

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT; Fire Station

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE; Business

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

On the west side of 7th Avenue, this structure is the firehouse from which the block received its nickname "Firehouse Row." The rest of the houses that were built on the block were done so for the firemens' families. The lot upon which this building sits is quite narrow, and the firehouse stretches the full length. Unlike the houses on the block, the firehouse was constructed on the street level.

Rectangular in plan, the two story firehouse is constructed of non-reinforced masonry walls laid in common bond and has a flat roof surrounded by a full parapet. The sides of the building are concealed by neighboring structures, but a few one-over-one double-hung sash windows pierce the exterior walls. The red brick which composes the non-major sides of the firehouse have been covered over with parging to protect them from weathering.

The most significant attribute of this building is its east-facing front facade. Purely symmetrical in design, the facade consists of Willamina, or buff-colored brick. The lower portion of the facade is dominated by the large, heavy wooden doors leading into the parking area for the engines.

Four huge wooden doors cover the entrance to the parking area and have multiple panes of glass set in rows of three by seven. The doors are hung with large wrought iron strap-hinges embellished by semi-circular patterns that were stamped into them. The original doorstops rise from the concrete driveway, and the rubber bumpers at the top of the steel rods are in relatively good condition. The bottom course of windows has been covered over with thin wooden panels for unknown reasons. Diagonal steel cable supports prevent the heavy doors from sagging and scraping on the ground. These appear to be a later addition. An inset stone lintel surmounts the doors.

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The second level of the facade contains many decorative features. The main elements are the two, three-part round arch windows with one-over-one double-hung sashes in the central bay. These windows have brick voussoirs surmounting the arches. Between the arched windows is a fixed bullseye window surrounded by a course of raised headers. To add more relief to the facade, below the main windows of the second level, two raised rectangles of headers are centered below the windows. Further decoration consists of the original signs. A rectangular plaque with clipped corners reads "Engine #23". Another longer rectangular plate with rounded corners above the main windows states that this was a Portland Fire Department, built in 1913. A full-length cornice projects from just below the parapet and has scroll-cut mock rafters for ornamentation, as well as two curvilinear brackets supporting the cornice.

On this elevation, the alterations consist of light fixtures above the large doors, and two drain pipes running down the opposite edges. To the rear of the building, a three story stairwell rises above the roof level. Also, an addition with a gable roof extends from the southwest of the rear elevation. This firehouse has been very well maintained and is in good condition on the exterior.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The first floor of the fire station is divided in half. The front half is the engine room. The rear portion is two rooms - office and conference rooms - with a half bath and hall which has been converted into a utility room along the north wall. The second floor is similarly divided. The front half is one room, now the executive office. Two smaller offices, a kitchen and full bathroom are arranged off a central hall.

The engine room has a concrete floor, and the walls are clad with ceramic tiles on the lower portion, while above is sand-finish lath-and-plaster, which is terminated at the picture molding. A firemen's pole from another fire station has been installed through the pole-hole in the ceiling. A second hole without a pole has been covered with plexiglas. The original fire bell, clock and drinking fountain are hung on the back wall of the engine room. Paired doors

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lead from this room to a hallway which is fitted with a number of brass coat hooks. Another door flanked by wooden horizontal sliding windows separates the engine room from the office. The office has bevelled tongue-and-groove wainscoting, with a plain chair rail and baseboard. The finishes in the conference room have been applied since 1978.

Upstairs, the hall and staircase remain intact. The plan, window and door surrounds of the other rooms, and the firemen's pole-holes are intact. The finishes of these other rooms have been changed since 1978.

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

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1913-1923

1913-1923

Significant Dates

1913

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Holden, Lee G.

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

The Firehouse Company No. 23 building, constructed in 1913, is locally significant under criterion A as the oldest and longest operating firehouse in southeast Portland. It is also of interest as the site of one of East Portland's earliest firehouses, Grant Engine Company No.2 (later Hose Company No.3), which was in existence as early as 1884. It operated until 1913 when it was replaced by the subject building. Secondly, it is significant under criterion B for its association with Lee Gray Holden, a nationally renowned designer of firehouses, who was stationed at the subject firehouse from 1913 to 1923. The date of construction was established by Fire Bureau records and confirmed by Sanborn Insurance maps and city directories. The building can also be considered significant under criterion C as a well-preserved and excellent example of the Italianate style adapted to a public building.

Lee G. Holden was born in Illinois in 1865 and came to Portland in 1885. Two years later he joined the Grant Engine Company No. 2, a volunteer firefighting company stationed in the building which pre-dated the subject firehouse. In 1892, following East Portland's consolidation with the City of Portland, the volunteer companies were incorporated into the City of Portland Fire Bureau. Just prior to this, in November of 1891, Holden became the first paid firefighter on the east side.

