

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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 Pacific Building
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 520 SW Yamhill Street
city, town Portland
state Oregon code OR county Multnomah code 051 zip code 97204

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: [X] private, [ ] public-local, [ ] public-State, [ ] public-Federal
Category of Property: [X] building(s), [ ] district, [ ] site, [ ] structure, [ ] object
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 1, Noncontributing buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total 1

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 [X] 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. [ ] See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official: [Signature]
Date: January 3, 1992
State or Federal agency and bureau: Oregon State Historic Preservation Office

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:
[X] entered in the National Register.
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register.
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[ ] removed from the National Register.
[ ] other, (explain:)
Signature of the Keeper: [Signature]
Date of Action: 3/5/92

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: office building

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: office building

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

HISTORIC PERIOD STYLE Italian Renaissance

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK, TERRA COTTA

roof OTHER/Mission Tile

other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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The Pacific Building, completed in 1926, <sup>1</sup> was built by the estate of prominent pioneer business leader and U.S. Senator, Henry W. Corbett. Designed by architect, Albert E. Doyle, in the Italian Renaissance style, the ten story, reinforced concrete structure occupies an important site facing Downtown Portland's most historic landmark, the 1875, Pioneer Courthouse. The Italian Renaissance style is expressed in the rusticated base, arched entrance and classical cornice, all in terra cotta. Harmonious walls of plain brick, punctuated with simple, steel casement windows, form the body of the two hundred foot long structure. Coloring of both brick and terra cotta is in shades of warm beige/gray. Atop the three street facades is a low pitched, hip-roof with shed dormers covered in red mission tile. Renaissance detail is continued in the entrance and elevator lobby with its coffered, vaulted ceiling, arched openings and Roman detailing in marble, bronze and plaster. Storefronts and the lobby were substantially altered over the years, particularly during the 1950s and 60s. During the 1980s, these areas have been rehabilitated and restored.

### SETTING

Since Portland's earliest days, the Pacific Building site had been owned and occupied by H.W. Corbett and his family. Corbett acquired the entire block in 1851, the year the twenty four year old native of Westboro, Mass., came to Portland from New York City. The block is bound by Fifth and Sixth Avenues and Taylor and Yamhill Streets (see maps). Within a few years, Corbett and his wife decided to settle in Portland and built a modest house on the site. The area was then a residential district well away from the commercial center to the north and east along the Willamette River.

Corbett prospered and in 1875 he built a large, elegant "mansion" on the south side of the block facing Taylor Street. A few years later, across Taylor Street to the south, Corbett's business partner and brother-in-law also built a "mansion" on a full block site. In 1925 it was razed for the fifteen story Public Service Building, completed in 1928 and also designed by Albert E. Doyle in the Italian Renaissance style.

Corbett died in 1903, outliving his two sons, Henry J. and Hamilton F., both of whom passed away in early manhood. His widow, Emma, lived in the house until a few months before her death in 1936. Since the time of the first house, the Corbett's had maintained a cow on the property for fresh milk. The pasture was located on the north half of the block, later the site of the Pacific Building. As the area urbanized after the 1890s, the Corbett cow became a source of local amusement and caught the attention of observers across the country. In a 1917 article on Portland in Collier's Weekly, writer Wilbur Hall commented on the "\$60,000 cow pasture" right in the middle of the city. Wilbur wondered whether the Corbett cow pasture was a symbol of the kind of mind that dominated Portland, one that, "scorns to consider change." <sup>2</sup>

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But change did occur. Portland's commercial development had been moving south and west: McKim, Mead & White's Portland Hotel on the block west of the U.S. Courthouse (now Pioneer Courthouse) was completed in 1890; the Marquam and Goodnough buildings, north of the Portland Hotel and east of the Courthouse respectively were erected in the mid-90s; the ten story Corbett Building (also built by the H.W. Corbett Estate) rose on the 1/4 block north of the Goodnough Building; and the Meier & Frank's store building north of the Courthouse expanded in 1909 and again in 1915.

By the early 1920s, the post-war real estate boom was in full swing and property values were rising. The Corbett grandsons who managed the Estate were concerned about the escalation of property taxes. At the same time their step-grandmother, Emma Corbett, then nearing eighty years, wished to remain in the family home. (Emma Corbett was Henry W. Corbett's second wife. His first wife and mother of his two sons died in 1865. The three grandsons were all children of Henry J. Corbett, oldest son of Henry W. Henry J. died in 1895.) In consultation with their real estate agents and advisors, the Strong & MacNaughton Trust Company, the grandsons came up with a plan to preserve the widow Corbett's lifestyle by building a highrise office structure on the north portion of the block that would generate sufficient income to carry the taxes on the entire block.<sup>3</sup> A 75'x200' parcel was dedicated to the new building. Adjacent to the south, a 25' strip was set aside for a ramp that would serve the basement parking. When the remainder of the block was sold in the 1930s, a 25' easement was maintained to provide for the ramp and protect the light, air and views from the south windows. Site clearance began in May 1925 and much sadness was registered when Mrs. Corbett's cow pasture and its unique grove of trees were removed. The Oregonian devoted an entire page to the proceedings:

"Logging operations in the heart of a metropolis were staged yesterday when buckers, sawyers and fallers began the deforestation of the Corbett block on Yamhill Street...Everyone who lives in Portland is familiar with the grove of majestic trees sprinkled over the lawn."

Henry Corbett had replaced the native fir with a number of more ornamental trees: One flowering tulip, three maples, one horse chestnut, a few holly and one distinctive almond, which most observers thought to be a peach tree. The twelve elms had been carried as little slips by Corbett himself on one of his return trips from the East in 1855. They came from his sister's home in the upstate New York town of Lansingburg. They would all have to go, except for the almond; its stump and roots were to be replanted in Washington Park. The Oregonian account continued:<sup>4</sup>

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"Nestling now in a forest of towering buildings, the old trees...are a breath from the past, but must leave now - no pun intended - so that another pile of brick and mortar and concrete and steel can have room. Man can make office buildings, but he never yet made a single tree. Considering the size and value of the site, probably \$500,000, it is the most expensive logging operation that has been conducted in this region."

The Oregonian concluded its essay on a philosophical note:

"This is a way that cities have...We take delight in cities, for they, too, are pleasing to the eye, and essential to the comfort and welfare of man. Yet often it seems to some of us that a city in its growth might sometimes grow round the trees and leave them there. For though land is valuable, and is priced by the foot, and is needed for commerce, the destruction of its esthetic values is wholly without an appraisal. But we know this tribute to sentiment is forbidden - now, The city is in haste." <sup>5</sup>

When the Pacific Building opened in the spring of 1926, it was the southern-most of the City's major office buildings. The leasing agents recognized this in their promotional brochure where they stated:

"The location of the Pacific Building in the new south of Morrison business district provides many unusual advantages. Although it is less than two minutes walk from the central downtown retail district, the building itself is outside the congested center of traffic. No street car lines operate either on Yamhill or Sixth Streets, which insures the tenant freedom from the incessant ringing of bells and roar of traffic too often found in other buildings."

Office and commercial development in Downtown Portland has continued to move south. Today, the Pacific Building is in the heart of the City with Light Rail at its front door and Pioneer Courthouse Square across the street to the northwest on the site of the Portland Hotel.

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**PLAN AND STRUCTURE**

Below the second level, the floor plan is a narrow rectangle, 75' along Fifth and Sixth Avenues and 200' along the full length of the block on Yamhill Street. Walls are built to the property line on all three street sides. A ramp on the south side leads to the basement which houses sixty parking spaces along with mechanical and electrical rooms, storage space, restrooms, a stairway to the first floor and two of the building's four main elevators. The Pacific Building was the first Portland office structure to provide underground parking for its tenants. On the street sides, the basement extends under the sidewalks to the curb lines.

Facing north and centered on the first floor is the main entrance, fifteen feet wide, which leads through a vestibule to the elevator lobby. The lobby which is the same width as the entrance extends to the south for the full width of the building. On the east side are four elevators and one of the two stairways. The second stair is located on the west side of the lobby along with a barber shop, lunch room and originally a "Cigar and News" counter, now part of the restaurant.

