

**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 Administration Building, Eastern Oregon State College

and/or common

**2. Location** Eastern Oregon State College campus

street & number 8th Street and K Avenue not for publication

city, town La Grande vicinity of congressional district 2

state Oregon code 41 county Union code 061

**3. Classification**

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

name Oregon State System of Higher Education

street & number University of Oregon

city, town Eugene vicinity of state Oregon 97403

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds, Union County Courthouse

street & number 1100 L. Avenue

city, town La Grande state Oregon 97850

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Statewide Inventory of Hist. Properties has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1969  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Salem state Oregon 97310

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input 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**

The Administration Building, Eastern Oregon State College, was designed in 1927 by John V. Bennes (Bennes and Herzog, Portland) and erected in 1929. It is a modern adaptation of Italian Renaissance palatial architecture and includes a formal grand stair with overlook terrace. Originally Eastern Oregon State Normal School, it housed all functions appropriate to a teacher training institution until a separate unit, J. H. Ackerman Laboratory School, was added to the campus in 1935. The nominated structure formed the nucleus of what is now Eastern Oregon State College and remains in excellent condition, with few major alterations; there have been no basic structural changes and no additions. At the present time it houses administrative offices and the Humanities Division. The building and grand stair were designed as an architectural unit and are being nominated as such.

### Site

The site is located on an alluvial bench composed of gravel cohered, and in part cemented by a stiff binding clay. This type of formation is known as fanglomerate, or more commonly as cement gravel. The north or leading edge of the bench rises abruptly from a flood plain to an elevation approximately forty feet above it. The nominated structure is site upon this eminence, its formal grand stair ascending the slope from what is now a quiet residential area.

The building is sited centrally with its entrance facing to the south; the overlook terrace and grand stair provide a view of the city and of the valley and mountains to the north.

### The Building

The building is a central pavilion with flanking wings; its overall dimensions are 85'-4" by 241'-8". There is a projecting bay in the north wall of each wing, providing access to a stairwell; east and west elevations have each a projecting central bay, which is gabled. The building consists of a basement, first floor and second floor.

The architect, who had lived in Baker for several years, selected a modern adaptation of Italian Renaissance palatial architecture as the style most appropriate to eastern Oregon; the dry climate of the region was, he felt, similar to that of northern Italy. The concept of a Renaissance palace on a hill, embodying the grand stair, is one of Benne's most satisfying designs and is particularly pleasing in its utilization of the site provided.

The building is constructed of reinforced concrete, finished in stucco. Roof areas visible from the ground are hipped and finished in variegated red terra cotta tile; areas not visible are composition. Part of the exterior detailing was cast in place, but the majority of these decorations (e.g., surrounds, consoles, balconies, escucheons, pediments and entrance details) are executed in cast stone. The entrance steps are granite. There have been no major structural changes and no additions.

### Visible External Changes

South Elevations: Second floor windows in the central pavilion were filled in and finished with stucco in 1967, when the auditorium was remodeled. This alteration has resulted in a blind arcade matching that on the north wall. The two balconies are in need of restoration (replacement of rails and balusters): otherwise the entire exterior of the building is in an excellent state of preservation.

North elevation: Four windows (central pavilion, second floor) were filled in when the auditorium was remodeled. The blind arcade between them was designed as such. The grand stair is currently undergoing restoration.

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Administration Building, Eastern Oregon State College

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East and west elevations; No changes.

### Original Internal Spatial Organization and Subsequent Alterations

Major alterations are described in detail below. Spaces noted as being subdivided for office suites have not been subject to major alteration or remodeling, as the partitions and other changes are essentially temporary in nature. Many of the larger rooms, originally designed with a single entrance, were provided with two points of access at the time of construction.

Basement (See Plan).

There have been no major alterations to this area. Several of the spaces have been subdivided to provide studio and office areas; others are used for storage.

First Floor (See plan and sectional drawing)

Reference is made to numbered spaces on the original plan. Space 101 (entry): No changes. Space 102 (Entrance Hall): Display cases added on either side of the inner doors. No other changes. Space 103 (center hall): Recess on north wall replaced by French doors providing access to Space 117. It is believed this change was made at the time of construction. Spaces 109 through 111 were combined in a single room with the same configuration as space 123 and the library was located in it. It is believed that this change was made at the time of construction. Spaces 116 and 118 were provided with doors giving access to the hall (space 133), also at the time of construction. No changes have been made in the stairwells (Spaces 112 and 122), the women's lounge (Space 107), or the restrooms (Spaces 115 and 120). The other spaces have been subdivided to provide office areas.

