

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received OCT 9 1986  
date entered NOV 20 1986

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

1. Name

historic New Hotel Oregon Number of contributing resources: 1  
and/or common Benson Hotel (preferred) Number of non-contributing resources: 1

2. Location

street & number 309 SW Broadway N/A not for publication  
city, town Portland N/A vicinity of Third Congressional District  
state Oregon code 41 county Multnomah code 051

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Benson Hotel Partnership  
street & number 86 Pine Street, No. 305  
city, town Seattle N/A vicinity of state Washington 98101

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Multnomah County Courthouse  
street & number 319 SW Fourth Avenue  
city, town Portland state Oregon 97204

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title City of Portland Historic Resource Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
date 1983  federal  state  county  local  
depository for survey records Portland Bureau of Planning, 1120 SW Fifth Avenue  
city, town Portland 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 <u>N/A</u>    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair            | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    |   |   |

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

The twelve-story Benson Hotel located at 309 SW Broadway in Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon, is adjacent to the principal downtown banking and retail district. Constructed in 1913 as an addition to the already standing Hotel Oregon (1905), the structure was first called the New Hotel Oregon. In 1914 was renamed the Benson by philanthropist Simon Benson, who had provided the financing for the building and took over direct management of the hotel after 16 months of operation.

The hotel was designed in the French Renaissance style by the prominent Portland architectural firm of Doyle, Patterson and Beach. The original steel-frame building has fourteen stories, including mezzanine and basement. In 1959, shortly after the Benson's acquisition of the old Hotel Oregon, the 1905 structure was razed to make way for the present southern addition to the hotel, designed by Jones, Lovegren, Helms and Jones. In 1981, the name of the hotel was changed to the Westin Benson, but the building is still commonly known as the Benson Hotel. The Benson Hotel is an officially designated a Portland Historical Landmark.

The Benson Hotel occupies a 100'X200' parcel on the eastern half of the block between SW Broadway and SW Park and SW Oak and SW Stark Streets. The building is specifically situated on Lots 1 through 4, Block 85 Portland Addition to the City of Portland. Adjacent on the quarter block to the west of the 1913 portion of the building is the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company Building (1914, 1926), while a more contemporary building occupies the southwest corner. Other National Register Properties located in the area include the Imperial Hotel, the Equitable Building, the Bank of California, and the old First National Bank of Oregon. The nearby United States National Bank and Wells Fargo Building have been nominated to the National Register.

### The 1913 Building

The 1913 building occupies a 100'X100' parcel at the SW corner of the intersection of Broadway and Oak Streets. It is a steel-framed masonry structure, faced with red brick and off-white glazed terra cotta decoration. The elaborate mansard roof is covered with copper and green ceramic tiles.

With its principal entrance to the east (facing Broadway) the original building is "L"-shaped in plan, with an interior court. Its street facades are the east and north elevations. The building is divided vertically into four sections: 1) a two-story, ground-level base, faced entirely with glazed terra cotta; 2) an intermediate attic story in glazed terra cotta, some of which is painted; 3) an eight-story shaft, predominantly brick-faced, with glazed terra cotta trim (staggered quoins, cornices, block modillions, and various window surrounds); and 4) a two-story capital, mostly glazed terra cotta-trimmed and including the mansard roof with Baroque-style pedimented dormers and bull's-eye, or oiel-de-boeuf windows. Centered in the Broadway Street facade is the main entrance flanked by Diocletian windows, four in all. The secondary entrance is centered in the Oak Street facade, and a Diocletian window is found at the street corner end of the facade. Terra cotta facing is rusticated in simulation of stone work, and all openings leave radiating "voussoirs".

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Continuation sheet THE BENSON HOTEL

Item number 7

Page 2

The arcuated openings of the ground story are divided into three units by mullions, with corresponding top lights, and most are hidden from view at present by dome-shaped canvas awnings. Balustrades decorate spandrel panels below each window opening. The secondary entrance on Oak Street has an original metal-and-glass marquee, similar to the larger one that once covered the main entrance and which collapsed under heavy snow, necessitating its removal. A glazed terra cotta belt course separates the base from the intermediate attic story, which has 18 windows with 1-over-1, double-hung sashes. These windows, nine on each street facade, are evenly spaced except that at each corner two are paired. This pattern of fenestration is carried upward through all but the topmost story of the shaft. The attic story is capped by a prominent glazed terra cotta cornice with modillions.

The third story has eighteen windows, with nine per facade. The paired window openings comprising the corner bays have 6-over-1, double-hung sashes, with glazed terra cotta surrounds, and hood moldings with block modillions. The windows of the inner bays, numbering ten, five per facade, have 8-over-1, double-hung sashes, with glazed terra cotta sills and pedimented architraves.

