

Oregon Historic Site Record

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME			
address:	800 SE 10th Ave Portland, Multnomah County (97214)	historic name:	Yale Union Laundry Building
assoc addresses:		current/other names:	City Linen Supply Co. Building; Yale Laundry Building; Perfect Fit Manufacturing
location descr:		block/lot/tax lot:	
		township/range/section/quarter section:	1S 1E 2
PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS			
resource type:	Building	height (stories):	2.0
elig evaluation:	eligible/significant	total elig resources:	1
prim constr date:	1908	NR Status:	Individually Listed
	second date: 1927	date indiv listed:	07/19/2007
primary orig use:	Specialty Store	orig use comments:	
second orig use:			
primary style:	Mediterranean Revival	prim style comments:	
secondary style:	Exotic Revival	sec style comments:	Egyptian Revival
primary siding:	Brick/Other/Undefined	siding comments:	
secondary siding:	Cast Stone		
plan type:		architect:	Cash & Wolfe (1927 Addition)
		builder:	
comments/notes:			
Site visit by C.Curran on 6/15/2006 with Bill Bailey, Waterleaf Architecture. Told him it was eligible under A and C. They want to rehab w/SA and Fed Tax. Seismic upgrade.			
GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS			
Not associated with any surveys or groupings.			
SHPO INFORMATION FOR THIS PROPERTY			
NR date listed:	07/19/2007	Federal Tax Program	
ILS survey date:		Status	
RLS survey date:		Start	
Gen file date:	08/02/2006	Compl	
		106 Project(s):	None
		Special Assess Project(s):	None
ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION			
<i>(Includes expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings and alterations)</i>			
<p>Summary The Yale Union Laundry Building is located at 800 SE 10th Street in Portland, Oregon. Built in 1908, the building is a two-story masonry structure with cast-stone decoration executed in an Italian Renaissance style. The building also has elements associated with the Egyptian Revival style. A two-story 1927 masonry addition, wrapping around a concrete water tower pedestal, and a 1929 two-story addition to the south, forms an L-shaped plan. Both the original portion and the additions have flat roofs, although the western rectangular portion of the building has a half-story, steel-frame light monitor running the length of the building in the north-south direction. Location The Yale Union Laundry Building sits on a .43 acre urban lot at 800 SE 10th Street in Portland, Oregon. The lot is devoid of landscaping, slopes to the west, and occupies the western half of the block bounded by SE Belmont to the south, SE 10th Street to the west, and SE Morrison to the north. A commercial building, located at 1040 SE Morrison and built in 1925, shares a common party wall on the east side of the 1927 addition. The building is located in the established central eastside commercial district of Portland, Oregon. The immediate neighborhood is primarily comprised of one- and two-story commercial buildings and multi-story residential units. Many of the existing buildings date from the same era as the Yale Union Laundry Building and are reflective of both typical early twentieth century commercial design and later "street car" commercial structures. The 1927 addition, located on the eastern portion of the lot area, has a rectangular footprint and measures approximately 50 ft x 50 ft. The addition allowed for a ground-level truck access to enter the building on the north off of SE Morrison and exit onto SE Belmont Street on the south. The paved lot area to the north of the addition is given over to parking and general delivery functions. Exterior The Yale Union Laundry Building is a combination of Italian Renaissance commercial style juxtaposed against elements of the Egyptian Revival style. The Italian Renaissance is particularly present in the large arched window openings on the ground floor and the grouping of two, narrow tall windows on the second floor. The primary building materials are a deep red brick laid in a running bond, multi-pane arched windows, and cast-stone decoration. The building window proportions and placement provide a rhythm to the facades, but the overall fenestration and massing are not symmetrical. It is not known who designed and who built the original structure or the two additions. The 1929 southwest corner entry on SE 10th Avenue and SE Belmont Street is accentuated by cast-stone decoration representing a stylized Egyptian temple and is arguably the Yale Union Laundry Building's most arresting feature. The corner is an example of Egyptian Revival elements inspired by ancient Egyptian temples like the Temple of Philae and the Temple of Amun at Karnak. The corner composition evokes the stone architecture of the temples but is executed in masonry. Overall, the corner has a symmetrical box-like appearance and, because of the south sloping site, was designed as a three-story structure. The three-story effect is produced by adding an internal mezzanine level with window openings above the first floor. The decorative cast-stone units are concentrated in the southwest corner on both SE 10th Avenue and SE Belmont Street. One and a half pair arches rise vertically, as engaged pilasters resting on cast-stone plinth blocks and adorned with cast-stone Lily flower capitals typical of Egyptian decoration. A cast-stone door surround occupies the center arch at street level on SE 10th Avenue. The pilasters carry an arched cast-stone entablature rising above the mezzanine floor windows. The recesses of the entablature are filled with a cast-stone carving depicting laundry workers. At the peak of each arch recess is a large cast-stone keystone slipped below the bottom of the arch in the Mannerist style. The carving predates the Work Progress Administration projects, but is very reminiscent of depression-era labor scenes (the artist who created the scene is unknown). The entablature is created by alternating horizontal bands of masonry and cast-stone imparting a polychrome affect similar to Egyptian temple painted ornamentation. The temple-like parapet above the top windows is derived from the use of a corbel of rowlock brick, giving visual emphasis and "weight" to the top. Both the mezzanine windows and the cast-stone pilasters create an allusion of a taller corner, even though the overall height of the corner and the parapet cap stone are at the same elevation as the remaining portions of the facade. Brick spandrel panels between the mezzanine floor sill and the head of the first floor windows are recessed and further adorned with square cast-stone decorative inlay units. The top floor windows of the corner are small compared to the other windows, and resemble punched openings in a massive masonry wall. The windows are a band of six, small, two-over-two, wood-frame