

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAR 30 1987

date entered MAY 6 1987

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Fisher, Ferdinand, House Number of contributing features: 1

and/or common Same Number of non-contributing features: 0

2. Location

street & number 687 12th Street N/A not for publication

city, town Astoria N/A vicinity of First Congressional District

state Oregon code 41 county Clatsop code 007

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Roberta L. LaFarge

street & number PO Box 839

city, town Warrenton N/A vicinity of state Oregon 97145

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Assessor's Office, Clatsop County Courthouse

street & number 749 Commercial Street

city, town Astoria state Oregon 97103

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Statewide Inventory of Historic Properties has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1986  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office, 525 Trade Street SE

city, town Salem state Oregon 97310

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved

date N/A

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This elaborate, two-story, High Victorian Italianate house was built as a residence for Ferdinand and Clara Fisher, husband and wife, and the former's brother, Augustus Fisher, sometime between 1880 and 1887. It was constructed on land purchased in 1873 for \$150 from the third brother, Henry Fisher. The house occupies a promontory on the first rise of Coxcomb Hill and commands a fine view of downtown Astoria and the Columbia River from Tongue Point to Cape Disappointment. The house faces east.

When the house was built, it was on an L-shaped plan with the east two-thirds two-story and the balance one-story, over a full brick foundation basement. The remainder of the house was completed some twenty years later, in 1902, by squaring of the L-shaped plan, completing the second story, and filling out the original roofline with a seven-foot-high attic. The attic features two gables facing north and west; the eaves of the gables are trimmed with scalloped and pierced scroll-sawn decoration, which repeats the saw tooth trim course beneath architrave molding of the entablature and bay windows and porches.

Rectangular in mass, the house measures 45 feet by 60 feet. Construction is balloon frame throughout, with bevel-joint and lapped exterior siding. The low, hipped roof was originally covered with terneplate; it is now roofed with three-tab composition shingles on the sloped portion, and a hot-mopped tar roof on the flat portion. Three brick chimneys with corbeled caps vent the four fireplaces, furnace, and kitchen range. The gutters are custom-formed and enclosed.

Two slanted, two-story bays project from the facade wall plane on either side of the central entrance porch. These imposing bays are unusual in that their central bays are fitted with paired double-hung windows. Except for large fixed plate-glass windows in the three one-story bays on other elevations, one-over-one, double-hung window sash are used throughout.

The facade of the Fisher House resembles that of the Morris Marks House at 1501 SW Harrison Street, Portland, Oregon, earlier listed in the National Register. Built in 1882, the Marks House has been attributed to architect Warren Haywood Williams. The resemblance is relatively general, however, as the Marks House has conventional tripartite window bays, a broken, segmental pedimented porch square in plan and having turned Corinthian columns, solid jig-sawn brackets at the frieze, and a more compact townhouse floor plan lacking side elevation bays and projections.

In contrast, the Fisher House, though obviously Italianate in overall character, is marked by its vertical tongue and groove frieze having sawtooth trim, by the somewhat spindly quality of its porch, and by its other surface ornament, as a building equally influenced by Eastlake architectural fashion,

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The only fully-developed Italianate single-window hood is found atop the first floor window on the right hand of the south wall, supported by two typically Italianate solid, sawn brackets. The shape of this hood is adopted as a decorative motif, applied as a continuous entablature which encircles the building almost completely above the first floor windows of the bays, and the porch roof, on the east wall; then on the north side, around the roofs of the two single-story slanted bays and the long porch. Across the back, or west, wall this entablature is interrupted. The windows on the west wall, and the one just east of the garage on the south wall, are trimmed with much-reduced unbracketed hoods (the one full hood is 13" deep by 11½" high by 51" wide; these five reduced, unbracketed hoods are 3½" deep by 3½" high by 47" wide). The full, bracketed motif then resumes its encirclement of the house, decorating the rectangular bay on the south wall.

