

360

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Davis Block  
other names/site number Dr. Luther Davis, Dentist; Sam Moy & Co. Dry Goods; Home Laundry

2. Location

street & number 801-813 N. Russell Street not for publication   
city or town Portland vicinity \_\_\_\_\_  
state Oregon code OR county Multnomah code 051  
zip code 97227

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James M. Hannah  
Signature of certifying official/Title

Deputy SHPO

February 10, 1999

Date

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:  entered in the National Register See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Elson H. Beall  
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

3/18/99

Davis Block  
Name of Property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)  
 private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)  
 building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
Contributing      Noncontributing  
\_\_\_\_\_              \_\_\_\_\_ buildings  
\_\_\_\_\_              \_\_\_\_\_ sites  
\_\_\_\_\_              \_\_\_\_\_ structures  
\_\_\_\_\_              \_\_\_\_\_ objects  
\_\_\_\_\_              \_\_\_\_\_ Total  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
Historic and Architectural Resources in the Eliot neighborhood

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
n/a

6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)  
COMMERCE/TRADE: Businesses  
HEALTH CARE: Medical Office  
SOCIAL: Meeting Hall  
DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwellings

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)  
COMMERCE/TRADE: Offices  
DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwellings

7. Description

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)  
LATE VICTORIAN:  
Romanesque Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)  
foundation Concrete  
walls Brick  
roof Asphalt  
other Cast Iron

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- x A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
x C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- ARCHITECTURE
COMMERCE
ETHNIC HERITAGE: Asian

Period of Significance

1890-1947

Significant Dates

1890

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Davis, Luther M.

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or a grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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
x Local government
University
Other
Name of repository:

Davis Block  
Name of Property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property .17 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

A	<u>1/0</u>	<u>5/2/5/4/8/0</u>	<u>5/0/4/2/9/2/0</u>	B	<u>/ /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>/ /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>	D	<u>/ /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Cathy Galbraith & Jane Morrison

organization Bosco-Milligan Foundation date July 30, 1998

street & number PO BOX 14157 telephone (503) 231-7264

city or town Portland state OR zip code 97293

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name William Wright

street & number 809 N. Russell Street telephone (503) 335-3300

city or town Portland state OR zip code 97227

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 3 Page 1

Davis Block, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

---

### COMMENTS OF THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE:

The Davis Block (1890) is significant under Criterion A as a building which describes commerce and ethnic heritage in the Eliot Neighborhood. It is also significant under Criterion C as one of the best remaining examples of a commercial block building from this period and is one of the few remaining that once lined Russell Street. While the Davis Block has been altered, compared to other commercial buildings from the original Albina commercial area, it retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic character and contribute to the historic qualities of the Eliot Neighborhood.

This two-story commercial block brick building was constructed in 1890 and is located in the Lower Albina Industrial District of Northeast Portland a few blocks east of the Willamette River and the railroad. It is being submitted as a part of the Multiple Property Submission entitled Historic and Architectural Properties in the Eliot Neighborhood of Portland (the boundaries of which are comparable to the original city of Albina). The Eliot Neighborhood is significant as a distinct section of Portland and is described in the Multiple Property Submission as one of the major contributors in defining Portland's present-day boundaries. The union of Albina and Portland in 1891 added to the socio-cultural history as it fostered a diverse working class, immigrant, and minority community.

When Albina was completely platted by 1882, the north end was designated as residential, with the area around Williams and Russell Avenues becoming the commercial core. The area by the docks on the river was mostly industrial. The area grew quickly and during 1880-87 Albina's population climbed from 143 to over 3000. With the progress of the streetcar system, other subdivisions to the east of Albina, many considered to be high-class communities which employed building and ethnic deed restrictions, were developed. Thus, many immigrants settled in the Albina community where housing was more affordable and located closer to the commercial center, railroad yard, grain mills, and waterfront. The ethnic migration to this area during the 1880s-1920s, primarily from eastern Europe, was concentrated in Albina which would come to serve as the gateway for immigrants newly arriving to Portland. There was an early Scandinavian community on lower Russell Street, and the presence of Japanese and Chinese business owners in Lower Albina on Russell Street and Albina Avenue.

This building was used as a commercial, residential and public building. It was constructed by Luther M. and Nancy Davis in 1890, the year following the first electric streetcar in Albina in 1899. Dr. Luther Davis was born in 1848 and came from Michigan to the Pacific Northwest in 1877, practicing dentistry in Washington before moving to Portland in 1888. He and Nancy, who had come to Portland in 1878 from Alabama, were married that same year. By 1895, Luther was practicing dentistry in this building, listed in

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 3 Page 2

Davis Block, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

---

the city directories of that period as "Davis Block & Hall". During 1898 through the 1910s, his son, John, also a dentist, was practicing with him. By 1900, fraternal organizations, including the Knights of Pythias and Knights of Maccabees, were meeting in the upstairs hall of the Davis Block. Luther was a Mason. He and Nancy were founding officers of the Order of the Eastern Star, Camelia Chapter. Luther was elected to the Portland City Council, and served on term in the Oregon Legislature in 1909. He died in 1923. Nancy retained ownership of the Davis Block until 1932, when it was sold to the Abe Weinstein family.

In the 1890s, there was a tailor's shop, a retail shoe store, and Lewis Moyer's Dry Goods Store. The Sam Moy & Company Dry Goods Store then operated in the corner storefront beginning in 1911. In the 1920s, Japanese-owned businesses were established on lower Russell Street; Eichi Saito established his Home Laundry in the center storefront of the Davis Block in 1921. He and his wife through a pre-arranged marriage, Haruno, also from Hiroshima, ran the laundry until World War II's forced interment of the Japanese sent them to Minidoka, Idaho. The upper floor of the Davis Block provided housing and was listed as a boarding house, having furnished rooms beginning in the 1890s. By the 1920s, the upstairs public hall had been converted to additional apartments and the upper floor continued to provide small living units primarily to single adults.

In 1942 the Davis Block was lost by the Weinstein family and sold at sheriff's auction to the Charles Paine Realty Investment Company. By the close of the 1940s, a string of automotive-type uses were located on the ground floor, which continued through the 1960s. In 1962, the building was again sold at a sheriff's auction, and by the late 1960s the storefront was being used for storage and the upper level was vacant. It was purchased in 1984 by the current owner William Wright.