Holden remained an employee of the Fire Bureau until 1896, when along with other members of the Bureau, he was fired for political reasons, by newly elected mayor Sylvester Pennoyer. At this time Holden was the captain of Hose Company No.3. When Pennoyer left office two years later, Holden returned to the Fire Bureau and was appointed Battalion Chief for the east side. He remained in the position until 1908, when he retired to a country home near Zig Zag, where he designed and built the Rhododendron Tavern and Hotel.

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Holden returned to Portland in 1911. By that time the east side of Portland had been divided into two districts--northeast and southeast. Holden was appointed Battalion Chief in charge of the southeast district.

The years after consolidation were a period of rapid growth for Portland's east side. The construction of bridges spanning the Willamette and the expansion of streetcar lines led to tremendous growth. The Fire Bureau expanded to keep pace. Of 12 new fire stations constructed between 1911 and 1913, nine were on the east side of the river. Of these nine, four are still standing. Holden, in addition to being Battalion Chief, was in charge of repairs and construction of the stations.

An article in the April 18, 1913 edition of The Oregonian reported that, "in two years the city has built nine fire stations. Three... were handled by architects and the rest... by [Battalion] Chief Holden." According to the article, "Holden's plans and specifications, and the adoption of a building economy plan" had kept the cost of all nine stations at \$16,000 each and saved the Fire Bureau an estimated \$45,579.

Although there are a number of similarities between the early east side stations which Holden designed, no two are identical in design. Three of these--including the subject property--are two-story buildings, rectangular in plan, with sleeping quarters for the firemen upstairs, and space for the trucks, horses and wagons on the ground floor. One of these early stations incorporated features associated with the Bungalow/Craftsman style which was popular during the time. Located in the Irvington neighborhood of northeast Portland, Holden designed the building to blend into the surrounding residential area. Instead of the common two-story plan this was a one-story building with kitchen and sleeping quarters in the basement. Three of Holden's six fire stations, constructed during the brief two-year period, were designed in the classical tradition. The subject building is the best example of the Italianate style. It is further distinguished for having retained much of its physical integrity.

In 1923 Holden was promoted to Assistant Fire Chief. Three months later, when the Fire Chief resigned, Holden replaced him, retaining the post until 1927 when he retired. During the time he held these two positions, he continued to design firehouses.

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Holden made many contributions to the firefighting profession. He developed a first aid training program for firemen. He designed a small, powerful, fireboat which could pass under the downtown bridges. He is also credited with encouraging the use of chemical apparatus on fire trucks, devising a method for mounting water turrets on ladder trucks, and affixing the first self-contained electric lights on trucks. When Holden joined Grant Engine Co. No.2 in 1887, the city had only three volunteer companies. By 1927, when he retired, Portland was served by 44 paid companies.

Holden designed 24 firehouses in Portland. Eleven of the 24 are still standing. The earliest of this group was built in 1912; the last, at 1036 S.E. Stark, included in this submission, was constructed in 1927.

The subject firehouse is located next to an ensemble of five Queen Anne style residences, constructed in 1893, that served as residences for Fire Department employees. The five Queen Anne style residences are being proposed as an ensemble as part of this Multiple Property submission. Holden lived in one of the houses in 1896-97.

Portland Fire Station No. 23 is significant under Criterion C because it is the singular, well-preserved example within the Portland Central Eastside study area of the traditional, two-story firehouse with formal, classically-detailed facade, a type which was commonly erected by the Portland Fire Bureau during the major capital construction period 1911-1913. It is not known that Lee Gray Holden designed the fire station where he was headquartered as Battalion Chief from 1913 to 1923, but it is clear that Holden was responsible for construction of twelve new stations erected in this period. A few of them were architect-designed. Station No. 23 has all the earmarks of the type attributed to Holden. It is characteristic of firehouses built during this period in that it is Italianate in spirit, poised eclectically between Classical and Georgian styles. The rectangular volume of brick-faced masonry construction is narrow by Fire Bureau standards. It does not exceed the lot lines, which measure 25 x 100 feet. Its formally-organized facade is a free adaptation of the Georgian style distinguished by dual, symmetrically-placed engine bays on the ground story and two large three-part Roman-arched, or Diocletian windows in the second story which are separated by a centrally-placed bull's-eye window. The facade is crowned by a modillioned cornice of sheet metal and is articulated by raised brick voussoirs and spandrel panels. Double-leaf engine bay doors may be replacements of the original, but they nevertheless retain the grid-like division of many small panes characteristic of the Fire Bureau's stations of this period, and the decorative strapwork hinges are original.