windows with concrete sills. West Facade The primary facade faces SE 10th Street (west). It is a masonry bearing wall with both cast-stone ornament and a concrete cap stone running the length of the parapet. The Italian Renaissance characteristics of the Yale Union Laundry Building are imparted by the window patterns, arches, and window styles. There are a total of ten "A" pattern and eleven "B" pattern windows on the west facade. The "A" pattern windows are located on the first story and deeply set into arched brick openings with arched brick lintel surrounds and concrete sills. These windows consist of a pair of wood-sash, double-hung windows, with four-over-four divided lights and an arched wood transom spanning the pair. The arched transom has six divided lights on the outside arch and two divided lights on the interior arch creating a sun pattern. A new customer entrance toward the north corner of the building along SE 10th Avenue was created by removing an original window sill and masonry down to sidewalk level. This entrance has an arched transom spanning over the top. Photographs from the late 1930s show an additional door mid-block that serves as a direct exit from the "laundry" floor to the street. The second floor of the west facade has 11 pairs of "B" pattern windows. The "B" pattern window pair has two wood-frame and wood-sash paired windows. Like the first floor, the windows are double-hung, except the lights are two-over-two and have a simpler arched transom. These windows are also set deeply back and decorated with arched brick lintel.</p>			

Decorative cast-stone pilasters are placed between each pair of windows accentuating the "piano noblea" of Italian Renaissance architecture. There are two sets of "B" windows located at the northern end of this facade without the cast-stone columns between each pair. South Facade Stylistically the SE Belmont Street (south) facade repeats the Egyptian temple motif. Like SE 10th Street, the cast-stone plinth blocks, pilasters, arches, and entablature are repeated at the corner. In lieu of the center entry door, another pair of wood casement windows with wood transoms was installed. At the sidewalk level, three, thin, horizontal windows covered with painted grills provide light to the boiler room on the interior. To the east of the cast-stone arches is a tall masonry opening extending from the first window sill to the second floor header, containing wood-frame, two-over-three windows on the first floor and mezzanine levels, separated by a wood spandrel panel. As an overall composition, the east addition of the south facade constructed in 1927 extends the fortress quality of Italian Renaissance commercial architecture. The masonry openings are fewer, narrower, and less tall when compared to the west facade. Emphasizing the temple-fortress quality of the design, the 1927 parapet of masonry above the second floor windows is double that of the area on the SE 10th Street side. The rowlock course of the original structure turn down five feet on the face of the addition immediately adjacent to the original building, and then extends horizontally across the addition. The effect is to pronounce the weight of the masonry and link the 1927 building to the "temple" original. SE Belmont Street rises in elevation towards the east, resulting in a four feet elevation change. The first floor of the 1927 addition has a large garage door, flanked by two large industrial steel-sash, three-over-four windows. A third, smaller window is located at the western edge of the addition. The second story has a band of seven double-hung, two-over-two windows with concrete sills. Each window has a small, square, decorative cast-stone piece above it. The concrete cornice runs along the length of the entire south facade, and is continuous between the original building and the east addition. North Facade While the SE Morrison Street facade (north) does not have the cast-stone ornamentation of the corner at SE 10th and SE Belmont, it does have many of the same Italian Renaissance features as the other primary facades. Four windows on the first story are in the "A" pattern and four windows on the second story are in the "B" pattern. The concrete cornice continues around the building on SE Morrison Street. The north facade of the 1927 addition (secondary elevation) is set back 150 feet from SE Morrison Street along the southern portion of the lot. A large paved parking lot extends from the building to the SE Morrison Street sidewalk. The 1927 north elevation contains a large garage door at the center of the first floor with a large steel-sash window. The second floor has two sets of the same type of window in an A:B:A pattern, where "A" has three-over-four divided lights, and "B" has four-over-four divided lights. A smaller four-over-four window is located under the water tower. As noted above, the water tower pedestal is concrete and the 1927 building wrapped around the pedestal. At present, the concrete structure is visible from the north, but no water tower exists. The eastern facade of the original building (a secondary facade) faces the interior of the lot. Both this facade, and the north facade of the 1927 addition, have no decorative exterior features. The first floor has a pair of two-over-two windows, with arched brick decoration, a band of three smaller, square, and fixed, two-over-two windows flank the south side of the doorway to the main floor. Two similar windows in this pattern are located just to the north of this door. The door has a large, square, metal canopy, and a transom. A metal stairway leads up to a door on the second floor that has a transom similar to that found on the first story above the door. There are two small windows on the south side of this door. Interior Lobby and Offices Immediately upon entering the Yale Union Laundry Building through the original doorway off SE 10th Avenue, one steps into the lobby and office area. The interior of the lobby and office area located in the 1929 addition of the Yale Union Laundry building has the richest and most detailed finishes found in the building. Upon entering the main door, all the offices are obscured by rich stained-oak paneling that stretches the length of the entry and stairwell along the western wall. As with the rest of the building, ceilings are vaulted, and the windows provide the room with generous light. Walls carry the stained-oak paneling throughout the lobby area. While the interior wall configuration of the offices appears to have changed over time, there is a vault located along the east wall of the main lobby area which appears to be original. A decorative wood screen matching the oak paneling is located at the northeastern corner of this level. Above the wood paneling, walls and ceilings are plaster. There are three