMPATIBLE**

NOTE: Only the built, surviving buildings in Oregon were evaluated.