

COLUMBIA VILLA  
(Columbia Villa Housing Project)  
Bounded by North Columbia Boulevard, North Adriatic Avenue, North  
Haven Avenue and North Houghton Street  
Portland  
Multnomah County  
Oregon

HABS OR-188  
OR-188

HABS  
OR-188

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
PACIFIC WEST REGIONAL OFFICE  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1111 Jackson Street, Suite 700  
Oakland, CA 94607

# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

## COLUMBIA VILLA (Columbia Villa Housing Project)

HABS No. OR-188

HABS  
OR-188  
(Page 1)

**Location:** Columbia Villa occupies an 80 acre site in the northeastern quadrant of Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon, within the area locally referred to as the "Portsmouth Neighborhood." The project consists of 191 structures with the primary office located at 8910 NE Woolsey. Individual units are identified by number. Columbia Villa is roughly bounded by North Columbia Boulevard, North Adriatic Avenue, North Haven Avenue, North Houghton Street and lines both sides of North Woolsey Avenue between North Houghton and North Columbia, west of North Dana. The site is generally flat with some modest rolling terrain to the northwest corner, toward North Fiske Avenue, a component of the internal street system. Surrounding uses included one-and two-story single-family residential units to the south and west, with the University Park Community Center and the University Park Housing Project located to the east. The site drops to Columbia Boulevard at its northern edge. Across Columbia Boulevard uses are small industrial and commercial properties. The Columbia Villa project contains eight separate tax lots, as shown on Multnomah County Assessors Plant 1N-1E-05CD and 1N-1E-08B, all located within Township 1 North, Range 1 East, Sections 5 and 8.

The project is located in the USGS Portland Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Zone 10, 5048340N, 522250E.

**Present Owner:** Columbia Villa is owned and operated by the Housing Authority of Portland [HAP], as it has been since its construction in 1942.

**Present Use:** Continually used as government-owned housing since its original development, the project is now vacant pending removal to allow construction of a HUD-approved Hope VI project, "New Columbia" on the site. Ground-breaking ceremonies for New Columbia was held on December 1, 2003 with project completion anticipated in 2006.

**Significance:** Columbia Villa was constructed in 1942 as the first housing project of the Housing Authority of Portland, an agency that was nationally significant during WWII as the single largest such entity in the United States. Designed by local architects, Columbia Villa was one of the few defense workers housing project in the area intended as "permanent" construction and so one of the few to survive. In March 2003 Columbia Villa was determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion "A" for its association with the WWII Homefront and the massive program of Federally-financed workers housing projects to support defense-industry activities in the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area.

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. PHYSICAL HISTORY:

1. **Date of Erection:** Initial planning for workers housing projects in the Portland vicinity began in Fall 1941 (*Oregonian*, 23-Nov-1941, 6:1-3). Following the creation of the Housing Authority of Portland on December 11, 1941 (McColl, 1979:575), the architects began planning Columbia Villa and the original plans are dated March 1942. Ground-breaking occurred in May and the first units were occupied by April 1942. The project, as required by the construction contract, was substantially completed by November 1942 (HAP, *Roses to Rivets*, 1945. See also Kramer, 2003:33).
2. **Architects:** Glenn Stanton and Hollis Johnston, both of Portland, designed Columbia Villa. Both established Portland-based architects, like many smaller firms the two formed a wartime joint venture to undertake the large war-related projects of the time. Glenn Stanton (1896-1969) studied at both the University of Oregon and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, working in France as an architect before returning to Portland in 1922. He established his own firm in 1935. After joining Johnston in 1940 to meet wartime construction demands, Stanton returned to sole practice in 1945 and formed the partnership of Stanton, Boles, Maguire and Church in 1955. Stanton was responsible for many large commissions in Oregon, including work for Lewis and Clark College and the YMCA. He served twenty-three years on the Portland Planning Commission and in 1951 was elected president of the national board of the American Institute of Architects (Ritz, 2003:365-66).

Hollis Eugene Johnston (1894-1967) was also educated at the University of Oregon and began his architectural career in 1917 at the Portland firm of Lawrence & Holford, founded by Ellis Lawrence, Dean of the UO School of Architecture. Alternating between work with Lawrence and another Portland firm, Sutton and Whitney, Johnston established his own firm as a sole practitioner in 1929. In 1933 Johnston left private practice to become chief consulting architect for US Army Corp of Engineers for the Bonneville Power Administration project. Between 1936 and 1938 he joined with Herman Brookman and together they designed the company town of Gilchrist, in south central Oregon, for the Gilchrist Timber Company. Johnston worked with Stanton through 1945 and then returned to his own practice. He later formed a partnership with Robert J. Koch, which endured until his death in 1967 (Ritz, 2003:214-215).

