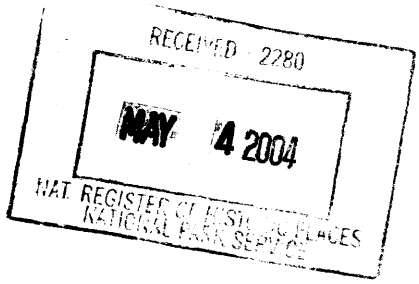


(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Sweeney, Straub & Dimm Printing Plant
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER:

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 535 NW 16th Avenue **NOT FOR PUBLICATION:** N/A
CITY OR TOWN: Portland **VICINITY:** N/A
STATE: Oregon **CODE:** OR **COUNTY:** Multnomah **CODE:** 51 **ZIP CODE:** 97210

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

X As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 X meets __ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
__ nationally __ statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James M. Hamrick

Signature of certifying official, State Historic Preservation Officer, Deputy April 21, 2004

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: Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

✓ entered in the National Register for Edson V. Beall 6/16/04
___ 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):

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private
CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:

CONTRIBUTING:	NONCONTRIBUTING:	
1	1	BUILDINGS
0	0	SITES
0	0	STRUCTURES
0	0	OBJECTS
1	0	TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: Industry - Communications Facility
CURRENT FUNCTIONS: Commerce/Trade - Specialty Store

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Modern Movement -- International Style

MATERIALS: **FOUNDATION:** Concrete
WALLS: Concrete
ROOF: Asphalt
OTHER:

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION: See Continuation Sheets

Overview

The 1946 Sweeney, Straub and Dimm Printing Plant is located at 535 NW 16th Avenue in northwest Portland, Oregon. Specifically, it is located on Lots 3, 5-8 of Block 154 in Couch's Addition to the City of Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon. *Pietro Belluschi - Architect* designed the building for the Miles Investment Company. The one and one-half story reinforced concrete building may be categorized as MODERN MOVEMENT -- International Style of architecture.

Setting: The building is located on a 25,000 square foot commercial parcel just west of I-405 on the corner of NW 16th Avenue and Hoyt Street, just to the west of Portland's Pearl District. The immediate area historically has been a vigorous mix of commercial, institutional, light industrial and residential uses. To the north are small one and two story industrial buildings. To the east is I-405 with the 13th Avenue warehouse district beyond. To the south is a former Swedish Evangelical Church, now listed on the National Register and adapted as a brewpub/theater. Adjacent and further south are commercial retail buildings. To the west is a residential neighborhood, once single-family homes with a mix of apartment buildings, churches and schools.

Site: The parcel occupies the north half of a standard Portland 200 by 200-foot block. A later addition occupies a 50 by 100 lot at the southwest of the original building. The remaining block consists of a modern one-story commercial building at the farthest southwest lot and a surface parking lot on the southeast quarter. The parcel slopes down approximately 15 degrees west to east at the same elevation and grade as Hoyt Street. The building is constructed to the lot line and the grade creates an exposed lower level approximately 60 feet from the eastern lot line. The site slopes down approximately 5 degrees, south to north.

Structure: The building consists of two portions. The original structure built on the 20,000 sf. northern half of the block, and the addition built on the 5,000 sf. parcel at the southwest. The original building is a one and one-half story structure that measures 200 feet east and west, and 100 feet north and south. The partial floor was excavated at the east and is approximately 75 feet along the east-west axis. The original building has reinforced concrete foundation, floors and walls, with a wood post and beam frame system on the upper floor to support the roof at the center.

The addition, considered non-contributing, was built in 1958 on an interior lot. It measures 50 feet north and south and 100 feet east and west. It is two-stories with a full basement and

constructed entirely of reinforced concrete.

Exterior: With clean rectilinear lines that emphasize the horizontal plane, the printing plant embraces the rising International style of the late 1940s with minimalist definition. The walls are painted stucco over concrete. Windows are multi-light painted steel sash. The primary façade faces east with secondary facades on the north and west. An exposed party wall is located on the south.

The eastern façade has strong horizontal articulation dominated by a band of 7 large rectangular windows on the upper level, mirrored by openings of a similar width but shorter height on the lower level nearly at grade. A large flat panel divides the first and second floors, with a complimentary parapet of similar simple lines. The windows also define the building vertically into seven symmetrical bays in an A:A:B:B:B:AA pattern, where the outside "A" bays are 8 lights across and the "B" bays are 5 lights across. The main entry is centered on the eastern façade. It is recessed at grade with a single flat door flanked by sidelights of glass and brick, 3 bricks wide. This entry is not original, but occupies the original opening. A new doorway treatment, more sympathetic to the building's original design, will be installed as part of the rehabilitation. A second code-required entry has been installed a grade at the north end of this façade; this entry was created by enlarging the window opening at that location.

The northern façade continues the horizontal articulation with a dominant band of ten steel sash windows with the complementary flat tall parapet and panels on the same planes as the east façade. These run the length of the 200-foot façade. Again, the horizontal pattern of the fenestration, with thin separations between windows, defines the facade. The windows are mostly identical, 6 lights tall and 10 lights across with painted steel sash. Nearly imperceptible, the easternmost are only 8 lights across. Below, the lower floor has been day lit with a three matching windows. Under the current renovation, the easternmost window opening has been enlarged, reusing salvaged steel sash windows, to balance the corner entry on the east facade.

The western elevation similarly reflects the horizontal lines of the design, using the same elements. Here at the rear of the building, the façade is defined into six bays, five identical in width with a small service bay/doorway at the southernmost end. The fenestration is 8 lights across and 6 lights deep. The fourth bay from the north is the loading entry with a broad rolled steel door. The sixth (southernmost) bay is a slightly recessed door flat service entry.

The southern façade of the original building is exposed east of the 1958 addition. It is made of board pressed concrete and was intended to serve as a party wall. During the current rehabilitation, four

large storefront style openings, 14 feet by 11 feet, have been cut into this façade.

The roof is dramatic for its large skylight. Facing north, it runs the east-west length of the building. There are 20 windows within the sidelight. The have 3/5 lights with a steel sash. The roof is composition.

Interior: The building is entered from the center east at a midpoint between levels. The stair landing directs visitors either up to the main level or down to the lower level. Though a split-level form was retained, the stairwell was entirely redesigned in 1983. In the current rehabilitation, that stair has been removed and a new stair with wheelchair lift has been installed to provide for ADA access to the upper and lower floors.

The upper, main, portion was the printing production area featuring a large open space with cement floors and walls and high ceiling. The most striking feature is the skylight. The opening for this is 32' x 92', with the rectangular shape of the opening reflecting the rectangular shape of the overall building. Within this opening the ceiling itself slopes upward to an apex, ending in the vertical band of 20 north-facing windows. As originally designed, the architect included 2 sash operator chains to open the windows in the sidelight.

The floor is divided into three bays along an east-west axis by support pillars. This original horizontal wooden girder system and the 4' x 4' rafters are exposed making for a striking detail. There are exposed wooden rafters on the lower portion of this ceiling as well. There are 15 original support posts, with three replacement metal support posts. East to west, the supports are about 18' apart. The northern bay is 33' wide, the southern bay is 14' wide, leaving a 53' center span.

In the current rehabilitation, the large open volume, skylights and structural system have been retained. The floor is divided into three retail areas across the north-south axis with one space spanning the western 150 feet; the remaining 50 feet are divided into two 25-foot spaces.

The lower level runs the north-south width of the building and is approximately 60-75 feet deep from the east. It served as executive and administrative offices for the printing plant. Originally, it also included the photographic rooms for the printers, though this was relocated in the 1958 addition. The space has been remodeled and reconfigured numerous times as the business expanded. The floor is concrete. Typically, the non-perimeter walls were gypsum board and the ceiling acoustical tile. The current rehabilitation work again reconfigures this space and those finishes will be modern.

1958 Addition: In 1958, a 2-story addition was constructed on the lot to the southwest. It is sympathetic and uses many of the same materials, but does not reflect the architect's facile hand and is considered non-contributing. The building continues the west façade of the original building with painted stucco on concrete and steel sash windows. It is three bays wide with a recessed doorway at the south. The south façade is attached to a single story commercial structure. Where exposed, it is board pressed concrete with steel sash windows on the second level. Two storefront openings have been cut into the façade at the ground level. There is one 3/10 light window on the eastern side of the ground floor. The east façade is similarly board pressed concrete and features a series of tromp de toile false windows. The roof is composite with a central skylight.

On the interior, the ground floor is industrial space, the second floor for office and inspection, and the basement for storage. Finishes are concrete floor and perimeter walls. The second floor is subdivided with gypsum board interior walls and dropped acoustical tile ceiling. There is an interior connecting door along the south wall of the original building at the west to the 1958 addition. The addition has flanking concrete stairwells at the east and west.

Alterations/Integrity: As an industrial building, the Sweeney, Straub and Dimm Printing Plant has a reasonable degree of integrity and a high one relating to the character-defining features. That said, as an industrial building, the interior spaces were frequently adapted according to production needs and business expansion. The office spaces were remodeled, including relocating some office partitions, in 1963, 1980, 1983 and 1989. New press slabs were installed in 1984, 1988 and 1991. The interior loading dock was installed in 1984.

The current renovation repositions the printing plant into retail use. To accomplish that, storefront windows have been installed on the party wall at the south while reflective film installed in the 1980s on the existing windows has been removed. As noted above, the northeast corner has also been modified with a new code-required exit at the north end of the east façade with comparable changes to provide balance on the east end of the north façade; the existing doorway in the center of the east façade, also remodeled in the 1980s has been retained. On the interior, the large volume of space is essentially retained with the upper floor being divided along north-south lines into one major retail space roughly 140 feet east and west (which incorporates the roof monitors into one space), and two smaller spaces each approximately 25 feet across. The lower level will also be modernized, removing non-original partitions. The current renovation has also upgraded the building seismically, retaining the building's existing and exposed heavy timber structural system but strengthening and tying joints and braces.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA:

_X_ **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.
_X_ **C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTI NCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, 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: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Industry
PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1946-1953
SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1946
SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A
CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A
ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Pietro Belluschi, Architect

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: See Continuation Sheets

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY: See Continuation Sheet

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A
_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_ previously listed in the National Register
X previously determined eligible by the National Register
_ designated a National Historic Landmark
_ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
_ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:
_ State Historic Preservation Office
_ Other state agency
_ Federal agency
x Local government: *City of Portland Building Records*
_ University
x Other: *Oregon Historical Society*

Overview

The 1946 Sweeney, Straub and Dimm Printing Plant is located at 535 NW 16th Street in northwest Portland, Oregon. Specifically, it is located on Lots 3, 5-8 of Block 154 in Couch's Addition to the City of Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon. *Pietro Belluschi - Architect* designed the building for the Miles Investment Company. Miles Investment was owned by Miles Sweeney, who was also the president of Sweeney, Straub and Dimm. Sweeney, Straub and Dimm was one of the leading Portland lithograph book printers, establishing a niche for high quality, full-color products. Formed in 1913, the company moved into the new building as part of business expansion incorporating new technologies. Over the years, the company was reorganized and eventually acquired by Rono Graphics in the 1980s; in 1998, the business relocated and the building vacated.

