

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Rex Arms Apartments

other names/site number N/A

Name of Multiple Property Listing Portland Oregon's Eastside Historic and Architectural Resources, 1850-1938

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

street & number 1230 SE Morrison Street

☐ not for publication

city or town Portland

☐ vicinity

state Oregon code OR county Multnomah code 051 zip code 97214

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B X C D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register

 determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | private |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - Local |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - State |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - Federal |

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | district |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | object |

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		site
		structure
		object
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Multiple dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY

REVIVALS:

Italian Renaissance

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: BRICK

roof: SYNTHETICS

other

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity).

Summary Paragraph

The Rex Arms Apartments is located at 1230 SE Morrison Street in Portland's Central Eastside. The surrounding area features primarily residential buildings with commercial buildings directly adjacent and along SE Morrison and SE Belmont Streets. As evidenced on building permit cards and in newspaper reports, the Rex Arms Apartments was completed in 1913. Located on a 100x100-foot quarter-block parcel, the Renaissance Revival style building is four stories tall plus a tall daylight basement and is 34,648 square feet in size. Facing north, the primary elevation is arranged nearly symmetrically with the main entrance located within a courtyard lightwell at the center of the façade. The building has a concrete foundation and a masonry exterior with rustication at the basement and first floor levels. It features corner pilasters and strong belt courses. Other architectural details include lintel hoods, balconies, and a prominent sheet metal cornice. The original multi-light wood window sashes have been replaced with vinyl windows, although the original wood window frames were retained. The sashes mimic the muntin pattern of the originals. At the lobby entry, the original front door, elaborate gilded crown molding, marble steps, and penny round tile all remain. The building's interior is organized around an H-shaped, double-loaded corridor. Residential units feature original window casing, trim, pocket doors, dressing rooms, clawfoot tubs, and disappearing beds. The building has moderately high integrity and continues to reflect its historic significance as an early, single-use apartment building. In addition to the replacement windows, alterations to the building include a new secondary entry on the east elevation and remodeling of the kitchens and bathrooms within the units. However, even with these modifications, the building retains sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register.

Narrative Description

SETTING

Located in southeast Portland's Buckman neighborhood within the Central Eastside, the Rex Arms Apartments is situated on a 10,000-square foot lot at the southwest corner of SE 13th Avenue and SE Morrison Street. The square-shaped parcel is designated as Lots 7 and 8 of Block 258 in the East Portland Addition. The lot slopes down toward the west.

SE Morrison Street, which the building's primary façade faces, is a one-way street with two lanes of traffic leading to the Morrison Bridge into downtown Portland. One-half-block to the west is another arterial street—SE 12th Avenue, which flows one-way to the north.

The immediate area consists of a mix of residential and commercial buildings constructed from the 1880s to the 2020s and vacant lots. With few exceptions, there are no single-family homes west of SE 12th Avenue, while to the east, the area is predominantly comprised of single-family homes except along the main corridors such as SE Morrison Street, SE Belmont Street, and SE 12th Avenue. Other apartment buildings are in the vicinity including some from the 1910s, 1920s, and the current century. The west elevation is adjacent to a surface parking lot while the south elevation is adjacent to both an at-grade courtyard and a one-story-tall parking garage topped by a courtyard associated with the 2001 apartment building to the south.

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The Rex Arms' primary facades are shrouded by approximately thirty-year-old Pacific Sunset maple trees planted in the parking strips between the sidewalk and SE Morrison Street and SE 13th Avenue. There were no street trees at the time the building was constructed.

EXTERIOR

The exterior description is presented here first with a general description of the character-defining features of the primary elevations (north, east, and within the courtyard) since these are consistent across all street-facing facades. Following this, shorter elevation descriptions are provided to detail the fenestration patterns and any other features unique to the elevation. Lastly, the two secondary elevations that face the interior of the block are described.

Shown in photos 1-4, the Rex Arms Apartments is a four-story, 34,648 square-foot building with a tall daylight basement. The height and prominence of the basement gives the building the appearance of being five stories. The foundation and basement are constructed with concrete and finished with stucco. Above this, the exterior walls are unreinforced brick masonry. The building's roof is flat with a raised parapet featuring a sheet metal cap.

Having a U-shaped plan, the top of the U opens to the street at the primary elevation and consists of a centrally-placed courtyard lightwell leading to the main entry. The courtyard's placement reinforces a sense of symmetry and also creates a feeling that is open and inviting while maintaining a degree of privacy. The rest of the courtyard will be described later.

The building has a strong base, which is created by a few design features. First, the basement level is given prominence by the use of stucco-finished concrete that contrasts with the brick above. The concrete was formed with horizontal reveals, giving the look of rusticated stone—a feature of the building's Renaissance Revival style. The concrete is capped with a stucco-finished belt course that aligns with the top of the basement level. The rustication continues at the first floor; however, brick is used rather than concrete. The rustication here is achieved with brick reveals using recessed headers every six to seven courses of stretchers. A larger stucco-finished belt course sits between the first and second floors. It appears as a double band with the upper layer having a beveled top and projecting out farther than the lower portion of the band. All combined, these elements give the building a strong base that supports the rest of the elevation above.

Above the basement level, the exterior is clad with moderately textured face brick in deep red tones. The mortar joints are deeply struck to maximize shadow lines. The second and third stories utilize the American bond using a Flemish header every seven courses. The brick bond type starting on the fourth floor is again the American bond but with a course of full headers being inserted every five to six courses of stretchers. Approaching the metal cornice there is a four-step brick cornice which, along with the metal cornice (described below), helps cap the elevation composition. Brick pilasters located at the corners of the primary elevations also appear twice towards the middle of the east elevation. The pilasters add to the feel of order and strength by framing the elevations and breaking up the massing of the east elevation by creating three distinct compositional groupings (similar to the way the courtyard creates three sections on the north elevation). Each pilaster has a concrete base. Further, the pilasters at the three corners on the north elevation are notched where they meet at the corners.

On both the north and east elevations, the building features deeply punched window openings on all levels except the fourth floor. Wood double-awning, single-awning, casement, paired casements, and double-hung windows were all used historically. Regardless of type, size, and location, all original windows had multi-light top sashes with single-light bottom sashes, made to look like double-hung windows. Today, all original windows have been replaced with vinyl sashes within the original wood

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frames. Replacements on the primary elevations match the muntin patterning of the originals, except for the following original window types and sizes:

- Double-awnings with an eighteen-over-one pattern have been replaced by paired nine-over-ones.
- At fire escape egress points, paired casements with a six-over-one pattern in each sash leaf (giving the appearance of a twelve-over-one window) have been replaced with a single twelve-over-one window.

Most windows are topped by unique flat-arch hoods. With their contrasting stucco-finish, the hoods accentuate the lintel area of the window opening. Like the aforementioned double-layered belt course, these hoods employ the same detail with a strong reveal between the thinner top band of the hood and the more recessed inner area underneath. The hoods are not just above the head of the window but extend down at a 90-degree angle on either side. Wrapping the top portion of the window, the inner part of the hood extends down further than the narrower, outer portion. While most of the larger fifteen-over-one windows have these hoods, they have been omitted from the fourth floor entirely and the basement level similarly lacks them. (Hoods also do not appear above balcony doors nor on the first-floor windows directly under balconies.) Lastly, each window on the building features a concrete sill.

Painted metal balconies with concrete floors appear on the east elevation and on all three elevations within the courtyard. These are located on the second, third, and fourth stories. In total, there are 21 balconies for the Rex Arms Apartments' original 61 units. Like the windows, the openings for the balcony doors are deeply punched. The doors were originally narrow, multi-light French doors with matching sidelights. Contrasting with the windows on the rest of the building that have a square multi-light pattern, these balcony doors and sidelights had vertically-oriented rectangular panes of glass. The doors were originally painted or stained in a dark color, in contrast to the whitish color on all other windows including the balcony door sidelights. All balcony doors have been replaced with a single standard-width swinging vinyl or fiberglass door and flanking sidelights. The multi-lights have the same vertical orientation as the original glass panes.

The cornice itself, made of sheet metal, prominently overhangs the walls. Shown in photo 7, its size (combined with the stepped brick cornice described earlier) strongly accentuates the top of the building. As a decorative element, its design is highly detailed with brackets and dentils. The oversized corbels located at the corners of the building and at the pilasters on the eastern wall are exaggerated, half-story tall, and feature three spear-shaped extensions.

Elevations and Patterns of Fenestration

North Elevation – Photos 1-3

The proportions of the north elevation are nearly symmetrical in appearance with the entry courtyard occupying the center. The eastern wing is slightly wider than the western with the former having an extra window. The pattern of fenestration on both wings of this elevation consists of four bays for each wing. The same window appears within each bay at all levels of the building unless otherwise noted.

At the east wing, from left to right at each level:

- The first bay contains a single fifteen-over-one vinyl window. There are hoods at these windows on the first, second, and third floors.
- The second bay contains two smaller nine-over-one single windows.
- The third bay contains a single twelve-over-one window that is accessible to the fire escape. At the basement level this bay is occupied by an exit door. The opening is original, but the wood door with multi-lights in the upper half and wood panels in the lower half has been replaced with a metal door.

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- The fourth bay and the last on the eastern wing contains a single fifteen-over-one window. There are hoods at these windows on the first, second, and third floors.

At the west wing, from left to right at each level:

- The first bay has a single fifteen-over-one window. There are hoods at these windows on the first, second, and third floors.
- The second bay contains a single nine-over-one window.
- The third bay contains a single twelve-over-one window.
- The last bay contains a pair of twelve-over-one windows with the eastern half of the pairing accessible to the fire escape. There are hoods at these windows on the first, second, and third floors. At the basement level, this bay is occupied by an entry door. The opening is original and was used by deliverymen for the residents via the building's dumb waiter system. It had a single step up from the sidewalk which was replaced by a ramp and a simple metal balustrade. The original door type is unknown but is now a metal door with a half-light.

Courtyard Elevations

The entry courtyard has three elevations. The detailing from the north elevation flows seamlessly into the courtyard and all features continue here except that no windows feature lintel hoods and there is no stepped brick cornice within the courtyard. The same window appears within each bay at all levels of the building unless otherwise noted.

- The eastern wall of the courtyard has four bays of fenestration. From the left to the right (outside edge of the courtyard to the inside), the first bay contains balconies on floors two through four accessed from the same balcony door ensemble as described earlier. At the basement and first floor level there is a single fifteen-over-one window. The second bay contains a single nine-over-one window. The third bay contains two single six-over-one windows. The last bay contains a single fifteen-over-one window with none appearing at the basement level.
- The southern wall is at the back of the courtyard and, because of its narrow width, only contains one bay of fenestration. In addition to the stairs and entry vestibule (which will all be described later), there are three balconies with doors and sidelights at levels two through four. Their design matches that which was described earlier.
- The western wall of the courtyard contains five bays of fenestration. From right to left (outside edge of the courtyard to the inside), the first bay contains balconies on floors two through four. At the basement and first floor level there is a single fifteen-over-one window. The second bay contains a pair of twelve-over-one windows on all levels. The third bay contains two single six-over-one windows. The fourth bay contains a pair of twelve-over-one windows. The last bay contains a single fifteen-over-one window, with none appearing at the basement level.

Courtyard Interior and Vestibule

Where the sidewalk on SE Morrison Street meets the courtyard, there is a single step up into the courtyard. The courtyard floor is poured concrete with eight small, circular planters cut into the surface. In the center of the concrete are clay-colored pavers. The walkway leads to twelve concrete steps that have non-original wrought iron handrails and balustrades. Larger planters flank the stairs filling the space on either side.

The stairs ascend to a one-story entry vestibule built in the form of a polygonal bay. Slit windows, seen in photo 9, are on either side of the polygon and look out on the court. The double-door wide opening for the vestibule is open. Markings and hardware on the tile floor at the threshold of the vestibule and entry stairs indicate the former presence of a door or two, possibly with one or two sidelights. A four-light

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transom window above the opening is still present. Above the transom window is a brick jack arch laid on a 60-degree skew to suggest the shape of voussoirs. On top of the vestibule is an apartment balcony, shown in photo 8.

The open vestibule has an original penny round tile floor that is predominantly colored white and patterned with equally spaced "flowers." Each flower is comprised of a single blue tile in the middle with a single layer of green tiles surrounding the blue. Surrounding the six green tiles, and completing the "flower," is a row of alternating white and pink tiles. In the middle of the vestibule, dark green tiles spell out "REX ARMS," shown in photo 10. Approaching the periphery of the vestibule, the design is comprised of a single layer of square green tile and, proceeding further from the center, has a mix of white, burnt orange, dark green, and blue-green tiles in a pattern that evokes a feeling of interlocking saw teeth. The wall base is original marble with dark veining. There is one marble step up from the tile floor into the lobby. Shown in photo 11, an original plaster crown molding has four layers of different motifs: acanthus, dentils, and two other types of abstract foliage all painted with gold paint that is likely original. Beyond the vestibule is the main entry door to the building, pictured in photo 12. It is an original wood door with a full light, flanked by original fifteen-light sidelights.

East Elevation – Photo 4

The east elevation is rigorous in its symmetry. Brick pilasters at the corners and two toward the center of the façade divide it into three sections. The middle section is narrower than the two outer segments, mimicking the courtyard-divided north elevation. The outer two sections each contain three bays of fenestration at each floor level, while the center section has two bays. The same window appears within each bay at all levels of the building unless otherwise noted.

The eight bays are described from left to right:

- The first bay contains a single fifteen-over-one window, except at the basement level which has a metal roll-up door. Originally, this was a pair of wood utility doors. Hoods are used on floors one through three.
- The second bay contains balconies at levels two through four. At the first-floor level, there is a pair of nine-over-one windows. At the basement level, there is an access door with two steps down from the sidewalk. Originally, this was an eighteen-over-one window.
- The third bay matches the second bay with the exception that the basement level has a pair of nine-over-one windows.
- The fourth and fifth bays comprise the middle section of the east elevation and are identical in that they have single fifteen-over-one windows at all levels. Hoods are featured at the windows on floors one through three.
- The sixth and seventh bays both match the third bay having balconies at levels two through four. At the basement and first-floor level, there is a pair of nine-over-one windows.
- The eighth and final bay on this elevation contains a single fifteen-over-one window at all levels. Hoods are featured at the windows on floors one through three.

South Elevation – Photo 5

The south elevation faces the interior of the block, has no architectural detail, and uses common brick that is painted. It features a wide lightwell recessed from the property line. Within the light well is a narrow masonry flue (no longer functional) that extends the full height of the building. Original windows have all been replaced with one-over-one vinyl windows. The same number of windows appear on each level except for the basement where there is only a single pair of windows located in one of the utility rooms. On the levels above the basement, there are twelve bays of windows in total, two on the ends and ten bays within the lightwell. Two of the ten bays within the lightwell are on either side of the return

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elevation (one which faces east and the other west). The basement level of this elevation is partially obstructed by a parking garage (topped by a courtyard) that is associated with the apartment building on the adjacent lot to the south.

West Elevation – Photo 6

The west elevation is also a secondary elevation, lacks architectural detail, and uses common brick that is painted. It has two small lightwells spaced evenly apart. The pattern of fenestration on this elevation is much more limited than on the south. Original windows have all been replaced with one-over-one vinyl windows. Of the three walls that extend to the property line, windows appear on the two outer sections in a single bay of relatively tiny windows; the middle section of the wall is devoid of fenestration. Within the two lightwells are two bays of windows. Additionally, the returns on the lightwells (north and south elevations) have small windows. The basement level has some of these windows omitted.

Other Exterior Elements

Signage and Lighting

On both sides of the entrance to the courtyard are two non-original signs that occupy the locations of original bronze signs that identified the building as the “REX ARMS APARTMENTS.” At present, the east plaque reads the same and the west reads “1230 s. e. Morrison.”

Exterior lamp posts with globe lights were located along both SE 13th Avenue and SE Morrison Street as well as the entry to the courtyard when the building was constructed but they have since been removed.

Fire Escapes

Two fire escapes remain on the building. These are on the north elevation accessed from some of the units and from the ends of the east and west corridors. The landings and railings mimic the design of the balconies, though, like the balconies, they do not have any noteworthy design detail. Originally, a third fire escape was connected with the balconies at the southern end of the eastern elevation. This ensemble has subsequently been modified such that these are balconies only with no fire escape function.

Building Vents

A passive venting system for the residential units appears at regular intervals throughout the brickwork. There are small (approximately four-inch diameter), round, metal vent covers appearing slightly proud of the brick. In addition, there are also square vents cut into the façade two bricks tall and the same dimension wide. The latter either are blocked off or have mesh covering just inside the fascia.

INTERIOR

Floorplan

At the building’s interior, there are three corridors per floor forming an “H” shape. The central east-west corridor provides access to the building’s single elevator and two sets of stairs. The elevator is on the western end of the central corridor and the sets of stairs are on both the east and west ends (with only the west set of stairs reaching the basement). The other two corridors run north-south in the east wing and the west wing. These double-loaded corridors provide access to the residential units and to the fire escapes at the front of the building.

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The basement originally had five residential units, a laundry room, a drying room, utility rooms, and a dumbwaiter system. At present, the basement has six units, a mail room, a laundry room, a recreation room, storage rooms, and three mechanical/utility rooms.

There are 62 apartments total—39 double studios, 17 single studios, and six one-bedroom apartments.

Lobby and First Floor Central Corridor

As described earlier, the lobby is located on the first floor, accessed from the courtyard and pictured in photos 12 and 13. The lobby floor is original to the building and continues the same tile pattern as the vestibule pattern described above. As the lobby transitions to the first floor's central corridor, the penny tile also transitions with a change to a less elaborate pattern. The "flower" motif from the vestibule and lobby continues but they are spaced out further between one another. The periphery is one row of dark-green squares followed by one layer of white squares finalized by two rows of dark-green squares. Damage is present where the two styles collide at the transition between the lobby and central corridor.

There is a large mirror with a piece of flat wood trim around it at the back of the lobby/central corridor wall that does not appear to be historic. Period descriptions note that mahogany fixtures were once present in the lobby, but their character and extent are unknown due to the lack of historic interior photos.¹

Stairs and Elevator

The stairs are U-shaped and constructed of wood with the treads having a vinyl covering. They feature simple square newel posts and a balustrade with square pickets, pictured in photo 15. It is unclear if these stairs are original to the building, as they are very simple and non-descript for a high-end apartment building that was constructed in 1913. New stair railings were added to the wall side of the U in 1986.

A single, large skylight is present at the top of each stairwell, shown in photo 15. These were likely an original feature, but the covers have since been replaced.

The single elevator has a modern, non-original cab although the building did have an automatic elevator when constructed in 1913.²

Corridors

Pictured in photos 16 and 17, corridor walls are a mix of original lath and plaster and modern drywall. The unit doors have been replaced and most of the door casings are also not original. Crown molding lines some of the corridors but its age is undetermined. The east and west corridors are carpeted, with original wood underneath, while the central corridors on each floor above the first have vinyl flooring. Exposed electrical conduit and exposed sprinkler lines are present in all corridors.

Cut into the wall base on some corridors are a few round holes that likely comprised part of a building-wide vacuum system. A dumbwaiter system was also present in the building, accessed via the corridors, but the shafts were walled over in 1974 with at least one removed completely in 1986.³

¹ "New Buildings," *Chamber of Commerce Bulletin*, 1913, volumes 18-19, p. 287

² Ads such as "Walking Distance," *Oregon Daily Journal*, November 8, 1913, 1.

³ "Apartments Have Latest Conveniences," *Oregon Daily Journal*, August 16, 1914, 16. This article describes Richard's next apartment house (built in 1914) which was very similar to the Rex Arms and had a building-wide vacuum

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The central corridors have a fire door towards the center and one fire door on either end as it transitions to the east and west corridors. The placement of and types of fire doors within the corridors has changed numerous times in the building's history according to renovation permits and plans on file with the City of Portland.

While there are residential units in the basement, the corridors there have a more characteristically utilitarian look and feel.

Units

The dominant unit type is a double-room studio with two roughly equal-sized rooms separated by pocket doors, in addition to a kitchen, a bathroom, and a closet. Windows inside of the units have mostly original casings. Door casings, in some cases, have been modified. Original wall base is present in most units. These features are depicted in photos 19 and 20.

There are a variety of door types within units. Some units have five-paneled wood doors on the closet and others have single-light over two-panel doors. Within some units are multi-light wood doors with translucent patterned glass. These were originally entry doors for the units and, while they were removed from the corridors for fire safety reasons in 1974 and 1986, some were relocated within apartment units. Door hardware is of mixed vintages, with some original to the building's construction. Example doors are shown in photos 21 and 22.

Walls throughout the units are made of lath and plaster. Applied acoustical ceiling tiles are found in some units. Fire sprinkler lines are exposed.

Most units have carpet over the original oak floors in the living area. In-unit stoves were originally present in one of the two main rooms in the double-studio units but have since been removed.

Full-size roll-out, disappearing beds provided by the Holmes Disappearing Bed Company are original and found predominantly in the double-studio units.^{4,5} Shown in photo 20, the beds roll into a buffet-style cabinet in the main living area that extends into an adjacent kitchen cupboard and adjacent dressing room cupboard within a walk-in closet. The buffet-style cabinets were re-built or re-faced after the period of significance.

All units have kitchens that now predominantly have 1980s-era cabinets, vinyl sheet flooring, and newer appliances, as seen in photo 23.

Private bathrooms exist in all units with some retaining their original hex tile floors. The original bathroom cabinetry has mostly been replaced by 1950s-era storage shelves and doors. Bathrooms, for the most part, have non-original sinks and toilets, however, some original claw foot tubs remain. These conditions are shown in photos 24 and 25.

Many of the kitchens and bathrooms have access to one of six airshafts that are present in the building. These shafts are original and had served a dual purpose: ventilation and daylight. A single hopper window opens into the shaft. In some, the glazing was later replaced with solid fireproof material.

cleaning system and a dumbwaiter system for the delivery of milk, food, and ice.

⁴ "East Side Booms," *Oregonian*, June 1, 1913, 9.

⁵ "Fine New Apartment House Completed," *Oregon Daily Journal*, August 24, 1913, 14.

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ALTERATIONS⁶

The following list includes the alterations to the building:

- The exterior lamp posts were removed at an unknown time prior to 1986.
- Original bronze "Rex Arms Apartments" plaques were replaced on the north elevation at a date unknown.
- Smoke doors were added in the corridors in 1923 with multiple changes in the types and locations of them over the years.
- One unit was added to the basement, replacing the building's office, before 1954.
- Significant fires in 1964 and 1997 prompted a variety of repairs.^{7,8}
- The combination balcony-fire escape assemblage on the east elevation had the fire escape apparatus removed in 1982. These were converted to modified balconies at that time. In 1998 they were replaced with balconies to match the other existing balconies.
- Apartments underwent remodeling in 1986. Part of this process included the replacement of multi-light unit doors with solid-core doors for fire safety. These multi-light doors were relocated within the units in at least some cases.
- An access ramp was added from the sidewalk to the basement entry at the northwest corner of the building in 1993.
- All windows were replaced around 1998.
- A window was removed at the basement level on the southeast corner to create a new door to the basement in 1998.
- The original cable elevator was replaced with a new hydraulic elevator in 1998.
- The original basement entry at the far south end of the east elevation was converted to a roll-up door in 1998.