Second Floor (See plans showing original configuration and auditorium remodel).

The auditorium was remodeled in order to transform an assembly hall into a modern theater. The remodeling occurred in two phases. In the first phase (1952) the floor was raked and permanent seating provided; in the second phase (1967) the entire interior was revised to provide improved stage and backstage areas, lighting and acoustics. During this phase of remodeling all windows were filled in. This is the only major alteration in the building. Two spaces on the second floor have been subdivided to provide office areas. The window alterations are not irreversible.

### Original Interior Finish and Subsequent Alterations

All ceilings and walls are plaster; in the more formal areas ceilings are coved and provided with cornices. That in the central hall is groined. Floors in the entry and part of the entrance hall are tiled and the tiled areas are surmounted by a green marble base. The entry, entrance hall and central hall are panelled in Honduras mahogany. Notable features include a carved mahogany tympanum above the French doors in the central hall, and the original decorative lighting fixtures in central hall and entry. Handrails in the stairwells are mahogany. With the exceptions noted here, all original woodwork in the building is vertical grain fir, originally varnished and later painted.

Doors and trim in public areas have not been replaced and nearly all retain their original brasses. Exterior doors have been refitted with locksets that are not architecturally correct; however, original or reproduction brasses could be adapted to the exterior surfaces without difficulty.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1929 **Builder/Architect** John V. Bennes

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Eastern Oregon State College is the only four-year institution of higher education within that part of Oregon which lies east of the Cascade Range. The geographic area it serves comprises most of the Second Congressional District and totals nearly 70,000 square miles. Founded in 1929 as Eastern Oregon State Normal School in order to provide an essential service to this large region, it has since developed into a multi-purpose institution whose mission is to provide an increasingly wide range of regional services. Its educational, cultural and social influence upon eastern Oregon has been of significant benefit to this region and to the state.

### Historical Background of Site and Institution

Daniel Chaplin was one of the earliest settlers in the Grande Ronde Valley, moving to this area from Dayton, Oregon in 1861 or 1862. At that time he staked a claim for 160 acres on land which later became the city of La Grande. Chaplin was a public spirited citizen and in 1864 the site under discussion was made available by him as a public burying ground. It served as La Grande's only cemetery until 1878.

On May 28, 1870 Daniel Chaplin sold a portion of his holdings, including the site, to James R. Coggan; and the latter sold it to George Coggan May 22, 1871. These earlier transactions were fully legalized when George Coggan paid the State of Oregon \$400.00 for sale of school lands and received a deed from that entity May 25, 1872.

George Coggan was killed by Indians July 12, 1878, at a point on the Old Oregon Trail now known as Deadman's Pass. His wife Annie did not inherit his property; it passed instead to Emma L. Coggan, his daughter by a previous marriage. A portion including the site was sold to J.F. Phy December 8, 1885, but the legality of this transaction was disputed by Thomas R. and Ira Irwin, heirs of Emma L. Coggan. When the property was sold to George O' Connor April 5, 1902, they were named as parties of the first part.

O'Connor platted and developed a major portion of his land as O'Connor's Addition to the city of La Grande, calling it Connordale. The venture met with serious financial reverses, and the property was placed in a trusteeship January 12, 1914, with C.C. Pennington named as administrator of the trust. A suit was also brought by Amanda C. Moore against George and Lydia O'Connor, the National Bank of La Grande, and S. McAnish, in the amount of \$26,171.79 plus interest. On January 4, 1921, the Circuit Court made a judgement in favor of the plaintiff. Moore obtained her deed to the property February 19, 1921.

Eastern Oregon State Normal School was approved by the people of Oregon at the general election in 1926. The Normal School Board of Regents visited eastern Oregon shortly thereafter and selected La Grande as the appropriate location for an institution of higher learning. The City Commissioners then made a survey of available property and discussed several possible sites with the regents when they again visited La Grande on April 30, 1927. The site formally selected was the old pioneer burying ground. As noted earlier, it had served as the community's only cemetery until 1878, when the I.O.O.F. Cemetery (now Grandview) was established. With development of other formal cemeteries (Masonic, now Hillcrest, in 1894 and Calvary in 1900) the old burying ground fell into disuse. Some of the graves were moved and by the early years of this century it served only as a potter's field. By



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1927 it had been virtually abandoned.

