



Devers, Arthur H., House  
Name of Property

Multnomah Co., OR  
County and State

## 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.)

<b>Contributing</b>	<b>Noncontributing</b>	
1	1	buildings
		site
		structure
		object
1	1	<b>Total</b>

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: BRICK

walls: WOOD/weatherboard

roof: ASPHALT

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 Arthur H. Devers House is located at 1125 NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue, a block north of the northern boundary of the National Register-listed Alphabet Historic District in the northwest quadrant of Portland, Oregon. It is a 2.5-story wood-framed building of 2,288 square feet, with parged brick and concrete foundation and horizontal wood "drop" siding.<sup>1</sup> The house, now a duplex, is in the Queen Anne style and was completed in 1891.<sup>2</sup> The architect and/or builder are unknown. There is one contemporary noncontributing structure on the property, a small shed in the southwest corner of the lot.

Exterior character-defining features include the house's staggered front gables, one with fishscale shingle siding and a bullseye window and the other with rectangular shingles and a rectangular window. Both gables flare outward at the bottom, forming a shallow overhang over the second story. Additional features include the double-hung wood windows, most of which appear original and have ogees and wavy glass, and three faceted bays: one at the ground level on the primary (east) façade, and two full-height bays on the north and south façades. There are also three stained-glass windows, all original, including one transom window over the entry doors and two others in the north and east bays. These three windows cannot be definitively attributed but bear the hallmarks of the famous Portland art glass studio, Povey Brothers. Finally, the original horizontal wood "drop" siding, along with the shingle siding at gable ends, is a characteristic of the house's original design, style, and materials. At the interior, character-defining features include the fireplace with its decorative surround, and the dark wood stair with turned balusters and decorative newel posts. All of these features were constructed for the Devers family, who lived in the house from 1891 to 1908, the period of time in which Arthur Devers became an important civic leader and businessman in Portland.

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**Narrative Description****Setting and Site**

The Devers House is located mid-block fronting a busy commercial arterial street between a gas station property to the south and a large house (in commercial use) of about the same age to the north. The house sits up above the street slightly, with a short flight of concrete steps from the sidewalk and a small grassy front yard (Photograph 2). Along the north edge of the property is a concrete driveway leading back to the paved rear yard behind the house.

Behind the gas station and both houses, on the west property line, is a 3-story blank painted concrete wall along the full block, the side of a parking garage structure owned by Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital (Figure 2, local location map). Additionally, a painted wood and metal privacy barrier sits on the back half of the property's south property line above a painted concrete masonry wall, about 10 feet high. The full height of the wall is about 25 feet. Towards the front of the house, the south property line is marked by a wood fence with dense plantings.

A small, shingled, shed-roofed structure is at the southwest corner of the lot, with double doors opening to the north (Photograph 6). As it was added to the property well after the 1891-1908 period of significance, it is noncontributing. The paved concrete surface at the driveway and the rear of the house becomes a gravel yard at the south side of the house. An unpainted wood fence, interrupted by the

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<sup>1</sup> Building area from Portlandmaps.com.

<sup>2</sup> Completion dates from "The Building Record," *Oregonian* July 11, 1891, 11; and "Many New Buildings over 2000 were Erected During the year Just Ended," *Oregonian* Jan 19, 1892, 9-10.

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exterior stair run extending down towards the west, is located between the house's rear inset porch and the south property line. Another parallel fence separates the gravel yard from the planted front yard, touching the house about 8 feet back from the front façade (Figure 4, site plan).

There are two small flowering deciduous trees in the planting strip in front of the house, and several neatly trimmed bushes in the front yard. Two or three larger broadleaf evergreen trees grow along the south property line, including a holly. Plantings in the rear yard consist of a multi-stemmed tree in a large pot towards the northwest corner, vines covering the fence along the north property line, and a large evergreen shrub growing along the north property line.

### **Exterior**

The Devers House has a rectangular footprint and includes a two-story addition off the rear façade. The roof of the original massing is front-gabled, with a smaller front gable to one side of the primary roof gable. The forward pedimented gable has fishscale shingles and a central bullseye window, and flares out at the bottom (Photograph 1). Just behind it and offset to the north is the primary gable end, which has a central fixed rectangular window and rectangular shingles, also with flared courses at the bottom. The eaves are boxed in and finished with stucco.

The house exhibits many Victorian-era exterior finishes, including "drop" wood siding with cornerboards, and vertically-proportioned wood windows that are primarily one-over-one double hung, with a pair of two-over-one windows at the second story of the primary façade. The house has a parged brick foundation, with concrete foundation at the rear addition, and one brick interior chimney straddles the south bay dormer. Original windows have a simple casing that typically ends in a horizontal band or friezeboard across the top.

