

Pioneer Post Office
Fifth between Morrison and Yamhill
Portland, Multnomah County
Oregon

HABS No. ORE-52

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
450 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, California

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PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
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PIONEER POST OFFICE

Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

ADDRESS: Fifth between Morrison and Yamhill
OWNER: United States Government
OCCUPANT: Federal Government
USE: Post Office and Federal Offices

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Pioneer Post Office (so named in 1937, when it was again activated as a post office after three years of disuse) is undoubtedly the singly most important building of the American Northwest to survive into the 20th century. Finished in 1875, it was a dignified exemplar of Italianate (albeit more classicist) design, following the precedent of much civic and government building in both San Francisco and Portland. The additions of "wings" (from the second story up), at the west in 1903, give it a more Baroque shape and made it more visually comparable to the San Francisco Mint - built also in the early 1870s. Long threatened by both government and city officials, the building has fortunately survived in a relatively intact condition, exteriorly and interiorly.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The history of this very important public building is generally clear, although some details are difficult to reconcile. The property on which the building stands was part of the land purchased by Daniel Lowndale from Pettygrove and Lovejoy, founders of Portland, in 1848. Later Lowndale dedicated to the City the block occupied by the Post Office, together with the block on which the present

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Auditorium of Portland stands, and the park blocks. The Post Office block and Auditorium blocks were dedicated for market purposes. Despite these so-called "dedications", Lownsdale sold block 172 (on which the Post Office stands) to Lansing Stout on April 1, 1858. On the same day, Stout sold half interest to Alonzo Leland, another attorney (and incidentally, city recorder). Two years later, the City of Portland sued these men, asserting Lownsdale had no right to sell after his "dedications". The City's case was tried and won, then lost on appeal, but won again, and finally vindicated at the Supreme Court level. Nevertheless, Leland and Stout had been selling lots in block 172, notably to L. M. and Addison Starr. These latter men took the case to court (using the same lawyers who had won for the City!). The City was assured title, legally, but made an out-of-court settlement, paying Addison M. Starr \$2750. (It has ever since been suggested that there was collusion in the city council as Addison M. Starr had been a councilman and L. M. Starr was a former mayor of Portland; the deeds and all legal papers were kept private for many years. In 1956, Leroy Barrett became interested and traced the complicated title to this property through devious wanderings. This curious old history of the property may always complicate legal ownership.)

On February 24, 1869, the city council authorized Mayor Hamilton Boyd to sell the block to the United States Government for a customs house and post office at a cost of \$15,000. The sale was consummated two days later for the two hundred foot square block. At the time of its purchase, the Federal Government was criticized for locating the Court House and Post Office so far from the center of town, then down near the river. It was humorously suggested that a pony express service be established between the new Post Office and the center of business. Although the building's cost is variously given as \$250,000, \$365,000 or \$450,000, it was actually \$396,500 - as proven by the Congressional Acts necessary to finance construction. An Act approved on July 20th, 1868 set the site and building cost at \$100,000. This was increased by an Act approved July 15, 1870, with continuation costs of \$40,000, and again by an Act approved March 3, 1871 with further continuation costs of \$100,000. Completion costs were scheduled in an Act approved March 3, 1873, at \$76,500. But two additional Acts were necessary - one on June 23, 1874 with costs of \$20,000 for grading, fencing and approaches and \$20,000 for furniture, and a final Act on March 3, 1875 for completion costs of \$40,000. The official completion date is October 1, 1875. Since it

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was built under the direction of the supervising architect of the United States Treasury, A. B. Mullett, one might assume he had something to do with the design. Like the contemporary Old Mint in San Francisco, it is in a generally classicizing Baroque manner, although there are Italinat aspects of the Portland Post Office - in the tall narrow windows - not seen in San Francisco. The local supervising architects, E. B. St. John and/or John H. Holman, may have had something to do with details.¹ The builder was William L. Higgins. Trees were planted in the last stages of construction in 1874-75 and are still standing,

The first Post Office in Portland was at Front and Washington Streets, and was a small building of logs (it is variously dated to 1849, or more often to 1850). The second Post Office was at Front and Alder Streets, and was of board siding on a balloon frame. All are illustrated in The West Shore, August 1875, and the new Post Office appears again in the January 1886 issue with its trees starting to show their growth. An Act of Congress, approved June 6, 1902, called for extension to the building at a cost of \$200,000. On December 17, 1902, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Post Master General and the Secretary of the Interior personally signed authorization for construction of two new wings at the west side of the structure (on Sixth Street). They were wings only from the second story up; below that, the interior was complete between the wings. Various sources present different information about the material of the building; some say the stone was blue freestone from Bellingham, Washington, for the main, first building, cut under the supervision of Noah Lambert. Another source says that the "sandstone blocks for the first section were quarried at Toledo, Oregon; all the stone was hand cut and finished in Portland". (Oregonian, September 8, 1955) The stone for the extension (also sandstone) is variously said to have come from Tenino or Bellingham, Washington. The building still has its original sandstone and iron fence, which encircles the entire block.

The first Post Master was George Cole. Daily mail amounted to 1500 pounds. In the Post Office section there were nine hundred public mail boxes and sixty larger ones for business. Sharing the main (first) floor with the Post Office was the Internal Revenue Department and the Office of the Survey General. Office of the United States Marshall and Clerk of the United States Court, as well as the District Court itself, occupied the second floor.² In 1875, the third floor did not have permanent tenants. (An interesting area fact was the

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paving of streets adjacent with wooden blocks, in the manner called "Nicholson".) Between September, 1933 and December, 1936, the Post Office service was closed in this building,³ when both Post Office and Court moved to new quarters at S.W. Broadway and Main Streets.

