

STATE OF OREGON INVENTORY
HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS
State Historic Preservation Office
Oregon State Parks, Salem 97310

County Multnomah

Theme Glazed Terra Cotta

Name
(Common) Governor Hotel

(Historic)+ Seward Hotel

Address 611 S.W. Tenth

Portland

Present Owner Lee A. and Florence Ellmaker

Address 5100 S.W. Laurelwood Dr., Portland, 97225

Original Use Hotel/Retail

Date of Construction 1909

hysical description of property and statement of historical significance:

This glazed terra-cotta building is one of approximately 50 constructed in Portland's downtown area between 1900 and 1930. During this period major commercial development shifted away from the strip of land along the Willamette River to border the principal street car routes on Morrison and Washington. As the street car system spread into outlying residential areas (Portland Heights, Willamette Heights, Ladd's Addition Laurelhurst, etc.) it brought increasing numbers of workers and shoppers downtown. And as the demand for office and retail space increased the construction of taller buildings became economically feasible. These taller buildings required a light weight and fireproof facing. Terra cotta met these requirements. It was also relatively inexpensive and could accomodate varying degrees of ornamentation - traits which fostered its use for public buildings of all heights. While unglazed terra cotta had been used for the Romanesque buildings constructed before 1900, the predominently Classical Revival buildings following 1900 featured terra cotta glazed either buff or cream to give the appearance of stone. (con't)

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ecorded by Virginia Guest Ferriday Date March 1980

or

Sources Consulted: See below.

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+ primary

Built in 1909 for G. Rosenblatt, this quarter-block hotel was designed by William C. Knighton. The exterior is grey brick with off-white glazed terra-cotta ornament.
The ornament is very unusual. Fred Baker, working in Portland when it was built, said in a recent interview that at the 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 trade-mark, occuring in his residential and commercial work. This motif, as well as the other pure geometric shapes on the Seward, were earmarks of 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 10x10 & 12x12 posts and 4x16 & 6x16 joists.
The copper entrance canopy is original. On each side of the entrance are leaded glass panels with green and caramel colored slag glass. The entrance vestibule has onyx wainscotting and a mosaic tile floor.
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.

William C. Knighton (1867-1938) was born in Indianapolis, Indiana. He moved to Portland in 1893 and remained a life-long resident. He was state architect for five years, president of the Oregon AIA, and first president of the Oregon State Architectural Board. His architectural work in Oregon included the Supreme Court and State Office Buildings in Salem, and the State Hospital in Pendleton.

Selling Building - Portland

Ben Selling (1852 - 1931) was born in San Francisco and came to Portland with his parents at age ten. He worked in his father's general merchandise store on Front St.(and later First St.) and in 1880 went into business for himself. He launched a wholesale boot and shoe business and then opened a clothing store. Both thrived and he died a millionaire. A staunch Republican, he was a member of the Public Docks Commission, charter member of the Port of Portland Commission, State Senator, a director of the Portland Symphony Society, director of the National Jewish Consumptive Hospital and president for more than 20 years of the Hebrew Benevolent Association. A great philanthropist, Selling raised money for Armenian relief work, established kitchens for the unemployed during the depressions of 1893 and 1907, supported the Waverley Baby Home and Jewish Neighborhood House, and established a scholarship loan fund at the University of Oregon medical school. In 1928 the Portland Realty Board voted Selling Portland's leading citizen -- the first time thehonor was conferred by the board.

Sources Consulted

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Job List, Photographs, Oregon Brass Works.

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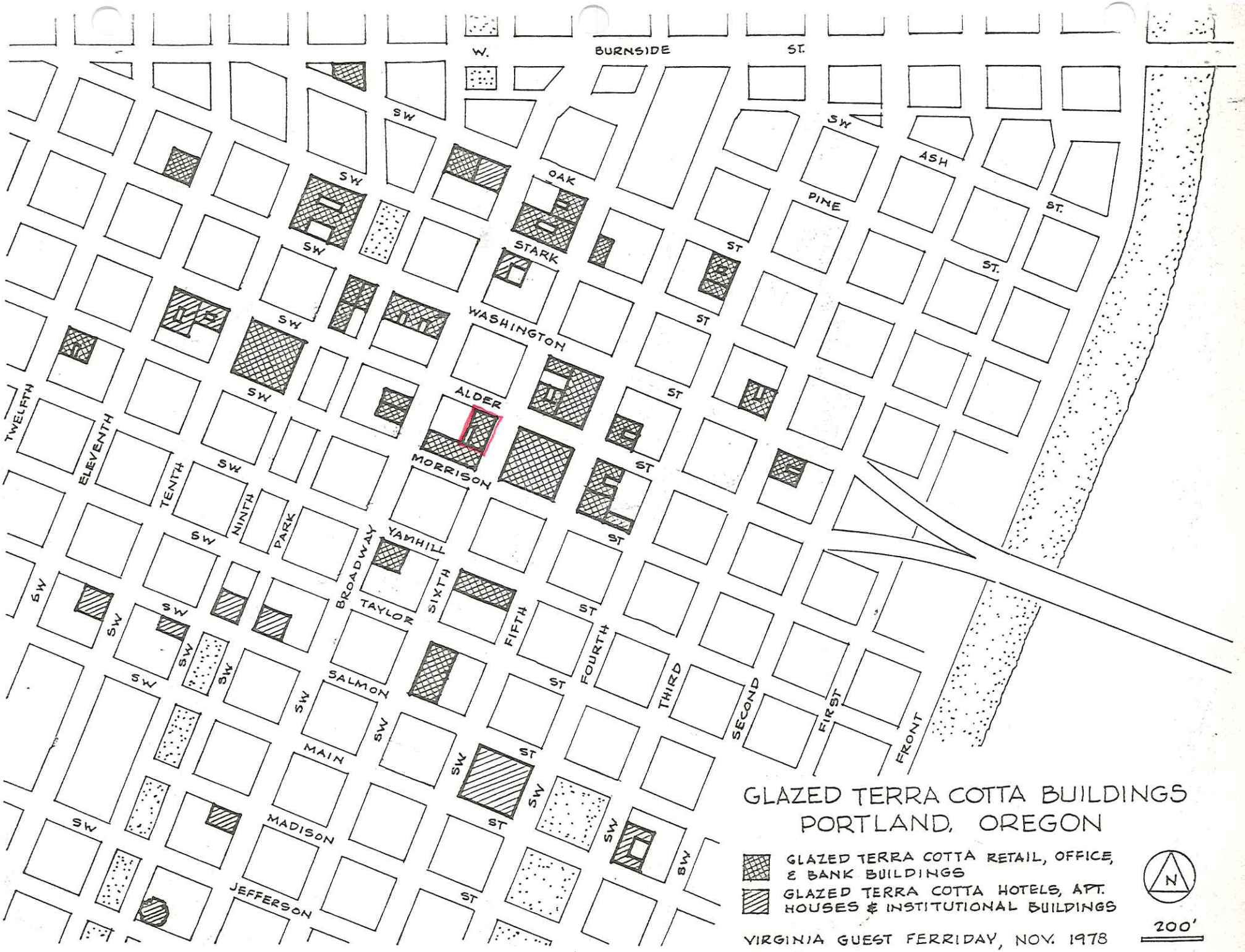
Oregon Journal, July 15, 1966, p.5M.

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FIFTH
FOURTH
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SECOND
FIRST
FRONT
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PORTLAND, OREGON
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