The one and one-half story reinforced concrete building may be categorized as MODERN MOVEMENT -- International Style of architecture. The building is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion "C," significant in the body of work of *Pietro Belluschi - Architect* both as a rare extant example of the firm's industrial design work. It, along with two other projects at the same time, represented an integral step in process that provided Belluschi the design/build experience in this style palette that then allowed subsequent major landmark designs. as a successful and immediate precursor to the firm's landmark designs in the International Style. The building is also eligible for listing under Criterion "A" for Industry, as a building type, constructed by a prominent architect for the specific purposes of the modern printing industry and one of a three major historic resources associated with the industry in Portland.

A Part 1 Determination of Eligibility was submitted and approved by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office and National Park Service. The building is expected to be rehabilitated under the Historic Preservation Tax Certification Program.

History of the Building

As World War II drew to a close, Miles Sweeney, President and CEO of the Sweeney, Straub and Dimm printing company looked to expand his business. Optimism was high for a significant business boom after the war. Sweeney hired Pietro Belluschi to evaluate the existing conditions at his printing plant at 316 SW 11th Avenue. Belluschi was a good friend of Sweeney's son and sister. The latter, with husband Henry Wachnik, got Belluschi his first job in the area at the Portland Gas Company.[1]

In the spring of 1945, architects and engineers from Belluschi's firm inspected the building and found evidence of considerable vibration causing beams and posts to split. Sagging in the center of the roof trusses was also evident due to loose truss rods. Since new presses and other machinery were contemplated for the third floor, they recommended the framing of the structure be strengthened.[2]

By the fall of 1945, conversations had moved from renovation of the existing facility to a new building entirely. The reasons likely were manifold: The cost of upgrading the existing facility, the inefficiency of the existing multi-floored space, and the limited room for expansion.[3] As important, printing competitors had plans for modern, signature facilities; notably, the Beattie Company hired architect Glenn Stanton to design a printing plant at 725 NW 18th Avenue.[4]

In November, Belluschi's office drafted a preliminary layout of the new printing plant and forwarded it to Sweeney.[5] On January 12 of the following year, Sweeney granted the architect authority to proceed on the building: the fee was 6% of the total cost of the structure. Sweeney was a bit surprised at the fee. He considered it high, over half of the cost of his residence, particularly since he felt that he had hired a family friend.[6]

By the end of January, William Crowell of Belluschi's office forwarded a print of sketches and asked whether the plan arrangement in general was acceptable. Sweeney requested the

---

1 Telephone Interview with Miles Sweeney
2 Correspondence, Belluschi to Sweeney, March 5, 1945 (Pietro Belluschi Papers, Syracuse University)
3 Correspondence, Belluschi to Sweeney, November 13, 1945 (Pietro Belluschi Papers, Syracuse University)
4 Oregon Journal, September 23, 1945
5 Correspondence, Belluschi to Sweeney, November 13, 1945 (Pietro Belluschi Papers, Syracuse University)
6 Correspondence, Sweeney to Belluschi, January 12, 1946; Belluschi to Sweeney, January 14, 1946 (Pietro Belluschi Papers, Syracuse University); Telephone Interview with Miles Sweeney

pressroom be located on the second floor and the offices below because Sweeney wanted to save money on excavation. Sweeney also wanted to make sure that the load bearing walls were strong enough to hold the press, as well as to handle the expansion of the structure upward if they ever wanted to add more floors in the future.[7]

Paying particular attention to the mechanics of production, the architects were concerned about the location and size of the vault, the boiler room and the acceptability of the roll-up door. They specifically asked if any locker or coatrooms were needed, and where the camera pit should be located. They also requested information on location and capacity of outlets for special lighting and power, as well as the type of current required by their various motors and if any modifications were necessary to accommodate equipment. Finally, they wanted to be sure that vibration from the machines was not objectionable or injurious to the structure.[8]

In February, Crowell forwarded Sweeney a set of blackline prints. He asked that Sweeney list the motors expected to be used, together with the type of current and amps or horsepower of each. He offered that their engineer would visit their existing plant to get a better appreciation of their electrical, heating, plumbing and lighting needs.[9]

Reimers and Jolivette were hired as general contractors and on March 6th, permits were secured for site preparation. Two weeks later, on March 18, building plans were finalized. The building was completed at the end of September at a cost of $75,000.[10] Of particular note is the reinforced concrete construction with concrete slab separating lower floor offices from the main floor pressrooms, the location of large open work spaces on the main floor with the broad north-facing monitor-style window, and the construction of specific area for lithotyping and photographic production.

After the new building was finished in 1946, Sweeney, Straub and Dimm installed the first large four-color press west of the Mississippi. They also perfected the use of photolithography, specializing in high-end quality books for clients as ESCO, White Stag and Nurserymen Books. In the next decade, the firm reorganized – first under the name Dimm, Walter and Sweeney and then

7 Correspondence, Sweeney to Belluschi, January 12, 1946; Crowell to Sweeney, January 18, 1946 (Pietro Belluschi Papers, Syracuse University)
8 Correspondence, Crowell to Sweeney, January 18, 1946 (Pietro Belluschi Papers, Syracuse University)
9 Correspondence, Crowell to Sweeney, February 13, 1946 (Pietro Belluschi Papers, Syracuse University)
10 Correspondence, Smith to Reimers & Jolivette, March 6, 1946; Smith to Sweeney, March 18, 1946 (Pietro Belluschi Papers, Syracuse University)

Sweeney, Krist and Dimm. They continued to expand, increasingly focused on the printing of high quality garden books.[11] In 1952-3, they installed concrete partitions on the upper floor and remodeled the office spaces. In 1958, they added a two-story and full basement addition on the lot at the southwest, adding 15,000 square feet of additional space. The addition was constructed by Reimers and Jolivette and while sympathetic, clearly not of Belluschi's design quality.

By the 1980s, the firm was reorganized yet again as Rono Graphic Communication and the entire building modernized. In 1998, Mail-Well acquired Rono Graphic, merged with the Graphics Arts Center and relocated from the present building.[12]

CRITERIA C, Architecture: The Sweeney, Straub building is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria C for Architecture both as a rare extant example of the firm's industrial design work, and, along with two other projects at the same time, as an integral step in process that provided Belluschi the design/build experience in this style palette that then allowed subsequent major landmark designs including the Equitable, Oregonian, Pacific Telephone & Telegraph and Federal Reserve Buildings.

Pietro Belluschi, Architect[13]

The Sweeney, Straub & Dimm Printing Plant was a product of the firm of *Pietro Belluschi, Architect.* The firm was a direct descendent of *A. E. Doyle & Associates.* When Doyle died in 1928, his firm continued as *A. E. Doyle and Associate* under the guidance of William Crowell. Doyle had hired Crowell, who was his same age, in 1927 to serve as chief draftsman and business manager. In 1933, the firm reorganized as *A. E. Doyle and Associates*, raising Pietro Belluschi, William Kennerly, Sid Lister and David Jack to partners. Ten years later, in 1943, Belluschi purchased the firm and changed the name to *Pietro Belluschi, Architect.*

As the war ended and raw materials became available, construction boomed. Banks, department stores, boutiques, shopping centers, warehouses, doctor's offices, restaurants, and coffee shops

---

11 Charles Ball, *Lifetime Memories* (unpublished); personal interviews with Charles Ball, Bill Fetsch, Joseph Kratke, Dorian Mell.

12 Oregonian, August 17, 1975; Charles Ball, *Lifetime Memories* (unpublished); personal interviews with Charles Ball, Bill Fetsch, Joseph Kratke, Dorian Mell.

13 Ritz, Richard E., Architects of Oregon. (Portland, OR: Lair Hill Publishing, 2002, pp. 29-35). Clausen, Meredith. Pietro Belluschi: Modern American Architect. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994); Ferriday, Virginia Guest, et. al. Historic Resources Inventory of Portland. (Portland, OR: City of Portland, 1984).

all needed architects. Belluschi sought any and every commission. His staff grew to 15 by 1946 and two years later, his staff peaked at 28.

In the postwar years, the Belluschi firm received several major commissions which garnered considerable attention. The most well known of these is the Equitable Building (1948; 421 SW Sixth Avenue), a masterpiece lauded internationally as the first curtain-wall skyscraper in the country and technologically more advanced than other office buildings at the time. It remains one of the most elegantly sleek glass and aluminum towers ever built. Other notable designs in Oregon in this time include: Pacific Telephone and Telegraph (1947; 819 SW Oak Street), Oregonian Building (1948; 1320 SW Broadway), and Federal Reserve Bank (1949; 915 SW Stark Street).

In 1950, Belluschi moved to Massachusetts to become the Dean of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He merged his firm with *Skidmore, Owings & Merrill* to form *Belluschi, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.* After 1955, the firm became simply *Skidmore Owings & Merrill.*

Pietro Belluschi: Pietro Belluschi was the younger of two children born to Guido and Camilla Belluschi on August 18, 1899 in the Adriatic port city of Ancona, Italy. From 1919-1922 he attended the University of Rome, and in December 1922, he received a "laurea di Ingegneria," (similar to an American B.A. in civil engineering). In 1923-24, he received a scholarship to study as an exchange student at Cornell University in the United States, where he graduated as a civil engineer in 1925.

He came to Portland, Oregon in the spring of that year with a letter of introduction to Albert E. Doyle. Doyle hired him. Over the next two years, Belluschi became a principal designer in the office, contributing to the designs of the Pacific Building (520 SW Yamhill Street), Public Service Building (920 SW Sixth Avenue) and a proposed addition to the Cloud Cap Inn that was not built. In 1931, with the A. E. Doyle firm under the management of William Crowell, Belluschi designed his first major work, the Portland Art Museum (1219 SW Park Avenue). Though the museum requested a Georgian style structure, Belluschi delivered a modern interpretation that drew national attention, praised for its modernity, simplicity, restraint and for its decidedly non-classical monumentality. In 1936-37, Belluschi's designs for Finley's Mortuary (since demolished) again gained national attention.

In this era, Belluschi also became well regarded for his residential work, working to establish

what has become known as the Northwest Regional style. The Belluschi family house designed in 1936 was the first to encompass many of the qualities he integrated into his later houses in the 1940s: careful siting in relationship to the land, wide eaves, low-pitched roof, single-story, open plan built around a central courtyard, with garden in back and bay windows.

These details played a significant role in the development of Belluschi's design priorities for domestic and ecclesiastic architecture that remained throughout his career. Using simple means, within often-modest budgets, Belluschi became respected and sought-after for the design of churches. He designed churches for many denominations, and in each design paid close attention to the specific spiritual needs required by the clergy, building committees and congregations for whom he worked. His successful church designs established him as one of the foremost church architects in the country.

In 1950, Belluschi left Portland to become Dean of the School of Architecture and Planning at MIT. There, in addition to teaching, he continued to work both as principal designer and as design consultant to many large architecture firms throughout the country. His tenure at MIT was from 1951-1965. One of his architecture students was Portland's Robert Frasca, who became one of the leading architects in the Pacific Northwest after moving to Portland. Belluschi's notable designs while living in Cambridge include: Julliard School of Music and Alice Tully Hall (with Eduardo Catalano, Helge Westermann, and Associated Architects, Lincoln Center, New York, 1956).

Though he retired from MIT in 1965, Belluschi continued to teach design and consult on both architectural and planning issues. The same year, he married Marjorie Bruckner. In 1973, he and Marjorie moved back to Portland, purchasing the Burkes House, which he had designed in 1944-48. He continued to practice as design consultant to architects throughout the country, and served on many advisory committees, design review boards and juries. In 1972, he was awarded the American Institute of Architects' highest honor – the Gold Medal for Lifetime Achievement. In 1991, he received the National Medal of Arts by President George Bush in a White House ceremony. In his later years he designed the University of Ancona, Italy (with *Jung/Brannen Associates*) in the city of his birth. Belluschi died in Portland on February 14, 1994.