The Davis Block has Romanesque Revival style characteristics which include the round arched windows with brick hoodmolding, full height pilasters, a dentil band and the corbelled cornice with overhang. The primary elevation is broken into three bays, and on the first level each bay has a recessed entry. The display windows and bulkheads have been replaced with diagonal wood siding. However, the original cast iron engaged columns and transoms remain, and some original doors. In the larger central bay, there are two separate entrances, one to the commercial space and a separate entrance for the stairway to the second floor with what is believed to be an original bronze sign showing "Davis Block". On the second level, the central bay contains paired round arches with paired double hung windows surmounted by round transoms. These are flanked by rectangular double hung windows with transoms. Some of the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 3 Page 3

Davis Block, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

---

wood sash in the windows on the second floor have been replaced with vinyl sash. Although they do not exactly replicate the wood sash with ogee detailing, the massing is similar and provides a similar appearance.

The fenestration pattern on the east and rear elevations is irregular. The side elevation that faces Albina street contains three bays which get progressively bigger as they go toward the rear. Round arched windows and tall rectangular windows are placed asymmetrically over the building's side elevations, but within each bay are symmetrical. In the last bay paired rectangular windows are flanked by round arched windows. On the first level, the openings are minimal. The rear elevation contains simply-detailed segmental arched window openings on both levels. The west elevation is a solid brick wall.

The interior of the Davis Block retains much of its original woodwork, including door moldings with bull's eye corner blocks, plinth blocks, chair rails, and wainscotting. The first floor plan is open in each of the three delineated spaces, with bathrooms at the rear. The original floor plan is not known on the second floor, which originally incorporated a public hall and twelve or more apartments, as it has been altered.

The Davis Block is one of the best remaining examples of a commercial building type in the area known as Albina and designated as the Eliot Neighborhood. It is historically significant as it physically documents the area's history which had a diverse ethnic, working, and social population. The building is also architecturally important displaying intricate brickwork and detailing describing the building trends for businesses during the late nineteenth century. A growing industrialized landscape was evolving as manufacturing and the need for showrooms, department stores and offices was increasing. As downtown real estate became more costly, building taller structures that met business needs of mixed retail, office, and sometimes residential use, influenced the construction of commercial buildings and they began to get taller as technological advancements of the period permitted. The Richardsonian Romanesque and Chicago School and Sullivan-esque styles became popular during this period. In Oregon, the buildings with Richardsonian Romanesque styling began to appear in late 1800s and was popular during 1885-1900. These buildings, influenced by Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886), one of America's most influential architects, incorporated round-arched openings, masonry construction, decorative moldings and lintels, and a massive heavy appearance. The Davis Block incorporates these features and is a good example of the style in the Eliot Neighborhood.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Davis Block  
name of property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

Historic and Architectural Resources in the Eliot Neighborhood  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

**DAVIS BLOCK**

The Davis Block is a two story brick commercial building with a rectangular plan and a dirt floor basement. It was constructed in 1890 in the Romanesque Revival Style in the Streetcar era in the 1887-91 City of Albina. Of the few remaining one and two-story masonry commercial buildings that once lined Russell Street, all have been altered, and some have little remaining historic materials. Some development has occurred since World War II. Most apparent are the concrete and sheet metal industrial buildings that dot Russell Street. While the Davis Block has been altered, compared to other commercial buildings from the original Albina Commercial area it retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic character; alterations to the facade are recoverable.

**SETTING**

The Davis Block is located in the Lower Albina Industrial District of Northeast Portland, a few blocks east of the Willamette River and the railroad. Located on the northwest corner of North Russell Street and Albina Avenue, the Davis Block is situated in an area characterized by commercial and industrial uses. The subject building is two blocks from Interstate Avenue, a heavily trafficked thoroughfare, that is the spine of the North Portland's close-in industrial district. The industrial area is a pie shaped district bounded by the Willamette River on the west and Interstate 5 on the east.

Russell Street extends approximately six blocks east from Interstate before rising up a gentle grade to the Williams/Vancouver commercial district. Interstate Freeway 5 also separates upper and lower Russell Street, which once served as the main street and central commercial corridor for the city of Albina.

**SITE**

The building has been constructed to the lot lines on three elevations of a 7,500 square foot corner lot. The rear portion of the lot is used as a patio and is landscaped with potted plants. A chain link fence separates the site from the semi-industrial use immediately to the north.

**EXTERIOR**

The building is a well proportioned, but simplified version of the Romanesque Revival style. Care was taken by the builder (unknown) to include several design features common to more extravagant buildings. It is constructed of unreinforced brick set in a common bond and ornamented by a decorative cornice. Of particular note is the cornice brickwork, where several courses have been blended to create a pleasing composition.

A decorative brick treatment is also seen at the cornice line. This treatment consists of two belt courses and recessed brick panels with a header course of bricks between the window sills.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2

Davis Block  
name of property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

Historic and Architectural Resources in the Eliot Neighborhood  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

The fenestration is regular. On the ground floor the primary elevation is composed of three storefronts, one to the west of the main entrance to the upper floor, and two to the east. The main entrance is composed of paired panel and glazed doors, flanked by sidelights and surmounted by a rectangular transom light. A bronze sign, "Davis Block" has been incorporated in the facade above this entrance and is probably original. The edge of the building sign is a filigree pattern. Full height pilasters divide the primary elevation into three bays. Rounded bricks mark the corners of the pilasters.

The display windows of the storefront have been replaced with diagonally applied boards on plywood. The ornamental cast-iron mullions, bulk heads and transoms remain. The bulkheads are also covered with the same diagonal plywood. The stoops have wood decks; the nose of the step is clad with iron treads. The decorative deeply paneled and glazed doors remain on the western storefront. The doors of the other two storefronts are plywood, and are in poor condition.

The upper floor is illuminated by symmetrically placed window groupings. One of the most distinctive features of the building are the round-headed openings, each of which contain two windows surmounted by half-round fanlights. These openings are lined with alternating or dentilated raised bricks, or within in a course of header bricks.

