

McKenzie Oerting & Co. Building
601 South Palafox Street
Pensacola
Escambia County
Florida

HABS No. FLA-206

HABS
FLA
17-PENSA
18-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

MCKENZIE OERTING & CO. BUILDING

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Location: 601 South Palafox Street, Pensacola, Escambia County, Florida. The building is located on the southwest corner of West Cedar and South Palafox Streets and extends between Palafox Street and the Baylen Street Slip.

Present Owner: John Oerting

Present Occupant: Vacant

Statement of Significance: This late nineteenth century ship chandlery structure retains its original building fabric.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: This commercial building is located on land fill at the foot of Palafox Street near the Pensacola Bay. The land was owned by the City of Pensacola Waterfront Commissioners until 1899 when it was sold to P. J. Oerting. Although he is deceased, the property is still in his name.
2. Date of erection: The building was built for the McKenzie Oerting company in 1887 as it does not appear in the 1885 Wellge view of Pensacola or the 1887 Sanborn Insurance Map of Pensacola.
3. Architect: Unknown
4. Original plans and construction information: None known
5. Alterations and additions: A corrugated sheet metal coal shed and porch are located at the northwest corner.
6. Important old views: Two photocopies of circa 1920 interior views accompany this data.

B. Historic Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Charles McKenzie Oerting, who served in 1898 as Danish Vice Consul to the King of Denmark and in 1920-27 as the Swedish Vice Consul, was born in Ebeltorf, Denmark, September 16, 1843. He attended the Latin School in Aarhus, Denmark, and immigrated to Pensacola in 1861 with his parents. The Oertings operated a general merchandise store at the Old Navy Yard in

Warrington in 1863 in conjunction with a Mr. Boysen, and in 1866 went into business for themselves. The 1885-86 city directory lists the Oerting dry goods and grocery store as being located at Roman and Tarragonna Streets. Apparently the company, which moved to the present location in 1887 and began advertising the Palafox Street address then in the Pensacola Floridian, became ship chandlers as indicated on the 1892 Sanborn Insurance Map. John Oerting, grandson of the founder, closed the business in 1971 and donated most of the store furnishings and stock to the Historic Pensacola Preservation Board for eventual use in a reconstructed chandlery exhibit.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: County Court Records, Escambia County Court House, Pensacola, Florida; Minute Books, Pensacola City Council, City Hall, Pensacola, Florida.
2. Secondary and published sources: H. Clay Armstrong, History of Escambia County, St. Augustine, Florida: The Record Company, 1930; Pensacola City Directory, 1885-86, 1896, 1898, and 1903; Pensacola Floridian.

Prepared by Rodd L. Wheaton
Architect, HABS
1972

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Description: This building, one-story in height, is rectangular in plan and has brick bearing walls. The fabric of the building is in fair condition.
- B. Description of Exterior:
 1. Overall dimensions: The building measures 50'-0" x 90'-0" with the short dimension paralleling Palafox Street. This does not include the northwest shed structure.
 2. Foundations: It is known that the masonry is supported on heart pine pilings, though the crawl space was inaccessible at the time of the survey.
 3. Wall construction, finish and color: The walling is red brick, 2 5/8" x 4" x 8 1/2" average, laid in common bond with flush 3/8" joints. The north and south walls extend above the roof eaves and form low parapets. The east and

west walls extend above the gable rakes in stepped parapets. Flat arches are over the masonry openings.

