

Historic Resource Inventory
CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON

1-005-00521

521 S.W. Fifth Avenue

Portland, Block 174, Lots 1-4
QUARTER SECTION MAP #: 3029.5
Downtown Community Association

ORIGINAL NAME: Lipman, Wolfe and Company
OTHER NAMES: Frederick and Nelson

ORIGINAL FUNCTION: Retail

DATE BUILT: 1912

STYLE: Twentieth Century Classical

ARCHITECTURAL PLANS BY: Doyle and Patterson

ORIGINAL OWNER: Corbett, H.W., Estate of, O'Shea Brothers
OTHER OWNERS: National Department Store, South American Platinum Company, Roberts Brothers Department Store, Dayton Hudson

TAX ASSESSOR'S ACCOUNT #: R-66771-7770, R-66771-7780
ZONING: C1Z

Rank II

HISTORIC DISTRICT: Glazed Terra Cotta (potential)

SPECIAL FEATURES AND MATERIALS:
Steel frame and ribbed-concrete slab structure sheathed in off-white glazed terra cotta. Cast-iron frames for street-level windows and doors; modified Chicago windows with wooden sash above. Grey granite plinth at sidewalk.

Wrought-iron fire escape. Glazed terra cotta decoration includes wreaths, meandering frets, lamb's tongue, egg and dart, bead and reel, antefixae, and roof cornice with lions heads and block modillions.

SPECIAL F/M - ORIGINAL REMOVED:
Glazed terra cotta at corner entrances. Cast-iron and glass entrance marquise.

SPECIAL F/M - SIGNIFICANT ALTERATION:
Fiberglass replacements for deteriorated lions on cornice.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Commerce

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.

Commerce: Lipman, Wolfe, and Company was founded in 1850 by Solomon Lipman as a small merchandise store in Sacramento. Other branches were subsequently opened in Napa and Virginia City. Adolphe Wolfe, Lipman's nephew, left his native Germany in 1863 for California where he worked for his uncle. In 1880 Lipman sent Wolfe to Portland to establish a store. Wolfe purchased the small store of Clark, Henderson and Cooke on First and Washington. Later his uncle joined him and they relocated in the Dekum Building where they remained until the 1912 move to Fifth Avenue.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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Lipman, Wolfe and Company, exterior photographs, OHS Collection.

Lockley, Fred, HISTORY OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER VALLEY (Chicago, 1928) v. 3.

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

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THE PACIFIC COAST ARCHITECT, 3:6 (Sept, 1912).

Plamendon Scrapbook, vol. 5, Alfred Staehli Collection.

Portland City Directory (Portland, Oregon), 1911.

Rogers, Charles, unrecorded interview by Claudia Ainsworth, 1979.

Roberts, Bill, unrecorded interview by Claudia Ainsworth, 1979.

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).

ORIGINAL BUILDING PERMIT #: 27111

Present owners, as of May 1980: Marshall Field and Company
MAILING ADDRESS: 25 East Washington Street, Chicago, Ill. 60690

No Preservation Funding

Negative: 121-17, 123-10

Score - Design/Construction: 14
Score - Historical: 2
Score - Rarity:
Score - Environment: 10
Score - Integrity: 10
Score - Intrinsic: 16
Score - Contextual: 20
Score - Total: 76