Oregon Historic Site Record

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

address:	811 SW Broadway Dr Portland, Multnomah County	**historic name:**	Costanzo Family House
		current/other names:	
assoc addresses:		**block/lot/tax lot:**	
location descr:		**twnshp/rng/sect/qtr sect:**	1S 1E 9

PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS

resource type:	Building	**height (stories):**	2.5	**total elig resources:**	2	**total inelig resources:**	
elig evaluation:	eligible/significant			**NR Status:**	Individually Listed		
prim constr date:	1912	**second date:**		**date indiv listed:**	08/23/2007		

primary orig use:	Single Dwelling	**orig use comments:**	
second orig use:	Secondary Dwelling		
primary style:	Foursquare (Type)	**prim style comments:**	
secondary style:		**sec style comments:**	
primary siding:	Vertical Board	**siding comments:**	
secondary siding:			
plan type:	Foursquare (Box)	**architect:**	
		builder:	Costanzo, Nat (concrete work)

comments/notes:

PEE on file

GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS

Not associated with any surveys or groupings.

SHPO INFORMATION FOR THIS PROPERTY

NR date listed:	08/23/2007	**106 Project(s):**	None
ILS survey date:		**Special Assess Project(s):**	None
RLS survey date:		**Federal Tax Project(s):**	None

ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

(Includes expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings and alterations)

SUMMARY: The Costanzo Family House, built in 1912, is a two-and-one-half-story American Foursquare with Craftsman styling, popular at that time. The house was built for Nat Costanzo and his family; the neighboring house to the south was built for his brother, Pasquale Costanzo. The Costanzo brothers executed all the foundation and concrete work at the properties. The concrete work at the site is un-reinforced. The house is in Southwest Portland, just south of downtown, near the area known as “Little Italy” or “Little Jerusalem” and was home to many Italian and Jewish immigrants, along with immigrants from many other countries. The Costanzo Family House is significant as one of the survivors of a busy and vibrant community of immigrants from the late-nineteenth century until their neighborhoods were demolished in conjunction with the 1960-1970 South Auditorium Urban Renewal Project. Nat Costanzo was a well-known and highly respected building contractor specializing in concrete work and was a social leader in the Italian community. Among the most character-defining elements of the Costanzo Family House is a traditional Italian brick-lined bread oven in a concrete outbuilding in the backyard. The oven building is original to the house, and is considered a contributing feature in the nominated parcel. SETTING: The Costanzo House is located on SW Broadway Drive on a 0.15-acre lot. SW Broadway Drive, which was formerly known as Patton Road, is the continuation of a major downtown Portland street that is now cut off from the less steep, heavily-populated South Portland neighborhood by Highway 405 and Barbur Boulevard. The house sits on a triangular-shaped lot on the west side of SW Broadway Drive. The hillside drops off steeply to the southeast as SW Broadway ascends the hill. At this point SW Broadway Drive is a narrow road with no sidewalks; there is parking at random spots along the road as space allows. The Costanzo House property line on the street side is delineated by an eight- to ten-foot-high painted un concrete retaining wall with a cap. A wrought-iron fence runs along the top the retaining wall. The wall is interrupted by a poured-concrete, flat-roof, double garage chiseled into the hillside northeast of the house. There are two garage doors at different heights; the southwest door indicates the original volume, the northeast door is a later addition. Above each door, a panel recessed into the garage's concrete parapet wall is decorated with a single diamond. There is a square concrete urn, stamped with a matching diamond, atop each end of the parapet wall. Northeast of the garage, the retaining wall breaks to reveal a wrought-iron gate and a set of concrete steps leading up behind the garage, back toward the house. Southwest of the garage, a small arched doorway in the