

# Oregon Historic Site Record

| LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME  |  |                                    |   |
|---|--|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>address:</b>   | 620 SW 5th Ave<br>Portland, Multnomah County (97204) | <b>historic name:</b>              | Failing Office Building   |
| <b>assoc addresses:</b>   |  | <b>current/other names:</b>        | Gevurtz Building, Gasco Building, 620 SW 5th Building; Phoenix Rising; Cascade AIDS Project |
| <b>location descr:</b>  |  | <b>block/lot/tax lot:</b>          |   |
|   |  | <b>twshp/rng/sect/qtr sect:</b>    | 1S 1E 18  |
| PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS  |  |                                    |   |
| <b>resource type:</b>   | Building   | <b>height (stories):</b>           | 12.0  |
| <b>elig evaluation:</b>   | eligible/significant                                 | <b>total elig resources:</b>       | 1   |
| <b>prim constr date:</b>  | 1907   | <b>total inelig resources:</b>     | 0   |
|   |  | <b>NR Status:</b>                  | Individually Listed   |
|   |  | <b>second date:</b>                | 1936  |
|   |  | <b>date indiv listed:</b>          | 10/31/2007  |
| <b>primary orig use:</b>  | Business   | <b>orig use comments:</b>          |   |
| <b>second orig use:</b>   | Department Store                                     | <b>prim style comments:</b>        |   |
| <b>primary style:</b>   | Commercial (Type)                                    | <b>sec style comments:</b>         |   |
| <b>secondary style:</b>   |  | <b>siding comments:</b>            |   |
| <b>primary siding:</b>  | Brick:Other/Undefined                                | <b>architect:</b>                  |   |
| <b>secondary siding:</b>  | Terra Cotta: Other/Undefined                         | Whidden & Lewis/Ion Lawrence (Alt) |   |
| <b>plan type:</b>   | 3-Part Vertical Block                                | <b>builder:</b>                    |   |
| <b>comments/notes:</b>  |  |                                    |   |
| Alterations   |  |                                    |   |
| GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS  |  |                                    |   |
| <b>Survey/Grouping Included In:</b>   |  | <b>Type of Grouping</b>            | <b>Date Listed</b>  |
| Ellis Lawrence Building Survey  |  | Survey & Inventory Project         |   |
| Portland Downtown Glazed Terra Cotta Buildings  |  | Thematic Grouping                  | 1980  |
| Portland LGBTQ+ Historic Resources 2024 RLS   |  | Survey & Inventory Project         | 2024  |
| SHPO INFORMATION FOR THIS PROPERTY  |  |                                    |   |
| <b>NR date listed:</b>  | 10/31/2007   | Special Assessment                 |   |
| <b>ILS survey date:</b>   | 05/01/1988   | <b>Status</b>                      | <b>Term</b>   |
| <b>RLS survey date:</b>   | 05/30/2023   | Closed                             | 1st   |
| <b>Gen file date:</b>   | 10/28/2015   | <b>End Yr</b>                      | 2021  |
|   |  | <b>106 Project(s):</b>             | None  |
|   |  | <b>Federal Tax Project(s):</b>     | None  |
| ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION  |  |                                    |   |
| <i>(Includes expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings and alterations)</i>  |  |                                    |   |
| <p>SUMMARY The 1907/1913 Failing Office Building is located at 620 SW Fifth Avenue in downtown Portland's historic commercial core on Lots 7 &amp; 8 of Block 62. Architects William Whidden and Ion Lewis designed the original six-story building in 1907 and the six-story addition in 1913. The building's initial construction and later dramatic expansion was a response to the Portland's economic boom and an extraordinary demand for additional office space in downtown after the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition in 1905. The twelve-story building itself is representative of commercial architecture of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, and features a reinforced steel-frame structure with facades of yellow brick and glazed terra cotta. SETTING The Failing Office Building is located to the southeast of Portland's retail core on an essentially flat, quarter-block, 10,000 square-foot parcel on the southeast corner of SW Alder Street and SW Fifth Avenue. The building is built to the lot line with a perimeter sidewalk, and the site contains no significant landscape features. The immediate area is surrounded by commercial buildings of a similar age. To the north are the 1912 Lipman Wolfe Building, designed by A. E. Doyle &amp; Patterson, the 1911 Yeon Building, and the 1911 Hotel Alder. Across the street to the west is the Meier &amp; Frank complex, also designed by A. E. Doyle. All four buildings are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Adjacent