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4. Structural system: In addition to the exterior masonry bearing walls, there are at the center line of the building 14'-6" on center, 6" square wood columns with chamfered edges. The floor joists appear to be approximately 17" on center. The attic space was inaccessible.
5. Porches: A shed roof canopy extends over the public sidewalk of Palafox Street. The corrugated sheet metal roof's wood structure is supported on 3" diameter pipe columns. The columns, 7'-11" on center, have a metal loop and an 8" sheet metal disc attached to each as a means of display for fishing poles and their prices.
6. Chimney: A brick chimney with a brick cowl extends above the parapet of the south wall near the west elevation. On the interior the flue, which is corbelled from the brick wall approximately 10'-0" above the floor, is pierced to receive a stove pipe.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: At the east elevation there are six doorways with double inswinging doors in each opening. Each door has two glazed lights over a square panel and are hung below two light transoms in wood frames with 4" thick wood sills. Several of the doorways have been converted to display windows by fixing the inswinging double doors in an open position and enclosing the opening with modern glazing and finish materials. The west doorway, under a shed roofed hood, originally had a pair of inswinging glazed doors with six lights over two panels in each leaf and was similar to the doorway to the shed. The doors have been cut at the lock rail and the panels have been fixed in place. The exterior opening with its barred transom is hung with a pair of shutters. At the north elevation the doorway opening is permanently closed with shutters extending to a barred three light transom.
 - b. Windows: The fixed plate glass display windows of the east and north elevations are installed below iron lintels. Windows on the west and south elevation are double-hung, four-over-four light sash set in plain wood frames and sills. Fixed louvers are located in the east and west parapet at attic vents and cast iron grills are set into the foundation vents.

- c. Shutters: The shutters are constructed from two layers HABS of diagonally and vertically applied beaded tongue and groove boards. Several shutters on exterior openings FLA are sheathed in sheet metal. The shutters have iron 17-PENSA strap hinges hung from cast iron pintles. A pivoted 18- strap-iron bar locks the shutters from the interior when they are closed.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape and covering: The gable roof is covered with a standing-seam sheet metal roof. Gutters; scuppers, which pierce the parapets near each corner; and leaders are of galvanized iron.
- b. Cornice and eaves: The front, east parapet is characterized by a series of corbelled brick courses which form an entablature that receives the stepped parapet having two low sections which flank a high, two level section. Each bay of the parapet is divided with short pilasters and has corbelled brick cappings. The west parapet, of similar design, is plain except for a two course cap.
- c. Skylights: Two metal and glass skylights, one hipped and one gabled, are set onto the roof. In the interior at the ceiling there are iron grills set within the splayed reveals.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The interior space is divided into a sales area and office-storage areas. The principal entrances from Palafox Street open into the sales area. There are storage shelves along the north and south walls with free standing cabinets and display cases in front of the shelves and at the center of the area. The office area at the center rear has a dropped ceiling with exposed 2 x 8 joists, 16" on center, which are floored over and used above for storage. The partition between the office and sales area has sliding sash above the counter height.
2. Stairways: None
3. Flooring: The building has 4" tongue and groove pine flooring. There is a hatch way to the crawl space at the northeast corner of the sales area.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The interior surfaces are sheathed with 3" wide beaded tongue and groove boarding. The boarding is applied horizontally on the walls and extends east and west on the ceiling.

5. Doorways and doors: The openings have modern four and seven panel doors.
6. Decorative features: The early store furniture, including the shelving, display cabinets and counters, provides the only decorative features.
7. Notable hardware: Movable ladders connected to a ceiling track provide for upper shelf access. There are miscellaneous thumb latches with embossed plates.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Lighting: There are exposed porcelain knob and tube wiring installations and various suspended fixtures.
 - b. Heating: There is a gas space heater with a vent to the chimney in the south wall.
- D. Site and Surroundings: This building faces east on South Palafox Street on the southwest corner at West Cedar Street. The Pensacola Bay is approximately 75 feet away through untended open space from the west wall of the building. A walk paved with octagonal black and white cement tiles is at the east and a concrete sidewalk is at the north.

Prepared by F. Blair Reeves, AIA
HABS--Pensacola
July 18, 1968

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project, sponsored by the Pensacola Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission, now known as the Historic Pensacola Preservation Board of Trustees, in cooperation with the Historic American Buildings Survey, was recorded during the summer of 1968 in Pensacola under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of HABS; Professor F. Blair Reeves, AIA (University of Florida), Project Supervisor; and Student Assistant Architects John O. Crosby (University of Florida), David L. Van de Ven, Jr. (Texas Technological College), and Edward Bondi, Jr. (University of Florida). The historical information was prepared by Professor Samuel Proctor (University of Florida), by Assistant Historian Linda V. Ellsworth (Historic Pensacola Preservation Board), and by Rodd L. Wheaton (Architect, HABS) who edited all the data in 1972.