SEVEN ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY

The Rex Arms Apartments retains historic integrity to convey its significance as an early high-style, single-use apartment building on Portland's eastside that was architect-designed and constructed with quality materials. Integrity is reflected through the retention of many of its original character features. On the exterior, these include rusticated base, belt courses, masonry details, lintel hoods, balconies, elaborate cornice, courtyard, and entry vestibule. On the interior, character features include the lobby tile, pocket doors, disappearing beds, and wood trim.

The following is an analysis of the seven aspects of integrity:

Location. The property remains at the same location, so integrity is high.

Setting. Integrity of setting is moderately high. SE Morrison Street retains the same width and other period apartment houses remain. Building sizes range from one to four stories while the newest apartment buildings in the vicinity are up to seven stories. While development pressure has brought about changes to Portland's eastside, the low-rise, commercial-residential character is still present near the nominated property. The most notable aspects of the setting that have changed since the period of significance include the loss of the adjacent church buildings and the streetcar system along

⁶ All alterations and dates were discovered through the review of the City of Portland permit records for the building.

⁷ "Portland Fire Takes One Life," *Albany Democrat Herald*, December 15, 1964, 7.

⁸ "Four-Alarm Fire Burns Apartment," *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, February 15, 1997, 3.

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SE Morrison. Additionally, only a few single-family homes remain, and their uses are now commercial.

Design. Integrity of design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. For the Rex Arms, integrity of design is moderately high. The exterior of the building has no alterations to massing, proportions, or scale. Character-defining features including the brick, stucco, belt courses, pilasters, lintel hoods, cornice, courtyard, and entry vestibule all remain at the exterior. The floorplan remains unchanged on the interior. The original penny round tile in the lobby remains. Within the units, original single doors and double pocket doors remain, as well as bathroom hex tile, clawfoot tubs, disappearing beds, and some original trim. These features convey the high-style character of the Rex Arms apartments and the fact that it was a uniquely upscale apartment house when constructed in 1913. The primary loss with respect to integrity of design is the replacement of the windows. The vinyl replacements have the same pattern in most cases and, when not, were at least faithful attempts to replicate the look of the originals.

Materials. Integrity of materials is moderately high, for largely the same reasons as discussed under "design." The building retains the original materials that make up the exterior walls and decorative features including the belt courses, lintel hoods, and elaborate sheet metal cornice. At the vestibule and lobby, unique materials such as the penny round tile floor, elaborate plaster crown molding, marble step, and marble wall base are retained. The apartment units do not retain all of their original materials, but feature some original doors, wood floors under carpet, tile floors in the bathrooms, plaster walls, and trim. The most noteworthy loss of materials includes the replacement of the wood windows with vinyl and the replacement of original corridor doors with fire-rated wood doors.

Workmanship. Workmanship refers to the quality of the craftsman's product. The Rex Arms was a single-use apartment building constructed with high-quality materials for middle- and upper-class renters and it had a high degree of workmanship in the many finish details. Integrity of workmanship is moderately high, and it is seen in the brick detailing, elaborate cornice, original lobby entry door, wood trim such as window casings, and, lastly, the tile floor, crown molding, and marble surfaces in the vestibule and lobby.

Feeling. Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period. At the Rex Arms, integrity of feeling is moderately high. Through the retention of the aforementioned character-defining features, the building retains its feeling from the historic period such that a visitor can experience an awareness of its history as a high-style, early-20th century apartment building.

Association. Integrity of association is defined as "the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property." This connection can occur only if the property's historic features survive. For the Rex Arms Apartments, integrity of association is moderately high. There are enough surviving physical features for a visitor to experience the direct link with the building's significance as an early high-style, single-use apartment building.

In summary, the Rex Arms Apartments retains moderately high integrity overall. The replacement of the windows and alterations to the building's interior have reduced some aspects of integrity; however, the building retains many of its character features and still conveys its significance as a single-use, early 20th century apartment building and an important design by architect Richard F. Wassell.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1913

Significant Dates

1913: construction completion

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wassell, Richard F.: architect and builder

Period of Significance (justification)

The appropriate period of significance for the Rex Arms Apartments is 1913, as this is the year its construction was completed.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary) N/A

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

The Rex Arms Apartments has local significance under National Register Criterion C for architecture and is nominated under the *Portland Oregon's Eastside Historic and Architectural Resources, 1850-1938* MPD as one of the best examples of a high-style, masonry apartment house in the MPD study area. It meets both the general and property type registration requirements. It is also nominated as the work of master architect Richard F. Wassell. When it was constructed in 1913, the Rex Arms Apartments was a notably large masonry apartment building that reflected the caliber of architecture previously only seen in Portland's downtown and northwest neighborhoods. The building substantially elevated the design quality of buildings in the Buckman neighborhood, offering a sophisticated multifamily housing option in this part of the city. Richard Wassell's design utilized a U-shaped floorplate which, combined with the Renaissance Revival styling, created a monumental, richly-articulated façade. With humble roots as a brick layer, Richard was a self-taught architect who was also in the role of real estate developer and builder. Over this career, he would become known for his large, high-style apartment houses and the Rex Arms was a seminal building in his portfolio reflecting an increased level of design mastery and sophistication.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

Introduction

Built in 1913 in Portland's Buckman neighborhood, the Rex Arms Apartments is nominated under Criterion C with local significance as a high-style, brick apartment house constructed within the study area of the *Portland Oregon's Eastside Historic and Architectural Resources, 1850-1938* MPD. This four-story, quarter-block building is nominated under Criterion C as the best example of a large-scale Renaissance Revival apartment house in the MPD study area. The Rex Arms was built for middleclass renters who were attracted to more urban-style living and had the money to spend on higher-end housing. Its construction was also part of the building up of the eastside during a period where the area transformed from the disjointed development patterns of its early years to parcels more conducive to development with higher quality buildings. The Rex Arms' sophisticated, high-style design was groundbreaking for the neighborhood and this nomination seeks to document its significant place in the development of apartment buildings within the MPD study area.

Additionally, the Rex Arms is a seminal building in the portfolio of Richard F. Wassell who was the architect, developer, general contractor, and first apartment manager. Pictured in Figure 16, Richard was an ambitious and talented second-generation Scotsman who learned about construction from his family of tradesmen and about architectural design through self-study. The Rex Arms demonstrates his maturation and skill development as an architect, and Richard would go on to design several other important apartment buildings that exhibited variations on the themes he used at the Rex Arms.

This Statement of Significance is organized into two sections that build an understanding of the factors that brought about the development of the Rex Arms Apartments. The first section begins with a review of how the nominated property meets the MPD registration requirements, followed by a historical overview of multifamily housing in Portland generally and within the MPD study area. The section goes on to define the Renaissance Revival style and details how the Rex Arms conforms with the characteristics of this style. Next, the nomination then recounts the story of the building of the Rex Arms, completed in 1913, and ends with a comparative analysis that analyses other similar apartment houses within the MPD study area. The second section of the Statement of Significance focuses on architect Richard F. Wassell. His role as a designer of important apartment houses in Portland has not been well-documented and, thusly, Richard has not received recognition from architectural historians for his expertise and significant contributions. This section of the nomination documents Richard Wassell's career, demonstrating that he was a remarkable, self-trained architect in Portland and argues that the Rex Arms was a significant building within his portfolio.

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MPD Registration

The Rex Arms is being nominated under the *Portland Oregon's Eastside Historic and Architectural Resources, 1850-1938* MPD umbrella. The multiple property document details the criteria and registration requirements for listing. These requirements are as follows:

1. An eligible resource must have been built between 1862 and 1938.

Response: The Rex Arms was built in 1913 and, therefore, meets the first registration requirement.

2. The resource should retain sufficient integrity to evoke the character of its style or function type.

Response: While the Rex Arms has had some alterations, including replacement windows and some interior remodeling, the building retains sufficient integrity to meet the second registration requirement. Its functional type as an apartment building is clearly expressed through its massing, site orientation, centrally-placed entrance location, fenestration patterns, interior plan type with an H-shaped double-loaded corridor, and apartment features such as “disappearing beds,” pocket doors, clawfoot tubs, and walk-in closets. Further, its integrity continues to reflect its Renaissance Revival style through the use of a rusticated base, flat roof, formal elevations, pilasters and belt courses, hoods above the windows, and elaborate cornice with dentils.

3. The resource should be one of the best examples or most characteristic examples typifying that style or function.

Response: The Rex Arms Apartments maintains the characteristics of a high-style apartment building designed in the Renaissance Revival style with the features noted above. It was the largest and most elaborate apartment building constructed in the MPD study area. The building's development in 1913 reflects Portland's growing population and the expansion of housing types on the eastside of the city. Using high quality materials and a sophisticated design of Renaissance Revival elements, the building reflected a caliber of design and construction that was unique for the eastside. As the comparative analysis will later demonstrate, the Rex Arms is one of the best examples of both its style and function in the MPD study area.

Brief Historic Overview of Portland's Eastside and the Buckman Neighborhood

Portland's development as a city began in 1843 on the west side of the Willamette River. The eastside was populated starting in 1850, became the town of East Portland in 1870, and eventually consolidated with Portland in 1891. Development in East Portland was gradual as the land was spacious but compromised by low, marshy areas that created barriers to transportation and the attendant building construction. Railroads came to East Portland to unload goods that were transported via ferries to the population center on the other side of the Willamette. The ferries were eventually replaced by bridges. The bridges allowed for the development of streetcar lines, which motivated property owners and city government to improve the land for commercial development. Accelerated population growth started in 1901 and was furthered by the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition, with the eastside experiencing significant development to house the growing working and middle classes.⁹

The MPD study area roughly stretches from the Willamette River to SE Cesar Chavez Boulevard, and from E Burnside Street to SE Hawthorne Boulevard. The neighborhood where the Rex Arms is located is called

⁹ Timothy Askin and Ernestina Fuenmayor, *National Register Nomination for the North Buckman Historic District*, No. 13000481, 2013, 18-19.

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Buckman, Portland's first suburb and the chief neighborhood within the MPD study area. Peak development in Buckman was between 1889 and 1915.

Apartment Building Context in Portland and the MPD Study Area¹⁰

Apartments were constructed in Portland starting in the 1880s, initially with tenement-type buildings for immigrant groups, then housing above retail shops along commercial corridors, followed by duplexes, rowhouses, downtown boarding houses, extended-stay hotels, and eventually apartment houses. By 1902, apartments, called "flats" during this early era, were so popular and profitable that a "mania" had developed.¹¹ Clusters of apartment buildings were developed, but they remained small (in height and footprint), were built mostly of wood, and often had ground-floor retail.¹² As the demand for apartments rose, so did the size of the buildings. In 1904, the eventual "apartment-house king"—William L. Morgan—built a thirteen-unit apartment building, widely hailed (but reviled by critics), as the first apartment house in Portland. More and more of these buildings followed, the demand coinciding with the thousands of travelers who came to the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition, many of whom stayed in Portland. By 1909, there were one hundred of these buildings in Portland—most being on the west side. The following year, with so many apartment houses being built (and immediately rented), it was said that Portland was becoming a "city of apartments."¹³ Buildings were getting larger to meet the growing demand, with one newspaper noting a "large building movement" had begun with apartment houses that could accommodate 20-50 families.¹⁴

While some in Portland considered the apartment house a fad, the demand from renters was strong enough to cause a "departure" in design that led to a new class of apartments.¹⁵ These would be the predecessors of the Rex Arms Apartments: large, palatial, and ornate apartment houses that first arose in 1909-1910. Developers were willing to fund high-style exteriors that would attract attention with "artistic features" with some described as "sumptuous affairs of stone and brick."^{16,17} Spacious lobbies, decorative elements, and, eventually, courtyards built the image of the apartment as a luxurious abode. Unit amenities included "hot and cold water, automatic telephones, disappearing beds" and gas stoves in a small, efficient "kitchenette."¹⁸ This development in convenience brought "all the comforts of the wealthy class" to the average person.¹⁹

The development of apartment houses in Portland beginning in 1904 was "almost like a contagion."²⁰ Land values quadrupled in a few years' time and doubled again in 1910 at desirable close-in sites. A 15-20% return on investment was common.²¹ In the fifteen years between the Exposition and the start of 1920, over 400 new apartment buildings were constructed in Portland. Eventually extending to the eastside, the Rex Arms was part of the "mania" apartment construction that saw developers rapidly responding to the feverish demand for this new multi-family housing type. Starting in 1908, many quarter-block buildings were constructed on the eastside that featured two or more floors of apartments. The *Oregonian* noted that eastside apartment buildings "are combination store and rooming-house buildings" and the "pure apartment house seems to be left to the West Side."²² That would change in early 1910 when Richard Wassell—developer and designer of the Rex Arms—constructed the first purely residential apartment building within the MPD study area at 1235 SE Yamhill St. It was, however, atypical of the apartment houses that would follow (like the Rex Arms) due to

¹⁰ This contextual information is provided here because the MPD does not provide contextual information about apartment house development.

¹¹ "Mania for Apartment Houses," *Morning Oregonian*, June 12, 1902, 6.

¹² "Flats Are Become a Feature in Portland's Newest Buildings," *Sunday Oregonian*, October 8, 1905, 18.

¹³ "Apartment Solves City's Housing Problem," *Oregon Daily Journal*, April 3, 1912, 66.

¹⁴ "Population Gains in Older District," *Sunday Oregonian*, June 26, 1910, 10.

¹⁵ "New Idea in Apartment Houses," *Oregon Daily Journal*, September 5, 1909, 56.

¹⁶ "Glance Backward at City's Building Shows Evolution," *Oregon Daily Journal*, April 2, 1911, 71.

¹⁷ "Apartment House Fad Takes a Firm Hold on Portland," *Oregon Daily Journal*, August 6, 1911, 19.

¹⁸ "Apartment Houses Built in Numbers," *Oregon Daily Journal*, April 10, 1910, 72.

¹⁹ "Apartment in Demand," *Sunday Oregonian*, November 6, 1910, 9.

²⁰ "Apartment Solves City's Housing Problem," *Oregon Daily Journal*, April 3, 1912, 66.

²¹ "Many Built Here," *Sunday Oregonian*, January 22, 1911, 40.

²² "Flats Popular in Central District," *Oregonian*, April 3, 1910, 3.

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its small size, location away from the streetcar line, and lack of architectural detail. The Pally Apartments—recently listed in the National Register—was the first quarter-block (100x100') building that was exclusively apartments in the MPD study area, completed later in 1910. The Wellesley Court Apartments, built between 1911 and 1912, followed the Pally as the second building with the same defining features for the building type. It was the first apartment house on the eastside to utilize a street-facing courtyard.

(Note: The MPD puts forth that the first large-scale apartment house was built c. 1915 in the Prairie style. However, given the Pally, Wellesley Court, Rex Arms Apartments, as well as two other similar apartment houses (Lambrook and the first phase of Melcliffe Court Apartments) were all completed by 1913 in a style other than Prairie, this part of the MPD is incorrect.)

The Pally, Wellesley Court, and the other apartment blocks in the MPD study area that followed in the next few years, including the Rex, all generally had the following defining characteristics, which constituted a new, more commanding type of building in the area:

- Large scale—typically a quarter-block and 3 or more stories
- Built to the property line
- Raised basement, resulting in an architecturally stronger base, increased fenestration, and a greater sense of procession when entering the building (because the entry is not at grade like combination business/apartment buildings that have ground-floor walk-in stores)
- Single building entry with architectural prominence
- Masonry construction
- Flat roof with parapet
- Architectural detailing, often including belt courses, special details in the masonry, and a prominent cornice
- Street-facing entry courtyard or a large courtyard lightwell facing the interior of the block
- Use of highly ordered styles including those based on classical precedent like Renaissance Revival or Classical Revival, or the Commercial Style

Renaissance Revival Style

The Rex Arms is arguably the best example of the Renaissance Revival style in the MPD study area, which is a relatively uncommon style in this part of Portland. In the simplest terms, American Renaissance Revival architecture focused on a celebration of forms and motifs inspired by the Italian Renaissance of the 16th Century. The style was first popularized on the East Coast of the United States by architects like McKim, Mead & White as early as the 1880s. Early in its use, the style was mostly employed in the designs for public buildings, banks, and large residences. Typical characteristics of the Renaissance Revival style include:

- At least three or more stories in height
- Flat roof
- Richly embellished cornice
- Monumental scale
- Symmetry
- Formal design
- Masonry construction
- Strong, rusticated base with upper floors having a smoother wall surface
- Italian Renaissance details including columns, pilasters, belt courses, keystones, quoins, dentils, balustrades, and/or balconies
- Windows and/or doors framed with pedimented hoods

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- Decorative round-arched windows

The Renaissance Revival style was part of a larger design movement that coincided with America's growing industrialization and was a reaction against picturesque styles. The major impetus for the renewed interest in this style was the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago where the main promenade of the fair was lined with rows of Classical and Renaissance-style buildings, making a strong impression on the 27 million people who attended the fair. Proponents of the Renaissance Revival style would advocate for a return to the disciplined order of classical precedent. Over the next 25 years, architectural styles popularized at the World's Fair would significantly shape the character of buildings across the country. As opposed to the more ornamented and feminine character of Victorian-era buildings, this new period of "American Renaissance" resulted in architectural designs that were imbued with greater strength, solidity, order, and formality.

The American Renaissance movement was further exemplified and expanded by the formation of architectural clubs in many cities around the country to promote the ideals of classicism. In Oregon, the Portland Architectural Club was formed in 1907, producing publications and exhibits that displayed buildings designed in classically-inspired styles. The club eventually consolidated with the Pacific Coast Architectural League and is said to have been very influential in fostering local interest in Classical and Renaissance buildings in Portland.²³

Richard Wassell's design for the Rex Arms Apartments brings in many components of the Renaissance Revival style, though often in a more abstracted way. Referencing the list of style characteristics above, the Rex Arms is aligned with the Renaissance Revival style in the following respects:

- The building is four stories tall but has the appearance of five stories given the tall basement.
- The roof is flat.
- One of the most striking features of the building is its richly embellished cornice with prominent dentils and corbels.
- While not precisely symmetrical, the formality of the building's design, the central courtyard, and the orderly nature of the fenestration and other design elements all reinforce a sense of symmetry.
- The building uses masonry construction with a stuccoed concrete base at the basement level to create a sense of monumentality. Further, the reveal lines in the concrete and the rustication of the brick at the first floor create the requisite rusticated base that contrasts with the smoother brick wall surfaces above.
- Pilasters, belt courses, and balconies are all Renaissance Revival elements that are employed in Richard's design. Most notably, the windows are framed with hoods. These are not classically styled pedimented hoods but instead a unique geometric abstraction of this classical element.
- Overall, the building's design conveys strength and formality through its well-defined lines, rectilinear forms, and absence of curves.

The Building of the Rex Arms Apartments

Located at the corner of SE Morrison Street and SE 13th Avenue, the parcel where the Rex was built was adjacent to the City and Suburban Railway Company's Sunnyside and Mt. Tabor streetcar lines. These provided easy access to businesses along SE Grand Avenue and downtown beyond. Along SE Morrison Street, however, most lots—and even some entire blocks—between 7th and 12th were completely empty in the 1909 Sanborn maps due to the existence of Asylum Creek.²⁴ With the city starting to fill in the creek, the Greater Portland Plan of 1912 identified SE 12th Avenue as part of a "circuit" or beltway around the core of

²³ Rosalind Clark, *Architecture Oregon Style: Architecture from 1840 to the 1950s*, Portland: Professional Book Center, 1983, 125-126.

²⁴ Asylum Creek was 20-feet deep and wide enough to warrant a bridge before it was eventually filled in before and during 1913.

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Portland.²⁵ These two improvements close to the Rex Arms' building site likely added to the desirability of the property for a large-scale housing development. Unlike the aforementioned Pallay Apartments, the lot was sufficiently removed from the commercial and industrial areas, while still being easily accessible to the city's employment centers. Furthermore, it was desirable for an upscale apartment building in that the other uses on the block were single-family homes and a half-block assemblage of buildings and a professionally-designed playground associated with the St. David of Wales Episcopal Church.²⁶ The church, constructed between 1892 and 1902, was an impressive, high-style masonry building that was demolished in 1957.²⁷ The surrounding blocks were predominately comprised of single-family homes and two-story buildings with flats. The lot where the Rex Arms is located is marked on the 1908 and 1924 Sanborn maps in Figures 10 and 11.

The R. F. Wassell Company purchased the site upon which the nominated property stands for \$20,000 in November 1912.²⁸ (The company was formed in 1911 and included Richard, his father Joseph, his uncle Donald Downie, investor Donald McBride, and James McKinnon. Further discussion about this milestone in Richard's career occurs later in the nomination.) Rather than demolish the existing house on the site—an elaborate Queen Anne home built in 1890 for owner W. S. Salmon—Richard instead moved it a few blocks where it was situated next to his first apartment building on SE 13th Avenue and SE Yamhill Street. It still stands today and is listed in the National Register.²⁹

Also in November 1912, Richard traveled to Los Angeles to learn about the latest and best features in apartment house development, specifically for incorporation into his design of the Rex Arms.³⁰ He likely attended the November 14th formal opening of the new Rex Arms Apartments on Wilshire Boulevard—a nine-story, one hundred-unit structure that was reportedly the largest and finest apartment building at the time on the West Coast.³¹ The developer—Franz “Frank” O. Engstrum—had visited Portland for a couple of weeks in July 1912 and may have initially made Richard's acquaintance at that time.³² While Richard was likely inspired by Frank's building in the naming of his own, the two structures otherwise have no similarities. The name likely appealed to Richard because of its roots in Great Britain where he was from. Historically, pubs and inns displayed the heraldic insignia of the local lord's coat of arms on their place of business, and thus “Arms” was incorporated into many business names.³³ While “Arms” names were given to hotel and apartment buildings in the United States as early as 1887, Rex Arms was the first “Arms” apartment building in Oregon. With “Rex” meaning king or ruler in Latin, combining these words made for a distinguished and venerable building name and Richard would go on to include “Arms” in the names of his next three apartment buildings.

By March of the following year, Richard had completed the plans for the Rex Arms in Portland. He is known to be the building's designer based on newspaper reports that name him as the architect, which is consistent with his known role in the R. F. Wassell Co.^{34,35} See Figure 13 for one example. The building permit for the Rex Arms was issued on April 11, 1913 and construction commenced that month, shown in Figure 12.³⁶ Before the building was substantially complete four months later, newspapers were touting it as a modern apartment

²⁵ “The Greater Portland Plan of Edward H. Bennett,” Portland, OR, October 1912, 10.