to the Meier &amp; Frank complex to the south is the Kress Building. EXTERIOR The Failing Office Building is a twelve-story, plus full basement, quarter-block, reinforced-steel frame, brick-and-terracotta, U-shaped building with a deep east-facing light well. The main decorative facades are similar in design and treatment and face north and west toward SW Alder Street and SW Fifth Avenue, while the south and east facades have little decoration and face into the interior of the city block. The building's structural bays, defined by the window openings, are five-bays wide along its primary facades. These visible sides of the building were designed in the tripartite "classical column" idiom of base, shaft, and capital reflective of the traditional approach to multi-story city office buildings in the early-twentieth century. The building "base" consists of the first two stories, which are dedicated to retail. The street-level ground floor is one-and-a-half stories in height. The building "shaft," the third through tenth stories, is executed in earth tone yellow brick. White terra cotta panels on the top two floors and an elaborate terra cotta cornice create the building's "capital." Fire escapes are prominent on both the northeast and southwest corners of the building. The original storefronts along the main facades consisted of two large plate-glass windows divided by terra cotta columns with a continuous granite base along the sidewalk. The terra cotta columns extended to the second floor, which also had four large paired plate-glass windows. In 1951, the original historic display windows and decorative cast iron ornamentation were entirely removed and replaced with flat-panel terra cotta units installed as a veneer directly to the structural framing system. Currently, the ground floor has been "modernized" with an unadorned, smooth-surface, panel skin evoking a solid surface with punched openings for the retail windows. At the height of the second floor, or retail mezzanine level, the solid skin hides the transfer zone of the mechanical system. The only telltale signs of the system are the visible small horizontal grilles installed in the width of the original second-floor window openings. The mass of the central portion of the building is reduced by horizontal striations created through the brick coursing. The coursing consists of six horizontal rows of running bond interrupted by two horizontal deeply recessed rows of brick. This pattern is especially apparent in the continuous spandrel panels at the floor heights. The treatment is not unusual for multi-story buildings, but many of the buildings of the same period accentuated the verticality of the structure and did not create strong horizontal visual elements. The tripartite design is highlighted by decorative belt courses between the elements, on the top two floors, and the classically-designed decorative cornice. The lower belt course separating the second and third floors is made of marble. The top belt-course is made of terracotta and lies between the tenth and eleventh stories. The top belt course, eleventh and twelfth stories, and cornice are decorated with cream-colored terra cotta ornament in bands, diapers, and free ornaments. Decoration on the top floors includes keystones with fish-scale pattern and window surrounds with a laurel-leaf design. The cornice features egg-and-dart, modillion block, and dentil ornament. Rosettes are placed between each of the dentils under the entablature of the cornice. Like many early twentieth-century multi-story buildings, the structural system allowed for the area between columns and beams to be used for window placement. Windows on the primary facades are one-over-one, double-hung wood sash, and are repetitive in every bay except the twelfth floor. Windows are arranged in five groups of three on each floor in a A:B:A pattern. The A and B type windows are similar; however, the B window is slightly larger. On the twelfth floor, each of the windows is angled slightly to fit within the arches. Windows on the top story are bordered by a terracotta surrounds with arched lintels, keystones, and other decorative elements. Sill courses of all window groups are of continuous Tenino sandstone. The southern and eastern facades of the building are finished in a painted concrete, and unlike the primary facades have no ornament. The top six floors are visible above both the Kress building to the south and the 1951 addition to the Failing Office Building to the east. On the southern façade the elevator bank is contained in the southwestern end. One east-facing wood double-hung window provides light to a small closet containing fire suppression equipment on each floor. On the remainder of the southern façade windows are one-over-one double-hung with three-over-three rectangular</p> |  |                                    |   |