Acting upon the regents' decision, the City of La Grande entered into formal negotiations with Moore, and purchased the old cemetery and adjoining land from her May 18, 1927. This property was deeded by the City to the Board of Regents of the Normal Schools of Oregon on August 5, 1927, and was formally presented to the Board at its regular quarterly meeting on October 20 by La Grande City Commission President A.T. Hill.

The site did not require extensive preparation. A number of graves were moved at the specific request of relatives; the surface was then leveled and eighteen inches of topsoil added to it. Bones recovered during excavation for the building were collected in a large box and later reinterred in a mass grave at Hillcrest Cemetery. A simple monument to the unknown pioneer dead was erected over them. The majority of those buried in the old cemetery still rest there undisturbed, beneath the surface of the mall and under portions of the building to which basement areas do not extend; but there is no visible reminder of their presence and few persons are now aware of it.

Eastern Oregon State College's first building, here nominated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, is a major work by an important Oregon architect. It takes fullest advantage of siting and is particularly impressive in terms of appropriate design, structural integrity, and attention to detail. It combines dignity with function and has required only one major alteration in order to maintain its usefulness. In addition, it is architecturally one of the most significant buildings of its period in very large region that it serves. The architect, John V. Bennes had designed a similar but not identical building for Southern Oregon Normal School (now Southern Oregon State College) in Ashland. It was erected in 1925. Currently named Churchill Hall, this earlier example of Bennes' work is not as impressively sited as the Eastern Oregon State College Administration Building in that its design concept does not embody a formal grand stair.

John V. Bennes (1867-1943), was born in Peru, Illinois; he received his education and early training in Illinois and lived in Chicago. He came to Oregon in 1900 and worked as an architect in Baker until he moved to Portland in 1906. His obituary states that he was the first architect to design a reinforced concrete building in Portland. He served for many years as architect for the Oregon State System of Higher Education. Bennes was an admirer of Frank Lloyd Wright, and the best examples of his residential designs are Prairie Style adaptations of the Italian Renaissance style, one of the best known examples of this type is the A. H. Maebly House (1915) in Portland's Arlington Heights Section. He moved to Los Angeles shortly before his death and is buried at Hoopston, Illinois.

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

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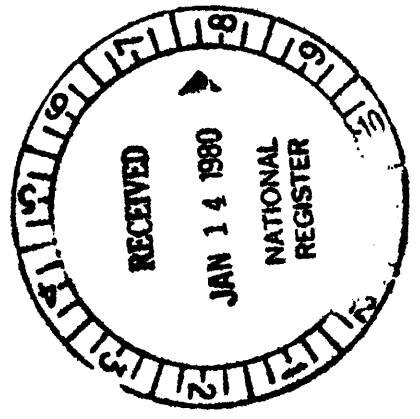
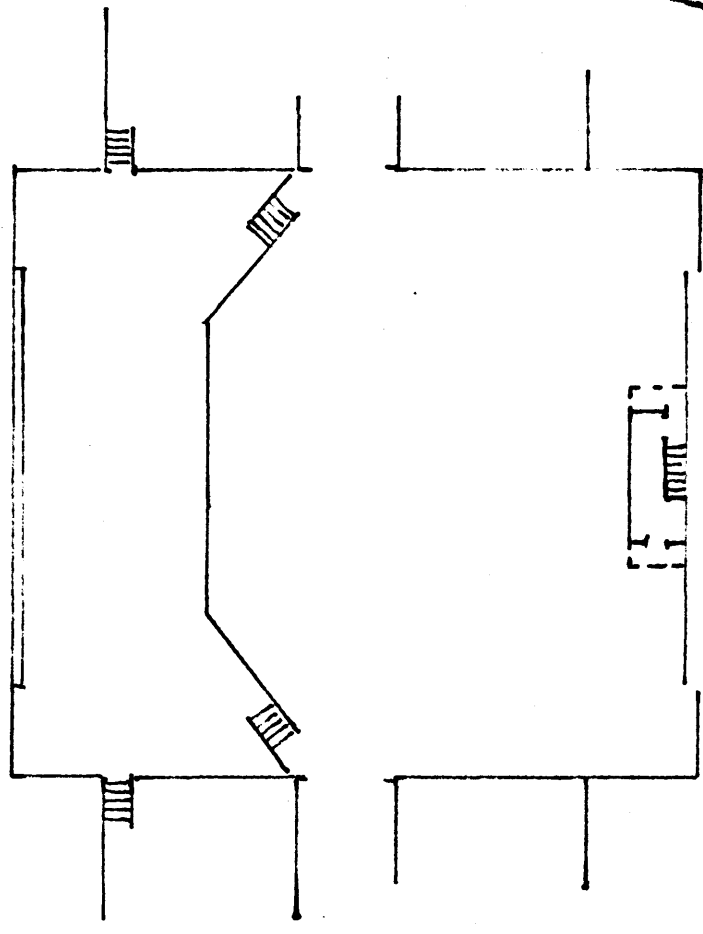
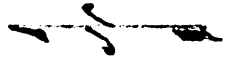
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thence east 600 feet, more or less, to the campus boundary on center line of Hill Avenue as platted; then northwesterly on center line of Hill Avenue as platted to "L" Avenue; thence west to the point of beginning.

