



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# 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 Bretnor Apartments  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 931 NW Twentieth N/A not for publication  
city, town Portland N/A vicinity  
state Oregon code OR county Multnomah code 051 zip code 97210

### 3. Classification

<b>Ownership of Property</b>	<b>Category of Property</b>	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</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.  
James M. Hamilton January 3, 1991  
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:) \_\_\_\_\_

**Entered in the National Register**  
Alvina Byrum 2/20/91  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: multiple dwelling;  
apartment building

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Apartment Building

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals:  
Jacobethan

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls brick

roof asphalt: built-up

other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

---

### Setting and Description

The Bretnor Apartments are located at 931 N.W. 20th Avenue on Lots 1 and 2 of Block 285 in Couch's Addition in Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon. Situated at the corner of N.W. Lovejoy Street on a nearly level lot, it was, when it was built in 1912, in a neighborhood of predominantly single family houses, some of them quite grand, others more modest. It was one of the first apartments to be built in the immediate area. The Willamette Heights streetcar line on 21st Avenue was a double block away, as was the north end of the neighborhood shopping district on 21st.

Designed by the architects Claussen & Claussen, it was apparently the first apartment designed by them, one of many over the next 10 or 15 years. In 1915, William E. Claussen (American Architect, June 23, 1915; the article is mistakenly attributed to "Walter" Claussen), one of the brothers in the partnership, published in the national architecture magazine, The American Architect, an article on apartment design entitled "Two and Three-Room Apartments of the Pacific Coast." The article deals with the apartment designs developed on the West Coast, particularly with beds which can be rolled under closets by day such as were used in Claussen & Claussen's 1915 Brown Apartments. The Bretnor, however, predated their use of these roll-away beds.

Situated on a 50 foot by 100 foot corner site, its entrance is located unusually at the edge of the narrow end of the building. It is speculated that it may have been intended to build a second wing to the building adjoining. The building is of four stories plus a basement and served by an elevator and single stair adjoining the entrance on N.W. 20th Avenue. A service entrance is located mid-block on Lovejoy Street, down several steps to the basement.

There are five apartments to a floor which are very nearly in their original condition.

The exterior of the building is exuberant, being designed in the Neo-Georgian style popular at the time. A rusticated base, cement plastered, contains the basement windows. Above, walls are faced with clinker brick in a range of dark red to black laid in common bond. Joints are colored black and tooled to a "V". The brick is contrasted to cast-iron belt courses and quoins. At the first floor windows a belt course is set back at both head and sill levels. Another narrow belt course is located at the second floor

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

---

window line with a third belt course at the top floor windows head, these two bracketing the three-story high, polygonal bays, two on each street elevation. Window lintels and jambs are cast stone with quoins at jambs. Quoins also occur at the corner of the building. At the spandrel below the second floor windows there is a pattern of projecting header bricks, every fourth course, with two bricks between and staggered between header courses. Below the brick parapet is a wood and sheet metal cornice supported on rectangular brackets under which are dentils. Over each bay window a rectangular pitched roof projects lightly and is supported on ornamental iron brackets.

The building entrance is emphasized with cast stone with a low arch over the opening. There are several types of windows, all wood sash, almost all double-hung. At the basement they are one-over-one; and at the top floor eight-over-one. Floors one through three are unusual for the date, having four vertical lights in the upper sash over the single light in the lower sash. At the west side wall there are small casement windows with small diamond shaped panes. At the west and south side walls windows are one-over-one, set in openings with brick arches over.

One enters the building through a glazed oak door with sidelights. The vestibule floor is tile and one walks up 10 marble steps to the elevator. The steps and a wainscot are of gray marble and there are cast plaster ornaments and cornice in the stair enclosure. Corridor floors are covered with the original cork tile, intended to cushion footsteps. The corridors, now rather dark, were originally lighted with glazed doors to the apartments. The elevator is in its original state with an iron grillework cage. The stairs are wood with a wood banister and square balusters. The elevator and stair lobby at each floor are cut off from the corridor by a Kalamein fire door. Fluted, rectangular pilasters of wood are placed at either side of the elevator and stair.