wall with a wrought-iron gate opens into the basement of the house. Between the basement door and the garage, a raised concrete panel in the retaining wall, just below the cap, reads "Nat Costanzo – 1912." A short distance southwest of the basement door, a wide concrete stairway leads up to both Costanzo houses; the stairway divides into two walkways as it ascends the hill between the two houses. The property looks out over a canyon with a multi-story building looming above the street, and in the distance to the right is Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU). In deference to the steep lot, the Costanzo House has its main entrance up the hill and at the back of the house. The backyard is terraced; the steep hillside held back with both poured-concrete and stone retaining walls. Several sets of concrete stairs and concrete and gravel paths crisscross the yard, which is informally planted with small trees and divided with low wrought-iron fences and railings. The poured-concrete roof of the garage serves as a terrace. The small concrete “il forno” or oven building is tucked into a hilly corner behind the house, anchored by a concrete retaining wall on one side and a stone retaining wall on the other. A concrete patio and adjacent flagstone terrace complete its immediate setting. EXTERIOR: The Costanzo Family House is a two-and-one-half-story example of an American Foursquare house type with highly decorative Craftsman styling, popular in Portland during the population growth after the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition. It is a wood-frame building, rectangular in plan, measuring 34' by 28,' over a concrete basement. The exterior cladding is predominantly narrow wood weatherboard. It has a hipped roof with wide, overhanging eaves, and hipped-roof dormers at the attic level. Windows are original wood sash in a variety of generous double-hung and fixed configurations, including singles, pairs, and rows of three. Decorative details include capped corner boards on all facades; dramatic projecting eaves above over-scaled, scroll-sawn, triangular knee braces; squared window bays; and stained-glass windows. There is an interior, parged-masonry chimney toward the back of the house. Southeast (front) Facade The primary facade of the house faces southeast. A full-facade, two-tiered porch dominates the front facade, wrapping around to the northeast side. At the first story, the porch has an elevated, rock-face, stone-masonry foundation. Stone piers at the top of the foundation wall support concrete piers, which are topped with thick, square, tapered columns at the first tier. A pent roof with projecting eaves divides the two tiers. At the second story, square wood piers support square tapered columns, which in turn support the dramatic overhanging eaves of the house's roof. Square balusters and a wide handrail form the porch railing at both tiers. The south end of the porch has been closed in at both levels, by a wood-frame window with four vertical lights separated by thick mullions at the first tier, and a nine-light, fixed sash window at the second tier. A set of stairs at the end of the porch on the northeast facade provides access to the porch's first tier, and subsequently, to the original front door. The door is located at the south end of the porch, which has a painted wood floor and a bead board ceiling. The front window has a plate-glass, fixed-sash unit with a leaded-glass transom flanked by units with one-over-one, double-hung sash. The front door has an oak veneer, wide stiles and a bevel plate-glass oval in the center, with carved foliation in the corners. Sidelights flank the door. The facade upstairs, at the second tier, holds a door in the center of the wall. Squared window bays at each corner hold one double-hung window each. Southwest Facade A sidewalk occupies the narrow space between the house and the property line at the southwest facade of the house. This side of the house is characterized by two squared window bays: the corner one at the front end of the facade at the second story, and one in the center of the facade, mid-level, indicating an interior stair landing. The corner bay holds a double-hung window tucked up against an eave that projects