Since the building opened, stores and service businesses have occupied the remainder of the first floor. Originally there were eleven shop spaces - eleven remain today, though in a slightly different configuration. Most stores have mezzanines which were accommodated in the 20'-10" height of the first floor. All storefronts have entries from the sidewalk and the two shops flanking the building entrance also have doorways to the lobby.

Floors two through ten have identical, "E" shaped plans with the stems facing south. This shape allows light, air and views to each office. The elevator lobby along with the stairs and restrooms occupy the center bay on each floor. A typical floor had a seven foot wide east/west corridor that turned south at the center of the east and west wings. Offices, typically 21 feet deep, were located on both sides of the corridor. At present, this office plan has been maintained on the second, third, fourth and tenth floors. The corridors on floors five through nine have been removed and other alterations made to accommodate a large law firm. Featured on the second floor was a "Director's Room", a large conference room that was available to all tenants.

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By far the most interesting layout was the attic floor plan. Early in the planning stage, Doyle decided to move his office from the Worcester Building (also a Corbett property) to the new structure. He conceived of the attic space under the hipped roof as ideal for his drafting room and other studios. The "E" shape of typical lower floor plans is continued at the attic with the voids extended northward and left open for use as a roof top terrace. Each stem of the "E" is a rectangular pavilion. The center unit houses the elevator machine room while the east pavilion, which has an entrance loggia at the southwest corner, was occupied by representatives of the Corbett family. It continues today as the owner's suite. Extending along the north were six studios that were initially occupied by the Mazamas, a sculptor, two musicians, a commercial artist and a teacher of hand weaving. The Doyle office was situated in the west pavilion and on the tenth floor below where the public entry and business office were located. A private stairway led up to the drafting room, file room and library which occupied the southeast corner. While the attic spaces have been altered over the years, the attic level remains a favored location for architects and other tenants seeking studio type space.

Structural elements throughout the building are reinforced concrete: Foundations, columns, beams, floor joists and slabs, the roof structure and the exterior walls. Columns are organized in a square grid, generally spaced 17'-6" in each direction, and rest on individual footings, typically 7'-0" square by 2'-9" deep. Beams span north-south and joists, east-west. Non-bearing partitions were constructed of clay tile.

### EXTERIOR

The primary facade, facing north on Yamhill Street, is a near perfect "Golden Rectangle" (1:1.618), the "ideal" proportion that evolved from classical architecture and mathematics. Whether this was planned, or intuitive is not known. In any event, the facade has a pleasing proportion and provides appropriate containment for the south flank of the Pioneer Courthouse space.

The lower three floors form the base of the composition and are clad in beige/gray terra cotta, rusticated to simulate the stone coursing of a Renaissance palace. Typical "stones" are 34" wide x 12" high and are laid in common bond with two inch joints. The base and main wall above are basically flat and on the same plane. Only the first floor columns which are in the same plane as the walls give evidence of the structural grid.

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The central arched entry, twenty eight feet high, extends into the second floor space. Entrance is through four bronze doors, each with a single plate glass panel. The door frames and window framing above are also bronze and are detailed in classical fashion. Door mullions with scalloped panels extend to the intrados of the arch. At the door head and at the spring line of the arch are identical entablatures, each with a molded architrave, a reeded frieze panel, and a molded cornice with a dentil course. Multi-paned windows fill the openings above the doors and in the arch. On the columns flanking the entrance are original bronze and ribbed glass light fixtures, believed to have been designed by Fred Baker.

Bases and door head frames on the storefronts step downward along the slope of Yamhill Street while the masonry openings remain level at the top. Original storefronts featured a recessed doorway in an angled opening either at the center of the bay or to one side, large clear glass windows with classically detailed metal trim, granite bases, a header panel suitable for signage and upper windows covered with a grillage of ornamental spindles. Over the years, most storefronts underwent several remodelings. By 1986 when the owner began a rehabilitation program only five original doors and three metal grill panels remained and some of the terra cotta had been covered, damaged or removed. With SRG Architects, the owner developed storefront design standards which have now been implemented. All remaining original elements were preserved. New granite bases slightly different in color and texture from the original column bases were installed. New doors and window framing have been done in bronze anodized aluminum with profiles that closely match the original.

Windows at the second and third floor of the base are equally spaced as they also are at the upper floors. Window openings at the second floor are 3'-8" wide by 8'-0" high and at the third through tenth floor, 7'-0" high. Each window has a pair of outswinging steel casement sash. Except at the tenth floor, each sash has a horizontal muntin near the top and when closed, the window appears as a four light cross. Tenth floor windows vary only in the sash divisions where each has eight lights. Sash is painted a bronze color to match bronze detailing at the entry and storefronts.

The rusticated base is topped with a terra cotta belt course with rosette and foliage ornament. Stories four through ten are faced with brick, very similar in color to the terra cotta. Bricks measure 8-1/4" x 2-3/8" with 1/2" joints and are laid in common bond. Window openings have header courses at the sills and soldier courses at the heads.

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Below the tenth floor window sills is a continuous brick header course and a terra cotta torus molding. Above the windows is the grand terra cotta cornice, a duplicate of the cornice on the Bank of California Building that Doyle had designed in 1923-24. The cornice, 6'-0" high, contains all of the appropriate classical elements: Cyma recta crown mold with acanthus leaf decoration, bead and reel course, and a corona supported by consoles with scrolled sides and acanthus ornament on the curved faces. The square soffits above the console line feature central rosettes, while the panels between consoles have a floriated pattern. Below is an egg and dart course and a dentil course with the dentils curved at the lower edges.

The hipped roof above has a 7:12 pitch and is covered with red mission tiles. Original tiles have deteriorated in many areas and are presently being replaced with new tiles that match the original. Shed dormers are centered on each structural bay. Dormer sides are stuccoed and each has a single, eight-light, pivoted steel sash.

At the attic level, pavilion walls are clad with the same brick as lower floors and windows match the multi-paned casements of the tenth floor. The south wall consists mostly of windows, steel sash with ribbed glass - solid surfaces are faced with stucco. Terrace decking is red quarry tile. The elegant entrance loggia at the east pavilion has paired arched openings at the north and south and three arches with paired columns on the west. Terra cotta columns have acanthus leaf capitals. The west arches are matched on the east wall and contain a multi-paned door in the center and similar windows in the side arches. In the 1960s the south and west loggia openings were covered with glass in aluminum frames.

The general treatment of the east and west facades is identical to that on the north. Unusually, the south wall (rear) was finished in the same manner as the street facades with the rusticated terra cotta and cornice returning on the stems of the "E". Windows also matched those on other walls. Steel fire escapes on the east and west extend to the attic terrace. Rear walls were typically left in bare concrete. It seems likely that finishing this wall was done to enhance the outlook from Mrs. Corbett's house.

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### INTERIOR

Entry doors lead to a small vestibule and a second set of doors to the elevator lobby. Vestibule and lobby walls are faced with Jaune Nile Fleuri marble, having a buff background with subtle gray and green veining. At the east and west vestibule walls are ornamental bronze air grilles. Vestibule walls are topped with a plaster frieze of concentric square panels. The plaster ceiling is a single panel with a cornice mold featuring an egg and dart course and a centered pendant light fixture that matches the design of the exterior bracketed lights.

Lobby doors are similar to entry doors but have eighteen lights rather than a single large pane. Door frames are also similar to those at the entrance, again displaying full entablatures of cast bronze. In addition, the cornices are topped by running scroll courses with anthemion and rosette antifixes. The same bronze door framing is repeated on other lobby doors. Four elevators are aligned on the east side of the lobby. Each had a segmental arched opening with bronze jambs, bronze framed glass doors, and cast bronze floor indicators above the doorways. The elevators were "modernized" in the mid-1950s - original doors were replaced with flush doors and the floor indicators were removed. Between the middle elevators is the original bronze mail box and drop slot, both set in a shallow arched recess.

Centered at the south end was a building directory, trimmed in cast bronze with classical detailing similar to doorways. The words, PACIFIC BUILDING adorn the frieze. A round clock with a bronze frame sits atop the cornice. During the mid-50's alterations, the frieze, cornice and clock unit were moved to the east wall above the mail drop and two new directories were installed on each side of the mail box. High on the south wall at each corner were ten light windows in the same proportion as typical exterior windows. These windows were removed and the openings filled with marble when the Greyhound Bus Depot was completed in 1939.