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING  
EASTERN OREGON STATE COLLEGE, LA GRANDE  
SECOND FLOOR PLAN: AUDITORIUM REMODEL (AFTER KORMAN, 1966)

SCALE: 1" = 24'-0"





ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

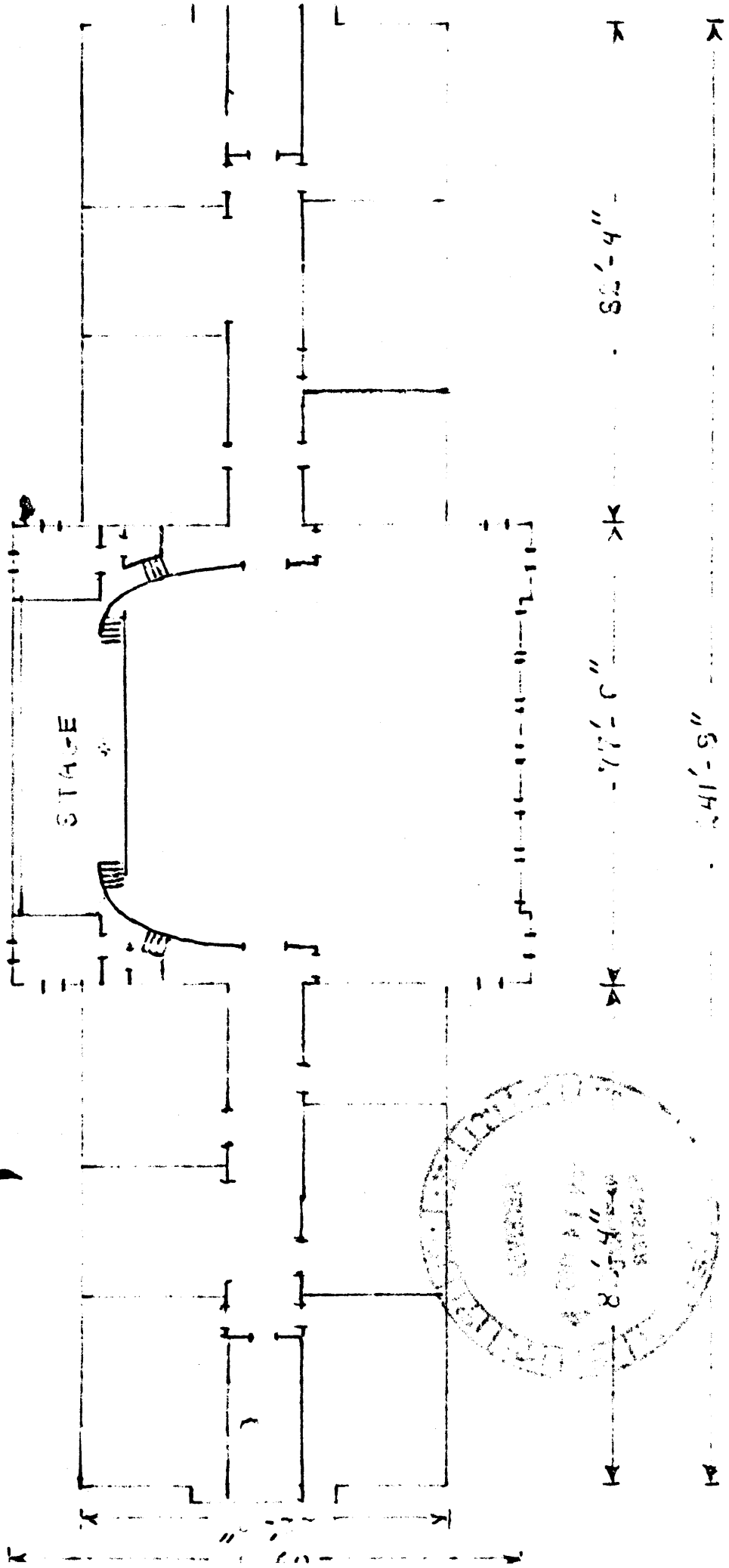
EASTERN OREGON STATE COLLEGE, LA GRANDE