so dramatically here that it has its own small cross-hipped roof above. The little bay is decorated with four over-scaled, scroll-sawn knee braces under the eaves, and two decorative brackets underneath. The mid-level bay is larger, holding a pair of double-hung, stained-glass windows under a pent roof with two small knee braces. Between the bays, at the first story, is a short, fixed-sash horizontal window lighting the interior entry hall. Northwest (rear) Facade The current main entrance to the house is on the northwest elevation, which is the back of the house. A nearly-full-width, one-story, projecting bay with a flat pent roof holds the entrance here. Four-light, sash-over-panel, wood double doors mark the center of the bay, with a pair of windows to the south and a single window, in a slight projection, to the north. Resting atop the roof of the entry bay is a square-bay sleeping porch projecting from the center of the second-story facade. The sleeping porch has fixed and casement windows, vertical tongue-and-groove siding, and wide eaves. Double-hung windows flank the porch, above which is a hipped-roof dormer holding a pair of windows. Northeast Facade Most of the northeast side of the house is wrapped by the two-tier porch continuing around from the front facade. The porch's rock-face, stone-masonry foundation appears as piers here, with a wood trellis between the piers blocking the unfinished space beneath the porch. The first-tier porch details are the same here as they are in front, except that the porch terminates in a descending set of five concrete stairs approximately halfway across the facade after passing a large living-room window in the same style as the one in front. A stepped stone wing-wall with stone coping contains the stairs. The pent porch roof also ends here. Above, the second-tier porch projects beyond the coverage of the roof at this facade, so the wood piers do not support columns. They are truncated, and have decorative, diamond-shaped cut-outs. A squared corner window bay with over-scaled knee braces and a cross-hipped roof, matching exactly the one on the southwest facade, is prominent at the second story. The rest of the facade, north of the porch, is comprised of a two-story projecting bay that holds a set of three, one-over-one, double-hung windows at the first and second stories. Both windows share the same configuration: the center unit is wider than the two flanking units. Both window openings span the width of the bay. INTERIOR: The Costanzo Family House consists of two-and-one-half floors and a basement. The first floor has a front entry hall with an open staircase leading to the second floor, living room, dining room, kitchen, a small back entry hall and a half bath. The second floor has three bedrooms, a sleeping porch, and one bathroom. The attic has been finished and is one large room. The basement consists of work and storage rooms, and at one time was used as a large wine cellar. There have been very few changes in the house, most of the light fixtures are original and the original varnished woodwork is in good condition. All ceilings on the first floor are nearly nine feet tall, and the walls display classical crown molding and nine-inch baseboards. All woodwork and paneling is stained and varnished fir. The five-panel doors and all windows have wide trim boards with cornice-molded head casing. Hardware has a japanned finish. Floors on the first floor are oak with a wide border inlaid with a linear parquetry pattern of two parallel strips of dark wood circumnavigating the rooms. Entry-Living-Dining-Kitchen The front door opens into the entry hall, where visitors may walk immediately forward to an ascending staircase, under the stairs to the kitchen, or to the right, to enter the living room. The 180-degree return, open-string staircase features two paneled newel posts, turned balusters, and a paneled finish wall with a built-in bench. A set of paneled pocket doors opens to the living room. The living room has a box-beam ceiling, with dark-finish beams contrasting with the bright plaster ceiling. Two focal windows light the room, which has a wood-stove in one of the corners. A set of paneled pocket doors opens to the dining room. The dining room also has a box-beam ceiling. This is the most formal space in the house. High oak-paneled wainscot with a deep plate rail circumnavigates the room, interrupted on the southeast wall by the paneled pocket doors, the northeast wall by a set of three double-hung windows, and on the northwest wall by a remarkable built-in china cabinet. The cabinet is oak, with classical details such as tapered pilasters and cornice molding. The upper doors hold leaded glass. A wide doorway on the southwest wall leads into the back entry hall. The back entry hall is a small utilitarian space into which visitors enter from the backyard. It offers access to the basement stairs. Immediately north of the exterior doors is a half bath; to the west is the kitchen. The kitchen is a large room comprising the west corner of the house. There is a breakfast nook under the window that faces the backyard. This room has been remodeled and now has granite counter tops and stainless steel appliances. On the southeast wall of the kitchen is a door that leads into the front entry hall. Upstairs At the top of the stairs, a central landing provides access to three bedrooms, a bathroom, a stairway to the attic, and a closet. Bedrooms have fir floors, double-hung windows, plaster walls and ceilings, picture rails and unpainted door and window casings with traditional moldings. The two front bedrooms have corner window seats, which are articulated on the exterior as the squared window bays discussed earlier. The east-corner bedroom has access by door to the second story of the house's two-tier porch. The bedroom in the north corner has access by door to the sleeping porch at the back of the house. The large bathroom has two double-hung windows, one with stained glass. The original hexagonal tile floor has a perimeter border design in contrasting colors. A painted wood chair rail encircles the room, interrupted by traditional painted window casings, which also frame the original mirrored medicine cabinet. The bathroom has the original clawfoot bathtub. OUTDOOR OVEN BUIDING Behind the Costanzo House is a small, poured-concrete building referred to by the Costanzo family as “il forno,” or "the oven." The structure measures nine feet by twelve feet; the walls are six inches thick, and the floor and ceiling are concrete. The roof is flat and surrounded on the north and east by a three-foot-tall parapet wall, and on the west and south by a higher concrete retaining wall. There are two windows on the same elevation as the door, facing the house; each with a one-light, fixed sash. Beneath each window is a decorative wrought-iron planter box. The building is quite plain inside, there is an oven about five feet from the floor on its south wall. It is a brick-lined, oval-shaped space, approximately three-feet wide, two-feet deep and two-feet high. The baking process involved building a fire in the oven, heating it to a certain temperature, at which time the bread pans were placed on the brick surface and baked. The building was evidently designed to make bread. There is a reference in a church newspaper about the wonderful bread that Mrs. Costanzo always made in this building for the church sale. The room is now used as storage space. Steep concrete steps lead up behind the building to access its flat roof, which serves as a terrace, covered by a high, wood-frame gabled canopy of newer construction. The roof's parapet and retaining walls contain the terrace. There is a gap in the north and east walls. The east wall gap is covered with plywood; the north wall gap is blocked by horizontal wrought-iron railing.