²⁶ “New Playground to Open,” *Morning Oregonian*, April 1, 1913, 20

²⁷ “For Thine is the Kingdom,” *Oregon Daily Journal*, April 4, 1920, 63. F. W. Lester was architect and plans were accepted and construction started in 1892.

²⁸ “East Side Corner Sells for \$20,000,” *Oregon Daily Journal*, November 17, 1912, 55.

²⁹ The Wassell family retained the Salmon House until 1933 as an income-producing property, renting out individual rooms. See ads for 171 E. 13th St. such as “Housekeeping Rooms in Private Family,” *Morning Oregonian*, November 13, 1916, 15.

³⁰ “Portland Realty Again Is Active,” 58.

³¹ “New Apartments Model of Type,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 17, 1912, 71.

³² “Personal Mention,” *Sunday Oregonian*, July 28, 1912, 14.

³³ “Where did the word arms for prestigious hotels and apartment buildings come from?” <https://zippyfacts.com/where-did-the-word-arms-for-prestigious-hotels-and-apartment-buildings-come-from/>, accessed March 24, 2023.

³⁴ “Fine New Apartment House Completed,” *Oregon Daily Journal* August 24, 1913, 14.

³⁵ “Syndicate Builds ‘Royal Arms,’” *Oregonian*, July 26, 1914, 51. Credits him with being the designer of Rex Arms and Royal Arms while reporting on the latter.

³⁶ “Large East Side Apartment House to Cost \$95,000,” *Oregon Daily Journal*, April 20, 1913, 14.

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house of “high-class construction” and one of the “most elaborate” and “pretentious” apartment houses on the eastside.^{37,38,39,40} The total cost of the project was \$95,000 including the land purchase. A first mortgage was secured with a \$45,000 bond issue where the bonds and they were touted as being “one of the choicest high-rate investments ever offered in Portland.”⁴¹

Remarkably, in addition to acting as developer, architect, and builder, Richard also became the first apartment manager of the Rex Arms.⁴² The completion of the building was publicized in newspaper ads beginning in August 1913 and apartments were rented for \$25-\$40 a month.⁴³ One such ad is shown in Figure 14. According to the initial newspaper advertisements, there were 53 units upon opening but by September 19, the ads had increased the number to 61 units. Rental advertisements noted the building was a fireproof structure and that rooms were well-lighted and well-ventilated in addition to being equipped with all the latest and modern conveniences.⁴⁴ These included an elevator, dumbwaiter system for deliveries, and a central vacuum system. Some units were rented furnished while others were not.⁴⁵ Originally present, lamp posts along SE Morrison Street, SE 13th Avenue, and at the entry to the courtyard lent an aura of prestige in a neighborhood that otherwise lacked what was more commonly found downtown. Additionally, the large number of balconies was also a first for this neighborhood, again, suggesting the apartment house had more features and desirability to offer compared with others within the MPD study area.

After the Rex Arms was completed and rented to tenants, Richard ran into challenges with getting final approval from the building department and the case eventually went to court. He alleged discriminatory treatment by the inspector’s office who blocked approval on a technical violation of the building code. Richard was quoted saying: “If you don’t stand in with the building inspector, you don’t get much consideration. The inspector allowed me to complete the building, rent all apartments, and then he notified me the rear [parapet/fire] wall was not high enough” when other surrounding apartment buildings have the same violation.⁴⁶ Given Richard’s young age and working-class roots, it is conceivable that he was not part of the inner network of developers and builders the inspector’s office typically dealt with. Completion of the building to meet code was also likely hampered by familial loss, as Richard’s mother became ill with pneumonia that autumn and passed in November.⁴⁷ The court matter finally concluded in December and the Rex Arms received final approval in June 1914. A photo of the complete Rex Apartments is shown in Figure 15.

Wassell & Company sold the Rex Arms in 1915 to Grant Smith Securities Company—a wealthy Spokane-based railway construction company.⁴⁸ The building was valued at \$150,000.⁴⁹ At the time of the sale, Richard reported that the proceeds would be put towards the development of another building, which would eventually be the Tudor Arms Apartments.⁵⁰ The Rex Arms changed hands many times until 1982 when REACH Community Development Corporation—the present owner—bought the building and renovated it as affordable housing.⁵¹ In all, the Rex Arms has continuously operated as an apartment house since it was constructed in 1913.

³⁷ “Building Growth Big,” *Oregonian*, May 11, 1913, 20.

³⁸ “Large East Side Apartment House to Cost \$95,000,” *Oregon Daily Journal*, April 20, 1913, 14.

³⁹ “East Side Booms,” *Oregonian*, June 1, 1913, 22.

⁴⁰ “Two Fine Structures Are Built in East Side Residence Section,” *Oregonian*, August 17, 1913, 25.

⁴¹ “7% Bonds,” *Oregonian*, October 4, 1913, 11.

⁴² 1914 Polk’s City Directory for Portland, <https://tinyurl.com/4jadssem>

⁴³ *Oregon Daily Journal*, various dates starting in August 1913

⁴⁴ “Two Fine Structures Are Built in East Side Residence Section,” *Oregonian* August 17, 1913, 25.

⁴⁵ “Walking Distance,” *Oregonian*, November 23, 1913, 77.

⁴⁶ “Builder Makes Charge Against Inspectors,” *Oregon Daily Journal*, October 2, 1913, 6.

⁴⁷ Standard Certificate of Death, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Portland, Oregon, Anstus Thompson Fleming Wassell, <https://tinyurl.com/ysaake9m>, accessed 8/4/2023.

⁴⁸ “\$200,000 Sale, Biggest Inside Deal of Year, Is Prosperity Sign,” *Morning Oregonian*, February 8, 1915, 16.

⁴⁹ “Principals in Big Deal Known,” *Sunday Oregonian*, February 28, 1915, 20.

⁵⁰ “Two Big Apartments Sold,” *Oregon Sunday Journal*, February 14, 1915, 30.

⁵¹ “Housing Renovated,” *Oregonian*, December 12, 1986, 116.

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Comparative Analysis with Other Apartment Buildings in the MPD Study Area

Six properties were selected for comparative analysis with the Rex Arms Apartments. They were chosen because they share a similar large scale, are strictly residential buildings, are within the boundaries and timeframe of the MPD, are of the Renaissance Revival style or feature design details indicative of a high-style typology, are of masonry construction, and have at least moderate integrity. As such, some apartment buildings located within the MPD study area were omitted when these criteria were not met.

Pallay Apartments

631 SE Taylor Street
Figure 25

As previously mentioned, the Pallay Apartments was the first large-scale building of apartments only (no commercial uses) built in the MPD study area. It was designed by Alexander Ewart for developer Morris Pallay in 1910 and was listed in the National Register in 2020. Different from the Rex, the Pallay is located within the commercial-industrial district of the eastside and served as housing for this employment district. This Renaissance Revival-style building has some decorative detailing using brick arches and dentils, scoring in the stucco to mimic stone block, an overhanging cornice, and decorative parapet at the roof. However, the level of design detail is significantly less than the Rex Arms with its more elaborate cornice, geometric window hoods, balconies, pilasters, belt courses, and rusticated base. The Rex Arms is also larger and has a more monumental presence. Lastly, the Rex Arms' facades are more richly articulated with fenestration than the Pallay. While the Pallay Apartments was an important early building that helped shape the commercial-industrial area of the eastside, the Rex is a more sophisticated high-style design and is arguably the most elaborate apartment building constructed in the MPD study area.

Wellesley Court Apartments

829 SE 15th Avenue
Figure 26

Located just two blocks away from the Rex Arms, the Wellesley Court Apartments was built before the Rex Arms in two successive phases in 1911 and 1912, making it the second known large-scale apartment house within the MPD study area. Like the Rex Arms, the building is four stories with a daylight basement sitting on a quarter-block lot. It is also U-shaped with a street-facing central courtyard. It was developed by Walla Walla architects and builders Bailey, Taylor, and Lambert for \$90,000. (The Taylor in this association was Richard Wassell's cousin and business associate, Alexander Taylor, Jr.⁵²) Designed in what could be defined as the Commercial Style, the sidewalk entry into the central courtyard features brick piers with cast stone capitals and ball finials. The building's entry doors are not original and are set into a simple projecting porch supported by cast stone piers and pilasters. While the Wellesley features punched windows, brick pilasters, belt courses, and a simple projecting cornice, its decoration is otherwise minimal. Its south elevation along SE Belmont Street looks very much like warehouse buildings being constructed at the time in Portland. Unlike the Rex Arms, there are no decorative details at the windows, no balconies, and no elaborate cornice. The building's original six-over-one and eight-over-one wood windows have mostly all been replaced with slider windows. While Wellesley Court was a notable design and a very large building for the neighborhood when completed in 1912, the Rex Arms achieved greater design sophistication with its more detailed Renaissance Revival presentation the following year.

⁵² "Building Records Here Surpass Any City of 300,000," *Oregon Daily Journal*, January 1, 1911, 32.

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Melcliffe Court Apartments
711 SE 11th Avenue
Figure 21

The Melcliffe Court Apartments is another apartment building two blocks away from the Rex Arms. The owner and developer was James Doty Wharton, while Richard Wassell was the architect and builder. Half of the building was constructed in 1912 and the second phase completed the design in 1925 under new ownership.⁵³ As the architect, Richard was exploring many of the elements that he would go on to employ at the Rex Arms. Also in the Renaissance Revival style, Melcliffe Court is four stories over a daylight basement with a street-facing central courtyard. The Melcliffe has a rusticated base, brick reveals, thick belt course, decorative jack arches with keystones above the windows, brick detailing at the top floor suggestive of pilasters (but does not extend further down the building), and a decorative cornice. The building appears to have originally had large, single-light casement windows that have been replaced with aluminum sliders. Compared to the Rex Arms, the stuccoed basement level is not as tall, resulting in the Melcliffe not having the same feeling of monumentality as the Rex Arms. The belt course is a single form rather than having a stepped appearance. Likewise, the lintel arches are not as prominent and unique as the more geometric, stepped form on the Rex Arms. Lastly, Melcliffe Court does not utilize pilasters nor balconies as part of the façade articulation and the cornice is less elaborate than the one on the Rex Arms. While the Melcliffe shares much in common with the Rex Arms, of the two, the Rex Arms is the more sophisticated, high-style design and it also made a greater impact on the neighborhood given that the Melcliffe was not completed until 1925.

Duke of York Apartments
1410 SE Belmont Street
Figure 28

The Duke of York Apartments, now called Belmont Court, is another building that was developed by and built by Richard Wassell and his family a couple of blocks away from the Rex Arms in 1926. In this case, Richard was not the architect; it was instead designed by John H. Grant. The building's eclectic style has been called Mediterranean, yet it also harkens to the Gustavian style of Sweden inspired by French Neoclassicism. Situated on a quarter-block parcel, the building is three stories tall. Like the Rex Arms, it has a street-facing central courtyard. The building is clad with painted stucco rather than brick and there is a strong belt course between the concrete block basement foundation and the first floor. Two additional belt courses frame the top floor windows. An oversized parapet features a simple projecting cornice. Bas relief urns are the primary decorative feature on the front façade. The windows are not deeply punched in the wall and the original wood sashes have been replaced with vinyl windows. Compared to the Rex Arms, this building has a significantly different design, which is focused on smooth surfaces and less articulation. The Rex has more texture, material variation, and greater depth and shadow lines. The Rex Arms also has a more monumental appearance with its taller base and elaborate cornice that caps the architectural composition. In sum, the Duke of York is a unique example of a style not typically seen in Portland and may have significance for this reason. However, it is not a better example of a high-style, large scale apartment building within the MPD study area.

Francis Marion Apartments
1436 SE Stark Street
Figure 27

While smaller than the afore-described apartment buildings, the Francis Marion Apartments is included for comparative analysis because it is a good example of the Renaissance Revival style as applied to this building type. Designed by DeYoung & Roald in 1927, the building is two stories with a tall daylight basement. The concrete foundation wall is finished with horizontal rusticated bands while the rest of the primary elevations

⁵³ "Apartment Annex is Added," *Oregonian*, June 7, 1925, 27.

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have red brick except where there is a plaster coating in the central entry bay. Rather than the typical flat roof, this building has a hipped roof, giving it a less monumental and more residential character. While both primary facades have a sense of rhythm and order, they are not symmetrically composed. Of note on the front façade, there is a wing on the west side of the building that is not matched on the east. The primary facades feature original paired and triple wood windows with multi-light upper sashes. The building's entry bay is defined by tall pilasters below an open pedimented gable with eave returns. Within it is a pedimented entry door surround topped with a large decorative, multi-light arched window. Lastly, stucco-finished brick quoining frames the three main bays of the façade. When surveyed in 2012, the building's excellent integrity was noted and was determined to likely be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C.

While the Francis Marion Apartments has a high level of integrity and is indeed a good example of the Renaissance Revival style in the MPD study area, the building is also notably different than the Rex Arms. The Francis Marion is much smaller, offering sixteen units when it opened compared to the Rex Arms' 61 units. Consequently, the building does not have the Rex Arms' sense of monumentality. Likewise, it does not have a flat roof, cornice, or a symmetrical design, which are hallmarks of the style. The Francis Marion does strongly exhibit the style at its classically-detailed entry bay, rusticated base, and corner quoins. For these reasons, the Rex Arms and the Francis Marion are both valuable representations of the Renaissance Revival style in the MPD study area. Because this style is rare compared to other styles like Craftsman and Colonial Revival in the MPD study area, listing the Rex Arms Apartments would not preclude the Francis Marion from an individual listing.

Comparative Analysis Conclusion

This comparative analysis demonstrates that while there were other large, high-style apartment houses built in the MPD study area, the Rex Arms Apartments is arguably one of the best, as required by the MPD registration requirements. Its size, monumentality, and rich palette of design elements signaled a heightened caliber of architecture that would not be surpassed, if at all, for many years to come in the Buckman neighborhood.

RICHARD F. WASSELL: MASTER ARCHITECT

Introduction

In addition to the Rex Arms Apartments' significance under the MPD, the building is also nominated as a seminal work in the portfolio of architect Richard F. Wassell, who designed at least eight apartment houses/residential hotels, three commercial buildings, and at least two dozen single-family homes. Apartment houses were what Richard was known for throughout his career—specifically large, high-style masonry apartment houses that feature a street-facing entry courtyard. Additionally, as a developer and builder (and not as architect), he was directly involved in at least four more apartment houses and an unknown number of single-family homes.

The Rex Arms Apartments is an important project in Richard's portfolio as it represents a turning point in his growth as a designer. The building exhibits a higher level of detail and design cohesiveness than his previous works. Also of importance, it exemplifies the talent, broad skillset, and ambition that Richard contributed as a young real estate developer and builder. Richard's career is particularly unique because of his blue-collar roots as a carpenter and bricklayer. After several years working in construction, he was driven to accomplish more and sought to become an architect and real estate developer. Building these skillsets afforded him an unusual amount of control over every aspect of his buildings—the aesthetic character, the features and functional aspects of the building that would affect his real estate pro forma, and the quality of the construction.

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Until now, Richard has been recognized primarily as a developer-builder during the 1910s and 1920s, while his architectural contributions have been arguably minimized or overlooked. This nomination seeks to establish and provide evidence of his central role in the design and development of many significant early 20th Century buildings in Portland with the Rex Arms being a critical milestone as he evolved to become an expert architect. Over his career, three different phases are readily apparent. His early career (1910-1916) will be covered in detail below because it coincides with his progression up to and following the Rex Arms. This phase is characterized by his peak performance working under a business model where he was the architect, developer, and builder for his projects. With the United States' involvement in World War I, Richard experienced a career interlude during which time he pivoted to wartime entrepreneurial activities. The second phase (1921-1925) was characterized by three major development projects that put him on the map as one of the most ambitious and forward-thinking developers in Portland. The final phase (1925-1927) was a return to smaller and lower-profile projects after years of compounding financial problems. These other phases will be reviewed in brief at the end of a chronological review of his early life and first career phase.

Early Life

Richard Fleming Wassell was born in Chicago, Illinois on October 24, 1887 to Scottish immigrant parents, Joseph David Wassell (1865-1953) and Anstus "Annie" Thompson Fleming (1865-1913). Richard's father worked as a bricklayer—a job he likely got via his brothers-in-law Alexander Taylor, Sr. (1849-1898) and Donald Downie (1856-1942) whose families would also hold importance in Richard's future flourishing as a builder and developer. When the Taylor family relocated to Portland, Oregon, the Wassells (and later the Downies) ultimately followed with all three families coming to live within a block of each other. Strongly connected by their respective journeys from Scotland to Milwaukee to Portland, Joseph, Alexander, and Donald were able to make a living as builders in the Pacific Northwest due to the influx of newcomers that fueled the construction industry.⁵⁴

Joseph Wassell became a naturalized US citizen in 1894 but the prosperous times in Portland did not last long. An economic recession that depressed property values by 40 percent and slowed construction made it challenging for Joseph to find work, so following the birth of the Wassell's fourth and final child, the family once again picked up and moved.⁵⁵ Richard was eight years old when the family sailed from New York City back to Scotland.⁵⁶ They lived in Joseph's hometown near his parents where he continued to work as a bricklayer. This is where Richard is said to have "received his education" according to one of his obituaries.⁵⁷ Richard also worked in Scotland as a shop assistant when he was twelve years old and was later a carpentry apprentice.^{58,59,60} When the family returned to the United States in 1902, Richard was listed as a "hammer boy" on the passenger list.⁶¹ Alexander Taylor's widow paid for the family's transatlantic journey, which gives some insight into the financial status of the Wassells.

Building activity in Portland had picked up from a low point in 1900, which is possibly what gave Joseph the confidence to return to Portland. The family moved in with Alexander Taylor's family in SE Portland's Buckman neighborhood, although Alexander had died in 1898. The Downies had also moved to the Buckman neighborhood, as had some other family that relocated from Milwaukee.⁶² Buckman's immigrants largely

⁵⁴ *National Register Nomination for the North Buckman Historic District*, 23. Portland's population grew by 46 percent between 1890 and 1900, not including the gain due to consolidation with other towns.

⁵⁵ Oliver Charles (1895-1972) born in the Kenilworth home, Mary Summers (1892-1981) born in the Kenilworth home, and Elizabeth Thompson (1891-1967) born in Pittsburgh, PA.

⁵⁶ UK and Ireland Incoming Passenger Lists, <https://tinyurl.com/mv5brvxj>

⁵⁷ "Obituary," *Oregonian*, July 20, 1927, 18.

⁵⁸ 1901 Scotland Census for Joseph, <https://tinyurl.com/2mn5pknf>

⁵⁹ 1901 Scotland Census for Richard, <https://tinyurl.com/3h2c87bn>

⁶⁰ UK and Ireland Outward Passenger List for Annie and her children, <https://tinyurl.com/y55d2pka>

⁶¹ UK and Ireland Outward Passenger List, <https://tinyurl.com/2p884ckk>—Joseph traveled alone a couple months before the rest of his family.

⁶² "Daily City Statistics," *Oregonian*, May 30, 1906, 5.

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came from English-speaking places and the Wassells and their extended Scottish family were a part of that trend.⁶³ Richard was now fourteen, living in a bustling city, and surrounded by adult relatives who were predominantly engaged in the building trades.

Walla Walla Residency

In 1903, when Richard was sixteen, the Wassells moved to Walla Walla, Washington where Richard's cousin Alexander Taylor, Jr. (1870-1945) was working as a brick mason as early as 1899.⁶⁴ Walla Walla was undergoing tremendous growth while the pace of building in Portland had once again slowed.^{65,66} After finishing high school, Richard entered the family business as a bricklayer.^{67,68} By 1906, Joseph and Alexander started Taylor & Wassell—a brick and masonry contracting company.⁶⁹ Richard worked with his cousin and father to help build many significant masonry structures in Walla Walla, such as Green Park Elementary School (1905), Carnegie Library (1905), the Denny Building (1906), Walla Walla County Jail (1906), Walla Walla Dressed Meat & Cold Storage Company's packing house (1907; demolished), and Walla Walla City Hall (1908).^{70,71,72} These projects provided Richard with extensive hands-on experience in the construction of different leading-edge, high-style buildings with rich and varied masonry details. Along with his carpentry training in Scotland, these years as a bricklayer in Walla Walla were invaluable as he progressed to designing and developing buildings in Portland a few years later. While he did not end his residency in Walla Walla until 1911, Richard began splitting his time with work that brought him to Portland between 1906 and 1911, living part-time in the Buckman neighborhood. He resumed living in Portland full-time in October 1911 after marrying Alice Johnson in Walla Walla.

Training in Architecture

Richard began calling himself an architect by 1909 and was definitively acting as one by the following year.⁷³ He identified himself as an architect in the 1910 census, on his 1911 marriage license, and on his 1917 draft registration card. Newspapers would also begin to validate this status by 1912 when reporting on his buildings.⁷⁴

Research for this nomination did not definitively establish what kind of architecture training Richard had, although it does seem certain that he did not attend a college or university and never worked as a draftsman or an apprentice in an architecture firm. Evidence suggests that he primarily learned design through self-study and from his hands-on work as a builder. Historian Roger Bordeaux Taylor (grandson of Alexander Taylor, Jr.), asserts that Richard studied architecture "through correspondence."⁷⁵ While Taylor's claim is unreferenced, taking correspondence coursework was a popular means of achieving post-secondary education and technical training during the early 20th century and it was the International Correspondence Schools (ICS) programs that were the most widely used during this period. By 1923, ICS had educated 2.5

⁶³ *National Register Nomination for the North Buckman Historic District*, 26.

⁶⁴ Polk's City Directory for Walla Walla, 1902, 106. Also see Ancestry.com at <https://tinyurl.com/3n3bc2s3>.

⁶⁵ Roger Bordeaux Taylor, *The Building Legacy of Alexander Taylor in the Pacific Northwest 1899-1944*, Self-published, 2020, 3. Walla Walla was the third richest city in the US per capita in 1903.

⁶⁶ "Walla Walla's History," <https://www.wallawallawa.gov/our-city/history>, accessed 6/15/2023. New brick buildings were replacing old wood buildings and a boom of civic buildings were built with stone. Paved streets, and new theaters and "skyscrapers" were to soon follow.

⁶⁷ Taylor, 113.

⁶⁸ 1907 Polk's City Directory for Walla Walla, 168. See also Ancestry.com at <https://tinyurl.com/mpsjje6y>. His first job there was as a messenger for a law firm, P T & C Company.

⁶⁹ 1907 Polk's city directory for Walla Walla, 251. See also Ancestry.com at <https://tinyurl.com/3anw4bmq>

⁷⁰ Taylor, 24-25, 55-56, 66.

