

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

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instruction in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classifications, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Failing Building

other names/site number Gevurtz Building/Gasco Building/620 SW 5<sup>th</sup> Building

### 2. Location

street & number 620 SW 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue  not for publication

city or town Portland  vicinity

state Oregon code OR county Multnomah code 051 zip code 97204

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_\_\_ locally.

Signature of certifying official/Title - Deputy SHPO \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

Failing Building  
Name of Property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property  
(check as many as apply)

- private
- public - local
- public - state
- public - Federal

Category of Property  
(check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
		Total

Name of related multiple property listing  
(enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register

Historic Resources in Downtown Portland 1906-1914

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions  
(enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/Business  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/Business  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Movements:  
Commercial Style  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: concrete  
walls: brick  
  
roof: asphalt  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description  
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

See continuation sheets.

Failing Building  
Name of Property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

Applicable National Register Criteria  
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing).

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Period of Significance

1907-1913

Significant Dates

1907,1913

Criteria Considerations  
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B removed from its original location
- C a birthplace or grave
- D a cemetery
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F a commemorative property
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance Within the past 50 years

Significant Person  
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder  
William Whidden & Ion Lewis

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Statement of Significance  
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Bibliography (Cite books, articles, and other sources used in preparing the form on one or more continuation sheets) See continuation sheets

- Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36CFR67) 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
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Failing Building  
Name of Property

Multnomah, OR  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property      . acre

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1                 
Zone Easting Northing  
2               

3                 
Zone Easting Northing  
4               

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title     Kimberli Fitzgerald, Historic Preservation Consultant    

organization      date     February 27, 2007    

street & number     1012 SW King, Suite 104     telephone     503 227-5146    

city or town     Portland     state     OR     zip code     97205    

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation sheets

Maps: A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs: Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

name     Mr. Brandon Anderson, CMS Corporation    

street & number     411 SW 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave, Suite 200     telephone     503 224-5600    

city or town     Portland     state     OR     zip code     97204    

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**Failing Building**

Name of Property

**Multnomah County, OR**

County and State

NPS Form 10-900-a

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number   7   Page   1  **Overview**

The 1907/1913 Failing Building is located at 620 SW Fifth Avenue in downtown Portland, Oregon. Specifically, it is located on Lots 7 & 8 of Block 62 of in Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon. Architects William Whidden and Ion Lewis designed the building.

The office building is a reinforced steel frame building with facades of yellow brick and glazed terra cotta and has twelve stories plus basement. It is located in the historic core of Portland's commercial district. It may be categorized as LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS- Commercial Style of Architecture.

**Setting**

The Failing Building is located on a quarter block parcel on the southeast corner of SW Alder Street and SW Fifth Avenue. Located to the southeast of Portland's retail core, the building is surrounded by commercial buildings of a similar vintage, many listed on the National Register. To the north are the 1912 Lipman Wolfe Building (NR; designed by A. E. Doyle & Patterson), the 1911 Yeon Building (NR) and the 1911 Hotel Alder (NR). Across the street to the west is the Meier & Frank complex (NR; designed by A. E. Doyle), and adjacent to the south is the Kress Building. The lower two stories of the Failing Building house an expansion retail space for the discount clothier *Ross Dress For Less* store. The modernization of the Ross store attempted to visually connect the expansion space with the larger primary store across SW Alder Street at the southwest corner of SW 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and SW Alder Street.

SW Alder Street is one-way heading east toward the Willamette River directing traffic onto the Morrison Bridge.

**Site**

The building is located on a 10,000 square foot parcel. The parcel is essentially flat. The structure is built to the lot line with a perimeter sidewalk. The site contains no significant landscape features.

**Structure**

The Failing Building is a 12-story, plus full basement quarter-block reinforced steel frame brick and terracotta building with similar facades on SW Alder Street and SW Fifth Avenue.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page   2  

## Exterior

As a building within the City of Portland's Central Business District, the Failing Building occupies a corner of the block with frontage on SW Alder Street and SW Fifth Avenue. The twelve story structure was designed in the tripartite "classical column" idiom of base, shaft, and capital reflective of the traditional approach to multi-story city office buildings. It's structural bays, defined by the window openings, are 5-bays deep along SW Alder and 5-bays wide along SW Fifth Street. The building "base" consists of the first two stories dedicated to retail with the ground floor, street elevation at 1.5 stories in actual height. The building "shaft," the third through tenth stories, is executed in earth tone brick. White terra cotta panels on the top two floors and an elaborate terra cotta cornice create the building "capital". Fire escapes are prominent on both the northeast and southwest corners of the building.