offices at this level. Floors are laminate. The lobby can also be accessed from the mezzanine level by stairs. Directly east of lobby area, and up a small stairway, are two offices. The finishes in these two rooms do not match the lower lobby. The mezzanine floors are laminate and the walls concrete block. There are two windows on the south wall. It is likely that these offices were created during a later tenant remodel. These offices lead to a hallway that leads out to the south-side of the first floor on the main building. There is a large opening leading to the first floor of the 1927 addition on the east wall. 1927 Addition The first floor of the addition has a large garage door opening on the north-side. The east wall has no openings. The northwest corner of the west wall is marked by a shute from the second floor which leads directly to the first floor of the 1927 addition. The interior west wall of the addition appears to retain the original 1908 window and door openings which existed on the original exterior eastern facade. A window and door have been covered, and the original brick has been painted. Concrete-block pillars have been added to the exterior to support heavy wooden crossbeams supporting the addition and water tower above. The south wall also has a garage door opening that leads out to SE Belmont, and there are several windows on either side of this door. Main Floor At the center of the west wall is a large opening leading to the main floor of the building. The main floor of the original building has tall vaulted ceilings and large windows with arched transoms that can be opened with pulleys. The space is large and open with brick walls. Ceilings are painted wood with wood cross beams. The floors are concrete on the south end and painted wood on the north end. The main customer entrance is now located along the west wall at the north end of the building. Stairs leading down to the basement are located on the north-side of this room in the center, across from the main customer entrance, and the current customer counter. The east wall has several smaller windows and a door leading to the parking lot. An elevator sits at the center of this wall near the opening that leads to the addition. The original lobby and stairs to the mezzanine and basement can be accessed at the southern end of this room. Mezzanine The mezzanine is accessed from stairs leading up from the existing lobby or stairs leading down from the second floor of the 1927 addition. A third access directly from SE 10th Street has been blocked off, but the stairs still exist. There are three rooms on this level. Windows are along the south and western walls. Floors are wood. Ceilings are wood with crossbeams. Second Floor The second floor of the original building is remarkably bright due to the bank of 22 large paired two-over-two windows along the west wall and the tall vaulted ceilings. There are windows that run the length of the ceiling that can be opened by a chained pulley. There is a functioning elevator on the north end of the east wall and another closed elevator at the south end of this wall. Along the center of the east wall is an opening to the 1927 addition, and a pair of windows which originally opened into a central atrium, which provided light and air between the two buildings. The floor and ceiling are wood and the interior walls are brick. Access to the 1927 addition is via a ramp through an opening in the center of the east wall. A second access to this portion of the building is from a doorway and stairs from the mezzanine along the east wall, or a stairwell from the first floor of the addition located at the northwest corner of this floor. The interior west wall has two, large windows surrounding the atrium, which was created when the addition was constructed. The windows can open and within the atrium there originally was a skylight which allowed access to light and air. These have now been closed off. Both the north and east walls have two, large windows in an A:B:A pattern. The east wall has three sets of these windows which are now blocked by a party wall. At the southeast corner of the addition are a men and women's restroom and a lunchroom. The south wall has four, small, two-over-two windows. The floor is painted concrete and the walls and ceiling are plaster. Basement The basement is accessed via stairs leading from the hallway between the lobby area and the first floor of the main building. These stairs lead down to the boiler room at the southern end of the building. This portion of the basement is at a lower elevation than the rest of the floor. Another smaller set of stairs run along the east wall, and there is a hallway which leads to another stairwell up to the first floor of the 1927 addition. An elevator, which accesses both the first and second floors is located along this eastern wall to the north. The northern portion of the basement has large, concrete square posts supporting reinforced concrete beams under the central portion of the first floor. At the northernmost end of the basement, posts and beams are wood with steel brackets. A stairwell leading up to the main floor is located at the center of this portion of the basement. Floors and walls are concrete. Major Alterations The Yale Union Laundry building is an excellent example of laundries that were built and adapted to meet the needs of the growing laundry industry. It was specifically constructed as a power laundry and it adapted over time as the industry grew. The original 1908 construction consisted of two floors plus a basement that contained the boilers used to heat the wash water. As was common for a purpose built laundry, the walls are made of brick and the floors made to withstand the use of heavy machines. The main area of the first floor was constructed with heavy beams to support the washers. The vaulted ceilings and prominent placement of windows indicate the need for light and ventilation. The first floor was also used for delivery and pick up, checking, marking, and sorting. The second floor was used for starching, drying, and ironing. Over time, as the laundry industry grew, the building was expanded. Two additions were added in 1927 and 1929. The garage door openings on the north side of the addition, as well as the one opening onto SE Belmont, indicate the need to accommodate trucks used for home delivery. The 1929 addition included three bathrooms, one urinal, and a drinking fountain, as well as expanding the lobby area where some of the richest and most detailed finishes in the building are found today. In 1927, an addition was made to the structure on the southeast side, replacing a smaller one-story paint shop and garage. At this time, several openings were added on the southern portion of the existing 1908 structure to provide easy access