### Comparison of the Bretnor with Other Apartments Designed by Claussen & Claussen

Claussen & Claussen designed a number of apartment houses in their career. The Bretnor (1912), the Wilmar at N.W. Everett and 22nd Place (1916 or 1911), 2087 N.W. Overton Street (1914), the Brown (1915) at S.W. 14th and Yamhill Streets, and the Newton (1924) at S.W. 12th AVenue near Jefferson Street.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page   4  

---

There are conflicting dates for the Wilmar Apartments so it is not certain whether it precedes or follows the Bretnor in date. It has much in common in exterior appearance, as it is also executed in clinker brick with cast stone trim; however, its entrance is at the center of the long elevation and its use of cast stone trim is much more restrained making it more somber in appearance. The 2087 Overton apartment is completely different, being on a 50 foot by 50 foot lot. This apartment was illustrated in the American Architect article (included with the nomination). Its exterior treatment of red brick with dark mortar, has little trim. The principal accent is the cast stone keystone at the flat arches over the windows.

The Newton Apartments belong to a different era of apartment design. It is a 50 foot by 100 foot building on an interior lot. Its street elevation is of red, rug-faced brick and there is virtually no ornament.

Of the five apartments, the Bretnor is unique and the strongest design. Its entrance location is unusual. While the interiors are in need of some restoration, the exterior is in excellent condition. Claussen & Claussen were known for their pride in the details of their designs and must certainly have been very proud of this building. The Bretnor is an outstanding example of their work and of apartment design of the period.

**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  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1912  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1912  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Claussen & Claussen, 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**

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 0.23 acres Portland, Oregon-Washington 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	0	5	2	4	0	9	0	5	0	4	1	6	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated area encompasses Lots 1 and 2 of Block 285 of Couch's Addition to the City of Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon. The property is bounded by NW Lovejoy Street on the north and NW 20th on the east.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated area corresponds to the legally recorded lot lines of property occupied by the Bretnor Apartments from 1912 onward. Lot 2 is undeveloped and historically has been used for parking for tenants and visitors.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title John M. Tess, President with Richard D. Ritz, FAIA  
organization Heritage Investment Corporation date July, 1990  
street & number 123 NW Second Avenue, Suite 200 telephone (503) 228-0272  
city or town Portland state Oregon zip code 97209

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1A

---

SUMMARY

The Bretnor Apartments occupy a 100 x 100-foot lot at the southwest corner of the intersection of 20th Avenue and Lovejoy Street in the Nob Hill neighborhood of northwest Portland, Oregon. The apartment house built in 1912 for the Barrett Estate was designed in the tradition of Beaux Arts or "Free Classic" eclecticism by local architects Claussen and Claussen, a firm that specialized to a degree in apartment and hotel architecture following this project. The Bretnor Apartments meet National Register Criterion C as the best-designed and best-preserved of five apartment houses designed by the brothers Claussen and as one of the leading examples of its stylistic type in the city, generally.

The brothers, H. Fred and William E. Claussen, practiced architecture in Portland from 1908 to 1942. They were educated in Chicago. In addition to such apartments as the Bretnor, the Brown (1916), the Wilmar (1916) and Newton (1924), their output included commercial buildings in downtown such as the Roosevelt and old Heathman hotels.

The brick-faced building has a footprint of 50 x 100 feet, and rises four stories over a high basement and houses twenty apartments of three and four rooms that, upon their opening for use were equipped with the modern conveniences of the day. The flat-roofed rectangular volume presents its major frontage on Lovejoy Street, but its main entrance facade faces east on NW 20th Avenue. Stylistically, the Bretnor is related to the numerous brick apartment blocks with multi-storied oriels that sprang up in Portland's streetcar era following The Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition of 1905. Its detailing is a restrained program in the Jacobethan mode that draws its chief effect from the high contrast between dark red and blackened clinker brick laid up in a common bond and the light cast-stone rusticated ground course, belt and string courses, quoins and window trim. One of the pleasing results of trim application occurs on the main story, where a rhythmic display of geometric panels is created by belt courses and window frame corner blocks.

The building's street facades are more or less formally organized in the base-shaft-capital vertical hierarchy adopted for tall buildings by the Chicago School. The distinguishing features are



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   8   Page  1B 

---

the sets of two hooded polygonal bays that are formally placed on either street facade. In keeping with the Jacobethan theme, the double-hung windows have multiple lights in upper sash. The parapet is encircled by a Classical cornice of wood and sheet metal having a dentil course and block modillions. The entrance bay on the south end of the 20th Avenue facade has a handsome cast stone surround articulated with low-relief inset panels and stylized ornament from the Classical vocabulary. The three-part entrance, including sidelights and transom, is recessed under two thirds of a segmental arch. The entry hall is finished with tile floor, marble dado, and elaborately modeled wall paneling and cornice in the Classical style. The original elevator with iron grillework cage is in place. The apartment interiors, featuring well-proportioned door and window trim, high paneled wainscoting, sliding pocket doors and deep cornice molding, were finished initially with white enamel paint and are substantially intact.

