

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0675555

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RECEIVED APR 8 1979

DATE ENTERED

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

HISTORIC

Central Building, Public Library of Multnomah County

AND/OR COMMON

Multnomah County Library

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

801 SW Tenth Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Portland

--NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1st

-- VICINITY OF

STATE

Oregon

CODE
41COUNTY
MultnomahCODE
051

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

 DISTRICT BUILDING(S) STRUCTURE SITE OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

 PUBLIC PRIVATE BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

 IN PROCESS BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

 OCCUPIED UNOCCUPIED WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

 YES: RESTRICTED YES: UNRESTRICTED NO

PRESENT USE

 AGRICULTURE COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Multnomah County, Property Management Division

STREET & NUMBER

1021 SW Fourth Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Portland

-- VICINITY OF

STATE
Oregon

97204

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Multnomah County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

1021 SW Fourth Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Portland

STATE
Oregon

97204

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Portland Historical Landmark

DATE

February 1970

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Portland Bureau of Planning

CITY, TOWN

424 SW Main Street
PortlandSTATE
Oregon

97204

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Central Building was begun in 1912 and completed in August 1913 to be the main library, administration offices, and central support facility for the Public Library of Multnomah County, and it continues as such today. It was described in the architect's words as being in the "Georgian Style," though it is now regarded one of Oregon's outstanding landmarks of Pre-Modern architecture, and it is the acknowledged masterpiece of Portland architect A. E. Doyle. The building is three story, 150-foot width by 178-foot deep, with a partial cellar, occupying the full block bounded by Southwest Tenth and Eleventh Avenues and Yamhill and Taylor Streets. It is in the western side of the downtown central business district in an area of low to medium height office, medical, and retail buildings. The site slopes up to the southwest corner at SW 11th Avenue and Taylor Street. The building is set back from the property lines on the south, east, and north sides behind a sandstone balustrade with benches, lanterns, a fountain, and a landscaped yard. The principal elevation faces east.

Construction is of reinforced concrete frame throughout, with spread footings, spiral tied columns, one-way pan joist-and-beam floor slabs. Walls are finished on the exterior with "Wilkinson Sandstone" veneer (a change from the Bedford-Indiana-Limestone originally proposed) on the basement story and red Mission Brick, Washington Brick and Terra Cotta Co. Flemish Bond, for the first and second stories, with sandstone corner pilasters, window sills, casings and trim, cornice, and parapet. Roofing is of built-up asphalt composition.

The building was originally organized around the central bookstacks, combining a generally symmetrically-arranged plan of reading and reference rooms, children's library, administration offices, service rooms, and staff rooms. One passenger and one freight elevator were provided. The patented metal bookstack system with marble flooring panels was by Sneed & Company Iron Works.

Public entrance was through three portals with wrought iron gates and wood doors into a vestibule, which, in turn, gave in the main lobby through inside doorways. Finishes are fumed oak, painted ornamental plaster work and plaster walls, marble bases and stairs and scagliola finished columns representing white marble with black and grey veining. The central staircase opposite the entrance across the lobby divides at the first landing and ascends in two flights to the second floor lobby. The second floor lobby had a central oculus in its ceiling up through the third floor lobby to a circular leaded glass skylight, which opening/^{was} closed in 1951 for safety purposes, according to a memo. The upper flights of stairs are similarly lighted by a leaded glass skylight. Skylights for lobby, stairs, and bookstacks are covered at the roof by copper sheet metal framed double pitched and hipped glazed skylights and ventilators.

All rooms were originally furnished with desks, tables, chairs, and bookshelves locally manufactured to the architect's designs. Some of the original furnishings remain, principally a few reading tables, and several of the original Windsor type chairs by the Oregon Chair Company. Furniture and woodwork throughout were "fumed oak" with "hand rubbed varnish" finish. Where metal doors and casings are found, they are painted and grained to match the oak. Interior plastered walls and ornamental plaster were painted in plain warm colors. Records indicate that interior decoration was planned by a local designer and artist, Harry Wentz.

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Exterior ornament, stone carving, commemorative plaques, graphics, and wrought iron work was designed in the architect's office. The original interior incandescent lighting fixtures were designed and manufactured by the J. C. English Company of Portland.

During the early design phase, the building was raised 2½ feet and the present perimeter landscaping, balustraded fence and seats were added.