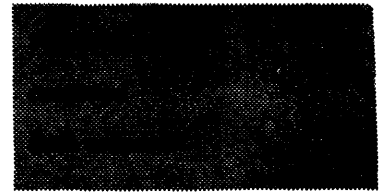
From the fourth story upward to the ninth, the two street facades are identical. The windows comprising the corner bays, eight per story, four per facade, have 6-over-1, double-hung sashes, with glazed terra cotta surrounds that are similar to the quoins extending upward at each corner to the ninth story. The windows of each center bay, ten per story, five per facade, have 8-over-1, double-hung sashes, with glazed terra cotta sills and flat arches with voussoirs. The ninth story is separated from the tenth by a glazed terra cotta belt course.

Windows at the tenth and eleventh stories on both facades follow the same pattern as those below, namely 6-over-1, double-hung sash windows in the corner bays; and 8-over-1, double-hung sash windows in the center bays. However, the surrounds of all windows on these two stories are of glazed terra cotta. A prominent cornice of glazed terra cotta, with block modillions and curved brackets, separates the tenth and eleventh stories. A smaller belt cornice separates the eleventh story from the mansard roof above.

On both facades, the twelfth story consists principally of a mansard roof sheathed in green glazed terra cotta made to resemble a copper patina. There are seven window openings in dormers in the mansard roofs of each facade. Those corresponding to the corner bays, numbering two per facade, are fitted with 16-light casement windows with segmental arch heads and pedimented, tabernacle frames of terra cotta which incorporate scroll-framed bull's-eye windows. The dormer windows corresponding to those of the center bays, numbering five per facade, have single openings with 16-light casement windows, with terra cotta surrounds under flat arches and pedimented frames all in off-white terra cotta. Above each is an independent bull's-eye window. The curvilinear roof corners and straight-topped hip ridges are decorated with ornamental copper work. A metal cresting which once surmounted the ridge cornice has been removed.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet THE BENSON HOTEL

Item number 7

Page 3

The 1959 Addition

Attached to the original volume of the Benson Hotel is a compatible but non-historic twelve-story addition of 1959 which occupies the adjoining 100'X100' parcel to the south. The first two stories of the new wing are faced with ceramic veneer and are aligned with and resemble the two corresponding lower stories of the 1913 building. The next ten stories are all red-brick-faced with fenestration in alignment with that of the older building. Topping the addition, and corresponding more or less to the older building's mansard roof, is a single-story, glass-and-aluminum curtain wall, with a cantilevered concrete roof slab with metal railing.

The first story of the 1959 wing has no openings, except for a corner entrance under a metal canopy which provides access to the popular Polynesian-style restaurant which occupies in the ground story. The name "Trader Vic's" appears in two places over this entrance, and again in a section of the facade with cut stone made to appear Polynesian in style. Except for the corner above the entrance, which is further decorated in Polynesian fashion, the remaining first story street facades consist of undecorated off-white ceramic veneer. A belt course of the same material separates the first and second stories. At the second story, there are ten windows (eight on the Broadway facade and two on Stark Street) which have fixed windows in aluminum frames with movable slide lights (two one each side). These windows are repeated throughout the building except for the twelfth story. The second story windows have ceramic veneer surrounds, and a prominent molding of the same material separated this story from those above it.

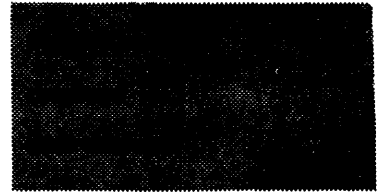
From the third story to the twelfth, the fenestration of each story is the same as on the second story, except that window surrounds are entirely of red-brick veneer. The spandrels are articulated as uninterrupted horizontal bands laid in common bond, and projecting slightly from the main wall plane.

INTERIOR

1913 Building

The main entrance to the hotel is located at the center bay of the east elevation on Broadway, and has been extensively altered over the years. A second entrance on Oak, which originally served as the ladies' entrance, now provides access to the London Grill and main lobby.

Originally, the main lobby on the first floor had two connections to the Old Hotel Oregon, which quickly came to be known as the Annex. The main lobby is finished in Circassian mahogany, walnut, and marble flooring now carpeted. The main lobby measures approximately 60'X100' and is 26' in height. Massive 24' pillars, finished and classically ornamented in walnut, are evenly spaced throughout the lobby area. An especially fine decorative plaster coffered ceiling, employs a wealth of classical motifs. At the south end of the main

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Continuation sheet THE BENSON HOTEL

Item number

7

Page

4

Lobby is a wide marble staircase with bronze railing which leads to both the mezzanine and basement levels. To the east of the staircase is a fireplace. Also located on the first floor are a bank of telephones and a former travel agency. The original bank of telephones was located behind the cashier counter.