On the east elevation, the upper floor is illuminated by five sets of double-hung-sash windows and fanlights, which are also set in round-headed openings. At the southeast corner of the ground floor, plywood covers a display window. A faded sign advertising the Sam Moy & Co. Dry Goods Store (an early tenant) has been painted between the covered display window and the remainder of the wall, which is pierced by a horizontally paneled and glazed door, which is flanked by small round-headed windows.

The rear elevation is unadorned. Simple double-hung sash windows illuminate the second story rooms. The window openings are segmental arches. A variety of doors provide access to the first floor. A shallow ell projects at the northwest corner of the building. The doorway to this section is recessed beneath the Romanesque arch, forming a sheltered alcove. Access to the center storefront from the rear is gained via a glazed aluminum door. The double-hung windows on the first floor have been covered with plywood.

A shorter and later building is attached to the subject building on the west elevation, covering much of this elevation.

**INTERIOR**

The interior of all three storefronts are unadorned. Finishes include four-inch fir floors. The walls between each storefront are parged brick which appear to be original. The center and western storefronts straddle the main staircase. In each storefront, beneath the staircase, there is a small closet or storage space. The door to the closet is framed with molding.

In the eastern storefront there are two small rooms at the rear of the space. One is a bathroom and the other was used as a dark room. The doorway of each is surrounded by molded trim boards and bulls-eye corner blocks. In lieu of a mopboard, door frame trim has been applied to part of the room.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 3

Davis Block  
name of property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

Historic and Architectural Resources in the Eliot Neighborhood  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

---

The interior of the center storefront has a box-like room created in the rear of the space. The interior of the western storefront has been remodeled into an apartment. The floor in the front portion of the space is carpeted; the rear portion is vinyl. A raised plinth defines the dining area. At the rear of the space a sleeping loft has been created above the kitchen area.

Inside the entry doors to the second floor there is a small foyer. The staircase rises to a landing before continuing to the second floor. The lath and plaster walls are enhanced with wood wainscoting, wide molded chair rail and simple mopboards. The treads of the stairs are wide stained fir, carpeted with a runner.

The second floor rooms are accessed by a central hallway, which runs east-west through the width of the building. The central skylight is in its original location but its reopening required new materials. Secondary hallways extend along the western wall and form a "T" near the eastern end of the building. Original doors and transoms have been retained.

In addition to the hallways, there are currently 16 rooms on the second floor. Two are bathrooms. The rooms at this level are in varying stages of rehabilitation. Some are fully rehabilitated and occupied as office space. In other rooms the plaster is or has fallen off the lath, or the lath and plaster have been removed to reveal the studs. In the northeastern corner of the building there is a coved ceiling, evidence that this corner was one room where the early Public Hall of the building was located.

The woodwork is composed of original molded door and window surrounds, enhanced with bulls-eye corner blocks and molded bases. Some of the window sashes are vinyl. In the rehabilitated rooms the walls have been repaired and painted or replaced with wall-board and painted. The original wood-work has been retained where it exists and painted or replaced to match the original. The floors have been refinished and stained. New brass lighting fixtures, compatible with typical lighting of the era are suspended from the ceiling.

**ALTERATIONS**

Photographs from the 1950s show the display windows replaced with plywood. As noted above, a loft-like apartment has been created in the western storefront. These changes have been made over the past ten years.

Changes to the interior of the second floor over time can not be clearly determined chronologically, although it is known that this floor was originally used as a public hall and apartments. During the historic period, the second floor was divided into at least a dozen apartments. Given the total area, these units must have been very small. As the space has been altered over time, walls have been added and subtracted.

The current owner has made additional changes in the last five years. These changes include the removal of two passageways that led to a warren of rooms. He also added a wall in a small interior room to create two bathrooms. An interior window was also added to permit light to enter a "land-locked" room. In doing so, the current owner duplicated a similar window in another room on the second floor.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 4

Davis Block  
name of property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

Historic and Architectural Resources in the Eliot Neighborhood  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

---

Approximately half of the second floor has been rehabilitated by the current owner. In addition to the wall changes, he has also replaced many of the second floor windows with vinyl sashes. The design of the windows was carefully duplicated, although the materials were not. In the rehabilitated space, walls and original woodwork have been painted, and floors have been refinished.

Plans are underway to complete the rehabilitation, including restoration of the exterior storefronts.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 5

Davis Block  
name of property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

Historic and Architectural Resources in the Eliot Neighborhood  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Davis Block is eligible for listing as it relates to the multiple property listing *Historic & Architectural Properties in the Eliot Neighborhood of Portland, Oregon*. It is locally significant under Criterion A in the contexts of Commerce and Ethnic Heritage. As a commercial and residential building and public hall, the Davis Block provides a substantial physical record of professional, commercial and fraternal activities over time on Russell Street, once the center of the early city of Albina. It is significant for its associations with its original owner Luther M. Davis, who was a dentist, Portland City Councilman and State Legislator. The period of significance dates from 1890, the date of construction, to the 1940s. It is significant for its ethnic associations with a Japanese owned business from 1921 to 1941 (Eichi Saito's Home Laundry) and a Chinese owned Dry Goods Store (The Sam Moy Company, established c. 1916 and operated until 1931). It is locally significant under Criterion C as one of the best remaining examples of commercial buildings in the Eliot Neighborhood.

**HISTORY OF PROPERTY**

**THE DAVIS BLOCK AND EARLY ALBINA**

With Albina's incorporation as a city in 1887, substantial brick buildings, both "permanent" in appearance and "fireproof" in their construction began to rise on Russell Street during the Progressive Era. Following the first electric streetcar in Albina in 1889, Luther M. and Nancy Davis purchased the subject property in 1890, erecting the Davis Block in their name at the Northwest corner of Russell and Albina Streets.