It is at the frieze that the decoration of the Fisher house departs from the Italianate norm, with borrowings from the San Francisco Stick style. First, "picket fence" decoration wraps completely around the house at the frieze line. This decoration is broken at irregular intervals by brackets, brackets which are unusual in that they are open and relatively large (22" deep by 44" tall; those at the window hood are 7" deep by 18½" tall). Footed by sawn bracket extensions that echo the lines of the solid brackets at the first-floor entablature, each of these scrollwork pieces sweeps upward from vertical strips at the sides or all windows and wall corners, as well as from the sides of the double French doors and the vertical board marking the end of the original second floor, on the north wall. This frieze decoration, along with the horizontal panels beneath each of the windows on all of the bays, is generally borrowed from the Stick style. The brackets are uncommon, perhaps neither Italianate nor Stick, yet complementing and marrying the two styles.

Examination of outlines of the house from the Sanborn Insurance Atlases of 1892, 1896, and 1908 shows the evolution of its form. The square entry porch on the east end of the north wall, near the driveway of 1892, was moved by 1896 to its current position between the two two-story bays on the east wall. Perhaps the fact that Olney (later Twelfth) Street was not graded, and the driveway was the main access, defined the functional "front" of the house in 1892.

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Newspaper accounts of an open house to mark the opening of the Fishers' "new" home on May 3, 1902 pinpoint the additions of the south and west portions of the first floor, including the rectangular bay and the garage, as well as the balance of the second floor and the attic.

At this time the long porch on the west end of the north wall, and the current entry porch, were completed and blended with the existing bays. Until 1902, the entry porch had retained the more typically Italianate square shape. Its supports are square posts with beveled corners. Examination of the foundation shows that the east bay on the north wall, built between 1892 and 1896, rests on a foundation added after the basic foundation was built a decade or so earlier.

The current entry door, now surrounded by sidelights, was installed in the 1930's; there is reason to believe that the original entry doors were side-by-side double doors, and there is clear evidence that there was once a door onto the roof of the front porch, in the space now occupied by a window. Wrought iron crestings originally surrounded this porch roof and the flat area of the house's roof.

The original L-shaped floor plan included three major rooms on the first floor, plus the kitchen, all of them with 11-foot ceilings. One was probably the dining room, and the other two were probably parlor and formal living room. Upstairs there were three rooms also, likely all bedrooms, and all with 10-foot ceilings.

The extensive additions of 1901-02 squared out the L-shaped floor plan with an additional parlor on the first floor, and a rebuilt kitchen, pantry, and servants' quarters, with bathroom. Upstairs were added two bedrooms along the north side, two bathrooms on the west, a music room and sun porch on the south side, and two back staircases.

While it is impossible to know just how the house was finished when built in the 1880's, it is inviting to imagine that some of the finer, more expensive touches like the grained wainscoting in the dining room, and the oak staircase with Lincrusta paper and embossed molding, were added during the 1901-02 remodelling, as were the 8½-foot-tall sliding doors and two of the house's three chimneys.

All door and window casings throughout the house are decorated with wide millwork surrounds, with rosettes at the upper corners.

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Some rosettes are made of stamped leather set in turned wood; the others are made entirely of carved and turned wood. All the doors and millwork of the house, as well as the surviving turned and panelled fireplace surrounds, are finished by graining. Privacy was ensured by three- and four-panel wooden shutters for both upper and lower portions of all double-hung windows except those in the kitchen. Two of the first-floor parlors have cast plaster ceiling medallions.

Although the house has recently suffered neglect, and some minor damage to its finish inside and out, the carpenters who remodelled it into apartments in the 1930s left the woodwork virtually untouched. Its structure remains sound and the decorative elements that make it an exemplary specimen of Victorian Italianate remain whole and entirely restorable. With careful cleaning and refinishing, with informed and thoughtful repair, and with redecoration guided by a clear sense of period methods and materials, the Fisher house will shine again as it did in 1902.

The 1½-story, hip-roofed garage attached to the southwest corner of the house housed the first auto owned in Astoria. The Sanborn Insurance Atlas of 1908 shows that the garage was probably added in the remodelling project of 1901-2. This supposition is borne out by the fact that the south wall of the house to which the garage is attached, is not sided; stud, and the back of the lath and plaster interior wall show into the garage.