The original elevators are still intact and used as service elevators. The main cashier counter, located just off center, was originally elliptical in shape and was of walnut with a black and gold marble base and wrought-iron decoration. The original cashier counter was removed, and over the years more functional ones have been added. A bar also was added to the northeast corner of the lobby.

Centered on the west side of the ground floor is the Crystal Ballroom. This room is lavishly decorated in wood, plaster and mirror paneling and is considered one of the premiere rooms of the hotel. Originally, the room was painted white. The lighting fixtures are gilded bronze and crystal.

The original "Fountain Grill" in the basement simulated a medieval hall. The ceiling is vaulted and lighted by suspended bronze lighting urns. In 1955, the grill underwent renovation to house the London Grill but maintained much of its original character.

The mezzanine level originally served as the upper lobby. Today this area serves the same purpose and houses administrative offices. The second floor originally contained the Tyrolean banquet hall finished in dark oak with beamed ceiling. Today the second floor has several banquet rooms, administrative offices, and barber and beauty shops.

Floors three through eleven originally catered to the general hotel guest. The twelfth floor was specifically designed to serve businessmen. These suites are arranged with bath, private bedroom and a parlor which were originally used as sample rooms. This arrangement allowed businessmen privacy and a place to entertain or display their wares.

The penthouse, as originally used, was the house keeping service area of the Hotel.

Original furnishings throughout the building were procured by the Wright-Dickinson Company, original managers of the hotel, and installed by the leading local department store, Meier & Frank Company. Furniture was mostly of mahogany, with certain rooms containing furniture of inlaid maple. The furniture was in the Colonial vein and little of it remains on the premises.

Over the years considerable renovation has occurred throughout the building, including work by A.E. Doyle in 1921 and subsequent alterations from the 1940s into the 1970s. The last major changes occurred in early 1980s.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet THE BENSON HOTEL

Item number 7

Page 5

1959 Addition

Because the non-historic wing of 1959 is structurally attached to the historic volume and functions in union with it, it cannot be excluded from the nomination, but it is counted as a non-contributing feature. The 200-room addition for which planning commenced in 1957, increased the number of rooms of the Benson to 400 at a cost of \$3,000,000. Each of the twelve floors and the penthouse of the addition are joined to corresponding floors of the 1913 building.

9/14/93

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 6 Benson Hotel, Portland, Multnomah County OR

---

1959 Addition

The 200 room addition, for which planning commenced in 1957, increased the number of rooms at the Benson to 400 at a cost of \$3,000,000. Each of the twelve floors, the penthouse and the mezzanine of the addition were joined to the corresponding floors of the 1913 building at the same level, except the second floor which was constructed a step above the original second story in order to provide greater headroom in the Mayfair Room.

The 1959 addition is an integral part of the historic Benson Hotel. The additional rooms it provided, the new Mayfair Room, Trader Vic's Restaurant, and the new elevators were all designed to create a new larger Benson Hotel, which would keep up with the growth of the Portland community, and allow it to maintain its pre-eminent position as Portland's leading fine hotel. The Mayfair Room has become the new civic heart of the city as a meeting place for the City Club of Portland, which formerly met in the Crystal Room, and which has met almost every Friday in the Mayfair Room since the completion of the addition in 1959. The exterior of the addition also makes the architectural statement, in contemporary idiom, that the addition is an integral part of the historic hotel building.

9/14/93

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 7

Benson Hotel, Portland, Multnomah County OR

**POST 1986 RENOVATIONS**

Since 1986, the Benson Hotel has undergone extensive refurbishing, cleaning, restoration and rehabilitation. To the extent possible, designers attempted to rehabilitate spaces to their 1913 atmosphere using original drawings and historical photographs as guides.

1. Lobby Entry: Accurately restored to much of its original 1913 appearance. Removed carpeting and repaired original white Italian marble floor. Marble work on the walls was restored. The wood paneled ceiling was returned to original appearance. Refurbished crystal chandelier. The non-original revolving door was replaced with new revolving door and the side doors were replaced with glass doors. Non-original marble was removed and replaced with Jessmonite which was painted to match the existing unpainted terra cotta on the building.

Removed non-compatible awnings, returning the facade to much of its original appearance including uncovering the original transom. Replaced existing non-original marquee at Broadway Street elevation with newly designed compatible marquee. Black and white diamond patterned aggregate in front of the building on Broadway was removed and replaced with standard 3' x 3' grid. The non-historic planter boxes were removed.

