

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) American Bank Building
 (Historic) + Northwestern Bank Building
 Address 621 S.W. Morrison
Portland
 Present Owner Building Syndicate Co.
c/o Smith-Ritchie
 Address American Bank Bldg.
 Original Use Banking/ Office
 Date of Construction 1913

Physical 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 accommodate 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 predominantly Classical Revival buildings following 1900 featured terra cotta glazed either buff or cream to give the appearance of stone. (con't)

continue on back if necessary

Recorded by Virginia Guest Ferriday Date Feb. 1980

Sources Consulted: See below.

Please enclose map Township N E
 W Section

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The Northwestern Bank Building, designed by Doyle, Patterson, & Beach, was constructed on the site of the 1891 Marquam Building. The Marquam was demolished in 1912 after its east wall collapsed and, upon inspection, other parts were found to be structurally unsound. Henry L. Pittock and his son-in-law Frederick W. Leadbetter, owners of the Marquam at the time of its demise, were organizers of the Northwestern Bank and they were responsible for construction of the new office building with space for the bank on the first floor. The Northwestern Bank failed in 1927, as did the two banks which subsequently occupied the building.

On a 75' by 200' lot, the building's plan is roughly U-shaped with a 15' light court along the north side. The basic structure consists of a steel frame with ribbed concrete slabs. The building was considered "strictly fireproof," tenants were asked to provide as much fireproof furniture as possible.

The lower and upper floors are faced with cream-colored glazed terra cotta produced by Gladding, McBean & Co. of Lincoln, California. Except for a glazed terra-cotta roof balustrade which became badly deteriorated and had to be removed, the terra cotta appears to be in good repair.

The design for the ^{bank} entrance was evidently derived from McKim, Mead & White's Knickerbocker Trust Building in New York. Decorative motifs in terra cotta include Corinthian columns with eagles, an acanthus scroll terminated by griffins, urns, egg and dart, and dentils.

The first floor base is of medium gray granite. The main shaft of the building is sheathed in smooth-faced buff brick.

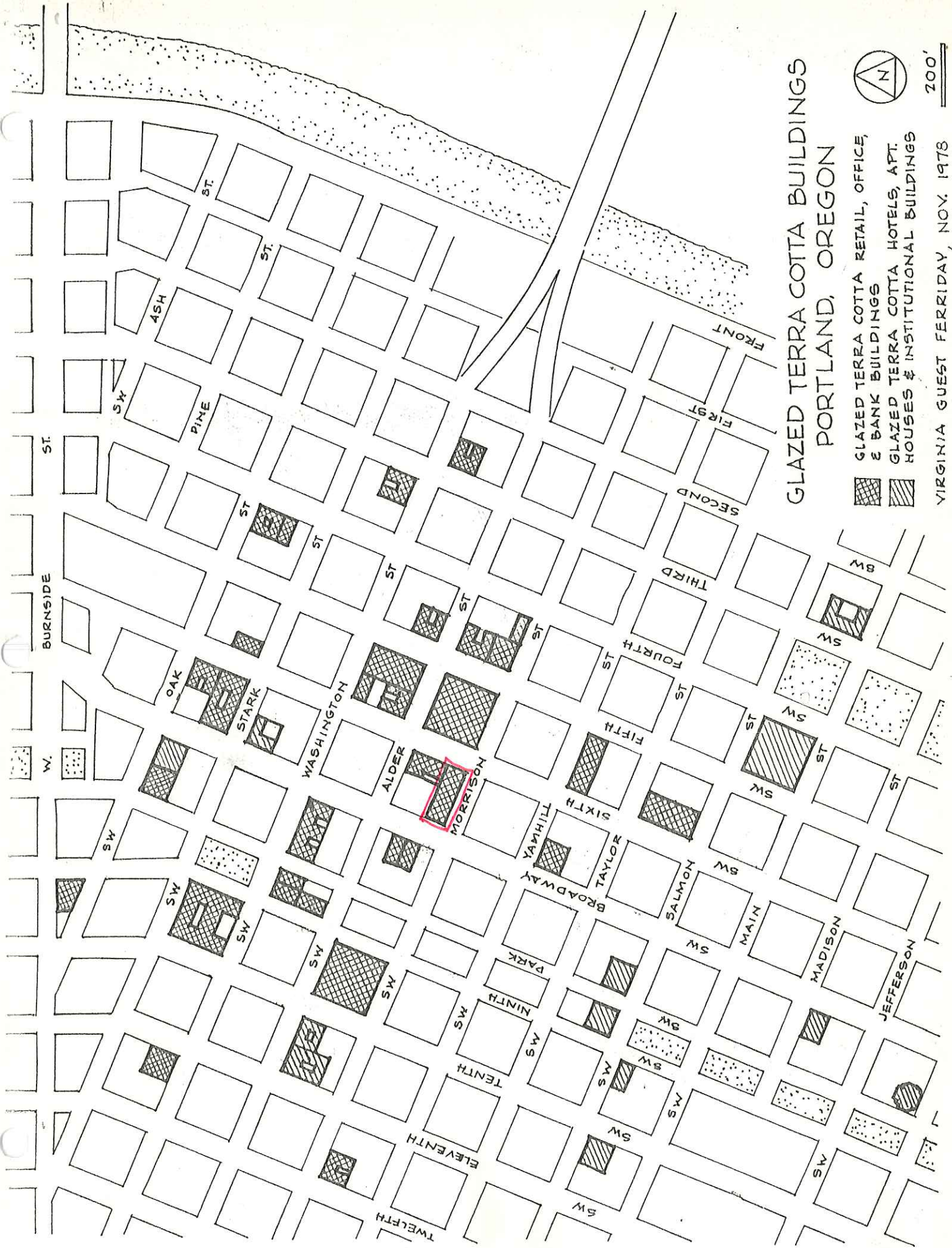
Windows for the lower floors are set into decorative cast-iron frames. The upper windows are double-hung, of wood.