The original storefronts along SW 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and SW Alder Street consisted of two large plate glass windows divided by terra cotta columns with a continuous granite base along the sidewalk. The terra cotta columns extended to the second floor which also had four large paired plate glass windows. In 1951, the original historic display windows and decorative cast iron ornamentation were entirely removed and replaced with flat panel terra cotta units installed as a veneer directly to the structural framing system. Currently, the ground floor has been "modernized" with an unadorned, smooth surface panel skin evoking a solid surface with punched opening for the retail windows. At the height of the second floor, or retail mezzanine level, the solid skin hides the transfer zone of the mechanical system the only telltale being small horizontal grilles, installed in the width of the original 2<sup>nd</sup> floor window openings, visible on the façade.

The mass of the central portion of the building is reduced by horizontal striations created through the brick coursing. Brick coursing consists of six horizontal rows of running bond interrupted by two horizontal deeply recessed rows of brick. This pattern is especially apparent in the continuous spandrel panels at the floor heights. Whereas the pattern is not unusual for multi-story buildings, many of the buildings of the same period had a tendency to accentuate the verticality of the structure and not create strong horizontal visual elements like the Failing Building.

The tripartite design is highlighted by decorative belt-courses between the elements and capped by a decorative cornice. The lower belt course separating the second and third floors is made of marble. The top belt-course is made of terracotta and lies between the tenth and eleventh stories. The cornice, like the top belt course, is also made of terracotta. The cornice features modillion blocks and dentils.

Like many early 20<sup>th</sup>-century multi-story buildings, the structural system allowed for the area between columns and beams to be in-filled with glass. The windows of the Failing Building are repetitive in every bay except the twelfth floor and are one-over-one, double-hung wood sash combined in groups of three. Windows on the top story are bordered by a terracotta surrounds with arched lintels and keystones. Sill courses of all window groups are of continuous Tenino sandstone. The Terra cotta decorative motifs include keystones with fish scale designs and window surrounds with laurel leaf patterns.

**Failing Building**

Name of Property

**Multnomah County, OR**

County and State

NPS Form 10-900-a

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number   7   Page   3  

As evidenced by historic photographs, the Failing Building exhibits strong historic integrity, with only the lower two stories showing significant alterations as the result of various tenant remodeling over the years. Remodel floor plans in 1927, for the retailer Britts, show that a galvanized sign panel with an awning box below existed between the first and second floors. A second larger sign was located between the second and third floors.

**Interior**

The interior to the Failing Building is divided into retail and office space. The first and second floors have consistently been the primary retail spaces of the building. Historically there were multiple retail entries from both SW 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and SW Alder Street. Currently, access to the retail space is from the northwest corner of the building at the corner of SW 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and SW Alder Street. This corner entrance appears to have been added in 1927 when the then retailer Britts store was remodeled.

The upper office spaces are accessed through a formal building entry and lobby space from SW Fifth Avenue. The main lobby has the most rich and detailed finishes of the public spaces. There is mahogany paneling, trim and moldings, and the three elevator doors retain their original brass finish and detailing. The remaining lobby space has been remodeled over the years, leaving modern finishes including wall-to-wall carpet and dropped acoustical tile ceilings. Floors five through twelve are dedicated to office spaces of varying sizes. Additional period detailing like a standard Cutler mail chute rising the height of the building and corresponding brass collection letter box remain in the lobby. The public stairwell, located in the southeast corner of the building, and accessed through a door at the east end of the main elevator lobby, by contrast, has limited decoration.

Typical office floors three through twelve follow the same general layout with the elevator lobby located at the southern portion of the floor. The standard Cutler mail chute is located in the elevator lobby on each floor. Offices are double loaded on either side of a hallway running in a "U" shape around a central east/west light well. The corridors have plaster walls, with limited original finishes. The woodwork was installed in circa 1970 including mahogany paneled walls, doors and crown molding. Floors have been modernized with carpet and ceilings are dropped with acoustical tile.

The full basement is 10,000 square feet in size, is finished and for many years has contained both space for the building mechanical equipment as well as room for storing stock. It has also served as a large retail space in addition to the first and second floors.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page   4  

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### Alterations

In 1951, JJ Newberry remodeled the first and second floors (Glenn Stanton Architect) of the Failing Building and constructed a new six story building, which replaced the Richmond Building, located just to the east. A ceramic veneer was added which covered the original large window openings on the first and second floors.

The interior has also been remodeled over the years as various tenants have occupied the retail space. In addition, the upper office areas have been remodeled to accommodate the various needs of tenants. Despite these tenant improvements, the upper floors still retain the same general layout. The following is a summary of the alterations:

1912/1913;	addition of 6 stories	Gevurtz Furniture/Whidden & Lewis
c.1917	installation of new elevator shaft	Gevurtz Furniture/Whidden & Lewis
c.1927	Retail tenant remodel	Brittan Brothers/Britts
c. 1929	Retail tenant remodel	J.J. Newberry Co.
c. 1951	Retail tenant remodel	J.J. Newberry Co.