Opposite the elevators on the west wall were three round arch openings. The south archway led to a restaurant. The northerly two arches framed the cigar/newstand whose rear wall was six feet west of the lobby wall. Projecting into the lobby in front of the arches was a glass counter and display case that sat on a marble base. This area was also altered during the mid-1950's remodeling: The display case was removed, the marble base unit was converted to a planter and the arches were filled with single panes of glass with gold anodized aluminum trim. Glass doors with similar trim were installed at the opening to the restaurant. Round arch openings also lead to the stairways on the east and west walls.

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The lobby floor is laid out in a 24" square grid with three types of marble: Border and field units are pink Tennessee marble; the four inch wide grid is light gray McMullen marble and the grid intersections are accented with four inch squares of an Italian black marble veined in light gray.

Crowning the marble walls, fourteen feet from the floor, is a plaster cornice similar in classical detail to other lobby elements. The cornice contains a continuous light cove. Above is the barrel vaulted plaster ceiling that has square coffers defined by a bead and reel molding and recessed coffer panels surrounded by egg and dart trim.

During the rehabilitation program of the late 1980s, several lobby elements were returned to original condition or rehabilitated in a compatible manner: A planter above the vestibule doors was removed; original surfaces were cleaned, repaired and refinished; and the plain lobby doors were overlaid with bronze strips to simulate the multi-pane pattern of the original.

Original corridors on the upper floors had terrazzo floors with borders and base of pink Tennessee marble. Walls were plaster with relights at each office and continuous wood sill rails and wood cornices at the transom line. Wood doors, casings and trim were Honduras Mahogany with a varnish finish. Typical office doors had a single panel of chipped plate glass surrounded by a bolection molding and a transom light also of chipped plate glass. Beams crossed the corridors creating panels that were finished in plaster and trimmed with classical moldings. During the mid-50's remodeling, all doors were replaced with flush panel wood fire doors. Relights, transoms, cornices and other wood trim were removed. Terrazzo and marble floors were covered with carpet and ceilings were lowered and refinished with 2'x4' acoustical panels. The only remaining original material visible in the corridors is the marble base and the marble walls in the elevator lobbies. Office interiors have also been substantially remodeled.

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While there is no remaining evidence of the A.E. Doyle office, original plans and photographs clearly portray the design. The large drafting room which occupied most of the west wing at the attic was unadorned concrete - sloping roof structure, walls and floors. The library at the southeast corner was another matter. Measuring 18' x 28', the axial space was entered through paneled glass doors in arched openings near each end of the north wall. Three windows on the east and one centered on the south provided one of the grandest views in the City. Flanking the south window were wood bookcases with paneled storage cabinets below the sill line. Shelving and other woodwork was varnished walnut. Centered on the opposite wall were deep shelves to accommodate Doyle's collection of large plate books. The west wall featured a slightly projecting central fireplace with a wood surround and marble hearth. Flooring was red quarry tile, matching the terrace, and was covered with a large oriental rug. Walls were plain plaster as were the ceiling coffers between dark wood beams. A classically detailed conference table surrounded by Windsor chairs was located in the center of the room. Walls and shelving tops featured Piranesi prints, statuary and other artwork. (In 1943 when the office was moved and renamed, Pietro Belluschi, Architect, the furniture, artwork, and books were relocated in the new space [2040 SW Jefferson St.]. When Belluschi sold the practice to Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in 1952, the conference table, chairs and artwork were taken to SOM's San Francisco office. The books were returned to the Doyle family to whom they had been willed upon his death in 1928.)

### UTILITIES

Original heating was from steam radiators at the perimeter wall with the steam being supplied by Pacific Power & Light Company's central plant. During the 1950's remodeling, the system was converted to a water source heat pump with the steam maintained as a back-up heat source. In recent years, additional modifications have been made to accommodate the full-floor tenant configuration. In 1986, the building went off the PP&L steam system and boilers were installed in the basement.

Except for the lights in the entry vestibule and at the entry doors, there are no remaining original light fixtures.

1. Sources of construction date: Working drawings dated June, 1925; newspaper accounts; and the City of Portland records.
2. MacColl, E. Kimbark, The Growth of a City. Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915 to 1950.
3. Ibid.
4. Oregonian, July 23, 1925.
5. Ibid.

**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  
1926

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates  
1926

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person  
N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder  
Albert E. Doyle

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

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 less than one acre (0.34) Portland, Oregon-Washington 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	0	5	2	5	2	0	0
Zone		Easting			Northing		

C 

Zone		Easting			Northing		

B 

Zone		Easting			Northing		

D 

Zone		Easting			Northing		

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description The nominated property is located in NW $\frac{1}{4}$  Sec. 3, T1S, R1E, Willamette Meridian, in Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon and is legally described as follows.  
**North 75', Block 171, Portland**

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated area corresponds with the Pacific Building's legally recorded lot lines.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title George A. McMath, FAIA

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 1 August 1991

street & number 1209 SW 6th Avenue, #503 telephone (503) 228-5154

city or town Portland state OR zip code 97204

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The Pacific Building, a ten-story skyscraper of reinforced concrete having brick and terra cotta cladding, was built in 1926 by the estate of Henry W. Corbett, which was managed by Corbett heirs. With a ground plan measuring 75 x 200 feet, it occupies the full block of street frontage on SW Yamhill Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues at the heart of Portland's central business district. The site, opposite the Pioneer Courthouse, is the northerly section of the block that served historically as pasture for the Corbett Mansion of 1875. For some years, the Pacific Building shared the full city block with the house that had been designed in the Italianate style by Warren H. Williams. The house was razed in 1936. The skyscraper was designed by Albert E. Doyle and detailed in the classical idiom customarily chosen by the leading Portland architect for the work of his firm in the commercial category.

E-shaped in plan, with three attic penthouses well set back from a low, mission tile-clad hip roof, the skyscraper is detailed on its three straight street elevations as a taut and restrained Italian Renaissance palazzo. It has a high rusticated terra cotta base extending from street level shop fronts through the third story. The tenth, or topmost story, is differentiated by a string course and is capped by a full, academically-detailed terra cotta entablature, including a modillioned cornice. Window openings are clean and unframed and fitted with steel casements.

The main entrance to the building, centered on the long north facade fronting Yamhill Street, is a colossal Roman-arched portal fitted with bronze Diocletian grillwork. The portal is reminiscent of the Roman-arched portal of the firm's concurrent project, the Terminal Sales Building, a Modernistic concrete skyscraper at SW Twelfth and Morrison which has been entered into the National Register. The elevator lobby of the Pacific Building, configured as a barrel-vaulted cross hall with coffered plaster ceiling, is fully lined with marble. Lobby shop and stairway entrances are Roman-arched. This elegant and simply furnished scheme is newly restored since it was remodeled in the 1950s and '60s. Over the years, upper floors have been largely reconfigured. Only one level retains the original double-loaded corridor that typified interior organization.

This document points out the original attic plan is of particular interest because the dormer-lighted space under the hipped roof offered ideal north light for the Doyle firm's architectural

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drafting room and other studios. An attic terrace is accessible from arcaded penthouse loggias.

The Pacific Building is significant under Criterion C as the culminating work of a regional master whose commercial work contributed so importantly to the growth and character of downtown Portland. It is considered the best preserved and most successful skyscraper design of A. E. Doyle in the Italian Renaissance style.

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The Pacific Building, completed in 1926, is significant under Criterion "C" as probably the finest Oregon example of an Italian Renaissance office building built during the era of Historic Period Styles. It was also one of the last major designs of Albert E. Doyle who more than any other architect shaped the character of Portland's neo-classic downtown development during the period between the City's Lewis & Clark Exposition (1905) and the Depression. Doyle's skill in adapting the Italian Renaissance palatial style to a high-rise office building is seen in the rusticated terra cotta base, the centered two-story arched entry, the simple fenestration and plain brick wall of upper stories, the grand terra cotta cornice and the crowning hipped roof, covered with red mission tile. In recent years, the exterior and the public lobby have been rehabilitated and restored and the Pacific Building stands today as one of Portland's best maintained and finest examples of Historic Period design in commercial architecture.