⁷¹ <https://ww2020.net/403-e-rose/>

⁷² "Splendid Industry Is Represented in Packing Plant Nearing Completion," *Evening Statesman*, April 25, 1907, 4.

⁷³ 1909 Polk's City Directory for Portland, <https://tinyurl.com/4bwjts6d> and <https://tinyurl.com/yck5kt8e>

⁷⁴ "Modern Apartment Planned," *Sunday Oregonian*, July 21, 1912, 48.

⁷⁵ Taylor, 113.

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million students in a variety of professions, including architecture.⁷⁶ The school was staunchly focused on economic advancement and practical knowledge for its students rather than the “training of the mind” or “moral uplift” as espoused by education reformers of this period.⁷⁷ One local newspaper article touted the school’s success in bringing “lifelong benefit to a large number of Portlanders” and highlighted local graduates’ accomplishments whereby “carpenters have become architects; machinists have become superintendents; and clerks have become managers and proprietors of businesses of their own.”⁷⁸ To achieve its “utilitarian” goal of education, ICS created instruction manuals and testing that only taught students the absolutely necessary material for their chosen field of study as opposed to standard textbooks of the day that attempted a much broader education. In *A Textbook on Architecture and Building Construction* used in their architect training program, the book covers relevant arithmetic, geometry, and measurement skills; engineering; information about construction including electrical wiring, plumbing, heating and ventilation, roofing, sheet metal, masonry, carpentry, joinery, stair building, ornamental ironwork, painting, and decorating. It teaches about contracts, permits, quantities calculations, estimating, and construction superintendence. Finally, it provides instruction on architectural history, design, and drawing.⁷⁹

Early Architectural Works

This section provides a chronological narrative of the first phase of Richard Wassell’s career as an architect. While it is believed he may have designed and likely constructed homes for family members in the Buckman neighborhood beginning in 1906, this overview will begin with his first apartment building.

Wassell Apartments (1235 SE Yamhill Street), Figure 18

Mentioned in the earlier apartment context, the Wassell family developed the first standalone apartment house in the MPD study area at 1235 SE Yamhill Street in 1910. This building is believed to be Richard’s first design for an income-producing property, built on a small, 50x50-foot lot that Joseph Wassell purchased from the Downies.^{80,81} The three-story brick apartment house had nine large units of four and five rooms each and cost approximately \$10,300.⁸² The building seemed experimental because, as mentioned, the location was not the optimal choice, nestled several blocks away from the streetcar line amongst single-family homes. However, given that the property was already in the family, it made sense as a first foray. The building’s meager construction budget and Richard’s inexperience as an architect is evident in the simple, unrefined façade design with oddly spaced fenestration and minimal design detail, shown in Figure 18. It once had a simple wood cornice now removed. Three years later, his design for the Rex Arms would far outshine the awkward Wassell Apartments. Retained in the family’s ownership until 1925, the development of the Wassell Apartments was likely both financially successful and professionally satisfying, as Richard would now go on to undertake several other apartment projects in quick succession. The trajectory of these projects shows Richard’s ever-increasing aspirations to design and build high-style, high-quality buildings in Portland.

Chesterbury Apartments (915 NW 20th Avenue), Figure 19

At the end of 1910, Richard and his father bought a vacant quarter-block lot at the northwest corner of NW 20th Avenue and NW Kearney Street for \$20,000.⁸³ The Wassells partnered with Downie and two other local

⁷⁶ “A Journey to Legitimacy: The Historical Development of Distance Education through Technology,” *TECH TRENDS* 52, 2008, 45–51. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-008-0135-z>

⁷⁷ “ICS of Scranton, Pennsylvania,” <https://digitalservices.scranton.edu/digital/collection/ics/custom/history>, accessed 6/5/2023.

⁷⁸ “Tars Seek Promotion,” *St. John’s Review*, March 20, 1908, 1.

⁷⁹ “A Textbook on Architecture and Building Construction,” Scranton, PA: International Textbook Co., 1899.

⁸⁰ “Real Estate Transfers,” *Morning Oregonian*, January 18, 1910, 17.

⁸¹ Photo and one sentence of text in *Oregon Daily Journal*, April 17, 1910, 18.

⁸² “Prosperous Year Closes in Realty,” *Sunday Oregonian*, January 2, 1910, 44.

⁸³ “To Build Apartments,” *Oregon Daily Journal*, January 2, 1911, 9.

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investors with Scottish roots—Donald B. McBride and John A. McKinnon—to develop the Chesterbury Apartments. Together they officially incorporated the R. F. Wassell and Company in March 1911 with \$50,000 in capital.⁸⁴ An ad for the company later identified themselves as a team of architects and builders specializing in financing the construction of apartments and buildings of all kinds in Oregon.⁸⁵ Richard's father was an experienced brick mason, Downie was involved in the building trades as a carpenter, McKinnon was a ship's carpenter, and McBride, who was a woolens and marine supply merchant, provided the majority of the capital and secured the financing. The fact that this business entity used Richard's name is suggestive of the fact that he was the driving force for the company. The four other members of this syndicate were his elders by at least 22 years and their accumulated wealth and practical knowledge about constructing buildings was likely advantageous to Richard, while his youthful energy, ambition, and architectural training were necessary to spearhead projects that would turn their investments into income-producing buildings.

On the Chesterbury site, they planned to build two apartment houses separately from one another.⁸⁶ The mid-block lot was developed first for \$35,000, completed in 1911. The three-story masonry building with 23 three-room units is designed in the Renaissance Revival style and demonstrates the forward progress in Richard's career as both an architect and developer. The Chesterbury's primary façade is a significant improvement over the Wassell Apartments, with greater balance and harmony in the fenestration. Additionally, the building features increased brick articulation including reveals at the daylight basement level suggestive of a rusticated base and a brick cornice with modillions. That said, the building feels top heavy without the use of a belt course or other features to better define the base and make it proportional to the rest of the building—errors that would be corrected in his forthcoming buildings.

Chesterbury Hotel (2015 NW Kearney Street). Figure 20

Following the construction of the Chesterbury Apartments, Richard was set to begin another apartment house on the second part of the lot.⁸⁷ Rather than a typical apartment house, the four-story building would be modeled on an "apartment hotel" concept, which provided homecooked meals to the residents in a large, well-appointed dining room.^{88,89} Work commenced January 1912 and it opened for business on May 1.⁹⁰ Initially, the building was estimated to cost \$45,000 but Richard's team ended up spending \$60,000. With 36 furnished and unfurnished studio units with private bathrooms, it, along with its sister building next door, became known as the Chesterbury Residential Hotel Apartments.⁹¹ Both Chesterbury buildings were ultimately sold to fund future projects, including the Rex Arms.

The Chesterbury Hotel is notable for its progression of design and architectural detail within Wassell's portfolio. The style of the building is a far more developed interpretation of high-style Renaissance Revival. The design incorporates a rusticated base with improved proportions and a belt course above the first floor, pilasters at the corners, and a metal cornice with dentils, modillions, and decorative brackets. The fenestration pattern has even greater coherence. The main entry is made prominent by a semi-circle arch with transom and, above the main entry, there are three stacked balconies that are recessed into the building, capped with a stepped brick arch. The Rex Arms would build upon the significant design improvement that Richard made with the Chesterbury Hotel, bringing an equally sophisticated but much larger Renaissance Revival apartment

⁸⁴ "New Incorporations," *Daily Capital Journal*, March 9, 1911, 8

⁸⁵ Chamber of Commerce Bulletin: Official Organ of the Portland Chamber of Commerce, vol. 20-21, 1914, 57.

⁸⁶ "Building Record for Day Broken," *Morning Oregonian*, December 28, 1910, 11.

⁸⁷ "To Build Apartments," *Oregon Daily Journal*, May 8, 1911, 9.

⁸⁸ "Apartment-House Plans Drawn," *Sunday Oregonian*, December 17, 1911, 62. But only says Wassell and Co had plans drawn for 4-story building with pressed brick 50x100 size.

⁸⁹ "New Family Hotel About Completed," *Sunday Oregonian*, March 24, 1912, 11. Ads such as "Chesterbury Hotel Apartments," *Morning Oregonian*, May 14, 1912, 16 and "The Chesterbury," *Sunday Oregonian*, June 16, 1912, 31.

⁹⁰ "The Chesterbury Hotel, Apts.," *Oregon Daily Journal*, April 28, 1912, 30.

⁹¹ "The Chesterbury Hotel," *Oregon Daily Journal*, June 15, 1912, 11. Guests could live in elegance with or without board and eat "excellent home cooking" by the proprietress, Miss E. M. Bowe, in the attractive, handsomely appointed, large dining room.

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house to the eastside. (Additionally, while the Chesterbury Hotel has high integrity on the exterior, available photos of the interior suggest that it has been remodeled down to its studs with no historic features remaining.) Melcliffe Court (711 SE 11th Avenue), Figure 21

While working on the Chesterbury Hotel in 1912, Richard was also involved with another apartment house being developed in his Buckman neighborhood. As described in the MPD comparative analysis, he was the architect and builder but not the owner/developer of this apartment house—an anomaly for this phase of his career. This was Richard's first foray into the use of a courtyard entry, though the design as such would not be completed until 1925. As discussed earlier, Melcliffe Court shares much in common with Richard's design for the Rex Arms, but the Rex achieves a greater level of design detail and sophistication.

The Rex Arms, Figure 15

Richard Wassell was 25 years old when he broke ground on the Rex Arms Apartments. This was his largest and most expensive project to-date. Beginning with the \$10,300, 6,022 square-foot Wassell Apartments in 1910, in three short years, he was developing a \$95,000 building with 34,648 square-feet. This apartment house was on par with the works of developers William L. Morgan and Morris Pallay who were much more advanced in their professional careers, at ages 48 and 52 respectively. In 1913, Richard was aggressively bringing forth the most expensive apartment building yet constructed on the eastside, testing the real estate market in terms of high-end units that rivaled some of the most sophisticated, top-tier apartment buildings on the west side. It is also noteworthy that Richard developed this building in his own neighborhood where his Scottish-immigrant family and friends were based. It likely was quite meaningful to him to design and construct one of the most impressive new buildings on the eastside but a few blocks from his own home and to be a leader in the development progress of this up-and-coming part of Portland. To make this a success, Richard employed his typical hands-on approach to his projects, taking responsibility and oversight for key aspects of the development, including design, construction management/general contracting, promotion, and leasing. In the research for this nomination, no other developers were identified who ever fulfilled all these roles in their business model.

While Richard would go on to design and develop even more sophisticated and high-style buildings in Portland, the Rex Arms is significant as a peak moment in Richard's early career. The building demonstrates that Richard was an ambitious and visionary developer motivated to realize progressively greater buildings from a financial and architectural perspective. It also showcases one of the best examples of Richard's work as a self-taught master architect. For the Rex Arms, he adapted many of the features used in his previous designs and refined them into an even larger and strikingly handsome high-style apartment house. Richard would go on to design three more apartment houses in the next three years, all of them variations on his successful design of the Rex Arms.

Royal Arms (1829 NW Lovejoy Street), Figure 22

The Royal Arms apartment house project quickly followed the Rex Arms in 1914. In fact, the building was nearly a duplicate of the design of the former building and Richard would again be the main developer, architect, and builder.⁹² The permit was issued in March and the building was substantially completed in August 1914. Costing \$100,000, it contained about 60 two-, three-, and four-room units.^{93,94} The Royal Arms is nearly identical to the Rex Arms in its exterior design, scale, and form. Two exterior differences include: 1) Royal Arms features more stylized rustication at the basement level via the use of raised panels versus continuous horizontal reveals at the Rex Arms and 2) the main entry to the Royal Arms lobby is at-grade in the courtyard versus raised up to the main floor level. While it is unknown why the same design was utilized, there are two likely factors: Richard and/or his investor partners were pleased with the result of his design on

⁹² "Apartments Have Latest Conveniences," *Oregon Daily Journal*, August 16, 1914, 16.

⁹³ "Going Apartment Brings Big Sum," *Coos Bay Times*, December 21, 1914, 4.

⁹⁴ "\$200,000 Sale Biggest Inside Deal of Year Is Prosperity Sign," *Morning Oregonian*, February 8, 1915, 16.

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the Rex Arms to the level that they wanted to contribute another Rex Arms in a different part of Portland. The other possibility revolved around two co-occurring circumstances that denied him the time, energy, and creative faculties to design anew: the illness and death of his mother and the code wrangling that occurred upon completion of the Rex Arms. In terms of integrity, the Royal Arms retains some of its original wood awning-style windows with multi-light upper sashes, while others have been replaced with compatible new windows. However, the balcony doors have been replaced with non-compatible aluminum sliding glass doors. Lastly, the interior of the building was damaged by fire in 1979. Either due to the fire and/or the fact that the building was later converted to condominiums, all available interior photos indicate there is no historic fabric remaining at the interior, including the lobby. Even though the Rex Arms no longer retains its original windows, the remaining interior features are important to the building's integrity and for conveying its significance.

Tudor Arms (1811 NW Couch Street), Figure 23

After the Royal Arms was completed and eventually sold, Richard was again flush with cash to pursue another apartment house, this time on a quarter-block site at 1811 NW Couch Street. Partnering with investor Donald McBride again, Richard would design the Tudor Arms. (Prominent architect Carl Linde has mistakenly been given credit for its design, which is discussed later in the nomination). Richard also acted as the developer and the builder. Completed in September, the nearly \$125,000 building opened with 53 suites of two, three, and four rooms each.^{95,96} It was said to be the most expensive apartment house built in Portland in 1915.⁹⁷ Another newspaper article at the time remarked on the "artistic beauty of its exterior" and claimed the Tudor Arms was "undoubtedly the most modernly constructed and appointed apartment house yet constructed on the Pacific coast."⁹⁸ Similar in form and scale to the Rex Arms, the resplendent, high-style Jacobethan design was a departure from the more rectilinear and masculine feel of the Rex Arms. Dark red, textured brick with copious glazed terra cotta elements including quoins, belt courses, and other banding create marked contrast between the exterior surface materials. Most strikingly, the entry courtyard is adorned by an elaborate arched entry while the roofline is crowned by a parapet with balustrades, arched elements, and spear-shaped finials.

Now condominiums, Tudor Arms retains its integrity through its well-preserved exterior and the many remaining interior elements including lobby paneling, interior doors, built-ins, trim, and wood floors. The design of the building led to its listing in the National Register in 1994. The significance and integrity of this building, however, does not preclude the listing of the Rex Arms—a building that marks a turning point in Richard Wassell's mastery of architectural design. In addition to its significance within the MPD study area, the Rex Arms was his first completed courtyard-entry building whose sophisticated, high-style design would continue to manifest in other works, including his bold composition for Tudor Arms.

Imperial Arms (1429 SW 14th Avenue), Figure 24

In 1916, Richard built the last of his pre-World War I apartment houses—this one also on the West Side. Richard was again the architect and builder but partnered up with two other co-developers. Construction began in April and was completed in September 1916. Like Tudor Arms the previous year, Imperial Arms was announced to be the largest apartment house built in 1916 and the most expensive that year at a cost of \$125,000.^{99,100} This building again employs the same size and courtyard-entry form as the Rex Arms. Constructed with red brick, it also has a strong rusticated concrete base. Only a few balconies are employed and, consistent with the Jacobethan styling, the parapet takes prominence rather than an elaborate cornice. It shares more similarities with Tudor Arms than it does with the Rex Arms, though it is much more restrained

⁹⁵ "Tudor Arms Apartment Completed at Cost of \$125,000," *Sunday Oregonian*, September 26, 1915, 54.

⁹⁶ "Will Build Apartment House," *Oregon Daily Journal*, March 28, 1915, 42.

⁹⁷ "Royal Arms Deal Is Biggest of Year," *Sunday Oregonian*, February 14, 1915, 54.

⁹⁸ "The Tudor Arms Apartments at Eighteenth and Couch Sts., Completed at a Cost of \$125,000," *Oregon Daily Journal*, August 29, 1915, 5.

⁹⁹ "Building and Realty Operations Active," *Morning Oregonian*, January 1, 1917, 44.

¹⁰⁰ "Office Building Prominent," *Oregon Daily Journal*, December 31, 1916, 13.

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with fewer terracotta elements. Here, terracotta is used for the parapet coping, quoins, belt courses, windowsills, and pedimented window hoods. The original windows have all been replaced with one-over-one vinyl windows, but the most obvious detriment to the building's integrity is the presence of Interstate 405 now directly in front of the building. Of note, the Imperial Arms was a precursor to Richard Wassell's post-WWI development project—the Ambassador Apartments—which utilized many of the same forms and motifs, but at a much larger and grand scale.

R. F. Wassell House (1609 S. Radcliffe Court) ¹⁰¹

The last building that Richard Wassell would design in the pre-World War I phase of his career was his own family home in Southwest Portland in 1916.^{102, 103} Richard's increased mastery as a designer and status as a successful real estate developer is well-represented in the grand Tudor Revival residence, which cost \$45,000 to build. Situated on a one-acre lot, the 4,860 square-foot house had six bedrooms plus a dance hall on the top floor.¹⁰⁴ Richard expertly utilizes the panoply of Tudor Revival design elements, including half-timbering with nogging, tapestried brick, steeply-pitched roof forms with multiple gables, and heavy brackets and braces. Massive multi-flued brick chimneys add prominence to the roofline. Polygonal bays, Tudor arches, and bargeboards with quatrefoil design also appear on the house. Groupings of leaded glass casement windows are numerous on three of the elevations. The interior features handsome woodwork with beamed ceilings in the study, a variety of wood paneling throughout the house, a parquet floor in the foyer, and stairs of quarter-sawn oak with newels, finials, and turned balusters. This well-preserved home is eligible for listing in the National Register as an example of high-style Tudor Revival architecture and as the work of a master architect. That said, as it is a very different building than the Rex Arms both in terms of its residential character and architectural style, the listing of the Rex Arms would not preclude the listing of the R. F. Wassell House and vice versa.

Brief Overview of Richard's Other Career Phases and His Untimely Passing

Richard's career would be upended by the United States' involvement in World War I and he would abandon all development, design, and (as far as the available evidence indicates) all construction activities. He started multiple food canning businesses (food conservation was a civic duty during the war) but was bankrupt by 1921. More information about this and the final two phases of his career are discussed in greater depth in Figure 29.

When the economy rebounded in 1920, Richard came back to real estate development in a huge way, completing three major projects that mark the middle phase of his career. The Ambassador Apartments and the Sovereign Hotel were both nine-story, residential buildings in downtown Portland that Richard developed and built. Designed by Carl Linde, Richard certainly had a hand in the design of these buildings, given their similarities to his previous apartment houses, Linde's inexperience with apartment houses at that point, and Richard's familiarity with Linde.¹⁰⁵ These two projects were, and possibly remain, some of the most significant architectural achievements in Portland prior to World War II. Afterward, Richard developed Peacock Lane—a four-block single-family home development in Southeast Portland where he also designed and built many of the homes. All three of these projects are listed in the National Register.

¹⁰¹ "Fine House Completed," *Sunday Oregonian*, July 30, 1916, 23. No address was given to the home (even in the U.S. Census) during the era it was built, and the exact location was only discovered by studying the rooflines in period photos and then scouring satellite images on GoogleMaps.com to find a similar roofline.

¹⁰² "Fine House Completed," *Sunday Oregonian*, July 30, 1916, 23. The area, today known as the Riverdale neighborhood, was, at the time, referred to as Ewahwe (a Native American word meaning "mouth of stream" according to Mary Goodall in Oregon's *Iron Dream: A Story of Old Oswego and the Proposed Iron Empire of the West*, Binfords & Mort, Portland, Oregon, 1958, 121) which was the name of a nearby station along Southern Pacific's Red Electric railway, a seventeen-minute ride to downtown Portland (according to timetables provided in *Early Oregon Days* by Edwin D. Culp, Caxton Printers, LTD, Caldwell, ID, 1997, 71.)

¹⁰³ "Real Estate Transfers," *Oregon Daily Journal*, July 20, 1916, 15.

¹⁰⁴ "New Handsome Home Along the River," *Oregon Daily Journal*, September 17, 1916, 21.

¹⁰⁵ Taylor, 115. Linde had gone to school with Richard's cousin, Alexander Taylor, Jr. in Milwaukee.

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Richard transitioned out of this middle part of his career in 1925 when he sold the remaining houses and lots on Peacock Lane. He then developed three small-scale commercial buildings and returned to apartment houses that were similar in scale to his pre-Rex Arms projects. Richard developed these properties alone and completed them in the names of his family either for their benefit or due to his bankrupt status that likely precluded him from doing business in his own name.

Richard died at the age of 39 in Portland on July 17, 1927. He had been under the supervision of a doctor starting June 21 for multiple neuritis (today this might be called Guillain-Barre Syndrome). By July 15, he had developed terminal pneumonia and died two days later at Good Samaritan Hospital. His funeral was conducted by the Roosevelt Lodge of Masons at Holman's Funeral Home, as he had been a longtime member of this fraternal organization.^{106,107} He was memorialized in newspapers as a builder of fine structures and was to be remembered in his time for being one of the best-known and most successful apartment house builders in the West—the last bit according to a 1916 article.¹⁰⁸ He left behind his wife Alice and two teenage daughters.

Comparison with Other Contemporary Architects

Richard Wassell had a handful of contemporaries who were instrumental in the rising profile of Portland's apartment houses in the early 20th century. Architectural historian Edward H. Teague has done the most to catalogue these architects and their apartment house designs.¹⁰⁹ His work shows distinct cohorts of architects pre- and post-World War I who specialized in apartment houses and have portfolios with numerous works where they were pushing apartment house design in new directions--constantly testing new styles, floorplans, and expressions. These include the firms of Alexander C. Ewart, Claussen & Claussen, and William L. Morgan. Ewart designed at least ten apartment houses during this period and four are listed in the National Register, including the Pally Apartments in the MPD study area. Claussen & Claussen designed at least eight with two listed in the National Register. Real estate developer William L. Morgan's firm was the most prolific of all with at least 21 apartments built in Portland, most on the west side. Four of these are National Register-listed but were built prior to 1908 and, therefore, are smaller in scale and not all are of masonry construction. While it is suspected that Morgan had a "leading hand" in his firm's designs, he was not the architect of record and his staff architects did not get credit by name. When apartment construction picked up again in the 1920s, there was another group of architects who rose to the forefront of apartment design and were considered leaders in their time. These include Elmer E. Feig and Carl L. Linde, while Claussen & Claussen also produced a second wave of apartment buildings during this period. Feig is particularly well-known for his Art Deco designs while Linde is hailed for his Renaissance Revival and Jacobethan designs.

