Historic Resource Inventory
CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON



1-010-00611

611 S.W. Tenth Avenue

Portland, Block 252, Lots 1, 2
QUARTER SECTION MAP #: 3028
Downtown Community Association

ORIGINAL NAME: Seward Hotel
OTHER NAMES: Governor Hotel

ORIGINAL FUNCTION: Hotel

DATE BUILT: 1909

STYLE: Zig-zag Moderne

ARCHITECTURAL PLANS BY: Knighton, William C.

ORIGINAL OWNER: Rosenblatt, G.

TAX ASSESSOR'S ACCOUNT #: R-66772-7880
ZONING: C1Z

Rank I

HISTORIC DISTRICT: Glazed Terra Cotta (potential)

SPECIAL FEATURES AND MATERIALS:
Grey brick with off-white glazed terra cotta ornament. Ornament is geometric with shield shapes, squares, and large beads predominating. Double-hung windows with wooden sash at upper floors. Copper entrance marquise. Mosaic

work in parapet cartouche. Leaded slag-glass panels flanking entrance. Onyx wainscotting and mosaic tile floor in vestibule. Dark stained woodwork in present lobby, corner retail space, and main stair. Wood framing.

SPECIAL F/M - ORIGINAL REMOVED:
Street level windows at corner. Fire escape railings.

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 forthe large commercial structures built during Portland's era of rapid growth. However, cast stone ornament (concrete), developed inthe 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 ornament on the Seward Hotel is very unusual. Fred Baker, working in Portland when it was built, said in a recent interview that at that time it was considered "far out," and added that he thought Knighton "went a little bit overboard on the outside." A nearly shield-shaped motif which is repeated in numerous locations both on the facade and in the interior was Knighton's trademark, occuring in his residential and commercial work. This motif, as well as the other pure geometric shapes on the Seward, were earmarks of the avant-garde design in Vienna just after the turn of the century. In fact, some of the Seward's terra cotta shapes are almost identical to drop pulls on a 1900 buffet by Kolaman Moser.

The building has two light courts, one in the center and one on the south side. Many rooms face into these courts. Outside rooms have connecting baths, interior rooms share common baths. The community baths have hex-tile floors and marble toilet stalls. The basic structure is wood with 10 x 10 and 12 x 12 posts and 4 x 16 and 6 x 16 joists.

The lobby was originally in the corner space. Except for the lobby, check-in area, and a small reading room, the street floor was given over to retail. Much of the original interior woodwork in the first floor public area and in the main stairway remains. The first floor corner windows have been considerably modified and the fire escape balcony railings replaced. Mosaics from the center of one of the large parapet cartouches are missing. Otherwise the building is well preserved.

1-010-00611

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

City of Portland Buildings Bureau microform and card files.

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

Knighton, William C., Seward Hotel working drawings, City of Portland Buildings Bureau Microfiche Collection.

Seward Hotel, exterior photographs, OHS Collection.

OREGONIAN, Jan. 1, 1910, p. 3; ibid, sec. 4, p. 14.

Portland Art Museum, "Vienna Moderne," exhibit, 1979.

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

Ellmaker, Lee, unrecorded interview by Janet Charlton, 1979.

Castleman, Mrs., manager, unrecorded interview by Janet Charlton and Virginia Ferriday.

ORIGINAL BUILDING PERMIT #: 11880

Present owners, as of May 1980: Lee A. and Florence Ellmaker
MAILING ADDRESS: 5100 S.W. Laurelwood Drive, Portland97225

No Preservation Funding

Negative: 122-8, 111-9

Score - Design/Construction: 18
Score - Historical:
Score - Rarity:
Score - Environment: 10
Score - Integrity: 10
Score - Intrinsic: 18
Score - Contextual: 20
Score - Total: 83

OREGON INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM
COUNTY: Multnomah