Already the Sons and Daughters of Oregon Pioneers were asking that it be maintained as an historical building for the Oregon Historical Society. Even earlier, in 1930, Henry E. Reed, a director of the Oregon Historical Society, had suggested that on the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of the Lewis and Clark expedition (1930) Congress authorize the issuance of 6,000,000 commemorative half dollars, to be sold at cost to the Society - which would then sell them for \$1.00 each, and purchase the building (for which the Federal Government asked no less than \$1,750,000), and renovate it, with an endowment from the profits of the sale. This Post Office had been the main Post Office of Portland until 1918, when it became a branch office. After the removal of 1933-1936, the inconvenience of not having a central, downtown Post Office had caused the Postal Department to open a branch in the old Post Office building again, early in 1937, now rechristened the Pioneer Post Office. In 1939, Congress passed a bill clearing the way for a twenty story federal building on the site, which never materialized. In 1947, Meier and Frank offered to exchange the Portland Hotel site (which building was still standing, although owned by Meier and Frank) for the Post Office block; again, in 1952, Meier and Frank offered to build a new Post Office on the east side of Portland for the block near their great department store. (During the 1940's the Oregon Trail organization tried to get the building also.)

The fine cupola of wood on the top of the building had been used essentially as a vantage point (numerous visiting dignitaries obtained their best views of 19th century Portland from this height) and as a support for a flagpole. This latter use was discontinued in 1951, when the cupola was declared unsafe. (The cupola has a flue in one side, suggesting that a stove may have been here at some time.) As a Government building, the property pays no taxes to Multnomah County (of which Portland is the center). Thus, the city has long been desirous of converting it to lucrative ends. In 1955, the General Service Administration offered the property for sale at slightly under \$2,000,000, but there were fierce protests, and the offer was withdrawn in 1958. The city has continued to hope for its sale, and conversion into taxable property - such as a parking lot.

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A letter from Jackson E. Price, Acting Associate Director of the National Park Service, reported in the Oregon Journal for July 5, 1957, noted that it did not specifically qualify as a national historic site "but is suitable for preservation by state or local interests". It is to be hoped that this will be true. In addition to the branch Post Office, the building now houses (1963): Government office of Social Security, Department of Commerce, General Accounting; Offices for the United States Army, Marines, WACS - essentially recruiting offices - and an office of Representative Edith Green. The structure was cleaned in 1959, and the exterior slightly renovated in 1962.

NOTES (Historical Information)

1. It is not entirely clear who was the local supervising architect. One source cites John H. Holman; M. D. Ross "Architecture in Oregon: 1845-1895", p. 57, says it was E. B. St. John. It is unlikely that either man had much to do with the design.
2. "The first session of the District Court was in Portland in 1859, and the second in Salem, in 1860. The next year, however, Judge Matthew P. Deady insisted the court be moved to Portland...From 1862 until 1875, the court was housed on the third floor of the Stark Building on Front Street." (Oregonian, September 8, 1955)
3. The very fine 19th century furnishings were sold at auction in the early 1930's for \$3.44 - solid black walnut furniture, etc., which had cost \$20,000. It took three trucks to haul the material away for the Alaska Junk Company.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL AND SOURCES

Addresses:

Westberg, Gene (Preservation Officer, AIA, Portland), address to Pioneer Post Office Committee, 1962.

Directories:

Portland Directory, 1870, p. 17.

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Letters:

Professor Marion Dean Ross to Thomas Vaughan, Director,
Oregon Historical Society, April 22, 1955: critical
evaluation.

Newspapers:

Clipping file at Oregon Historical Society
Oregonian (Portland), September 8, 1955.
Oregon Journal (Portland), February 9, 1930.
Oregon Journal, October 23, 1955: important article by
Jim Running, summarizing the building's history.
Oregon Journal, February 19, 1956: Leroy Barrett's title
search.
Oregon Journal, July 5, 1957.

Periodicals:

Ross, Marion Dean, "Architecture in Oregon: 1845-1895",
Oregon Historical Quarterly, March, 1956, (Vol. LVII, No. 1),
pp. 57-58.
The West Shore, August, 1875 and January, 1886.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The original Post Office was a rectangular structure of stone which stood unaltered until 1903. At that time additions at the west (on 6th Street) increased the floor space of the first floor to almost double what it had been, and continued on the second and third floors as two wings at the west of the older structure - with an open space between. It would be unwise to say that the building was "spoiled" by these additions as they are a meticulously exact imitation of the style of the original structure - in the same kind of stone (apparently from a different quarry). Furthermore, they are essentially the kind of wings that might be expected on this kind of restrained building. A photograph of the back of the Portland Post Office (from the west, looking at these wings) is comparable to the side elevation of the Old Mint in San Francisco. It is obvious that the original building in Portland was in an unusually plain form (as far as composition is concerned); the exactly contemporary Old Mint, by the same supervising architect, represents a more ambitious and purist approach to design;

architects of the addition wisely chose to follow this precedent. The original structure in Portland had a kind of prim, prismatic purity which was modified by the additions of 1903. However, niggling insistence on returning to the "original" appearance of 1875 would be unrealistic in terms of the more serious problems of preservation and renovation. It is interesting that the early shape of the Pioneer Post Office was closely related in form to the Old Custom House of Portland, which stood to the southwest. Both were simple rectangular structures, with projecting central sections - in varying degrees of salience - on their long sides. The precedent for all such simple Government architecture, locally, was the Old Custom House in San Francisco by Gridley Bryant, of 1855.)