between the buildings. In 1929, both the north and south portions of the Yale Union Laundry Building were modified when SE Morrison Street was widened to accommodate a new street car line. Given the opportunity to either create a sidewalk arcade abutting the street or removing the rear portion of the building, the owners elected to remove approximately twelve feet and set the north facade back adjacent to the sidewalk. Based on the consistency in window design, masonry materials, and setting techniques, it appears the new rear facade was created from salvaged building material and replicated the original north facade. The portion of the building facing Morrison was cut off, and the front facade moved back twenty feet. It is likely that the original brick was salvaged and reused. The north facade on this portion of the building was reconstructed and many of the decorative features restored. Also at this time, in 1929, a second two-story addition was joined to the south of the original 1908 building and to the west of the 1927 addition. This addition replaced an existing one-story machine shop. Prior to that time, a horse barn was located on this portion of the lot. The front entrance was moved from the corner of SE 10th and Morrison to this new addition at the south end of the building at the corner of SE 10th and Belmont. During this time, the significant cast-stone decoration was added. The Yale Union Laundry Building has a high degree of integrity, as there have only been minor alterations to the structure over the years. The alterations that have been made were completed soon after the Home Service Company purchased the building, and the architectural details and cast-stone decoration convey the success this company achieved in the laundry industry during this period. The additions reflect the growing importance of the industrial laundry business in the early twentieth century. By 1947, the power laundry business had declined due to the availability of the home washing machine. At this time, the business adapted to the building and became the City Linen Supply Company. In this way the building was still able to be used to clean products such as linens, towels, and aprons for other commercial businesses, such as hotels and restaurants

HISTORY

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE Overview The Yale Union Laundry Building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its significance in the area of Commerce. The Yale Union Laundry Company was associated with the Home Service Company, a holding company that held ownership in many of the major commercial laundries operating in Portland from 1920-1950. The Yale Union Laundry Building is an excellent example of a purpose-built commercial laundry building constructed in the early twentieth century in Portland. It is typical of laundry buildings that were built to meet the demands of the growing laundry industry. The Yale Union Laundry Building is located at 800 SE 10th Avenue. It was built as a commercial laundry in 1908 in the Italian Renaissance commercial style and has Egyptian Revival elements. Two additions were constructed in 1927 and 1929, both of which expanded its use as an industrial laundry to serve residents and businesses within Portland. Early Commercial Laundries in the United States Prior to the invention of the steam laundry machine in the mid-nineteenth century, most domestic washing was done by women at home, although wealthy households could hire washerwomen, servants, or Chinese laborers as launderers. The earliest washing "machine" was the scrub board, invented in 1797. This board was typically used in a large (usually wooden) wash tub. Clothes were then put through a ringer to squeeze out excess water and hung on a line to dry. In 1858, Hamilton Smith patented the first rotary washing machine. In the late nineteenth century, laundering became more industrialized with the invention of the steam laundry machine. Powered by steam engines that also heated water, steam laundry machines needed appropriate buildings that could provide strong floors to support heavy machinery, proper drainage, ventilation, and a good source of light. In addition to fireproofing, these features were all necessary components of an industrial laundry building. Between 1880 and 1900, technological advances affected the laundry process at these new factories. Machines were invented that could perform the least specialized and most physically demanding tasks, such as washing and wringing. Between 1900 and 1910, machines were invented to perform even more specialized tasks, like ironing and starching. By the turn of the century, laundries within cities became more common. Laundries ranged from small shop-front establishments with less than five employees, to large factory laundries which employed over 200 people. The first census of factory laundries operating with power driven machinery, taken in 1909, revealed that 5,186 factory laundries existed in the United States, and employed 124,214 workers. Of the laborers that worked at these laundries, 71.2 percent were women. Between 1909 and 1914, the laundry business continued to grow, as the number of workers at mechanized laundries increased by 19.3 percent. The Yale Union Laundry Building was part of this growing business. The majority of these large factory laundries were owned and managed by Euro-American men, who continued to discriminate against Chinese launderers. Euro-American-owned laundries, for example, advertised that it was better to take laundry out of the hands of undesirable and unclean Chinese workers and have it washed by their new, modern machines. In addition, Euro-American managers would not hire Chinese to work in their factories; however, managers would typically hire women. Many homes and apartments in urban centers did not include space for the type of laundry equipment in existence at the time. Also due to the fashions of the time, which emphasized extra stiff collars and cuffs, many middle-class women preferred to send menswear out for a professional touch. In fact, many of the first "factory" laundries did primarily men's shirts and collars, as well as linens from ships and hotels. Some of the smaller, store front laundries also subcontracted washing to larger factories that were able to process up to 50,000 pieces a day. These smaller establishments would then do ironing and other finish work by hand. In 1928, a promotional campaign developed by the Laundrymen's National Association published documented tours of skeptical female customers through large laundries in magazines like Good Housekeeping. The goal was to attract new customers, especially from the middle-class. Many laundries were interested in doing the family wash on a regular basis and would offer reasonable rates. Technological improvements