Dr. Luther Davis was born in Michigan in 1848, and came to the Pacific Northwest in 1877, practicing dentistry in Walla Walla, Washington for a short time. He moved to Portland in 1888 where he married his Alabama-born wife Nancy, who had come to Portland in 1878. By 1895, Luther Davis was practicing dentistry in his own building, which is listed in City Directories of the era as the Davis Block & Hall under Public Buildings. By 1900, fraternal organization, including the Knights of Pythias and Knights of the Maccabees were meeting in the Davis Block upstairs hall. In 1898, he and his son John, who was also a dentist, practiced together for a time in the Mohawk Buildings; Luther Davis relocated back to his own building by 1910 where he kept his practice into the late 'teens. Davis was an officer in the Albina Masonic Lodge No. 101, and a Scottish Rite Mason, as well as a charter member of Camelia Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star, in which he and his wife were founding officers. Dr. Davis was elected to the Portland City Council where he served for two years, going on to a term in the Oregon Legislature in 1909. He died in 1923 at the age of 75 and the Davis Block's ownership remained with his wife Nancy until 1932. The building was sold then to the Abe Weinstein family who operated a grocery in South Portland.

**ETHNIC MIGRATION**

In the 1890s, in addition to a tailor's shop and a retail shoe store, the Davis Block housed Lewis Moyer's Dry Goods Store, who built his own store at 703 North Russell (extant) in 1911. Luther Davis then leased the corner storefront to Chinese immigrant Sam Moy, who established the Sam Moy & Company Dry Goods Store ("Men's & Women's furnishings, Special Weave Cloth, Headlight

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 6

Davis Block  
name of property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

Historic and Architectural Resources in the Eliot Neighborhood  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

Union Made Overalls") and lived upstairs. The Moy & Company painted advertisement is still extant on the east wall of the building. His manager Thomas Lang, who was also Chinese, eventually assumed ownership of the company; Lang's son Charles clerked in the store until moving on to the Economy Dry Goods Store at 715 SE Grand Avenue (owned by Mrs. Charles Tong, who lived with the Langs) which he then bought and operated as Lang's Dry Goods. Charles Lang closed his store on Pearl Harbor Day, but went there every day until his death in the 1960s (715 Grand Avenue, built by Nathaniel K. West, is listed in the National Register).

As the 1920s unfolded, a small enclave of Japanese owned businesses were established on lower Russell Street. In 1921, Eichi Saito established his Home Laundry in the center storefront of the Davis Block. By 1927, other Japanese business owners were operating lodgings and groceries, and living nearby. Saito had immigrated from Hiroshima, Japan to Western Washington's central coast. His wife-to-be Haruno had also come from Hiroshima, to a pre-arranged marriage. They moved to Portland c. 1918, and operated the Home Laundry in the Davis Block until World War II's forced internment of the Japanese sent them to Minidoka, Idaho. From 1938 to 1941, the Home Laundry had been the only operating business on the Davis Block's main floor. The Saito's storefront remained vacant until 1952. When the Saitos returned after the war, they operated a hotel at SW 3rd and Oak. Their nearby home of the 1921-41 era, at 2502 N. Albina no longer stands.

The upper floor of the Davis Block provided housing and is listed as a boarding house and then furnished rooms, from the 1890s into the turn of the century. By the 1920s, the upstairs public hall had been converted to additional apartments; the upper floor continued to provide small living units primarily to single adults, and was known as the Main Apartments and then the Davis Apartments.

**POST WAR YEARS**

At the start of World War II, the Japanese owned businesses on Russell were forced to close. In 1942, the Davis Block was lost by the Weinstein family and sold at sheriff's auction to the Charles Paine Realty Investment Company. In 1943, only one of the Davis Block storefronts was occupied, by C.H. Gade's Furniture Store, with Mr. and Mrs. Gade living upstairs in one of the apartments. They relocated across Russell Street to the Torgler Building (extant) at 816-820 N. Russell Street where they remained until 1950. By the close of the 1940s, a string of automotive type uses located on the ground floor, lasting through the 1960s. The corner storefront that had been the Sam Moy & Company Dry Goods Store became the Northwest Variety Store, remaining there through the mid 1950s.

In 1962 the building was again sold at sheriff's auction; it was owned for the next seven years by Silas & Margaret Williams, who operated a grocery store nearby on N. Knott. By the late 1960s, one storefront of the Davis Block was being used for storage and the rest of the property (including the apartments) was vacant. The building continued to fall into decline, along with lower Russell Street and much of the Albina neighborhood. In 1984, the property was purchased by William Wright, the present property owner.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 7

Davis Block  
name of property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

Historic and Architectural Resources in the Eliot Neighborhood  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The Eliot neighborhood, located in northeast Portland, Oregon, is locally significant as the original townsite of the City of Albina. Settled in three separate parts, the City of Albina is generally categorized in terms of Lower, Central, or Upper Albina. Lower Albina refers to the area from the Willamette River to Mississippi Avenue (Central Albina follows Mississippi Avenue, Russell Street, and Williams Avenue; and Upper Albina consists of the area north of the intersection of Russell and Williams Avenue, up to Union Avenue / Martin Luther King, Jr.). The subject property stands in the heart of Lower Albina, and is among the few extant properties of the area's earliest era on North Russell Street.

**SETTLEMENT: 1872-1880**

Platted in 1872, the original townsite of Albina developed along the eastern banks of the Willamette River. It was located on a donation land claim originally owned by J.L. Loring and Joseph Delay, pioneers who took advantage of the economic opportunity afforded by the Donation Land Act of 1850. Loring and Delay eventually sold their shares to William W. Page who, in turn, sold it to Edwin Russell and George H. Williams, former senator, U.S. Attorney General, and future mayor of Portland. The town was named after Page's wife and daughter, both of whom were named Albina. NE Russell Street and N. Williams Avenue still bear the names of the community's early pioneers.

Edwin Russell, for whom the Russell Street Conservation District in the Eliot neighborhood is named (and where the subject property is located) was an aristocratic Englishman who emigrated to America to run the Portland branch of the Bank of British Columbia. Occasionally called Lord Russell, he was described as "a man of hustle" who was also one of the best-dressed men in Portland.<sup>1</sup> Russell managed the downtown bank, located on Front Avenue, but foresaw greater personal success in financing a town on the other side of the Willamette.

