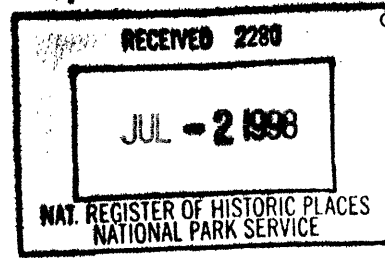


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



950

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Soboleski, B., and Company Saloon; Hryszko Brothers Building (the latter title is preferred)

other names/site number Hryszko Brothers Saloon; White Eagle Cafe and Saloon

2. Location

street & number 836 N. Russell Street not for publication
city or town Portland vicinity
state Oregon code OR county Multnomah code 051
zip code 97227

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] June 22, 1998
Signature of certifying official Deputy SHPO 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 for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. 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] Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
Edson H. Beall 7.31.98

Hrysyko Brothers Building
Name of Property

Multnomah, OR
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

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

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic & Architectural Resources in the Eliot neighborhood

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

-0-

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Restaurant

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial
Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Brick

roof Asphalt
other Cornice: galvanized sheet metal

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Hrysyko Brothers Building
Name of Property

Multnomah, OR
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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more 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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION; ETHNIC HERITAGE; SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1906-1938

Significant Dates

1906

1914

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Euro-American (Polish)

Architect/Builder

W. C. Arthur and Co.

Primary location of additional data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository
Oregon Historical Society / 1230 SW Park Ave. / Portland, OR 97205

Hryskyko Brothers Building
Name of Property

Multnomah, OR
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10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property less than 1 acre (2,500 sq. ft.) 0.06 acres Portland, Oregon - Washington 1:24000

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	110	52154310	51042890
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michelle Lutino, Liza Mickle

organization City of Portland Bureau of Planning date October 22, 1997

street & number 1120 SW 5th Avenue, Room 1002 telephone (503) 823-7700

city or town Portland state OR zip code 97204-1966

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Charles L. Hughes

street & number 836 N. Russell Street telephone (503) 282 - 6810

city or town Portland state OR zip code 97227-1737

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Hrysyko Brothers Building
Name of Property

Multnomah, OR
County and State

Historic and Architectural Resources in the Eliot neighborhood
Name of Multiple Property Listing

The 1906 Hryszko Brothers Building, now known as the White Eagle Cafe and Saloon, is a two story, commercial building with a rectangular plan. The walls are constructed of solid brick, the foundation is concrete slab, and the flat roof is composition. At the front (north) elevation, historic architectural details include a decorative brick facade, a boxed metal cornice below the roofline, and a glass transom spanning the recessed first floor entrance. The White Eagle retains significant interior features, including the carved oak bar and mosaic tile floor. The second story, added in 1914 and used as a boarding house, retains the original room layout and woodwork. Located in the Lower Albina Industrial District of northeast Portland, the White Eagle occupies a sloping 2,500 square foot interior lot and fronts north on N. Russell Street. The primary area of the building is generally in good condition and retains its significant stylistic features and materials. On the second floor, there is some deterioration due to water infiltration. Alterations have been made in concert with the evolution of the proprietors' businesses over nine decades, which have included (but perhaps not been limited to) saloon, boarding house, and cafe. The White Eagle is significant as one of a few of the original commercial enterprises in the immediate area, and the last saloon of 11 that once lined lower Russell Street. Its colorful oral history and association with patterns of urban development in Portland make the White Eagle Cafe and Saloon an important cultural resource.

SETTING

The White Eagle Cafe and Saloon is located in the Lower Albina Industrial District of northeast Portland, a few blocks east of the Willamette River and the railroad. It is situated on N. Russell Street, between N. Mississippi Avenue to the west and N. Albina Avenue to the east. Part of the Eliot neighborhood, Russell Street was the main street of the City of Albina, which was incorporated with Portland and East Portland in 1891. Russell continues to serve as a transit street in northeast Portland. In recent years Russell Street, along with the entire industrial district, has experienced considerable redevelopment and renewed vitality. This has also been the case immediately to the east in the residential area of the Eliot neighborhood.

SITE

The White Eagle is situated on a 2,500 square foot interior lot between N. Mississippi Avenue to the west and N. Albina Avenue to the east. The parcel fronts north on N. Russell Street and slopes westward. According to the 1897 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, a building was located on the northern portion of the property. The remainder of the site was occupied by an outbuilding. By 1908, the Sanborn record shows a saloon occupying the northern half of the property, with no outbuilding. By 1924, the building shown on the site had assumed its current configuration, occupying almost the entire 2,500 square feet.

The White Eagle occupies the west half of the east half of Lots 1-2 of Block 52 of the Albina Addition to the City of Portland. The building is rectangular in shape and abuts the sidewalk, fronting north on Russell Street. There are empty paved lots to the east and west where a succession of commercial establishments were once located in close proximity to the tavern. There are no plantings.

EXTERIOR

The White Eagle Cafe and Saloon is a two story brick commercial building with a narrow rectangular plan, measuring approximately 25 feet by 90 feet. Fronting north on Russell Street, the primary facade is punctuated by a glass transom over plate glass bay windows at the first story, and at the second story by windows centered over the doorway. The recessed entrance is slightly elevated from the sidewalk. The east and west elevations are utilitarian and without

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Hrysyko Brothers Building
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fenestration. The south (rear) of the building features two windows at the second story level, with a doorway between the windows. This elevation has a non historic concrete block addition on the first story.

The north (front) elevation is clad with pale yellow pressed brick, a popular material for surface embellishment at the turn of the century. Decorative brickwork on the second story includes raised rectangular panels formed by a pattern of headers and rowlocks and a full-width course of soldier brick above the second story windows. A string course finished with cement delineates the first and second stories. At the corners of the front elevation, the yellow brick interlaces with the common red brick in a quoin pattern. Approximately three feet below the roofline, a boxed metal cornice with modillions interjects a classical element to the storefront facade.

Fenestration is confined to the front and rear elevations of the White Eagle. A defining architectural feature of the primary elevation, the fenestration is for the most part intact. At the second floor, two pairs of tall, single-pane casement windows occupy the center of the facade. A transom spans the first floor retail area above the front entrance, measuring approximately 20 feet. Set in a wood frame, the transom is comprised of 5 x 37, hand-soldered prism glass. Below the transom, two plate glass windows over white glazed tile angle inward to flank the recessed entrance. The double doors at the entrance are wood framed, embellished with a decorative glass panel and brass hardware. A second doorway, offset at the northwest corner of the building under the transom, provides access to the upper story. This entrance still bears the original street number, 118 1/2, that was used for the boarding house. The wood framed double doors, set underneath a secondary transom, have one light on each side above three cross panels.