3. **Builders:** In March 1942 Lease and Leigland, of Seattle, Washington, were awarded the contract for construction of Columbia Villa with a low bid of \$1.3 million dollars. No information on sub-contractors or sources of supply were located, although virtually all of the materials are assumed to be local to the northwest. (HAP, *Roses to Rivets*, 1945).

4. **Original Plans and Construction:** The initial phase of Columbia Villa included 400 living units of standardized design located within 164 individual structures identified as Type A (fourplex containing two 1 bedroom units, one 2 bedroom unit and one 3 bedroom unit), Type B (Duplex, two 2 bedroom units), Type C (Duplex, two bedroom) and Type D (Duplex, two 4 bedroom units).<sup>1</sup> Additional support structures included warehouse, office space and small laundry and storage facilities. These structures were widely spaced around a new curvilinear street system created upon the site in low-density clustered groups. The dominant format is with an A Unit serving as the bottom of u-shaped arrangement where multiple structures flank a common central courtyard area. Type A buildings were two-stories in height with the other units all of single-story design. The original structures were all of wood frame construction with either stained wood shingle siding (types B, C and D) or weatherboard (Type A), painted wood trim, wood double-hung or casement windows, and shingle roofing (*Original Plans*, HAP 1942).
  
5. **Alterations and Additions:** Increasing the density of the site to meet low-income housing demand in the area, Columbia Villa's capacity was augmented twice subsequent to the initial development period. In 1958 Portland architect Don Byers designed two compatible new structural types, most of which were built upon a new street (North Trenton Place) that was added to the original road system. Byers' units were identified as Type E (Duplex, containing two 3-bedroom units) and Type F (Duplex, two 4-bedroom units). Fifteen Type D and five Type E units were built, raising the total capacity of Columbia Villa to 440 units (HAP Files, see Kramer, Jan 2003:3).<sup>2</sup>

In 1967 Byers was again retained to increase Columbia Villa capacity, designing four additional housing types: G (Triplex, three 5-bedroom units), H (Fouplex, four 4 bedroom units), J (Fiveplex, five 4-bedroom units) and K (Sixplex, six 3-bedroom units). Four additional Type C structures were also built during this phase, for a total of eleven new structures containing 38 new units, bringing the total capacity of Columbia Villa to 478 housing units.

Known alterations include the replacement of the original wood sash windows with aluminum, probably circa 1958 as a part of the first addition, replacement of the wood roofing with Flintkote asphalt shingle. In 1971 the Portland architectural firm of Gilham, Johnson, Webb designed 400 storage room additions to improve the utility systems of the original Columbia Villa structures. R. A. Gray and Company was awarded this \$210,000 contract, which was completed in by early 1972. Beginning in 1983 units were systematically re-sided with a smooth board material after the

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<sup>1</sup> Colloquially structures at Columbia Villa are identified by type, as in "B Units," "C Units," etc.

<sup>2</sup> Donovan C. Byers (1912-1989) was born in Oregon and began design work in 1934, receiving his license in 1946. He is best known for the numerous concrete garden and "plaza" apartments houses he designed throughout the Pacific Northwest in the late 1940s and 1950s, as well as serving as the chief designer of the Universal Plan Service, a popular source for residential design nationwide (Ritz, 2002:62).

removal of the shingle siding. At the same time the earlier aluminum window replacements were themselves removed in favor of double-paned vinyl sash.

While all original units and replacements remained, changes in use and occupancy reduced the total capacity of Columbia Villa to 462 units at the time it was determined to replace the project with New Columbia.<sup>3</sup>

B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Columbia Villa, designated as National Housing Agency Project ORE-2-1, was the first announced project of the Housing Authority of Portland [HAP], a locally-operated organization created by the City of Portland to help ease the area's housing crisis that resulted from the development of a massive wartime defense industry in the Portland metropolitan area. HAP, established on 11-December-1941, just four days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the US entry into World War II, would eventually operate over 18,500 housing units — the largest such wartime operation in the United States. With the Vancouver Housing Authority (in Vancouver, Washington), the Portland Metropolitan area provided more than 30,000 units of defense worker housing, far more than any other area.<sup>4</sup>

The need for defense workers housing in Portland initially reached critical proportions after the January 1941 announcement that Henry J. Kaiser would soon begin construction of a massive shipyard to specialize in "Liberty Ships" near the community of St. Johns, in northeast Portland.