lights. There are five windows on each floor in a A:A:B pattern with "A" representing a pair of double-hung wood windows with three-over-three lights, and "B" representing a single wood sash window with three-over-three lights. A metal exhaust pipe is affixed to the southeastern corner of the building extending from the basement level to above the roofline. On the east façade and the southern end of the U-shaped light well there are four windows on each floor in a A:B pattern with "A" representing a pair of double-hung wood sash four-over-four windows and "B" representing a pair of wood double-hung three-over-three windows. On the northern end of the U-shaped light well of the east façade there are four windows on each floor. Each floor has three wood double-hung windows with three-over-three rectangular lights. The last window at the northern end is smaller on each floor and has two-over-two lights. Windows in the light well are wood double-hung three-over-three with six of this type placed on both the inside of the south and north walls of each floor in the light well. Similar windows are located at the western end of the light well. At the penthouse level there is a sign that reads: Portland Tribune, and below that it reads: 620 Building. The same sign is also located on the southern façade above the elevators at the penthouse level. INTERIOR The interior to the Failing Office Building is divided into retail and office space. The first and second floors have consistently been the primary retail spaces of the building. Historically there were multiple retail entries from both SW 5th Avenue and SW Alder Street. Currently, access to the retail space is from the northwest corner of the building at the intersection. This corner entrance appears to have been added in 1927 when the Britts store was remodeled. Currently, the lower two stories of the Failing Office Building house an expansion retail space for the discount clothier Ross Dress For Less. Floors five through twelve are dedicated office space. The upper office spaces are accessed through a formal building entry and lobby space from SW Fifth Avenue. The main lobby has the richest and most detailed finishes of the public spaces. There is mahogany paneling, trim, and moldings, and the three elevator doors retain their original brass finish and detailing. The remaining lobby space was remodeled over the years, resulting in modern finishes including wall-to-wall carpet and dropped acoustical tile ceilings. Additional period detailing includes a standard Cutler mail chute rising the height of the building and a corresponding brass collection letter box. By contrast, the public stairwell located in the southeast corner of the building and accessed through a door at the east end of the main elevator lobby has little decoration. Office floors three through twelve follow the same general layout with the elevator lobby located at the southern portion of the floor. The Cutler mail chute is located on the northern wall in the elevator lobby on each floor. Offices are double-loaded on either side of a hallway running in a U-shape around a central east/west light well. The corridors have plaster walls with some original finishes including mahogany wood-crown moldings and baseboards, wainscot, and office doors. Restrooms are located opposite of the elevator bank on each floor. The finished 10,000 square foot basement contains the building's mechanical equipment room and storage space for retail stock. It has also at times served as a retail space to supplement the first and second floors. ALTERATIONS Historic photographs show that the Failing Office Building was originally constructed with six stories and lacked an elaborate cornice. Original interior floor plans of floors three through six were not found, and it is not clear how the interior was organized prior to 1912. The structure was substantially altered during the 1912/1913 remodel when six stories were added to the building and the simple design was augmented by elaborate tile work, especially on the top floors. Historic photographs appear to indicate that the original brick skin of the building was retained and that the existing window patterns and stylistic elements were copied in floors six through twelve. The first and second floors have been remodeled over the years as various tenants have occupied the retail space. The following is a summary of the alterations to the first two floors: c.1917 Installation of new elevator shaft Gevurtz Furniture/Whidden & Lewis c.1927 Retail tenant remodel Brittan Brothers/Britts c. 1929 Retail tenant remodel J.J. Newberry Co. c. 1951 Retail tenant remodel J.J. Newberry Co. The first major alteration after the building's expansion was in 1927 when the first floor tenant, Britz, modified the façade to include an entry on the northwest corner of the building in addition to other interior changes. In 1929 J.J. Newberry remodeled their retail space on the first two floors. In 1951 the company hired architect Glenn Stanton and again remodeled their space and constructed a new six-story building on the site of the Richmond Building, located just to the east. As part of the changes, a ceramic veneer was added to the Failing Office Building, which covered the original large window openings on the first and second floors. In addition to these changes, the office areas have been remodeled over time to accommodate tenant's needs. Despite these improvements, the upper floors still retain the same general layout. Floors have been modernized with carpet and ceilings are dropped with acoustical tile. Walls and windows are intact on floors three and four, but the original corridors and internal walls creating office spaces have been removed. On floor five the tenant uses the public elevator lobby as their reception area. Floors six through twelve retain the most integrity with the location of the original corridors, restrooms, and doors to the internal stairwell remaining intact. Current plans call for a remodel of the ground floor retail area, including plate glass windows and transoms filling each bay with recessed entrances located as needed. While the plans do not intend to duplicate the original designs of Whidden & Lewis, it is intended that the new design will be more compatible than previous remodels.