It has been suggested that, originally, the plan was to build a mirror-image apartment block on the adjoining lot to the south.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

---

The 1912 Bretnor Apartment Building is located in Northwest Portland in the Nob Hill neighborhood.

### Nob Hill and the Advent of the Apartment house in Portland

The Bretnor Apartment Building is located in the Nob Hill neighborhood in Portland. This area was part of Capt. John H. Couch's land claim. Couch was a Massachusetts seaman who first came to Oregon in 1840. Portland was not much more than a simple clearing in the wilderness at that time. He returned to the area in 1845 and claimed an area of land bounded by the Willamette River and NW Twenty-first, Ankeny and Thurman-Donation land Claim #52. Couch chose this territory because he felt it had the greatest potential for the shipping and commercial industries. The total claim was perfected in 1849 to include 640 acres. In 1850, Couch sold one-half his interest in the claim to George Flanders.

The Couch family settled in the claimed area setting aside 13 acres for the Couch estate and orchard. The first residential houses were built north of A and B streets. The commercial district was near the water in the 1850's and was expanding northward. The first residential district was centered along 4th and 5th streets. Couch decided to move north as the city began to grow. Large, double blocks were given to the Couch children and the area between 16th and 26th began to develop into an area of elegant homes. People moving into the area were the successful merchants, doctors, and other professionals who had taken advantage of the opportunities that existed in the young city of Portland. The Nob Hill area was an isolated area of the city with the Couch family creating their own New England style niche in the neighborhood.

The early years of the 20th century were a time of rapid growth and development in Portland. The city's population more than doubled between the years 1900 and 1910 from 90,000 to 212,000. This growth surge was due in part to the 1905 Lewis and Clark World's Fair, which gave the city international exposure it had not previously known.

Much of the population growth in Portland was absorbed in Nob Hill, an area which had previously been distinguished by its stately mansions, owned by many of the city's leading families. Some of these mansions still remain, including the Ayer-Shea residence and the George Heusner residence, both on the National Register. However, many of the mansions were replaced in the first two decades of this century by apartment houses and other developments.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

---

The area became, and remains to this day, an intensely urban concentration of residential, commercial, and institutional uses. It boasts a number of properties listed or eligible for the National Register. Besides the mansions listed above, these include the Ormonde Apartments, the Campbell Hotel, Trinity Episcopal Church, and the Belle Court Apartments.

Newspaper articles from the period testify to the apartment house boom which occurred in Portland around the years 1910-1913, and which was focused in Nob Hill. These articles also speak of a growing sophistication on the part of the public, which expected a high degree of quality in apartments. Real estate prices began to climb and apartment buildings were the wave of the future. Apartment buildings were virtually non-existent before 1904.

W.L. Morgan, Portland architect and contractor, built what was reported to be the first apartment building in the city in 1904 at what was then the southeast corner of 16th and Jefferson. The apartment building had 13 rooms and was opened in June of 1904. Morgan built two other apartment buildings at northwest 15th and Everett and the apartments rented immediately. In 1905 there were only three or four frame apartment houses in Portland. In the Nob Hill area, apartment buildings sprang up around the streetcar lines on 19th and Twenty-first avenues. This area became the most densely populated district in the state. By 1910, an article in the Oregonian reported that Nob Hill was an area where "the building is most marked" and was "being built up with fine apartment structures."

During the 1920's and 1930's, long time residents of the area continued to move away as older homes were being replaced and more homes were converted into apartment dwellings. With the advent of the automobile, the need to live close to the downtown area diminished and people began moving away from the city center. In the 1940's and 1950's inner-city problems, such as theft, traffic, and vandalism were on the increase in the Nob Hill area.

The 1960's and 1970's saw a re-birth of the neighborhood, families were moving back and older homes were being restored. The Northwest District Association was created in an effort to restore the neighborhood. The elegant days of the late 1800's are long

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

---

gone, but historically and architecturally significant structures in the Nob Hill district still exist. This character is preserved through the residences and apartment houses that were built during this period.