This structure, like the rest of the house, is balloon-frame structure. Its interior walls are not finished, and rest on a brick foundation. The west and east walls of the garage are 13 ft. 4 ¾ in. long; the south wall, which had the garage door, is 12 ft. 4½ in. wide. The drip cap, over what was once the door opening, is 10 ft. 1 in. above the sidewalk; the eaves are 17 ft. 7½ in. high. Inside, there is a ceiling, 10 ft. 8 in. from the dirt floor, which also serves as the floor of a low attic or storage space.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** c. 1883      **Builder/Architect** Unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Ferdinand Fisher House in Astoria, Oregon occupies a lot at the northwest corner of the intersection of 12th Street and Grand Avenue. It was built about 1883 and enlarged at the west end by the addition of a second story and garage unit in 1902. Architect and builder are as yet unknown. As the city's singular example of a Symmetrical Bracketed Villa, one which compares favorably with outstanding examples of the particular Italianate type elsewhere in the state, the Fisher House meets National Register Criterion C. Its facade displays the primary distinguishing characteristics of the Italianate Symmetrical Bracketed Villa, namely formally-placed, two-story polygonal bays and a richly detailed bracketed frieze. The hip roof has a crowning platform, or widow's walk which may have been balustraded originally. The ornament, made up of a variety of stylized, cut-out repeating motifs, beads and reeding, distinctly reflects another architectural fashion: the Eastlake tradition. The house was turned into a boarding place in 1913 after the original occupants left the property. It was remodeled for apartment use in the 1930s, but most of the original grained woodwork and chimneypieces are intact. The building thus retains its essential character-defining features inside and out. In comparison with more ordinary Italianate houses in Astoria (there are perhaps fifteen), the Fisher House stands out not only as a singular representative of type, but because of its size, generally, because of the quality of its interior finish work, and because of the scope and originality of its exterior decoration. Among Italianate houses locally, only the Captain George Flavel House (1884), earlier listed in the National Register, is more grand.

Although not nominated under Criterion B, the house is noteworthy for its association with Ferdinand and Augustus Fisher, whose Fisher Brothers ship chandlery firm was one of the long-lived and profitable businesses which contributed to Astoria's economy.

(continued)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Astoria Daily Budget and Morning Astorian microfilms, 1872-1929.  
Ausnehmer, Mary Elizabeth Boyington, personal interviews, 1986.  
Clatsop County deed records, Courthouse, Astoria, Oregon.  
Gault, Vera Whitney, Walking Tour of Astoria, 1978.

(continued)

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Astoria, Oregon-Washington

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** The nominated area encompasses the south 56 feet of Lot 8 and the south 58 feet of Lot 9, Block 70, McClure's Addition to Astoria, in Clatsop County, Oregon. The property is otherwise described as Tax Lot 4700 in said Addition.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ralph M. Wirfs

organization N/A date August 14, 1986

street & number PO Box 838 telephone (503) 325-3836

city or town Warrenton state Oregon 97145

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

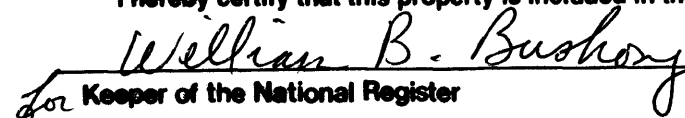
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date February 25, 1987

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

 date 5/6/87  
for Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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Ferdinand Fisher (1853-1929), the younger brother, was an entrepreneur, ever ready for a new experience, willing to gamble on an untried but well-studied idea, able to involve others in his schemes, he supplied the leadership and energy which made the Fisher Brothers name part of Astoria for almost a century.

Augustus was a decade older, more reclusive, making a life of the challenges offered by the river, the ocean, and the boats of which he was master. It was his earning capacity and industry which provided the capital that fueled the ventures Ferdinand designed. Augustus made his home with Ferdinand and Clara through most of his adult years.

Half-brothers, they told the census taker in 1880 that Ferdinand was born in Oregon in 1853 of a father born in Maryland and a mother born in Scotland. Augustus was born in 1843 in "Sisila" or "Sisilce," neither of which spelling occurs in any atlas or gazeteer available to this writer, of parents both born in Maryland. Ferdinand's wife was born Clara Alice Madison, in 1857 in England of English parents.