### Summary

The Failing Building has a high degree of integrity and therefore has the ability to convey its association with the boom period of construction in downtown Portland in the early part of the twentieth century. The exterior alterations that have been made are limited the addition of six additional stories which were also designed by Whidden & Lewis. The addition of six stories in 1912/1913 conveys the incredible demand for office space in downtown Portland during the era after the Lewis & Clark Exposition. While alterations have been made to the first and second floors retail space over the years, the unique architectural details and terra cotta decoration designed by Whidden & Lewis remain intact, and continue to convey the success the Failing family was achieving during one of downtown Portland's most productive periods of construction.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   8   Page   1  

### Statement of Significance:

#### Overview

In the context of the multiple property listing, “Historic Resources in Downtown Portland: 1906-1914”, the Failing Building is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion “A” for Commerce & Community Development as part of that collection of buildings that redefined downtown Portland. In addition, the Failing Building is significant under Criterion C as an excellent example of a commercial building designed & constructed in the early twentieth century in Portland by Whidden & Lewis.

#### History of the Building

The site of the Failing Building at the corner of SW 6<sup>th</sup> and SW Alder was the location of the original Henry Failing residence. Henry Failing was a Portland Mayor who left an outstanding record of accomplishments. He was the city’s fifteenth mayor, and then later the city’s twenty-first mayor, nearly ten years later, in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Josiah Failing, Henry’s father, also had served as Portland’s Mayor. They were Portland’s only father and son mayors. The Failings owned a general merchandise store, and later went into business with the Corbett family, establishing Corbett, Failing and Co. In 1869, they bought controlling interest in the First National Bank. Henry Failing became that bank’s president.<sup>1</sup>

Failing purchased the building site, along with two bordering lots, from the First Baptist Church of Portland in 1892. He passed away in 1898 but left the real estate to his three daughters. The Failing Building was built in 1907 on speculation by the representatives of the Failing Estate. The building was originally constructed with just six floors, and an additional six floors were added beginning in 1912 and completed in 1913. It appears that builders planned the additional floors from the time of initial construction. As the building neared completion, the January 7, 1907, *Oregonian* said that the building was designed to carry four additional stories.<sup>2</sup> The building was originally known as the *Gevurtz Building*, since the ground floor commercial was going to be leased by the Gevurtz Furniture Company. Gevurtz Furniture ended their lease in 1918 when the Portland Gas & Coke Company signed a lease with the Failing Estate. At this time the building was renamed the *Gasco Building*.

Representatives from the Failing Estate announced in late 1927 that the Portland Gas & Coke Company would be moving to the Public Service Building on Dec. 17, 1927. Further, representatives announced that starting on January 1, 1928 the name of the Gasco Building would change to the *Failing Building*. At this time a ten year lease was signed with the Britts Five Cents to a Dollar store, whose operations would cover the basement, first and second floors of the Failing Building.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lansing, Jewel. *Portland: People, Politics, and Power 1851-2001*. (Oregon State University Press, Corvallis OR, 2003), p114.

<sup>2</sup> *Millions Invested, Skyscrapers Under Construction and Planned for 1907, Oregonian*. 7, Jan. 1907, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Gasco building To take Old Name of Failing Jan. 1. Oregon Journal*. 30, Nov. 1927, p. 14

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

The *Oregon Journal* further explained the use of the name: “*The name Failing building was first applied to the four-story structure at third and Washington streets, built in 1902. This building was recently sold by the Failing estate to W. C. Becketell and renamed the Postal building, the estate retaining the name for the Gasco Building.*”<sup>4</sup>

In 1929 J.J. Newberry Co. converted the Brittan Brothers Britts store. J.J. Newberry completed additional exterior and interior modifications to the retail floors in 1951. At this time the building directly to the east was demolished, and a new six story structure built which connected to the Failing Building on the first two floors, doubling the retail space for J.J. Newberry.

The Failing Estate sold the Failing Building to Melvin Mark in 1963. An article in the *Oregonian* describes the purchase: “*Melvin Mark Properties, largest single holder of downtown Portland properties, has purchased the Failing Building and the Park Building from the Failing Estate for a price in excess of \$2 million. The sale involves one of the largest downtown, core-area blocks of property put together in a single real estate transaction and adds to the Mark downtown holdings a total of 18 stories of office space...Henry Failing Cabell, who handled the sale for the estate, is the grandson of the late Henry Failing, who was president of the First National Bank of Oregon from 1869 to 1898. The grandson is an attorney.*”<sup>5</sup>

Despite change in various retail and office tenants over the years, the Failing building has retained its original use since its construction in 1907/1913. Currently the first two floors are occupied by the *Ross Dress for Less* store. Floors three through twelve are still utilized as office.