### H. Fred Claussen

H. Fred Claussen, with his brother William E. Claussen, practiced architecture in Portland from 1908 to 1942.

Claussen was born in Chicago about 1880 and was educated in Chicago. In 1908 he came to Portland with his brother and established the firm of Claussen & Claussen which continued until the death of his brother in 1950. Claussen received license no. 45 under the "grandfather's clause" when Oregon began licensing architects in 1919. Claussen was a member of the Portland Architectural Club in 1909 and 1910.

Claussen & Claussen had a busy practice and were architects for a number of important downtown Portland buildings including the Roosevelt Hotel (1925); the Old Heathman Hotel (1926); the Alderway Building (1928); and the Loyalty Building (1929). They were also architects for the Laurelhurst School; Holman Transfer Co. Warehouse; the Bretnor Apartments (1916); the Wilmar Apartments (1916); the Brown Apartments (1916); the Wilmar Apartments (1916); the Newton Apartments (1924); and the Adcox Trade School (1928). Longtime prominent contractor, Guy Jolivette of Reimers & Jolivette said that Claussen & Claussen were very proud of their details, and that if you wanted to please them you would carry out the details exactly as shown.

Claussen died at Portland after a long illness on April 1, 1942, at the age of 62.

### William E. Claussen

William E. Claussen, with his brother H. Fred Claussen, practiced architecture in Portland from 1908 to 1950.

Claussen came from Chicago to Portland with his brother in 1908 and established the firm of Claussen & Claussen which he continued, after the death of his brother in 1942, until 1950. It is not known whether he was younger or older than his brother.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   8   Page   5  

---

He received license no. 46 under the "grandfather's clause" when licensing of architects commenced in Oregon in 1919. Claussen was a member of the Portland Architectural Club in 1910.

William Claussen died in 1953.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   9   Page   1  

---

Bibliography

Portland City Directory, 1909-50.

Portland Architectural Club Year Book, 1909 and 1910.

Interview with Guy Jolivette by Richard E. Ritz, 1982.

Pacific Coast Architect, Feb. 1916.

The Oregonian, 3 Apr. 1942, obituary.

The Oregon-Journal, 6 May 1928.

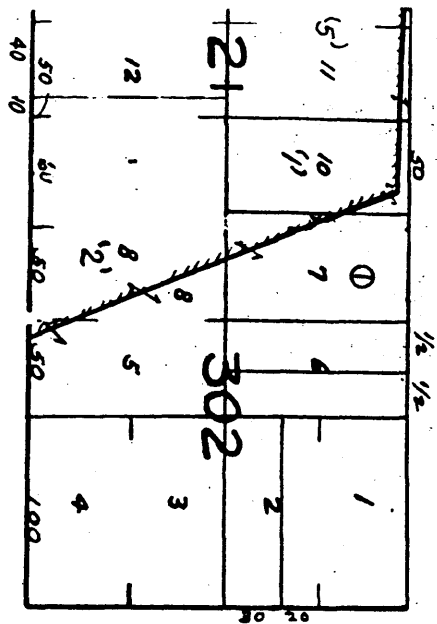
Portland Historic Resources Inventory, 1982.

Oregon Board of Architect Examiners Records.

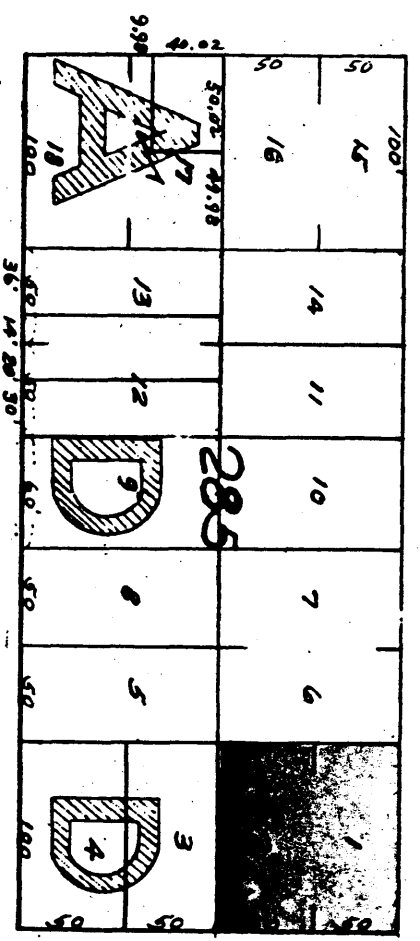
Claussen, Walter, "Two and Three-Room Apartments of the Pacific Coast,"  
The American Architect, June 1915. Vol. 107, No. 2061 (June 23, 1915), 410ff.