On the rear elevation, the second story features two symmetrical sash windows separated by a doorway. These are set into recessed segmental arches and outlined with a course of rowlocks. Identical windows and a doorway are also in place on the first floor but are masked from the exterior by a concrete block addition.

Several decorative elements embellish the front entrance of the White Eagle. A characteristic wood-carved tavern sign, with white lettering and the establishment's flying eagle design, is suspended from the top of the transom over the entrance. The double wood doors at the entrance are adorned with vertical glass panels in an Oriental Revival style, providing an exotic accent. Glazed white tile embellishes the base of the storefront windows, while predominantly white mosaic tile covers the single concrete step at the street entrance.

According to the 1924 Sanborn Map, the brick walls of the White Eagle are 16 inches thick at the first story, stepping back to 12 inches at the second story. The brick is laid in a common bond variant, with six stretcher rows per header row. The bricks are medium to dark red, solid, and of a standard size and weight. The mortar is portland cement. The mortar joints are flush but exhibit some variation. This variation is particularly evident at the southwest elevation, where the joints are overfilled over a large area of the facade that previously abutted an adjoining building.

INTERIOR

First Floor Interior

The interior of the White Eagle has not been subdivided on the ground story of the main volume. The space extends approximately 80 feet from the front entrance at the north end to the restrooms at the south end. The floor plan is straightforward, proceeding from the mezzanine, through the cafe, past the 20-foot bar on the east side, and finally to the saloon and entertainment area at the south end.

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Hrysyko Brothers Building
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Name of Multiple Property Listing

The original lath and plaster surface material is retained at the northwest side of the building and on the ceiling. The walls at the east, south, and southwest are brick. The mosaic tile floor, laid over a concrete slab, adds a vibrant note to the interior. Spanning approximately 60 feet from the front entrance, it delineates the original configuration of the White Eagle. The tile is laid in a striking Native American pattern, executed in muted shades of brown, yellow, green, and white. The design is said to have been created with many intentional flaws, representing the impossibility of human perfection.¹ Beyond the mosaic tile floor and the bar, there is wood strip flooring over an open expanse at the rear of the building. Once the pool and card room, this area is now used for additional seating and has a band platform in the southwest corner. The brick wall at the south end of the building has two segmental arch windows and an arched doorway. The latter provides access to the restrooms, which are located in a concrete block addition where there was once a back porch. The kitchen is in a partitioned area on the west side, immediately opposite the bar.

A defining feature of the interior is the ornate 20-foot backbar. Hand carved with architectural details such as Ionic columns, a cornice, and frieze, the oak and mirrored bar was transported around Cape Horn from either Boston or England and displayed at the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition before being purchased for the White Eagle.² The bar now occupies the center of the building at the east wall but was originally located seven feet from the entrance. This is evidenced by the pattern on the tile floor, which was designed to frame the bar, and by the "running water spittoon," a trough between the bar and the brass footrail. According to Charles Hughes, the White Eagle's present owner, the trough was used in the saloon's early days as a urinal as well as a spittoon. Still visible but covered with cement, the trough is a vestige of the White Eagle's history as a workingman's bar in a rough waterfront town.

Basement/Foundation

The basement, secured by a bank vault door, has a concrete foundation and is roughly divided into two parts, corresponding to the older and newer sections of the building. The older section of the building, which has a concrete slab floor, is supported by two transverse concrete beams and concrete piers. In this area, approximately 60 feet long, two brick-walled rooms are also located. One room contains the boiler, and the other was constructed for an undetermined purpose. The rear or south end of the basement, approximately 40 feet long, has a configuration that supports the newer area of the White Eagle. One large wood beam at center and a series of cross beams on either side support the wood strip floor above.

According to legend, a tunnel from the north end of the basement connected to an underground network that led to the docks, but there is currently no evidence to support this account.

Second Floor Interior

Completed in 1914 to serve as a boarding house, the second floor is accessed from the street level by a staircase. The stairwell is approximately 52 inches wide and terminates with a squared newel, a handrail, and plain balusters at the upper landing. The second floor has 11 private, numbered rooms, a bath, and two lavatories. These are arranged from the front to the rear of the building along a narrow hallway. The numbered rooms vary somewhat in size. The two largest rooms at the north end measure 11 feet by 12 feet. The others are approximately nine and a half feet by eleven feet. The rooms were all similarly appointed, containing a door, a window, a sink, a radiator, and a hanging electrical fixture. The cross panel door of each room has an operable glass transom, plain brass hardware, a brass number, and a lock.

¹ John Willis, "The White Eagle Saloon: 836 N. Russell St.," from the historical files of Charles Hughes.

² *ibid.*; Sharon M. Wood, "Saloon's Seen a Lot of History," (*Oregonian*, 7 Mar. 1984).

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Hrysyko Brothers Building
Name of Property

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The two rooms at the front and the two rooms at the rear of the building receive natural light from windows to the exterior. The remaining nine rooms receive indirect light from an unusual arrangement consisting of four large skylights, two on the east and two on the west side of the building. This arrangement allows adjacent interior rooms to share a skylight, with each room having a window that opens onto a skylight well. The windows are one-over-one, double hung sash, with cornices and lamb's tongue detail.

The original woodwork – wood strip flooring, stairs, doors, windows, chair rails, and crown molding – is still generally intact. Water infiltration, due in large part to removal of the original skylights, has considerably damaged the lath and plaster ceiling and walls. One small skylight remains intact, a remnant of the 1914 construction project.

HISTORY AND ALTERATIONS

In 1897, a one and one-half story, shingle-roofed commercial building was located at 118 Russell, the early address of the White Eagle, according to Sanborn Map records. It occupied the northern half of the parcel and had a shed at the rear. In 1906, the B. Soboleski and Company Saloon was established at 118 Russell by Polish immigrants Barney Soboleski and William Hryszko. The 1908 Sanborn Map shows that Soboleski and Company occupied a one and a half story saloon which had the same dimensions noted in 1897. There was no outbuilding.

In 1915, the saloon's ownership was taken over by the Hryszko brothers and the name was changed to the Hryszko Brothers Saloon. It is likely that the building's exterior appearance dates to that time. Bureau of Building records for the city of Portland show that, in 1914, contractor W. C. Arthur & Company constructed a second story on the building at a cost of \$10,000. The work included adding a new entrance, which was numbered 118 1/2, and "setting partitions," lathing and plastering, and installing skylights on the second floor. An enclosed boiler room was also built in the basement. Plumbing work was contracted to Weckrow-Woodhouse in the same year. Water closets (four), basins (13) and a bathtub were installed on the second floor. No biographical records were located for W. C. Arthur.