### Whidden and Lewis, Architects

William M. Whidden and Ion Lewis made a significant impact on Portland architecture. For more than thirty-five years they designed residential, commercial, and public buildings that shaped the city at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Whidden and Lewis met while studying architecture the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the late 1870s. Both natives of Massachusetts, Whidden was born in Boston on February 10, 1857, and Lewis was born in Lynn on March 26, 1858. After graduation in 1877, Lewis stayed in Boston working for architects Peabody & Stearns, and Cabot & Chandler. Whidden went to Paris to attend the Ecole des Beaux Arts, then returned to the U.S. to work for the firm McKim, Mead & White in New York City. Whidden & McKim came to Portland Oregon in 1882 to supervise work on the Portland Hotel. The hotel was only partially completed because Villard’s finances collapsed, and Whidden temporarily returned to the east. In 1888 Whidden was invited back

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> *Big Downtown Property Owners Purchase Park, Failing Buildings. Oregonian.* 10 January 1963, p1 c4.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   8   Page   3  

to Portland by Ladd & Corbett to finish work on the hotel. A year later Ion Lewis moved out to Portland and joined Whidden as a partner.

The architects reunited in 1889 and they formed the partnership of Whidden and Lewis that same year, establishing an architectural firm that dominated Portland construction for over three decades. In addition to numerous outstanding residential properties, they received many important public and commercial commissions. These included: the Portland City Hall (NR) in 1895, the Concord Building (NR) in 1900, and the Multnomah County Courthouse (NR) in 1914. William Lewis became the first President of the University Club of Portland, which held its first meeting May 2, 1898 at the Whidden & Lewis offices. Lewis was the Director of Architecture for the Lewis and Clark Exposition of 1905. Whidden retired in 1920 and later died on July 27, 1929. Lewis continued practicing under the firm name, and in 1930 established the Ion Lewis Traveling Fellowship at the University of Oregon School of Architecture and Allied Arts. He died on August 29, 1933.

Whidden and Lewis' contribution to Portland architecture not only included the grand buildings they designed but the architects they trained. Albert E. Doyle started with the firm when he was only 14 years old. The Forestry Building at the Lewis and Clark Exposition was designed by A.E. Doyle while working for the firm. A gigantic log structure, it was the only building kept after the fair, and unfortunately burned in 1965.<sup>6</sup> Doyle went on to open his own office in 1907, becoming one of Portland's leading architects. Other notable architects who trained under Whidden and Lewis include Joseph Jacobberger, David Chambers Lewis, Harrison A. Whitney, and Frederick A. Fritsch.

A. E. Doyle, was noted for his classic designs using terra cotta to create wonderfully decorated commercial buildings. At the end of his life, Doyle produced two buildings, the Pacific Building and the Public Service Building, heavily influenced by the Italian Renaissance style.

Pietro Belluschi came to Portland, Oregon in April, 1925, with a letter of introduction to Albert E. Doyle. By 1927 he was the chief designer at the firm. Although Doyle died in 1928, the firm continued first under the name of A. E. Doyle and Associate (with William Crowell as the associate) and then five years later as A. E. Doyle and Associates (including Belluschi as one of five partners). In 1931, Belluschi received his first major commission, the Portland Art Museum (1931-32, 1937-38). It was his first design to draw national attention. It was praised for its modernity, simplicity, restraint and for its decidedly non-classical monumentality. Although the museum's curator asked him to design a building in the Georgian Style, Belluschi presented a design that was clearly modern. The building was clad in red brick and trimmed in white, massed with central block and two wings set back. Belluschi however used the trim, window openings and the entry to create a strong rectilinear and geometric form. It offered strong, yet clean lines reinforced by the doorway and window frames. Belluschi had clearly abandoned the traditional classical design elements used by his predecessors, Doyle and Whidden & Lewis, and moved into the modern era.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ross, Marion. "125 Years of Building" AIA Journal, June 1968. pp72, 178

<sup>7</sup> Clausen, "Pietro Belluschi: Modern Architect" p.63.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   8   Page   4  

### Comparative Analysis, Works by Whidden and Lewis

Whidden and Lewis designed works for residential, commercial, and public use throughout their careers in Portland. The majority of their residential work was in the Colonial Revival style, displaying their New England heritage. Their commercial buildings were primarily in the Twentieth Century Classical style. They regularly used brick and terra cotta in their designs, and favored classical detailing.

The Portland Hotel (1888-90) was their first large commission, and a landmark in its own right for many years in Portland until it was demolished. Their first commercial work was the 1891 Concord Building, followed by the Hamilton and Gilbert Buildings in 1893, all of which are listed on the National Register. Their first public commission was the Portland City Hall in 1895, constructed in the same year as their Meier & Frank Building, which was later replaced by the current building designed by their protégé, A. E. Doyle.

