

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

JAN 23 1989

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Wilcox Building

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 506 SW 6th Avenue

N/A not for publication

city, town Portland

N/A vicinity

state Oregon code OR county Multnomah code 051 zip code 97204

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

[Signature] January 17, 1989
Signature of certifying official Date
Oregon State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
- See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.

- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

[Signature] Entered in the National Register 2/23/89

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: office building

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: office building

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century

American Movements: Commercial style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls steelframed ; brick masonry clad

roof built-up asphalt

other terra cotta decoration

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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SETTING

The Wilcox Building stands on a 100'x200' lot on the northwest corner of Block 174 on lot 8, Portland Addition to the City of Portland. The building fronts SW Sixth Avenue to the west and Washington Street to the north and abuts the Exchange Building to the south and Lipman & Wolfe Building to the east. The only other building located on the same block is the Bedell Building which is being nominated for listed in the National Register.

Other National Register listed properties located in the same vicinity include the Meier and Frank Company Building, Pioneer Courthouse, the Equitable Building, and the Charles F. Berg Building.

When constructed, the area surrounding the building was emerging as the commercial center of the city. A gradual westerly movement of the commercial district of Portland had been occurring since the great fires of 1872 and 1873, which destroyed major sections of the city along the waterfront. Spring flooding of the city, until the construction of the sea wall in 1929, further spurred the movement of the commercial section of the city to move west away from the river. Following the Lewis and Clark Exposition of 1905, the City of Portland grew by leaps and bounds. This period of growth is marked by the construction of many commercial institutions following the Exposition until the stock market crash of 1929 which led to the Great Depression.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

As previously stated the Wilcox Building was the second of three buildings designed for Wilcox by the architectural firm of Whidden and Lewis. The first building had been the new Imperial Hotel at S.W. Broadway and Stark Streets, constructed in 1909. The third building was the Stevens Building, constructed in 1914 at the corner of S.W. Washington and West Park streets. All three of these buildings featured similar materials and design characteristics. This design concept followed the precepts established for the design of tall buildings by Louis Sullivan in Chicago a few years earlier: the tall building should be designed like a column, with a base, a shaft, and a capital at the top. Whidden & Lewis's designs for these three buildings included a two-story base of off-white colored glazed terra cotta, a shaft of near

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white brick, and a capital consisting of the top one or two stories treated as a frieze of off-white terra cotta, surmounted by a projecting white cornice of the same color terra cotta. The 1914 Stevens Building (Stevens was the maiden name of his second wife) was a virtual twin of the Wilcox Building except that its floor plan was reversed, and the terra cotta ornament was much simpler in its detail.

The Wilcox Building, together with the Stevens, and the Imperial Hotel, all designed by the prominent Whidden & Lewis firm, together with numerous other buildings designed by their equally prominent protege, A. E. Doyle, and a few other architects, form Portland's important white terra cotta district which was constructed between 1909 and 1929. While A. E. Doyle's 1910 Selling Building resembles in detail Louis Sullivan's Bayard Building, the Wilcox and Stevens buildings obviously owe a debt to it. Doyle returned the compliment in 1914 with his design for the Northwestern Bank Building (now American Bank Building) which, although twice the size, bears a strong resemblance to the Wilcox Building.

The richness of the white terra cotta of the Wilcox Building is unsurpassed in Portland's white city. Unfortunately, the Wilcox suffered the fate of so many Portland buildings in the 1940s and '50s, losing its original base at the street level to modernization. However, this modernization was very tastefully done, with careful detailing and durable, quality materials. This new base of travertine marble was constructed for Weisfield & Goldberg Jewelers in 1946, and was designed by architect Harry Herzog. Only the belt course, with its wave motif, has survived from the original terra cotta base. Also lost in the street level remodeling were two iron, copper and glass marquees. One was located at the entrance to the retail space on Washington Street, and was semicircular in plan. A rectangular marquee was located at the building entrance on S.W. Sixth Avenue. Both marquees were suspended by chains from the building wall, the suspension of the semicircular one being in a unique radial pattern. Each column originally had a granite base, and bulkheads under the shop front windows were faced with verde antique marble.

The brickwork, originally nearly white, has darkened with a deposit of dirt and grime and resists cleaning. Windows are paired, double-hung wood sash. Sills are white glazed terra cotta. An iron fire escape is hung at the east end of the north elevation.

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The building has a narrow light court at the rear of the south elevation, but also has a regular pattern of windows in the wall at the property line at the front of the building. The east wall abuts the Lipman-Wolfe Building at the property line.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

Inside the building virtually nothing of the original remains, having been remodeled in recent years with new partitions, slab doors, and a suspended ceiling throughout. A fire sprinkler system has also been installed. The original open stairway remains with its original wrought iron railing. The lobby has undergone at least two remodelings.