Richard, perhaps surprisingly, does not appear on Teague's list of architects, though all twelve of the apartment houses that he designed and/or developed appear on Teague's inventory. However, of the eight where Richard was the designer, either no architect is listed or credit is given to Carl Linde. (As shown in Figure 17, Richard is listed as the architect on the original drawings for Tudor Arms.) Historian Richard Ritz, in *Architects of Oregon*, similarly did not acknowledge (due to lack of correction information) Richard Wassell's apartment house designs and specifically credits Tudor Arms to Linde. Others have also mistakenly and without evidence attributed the Rex Arms, Royal Arms, and Imperial Arms to Linde. Richard Wassell and Carl Linde did share an office in the Pittock Block from 1916 to 1918 and were possibly collaborating on Richard's

¹⁰⁶ "Delegations Favor Hard Surface Roads in Country Districts," *Oregon Daily Journal*, December 2, 1913, 2. He was also involved with the East Side Business Men's Club, the Irvington Club, the Roosevelt Lodge of the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons (based in Buckman), the Al Kader temple of the Ancient Order of the Mystic Shrine, and the Portland lodge of the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks.

¹⁰⁷ "Noted Builder Passes," *Morning Oregonian*, July 19, 1927, 7.

¹⁰⁸ "The New Imperial Arms Apartments," *Oregonian*, September 24, 1916, 70.

¹⁰⁹ Edward H. Teague, "The Apartment House in Portland," 2016, accessed 8/1/2023, <https://sites.google.com/site/portlandapartmenthistory/introduction>

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next apartment House (Republic Arms), which never came to be.¹¹⁰ While no information exists describing the nature of their working relationship, they had similar design aesthetics and likely mutually influenced each other's work. Given Linde's status as an indisputable master in the pantheon of Oregon architects, at least some of his reputation was established on the back of Richard's designs. As an architect, Richard's total number of apartment houses is only bested by four others on Teague's list (five if we include William L. Morgan): Claussen & Claussen, Ewart, Feig, and Linde. In summary, Richard was both a prolific and gifted designer, putting him in the same echelon with already-established master architects.

Conclusion

This section of the nomination has detailed the short but profound career of Richard F. Wassell to demonstrate his status as an important architect in Portland. Richard was ambitious as a young man who worked hard to surpass the working-class nature of his background. As a carpenter and bricklayer, he had the moxie to transform himself into a do-it-all apartment house magnate. Unlike other traditional single-role developers, architects, and builders at the time, he would remarkably and successfully operate in all three roles simultaneously. Evidence of his unique combined roles is perhaps best represented by the building of the Rex Arms where he served in every position necessary—except financier—to bring this ground-breaking eastside building to fruition. In his combined roles, he was continually learning and refining his business model, including traveling out of state to learn about the latest trends in apartment design and construction.

As a developer-builder, Richard would complete eight apartment houses during a seven-year period. And while he designed all eight of these, it was his buildings starting with the Rex Arms that demonstrated he had hit upon a winning formula for design and deal-making that he could repeat successfully with architectural variation and experimentation.

Richard's reputation was ultimately sullied due to a variety of reasons: his working-class bricklayer status, his embattled financial situation, his untimely death, and archival building plans that went unnoticed. As a consequence, he did not receive the recognition that his short career deserved. One hundred years later, the breadth of Richard's work has come to light, showing that he is deserving of a place amongst Portland's apartment house master designers of the pre-World War II era. He was a gifted designer-builder and is the only known developer in Portland who promoted, designed, acted as the general contractor, and sometimes filled the apartment manager role for his projects. Perhaps one of the most remarkable achievements of his career, one century removed, is that all the buildings that he was known to be involved with in Portland still stand to this day—a testament to their quality and character.

¹¹⁰ "New Apartment House Is to Rise," *Sunday Oregonian*, July 30, 1916, 23.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☒ Other

Name of repository: Historical Newspapers

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 5355

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>45.516967°</u> Latitude	<u>-122.652946°</u> Longitude	3	<u></u> Latitude	<u></u> Longitude
2	<u></u> Latitude	<u></u> Longitude	4	<u></u> Latitude	<u></u> Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is the property's full tax lot, which is comprised of lots 7 and 8 of Block 258 in the East Portland addition (#1S1E02BA 00800). Beginning at the northeast corner of the building at SE Morrison Street and SE 13th Avenue, the boundary runs 100 feet west to the northwest corner of the property. The boundary then runs 100 feet south. From there the boundary runs 100 feet east. Finally, the boundary runs north 100 feet back to the northeast corner.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary was selected because it encompasses the building, which fills the entire 10,000 sf lot.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Erik Hovmiller and Jessica Engeman, Historians date July 1, 2023
organization Continuum Preservation Consulting LLC telephone 971-221-6796
street & number 3135 NE 23rd Ave email Jessica@continuumpreservation.com
city or town Portland state OR zip code 97212

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Regional Location Map**
-
- **Local Location Map**
-
- **Tax Lot Map**
-
- **Site Plan**
-
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**
-
- **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Rex Arms Apartments
City or Vicinity: Portland
County: Multnomah **State:** Oregon
Photographer: Jessica Engeman
Date Photographed: February 3, 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0001)
North elevation, camera facing southwest.

Photo 2 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0002)
North elevation, camera facing south.

Photo 3 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0003)
North elevation entry courtyard, camera facing south.

Photo 4 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0004)
East elevation, camera facing southwest.

Photo 5 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0005)
South elevation, camera facing northwest.

Photo 6 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0006)
West elevation, camera facing southeast.

Photo 7 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0007)
Detail of cornice at northeast corner.

Photo 8 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0008)
Entry vestibule, camera facing south.

Photo 9 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0009)
Interior of entry vestibule, camera facing southwest.

Photo 10 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0010)
Entry vestibule penny round tile floor.

Photo 11 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0011)
Entry vestibule plaster crown molding.

Photo 12 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0012)

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Lobby entry doors, camera facing northeast.

Photo 13 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0013)
Lobby, camera facing southwest.

Photo 14 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0014)
Interior staircase, camera facing northeast.

Photo 15 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0015)
Staircase skylight, camera facing northwest.

Photo 16 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0016)
Third-floor east-west corridor and elevator, camera facing west.

Photo 17 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0017)
Typical corridor, camera facing north.

Photo 18 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0018)
Typical double studio with pocket doors.

Photo 19 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0019)
Typical window with wood casing.

Photo 20 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0020)
Holmes roll-out bed with non-historic casework.

Photo 21 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0021)
Historic multi-light door within apartment unit.

Photo 22 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0022)
Typical single panel door.

Photo 23 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0023)
Apartment kitchen.

Photo 24 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0024)
Typical bathroom.

Photo 25 of 25: (OR_MultnomahCounty_RexArmsApartments_0025)
Typical bathroom with hex tile floor.

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

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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- Figure 2:** Local location map
- Figure 3:** Tax lot map
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- Figure 5:** First floorplan
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- Figure 12:** Rex Arms Apartments under construction in 1913.
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Figure 29: Appendix of Richard Wassell's Career Starting in 1917.

Figure 30: Appendix of Other Richard Wassell Projects.

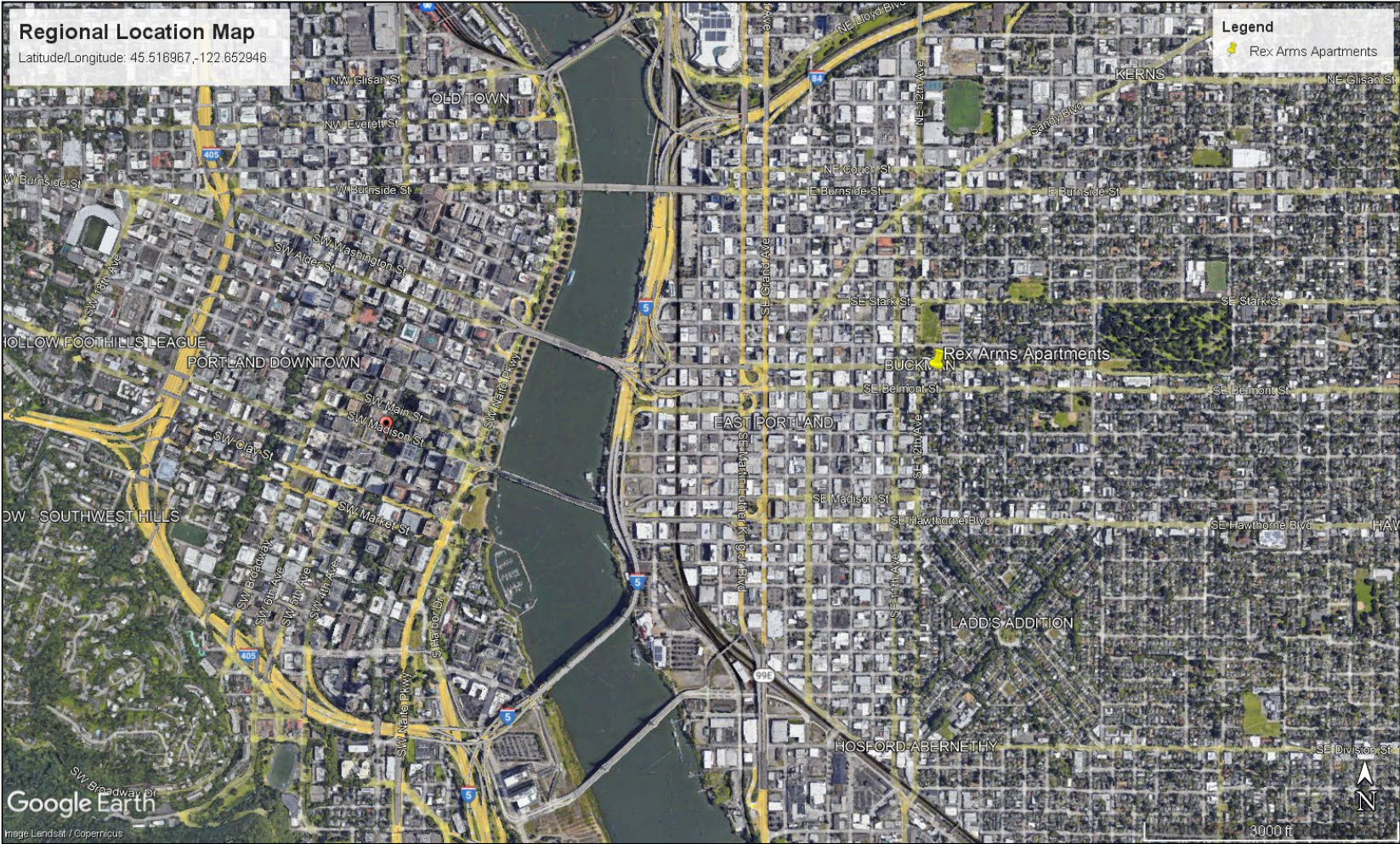
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Figure 1: Regional Location Map. Latitude 45.516967, Longitude -122.652946.



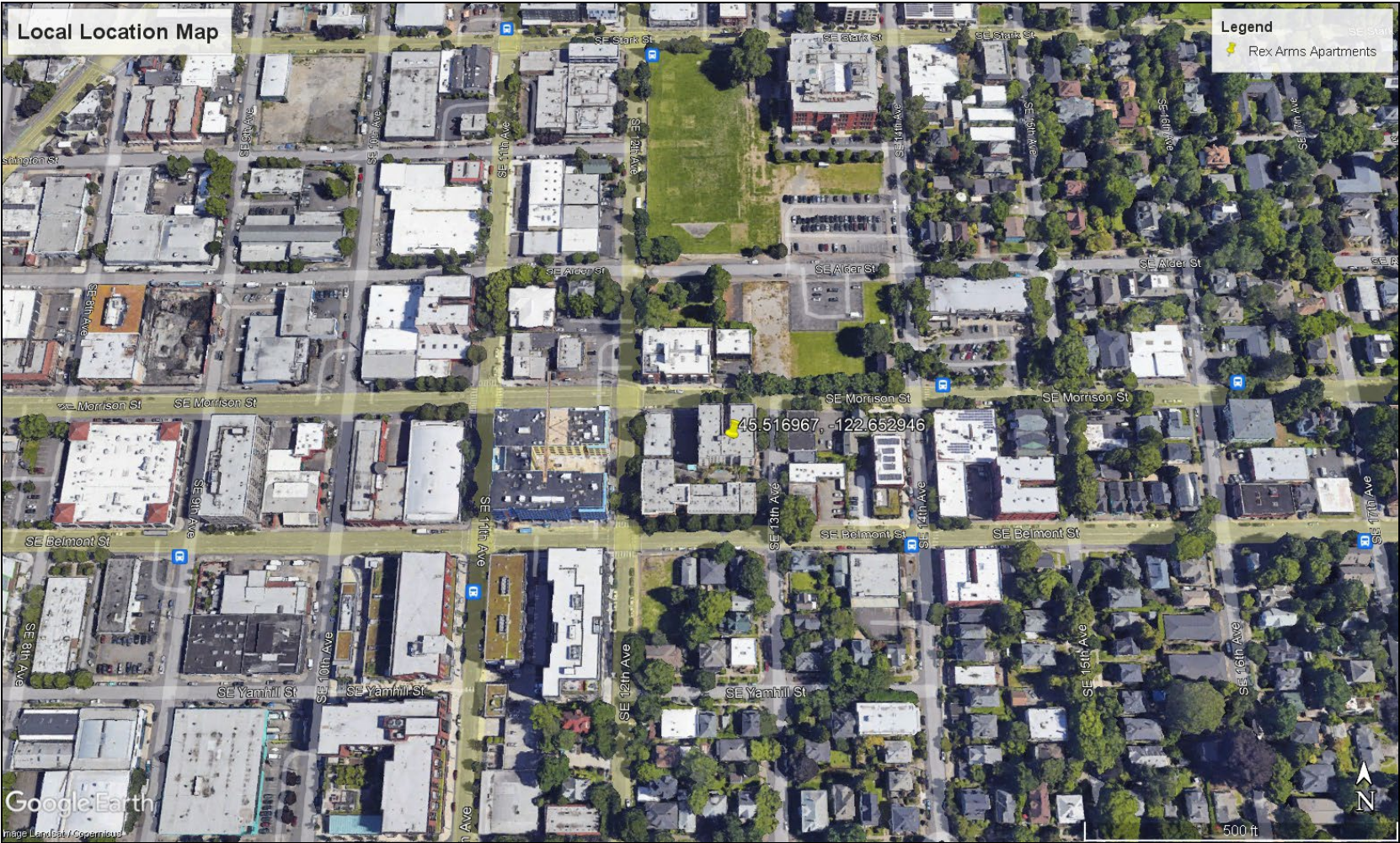
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Figure 2: Local location map. Latitude 45.516967, Longitude -122.652946.



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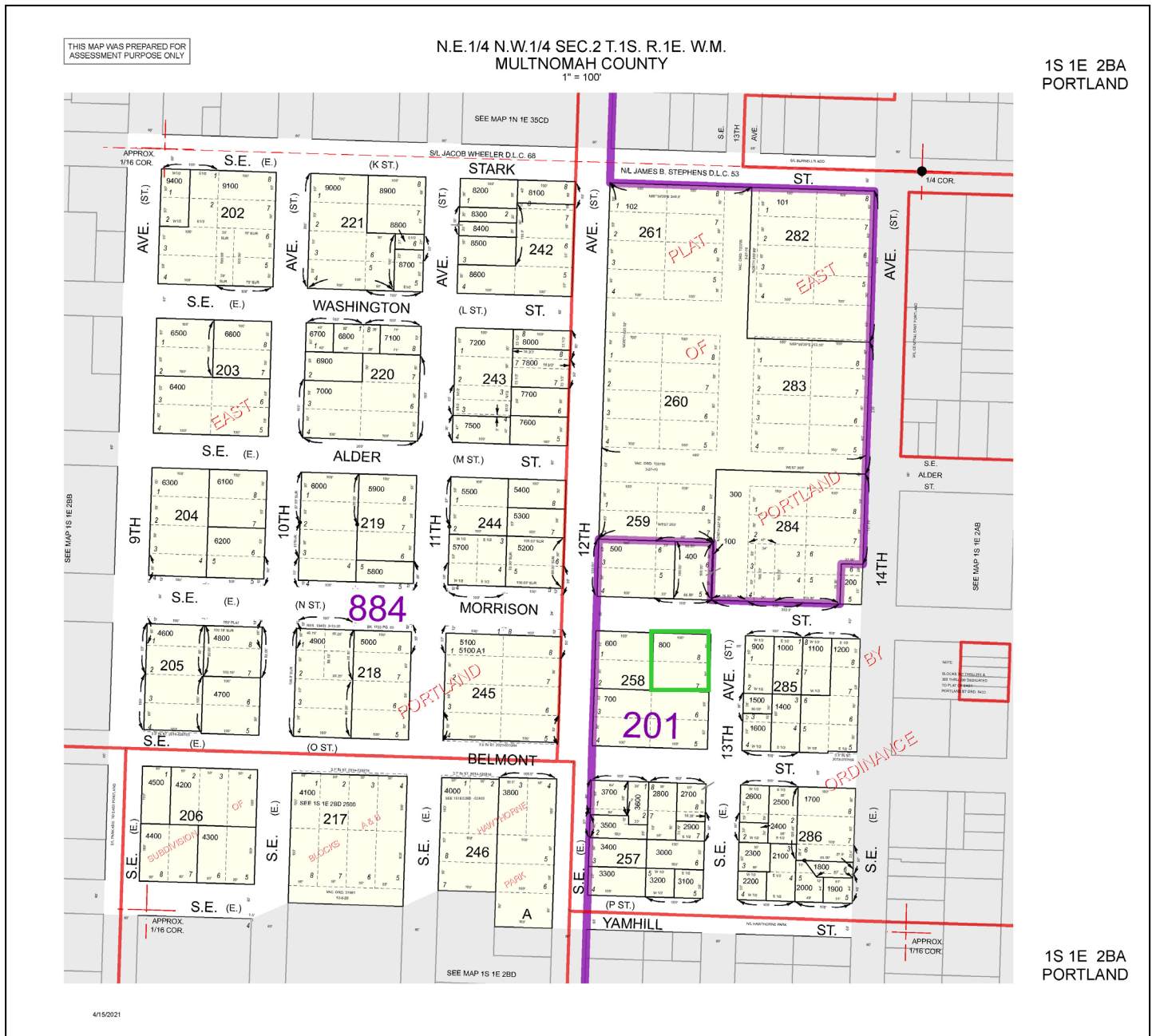
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Figure 3: Tax lot map, accessed June 29, 2023. Nominated property outlined in green.



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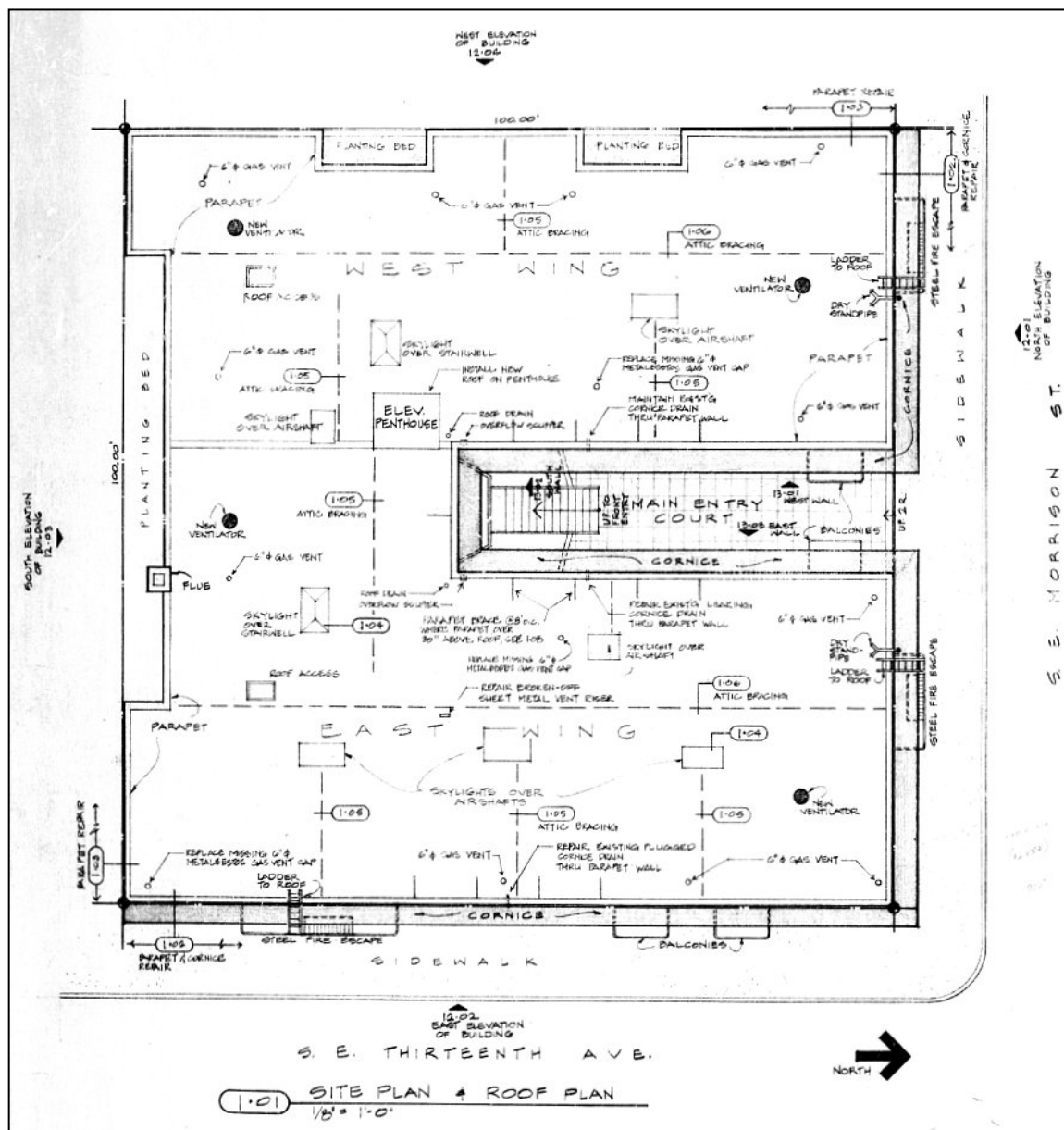
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Figure 4: Site Plan