The Concord Building (1891) is significant as a unique Oregon example of the transition to the Commercial style in office buildings. The first office building designed and constructed by Whidden & Lewis after they came to Portland, the Concord Building is designed in the Commercial Style, but includes elements of the Richardsonian Romanesque in the rock faced ground floor piers. The building is six stories and occupies a 50' x 95' corner site at SW Second Avenue and Stark Street. Whidden & Lewis were hired by William Ladd to construct the Concord Building for use as an office, with space for retail on the ground floor. The basic structure of the Concord was conventional for the period, masonry piers and bearing walls with wood frame construction. Overall the building is in the Commercial style with classical details on the exterior. This is a contrast to many other buildings of the period which were designed in the Victorian Italianate style with cast iron fronts, buildings like the Glisan's Building (Chown Electric Bldg) on Second and Ash. This modern style for office buildings was also in contrast to another predominant style of the period, the Richardsonian Romanesque, which can be seen in the Dekum Building (1892).<sup>8</sup>

Whidden & Lewis were hired by H.W. Corbett to construct the Hamilton Building (1892-93) located at 529 SW Third. Designed as a six story office building with retail space on the ground floor, the building was located on SW Third Avenue, which was in the center of commercial development between 1890-1900. The Hamilton Building is an excellent example of the Commercial Style with its classical form and detail. It is interesting to note that the brick facing on this building is rust-brown pressed brick made in Japan. This rust-brown brick and the off-white terra cotta trim was characteristic of other Whidden and Lewis buildings of the period: the Postal Building (1900), the first Meier & Frank Store (1897-98) and the Failing Building (1907/1913).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> McMath, George A. *Concord Building National Register Nomination*. Portland, OR. May 10, 1977. Sections 7 & 8

<sup>9</sup> McMath, George A. *Hamilton Building National Register Nomination*. Portland OR. Sept. 8, 1976. Sections 7 & 8.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Portland City Hall (1895) was designed by Whidden & Lewis in the Renaissance Revival Style. Noteworthy for its time, it was a fireproof structure which was centrally heated, wired for electricity, gas and telephone. Whidden & Lewis utilized the most modern engineering techniques of the time and designed the building to carry roof and floor loads on the steel frame, not on the exterior walls. Located at 1220 SW Fifth Ave, the building is four stories, with a granite façade. Decorative elements include an ionic entablature with a bracketed cornice and balustrade, medallions and pedimented shields.

The Postal Building was designed by Whidden and Lewis in 1900. The Postal Building is most distinguished for its elegant terra cotta work. The four story building occupies a 100 x 100 foot corner site at SW 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Washington Streets. The building was initially known as the “Failing” Building and later became known as the “Postal” Building. The lot was purchased by Henry Failing in the 1880’s and Whidden & Lewis were contracted to design and construct an office building with space for retail on the ground floor. The building is Italian Renaissance in style, and employs the forms and ornaments of classical Roman art. This building consists of exterior masonry walls with interior wood columns and heavy wood floor construction.<sup>10</sup>

Whidden and Lewis continued to design many buildings in the early 1900s, including the demolished Portland Art Museum in 1905, the 1909 Arlington Club, the 1910 Imperial Hotel, and the 1911 Wilcox Building. Their dominance in Portland faded as Doyle’s firm began to flourish but they continued to create fine designs late in their career, including the 1913 Failing Building and the Multnomah County Courthouse in 1914.

The Multnomah County Courthouse (1911/1914) was designed by Whidden & Lewis and is an outstanding example of Neo Classical Revival architecture. The east wing was constructed first in 1911 and the remaining west wing was completed in 1914. Construction was completed this way primarily not to disrupt the daily proceedings in the old courthouse. The courthouse is steel frame covered with concrete to prevent fire damage. An unusual practice for the time, plaster ceilings were applied directly to the masonry instead of wooden lath. Mechanically, the building was progressively designed, with a built in vacuuming system and forced air heat. Located at 1021 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Ave, the eight story Multnomah County Courthouse occupies an entire 200’ x 200’ block. The building is faced with terra cotta decorative elements, granite and limestone columns and entablatures with a four story colonnade of six Ionic columns.<sup>11</sup>

The Failing Building featured many design elements that Whidden and Lewis favored. These included arched windows and/or window lintels in the top story, and double-hung windows throughout. They also commonly featured molded belt-courses between the lowermost and uppermost stories, and projected cornices with classical detailing. The materials of the Failing Building also help identify it as a Whidden and Lewis design because they featured brick and terra cotta, materials they often used on their design façades.

<sup>10</sup> Tess, John M. *Failing Building (Postal Building) National Register Nomination*. Portland, OR. Dec. 1977. Sections 7&8.

<sup>11</sup> Moseley, Carl P. *Multnomah County Courthouse National Register Nomination*. January 7, 1978. Sections 7&8.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   8   Page   6  

### MPS- Historic Resources in Downtown: 1906-1914

#### *Overview of context*

The Failing Building is being nominated under the umbrella of the MPS *Historic Resources in Downtown Portland, 1906-1914* under Criterion A in the categories Commerce and Community Development, and under Criterion C in the category of architecture as an example in the body of work by architects Whidden & Lewis.