EXTERIOR

The basement level is made up of a thick wall of stones, with an externally roughened surface laid in regular horizontal courses. The first story was divided (east and west) into nine "bays", with a projecting group of three bays at the center of each face. Corner and internal articulation, vertically, is achieved with smoothly rusticated pilasters of sandstone. The eight windows and single door (of the original facades - the west facade is now different) were crowned with flattened arches with a stubby key-stone in the center. Window and door reveals were set back in two levels of recession from the main facade plane. The windows have muntins of wood, making four panes in each window. The second and third stories were grouped (again there are the changes of 1903 on the west) as a single story with colossal Roman Doric pilasters on bases above a salient string course; above, is a classical entablature of Doric type without triglyphs and metopes. The cornice has mutules, as did the raking cornice of the pediment over the projecting central section of each facade.

The north and south facades are alike. Each is a repeat of the salient central section of the east and west facades - again made salient from this north and south face of the building, with a section of wall and with corner pilasters to complete the composition.

The windows of the second story on all facades are relatively tall; and their narrowness is emphasized by the continuation of vertical moldings at either side, to the main string course below - the space

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between the bottom of the window and the horizontal molding above the string course being treated as a rectangular recessed panel. Each window is capped with a strongly projecting cornice strip, supported on consoles - in the Italianate manner. The windows of the third story are simple square shapes with framing moldings to give them plastic definition. The roof is a modified gable-hip type, with angles of intersection where the salient sections come together. There are four sandstone chimneys on each side of the building, east and west, serving old fireplaces inside (now generally unused). An octagonal cupola of wood crowns the entire building, in the center of the roof. It has a pseudo-balustrade (obviously not to be used as a balustrade) beneath each arched window (of each of the eight sides) - the arch above being strengthened visually with repeated moldings and a continuous molding horizontally at the springing point of the arches. The domed cap of the cupola rises above a cornice with mutules and a dentil course.

INTERIOR

Of the original interior (finished in 1875) the main hall on the first floor, the stairway at the north, and the great Court Room on the second floor are the best preserved. All are of exceptional architectural interest and of fine design quality. The hall on the first (main) floor is made up of six "bays" which start at the south and end at the staircase on the north side of the building. The side elevations of these "bays" is ennobled with a colossal order of wooden pilasters, grouped as pairs at the point of abutment of each "bay". Their capitals are of a Roman Doric type, with egg and dart molding in the echinus; the fluting is of the Ionic type. A ten inch grey and white marble baseboard rises to the base of these pilasters; above each of them is a plaster (mastic?) console. The squared ceiling compartment of each "bay" is enriched with additional moldings to emphasize its shape. The entire effect of heavily varnished (apparently oak) pilasters and white ceiling is handsome and dignified. The floor is a combination of marble and terrazzo. Various doors and wicket-like windows punctuate the side elevations, and provide access to the rooms at the east and west which are generally of less architectural interest than the hall. Many have had interior revisions, and new lighting, in more recent times.

The stair is an interesting structural type - rising in two side flights to a mezzanine landing, and then continuing (reversing itself)

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to the second floor with one central flight; it is the so-called "imperial" stair, and is appropriate to this building's stylistic character. The woods of the stair are reported to be of Oregon ash and walnut - probably ash for the steps and balusters, and walnut for the handrails. All have been heavily varnished. An elevator (probably dating from the additions of 1903) rises to the west of the stair.

On the second floor, at the head of the stair, is the entrance to the great Court Room - magnificent chamber of rectangular shape, with the judge's chambers to the south. This Court Room is also articulated vertically with colossal pilasters, grouped as pairs on the east and west sides (center) and singly on the north and south sides (center). At the corners there are single pilasters on each face, making two for each corner. There are great doors, at north and south, and a simple, but attractive fireplace in the center of the north wall. On the west, there is one main central door to the hall; on the east there are three large windows between the pilasters. All of the trim is of wood (oak apparently), yellow with varnish; the pilasters are again (as in the first floor hall) of the Doric type with Ionic fluting. Above, a massive entablature with dentil course over the triglyph blocks above each pilaster leads to the ceiling. This is enriched in the center with an oval molding with high relief areas of ornament (cartouches around central bosses) - east, west, north and south. A great gas chandelier was once the principal artificial light source of the room; it has disappeared, as has all of the superb walnut furniture.

ARCHITECTURAL MATERIAL

An extensive collection of blueprints of the building are available at the Oregon Historical Society (Portland) - from the Federal records at Seattle.

Prepared by,

Joseph A. Baird Jr.

Joseph A. Baird, Jr., PHD
University of California

June 1964

APPROVED:

Charles S. Pope
Charles S. Pope, AIA
Supervising Architect, Historic Structures
Western Office, Design and Construction
National Park Service

DATE: *December 1964*

Addendum to
Pioneer Post Office
700 SW Sixth Avenue
Portland
Multnomah County
Oregon

HABS No. OR-52

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Seattle, Washington

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

**Addendum to
Pioneer Post Office**

HABS No. OR-52

Data pages 1-9 were previously transmitted to the Library of Congress.

Name: **Addendum to
Pioneer Post Office**

Location: 700 SW Sixth Avenue
Multnomah County
Portland
Multnomah County
Oregon

Block 172 is defined by S.W. Morrison Street on the north, S.W. Yamhill Street on the south, S.W. Fifth Avenue on the east, and S.W. Sixth Avenue on the west. The designed entrance is on Fifth Avenue, the eastern façade.

UTMs: Portland Quad Zone 10 525232E 5040428N

Present Owner: United States Government (General Services Administration)
Present Occupants: US Post Office and Federal Offices

Statement of
Significance: The Pioneer Courthouse is one of the most important federally-funded buildings in the Pacific Northwest. Built in 1875, the Italianate building is styled with classic, restrained architectural details. Pioneer Courthouse is Portland's oldest extant public building and the second oldest federal courthouse west of the Mississippi.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A post office was officially established at Portland November 8, 1849, at Front and Washington Streets. The office moved, typically coinciding with a change in Postmaster, to thirteen different locations in downtown Portland before settling into its Pioneer Courthouse location in 1875 (Helbrock 1983:8).