HIST. NAME: Seward Hotel
COMMON NAME: Governor Hotel
ADDRESS: SW 10th & Alder
CITY: Portland, Oregon
OWNER:

T/R/S:
MAP NO.: TAX LOT:
ADDITION:
BLOCK: LOT:
TAX ACCOUNT NUMBER:

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:
ORIGINAL USE:
PRESENT USE:
ARCHITECT:
BUILDER:
THEME: Ethnic immigration
STYLE:
OLD ADDRESS:
BLDG. STRUC. DIST. SITE. OBJ.
QUAD:

PLAN TYPE/SHAPE: See National Register Nomination
NUMBER OF STORIES: and Significance Statement
FOUNDATION MATERIALS:
BASEMENT (Y/N):
ROOF FORM & MATERIALS:
WALL/FRAME:
PRIMARY WINDOW TYPE:

EXTERIOR SURFACING MATERIALS:

DECORATIVE FEATURES:

CONDITION: GOOD FAIR POOR MOVED (DATE)

EXTERIOR ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS (DATED):

NOTEWORTHY LANDSCAPE FEATURES:

ASSOCIATED STRUCTURES:

KNOWN ARCHEOLOGICAL FEATURES:

(Duplicate)
SHPO# 407

OREGON INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM

NAME:
ADDRESS:

T\R\S:
MAP NO.: TAX LOT:
QUADRANGLE:

SETTING:

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: (Historical and/or architectural importance, dates, events, persons, contexts)
The subject property was the Seward Hotel in the 1920s and 1930s. It, along with the Portland Hotel and then the Imperial Hotel, provided significant employment for the many African American hotel workers in the first half of the 20th century.

SOURCES: The Advocate newspaper

RECORDED BY:

DATE:

SHPO INVENTORY NO.: 407

OREGON INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM

NAME:
ADDRESS:

T\R\S:
MAP NO.: TAX LOT:
QUADRANGLE:

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NEGATIVE NO.:

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PLEASE PLACE HERE:

SITE MAP SCHEMATIC DRAWING
SHOWING INVENTORIED BUILDING (S)
AND INCLUDING OUTBUILDINGS,
STRUCTURES, ROADS, AND HISTORIC
LANDSCAPING, IF APPROPRIATE