#### *Factors Influencing Development – Social, Economic and Business Conditions 1906-1914*

##### *Population*

After the Lewis and Clark Exposition in 1905 there was significant interest in Portland. Its population grew from 110, 839 to 207, 214 in 1910. In 1910, only Seattle had a larger increase in population during that time frame. By 1915 it had increased to 259,510. One-sixth of the population was foreign born, with 22.4% German, 11.2% Canadian and 9.5% English. Portland also had the second largest Asian population on the west coast, second only to San Francisco, although they only accounted for 3% of the total state population, more than ½ lived in the city. A majority of people were employed in manufacturing, trade or transportation with a smaller minority employed in professional fields.<sup>12</sup>

##### *Community Planning*

No official planning or zoning existed to guide development in the early part of this century. Growth was guided by the private investor, and land was purchased and developed as they saw fit. Suburban tracts, many owned by the railroads themselves encouraged decentralization by promoting the development of neighborhood shopping centers. City was separated into clearly defined lower and upper class neighborhoods. Industry remained close to the railroads and riverbanks where easy access to transportation was available. By 1910, over fifty percent of the city's waterfront on both sides of the river was owned by the railroads and the Northern Pacific Terminal Company. There was no public dock. In 1910 the Portland Commission of Public Docks was created to address this issue.

In 1909 Mayor Simon, a Republican with a great deal of support in the business world established the "City Beautiful Fund" which was to be used to hire Edward Bennett from Chicago to prepare a plan for the future development of the city. The "City Beautiful Movement" was taking hold around the country, with planners and architects working together to try to create beautiful and livable cities for everyone, especially the working class, to enjoy. Edward Bennett completed "The Greater Portland Plan" in October 1912, and it was presented to the public. In November of that year the public voted to accept the plan. Unfortunately nothing was ever built or officially adopted from the plan. In November 1913 voters rejected a two million dollar bond that would have gone toward the implementation of the Olmsted and Bennett plans. A series of unfortunate decisions also led to the dismantling of the phenomenal Lewis and Clark Exposition site without salvaging any of the significant structures or preserving even a portion of the Lake for public use. In the original development

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<sup>12</sup> Oregon Blue Book, 1915

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   8   Page   7  

it was decided to simply lease the lots from the owners to build the Exposition, and when the City had an opportunity to purchase the land and structures, the City only had the funds to purchase one structure. Many of the structures were dismantled or moved, the lake was filled and the site was eventually developed as industrial land.<sup>13</sup>

By 1915 geographical social segregation had become a fact of life, with the wealthier families escaping from in town to secluded fringes of the city. Interestingly this was induced primarily by the spread of the electric streetcar and the interurban lines. Residential property along the tracks became less desirable because the streetcars were noisy. Those who could afford to move away did, and the property became attractive for commercial development. Many houses were converted to stores, shops, or simply torn down and redeveloped. At this time over 60 percent of the population lived on the East side of the river, although the west side remained the heart of the city. The west side still had the highest land value, most intense land use, and the most productive pedestrian traffic

### *Commercial Development and Trade*

Joseph Gaston reports that in 1901 Portland was the 5<sup>th</sup> city in the nation for wheat exports, but by 1910 Portland was the number 2 city in the United States for wheat exports, second only to New York.<sup>14</sup> These exports included wheat, barley, flour, oats and hay. Lumber manufacturing and shipping was the largest industry in Portland at the time. Over 700 million board feet were cut producing \$10 million in revenue. Overall the manufacturing output for Portland grew from \$28,651,00 in 1905 earnings to \$46,861,000 in 1910. Most of this manufacturing was related to the production of wood products. Manufacturing products included: furniture, woolens, harness, saddlery, machinery, meat packing, ship building, fruit canning and packing, dairying, horticulture and floriculture. Portland was the livestock and meatpacking center for the Pacific Northwest at the time, having the largest packing plant in the west.<sup>15</sup>

### *Transportation*

The import and export of goods and services was handled entirely by ship or railroad. On the average day in Portland about 8 to 10 freighters or steamships would bring cargo in and take cargo out of the city. By 1915 there were 109 steam passenger trains leaving and arriving in Portland. There were seven interurban lines, reaching out to neighboring cities in all directions. The steam passenger trains arrived or departed every 20 minutes, and the electric train every 9 minutes. Freight trains also brought cargo in on a regular basis. During the year of 1910, Union Depot alone handled in and out of the city 220,000 freight cars.

Streetcars also influenced the development and layout of the city. The laying of an efficient track system caused the center of the business district to be moved from Front, to 3<sup>rd</sup> and then finally out to 7<sup>th</sup> (Broadway). It also allowed for working class to access all parts of the city efficiently for a reasonable cost. By 1914, six

<sup>13</sup> p14 City Beautiful MPS

<sup>14</sup> Gaston, Joseph. *Portland, Oregon: Its History and Builders*. (S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., Chicago IL, 1911)

<sup>15</sup> Oregon Blue Book , 1915

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   8   Page   8  

steel bridges had been constructed to span the Willamette. During the years of 1911-13 the city covered more than 175 miles of streets with hard surfaced pavement. Also in 1914 the first assembly plant for Ford motorcars was constructed, one of 17 in the country, and it produced 10 cars a day. By 1914 the traffic was a mixture of streetcars, motorcars, trains, horse driven vehicles, bikes and pedestrians. By and large the majority of people used the streetcars for transportation around the city. However, in 1914, in anticipation of increased use of the motorcar, the Portland City Council enacted its first code for automobile and pedestrian traffic.