In 1917, following passage in Oregon of a statewide Prohibition law, the Hryszko Brothers Saloon became the Hryszko Brothers Soft Drinks Emporium. It did not officially become a tavern again until 1938, when it was renamed the Hryszko Brothers Restaurant and Beer Parlor. During part of World War II, the tavern operated as the Blue Eagle Cafe. It assumed its present name, the White Eagle Cafe and Saloon, in 1949. No historic photographs were located to document the physical changes that occurred during these transitions.

In the early 1970s, under ownership of Audrey Sampson, the interior lath and plaster was removed, exposing the brick walls on the east, south, and southwest sides of the first floor. The back room of the saloon, which had long been used as a pool room, was converted to an entertainment area. The restroom was renovated in 1973, and strips of scoring beads that reportedly had been used to keep track of the pool games were removed from the restroom ceiling. In 1974, the skylights and radiators were removed from the second floor.

In 1976, Bureau of Building records show that owners Philip Siegelbaum and Tyler Stevens received a permit to alter the structure. The project included remodeling the restrooms, replacing the heating system, enlarging the kitchen, and installing a partition to separate the bar area from the restaurant. The bar was moved at this time from the front of the building to its present location. The interior brick walls were also reinforced with vertical wood boards, and overhead pipes were installed for heating and ventilation. Plans were drawn by R. E. Skinner and Associates. The project was completed at a cost of \$15,000.

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Hrysyko Brothers Building
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In 1986, an eight inch firewall on the east side of the building was torn down, leaving a discernable mark on the brick facade. According to the 1955 Sanborn Map, the firewall had provided a barrier between the White Eagle and a galvanizing business located at 832 Russell.

Charles Hughes, current building owner, has discussed rehabilitating the second story in the future for adaptive reuse, but those plans are very tentative at this stage.

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Hrysyko Brothers Building
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Hryszko Brothers Building is eligible for listing as it relates to the Multiple Property Submission, Historic and Architectural Properties in the Eliot neighborhood of Portland, Oregon, under the Associated Property Type, Public and Social Buildings. It is locally significant under Criterion A in multiple contexts: Entertainment/Recreation; Ethnic Heritage; and Social History. As a saloon established by Polish immigrants, the Hryszko Brothers Building provides a physical record of the activities of the primarily ethnic, working class residents of the Albina area. The period of significance marks the building's date of construction.

ETHNIC MIGRATION IN THE CITY OF ALBINA

The city of Albina, platted in 1872, developed along the eastern banks of the Willamette River. Its geographical location made it a natural choice for the railroad industry. Sandwiched between the Columbia River to the north and the Willamette River to the south, Albina was an ideal site for creating a transportation system between Oregon and Washington. Observers were quick to note the suitability of Albina's layout for the transportation industry and wrote, "Albina strikes one with the general weight and importance of its operations. It lies—so far as the business portion is concerned—upon a low tract of land about the level of high water, but 25 feet above the low stage. It is most admirably adapted to railroad work."¹

The transportation industry—signified by the railroads and the advent of the streetcars—brought large industry to Albina, as well as a whole new socioeconomic class. As railroad yards and industrial districts gained prominence in the area's landscape, the distinctions between residential and nonresidential use of land gradually eroded. The blurring of such boundaries tended to repel the more affluent managerial and business class but attracted lower income groups who were drawn to the Albina area's affordable housing and proximity to industrial and commercial employment centers. Many of the attractive cottages left by the original settlers were divided up into apartments or fell into disrepair. Today, very few of the old homes remain on the hillside. Their presence tends to feed the reported "shacktown" reputation of very early Albina when, in fact, they were considered quite respectable at the time.²

This change in the economic profile of the area's inhabitants was accompanied by a parallel shift in the cultural landscape. In the 1880s, working class Irish and German immigrants began filling the semi-skilled jobs offered by the railroads. While the middle class were fleeing to new subdivisions such as Boise or Woodlawn that were sited on high ground away from the rough environment of the waterfront, immigrants were being herded to the "cheap, temporary structures" along the railroad tracks.³ Hastily put together, this residential area came to be known as "Stringtown." It is the area more widely associated with early Albina's history as a town of "booze and battle,"⁴ but Stringtown's significance has more to do with the growing working class community it introduced to Albina than the notoriety attached to it.

Beginning in the 1880s and into the teens, Albina continued to absorb an increasing number of immigrants relative to the rest of the city. Predominantly from eastern Europe, immigrants from Italy, Greece, Hungary, Poland, and Russia joined established immigrants from Germany and Ireland, as well as a Scandinavian community that had settled along the

¹H. W. Scott, *History of Portland, OR* (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & Co., 1890) 429.

²Alfred Staehli, *Preservation Options for Portland Neighborhoods* (Dec. 15, 1975).

³*Op. cit.*, p. 429.

⁴E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Shaping of a City: Business and Politics in Portland, OR 1885 to 1915* (Portland, OR: The Georgian Press, 1976) 136.

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Section number 8 Page 2

Hrysyko Brothers Building
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corridor of NE Seventh Avenue. This concentration of immigrants remained, even as Portland experienced a phenomenal growth rate from 1900 to 1910 that diluted its foreign-born population. The Albina area came to serve as a gateway for immigrants newly arriving to Portland.

By the turn of the century and certainly by its early decades, Albina was solidly identified as an ethnic, working class, industrial community. Modest, but ornate, Queen Anne style worker's cottages defined the residential portions of the area, while shanties and saloons along the river and along Russell Street underscored Albina's beginnings as a rough, waterfront town. This image was furthered in the 1890s by the formation of neighborhood gangs consisting of young men given to hard drink and gambling. Despite their reputation, the gang members committed nothing more than childish pranks, such as skimming coal off unattended train cars or stealing bags of flour from the nearby mill. Albina's first ordinance upon incorporation—"To provide for licensing Bar-rooms and Drinking Shops"—seemed to have influenced the behavior of the area's citizens. By the late 1920s however, Albina's notorious standing had become a burden to its residents and businessmen, particularly along Albina Avenue. In 1927, property owners along that street petitioned the city council for the opportunity to change its name but were rejected.⁵ Surprisingly, Albina's colorful reputation held into the 1930s, as described by Stewart Holbrook who, writing for the *Oregonian*, narrated tales of infighting between Albina residents and skirmishes with rival gangs from Goose Hollow and Slabtown on the west side of town.

SALOONS AND TAVERNS IN THE SOCIAL LIFE OF ALBINA

Almost all of the physical properties that lent credence to Albina's reputation as a town of "booze and battle" no longer exist. Many of those properties gradually succumbed to industrial redevelopment because of their location in lower Albina near the waterfront. A number of the establishments of ill-repute became today's warehouses and parking lots. The B. Soboleski and Company Saloon (now known as the White Eagle Cafe and Saloon) is the sole remainder of what was once the area's "red light district" and is the only bar left of the eleven that used to line lower Russell Street.