during this time also helped facilitate more efficiency. For example, conveyor belts were added so that articles were no longer driven from room to room. In addition, tumble driers and electric became more common. By 1931, over 80 percent of services provided by a majority of industrial laundry companies were for family wash. The Laundering Process Laundry was picked up typically at individual residences, hotels, restaurants, and ships. Laundry was then checked and marked with the owner's name. Immediately upon arrival to the laundry building, dirty laundry was moved to the back of the building, away from the front lobby, since it often had a terrible odor. After the laundry was checked and marked, it was then sorted by color and fabric type. It was then transported to where washing machines were located, typically in the basement or ground floor to prevent additional stress on floorboards and to minimize the potential for rotting or collapsing ceilings. Machines often splashed water out, and wooden machines would rot and break. Poorly draining basements often had floods of foul water across the floor that necessitated workers to wear rubber boots. Most laundries made their own soap until detergents were invented in the 1930s. The most difficult part of washing laundry was removing the wet clothes from washing machines and placing the pieces in a centrifugal extractor. Strong men were often hired to do this work, but women, too, performed this task. The centrifugal extractor consisted of a drum with a basket that removed excess water through centrifugal force, similar to the "spin cycle" used in most home washing machines today. This was the most dangerous machine in use at the laundry factory, especially before legislation required locking lids on the machines. As a result, workers' clothing would often get caught in the machines, resulting in injury and, in some cases, even death. The extractors left the clothing tightly wound, and articles needed to be shaken out to get rid of any remaining water. Most laundries employed young girls to shake out items, as this job required the least amount of expertise. Mangle machines pressed out wrinkles and began drying items. Laundry was fed by operators into mangle machines, which typically consisted of a series of rollers, padded with fabric, and heated by steam, or gas flames. Operators were usually women, and injuries, such as burned or crushed fingers, were common. Starch was then applied. Laundries often made their own starch, and it was applied by hand until 1910, when starching became mechanized. After the items were starched, they were brought to the drying closets. These were enclosed boxes with heating elements that were usually pipes from the boiler. Rotary and tumble driers were available after 1912, but many commercial laundries continued to utilize the drying closets since they were quite effective. The next step of the process was ironing. This was the most skilled and highest paying job. Since ironing was highly specialized and depended on the type of garment, it was the last step to be mechanized. The last step of the process was folding, stacking, and either wrapping or binding the laundry with brown paper in preparation for pickup or delivery. Some of the smaller storefront laundries would subcontract out the washing and drying services to the commercial laundries and then complete the finish work at their own establishments. Decline of Commercial Laundries During the Great Depression, the use of factory laundry services began to decline around the country. Instead, sending laundry out was a luxury few could afford. After World War II, the use of factory laundry declined even further within the general population. The first electric washing machine, "The Mighty Thor," was introduced in 1908 by the Hurley Machine Company of Chicago, Illinois. Maytag and Whirlpool also began to produce electric motor-driven wringer washers after 1911. Electric driers were also developed during this period, but were initially too expensive for the average family. After World War II, however, electric washing machines and driers designed for private home use became increasingly more affordable. During the 1940s and 1950s, the increased availability of consumer credit made it simple and attractive for middle-class families to purchase washing machines and driers for their homes. Consequently, factory laundries adapted their services and began to offer specialized services that focused on diapers or linens. Interestingly, just as Euro-American laundry owners had used racism to advertise their services in the past, domestic washing machine makers suggested that patrons should not trust their private wash to lower-class factory workers, and instead do their laundry in the privacy of their own home. Commercial Laundries in Portland and the Home Service Company Yale Union Laundry and Laundries in Portland Prior to 1920 In Portland, laundries were located throughout the city, and ranged in size and capacity. Some of the larger factory laundries comprised at least half of a city block (100' x 200'), and often incorporated large additions to provide more workspace. The Opera House Laundry, initially constructed in 1906, and Troy Laundry, initially constructed in 1913, were of this type, as was Excelsior Laundry (1906). Other laundries were smaller in scale, and either operated out of existing storefronts, such as the laundry in the Pallay Building (1915), or adaptively reused existing buildings, such as the building at 1006 SE Grand that was originally constructed for office use by Arcoa Inc. in 1915. The Yale Laundry building was built by Charles F. Brown. Charles was born in Richland, Michigan, and in 1892, entered the laundry business in Superior, Wisconsin. He also built and operated an industrial power laundry in Duluth, Minnesota. In 1908, he moved to Portland, Oregon and opened the Yale Laundry Company at SE 10th and Morrison as an industrial power laundry. Charles married Hester B. Brown, and together had a son, D. Howard Brown, who worked as Secretary and Treasurer for the Yale Laundry Company. The Yale Union Laundry Building is an excellent example of laundries that were built and adapted to meet the needs of the growing laundry industry. When it was first constructed in 1908, the building consisted of two floors plus a basement, which contained boilers to heat wash-water. The central portion of the first floor was constructed with strong support beams underneath to support heavy washers. Both the first and second floors were originally designed with large open windows to allow for light and circulation. A large addition was added in 1927, and another in 1929. The expansion was needed to accommodate trucks that were used for home delivery. The addition also included a lunchroom and restrooms