HISTORY

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

SUMMARY The Costanzo Family House at 811 SW Broadway Drive qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as of one the few surviving buildings of the immigrant community in the South Portland area. Attracted to the area by its close proximity, to downtown, available transportation, and the kinship of their own countryman, waves immigrants settled in the area between 1880 to 1920. The area became particularly known for its Italian and Jewish communities, and soon their neighborhoods came to be known as “Little Italy” and “Little Jerusalem.” Well-known and prosperous Italian immigrant Nat Costanzo was part of this community, and in 1912 he built a fine Craftsman-style home on the land he owned just west of the old neighborhood. While the building reflected the architectural aesthetic of his new country, Nat choose to stay physically close to his community. The home also reflected Italian culture through the incorporation of a detached bread oven in the yard and a wine cellar in the basement. In the mid-twentieth century, the area changed as the community became more dispersed and redevelopment initiatives divided the neighborhood. The Costanzo Family House is now one of the few remaining buildings associated with the Italian community of South Portland. IMMIGRATION For the first three centuries of its existence, the U.S. government followed a policy of open immigration. As a nation made up of immigrants, the United States became home to people who fled their countries for various reasons. Many immigrants who came to the U. S. before the turn of the century struggled to adjust to their new home. Yet, beginning around 1900, immigration laws began to be passed as more immigrants from Asia and Eastern Europe arrived. The trend continued, and after the economic downturn immediately following World War I immigration laws became more restrictive. The transition was led by the native middle-class population that felt that immigrants threatened their livelihoods because the newcomers accepted lower wages, and perhaps by the different customs and "foreign" ideas that each nationality brought with it. This prompted legislation to control entry, and a quota system was set in place that allowed each country a certain number of immigrants based on the total of those already in the country. Countries where the earliest settlers came from, such as those in northern Europe, had the largest quotas. Subsequent legislation declared that only "desirable" immigrants would be accepted. Italian migration was a relatively late phenomenon in the United States. The Italian arrival was preceded by waves of Northern Europeans and Asians including English, German, Irish and Chinese immigrants who arrived throughout the nineteenth century. Between 1860 and 1870 only 12,000 Italians left Italy, but that changed drastically as disease, hunger, epidemics, and pervasive political corruption forced many to consider immigration. A severe depression in 1887, political unrest in Sicily in 1894, a decreasing need for unskilled farm labor, and a burgeoning birth rate made existing problems worse, resulting in one of the greatest waves of immigration. Conditions were especially poor in the southern portion of Italy. Most Italian immigrants arrived in two distinct waves between 1880 and 1924. The first wave began arriving in 1880, and by 1889 there were more Italian immigrants in the US than from any other nation. In that year twice as many Italians as Britons arrived. The second wave of immigration began in 1901 as almost 500,000 Italians left their homeland, many bound for the U.S. Between 1900 and 1910 1,109,524 Italians arrived, eventually numbering over six million persons who could claim Italian heritage. Immigration was especially high between 1902 and 1914 before slowing to a trickle. Of those Italians who arrived in the U.S., most came from rural areas and were poor, ill-educated, unable to speak English, and lacked technical skills. Upon arrival, over seventy percent settled in urban areas, mostly on the Eastern seaboard. However, some twenty percent of new arrivals traveled West, many to San Francisco. Jobs in the ranching, logging, mining, and railroad industries attracted many. Although Oregon was not a major destination for Italian immigrants by 1900 the state had 1,014 foreign-born Italians. In 1910 that number jumped to 5,538 foreign-born Italians, many of whom lived in Portland. The number of immigrants from Italy was part of a larger trend of increased migration from the nations of south-central and eastern Europe, whose population was more likely to be Catholic or Jewish. During the same time the numbers of new arrivals from the traditional sending nations of protestant northern Europe such as England, Ireland, and Germany fell. In reaction to the country’s changing population demographics, anti-Catholic, anti-Jew, and anti-Asian sentiments ran strongly in the U.S. in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These sentiments became law as the U.S. Congress began to restrict immigration. Beginning in 1882 Congress began to exclude “undesirables” such as paupers and criminals. By 1917 a literacy request was required, effectively banning the entry of many of southern and central Europe’s poor, and in 1921 and 1924 quota systems were introduced to further restrict how many immigrants could enter the country. Many groups of immigrants dealt with prejudice in their new nation, and Italians were among them. Difficulty in obtaining work and a strong desire to retain native languages and customs encouraged cohesive settlements and a strong community ethic among immigrants. Such was the situation in Southwest Portland beginning around 1880 through 1920. Italians and their eastern-European Jewish neighbors arriving to the city found an established neighborhood where they could speak their native language and feel at home with those who shared similar ethics. The community also offered a feeling of fellowship along with affordable housing, stores and markets offering traditional goods, and churches of their choice. SOUTH PORTLAND NEIGHBORHOOD Until the recent past,