While Williams platted the community's general dimensions, Russell, who had controlling interest in the venture, oversaw Albina's development. He built a sawmill and shipyard along the river's edge and organized machine and engine shops. In 1873, he negotiated a contract with the U.S. Government to build a \$92,000 revenue cutter in his shipbuilding yards. Russell envisioned overtaking the nearby City of Portland where a fire that same year had destroyed a large portion of its business district, predicting Albina's future as the "premier city of the Pacific Northwest."<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, Russell had invested all of his savings and borrowed heavily for his new enterprises and the bank panic of 1873 was disastrous for him. By 1874, unable to pay the interest on his mortgaged properties, Russell left town and moved his family to San Francisco.

In 1874, James Montgomery and William Reid took over the donation land claim, which, despite Russell's business risks, was still essentially a pastoral wilderness. They began developing residential sites, a move that met with success. Montgomery and Reid were also able to complete Russell's revenue cutter. It was the first U.S. Government vessel built in Oregon.

<sup>1</sup> William Swing, "Edwin Russell's Albina Dream Cost Fortune, Never Came True" (*Oregonian*, 9 Jan. 1961) Sec. 2, p. 6, c.1.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Pintarich, "Albina Residents Celebrate New Life" (*Oregonian*, 20 Feb. 1997) 2M.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 8

Davis Block  
name of property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

Historic and Architectural Resources in the Eliot Neighborhood  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

---

The fire in Portland influenced the real estate market, and caused sales in Albina to rise dramatically. It grew from a town of 143 persons in 1880 to one with a population of nearly 3,000 by the time of its incorporation in 1887.

**CONSOLIDATION: 1880-1891**

The primary reason for Albina's rapid growth in the 1880s was the advent of the railways to the area. It was chosen to become the western terminus of a line operated by the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company (ORNC) in 1882. The arrival of the railroads caused a flurry of industrial, commercial, and residential growth in Albina. In 1883, William S. Ladd capitalized on the increased foreign trade in wheat and expanded his small Albina Flour Mills into the seven storied Portland Flouring Mills. It was soon the largest milling operation in the Northwest. Between the ORNC and Ladd's mill, two miles of Albina's waterfront were devoted to large corporate businesses. Until the time of its incorporation in 1887, Albina's growth as a community would be largely controlled by private business interests with headquarters on the west side of the river. Few cities in America were as dominated by corporate interests as was Albina.<sup>3</sup>

The City of Albina was already busily creating a social infrastructure to support its potential. Developers' attention had been further focused on the east side with the opening of the Morrison Bridge in 1887 and then the Steel Bridge in 1889, which connected the east and west sides of the river. In 1889, the first electric streetcar in the City of Portland began operation in Albina and soon became the dominant mode of transportation for the entire east side. The street railways produced an accelerated pace of growth for the east side, especially in Albina. Social institutions such as schools and churches appeared in the growing town, as did residences.

The City of Albina also expanded physically. West side interests and local realtors pressured the state legislature to allow Albina to annex territory that was nine times greater than its original size at incorporation. Upon annexation, Albina covered more land than incorporated East and West Portland combined. The City of Albina consisted of 13.5 square miles with a population density of 450 per square mile.

With so much land at stake, Albina's consolidation with the City of Portland became a focal topic for policy makers of both cities. Consolidation made sense for the City of Albina, since it would relieve its city council of the burden of providing municipal services with funds it did not have. As the City of Portland developed, industrial and residential areas began to dot the landscape of the east side. Soon, Portland's business district was the financial downtown of the three cities.<sup>4</sup> Consolidation with the City of East Portland and the City of Albina seemed a wise move for the City of Portland, as it would make Portland a city of some 25 square miles in

---

<sup>3</sup> E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Shaping of a City: Business and Politics in Portland, OR, 1885 to 1915* (Portland, OR: The Georgian Press, 1976) 126.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 117.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 9

Davis Block  
name of property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

Historic and Architectural Resources in the Eliot Neighborhood  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

area.<sup>5</sup> Nine years after consolidation passed, Portland's population had increased by 50 percent and its geographic area by 40 percent.<sup>6</sup> Consolidation, promoted by Portland businessmen, was also supported by Albina's citizens who, lacking funds for municipal services, had their own economic interests at heart. In 1891, consolidation was approved, and citizens of Portland were faced with the formidable task of taking on former obligations of the City of Albina.

**COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT: 1880-1923**

Russell Street and its surroundings developed in step with the City of Albina. Since the town's beginnings, Russell Street had been a crucial part of Albina's growth. The avenue's proximity to the river had naturally brought it to prominence as Albina's main street. With the river ferry operating at the base of Albina Avenue—about three blocks from Russell Street—shopkeepers favored sites along the town's emerging transportation gateway. In 1884, the only way to get from Albina to Portland was via the Albina Ferry. That changed during the Streetcar Era, when residential development skyrocketed and the community's economic base expanded.

For the commercial district of Albina, the street railways were undeniably transformative. Commercial centers tended to flourish near or on such transit nodes, as was the case for Russell Street. The first rail line, which traveled north on Interstate Avenue and south on Williams Avenue, caused Russell Street to become the arterial east-west thoroughfare since it ran between the two avenues. Russell Street was now able to connect the river and railroad yards to the west with the residential sector to the east.

Within this context of growth and development, the Davis Block was constructed in 1890 by Luther Davis. He and his wife Nancy were "substantial citizens," along with others who erected or subsequently owned early Albina's finest brick buildings in the 1890s.

Unlike the major westside industrialists who championed Albina's riverfront development, the Davises also lived on the east side of the river. They resided in three houses in Central Albina, first on Shaver Street, moving to Borthwick Avenue briefly, and settled on N. Commercial Avenue (at Skidmore) by 1910.

Russell Street's identity as the town's main boulevard was definitively secured. Many machine maintenance and repair shops were constructed in the vicinity, and, in 1892, the first bank built in Lower Albina opted for a location at the intersection of Kerby and Russell. Founded by George W. Bates, the Bank of Albina also housed the town's post office and accommodated a few medical offices. Lower Albina was also rich in retail, with stores located along N. Russell Street. The corner of Albina Avenue and Russell, where the Davis Block is located, is one of the few surviving primary corner commercial buildings from the pre-consolidation era.