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As has been pointed out, the station's association with Lee Gray Holden (1865-1943) is significant whether or not Holden designed the building because of Holden's long-time use of the building in his capacity as Battalion Chief from 1913 to 1923. Holden is significant in Portland governmental history as the innovator of maneuverable fireboats for Portland's harbor area, lifesaving squad wagons, and bungalow-style firehouse designs to better integrate with residential neighborhoods. Holden's career culminated in his promotion to Fire Bureau Chief, which position he held from 1923 to 1927.

Architecturally, the fire stations constructed under Holden's supervision, and largely by his design, represent a pragmatic approach to the matter of housing fire-fighting apparatus, whether horse-drawn or mechanized, and the men who operated the equipment. The designs are straightforward. Yet, in the handling of eclectic facade elements, they have a quaint architectural pretension. There is no record that Holden received any formal training as an architect. A native of Cairo, Illinois, he had an elementary education and an early exposure to a variety of occupations, including those of coffin-maker and steamboat hand on the Ohio River. During a hiatus in his career with the Portland Fire Bureau, between 1908 and 1911, Holden built and operated the Rhododendron Inn, within striking distance of Mt. Hood. In this enterprise, it is thought that he gained hands-on experience in design and construction. All told, Holden is thought to have been responsible for designing as many as 24 firehouses and fireboats in the span of his career with the Bureau. Of this number, less than half are extant. They form a distinctive resource group in the City's inventory.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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- . City of Portland Building Bureau microform and card files.
- . City of Portland Bureau of Planning, Portland Historic Resource Inventory, 1983.
- . Multnomah County Tax Assessor records, microform and card files, Portland, 1980.
- . Polk, R. L. and Co., Portland City Directories, 1938.
- . Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1909, 1923.
- . Ticor Title Company records, Portland, Oregon.
- . City of Portland Bureau of Planning, Landmarks files.

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

Acreege of property Less than one acre Portland, Washington-Oregon 1:62500

UTM References

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B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Stephens addition, S. 1/2 of Lot 7, Block 76

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Taxlot lines

See continuation sheet

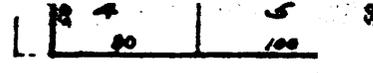
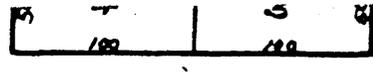
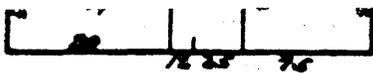
11. Form Prepared By

name/title K. Zisman, J. Koler, J. Morrison, B. Grimala, A. Yost

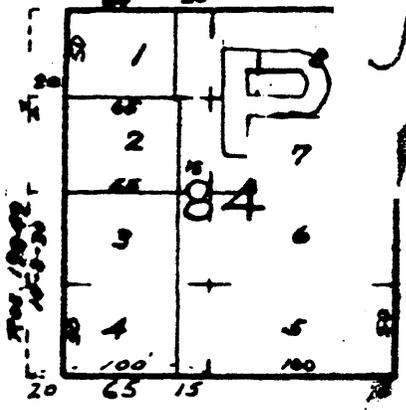
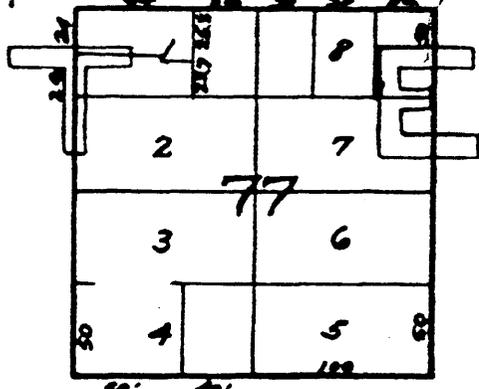
organization Hawthorne Blvd. Business Association date August 15, 1988

