

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

RECEIVED

JAN 15 1988

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Otis Elevator Company Building  
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 230 NW 10th Avenue N/A not for publication  
city, town Portland N/A vicinity  
state Oregon code OR county Multnomah code 051 zip code 97209

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>      </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>      </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official *[Signature]* Date January 5, 1988  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

*[Signature]* Entered in the National Register 2-11-88

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

---

**6. Function or Use**

---

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: Office/Warehouse

---

---

---

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce: Office

---

---

---

---

**7. Description**

---

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Italian Renaissance

---

---

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation granitewalls brick, pressedroof ceramic tileother terra cotta, glazedglass

---

---

**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

The Otis Elevator Company Building is a one-story brick and terra cotta-clad structure located at 230 NW 10th Avenue, on Lot 7 of Block 63, Couch's Addition in Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon. The building completely covers its 5,000 square foot site. It is massed into two elements -- the smaller main block, which comprises the western 20 feet of the building, and the long eastern block which comprises the balance of the structure. The main block is capped with a red tile hip roof and the eastern block is covered with a flat roof with clerestory skylights.

The structure was built in 1920 to house the Portland operations of the Otis Elevator Company. That company occupied the building until 1975. Consequently, it retains virtually all of its original exterior fabric in good condition and most of its original interior fabric. Otis Elevator Company has been the major supplier of elevators to Portland's historic and contemporary skyscrapers.

**EXTERIOR**West Elevation

The west elevation is the principal facade of the Otis Elevator Building. It is 50 feet wide and faces NW 10th Avenue. The single story facade is five bays wide. It is clad in Flemish bond pressed brick. Brick color is in a reddish brown palate. The base of the facade is striated granite. Two metal ventilation grills and a copper sprinkler head are set in the base.

The southern-most bay of the west elevation is devoted to the main entry to the building. The entry features a segmental-arched pediment of elaborately decorated terra cotta. A row of dentils supports the low-arched pediment, which has bands of acanthus leaves, molding and dentils. At the base of the lintel supporting the arch is a decorative oval piece. The pilasters at the sides of the entry are also elaborately decorated with urns, scroll work, shields, acanthus leaves, and capped with heads of putti.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

---

The entry itself is recessed. Two granite steps lead to the double entry, which is wood-framed. The doors are single light, with a single light transom above.

The other four bays of the west elevation are occupied by large, arched openings with wood-framed windows and stone sills. The windows feature small perimeter lights. The bricks above the windows are set in a radiating voussoir pattern, with a terra cotta oval decoration at the head of each arch.

At the head of the six pilasters dividing the bays there are six circles bordered in radiating brick. Inside the circles are cross-patterned bricks set in a field of concrete.

A convex-molded terra cotta belt course supports the frieze above. The frieze itself is bordered at the top and bottom with single rows of header bricks. The frieze is divided into a series of panels which are vertically defined by header bricks. The large central panel is devoted to a granite sign with the words "OTIS ELEVATOR COMPANY" incised into the stone. Other panels feature a variety of decorative brick patterns set into a concrete field. These patterns include diamonds; H-figures; and round terra cotta paterae set in a circle of radiating header bricks. The two paterae are located at the two end bays of the facade.

Above the frieze, a terra cotta cornice rests on a row of dentils. Above the cornice are the tiles of the hip roof.

## North Elevation

The other street elevation of the Otis Elevator Building, facing Northwest Everett Street, is the north elevation. The entire elevation, like the west elevation, is clad in Flemish bond pressed brick of a reddish-brown hue.

The west end of the north elevation is part of the main block of the building. Consequently, this portion of the facade matches the treatment of the west elevation. This treatment includes the striated granite base; terra cotta belt course supporting the frieze; the frieze with decorative brick work and a single terra cotta patera; the convex-molded terra cotta roof cornice with dentils; and the tiles of the hip roof end.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

---

A single arched opening occupies this western section of the north elevation, again matching the west elevation treatment. The window is wood-framed, with small perimeter lights, and a stone sill. It is capped with bricks in a radiating pattern, and an oval terra cotta decoration is at the head of the arch.

The balance of the north elevation is somewhat simpler in detail to the main block. It is eight bays across. The end bay, at the eastern edge of the elevation, features a larger opening where a service entry was originally located. This opening has been modified somewhat, with an angled recess. The entry retains its original panelled wood doors, wood framing, multi-light transom, and concrete wheel guards.

