

SURVEY-INVENTORY FORM  
COMMUNITY CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY

1. NAME  
Historic Big Four Furniture Building

and/or Common N.A.

2. LOCATION UTM References: Kelso, WA-OR Scale: 1:24,000  
Zone 10 Easting 505280  
Street & Number 1329 Commerce Avenue Northing 5109190  
- not for publication

City, Town Longview - vicinity of

State Washington County Cowlitz

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership: public private both  
Status: occupied unoccupied work in progress  
Present Use: agriculture commercial educational entertainment government  
industrial military museum park private residence  
religious scientific transportation other:

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

Name Ellen Silverman

Street & Number 2554 Ocean Beach Highway

City, Town Longview State Washington  
- vicinity of 98632

5. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Long-Bell Files, Deposited in the Longview History Room. Longview Public Library. Longview  
MacPherson, George. Architect. Big Four Furniture Building Construction Drawings.  
1934. Longview City Hall. Longview  
Silverman, Ellen, "Nellie". Personal Interview. Longview. March, 1985.

6. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title Michael L. Neuschwanger, Architectural Apprentice

Organization City of Longview Date March 28, 1985  
Urban Services & Permits Department

Street & Number 1525 Broadway Telephone 577-3330

City or Town Longview State Washington  
98632

## 7. DESCRIPTION

Condition:        excellent    good    fair    deteriorated    ruins    unexposed  
Circle one:        unaltered                    altered  
Circle one:        original site            moved    date \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance  
attach photo

The Big Four Furniture Building is located on Commerce Avenue, which was developed as the center of the Business District during Longview's settlement. The building occupies a row slot, sharing a party wall with the Columbia Mercantile Building on its northern side and abutts another commercial building to the south. The buildings are serviced by an alley to the rear. The "Big Four" is similar to other buildings on the avenue in its functional and organizational type. Appearing to be three stories in height, it is actually two stories, with mezzanine level windows set in vertical, spandrel openings, in conjunction with second story windows. The building is fifty feet wide, with a tripartite central bay and smaller flanking side bays. The store has a ground story and mezzanine for display space and storage, with offices on the second floor above. The building entrance and stairhall is located in the side bay to the south. The deeply recessed store entrance is on the building's central axis, with an open balustraded mezzanine wrapping a double height volume and open stairs, in the interior.

The perimeter walls of the building are constructed of masonry, with a wood post and beam (see continuation sheet)

Verbal boundary description:    Lot 4, Block 56,  
Longview Addn. #2  
50' X 120'

Acreage: Less than One Acre

## 8. SIGNIFICANCE

Specific dates	1924, 1934	Builder/Architect	George MacPherson
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a. Level of significance: local  
History

The Big Four Furniture Building was first constructed as the Lumberman's Bank in 1924, with a classically influenced brick and tile facade. It was a prominent building located adjacent to the Columbia Mercantile Building, the Long-Bell Lumber Company's downtown store and offices. By their related style and scale, the building's were representative of city planning intentions. The Lumberman's Bank failed during the Depression and was liquidated April 6, 1934. The building was sold to the Big Four Furniture Co. in June 12, 1934 for \$10,000.

In the fall of 1934, George MacPherson, a distinguished local architect, designed an Art Deco building facade which substantially altered the original. MacPherson had (see continuation sheet)

b. Evaluation of Significance

The Big Four Furniture Building is significant for its highly intact Art Deco facade. Designed by a noted local architect, George MacPherson, the building is one of three nominated buildings featuring Art Deco styling. The overall form of the building exhibits the influence of deed restrictions related to city planning, by its functional type, the type of construction, the ground story height, and the number of stories.

SURVEY-INVENTORY FORM  
CONTINUATION SHEET

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1. NAME Big Four Furniture Building

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7. DESCRIPTION - continued

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structural interior. The frontal elevation is constructed of masonry and concrete, and faced in stucco. The facade and the interior detailing are the result of an extensive renovation to a brick, Georgian Revival bank. The Art Deco facade is clearly distinguishable in form and style from the original, but retains its general spatial divisions of a dominant central bay flanked by side bays. The interior also retains much of the structural character of the original building. The only existing feature of the original building's detailing is a beamed, coved plaster ceiling with fine architrave trim and frieze. The ceiling is located in a frontal bay of the mezzanine level. The interior detailing of the mezzanine stairs, balustrade, and light fixtures are Art Deco in style. The plaster walls are plain and unornamented.

The exterior elevation is notable for its austerity. The ground story is relieved by a simple horizontal belt course and lintel, which appears to span fifty feet, supporting upper story walls. Two round steel columns on either side of the tripartite central bay are set inside the display windows, directly under the engage pilaster strips. The pilaster strips and intermediate ribs extend from the belt course, through the upper stories, to break the subtly indicated frieze of the parapet. The pilaster strips are terminated by a projecting, stepped, angular motif. The wood spandrels feature a simple, rectilinear pattern set in relief. The double-leaf, paneled building entrance doors, and the central, glazed store entrance door, are original and in good condition. The raised lettering of the ground story lintel is also original and generally in fair condition.

The building, which was originally 65 feet deep, has been extended by a one story addition to the rear, to the property line along the alley. The addition is constructed of masonry, with wood windows and large quadruple-leaf, paneled doors. By the construction type and detailing, the addition is similar in style to the Art Deco facade and appears to have been constructed during the same period, circa 1935-1945.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE

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a. History - continued

previously designed the Classical Washington Gas & Electric Building in 1928, and the Gothic First Christian Church, in 1930, both of which are nominated as part of the theme. Although the facade and interior of the building are clearly distinguishable from the Lumberman's Bank, the building retains the general spatial organization of the original structure.

Two other nominated buildings were built in the Art Deco style in Longview -- the Longview Main Post Office and the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Building. Both were designed by Architects Bebb & Gould and John Graham of Seattle, constructed of brick with terra cotta or sandstone detailing, and are representative of highly developed and refined Art Deco styling. The Big Four Furniture Building is quite different from these other buildings, by its stucco facade and severity of detailing. The highly intact facade is more similar in style to the demolished Longview City Hall (1936) which was also designed by MacPherson.

The Big Four Furniture Company was a successful business venture at its present location. (see continuation sheet)

SURVEY-INVENTORY FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET

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1. NAME

Big Four Furniture Building

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8. SIGNIFICANCE

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a. History - continued

The company was previously located in another building fronting Commerce Avenue, and also in the neighboring town of Kelso. The store is presently operated by Nellie Silverman, one of the owners of the Big Four Furniture Company when the building was purchased and renovated.