

PH 0663310

DATA STREET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 15 1978

DATE ENTERED

MAR 14 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1** NAME

HISTORIC

Failing Building

AND/OR COMMON

Postal Building (preferred)

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

510 S.W. Third Ave.

—NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Portland

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

3rd

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Oregon

CODE

41

COUNTY

Multnomah

CODE

051 ✓

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<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 checked="" 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	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

C. A. Relos and G. Garaplis *see letter 9.8.78*

STREET & NUMBER

510 S.W. Third Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Portland

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Oregon 97204

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Multnomah County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

1021 S.W. Fourth Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Portland

STATE

Oregon 97204

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Portland Historical Landmark

DATE

December 21, 1977

—FEDERAL —STATE —COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

City of Portland Bureau of Planning

CITY, TOWN

Portland

STATE

Oregon 97204

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	—DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	—RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	—UNEXPOSED		

exterior only

Interior and ground floor

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The four-story Postal Building occupies a 100 x 100 foot corner site at S. W. 3rd Avenue and Washington Street in Block 19 of the original City of Portland plat. Located across the street and to the west of the building are the 1892 "Dekum Building" and 1893 "Hamilton Building", both designated National Register properties.

The Postal Building is also situated between two National Register Historic Landmark Districts, the Skidmore/Old Town District beginning two blocks north, and the Yamhill District two blocks to the south.

During the 1870's Portland's business district began a gradual move west away from the Willamette River. Many men had foreseen this move and had purchased land in the late 1800's on which to build. The particular lot where the Postal Building stands was purchased by Henry Failing in the 1880's.

By 1900 Third Avenue had developed into one of the major retail streets in the city. This year also marked the construction date of the Postal Building then known as the Failing Building for the Failing Estate who had contracted for the construction of the building. Prior to the erection of the new building, the site was occupied by a railroad office.

The architectural firm of Whidden and Lewis was contracted to design the building. The architects chose the Italian Renaissance style - for its "clarity and mathematical relationship of plan and design - employing the forms and ornaments of classical Roman art".

Designed originally as an office building with space for retail and service business on the ground floor, the building retains its original use today.

Early tenants of the building included Bohn Lumber Co., Pacific Coast Abstract & Trust Co., Dr. W. A. Wise - Dentist, and The Union Pacific R. R.

During the late 1920's much property speculation occurred in downtown Portland in view of the waterfront development being carried out by the city. The Failing Building itself changed hands many times. It was during this period that the name of the Failing Building also changed.

(See continuation sheets.)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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The Failing Estate had sold the building in the early twenties. However, the building retained the Failing name until September, 1927, when the name changed to the Postal Building after the Postal Telegraph Co. who held the major lease on the building at the time.

On January 1, 1928, the Failing name was then given to the 1912 Gasco Building located on S. W. Fifth Avenue. The Gasco Building had been owned by the Failings, and originally named Gasco when Portland Gas and Coke Co. became the major tenant in 1918.

Some of the noted occupants of the Postal Building over the years have included: The Norwegian Consul; Sculptor Miss Marie Louise Feldenheimer; the Internationally known Laubach Literacy firm; Poetess Vi Gale, Publisher and Owner of Prescott Street Press; and Francois Nogal, a world renown violin craftsman.

Occupants in the building today include Portland Music and The Bon Ton Sandwich Shop on the street level. The upper stories' tenants include many jewelers, Peter Corvallis Productions, and the National College of Naturopathic Medicine.

STRUCTURE

Original construction drawings for this four-story building are no longer available. Site inspection, however, reveals that the basic structure consists of exterior masonry walls with interior wood columns and heavy wood floor construction. The north and west (street-side walls) are divided into five 20 foot bays each, in a column and spandrel facade arrangement. The east and south walls are masonry bearing.

The basement is 115 x 112 feet and extends under the vaulted sidewalks. It has a poured concrete floor.

To the east of the elevator shaft and stairwell is a light court which provides natural light to the stairwell and inner

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rooms of the building. The light court measures 20 x 60 feet and is from the second floor up.

The roof is flat and built-up asphalt covered.

The building is essentially square except for a 8 x 60 foot set-in section at the southeast corner of the building.

INTERIOR

Originally the first floor of the Postal Building accommodated eight stores and offices on the first floor with 25 offices on each upper floor. Over the years because of the building's commercial use, alterations to the interior of the building have been made to accommodate the needs of the occupants. The majority of these alterations have dealt with the addition or removal of partitions within the building and most room sizes have remained as designed.

The main entrance and store front entrances to the building have tile floors and marble wainscot.

The wood door leading to the basement is one of the few remaining original doors left in the building, although some can be found stored in the basement.

The basement floor is concrete, with the upper floors being of wood. The original flooring of the building is intact but most is covered by tile or carpeting.

The corridors of the three upper floors and main stairwell have marble wainscots which are secured to walls at the top by screws. Over each office door are transoms with original glass. Nearly all woodwork is presently painted.

The stairs of the main stairwell are badly worn marble mounted on viewable cast-iron and I-beam supports. Handrails in the stairwells are original, those to the 3rd and 4th floors being of oak and the one to the 2nd floor of brass.