The seven other bays feature windows in rectangular openings. The windows are wood-framed with stone sills. The lower portion of the windows have a large central light and two side lights. Above is a multi-light five by five grid.

The base of the eastern portion of the north elevation is brick rather than stone, with vertical bricks supporting two rows of Flemish bond. These in turn support a single header row, above which is a plain concrete band and another single row of headers.

The upper portion of the facade features corbelled bricks beneath the frieze. The frieze is similar to the west elevation. The central element is another granite sign with incised letters reading "OTIS ELEVATOR COMPANY." The balance of the frieze is devoted to header brick-bordered panels which consist of decorative brick patterns on concrete fields. The brick patterns are simpler than those on the main block, and include diamonds in circles, and larger diamonds. There are no paterae.

Non-Street Elevations

The south elevation, originally clad in common bond stretcher brick, was resurfaced in 1965 with a smooth cement plaster. This elevation faces a narrow strip surface parking lot.

The east elevation is completely obscured by common wall construction to the east.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 4

---

INTERIOR

The interior of the western portion of the building, i.e. the main block, is devoted to the company offices. Consequently, this portion of the interior is more refined than the more functional eastern block. Most of the original fabric remains intact.

The offices are entered from N.W. 10th Avenue via an entry vestibule. The entry vestibule retains its original wood wainscoting, marble baseboard, marble tile floor, and wood ceiling and door trim. The dropped acoustical tile ceiling is the only non-original portion of this space.

The office proper features an elliptically arched barrel vaulted ceiling. There is original wood trim at the ceiling, doors, windows, chair rail, and at the baseboard. (The baseboard trim has generally been covered over.) The north end of the office is enclosed as a separate office space. The wood and glass partition does not rise the full height of the room.

A small room is located to the southeast of the large office, behind the entry vestibule. This room features a non-original tile floor and a dropped acoustical tile ceiling.

A corridor runs from the main office towards the center of the building. The corridor features a wood chair rail. Along the corridor are two restrooms which retain original wood doors and trim, floor and wall tile, and skylights.

The eastern block of the building, except for the corridor and restrooms, has always been functional and less refined than the offices in the main block. A large room (originally the construction room) occupies the east end of the interior. This room features unadorned finishes, e.g. exposed brick walls, plain wood posts and ceiling joists. Some minor modifications were made to this space on 1983 to accommodate a theater space. These include a raised plywood floor covering most of the original concrete floor; a small corner office/dressing room with mezzanine; and the modified, angled entry.

The large room at the east end of the building retains its original clerestory windows.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

---

A second major room, originally serving as a stock room, occupies the center-north portion of the building. Like the larger room to the east, it has always been unadorned, and it retains much of its original fabric. There are plain wood posts and ceiling joists, an exposed brick outer wall, and a plain concrete floor.

A small room, located along the south wall near the juncture of the corridor and the east room, has recently served as a kitchen. It features non-original fabric.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Architecture

Period of Significance

1920-1930

Significant Dates

1920

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Otis Elevator Company

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The local headquarters building of the Otis Elevator Company is situated at the SE corner of the intersection of NW 10th Avenue and Everett Street in Northwest Portland. Erected in 1920, the one story building is organized into two sections: a west-facing office block measuring 20 x 50 feet, and the operations section for service and storage extending 80 feet to the east. The building is of frame construction with brick exterior walls. Street elevations are finished with pressed brick, glazed terra cotta trim, and granite bases. The office section has a hipped roof clad with mission tiles.

Stylistic details are concentrated at the westerly, or office section, and are in the Italian Renaissance vein. Historic period features are tall, Roman-arched windows, a pedimented entrance surround, a denticulated cornice with frieze of Italian art tile, and symmetrical organization overall. The architect of the building is not individually identified, but it is believed the plans and elevations were adopted from a standard design produced by a company designer at national headquarters on the East Coast.

The building is primarily significant under Criterion A as the first specially-designed operations headquarters of the Otis Elevator Company in Portland. The company was founded in New York in the 1850s by Elisha Graves Otis and expanded as Otis Brothers and Company by the founder's sons from 1864 onward. Based on a search of early Portland directories, the Otis Elevator Company maintained an office in Oregon's largest city from 1889 onward. The present company title was adopted in 1898. The company's first operations headquarters in Portland, located on West Burnside, was leased for the comparatively brief span of five years between 1915 and 1920.

