

SURVEY-INVENTORY FORM
COMMUNITY CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY

1. NAME
Historic Mills Building

and/or Common Tobiason's

2. LOCATION
Street & Number 1239 Commerce Avenue

UTM References: Kelso, WA-OR Scale: 1:24,000
Zone 10 Easting 505150
Northing 5109000
- not for publication

City, Town Longview - vicinity of

State Washington County Cowlitz

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership: public private both
Status: occupied unoccupied work in progress
Present Use: agriculture commercial educational entertainment government
industrial military museum park private residence
religious scientific transportation other:

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

Name Francis L'Amie

Street & Number 28 Country Club Drive

City, Town Longview - vicinity of State Washington

98632

5. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Copeland, Paul W. "Small Town Stuff". The American Architect, December 29, 1927, Pp. 821-823. Longview History Room. Longview Public Library. Longview
Tobiason, Lawrence. Personal Interview. Longview. March 20, 1985.
Longview City Directory. R. L. Polk & Co. Seattle. 1931. Longview Public Library. Longview.

6. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title Michael L. Neuschwanger, Architectural Apprentice

Organization City of Longview Date March 21, 1985
Urban Services & Permits Department

Street & Number 1525 Broadway Telephone 577-3330

City or Town Longview State Washington
98632

7. DESCRIPTION

Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed
Circle one: unaltered altered
Circle one: original site moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance
attach photo

The Mills Building occupies a row slot, fronting Commerce Avenue to the east. The two story building, measuring 45 X 120 feet, is abutted on its long sides by two like structures, and is serviced by an alley to the rear. The facade has a columnar ground story which is two bays wide, with transom lights indicative of the mezzanine level. The planar second story wall is punctuated by six openings. The stairhall to the second floor of the building is located in the northern retail bay of the adjacent Schumann building.

The perimeter walls are constructed of masonry in conjunction with interior bay system of wood post and beam. The street elevation is faced in brick, predominantly in buff and brown colors and highlighted by burnt blues. The column pedestals, the skeletal ribs and the parapet frieze of the facade are constructed of cream colored terra cotta glazed tile. The horizontal banding of the skeletal ribs approximate the ground story ceiling datum, as well as act as second story window sills and lintels. The vertical ribs spring from pendants engaged in the central and side columns at the datum of the transom beam, terminating in finials which break the frieze of the parapet. The parapet is decorated by a repeating motif of curvilinear, geometric tracery. Brickwork is laid

Verbal boundary description:

Lot #6, Block 87,
Longview Addtn. #2
45' X 120'

Acreage: Less than One Acre

8. SIGNIFICANCE

Specific dates 1926 ¹

Builder/Architect H. L. Copeland, Architect

a. Level of significance: local
History

The Mills Building was financed by James F. Mills on a loan from Pacific States Savings and Loan, in 1926, on an improved lot originally sold by the Longview Real Estate Company a division of Long Bell. It was designed by H. L. Copeland who also prepared drawings for the neighboring Schumann Building. The two buildings, which are individually distinct, appear to have been built in conjunction with one another. They were financed simultaneously through loans from Pacific States and they share a single stairhall, located in the Schumann Building.

The buildings were featured in "Small Town Stuff", written by Arch. Paul Copeland for the American Architect. The author, son of H. L. Copeland, discusses the efficacy of deed restrictions which required a second story and a 17 foot 6 inch floor to floor ground

b. Evaluation of Significance

The Mills Building is a fine example of the Gothic Revival stylistic influence and is unusual among Longview's commercial buildings in this sense. It is related to city planning efforts by its position in the urban core and in its conformance with deed restrictions requiring 17' 6" ground story ceiling heights and a mandatory second story - restrictions which its architect abided by grudgingly (see thematic nomination). It is also significant by its association with its architect, H. L. Copeland, who was active during the city's settlement.

1. A building permit filed May 11, 1926, in the name of J. F. Mills, shows a masonry building to be constructed, valued at \$23,000.

SURVEY-INVENTORY FORM
CONTINUATION SHEET

1. NAME Mills Building

7. DESCRIPTION - continued

predominantly in running bond. Slightly recessed panels under the second story windows are laid in a basket weave pattern and are trimmed in bull header courses and stacked headers.

Second floor windows are single pane, double hung and of wood construction. The transom lights are arranged in a bank and are either fixed or casement in type, with translucent glass and wood frames. Retail entries are recessed and inset symmetrically within the larger structural bays. Store windows are large, fixed panes, running continuously from the kickplate to the transom beam. The original tile kickplate and wood store entrance doors have been replaced.

The building has had a one story addition built to the rear of the building in 1947, extending the building forty feet to the alley. The upper story interior, which is spatially related by a continuous corridor, to the adjacent Schumann Building, is largely intact. A projecting wood cornice in the hall adorns the plain plaster walls. Wood trim, cabinets, fixtures and skylights are intact in the apartments. The ground story interiors have been largely altered.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

a. History - continued

story height on buildings in the central area of the business district. "This latter requirement was designed to provide all stores with mezzanines whether one was wanted or not, and also, in some inscrutable and omnipotent manner, keep the coping lines even and guarantee a pleasing harmony between the different building facades. Needless to say, this fatuous expectation was never realized. But it did complicate the solution of a good looking store front for the necessity of high window lights gave even the best designs the appearance of an open faced pie." Copeland also writes that the second story requirement led to the development of apartments in the business district, as there was not enough professionals to occupy the ample, resulting office space. "Contrary to the usual experience with tenants who occupy the cheap rooms of second rate office buildings that have degenerated into the lodging house type, we have found the apartment idea appeals to a surprisingly fine and substantial type of citizen."

Copeland was a local architect responsible for the design of several commercial and residential buildings in the city. Other buildings by Copeland listed in the thematic nomination are the Schumann Building, Pounder Building and the Longview Community Church.

The Longview City Directory of 1929 lists the Mills Apartment Building with four ground story tenants, which were the Ben Franklin Chain Store, Business Services Inc., Jim Ragland, Real Estate and H. L. Copeland, Architect. The building has been occupied by Tobiason's Variety Store continuously since as early as 1936. The second story continues to operate as an apartment house.

The Gothic Revival influence displayed in the skeletal detailing of the Mills Building is unusual within Longview's Business District, clearly distinguishable from the Tudor detailing of the Pounder Building across the street, and the more Sullivanesque, Arts & Crafts detailing of the adjacent Schumann Building.