

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic West's Block

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number 701-707 SE Grand Avenue      not for publication

city, town Portland      vicinity of      congressional district 3rd

state Oregon code 41 county Multnomah code 051

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<u>    </u> district	<u>    </u> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<u>    </u> agriculture	<u>    </u> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<u>    </u> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<u>    </u> park
<u>    </u> structure	<u>    </u> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<u>    </u> educational	<u>    </u> private residence
<u>    </u> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<u>    </u> entertainment	<u>    </u> religious
<u>    </u> object	<u>    </u> in process	<u>    </u> yes: restricted	<u>    </u> government	<u>    </u> scientific
	<u>    </u> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<u>    </u> industrial	<u>    </u> transportation
		<u>    </u> no	<u>    </u> military	<u>    </u> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name Jerry R. Bosco

street & number 913 SE 33rd Avenue

city, town Portland      vicinity of      state Oregon 97202

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Multnomah County Courthouse

street & number 1021 SW 4th Avenue

city, town Portland      vicinity of      state Oregon 97204

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Portland Historic Land-  
mark status pending has this property been determined eligible?      yes      no

date 1979      federal      state      county  local

depository for survey records Portland Bureau of Planning

city, town Portland      vicinity of      state Oregon 97204

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved      date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### **Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

West's Block is a two-story wood-frame commercial Italianate building with brick exterior walls and original exterior trim of wood and rolled metal. The ground plan measures 48x80', with the shorter dimension fronting SE Grand Avenue. Fenestration of the formal, six-bay principal (east) facade is regular. Second story windows have segmental arch heads with sheet metal hood moldings and are fitted with double-hung sash containing one light over one. At the cornice line, a shallow eave with central pediment is supported by a bracketed frieze which is embellished with modillions, dentils, brackets of varying size, and frieze panels decorated with bosses and incised ornament. The secondary eight-bay street facade fronting Alder is similarly finished but lacks ground-story shop fronts. Owing to successive remodeling of the shopfronts on the Grand Avenue facade in the 20th century, the original configuration of the ground story facade has been lost, and the current owners have sought to recreate it using salvaged cast iron from a destroyed building which was contemporary with West's Block. West's Block has survived in a reasonable state of preservation in part because Portland's East Side business district remained static during the Great Depression and escaped wholesale clearance in the 1940s and 1950s. Rehabilitation of West's Block, now nearing completion, is one of the key projects in a revitalization effort spreading through the East Portland neighborhood.

### STRUCTURE AND PLAN

The construction method of applying a brick veneer over 2x6" studding, recently caused the City building department to accept with relief the building's ability to withstand an earthquake. Rather than solid brick masonry walls, the building has a more flexible wood framework. The walls rest on a solid brick foundation, including a central masonry wall in the basement, to support over-sized wooden floor joists. Dimensions such as 12"x24"x20' reflect a time when timber was plentiful. Douglas fir is used for the framing lumber throughout.

The present, simplified ground floor layout features a one-room display floor on the south, with office and bathroom cubicles, and a more shallow store on the north, with front display area and a half-bath. These two lofty spaces, originally intended for various furnishings and dry goods displays, are separated by the central staircase leading to the second story apartments.

At the top of the stairway is a large hall, surrounded by rooms on all but the west side, which narrows to a further hall with skylight. The largest rooms in the front (east) expand into even bigger areas by sliding back a large set of doors into wall pockets. The seven back apartments, lining the smaller hall, generally had two rooms each, which could be enlarged by unlocking a door that would open into the next two-room unit. There appears to have been one kitchen, one bath area, and a room for unplumbed toilet facilities. The back of the building has the basics of a large balcony, which at an earlier time had a panoramic view of the river, and a back stairs for bring up firewood for the numerous stoves, and for carrying out the chamber pots.

Flushable plumbing had been installed by 1897, according to a Sanborn Fire Insurance map correction. A "WC" was indicated in the back porch space. Traces of the wooden additions for this style plumbing is still in evidence in the neighboring building.

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The 12'-high ceiling's paperings are of interest. They were photographed when first exposed by a sudden windstorm rain leak. With moisture in the printed inks, the colors were at their most vibrant. The restrained pattern includes small shocks of wheat and field daisies, entwined with copper and gilt bands. These border a central field of a deep sienna. There is a small hallway pattern of an almost seaweed-like pattern, also in rich earth tones.

The formality, or symmetry of the principal (east) facade has been retained despite revision of the ground story front. It is noteworthy that the cornice has survived intact. The original cornice is missing from many early Portland buildings. The cornice that supports the crowning eave and central pediment is made up of double and single cedar bracket groupings. These are alternated with several dimensions of block moldings (dentils) and cedar frieze panels with bosses and incised decoration. The central frieze panels of either street facade carry the building's name and date. Larger paired brackets are used at the corners and to set off the central bays of either street facade.