Portland's new shipyard will be erected just north of municipal terminal No. 4 and will cost \$4,700,000 in construction before any ships can be launched... at height of production as many as 18 ships will be worked on at one time (*Oregonian*, 12-January-1941, 1:6-7).

This facility, correctly known as Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation but generally called either Kaiser Shipyard or "Oregonship," was soon joined by two other Kaiser-owned facilities in the Portland region: a smaller yard on Swan Island that built tanker ships and landing craft and Vancouvership, a large scale operation across the Columbia River, in Washington state. Vancouvership, correctly known as the Vancouver Shipbuilding Corporation, would win historical acclaim for its development of "baby flat-tops," small escort aircraft carriers built upon a basic Liberty Ship hull. Later in

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<sup>3</sup> For example, an original residential unit was converted into a health care facility while another was used as a children's daycare center.

<sup>4</sup> Portland, with 18,504 units was the single largest housing authority, with New York City (which operated 13,175 units), the next largest. Vancouver, Washington, with 12,389 housing units, was the fourth largest such entity in the country (Emmerich, 1944, as cited in *Roses to Rivets*, 1945).

the war Vancouvership would also produce the LST landing craft used at Normandy and other beaches in both the Pacific and European fronts.<sup>5</sup>

At their peak operation in late 1943, Kaiser's three area Portland-area shipyards, along with three other, smaller, locally-owned facilities, employed more than 100,000 defense-related workers (Kramer, 2003:15). Other defense industries in the area included the Electro Metallurgical Company, a subsidiary of Union Carbide and, most notably, an Alcoa Aluminum Company plant that was built in Vancouver and a Reynolds Aluminum Company plant at Longview, Washington. With a second Alcoa plant, at Troutdale, in Clackamas County, Oregon, these three plants alone were estimated to have produced 20-30 percent of the nation's total aluminum output by early 1942, almost all of which went to defense industry uses, particularly airplane manufacture (*Oregonian*, 11-March-1942, 1:5).<sup>6</sup>

The combined impact of these defense-related developments in the region quickly transformed the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan into a major hub within the American war production effort. Tens of thousands of workers were drawn to the area by the promise of good-paying jobs. Kaiser, in particular, actually sent scouts and promoters to the Midwest and south enticing workers to move to Portland and build the company's ships.

Within a few weeks after war was declared, our peace-time City of Roses... became the stage for the shipbuilding drama of the centuries, with a production record for a given time of the largest tonnage known to world history. Private housing was entirely unequal to the demands, and the war effort for the area seriously threatened by lack of shelter for the thousand of war workers sweeping in upon Portland alike a tidal wave (HAP, *Roses to Rivets*, 1945).

Concerns about public housing and government competition with private property development had long stymied efforts to develop a housing authority in Portland. Limited housing constructed to ease shortages during WWI were quickly razed following that war's conclusion and even the Great Depression brought little progress despite a growing need. As late as November 1938 Portlanders voted more than 2-to-1 to reject the formation of a housing agency in the city (Abbott, 1982:170).

By mid-1941, after the construction of Oregonship was underway, the housing demand in Portland became increasingly severe. Without any action on the city's part, the Division of Defense Housing, a Federal agency, began to plan housing projects for

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<sup>5</sup> The site of Kaiser's better known "Californiaship" operation in Richmond, California, of similar scale and production capacity with Oregonship, is a major component of the Rosie the Riveter WWII Homefront National Historical Park, established in October 2000 (<http://www.nps.gov/rori/>).

<sup>6</sup> Oregon's aluminum plants, reliant upon the inexpensive electricity produced by the Bonneville Power Administration dams on the Columbia River, was a major supplier of aircraft shell material to the Boeing Corporation in Seattle.

defense workers as critical to the nation's defense effort.<sup>7</sup> In response to concerns about the Federal government competing with local developers, the Division determined to use local architects to design its "...400 new defense homes to be erected in the Portland area.." (*Oregonian*, 23-November-1941, 6:1-3). Three days before Pearl Harbor the Portland newspaper that the city was "...confronted with the likelihood of a major increase in its shipbuilding activities soon, is at the same time now faced with a shortage of rental housing... Oregon Shipbuilding officials [state] that there is not a vacant house within six miles of that plant" (*Oregonian*, 4-December-1941, 12:1).