SECOND FLOOR PLAN AS DESIGNED (AFTER DENNES & HERZOG, 1927) (WINDOWS,  
WITH EXCEPTION OF AUDITORIUM, NOT SHOWN)

SCALE: 1" = 24'-0"



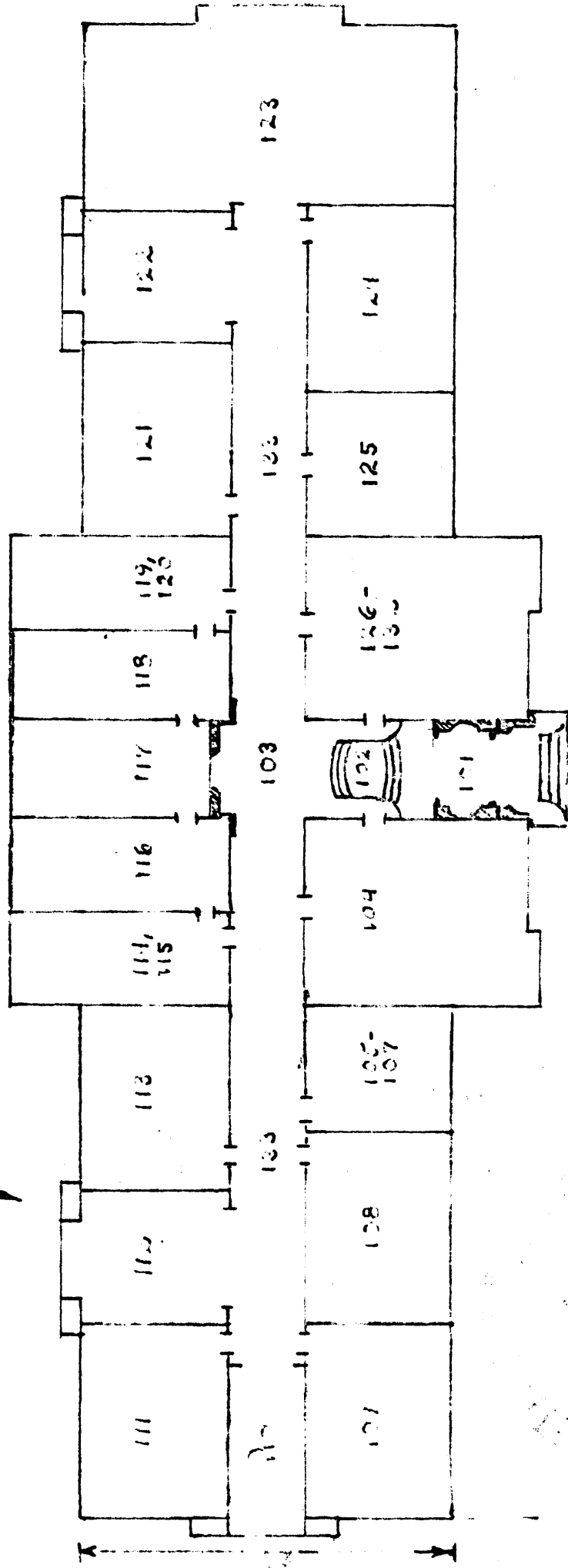
JOHN W. EVANS  
1979



ADMINISTRATION BUILDING  
 EASTERN OREGON STATE COLLEGE, LA GRANDE  
 FIRST FLOOR PLAN AS DESIGNED (AFTER BENNE & HERZOG, 1927) (WINDOWS NOT  
 SHOWN)