The Design Process and Attribution of the Sweeney, Straub & Dimm Printing Plant[14]

14 Clausen, Meredith. Pietro Belluschi: Modern American Architect. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), p. 184-88; personal interview, Meredith Clausen.

The Sweeney, Straub & Dimm Printing Plant is a product of the firm of *Pietro Belluschi - Architect.* Correspondence and plans from the firm document that relationship. But to what extent was Belluschi, himself, involved in the design?

As with any attribution, it is important to begin with the building.

As to the exterior appearance of the building, having come to the conclusion that windows of a certain peculiar shape placed at a certain location were the most efficient from the lighting point of view, it was not tried to disguise, cut or change them in any way in order to conform to any rule of style, but they were given their proper place and made a part of that subtle relationship of masses and materials which constitutes, or rather ought to constitute, the basis of real architecture, if it is to be alive and not be just popular or fashionable architecture.[15]

In the quote above, Belluschi was talking about his design of the Art Museum. The same comment could easily apply to the Sweeney, Straub.

As with many modern-style industrial works, it is easy to dismiss the simplicity for a lack of design, a simple precursor to the concrete block products of the current era. In size and budget, Sweeney, Straub is a humble building. Yet, in the eyes of published Belluschi scholar Meredith Clausen, there is no question that it bears the master hand of Belluschi. With geometrical lines, subtle proportions, absence of ornamentation and sophisticated fenestration, the simplicity of the Sweeney, Straub belies a masterful design. The ultimate telltale is the use of the monitor windows, which were not being used by anyone at this time and mirroring Belluschi's use of them in the Art Museum.

To fully appreciate the strength of the design, one need only examine the Beattie Building located two blocks away. Designed by Glenn Stanton in 1947 for a competing printing company, it shares many of the design issues and materials: It is a one story concrete building with steel sash windows and primary facades facing east and north constructed for a printing company. Yet, in comparing the two buildings, the strength of the Sweeney, Straub design is defining.

---

15 Pietro Belluschi, quoted by Meredith Clausen, Pietro Belluschi: Modern American Architect, p. 63; Ritz, Richard E., Architects of Oregon. (Portland, OR: Lair Hill Publishing, 2002, pp. 29-35); Ferriday, Virginia Guest, et. al. Historic Resources Inventory of Portland. (Portland, OR: City of Portland, 1984).

While correspondence and oral history clearly indicates that Belluschi was active in the project, no evidence exists that clearly delineates the degree of Belluschi's involvement in the design. Belluschi papers at Syracuse University and the Oregon Historical Society were examined, but no plans or correspondence exists that indicates who was involved in the design process. Project correspondence relates to the project management and bears the initials of William Crowell and Irving Smith, both of whom were well regarded as project architects but not designers.

If this were a typical project, and there is nothing in the record to suggest otherwise, Belluschi would have provided the fundamental design paradigm and approved the final designs. Following the war, Belluschi's staff had grown from wartime low of 4 to 15. The office was relocated to a renovated garage at 2040 SW Jefferson Street where everybody worked in one large drafting room with Belluschi at the first desk. The office organization was loose and informal, basically that of a small firm with everybody participating in a wide variety of jobs. Maintaining this organizational pattern, Belluschi himself remained in control of the business of the firm, as well as handling all negotiations with clients and supervising design.
On design, Belluschi worked in a collaborative atmosphere. After meeting with the client, he would schedule ample time to study the problem and often roughed out his ideas in a quick sketch. He would establish the design parameters and turn the project over to one or more staff in his office for refinement and development. Belluschi would then review and critique the work in progress. His forte was the artistic touch that constituted the difference between an ordinary and distinctive building. The size of the staff and the open floor plan lent itself to this process.

It has been suggested that given the size and nature of the commission, Belluschi may not have cared much about the design of Sweeney, Straub & Dimm. The design itself speaks to the contrary. It is also important to remember while Belluschi had received recognition in the 1930s, he was not nationally prominent until the Equitable Building and subsequent works in the late 1940s. His project list of commercial work from 1936 Finley's Mortuary into the war years was lean, the client list insubstantial and the firm shrinking in size. In growing his firm, given Belluschi's business talents, there is every reason to believe that he recognized that his reputation was synonymous with the firm that bore his name and its products.
In this context too, if as some contest that Belluschi was not responsible for the design, who in his office had the design skills and the principal's confidence? As noted before, the Belluschi firm in 1945-46 was rather small, numbering between four and fifteen, many recent hires, many long-time project managers. Correspondence relating to the Sweeney, Straub & Dimm Printing Plant identifies two in Belluschi's firm involved in the project besides Belluschi: William H.

Crowell and Irving G. Smith. Both Smith or Crowell focused on the production aspect of architecture and any substantive design influence seems unlikely.

William H. Crowell was born in 1877 and studied architecture at MIT. He first worked in Boston from 1897 to 1908, whereupon he moved to Portland. He was first employed by Whitehouse & Fouilhoux and remained there until 1915. He subsequently worked for the Portland School District and then later returned to Whitehouse & Fouilhoux. In 1927, Crowell joined A. E. Doyle. At the time, Doyle was suffering from a fatal illness. Crowell was a sound, experienced architect hired to carry on the operation of the office. He remained in that capacity after Doyle's death with the successor firms. In 1943, the partnership was dissolved and Pietro Belluschi continued the office under his own name. The 66-year-old Crowell continued working in Belluschi's office on a part-time basis until 1947.[16]

Irving G. Smith was born in 1899. In 1920, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Oregon and later did graduate work at MIT. Smith then worked for architectural firms in Los Angeles, and for Dickey & Wood in Honolulu. In 1922, he came to Portland, where he worked for the School District. In 1929, he was hired by A. E. Doyle & Associates. He stayed with Doyle until 1932 and then worked for Whitehouse, Stanton & Church. From 1933 to 1935, he was with the District Engineer's office and then from 1935 to 1937 he was on his own. In 1938, Smith returned to the Doyle office, then headed by Pietro Belluschi, and that year he produced most of the construction drawings for the Hirsch Wing additional to the Portland Art Museum. He remained with Belluschi until 1950, becoming chief draftsman. In the assessment of Portland architectural historian Richard E. Ritz, Smith was a highly competent technical man, and while chief draftsman for Belluschi, had an important part of training young draftsmen and in maintaining the high quality of construction documents.[17]

Because of his local reputation, Belluschi did attract talented designers who appreciated the modern palette and sought to learn from a master. Designers in Belluschi's office at the time of the Sweeney, Straub & Dimm included *Walter Gordon* and *Kenneth Richardson.* Both designers had successful careers, however, neither had a subsequent body of work that is suggestive of Sweeney, Straub. Gordon was born in 1907 and received his undergraduate and architectural

16 Ritz, Richard E., Architects of Oregon. (Portland, OR: Lair Hill Publishing, 2002, pp. 90-91); Ferriday, Virginia Guest, et. al. Historic Resources Inventory of Portland. (Portland, OR: City of Portland, 1984).
17 Ritz, Richard E., Architects of Oregon. (Portland, OR: Lair Hill Publishing, 2002, pp. 364-365); Ferriday, Virginia Guest, et. al. Historic Resources Inventory of Portland. (Portland, OR: City of Portland, 1984).

degrees from Princeton in the early 1930s. In 1940, he went to work for Belluschi under the A. E. Doyle & Associates name. In that capacity, he worked on War Housing at Bagley Downs near Vancouver. He served for three years in the Navy and then returned to work with Belluschi. In September 1946, Gordon passed the architectural examination and opened his own office. His practiced focused on the design of fine homes in what came to be known as the "Walter Gordon Style" with characteristics of what was often called the "Northwest Style".[18]

Kenneth Richardson became Belluschi chief design assistant in 1947. However, even when he allowed Richardson to develop design options, Belluschi made the final decision as with the Zion Lutheran Church in which Richardson played a significant role. In 1952, when Belluschi merged with Skidmore Owings and Merrill, Richardson left to form a partnership with Donald Stewart, which specialized in schools, libraries and churches. This firm later added Frank C. Allen, also a long-time employee of Belluschi, and George McMath, grandson of A. E. Doyle.[19]

In attributing the design of Sweeney, Straub & Dimm Printing Plant then, the building's design, the firm's design process, Belluschi's own guard for his reputation and the design skills and palettes of others in the firm all suggest Belluschi's hand played a significant role in this project.

---

18 Clausen, Meredith. Pietro Belluschi: Modern American Architect. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994); personal interview, Meredith Clausen.

19 Clausen, Meredith. Pietro Belluschi: Modern American Architect. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), p. 184-88; personal interview, Meredith Clausen; Ritz, Richard E., Architects of Oregon. (Portland, OR: Lair Hill Publishing, 2002); Ferriday, Virginia Guest, et. al. Historic Resources Inventory of Portland. (Portland, OR: City of Portland, 1984).

Comparative Analysis: Sweeney, Straub and Dimm Printing Plant as an example of the firm and architect's work[20]

A deceptively simple looking building, the Sweeney, Straub and Dimm printing plant represents a marked and important integral step in the evolution of the architect's design sense from the historicized designs produced under Doyle to the restrained International designs found in the bulk of his commercial work in the late 1940s. As a limited project with a limited commission ($4,500), the printing plant also represents his mastery of design through attention to the function of the building.

Belluschi's employer and mentor, A. E. Doyle, was noted for his classic designs using terra cotta to create wonderfully decorated commercial buildings. At the end of his life, Doyle produced two buildings, the Pacific Building (520 SW Yamhill Street) and the Public Service Building (920 SW Sixth Avenue), heavily influenced by the Italian Renaissance style. After Doyle's death, Belluschi's first major commission was the Portland Art Museum (1219 SW Park Avenue) in 1932. Although the museum's curator asked him to design a building in the Georgian Style, Belluschi presented a design that was clearly modern in aesthetic. As a bow to Georgian, the building was clad in red brick and trimmed in white, massed with central block and two wings set back. Belluschi however used the trim, window openings and the entry to create a strong rectilinear and geometric form. It offered strong, yet clean lines reinforced by the doorway and window frames.

During this same era, Belluschi remodeled Finley's Mortuary (demolished) and followed this same aesthetic. The remodel of Finley's Mortuary was distinctly modern, with the new portions of the building consisting of simple bold geometric forms with a pronounced horizontality. Recognized for its clean modernity, that building also drew national attention. It was published in the Architectural Forum in December 1937 and honored by both the National AIA and Architectural League of New York in 1938.

---

20 Clausen, Meredith. Pietro Belluschi: Modern American Architect. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994); personal interview, Meredith Clausen; Ritz, Richard E., Architects of Oregon. (Portland, OR: Lair Hill Publishing, 2002); Ferriday, Virginia Guest, et. al. Historic Resources Inventory of Portland. (Portland, OR: City of Portland, 1984).

By 1939, Belluschi's concepts evolved further into the International style. Decoration was reduced even further and the design tension between the exterior skin and window openings became the driving force of his work. In 1939, Belluschi remodeled the Hibernian Building (505 SW Sixth Avenue), a Richardsonian Romanesque building constructed in 1890. The remodel was substantial and consisted of a rectangular block with a stucco exterior finish, ribbon windows with a steel sash and a freestanding cylindrical corner column. A similar treatment is found in the Healy Building (731 SW Morrison Street) (ironically the original home of Sweeney, Straub and Dimm), completed in 1945.

