

INVENTORY SHEET FOR GROUP NOMINATIONS: IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BOISE, IDAHO

NOMINATION: Historic Resources of Paris (Partial Inventory: Architecture)

SITE NAME: Browning Block SITE # 74

LOCATION: Southwest corner Main and Center<sup>Sts.</sup>, Paris, Idaho

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: James Hawkes, Paris, Idaho, 83261

QUADRANGLE AND SCALE: Paris, 7.5 minute ACREAGE: less than one

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: Nomination includes the Browning Block and property on which it stands: fraction lots 9 and 10, block 17, Paris Townsite.

UTM(S): 12/4, 66, 950/46, 74, 800

DATE OR PERIOD: 1905, 1917 EVALUATED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: architecture, commerce

DESCRIPTION:                      Good condition                      altered                      original site

The Browning Block is a two-story ell-shaped brick commercial structure, with a lateral block measuring about ninety-five feet along Main Street and an ell extending about seventy feet back along Center. Viewing the building from northern or oblique angles it is evident that an older structure, its segmentally-arched north elevation now facing Center Street, has been absorbed into the present building. The parapet of the earlier building has been built up and made continuous with that of the newer structure, which has been extended forward some dozen feet toward the corner. This composite corner section contains the local bank and is the most prominent part of the building. The structure continues under a lower parapet approximately seventy feet to the south. This section contains a row of first floor shopfronts and second-story office space.

The fabric of the Main Street facade is red-brown brick. A galvanized iron cornice and frieze of bars and discs, below the parapet and above the second story windows, runs the width of the building and back to the earlier structure on Center. The windows are in two pairs on the bank section of the facade. They are evenly spaced and ten in number above the shopfronts. The windows are little elaborated; they are square-headed, capped with triple and framed with double outset header courses. A slightly projecting course of end-set bricks runs immediately under the window line. Between this and the shopfronts is a broad unelaborated band of brick masonry.

The transom light space in most of the shopfronts has been filled with plywood; in the bank it has been reglazed, as have the other openings. Above the stairwell immediately to the left of the bank, however, and in the barbershop front immediately to the left of that, the original stained and leaded glass survives. The stairwell also retains a small metal marquee, in good condition: stamped tin ceiling, suspended stained glass border panes. A matching, double-width marquee over the bank entrance has been painted and has lost its stained glass. The bank entry door and steps have been remodeled and the lower facade veneered with glazed tile; however the inset entries and canted display windows of the shops are unaltered. The bank lobby and the entrances to the stairwell, barbershop, and corner drugstore retain their miniature polygonal floor tiles. The barbershop retains its revolving striped sign. The interiors are for the most part heavily remodeled, but a few features are of interest, particularly on the second story. The spare early woodwork survives in the stairwell and long central hall, and opaque glass in the transoms and hall windows of the offices opening off of it.

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Browning Block (continued)

Behind the Main Street extension, the Center Street facade of the earlier building is distinguished by brick of a slightly different color and windows of a different style. In the first wide bay of the old elevation there are three segmentally-arched windows on the ground floor, each with an outset head in contrasting brick. On the floor above are five square-headed windows; contrasting belt courses separate the stories and trim the parapet. On the narrower west bay, there are two segmentally-arched windows above and a storefront framed in early millwork below.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Browning Block has architectural and historical significance as the most ambitious commercial undertaking in Paris and as one of its most pretentious buildings. The importance of this business block lies not only in its 1917 form, the present east facade, but in the corner building which it absorbed, the 1905 Bear Lake State Bank, some of which is visible on Center Street.

The construction of the earlier building greatly changed the face of the intersection. In preparation, several frame shops were moved back one hundred feet. The distinctive brickwork, with corbel-capped pilasters and contrasting window heads, was by the Tueller Brothers who would eventually build most of Main Street's masonry buildings. The new bank, the first in Paris, was a joint financial venture between J.R. Shepherd and capitalist A.K. Steunenberg of Caldwell, Idaho who had opened other small banks across the southern part of the state.

Ten years later, plans had started for the Browning Block. Again the financial backing came from outside the town in Matthew Browning "one of Ogden's millionaire (who) has faith in the future of Paris."<sup>1</sup> He also sponsored the Hotel Paris (site #76). More older buildings were moved instead of torn down for this project and construction began late in 1916 and continued to the next summer. The architects hired by Browning were Shreve and Madsen of Ogden, who would also do the Hotel.

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Paris Post, 18 August 1916.

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Browning Block

SIGNIFICANCE (Continued):

The most telling effect of the construction of the Browning Block was the narrowing of Main Street. The city donated sixteen feet of right of way, bringing the roadbed to ninety-nine feet.

With its prominent outset cornice and horizontal bands of brick and window, the form of the Browning Block fairly successfully connected the new building with the old. Its vaguely classical frieze and extravagant marquees added a kind of urban stylization that Paris had not displayed before. With its completion and that of the Hotel, Paris' main intersection was fully in brick and still bespeaks substantiality and permanence.