JOHN W. EVANS  
 1979

SCALE: 1" = 24'-0"



77'-0"

72'-4"

241'-8"

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

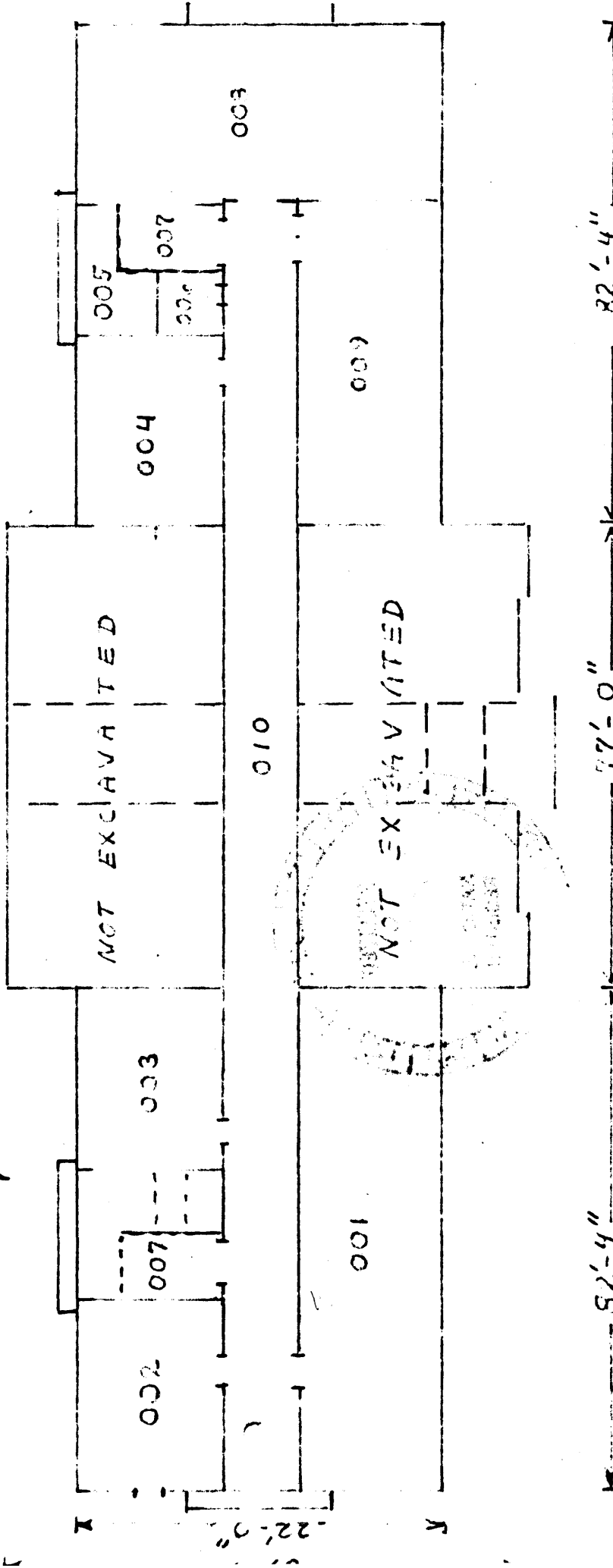
EASTERN OREGON STATE COLLEGE, LA GRANGE

FOUNDATION & BASEMENT PLAN AS DESIGNED (AFTER BERNES & HERZOG, 1927)  
(WINDOWS NOT SHOWN)

SCALE: 1" = 24' - 0"