By 1946, Belluschi's design tension reached a minimalist aesthetic, a simplified exterior devoid of decoration with simple geometric forms, and a plan where form follows function. That aesthetic was expressed in three buildings: The Sweeney, Straub and Dimm building consisted of strong bands of flush industrial windows nicely proportioned in the reinforced concrete skin to create a dramatic, if inexpensive, design statement. Designed at the same time was the Edris Morrison Studio (1222-24 SW Morrison Street), again using concrete and glass. Again, Belluschi used massing, openings and materials to create what was considered an "ultra-modern" design by contemporary news accounts. The third design, the Electrical Distribution Co. warehouse (140 NW Fourteenth Avenue), also followed this design palette. This structure is a rectangular block with horizontal bands of plate glass windows, a metal covered cornice and a bowstring roof. Rounded steel posts support the cantilevered second floor.

It was at this time that Belluschi had several major commissions that allowed him to bring the aesthetic to final form. These included the Equitable (421 SW Sixth Avenue), Oregonian (1320 SW Broadway), Pacific Telephone and Telegraph (819 SW Oak Street) and the Federal Reserve (915 W Stark Street). Almost certainly, these commissions benefited form the design and materials experience of the smaller projects immediately proceeding.

The Equitable is in a class unto itself. It was Belluschi's first major postwar job, begun in 1945 and completed in 1948. He used aluminum for both structure and exterior cladding; double-paned sealed windows to minimize heat loss; and an innovative reverse-cycle heat and air-conditioning system. The building rose twelve stories in a single unbroken plane. The rectangular slab, eleven bays wide by three bays deep, abutted the street but was set back in the rear, with a two-story portion filing the remainder of the lot. The structure was of reinforced concrete, using a newly developed formula that enhanced its strength. With the structural members reduced to a minimum and except those on the street floor, all clad with a thin veneer of aluminum, the building appeared extraordinarily lightweight, as though entirely of steel.

At the same time, he was also working on the full block Oregonian Building. To accommodate a 24-foot slope from east to west, Belluschi conceived the building as a staggered six story block, two levels of which were below grade on one side. On the opposite side, facing the street to the east, these lower levels were fully glazed, enabling pedestrians to watch the action of the gigantic printing presses inside. The structure was of reinforced concrete, with 50-foot steel beams spanning the open space of the pressrooms. Exteriors were of warm rosy agate granite at the base, with a lighter limestone above. Windows were set flush in horizontal bands with aqua tinted thermopane held in aluminum sash. Running through the middle of the building from one side street to the other was a truckway for the loading of papers and deliveries.

In 1947, Belluschi designed the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph building. The plan, basically a series of loft spaces for the housing of equipment, was prepared by the company's engineers, leaving to Belluschi the design of the exteriors and public lobby. It was an 11-story steel framed building with six stories to be built immediately and 5 to be added later. The building read as a simple, clean, sharply defined rectangular block with an even, overall grid of windows, square in proportion repeating the virtually square proportions of the building itself. Each pane was divided by thin T-shaped mullions into three, with a slender horizontal rectangle above spanning a pair of more nearly squared rectangles below in a typical Belluschi proportioning. Walls were clad in dark, richly veined polished granite at the street level, with fine white Georgian marble above. The paneling too was squared, with joints carefully aligned with the window openings. Thermopane glass, now standard in Belluschi's commercial structures, was clear and transparent so that the windows read as a pattern of black voids against a solid white background, rather than a continuous reflective skin. Surfaces were absolutely flush, with glazing held to the wall plane and windows articulated only by thin bands of aluminum sash.

The Federal Reserve Bank was completed in 1949. It is a five-story building of creamy white marble supported on a base of dark richly veined granite. Belluschi exploited the corner site by giving the building a rounded façade with entrance on the diagonal and opening up the base with regular bays of large plate glass windows. Above, even rows of squared windows continued unbroken around the corner, uniting the principal facades as one.

The Sweeney Straub building is an excellent example of simplified expression, and a notable step in Belluschi's design aesthetic -- with little ornament on the buildings, uniform windows and a simplified rectangular form. Juxtaposed between the success of the Art Museum and landmark International designs of the late 1940s, it -- along with the Morrison House and Electrical Distributing Warehouse -- served as an integral step in the Belluschi's design/build maturation.

Comparative Analysis: Sweeney, Straub and Dimm Printing Plant as a rare example of industrial design by Pietro Belluschi, Architect[21]

Pietro Belluschi was active in Portland for a quarter of a century. He and his firm were prolific in creating a vast array of designs, from single family to multifamily, from churches to schools, and an assortment of commercial projects. In total, Belluschi worked on over 150 building designs (exclusive of remodels and planning exercises) between 1925 (under the banner of A. E. Doyle) and 1950, when Belluschi left for MIT.

Despite this prolific number, only eight may be considered industrial in form. In 1928, he designed the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph equipment building at 1733 SE Belmont Street. In 1944, he designed the now demolished Courtemanche Warehouse in McMinnville and the Oregon Statesman printing plant in Salem. In 1945, he designed the Electrical Distribution Warehouse (140 NW 14th Street), followed by Sweeney, Straub the following year. In 1947, he remodeled the now demolished Blitz-Weinhard headquarters and Doughnut Corporation of American factory. And in 1948, he completed the Oregonian Building.

Of those, only four remain: In addition to Sweeney, Straub, these include the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph building, Oregonian Building and Electrical Distributing Warehouse. Of these, the first is classically Georgian Revival in style and the last was substantially remodeled in 2003, fundamentally altering Belluschi's design. The Oregonian Building is as much an office structure as industrial. The Sweeney, Straub represents both the purest industrial design with the strongest expression of Belluschi's modernist palette.

21 Clausen, Meredith. Pietro Belluschi: Modern American Architect. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994); personal interview, Meredith Clausen; Ritz, Richard E., Architects of Oregon. (Portland, OR: Lair Hill Publishing, 2002); Ferriday, Virginia Guest, et. al. Historic Resources Inventory of Portland. (Portland, OR: City of Portland, 1984).

CRITERIA A, Printing Industry: The Sweeney, Straub building is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A for as one of two pre-eminent historic resources relating to the city's printing industry.

The Printing Industry in Portland

Printing in the Pacific Northwest country started in the mid-1800s, primarily by Christian missionaries who were interested in publishing bibles and other religious documents for the purposes of converting the Native Americans. The first known printing press was established in 1839 at the Lapwai Mission (near what is now Lewiston, WA). The press was used to print books in the Nez Perce language so they might read and learn religious works. This press became known as the "mission press." This press was taken to the Dalles where it remained until after the 1847 Whitman Massacre. The press then traveled to Hillsboro and eventually to the collection of the Oregon Historical Society.

As settlers moved to the Oregon territory, "tramp printers" would travel from town to town peddling their trade. They would mostly print advertisements for businesses, or political posters using small printing presses to publish single copies of their various fliers.

In 1844, the "Oregon Printing Association" formed in Oregon City for the purposes of bringing a press to the state for publishing books and a newspaper. The association first established a printing plant in Oregon City, and in 1847 published the first book printed in English in the Pacific Northwest, called "Webster's Elementary Spelling Book.". At the association's urging, Thomas Dryer, the editor of the California Courier, purchased a printing plant and shipped its printing presses to Portland in 1850. The press printed the first issue of "The Weekly Oregonian" (predecessor to the Oregonian) on December 4 of that year, soon to be followed by numerous other newspapers throughout the city and region. In 1893 the first linotype machine on the Pacific coast came to Astoria. A year later, in 1894, the Oregonian installed eight linotypes machines. This new technology resulted in the automation of typesetting and greater productivity for printing firms.

By the early part of the twentieth century, Portland began to show signs of becoming a region full of printers and tradesmen at the forefront of their field:

> *"We have not yet begun to print!" could well be the cry of the printers of the Pacific Northwest as they look toward the future with appreciation of their accomplishments of the past, and it would be no idle boast. The progress has*

> *been rapid and tremendous but the lead has come from other sections of the country and other countries of the world; in the future as has been indicated by recent events, the Pacific Northwest will be one of the leaders and pioneers on the frontier of technical advancements as our predecessors were pioneers on the frontier of settling the country in their time.*[22]

Following the Great War, the industry received a major boost forward both nationally and locally with the formation of craft associations. Nationally, the International Association of Printing House Craftsmen was formed in 1919. Their goal was "to assist materially in the present general movement for greater stability in the trade by uniform methods of handling work under its members' supervision." Within ten years, 118 local clubs were formed with a total membership in excess of 10,000. Locally, the Portland Club of Printing House Craftsmen was founded on November 22, 1923 and four years later joined the International Association.

By 1940, the printing and publishing industry employed over 6,500 people, representing approximately 4% of the county's work force. It was considered one of the top industries in importance in the states' economy and Portland was considered a Pacific Northwest regional publishing center. Oregon had a reputation of being an excellent book market and book publishing center. To honor their craft, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Gutenberg's invention of movable type, the Portland Club, with Miles Sweeney as Master of Ceremony, held a banquet at the Multnomah Hotel.

Major Printing Firms in Portland[23]

Students of the Portland printing industry identify three predominant printing firms in Portland, particularly in the 1940's: Sweeney, Straub and Dimm; James, Kerns and Abbott; and the Metropolitan Printing Company/Binford & Mort.

---

22 Elmer Clausen, History of Early Printing in the Pacific Northwest, p. 13

23 Clausen, Elmer E. A History of Early Printing in the Pacific Northwest. (Vancouver, WA: Western Washington College of Education Extension, 1948); Polk's Portland, Oregon City Directory. (Portland, OR: Polks); *Portland (OR) Craftsman Bulletin*, 1928-present; Powers, Alfred. Early Printing in the Oregon Country. (Portland, OR: Club of Printing House Craftsmen, 1933); Interviews with Charles Ball, Bill Fetsch, Joseph Kratke, Dorian Mell, Ron Shook, John Trachtenburg; Portland Club of Printing House of Craftsmen, records.

Sweeney Straub and Dimm: In 1913, Miles Sweeney formed the Adrian & Sweeney book printing company, located on the second floor of the Healy Building (now 731 SW Morrison Street). The next year, the firm reorganized into Sweeney, Varney & Straub. Two years later, the firm moved to a new location at 10 11th Avenue (now 314 SW 11th Avenue). In the mid-1930s, the firm again reorganized into Sweeney, Straub and Dimm, which it remained until the early 1950s. Throughout each iteration, Miles Sweeney was the company president.