The Pioneer Courthouse site was part of an 1848 Donation Land Claim belonging to Daniel Lowndale, one of Portland's founders. A tanner, Lowndale paid for the claim with leather valued at \$5,000(Roby 1889:10). The block was donated to the City of Portland for use as a public market, but returned to private ownership by 1868, when the City purchased it from Addison Starr, a City Council member. In 1869, the parcel was purchased for federal use for \$15,000; more than five times the previous year's sale price (Ellis 2002:3).

The United States Government has been the owner of the property since 1869. Construction began the same year and was completed in 1875. Major additions to the building were made in 1905. The General Services Administration oversees the property. The building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1968, and in 1977, was designated a National Historic Landmark.

Historical Context

The mid- to late-nineteenth century saw a significant boom in the construction of impressive commercial buildings on the west coast. Portland alone boasted nearly 200 exquisite cast-iron buildings built between 1853 and 1889. These buildings represented Italianate, Second Empire, Gothic Revival, and Baroque styles and helped define Portland's architectural and urban character. After the San Francisco fire of 1906, Portland contained the largest and finest collection of cast iron buildings on the west coast (Bosker and Lencek 1985:182). However, federally funded construction was minimal in the Northwest during this period.

In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, towns in the Pacific Northwest sought to demonstrate their stability and prosperity. One avenue for achieving this goal was to obtain federal and state courthouses, universities, and other major institutional buildings. Although these buildings were few in number, they helped define

communities. An important building could put a town on the map. Many of these early buildings survive as excellent examples of both architecture and civic pride.

Federal and state-funded construction began in Oregon in 1868 with construction of the locks at Oregon City, the State Capitol and Penitentiary in Salem, the University in Eugene, and Portland's Pioneer Courthouse (Reid 1879:22). Judge Matthew Deady, the first territorial judge, requested that the territorial court be moved from Salem to Portland in the 1860s, thereby establishing Portland as the home of the federal court. Pioneer Courthouse is Portland's oldest extant public building and the second oldest federal courthouse west of the Mississippi; the oldest being located in Galveston, Texas.

During the mid-nineteenth century federal offices were often paired with post offices in a single building. This was true of the Portland Post Office (Pioneer Courthouse); the U.S. Post Office occupied the first floor, the U.S. District Court the second, and the U.S. Customs and Internal Revenue Service the third. As an early example of local federal construction, Pioneer Courthouse set a standard of classical architecture designed to serve the public.

In the late 1890s James Knox Taylor, Supervising Architect of the Treasury, designed a new federal Custom House, at 220 NW 8th Avenue, in Portland. Constructed between 1897 and 1901, this four story, full-block structure is a unique Oregon example of the Second Renaissance Revival style. The most prominent treatment of the exterior is a window framing detail characterized by keystones and spaced blocks. Mannerist and Baroque features are also prevalent. The palazzo theme is repeated in the interior. In the early-twentieth century the Customs Service moved from the Pioneer Courthouse to this new building, where they remained until 1968. The Custom House is currently occupied by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (www.gsa.gov).

In 1918 architect Lewis Hobart won a design competition for Portland's new Federal Building. Located at 511 NW Broadway, the building is a significant departure from earlier, monumental government buildings. It is a highly restrained design in the Second Renaissance Revival style, intended solely for use as a Post Office. It is of high quality construction, but lacks the excesses of baroque styling. The building is sited between the U.S. Customs House and Union Pacific Railway Station (1892-96) (www.gsa.gov).

The Gus Solomon Courthouse, known as the New Courthouse to distinguish it from the Pioneer Courthouse, was designed and built between 1929 and 1933. A Neo-Classical

style design by Portland architect Morris Whitehouse, the building is an impressive symbol of Portland's civic growth and progress. Whitehouse was also responsible for other Portland landmarks such as the Columbia Gorge Hotel, the Multnomah Athletic Club, and the University Club. (www.gsa.gov)

Architect

The best known of the fifteen men who held the office of Supervising Architect to the Treasury Department, Alfred Bult Mullett personified the office's near total control over public building design. The office of Supervising Architect to the Treasury Department was created in the early 1850s and remained a powerful influence on public architecture well into the late 1930s. The office left a legacy of artistic and energetic design in federal buildings throughout the nation. These buildings functioned as the face of the national government and were meant to inspire a civic consciousness. In addition, they were architectural ornaments in their communities that, in the best Jeffersonian tradition, were intended to enlighten a young nation.

Born in England in 1834, Mullett's family immigrated in 1844 to a rural location outside Cincinnati, Ohio (Lee 2000:73-74). Appointed Supervising Architect on June 1, 1866, though he had assumed the position earlier, Mullett inherited the traditions of classicism of his immediate predecessor and mentor, Isaiah Rogers. During his tenure Mullett supervised the design and construction of nearly forty new government buildings across the country, making him one of the first architects whose name was recognizable from coast to coast. Described as a difficult man by those that knew and worked for him, he refused to join the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and resigned his office under pressure in 1874. In the midst of financial ruin, he committed suicide at his Washington DC home in 1890 (Lee 2000:107-108).

Mullett was also architect for the Old Executive Office Building, Washington, DC; the U.S. Treasury Building, Washington, DC; the Sun Building, Washington, DC; the Courthouse/Post Office, Columbia, SC; the Post Office/Custom House, Ogdensburg, NY; Courthouse/Post Office, Lincoln, NE; the Federal Building/Century Station, Raleigh, NC; Federal Building/ US Courthouse, Port Huron, MI; the Carson City Mint, Carson City, Nevada; Assay Office, Boise, ID; Old Post Office, St. Louis, MO; and the US Custom House in Portland, ME. In addition, Mullett was responsible for the renovation and remodel of 631 to 633 Pennsylvania Avenue (Central National Bank), Washington, DC.