The significance of the company in American architecture is that Otis's innovation and development of the passenger elevator contributed to the rise of multi-storied office buildings and department stores. While not the only manufacturer of elevators in the country, the Otis Company is the oldest, largest and most widely-known. Its elevators were installed in the most distinguished commercial and public buildings raised in Portland both before and after the construction of the headquarters building on 10th Avenue in 1920. The list ranges from early skyscrapers, such as the Wells Fargo Building (1907) and Spalding Building (1911), to installations of the 1930s in Portland's

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than one

UTM References

A 

1	0
---	---

5	2	5	0	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

5	0	4	1	1	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone      Easting      Northing

B 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone      Easting      Northing

C 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated area is Lot 7, Block 63, Couch's Addition to the City of Portland in Multnomah County, Oregon.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated area comprises the entire 50 x 100-foot lot historically improved by the Otis Elevator Company in 1920. It does not include the adjoining Lot 6, which has been used for parking in recent years.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title John M. Tess

organization Heritage Investment Corporation date August 19, 1987

street & number 123 NW Second Avenue, Suite 200 telephone (503) 228-0272

city or town Portland state Oregon zip code 97209



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

---

premier department store, Meier and Frank Company Store, and the city's grand union railroad passenger station, Union Station. During the historic period of significance of the local headquarters building, which extends from the date of construction to interruption of normal production flow at the height of the Great Depression, the Otis Elevator Company commanded fully 70 per cent of the city's building elevator market. Otis Elevator Company occupied the nominated building to 1975 and from this location continued as major supplier to Portland's contemporary skyscrapers.

The building is secondarily significant under Criterion C as a well-preserved and a finely detailed example of 20th Century period architecture in the Italian Renaissance style which is locally noteworthy for its restrained elegance applied to a commercial purpose.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT: The Otis Elevator Building and the Historic Northwest Warehouse/Service District

The Otis Elevator Building is located in the "Northwest Triangle," an area bounded by W. Burnside Street on the south, the I-405 freeway on the west, the North Park Blocks on the east and the Willamette River to the north. This area has long been a major center of warehousing, industrial, and service uses which benefit from the area's close proximity to rail and shipping activity and to the downtown commercial center. The Northwest Triangle features a number of loft warehouse structures, typically clad in brick, which date to the early years of this century. It was during this period that Portland emerged as a world seaport, a major west coast distribution center, and a thriving metropolis which grew from 90,000 to 258,000 between the years 1900 and 1920.

With the recent emergence of low scale, low-rise suburban industrial development, buildings in the historic warehousing district in northwest Portland have begun to change in use. Old warehousing uses are moving out and are being replaced by a new mixture of galleries, offices, artists' studios, micro-breweries, etc. The Otis Building is an example of this trend. After the Otis Company vacated the structure, it was occupied by an architect's office and a theatre.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 2

---

Partly as a result of this phenomenon of transition, the area has been the subject of two major planning efforts -- the AIA R/UDAT Study (1983) and the City of Portland's Northwest Triangle Plan (1984-85). Both of these reports focused major attention on the historic resources of the area -- the historic warehouse and service related buildings which comprise much of the area's distinct character and appeal. The R/UDAT Study proposed a large historic district (which would include the Otis Building), and the Northwest Triangle Plan also advocated district designation. In 1986, a major concentration of historic warehouses along 13th Avenue was designated as an historic district, with formal National Register listing occurring in early 1987.

Both the National Register nomination for the 13th Avenue district and official deliberations on the district's designation cited the Otis Building as one of several architecturally significant structures within the greater Northwest Triangle, but outside of the more contained 13th Avenue Historic District. Statistics from the city's Historic Resources Inventory bear out the significance of the Otis Building. The Northwest Triangle is comprised of about 140 city blocks. Within this area there is one National Register property (the Ballou-Wright Warehouse), two local landmarks (the Blitz Weinhard Brewery and the Gann Building), one Rank I structure (the Armory), seven Rank II structures (including the Otis Building), and some sixty Rank III structures.

The Otis Building is one of the most distinctive works of architecture in the district. One of a number of similarly-designed structures which the Otis Company built around the country, it features refined terra cotta ornamentation, graceful arched window openings, reddish brown brick cladding, and a red-tile roof.