The brothers moved to Astoria in 1864 with their parents, Carl Albert Fisher and Crystal (Wittick) Fisher. Oregon had been a state five years, and Astoria was a village of perhaps 300 persons, boasting a U.S. Customs House and a Post Office. The first sawmill and tannery had yet to be built; the first cases of salmon had yet to be canned, though a limited fishery producing fresh fish in season and pickled and salted and smoked salmon had functioned since 1850. (In 1866, 4,000 cases of salmon would mark the beginning of an industry that was to shape Astoria.) The village developed on docks built on pilings in the Columbia, and transportation was achieved almost entirely on the water.



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Ferdinand, a teenager in the late 1860s, worked at various jobs in the salmon cannery of A. Booth and Co.. Augustus, 21 years of age in 1864, built the schooner Ella Nora with their third brother, Henry, and spent the next ten years hauling freight and passengers between Astoria, Warrenton, Olney, Knappton, and other landings in the lower Columbia and Youngs Bay.

At age 19 Ferdinand, in 1872, opened a trading post, probably with Augustus's backing. Astoria's 1870 population was 639, but with regular steamship service between Astoria and Portland, and Portland and San Francisco ("steamer day," when the steamer laid over in Astoria for freight and/or tides, brought many new faces and considerable business each week); and with a growing salmon cannery, lumber industry, and grain shipping depot, the population hit 2,000 by 1876. It was a propitious time to begin a commercial venture.

In 1876 Ferdinand went to the Commercial Business College in Portland for a course. In 1877, when Astoria got its first telephone, it boasted 11 salmon canneries, more than a thousand fishing boats, 189 new houses under construction, and 40 saloons in full operation. In October of that year Ferdinand, then 24, undertook two new ventures that were to shape the rest of his years: he married Clara Alice Madison, and opened, with Louis Wilson, the firm of Wilson and Fisher. They invested \$1,000 each to become "Dealers in Hay, Feed, Groceries and Hardware."

During the same period, Augustus had bought part interest in the steamboat Oneatta (1874), bought the steamer Sam and built the steamer Electric (1876), briefly owned and operated the steamer Katata (1878) before it was dismantled, and expanded the run of the Oneatta as far upstream as the Cowlitz River. According to Sam Lee, grandson of their brother Henry, Augustus made most of the money in the early years and funded the ventures at which Ferdinand and he succeeded.

In the 1880s Astoria boomed, growing in population from 2,800 to more than 6,100; the salmon canning industry peaked in 1883 with a yield of 629,000 cases. The Fishers kept diligently to their work; the firm of Wilson and Fisher by May, 1882, advertised themselves as "SHIP CHANDLERS, Dealers in Iron, Steel, Coal, Anchors, Chains, Tar, Pitch, Oakum, Wrought & Cut Galvanized Spikes, Nails, Copper Nails and Burrs, Shelf Hardware, Paint, and Oils, Rubber, and Hemp Packing of All Kinds, Provisions, Flour and Mill Feed, Agents for Salem Flouring Mills." On October 20, 1882 Ferdinand and Clara's son Earl was born.

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Sometime before 1887 they had built the initial portion of the subject house, which appears in the lower left of the accompanying 1887 lithograph. In 1889 Augustus sold the Electric and, in September of 1890, bought Louis Wilson's interest in the chandlery from the deceased partner's estate, thus forming the firm of Fisher Brothers, a business name which became part of Astoria's culture for another 90 years.

During the 1890s, Ferdinand's business interests expanded into Seaside, where in 1894 he bought out the Grimes Hotel, and in 1897 incorporated the Grimes Grove Land Company for the purpose of developing a 25-acre tract at Seaside. In 1898 the brothers decided to invest in the Klondike gold rush, which had begun in 1896 and had gathered momentum during the next year. In January, 1898 Augustus went to Skagway for two months and upon his return in March, they announced the incorporation of the Astoria and Dyea Trading Company. With a capital stock of \$5,000 they built a 20- by 40-foot 1½-story store at Dyea, at the foot of the Chilcoot Trail, and sent North \$1,000 worth of provisions as inventory.