"Modern Apartment-House Rises," The Sunday Oregonian, October 27, 1912.

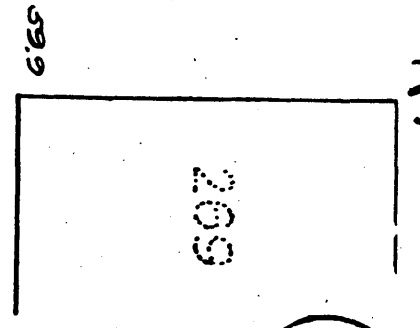
1NW LOVEJOY ST.



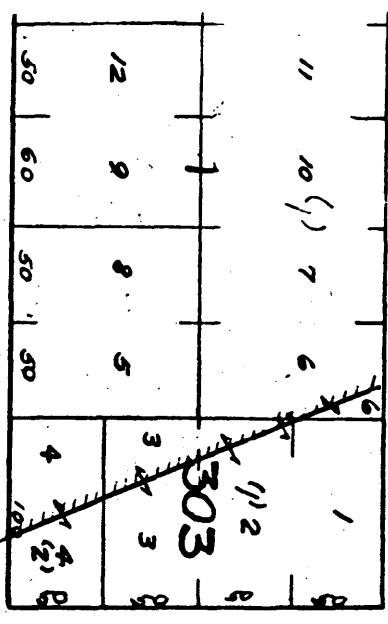
9 NJ



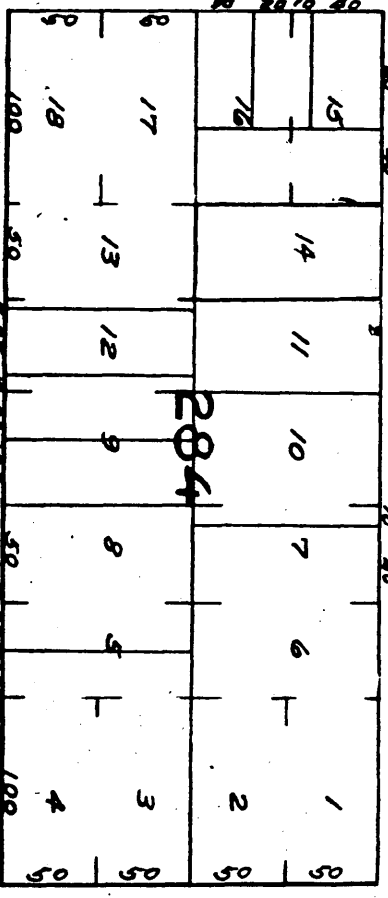
NW KEARNY ST.



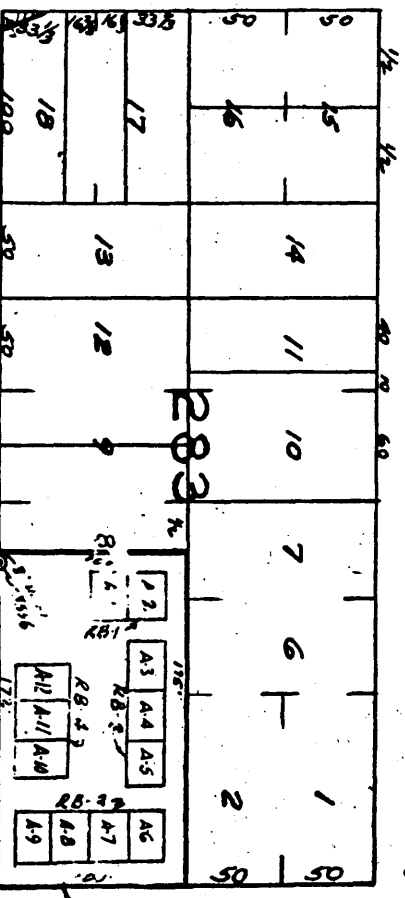
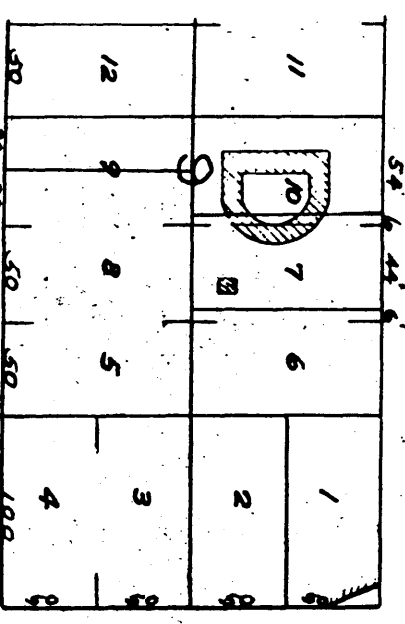
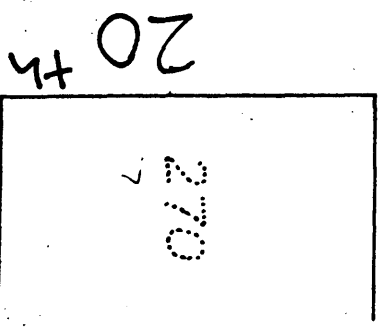
2928