street & number 615 S.E. Alder telephone (503) 234-4801

city or town Portland state Oregon zip code 97214

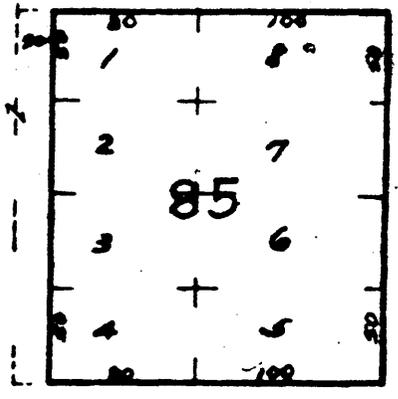
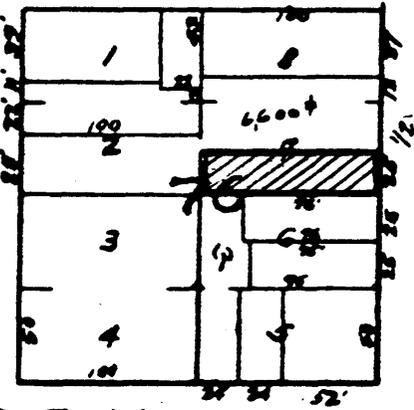
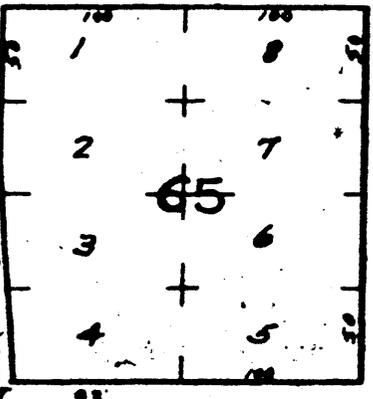


S.E. MILL

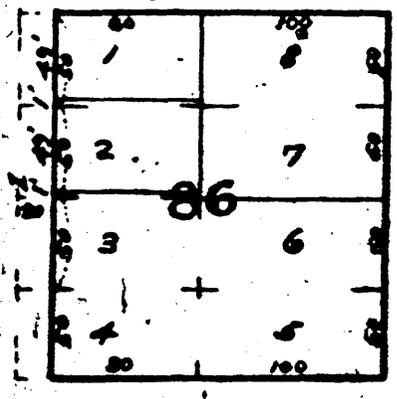
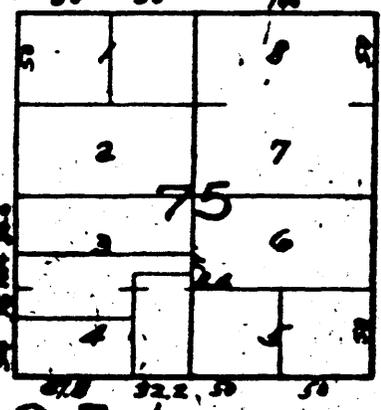
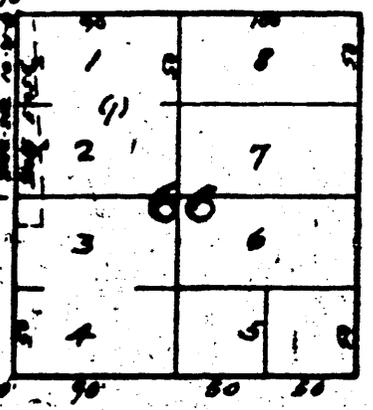


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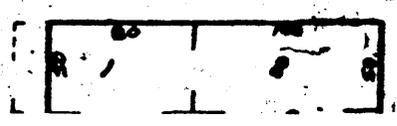
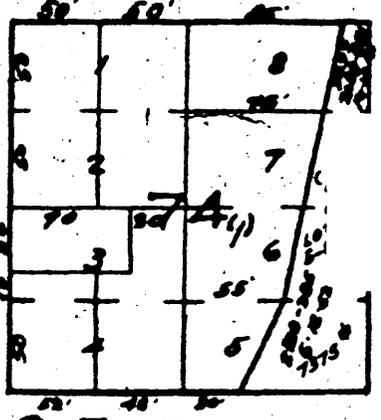
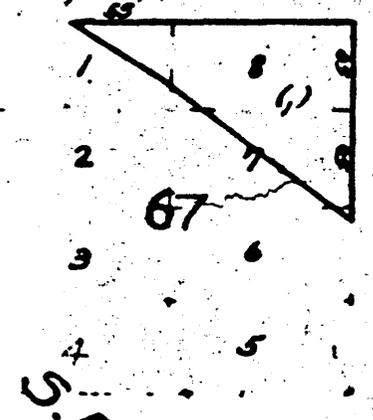
STEPHENS



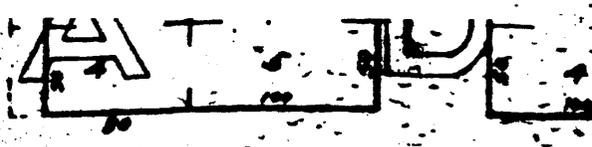
S.E. HARRISON



S.E. LINCOLN



1917 S.E. 7th
Portland, OR 97214



S.E. 6TH

S.F. GRANT

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