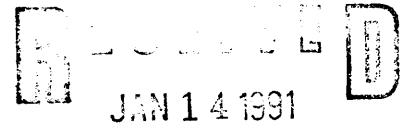


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**NATIONAL  
REGISTER**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Biltmore Apartments  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 2014 NW Glisan Street N/A not for publication  
city, town Portland N/A vicinity  
state Oregon code OR county Multnomah code 051 zip code 97210

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
[Signature] January 3, 1991  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Oregon State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register. 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] 2/20/91  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: multiple dwelling;  
apartment building

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Apartment Building

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals:  
Mediterranean

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls stucco

roof metal tile

other decorative wrought iron

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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### Setting and Description

The Biltmore Apartments are located at 2014 N.W. Glisan Street on Lots 1, 2 and 6 of Block 280 of Couch's Addition in Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon.

Designed by architect John H. Grant and completed in 1924, this building is best described as being in the Mediterranean style. However, it was designed with such restraint and good taste, for its time, that it has a timeless quality and looks surprisingly modern.

When it was built the Willamette Heights streetcar line went past on Glisan Street and the Couch Street playground was across the street. At that time, also, 20th Avenue went through from Glisan to Hoyt Street. Temple Beth Israel had not yet been built, and many of the Couch family mansions were still standing on their full block sites in the neighborhood including the C. H. Lewis house where Couch Park is now. Northwest 21st Avenue was already developed then as a neighborhood shopping street and the State Theater was around the corner on 21st. It was a very quiet, comfortable neighborhood then, without many automobiles parked at the curb; and many deliveries were still being made with horse-drawn vehicles.

The building is constructed with concrete exterior walls, stuccoed, and now painted a light gray color. The base of the building projects 2 inches and is ornamented with cast medallions of a rotated squared design. There is a projecting belt course at every floor ornamented with the same medallions. At the corner bays and at the entry court, large vertical panels of cast-stone ornament occur at every floor above the base. Below the parapet wall is a wide, bracketed cornice with a red metal tile roof.

The building occupies a 100 foot by 150 foot site with the long dimension on N.W. Glisan Street. Ample light and air are available for all apartments as the front entrance court is 40 feet wide and 40 feet deep. The narrower court at the rear backs up to the large court of the Embassy Apartments on Flanders Street, so that there is ample light there, too.

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Windows are wood, double-hung sash, in groups of two and three, six-over-one, except that the center sash of the three is wider, with ten-over-one.

The entrance is up a flight of six brick steps to a vestibule in a one-story projection with a metal tile roof. The glazed door and sidelights are set in an arched opening. The vestibule floor is ceramic tile. The inner door with sidelights opens to a short flight of gray marble steps to the first floor. The elevator is original except that panels have been fastened to the cab walls. The stair, also original, is wood with a wood banister and square balusters.

The apartment contains 49 units with a mix of 18 studio units, 27 one-bedroom units and 4 two-bedroom units. The interiors are in excellent repair. The original kitchen cabinets have been replaced as have the light fixtures, but the bathrooms still have their original tile floors and wainscots and mostly original fixtures. Doors are single panel doors. Floors are hardwood. Rooms have coved ceilings. These apartments are very much in demand and vacancies are infrequent.

### Comparison with Grant's Other Work

John Grant's work in Portland is not well known, and only four of his buildings have been identified. However, besides the Biltmore Apartments, he designed at least two other apartment houses. The 1926 Eglinton Arms at S.W. 12th Avenue and Alder Street is a 50 foot x 100 foot building on an interior lot with the greet front in the Tudor style. This building is nicely done and of excellent quality. His other apartment is the Acacia, also on a 50 foot x 100 foot site, at 1034 N.W. 21st Avenue. This was constructed a little earlier. On a corner site, this is very tastefully and simply done with slight Spanish overtones. These three apartments make it clear that Grant was a capable architect; but of the three, the Biltmore is by far his major work as well as comparing favorably with the designs of other contemporary apartments. Its excellent design, quality construction and good state of repair makes it an important example of apartment design.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1924  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1924  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

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

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

John H. Grant, architect  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property 0.34 acres Portland, Oregon-Washington 1:24000

UTM References

A 

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

C 

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B 

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Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated area encompasses Lots 1, 2 and 6 of Block 280 of Couch's Addition to the City of Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon. The property is bounded by NW Glisan Street on the north and NW 20th Avenue on the east.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated area corresponds to the legally recorded lot lines of property occupied by the Biltmore Apartments from 1924 onward.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title John M. Tess, President with Richard E. Ritz, FAIA

organization Heritage Investment Corporation date July, 1990

street & number 123 NW Second Avenue, Suite 200 telephone (503) 228-0272

city or town Portland state Oregon zip code 97209

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**SUMMARY**

The Biltmore Apartments occupy a 100 x 150-foot lot at the southwest corner of the intersection of NW Glisan and 20th Avenue in the Nob Hill neighborhood of northwest Portland, Oregon. Constructed for the Commodore Investment Company in 1924, the Biltmore was designed in the conservative "Free Classic" manner, updated by Mediterranean motifs. Plans were prepared by John H. Grant, an architect known to have designed two other apartment houses in the addition to this, The Acacia (1923), 1034 NW 21st Avenue, and the Eglinton Arms (1926), SW 12th and Alder, both of them half size of the Biltmore.