The main ^{building} entrance on Morrison was remodeled in 1936 under the direction of A.E. Doyle's office, with Pietro Belluschi as designer. The extruded bronze for his new entrance was produced by Oregon Brass Works. The lobby has also been remodeled, probably at the same time. Both original and new lighting fixtures were provided by Fred Baker.

The building when constructed had four high-speed elevators. According to the working drawings corridor floors were of terrazzo and offices had cement floors. Each office was provided with a wood base, chair rail and picture molding. The original mahogany doors are stored in the basement. A few of the original cast-bronze fixtures from the lobby have also been stored. According to the working drawings the lobby originally had bronze-plated elevator doors and grilles but these are gone. Dinwiddie Construction Co. was the original contractor. Iron stairs were made by City Iron Works.

Henry Pittock (1836-1919) arrived in Portland in 1853 to become assistant on "The Morning Oregonian," then a struggling weekly. Within seven years he became the paper's owner and the following year made it a daily. He maintained control of the paper until his death. Following the 1893 marriage of Frederick W. Leadbetter to Pittock's daughter Caroline, Pittock and Leadbetter combined talents to put together a vast timber and paper empire. The two were also extensively involved in real estate and banking. Pittock

is perhaps best known for his 22 room mansion completed in 1914 atop Imperial Heights. He moved there from a six-room cottage on the site of the downtown Pittock Block.



GLAZED TERRA COTTA BUILDINGS PORTLAND, OREGON



GLAZED TERRA COTTA RETAIL, OFFICE
 & BANK BUILDINGS
 GLAZED TERRA COTTA HOTELS, APT.
 HOUSES & INSTITUTIONAL BUILDINGS

VIRGINIA GUEST FERRIDAY, NOV. 1978

100'

STATEMENT OF THE OPINION OF THE OREGON STATE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION OFFICER CONCERNING THE ELIGIBILITY OF A
PROPERTY FOR INCLUSION IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER.

I understand that the Oregon Department of Transportation is requesting the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Officer concerning the eligibility of Northwestern (First National) Bank Building for inclusion in the National Register and that my opinion may be submitted to the Secretary of the Interior with a formal request for a determination of eligibility on this property. This statement confirms that I have been consulted as part of the determination of eligibility procedures.

- ~~-X-~~(1) In my opinion, the property is eligible for inclusion in the National Register.
- (2) In my opinion, the property is not eligible for inclusion in the National Register.
- (3) I have no opinion and prefer to defer to the opinion of the Secretary of the Interior.