PLEASE PLA

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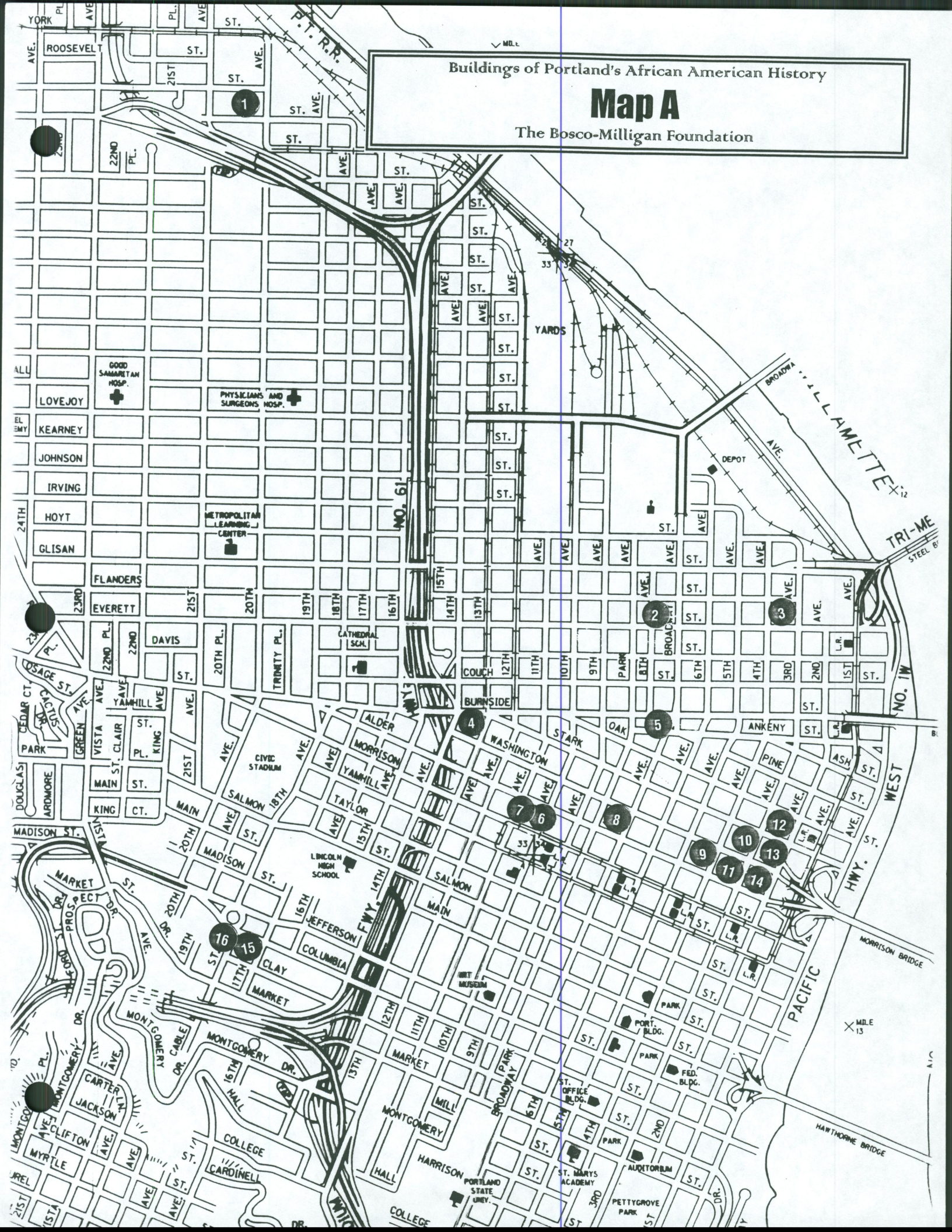
PLEASE SEE VICINITY
Map A Number 6

OF
RURAL

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GRAPHIC & PHOTO RESOURCES:

SHPO INVENTORY NO. 407


Buildings of Portland's African American History
Map A
The Bosco-Milligan Foundation
P.T.R.R.
YORK
ROOSEVELT
GOOD SAMARETAN HOSP.
PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS HOSP.
LOVEJOY
KEARNEY
JOHNSON
IRVING
HOYT
GLISAN
METROPOLITAN LEARNING CENTER
FLANDERS
EVERETT
DAVIS
CATHEDRAL SCH.
TRINITY PL.
COUCH
BURNSIDE
OSAGE ST.
CEDAR CT.
CACTUS
PARK
GREEN AVE.
VISTA AVE.
YAMHILL
CLAIR
KING
MAIN
CIVIC STADIUM
SALMON
TAYLOR
MORRISON
ALDER
WASHINGTON
STARK
OAK
ANKENY
PINE
ASH
DOUGLAS
ARDMORE
MADISON ST.
LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL
JEFFERSON
COLUMBIA
CLAY
MARKET
MONTGOMERY DR.
CARTER
JACKSON
CLIFTON
MYRTLE
COLLEGE
CARDINELL
HALL
MONTGOMERY
HARRISON
PORTLAND STATE UNIV.
ART MUSEUM
PORT. BLDG.
FED. BLDG.
ST. OFFICE BLDG.
ST. MARYS ACADEMY
AUDITORIUM
PETTYGROVE PARK
YARDS
DEPOT
BROADWAY
WILLAMETTE
TRI-ME
STEEL BR
NO. 61
NO. 1W
FWY.
HWY.
WEST
PACIFIC
MORRISON BRIDGE
HAWTHORNE BRIDGE
MILE 13
1
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