The Biltmore is significant locally under National Register Criterion C as the exemplary work in the 1920s apartment house genre by architect John Grant. Little is known about the architect to date, except his output in apartment buildings. Grant earlier had practiced architecture in Montana and was reciprocally licensed in Oregon on settling in Portland.

The Nob Hill district of northwest Portland is noted for an extensive array of genteel, upper middle-scale apartment houses of the early 20th Century. Those which stand out in a field where solid construction and quality craftsmanship are the norm are the more sizable buildings that achieve the optimum in arrangement of comfortable living space, provision for light and air, and fitness of decorative program. The Biltmore meets this standard. Moreover, it is enhanced by the school/park setting that spreads out before it and by the expansive rear light court it shares with The Embassy, an apartment building that backs up to the Biltmore with a mirror-image footprint.

The Biltmore is a substantial, flat-roofed, U-shaped volume of concrete construction, five stories in height, finished entirely in stucco. It present its major frontage on NW Glisan Street, where the portico is centered on the axis of the entrance court. The north-facing Glisan Street facade overlooks the Couch School park. Street facades have a conventional, formal Chicago School organization in which vertical and horizontal elements are carefully balanced. A taut and understated decorative program is carried out essentially in relief work of cast stone, with accents of metal tile and wrought iron. The ground course is smooth-finished stucco, unarticulated except for stylized paterae setting

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off the major bays. The second through fifth stories are demarcated horizontally by flat belt courses decorated with paterae. The outer bays are framed by scrolled cartouches in vertical inset panels. The parapet is encircled by a pent eave on outriggers that is clad with metal tile. Window openings are unframed, except for lug sills, and are fitted with double-hung wood assemblies with multi-paned upper sash. Windows are paired or arranged in three-part groupings reminiscent of Chicago-style windows, and all have strong vertical divisions, or mullions.

The single most atmospheric feature of the exterior is the portico, which is a cubic volume with round-arched portal capped by a bracketed, hip roof, originally tile-clad, that has a wrought iron upper deck railing. Arch spandrels are decorated with paterae. The portico is flanked by buttresses terminated by reverse-curve scroll decoration. Stairway cheeks are surmounted by elegant wrought iron torcheres. In keeping with the Mediterranean theme, wrought iron is used also for balconies at the corridor heads superposed at each story above the main entrance. The interior circulation pattern, so clearly expressed on the exterior, is intact. The front door and vestibule are finished with fine oak woodwork, plate glass panel doors with side lights and leaded glass transoms, and ceramic floor tiles--all original. The building houses 49 units, representing a mix of studio and one and two-bedroom units, most of which are replete with original coved ceilings, woodwork and fixtures.



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The 1924 Biltmore Apartment Building is located In Northwest Portland in the Nob Hill neighborhood.

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

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

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

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

Much of the population growth in Portland was absorbed in Nob Hill, an area which had previously been distinguished by its stately mansions, owned by many of the city's leading families. Some of

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these mansions still remain, including the Ayer-Shea residence and the George Heusner residence, both on the National Register. However, many of the mansions were replaced in the first two decades of this century by apartment houses and other developments. The area became, and remains to this day, an intensely urban concentration of residential, commercial, and institutional uses. It boasts a number of properties listed or eligible for the National Register. Besides the mansions listed above, these include the Ormonde Apartments, the Campbell Hotel, Trinity Episcopal Church, and the Belle Court Apartments.

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

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

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

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The 1960's and 1970's saw a re-birth of the neighborhood, as families were moving back and older homes were being restored. The Northwest District Association was created in an effort to restore the neighborhood. The elegant days of the late 1800's are long gone, but historically and architecturally significant structures in the Nob Hill district still exist. This character is preserved through the residences and apartment houses that were built during this period.