“South Portland” referred to five communities including Fulton Park, Terwilliger, Lair Hill, Corbett, and South Portland. The Lair Hill and Corbett neighborhoods are located in the area surrounding the Ross Island Bridge and present-day Duniway Park, and are actually two of the oldest settlements in Portland. The city’s southward expansion originally caused the two neighborhoods to be regarded as suburbs of the blossoming metropolis. That image began to change as early as 1862 when the Jewish community took a dominate role of the Lair Hill and Corbett neighborhoods after several families purchased lots at public auction for $280 to $700. Subsequent ethnic migrations to the district cemented its reputation as a close-knit immigrant community, which gave rise to the area’s standing as a “ghetto.” The term mistakenly characterized the South Portland area as a slum, but, in reality, the neighborhood functioned as a stopping point for waves of immigrants arriving in the city. Lair Hill and Corbett had vibrant commercial centers and exhibited strong community cohesion. It was a microcosm of Portland that allowed immigrants to fraternize with their fellow countrymen. Beginning in 1860, Portland experienced an exceptional population boom as it grew from a town of 800 persons in 1860 to a city with more than 17,000 residents in 1880. The export of timber, canned fish, and agricultural products fueled the boom. As a result, Portland grew south as the ground rose slightly away from the river to the east. An early railroad line ran through South Portland, going to the Tualatin Valley on what is now Barbur Boulevard. A horse-drawn trolley, with a route along First Avenue, also connected South Portland with the heart of the downtown area. In 1899 this became the Fulton Park line, and many small shops were built along this trolley line. To accommodate the growing population the relatively flat land in the present-day Lair Hill and Corbett neighborhoods was subdivided. Streets were laid out in a two-hundred by two-hundred foot grid pattern to match the layout of downtown. Lots sold quickly and homes began to be built. The farmland along the river’s edge quickly gave way to sawmills and factories giving rise to South Portland’s industrial area. South Portland’s ethnic make-up began to change in the late 1860s and early 1870s when a great number of immigrants began to move to the area. The expansion of the timber, agriculture, and railroad industries produced many low-skill jobs, causing immigrants to flock to the state. Scandinavian and Irish immigrants settled in the northeast of the city, while European Jews settled in South Portland, joining an already-existing small community of German Jews who settled in the area around 1850. The community centered on the area bordered by 1st Avenue and the Willamette River. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, a wave of new arrivals flocked into South Portland to take advantage of the city’s booming economy. The city was experiencing economic growth as the demands for Oregon lumber, wheat, and other commodities increased. Newcomers came via newly-completed trans-continental railroad and many worked for the railroad during this period. The second groups of immigrants were from diverse cultural backgrounds including French, Turkish, and Asian descent, but continuing Jewish migration and a new influx of Italian immigrants made up the majority of the Portland’s foreign-born citizens. Fleeing natural disasters and a host of socioeconomic problems, the first wave of Italians arrived in Portland in the 1880s and settled at the edge of the city dump, now Duniway Park - south of SW Sheridan Street and west of SW 4th Avenue. They continued to move east towards the river; but the heaviest concentrations were located between SW Clay Street and the west end of the Ross Island Bridge. By the 1880s, South Portland had become known as “Little Jerusalem” or “Little Italy,” reflecting the dominate ethnicities of the neighborhood’s population. The approximate boundaries were SW Broadway on the west, SW Market Street on the north, Freeway Avenue and SW Front on the east, and SW Curry St. on the south. The first settlement in Southwest Portland was made up of mainly of northern Italians. These family heads found work with the railroads, road crews, mills, and lumber camps, all industries that were growing because of population increases on the west coast, because of the increased trade on the continental railroad. A booming economy stimulated the building industry, and many immigrants went into the construction business, as carpenters, brick layers, stone masons, and general laborers. Many also made a living as farmers by supplying local produce markets. In fact, today there are still many Italian families involved in the produce business in inner Portland. The second wave of