This building remains in excellent condition, having had good care over the years. It is one of the best examples of Portland's white brick and terra cotta office buildings. Despite the interior and ground floor changes the building is in good condition.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance

1911

Significant Dates

1911

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Whidden and Lewis, architects

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached continuation sheets

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property 0.12 Portland, Oregon-Washington 1:24000

UTM References

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated area is comprised of Lot 8, Block 174, Portland Addition to the City of Portland, in Multnomah County, Oregon.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated area consists of the entire 50 x 100-foot lot in downtown Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon historically developed for and occupied by the Wilcox Building from 1911 onward.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John M. Tess, President
organization Heritage Investment Corporation date August, 1988
street & number 123 NW Second Avenue, Suite 200 telephone (503) 228-0272
city or town Portland state Oregon zip code 97209

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The Wilcox Building is a twelve-story Commercial-style building of steel frame construction clad with white brick and detailed in the Classical idiom with off-white glazed terra cotta. Constructed in 1911 at the southeast corner of the intersection of SW Sixth Avenue and Washington Street in downtown Portland, Oregon, it was designed by leading local architects William Whidden and Ion Lewis. The building was highly ranked in a study of Portland's historic terra cotta architecture and in the Portland Historic Resources Inventory. City of Portland Historical Landmark designation for the building is pending.

The Wilcox Building meets National Register Criterion C as the best-designed of tall office buildings in the body of work by Portland's preeminent architectural firm to the time when commercial construction was slowed, generally, by the First World War. In mass, vertical scale and richness of Classical detail in the crowning stories and entablature--all rendered in gleaming white terra cotta, the Wilcox Building was the equal of concurrent skyscrapers in the Portland skyline, the Spalding Building (1911), and the Yeon Building (1911), both of them designed by prominent out-of-state architects, Cass Gilbert and Reid and Reid, respectively.

The development of so imposing a temple of commerce was the fulfillment of a spirit of competition which moved wealthy Portland industrialist Theodore B. Wilcox to embark on this, his flagship venture in downtown real estate. The Wilcox Building is significant under Criterion A as the ultimate expression of T. B. Wilcox's power and achievement in banking and business and the upbuilding of Portland.

On its completion, the Classically-inspired skyscraper was both the embodiment of current notions concerning the City Beautiful and the symbolic seat of the president of the Portland Flouring Mills Company, the largest milling and grain exporting operation in the Pacific Northwest. The company incorporated by William S. Ladd in 1883/1884 and headed by Wilcox from 1893 onward had opened up markets in Japan and China and thus contributed significantly to the development of Columbia River shipping at a vital stage. Wilcox tended his interest in foreign trade as a member of the Port of Portland Commission.

The architects, Whidden and Lewis, relocated their office to the prominent new building at Sixth and Washington as soon as it was opened for use.

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Theodore Burney Wilcox

Theodore Wilcox was born in Agawam, Massachusetts, a village not far from Springfield, on July 8, 1856. His ancestry may be traced directly back to David Wilcox, who came from Wales to the new world in 1635. Henry S. Wilcox, the father of Theodore Wilcox, was born in Massachusetts where he eventually wed Sarah Burney, a daughter of Thomas Burney, who came to Webster Massachusetts from England in 1820.

Theodore Wilcox attended the public schools of Massachusetts but never had the opportunity to pursue his education at the college level. When he was but sixteen, Wilcox began supporting himself through employment at the Hampden National Bank located in Westfield, Massachusetts. While Wilcox was working for Hampden National, Asahel Bush of the Bank of Ladd & Bush of Salem, Oregon recognized Wilcox's capabilities and offered him a position in the bank of Ladd & Tilton in Portland, Oregon. Wilcox accepted the position and served as a teller in the Ladd & Tilton Bank until 1884 at which time he became confidential man to W.S. Ladd until 1893.

While still in the banking business, Wilcox also had a focused attention on flour manufacturing. Wilcox first entered the field in 1884 when he organized the Portland Flouring Mills Company from the properties of several failing enterprises. Wilcox and the Ladd estate held the stock of the company, with Theodore Wilcox acting as general manager and W.S. Ladd acting as president. Upon Ladd's death in 1893, Wilcox became president of the company. From this point on, Wilcox continued to develop and enlarge his business until he made it the foremost of its field in the northwest. Wilcox was successful in the development of the Chinese and Japanese markets, as a result other flour mills were able to operate successfully and share in the new trade. Wilcox's business became one of the largest and most successful of its kind in the world, producing over 10,000 barrels of flour per day. Oregon flour bearing the name of Portland was carried to all parts of the world, from the Amur River to the Cape of Good Hope, and from

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Alaska to Cape Horn, to all the Pacific islands and to various European ports. J.J. Hill, a railway magnate in the northwest, once said of Wilcox:

"Mr. Wilcox has done more than any other man in Portland though the fame of the institution of which he is the head to develop the commerce of the Columbia River and gain recognition for the northwest throughout the world."

Wilcox was also successful in the field of real estate investment. At the time of the development of the Wilcox building Wilcox had steadily been buying up property in downtown Portland. As a result of annual flooding of the river and two great fires in the 1870's Portland's business district was steadily moving to the west. Then in 1905 Portland began to grow more rapidly as a direct result of the Lewis and Clark Exposition which brought much notoriety and subsequent growth to the city. At the time Wilcox when asked about his property acquisitions stated that he felt real estate was always a good investment.