History of the Building

The Biltmore Apartment Building was constructed for the Commodore Investment Company in 1923 and 1924, years that were high points of building during Portland's great architectural boom of the early 1920s. On New Year's Day, 1925, The Oregonian reported, "Construction activity in Portland during the year just closed broke all previous records and placed the city in the front rank among municipalities of the entire country from the standpoint of building." Building permits for 1923 numbered 15,457 at a total value of \$25,247,135 (The Oregonian, 1 Jan. 1925), and as the Portland City Directory for 1924 noted, "The past few years have been busy ones in building new structures in Portland, and the advance in apartment houses and hotels has been especially marked." (PCD, 1924, p. 10)

At a height of five stories and a cost of \$250,000 the Biltmore was one of the most noticeable of these new apartment buildings. A building permit was issued on August 15, 1923. The first public mention of the Biltmore was a small notice in The Oregonian on August 19, 1923 announcing the letting of a contract by Commodore Investment Company for a four-story, \$250,000 building to be built at 640 Glisan Street. The contractors were McHolland Brothers, and the plans were designed by John H. Grant. Excavation was begun in late August 1923 and an elevator was installed on December 3, 1923.

Over the course of the ensuing winter the apartment house was constructed with the resulting structure eventually comprising five rather than four stories. The building was ready for occupancy on May 1, 1924 and was billed as the "latest edition to Nob Hill multiple dwelling group" (Oregon-Journal, 13 Apr. 1924) and as "similar to the latest type of New York Apartment" (The Oregonian,

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13 Apr. 1924). The site it occupied was 100 by 150 feet with the west line of the plot being 11 feet from the building in order to allow abundant light for all apartments. Floors were divided into 49 apartment suites of 3, 4 and 5 rooms. The architectural style of the building was Mission style with Spanish tile cornice, cast stone trimmings, and plaster finishing on the exterior. The original owners, the Commodore Investment Company (of which Julius C. Friendly was president and Jacob Rosenthal secretary and treasurer).

John H. Grant

John H. Grant came to Portland in 1922 from Montana where he had been a registered architect. Grant became licensed in Oregon in 1922 by reciprocity, receiving license no. 147. He practiced in Portland from 1922 to 1939 but the only work besides the Biltmore Apartments, which has been identified as his, is the 1926 Eglinton Arms Hotel at S.W. 12th and Alder Streets.

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Bibliography

Historic Resource Inventory.

"Apartment Contract Let," The Oregonian, 19 Aug. 1923, S.2, p. 2.

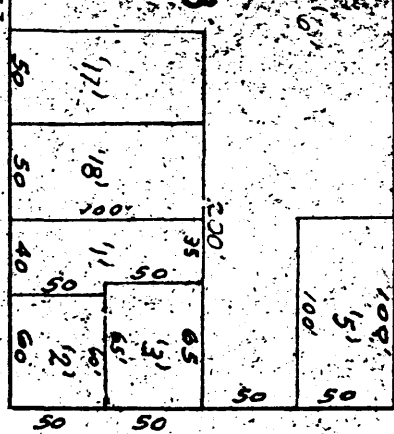
"Apartments Nearly Ready," The Oregonian, 13 Apr. 1924, S.2, p. 1.

"Construction for 1924 Exceeds Any Recorded," The Oregonian, 1 Jan. 1925, S. 5, p. 13.

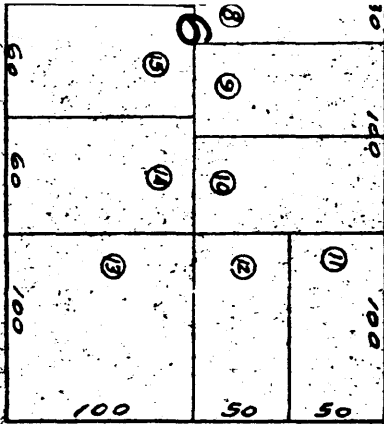
"New Apartment Estimated to Cost \$250,000," The Oregon-Journal, 13 Apr. 1924, S.2, p. 16.

Portland City Directory, 1924, 1925.