It is within this climate, just four days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, that the Housing Authority of Portland was finally created. Upon its formation, HAP not only took over the previously announced 400 units planned by Division of Defense Housing Project (the project that would become Columbia Villa) but immediately began to develop other programs to meet the critical housing needs of the area. Among these the Gartrell Plan units were widely scattered, architect-designed, dwellings built on vacant municipally-owned land throughout the Portland area but most structures were located with easy walking or bus distance of the major defense facilities of the northeast Portland area.<sup>8</sup>

Columbia Villa, unusual among HAP's projects, was designed as "permanent construction" and intended to convert to other public housing use after the war.<sup>9</sup> The project's design was considered highly successful and received national acclaim both for its architectural and social characteristics. Catherine Bauer, author of the influential "Building Type Study" concerning public housing that was published by *The Architectural Record*, toured Oregon with her husband, the noted San Francisco architect William Wurster and commented that "...Columbia Villa, is one of the very best [housing projects] in the country.." (*Oregonian*, 3-May-1944). The low-density design of the project, with its curvilinear streets and clustered housing groupings, became something of a model for later public housing, though one that was too space-intensive and expensive for most urban situations. Through multiple editions of *The Urban Pattern*, a standard textbook in the field, Columbia Villa remained as an example of quality public housing design (Gallion and Eisner, 1963:155).

Across the Columbia River from Portland, in Washington, the Vancouver Housing Authority was established on February 7, 1942 and soon began its own massive

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<sup>7</sup> The production of Oregonship, which was to make Liberty Ships, were a major element in Kaiser's program to provide tonnage required for the Lend Leaser Program in support of Britain.

<sup>8</sup> Cecil M. Gartrell, a local banker, was named the first Chairman of the Housing Authority of Portland and served with distinction in that position throughout the WWII period, developing the concept of using available city-owned vacant parcels and rapid response to the area's housing needs soon after HAP's formation (Capitol Publishing, 1948:207)

<sup>9</sup> Because of fears related to "low income" development and competition between private and public housing development, most of HAP's project were, from the beginning, intended to be used only during the wartime emergency and were built with a purposely impermanent quality.

construction projects to serve Kaiser's Vancouvership (VHA, 1972:32). The largest project of the VHA was McLoughlin Heights, which with more than 4000 units was the second largest defense housing project in the nation. The largest in the nation, built by the Housing Authority of Portland just north of Columbia Villa on the Columbia Slough, was Vanport. Vanport City, named as a contraction of Vancouver and Portland, was built to provide housing for Kaiser workers in all three of the companies area facilities. Construction began in Sept 1942 and the project, with 9,942 units, or more than twice that of any other such project in the United States, was completed in September 1943 (Maben, 1987:12).

Kaiser's Oregonship had an illustrious career during the war, launching 322 Liberty ship hulls and setting records for speed and consistency unmatched in the nation.<sup>10</sup> Later converted to "Victory Ship" production, a faster, updated version of the Liberty hull that was made toward the end of the war, Oregonship produced a total of 455 hulls before it closed down for good in late 1945. The Swan Island Shipyard built its last tanker in 1945 and was later sold to the Port of Portland (*Oregonian*, 24-October-1945, 1:3). Kaiser's Vancouvership ceased operation in November 1945 and was largely dismantled in the early 1950s. Combined these three yards launched more than 600 individual sea-going hulls between mid-1941 and late-1945.

As the war and the defense-industry wound down, most of the immediate need for housing in the area declined. Some of HAP's units, especially Vanport, were converted to low-income housing for the area's minority populations, many of whom had first arrived in the area for employment in the defense industry. Other units, particularly the widely scattered Gartrell Homes in Portland and several early developments in Vancouver, were sold to private families.<sup>11</sup> Partially to ameliorate the pre-war concerns regarding Federal involvement in the local housing market, and partially to allow for rapid construction, the vast majority of the 35,000-plus defense workers housing units built in the Portland-Vancouver area were termed "temporary construction." Quickly built, it was intended that with the end of hostilities, most would be demolished, relocated or salvaged, returning a pre-war character to the local housing market. Many of these units were in dormitories or apartments built on the shipyard sites, most intended for single men, and most were quickly dismantled. McLoughlin Heights and Vanport, far larger projects with integrated commercial,