### **ALBERT E. DOYLE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOWNTOWN PORTLAND**

Albert Ernest Doyle was born in Santa Cruz, California on 27 July 1877. The family moved to Portland in c.1880 where his father James was a building contractor. Upon completion of the eighth grade at Park School in 1891, Doyle apprenticed with Whidden & Lewis, Portland's most prominent architectural firm of the era. During his twelve year tenure with the firm, he was involved with all aspects of their work: Colonial Revival houses, Neo-Classic commercial structures and Renaissance institutional buildings. Doyle very likely worked on such projects as the Gilbert Building, Hamilton Building (a project of the H.W. Corbett Estate), Marsh Hall at Pacific University, the Portland Academy, Portland City Hall, Meier & Frank Store, and the Failing (Postal) Building. In 1903, under the supervision of partner Ion Lewis, Doyle designed the Forestry Building for the Lewis & Clark Exposition. After completion of his work on the "log Parthenon", as the Forestry Building came to be known, Doyle went to New York where he took design and engineering classes at Columbia University and worked in the office of Henry Bacon. In the spring of 1906, Doyle received a traveling scholarship from the American School of Archaeology in Athens and he spent the next six months on a "Grand Tour" in Europe. <sup>1</sup>

In January, 1907, at age 29, Doyle opened his own office in the Worcester Building (also a Corbett Property) with a partner, construction supervisor, William B. Patterson. By mid-year, the firm received its first major commission, the ten story Annex to the Meier & Frank store building to be sited on the quarter block at Sixth and Alder Streets. At this time Portland's Post-Fair expansion was well underway with the major Downtown development moving southward along the Fifth and Sixth Avenue corridor. While there were a few major buildings in the area, such as the previously noted U.S. Courthouse, Portland Hotel and Marquam Building, and further south, the Multnomah County Courthouse and Portland City Hall, the predominant structures were houses and small commercial buildings.

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The first Portland "skyscraper" (defined locally as any building over eight stories) was the neo-classic, twelve story, Wells Fargo Building located at Sixth and Pine Streets at the north end of the corridor. Completed in 1907, it was designed by prominent New York architect, Benjamin Wistar Morris. 1907 also saw the construction of the first six stories of the Failing Building at Fifth and Alder, a design of Whidden & Lewis that would rise to twelve stories in 1913. Doyle's Meier & Frank Annex, a Classical Commercial design sheathed in white terra cotta, opened in 1909. A year later, two Doyle designs were completed: the twelve story Selling Building across from Sixth Avenue from Meier & Frank's store and the half-block Lipman & Wolfe store, immediately north of Meier & Frank. Doyle's first use of the Italian Renaissance can be seen in the Selling building, particularly in the "Florentine" windows at the upper two stories. The Olds, Wortman & King store was also built in 1910 - Doyle & Patterson were associate architects with C.R. Aldrich.

Other major projects for the Doyle office quickly followed: The brick and terra cotta Woodlark and Mead Buildings (1912); the Multnomah County Library, Benson Hotel, Morgan Building and Northwestern (American) Bank Building (all 1913); the first sections of the Pittock Block (1914), the U.S. Bank Building (1917 and 1923). All of these Doyle designs were in the classical Commercial Style or in Historic Period Styles: Georgian, Classical Roman and Italian and French Renaissance.

Other architects working in the same styles contributed to the classical richness of the area. Of particular note are the Yeon Building (1911) and Journal building (Jackson Tower) (1912), both designed by Reed & Reed of San Francisco and Whidden & Lewis' Imperial Hotel (1910) and Wilcox Building (1911).

World War I caused a severe slowdown in Portland's Downtown development but it picked up again in the early 1920s. The Corbett Estate, then being managed by Henry W. Corbett's three grandsons, first approached Doyle on the proposed Pacific Building in 1921. The family had a long history of building development in Portland's downtown commercial district: The Corbett Building (1870), later the first home of the First National Bank, that was founded by H.W. Corbett; the Worcester Block at Third and Oak Streets, site of the Doyle office since 1907; the Cambridge Block, Neustadter Block, Hamilton Building (1893) and the Corbett Building (1911). Doyle, who had known the Corbett's since his time with Whidden & Lewis, had many commissions with the Estate and members of the family. According to Doyle's office records there were twenty four separate projects for the Corbett family, most of which were remodelings for the buildings noted above and other properties owned by the estate. Doyle also designed houses for two of the grandsons, Hamilton F. and Elliott R., but neither were built.

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The earliest known design for the Pacific Building was completed in October 1922.<sup>2</sup> It was a fourteen story, brick and terra cotta structure that featured a base of classical columns, plain walls with paired double-hung windows and a modest cornice, all very similar to the earlier Pittock Block. A two story arched entrance is the only element that can be seen in the final design.

In December of 1922, Charles K. Greene returned to the Doyle office after a two year sabbatical in Europe, partially financed by Doyle. Greene had entered the office as an apprentice in 1908 and took night courses at the "Atelier" of the Portland Architectural Club where Doyle and other architects served as design critics. Soon after Greene's return, Doyle appointed him Chief Designer, the first to occupy that position. While Greene developed many designs during his five year tenure as Chief Designer, work in the Doyle office was collegial and Greene's efforts were reviewed and approved by Doyle and others. During his travels, Greene became enamored with the Italian Renaissance, also a favorite of Doyle's. In 1923, design work began on the Bank of California Building that was to be located on a small site across Fifth Avenue from Doyle's Classical Roman, U.S. Bank Building. The new bank building, completed in 1925, is an elegant Italian Renaissance Palace with rusticated terra cotta walls, two story arched windows, a classical cornice and a hipped, mission tile roof.

Redesign on the Pacific Building resumed in 1924 and the same Italian Renaissance palatial style was again the design theme. While the small Bank of California building was readily adapted to the Renaissance palace mode, the Pacific Building presented a more challenging problem: how to accommodate a full block long by ten story high office building into a palace form that was usually three stories. The designers were most skillful - they took four stories off of the original scheme, developed the three story rusticated base and treated the upper floors as a simple mass or "shaft" with minimal articulation at the windows. Above, the cornice and roof provided a "top" of appropriate size. The final design achieved the correct proportions and the overall size is slightly larger than a typical Italian Renaissance Palace. (Pacific Building front facade: 200' wide by 130' high. Farnese Palace [Rome, 1515]: 185' wide by 97' high.)

When the Pacific Building opened in the spring of 1926, the A.E. Doyle office was among a large group of tenants who had pre-leased space in the new structure. Others included Blyth-Witter & Co., stockbrokers, who occupied half of the second floor, the Southern Pacific Railroad who rented two floors, Standard Oil Company of California had one floor and Western Union opened an office in one of the Yamhill Street Storefronts.<sup>3</sup>

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Also in 1926 the drawings for the Public Service Building were being completed. Located on the Failing House block, immediately south of the Pacific Building, the fifteen story structure was also designed in the Italian Renaissance style. The Public Service Building, completed in 1928, would be the last major building of the Historic Period era and it was the last major design of the Doyle office prior to his death.

At the conclusion of this era, the neo-classic character of Portland's commercial center had been established and to a remarkable extent, that character remains today. Except for the vacant Lipman & Wolfe Store building, all of Doyle's major downtown structures are presently being used for their original purpose. All are well maintained and several have undergone restoration of storefronts and interiors that were inappropriately remodeled in the 1950s and 60s. In a 1970 review of Portland's new commercial architecture, Ada Louise Huxtable wrote in the New York Times:

"Portland also has some of the most beautifully detailed and dignified early 20th century classical revival buildings in the country which add Roman Richness to the decimated streets."

The Pacific Building is certainly among those that contribute to the "Roman Richness".

In 1979, Huxtable's replacement as architectural critic on the New York Times, Paul Goldberger, commenting on Portland's new buildings, praised the City's terra cotta district and recommended designs that "projected a hint of classism", adding that "Meier & Frank and other buildings nearby are crucial to the City. They make for a white architecture that blends with the City."