2. Reception Desk: Removed non-original front desk. Repaired and exposed white marble floor. Installed oak wall panelling. Crystal fixtures were repaired and refurbished. Repaired and plaster ceiling restored. Repainted walls in historically compatible color scheme.

3. London Grill : Removed non-original floor, wall mirrors, wall coverings, and wall sconces. Installed oak wall panelling. Repainted ceiling in subtle marbleized cream. Cleaned woodwork. Repaired damaged woodwork and marble.

4. Crystal Ballroom: Repainted walls in historically compatible color scheme. Tall north windows at exterior ground/mezzanine level along Oak Street (which face onto the Crystal Ballroom) were restored.

5. Exterior Elevations: Removed fire-escapes on the Broadway and Oak elevations. Repainted exterior surface treatments a neutral color.



# 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/<br>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 checked="" 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** 1913 **Builder/Architect** Doyle, Patterson and Beach, architects

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Benson Hotel, a twelve-story building located at 309 SW Broadway in Portland, Oregon, was originally known as the New Hotel Oregon when it was opened in 1913 as an addition to the adjacent Hotel Oregon of 1905. Designed in the French Renaissance style by the prominent firm of Doyle, Patterson and Beach, its elegant street facades were constructed in off-white glazed terra cotta and red brick over a structure of reinforced concrete. The Benson Hotel was renamed for its backer and new manager the year after its opening. Under the supervision of Simon Benson, it quickly set a standard for excellence unsurpassed for many years by any other hotel in the city. Of particular importance are the lobby, mezzanine, original ballroom, and banquet room. Essentially unaltered, these spaces are elaborately finished in Circassian mahogany, walnut, marble, and ornamental plaster and are furnished with bronze fixtures. Included in the nominated property is the south wing of equal height, completed in 1959. Structurally, it is an integral part of the 100 X 100-foot volume of 1913, and it is both compatible in building materials and visually discrete. While it must be included, the annex is a non-contributing feature due to its recent date of construction. The Benson Hotel has been officially designated a City of Portland Historical Landmark. It meets National Register criterion "c", above all, as the finest example of historic period architecture as manifest in the hotel type in Portland. The property is significant also for its association with Simon Benson (1852-1942), lumberman and philanthropist, the hotel's backer and early manager. The Benson Hotel is the property most widely associated with the outstanding businessman, though Benson's residence at 1504 SW 11th Avenue has been listed in the National Register.

For a short period after its construction, the hotel was known as the "New Hotel Oregon". The original Hotel Oregon had opened in 1905 just before the start of Portland's Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition.

Initially designed as an office building, the 1905 hotel was financed by Chinese businessmen Moy Back Yin and Goon Dip. During construction, the Wright-Dickinson Company, which at the time managed several hotels throughout the state of Washington, convinced Messrs. Yin and Dip to lease them the structure for use as a hotel.

When the Hotel Oregon opened in 1905, it was an immediate success. The opening featured the Royal Hawaiian Orchestra and a grill which soon gained the reputation as one of the most successful in the Pacific Northwest. Shortly after the opening, an annex was added to the building, and by 1907 the Hotel managers were again discussing further expansion which would have added two ten-story structures and which would have made it the largest hotel in the Pacific Northwest. The plans did not materialize, and a deal was struck with Simon Benson for the construction of what is known today as the Benson Hotel. Dickinson, like Benson, was a promoter of good roads, and it is possible this common interest led them to make a deal.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Portland, Oregon-Washington

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

|      |   |         |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 0 | 5       | 2 | 5 | 2 | 0        | 0 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 7 | 0 |
| Zone |   | Easting |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

B 

|      |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|      |  |         |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

C 

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

D 

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

E 

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

F 

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

G 

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

H 

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The Benson Hotel occupies a 100' x 200' parcel in downtown Portland, and is legally described as Lots 1 through 4 of Block 85, Portland Addition to the City of Portland, in Multnomah County, Oregon.

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

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title John M. Tess, President

organization Heritage Investment Corporation date March, 1986

street & number 123 NW Second, Suite 200 telephone (503) 228-0271

city or town Portland state Oregon 97208

# 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date October 3, 1986

For NPS use only

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

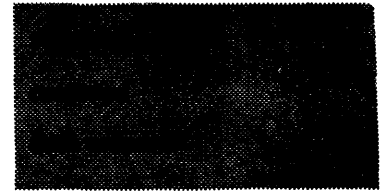
William B. Bushong date 11/20/86  
for Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet THE BENSON HOTEL

Item number 8

Page 2

Prior to the Lewis and Clark Exposition of 1905, Portland had only one or two first-class hotels. During the Lewis and Clark Exposition the demand for first-class hotel space exceeded the availability; following the Exposition, tourism in the city continued to increase each year. It was during this period that the Multnomah, Mallory, Congress, New Smith, Hotel Carlton and many other hotels were constructed while many other hotels like the Imperial, Perkins, and Hotel Oregon were expanded. By 1912 Portland was "becoming known throughout the country as a city of fine hotels."