Its classical facade expresses a central tenet of the Beaux Art influenced, classically derived architecture of the time, i.e. that even mundane uses should be housed in nobly-designed structures. The Otis Building is noteworthy as a relatively late example of this tenet, since by the time of its construction (1920), it was already becoming common to house industrial uses in more functionally-designed structures.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 3

---

The Otis Elevator Building is thus a premier work of architecture in a distinctive, historic, and functionally significant section of the city. It is one of the finest extant examples of service-related structures in the Northwest Triangle, in particular a service which contributed mightily to the growth and development of the city as a whole.

The Otis Elevator Company

The origins of the Otis Elevator Company bear out the maxim, "Necessity is the mother of invention."

Elisha Graves Otis (1811-1861) was the founder of the oldest and largest elevator company in the world. While working on the construction of a bedstead factory in Yonkers, NY in 1852 as a master mechanic, Otis was responsible for the construction of an elevator to move some equipment into place. The elevator he built, and especially a safety mechanism he designed to prevent the elevator from falling should the lifting-chain or rope break, was a notable enough achievement that he quickly received orders to construct elevators for another manufacturer in New York.

On the strength of that order for two elevators, Otis decided to establish his firm. The shop was opened on September 20, 1853. An early promotional effort garnered the attention and fascination of New Yorkers. At the Crystal Palace Exposition, held in New York in 1854, Otis had one of his elevators installed in the exhibition hall. Otis boarded the open-platform elevator, together with various freight; the elevator was lifted, and Otis then had the rope cut. To the amazement and applause of his audience, the elevator did not fall -- the safety mechanism worked. Otis took a bow and declared, "All safe, gentlemen, all safe."

Imaginative promotion notwithstanding, business was slow in the first years. However, with the passing of years the company continued to develop and patent features which improved the safety and function of elevators, in turn helping to set the stage for the emergence of the American skyscraper. The Otis Company installed the first passenger elevator in 1857 in the five-story E.V. Haughwont & Company building, at Broadway and Broome Streets in New York. The first hydraulic elevator, capable of travelling 800 feet per minute, was developed in 1878. The first elevator was installed in 1901 in Gimbel's Department Store in New York.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 4

---

Elisha Otis died prematurely in 1861, having been of frail health. At the time of his death the company had a plant valued at \$5,000 and employed eight to ten men. Charles Otis, with his brother Norton, built on his father's success. The firm was re-organized in 1864 under the name Otis Brothers & Company (incorporated in November 1867), and it was under this name that the company first appears in the Portland City Directory in 1889.

The Otis Elevator Company is the oldest elevator business in Portland. Originally the company was represented by exclusive agents. More complete operations were installed at 482 W. Burnside Street (old address) in 1915. The company was moved to its new quarters at 72 10th Street North (now 230 N.W. 10th Avenue) in 1920, under the supervision of Otis' District Manager Richard J. Huntington. The property had been purchased in 1912 for the sum of \$25,500. (The entire block was sold in 1859 by Captain John H. Couch for the sum of \$800!)

Over the years the company has been and remains the principal supplier of elevators and escalators to Portland's great towers, from such classic terra cotta and masonry clad structures as the American Bank Building, Meier & Frank Department Store, Jackson Tower, Wells Fargo Building, Benson (formerly Oregon) Hotel, and U.S. Bank Building (all of which are on the National Register or have the highest ranking in the Portland Historic Resources Inventory) to most of the city's more contemporary skyscrapers.

The historic Otis Elevator Building thus remains as a physical expression of a company closely associated with the growth and development of Portland and the nation.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   9   Page   1  

---

Dictionary of American Biography, Scribners & Sons, 1934.

"Last Place in Downtown", AIA R\UDAT Study 1984.

Multnomah County Deed Records

Portland Building Permits, #82981, #421320, #495452, #113309.

Portland City Directories, 1880 et seq.

Portland Historic Resources Inventory 1984

Tell Me About Elevators, Otis Elevator Company, 1974.

