

Hon. Peter N. Kyros

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Maine	
COUNTY: Cumberland	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
FEB 28 1973	

N 4890540
E 39X950

1. NAME

COMMON:
AND/OR HISTORIC:
Thompson Block

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
117, 119, 121, 123, 125 Middle Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Portland

STATE: **Maine** CODE: **23** COUNTY: **Cumberland** CODE: **005**



3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input 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 (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Simon Glaser

STREET AND NUMBER:
645 Congress Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Portland** STATE: **Maine** CODE: **23**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Cumberland County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:
142 Federal Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Portland** STATE: **Maine** CODE: **23**

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Greater Portland Landmarks Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: **1969** Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Greater Portland Landmarks, Inc.

STREET AND NUMBER:
Station A, Box 4197

CITY OR TOWN: **Portland** STATE: **Maine** CODE: **23**

STATE: Maine
COUNTY: Cumberland
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DATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The Thompson Block is located on the northwestern side of Middle Street in Portland, facing southeast toward Middle Street. It is bounded on the left (southwestern) side by Church Street and on the right (northeastern) side by Garden Street. When it was built there were wooden buildings behind it on the northwest, between it and Newbury Street. Today there is a parking lot there.

The Thompson Block (built for a Mrs. Thompson) was designed by architect George M. Harding, who also designed the Woodman Block and the Rackleff Building which form the block immediately to the southwest of the Thompson Block. Started in 1867, the date it bears, it was completed in 1868. It is four stories high with the fourth story enclosed in a mansard roof, in the Second Empire or Mansard style. The first floor of the facade of the building is of iron, cast in Portland. The rest of the building is brick with freestone trim in two colors. The foundation is granite. The roof is gray slate, except on the facade where it is in bands of red and gray slate. The building is a trapezoid, its sides determined by the streets which form the block it occupies. It is eighty-five feet wide in front and ninety-five feet wide in the rear, and about eighty-five feet along the side.

The facade of the Thompson Block is complicated. The first floor is a continuous arcade of cast iron supporting an iron entablature which originally served as the location for store names. Six bays of the arcade are recessed glass doors; the remaining six have full length windows. On the second floor are six pairs of double arched windows with keystones and side rustication in two tones of freestone. On the third floor are four single windows and two paired windows with elaborate freestone arches and the same side rustication. On the fourth floor are six dormer windows with circular hoods. A double freestone stringcourse divides the facade at the third floor level.

The facade is treated as two corner towers of one bay each (the facade wraps around the sides of the building for one bay to complete these towers) and a wider center tower of two bays with single bays between. Bands of rustication in the two tones of freestone make the vertical divisions delineating the towers. The three towers have elaborate overhanging cornices with freestone brackets. The mansard roofs of the towers are edged and project slightly. Those of the corner towers have bracketted cornices and were originally topped by iron work grills, giving them greater emphasis at the top.

The bays between the towers are also treated as vertical elements. The paired windows at the third floor as well as the second floor dormer windows, unbroken by a cornice.

A description contemporary with the Thompson Block talks about the bays (See Continuation Sheet)



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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
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FEB 28 1973	

(Number all entries)

7. DESCRIPTION

ornamentation of the building, most of which is visible today; each ornament was cut to represent part of an oak tree, as an indication of strength. The triangular inserts above the third floor double windows are carved with oak leaves and acorns. The carved patterns which alternate on the rustication blocks are made up of oak leaves. At the center of the third floor is a scroll which says "Thompson Bldg. 1867".

The sides of the Thompson Block are treated identically. All the detail on the sides is done with brick; and freestone is used. On the first floor is a continuous arcade of brick. Whole windows and fanlights, with arches punctuated by little keystones, alternate in the sunken panels between the columns. The windows at the second and third floors are the same size as those on the facade. They have patterned brick arches. There are no fourth floor windows. There are stringcourses of projecting brick at the second and third floor levels. The overhanging cornice continues around the building, but has only a few paired brackets.