Plans for the construction of an annex to the Hotel Oregon were announced in October of 1911. It was hoped that the building would be opened in mid 1912, but Dickinson and Wright were over-optimistic in their predictions and in October 1912, construction of the hotel was still under way. Very few costs were spared in the construction of the hotel and Dickinson and Wright traveled throughout the county selecting special designs in furnishings for the hotel.

By January 1913, plans to open the hotel in late February were announced as the carpets and furnishings were being installed. As the announced day drew near, it was once more deferred, this time to March 4, to coincide with the taking of the oath of office by President-elect Woodrow Wilson. It was decided that a "telegraphic flash" from Washington would be the signal for the opening of the doors of the new hotel.

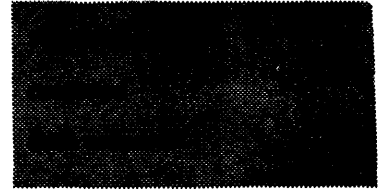
By the time of its opening, costs of the hotel were estimated at \$1,250,000 to \$1,500,000, and the hotel was touted as the most elegant west of Chicago. While Mr. Benson was not in attendance at the opening, two homing pigeons with keys to the hotel were set loose on the morning of the opening: their destination, Mr. Benson.

So great was the demand to be at the opening that reservations were reported to have been taken at all hours before the opening and up to the event itself, and the crowds continued to flock to the hotel the following two evenings. Throughout opening evening, the lobby and corridors of the hotel were crowded with people. As part of the festivities fireworks were displayed later in the evening. Throughout the evening the praises of Benson, Wright, and Dickinson could be heard from all including other competitors.

Acting Mayor Baker described the hotel as "the finest and best hotel in America of its size", while the newspapers labeled the building as the "Crowning Achievement in Development of the City's Facilities for Caring for Visitors."

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet THE BENSON HOTEL

Item number 8

Page 2

Shortly after the opening A.E. Doyle wrote of the hotel:

The problem presented to an architect by the average hotel is one involving all the problems of the home, the requisites of the assembly hall, a place where business is done, and last but not least, it is a commercial enterprise. A further requirement in hotel planning is that to a certain extent it should embody the gaiety of the playhouse.

These elements must be combined into a coherent scheme and herein lies the architect's opportunity. Efficient business management in the past has been the life of the hotel industry, but like many other undertakings, it now feels the force of competition, and is compelled not only to continue maintaining the highest efficiency in management, but it must reach out after something distinctive in the opinion of its patrons. It must justify its existence by supplying something in a special way for a distinctive division of society. To do this effectively, appropriate surroundings must be offered.

The New Oregon is an attempt to create such surroundings. In every respect this has been the keynote of the design, in the disposition of the rooms, in their decorative treatment, and in the general external architecture of the building.

As hotels in large cities go, the Oregon does not pretend to qualify for size: the desire of its management is rather in the direction of quality. All of the unusual features of a first-class hotel are present, of course lobby, office, dining-room, grille, barber shop, private dining rooms and the usual services connected therewith, and some specially designed and equipped suites commanding high rentals.

Despite its successful opening, Benson decided about a year later to take over the direct management of the hotel from Wright and Dickinson, He changed its name to the "Benson", made several changes to the hotel and operated it apart from the Hotel Oregon. The reason for the takeover is not clear, but there is evidence that the takeover could have been tied to Benson's aversion to the widespread use of alcohol. Shortly after the takeover, Benson tried to buy the property upon which the New Oregon was situated for expansion of the hotel, but was unsuccessful in his negotiations.

Benson, under the direction of his son Amos, then planned an annex, designed by Houghtaling & Dougan to be situated diagonally across the street and to be connected to the main hotel by an underground passage. These plans were never carried out, but had they been, the

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Continuation sheet THE BENSON HOTEL

Item number 8

Page 4

plans called for a complete remodeling of the Benson. At the same time Benson was planning his expansion, the owners of the Hotel Oregon were also planning to build a new facility. Like Benson's, these plans were never carried out.