<sup>5</sup> Richard H. Engeman, "and so made town and country one": *The Streetcar and the Building of Portland 1872-1920*. (B.A. thesis, Reed College, 1969) 13.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 111-112.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 10

Davis Block  
name of property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

Historic and Architectural Resources in the Eliot Neighborhood  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

---

**ETHNIC MIGRATION: 1880-1920s**

Beginning in the 1880s and into the teens, Albina would continue to absorb an increasing number of immigrants relative to the rest of the city. Predominantly from eastern Europe, immigrants from Italy, Greece, Hungary, Poland, and Russia would join established immigrants from Germany and Ireland, as well as a Scandinavian community that had settled along the corridor of NE Seventh Avenue. This concentration of immigrants would remain, even as Portland experienced a phenomenal growth rate from 1900 to 1910 that diluted its foreign-born population. The Albina area would come to serve as a gateway for immigrants newly arriving to Portland.

For the early Scandinavian community, lower Russell Street functioned as their primary commercial area. In 1892, H. H. Heide, A Danish engraver and goldsmith, started the first jewelry store in Albina in the Torgler Building at 816-820 N. Russell Street (extant). Hans Hansen was another successful Dane in Albina, who operated a landmark furniture store on Russell Street in between Mississippi and Delay (now Interstate) Streets. By the turn of the century and certainly by its early decades, Albina was solidly identified as an ethnic, working class, industrial community.

The presence of Japanese and Chinese business owners in Lower Albina in the 'teens on Russell Street and Albina Avenue is significant, since most Asian immigrants were located on the inner west side across the river. The Moys, Langs and Saitos, who owned businesses in the Davis Block beginning in 1916, lived on the east side of the river - the Moys and Langs in Central Albina on N. Knott, and the Saitos on N. Albina Avenue just across Russell Street from their business.

**CHANGES IN COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT: 1920s-1960s**

Future changes in land use drastically altered the environment of the Albina district. For the business sector, the changes in land use patterns were tied to the growing popularity of cars as America's favorite means of transportation. As more and more clients and customers arrived by car to do their business, building orientation and land use patterns were adjusted to suit their needs. Commercial districts that had flourished in the time of streetcars now struggled to compete with the retail opportunities offered by the automobile. Regional shopping malls further drained commercial traffic from businesses located along the old streetcar lines.

Union Avenue's commercial economy went into decline in the 1940s when the auto dealerships decided to relocate to the up and coming Interstate Avenue, a street primed for the automobile. Interstate Avenue remained an arterial thoroughfare well into the 1950s but took a downturn with the opening of the Minnesota Freeway (I-5) in 1964. The construction of I-5 did for Interstate Avenue what it had for Union Avenue. Russell Street and other nearby streets were likewise substantially impacted. Many of the earlier brick buildings of Russell Street's historic period have incrementally disappeared over time, replaced with semi-industrial developments and surface parking lots.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 11

Davis Block  
name of property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

Historic and Architectural Resources in the Eliot Neighborhood  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

---

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Engeman, Richard H. *"and so made town and country one": The Streetcar and the Building of Portland 1872-1920*. B.A. thesis, Reed College, 1969.
- Hartnett, Susan: "From Urban Albina to Eliot." Urban Studies Seminar, 1991 (unpublished).
- MacColl, E. Kimbark. *The Shaping of a City: Business and Politics in Portland, OR 1885-1915*. Portland, OR: The Georgian Press, 1976.
- Multnomah County Assessment and Taxation Office. Property records, microform, automated data files and card files.
- Oregonian*, 29 July, 1923; 17 November, 1948.
- Polk's Portland City Directory*. Portland, OR: R.L. Polk & Co., Inc. 1895-1976.
- Portland Buildings Bureau. Building permit records.
- Portland Bureau of Planning. *Albina Community Plan: Background Report, Vol. 1: The Albina Community*. Portland, OR: Bureau of Planning, Feb. 1991.
- . *Eliot Multiple Property Submission, Historic and Architectural Properties in the Eliot Neighborhood*. Portland, OR: Bureau of Planning, October, 1997.
- . *History of the Albina Plan Area*. Portland, OR: Bureau of Planning, 1990.
- . *Portland Historical Context Statement*. Portland, OR: Bureau of Planning, Sept. 1992.
- . *Proposed Local Historic Districts*. Portland, OR: Bureau of Planning, May 1992.
- Saito, Rick. Telephone Interview. July, 1998.
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Vols. 1-6. 1897-1955.
- Snyder, Eugene. *Portland Names and Neighborhoods: Their Historic Origins*. Portland, OR: Binford & Mort, 1979.
- Staehli, Alfred. *Preservation Options for Portland Neighborhoods*. 15 Dec. 1975.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 12

Davis Block  
name of property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

Historic and Architectural Resources in the Eliot Neighborhood  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

---

**VERBAL PROPERTY DESCRIPTION**

East 75' of Lot 9 and 10, Block 8, Proebstels Addition

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

Portland City lot, original lot lines

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. PHOTOS Page 13

Davis Block, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

---

### Common Label Information:

1. Davis Block
2. Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon
3. Photographer: Jane Morrison
4. Date: July 1998
5. Negative on file at Bosco-Milligan Foundation