Sweeney, Straub and Dimm focused primarily on the production of high quality books, establishing a strong niche in garden books and horticultural catalogs. They were considered within the industry as a leader in printing technology, installing the first four-color press west of the Mississippi River. In 1950, they were the only lithographers listed in the City Directory. They later became Sweeney, Krist and Dimm and then Ronographics. H.J. Krist wrote a guest editorial for a 1960 "What's New About Paper" industry newsletter. He said of their company:

> *We are proud to be among the many progressive printers throughout the United States, building the quality and craftsmanship of color processing. We started business in Portland in 1912 with a one-cylinder press and two platen presses. Craftsmanship and quality were two of the most important words of that day, along with pride of work and skilled printers. As we attempted new techniques and used new equipment, we have strived to keep a goal of "perfection" to our modern day fine art of color reproduction . . . We are honored to render an important service to the Horticultural Industry in the United States, Canada, England and some European countries. Under the direction of Mr. Walter R. Dimm, we have gained national recognition as leading horticultural printers. Mr. Dimm's vast knowledge gained through 35 years experience has proven invaluable to our horticultural customers . . . It is through such supervision we presumed to reproduce the reverence and beauty of nature's artistry, through man-created printing processes, on the papers whose source is also traced back to nature. . . Modern equipment and skill are not enough to bring greatness to an individual, a business, or an industry. True greatness comes from the emotions of humility in the face of trust, dignity in the pursuit of business, pride in accomplishment, and courage to face the challenges of competition. We at Sweeney, Krist and Dimm, view with optimism our future and the future of the printing industry in Oregon, knowing that we are contributing to the economy of our State and Nation.*[24]

24 W*hat's New About Paper,* December, 1960, p. 4.

James, Kerns, and Abbott: Formed in 1912 by E. H. James, J. D. Abbott and W. W. Kearns, the printing company located in a two-story brick former laundry building at 338 NW 9th Avenue. The company was a successor of Mann & Abbott, formed in 1901 by James Abbott and John Mann. Abbott, who was the firm's president, also served in the Oregon House of Representatives from 1909 to 1913, and was chairman of the Ways & Means Committee. He had learned the printing business in Vancouver, had worked for the Oregonian, Journal and Telegram. The firm remained there well into the 1950s. It was renamed Abbott, Kerns and Bell, and later merged with Agency Lithography to become the Graphic Arts Center. In the 1940s, this firm concentrated primarily on general commercial printing. Presently located at 2000 NW Wilson Street.

Metropolitan Printing Compan/Binford & Mort: In 1891, Frank Lee purchased the Northwest Pacific Farmer, an almanac printed in the Rookery Building overhanging the Willamette at the foot of Morrison Street. He was aided in his enterprise by his two Hoosier-born brothers-in-law, Peter and Maurice Binford. Lee's business prospered and in 1899, he purchased the name, equipment and goodwill of the Metropolitan Printing Company, located in rented space at 2nd and Morrison. Three years later, the Binford brothers bought out Lee. Shortly thereafter, Metropolitan moved to 147 Front Street and in 1908 to its own building at 211 Oak Street. In 1919, the brothers made nephew and employee Ralph Mort a partner in the firm. Continuing to grow, Binford & Mort moved into the Graphic Arts Building at 110-118 NW 9th Avenue, a 3 story brick building built for their businesses. The Metropolitan Printing Company focused primarily on printing telephone directories for Portland and Oregon's ten largest cities. At the height of their business, they boasted a volume of 1,000,000 a year. Binford & Mort focused on publishing nonfiction books, mostly history - eventually becoming the official publisher of the Oregon Historical Society. In 1961, Metropolitan moved to the Ford Building at 2505 SE 11th Avenue. The firm is today located in Hillsboro.[25]

The printing firms located within Portland grew to become a very close-knit community. Over the years the Portland Craftsmen Club has evolved and grown. Starting in the 1950s the group began a more concerted effort publicizing and celebrating National Printing week. They began electing a "Printing Week Queen" and published the major accomplishments of the printing industry in the paper. They continued to hold local, regional and national conventions to share information and enjoy activities together. Currently today the club continues to thrive, and they still have awards for the best craftsmanship in printing.

---

25 Oregonian, December 28, 1947

Craftsmen follow your creed; be unselfish with your knowledge; pass on your wisdom to your fellow-craftsmen- always remembering that the new ideas of today will be common a few years hence, just as the marvels of our forefathers are the ordinary things of the present.[26]

Sweeney, Straub and Dimm Printing Plant as a building type[27]

The Sweeney, Straub and Dimm Printing Plant is unusual in that it was designed by a prominent architect for the specific purpose of housing a book printer. As noted in the history of the building, Belluschi and his engineers spent considerable time assessing the company's needs and processes. A relatively inexpensive building at $75,000, the printing plant was notable for its reinforced concrete construction with concrete slab separating lower floor offices from the main floor pressrooms and the location of large open work spaces on the main floor with the broad north-facing monitor-style window and the large bands of windows on the north and east facades.

Prior to the new plant, Sweeney, Straub and Dimm were printing mainly by letterpress. Sweeney was especially interested in constructing a new facility, which would allow him to utilize the most advanced printing technology available at the time and to remain competitive in an increasing competitive industry.

Printing, particularly lithography, made enormous strides in the first half of the twentieth century. The offset press for paper printing came into use about 1908 and steadily made its way into the 650 printing companies that nationwide comprised the printing industry. The offset continued the tradition of printing from raised images. Ink rollers travel over the image and the inked image is then transferred onto the paper. The press operated faster and produced a higher quality. Letterpress shops had huge cylinder presses and could produce fine quality work in black and white and full color. Type was set from machines that cast a complete line in one piece. Large tables were used to assemble the lines of cast type along with illustrations and the resulting pages

---

26 Portland Craftsman, 1928.
27 *Portland (OR) Craftsman Bulletin*, 1928-present; Powers, Alfred. Early Printing in the Oregon Country. (Portland, OR: Club of Printing House Craftsmen, 1933); Interviews with Charles Ball, Bill Fetsch, Joseph Kratke, Dorian Mell, Ron Shook, John Trachtenburg; Portland Club of Printing House of Craftsmen, records.
Mertle, J. S. and Monson, Gordon. Photomechanics and Printing. (Chicago, IL: Mertle Publishing Co., 1957).
Porzio, Domenico. Lithography: 200 Years of Art, History and Technique. (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1983). Soderstrom, Walter E. The Lithographers Manual. New York: Waltwin Publishing Company, 1940).

were locked into a chase that were then positioned on the press for printing. The presses were slow compared to modern day printing. Twenty-five hundred impressions per hour was an accepted standard. If color was added the sheets had to be printed an additional time for each additional color.

Turn-of-the-century graphic processes focused on photogravure and photo-engraving, which allowed the image to be directly transferred from the original drawing to the printing surface photographically. These processes, however, transferred only the outline, not the color. At the same time zinc plates replaced cumbersome lithography stones and further accelerated the printing process.

Technological advances continued into the 1930s with the photographic process, transference of film images for printing and in the printing machinery. The invention of the trichromic halftone allowed color reproduction by using film which was sensitive to color and a series of filters for the camera lens which filtered out all but either the red, yellow, or blue section of the spectrum. The result was a wide color palette with the colors appearing bright and true to the original. Color printing became more common while the physical labor of printing grew less. By the start of the 1930s, there were approximately 1,000 printing companies; by the end of the decade, the number doubled.

Nationally, World War II accelerated this growth, with the need for military graphics -- maps, charts, manuals, instruction books, and technical data sheets. This demand encouraged the installation of new technologies -- web-fed offset presses, four-color presses, specialty presses and platemaking equipment. However, much of this growth occurred on the major metropolitan areas of the northeast, Midwest and southern California. For Portland, the war meant rationing (including paper) and a repressed market.

Following the war, the industry took on sensational growth. The number of printers doubled while sales volume grew seven-fold to nearly a billion dollars. In New York City alone, capital investment jumped by $20 million with a resulting sales growth of $250 million.

The printing process in the postwar world was varied only slightly: The process began with print designers creating camera-ready work. Often, the work was done by graphic artists, but typically printers maintained some staff capacity. The camera ready art arrived in the camera room where technicians produced the image in real size onto film, plate or paper. The negative was then fixed, washed, and dried, and then proceeded to the art department, where touch ups or hand

artwork was done. The negatives were then assembled and were made ready for plate making. In transferring the image for printing, in the 1940s, a photocomposing machine was commonly used. It was a small vacuum frame, which could be set over a plate. The plate could then be run through the lithographic proof press to make sure the image appeared as expected before a big run was made. Finally, the plate was strapped onto the press for printing.

Printing depended upon the well-known principle that water and oil do not mix. Through a chemical process the image on the plate was rendered oily or greasy ink receptive. Similarly the non-image area was rendered water receptive. When the plate is strapped on the press, two sets of rollers pass over the plate. One set of rollers carries the greasy ink and the other set of rollers carries water. The water prevents ink from depositing on the non-image area and the ink prevents water from depositing on the image area. The image is then transferred to paper from this surface. A complicated roller system carries ink and water to the plate cylinder, completing the roller unit, while the rest of the press carries the paper to the blanket and from these to the delivery pile. Several roller units may be placed between feeder and delivery, making the multi-color offset press.

Prior to World War II, Sweeney, Straub and Dimm operated a letterpress business on three floors above a retail shop at NW 11th and Burnside. Sweeney anticipated that the firm would not be able to compete in the post-war industry and embraced the latest technologies. He wanted to convert to photolithography. He wanted a state of the art facility that reflected a modern image.

The Sweeney, Straub and Dimm printing plant was designed for functional efficiency. Offices and camera room were located on the ground floor. The offices, housing management, administration and sales on the north side, camera room on the southside. Functionally this worked well, because the darkroom could be placed well away from the windows thereby making it easier to control light. It also made sense for the camera room to be placed directly opposite to the general offices on this floor to the north because after clients placed their orders with the general office, the first place their copy needed to go was to the camera room.

This also allowed the pressroom the broad expanse of the first floor. After the construction of their new printing plant in 1946, Sweeney, Straub and Dimm installed the first 4-color offset lithographic press operating west of the Mississippi. By so doing, Sweeney achieved his goal of establishing the most technologically advanced printing establishment in the region. The pressroom was largely was largely open, designed to hold the new 4 color offset press, as well as several older letterpresses. The Harris 4 color offset lithographic press available at the time was

50" x 68" and weighed 125,000 lbs. Each press was equipped with natural cork plates. These plates absorbed much of the vibration that caused press clatter. The National Process Company, producers of these plates in the forties had done a great deal of research at the time into ways to reduce vibration and noise of these presses. Since reduction of vibration and noise was very important to both Sweeney and Belluschi, they researched the many options available and in addition to designing the structure to hold the large presses, Sweeney made sure to purchase the best vibration absorption plates available at the time for his presses. Lastly, the shipping area was located directly across from the pressroom, at the west end of the building functionally, the best and most efficient space.

Sweeney, Straub and Dimm successfully produced high quality books and gardening catalogs for major companies like ESCO, White Stag and Nature Books. They were especially well known for their ability to produce high quality botanical illustrations.

Comparative Analysis of Portland Buildings related to the Printing Industry[28]

The Sweeney, Straub building, along with the 1921 Graphic Arts Building, is a strong associative resource for Portland's printing industry.

As discussed above, exclusive of newspapers, Portland had three primary printing companies. Each is identified with a specific historic resource. Sweeney Straub and Dimm is best associated with the Belluschi-designed building. Others buildings include the Healy Building (731 SW Morrison Street) and a former venetian blind factory at 315 SW 11th Avenue, both of which were rented. The Metropolitan Printing Company/Binford & Mort is best associated with the Graphic Arts Building at 102-118 NW 9th Avenue. Other locations were rental and have been demolished. James, Kerns and Abbot located in a former laundry building in 1917 and remained there though the 1950s. A fourth printing firm, the Beattie Company, sought to expand its place in the market in the 1940s with a new building designed by Glenn Stanton. Formed at the turn of the century as Hofman & Beattie, they were located at 208 Alder Street. The new building is located at 723-35 NW 18th Avenue.