In 1919 Benson sold the hotel to William E. Boyd and Robert N. Keller hotel operators of two hotels in North Dakota. Both the Benson and the Hotel Oregon continued to operate successfully until Prohibition, when the famous grill of the Hotel Oregon lost its popularity. Not being able to compete with the posh interior of the Benson, the Hotel Oregon announced in 1924 that it was closing its doors.

For the remainder of the decade the Benson maintained its stature while the Hotel Oregon remained closed. Then in 1932 the Hotel Oregon was refurbished, and under the management of Dickinson, was reopened. Both hotels continued to operate into the 1940's, when in 1944 Keller retired and the Benson was sold to a group of investors headed by Boyd and known as Western Hotels. Boyd continued on in the business as general manager until 1955.

In the same year that Keller sold his interests in the hotel in order to retire, the Hotel Oregon was sold to Richard See and Associates for back taxes. See and Associates had also recently purchased the Goodnough and Kraemer buildings, which later were to become part of the Paul Gold Estate which up to today still has many holdings in the city.

The Hotel Oregon continued to operate until 1957, when plans were announced to build an annex to the 1913 building. Construction of the addition began in 1957, and was completed in 1959.

Simon Benson

When we read of magnates who on their way up went broke several times it is usually because of their gambler nature. Simon Benson's early adversities came to him through no such quality. Fire destroyed his prosperous general store in Wisconsin and sent him west to Portland. Later, his wife's long and costly last illness drained him of his first fortune, made in logging.

He had a methodical way of setting in to hard work on a project he'd thoroughly researched and, regardless of others' predictions of sticking to it: "I generally got on the job and stayed a little longer than the rest." This was doubtless how he held to his expensive

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Continuation sheet THE BENSON HOTEL

Item number 8

Page 5

project, once he re-established himself in logging, of laying track so that donkey engines could haul his logs to the river. With this and with his ocean-going rafts of logs, he revolutionized the pricing and exploitation of logs from the Northwest, and this made his fortune for keeps.

He was of that ilk among the wealthy who believe in showing gratitude for the opportunities they've had of making their large fortunes. He spent a large part of his life, after 1910, in bestowing his wealth in gifts to the state, for example, the scenic properties on the Columbia River which he gave now constitute some of the finest public parks in Oregon.

He built the hotel which would soon be renamed the Benson, and when he chose to sell, cheerfully took a larger loss than he might otherwise have done, so that the "right people" could carry on the tradition of elegance and public usefulness for which he had built the hotel.

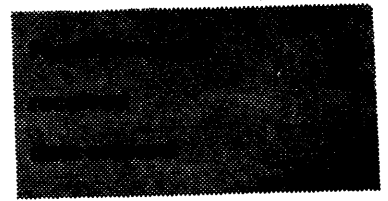
The Columbia Gorge Hotel was built by Benson, opening in June, 1921, to accommodate and attract tourists to the Gorge. In his gift of \$100,000 to establish the Benson Polytechnic School, matching available public funds, he assured Portlanders, to this day, of one of the nation's top-ranking vocational and pre-engineering schools. He was champion of clear water over less pure potatoes, and left downtown Portland well endowed with twenty permanent bronze drinking fountains. He championed the early improvement of Oregon's road systems, served as chairman of the Highway Commission, but had no other personal political aspirations.

He had a day dedicated in his honor in 1915, at the Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, where he was named "Oregon's First Citizen" by a Governor's Commission headed by newspaper publisher H.L. Pittock. Born Simon Bergerson in Norway in 1852, he died in Beverly Hills several months short of his ninetieth birthday, and is buried in Portland.

Albert E. Doyle

Born in California in 1877, Doyle arrived with his family in Portland five years later. Educated in the City's public schools he also learned a great deal about construction from his father, who was a carpenter and building contractor. When he was 17, Albert went to work as an apprentice in the architectural firm of Whidden & Lewis. At the time (1894), William Whidden and Ion Lewis had been partners for only three years, but were responsible for the design of many of the City's fine classical buildings. Doyle remained with them for ten years, a period when the company produced structures such as the Public Library (1891), the Packer Scott Warehouse (1891-92).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet THE BENSON HOTEL

Item number

8

Page 6

After eight years with the firm, Doyle attended the college of Architecture at Columbia University for approximately two years. His interlude in New York City also entailed employment in the office of architect Henry Bacon, the designer of the Lincoln Memorial. Doyle then returned to the office of Whidden & Lewis (1904-06), but left the city again for a year of travel in Europe. In 1907, at the age of 30, Doyle established his own architectural firm in Portland in partnership with W.B. Patterson. This practice was maintained for almost ten years, at which time Patterson left and Doyle operated under his own name for the remaining 11 years of his life.