Mullett's design of the State, War, and Navy Building (Old Executive Office Building), an imposing granite structure located immediately west of the White House, is often

considered America's best expression of the French Second Empire mode. The Old Mint in San Francisco is considered by many to be Mullett's best work in the public genre. Its opening coincided with the conclusion of his tenure as Supervising Architect.

Building Evolution

E.B. St. John and John H. Holman served as local architects in charge of supervising the original construction of the Pioneer Courthouse. The building contractor was William Luther Higgins. Architectural plans for the Pioneer Post Office were begun in 1869.

The Italianate design of the Pioneer Courthouse is reminiscent of many civic and government buildings constructed in San Francisco and Portland during the same period. Six Congressional Acts, between 1868 and 1875, were necessary to finance the construction, which ultimately cost \$611,165 (Helbock 1983:8). The lead contractor, William Higgins, drew considerable criticism and an investigation for requiring almost six years to complete construction at four times the proposed cost (Ellis 2002:3). Construction of the original structure was completed in 1875.

The original design is a rectangular plan with a symmetrical exterior. The foundation was built by S. Herman and Co. for \$34,607. The Benfley Construction Company provided additional foundation work and the superstructure for \$348,798. They also connected the building to the street water main. Congress Construction Company completed interior finishes for \$117,900. Oregon Brass Works and Cassidy and Son Manufacturing Company contributed lamps and lighting fixtures (NARA:1-16).

Many finishing touches in the building were completed as late as 1902. George Gordon supplied the ladder to the upper roof for \$48. Edward Shear provided gold lettering to office doors for \$15. Seayech Brothers produced thirty-one keys for the building for a total cost of \$7. The Otis Elevator Company installed the elevator for \$10,490 (NARA: 15-17). Western Electric Works updated the electrical systems for \$7,148. William Stevenson updated the plumbing with a fourth water connection in May 1902. Charles B. Kraus Heating Company installed steam heat for \$21,471 (NARA:5-14).

As early as 1889, C.W. Roby, Postmaster, complained of a lack of room in the building. The Post Office gained floor space when the Internal Revenue Department moved out of the building, yet the available space was only half what the Postal Service required. The post office was originally designed to serve a public of fewer than 15,000 people, but by 1889 Portland's population was four times that number and the office's sixteen mail

carriers made deliveries three times daily (Roby 1889: intro, 47). The Post Office was open for business seven days a week, including a one-hour shift on Sundays (Roby 1889: 52). Transactions at the Post Office amounted to \$4,801,909 in 1888 (Roby 1889:14). No other post office in the nation returned more revenue to the federal government (Roby 1889: 27).

Roby argued that "nothing short of a radical remodeling" would improve the situation and lobbied for a new building altogether (Roby 1889:intro). The Postmasters' wish for a new building, however, did not materialize. Instead, two major renovations transformed the rectangular plan building into a square plan building occupying a large portion of a city block.

An act of Congress, approved June 6, 1902, called for a \$200,000 extension to the building. On December 17, 1902, the Treasury Department authorized construction of two new wings on the west façade. Supervising Architect for the Treasury James Knox Taylor redesigned the first three floors in 1902 and made two major revisions to those drawings by 1904. In keeping with Treasury Department policies, the new additions closely conformed to the architectural style of the original building. Completed by 1905, these additions were built of the same type of stone, albeit from a different quarry.

The 1905 additions on the west (Sixth Street) façade of the original building doubled the size of the first floor and significantly altered the interior. Second and third floor wings were also added at this time, and mechanical upgrades to the heating, power, and lighting systems completed. The original entry hall was extended to the south and a side lobby and registry added. The original floor tiles were replaced in terrazzo with marble borders and new wood wainscoting and pilasters were installed. Original office spaces were reconfigured by the addition of a large open space for a postal workroom. Many features were retained from the original construction, including plaster ceilings and cornices, the main stair, and the second floor two-story courtroom (Herrera 2000:31).

In 1933, with completion of the new U.S. Courthouse (Gus Solomon Courthouse) the federal government considered the Pioneer Square building obsolete. The government surplused the building, offering it for sale to private developers, but the economic depression failed to produce a buyer. In 1939, Congress, unable to find a purchaser, authorized demolition of the building. In the 1940s, local merchants Meier & Frank sought to purchase and raze the building. This proposal spurred a collision between local merchants and the Portland chapter of American Institute of Architects, which took up

the building's cause. World War II and the Korean War also contributed to the preservation of the building, as the government temporarily changed its stand and decided to retain all its resources (Bosker and Lencek 1985:200).

In the late 1950s the government again put the building up for sale. The Oregon Historical Society showed interest, but could not raise the funds. The second renovation of the building came after the U.S. Court of Appeals, specifically Judges John F. Kilkenny, Senior Circuit Judge, and Richard H. Chambers, U.S. Court of Appeals Judge, sought to return the court to the vacant building, pushing for its restoration in 1962.

The building sparked a heated debate over preservation issues among Portland's architects, who considered it a pivotal building in the city's efforts to restore its downtown. Permission was obtained from GSA to consider restoration of the building for use as a courthouse in 1967. However, the structure sat abandoned until 1968. In 1969, GSA authorized restoration of the building (Bosker and Lencek 1985:200).