The building has undergone an almost continuous series of alterations and modernizations during its 65 years without significantly changing its basic plan or volume. Originally designed with an oil-fired steam boiler heating system and "fan forced washed air ventilation system," the building now is supplied with steam from the central Pacific Power and Light Company system and the boiler rooms are used for additional bookstacks. A new bookstack elevator occupies the former smokestack space. To accomodate expanded services and new programs following the Second World War, major alterations were completed in 1956 by the architectural firm of Church, Newberry & Roehr (principally to the former periodical room, children's room, public toilets, Library Hall, administrative offices, and lobbies, and to mechanical and electrical systems).

Subsequent alterations were made in the 1960s by Stewart & Richardson (later Stewart Richardson, Allen, McMath Architects) and in the 1970s by the succeeding firm of Allen, McMath, Hawkins Architects. These involved the children's room, lighting, second floor lobby (catalog area), floor finishes, work room, computer services, and front lobby desk alterations. At some time during the alterations, the original plaster cast statue of the "Lemnian Athena" by P. P. Caproni which had graced the central niche in the second floor lobby was removed and no record kept of its disposition.

A central tower to house "additions to stack room" was planned in 1948 by the successor to the A. E. Doyle architect's office, Pietro Belluschi, but, mercifully, was not constructed. An International Modern scheme using polished marble, glass, and aluminum very like Belluschi's 1948 Equitable Building or his slightly later Oregonian Building, would have risen like a toadstool from a garden-bed from Doyle's restrained period work.

While the loss of furnishings and original artwork and certain alterations made to the building may now be regretted, the overall quality of the original building remains complete. Maintenance and general condition is excellent, with the exception of some severe disintegration of original exterior stonework and vandal-damaged wrought iron work.

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Excellent records are presently available to study the building's history and evolution. Microfilmed construction drawings and specifications are filed with the City of Portland Building Department. The Library Association of Portland has file copies of original construction blueprints from construction through all alterations as well as detailed construction correspondence and photographic records. The firm of Allen, McMath, Hawkins Architects maintains files of historical and contemporary work on the building. The original A. E. Doyle drawings and construction records are with the Pietro Belluschi records given to the George Arents Research Library, Syracuse University, New York. Assorted photographs, notes and clippings are kept in the library of the Oregon Historical Society, Portland. The architectural firm of Church, Newberry, and Roehr has been succeeded by Newberry, Shuette, and Wheeler, and has kept the 1950s records on file.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1912-1913 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Albert E. Doyle

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Central Library Building is the acknowledged masterpiece of leading Portland architect Albert E. Doyle. It is significant to the state as an outstanding landmark of Pre-Modern architecture in which academic conventions of a period style--The Georgian Revival--were applied economically in a balanced statement expressive of its function. The building was decorated and furnished by several noted artisans and local manufacturers, including, in the former category, apprentice architect Jamieson Parker and designer Harry F. Wentz. The General Contractor was Pearson Construction Company. Clerk-of-the-Works was Mr. C. A. Merriam. The fact that the Library is still regarded a handsome and functional building demonstrates the skill with which Doyle fulfilled his commission. The Library continues to be one of the most admired buildings in Portland. It is also a monument to the social and political changes which brought forth the modern public library system.

The Public Library of Multnomah County Central Building was designed, beginning in 1911, to be a collaboration between the architect A. E. Doyle (Doyle, Patterson & Beach, Architects) and the Librarian, Miss Mary Francis Isom, which incorporated the most progressive, state-of-the-art, public library theories within the Beaux-Arts architecture of the 1910s. According to contemporary accounts, the resulting building met everyone's best expectations and placed Portland and Miss Isom in the forefront of public library facilities and direction.

A. E. Doyle received his initial architectural apprenticeship in the Portland architectural firm of Whidden and Lewis. He went to New York in 1903 where he studied at Columbia University and also worked in the office of Henry Bacon. In 1906, he left New York for one year of study and travel in Europe. Returning to Portland, he opened his own office in 1907. With the addition of partners W. B. Patterson in 1908 and J. G. Beach in 1911, the firm of Doyle, Patterson, and Beach became the leading architectural office in the region, and it was responsible for the design of a significant number of Portland's important commercial buildings. In addition to the buildings, Doyle's office was instrumental in launching the careers of many of Portland's leading architects of the mid-20th century and today.