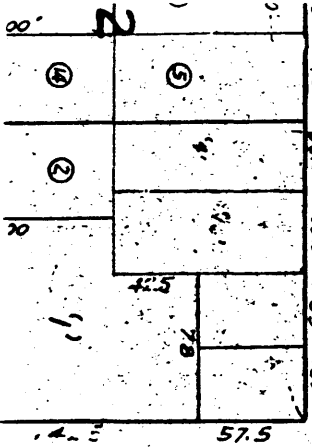
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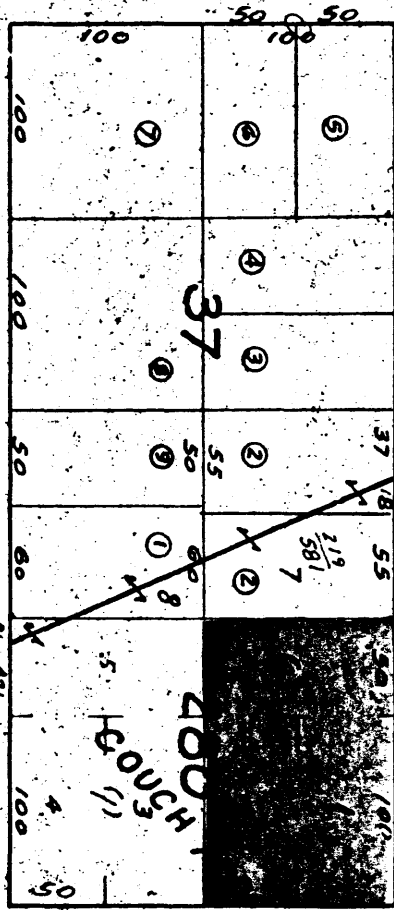
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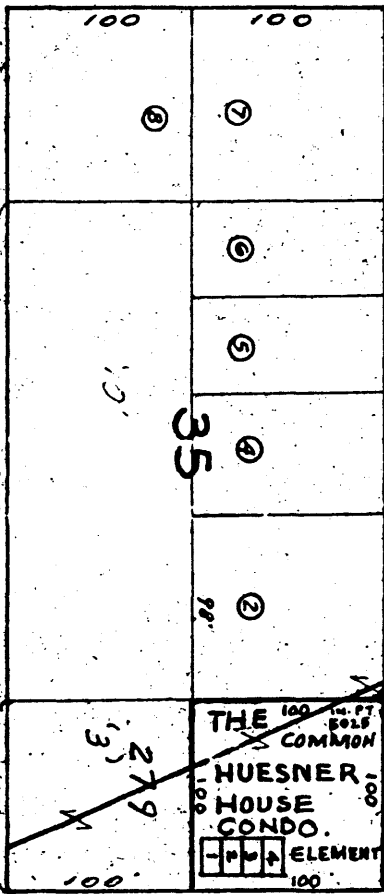
NW 21<sup>ST</sup> AVE.



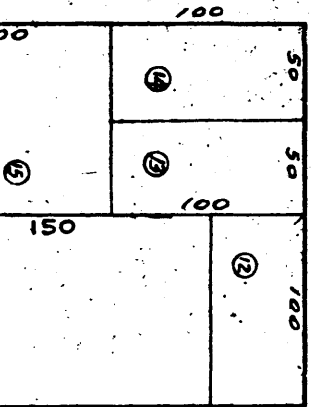
NW GLISAN ST.



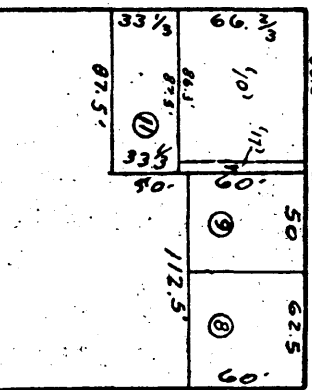
NW FLANDERS ST.



NW 20<sup>TH</sup> AVE.



NW EVERETT ST.



NT ↑

Historic  
Resource  
Inventory  
CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON



2-336-02014

2014 N.W. Glisan Street

Couch's, Block 280, Lots 1, 2, 6

QUARTER SECTION MAP #: 3027

Northwest District Association

OTHER NAMES: Biltmore Apartments

ORIGINAL FUNCTION: Apartment House

DATE BUILT: 1924

STYLE: Mediterranean

ARCHITECTURAL PLANS BY: Grant, John H.

ORIGINAL OWNER: Commodore Investment Company

TAX ASSESSOR'S ACCOUNT #: R-18022-7490 7520

ZONING: RH

Rank III

HISTORIC DISTRICT: Nob Hill (potential)

SPECIAL FEATURES AND MATERIALS:

Flat roof. Bracketed cornice below parapet with metal tiles. Decorative cast-stone panels. Wrought-iron balconies and light standards. Entrance has round-headed opening and roof similar to roof cornice.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

2-336-02014

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

City of Portland Buildings Bureau microform and card files.

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

Grant, John H., apartment building for Commodore Investment Company, plans, 1923, City of Portland Buildings Bureau Microfiche Collection.

OLD ADDRESS: 640 Glisan Street

ORIGINAL BUILDING PERMIT #: 128305

Present owners, as of May 1980: Friendly Rosenthal Foundation, Inc.  
MAILING ADDRESS: 2014 N.W. Glisan Street, Portland 97209

No Preservation Funding

Negative: 565-17

Score - Design/Construction: 8

Score - Historical: 0

Score - Rarity: 0

Score - Environment: 6

Score - Integrity: 10

Score - Intrinsic: 8

Score - Contextual: 16

Score - Total: 44