Announcement for the construction of the building was made in August 1910, at which time the Oregonian quoted Wilcox as stating "This is the finest building in the city." Actual construction of the building did not begin until March of 1911. By fall of that same year the building was nearly completed.

Wilcox during his lifetime was considered a civic leader. He was very involved with the Portland Chamber of Commerce, the Port of Portland, was on the board of the Lewis and Clark Exposition and active in the Portland Development League. Wilcox was also a member of the First Presbyterian Church and held memberships in the Waverly Club, the Multnomah Athletic Club and the Arlington Club.

Besides his interests in real estate and being president of Portland Flouring Mills Company, Wilcox was also a stockholder and director of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company and director of the United States National Bank and the Ladd & Tilton Bank. At the time of his death in 1918 Wilcox's estate was valued at somewhere between \$5,000,000 to \$7,000,000. Mr Wilcox was survived by his wife and a son.

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WHIDDEN AND LEWIS

William M. Whidden and Ion Lewis were both trained at M.I.T. After graduation, Lewis worked in the Boston office of Peabody & Stearns, and later formed a partnership with Henry P. Clark.

Whidden, after four years at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, joined McKim, Meade & White in New York. Accompanied by McKim, Whidden came to Portland in 1882 to supervise work on railroad magnate Henry Villard's Portland Hotel. Villard's financial collapse in 1883 ended work on the hotel and Whidden returned to the east coast.

In 1888 the partially completed hotel was acquired by a local syndicate headed by H. W. Corbett and William Ladd who invited Whidden to return to Portland to oversee construction. A year later Whidden was visited by his friend and classmate, Ion Lewis, who stayed on and joined Whidden in partnership.

The arrival of Whidden & Lewis marked the arrival of current eastern styles, and architecturally speaking, Portland had "come of age." Whidden & Lewis introduced the Georgian in residential design, the Second Renaissance Revival in public buildings, and the classically detailed Commercial Style in office buildings. Among the firm's most noted early works are the Hamilton Building (1893) located west of the Postal Building, and Portland City Hall (1892-95), both National Register properties.

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City of Portland Buildings Bureau microform and card files.

Fredericks, Herb. "Whidden and Lewis Job List," unpublished typescript, OHS Collection.

Herzog, Harry A. and Barnes, Holman J., "Wilcox Building Alteration Working Drawings," 1947. City of Portland Buildings Bureau Microfiche Collection.

Multnomah County Tax Assessor records, microform, automated data files, and card files (Portland).

Portland Architectural Club Yearbook, Fifth Annual Exhibition (1913).

Portland Historical Landmarks Commission, inventory form.

The Pacific Coast Architect, 2:4 (Jan., 1912).

Vaughan, Thomas and Ferriday, Virginia Guest, editors, Space, Style and Structure: Buildings in Northwest America, Portland, OR: 1974.

Whidden and Lewis, Wilcox Building Working Drawings, 1910. City of Portland Buildings Bureau Microfiche Collection.

NEWSPAPERS

"Washington-Street Elevation of Wilcox Building, at Southeast Corner of Sixth," The Morning Oregonian, Aug. 14, 1910.

"Construction of Wilcox Building at Sixth and Washington Streets Rushed," The Sunday Oregonian, Aug. 20, 1911.

The Morning Oregonian, Jan. 1, 1912, sec. 2, p. 2.

"Theodore Wilcox Is Critically Ill," The Morning Oregonian, Mar. 30, 1918.

"T.B. Wilcox Dead at Portland Home" and "T.B. Wilcox Is Dead," The Morning Oregonian, Apr. 1, 1918.

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"Prominent Citizen Passes On," and "Theodore Wilcox Yields to Death," The Oregon Daily Journal, Apr. 1, 1918.

"One of Portland's Really Great Forces Is Removed," The Morning Oregonian, April 4, 1918.

"Big Inheritance Tax Paid," The Morning Oregonian, Nov. 30, 1918.

"W. M. Whidden, 72, Architect, Dies; Work Recalled," The Oregon Sunday Journal, July 28, 1929

"Firm to Be Honored," The Sunday Oregonian, Nov. 16, 1930.

"Students to Get Help: Architecture Scholarship Provided by Fund," The Morning Oregonian, Oct. 2, 1930.

"Impressions and Observations of The Journal Man," The Oregon Daily Journal, Oct. 30, 1930.

"Books Given to School of Architecture," The Oregon Daily Journal, Nov. 28, 1930.

"Pioneer Architect of Portland Dies," The Morning Oregonian, Aug. 30, 1933.

"Ion Lewis, 75, Designer of City Hall, Dies," The Oregon Daily Journal, Aug. 30, 1933.

"Investment Man Dies: T.B. Wilcox (Jr.) Funeral Saturday," The Daily Journal, Mar. 17, 1961.