The Librarian for the Portland Library Association from 1902 to 1920, Miss Mary Francis Isom, was born in Nashville, Tennessee in 1865. She studied at Wellesley College and learned library science at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. She was brought to Portland in 1901 to catalog the John Wilson Collection. The Wilson Library was a gift to the Portland Library Association in 1900. The collection consisted of some 8000 volumes and manuscripts and was given on the condition that it be used for "reference only," and would be "free to the citizens of Portland under such rules and regulations as the Directors may think proper to make." The Wilson Library gift was of such importance that, along

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY ca. 1 (40,000 sq. ft.)
UTM REFERENCES See attached USGS map, Portland, Oregon.

A	1 0	5 2 4 8 4 0	5 0 4 0 4 7 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All of Block 250, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Alfred Staehli, AIA

ORGANIZATION

DATE
May 1978

STREET & NUMBER

317 SE 62nd Avenue

TELEPHONE
(503) 235-3515

CITY OR TOWN

Portland

STATE
Oregon 97215

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE March 3, 1979

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE 6-11-79

~~DIRECTOR, NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC LANDS AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION~~

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

W. Ray Jones

DATE June 6, 1979

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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with its provisions for free access by the public and the modern library background of Miss Isom, it was to transform Portland's subscription library into the present County Public Library.

The Minutes of the Library Association record that the New York architectural firm of Carrere and Hastings was first considered for the Central Building project, and that they were subsequently paid for sketches they submitted. The idea of a competition was considered and rejected. The A. E. Doyle firm was awarded the project late in 1911.

The architecture of the Central Building reflects in every detail the melding of gifted architectural design, library science leadership, and the progressive social changes occurring in the early 1910s. From the correspondence between Miss Isom and Mr. Doyle during the design and construction, Miss Isom's "weekly letters," and from the dedicatory addresses given in September 1913, a positive sense of the high degree of collaboration between the Librarian and the Architect can be seen. In Doyle's address, he describes the unhappy state of library design he encountered throughout the country while planning the project, and it appears that Miss Isom would tolerate nothing less than perfection in the meeting of her library administration standards. Doyle concisely stated the program and its solution in his address: "Miss Isom's original idea of building the building around a stack room has been adhered to, and the disposition and relation of the rooms according to her definite ideas of library administration have been carried out, so there were not many compromises for the sake of architecture, and there were not many necessary, as it was possible to give honest architectural expression to the practical requirements of the building." This was a very modern statement of architectural philosophy from a 1913 Beaux-Arts architect.

Innovations appearing in the 1913 building were a children's library, outreach facilities for school and branch libraries, separate staff entrances and service rooms, and a general plan developed to emphasize openness and accessibility to the public. It is only within the last few years that dogs have been barred from the reading rooms.

The erection of such an important public building in Portland attracted considerable local interest. The Oregon Manufacturers' Association wrote in 1912 requesting the use of Oregon materials in its construction; and, indeed, many of the products used in the building were of Oregon manufacture, most notably the custom lighting fixtures and the furniture. Local artisans continued the tradition of excellence in architectural craftsmanship, the execution of the ornamental plasterwork, finish carpentry, stone carving, and masonry.

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The extensive use of ornamental graphics throughout the building is especially noteworthy. The appropriate degree of restraint with which graphic art was employed as a complement to the architectural design is generally acclaimed. Sketches for all ornamental work were produced in Doyle's office. The carved inscriptions used in the frieze, under window panels and outdoor seats were designed by 17-year old Jamieson K. Parker, an apprentice architectural draftsman in Doyle's office who later continued with his studies preparatory to becoming a leading Portland architect with his own office in the 1920s.

Heavy use has necessitated some interior surface change and adaptive remodeling. Although spaces have been reapportioned to meet current needs, the original spatial qualities have been preserved. The building's exterior has matured with little apparent change. It appears certain that A. E. Doyle and Miss Mary Francis Isom's Central Library Building will continue to quietly evolve to meet changing library needs and to serve many future generations of Portland citizens.

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Public Library of Multnomah County, Central Building, Portland, Oregon, Library Association of Portland, Oregon, 1913. Dedication booklet.

Vaughan, Thomas and McMath, George, A Century of Portland Architecture, Oregon Historical Society, 1964.

Anderson, Katherine E., Historical Sketch of the Library Association of Portland, 1864-1964, Library Association of Portland, Oregon, 1964.

Vaughan, Thomas, ed., Space, Style and Structure: Building in Northwest America, Portland, Oregon Historical Society, 1974, "After the Fair", George McMath, pp. 325-340.