Tin hood moldings with keystones surmount the stilted segmental-arched windows of the second story street facades. Window openings on the other elevations have simple segmental brick arches. Typical window openings are fitted with double hung sash with one light over one. Most of the stove flues are now missing. The bases of some are still visible.

ALTERATIONS AND RESTORATION

The front, ground-floor facade showed the most abandon from any practice of preservation. It was completely left to any remodeler's whim for change that might have been momentarily in vogue. Conversion to electricity caused light sources to be covered over in the 1900s. The 1930s deposited a sheathing of green, black and red opaque "Vitrolite Glass", and the 1950s brought shakes and rough cedar planking.

Recently, the 20th century finishes were peeled back to allow a system of cast iron pilasters and a centrally arched unit to be built in. No historic views of West's Block have come to light to date in any of the normal repositories, so it has not been possible to document the original appearance of the ground story facade. The transplanted ground story facade was salvaged from the 1965 demolition of Portland's "Cook's Block." The module of the castings is closely matched to openings of West's Block, and the foundry mark dates one year later than the construction date of West's Block ("Smith Bros. & Watson's Iron Works, 1884, Portland, Oregon"). The cast iron heads of Minerva decorate the capital sections of the pilasters, which have fluted bases, one of which bears the manufacturer's nameplate and date. The jamb pilasters of the round-arched portal are of the Ionic Order. A Poseidon masque decorates the portal keystone, and the spandrels of the arched entry are decorated with chimaera.

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INTERIOR FINISHES

The finish work will be considered from the basement upwards. The cellar has exposed brick walls. The center wall features a portion of an embellished sign reading: "SALE...Open..." Another by-gone article is of filigreed cast iron, found on one of the support posts, installed as a holder for a kerosene bracket lamp.

The 14'-high first floor side and back walls were wainscotted with a Douglas fir vertical bead and flat slat cut, and finished with a horizontal molding at the usual chairback height. The remainder of the wall continues on up as plastered wooden lath. This was also used for the base coat for wallpapered ceilings, except in the shop entrance-ways, which were paneled in more of the wainscoting.

The tile floors in these sidewalk entrances suffered badly when the doors were shifted, as various revampings occurred. Parts of the ornate, high-fired, parquet patterns of buff, white, red and ebony geometrically-shaped tiles ended up in about the same condition as those recently uncovered in the Barber Block (one block north), ie, thrown into wall cavities, covered over, or pried up and discarded to the cellar. Being both practical and visually pleasing, the uncovered portions at the site will be unified with replacements from the demolished Albina City Hall, once the center of another small town northwest of Portland, which eventually was annexed to the present City of Portland.

The years of attempting to hide the first floor's Victorian origins behind fleeting preferences of deco, modern, 1950 country western, etc., have left a need for replacing certain detailing such as light fixtures more closely resembling the original gaslights.

This lack of architectural preservation swings to the opposite scale on the second floor. Its entrances had been boarded over to favor the taverns and a delicatessen below. As the upper chambers were opened up, it was apparent that many of the entrances still had the cedar casement moldings that rise to several layers at the outer edges of the doors and windows, with the mitered corners. The transomed doors, also of cedar, have four raised panels, with the upper panels taller than the lower ones. Several doors still parade their authentic knobs. They are quite unusual, being made up of a composition similar to the weighty press used to manufacture the daguerreotype-box sculptured reliefs. One of these rarities was photographed for Maud Eastwood's book, The Antique Doorknob, Times Litho, Forest Grove, Oregon, 1976, p. 90 (date and nameplate are misquoted, but visual features are accurate). Hinges, window locks and handles were cast in the usual decorative iron patterns.

The arched front windows show the hardware markings for interior, louvered shutters. One shutter was found tacked onto the bottom of a wood stove's tin hearth panel. Flooring, on both levels, is cut in the old, extra-wide, six-inch tongue and groove Douglas fir. Chair-height fir wainscoting, like that on the first floor, is used in many rooms, but can be found extending to the ceiling in bathing rooms and storage areas for the chamber pots. There are a number of parlor stovepipe connections to the chimneys. Some of the smaller rooms show evidence of having been chopped down at about the time of a basic wiring system installation in the years of 1910-1915.

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The double nine-foot doors have panels which pick up the wainscot repeat. Bronze hardware, cast in 1880s patterns, is being re-installed where potmetal handles bearing exaggerated castle motifs had been recently tacked in place by one of the last tenants. Semi-concealed folding wrought iron is installed where night protection is deemed necessary over the doors. The window sash for street display is divided up, to carry out the scale of glass panels common to early West Coast commercial structures.