Italian immigrants arrived in the early 1900s and settled within the already established immigrant community. Second and third colonies grew up in the Parkrose and Milwaukie areas, and were made up mainly of immigrants from southern Italy who had farming experience. Another settlement grew in Ladd's Addition on the east side. As this second group of Italians moved into the neighborhood, some of those who arrived earlier began to relocate to the southeast section of the city along Clinton Street. As a gateway community, the Lair Hill neighborhood strived to fulfill certain social needs of its immigrant residents. Many who moved to America arrived penniless, illiterate, and unable to speak English, and naturally sought out relatives and friends. To ease the burden of such a major move, many social organizations were formed to smooth the transitions immigrants faced upon arriving in Portland. Small shops and delicatessens flourished in the ethnic communities of South Portland as newcomers sought out the goods and companionship they were accustomed to in their home nations. The fast-growing Italian population soon established many social institutions to cater to the needs of their community. By 1901, west-side Italians had laid the cornerstone for Saint Michael’s the Archangel church at SW 4th and Mill Streets. In 1913, the cornerstone was laid for the St. Philip Neri congregation in Ladd’s Addition. This group of Italians included many from the northern provinces who had arrived earlier than those from the south. Neighborhood residents also created a sense of community by establishing classes in cooking, English, health, and citizenship to help newcomers adjust to a new life. Many of these classes were held in the Neighborhood House on Second Street near Duniway Park. This building today continues to offer social serves to Southwest Portland. One of the crucial elements of life in South Portland from 1890 until 1920 was the weekend informal street activity. Children played in the streets, fruit vendors sold their goods, and many residents walked and chatted in the streets. This street activity reinforced the sense of community that had already been established in the area. A sense of belonging existed among all of Portland’s Italians, as evidenced by the many city-wide social organizations such as the Christoforo Columbo Society, L’Allegria Club, Sons of Italy, the Peddler’s Union, Regina Margerita, and more, all listed in a “Fraternal Index” from 1932. There was also an Italian-American Republican club with a membership of five-hundred. The community also established its own local newspapers. Around 1910, a Dr. Rosa printed and published his own newspaper in English and Italian, calling it “Le Stella” (The Star). In 1917 “L’Aino” (The Donkey) was published in Italian and edited by the Italian consular agent in Portland, Dr. Visetti. In 1929 the “Columbus Record,” a monthly newspaper in English was founded by Joseph DiSantis. This newspaper was politically oriented. In 1956 it was purchased by Joseph Bianco, one-time editor of the Oregonian’s Northwest Magazine. It was later sold to Al C. Giusti of the Al C. Giusti Wine Company and terminated in 1959. In the period following World War I the South Portland area flourished, leading to changes in South Portland’s ethnic community. Small shops and fruit vendors expanded to become larger wholesale markets, many wealthier families moved away to more prestigious areas of the city, and the introduction of the automobile diminished the neighborhoods street life as cars replaced open-air markets. Perhaps the biggest change was the expansion of roads in the area, which eventually divided the neighborhood. Built to connect the Corbett and Lair Hill neighborhoods with the east side of Portland, the Ross Island Bridge was constructed in 1926. Later, Barbur Boulevard was built in 1935 to handle increasing auto traffic in the area. Duniway Park was created when the Arthur Street Gulch was filled. Another major project that had a great effect on the neighborhood was the development of Harbor Drive in 1943 as a part of the highway system. Front Avenue was changed from a small street to a major highway. Ramps were constructed on Front Avenue, thus leaving Lair Hill cut off from the Corbett neighborhood. The changes meant that the large neighborhood that was once called South Portland no longer existed, and what remained was separated into five sections. As time passed and the buildings aged, other nearby areas looked advantageous for large-scale development. In the early 1960s the City of Portland, in cooperation with the federal government regarding funding, undertook the “South Auditorium Urban Renewal Area” bounded by SW Market on the north, Harbor Drive on the east, SW Arthur on the south, and SW 4th on the west. As a result 445 buildings on 339 parcels of land were