## HISTORY

*(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period - preferably to the present)*

**SUMMARY:** In the context of the multiple property submission (MPS) cover document, "Historic Resources in Downtown Portland: 1906-1914," the Failing Office Building is individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion "A" for its association with local commercial practices and community planning and development. The building is part of a larger collection of buildings defined by the MPS that physical demonstrate Portland's rapid growth after the 1905 Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition, and meets the general registration requirements and those specific to office buildings as defined by the document. THE FAILING OFFICE BUILDING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOWNTOWN PORTLAND As described in the historic context for the multiple-property submission, one of Portland's most dynamic construction periods occurred between the 1905 Lewis and Clark Centennial exposition and the First World War. The exposition initially attracted 1,588,00 people and added \$8 million, 135 million adjusted for inflation, to the local economy. The initial investment propelled the city's businesses, and the fair's success attracted the interest of investors, businessmen, developers, and workers who believed that Portland was destined to be one of the nation's major cities. The success of the exposition drew thousands of new residents to the city, many of whom were new to the country as well. The city's population grew from 110,839 to 207,214 in 1910. In 1910, only Seattle had a larger increase in population during that same time. By 1915 the number of residents had increased to 259,510. A total of one-sixth of the population was foreign born, including 22.4 percent German, 11.2 percent Canadian and 9.5 percent English. Portland also had one of the largest Asian populations on the West Coast, second only to San Francisco. Although this group only accounted for 3 percent of the total state population, more than one half of Oregon's Asians lived in the Portland. The majority of the city's residents were employed in the booming manufacturing, trade, and transportation industries, while a smaller minority were employed in professional fields. The population increase was driven by the city's rapidly expanding businesses. Joseph Gaston reports that in 1901 Portland was the fifth city in the nation for wheat exports, but by 1910 Portland was the second largest exporter of the crop, second only to New York. Other exports included barley, flour, oats, and hay harvested from the State's fertile agricultural lands. Portland's access to the Pacific Ocean and large stands of trees made lumber production, manufacturing, and shipping the most important industries at the time. Over 700 million board feet were cut, producing ten million dollars in revenue annually. Overall the city's manufacturing grew from an output of \$28,651,00 in goods in 1905 to \$46,861,000 by 1910. Most of this increase was related to the production of wood products, including furniture. Portland also produced woollens, leather goods, machinery, food stuffs, and built ships. Portland was also the livestock and meatpacking center for the Pacific Northwest during this period, and the city boasted the largest packing plant in the West. The import and export of goods and services was handled entirely by ship or railroad. On the average day in Portland about eight to ten freighters or steamships would bring cargo in and take cargo out of the city. Freight trains also brought cargo in on a regular basis. During 1910, Union Depot alone handled 220,000 freight cars. As Portland's population and industry grew, so did its transportation network. By 1915 there were 109 steam passenger trains leaving and arriving in Portland, and there were seven interurban lines that reached out to the neighboring cities. The steam passenger trains arrived or departed every twenty minutes, and the electric train every nine minutes. Streetcars became an important mode of transportation within Portland, and their use influenced the development and layout of the city. The laying of an efficient urban track system caused the center of the business district to be moved from Front, to Third and then finally out to Seventh (Broadway Ave.). It also allowed for working-class residents to access all parts of the city efficiently for a reasonable cost. To accommodate the growing volume of rail and foot traffic, six steel bridges were constructed to span the Willamette by 1914. During the years of 1911-13 the city covered more than 175 miles of streets with hard surfaced pavement to facilitate easier travel. By 1914 the traffic was a mixture of streetcars, motorcars, trains, horse-drawn vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians, but the majority of people used the streetcars for transportation around the city. However, in 1914, in anticipation of increased automobile use, the Portland City Council enacted its first code for automobile and pedestrian traffic. No official planning or zoning existed to constrain Portland's fantastic expansion. Instead, growth was guided by private investors who developed land as they saw fit, giving private companies and individuals control over the physical shape of the city and ensuring windfall profits. Building permits by the city showed that new building construction valued \$4,183,368 in 1905, and by 1910 that number amounted to \$19,152,370. By 1913, the president of the National Association of Real Estate Exchanges had declared, "Portland has the greatest future of any city of the Pacific Coast." Many people were making huge amounts of money on real estate. A quarter block bought in 1898 for \$13,000 sold eight years later for \$125,000. The twenty-one banking institutions of the city showed clearings of \$578,884,018.99 in 1914 as compared to \$122,575,461.99 in 1901. The plating of new suburban tracts along the rail lines, many owned by the railroads themselves, encouraged decentralization by promoting the development of neighborhood shopping centers. The influence of big business was wide-reaching, and by 1910, over 50 percent of the city's waterfront on both sides of the river was owned by the railroads and the Northern Pacific Terminal Company. Shortly after the conclusion of the exposition, the negative effects of rapid and undirected development were noticed by the city's leadership. In 1909 Mayor Simon, a Republican with a great deal of support in the business world, established the "City Beautiful Fund." The money was to be used to hire Edward Bennett from Chicago to prepare a plan for the future development of the city based on the City Beautiful Movement. The City Beautiful Movement was taking hold around the country, with planners and architects working together to try to create beautiful and livable cities for everyone, especially the working class, to enjoy. Another noted need was a public dock, which the mayor addressed by creating the Portland Commission of Public Docks in 1910. Edward Bennett completed "The Greater Portland Plan" in October 1912, and it was presented to the public. In November of that year the public voted to accept the plan. The need for planning and public services was heightened as the city's population boomed. Between 1900 and 1916, the old Westside neighborhoods grew from 58,000 to 96,000 residents. Over the same period, the east side grew from 32,000 to 178,000 residents. As the population grew, so did the disparity between the classes, in spite of Mayor Bennett's ambitious civic and social improvement plan. The population explosion resulted in a geographical social segregation, with the wealthier families escaping from in town to secluded fringes of the city. The movement was induced primarily by the spread of the electric streetcar lines that encouraged the city's growth and enabled it residents to travel within the urban area. Residential property along the tracks became less