### Photo No. 1:

6. South elevation of building. Camera facing north.

### Photo No. 2:

6. Southeast elevation of building. Camera facing northwest.

### Photo No. 3:

6. South elevation of building. Camera facing north.

### Photo No. 4:

6. Interior door detail, second floor. Camera facing west.

### Photo No. 5:

6. Interior - Main staircase, west wall.

### Photo No. 6:

6. Interior, second floor. Rehabilitated hallway. Camera facing west.

### Photo No. 7:

6. Interior, second floor. Rehabilitated office. Camera facing west.

### Photo No. 8:

6. Interior, second floor. Camera facing northwest.

### Photo No. 9:

6. Interior, second floor. Corridor. Camera facing west.

### Photo No. 10:

6. Interior. Eastern entrance.

### Photo No.11:

6. Northeast elevation. Camera facing southwest.

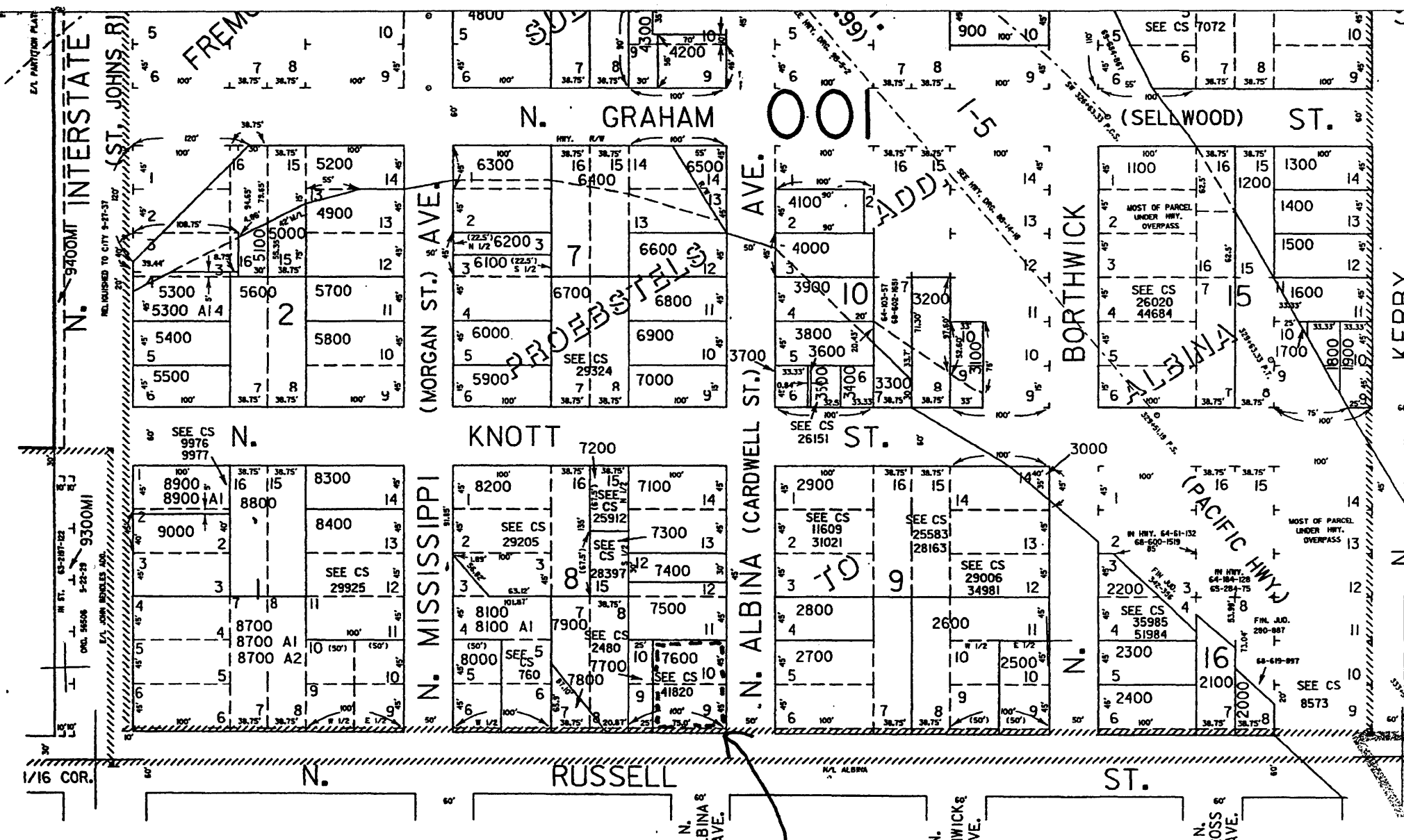
### Photo No. 12:

6. Rear elevation, arch detail. Camera facing south.

### Photo No. 13:

6. Rear elevation, doorway detail. Camera facing south.

SEE MAP IN IE 27



1,412,500

SEE MAP IN IE 27CA

DAVIS BLOCK  
 801-813 N RUSSELL  
 PORTLAND, OR  
 Elist Neighborhood MPS

N KNOTT

N RUSSELL

N. ALBINA

DAVIS BLOCK  
801-813  
N RUSSELL  
PORTLAND OR

Eliot Neighborhood MPS

N MISSISSIPPI

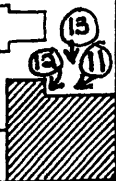
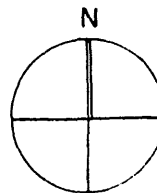
N. ALBINA