### *Real Estate and Building*

Building permits by the city showed that new buildings were constructed valuing \$4,183,368 in 1905, and by 1910 that number amounted to \$19,152,370. By 1913, the president of the National Association of Real Estate Exchanges had declared, "Portland has the greatest future of any city of the Pacific Coast".<sup>16</sup> Many people were making huge amounts of money on real estate. A ¼ block bought in 1898 for \$13,000 sold 8 years later for \$125,000. The 21 banking institutions of the city showed clearings of \$578,884,018.99 in 1914 as compared to \$122,575,461.99 in 1901.<sup>17</sup>

### *Summary*

Engineer Ray Stout recalls the time the he first arrived in Portland in 1900:

*"It was all noise and confusion at Union Station. As we came out of the building and on to the street many cab drivers were soliciting customers for the various hotels. The horse-drawn cabs, with entrances at the rear, were backed up to the curb as close as they could stand for a full block and the drivers were crowded on the sidewalk shouting the names of their respective hotels and otherwise trying to induce the people to enter their cab by grabbing their handbags. I followed my uncle as he pushed through the crowd, ignoring all of them. He suggested that we walk uptown, which was satisfactory to me. ..During out short stay in Portland, while my Uncle was attending to other matters, I walked around the big city to see some of the sights. The Portland Hotel, with its park-like entrance, the Oregonian building with its tall clock tower and the First Presbyterian Church seemed to me the outstanding buildings in the city."*<sup>18</sup> His description provides a stark contrast to what the city must have looked like only fifteen years later, after a significant time of development for Portland's downtown.

A building boom resulted in a number of new offices, hotels and retail stores in the city's core. Specifically, nearly six dozen buildings were constructed in a sixty block area, bounded by Third Avenue on the east, Eleventh Avenue on the west, Salmon Street on the south and Burnside on the north. As the historic context describes, the building boom resulted in the addition of about five million new square feet to the city's core business district primarily in order to satisfy the high demand for increased office and retail space. As the MPS

<sup>16</sup> (p467 MacColl).

<sup>17</sup> Oregon Blue Book 1915, p78

<sup>18</sup> (p.224 Shaping of a city, MacColl.)

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

context specifically states: *“To some degree, the Failing Building at Fifth Avenue and Alder is symbolic: Designed by Whidden & Lewis, it was constructed as a six story building in 1907 and in 1913, six additional floors were added.”*<sup>19</sup>

The buildings that were built during this time period define much of the character of downtown Portland today, and link us to a time in our history when economic conditions caused a transformation of the City of Portland from “Stump Town” to a great city, worthy of significant economic investment.

### Registration Requirements:

The multiple property listing document details the criteria and registration requirements for being included under this umbrella. Below is a synopsis of the relevant sections, describing the Criterion A and C, the seven aspects of integrity, general registration requirements and additional registration requirements for the relevant associated building type, Office Buildings in Downtown Portland, 1906-14. The Failing Building meets these registration requirements.

Criterion A: All buildings that meet the registration requirements and have sufficient integrity are significant under Criterion A under the categories of commerce and community development. Commerce relates to the collection of properties that convey the synergism and dynamics of commercial growth that emanated from the boosterism associated with the Lewis & Clark

Exposition. Community Development relates to the resources ability as a collection to reflect the shift in the downtown’s epicenter, the vertical growth in the downtown, the emphasis of commercial over residential in the downtown, and the emphasis of ground floor retail in the downtown.

Criterion C: Some buildings that meet the registration requirements and have sufficient integrity are significant under Criterion C under the category of Architecture provided that the property is distinctive or the work of a master.

Assessment of Integrity: The National Park Service details seven aspects of integrity: Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling and Association. As detailed below, the Failing Building possesses a reasonably high degree of integrity.

Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred; the Failing Building is in its original location.

<sup>19</sup> Tess, John. *Historic Resources in Downtown Portland: 1906-1914, National Register Multiple Property Submission*. Section E, page 9.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

*Design* is the combination of elements that create, form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property; while the ground floor has been remodeled on several occasions, above the storefront, the interior and exterior are largely intact. Notable features as floorplan, windows, interior and exterior decoration are original and in fair or better condition.

*Setting* is the physical environment of a historic property; located in the middle of the downtown core, the site and the surrounding area continue to reflect its commercial nature.

*Materials* are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property . . . A property must retain the key exterior materials dating from the period of its historic significance; to a great extent, interior and exterior materials are intact in the Failing Building.

*Workmanship* is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory; as noted in the multiple property listing, this aspect is not germane.

*Feeling* is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time; limited slightly by the ground floor modernizations, the Failing Building nonetheless expresses the feel for its era of significance.