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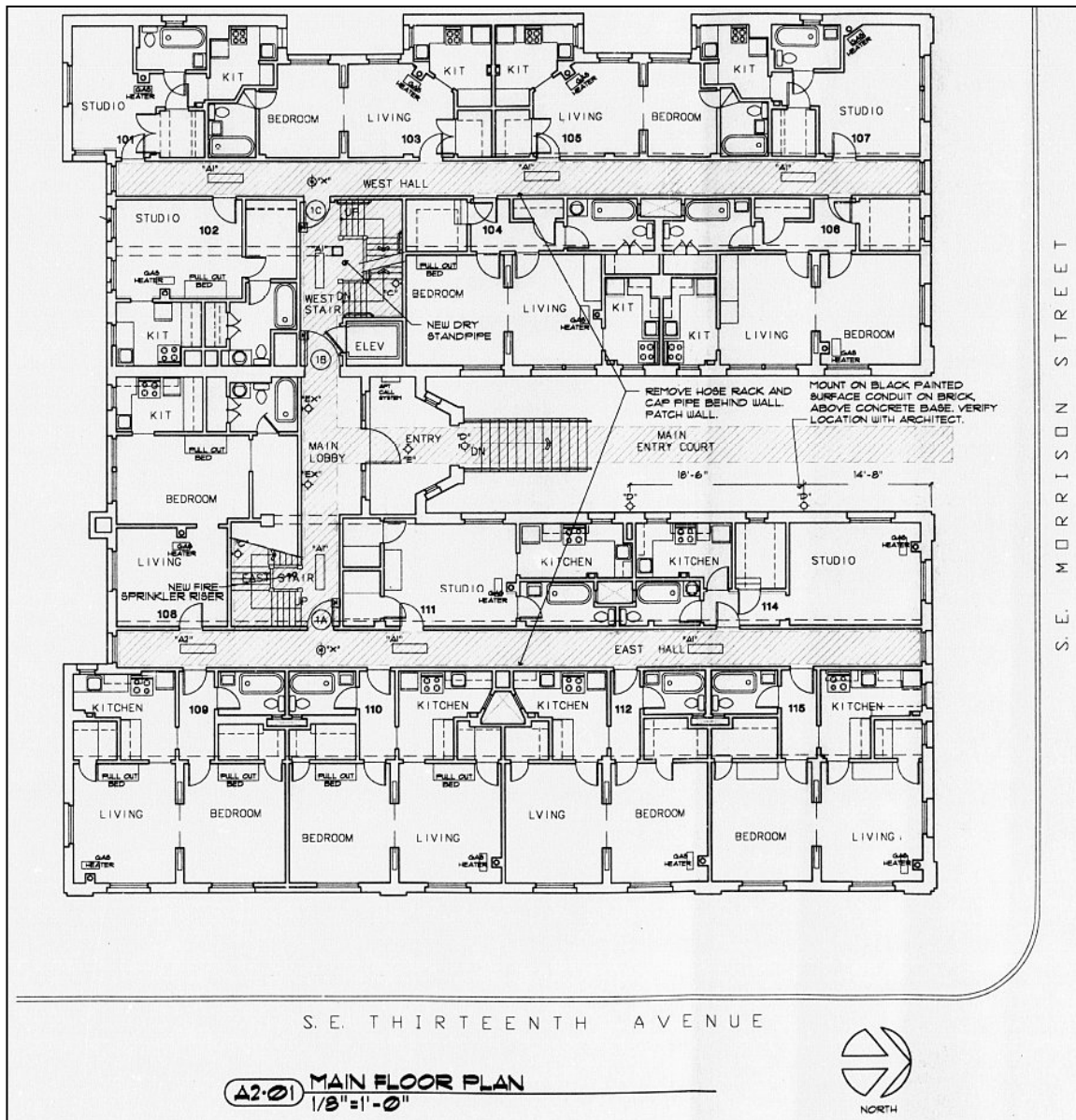
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Figure 5: First Floor Plan



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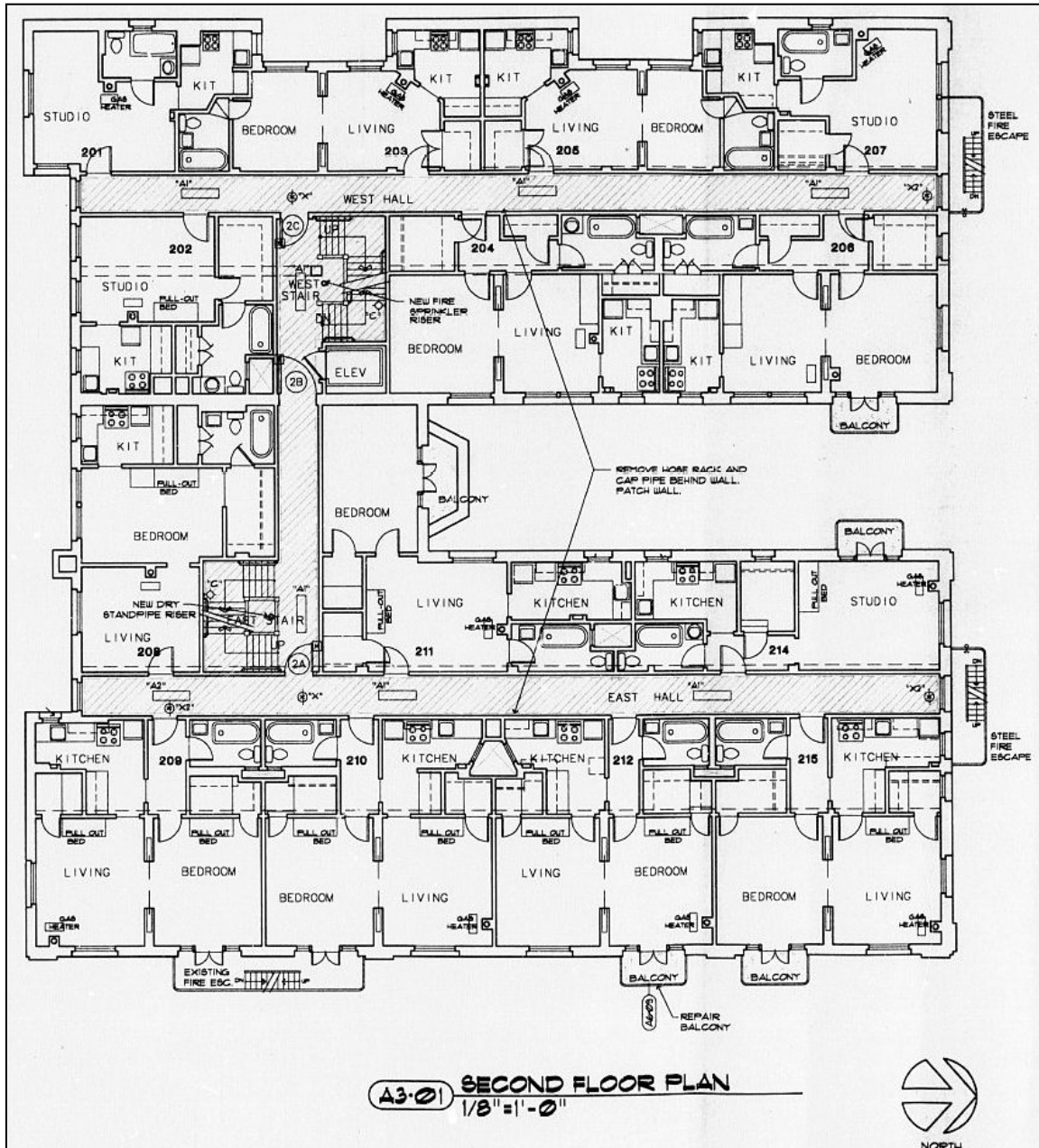
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Figure 6: Second Floor Plan



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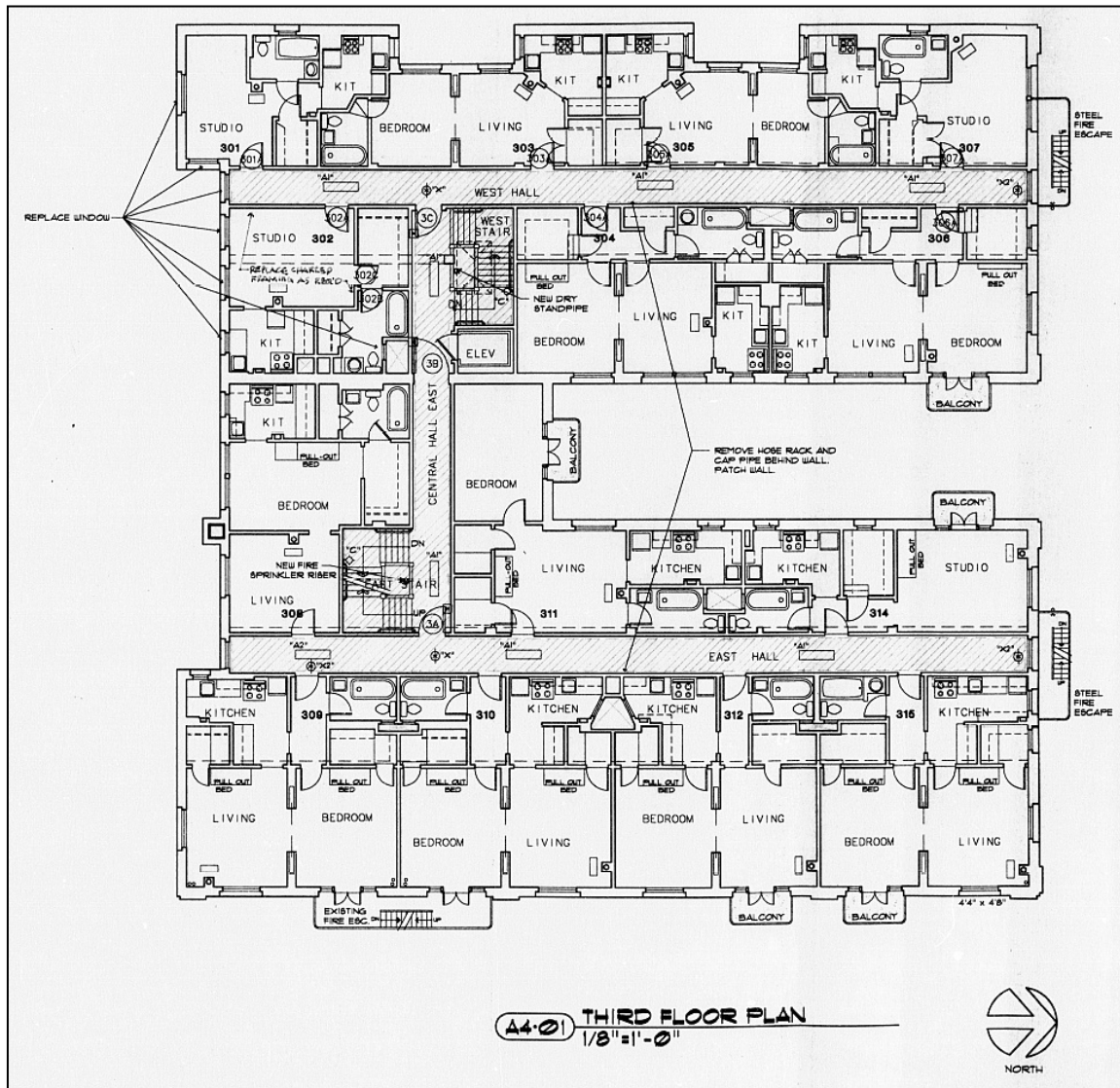
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Figure 7: Third Floor Plan



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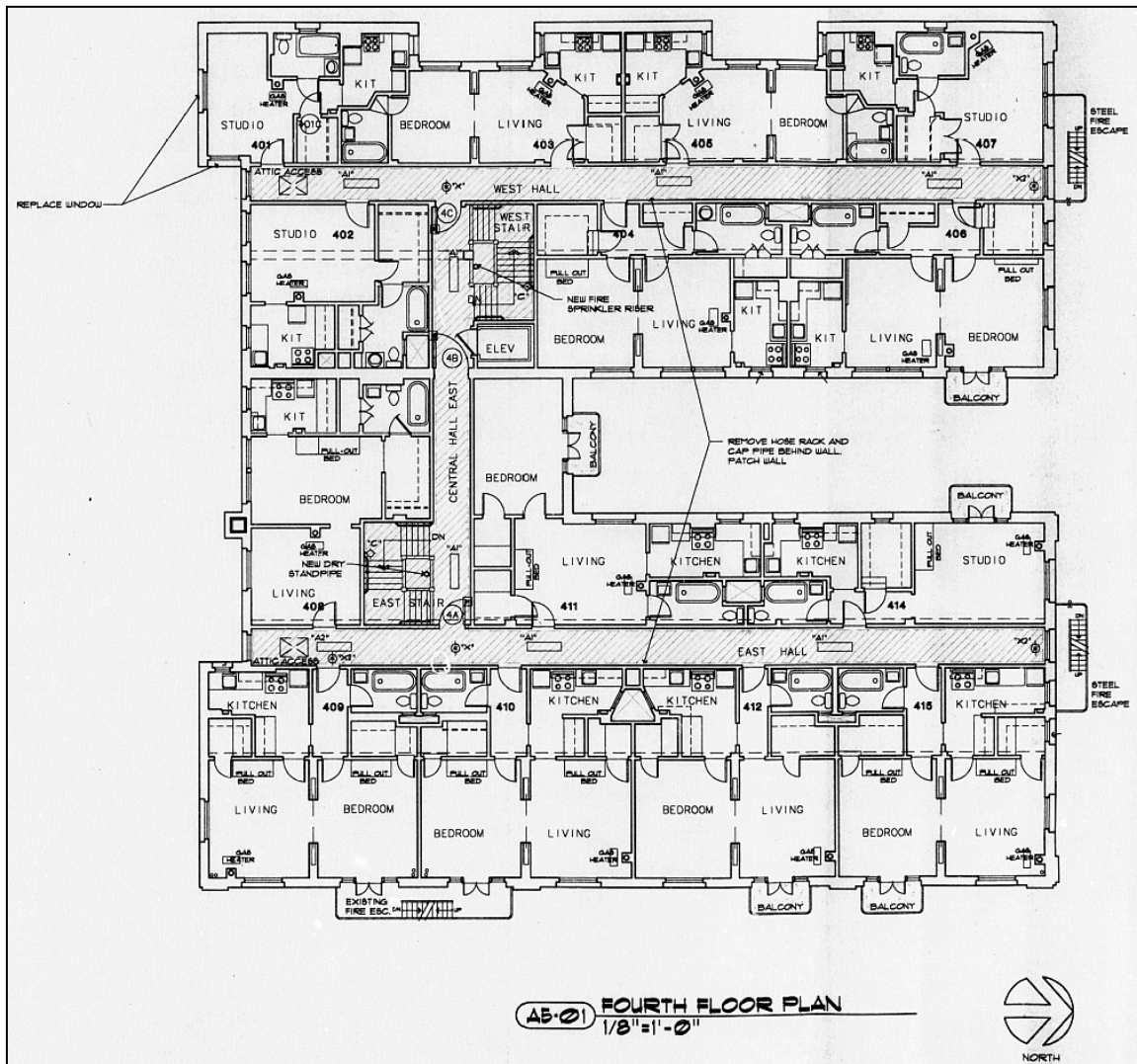
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Figure 8: Fourth Floor Plan



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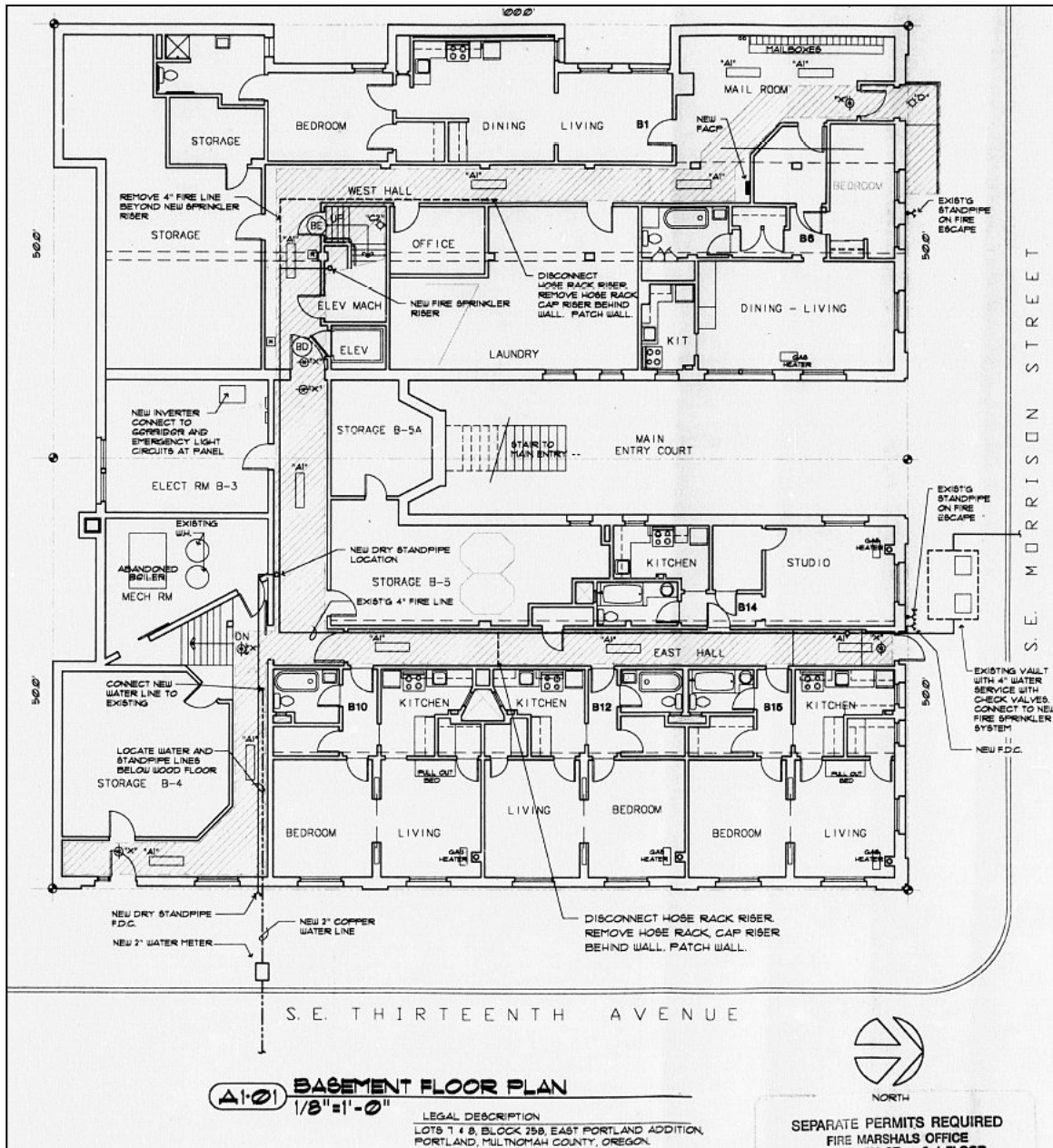
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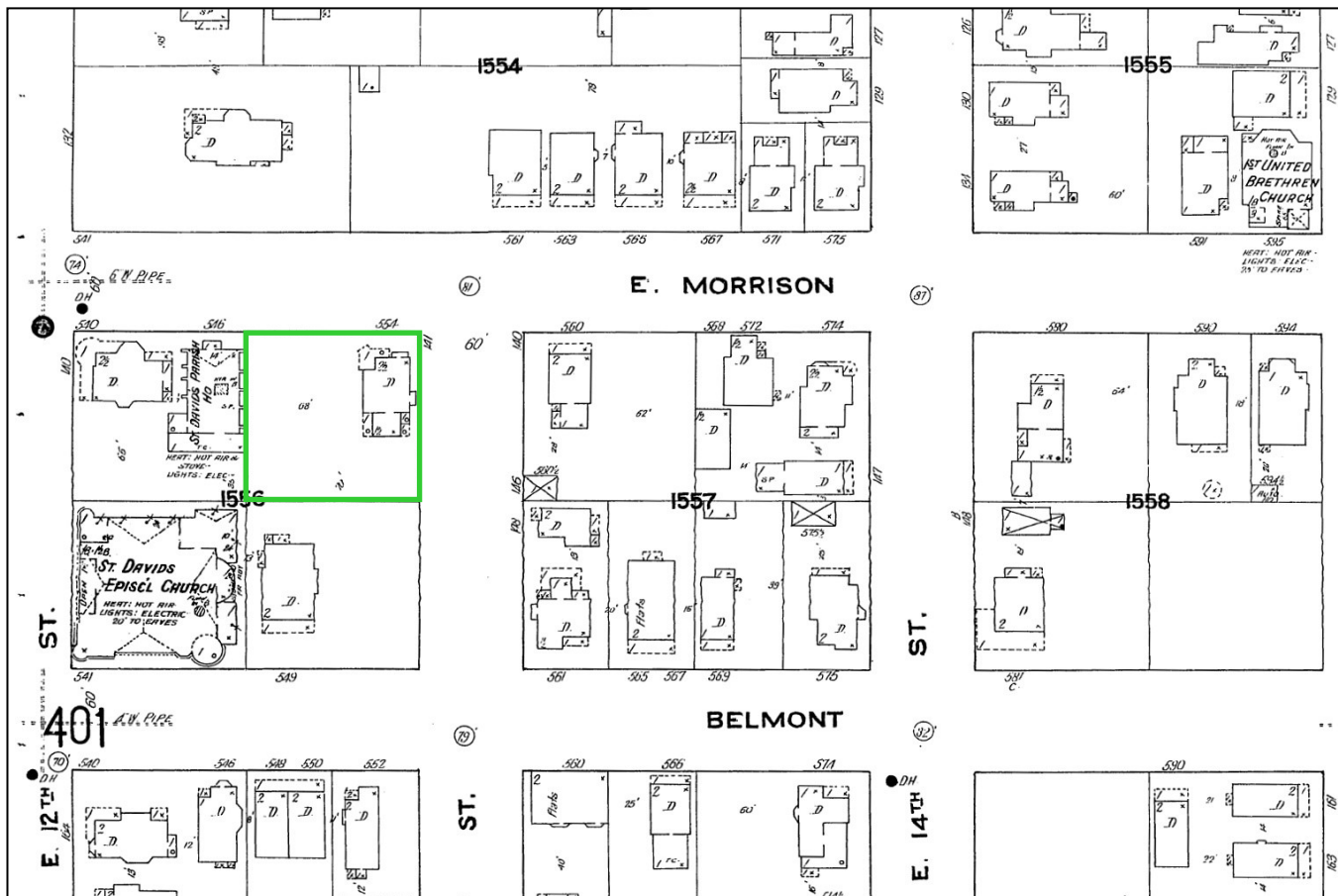
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Figure 10: 1908-1909 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing the Rex Arms property prior to development. Nominated property outlined in green.