Unsurprisingly, tracking the history of a saloon located in what was known as Albina's "red light district" (a euphemism for a town's vice center) reveals many inconsistencies. As a drinking establishment, a saloon was usually seen as a combative element to a society's stability. In the public eye, "the saloon was economically, socially, and psychologically linked to both prostitution and other vice activities such as gambling."⁶ For a saloon, then, the popular adage, "Even bad publicity is good publicity," would have read better as "No publicity is good publicity." Given the rising popularity of the temperance crusade among social reformers, a saloon was more successful as a business when treated to little or no public fanfare. In addition, saloons and taverns have been traditionally shortchanged in canonical historiography.⁷ Until social and cultural studies were accepted as valid avenues for historical inquiry, the recording of "low" history (generally regarded as forms of popular culture—examples might be comic books or amusement parks) was not viewed as a priority. Of course, sites of possible illegal activity (such as the saloon) probably would not have wanted to leave evidence behind. As a result, primary sources documenting the White Eagle's early history are scarce and are mainly characterized by oral histories. However, the sources that have endured testify to the White Eagle's rich past and validate its contribution to Albina's early social history. As Howard P. Chudacoff, eminent urban historian, observed, "[the saloon] proved to be one of the most durable features of the urban environment."⁸

⁵Eugene Snyder, *Portland Names and Neighborhoods: Their Historic Origins* (Portland, OR: Binford & Mort, 1979) 83.

⁶Chris D. Sawyer, *From Whitechapel to Old Town: The Life and Death of the Skid Row District, Portland, OR* (Phd thesis, Portland State University, 1985) 141.

⁷Leslie H. Fishel, jr., "Public History and the Academy," Ch. in *Public History: An Introduction*, eds. Barbara J. Howe and Emory L. Kemp (Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1986) 10-11.

⁸Howard P. Chudacoff, *The Evolution of American Urban Society* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981) 123.

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Hrysyko Brothers Building
Name of Property

Multnomah, OR
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Historic and Architectural Resources in the Eliot neighborhood
Name of Multiple Property Listing

The White Eagle Tavern was originally known as the B. Soboleski and Company Saloon. It was first established by two Polish immigrants, Barney Soboleski, and his partner, William Hryszko in 1906. Soboleski lived in the building itself while Hryszko resided in Walla Walla, Washington. Hryszko's brother, Joseph, worked at the saloon as a bartender, eventually boarding there in 1909. By 1914, both Soboleski and Joseph Hryszko had moved out of the building. In 1915, William Hryszko moved to Portland, and the rooms above the saloon began to be rented out as furnished rooms.

In 1915, the Hryszko brothers became the saloon's sole proprietors.⁹ They changed its name to the Hryszko Brothers Saloon. Early customers of the bar remember that "there was a free lunch bar and that was the thing, you know,—free food for customers."¹⁰ "Free lunches" were offered at many saloons and taverns around the city and were legendary to their customers. The free lunches were, at times, prodigious affairs where one could be served half a roast ox.¹¹ Banned in 1913, the free meals probably saved many unemployed or transient males from starving.¹²

Discrimination against women was another feature of the Hryszko Brothers Saloon. Although its upstairs rooms and basement may have been used as brothels, it is said that none of the women who worked there were allowed in the workingman's bar.¹³ If the women wanted beer, they would have to either come themselves or send a child to stand outside and order the beer.¹⁴ They would pass an empty bucket inside to be filled and then carry the full bucket of beer back home. It was considered very bad form for a respectable lady to be seen tipping back a cup of grog.¹⁵ In fact, the saloon remained a male sanctuary until 1971 when Audrey Sampson, a female, purchased the bar.

The tavern's regulars generally consisted of the laborers employed by the many industries that characterized Albina's job market. As one barkeeper recollected: "When the shifts changed, they say men from the railroads, waterfront, the foundries would walk four abreast up north Russell Street, going to 'their' particular bars."¹⁶ At the time, the saloon had a lot of competition, with ten other bars located nearby. Another customer remembers "when the White Eagle was just one storefront on a block full of thriving businesses that served the area's Poles, Russians, Slavs, and Germans."¹⁷ Racial diversity was further promoted by the multinational crew of sailors that would swarm the saloon on their leave from the ships docked at the waterfront.¹⁸ The saloon's popularity with workingmen persevered into the late 1930s and 1940s, when, it is said, the Albina streetcar would swing around the corner and stop in front of the White Eagle. The conductor would announce the stop by intoning, "The Bucket of Blood," which, to the shipyard workers on board, was the unofficial name of the White Eagle.

Perhaps it was the keen competition among so many other watering holes that caused the prostitution for which the saloon was supposedly known. Social reformers argued that saloons and taverns, when faced with such competition, would resort to illegal survival strategies such as staying open after hours or providing sordid pleasures, like gambling or prostitution.¹⁹ In the case of the Hryszko Brothers Saloon, it might have responded to the competition by housing

⁹ Sonya Kazen, "The White Eagle—Still Flying After All These Years" (*Oregon Tavern and Lounge Guide*, Jul. 1980)

¹⁰ Sharon M. Wood, "Saloon's seen a lot of history" (*Oregonian*, 7 Mar. 1984) 4M-MP, B5.

¹¹ Stewart H. Holbrook, *Holy Old Mackinaw: A Natural History of the American Lumberjack* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1946) 197.

¹² Sawyer, p. 141.

¹³ Wood, p. 4M-MP, B5.

¹⁴ Mike Francis, "White Eagle sees life beyond grave" (*Business Journal*, 9 Sept. 1985) 4.

¹⁵ Chudacoff, p. 21.

¹⁶ John Wendeborn, "Original workingman's joint gets with it, everybody turns up happy" (*Oregonian*, 16 Sept. 1973) Form sec., p. 4, c. 1.

¹⁷ Francis, p. 4.

¹⁸ Wood, p. 4M-MP, B5.

¹⁹ Chudacoff, p. 180.

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bordellos. The upstairs was supposed to have been a "white brothel," while the basement was known as a "black/asian brothel" with mostly Chinese women.²⁰

The bank vault door that secures the basement hints at other possible illegal activities that may have taken place there. Some oldtimers believe the door to have been connected at one time to underground tunnels that usually led to the waterfront. Present owner, Charles Hughes, suspects it may have been the entrance for an opium den, though there is no further evidence beyond suspicion.²¹ More evidence exists linking the curious door to the practice of shanghaiing. A shanghai (named after fraudulent British enlistment practices—not the Chinese port) involved the "knock out" of an unsuspecting male who would be transported through the tunnels to an unknown destination. With luck, he might wake up with a lighter wallet in some alleyway. The unluckier fellows might find themselves aboard a ship headed to Seattle or some other faraway port. In the latter case, the unfortunate lad would have to work on board to pay for his passage back home. A local waterfront character took issue with such reporting, insisting that the "knock out drops" were the kind received from a druggist and not from a heavy club.²² Whatever the case, one historian writes, "The shanghaier's infamous 'knock-out' [sic] drops were more likely to be used by greedy saloonkeepers and prostitutes to liberate paychecks from visiting miners, sailors, ranchers, and casual laborers than to assist sailor's boarding house operators."²³ In the end, the door remains an unexplained architectural feature of the building.