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<sup>10</sup> Oregonship and Californiaship (see Footnote #5, above) engaged in a see-saw battle for the claim of fastest launch, with Californiaship finally setting the record with the *Robert E. Peary*, launched in 4 days 15 hours and 26 minutes after she was begun. This record was admittedly set with substantial pre-construction to beat Oregonship's record for the *Joseph N. Teal*, built in 10 ½ days in October 1942. In terms of normal, as opposed to showpiece, construction, Oregonship regularly maintained the record monthly aver average throughout the war despite having three less ship ways than Californiaship. "In the month of October 1943 Oregonship launched 24 ships, a feat of regular production that remained unmatched during the war and has not likely been approached since" (*Oregonian*, 27-Sept-1943, 7:2).

<sup>11</sup> In Vancouver the single-family type cottages built in Fruit Valley, Fourth Plain Village and Harney Hill, totaling 1000 units, were sold to private families between 1948 and 1951. Many survive and are clearly recognizable despite modest improvements and additions over the past 50+ years (VHA, 1959, 1972:32).

service and public uses, were temporarily used after the war. Vanport, which had a troubled reputation based on racial segregation issues, was destroyed by flood in May 1948. McLoughlin Heights was dismantled and sold part by part for more than a decade.

As a result of this planned removal process, of the 35,000-plus workers housing units built in the Portland-Vancouver area, only 1600 survived by the early 1960s, all of which were built very early in the WWII period and intended, as was Columbia Villa, as “permanent” housing that could be converted to other uses after the war. Most of these, the one thousand single-family units built in Vancouver, were sold to private ownerships shortly after the war’s end. Six hundred permanent units were built in Oregon. Two hundred units remain in two 100-unit government-owned low-income housing operated by the Housing Authority of Clackamas County [Oregon].<sup>12</sup>

Having been built as defense workers housing, Columbia Villa, as was intended, was converted to other public-housing uses after the war, and remained under the control and ownership of the Housing Authority of Portland. In the immediate post-war years the project was largely used to provide housing for returning veterans, particularly those studying at local colleges through the G.I. Bill. During the 1960s and continuing through the 1990s Columbia Villa remained as low-income housing for a variety of individuals or all ages and ethnic backgrounds. It became an increasingly atypical element within the Housing Authority of Portland’s inventory, most of which was the high-density, multi-story, apartment type development that gained favor in the late 1960s and 1970s.

In January 2003, when the historic significance of Columbia Villa was first assessed as a component of the planning process for New Columbia Villa, only 600 of the 18,000 plus defense workers housing units built in Oregon, were known to survive. Four hundred of that number, two-thirds of the total, were the original 1942 units at Columbia Villa.

#### SUMMARY:

Columbia Villa was designed and constructed in 1942 as the first housing project of the Housing Authority of Portland, an agency that became nationally significant during the WWII era as the single largest such entity in the United States. Designed by Portland architects Glenn Stanton and Hollis Johnston and built by Seattle-based contractors Lease and Leighland, Columbia Villa was one of the few defense workers housing projects in the Portland metropolitan area that was intended as “permanent” construction. Forming the majority of the 600 WWII-era workers housing units in Portland, Oregon area which survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Columbia Villa was determined eligible of listing on the National Register of Historic Places due to its

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<sup>12</sup> These are Hillside Park, in Milwaukie, Oregon and the Clackamas Heights Housing Project, in Oregon City (See Kramer, 2003:46).

significant association with WWII Homefront activities in the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area between 1942 and 1946.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. GENERAL STATEMENT:

#### 1. **Architectural Character:**

Columbia Villa consists of 190 individual structures that were located in clustered groups of five-to-six buildings in a U-Shaped arrangements, all arrayed within a designed curvilinear street system, that related important trends in low-density urban planning of the late-1930s and early 1940s era. The majority of structures were simple, single-story gable roofed volumes and had been modified from their historic exterior in terms of materials while retaining overall integrity through setting, location, feeling and association with the original development of the project in 1942.

#### 2. **Condition of fabric:**

Most of the individual structures at Columbia Villa, as the result of serial modification to siding, roofing, and windows, retained integrity in structure and massing. While specific exterior elements and the significance of the individual structures had been altered or obscured, the overall character of the site, through the continued character of the large-scale development, remained.