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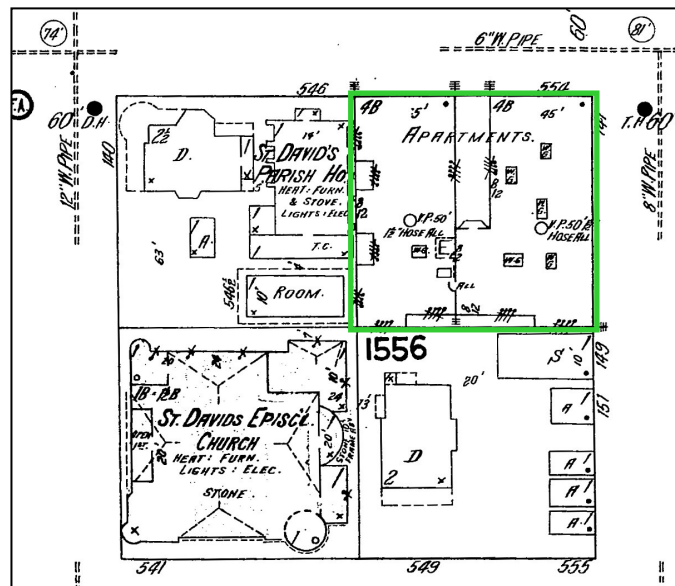
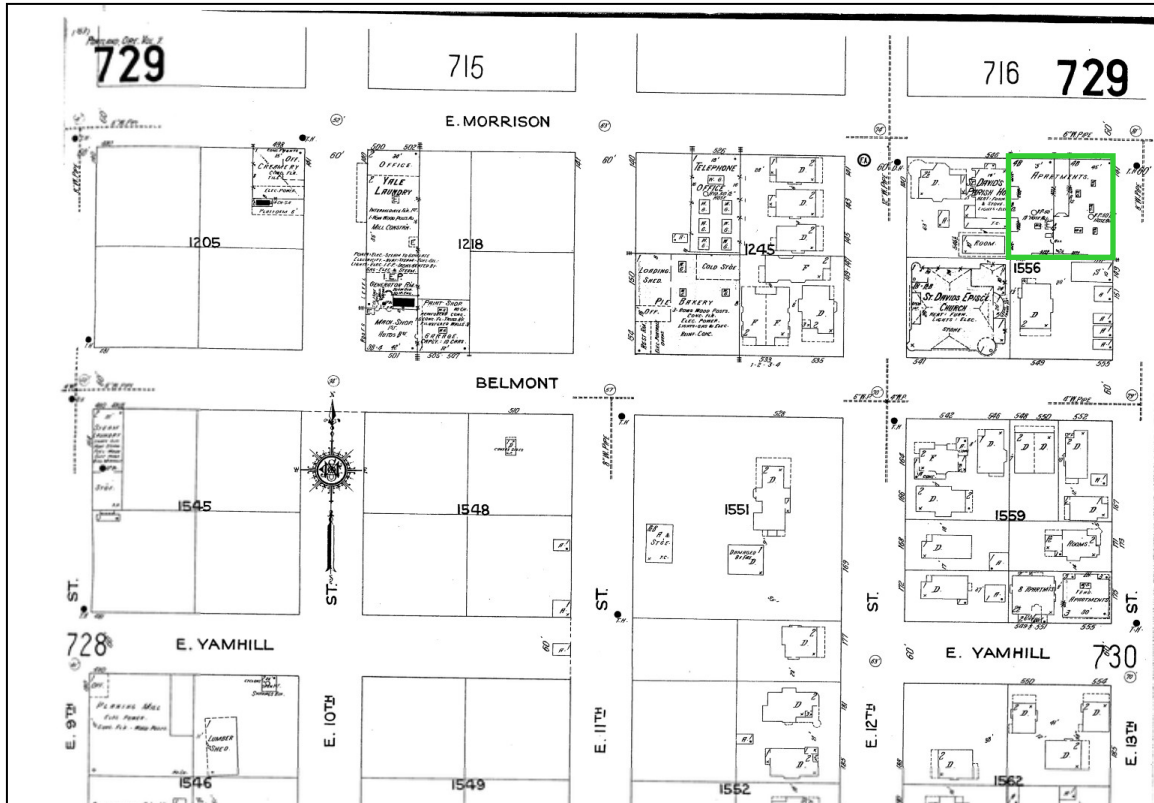
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Figure 11: 1924-1928 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing the Rex Arms property after construction—full view and detailed view. Nominated property outlined in green.



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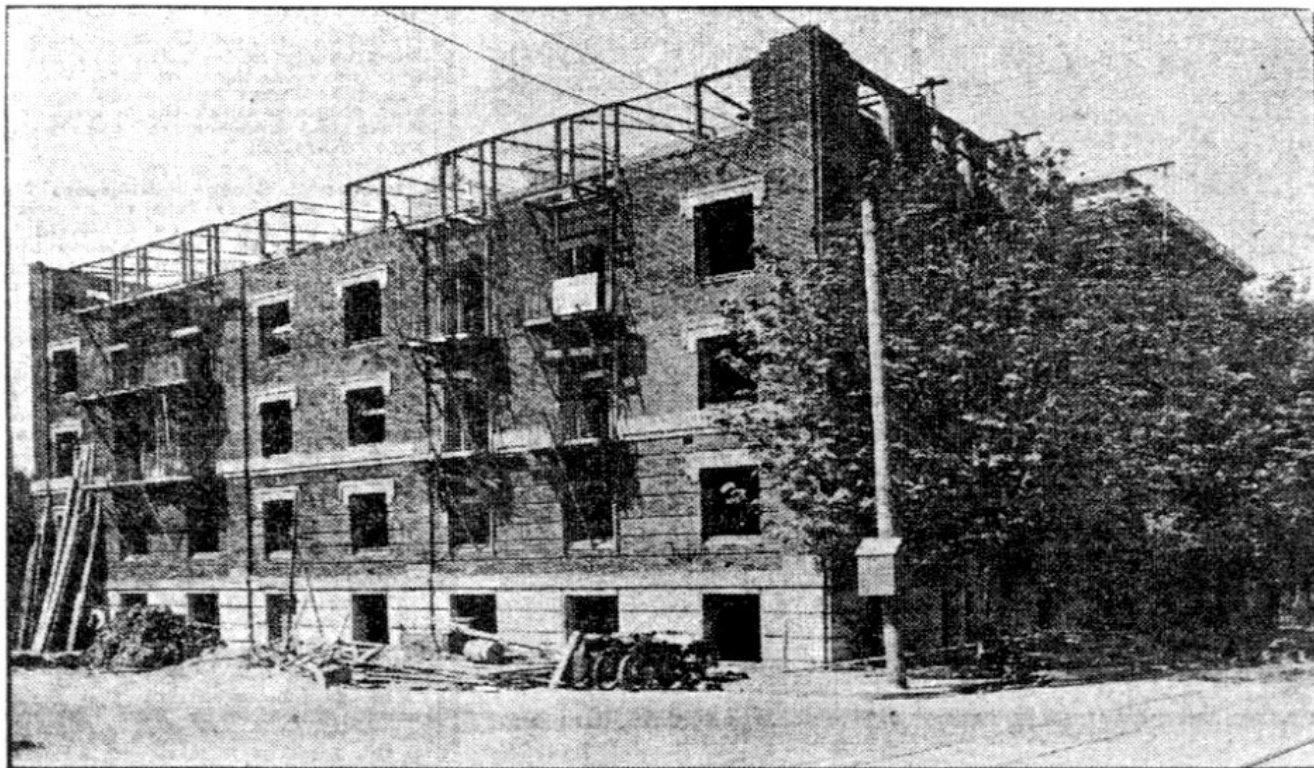
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Figure 12: Rex Arms Apartments under construction in 1913.¹¹¹



¹¹¹ "Fine East Side Apartment House Rises," *Sunday Oregonian*, July 8, 1913, 55.

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Figure 13: Rex Arms Apartments Opening Article, Oregon Daily Journal, August 24, 1913, page 14.

FINE NEW APARTMENT HOUSE COMPLETED



Rex Arms Apartments at East Thirteenth and East Morrison streets.

Rex Arms Apartments, the handsome new apartment building recently completed at southwest corner of East Thirteenth and East Morrison street by **R. E. Wassell**, owner, architect and builder. The structure covers two full lots, is of brick construction, four stories high and contains 53 two, three and four room apartments. Disappearing beds and other built-in furniture effects feature the equipment of this apartment house. Each apartment is provided with a private bath and a dressing room. Laundry and drying rooms are located in the basement. The halls are finished in marble and solid mahogany. An automatic passenger elevator connects the upper floors with the main entrance. The building represents an investment of about \$60,000.

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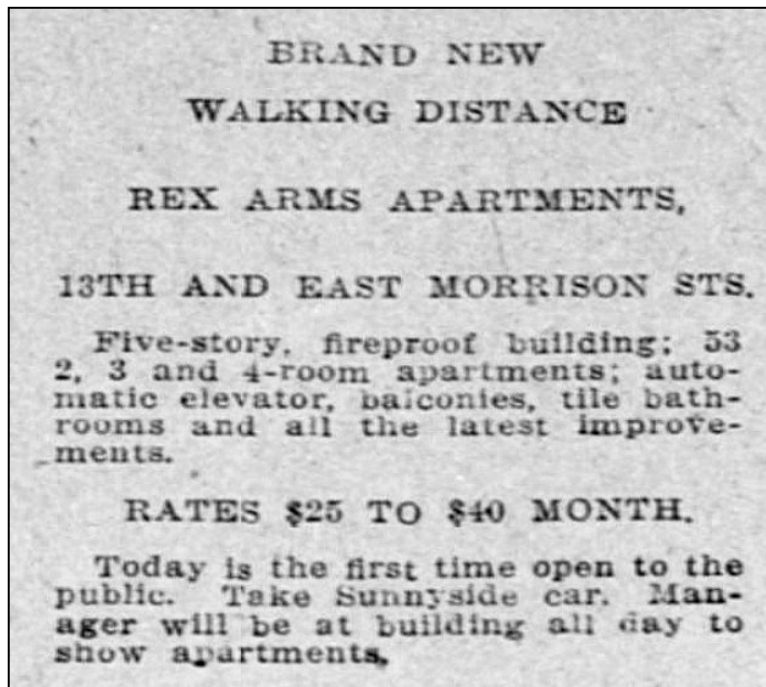
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Figure 14: Rex Arms Advertisement in the Oregonian, August 17, 1913, page 28.



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Figure 15: Historic photo of Rex Arms Apartments shortly after completion, 1913.¹¹²



¹¹² Oregon Historical Society Digital Collections, <https://tinyurl.com/yxm4uxn8>, accessed 6/1/2023.

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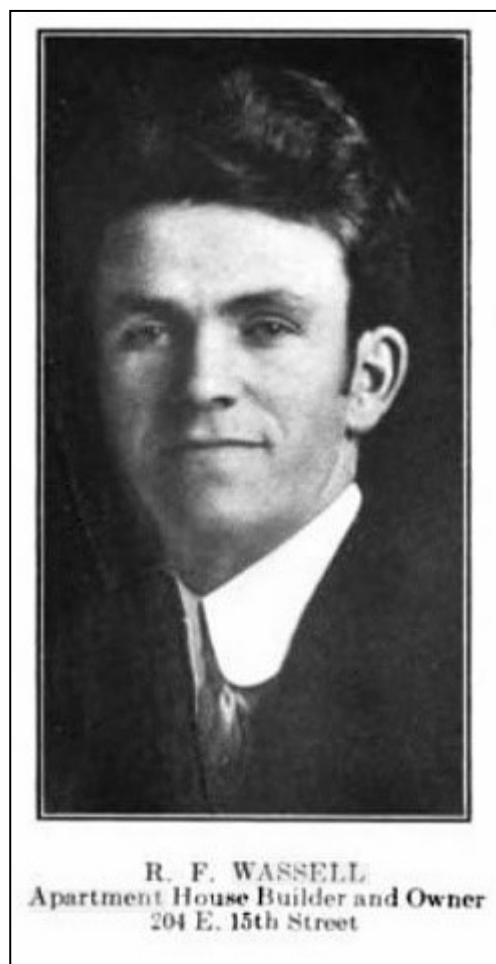
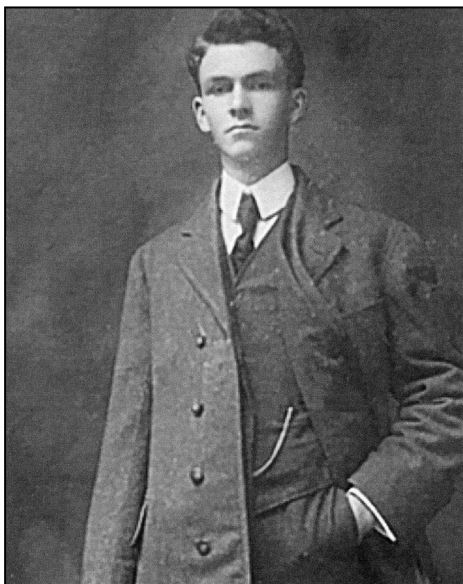
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Figure 16: Photos of Richard F. Wassell, c. 1906 (age 18)¹¹³ and 1916 (age 28).¹¹⁴



¹¹³ Taylor, 113.

¹¹⁴ Photographic Business and Professional Directory, 1916, Portland, OR, 44.

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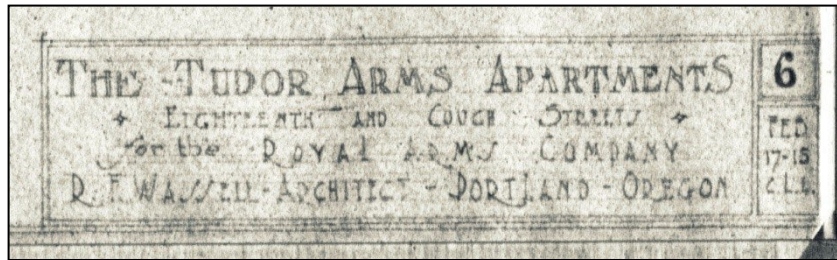
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Figure 17: Richard F. Wassell architect signature block on Tudor Arms, 1915.



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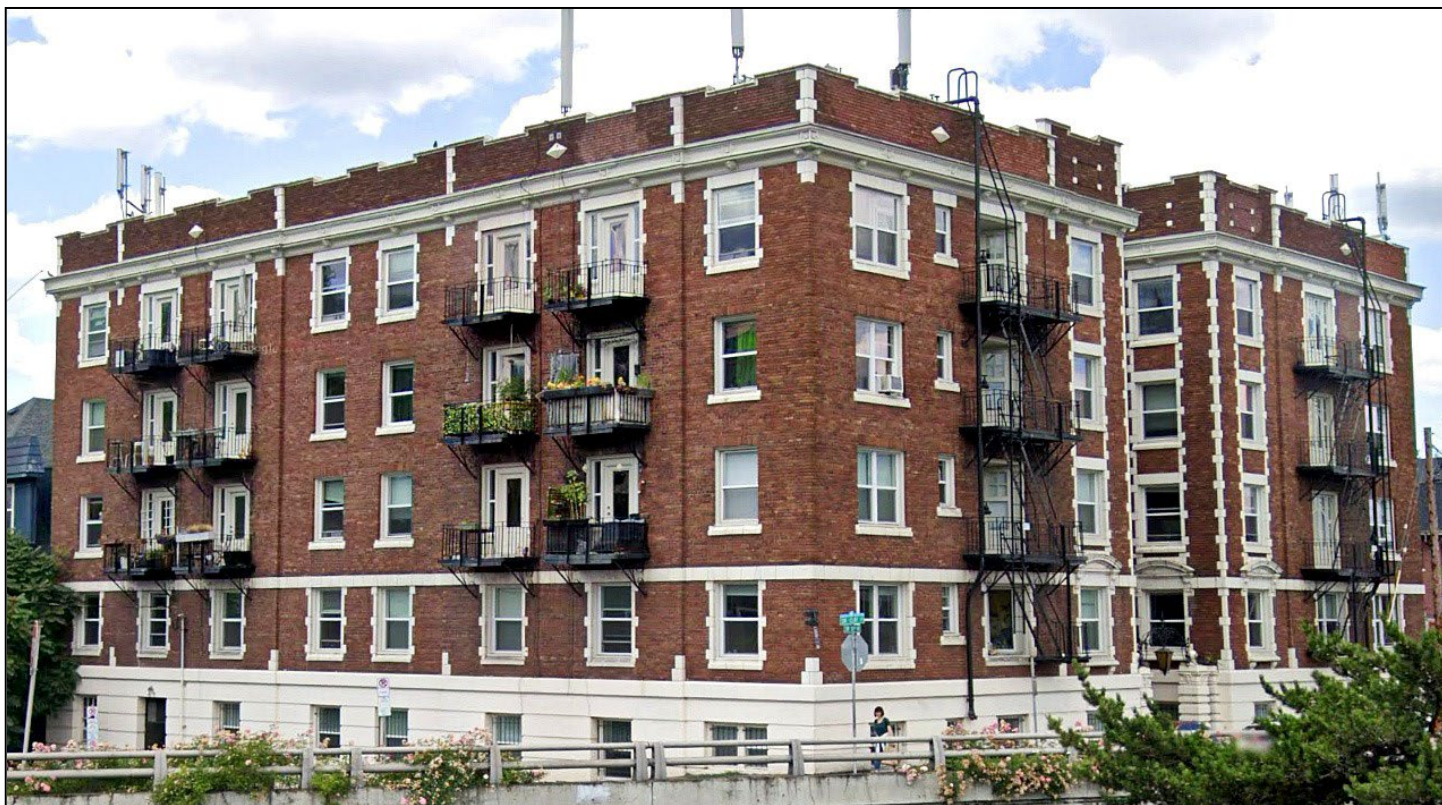
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Figure 24: Imperial Arms Apartments, 1429 SW 14th Avenue, Portland. (Viewed from Highway 26 on-ramp over Interstate 405.)



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Figure 28: Duke of York Apartments, 1410 SE Belmont Street, Portland.



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Figure 29: Appendix of Richard Wassell's Career Starting in 1917

The Great War Years

As construction on Richard's Imperial Arms Apartments was approaching its completion, Richard was engaged in the predevelopment of no fewer than five projects that, for reasons mostly unknown, would ultimately never break ground. However, with the United States entering the Great War in April 1917, whatever difficulties Richard was having on the development front were made irrelevant. The war presented both economic challenges and opportunities but, for real estate developers like Richard, the economics of development were upended. Traditional residential building was effectively halted by the construction surge in industrial and manufacturing buildings and by building limitations enacted by the federal government in 1918.^{115, 116, 117, 118}

Richard registered, as required, for the military draft in June in Walla Walla where he was working with his contractor cousin, Alexander Taylor, Jr., on the building of the American Theater, now listed in the National Register.^{119, 120, 121} Unlike some of his relatives, Richard was not chosen for military service.¹²² Now lacking an avenue to develop another apartment house, Richard was not making any money and was also likely feeling a lack of purpose with many his age off fighting in the war. Richard worried about what would happen to his properties and investments if he was drafted and thus began to transfer them to his wife. He completed a will ten days after the country's war declaration and it bequeathed all of his estate to Alice.¹²³

Post-War Debt

To provide for his family during and after the war years, Richard started several different food canning and food packaging businesses.¹²⁴ His pivot to a new business venture during the war is a testament to his entrepreneurial spirit and drive to create new income-producing opportunities. However, his new line of work during and after the war was not profitable enough and he was bankrupt by 1921.^{125, 126} The cause of his poor financial status is not clear, especially given that one source professed that he had "considerable personal property and no indebtedness against him" in 1917.¹²⁷ He was certainly bullish as a developer before the war and did not adapt or pivot his projects in a new way when the demand for apartment houses leveled off and started to decline by 1912. Instead, his seemingly insatiable propensity to build led him to continue designing

¹¹⁵ "Building Is Brisk," *Sunday Oregonian*, August 19, 1917, 44.

¹¹⁶ "Industrial Growth Is Conspicuous in Building for Week," *Oregon Daily Journal*, August 19, 1917, 20.

¹¹⁷ "Oregon Architects Will Aid Portland Housing Campaign," *Oregon Daily Journal*, June 30, 1918. Housing for war workers was needed and apartment houses and single-family homes did not generally fit that bill.

¹¹⁸ "Ban on Building Activities Lifted," *Oregon Daily Journal*, November 14, 1918, 16.

¹¹⁹ Draft card for Richard <https://tinyurl.com/2zxuc7xx>

¹²⁰ "Richard F. Wassell to Erect Close-In Apartment-House," *Oregonian*, July 15, 1917, 19.

¹²¹ Elizabeth Gibson, *Images of America: Walla Walla*, Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, SC, 2004, 62. The three-story theater at 50 E Main Street was designed by Henry Osterman, someone Richard had done previous work for in Walla Walla. The building was renamed the Liberty Theatre in 1926 when it underwent various architectural enhancements. It is now listed in the National Register.

¹²² Richard's brother and cousin, William Arthur Sylvester (1892-1973), both Portland residents, would serve in the United States Army. Richard's uncle, William Summers Wassell, (1867-1917) would die while fighting for the British.

¹²³ "Estate Left to Widow," *Oregonian*, January 28, 1928, 7.

¹²⁴ "Nation Awake to Necessity of Providing Food Supply," *Oregon Daily Journal*, May 13, 1917, 31. Food conservation was a civic duty of Americans during and after the war and Richard had recently partnered with men already in the business.

¹²⁵ <https://casetext.com/case/gray-v-wassell> In debt to McBride for \$27,000 and owned no property.

¹²⁶ "Notice of Sheriff's Sale," *Tillamook Headlight*, June 9, 1921, 3. Property of the Wassell-Butler Packing (and possibly others) in foreclosure.

¹²⁷ <https://casetext.com/case/gray-v-wassell> section 277.

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and constructing large and increasingly elaborate apartment houses.¹²⁸ Doing so from a working-class starting position meant he was likely incurring large debts to finance his works.¹²⁹ It is unclear if he had indeed settled all those debts by the time the war started.

More Ambitious Projects

Undaunted by his financial troubles, Richard pursued even bigger projects in the next couple of years, returning to apartment houses, including another one with his long-term partner, Donald McBride. Richard would work tirelessly during this period as he was developing and overseeing construction of two of the biggest and most esteemed apartment houses at the time followed by a four-city-block development of single-family homes.

Ambassador Apartments (1209 SW 6th Avenue)

In 1920, Richard and McBride purchased a lot in downtown Portland well-suited for an apartment building as it was close to the banks, theaters, and hotels in the central business district.^{130,131,132,133} Richard was again seemingly driving the project as the developer/promoter and manager of building construction while McBride was responsible for the equity and financing.^{134,135,136} Richard hatched a cooperative ownership plan, inspired by high-rise condominiums on the east coast. Anticipated to cost \$300,000, it would be the first condo apartment building in Portland.^{137,138,139,140} Highly exclusive, "financial and social references" were to be required "with a view of obtaining a group of congenial tenants."¹⁴¹ But because pre-sale efforts were not showing enough market interest, Richard, after construction had started, changed the use to for-rent apartments for the "more discriminating apartment house patronage."¹⁴² Richard showed his prowess and power for real estate development by ultimately having city building code remade in his favor.