demolished. What replaced them were three high-rise apartment houses, many offices, commercial and retail buildings, and a hotel. The original Costanzo house at 227 SW Hall was a casualty of this project. Another building that was destroyed was the Italian Federation Hall at SW Fourth and Madison, the meeting place of the Costanzo’s social club. The continued growth of Portland State University took additional land away from the mainly residential-up that had been in place for several decades. THE NAT COSTANZO FAMILY Nat Costanzo’s story reflects an immigrant experience shared by many of the neighbors he eventually settled with in South Portland. Nat Costanzo was born near Borboruso, in Horatio de Calabria in southern Italy in 1872. Looking for better opportunities, Nat immigrated to the United States with his brother Pasquale in 1887 when he was fifteen. Like many new immigrants, he found work in the United States’ growing industrial sector. As a railroad laborer he saved a good portion of his wages, which allowed him enough to come to Portland in 1888 and join the first waves of Italian immigrants arriving in the city. At some point, Nat settled in the South Portland neighborhood, in a house on SW Hall, now demolished. He continued to work on the railroads, first on the Rock Creek Railroad west of Albany, then, in order, on the Celilo Portage Railroad, the Portland Cable Railway, and the old City and Suburban Railway. He was also a deckhand on the steamboats T. J. Potter and the R. R. Thompson, and at some point, a silent partner in a saloon and later a billiards room with his brother Pasquale and various other investors. Still a young man, in 1898 Nat experienced a bout of gold fever and joined many others in a trek to Alaska. He traveled over the Dye Trail and the Chilcoot Pass, carrying all of his own tools and provisions. Nat had many experiences that became part of his family’s story. For instance, Nat later related that on the way to the gold fields he witnessed a large avalanche that buried about seventy-five people and that he stopped to help find the bodies of fifty-one of the victims. Another of his escapades involved shooting the Whitehorse Rapids of the Yukon River in a boat he had built himself. After five years in Alaska, Nat returned to Portland in 1904 by way of St. Michaels and Nome. Nat’s time in Alaska had been very profitable, and again he managed to save a large sum of money. By the time of his return, Nat was married to Filomena Bruno, with whom Nat eventually had four children. The year after his return he began yet another business venture with his saved earnings. In 1905 Nat began his career in the contracting business with his brother, Pasquale, as partner, and a team of two horses. Nat’s choice was a natural one because stone working and masonry were major industries in his home town in Italy, and the construction industry was where many immigrants found jobs in the Portland area. The launch of their new business coincided with the Lewis and Clark Exposition, which allowed the Costanzo brothers to take advantage of the booming building industry in Portland. After the Lewis and Clark Exposition in 1905 there was significant interest in Portland. 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 time frame. By 1915 Portland’s population had increased to 259,510. The favorable economy propelled the company, which specialized in grading, excavating, and all kinds of cement work including stairs, foundations, and walls. Nat’s sense of adventure and business acumen served him well, and by the age of thirty-nine the business was very successful and had become quite well-respected. Richard Falaschetti, Costanzo’s grandson, called him an “upper-class” Italian who had taught himself to read and write at a time when few could do so. In his business dealings Nat managed to acquire several lots in South Portland in a series of land swaps where allowed those who owed him money to pay in tracts of land. Although vacant, the area’s close proximity to the neighborhood provided an area for the children of Portland’s Italian community to play softball and soccer. In 1911, just as the second wave of Italian immigrants began to arrive in Portland, Nat began construction on his American dream house on this land. The building was both a statement of his wealth and of his aspirations. Costanzo himself poured the concrete foundation, retaining walls, and steps for the large and well-built two-and-one-half-story Craftsman foursquare on Broadway Drive, as well as another for his brother, next door. It is not known who provided the plans or built the houses. Although Costazo choose to build a house in the American Craftsman style on a hill just outside South Portland’s ethnic neighborhoods, he remained close to his community. He selected a location overlooking the neighborhood, then just