All the hellraising that may or may not have taken place in saloons was threatened by state and local crackdowns in 1914. In December of that year, the Portland City Commission convened to pass judgment on the "behavior" of saloons during the year. As the *Oregonian* reported: "Those that have black marks against them will be refused renewals of license for 1915."²⁴ Hryszko Brothers Saloon must have passed with a clean record, because it was still listed as a saloon in *Polk's Portland City Directory* for 1915: "Hryszko Bros. Buffet and Pool Room, First Class Wines, Liquors, and Cigars."²⁵ The ribald merrymaking would not last long, though. In 1916, Oregon passed a statewide Prohibition law, preceding national enactment by four years. Consequently, the Hryszko brothers began using the building as a boarding house. By 1917, it became the Hryszko Brothers Soft Drinks Emporium. Despite its tame exterior, word was, if you knew the bartender, it was still possible "to get a shot of hootch on the sly."²⁶ That prospect raises the other possibility that the vaultlike door to the basement was the entrance to a speakeasy during the Prohibition era.

THE POSTWAR YEARS

Prohibition seemed to signal the beginning of the end of an era for the saloon. Although Prohibition ended in 1933, it was not until 1938 that Hryszko Brothers Soft Drinks Emporium became a tavern again. That year, the name was changed to the Hryszko Brothers Restaurant and Beer Parlor. The transition from soft drink hangout to beer parlor did not seem to restore the lively spirits of the saloon's early history, though. No illegal practices were connected to the bar after the 1930s. (The last mention of prostitution occurs in the 1930s.) Afterwards, the Hryszko Brothers Restaurant and Beer Parlor assumed the fairly normal workings of a modern bar.

²⁰ Charles Hughes, telephone interview, 26 Aug. 1997.

²¹ Charles Hughes, telephone interview, 18 Aug. 1997.

²² Stewart H. Holbrook, "Shanghai Days in the City of Roses" (*Oregonian*, 1 Oct. 1933) Mag. sec., p. 1.

²³ Sawyer, pp. 148 - 149.

²⁴ "Saloons to be sifted" (*Oregonian*, 5 Dec. 1914) 12.

²⁵ *Polk's Portland City Directory*. (Portland, OR: R. L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1915) 619.

²⁶ Promotional material, ca. 1970s, from the historical files of Charles Hughes.

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Hrysyko Brothers Building
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William Hryszko's son, Robert, claimed management of the place after World War II. For a time during the war, the bar operated as the Blue Eagle Café but changed to its present name, the White Eagle Cafe and Saloon, in 1949. It is supposedly named after the white eagle on an early Polish flag.²⁷

During the '50s and '60s, the White Eagle seemed poised to recover its former rowdy reputation when it became known as a biker bar. It closed down for some time in the late '60s, though, when the Hryszkos decided to sell what had been a family business for over 60 years. They might have been tempted to sell the place because of the economic renewal the area was experiencing with the Emanuel Hospital project and the impending construction of the Fremont Bridge. They sold the bar to another immigrant—Tony Ferrone from New York and his wife, Audrey Sampson.

The White Eagle Tavern flourished under the new owners. Workingmen apparently continued to patronize the bar. Ferrone said: "There were railroad men, bridge workers, longshoremen. We used to cash huge checks for these men, but no more."²⁸ They had retained the practice of informal banking like in the earlier years, but tougher insurance laws forced them to stop. They did, however, introduce live music as an entertainment feature to the bar.

When ownership changed hands in 1978, the new manager, Charles Hughes, kept the live music but got rid of the bikers who were still coming to the bar. Hughes remembers, "I didn't mind the fact that they were bikers at all. But, when you get a lot of them in here, especially from two different clubs, problems tended to arise."²⁹ He restricted jackets displaying bikers' club logos. When bikers refused to take them off, they were likewise refused entry to the bar.

Today, the White Eagle's clients are still workingmen. Hughes, who still owns the bar, was himself a longtime workingman. He worked at the Hyster Company for 22 years as a tool and die maker. It was his dream to own a place like the White Eagle. "[It] is everything I've always wanted," he says. "But there's a stereotype that it is in a poor residential area of an undesirable part of town. In reality, we're a commercial business in an industrial area of the city that's full of history."³⁰

The long ago legends of the White Eagle Tavern and its environs are still making themselves known today—paranormally, that is. Actually, it seems par for the course that the saloon's history is popularly retold as an old fashioned ghost story. Most contemporary articles mention the tavern in connection with the ghosts that supposedly haunt the place. Its fame has even traveled nationwide, with mention in daily journals as far as Buffalo, New York.³¹

One of the ghosts seems to have been a Polish immigrant, Sam Warlinski. He supposedly worked at the docks for some time. Upon retirement, Sam was hired by the Hryszkos as a handyman and began boarding upstairs. (Other accounts report that Sam was adopted by the Hryszkos.) When the rooms upstairs were condemned, the Hryszkos told Sam that he would have to leave but that they would help find him a new place to live. The Hryszkos left to begin looking for a new boarding house for Sam. When they returned, they found him in his room dead of natural causes. The Hryszkos removed the body but locked the room just as Sam had left it. Contemporary accounts relate that it is now impossible to keep what had been Sam's room open.³² There have also been strange sightings in the upstairs windows and unexplained toilet flushing attributed to Sam.

²⁷ Wendeborn, p. 4, c. 1.

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ John Willis, "The White Eagle Saloon: 836 N. Russell St.," from the historical files of Charles Hughes.

³⁰ Wood, p. 4M-MP, B5.

³¹ Arthur Myers, "Tough Ghosts Hang Out at Oregon Tavern" (*Buffalo News*, 28 Oct. 1987).

³² Arthur Myers, "The Ghost Who Flushes Toilets: The White Eagle Cafe, Portland, OR," Ch. 54 in *The Ghostly Register: Haunted Dwellings, Active Spirits—A Guide to America's Strangest Landmarks* (Chicago, IL: Contemporary Books, Inc., 1986) 307.