28 Ferriday, Virginia Guest, et. al. Historic Resources Inventory of Portland. (Portland, OR: City of Portland, 1984); Polk's Portland, Oregon City Directory (Portland, OR: Polks); Ritz, Richard E., Architects of Oregon. (Portland, OR: Lair Hill Publishing, 2002).

These four buildings offer great insight into the relationship, real and perceived, of architecture, technology and business development. In 1946, the Sweeney, Straub & Dimm building was designed by a prominent architect on a half-block parcel. Close attention was paid to light and vibration, and production was located on a single floor. In exterior design, a sleek, modern image was embraced in the post-war city.

A quarter of a century earlier, in 1921, another rapidly expanding printing company -- the Metropolitan -- built the Graphic Arts Building in the then current commercial style. The three story building was designed by then prominent architect, F. Manson White. White worked with McCaw and Martin from 1889 to 1892, and then established his own firm. He designed the Sherlock Building (1893), Imperial Hotel (1894) the Auditorium Building (1895), and the Flatiron Building (1917). Designed of reinforced concrete with a brick façade, the building offers enlarged windows and large open spaces to accommodate oversized paper rolls. The building has been adapted for office and retail use, is listed in the Historic Inventory of Portland, is reasonably intact and in good condition.

The James, Kerns and Abbott was located in an adapted early 20th century two-story, quarter-block commercial style laundry building without significant modification to the building. The firm remained productive in that building for nearly four decades. This building is being used for office supply warehouse and retail, is listed in the Historic Inventory of Portland, is reasonably intact and in good condition.

Finally, the Beattie Company building, designed by noted Portland architect Glenn Stanton, is a one-story quarter-block concrete building with prominent windows. This building has been adapted for office use, is a non-contributing in Portland's Alphabet District, is reasonably intact and in good condition.

These four resources offer three important insights. First, the parallels between the 1921Graphic Arts Building and 1946 Sweeney Straub are notable. Separated by two decades of rapid technological change, both represent the aspirations of a rapidly growing printing company to hire a prominent architect to create a superior work environment combined with a strong stylistic statement. In a sense, they may be viewed as bookends. Second, the James, Kerns experience shows that such architectural aspirations were not essential to survive and thrive in the industry. Finally, a comparison of the Sweeney Straub and Beattie Buildings, completed nearly at the same time by prominent architects, clearly illustrates the mastery of Belluschi compared to the strong skills of Stanton's.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Published

Abbott, Carl. Portland. Planning, Politics and Growth in a Twentieth Century City. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1983).

Belluschi, Pietro, "An Architect's Challenge," Architectural Forum (December, 1949).

Belluschi, Pietro, "Eloquent Simplicity in Architecture," Architectural Record (July, 1963).

Belluschi, Pietro, "The Unchanged in a Time of Change," AIA Journal (July, 1972).

Bluemenson, John J. G. Identifying American Architecture. (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History, 1977).

Bosker, Gideon and Lencek, Lena. Frozen Music. (Portland, OR: Western Imprints, 1985).

Clark, Rosalind. Oregon Style: Architecture from 1840s to the 1950s. (Portland, OR: Professional Book Center, 1983).

Clausen, Elmer E. A History of Early Printing in the Pacific Northwest. (Vancouver, WA: Western Washington College of Education Extension, 1948).

Clausen, Meredith. Pietro Belluschi: Modern American Architect. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994).

Ferriday, Virginia Guest, et. al. Historic Resources Inventory of Portland. (Portland, OR: City of Portland, 1984).

Gordon, Walter. "Designed by Pietro Belluschi," Pencil Points (July, 1942).

Labbe, John T. Fares, Please: Those Portland Trolley Years. (Caldwell, ID: The Caxton Printers, 1980)

MacColl, E. Kimbark. The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon 1915-1950. (Portland: The Georgian Press, 1979).

Mertle, J. S. and Monson, Gordon. Photomechanics and Printing. (Chicago, IL: Mertle Publishing Co., 1957).

Polk's Portland, Oregon City Directory. (Portland, OR: Polks).

Portland (OR) Craftsman Bulletin, 1928-present

Porzio, Domenico. Lithography: 200 Years of Art, History and Technique. (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1983).

Powers, Alfred. Early Printing in the Oregon Country. (Portland, OR: Club of Printing House Craftsmen, 1933).

Ritz, Richard E., Architects of Oregon. (Portland, OR: Lair Hill Publishing, 2002).

Ross, Marion Dean, "The Attainment and Restraint of Pietro Belluschi," AIA Journal (July, 1972).

Snyder, Eugene E. Portland Names and Neighborhoods: Their Historic Origins. (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1979).

Soderstrom, Walter E. The Lithographers Manual. New York: Waltwin Publishing Company, 1940).

Jo Stubblebine, ed. The Northwest Architecture of Pietro Belluschi. (New York: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1953).

Van Cleeve, Jane. "Conversations with Pietro Belluschi," Willamette Week (March 17, 1990).

Vaughan, Thomas and Ferriday, Virginia. Space, Style and Structure. Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society, 1974).

Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969).

OTHER SOURCES

Ball, Charles. Telephone Interview.

City of Portland Office of Planning & Development Review microform and card files.

Great Buildings Online (www.greatbuildings.com)

Fetsch, Bill. Personal Interview.

Heritage Consulting Group historic Portland research files.

Kratke, Joseph. Telephone Interview.

Mell, Dorian. Personal Interview.

Multnomah County Tax Assessor Records

The Oregon Journal

The Oregonian

Oregon State Parks and Recreation, State Historic Preservation Office, historic building research files.

Portland Club of Printing House of Craftsmen, records

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Portland, Oregon.

Sho0k, Ron. Personal and Telephone Interview

Sweeney, Casey. Personal Interview.

Sweeney, Miles. Telephone Interview.

Syracuse University Library Special Collections, Pietro Belluschi Papers.

Trachtenburg, John. Personal Interview.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: 0.57 acre (25,000 SF)

UTM REFERENCES	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	10	524458	5041348	3			
2				4			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: The Sweeney, Straub and Dimm Printing Plant is located on Lots 3, 5-8 of Block 154, Couch's Addition to the City of Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon.

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

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: John M. Tess, President

ORGANIZATION: Heritage Consulting Group **DATE:** April 5, 2004

STREET & NUMBER: 1120 NW Northrup Street **TELEPHONE:** (503) 228-0272

CITY OR TOWN: Portland **STATE:** OR **ZIP CODE:** 97209

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS:

MAPS: See Enclosed

PHOTOGRAPHS: See Continuation Sheet

ADDITIONAL ITEMS:

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Mark Madden, Metro Holdings West 2 LLC

STREET & NUMBER: 2118 SW Park Place **TELEPHONE:** (503) 221-2900

CITY OR TOWN: Portland **STATE:** OR **ZIP CODE:** 97205

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The 1946 Sweeney, Straub and Dimm Printing Plant is located on Lots 3, 5-8 of Couch's Addition to the City of Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Photos Page 1

Sweeney, Straub and Dimm Printing Plant — Name of Property
Multnomah County, Oregon — County and State

General Information

Information for items 1-5 is the same for all photographs

1. Sweeney, Straub and Dimm Printing Plant
2. 535 NW 16th Avenue, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon
3. Photographer: Heritage Consulting
4. Date of Photo: June, 2003
5. Negatives: John Tess, Heritage Consulting Group
   1120 NW Northrup Street
   Portland, OR 97209

Photo 1 6. Exterior View, Looking SW at E (primary) Elevation
7. 1 of 26

Photo 2 6. Exterior View, Looking SW at N elevation
7. 2 of 26

Photo 3 6. Exterior View, Looking SE at N elevation
7. 3 of 26

Photo 4 6. Exterior View, Looking SE at W elevation
7. 4 of 26

Photo 5 6. Exterior View, Looking NE at W elevation
7. 5 of 26

Photo 6 6. Exterior View, Looking NE at W elevation, 1958 Addition
7. 6 of 26

Photo 7 6. Exterior View, Looking NW at S elevation, 1958 Addition
7. 7 of 26

Photo 8 6. Exterior View, Looking W at E elevation, 1958 Addition
7. 8 of 26

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Photos Page 2

Sweeney, Straub and Dimm Printing Plant — Name of Property
Multnomah County, Oregon — County and State

Photo 9 6. Exterior View, Looking N at S elevation
7. 9 of 26

Photo 10 6. Exterior View, Looking NW at S elevation and 1958 Addition E elevation
7. 10 of 26

Photo 11 6. Exterior Detail, Looking W at main entry and windows
7. 11 of 26

Photo 12 6. Exterior Detail, Window, Typical
7. 12 of 26

Photo 13 6. Exterior Detail, Window, Typical
7. 13 of 26

Photo 14 6. Interior View, First Floor, Looking SE
7. 14 of 26

Photo 15 6. Interior View, First Floor, Looking E
7. 15 of 26

Photo 16 6. Interior View, First Floor, Looking NW
7.16 of 26

Photo 17 6. Interior View, First Floor, Looking NW
7. 17 of 26

Photo 18 6. Interior View, First Floor, Looking SW
7. 18 of 26

Photo 19 6. Interior View, Ground Floor, Looking SW
7. 19 of 26

Photo 20 6. Interior Detail, Window and Monitor, Looking N
7. 20 of 26

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Photos Page 3

Sweeney, Straub and Dimm Printing Plant — Name of Property
Multnomah County, Oregon — County and State