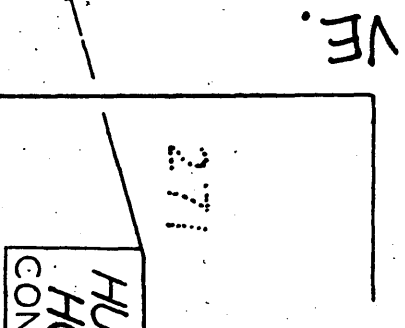
21st AVH.



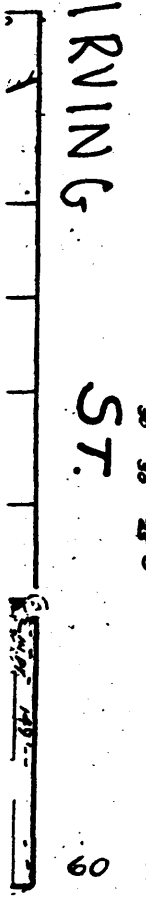
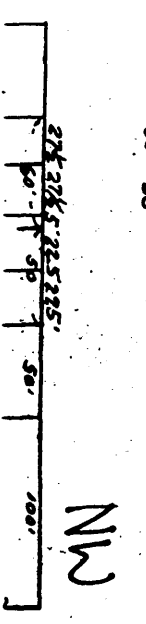
NW JOHNSON ST.



NW IRVING ST.



HUBBARD HOUSE CONDOMINI



**Historic  
Resource  
Inventory**  
CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON



3-020-00931

931 N.W. Twentieth Avenue

Couch's, Block 285, Lots 1, 2  
QUARTER SECTION MAP #: 2927  
Northwest District Association

ORIGINAL NAME: Bretnor Apartments

ORIGINAL FUNCTION: Apartment House

DATE BUILT: 1912

STYLE: Streetcar Era Apartments  
Rank III

ARCHITECTURAL PLANS BY: Claussen and Claussen

ORIGINAL OWNER: Barrett Estate

TAX ASSESSOR'S ACCOUNT #: R-18022-8480  
ZONING: C2

**SPECIAL FEATURES AND MATERIALS:**

Flat roof. Cornice with block modillions and dentil frieze. Polygonal bay windows. Hoods with cast-iron decorative brackets at tops of bays. Exterior finish of brick, with decorative brickwork between first and second stories. Rusticated first story and rusticated raised basement. Quoins at corners.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture



**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

City of Portland Buildings Bureau microform and card files.

Portland City Directory (Portland, Oregon).

Multnomah County Tax Assessor records, microform, automated data files, and card files (Portland, 1980).

OLD ADDRESS: 215 Twentieth Street North

ORIGINAL BUILDING PERMIT #: 37644

Present owners, as of May 1980: Fred E. Joseph (One-sixth), Kurt W. Joseph (One-third), Mary A. Lehman (One-third), Gertrude Joseph (One-sixth)  
MAILING ADDRESS: 620 S.W. Moss Street, Portland 97219

No Preservation Funding

Negative: 566-33

Score - Design/Construction: 6

Score - Historical: 0

Score - Rarity: 0

Score - Environment: 6

Score - Integrity: 10

Score - Intrinsic: 6

Score - Contextual: 16

Score - Total: 37