The architect for the restoration was George McMath of Allen, McMath, Hawkins and Associates. Exterior work was completed between 1971-1972. This \$180,000 restoration included repairs to deteriorating exterior stone walls using a mixture of epoxy and ground stone from the original quarry to replicate the texture and surfaces of the original material. The stone chimney flues were fitted with rebar and filled with concrete for stability. The chimney exteriors were also treated with epoxy. In addition, surfaces were sealed and waterproofed for protection from the elements. Only very close visual inspection reveals differences between the original and restored stonework.

The 1973 rehabilitation involved a major reconfiguration of the building interior to accommodate the U.S. Court of Appeals and bankruptcy courts. The original public entry was moved from the east to the west façade. The doors and windows were removed and the main lobby was paneled with wood to match 1905 details. An east-west corridor and lobby replaced the postal workroom, again with details closely matching those of the 1905 work. Second and third floor spaces were reconfigured to provide offices and were trimmed with details matching those of the 1875 construction. New restrooms, an enclosed stair, and an additional exit were added to meet life safety codes. The elevator shaft was rebuilt and new air conditioning, ventilation, and a partial sprinkler system installed (Herrera 2000:31). Interior restoration work was completed in 1973, and the building was rededicated that year.

Site Design

For Mullett, the primary consideration in the design of all federal structures was the building's setting within the community. Mullett had experience with major urban fires of the 1850s and 1860s. The lessons learned translated into sites that isolated government buildings with wide streets or public open spaces (Lee 2000:85). The actual foot print of the courthouse covers only 25 to 30 percent of the block. The building is sited at an elevated spot in the center of the block.

Mullett's site design for the Pioneer Courthouse became the standard for problem terrain for the next sixty years in Portland. A stepped wall and walkways surrounding the Courthouse mitigated the sloping topography, allowing easy access to all facades. This seemingly simple solution was repeated in Portland by other architects in designs for the City Hall, Central Library, Masonic Temple, the New Courthouse, and the Art Museum (Ritz 1991:83).

Landscapers for the Pioneer Courthouse were Henry Ehlen, Gustav Pfunder, and Paulus Limmeroth, all German immigrants who arrived in Portland between 1869 and 1871. Ehlen, the head gardener, signed the government contract for \$900. The contract included grading of the grounds and required sod, not seed, for the lawn. Sod was obtained from a nearby pasture on what is now Burnside Street. The trees were secured from a nursery in San Francisco, possibly by the name of Ludeman's (Corning 1957:6M).

Pfunder learned landscaping in Switzerland and participated in the landscaping of New York City's Central Park. He also built Portland's first greenhouse. Limmeroth was professionally trained as a horticulturist in Prussia and ran a successful nursery in Portland. Both Limmeroth and Ehlen took credit for the landscape plan of Pioneer Courthouse, which was completed in 1877. These original plans included a much larger number of trees than are currently present, though the varieties are probably still represented. There are fewer extant original trees than were planted, especially on the north side of the building (Corning 1957:6M).

In 1943, Thornton Munger, of the U.S. Forest Service, and Dr. Leon Croizat, of the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard University, identified the species of trees present on the lot. Nan Wood Honeyman, the Oregon collector of customs and custodian of federal properties, labeled the trees that same year (Corning 1957:8M).

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Architectural character

The three-story building is designed in the Italianate style with classic, restrained architectural details. It is of wood frame construction with load bearing, stone and brick masonry walls. The building is comprised of 63,590 square feet, which includes the three publicly accessible floors, a basement, and attic and cupola observation deck. Currently, 24,980 square feet of the building is considered usable.

Condition

In general, the building is in excellent condition. Over the last thirty years, GSA has methodically repaired and conserved the features of the building, while minimally upgrading mechanical systems.

There are visible signs of deterioration in exterior finishes and treatments. The landscape features require the attention of an arborist.

Description of Exterior

1. Dimensions

The original building measures roughly 118 feet (east and west facades) x 66 feet (north and south facades). The 1905 expansion brought the overall dimensions to 118 feet x 116 feet (north and south facades).

2. Foundations

The foundation is rusticated Tenino Sandstone, yellow in color with a course grained texture. The stone foundation is topped with brick masonry load bearing walls that are veneered with stone on the exterior.

The original Mullett-designed portion of the building uses an arch and vault type of construction. The new wings and the earth surrounding the basement act as additional support for the original basement walls (www.mullet-smith-press.com/gsa-port).

3. Walls

The upper stories are composed of smooth Chuckanut Sandstone. The masonry is laid in a broken ashlar pattern with a Tenino Sandstone cap.

The north and south facades are virtually identical, but the east and west facades vary greatly from each other as a result of the 1905 alterations.

The center three bays of the east facade project slightly and are capped with classical pediments. The first story has rusticated pilasters that terminate in a belt cornice and segmental arch openings, both of which rest on the low building base. The second and third stories are grouped and defined by Roman Doric pilasters and entablatures. The tall, narrow windows of the second story are headed with a projecting cornice supported by consoles, while those of the third story are square openings with frame moldings (Herrera 2000:30).

The north façade of the building has been updated with an ADA ramp that runs half the length of the building and enters the basement floor just east of the north entrance.

4. Structural systems, framing

Sandstone and basalt were used for the original basement walls, which are over four feet thick in places. The brick in the masonry load bearing walls was fired locally. Timber and iron members give internal support. The timber-spanning members are old growth from Oregon forests (Herrera 2000:26). The octagonal cupola is wood cladding over wood framing.

5. Porches

There is a small loading dock, with a roll-down metal door, north of the west entrance. This dock is a granite veneered platform and is balanced architecturally by the basement exit on the opposite side of the west entry. This exit is also granite-clad. The Post Office entry is covered with a wood canopy supported by steel tension rods. The canopy has a standing seam metal roof (GSA).

6. Chimneys

The eight stone chimneys are original. They were, however, fitted with rebar and filled with concrete in the 1970s rehabilitation. At the same date the exterior surfaces were treated with an epoxy to deter erosion of the stone and the openings were capped in sheet metal. There are currently three working fireplaces in the building.