Photo 21 6. Interior Detail, Window and Monitor, Looking N
7. 21 of 26

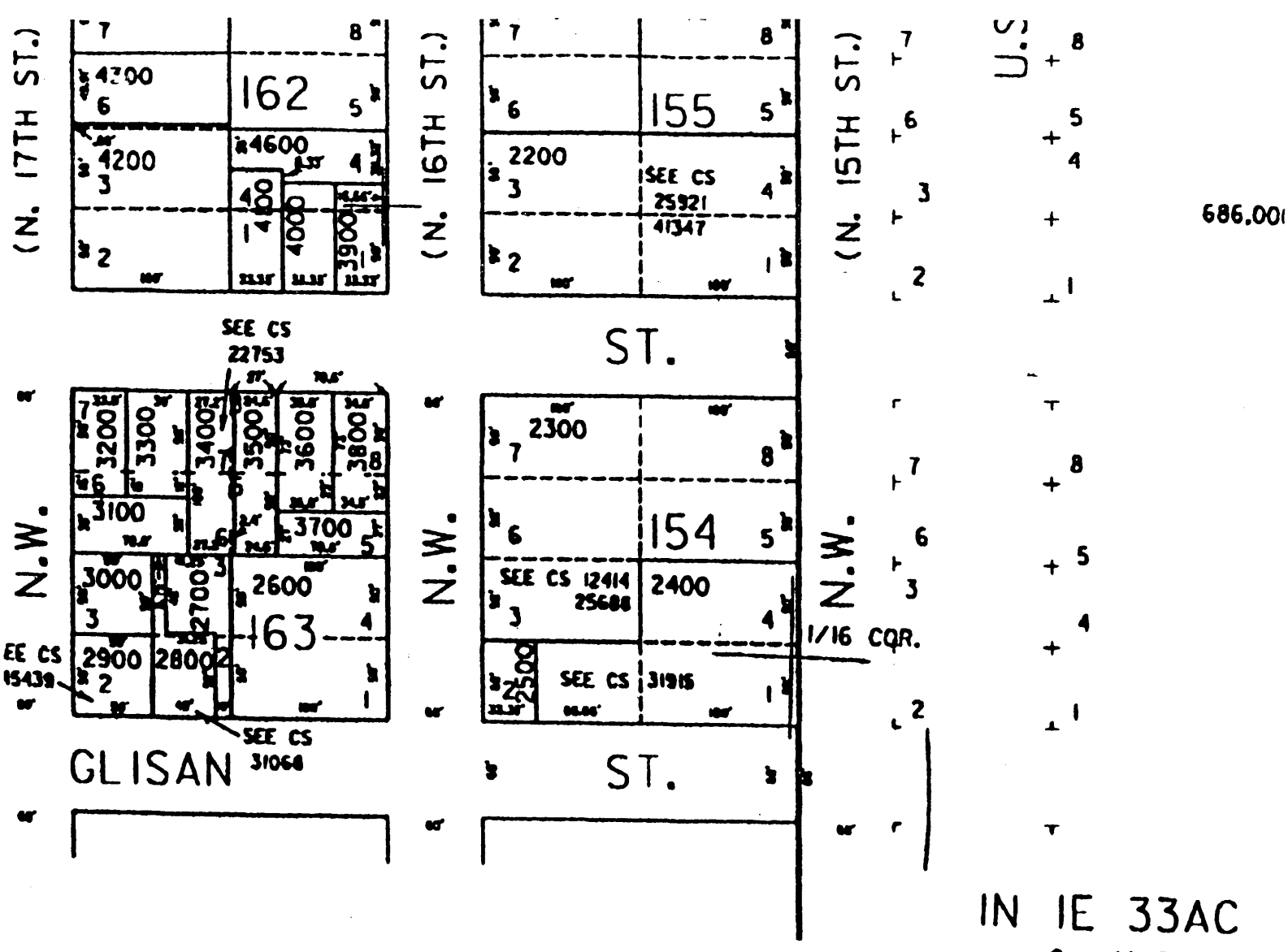
Photo 22 6. Interior View, 1958 Addition, First Floor, Looking NW
7. 22 of 26

Photo 23 6. Interior View, 1958 Addition, Second Floor, Looking W
7. 23 of 26

Photo 24 6. Interior View, 1958 Addition, Second Floor, Looking NE
7. 24 of 26

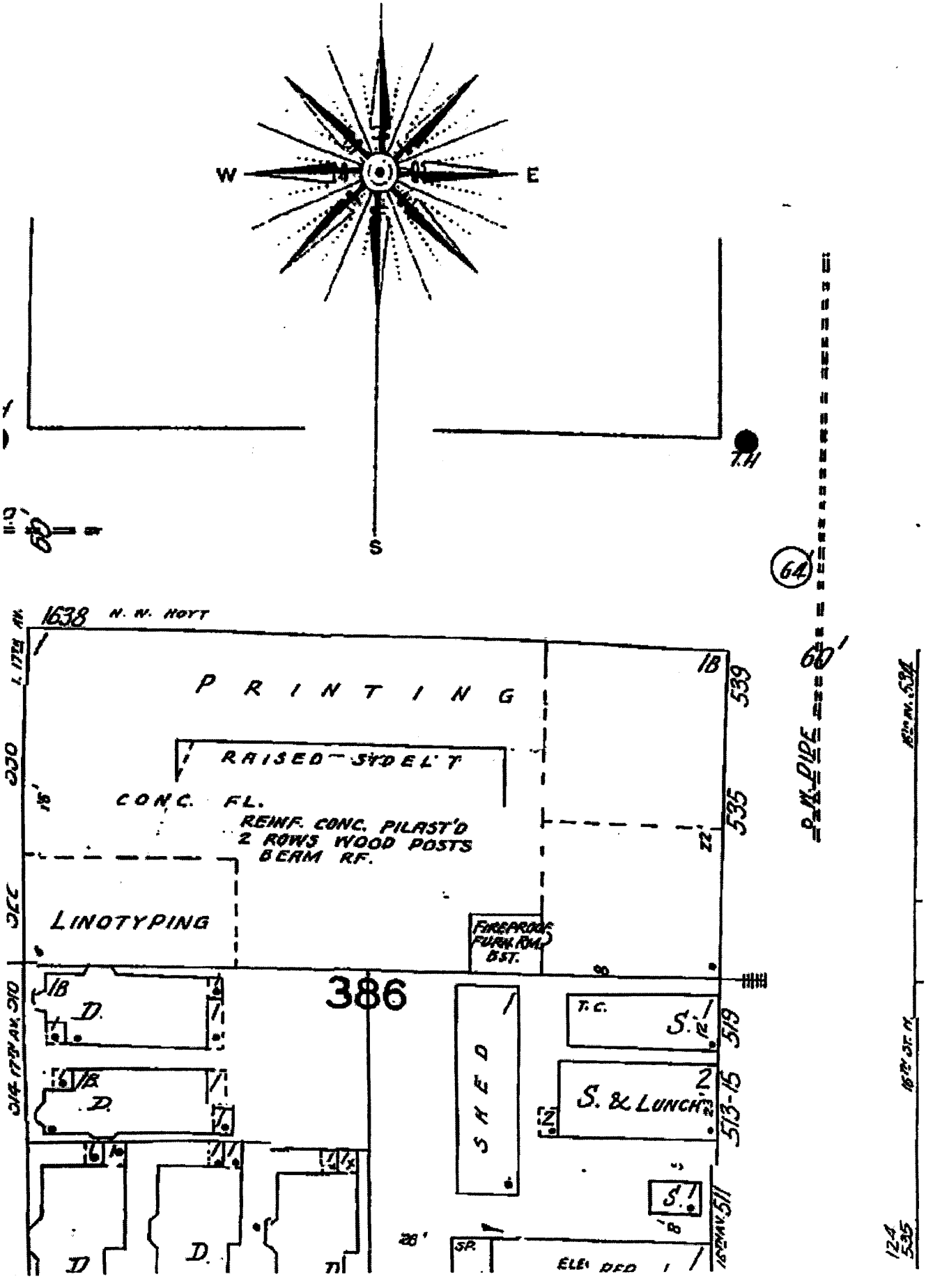
Photo 25 6. Interior View, 1958 Addition, Basement, Looking W
7. 25 of 26