### B. DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR:

1. **Overall dimensions:** Each of the original unit types were of varied dimensions and with only minor exceptions (added storage/utility heater closets to the rear), remained largely changed throughout the project's use. The dimensions of each primary unit type are:<sup>13</sup>

Type A: 25'-6" wide by 86'-7" long (Sheet A14)

Type B: 26'-10" wide by 59'-0" long (Sheet A16)

Type C: 31'-11" wide by 65'-0" long (Sheet A17)

Type D: 29'-10" wide by 61'-2.5" wide (Sheet A18)

2. **Foundations:** The 400 original units at Columbia Villa had poured concrete perimeter foundations consisting of a footing and stem wall. Floor joisting was of 2x8" Douglas Fir joisting, running perpendicular to the roof ridge.
3. **Walls:** As originally designed, exterior cladding of all Type A buildings was of painted weatherboard, approximately 8" to weather, and all Types B, C, and D buildings were of stained shingle siding, approximately 10" to weather. As the result of later modifications, original siding materials were almost uniformly replaced with

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<sup>13</sup> All dimensions are taken from the original building plans and are referenced, by Sheet No., to that document, dated March 1942. Slightly earlier versions of these structures (dated Feb. 6, 1942, and included in the attached plan set for reference) are of slightly different dimensions.

horizontal board, approximately 6" to weather. A few buildings retained painted shingle siding.

4. **Structural System, framing:** Columbia Villa structures are build of standard western platform framing with 2x4 exterior and interior wood walls. Sheathing of 1x6 horizontal boards (probably with lapped edges) was applied directly to the studs, serving as substrate for the siding. Roof framing was of standard 2x6 wood rafters, originally with 1x 4 skip sheathing.
5. **Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads:** Small projecting shed roofs, without vertical support, were integrated into the roof rafter system and creating small covered "stoops" over the entry doors of each of the units in the four original Type structures. Similar features were employed on the later (1958 and 1967) addition volumes. Entry porches beneath these stoops were poured concrete slabs, with one or two steps. Window bulkheads were either shingle-clad (Types B, C and D) or clad with weatherboard (Type A), matching the surrounding walls.
6. **Chimneys:** As originally designed, the units at Columbia Villa had chimney like enclosures built of painted wooden lath that framed a projecting mechanical vent for the gas heater, range and hot-water heaters. Estimated to be approximately 30" square, these features were removed, probably in c1958 as a part of the first re-roofing project (See original plans, Sheet A21).
7. **Openings:**
  - a) **Doorways and doors:** According to original plans and available historic images, the original front entry doors at Columbia Villa were wood and glass panels. Many units also had simple wooden screen doors. These doors were almost universally removed at some undocumented point and replaces with solid core slab doors, without glazing, likely in response to security concerns. Those units with screen doors generally had mill-finish aluminum designs, both with and without glazed storm-window panels. Rear porch doors were also originally wood panel and were also all replaced with solid-core slab doors.
  - b) **Windows:** The original wood-sash casement and double-hung windows of Columbia Villa were set in banks, generally of three, and were divided horizontally by muntins. These windows were all removed c1958 and replaced with aluminum sash horizontal sliders, flanking a fixed pane for the larger openings. The aluminum windows were replaced with vinyl sash horizontal slider and fixed units in the early 1990s (HAP Maintenance Records).

**8. Roof:**

- a) **Shape & Materials:** All Columbia Villa buildings have approximately 8/12 pitch gable roofs. Originally clad with wood shingles, this material was removed and replaced with Pioneer-Flintkote 290/Westerner roofing, an asphalt shingle product in mixed gray, green and brown tones, in 1958 (Flintkote Topknotcher, Dec 1958). A small percentage of buildings in January 2003 still retained this roof, reported during installation to have a 50-year life expectancy. The majority of units had, however, been re-roofed with standing seam metal roofing of brown, blue and red.
- b) **Cornices & Eaves:** Longitudinal eaves, parallel with the ridge, are small (8" +/-) boxed overhangs on certain unit types while others have extended eaves of approximately 24-inches. Eaves extended further, and were slightly lower, over the entry doors. Original wood gutters were integrated into the roof plane (see Sheet A21). Later metal gutters were applied to the fascia. Gable ends were without any eave detail, comparable to so-called "Minimal Traditional," sometimes known as minimal eave" tract style housing of the post-WWII period.<sup>14</sup> Historic images document small ¾" thick "corbel" like cut scalloped board details at the extreme ends.

C. DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR:

1. **Floor Plans:** As might be expected, each of the four original unit types had similar floorplans, with access from the entry door leading directly into the living area. A small dining alcove was nested into the rear, between the kitchen and living areas, with a utility unit to the extreme rear. A small hall located off the living room led to the bathroom and sleeping rooms, the quantity of which was dependent upon the unit type. (Please refer to floorplans, Sheets A14-19, for specific dimensions and arrangement).
2. **Stairways:** Other than the Type A units, all the Columbia Villa structures are single-story, without stairwells. The Type A units had a straight stair flight that rose from the entry foyer area directly upstairs to the bedrooms. Detailing was utilitarian, with enclosed plaster sidewalls and round wooden handrails, devoid of any other detailing.
3. **Flooring:** Available historic images show that living room interiors at Columbia Villa were finished wood flooring, often with area rugs. Bedrooms and halls were also of tongue and groove fir flooring. Kitchens, bathroom and utility areas were linoleum. Over time some living room areas were carpeted with simple wall-to-wall materials while others were covered with patterned linoleum tile. Most bedrooms remained wood although some were later carpeted, probably to hide major repair work. Kitchens, bath and utility spaces were generally covered with sheet vinyl products.

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<sup>14</sup> See McAlester & McAlester, 1984:478-79.

4. **Wall and Ceiling Finish:** Interior partition walls were framed with 2x4 studs, 16" o.c., and all original surfaces were of painted lath and plaster except for some service areas which had stained plywood walls (See Interior Finish Schedules, Sheets A15-18). Later surfaces included painted gypsum board repair/replacement and pre-finished wood panels.
5. **Openings:**
  - a) **Doorways and doors:** Interior doors to bedrooms, bath, and closets were painted wood panel, typically two-large panels. Many original interior doors survived through January 2003 although others were replaced, typically with solid- or hollow-core slab doors.
  - b) **Windows and shutters:** Original windows were painted wood sash, replaced first by aluminum (c1958) and then finally vinyl sash windows (c1990s) within the same openings.
6. **Decorative Features and Trim:** Built quickly, the units at Columbia Villa were simply and functionally designed with little decorative trim. Door and window casings were generally narrow (2") with mitered corners. Windows were 'picture-framed' with no sill or apron. Baseboards were simple 4" boards with no edge detail. All trim appears to have been painted to match the wall surfaces.
7. **Hardware:** No specific information on original hardware was located. Some early/original appearing mortised door sets remained on interior doors, identified by simple escutcheons and knobs.
8. **Mechanical Equipment:**
  - a. **Heating/Air Conditioning:** Columbia Villa units had no air conditioning installed. As originally designed, heating was apparently through a single gas space heater per unit, located in the primary Living Room area (room 101, per plans). No other form of heating was initially installed (See Plan Sheet M1, March 1942). Later heat sources included baseboard electric.
  - b. **Lighting:** Original plans called for ceiling mounted light fixtures in public/service areas and wall mounted fixtures in most bedroom areas. Fixtures were simple surface mounted incandescent, either exposed bulb or what are often termed "schoolhouse" glass globes. (See Sheet E-6 for lighting fixture types). Lighting was substantially replaced during Columbia Villa's history and few if any original fixtures were noted to remain.
  - c. **Plumbing:** Plumbing was limited to a single bathroom in each building type, each with typical tub, stool and lavatory. Sink and laundry tray were mounted immediately opposite, sharing a single "plumbing wall" for efficiency. As

originally designed, the gas-fired water heater was located in this same area although later modifications replaced these units, requiring minor expansion to the rear of the original volumes.

9. **Original Furnishings:** It is not clear if Columbia Villa units were originally “furnished” or not. No specifications or details of any project-wide furnishing designs have been located. Available period photographs document simple “Colonial Revival” style designs however these may or may not be typical. No original-appearing furniture was identified as a part of this documentation process.