for employees, and was built to comply with established union concerns regarding wages and working conditions. In 1929, an additional three bathrooms, one urinal, and one drinking fountain were installed at Yale Union Laundry. This addition included expanding the lobby area where some of the richest and most detailed finishes in the building are still found today. These details were a reflection of the growing importance of the industrial laundry business during the early twentieth century. The Yale Union Laundry Building is typical of a building that was specifically constructed for many tasks associated with the power laundry business. It is an example of a purpose-built building, constructed specifically for use as a laundry. A purpose-built laundry typically had brick walls and its floors were made to withstand the use of heavy machines. It had several floors which were used for various tasks. The main floor was typically used for laundry delivery and pick up, checking, marking, and sorting. The lower floors, either the basement or first floor, were where the washing, extracting, and shaking processes occurred. The upper floor was used for mangling, starching, drying, and ironing. As described in the 1914 Industrial Welfare Commission Report on Power Laundries in Portland: Laundries built for laundry purposes have the walls and floors constructed to withstand the jar of heavy machinery, to offer resistance to water, and to carry off heat and steam; laundries established in store or other business buildings lack these arrangements and usually have the added disadvantage of low ceilings. Twelve of the laundries are in buildings erected for laundry purposes, five are in buildings erected for other purposes. Two of these five are in hotel buildings, and are located, one in the basement, the other in the sub-basement. Six of the 17 laundries are in frame buildings; 11 are in brick. Two of the laundries in frame structures erected for other than laundry purposes have occupied these buildings for 12 and 13 years respectively. Four of the brick buildings erected for laundry purposes have been occupied for three years or less. Seventy-nine per cent of the women employed are in buildings constructed for laundry purposes and 21 per cent are in buildings constructed for other purposes. The Yale Union Laundry Building easily conveys its association with the developing and flourishing laundry industry during the early twentieth century. It still retains the primary elements of its construction that identify it as a purpose-built laundry building. Most exceptional are its decorative stone reliefs of laundry workers on the exterior. On the interior, its original use is conveyed most strikingly by the large belt conveyor, which still exists, running from an opening in the floor from the second floor to the garage area of the first floor. With its tall ceilings, it is easy to imagine the large windows, which still have operating pulleys, and several skylights providing laundry workers with much needed light and ventilation,

especially notable on the wide-open second floor where the finish work was originally done. When Yale Laundry was built in 1908, there were 68 laundries listed in Portland directories, including Chinese and Japanese laundries. In 1909, there were 29 Euro-American, and 37 Chinese/Japanese laundries. By 1913, however, there were 43 Euro-American laundries, and 35 Chinese/Japanese laundries. Yale Laundry grew during this period, and in 1916, an article in the Portland Evening Telegram disclosed how the company employed 125 workers, and had invested \$140,000. The Oregonian also reported in 1916 on a preliminary report by the census, which summarized growth in the industry. It showed an increase in steam laundries in Oregon between 1909 and 1914. In 1909 there were 58 "power laundries" in the State of Oregon. By 1914, there were 31 in Portland, and 78 in the state. By 1917, there were 70 laundries operating in Portland, 33 of which were Chinese or Japanese. The number of Chinese/Japanese laundries continued to decline, and by 1920, after the consolidation of many Portland laundries, only 33 Euro-American, and 25 Chinese/Japanese laundries remained. Birth of the Home Service Company In 1920, several power laundries in Portland consolidated to form the Home Service Company. Through this consolidation, and subsequent acquisitions of additional power laundries, the Home Service Company was able to offer a larger number of people throughout Portland an affordable alternative to doing laundry themselves at home. Delivery drivers from the Home Service Company would pick up laundry at customers' homes and return the clothes washed, dried, pressed, and starched. The Home Service Company owned and operated the largest number of power laundries combined in Portland between 1920 and 1950. The Yale Union Laundry building was one of the laundries ~~and~~ subsequently operated by the Home Service Company from 1927 to 1950. Both Yale Union Laundry and the Home Service Company are associated with the development and operation of power laundries in Portland. Industrialization of the laundry process allowed power laundry owners to offer affordable laundry services to average middle-class families for the first time. Consequently, this improved the daily lives of people in early twentieth century Portland by relieving them of this time-consuming and labor-intensive process. The Home Service Company was formed in response to labor trends that were occurring in Portland and elsewhere at the time. In order to understand why the Home Service Company was formed, it is necessary to examine more closely what was happening in Portland at the power laundries in the years leading up to its formation in 1920. It is especially useful to understand the concerns of the women who worked at the laundries. Most of the tasks involved in the commercial factory laundry, with the exception of delivery drivers, washers/extractors, and managers, were done by women. As mechanization of the processes increased, the highest paid job for women changed from ironer, to clerical work, which involved the checking and marking of the laundry as it arrived. Muller v. Oregon In 1903, Oregon passed a state law that established a ten-hour work day for women. In 1905, Curt Muller required a laundry worker to stay over ten hours, resulting in the landmark Supreme Court case Muller v. Oregon. In 1908, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states had the right to limit women's work hours. Between 1911 and 1913, labor activists led a nationwide drive for hourly wages and an eight-hour work day for both men and women. In 1912, when Massachusetts passed the nation's first minimum wage law (which only applied to women workers), eyes turned toward Oregon to pass similar