

Oregon Historic Site Record

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME			
address:	520 SW Morrison St Portland, Multnomah County		historic name: Pioneer Courthouse (NHL)
assoc addresses:			current/other names: US Courthouse & Custom House
location descr:			block/lot/tax lot: twnshp/rng/sect/qtr sect: 1S 1E 3
PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS			
resource type:	Building	height (stories): 3.0	total elig resources: 1 total inelig resources:
elig evaluation:	eligible/significant		NR Status: Natl Hist Landmark
prim constr date:	1869	second date: 1875	date indiv listed: 03/20/1973
primary orig use:	Courthouse	orig use comments:	
second orig use:		prim style comments:	
primary style:	Italianate	sec style comments:	
secondary style:		siding comments:	
primary siding:	Stone:Other/Undefined	architect: Mullett, A; Holman, John, Et Al	
secondary siding:		builder: Higgins, William L	
plan type:			
comments/notes:			
Listed as NHL 05/05/77.			
GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS			
Survey/Grouping Included In:		Type of Grouping	Date Listed
Portland LGBTQ+ Historic Resources 2025 RLS		Survey & Inventory Project	Date Compiled 2025
SHPO INFORMATION FOR THIS PROPERTY			
NR date listed: 03/20/1973	106 Project(s)		Special Assess Project(s): None
ILS survey date:	SHPO Case	Date 05/21/2002	Agency Effect Eval no adverse effect
RLS survey date: 05/22/2025			Federal Tax Project(s): None
ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION			
<i>(Includes expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings and alterations)</i>			
520 SW Morrison Street is a monumental stone building exemplifying the Italianate style in its symmetrical form, deeply bracketed cornice, and engaged pilasters. Constructed of smooth stone masonry, the 1869 building features arched windows with prominent hoods, rusticated quoins at the corners, and a pronounced pediment at the central entry bay. The central portico is accessed by a grand stair and is flanked by classical columns supporting a heavy entablature. The building is set on a raised foundation and surrounded by formal landscaping and wrought-iron fencing.			
HISTORY			
<i>(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period - preferably to the present)</i>			
Pioneer Courthouse, also known as the Pioneer Post Office, served as the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon and served as the location of federal court cases and actions related to LGBTQ+ individuals and rights. In 1917-1918, activist and prominent queer Portlander Dr. Marie Equi was tried for sedition. During the trial, the prosecution referenced her sexuality and private life in an effort to damage her image in court; prosecuting attorney Barnet Goldstein declared her "an unsexed woman," and Special Agent William Byron labeled her a "degenerate." The court sentenced Dr. Equi to a year and a day in federal prison under the recently enacted Espionage Act. Later, on February 28, 1989, U.S. Federal Marshals strip searched 10 AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power/Portland activists at the courthouse following an ACT UP demonstration at the Food and Drug Administrative office (511 NW Broadway Street) that morning. The activists sued, leading to a multi-year effort for justice. Already a National Historic Landmark, Pioneer Courthouse is also potentially significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of LGBTQ+ history for its association with politics related to queer persons and rights.			
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:	University of Oregon	
Historical Society:	Other Repository:		
Bibliography:			
For further information on the events, people, and organizations mentioned in the LGBTQ+ historical narrative, see LGBTQ+ History in Portland, Oregon: A Historic Context Statement. Tom Cook, revised by George Painter, "1999 Portland Gay History Walking Tour," Oregon Queer History Collective, Last updated 2011, https://www.glapn.org/6045walkingtour.html . "ACT UP Strip search produces federal suit," Just Out, October 1, 1989, 12. Inga Sorensen, "Justice Served," Just Out, July 21, 1995, 15.			