Ticor Title Co. Ownership Records

Oregonian

Oregon Journal

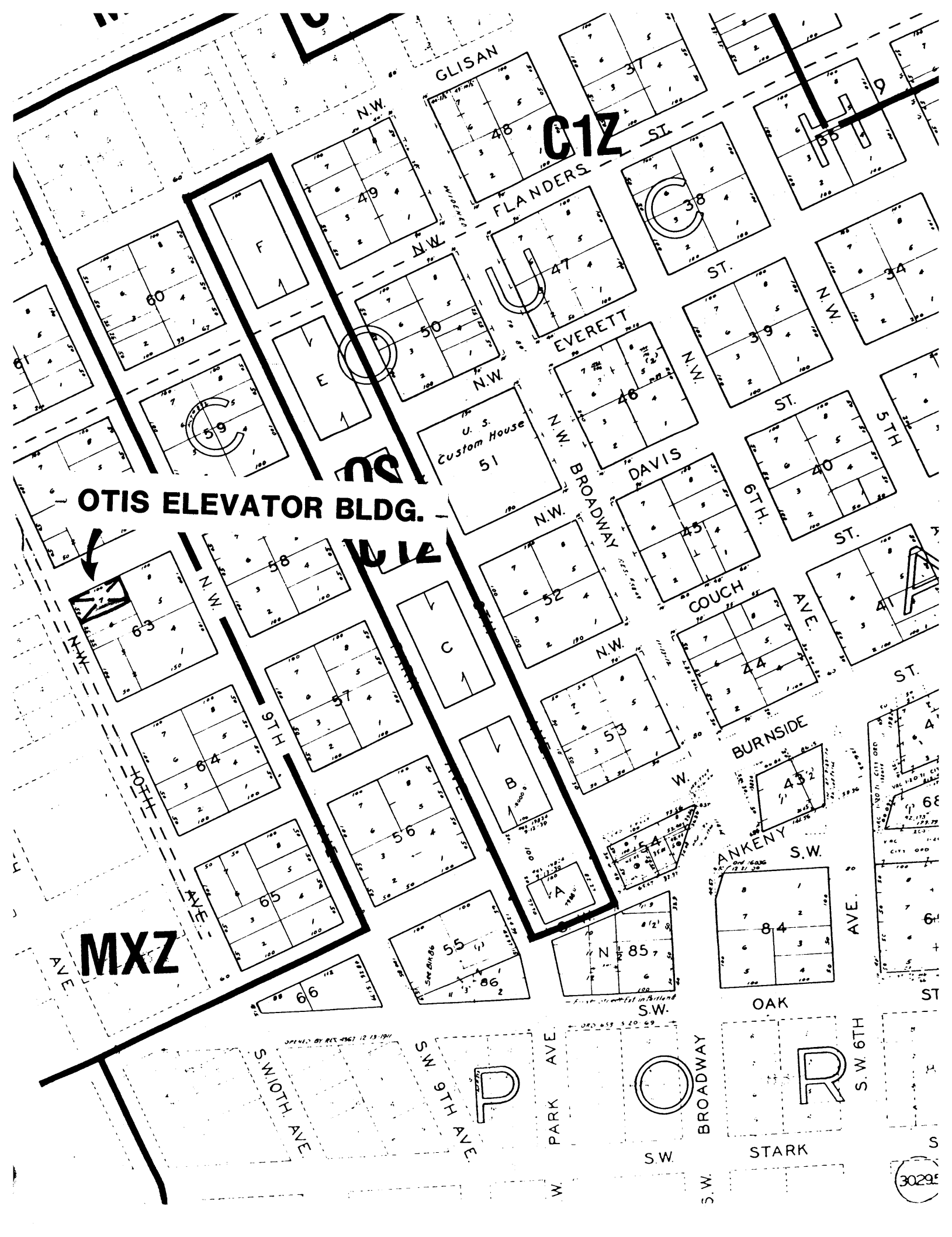
Interviews

Mr. William Moore, former employee of Otis Elevator Company in Portland (1927 to 1977), 8-12-87.

Mr. Larry Garritch, Otis Group Inc. 8-11-87.

Mr. James Verlinde, Portland Manager, Otis Elevator Company, 8-18-87.

Dr. Anne Milbrooke, United Technologies Archivist, 8-19-87.



**C1Z**

**OTIS ELEVATOR BLDG.**

**MXZ**

**P**

**O**

**R**

30295

GLISAN

FLANDERS

EVERETT

DAVIS

BURNSIDE

ANKENY

OAK

BROADWAY

STARK

N.W.

N.W.

N.W.

N.W.

N.W.

N.W.

N.W.

N.W.

9TH

10TH

AVE

U. S. Custom House  
51

C

B

A

SW 9TH AVE

SW 9TH AVE

PARK AVE

S.W.

S.W. 6TH

S

OFFICIAL BY REC-4567 12 13 1941

First street list in Portland  
ONE YEAR  
1941