By early 1916, A.E. Doyle's design skills were evident in buildings throughout the City. Important commercial buildings included the Selling Building (1910), the Benson Hotel (1911), the Central Library (1913), the American Bank Building (1913), the Morgan Building (1913), and the Pittock Block (1914). These were prestigious commissions from important clients. As a result of his apprenticeship with Whidden & Lewis, classroom training at Columbia, and travel in Europe Doyle had become a master at designing buildings in the classical architectural styles. His love of traditional design did not include traditional building materials. The Benson Hotel, American Bank Building, and Morgan Building all featured the popular new building material, glazed terra cotta.

Robert N. Keller

Robert N. Keller was one of the two "right people" to whom Simon Benson sold his hotel in 1919. Born in Omaha, Nebraska, he operated hotels in Fargo and Mandan, North Dakota, prior to and during World War I. Keller and his partner, William Boyd, closed out their interests in the Fargo and Mandan Hotels and ran the Benson jointly from 1919 to 1941, when Western Hotels bought out Keller's interest. He was a member of the First Methodist Church, the Masons, and the Al Kader Shrine, and died, aged 91, on April 2, 1961.

William E. Boyd

Born in Clontarf, Minnesota, in 1880, William E. Boyd was ten years younger than his partner in the Benson Hotel and earlier hotel operations, Robert Keller. He once told the Oregon Journal, "It took us just five days to decide that Portland has a brilliant future." Boyd was general manager for 36 years in all, participating in Western Hotels' purchase of Keller's interest in the Benson in 1944. Boyd left the hotel eleven years later, in 1955.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet THE BENSON HOTEL

Item number 8

Page 7

He was a member, like Keller, of Al Kader Shrine, belonged to Blue Lodge, Scottish Rite; Jesters; Shrine Patrols; and the Rotary Club of Portland. He passed away in Portland, March 1, 1965.



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

---

Benson Hotel                      Multnomah County, OREGON

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVAL  
86003175

Patrick Andrus 10/27/93

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

RECEIVED

SEP 14 1993

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

Section number 8 Page 8

---

**BENSON HOTEL (1913)**  
(NEW HOTEL OREGON)  
309 SW Broadway  
Portland, Multnomah County  
OREGON

**NRIS NO: 86003175**

Listing date: 11-20-86

The purpose of this continuation sheet is to reaffirm the status of the Benson Hotel south wing, or addition of 1959 as compatible construction. As was pointed out by the SHPO's customary opening passage in the statement of significance, the newer wing is distinguishable from the historic block, and in that sense it is consistent with the Secretary's Standards for Preservation Projects. At the same time, it is visually as well as structurally integrated with the 12-story 1913 volume through the use of compatible facing materials (brick and ceramic), roofline height, a culminating cap or overhanging slab of concrete, and alignment of stories and fenestration.

Even though the addition of 1959 was acknowledged as a compatible construction in the nominating documentation, it was inaccurately counted as a separate, non-contributing feature.

The accompanying continuation sheet (Section 7, page 6) more accurately conveys the integral character of the addition.

In the interest of updating descriptive information, an additional continuation sheet (Section 7, page 7) briefly characterizes restoration/renovation work completed since the hotel was listed in 1986. The main entrance on SW Broadway and the lobby, for example, were restored in 1991-1992.



Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE: September 3, 1993

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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



Continuation sheet THE BENSON HOTEL

Item number 9

Page 2

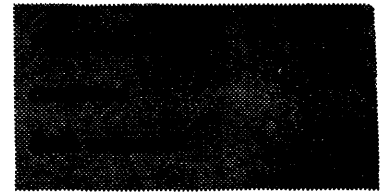
REFERENCES

General Reference

- Benson Hotel Scrapbook, Property of Benson Hotel
- The Hotel News, October 2, 1911, pg. 1,2
- The Hotel News, November 28, 1911, pg. 1
- The Hotel News, March 20, 1912, pg. 1
- The Hotel News, June 27, 1912, pg. 1
- The Northwest Hotel News, August 29, 1912, pg. 1, 5
- The Northwest Hotel News, October 24, 1912, page 1,5
- The Northwest Hotel News, January 9, 1913, pg. 7
- The Northwest Hotel News, January 23, 1913, pg. 7
- The Northwest Hotel News, February 20, 1913, pg. 1
- The Northwest Hotel News, February 27, 1913, pg. 1
- The Northwest Hotel News, March 6, 1913, pg. 1, 2
- Oregonian, January 1, 1912, pg. 12 sec 3
- Oregonian, March 2, 1913, pg. 8 sec. 4
- Oregonian, March 3, 1913, pg. 14
- Oregonian, March 5, 1913, pg. 16
- Oregon Daily Journal, February 2, 1937, pg. 4
- Oregon Daily Journal, March 1, 1944, pg. 5
- Oregonian, October 31, 1944, sec. 2 pg. 3
- Oregonian, January 20, 1957, pg. 1
- Oregonian, December 15, 1957, pg. 16