desirable because the streetcars were noisy. Those who could afford to move away did, and as property values fell the property became attractive for commercial development. Many houses were converted to stores, shops, or simply torn down and redeveloped. During this period of transition over 60 percent of the population lived on the east side of the river, although the west side remained the heart of the city. The west side still had the highest land value, most intense land use, and the most pedestrian traffic. Perhaps nowhere in Portland was the effects of the city's changing demographics and burgeoning industry more evident than in the growth of its financial and commercial center. In downtown, the first indirect impact of the economic boom after the fair was a shortage of office space. Demand pushed real estate values upwards by 30 percent between 1905 to 1906 and by 100 percent by 1910. Surprisingly, this increase in value was not tempered by a building boom. Total rentable space grew from 900,000 square feet in 1900 to 2,000,000 in 1910. In this period, nearly six dozen buildings were constructed in a sixty block area, bounded by Third Avenue on the east, Eleventh Avenue on the west, Salmon Street on the south and Burnside on the north. The construction frenzied resulted in the addition of about five million new square feet to the city's core business district, primarily in order to satisfy the high demand for increased office and retail space. The three and four story nineteenth century business blocks of mostly wood and non-reinforced masonry buildings were being supplanted by steel frame and reinforced concrete structures of twelve and fourteen stories on Fifth and Sixth Avenue and six story buildings were located between Third Avenue and Broadway. The building boom included a wide variety of building types, each physically expressing the community's new-found wealth. Office buildings built on speculation were built in large numbers in this period. These buildings often included ground-floor retail space to maximize rents in addition the interconnected office suites on the upper floors. Other building types were also constructed during this period. Department stores, such as Meier & Frank, located across the street from the Failing Office Building, reflected an exceptional growth in retail sales during and after the exposition. Hotels also prospered during this period. Several first-class hotels, including the Multnomah, the Oregon (Benson), and the Imperial featured grand lobbies, meeting rooms, and restaurants. Grand civic buildings, such as the new central library, the county courthouse, and police headquarters were constructed during this period as well. By 1915 Portland's boom was waning due to falling wheat and lumber prices and an economic downturn on the eve of World War I. Revenues from building permits fell from twenty million dollars to seven million the following year and then down to three million by 1917. From 1915 to 1920 there was only an average of one to two buildings constructed per year.