Photo 26 6. Interior Detail, 1958 Addition, Stairwell
7. 26 of 26



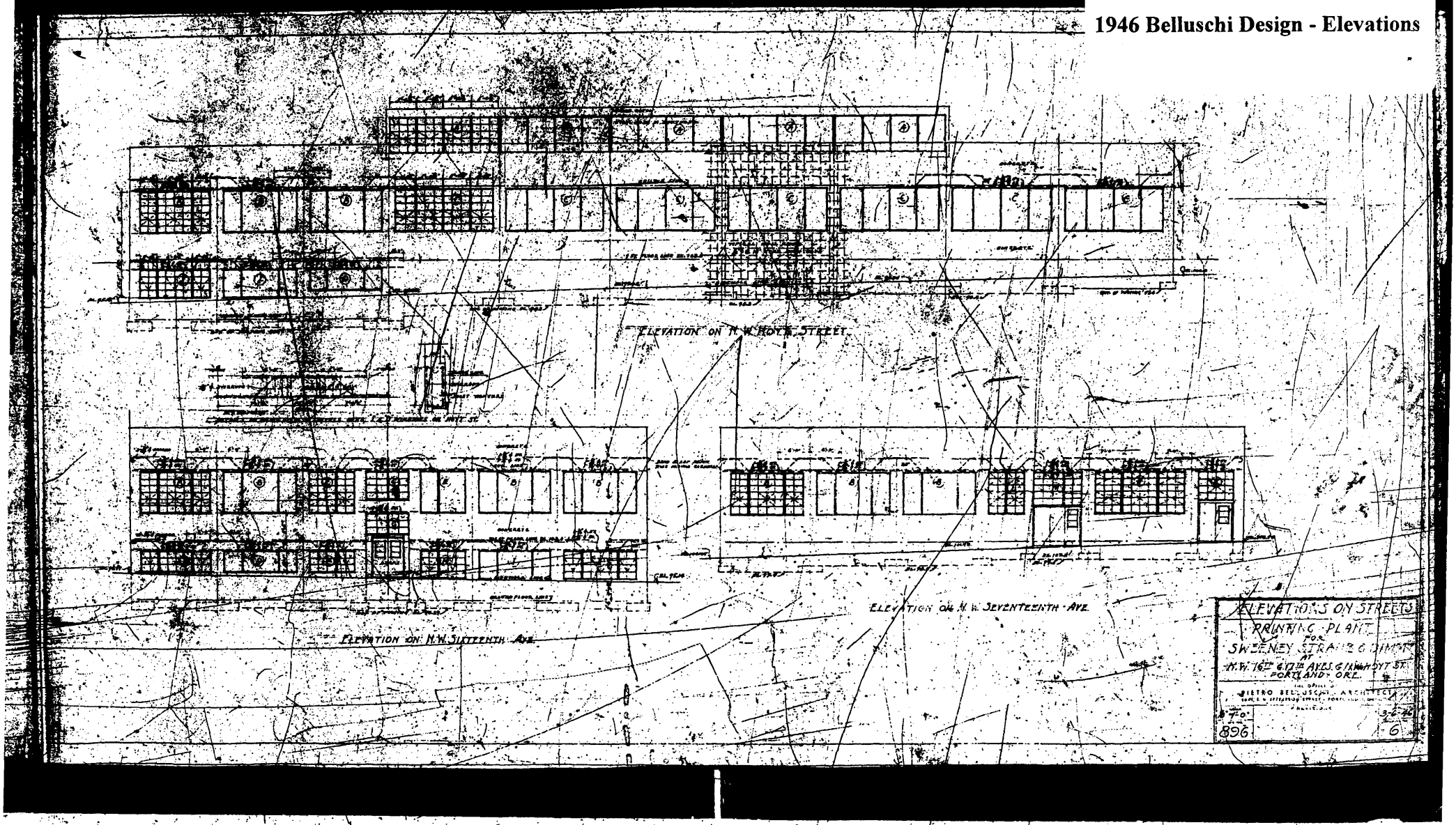
IN 1E 33AC
& INDEX
PORTLAND

Sanborn - 1950

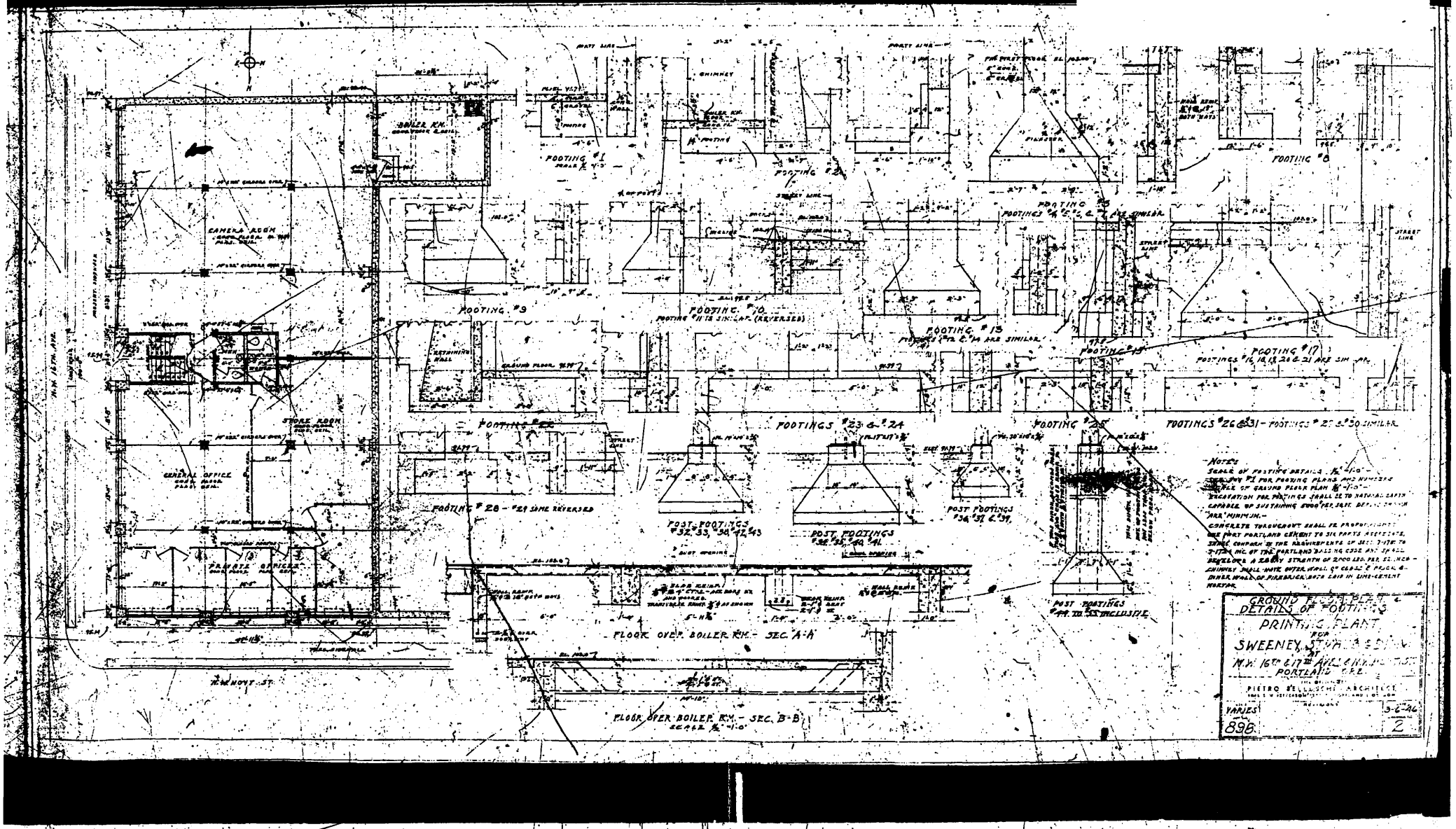


.../fetchimage?state=or&reelid=reel11&lcid=7439&imagename=00063&width=2903&crop=5 4/22/2003

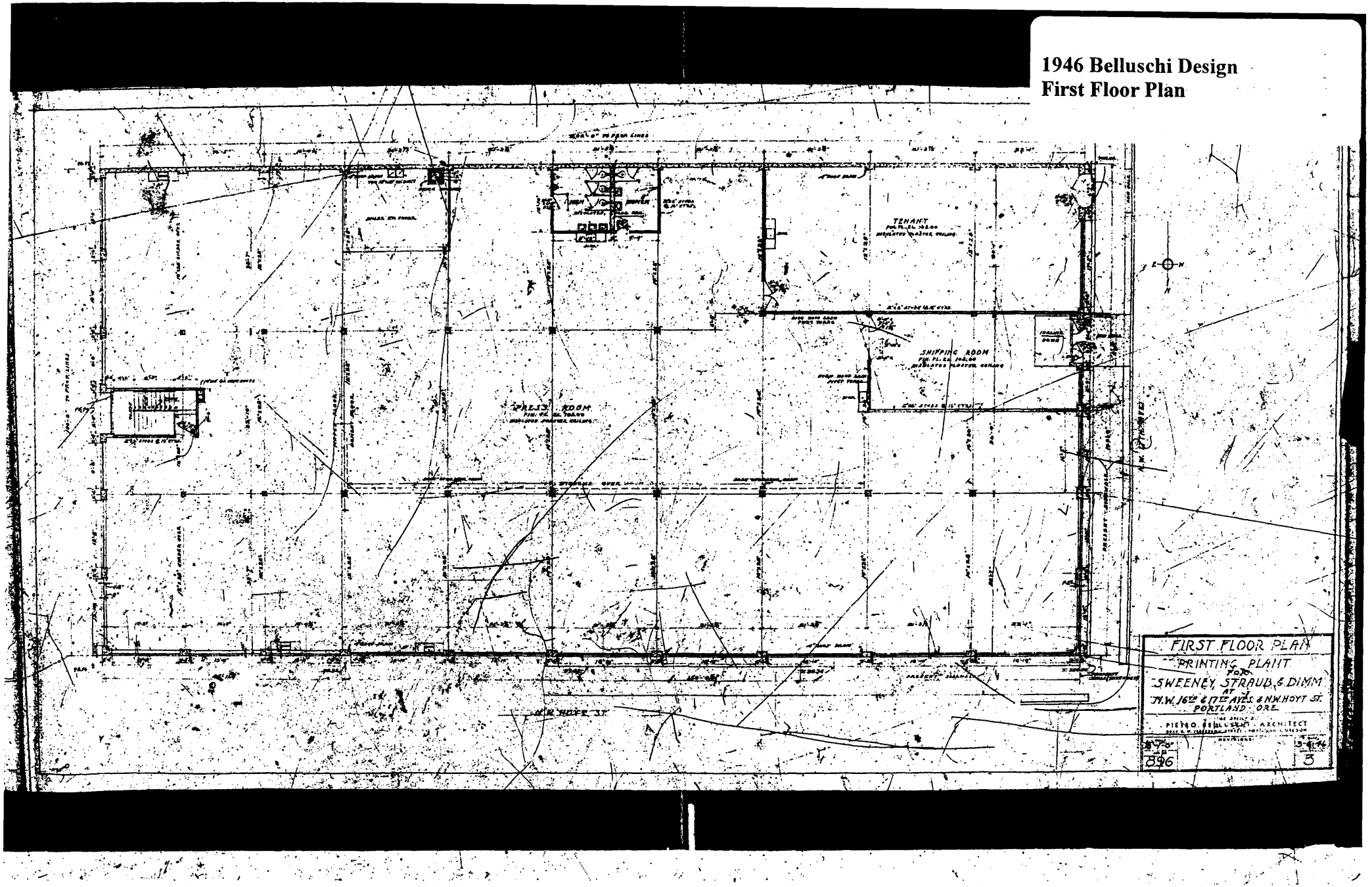
1946 Belluschi Design - Elevations

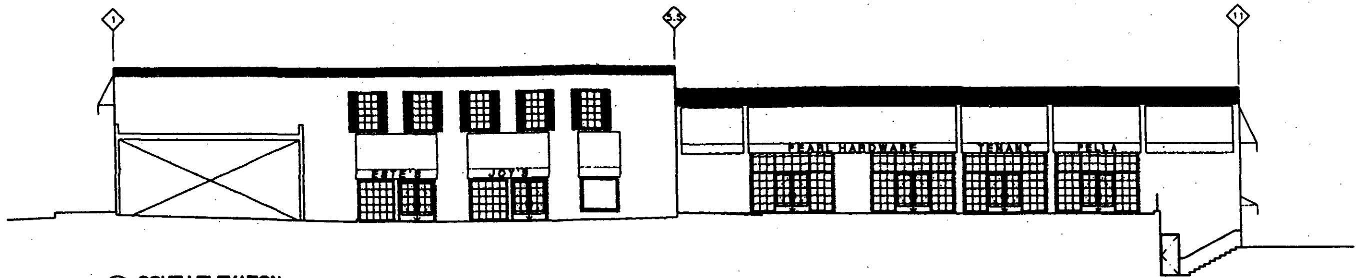


1946 Belluschi Design
Ground Floor Plan

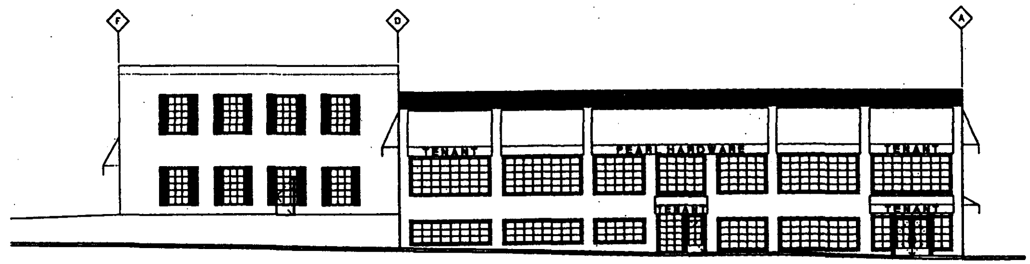


1946 Belluschi Design
First Floor Plan

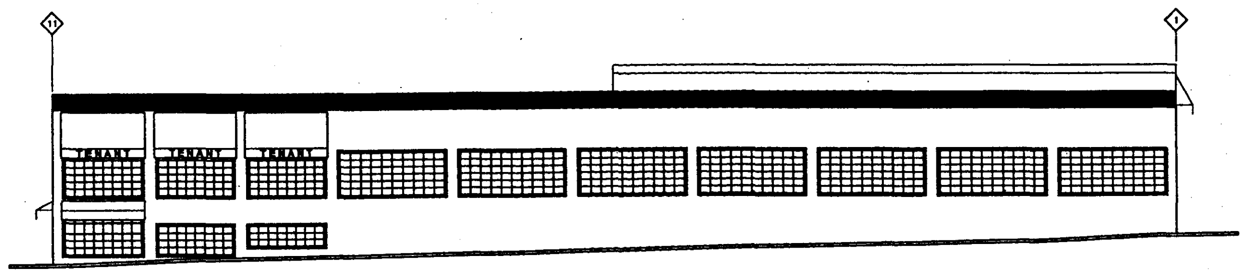




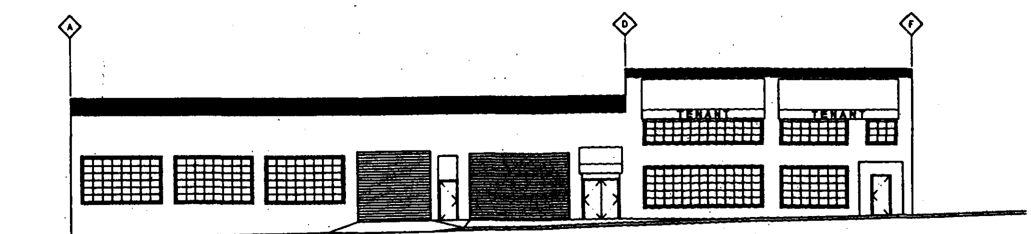
1 SOUTH ELEVATION
1/8"=1'-0"



2 EAST ELEVATION
1/8"=1'-0"



3 NORTH ELEVATION
1/8"=1'-0"



4 WEST ELEVATION
1/8"=1'-0"

NW 16TH AND GLISAN
BUILDING ELEVATIONS

MACKENZIE

A-1
7/23/03

Floor Plan - 2000