N BORTHWICK

N

INTERSTATE

PHOTOGRAPHS - Key



③



②

④

⑤

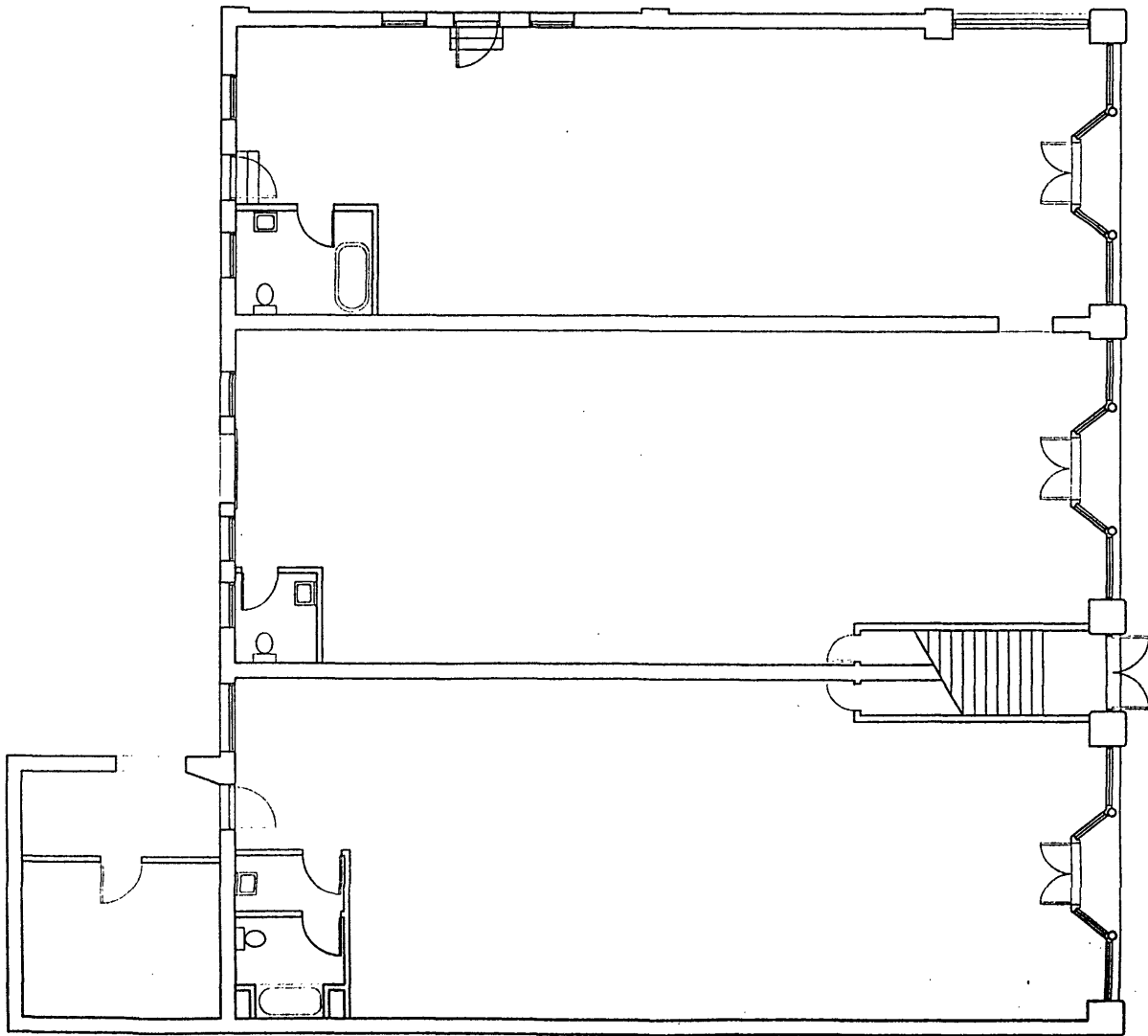
⑥

⑦



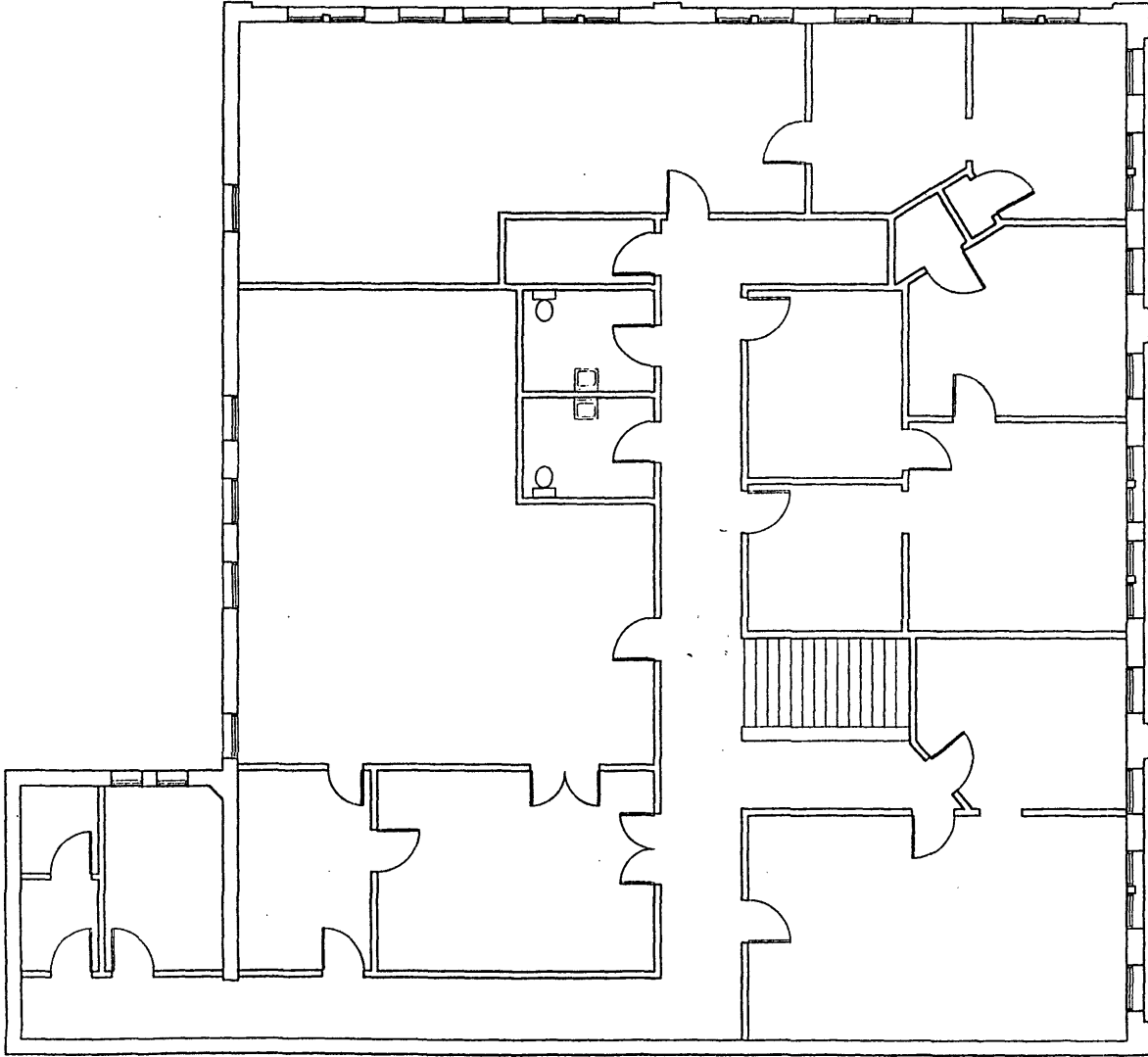
DAVIS BLOCK  
801-813 N RUSSELL  
PORTLAND, OR

Ellet Neighborhood MPS



DAVIS BLOCK  
801-813 N RUSSELL  
PORTLAND, OR

Eliot Neighborhood MPS



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