With the turn of the century the activities of the Fishers intensified and their fortunes improved. The Fisher Opera House was in business by 1900; it burned, and was replaced in 1906 by the Astoria Theater, which the brothers built for \$12,000. Together or individually, Ferdinand and Augustus initiated nearly a dozen businesses through the decade to speculate in Astoria land, to retail merchandise in Astoria and Seaside, and to operate hotels. In 1903 they sold Fisher Brothers Chandlery to a corporation headed by Asmus Brix, but which still included Ferdinand as a shareholder. The same year Augustus, now 60, invested with Ferdinand in the Gerald C., a motor schooner with which he hauled freight to Oregon coast ports until 1905.

Most significantly, after Ferdinand's return from a 1901 train journey to New York where "Mr. Fisher was interested in the formation of the great salmon cannery trust and which was very successfully organized to the perfect satisfaction of all parties," he undertook ventures in the cannery business with the Lynn Packing Co. (1905) and the Taku Alaska Packing Co. (1906) to pack, can, and pickle salmon in Alaska, Washington, and Oregon.

Clara appears in the newspapers of this decade also, as the hostess of an entertainment at their new beach home in Seaside (1900) and at a party marking the opening of their "new" home at 12th and Grand in May, 1902, this latter undoubtedly the result of the extensive

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remodelling described above. This remodelling included a garage for the first automobile owned in Astoria (the only other two autos to visit Astoria had come with a circus and a minstrel show, respectively), son Earl's 1903 Rambler.

In 1908, Ferdinand emerges as a civic leader, being elected in December as Water Commissioner, taking his place in a community improvement effort that took from 1891 to 1918. He was elected on the slate of the Citizens' Party, a local organization dedicated to the non-partisan conduct of local politics and the principle that "candidates for office should be selected solely on account of their known honesty and fidelity in the discharge of their official duties."

In 1909 Ferdinand was also elected as president of the Good Roads Association. Having bought son Earl the 1903 Rambler and apparently later deciding that the automobile was on its way to permanence, Ferdinand had bought himself a 1906 Stevens-Duryea. The Association charged dues of \$20.00 for owners of two-seaters, \$10.00 for one-seaters, and \$5.00 for others. The dues went to an emergency fund for repair of the worst spots in the few roads then built, and the organization joined with the county court in its efforts to construct permanent highways throughout the county.

The Fishers built another home, in 1911, just to the north, between the subject house and an eight-unit block of flats built on the corner of 12th and Franklin by brother Henry in 1905. They turned their former home into a boarding house by 1913. During the decade Ferdinand also built an automotive service garage, setting up son Earl in business, and took care of investments in theater and hotel properties. In 1915-17 he helped form the Light House Packing and Canning Co., which set out to pack clams, fish, fruits, and vegetables at Warrenton, and which later opened a clam cannery at Cordova, Alaska. In 1916 he was elected to a second eight-year term as water commissioner.

In 1924 the brothers built two new buildings in Astoria. On July 21, 1926 Augustus died; then on July 18, 1929 Ferdinand passed away. Clara died two years later, on April 14, 1931.

Clara sold the subject house in 1929 to Judge Guy Boyington, a well-known county judge, who lived there with his family until 1938, when he sold it to Euna Pearl Burke. Mrs. Burke remodelled the house that year and opened it in April as The Magnolia House, a rooming house

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of four double and four single rooms. The house served four more owners as an apartment building until 1979, when it was closed and left to sit with leaking roof and gutters, serving as an unofficial campsite for squatters and vandals.

In 1985 its current owner purchased the house and has undertaken its repair and restoration.

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Beckham, Stephen Dow, Statewide Inventory form, Augustus and Ferdinand Fisher house, 1976.

Cleveland, Alfred A., "Social and Economic History of Astoria." Oregon Historical Quarterly, IV, March, 1903. pp. 130-149.

Hines, Harvey, An Illustrated History of Oregon, 1894, p. 536.

Lee, Sam, personal interview, 1986.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee, A Field Guide to American Houses, 1985.

Polk Astoria City Directory, 1890, 1913.