D. SITE:

1. **Historic Landscape Design:** Walter Gerke, of Portland, is credited with the original landscape design for Columbia Villa however it is unknown to what extent, if any, his work included site planning beyond the planting plan itself. Gerke’s plan (see Sheets L1-L3, March 1942) incorporated numerous existing trees on the site and provided for large open areas identified as “meadows” to create the character-defining low-density feeling of the site. Many of the original plantings, both the existing trees Gerke’s plan incorporated and the numerous additions as a part of the 1942 development, survived throughout Columbia Villa’s history and to the extent feasible will be incorporated into the present New Columbia/Hope VI project design.
2. **Outbuildings:** In addition to the housing units, the original plan for Columbia Villa included other structure types necessary for the operation of the project. The large Administration Building was substantially altered and enlarged in 1967 and again in 1971-1975, prior to the current New Columbia Project and was determined to no longer retain integrity to its original design in 2003. Similar modification has occurred at the multiple-component “maintenance yard.”

Four variations (L-1 thru L-4) were designed for small gable-roof Laundry Buildings that were interspersed into the site plan, the larger of which included a “Tool Room” or mechanical space for “Gas Meters” (See Sheet A24). Nine of the original laundry facilities were removed circa 1970. The single surviving laundry facility, while altered, remained on site until the beginnings of the New Columbia development (Kramer, 2003B:5).

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. **Architectural Drawings:** Several copies of the Stanton and Johnston original plan set for the original 400 units of Columbia Villa, as well as construction drawings and other materials, were maintained by the Housing Authority of Portland physical plant offices on the project. These drawings provided information on the original design and, along with various specifications and maintenance records, helped document subsequent changes to the project. A complete set of all available plans prior to 1945 are submitted in connection with this narrative.
- B. **Early Views:** Historic photographs, including views of the site prior to construction, construction images and several promotional-type brochures are held in the Stanley Parr Archives of the City of Portland, Oregon. Arranged in binders, these images are apparently elements of the HAP Archive material that has been transferred to the repository for storage. Many of these images were taken by Portland-area photographer Leonard Delano. Other views, most taken between 1970 and 1990 and documenting various remodeling and repair projects, are located in the HAP physical plant offices.
- C. **Archival Sources:** Little published history of the defense workers housing effort in Portland, or of Columbia Villa and the Housing Authority of Portland, exists. Substantial records may be found in the HAP Archives located in the agency's offices on Oak Street in Portland as well as those held by the Stanley Parr Archive of the City of Portland. These include published articles, clipping files, contracts, memos, reports and other primary and secondary sources documenting the development of the Authority and its role in the public housing matters since 1941. Other archival materials, especially indexed copies of the Portland *Oregonian* newspaper are located at the Multnomah County Public Library, in Portland, and the Knight Library, at the University of Oregon in Eugene. Materials related to the history and development of the Vancouver Housing Authority are located in that agency's archive, in Vancouver, Washington as well as the Clark County Historical Society and Vancouver Public Library.

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E. **Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:** While some information regarding the Division of Defense Housing activities during WWII were located in the Portland area, materials related to this period and the agencies involved likely exist at the National Archives, both in Seattle and Washington, D.C. No specific source was located for the papers of architects Glenn Stanton and Hollis Johnson, although such may exist in the Portland area. Additional information on the Kaiser Corporation's activities in the Portland metropolitan area may survive in the Henry J. Kaiser archive held by the University of California's Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

F. **Supplemental Material:** N/A

#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This historical narrative report was prepared in February 2004 by George Kramer, M.S., Senior Preservation Specialist, Heritage Research Associates, Inc., Eugene, Oregon under contract to the Housing Authority of Portland. Fieldwork and archival investigation was done between December 2002 and January 2003, related to the preparation of a Historic Context Statement, Request for Determination of Eligibility and Section 106 Findings of Adverse Effect as a part of the proposed New Columbia Villa Project. HABS photography of Columbia Villa was taken in September 2003 prior to the start of demolition by John Toso and Andy Noble, A Frame in Time, Ashland, Oregon, under contract to Heritage Research Associates.

Kathryn Toepel, PhD, provided project management and oversight for Heritage Research Associates, working with Lynda Odette Wannamaker of Parametrix, Inc., Portland and Julie Livingston, of the Housing Authority of Portland. Nancy Nidernhofer, formerly National Register Coordinator and Christine Curran, formerly 106 Compliance Specialist at the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office both provided valuable insight during the evaluation and preliminary documentation phase of the Columbia Villa project.



Hope VI Redevelopment of Columbia Villa

Not to Scale

**Aerial Map**