Justification and comments:

The Northwestern Bank Building (1913), 671 SW Morrison Street, ~~Portland, Oregon, designed by the noted local firm Doyle, Patterson and Beach, is eligible for inclusion in the National Register as a component of a district or group nomination concerning the use of architectural terra cotta in the downtown core in the early 20th century. In its use of the colossal three-story Roman Corinthian colonnade and richly decorated entablature, the Northwestern Bank Building anticipated Doyle's masterwork in the "Roman" style, the U.S. National Bank of 1917.~~

SIGNED: 
Deputy Oregon State Historic Preservation Officer

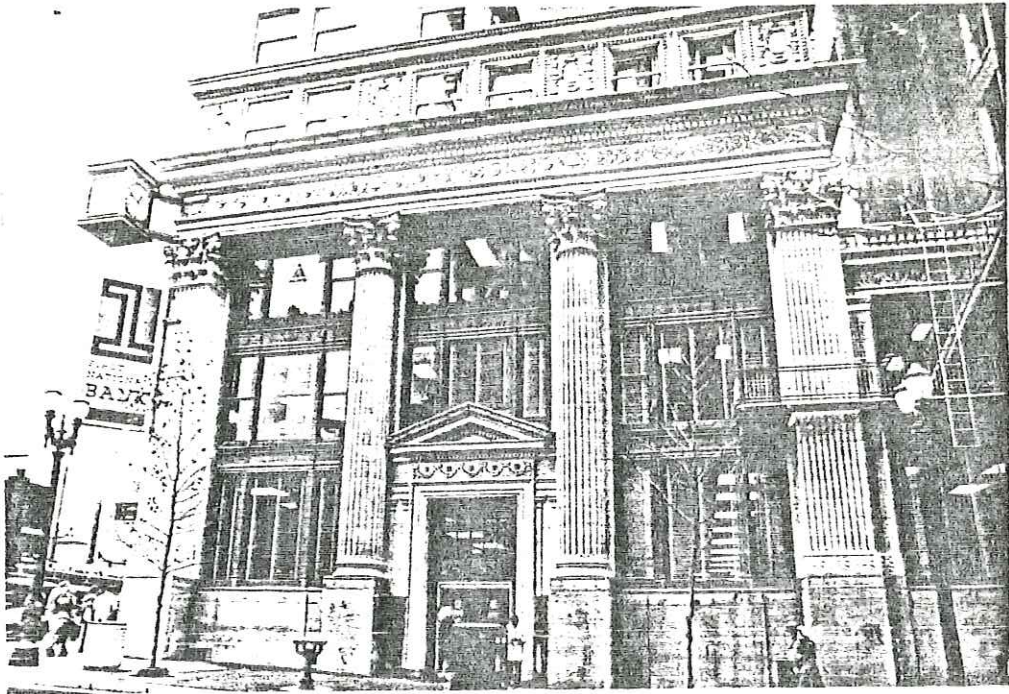
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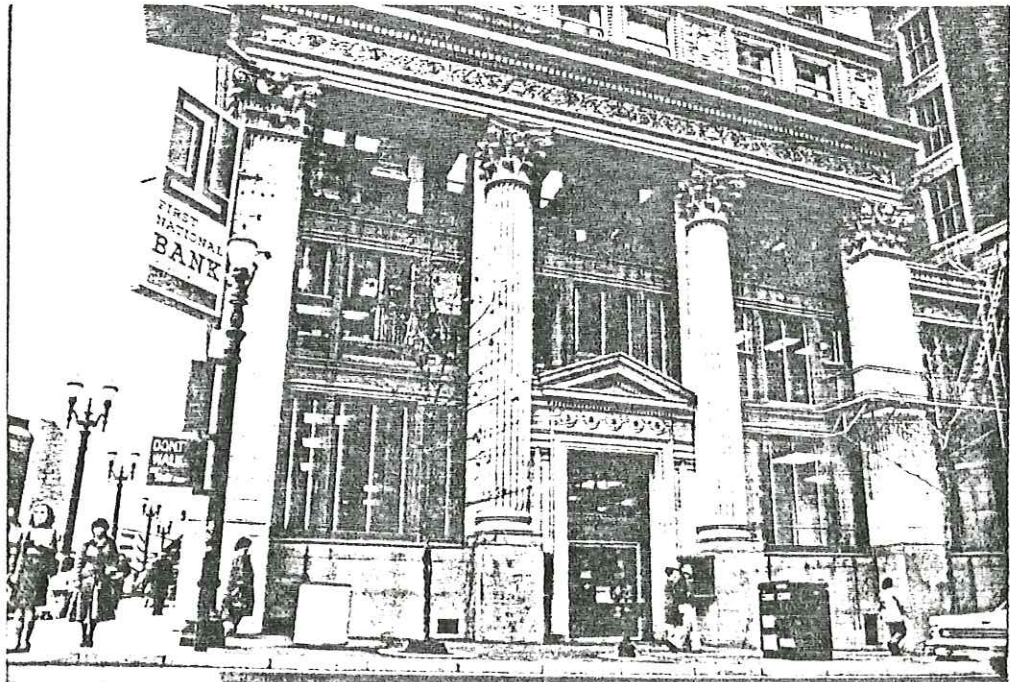
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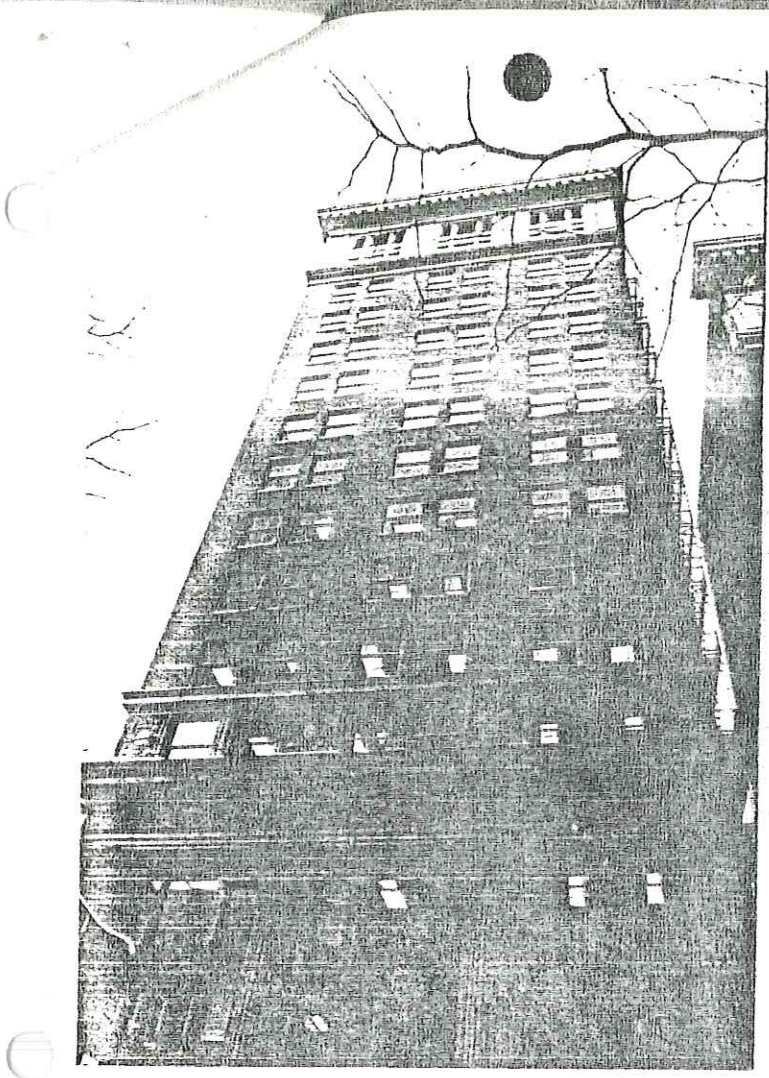
Note:

Each of these buildings is individually eligible for the National Register under the historical and architectural criteria cited. For some of the properties, however, the documentation provided was only minimally adequate to establish their significance. The buildings also appear to be collectively significant as contributing elements in the larger context of a potentially eligible downtown Portland historic district characterized by high-rise terra-cotta commercial buildings associated with the rapid growth of the city in the early 20th century. Please provide a brief discussion of the values, integrity, and boundaries of this district. If you request additional determinations in the area, we recommend that you consider making the request on the district itself, with appropriate documentation including an inventory, sketchmap, and original streetscape photographs.



The Sixth Avenue facade of the
Northwestern Bank Building.





The upper stories of the
Northwestern Bank Building
seen from Sixth Avenue.

The Sixth Avenue entrance
to the Northwestern Bank
Building.