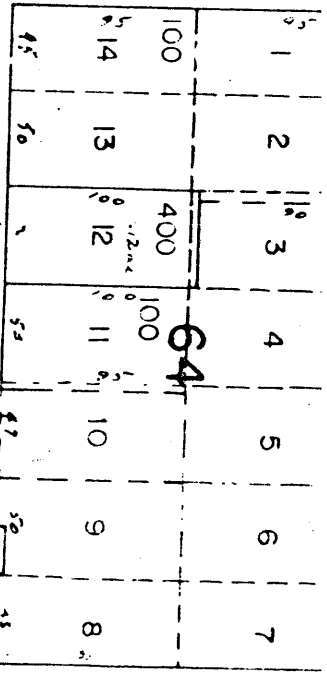
Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas of Astoria, 1892, 1896, 1908.

U. S. Census Records, 1880, microfilm.

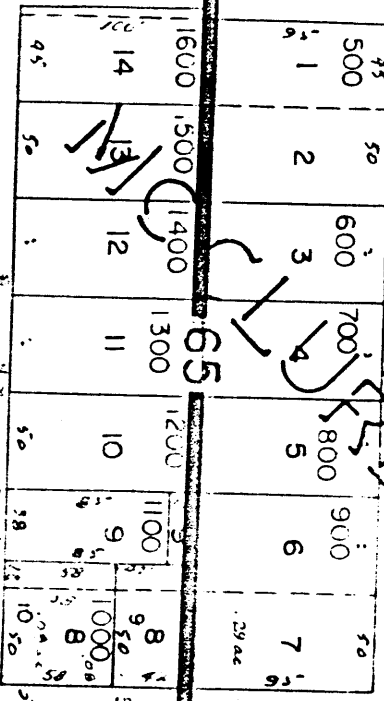
Whiffen, Marcus, American Architecture Since 1780, 1969.

Yambrovich, Janet Fisher, granddaughter of Ferdinand and Clara, personal telephone interview and copies of family photographs, 1986.