legislation. National organizations, such as the National Consumer's League (NCL) and the Association for Labor Legislation, appointed a special committee to study the minimum wage situation in Oregon. This resulted in Rev. Edwin O'Hara's Social Survey Report, completed in 1913. In the report, a survey of 509 earning women in Portland revealed that the typical woman sent laundry out to be done. In 1913, the average annual cost for this service ranged from \$7 to \$25 a year, depending on the volume of laundry serviced. The O'Hara report studied nineteen laundries in Portland. Seventeen reported an average workday of nine to ten hours a day. Two of the laundries reported a workday of less than nine hours. Portland also had a Laundrymen's Club, a social organization of about twenty-five leading laundrymen in the city, formed in 1914. In 1913, the following wages were reported for different commercial laundry jobs in Portland: Job/Pay rate in Portland Oregon- 1913 Markers/\$1.50/day Manglers/\$1.50-\$2.00/day Starchers/\$1.00-\$1.50/day Ironers/\$1.50-\$2.00/day Folders/\$1.25-\$1.35/day Stackers/\$1.25-\$1.35/day Both the Vice Commission Report and the O'Hara report concluded that \$10 a week was what single women needed to earn to live reasonably without resorting to vice for extra income. The Vice Commission Report of 1913 described an investigation of eight laundries in the city (names withheld), where heavy lifting, foot and leg work on machines, bad ventilation, and high temperatures could all contribute to making work severe and over-taxing. In every laundry investigated there were complaints regarding bad ventilation. In one laundry within a period of two weeks (in the summer), six female workers were carried out, due to fainting, or heat exhaustion. The O'Hara Report found similar conditions. Of all the industries surveyed, laundry scored the worst on the "too great heat" category. Work was difficult because the steam-laden atmosphere often averaged 135 degrees. As a result, fainting among workers was common. Other worker complaints concerned the strong odors from soiled laundry and chemicals, as well as poor plumbing facilities. The Industrial Welfare Commission On June 3, 1913, the minimum wage act for women and minors established the Industrial Welfare Commission to regulate the hours, wages, and working conditions of workers in Oregon. Soon after the establishment of this Commission on July 14, 1913, C.F. Brown of Yale Laundry contacted the commission to ask for an investigation of laundries in Portland because he was concerned about his own laundry workers becoming agitated or inspired by strikers at a nearby cannery, the Oregon Packing Company. He was specifically interested in finding out what changes he might make at his laundry in order to avoid a similar situation among his laundry workers. Brown also stated that he did not belong to the Laundrymen's Association. He reported the following working conditions at Yale Laundry: "Employs women for 9.5 hours a day. There is no restroom, no lunchroom, [and] no stools at the tables. The girls prefer shorter lunches, half hour rather than an hour." The following day, July 15, 1913, the Industrial Welfare Commission held a meeting with laundrymen in Portland. The following laundries were represented: Troy, Union, Yale, Opera House, National, Portland, Independent, Pacific, U.S. Laundry, State, Lace House, American, International, and Star. They were formally requested to submit their payrolls to the commission for evaluation to prepare a report that would recommend an acceptable minimum wage for laundry workers. In 1914, Caroline J. Gleason prepared a Report of the Industrial Welfare Commission of the State of Oregon: "Power Laundries in Portland." This report was written in order to evaluate the conditions of employment for women in power laundries in Portland. The report found that six wet-wash laundries existed at the time. These laundries would wash and wring the clothes only, and, therefore, return them to owners in a wet condition. Six hand laundries employed a total of twelve women. In three of these, power machines were used for washing and extracting water, but the other processes were done by hand. Thirty-five of the laundries were found to be Chinese, and an additional three were Japanese. It was found that only Asian employees worked at these laundries. One "white" laundry was operated in connection with a shirt factory as the last process before shipment. Two laundries were operated by hotel companies in hotel buildings. One laundered linens of hotel patrons and house linens only. The other did these essential tasks, but also solicited business from city residents. The fifty-two page report was substantially devoted to evaluating the working conditions at the seventeen power laundries identified in Portland in 1913. These laundries employed a total of 1,157 people; 768 were women. The study found that 7/8 of the women were American-born, 1/8 were German-born, and 1 woman was African-American. The women ranged in age from 16 to 60 years old, and 36 percent of the women were married, 50 percent were single, and 13 percent were widowed. The report described in great detail the tasks involved in laundering. As described earlier they included, marking, sorting, washing, shaking, mangling, starching, drying, and ironing. It was noted that the laundry business required efficiency and speed in its workers: "The laundry industry is a business the 'trade' of which will brook no delays. Hence, the necessity of system and efficiency in the management, of devices for saving time in the transit of work within the plant, and of machinery and processes which will produce the best work in the shortest time. The processes through which an article must go from the time it leaves its owner until it is delivered again are unknown to nine out of every ten housewives, who are depended upon ultimately to keep the industry in existence." A special analysis was made regarding the provisions made for the comfort, health, and well-being of women workers, as well as the important issue of whether these women were able to make a living-wage and if they had a reasonable work week. The 1914 report summarized a list of eight recommendations ~~suggeste~~ Portland Power Laundries: 1. Reduce the temperature and humidity of the work rooms to a normal degree by use of exhaust fans, exhaust hoods over machines and any natural or artificial means available. 2. Arrange departments and machinery so that the warmest and most exacting occupations will derive the greatest benefits from the ventilation. 3. Furnish heat-deflecting devices for machines on which they may be used, e.g. body ironers. 4. Install pneumatic attachments on press machines which women are expected to operate. 