As mentioned, Richard employed Carl L. Linde to design the building, with whom he was once again sharing offices.¹⁴³ While Linde was the architect, it was very likely that the two were collaborating more on the design

¹²⁸ He built one apartment house per year between 1910 (The Portland boom reached a peak in 1910-1911 when building permits were twenty times the rate as in 1900) and 1916 while the pace of building activity in Portland had slowed in 1911/12 in response to reduced demand.

¹²⁹ His non-familial partners were predominantly from greater means.

¹³⁰ "Apartment House Plans Under Way," *Sunday Oregonian*, January 2, 1921, 28.

¹³¹ "Housing Code Problem," *Oregon Daily Journal*, March 13, 1921, 23. On the site was a three-story frame house dating circa 1885 for the James Steele family.

¹³² Photo of house at "Housing Code Problem," *Oregon Daily Journal*, March 13, 1921, 23. It was demolished.

¹³³ "Work Will Begin Soon," *Sunday Oregonian*, February 27, 1921, 8.

¹³⁴ "Apartment of Nine Stories Is Assured," *Oregon Daily Journal*, March 22, 1921, 1.

¹³⁵ Work Commenced on Apartment at Madison and 6th," *Oregon Daily Journal*, September 4, 1921, 9.

¹³⁶ "Building Capital Available," *Sunday Oregonian*, September 18, 1921, 8. Significant financing through the S. W. Straus Company of New York, which financed some of the best-known skyscrapers in the country.

¹³⁷ "New Cooperative Popular Plan," *Oregon Daily Journal*, February 20, 1921, 21.

¹³⁸ "New Cooperative Popular Plan," *Oregon Daily Journal*, February 20, 1921, 21.

¹³⁹ "Rent Profiteers Beaten by Unit Ownership Plan," *Oregon Daily Journal*, February 6, 1921, 19. Richard said "The amount of money which a renter throws away in the course of a five- or ten-year period has been accurately figured out and this data proves a convincing argument in the majority of cases. Cooperation is the keynote of the century. It simply means a combination of people acting for their own benefit, each having a part in the capitalization and profits of an enterprise. Applications of this principle to home ownership is as practicable as in any other line of business."

¹⁴⁰ "Own Your Own Apartment," *Sunday Oregonian*, February 20, 1921, 11.

¹⁴¹ "Work Will Begin Soon," *Sunday Oregonian*, February 27, 1921, 8.

¹⁴² "New Ambassador Apartment House Open to Patrons," *Oregon Daily Journal*, August 20, 1922, 17.

¹⁴³ 1921 Polk's City Directory has a combined entry for the two men with an office at the Artisans Building (239 SW Broadway).

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than the typical developer-architect relationship. For instance, one report noted that the plans were completed in Richard's office and, in another, Richard was given credit for the design.^{144,145} After delays in the approval of the plans, construction was underway around September 1921 and completed for partial residency in July 1922 but formally open and complete in September 1922.^{146,147,148,149} By that point, the cost had ballooned to \$650,000.¹⁵⁰

The nine-story, Jacobethan-styled building was called the "finest apartment house in the Northwest" at the time and reportedly the first major post-war apartment building in Portland.¹⁵¹ Among early twentieth-century apartment houses, it is one of the greatest architectural achievements in downtown Portland and possibly the entire city. The design of the building led to its listing in the National Register in 1979.

Sovereign Apartment Hotel (1207 SW Broadway)

In 1921, Richard partnered with Claude Starr again (they had developed Imperial Arms together in 1916) in the newly formed Sovereign Hotel Company. The Sovereign, just like the Ambassador, was envisioned (but also completed) as an experimental building type in Portland: an ultra-high end "residential hotel" that catered to sophisticated urban dwellers and the most "discriminating clientele" who expected a "maximum of service."¹⁵² Richard managed the construction while Linde was again engaged as the architect. The original 1921 plans for the 58-suite building had exterior styling similar to the Ambassador.¹⁵³ But by the next year, the plans for the nine-story building were made much more elaborate with "amplified" exterior decoration, the number of suites increased to 72, and the price rising accordingly from \$375,000 to \$500,000.¹⁵⁴ Construction was complete at the beginning of 1923.¹⁵⁵ The Sovereign, completed just after the Ambassador, is also among the historic buildings of great architectural significance in downtown Portland and was listed in the National Register in 1981.

Peacock Lane (SE Peacock Lane between SE Stark Street and SE Belmont Street)

As early as 1916, Richard had attempted, but failed, to build a series of single-family homes in the Laurelhurst neighborhood.^{156,157} With his experience designing single-family homes for the Wassells in 1908, his own home in 1916, and another in 1923 at 4624 NE Halsey Street, he likely was the architect of others.¹⁵⁸ As a contractor, he had been involved in more than a handful for his family and likely more.¹⁵⁹

His prowess as a combination developer, architect, and builder came together in 1923 when he purchased a four-block length of SE 40th Avenue. Richard changed the street's name to Peacock Lane for a planned

¹⁴⁴ "New Cooperative Popular Plan," *Oregon Daily Journal*, February 20, 1921, 21.

¹⁴⁵ Crane Valve World, Volume 19, 1922, 385.

¹⁴⁶ "Housing Code Problem," *Oregon Daily Journal*, March 13, 1921, 23.

¹⁴⁷ "Apartment of Nine Stories Is Assured," *Oregon Daily Journal*, March 22, 1921, 1.

¹⁴⁸ "Big Apartment Is Done," *Oregon Daily Journal*, August 20, 1922, 8.

¹⁴⁹ "New Ambassador Apartment House Open to Patrons," *Oregon Daily Journal*, August 20, 1922, 17.

¹⁵⁰ "Building Record This Year Looms," *Sunday Oregonian*, July 2, 1922, 9.

¹⁵¹ "New Ambassador Apartment House Open to Patrons," *Oregon Daily Journal*, August 20, 1922, 17.

¹⁵² "Excavation Begun for 9-Story Hotel," *Sunday Oregonian*, April 2, 1922, 4.

¹⁵³ "Fine Hotel Will Rise," *Sunday Oregonian*, December 18, 1921, 10.

¹⁵⁴ "Sovereign Hotel to Be Elaborate," *Sunday Oregonian*, May 28, 1922, 8.

¹⁵⁵ "Modern Apartments," *Oregon Daily Journal*, December 31, 1922, 92.

¹⁵⁶ "New Apartment House Is to Rise," *Sunday Oregonian*, July 30, 1916, 23.

¹⁵⁷ "Realty Men Lining Up," *Sunday Oregonian*, September 3, 1916, 56.

¹⁵⁸ "Home Building Active," *Oregonian*, November 4, 1923, 25.

¹⁵⁹ "Building Permits," *Pacific Builder & Engineer*, 1924, vol. 30, p. 7. Such as the builder of a single-family home at 5540 SE Hawthorne for a design by Morris Whitehouse.

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community of architecturally harmonious houses, designed mostly in the English Cottage and Tudor Revival styles. It was a daring plan as it was "all done on borrowed capital with excessive discounts and carrying charges" under his father's name.¹⁶⁰ Equity for the development came from a mortgaging of the Wassell home on SE Madison. Most of the eventual 32 homes were built in an innovative-for-the-times merchant builder approach with Richard designing most of these. By 1925, Richard (under the Wassell Estate Company name) sold the remaining lots and homes at a discount with other builders constructing subsequent homes.^{161,162} The street was listed as a National Register Historic District in 2017.

Three one-story commercial buildings (various locations)

As Richard was selling off lots on Peacock Lane in 1925, he was trying to build another apartment house in the Buckman neighborhood while also venturing into commercial property. Richard designed, developed, and built three quarter-block, one-story buildings in SE Portland—two in Buckman and one in the Richmond neighborhood. He purchased the land himself and conveyed ownership to his wife but "retained a secret trust for his own use and benefit."¹⁶³ The first and second buildings, at the northeast corner of SE 17th Avenue and SE Hawthorne Boulevard and the northwest corner of SE 35th Place and SE Division Street respectively, were minimally but tastefully detailed.¹⁶⁴ The third was a utilitarian garage with little to no detail at the northeast corner of SE 6th Avenue and SE Washington Street.¹⁶⁵

Eglington Arms Hotel¹⁶⁶ (1225 SW Alder Street)

Richard continued to build apartment houses after Peacock Lane, but his next viable one was not until the end of 1925. Returning to downtown again, he purchased a one-eighth block site in September 1925 and made his wife the owner to insulate himself financially.¹⁶⁷ His first project without another business partner, Richard enlisted architect and fellow son-of-Scottish-immigrants John Hugh Grant (1879-1958) to design the four-story apartment hotel with Tudor and Jacobethan elements, catering to the business class.^{168,169} It was completed in March 1926 for \$125,000. Originally called the Eglington Arms Hotel during construction, the 42 hotel apartment rooms opened as the Prince of Wales Hotel.¹⁷⁰ Richard—for the second time in his career—managed the operations, this time with his brother-in-law.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁰ <https://casetext.com/case/gray-v-wassell>

¹⁶¹ "Selling Out," *Oregonian*, April 26, 1925, 30. This was one of many ads selling the remaining lots due to "other large building operations."

¹⁶² "Portland Building Many New Homes," *Oregonian*, March 14, 1926, 30. "Many Houses Rise All Over Portland," *Oregonian*, February 21, 1926, 27. "Home Bulk Large in Fall Building," *Oregonian*, October 4, 1925, 32. "Building Permits of \$1,000 and Over," *Oregonian*, August 8, 1926, 26.

¹⁶³ <https://casetext.com/case/gray-v-wassell>

¹⁶⁴ "Sales in Week Run to Home Property," *Oregonian*, December 14, 1924, 35. "Brisk Demand Reported," Sunday *Oregonian*, April 19, 1925, 31. "200,000 Leases Taken," *Oregonian*, February 1, 1925, 26.

¹⁶⁵ "Many Buildings Rise," *Oregonian*, August 23, 1925, 27.

¹⁶⁶ The name is the same name of a hotel in Androssan, Scotland where Anstus' brother, William, had lived before emigrating to Portland in 1908. He died in 1909.

¹⁶⁷ "Hotel Building on Alder Street Costs \$125,000," *Oregon Daily Journal*, September 27, 1925, 24. Purchased for \$80,000 from James Clarkson and included the transfer of the one-story commercial building at SE 17th Avenue and Hawthorne.

¹⁶⁸ "New Hotel Projected," *Oregonian*, September 11, 1925, 9.

¹⁶⁹ "Hotel to Open Today," *Oregonian*, March 7, 1926, 29-30.

¹⁷⁰ "New Alder Street Apartment House to Cost \$125,000," *Oregon Daily Journal*, September 13, 1925, 26.

¹⁷¹ "Hotel to Open Today," *Oregonian*, March 7, 1926, 29-30. Brother-in-law was Charles H. Rundell.

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Duke of York (1410 SE Belmont Street)

Later in 1926, Richard conducted his last project, the Duke of York Apartments, built on behalf of his wife's sister for \$145,000.¹⁷² Discussed in the MPD comparative analysis section, Richard would oversee the building's three-story construction between June and October 1926.^{173,174,175} He again hired John Grant to do the design, which included a street-facing central courtyard and 37 apartments of two and three rooms each.¹⁷⁶ As mentioned, the styling was markedly different from all of Richard's previous projects where he showed a strong preference for Renaissance Revival, Tudor Revival, and Jacobethan styles.¹⁷⁷

Estate Matters

In the few years following Richard's death, his wife—the beneficiary of \$45,000 in life insurance—and his father appeared in court disputing matters over his estate. A neutral administrator was appointed by the court who subsequently engaged in litigation to determine the rightful assets (mostly properties in Alice's and Joseph's names) so that debts could be paid (primarily for labor and materials on the buildings he built starting in 1922) and for compensation for the administration of the estate.¹⁷⁸ Joseph, as the manager of Richard's Duke of York apartment house, sued for the ability to collect rent after it was sold at a sheriff's sale and also sought \$11,315 against the estate.^{179,180,181} Appeals were subsequently heard and the matters were eventually settled.^{182,183}

The resolution of his estate was marred by allegations of fraud resulting from Richard having conducted business in the name of his father and wife starting around 1921, ostensibly to prevent creditors from seizing his property to pay the debts he owed. It was also alleged that he was secretly and fraudulently using the profits from properties that he did not own to perpetuate other projects.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷² Wife's sister was Anna Rundell nee Johnson (1884-1976).

¹⁷³ "New Apartments Near Completion," *Oregon Daily Journal*, July 25, 1926, 22.

¹⁷⁴ "New Apartments Open," *Sunday Oregonian*, October 24, 1926, 27.

¹⁷⁵ "Record Year Looms in Home Building," *Oregonian*, July 11, 1926, 24.

¹⁷⁶ *Building and Engineering News*, Volume 26, Issue 1, 1926, 8.

¹⁷⁷ "Record Year Looms in Home Building," *Oregonian*, July 11, 1926, 24.

¹⁷⁸ "Hotel Suit Is Filed," *Oregonian*, August 1, 1931, 12. Defaulted mortgage bonds from the building of the Sovereign hotel were being foreclosed on.

¹⁷⁹ "Suit on Furniture Filed," *Oregonian*, January 23, 1929, 34.

¹⁸⁰ "Widow Loses Contest," *Oregonian*, January 26, 1928, 5.

¹⁸¹ "Father Sues on Estate," *Oregonian*, March 8, 1929, 9.

¹⁸² "Larceny Appeal Lost," *Oregonian*, November 11, 1931, 6.

¹⁸³ "Injury Ruling Upheld," *Oregonian*, January 6, 1932, 2.

¹⁸⁴ <https://casetext.com/case/gray-v-wassell>

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Figure 30: Appendix of Other Richard Wassell Projects

Given all the research done for this nomination, this additional information is included to facilitate a more complete and accurate record of Richard Wassell's career. Collectively, they offer further evidence of Richard's seemingly indefatigable ambition, remarkable talents, and may suggest a larger contribution to architecture and development than documented above. This list of projects that he attempted and those he was possibly involved with is presented for the reader interested in learning more about his arc.

Projects Not Completed

The cause for the failure of these initiatives is mostly unknown (except for his 1916 projects seemingly scuttled by World War I), however, they were all happening concomitantly with the projects which did end up being built.

- Astoria, Oregon: In 1914, Wassell and company bought property on 14th Street between Exchange Street and Franklin Street and planned to build a \$60,000 five-story apartment house that would have been similar to his other Portland buildings.^{185,186}
- NW 22nd Avenue and NW Irving Street: In 1914, Wassell and J. D. Wharton, following the latter's sale of Melcliffe Court, bought a lot and intended to build an apartment house.¹⁸⁷
- SW 20th Avenue and SW Morrison Street: In 1915, Wassell and Company bought a lot with permits being subsequently issued for a four-story apartment house. It was to be modeled after Tudor Arms but done on a more elaborate scale and having larger suites (4-6 rooms each).¹⁸⁸
- NW 19th Avenue and NW Flanders Street: In 1916, Richard planned a four-story brick apartment house.¹⁸⁹
- Republic Arms: In 1916, Richard planned another apartment house downtown, "near the heart of the business district", that he called Republic Arms but he never acquired a property to build it. Republic Arms was to be "quite different" than his previous buildings, with Carl Linde possibly the architect, with a five-story plan that was more elaborate, more European in design, and lacking his customary prominent entry court.¹⁹⁰ After more than a year of trying to make the project happen, World War One seems to have killed the effort.^{191,192}
- SE Ankeny Street: In 1916, Richard bought a string of lots and planned to build ten single-family bungalows between SE Cesar Chavez Boulevard and SE 41st Avenue.¹⁹³
- Other Oregon Cities: In 1916, Richard was reportedly pursuing and making sketches for the building of two to three other apartment houses in cities outside of Portland, namely Eugene, La Grande, and Pendleton.^{194,195}

¹⁸⁵ "3 Oregon Cities Brisk in Building," *Sunday Oregonian*, July 26, 1914, 22.

¹⁸⁶ "Flour Mill Newest Industry," *Sunday Oregonian*, August 9, 1914, 53.

¹⁸⁷ "Apartment House Site Sold," *Oregon Daily Journal*, September 12, 1915, 40. This property was developed in 1926 for a different owner, H. Hoffman.

¹⁸⁸ "Apartment Plan Is Month's Big Event," *Sunday Oregonian*, September 19, 1915, 58. The site used to house the Pacific Northwest Industrial Exposition Building, a large and elaborate exhibition hall, which was razed in a fire in 1910.

¹⁸⁹ "Portland, Ore.," *Engineering Record*, Vol. 73, No. 4, 34.

¹⁹⁰ "New Apartment House Is to Rise," *Sunday Oregonian*, July 30, 1916, 23.

¹⁹¹ "Mewblock Planned," *Oregonian*, July 15, 1917, 19. Title of article is as it appeared.

¹⁹² "Building Permits Show Big Jump," *Sunday Oregonian*, September 24, 1916, 60.

¹⁹³ "Ten Dwellings to Rise," *Sunday Oregonian*, September 3, 1916, 56.

¹⁹⁴ "New Apartment House Is to Rise," *Sunday Oregonian*, July 30, 1916, 23.

¹⁹⁵ "Stanfield School Is Opened Following 2 Weeks Xmas Vacation," *Daily East Oregonian*, January 8, 1915, 3.

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- SE 14th Avenue and SE Hawthorne Boulevard: In 1922, Richard and associates purchased a lot and planned to build a large apartment house that year.¹⁹⁶ But by 1924, Richard was still trying to make the project, a three-story apartment house, happen. The last newspaper report on the project occurred nine months later, informing readers that efforts were still being made to bring the project to construction.¹⁹⁷ A couple months henceforth, Richard had sold the property and used the proceeds to invest in his three one-story commercial buildings and possibly the next one on this list.¹⁹⁸
- SW Broadway and SW Columbia Street: In 1925, Richard had tried to build a four-over-one apartment hotel with 107 units using plans by architect John H. Grant.¹⁹⁹ However, another developer completed the project with a different architect and design the following year.²⁰⁰

Possible Projects

- J. D. Wassell House: Richard's father, Joseph, built a house for his family in the Buckman neighborhood at 1126 SE 15th Avenue in 1908. He purchased the site in 1907 for \$1,500 and had a permit in March 1908 to construct the two-story frame house for \$3,500.^{201,202} The home is built in the American Basic style. While little else is known about the house's design and construction, this study of the Wassells leaves little doubt that Richard was involved in the construction and possibly also the design. A half-story has since been added with a significant alteration to the roofline. A street-level garage and shop that's nearly the whole width of the property was added around 1980.
- Wellesley Court Apartments: Intriguing inferences can be made regarding Richard's possible 1911-1912 involvement in the development of this building which has been covered elsewhere in this nomination. Some facts to note that would support Richard's involvement:
 - Bailey, Taylor, and Lambert had no known prior experience building apartment houses, had not built any housing other than single-family homes, and had not done any work, as far as our research has found, outside of the southeastern Washington and northeastern Oregon area.
 - Richard was Taylor's cousin and they had worked together in Walla Walla, along with Richard's father, Joseph, since 1903. Joseph and Alexander were joint operators of a Walla Walla-based masonry contracting company for eleven years, including the time when the Wellesley was built.
 - The Wellesley was built in the Buckman neighborhood of Portland, just two blocks away from the Wassell's home.
 - By the time the Wellesley was begun, Richard had much more experience with apartment houses having already built two others in Portland with a third being planned (and completed a few weeks before the Wellesley).
 - Alexander's family lived in Portland, although it is unknown where, during its construction.²⁰³

¹⁹⁶ "Corner Block Is Sold," *Sunday Oregonian*, August 6, 1922, 10.

¹⁹⁷ "Space in Strong Demand," *Oregonian*, January 11, 1925, 27.

¹⁹⁸ "Brisk Demand Reported," *Oregonian*, April 19, 1925, 31.

¹⁹⁹ "Portland's Real Estate Market Offers Many Excellent Opportunities for Safe and Profitable Development," *Oregon Daily Journal*, June 14, 1925, 29.

²⁰⁰ New \$250,000 Hotel to Rise Downtown," *Oregonian*, March 24, 1926, 1.

²⁰¹ "Real Estate Transfers," *Oregon Daily Journal*, November 21, 1907, 16. Historically, this was the Hawthorne Park development.

²⁰² <https://tinyurl.com/44wdcnpf>, 1272.

²⁰³ Taylor, 110.

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- Walla Walla, Washington: Since the Taylor and Wassell Company partnership lasted from 1906 until 1917, it is possible that Richard partook in building other structures (the way he did with the American Theater), likely in and around Walla Walla where Taylor, over the course of his life, was involved in the building of at least 124 structures.²⁰⁴
- Repairs and Renovations: One other project Richard *did* complete (amidst an extraordinarily busy 1916) was the repair of the Waldorf Billiard Parlors (630 SW Washington Street), a two-story store and poolroom owned by J. J. Parker in 1916. This suggests that Richard, possibly throughout his career, was managing construction on possibly many more buildings in Portland.
- Given the paucity of reporting on some of his projects—including the possible and aspiring projects listed in this appendix—it is conceivable that there were many more buildings he built, which future research may yet uncover.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 138.

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Photo 1 of 25: North elevation, camera facing southwest.



Photo 2 of 25: North elevation, camera facing south.



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Photo 3 of 25: North elevation entry courtyard, camera facing south.



Photo 4 of 25: East elevation, camera facing southwest.



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Photo 5 of 25: South elevation, camera facing northwest.



Photo 6 of 25: West elevation, camera facing southeast.



Photo 7 of 25: Detail of cornice at northeast corner.



Photo 8 of 25: Entry vestibule, camera facing south.



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Photo 9 of 25: Interior of entry vestibule, camera facing southwest.



Photo 10 of 25: Entry vestibule penny round tile floor.



Photo 11 of 25: Entry vestibule plaster crown molding.



Photo 12 of 25: Lobby entry doors, camera facing northeast.



Photo 13 of 25: Lobby, camera facing southwest.



Photo 14 of 25: Interior staircase, camera facing northeast.



Photo 15 of 25: Staircase skylight, camera facing northwest.



Photo 16 of 25: Third-floor east-west corridor and elevator, camera facing west.



Photo 17 of 25: Typical corridor, camera facing north.



Photo 18 of 25: Typical double studio with pocket doors.



Photo 19 of 25: Typical window with wood casing.



Photo 20 of 25: Holmes roll-out bed with non-historic casework.



Photo 21 of 25: Historic multi-light door within apartment unit.



Photo 22 of 25: Typical single panel door.



Photo 23 of 25: Apartment kitchen.



Photo 24 of 25: Typical bathroom.



Photo 25 of 25: Typical bathroom with hex tile floor.