In 1925 Doyle contracted Bright's disease, a slow, debilitating and fatal illness. Late in the following year he reorganized the office as A.E. Doyle and Associate so that it would continue in an orderly manner after his death. The "Associate" was William H. Crowell, the only registered architect at the time. The other partners were David M. Jack, Office Manager and Sid Lister, engineer and construction superintendent. Doyle died on 23 January 1928.

A young Italian immigrant, Pietro Belluschi, joined the Doyle office as a draftsman in the spring of 1925. One of his earliest projects was the Pacific Building where he prepared detail drawings for the lobby cornice and ceiling and the Doyle library. Two years later, Charles Greene left the firm and Belluschi, then 28 year old, became Chief Designer. He continued in that role after Doyle's death and soon became a partner. In 1933, he acquired the interests of Lister and Jack and became head of the firm. Belluschi maintained the Pacific Building office and the Doyle name until 1943 when he reorganized the firm under his own name and moved to new quarters.

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### OWNERSHIP HISTORY

H.W. Corbett Estate to the Ladd Building Company, 1950s.

Ladd Building Company to the Northwest Holding Company, 1971.

Northwest Holding Company to Pacific-620, 1976.

Pacific-620 to the Pac-Hill Limited Partnership, 1986.

(The latter three owners all involved members of the Harold Miller family.)

1. McMath, George, A.E. Doyle office and family records.
2. Oregon Historical Society, Manuscript Collection.
3. MacColl, E. Kimbark, The Growth of a City, Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon 1915 to 1950.

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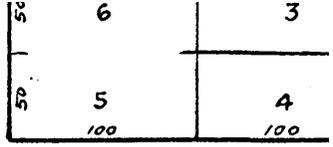
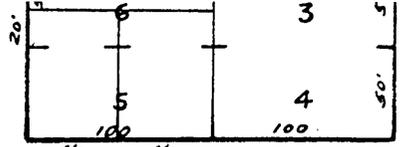
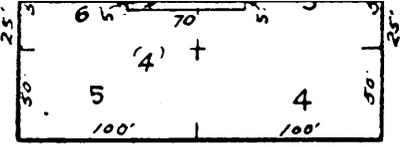
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Oregonian, July 23, 1925.

"Pacific Building", a promotional brochure prepared by building managers, Strong and MacNaughton Trust Co. in 1926. Oregon Historical Society Collection.

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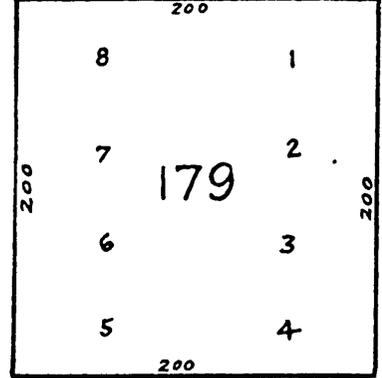


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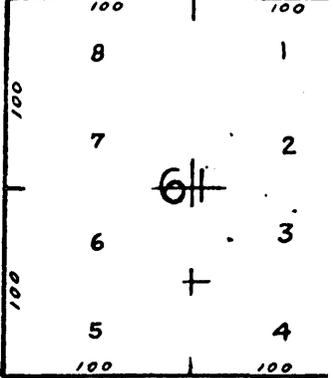
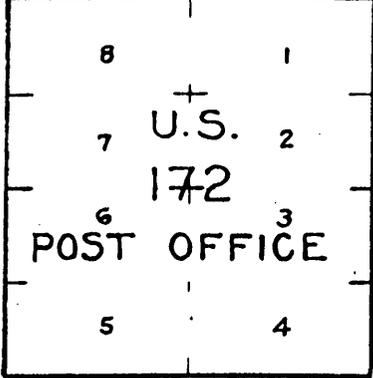
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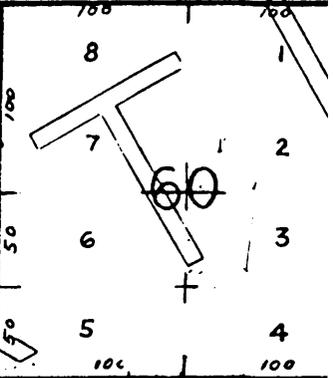
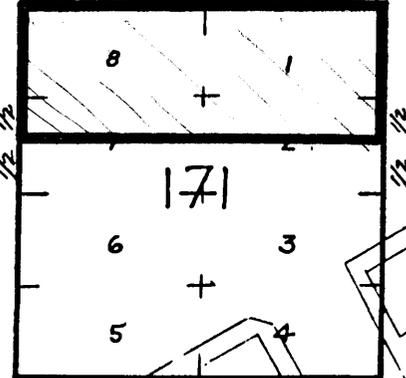
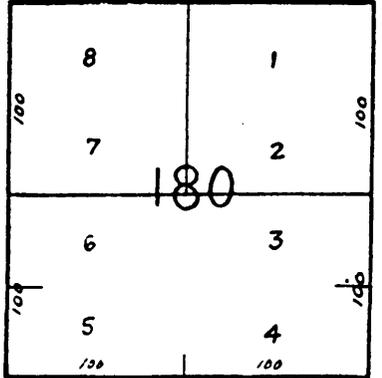


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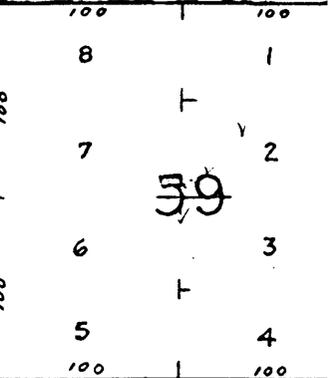
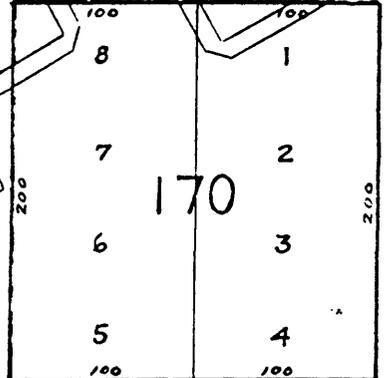
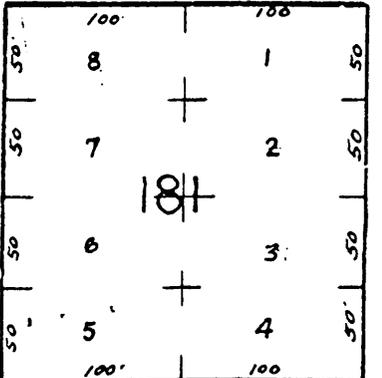
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YAMHILL



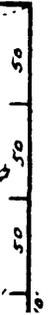
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TAYLOR

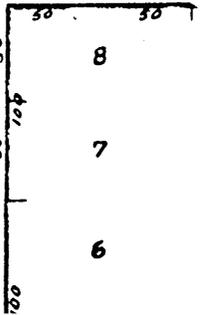
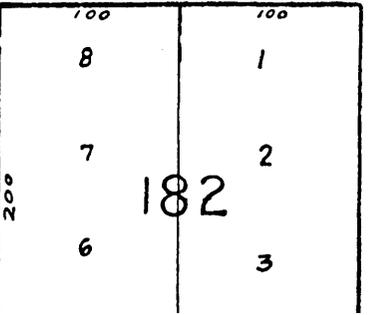


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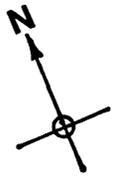
SALMON



BROADWAY



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1" = 100'