7. Openings

Doorways and doors

Granite stairs lead to landings at each of the four sets of entry doors, one on each façade. East and west entries are centered in their façade. The west entry is set back under a canopy overhang and is the current main entrance to the building. North and south entries are set off-center toward the west. Bronze handrails flank each stairway. The exterior double doors are varnished oak with upper light panels. Fixed two-light transoms top the doors. Door hardware is unlacquered bronze.

Two external entrances serve the basement. The entrance on the west façade is for maintenance purposes. The north entry is primarily used for ADA access gained through a ramp. Service doors are painted, hollow metal with metal doorframes.

Windows

Window sash are a combination of casement, double-hung and fixed types. All windows are single and spaced symmetrically across façades. The basement has small wood-framed casements with shallow arched lintels. The first story windows are a combination of double-hung and casements with hopper transoms on the west elevation. These also have a shallow arched lintel. There are wrought iron security bars across the Post Office windows. The second story has tall double-hung windows topped with braced pediments. The third story has casement type openings with flat pediments. Cupola windows are two-light, round-arched fixed double-hung sash. All windows have wood sash construction.

8. Roof

Shape, covering

Cornice, eaves

Dormers, cupola

The structure has an intersecting hip and gable roof. The cornice has dentils evenly spaced below flat and gabled eaves. The building has three separate and distinct roofing systems, all with standing seam metal roofing. Terne, an alloy of tin and lead, covers the main portions of the gabled structure. The roof slope is generally 5:12. This roof has integral gutters with leaders built into the stone wall. A wood stepladder, in the mechanical well, provides access to the main roof. The lower roof, over the Post Office lobby, is covered in flat-lapped tin and has a newer aluminum skylight that replaced the 1905 wood framed skylight. This roof also has an integral gutter that drains behind the west parapet. The cupola roof is wood, clad in copper, and has a hatch-type door that provides access to the flagpole (GSA).

Description of Interior

1. Floor plans

Basement

The 13,450 square-foot basement consists of twelve main rooms, used for storage space, mechanical operations, a maintenance room, and a restroom. Each of the main basement rooms connects to a central L-plan hallway that is painted rusticated stone and brickwork. Most basement spaces have exposed plumbing, heating, and electrical conduits near the ceiling.

Two external entrances access the basement. The entrance on the east façade is for maintenance purposes. The other primarily provides ADA access to the building by means of a ramp entering the basement on the north façade way. Access to the main stair is north of the elevator.

First floor

The main floor consists of 13,450 square feet. The main public lobby and elevator are the most historically significant features on this floor and date to the 1905 addition. The 1905 addition included construction of the side lobby and registry, which closely match the details and materials of the main lobby. The side lobby is well preserved, but has a 1973 security enclosure that separates it from the main lobby.

Approximately one-third of the first floor, the southwest corner of the building, is known as the registry and is currently occupied by Senator Hatfield's offices. This area contains five offices, a work/storage space, and a reception area.

The northwest third of the floor is used as the Post Office. Both this section and the registry were added in the 1905 construction and retain many of their original features. This area accesses the current main entrance on the west of the building and consists of two large rooms, the Post Office Lobby and a workroom. In addition, there is a hallway that connects to the main lobby, a janitor's closet, and two small public restrooms.

The oldest portion of this floor, to the east, contains four small offices and two larger rooms containing law libraries. This area offers the only public access to the grand staircase.

Second floor

The second floor, U-shaped in plan, contains 12,230 square feet. This floor consists of the original 1875 second floor and the two 1905 wings. The main courtroom, the central feature of this floor, dates to 1875 and is two stories in height. Opposite the courtroom, to the west, are a conference room and enclosed stairway.

The southern and northern portions of this floor are utilized as judge's chambers and support offices. A small library is also located on this floor. The north section of the floor has public restrooms and a public waiting room flanking the main staircase.

Third floor

The third floor contains 12,230 square feet. This floor is H-shaped in plan, as dictated by the two-story courtroom below. The southern portion of this floor contains one permanent judge's chamber, four clerk offices, a legal library, a general reception area, a small workroom, and a private bathroom. The northern portion of the floor holds three visiting judge's chambers, three clerk offices, and public restrooms. A small hallway connecting the wings accesses a file storage room and the enclosed central stair, which terminates at this floor.

Attic

The attic is made up of nine large unfinished rooms, in a U-shaped floor plan with roof trusses and beams exposed over half brick walls. The rooms act as smoke and draft barriers. The grand stair terminates at this level, as does the elevator. There is a centralized tandem stair that provides access to the cupola and a windowed mechanical well west of the cupola stair.

Cupola

Originally constructed in 1875, it has remained unchanged and is a non-public area. It is octagonal in plan and has a two-light, round-arched double-hung window on each face. The wood tandem stair that accesses this floor has a turned oak balustrade. From this level a metal service stair extends to an opening in the roof providing access to a flagpole.

2. Stairways

The grand public stairway is an open wood structure that extends from the north end of the main lobby to the attic and dates to 1875. There are four additional service stairways. The principle service stairway, made of metal, is enclosed near the center of the building

and rises only to the third floor. A smaller tandem stair connects the basement with the north entrance. In addition, there is a wood stair that leads from the attic to the cupola observation floor and a small metal stair that accesses the roof of the cupola.

3. Flooring

Floors throughout the building are wood, with the exception of the 1905 terrazzo and marble floors in the main lobby. The original hardwood floors have been covered with carpeting throughout most of the building, with the exception of the attic vestibule and cupola. Ceramic tiles have been installed in the bathrooms.

The basement floor is poured concrete with some areas covered in asbestos tiling.