a quick walk to the homes of friends and family and the community market. At the time, SW Broadway Drive, where the subject house is located, was known as SW Patton Road. Access to this road was relatively simple, the present-day through-traffic roads did not exist, and SW Broadway Street led directly into SW Patton Road. The primary object dividing this area from the lower settled area was the landscape which rises abruptly in a steep hill with the road cut into the side forming a steep drop-off on the southeast elevation. It is notable that Nat choose to stay in the area given that many first-wave Italian migrants were choosing to move to the southeast section of the city at this time. Still, the Costanzos were joined on the hill by several other families of Italian descent. Other properties on the SW Broadway Drive hillside were owned by the Caputo, Avalia, Lombardo, and Siri families. Although his home departed from traditional Italian architecture, he insisted on incorporting aspects of his culture into the building's design. Following Italian tradition, Nat built a detached, poured-concrete bread-oven building in the backyard of his house. It was common in Italy for families to have their own bread ovens. Small in size, oval or round in shape, the ovens were lined with brick and could stay hot for many hours at a time without an open flame. Nat's youngest daughter, Elaine Costanzo Falaschetti, recalled that it was her father who wanted the bread oven, as he was "pretty good in the kitchen." Elaine also remembered that the building was used essentially as an outdoor kitchen and pantry, with shelves heavy with canning jars. The little building was not heated, and served as a cooler when the oven was not in use. From her recollection, none of the surrounding houses had traditional ovens, not even her uncle Pasquale. Nat also converted his basement into a large wine cellar. Although it is unknown if he fermented his own wine, it was common in the community to make alcohol at home. Nat's first wife, Filomena Costanzo, did not enjoy the outdoor oven for long however; she died during childbirth one year after the house was completed, leaving Nat to care for Ida, Albert, Mary, and newborn Carl. Nat remarried in 1918, to twenty-five-year-old Paulina Mongelli. They had one child together, Elena, whose name was changed in school to Elaine. The names of the entire family are stamped into the concrete in two places on the property: inside the basement doorway and at the top of the entry stairs. Like many immigrants, the Costanzos belonged to a lodge or social club throughout their lives. Nat served as president of the Italian Federation Hall for three terms. According to daughter Elaine, these clubs were mainly for socializing, dancing, and visiting with other families. Children were included in the festivities, and it was an important part of their lives. The Costanzos entertained extensively in their house on Broadway Drive, even hosting events for well-known Italians. The Costanzo's held a reception for Hollywood star Leo Carrillo, as well as an Italian opera singer who performed in Portland. Nat's company continued to grow throughout the early twentieth century. The family business eventually switched from horses to Ford trucks, and employed an average of six to eight workers. Most of the company's work was in and around southwest Portland where Nat had his home. Nat worked in his construction business until just before his death at 77 in 1950. SOUTH PORTLAND'S "LITTLE ITALY" TODAY Of the many buildings that comprised Little Italy, very few survive today due to a number of city-sponsored road-construction and urban-renewal projects. Nat's brother's house, the 1912 Pasquale Costanzo house, still stands at 815 SW Broadway Drive, immediately adjacent to Nat's. Also two-and-one-half stories, the house is very similar in style to his brother's, with Craftsman features, a hipped roof with hipped dormers, wide, open eaves with modillions, and a two-story front porch with square, tapered porch posts on paneled bases resting on cast stone piers. However, Pasquale choose not to incorporate his native culture into the building as his brother did. In addition, St. Michael the Archangel Catholic church on SW Fourth and Mill Streets is a survivor that maintained its stature and presence for a century since its construction in 1901. It was designed by the highly-regarded Portland architect Joseph Jacobberger. A Catholic presence has been present in this location since a chapel was moved to the site from downtown Portland around 1880. This was coupled in the early years, around 1871, with the private boy's school, St. Michael's College, which was located on the adjoining block. The church is designed "in the Italian style" using red brick with a white brick trim. This was at a time when almost all other churches in the city were constructed of wood. It features a square bell tower with a pyramidal roof, Povey Brothers' stained glass windows, and a sanctuary that can seat four-hundred. Cost of the building was around $20,000, much of which was raised by the congregation. The opening sermon was given in three languages, Italian, English, and German. The church remains a cornerstone for Catholic worship in downtown Portland. Another community building of this era is the Neighborhood House at SW Second and Woods Streets, which was built around 1910. The building served the many needs of the neighborhood by providing recreation opportunities, meeting rooms, sewing and manual arts classes for children, and adult education. Although it has always been owned and managed by the Jewish community, people of all faiths were welcome, and continue to be. CONCLUSION "Little Italy" provided a landing place and acted as a start for many poor and displaced immigrants. Nat Costanzo is representative of the life many new immigrants lived in the United States. As a young man Nat arrived to the U.S. eastern seaboard where he found work in America's industrial sector. Through hard work he paid for his way to Portland, and eventually found himself in Alaska seeking adventure and wealth. Upon his return to Oregon he and his brother entered the concrete business, following their experience in Italy and mirroring employment trends for Portland migrants. Nat became very successful, but he stayed close to his community. Unlike other families that moved out to other areas of the city, Nat chose a location close to the old neighborhood where he could still stay connected to friends and family and familiar institutions. The Costanzo Family House, with its traditional Italian bread oven building and wine cellar stands as a remnant of a once-thriving immigrant neighborhood, and provides a glimpse into the story of one immigrant family's journey from the Old World to the New.

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:	Portland	**University Library:**	
Historical Society:		**Other Respository:**	SHPO archives

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