### THE HISTORY OF THE FAILING OFFICE BUILDING

The buildings constructed during Portland's boom after the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition define much of the character of downtown Portland today and link the city to a time in its history when economic conditions caused a transformation of the City of Portland from "Stump Town" to a great city, worthy of significant economic investment. The Failing Office Building is a physical representation of the legacy of Portland's influential Failing family and a product of Portland's economic success in the early twentieth century. Henry Failing was a Portland Mayor who left an outstanding record of accomplishments. He served as both the city's fifteenth executive, and he held the same position nearly ten years later as the city's twenty-first mayor. Josiah Failing, Henry's father, also served as Portland's Mayor. They were Portland's only father and son mayors. The Failing family's influence stemmed from their business acumen and fortuitous alliances. The family began their fortune with a general store, but in 1868 they began to restrict their business exclusively to hardware, which quickly grew into a successful enterprise. Henry's marriage ten years earlier to Emily Corbett in 1858 led to a financial venture in 1869 when the Failing and Corbett families bought a controlling interest in the First National Bank, the first bank established in Oregon under the National Banking Act. Henry Failing became the bank's president. In 1871 the Failings went into the hardware business with the Corbett family, establishing Corbett, Failing and Co. The site of the Failing Office Building at the corner of SW Sixth and SW Alder was the location of the original Henry Failing residence. Failing purchased the building site, along with two bordering lots, from the First Baptist Church of Portland in 1892. He passed away in 1898 but left the real estate to his three daughters. Taking advantage of the booming economy, the family's good economic position, and the rapid commercialization of the area surrounding the family home, the Failing estate began plans for a new office building. The Failing Office Building was designed by noted regional architectural firm Whidden and Lewis and built in 1907 on speculation. The firm had previously worked with the Failing family on the construction of the Postal Building in 1900. Completed just two years after the 1905 Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition, the Failing Office Building was one of the many buildings constructed in downtown Portland during this period to address the increased demand for office and ground floor retail space. The Failings were no doubt aware of the coming opportunities because of their interest in the First National Bank. As one of the many wealthy business-families investing in and shaping Portland at this time, the Failings were in a position to take advantage of rising economic fortunes. Initially the Failings were only cautiously optimistic at the beginning of the economic boom, and although well-executed, the building's ornamentation was relatively simple and rose to a height of only six stories. Yet, there was room for expansion. As the building neared completion, the January 7, 1907 Oregonian said that the building was designed to carry additional stories. Upon its completion, the building was named the Gevurtz Building, after its first-floor tenant the Gevurtz Furniture Company. Despite its restrained stature and ornamentation, the building exemplified many of the aesthetic trends of the period. As noted by Ferriday, the transition in brick color and texture which occurred between 1905 and 1930 in Portland is reflected in the Failing Office Building. The popularity of yellow brick during the late 1890's and early 1900s was apparently a nationwide phenomenon, relating to the desire to replicate the white and off-white buildings popularized by Chicago's World Fair. Architects utilizing a smooth-faced brick also began using a variously textured brick. The 1907 Failing Office Building is a good example of the early use of pressed yellow brick in Portland, yet its brick coursing consisting of six horizontal rows of running bond interrupted by two horizontal deeply recessed rows make it distinctive. This pattern is especially apparent in the continuous spandrel panels at the floor heights. Many of the buildings of the same period had a tendency to accentuate the verticality of their structures and not create strong horizontal visual elements like the Failing Office Building. Five years later in 1912, Portland's economic boom continued, as did the demand for retail and office space in downtown. The Failing family again turned to Whidden and Lewis to design a six-story addition to the building. It appears that initially the remodel was intended to be similar to the original plan and much more modest than what was finally constructed. On January 1, 1912 the Oregonian published a design for the building that showed how the architects intended to simply replicate the building's original appearance and decoration. Perhaps the Failing family was feeling more optimistic about their economic future or sought to lure tenants, but the final design they selected was much more ornate, including the extensive use of terra-cotta tile to adorn the building. Ferriday explains that the ornament of the glazed terra-cotta era can be classified into five types: supports (columns & pilasters); bands (friezes, cornices), panels; diapers (overall patterns) and free ornaments (rosettes, finials, cartouches etc.). The economy of production of glazed terra cotta was achieved through repetition of ornamental motifs, thus making it a relatively affordable material. This more elaborate building decoration conveyed the financial success the Failings achieved and reflected the financial success of the development within the immediate area. Although it is unclear what influence the architects had, no doubt Whidden & Lewis wished to keep up with the buildings in the immediate vicinity, such as the Meier & Frank Building to the west and the Yeon Building to the north. Following the building remodel, the Failing Office Building had a number of tenants and its use continued to evolve. The Gevurtz Furniture Company continued their tenancy after the remodel, but left in 1918. Shortly thereafter the Portland Gas & Coke Company signed a lease with the Failing Estate. At this time the building was renamed the Gasco Building. The tenancy again changed when representatives from the Failing Estate announced in late 1927 that the Portland Gas & Coke Company would be moving to the Public Service Building on Dec. 17, 1927. Further, representatives announced that starting on January 1, 1928 the name of the Gasco Building would change to the Failing Building. At this time a ten-year lease was signed with the Britts Five Cents to a Dollar store, whose operations would cover the basement, first and second floors of the Failing Building. At this time the building became the Failing Building. The Oregon Journal explained the use of the name: "The name Failing building was first applied to the four-story structure at third and Washington streets," built in 1902. This building was recently sold by the Failing estate to W. C. Becketell and renamed the Postal building, the estate retaining the name for the Gasco Building. In 1929 J.J. Newberry Co. converted the Brittan Brothers Britts store. J.J. Newberry completed additional exterior and interior modifications to the retail floors in 1951. At this time the building directly to the east was demolished, and a new six-story structure built which connected to the Failing Building on the first two floors, doubling the retail space for J.J. Newberry. The Failing Estate sold the Failing Building to Melvin Mark in 1963. An article in the Oregonian describes the purchase: Melvin Mark Properties, largest single holder of downtown Portland properties, has purchased the Failing Building and the Park Building from the Failing Estate for a price in excess of \$2 million. The sale involves one of the largest downtown, core-area blocks of property put together in a single real estate transaction and adds to the Mark downtown holdings a total of eighteen stories of office space... Henry Failing Cabell, who handled the sale for the estate, is the grandson of the late Henry Failing, who was president of the First National Bank of Oregon from 1869 to 1898. The grandson is an attorney." As the MPS context specifically states: "To some degree, the Failing Building at Fifth Avenue and Alder is symbolic: Designed by Whidden and Lewis, it was constructed as a six story building in 1907 and in 1913, six additional floors were added." Despite change in various retail and office tenants over the years, the Failing building has retained its original use since its construction in 1907 and renovation in 1913 and remains a physical example of Portland's economic boom after the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition.