4. Walls and ceilings

The walls are primarily lath and plaster over wood frame. However, the main lobby, the courtroom, and portions of the judges' chambers are paneled in ash with oak Doric pilasters and ornate wood door pediments. Walls in the courtroom have plaster details. Paneling on the main lobby's south wall is topped with glass panels.

Ceilings are typically lath and plaster decorated with simple cornice moldings. The main lobby and courtroom ceilings are worked in the same material though in a more ornate manner.

The Post Office lobby has boxed beams and low wainscot installed in 1905. In addition, there are four cashier windows evenly spaced along the north wall. The Post Office lobby and the main lobby have marble baseboards.

Dropped acoustic tiles have been installed in some of the office spaces that currently occupy the registry.

The cupola has plaster walls with 36 -inch oak wainscot.

5. Openings

Doorways, doors

Generally, existing doors on the public floors are of oak and ash, with brass hardware, in a unique design, and are original. Wood doors are generally of two types. Private office doors are four-panel doors with heavy, simple moldings. Two-light transoms are placed above. Some doors entering clerk's offices contain one obscured light and two vertical

panels. These doors contain smaller moldings and no transom. In order to comply with current fire codes, a few newer doors have been installed.

Doors on the basement floor are common wood panel doors, though fire doors are present at the mechanical rooms.

Windows

Although window glass in general appears to have been replaced, the simple brass hardware appears original.

The windows in the basement, primarily on the south façade, gain light through grated window wells. The windows are deeply set into the four-foot thick walls and are casements.

Windows in the Courtroom have oak sash with ornate pediments. The third story Courtroom windows are square. They are leaded and have two types of fixed glass lights. One type has small glass lights throughout; while the other has a large central light bordered by small lights.

Office windows on the second floor have a simple oak sash and are set deep in the wall.

The cupola windows have a two-light round-arched fixed, double-hung sash on each face.

6. Decorative features and trim

The main lobby and Post Office lobby have marble baseboards, while all other public spaces have oak baseboards. The basement has modern vinyl baseboards in some areas.

There are three fireplaces on the second floor. Two, in a reception area and a waiting room, are marble and appear to be a matched set. The one occupying the Courtroom is of ornately carved oak with a marble inset and a glazed tile hearth.

7. Hardware

Wood doors have brass hardware designed for the courthouse. This hardware was cleaned and restored in the 1973 renovation.

All windows have brass hardware.

8. Mechanical equipment
Elevator

The elevator, manufactured by Otis and installed in 1905, is a traction type unit with the machine room in the basement. It accesses all three floors and serves as the ADA access for the building. The cab is highly ornate and has been restored.

Heating, air, ventilation

The original heating system relied on fireplaces and steam supplied from an outside source. This was updated to a steam heat system with boilers in 1986. Steam heat radiators were restored in the 1970s and remain in use with the new heating system.

A 120-ton water-cooler and tower installed in 1971 provide the cooling system.

Lighting

The original electric lighting system was updated in 1905; none of the original fixtures survive. The current system was updated in 1986.

Lighting fixtures throughout are brass with oversized white opaque globes. Chandeliers and sconces are present in both lobbies. The Courtroom has a similar but more ornate chandelier and a pole light. The upper floors of the building have simple hanging lamps.

Lighting in the basement consists of overhead florescent tubes.

Plumbing

The original plans indicate that the Pioneer Courthouse was to be connected to Portland's new sewer system. To accommodate initial construction, a temporary cesspool was installed in the front (east) yard. Plans from the 1905 renovations indicate that this cesspool was abandoned and filled with concrete. The building was constructed with indoor plumbing and facilities.

A sprinkler system was installed in parts of the building in 1973 when general plumbing was updated.

Site

1. General setting and orientation

The Pioneer Courthouse, with surrounding lawn, walkways and stepped retaining walls, occupies a full city block bordered by SW Morrison Street, SW Yamhill Street, SW Fifth Avenue, and SW Sixth Avenue the current main entrance faces west. The courthouse is the focal point of downtown Portland, with the city's most prominent public space, Pioneer Square, recently designed as its forecourt. Many historic buildings are within site of the courthouse.

2. Historic landscape design

The stone retaining wall supports a wrought iron fence and is gated at sidewalk and drive entrances. Government vehicles can access two temporary parking spaces associated with the Post Office loading dock on SW Morrison Street.

The site retains several trees planted during the original construction campaign, interspersed with newer plantings. Historic plantings, dating from 1873, are primarily located on the east side of the building and include one specimen each of Deodar cedar, English yew, Giant sequoia, and Holly. One Austrian pine is sited on the south side of the building and two Port Orford cedars are located on the northwest side. The majority of the site is covered in lawn. The topography is level from the building to a distance of 25 to 50 feet depending on the façade. On the north and east sides, a slope of 12:25 skirts this level area, falling toward the street.

Newer plantings on the site include several Austrian pines planted as an understory and currently growing into the canopy of the original trees.

The sidewalks that border the block on the north, west, and south sides of the building are evenly spaced with four London planetrees to a side. These trees appear to be heavily stressed by urban conditions and though they are not part of the site landscape proper they do contribute to the building's setting.

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PROJECT INFORMATION

The primary objectives of the work to be completed include seismic upgrading and secure parking for federal judges. Partial demolition of the east façade and basement will facilitate installation of an underground parking garage. Demolition to interior spaces includes non-historical features. Interior features that are historical will be removed, restored and stored off site until needed. Sally Donovan prepared the HABS photography including the building and historic architectural drawings in June and October 2003. Oregon Historical Society prepared photographs including historic views in November 2003. Barbara Smith-Steiner, Research Historian for Historical Research Associates, prepared information included in this document, July 2003.