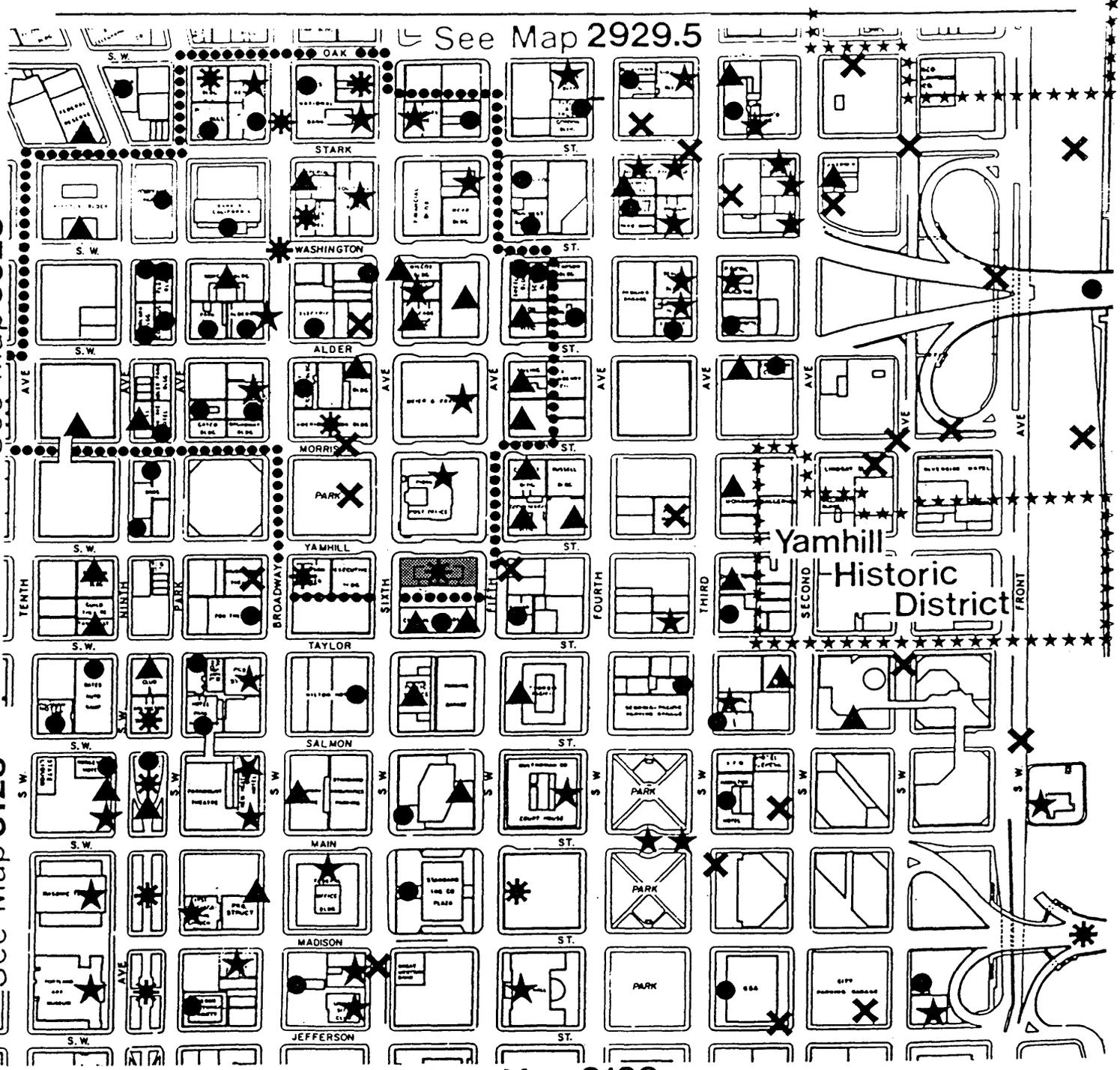


See Map 3028

See Map 3128

See Map 2929.5

See Map 3129



1"=400'



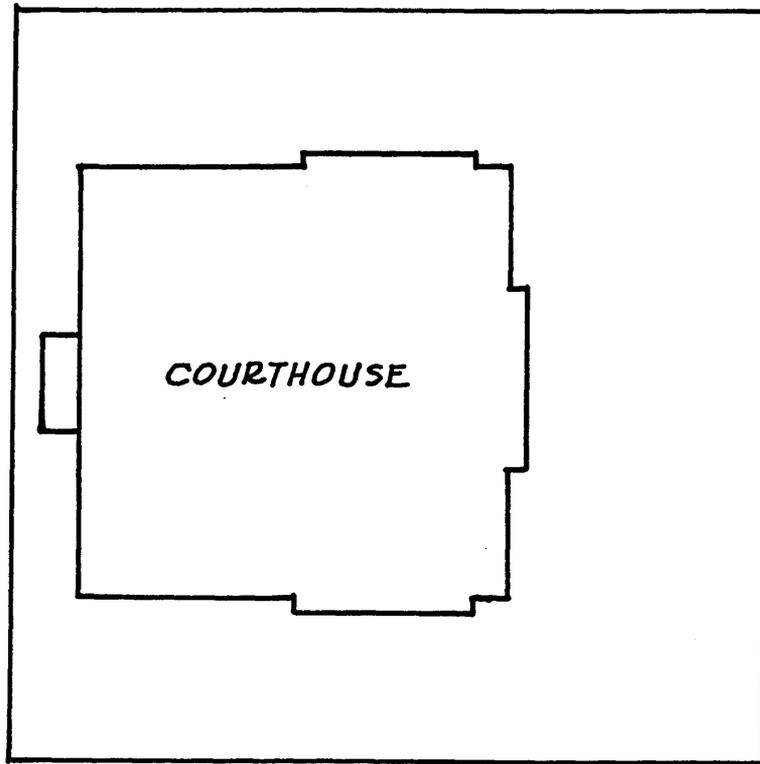
# Historic Resource Inventory

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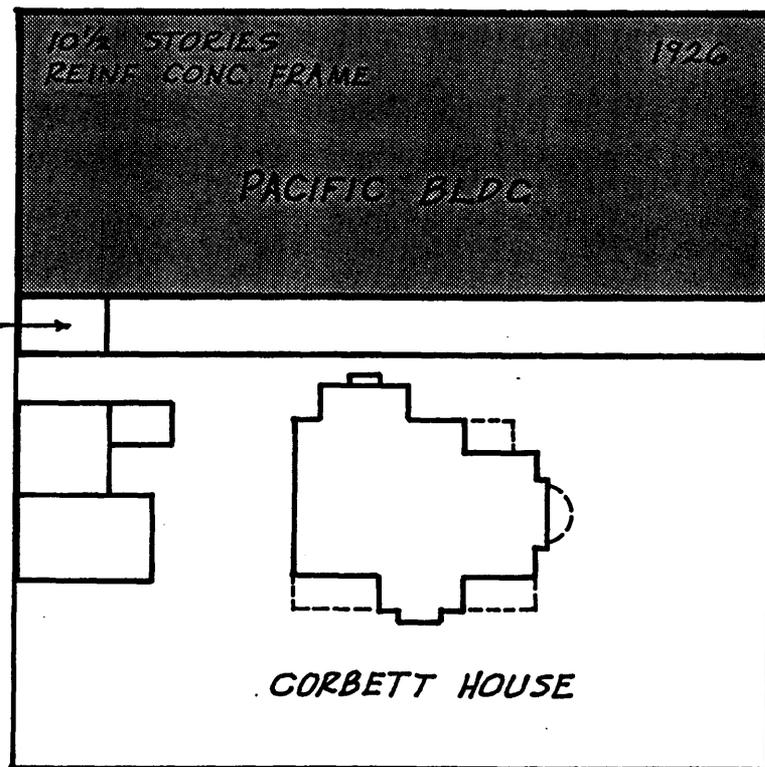
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-  RANK III UNDESIGNATED PROPERTY (Cultural Resource)
-  UNDESIGNATED SITE
-  UNDESIGNATED ENSEMBLE
-  DESIGNATED LANDMARK AND/OR LISTED ON NATIONAL REGISTER
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-  DESIGNATED CONSERVATION DISTRICT
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3029.5

