

INMAN-POULSEN LUMBER COMPANY GARAGE
Corner of Southeast Grand & Division Place
Portland
Multnomah County
Oregon

HABS OR-178
OR-178

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OR-178

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
INMAN-POULSEN LUMBER COMPANY GARAGE
HABS No. OR-178**

Location: Corner of Southeast Grand and Division Place, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

Date of Construction: c.1920

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Present Owner: Georgia-Pacific Plywood Company

Present Use: Garage

Significance: The structure is significant for its rarity as a lumber milling resource remaining in the Portland harbor area of the Willamette River and for its association with the large Inman-Poulsen Lumber Mill. It is an unusual example of the specialized mill garage developed as a response to the increasingly mechanized lumbering efforts of the 1920s. As productivity began to fall due to such forces as the dwindling supply of accessible timber and production interruptions caused by labor strikes, new innovations in equipment helped to stabilize lumber production. At the Inman-Poulsen Lumber Company, most of the mill's timber arrived in log rafts floated from sites along the Columbia River. To improve efficiency at the sawmill yard and to facilitate storage of hundreds of thousands of board feet of milled lumber, small service vehicles such as forklifts were developed to move the product. These vehicles were serviced at the garage.

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I. DESCRIPTION

The Inman-Poulsen Lumber Company Garage, located at SE Grand Avenue and Division Place, is set in the industrial area of the Hosford-Abernethy neighborhood. The building is a simple, functional expression of the 1920s purpose-built commercial garage. It is a one story, rectangular-shaped brick and reinforced concrete mass comprising 5,000 square feet. The primary facade (east exposure) features a low-pitched, end-gable parapet, which, together with the north exposure, reveals an articulated frieze. Trim includes a diamond design cluster motif at the corners and bays; chevron designs above the pilasters; concrete bumpers at the garage doors; and a graded masonry watercourse on the primary and north exposures. Window openings are irregularly placed; one major set of heavy mullioned lights is contained in the primary exposure while two sets of similarly detailed openings are in the northern exposure.

Four oversized metal doors accommodate the movement of automotive/mechanical equipment at the garage. On the interior there is a modified king post wood truss roof system with heavy beams that are approximately 10" x 12". It is finished in milled lumber, approximately 1" x 6". Historically, the space served as many as 20 vehicles. The building contained electric lighting, wood heating, and battery charging equipment.

II. HISTORY

The structure is significant for its rarity as a lumber milling resource remaining in the Portland harbor area of the Willamette River and for its association with the large Inman-Poulsen Lumber Mill. It is an unusual example of the specialized mill garage developed as a response to the increasingly mechanized lumbering efforts of the 1920s. As productivity began to fall due to such forces as the dwindling supply of accessible timber and production interruptions caused by labor strikes, new innovations in equipment helped to stabilize lumber production. At the Inman-Poulsen Lumber Company, most of the mill's timber arrived in log rafts floated from sites along the Columbia River. To improve efficiency at the sawmill yard and to facilitate storage of hundreds of thousands of board feet of milled lumber, small service vehicles such as forklifts were developed to move the product. These vehicles were serviced at the garage.

The garage is one of two buildings left that are associated with the 37-acre complex of the Inman-Poulsen Lumber Company. The company, founded by Johan Poulsen and Robert D. Inman in 1890, was once the largest lumber mill in Oregon, and by 1924, was reportedly the largest producing plant in the region with a workforce of some 700 men. By 1903 the Inman-Poulsen mill plant was surrounded by housing and was the largest business in the state, with 350 workers. Several decades later, in 1924, the company employed 700 workers who produced as much as 750,000 board feet daily. Annual output in 1924 was 200,000,000 board feet. The operation was known as one of the most mechanically efficient of its type, requiring storage for 12,000,000 board feet.

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In addition to storage space, the site contained sorting tables, the sawmill, lath and planing mill, pipe shop, band saw mill, several dry kilns, blacksmith and carpenter shop, a dressed lumber shed, machine shop, transfer shed, an assortment of smaller buildings serving the industry, water tank, numerous firehose stations, loading docks and platforms, railroad tracks, garage and the mill office. Fuel for the operation was supplied by steam and electricity generated by the adjacent PEPCO plants, Station "L" and Station "F." A huge sawdust pile existed near the mill's northwestern perimeter. From company docks along the waterfront, the business shipped approximately half of its output abroad, primarily to Asia.

Robert Inman led the company as president while his partner, Johan Poulsen, served as secretary and treasurer. Both men played active roles in Portland cultural life. Poulsen, the longest living partner and successor as president, was noted by Portland *Oregonian* editor Harvey Scott as "...the most conspicuous figure in the lumber business in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest for almost four decades. Business men (sic) regard him as a man of great force, energy, and aggressiveness—a successful business man and a historical and literary scholar...a very rare combination." Both men resided, at least for a time, in the vicinity. Poulsen's home (now a National Register-listed property) was finished in 1892 on a bluff nearby, overlooking the mill. The Inman home, demolished in the 1950s, was constructed further east on Powell Boulevard.

Following the demise of Robert D. Inman (1853-1920) and Johan Poulsen (1849-1929), the company was led by H.B. Van Duzer. Milling became more complicated in the 1920s and 1930s when specialized equipment was needed for efficient production. As with other mills in the Northwest, labor disagreements arose and resulted in production interruptions. Several decades after leadership passed to Van Duzer, a portion of the business was acquired by another lumber concern, Dant and Russell, Inc. In 1954 the holdings of both Dant and Russell and the Inman-Poulsen Lumber Company were purchased by Georgia-Pacific Plywood Company. In mid-year the plant was closed and the remaining 300 workers dismissed. By 1959, the entire mill site complex had been subdivided and developed to support light industry.

Very few (if any) historic timber product mills exist in Portland along the banks of the Willamette River. According to the Historic resources Inventory for the City of Portland, Inman-Poulsen is one of two mills listed in the statewide inventory. The other operation is the Aaron Brother's Planing Mill located at 2215 SE Gladstone Street.

III. SOURCES

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IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The MLK Boulevard Viaduct Replacement Project seeks to replace the historic portion of MLK Viaduct and construct a new 1,312' long reinforced concrete viaduct system. This plan will connect MLK Boulevard with Grand Avenue and link them with McLoughlin Boulevard (Highway 99E) in a traffic pattern similar to the current viaduct. Although it is not designed to increase capacity, the new viaduct system will address the structural deficiencies and functional obsolescence of the original portion of the viaduct. Two structures will be erected to carry traffic in each direction. Each will contain two 12' north and southbound lanes (or approved exceptions), along with two 8' shoulders. On the west side of the viaduct a 2.1 meter (7 foot) sidewalk will be built, while on the east a 8' sidewalk has been incorporated into the design.

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Construction would impact property along the west side of MLK Boulevard between Division Place and Taggart Street, including the Inman-Poulsen Lumber Mill Garage, which would be razed. Since the widening would necessarily impact this area, right of way from the same property would be used for the southbound access road to keep traffic off the portion of SE 4th between Division Place and Ivon Street. In this configuration, conflicts between multi-modal users of the 4th Street right of way would also be reduced.