FUTURE RESTORATION

Future work will be directed toward roof sheathing, railings for the back balcony, restriking and sealing mortar joints on the south side, where exposure to severe weather and a lack of paint have allowed the removal of outer mortar lines. Exterior trim, now painted red, needs to be taken back to variations of green relating to the original color scheme. There are also portions of interior woodwork that need replacing. Stove flues need to be reconstructed.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1883 Builder/Architect Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The two-story brick-faced Italianate commercial building erected at the intersection of SE Grand Avenue and Alder Street in 1883 was the first of several buildings constructed on Block 99 of the East Portland Addition for merchant Nathaniel West. It is significant to Portland as perhaps the oldest building remaining in the historic business district of East Portland, and as one of the pivotal buildings of the current neighborhood rehabilitation movement.

Nathaniel West (1826-1897), a native of Broome County, New York, was descended from Thomas West, a member of the British armed forces sent to the North American colonies to enforce the Stamp Act. West's forebear is said to have switched his allegiance upon arrival and to have joined the revolutionary movement. In any event, West brought his wife and four children to Portland in 1875. In the following year he settled in the separate town of East Portland, on the east bank of the Willamette River, and bought property on 4th and L Streets. The 4th Street property, containing a store and house, later was sold to become the East Portland First National Bank. Bank buildings typically were associated with his land dealings.

Selling his initial property for a bank site for \$30,000 enabled West to build at 5th and M Streets (later renamed SE Grand and Alder) and open the "most complete dry goods and ladies' and gents' furnishing goods establishment on the East Side." The Wests resided in an upstairs apartment in the building. Over the next ten years, the family constructed additional buildings on the block, including five stores and a bank. Of these, only a three-story brick-faced building of 1894 adjoining the south end of West's Block, and a two-story brick-faced building dating from the later 1890s are still standing, owing to construction of new approach spans for the Morrison Street Bridge in 1936 under WPA auspices. The remainder of the block is vacant except for a two-story concrete warehouse/retail building of the 1920s which occupies the northwest corner, behind West's Block. West's Block and its neighbors to the south offer strong visual support for two National Register properties a block to the north on either side of Grand Avenue--the New Logus Block (1892) and the Barber Block (1890).

West was elected president of the East Portland City Council and was known as a champion of public improvements--most notably a crossing of the Willamette River at Morrison Street. The original Morrison Street Bridge promoted by West and other East Portland businessmen was opened in 1887. It was replaced by the existing structure in 1905.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**  
**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than one (4500 sq ft)

Quadrangle name Portland, Oregon-Washington

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

### UMT References

A 

1	0	5	2	6	5	8	1	0	5	1	0	4	1	0	3	4	1	0
Zone			Easting						Northing									

B 

Zone			Easting						Northing									

C 

Zone			Easting						Northing									

D 

Zone			Easting						Northing									

E 

Zone			Easting						Northing									

F 

Zone			Easting						Northing									

G 

Zone			Easting						Northing									

H 

Zone			Easting						Northing									

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 8, Block 99 of the East Portland Addition to Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jerry R. Bosco and J. Benny Milligan

organization Westblock Glass date December 14, 1979

street & number 707 SE Grand Avenue telephone 503/231-7070

city or town Portland state Oregon 97214

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

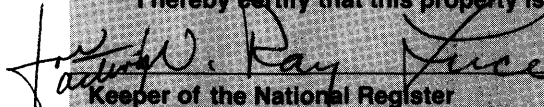
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 


title Deputy SHPO date July 14, 1980

For HCERS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

  
Keeper of the National Register

date 10/10/80

Attest:   
Chief of Regional Regional Coordinator

date 10-7-80

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East Portland Directory. Portland, OR: R.L. Polk & Co. (OHS Library). "West" listings: 1883, 1884, 1885, 1893, 1898, 1910. Advertisement for "Smith & Watson Iron" 1890, p. 473.

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The Morning Oregonian, Portland. January 16, 1907, p. 14 (OHS).

Hines. History of the State of Oregon, 1893, p. 375-376 (OHS).

Hawkins, William III. The Grand Era of Cast Iron Architecture in Portland. Portland, OR: Binford & Mort, 1976. p. 143, 184, 189-191, 199, 204-205.

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Sanborn Insurance Maps - East Portland and Albina, Oregon. New York: Sanborn Publishing Company, Ltd., 1889 (and pasted revision of 1897), p. 5 (OHS Library).

Eastwood, Maud. The Antique Doorknob. Forest Grove, OR: Times litho, 1976. p. 90.

Godfrey, Richard. "Nearly Last of City's Chinatown Buildings Will Be Raised for Downtown Parking Lot," The Oregonian, Portland, July 15, 1965, p. 20 (4M).

Laarts, Paul. "First Across the Willamette," The Sunday Oregonian, Northwest Roto Magazine. Portland, May 16, 1954, p. 8-9.