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Hrysyko Brothers Building
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In truth, Sam was a cook who worked for the Hryszkos for many years. Because he worked so much at the bar and restaurant, he also kept a room upstairs. He died of a heart attack in Salem, Oregon. Members of the Hryszko family remember Sam's close relationship with William and Joseph Hryszko and report that Sam was indeed "adopted" into the family but not legally.³³

The remaining ghosts speak to the building's history as a bordello. Rose, a white prostitute, is said to have been murdered upstairs by a jealous lover—occasionally identified as Sam.³⁴ Visitors to the White Eagle can sometimes hear her weeping. A more aggressive ghost in the basement has been known to push waitresses down the stairs and throw mop buckets after them. This rough haunting is attributed to a Chinese bouncer who mysteriously disappeared years ago.³⁵ The stories tend to intermingle and sometimes conflict but are representative of the area's history as a "red light district" and a gateway for immigrants.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS / SUMMARY

As discussed in the Multiple Property Submission for the Historic and Architectural Properties in the Eliot neighborhood of Portland, Oregon, the Associated Property Type, Public and Social Buildings, will be historically significant under Criterion A. A property under the rubric of Public and Social Buildings will be associated with broad patterns of community development in the Eliot neighborhood. It will depict the lifestyles of the primarily ethnic, working class residents of the Albina area.

The White Eagle Tavern meets Criterion A in multiple contexts: Entertainment/Recreation; Ethnic Heritage; and Social History. When discussing the Entertainment/Recreation and Social History contexts, the White Eagle is easily defended. Although the saloon has a difficult history to substantiate, its importance as a social club for workingmen is unperiled. Though reformers railed against its danger to society's moral fabric, the saloon also provided a much needed outlet for its customers. The saloon was seen as an escape for those with poor living conditions and was, on occasion, a much needed shelter for those with no homes at all. In addition, saloons offered cheap recreational possibilities at a wide experiential range during an age when the concept of leisure time was just beginning to emerge. There were opportunities for free food at a saloon—welcomed by transient males, the unemployed, and newly arrived, penniless immigrants alike. Banking and checking services were also sometimes available (which might be the unglamorous answer to the mysterious vault door at the White Eagle Cafe and Saloon). Also free at the saloon was camaraderie, a forum for political debate, and the occasional employment contact. The saloon was the workingman's answer to the gentlemanly country club. The White Eagle happily filled this role and became a cherished neighborhood fixture.

The White Eagle's long history as a family business operated by Polish immigrants should also not be overlooked. Its beginnings as an entrepreneurial endeavor by immigrants reflect Albina's past as a gateway community. Certainly, the White Eagle deepens the Ethnic Heritage context of the Eliot neighborhood.

In conclusion, the White Eagle Tavern is an excellent example of the Associated Property Type, Public and Social Buildings, for the Multiple Property Submission for the Historic and Architectural Properties in the Eliot neighborhood of Portland, Oregon. It should thus be granted landmark status to the National Register of Historic Places.

³³ Rosetta Riscoe, telephone interview, 18 Sept. 1997.

³⁴ David Cullier, "Northwest ghost tales collected in book" (*Columbian*, 24 Oct. 1993).

³⁵ Arthur Myers, "That's The Spirit" (*Travel-Holiday*, Sept.-Oct. 1987) 114.

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Section number 9 Page 1

Hrysyko Brothers Building
Name of Property

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Name of Multiple Property Listing

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Section number 9 Page 2

Hrysyko Brothers Building
Name of Property

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Historic and Architectural Resources in the Eliot neighborhood
Name of Multiple Property Listing

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Section number 10 Page 1

Hrysyko Brothers Building
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Historic & Architectural Resources in the Eliot neighborhood, 1872 -1947
Name of Multiple Property Listing

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Hrysyko Brothers Building is located in Township 1 North, Range 1 East, Section 27, Willamette Meridian, Multnomah County. Specifically, it is legally described as the west half of the east half of Lots 1-2 of Block 52 of the Albina Addition to the City of Portland, Oregon.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary is the legally recorded boundary lines for the building for which National Register status is being requested.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 12 Page 1

South Portland Historic District
Name of Property

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ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION: Rubenstein, Sura. "White Eagle circles historic places nest." *Oregonian*. 29 Dec. 1997.

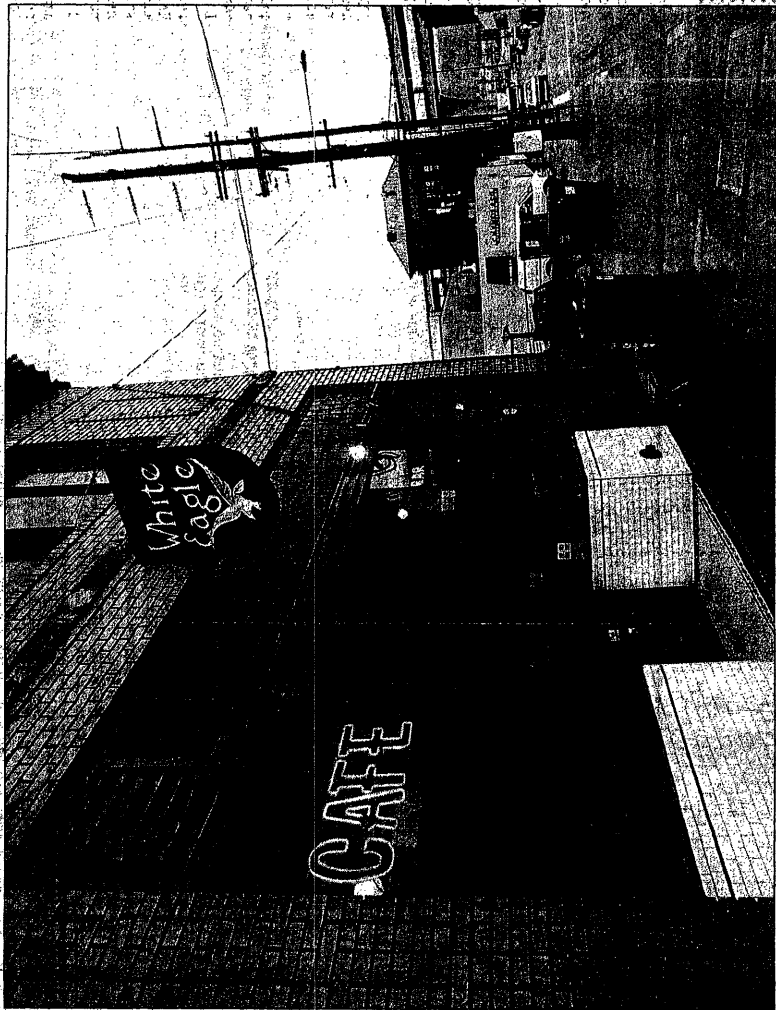
THE OREGONIAN, MONDAY, DECEMBER 29, 1997

News and features about
the city of Portland's
neighborhoods, communities,
city government, parks,
events, and the waterfront.