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet THE BENSON HOTEL

Item number 9

Page 3

- Oregonian, February 14, 1957, pg 16.
- Oregonian, December 28, 1957, pg. 7
- Oregonian, March 19, 1958, pg. 1
- Oregonian, January 4, 1958, pg.1
- Oregonian, April 1, 1958, pg. 3
- Oregonian, April 5, 1958, Sec. 3 pg. 6
- Oregonian, April 10, 1958, pg. 1
- Oregonian, May 4, 1958, pg.1
- Oregon Daily Journal, August 1959, pg. 12
- Oregon Daily Journal, February 13, 1962, sec. 3 pg.5
- Oregon Daily Journal, April 3, 1962, pg. 3
- Oregonian, November 2, 1965, pg. 17
- Oregon Daily Journal, December 23, 1965, pg. 2
- Oregonian, May 31, 1968, pg. 32
- Oregon Daily Journal, March 19, 1975, pg. A2
- Oregonian, April 19, 1976, pg. A1
- Oregonian, August 20, 1977, A7
- Oregonian, March 16, 1913, Hotel Oregon Section pg. 1 - 4
- Oregon Daily Journal, January 21, 1914, pg. 1
- Oregon Daily Journal, January 22, 1914, pg. 2
- Oregon Daily Journal, December 17, 1916, pg. 1
- Oregon Daily Journal, December 17, 1916
- Oregonian, December 21, 1916, pg. 16
- Oregonian, September 1, 1929, (Oregon Hotel Shut After Long Career)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet THE BENSON HOTEL

Item number 9

Page 4

Oregonian, September 9, 1932, pg. 3

Oregon Daily Journal, October 26, 1924, p. 14, Town Topics

Oregonian, January 20, 1957, pg. 1

Oregon Daily Journal, January 20, 1957, pg. 2A

Boyd

Oregonian, March 2, 1965, pg. 13

Oregon Daily Journal, March 2, 1965, pg. 4

Oregonian, June 1, 1965, sec. 3, pg. 8

Oregon Daily Journal, June 11, 1965, pg. 4

Keller

Oregon Daily Journal, April 2, 1961, pg. 13

Benson

Oregon Daily Journal, October 11, 1914, sec. 4, pg. 1

Oregonian, July 1, 1915, pg. 1

Oregon Daily Journal, July 1, 1915, pg. 2

Oregon Daily Journal, December 3, 1919, pg. 8

Oregon Daily Journal, December 4, 1919, pg. 12

Oregon Daily Journal, December 5, 1919, pg. 8

Oregon Daily Journal, November 17, 1920. pg. 1, 3

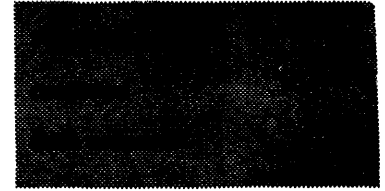
Oregonian, July 27, 1929, pg. 11

Oregonian, August 6, 1942, pg. 19

Oregon Daily Journal, August 10, 1942, pg. 6

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet THE BENSON HOTEL

Item number

9

Page 5

Corning, Howard McKinley ed., Dictionary of Oregon History,  
Portland, Oregon, Binfords & Mort, Publishers,  
1956. Page 27.

Allen, Alice Benson, Simon Benson Northwest Lumber King,  
Portland, Oregon, Binfords & Mort, Publishers, 1971.

Lockley, Fred, History of the Columbia River Valley, Vol. II,  
Chicago, S. J. Clarke, Publishing Co., 1928. Pages 88-94.

Doyle

Oregon Daily Journal, August 7, 1919, pg. 6 sec. 2

Oregon Daily Journal, October 18, 1925, sec. 1 pg. 14

Oregon Daily Journal, January 24, 1928, pg. 5

Oregonian, January 24, 1928, pg. 1

Oregon Daily Journal, January 26, 1928, pg. 8

Oregonian, February 5, 1928, Northwest Magazine

Architect and Engineer, Volume No. LVIII, No. 1, "The Work of Albert  
E. Doyle, Architect of Portland, Oregon", Charles H. Cheney,  
pg. 39-86.

Carey, Charles H., History of Oregon, Vol. II, Chicago and Portland:  
Historical Publishing Co., 1922. Pages 110-111.

The BENSON HOTEL, 309-319 SW Broadway