MAY, 1984



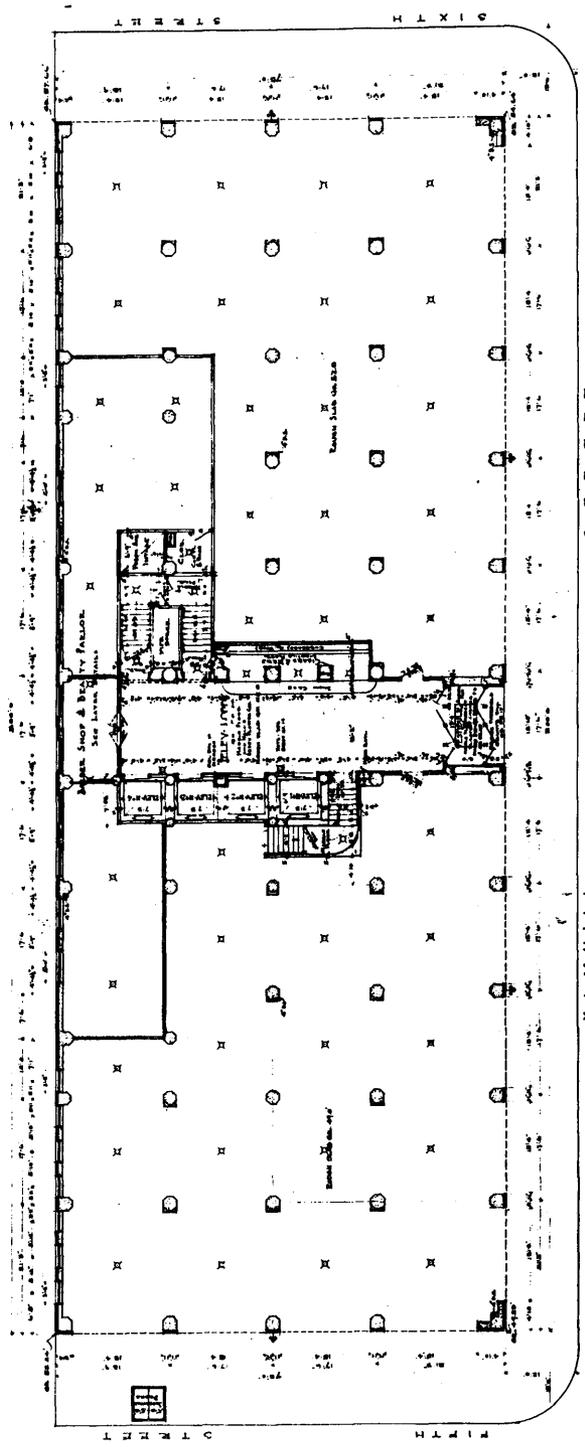
YAMHILL



TAYLOR



GENERAL NOTES	1. ALL WORK TO BE ACCORDING TO THE SPECIFICATIONS AND DRAWINGS.
	2. THE CONTRACTOR SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR OBTAINING ALL NECESSARY PERMITS AND APPROVALS FROM THE APPROPRIATE AGENCIES.
DOOR SCHEDULE	A. 3' x 7' 0" SWINGING DOOR WITH 1/2" GLASS
	B. 3' x 7' 0" SWINGING DOOR WITH 1/2" GLASS AND 1/2" ALUMINUM FINISH
KEY TO INDICATORS	1. BRICK
	2. CONCRETE
FIRST FLOOR PLAN	PACIFIC BUILDING
	H.W. CORBETT ARCHITECT

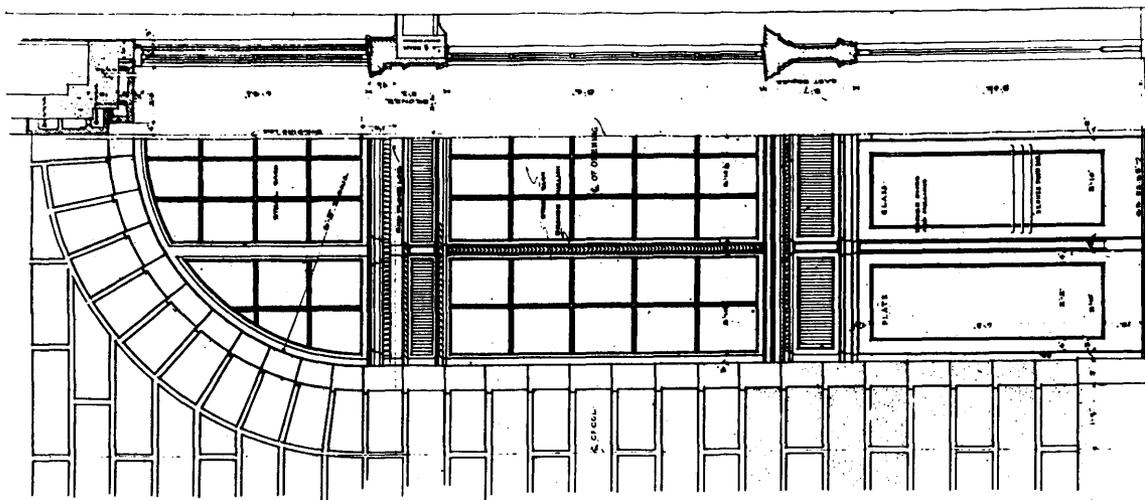


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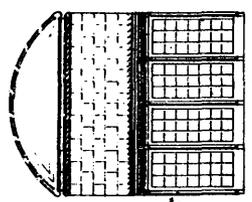
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Perimeter - 13,024

FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
PACIFIC BUILDING  
WITH W.H. & V. HILL, ARCHITECTS  
H.W. CORBETT ARCHITECT  
A.E. DOOLE ARCHITECT  
SUMMER | JUNE, 1918 | SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

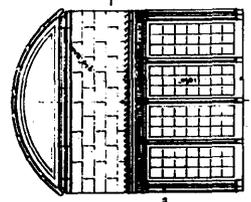




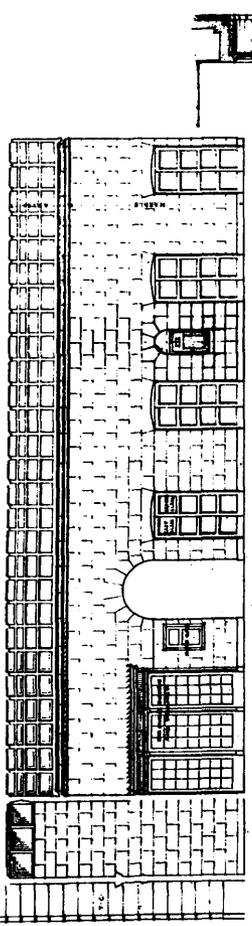
LOBBY & FRONT ENTRANCE DETAILS  
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 H.W. CORBETT ESTATE  
 A.E. DONNELL ARCHITECT  
 1000 PINE ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.