PORTLAND

White Eagle circles historic places nest

The listing would give the old cafe and saloon on Russell Street protection from demolition and more



The White Eagle Cafe and Saloon, a longtime fixture on North Russell Avenue, may soon become an official city landmark. It's been recommended for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

an after-work drink. But, it also draws businessmen and young professionals, and on the weekends a younger crowd attracted by the live music offered Friday and Saturday nights.

Widmer Brewing Company's move into the neighborhood — with its corporate offices and a brew pub a block down the street — have been a plus, Hughes says. Not only are more people exploring the historic industrial area, but he says some Widmer workers stop by his saloon after the Gasthaus closes.

"I try to keep it where you feel comfortable when you come in here," says Hughes, 56, who remembers how scared he was the first time he visited the bar in 1963.

Rough area,
rough bar

"It was a rough area and a rough bar," says Hughes, who then worked as a tool-and-die maker for Hyster Co. "I came down here with a friend and I swore, 'I'd never come back.'"

And, he didn't. At least for the next 15 years. Then, looking to leave Hyster and get into the restaurant business, he spent two months checking out properties with a real estate agent. He refused to consider the White Eagle, but the agent brought him there late one night.

By SURA RUBENSTEIN
of The Oregonian staff

After more than 90 years, the White Eagle Cafe and Saloon may finally get some respect.

The bar near the bottom of North Russell Street, once dubbed "The Bucket of Blood," is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places — a list that includes such notable Portland properties as the Pittock Mansion and Benson and Multnomah hotels.

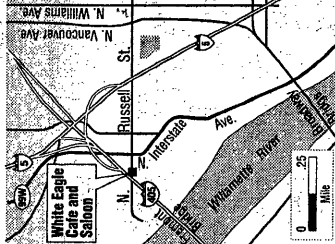
"This building has such a unique history," says Charles L. Hughes, who bought both the bar and the building at 836 N. Russell St. in 1978. "I don't want it destroyed."

Listing on the National Register would give the White Eagle some protection against demolition. And, the loans it would then become eligible for could make it possible for Hughes to realize his long-held dream of refurbishing the now-derelict second floor.

The city Historic Landmarks Commission unanimously approved the nomination, which was urged by the city Planning Bureau.

A HISTORIC PLACE

Once a notorious hangout, the White Eagle Cafe and Saloon at 836 N. Russell St. has been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.



The Oregonian

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 12 Page 2

South Portland Historic District
Name of Property

Multnomah, OR
County and State

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION: Rubenstein, Sura. "White Eagle circles historic places nest." *Oregonian*. 29 Dec. 1997.

Workers' social club

"Its importance as a social club for workmen is unparalleled," city planners noted in their report to the commission. "It provides a physical record of the activities of the primarily ethnic working class residents of the Albina area."

"They also cite intriguing architectural details — the decorative brickwork, transom, characteristic woodcarved tavern sign, and a mosaic tile floor laid in a Native American pattern."

Officially called the Hryszko Brothers Building, the structure dates to the first years of this century, although Hughes believes the site earlier housed another saloon.

"There's a bit of confusion over the actual construction date of the White Eagle — the Planning Bureau staff report says it was built in 1906, but Hughes says the bar license was issued in 1905."

No matter which year it began, the White Eagle's had quite a run. It's been a saloon, boarding house and cafe — possibly even a brothel. In the 1950s and 1960s, it was a biker hangout, and in recent years a popular blues venue.

It's also a survivor: It's the last of 11 saloons that once lined lower Russell Street and catered to the Polish, Russian, Slavic and German laborers who worked for the railroad and waterfront businesses and the foundries of the lower Albina Industrial District.

It's still a workmen's bar, with laborers from the Swan Island industrial area stopping in regularly for lunch or

"I didn't believe it was the same place," he says. "I just fell in love with it."

Especially with the ornate 20-foot handcrafted oak bar, which originally came around Cape Horn and was displayed at Portland's 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition, before finding a home at the White Eagle.

He's worked there ever since, delighting in the building's quirks and details of its past.

He talks about the ghosts who supposedly haunt the place, the bent vault door that likely was meant to keep people in the basement rather than keep them out, and the collections of letters sent to residents of the second-floor boarding house so many years ago.

"I wish I knew more," he says. "I really want to preserve the White Eagle's history."

If the White Eagle makes it onto the National Register, he'll have some help.

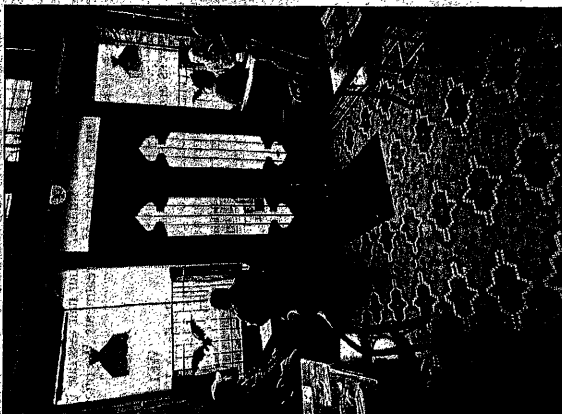
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Left: Among the bar's notable features are the mosaic tile floor, laid in a vibrant Native American pattern, and the wooden double doors with vertical glass panels in an Oriental Revival style.

Above: Charles L. Hughes, the White Eagle's owner, says he fell in love with the ornate carved oak bar in the background that came by ship around Cape Horn at the turn of the century.