5. Shift employees at work so that the heat and strain of the difficult occupations may be distributed. 6. Furnish padding or mats for women to stand on, who work on concrete floors. 7. Permit stools at work in many departments where they are not at present supplied. 8. Maintain toilets, dressing rooms, and the laundry as a whole in a clean, well-swept condition. It was found that 254 of the 768 women were employed as manglers, and a majority of these women (212) received less than \$9 per week for working a nine-hour day, five days a week. As a result of this study, the Industrial Welfare Commission established a minimum weekly wage of \$8.25 for women workers in the laundry industry in Portland. On February 7, 1914, the Industrial Welfare Commission ruled that women could not work in laundries over 54 hours per week. On February 27, 1914, laundry owners in Portland announced they were raising their prices for large-scale work to cover the cost of complying with the Industrial Welfare Commission's rules. The Oregon Journal reported that laundry owners significantly raised the price of flatwork (linens) they charged hotels, restaurants, and boarding houses. Laundry owners justified the twenty percent price increase based on a ruling by the Industrial Welfare Commission that workers were only to work nine hours, rather than ten hours, per day. Prices for family work, however, did not rise at this time. By September 1917, an eight-hour workday was required, and laundrymen were becoming increasingly concerned about the rising costs of their business combined with the rising wages of employees. The Oregon Labor Press reported that laundry workers were organizing a union, and in October 1917 Yale Laundry workers were fired for being union members. Discharged workers were blacklisted. In 1919, laundry workers in Portland went on strike. As the Oregon Labor Press reported: Recognizing the conditions under which the girls have been working and fully aware of the strong combination which must be whipped, the delegates voted the appointment of a committee of twelve members to cooperate with the laundry workers in conducting the strike... A strike of twenty unorganized laundry workers at the National Laundry Friday of last week has spread until it takes in all the laundries in the City except Liberty, Very Best and the Mechanics, which are running under Union conditions.. The laundries affected, all members of the Laundrymen's Association, are: American, Crystal, Crescent, Imperial, National, Opera House, Oregon, Palace, Portland, State, U.S., Union and Yale. Emotions in the city were running high, and many housewives were encouraged not to have their laundry done by laundries that were unsympathetic to the union: "A few wealthy laundry owners will continue to pile up their dollars ground out of the lives of women for the City, for most of the laundry workers are women." Some of the laundries tried to launch their own counter campaigns. For example, Union Laundry placed an ad in the February 15, 1919 issue of the Oregon Labor Press. This was not to be effective, however, and in September 1919, the Press noted that although the striking laundry workers considered Union to be the most unfair, its name fooled many unsuspecting customers who thought they were patronizing a fair laundry. During 1919, it was estimated that laundries in Portland were operating at only 50 percent because of striking workers and a public boycott. The Oregon Labor Press reported on October 18, 1919 that all the laundries were suffering as a result of the strike, but that Opera House, Portland, and Union laundries were the worst hurt by the strike. In November of 1919, the union announced that a laundry known as the "Victory Laundry" was opening at 69th and Foster Road, and would be operated by organized labor. Strikes continued to spread throughout Oregon, with laundry workers striking in Bend and The Dalles. In direct response to the difficulties they were facing from workers, the laundry owners formed a State Association in

1920. An event was held at the Benson Hotel in Portland with the organization establishing a mission for: "the protection of the industry against unjust competition and discrimination." Percy G. Allen was elected temporary chairman of the organization. The Home Service Company and Consolidation of Portland Laundries As early as 1917, the Oregonian reported that the owner of U.S. Laundry, John Dannells, was planning to consolidate the eight largest laundries in Portland. Later, Percy G. Allen and the Home Service Company purchased U.S. Laundry. The consolidation of Portland laundries would create a large corporation with over \$1,000,000 in capital. The goal of consolidating was to reduce overhead expenses by half. The Home Service Company was founded in 1920 by Percy Allen, and incorporated by L.E. Crouch, a Portland attorney, in part as a direct response to the challenges laundry owners faced from workers. The original Articles of Incorporation for the company stated eight objectives that encompassed all aspects of operating a laundry business in Portland. The Home Service Company's first objective was to "engage in, conduct and maintain a general laundry, cleaning and dying business in the City of Portland, Oregon and in such other places as may seem advisable with the use of such buildings, machinery, appliances and other means as may be necessary or proper in connection with such business." The initial capital stock for the company was \$1,000,000, divided into 6,000 shares of common stock, and 4,000 shares of preferred stock. The holders of preferred stock were entitled to receive a seven percent dividend of the company's profits yearly. The Home Service Company consolidated businesses to save money on overhead expenses, as well as to increase potential profits. They were very successful in achieving their goals. The original companies consolidated by the Home Service Company were Troy Laundry, Allyn's Dyeing and Cleaning, and Crystal Laundries, all originally owned by Percy G. Allen. In 1926, the Home Service Company purchased Union Laundry. It then purchased Yale Laundry, originally founded by C.F. Brown, in 1927. The Yale Laundry Company was also known as Brown, Meyer, Inc. Born May 29, 1878 in New York City, Ralph P. Meyer joined the Yale Laundry Company in June, 1912, and served as Vice President and manager for many years. In 1916, an article in the Portland Evening Telegram described how Yal

RESEARCH INFORMATION

Title Records	Census Records	Property Tax Records	Local Histories
✓ Sanborn Maps	Biographical Sources	SHPO Files	Interviews
Obituaries	✓ Newspapers	State Archives	Historic Photographs
City Directories	✓ Building Permits	State Library	

Local Library:	University Library:
Historical Society:	Other Repository:

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