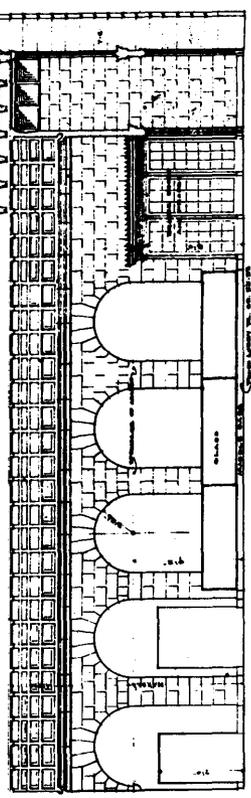
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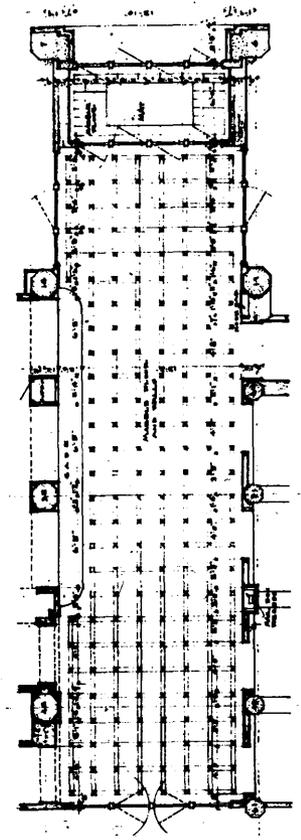
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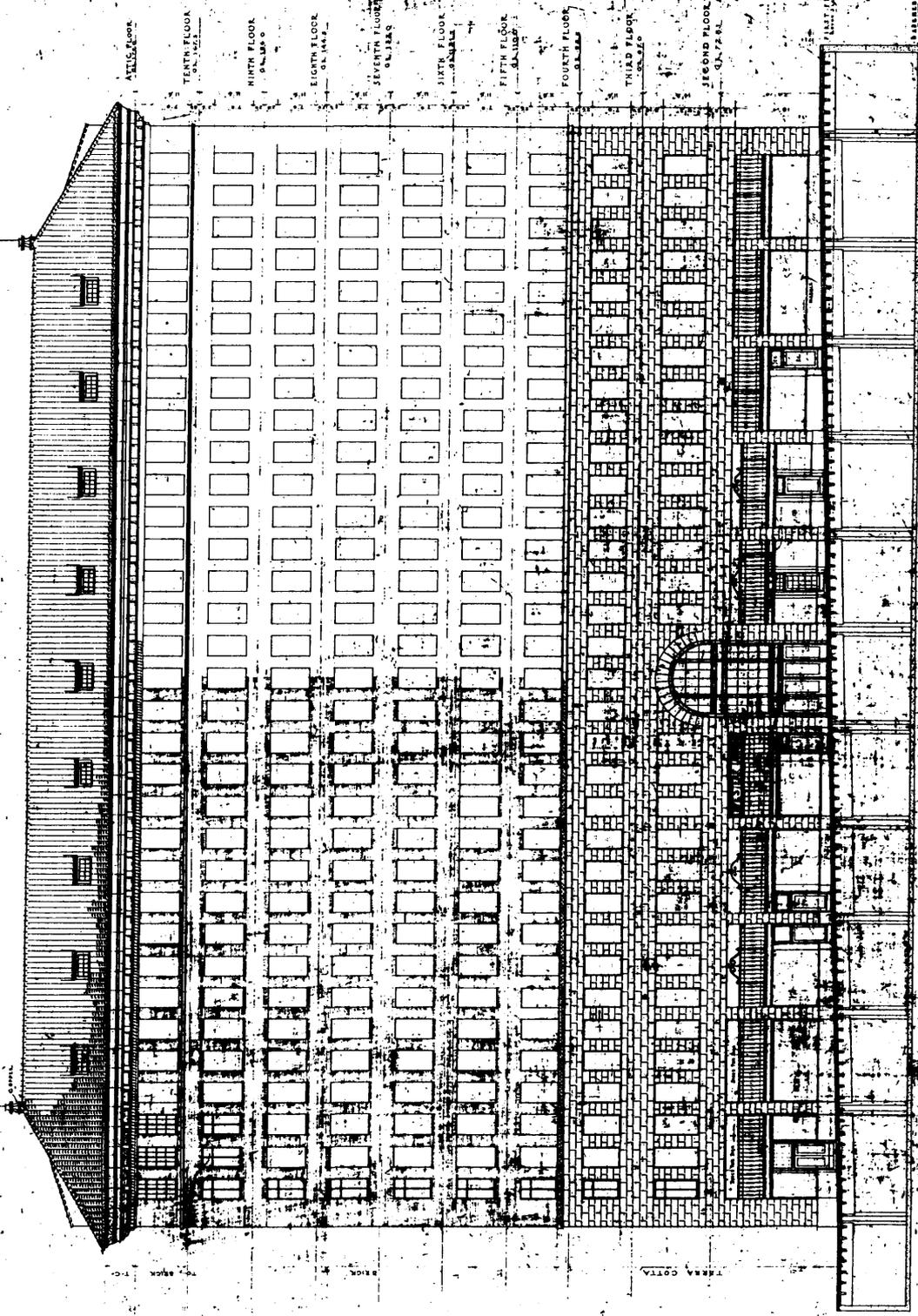
ELEVATION LOOKING EAST



ELEVATION LOOKING WEST



PLAN OF LOBBY



ATTIC FLOOR

TENTH FLOOR

NINTH FLOOR

EIGHTH FLOOR

SEVENTH FLOOR

SIXTH FLOOR

FIFTH FLOOR

FOURTH FLOOR

THIRD FLOOR

SECOND FLOOR

YERGEN & COMPANY ARCHITECTS  
PACIFIC BUILDING  
315 BROADWAY  
NEW YORK

SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

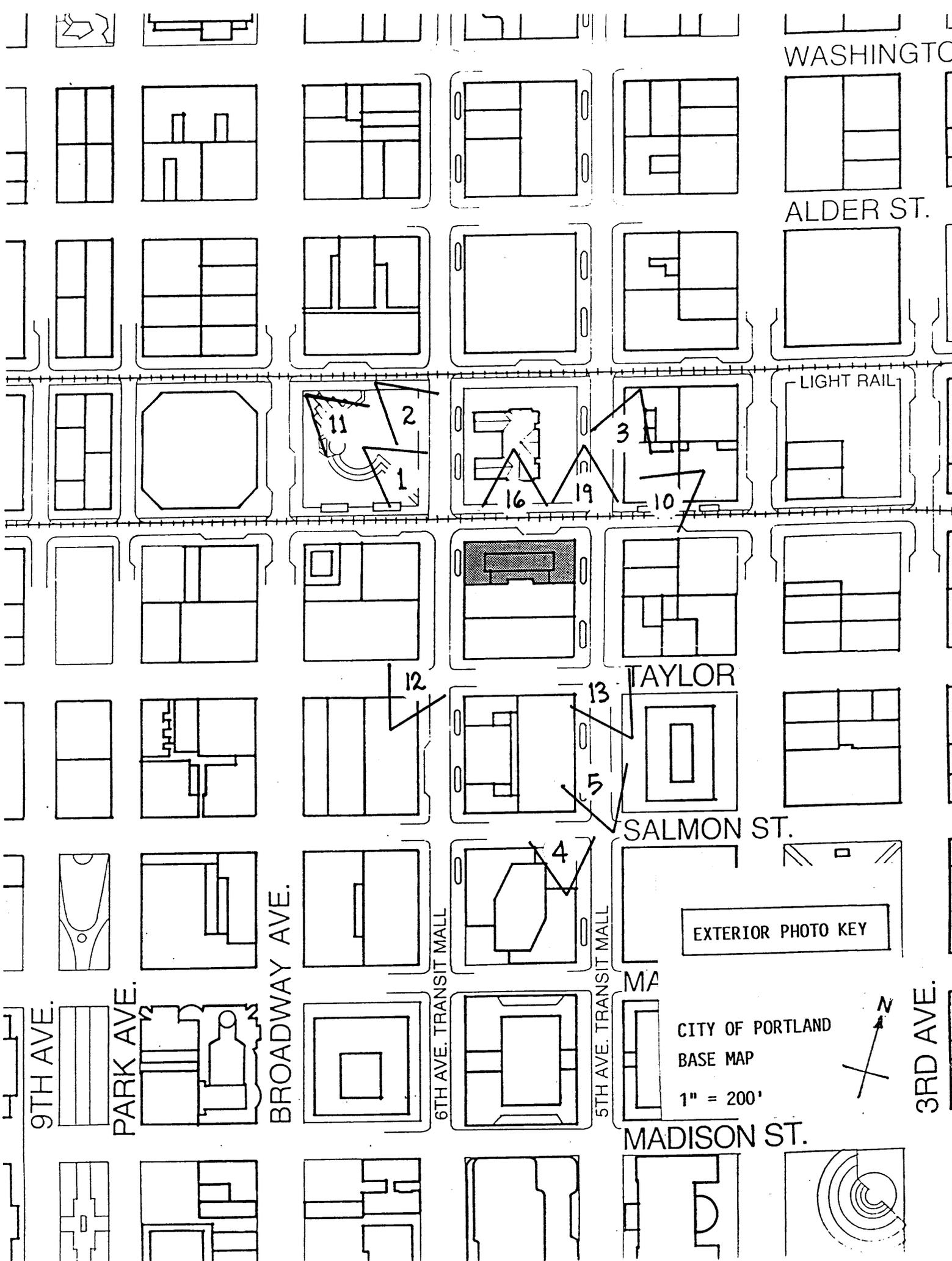
NOTES

NOTES

TRUSS CORNER

SCALE





WASHINGTON

ALDER ST.

LIGHT RAIL

TAYLOR

SALMON ST.

EXTERIOR PHOTO KEY

CITY OF PORTLAND  
BASE MAP

1" = 200'



MADISON ST.

3RD AVE.

9TH AVE.

PARK AVE.

BROADWAY AVE.

6TH AVE. TRANSIT MALL

5TH AVE. TRANSIT MALL