The rear of the Thompson Block is divided in half, one half a mirror image of the other. A section of blank brick in the center separates five windows at either side on the first, second and third floors. All have double band brick arches. The two stringcourses of the sides continue across the rear, as does the cornice. Four fourth floor dormer windows with triangular gables line up over the interior windows on either side. Paired at the center of the first floor are two doors with wide granite lintels. The ten windows on the first floor are the only ones on the whole building with provision for shutters.

The Thompson Block has not been tampered with on the exterior. The freestone has remained unpainted, showing its original color, although it has suffered some deterioration. Changes from the original appearance of the building are the missing ironwork of the corner towers and the addition of modern signs on half the facade. The building was originally divided in half to form two stores, and it remains so divided today.



6. SIGNIFICANCE

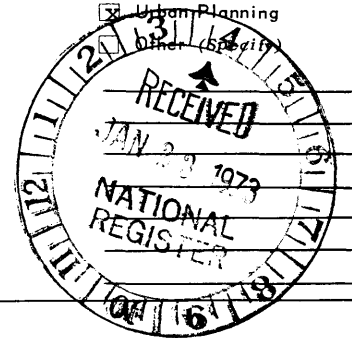
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1867-68

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Thompson Block and the Woodman Block and Rackleff Building, which comprise the block to the immediate southwest, are the most high style Victorian commercial buildings erected in Maine. The three are extremely well designed buildings, the work of George M. Harding. They are outstanding examples of the architecture of their period. All have been well preserved, the Thompson Block particularly.

The three buildings are similar in composition, but the detail on each is developed individually. The Thompson Block is a distinguished building. The facade is subtle, a delicate balance of horizontals and verticals. The five bays of the facade are similar enough to have each floor read continuously as a horizontal unit, but are modulated to give the facade texture. The corner towers are more emphatic verticals than the center tower because of their narrowness, three dimensionality, and originally their iron grillwork; yet they are balanced by the massiveness of the wider center tower. The two interior bays, sandwiched between the towers, act as verticals also, but recede because of their continuous flat planes of brick, forming a contrast to the towers.

George M. Harding practiced architecture in Portland for only a short period, from 1858 until 1873. After the Great Fire of 1866, he played a major role in rebuilding the business district.

Today, this handsome Victorian business district is rapidly being destroyed. Highways and modern office plazas have leveled whole sections of handsome brick structures. The buildings, so proudly erected by the rebuilding city in the 1860's and 1870's, which remain today on Exchange Market and Middle Street offer a rare environment - practically continuous Victorian streetscapes. These buildings are of a uniform material, brick, and employ architectural motifs of their period in infinite variety. The scale of these buildings relates to the pedestrian. The steady rhythm of the bays repeated in each facade makes it a pleasant experience to walk beside them. The buildings themselves are texturally exciting. Any further encroachment of parking lots, empty spaces and set-back buildings will destroy this unique environment which makes this section of Portland so special.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Portland Daily Press. "Another Fine Building", Portland, January 28, 1868.
 Shettleworth, Earle G., Jr. "City's Victorian Business District Fascinating Area", in Portland, Maine, Evening Express, August 6, 1966.

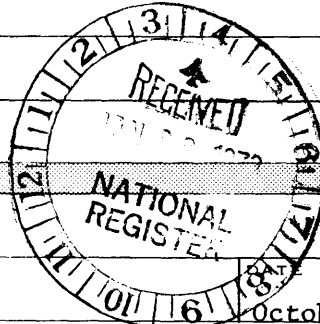
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		43° 39' 32" N	70° 15' 13" W	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **Less than one acre**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Mary-Eliza Wengren, Consultant
 ORGANIZATION: Maine Historic Preservation Commission
 STREET AND NUMBER: 31 Western Avenue
 CITY OR TOWN: Augusta STATE: Maine CODE: 23
 RECEIVED DATE: October 1972

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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 National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name: James H. Mundy
 Title: State Liaison Officer
 Date: January 15, 1973

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Robert Van Utley
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 2/28/73

ATTEST:
C. Mundy
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: 2-27-72