Photos by STEVEN NEHL/The Oregonian



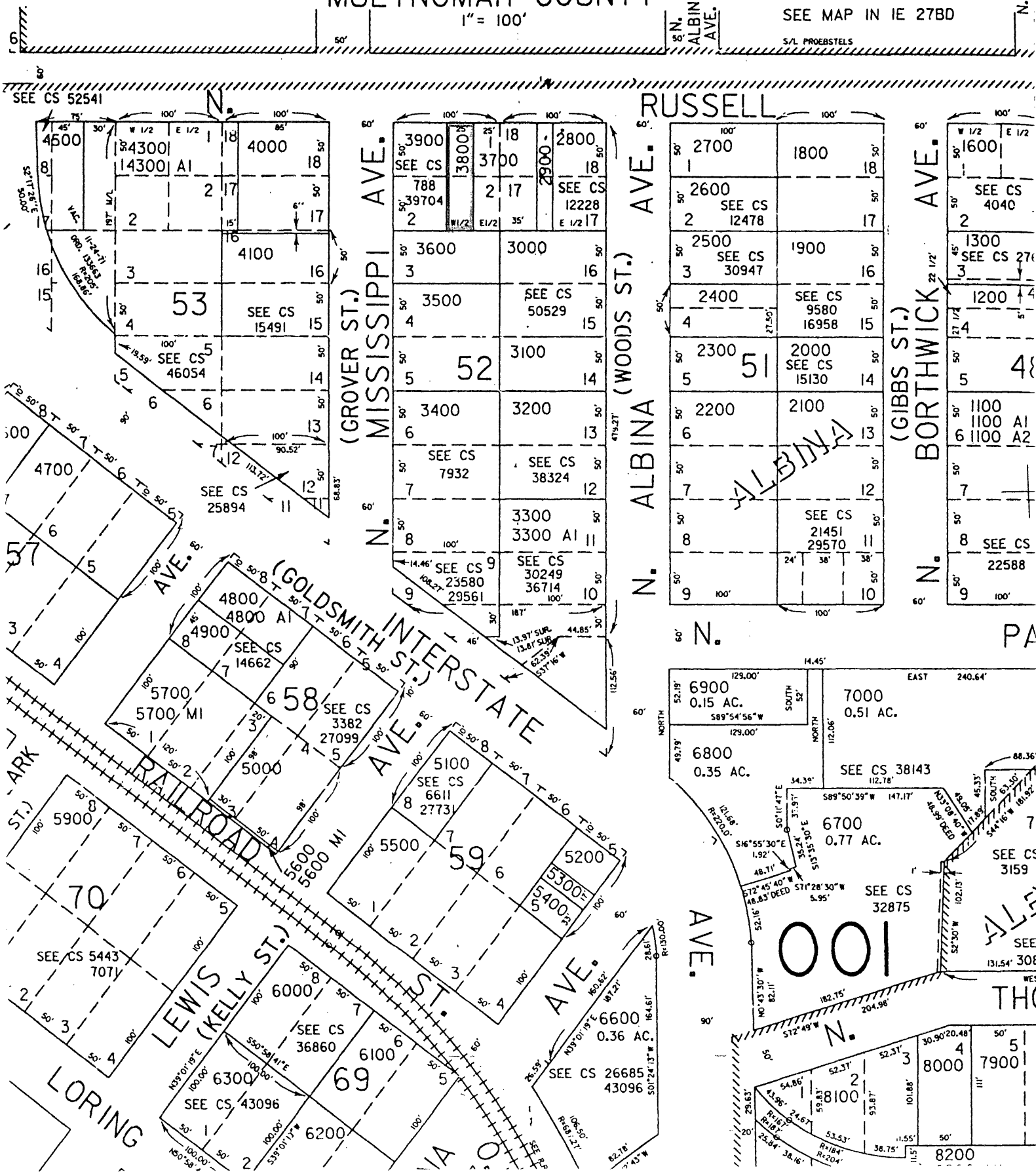
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MULTNOMAH COUNTY

1" = 100'

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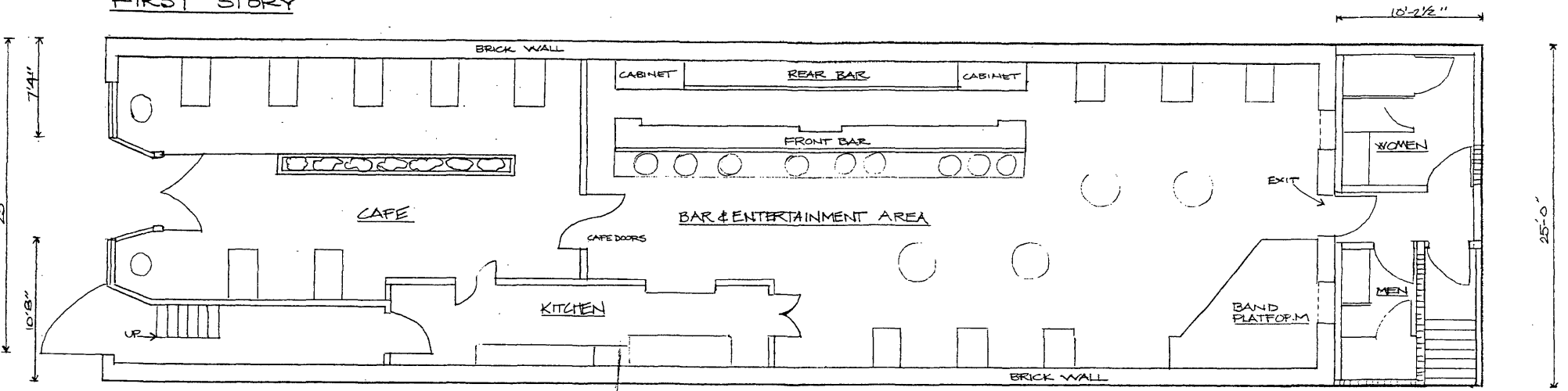


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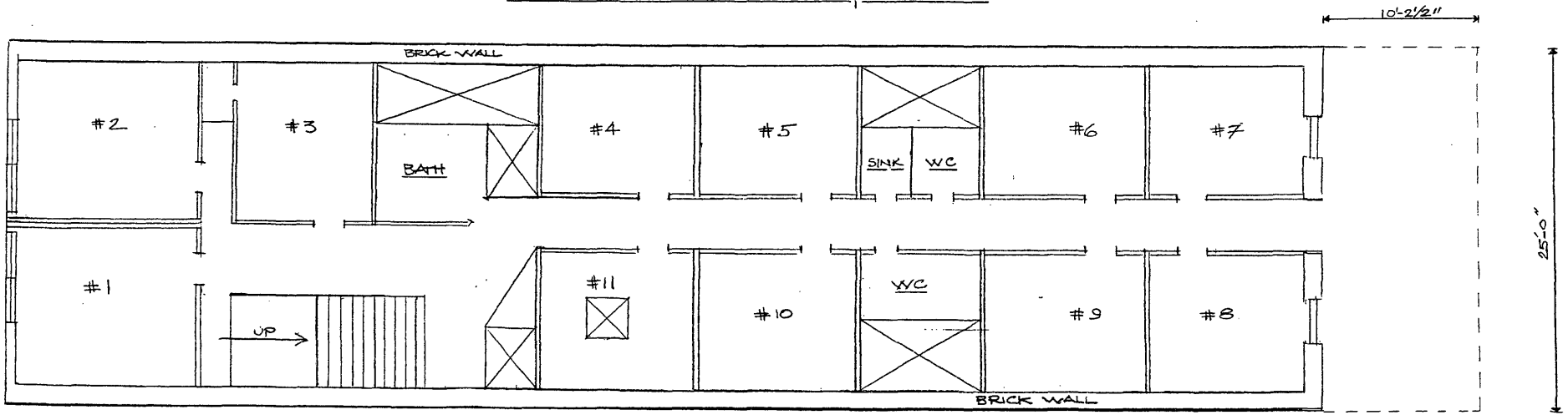
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FIRST STORY



WHITE EAGLE CAFE & SALOON



SECOND STORY

SOURCE: FROM THE RECORDS OF THE BUREAU OF BUILDINGS, PORTLAND.