JOHN W. EVANS  
1919

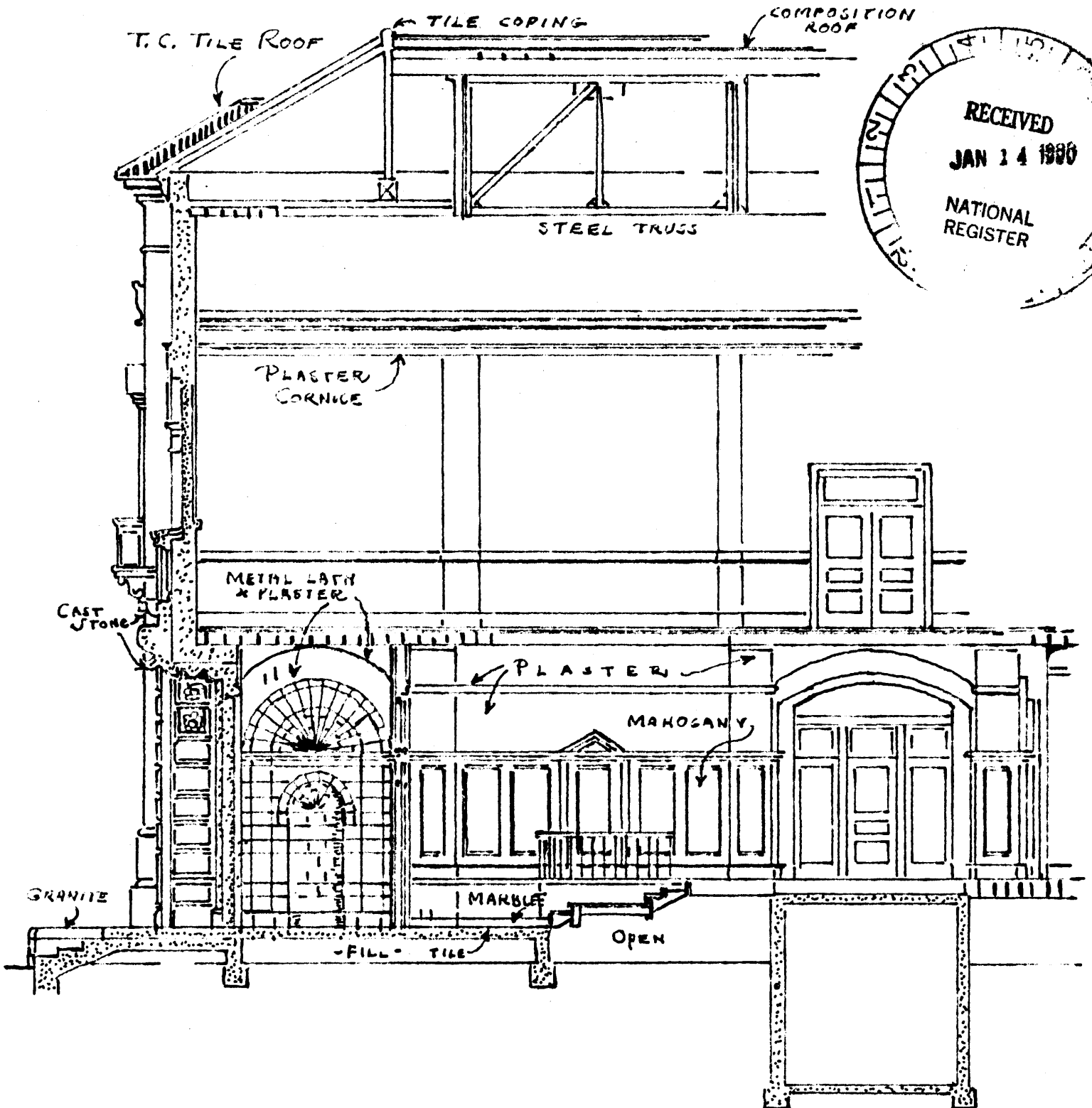


ADMINISTRATION BUILDING  
EASTERN OREGON STATE COLLEGE, LA GRANDE

PORTION OF TRANSVERSE SECTION THROUGH §  
(AFTER BENNES & HERZOG, 1927)

SCALE:  $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'-0''$

JOHN W. EVANS 1979



ADMINISTRATION BUILDING  
EASTERN OREGON STATE COLLEGE, LA GRANDE

FIRST FLOOR PLAN: ENTRANCE AND HALL DETAIL  
(AFTER BENNES & HERZOG, 1927)

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

John W. Evans 1979