### WHIDDEN AND LEWIS ARCHITECTS

The Failing Building is representative of Whidden and Lewis' work in Portland during the city's economic boom period and remains a good example of early-twentieth century commercial architecture. For more than thirty-five years Whidden and Lewis designed residential, commercial, and public buildings that shaped the city at the turn century, and the Failing Building is included within their accomplishments. Whidden and Lewis met while studying architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the late 1870s. Both natives of Massachusetts, Whidden was born in Boston on February 10, 1857, and Lewis was born in Lynn on March 26, 1858. After graduation in 1877, Lewis stayed in Boston working for architects Peabody & Stearns, and Cabot & Chandler. Whidden went to Paris to attend the Ecole des Beaux Arts, then returned to the U.S. to work for the firm McKim, Mead & White in New York City. Whidden & McKim came to Portland in 1882 to supervise work on the Portland Hotel. The hotel was only partially completed because owner Henry Villard's finances collapsed, and Whidden temporarily returned to the east. In 1888, Whidden was invited back to Portland by Ladd & Corbett to finish work on the hotel. A year later Lon Lewis moved to Portland and joined Whidden. In 1889 Whidden and Lewis formed a partnership, establishing a firm that came to dominate Portland's architectural community for over three decades. In addition to numerous outstanding residential properties, they received many important public and commercial commissions. These included: the Portland City Hall in 1895, the Concord Building in 1900, and the Multnomah County Courthouse in 1914. All three are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to their professional work, each became involved in their community. William Lewis became the first President of the University Club of Portland, which held its first meeting May 2, 1898 at the Whidden and Lewis offices. Lewis was the Director of Architecture for the Lewis and Clark Exposition of 1905. After several decades of work, Whidden and Lewis were reaching the end of their careers. Whidden retired in 1920 and later died on July 27, 1929. Lewis continued practicing under the firm name, and in 1930 established the Lon Lewis Traveling Fellowship at the University of Oregon School of Architecture and Allied Arts. He died on August 29, 1933. Whidden and Lewis' contribution to Portland architecture not only included the grand buildings they designed, but also the architects they trained. Albert E. Doyle started with the firm when he was only fourteen years old, and the Forestry Building at the Lewis and Clark Exposition was designed by him while he worked for the firm. The building,