*Association* is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. A property retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to the observer. As an essentially intact resource mostly in its historical use, the Failing Building illustrates a direct link with the development boom in Downtown Portland between 1906 and 1914.

### General Registration Requirements:

- *Integrity:* To be eligible for listing in the National Register under this multiple property context, a building must convey its sense of historical character by retaining sufficient exterior and interior integrity. Generally a resource will possess most of the following seven aspects of integrity: Association, Location, Setting, Feeling, Design, Materials and Workmanship. Generally, these tests are not especially critical for ground floor retail or non-public upper floor interior spaces; modernization of these spaces should not be a basis for disqualification. In addition, modernization of ground floor exterior retail spaces should not be a basis for disqualification.
- The Failing Building maintains substantial integrity and intends to be redeveloped as a historic preservation tax act project. The Failing Building meets this registration requirement.
- *Date of Construction:* The structure must have been built as an office building in the era of 1906 to 1914.

The Failing Building was built in 1907/1913. The Failing Building meets this registration requirement.

**Failing Building**

Name of Property

**Multnomah County, OR**

County and State

NPS Form 10-900-a

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   8   Page   11  

- *Geographic area:* The structure must be located within the geographic area bounded by the east side of Third Avenue to the west side of Eleventh Avenue, and the north side of Burnside to the south side of Salmon Street.

The Failing Building is located within the geographic area. The Failing Building meets this registration requirement.

- *Use:* In order to be listed, it is not critical that the building be retained in its original use.

The Failing Building currently has its original use; plans are being developed to adapt the building for ground floor commercial and upper floor office occupancy. The Failing Building meets this registration requirement.

### Specific Property Types: Office Buildings in Downtown Portland, 1906-14

#### Additional Registration Requirements for Office Buildings:

To be eligible, the office building should have:

- *Structure:* It must be of steel frame or reinforced concrete construction. The Failing Building meets this registration requirement.
- *Height:* It must be no smaller than 5 floors. The Failing Building is 12 floors, and therefore meets this registration requirement.
- *Ground Floor:* For a speculative office building, it should have been designed with street-fronting ground floor commercial space dominating the ground floor. The Failing Building was designed as a speculative office building, and the ground floor is dominated by commercial space. The Failing Building meets this registration requirement.
- *Access to Upper Floors:* Access to the upper floors should have been designed to be by elevator with a public elevator lobby. The Failing Building was designed to have access to the upper floors through the use of an elevator with a public elevator lobby. The Failing Building meets this registration requirement.
- *Upper Floor floorplans:* The upper floors should have a double-loaded corridor with an "L" or "U" shape.

The upper floors of the Failing Building are in a "U" shape. The Failing Building meets this registration requirement.

**Failing Building**

Name of Property

**Multnomah County, OR**

County and State

NPS Form 10-900-a

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   8   Page   12  

---

**Conclusion:** The Failing Building meets the general and specific associated building type registration requirements for listing in the National Register under the Multiple Property Listing, Historic Resources in Downtown Portland, 1906-1914. It is eligible for listing under Criterion A for Commerce and Community Development. It is also eligible for listing under Criterion C as a strong design by noted Portland architects, Whidden & Lewis.

**Failing Building**

Name of Property

**Multnomah County, OR**

County and State

NPS Form 10-900-a

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   9   Page   1  

---

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**Failing Building**

Name of Property

**Multnomah County, OR**

County and State

NPS Form 10-900-a

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   9   Page   2  

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**Failing Building**  
Name of Property

**Multnomah County, OR**  
County and State

NPS Form 10-900-a

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

---

### Verbal Boundary Description

The Failing Building is located on lots 7 & 8, Block 62 in the City of Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon. The tax lot identification number for this property is #R246112.

### Boundary Justification

The boundary is the legally recorded boundary lines for the building for which National Register Status is being requested. The boundary was determined by the lots lines of lots 7 & 8.

**Failing Building**  
Name of Property

**Multnomah County, OR**  
County and State

NPS Form 10-900-a

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Supplemental Information Page 1

---

Aerial View of Property, 2005  
Portland Maps

**Failing Building**

Name of Property

**Multnomah County, OR**

County and State

NPS Form 10-900-a

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Supplemental Information Page 2

---

### Image Index

1. Failing Building. *Oregonian*, January 7, 1907, page 3.
2. Failing Building. *Oregonian* March 31, 1907, page 30
3. Gevurtz Building. *Oregonian*. Jan 1, 1912
4. Gevurtz Building. *Oregonian*. Oct. 6, 1912, Sec. 4, page 9
5. Gevurtz Building. *Oregonian*. Oct. 6, 1912, Sec. 4, page 10
6. Failing Bldg. Photo, City of Portland Archives, circa 1912
7. Gevurtz Bldg., *Oregonian*. Jan. 1, 1913.
8. *Gasco Build to Take Old Name of Failing*. *Oregonian*. Nov. 30, 1927
9. Watercolor of Failing Building. OHS negative number 56877; original watercolor in MSS 3052-1
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