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All original rest rooms are intact and in good condition. The toilets are separated by marble and the floors are covered with hexagonal shaped ceramic tile. The sinks are of marble with some porcelain fixtures.

On the second and third floors the original plaster ceilings can be seen while, on the fourth floor the ceilings have been covered with 12 x 24 inch ceiling tile.

The elevator of the building is hand-operated. Its cab has been modernized but the shaft is intact.

Along the west offices walls and in the center of the building is a mail chute which extends from the fourth to the main floor.

New fluorescent lighting fixtures have been added in the corridors, leaving no traces of older fixtures.

The building is heated by steam with most of the cast iron radiators being in place or in storage within the building.

EXTERIOR

Except for the alterations to the street floor level, the original exterior is intact and in excellent condition.

Original glass store fronts were framed in wood and had low paneled bases. Today only one section of the original storefronts remains intact, although the glass has been painted over and the entry way unused. Other storefront sections have altered lower panel bases and the upper glass panels of the windows have been covered by signs or replaced with other materials. With the alterations of the windows some of the terra cotta on the piers which define the bays of the buildings have been either covered or removed.

On the northwest corner the entrance way to the store on that corner has been completely closed and moved to the west side of the building.

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The main entrance on the west side at the center bay, previously an archway from the ground to the top of the first floor, is now covered with brown marble and the building's name, "Postal Building", has been inscribed above the entrance. The lowering of the archway is reflected in the lobby of the building, where a false ceiling now exists, and room has been made for the Bon Ton Restaurant. A section of the original floor tile and ceiling are visible in a storage space behind and directly to the east of the restaurant.

The three upper stories on the north and west facades (street facades) are elegantly detailed with classical elements organized in a manner that is Renaissance in spirit.

The brick facing is rust brown in color, and except for the window frames, the trim and detail is of an off-white terra cotta. (Other Whidden and Lewis buildings of the period with the rust brown brick and off-white terra cotta include the second Failing Building (1907 and 1913) and the (1892-93) Hamilton Building.)

The setter's diagrams for the terra cotta are available from the Glading, McBean & Co. in Lincoln, California.

The north and west facades are divided into 5 symmetrical 20 foot bays, each in a column and spandrel arrangement. Each bay contains 3 sets of double hung windows 1 over 1 of equal size with a relieving arch above the 3rd story set.

Crowning the entire building is a row of bead and reel, scroll-shaped consoles and row of dentils leading to the cornice which is crowned by a cymatium ornament.

Exterior cast iron fire escapes are also located on north and west facades.

The east and west walls are masonry with no windows on the east and few on the south in no definite pattern.

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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" 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 1900

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Whidden and Lewis, Architects

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Failing Building, now known as the Postal Building, was designed by the firm of Whidden & Lewis, who dominated the Portland architectural scene for two decades and gave to the city many of its finest buildings.

The Postal Building is most distinguished for its elegant terra cotta work, which remains unique and in excellent condition today.

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. Notable examples of their work are the (1893) Hamilton Building, located west of the Postal Building, and Portland City Hall (1892-95), both National Register Properties.

(See continuation sheet.)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .230 (100 x 100 feet)

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u>5</u> <u>2</u> <u>5</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>5</u> <u>0</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u> <u>5</u> <u>1</u> <u>0</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>

B	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 7 & 8, Block 19,
Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

John M. Tess, Historical Consultant

ORGANIZATION

DATE

December 1977

STREET & NUMBER

1970 S.W. Roxbury Ave., Apt. #3

TELEPHONE

503-297-5146

CITY OR TOWN

Portland

STATE

Oregon 97225

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL^x

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 State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE February 8, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE

3-18-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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The building was completed in 1901-02 and took its original name from the Henry Failing Estate who had contracted for its construction.

Henry Failing came to Portland from New York in 1851 at the age of 17, and followed his father into the merchantile business. He went on from there to serve as Mayor of Portland three times and has been described as "a public servant of memorable value". Henry Failing died in 1898 two years before the construction of the building.

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Oregon Historical Society Vertical File, "Portland Buildings F".

Unpublished Manuscript, work of Whidden & Lewis, compiled by Herb Fredericks (former office boy at Whidden & Lewis), Oregon Historical Center Library.

Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased), Los Angeles, 1956.

The Oregonian, January 1, 1903, Section Z, p. 32, ad and picture of the Failing Building listing some of the tenants.

The Oregonian, January 1, 1902, Part 4, p. 50, picture of the building.

The Oregonian, "Postal Building Sold", June 8, 1929, p. 3.

The Oregon Journal, "Postal Building Changes Hands", January 17, 1928, p. 1.

The Oregon Daily Journal, November 30, 1927, p. 14.

Letter Press Copy Book of Henry Failing, Mss 650, Nov. 6, 1897 - April 28, 1902, pp. 444-459, 467, 482, 483, OHS Library.

Portrait and Biographical Record of Portland and Vicinity Oregon. Chapman Publishing Co. Chicago, 1903, p. 27-29.

Oregonian, 100 Men of the Oregonian Century, Portland, Oregon.

Location of the setter's diagrams of the terra cotta are at: Glading, McBean & Co., P. O. Box 97, Lincoln, California 95648.