a gigantic log structure, was the only structure kept after the fair. It unfortunately burned in 1965. Doyle went on to open his own office in 1907, eventually becoming one of Portland's leading architects. Doyle was noted for his classic designs that used terra cotta to create wonderfully decorated commercial buildings. At the end of his life, Doyle produced two buildings, the Pacific Building and the Public Service Building, that were heavily influenced by the Italian Renaissance style. Other notable architects who trained under Whidden and Lewis include Joseph Jacobberger, David Chambers Lewis, Harrison A. Whitney, and Frederick A. Fritsch. Comparative Analysis, Works by Whidden and Lewis Whidden and Lewis designed works for residential, commercial, and public use throughout their careers in Portland. The majority of their residential work was in the Colonial Revival style, displaying their New England heritage. Their commercial buildings were primarily in the twentieth-century Classical style. They regularly used brick and terra cotta in their designs, and favored classical detailing. The Portland Hotel (1888-90) was their first large commission, and it was a Portland landmark for many years until it was demolished. Other commissions quickly followed. In 1891 the Concord Building was completed, followed by the Hamilton and Gilbert Buildings in 1893, all of which are listed in the National Register. Their first public commission was the Portland City Hall in 1895, constructed in the same year as their Meier & Frank Building, which was later replaced by the current building designed by their protégé, A. E. Doyle. The first office building designed and constructed by Whidden and Lewis after they came to Portland was the Concord Building. The building is a unique Oregon example of the emerging Commercial Style, but it includes elements of the Richardsonian Romanesque in the rock-faced ground floor piers. Whidden and Lewis were hired by William Ladd to construct the Concord Building for use as an office, with space for retail on the ground floor. The building is six stories in height and occupies a 50' x 95' corner site at SW Second Avenue and Stark Street. The basic structure of the building was conventional for the period, masonry piers and bearing walls with wood frame construction. The appearance of the Concord Building contrasted with designs that were popular in Portland in the late nineteenth century such as the Victorian Italianate style with cast-iron fronts, such as the Glisan's Building (Chown Electric Bldg) on Second and Ash, and the popular Richardsonian Romanesque Style, which can be seen in the Dekum Building (1892). Whidden and Lewis were hired by H.W. Corbett to construct the Hamilton Building (1892-93), located at 529 SW Third. Designed as a six-story office building with retail space on the ground floor, the building was located on SW Third Avenue, which was in the center of commercial development between 1890 and 1900. The Hamilton Building is another excellent example of the Commercial Style as demonstrated in its classical form and detail. It is interesting to note that the brick facing on this building is rust-brown pressed brick made in Japan. This rust-brown brick and the off-white terra cotta trim was characteristic of other Whidden and Lewis buildings of the period, such as the Postal Building (1900), the first Meier & Frank Store (1897-98) and the Failing Office Building (1907/1913). Portland City Hall (1895) was designed by Whidden and Lewis in the Renaissance Revival Style. Noteworthy for its time, it was a fireproof structure which was centrally heated, wired for electricity, gas and telephone. Whidden and Lewis utilized the most modern engineering techniques of the time and designed the building to carry roof and floor loads on the steel frame, not on the exterior walls. Located at 1220 SW Fifth Ave, the building is four stories, with a granite façade. Decorative elements include an ionic entablature with a bracketed cornice and balustrade, medallions and pedimented shields. The Postal Building was designed by Whidden and Lewis in 1900. The Postal Building is most distinguished for its elegant terra cotta work. The four story building occupies a 100 x 100 foot corner site at SW 3rd Avenue and Washington Streets. The building was initially known as the "Failing" Building and later became known as the "Postal" Building. The lot was purchased by Henry Failing in the 1880's and Whidden and Lewis were contracted to design and construct an office building with space for retail on the ground floor. The building is Italian Renaissance in style, and it employs the forms and ornaments of classical Roman art. This building consists of exterior masonry walls with interior wood columns and heavy wood-floor construction. Whidden and Lewis continued to design many buildings in the early 1900s, including the demolished Portland Art Museum in 1905, the 1909 Arlington Club, the 1910 Imperial Hotel, and the 1911 Wilcox Building. Their dominance in Portland faded as Doyle's firm began to flourish, but they continued to create fine designs late in their career, including the 1913 Failing Office Building and the Multnomah County Courthouse in 1914. The Multnomah County Courthouse (1911/1914) is an outstanding example of Neo-Classical Revival architecture. The east wing was constructed first in 1911 and the remaining west wing was completed in 1914. Construction was completed this way primarily not to disrupt the daily proceedings in the old courthouse. The courthouse steel frame covered with concrete to prevent fire damage. An unusual practice for the time, plaster ceilings were applied directly to the masonry instead of wooden lath. Mechanically, the building was progressively designed, with a built-in vacuuming system and forced-air heat. Located at 1021 SW Fourth Ave, the eight story Multnomah County Courthouse occupies an entire 200' x 200' block. The building is faced with terra cotta decorative elements, granite and limestone columns and entablatures with a four story colonnade of six Ionic columns. The Failing Office Building features many design elements that Whidden and Lewis favored. These included the use of the Commercial Style, light-colored brick, arched windows and/or window lintels in the top story, and double-hung windows throughout. The building also features molded belt-courses between the lowermost and uppermost stories and projected cornices with classical detailing executed in terra cotta, another technique Whidden and Lewis frequently used. MPS- HISTORIC RESOURCES IN DOWNTOWN, 1906-1914: The Failing Office Building is nominated under the Multiple Property Submission cover document "Historic Resources in Downtown Portland, 1906-1914," Criterion A, under the area of significance Commerce and Community Development. Registration Requirements: The MPS details the criteria and registration requirements inclusion. Below is a synopsis of the relevant sections, describing registration guidelines for Criterion A, the seven aspects of integrity, general registration requirements and additional registration requirements for the relevant associated building type, listed as Office Buildings in Downtown Portland, 1906-1914 in the document. The Failing Office Building meets both the general and office-specific registration requirements. Criterion A: All buildings that meet the registration requirements and have sufficient integrity are significant under Criterion A under the categories of commerce and community development. Commerce relates to the collection of properties that convey the synergism and dynamics of commercial growth that emanated from the boosterism associated with the Lewis & Clark Exposition. Community Development relates to the resource's ability, as part of a collection, to reflect the shift in the downtown's epicenter, the vertical growth in the downtown, and the emphasis on building commercial and ground floor retail space over residential building in the downtown. Assessment of Integrity: The National Park Service details seven aspects of integrity: Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling and Association. Exterior alterations are limited to the first two floors, the Failing Office Building possesses a reasonably high degree of integrity. Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred. The Failing Office Building is in its original location. Design is the combination of elements that create, form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. While the first two floors have been remodeled on several occasions, above the storefront the interior and exterior are largely intact. Notable features such as windows and interior and exterior decoration are original and in fair or better condition. Setting is the physical environment of a historic property. Located in the middle of the downtown core, the si

## RESEARCH INFORMATION

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|--------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| ✓ 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          |                      |

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|----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Local Library:</b>      |                                 | <b>University Library:</b> |  |
| <b>Historical Society:</b> | Oregon Queer History Collective | <b>Other Repository:</b>   |  |

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