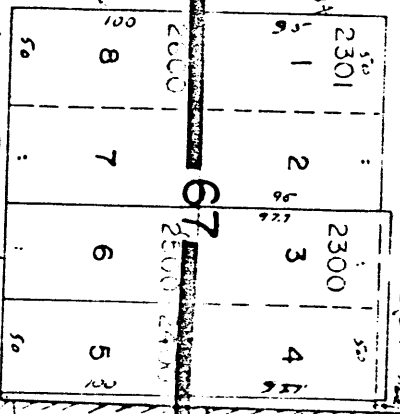
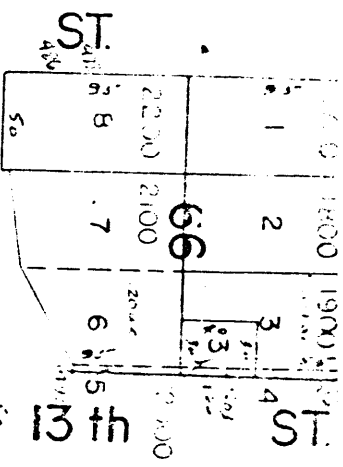
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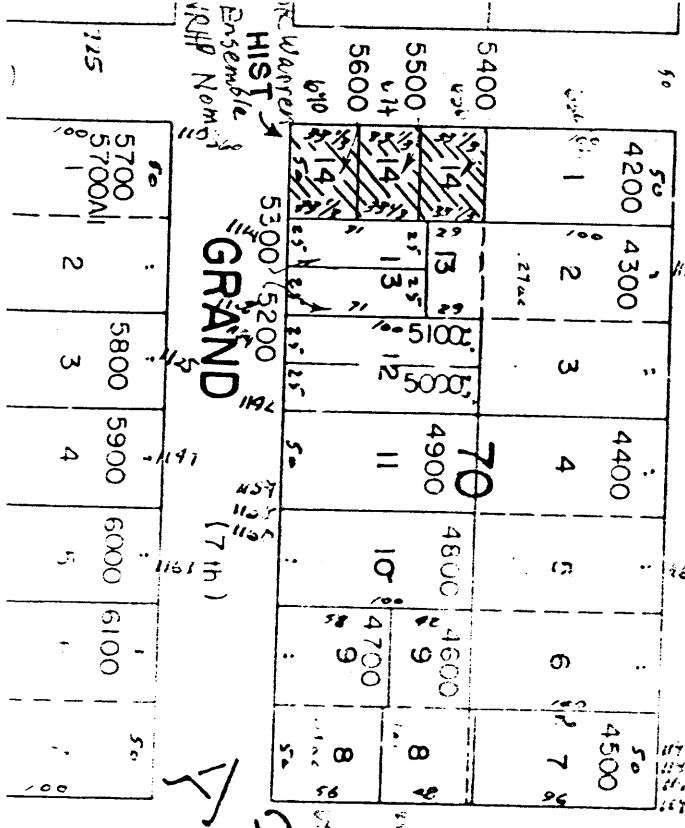
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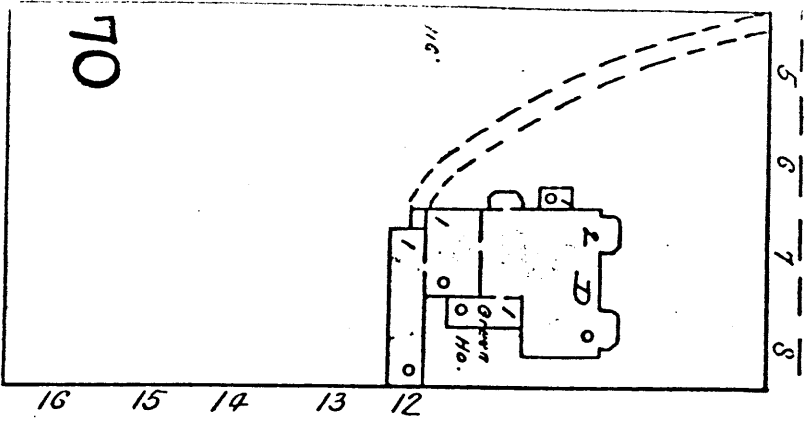
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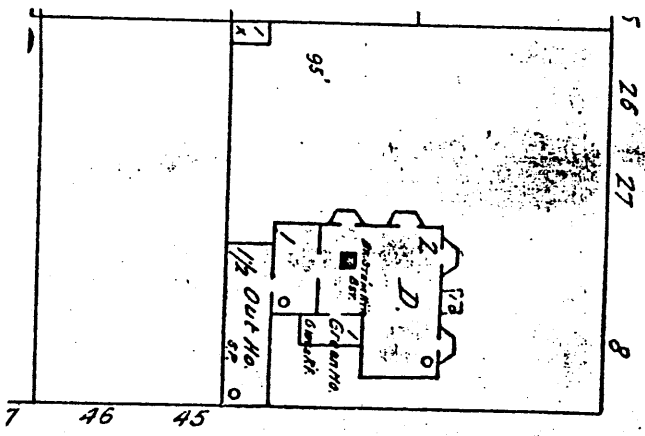


1892

7<sup>TH</sup>

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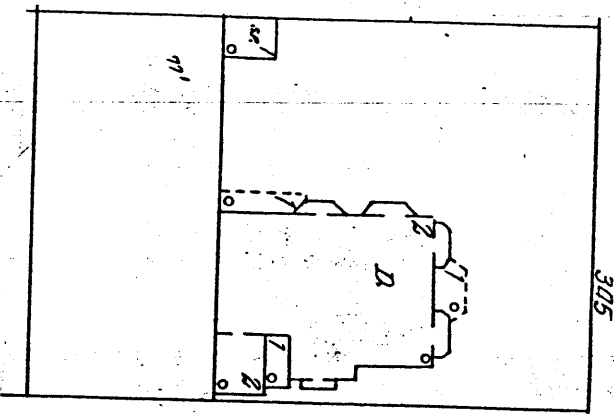


1896

AND

8 527 11 12 13 14

328 330 325 50' (107)



1908

GRAND AV.

OUTLINES OF THE FISHER HOUSE TAKEN FROM THE SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE ATLASSES OF ASTORIA  
 Fisher, Ferdinand, House (c. 1883), 687 12th Street, Astoria, Clatsop County, Oregon