### **East**

The porch and primary entry is at the northeast corner of the house, facing east towards NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue. Five wood steps lead up to a recessed porch, which has a decorative turned post at the northeast corner and wood railings with ball newel posts and simple chamfered balusters (Photograph 4). Double doors have large glass panes over two wood panels, and a decorative stained-glass transom with the original house number, "253."<sup>3</sup> A single decorative glass light fixture, which does not appear to be original, is affixed to the center of the soffit. A front bay with cutaway angled sides forms the south side of the porch. The central window in the bay is divided into two unequal fixed units; the top is a stained-glass panel with diamond and floral motifs. The side windows are one-over-one double-hung units with ogee sash lugs.

At the upper level, a pair of two-over-one windows with ogee sash lugs faces the street above the bay. A smaller wood double-hung window of a wider proportion (not original) is located above the porch. A projecting soffit above this wall area wraps around to the north.

### **North**

The north façade, along the driveway, has a full-height three-sided bay with a hipped roof and a small cornice. A fixed stained-glass window with a floral theme is located in the center of the bay at ground floor. A narrow double-hung window is located on either side in the angled walls.

At the upper level, a short double-hung wood window (not original) is in the wall area in front of the bay. The bay itself at this level has a small, vertically-proportioned window at the northeast bay angle and one at center of the bay (Photograph 3).

<sup>3</sup> The house number changed in the 1930s when Portland embarked on a "great renumbering" over several years, updating the house address from 253 21<sup>st</sup> Street N to 1125 NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue.

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A square wood window is located in the north wall of the slightly inset rear addition at both the ground and upper levels.

#### *West*

The rear façade of the house consists mostly of a contemporary two-story addition, constructed in 2006. The addition is not as wide as the original rear façade; it is pulled in about 12" from both sides. An asymmetrical composition, this façade of the addition has an inset porch at the southwest corner and a pair of square wood awning windows at the ground floor. At the second level, a large inset balcony takes up about half of the façade width, with a relatively tall and narrow double-hung window centered on the wall next to it (Photographs 3 and 5). A simple square post anchors the corner at both openings. The addition volume also has a partial hipped roof on three sides, concealing a flat roof which is accessible from a contemporary wood door in the attic-level gable at the original west end of the building. The original gable end of the house, facing west, can be seen above the addition.

#### *South*

The south elevation in total is difficult to see owing to an exterior staircase, the proximity of the fence line at the south property line, and the perpendicular fences. However, the composition of this side of the house indicates that it was originally meant to be seen with the front of the house, since the gabled dormer atop the two-story, three-sided bay recalls the front gable, which also has fishscale shingles (Photograph 5). The gabled dormer overhangs both angled sides of the full-height bay. There are matching tall double-hung wood windows on the angled walls of the bay both at ground level and at second floor. A single shorter wood window is located on the ground floor towards the back of the house, in the kitchen.

At the southwest corner of the building is a complex painted wood exterior stair. At the top, the stair has two separate landings, one at the second-floor deck and one from the half-level between the attic and the second floor, at the south side of the house. The two stairs down from the upper landings meet at a landing slightly below the second floor (Figure 4, site plan). Finally, a third run extends down and west into the back yard. The open wood stair is held up on wood posts with cross-bracing and has a simple painted wood railing. A concrete stair also extends up and towards the west from the basement level along the south side of the house, east of the wood fence.

Openings in the south wall of the rear addition, facing onto the exterior porches at both levels, include a wood window and door at the upper level and a pair of wood windows at the ground floor.

#### **Interior**

Finishes at the interior are generally carpeted or wood floors, with tile bathroom floors and some composite flooring in the second floor kitchen. Walls and ceilings are painted plaster or gypsum wall board, with a tall baseboard, and some painted wood beadboard wainscot in bathrooms. Openings are trimmed with a wide and highly detailed wood surround, painted white. Picture rail trim is in most of the downstairs rooms, and in some upstairs rooms at the front of the house as well. Most of the light fixtures in the downstairs and the upstairs in front rooms are pendant fixtures at the center of the room. Some of these may be original.

#### *Ground Level*

One enters the house through the double doors in the east façade, which open into a compact space at the bottom of the stair (Photograph 7). The stair itself has a carpeted runner and dark stained wood treads and risers, chamfered newel posts, and turned balustrade, with a square post top at the bottom and an octagonal newel post on the top. To the left of the vestibule, through a doorway, is the front room, dominated by the front bay with three windows including the central stained-glass window (Photograph 9). Below the bay windows are painted wood panels.

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Moving west into the dining room, a decorative fireplace is on the south wall on an inset tiled area in the wood floor (Photograph 8). On either side of the fireplace, the walls angle outward, both with a tall double-hung window, to form a three-sided bay with the fireplace in the center. A decorative cast iron insert burns gas under "fake wood" and the hearth surround is a series of square tiles each with domed central bullseye. The overmantel and surround for the tile is decorative carved wood in a dark color, with a mantel supporting two turned columns with a central mirror (Photograph 8). From the dining room, one door leads to the kitchen directly west at the back of the house, and another door leads to a large bedroom to the northwest through an angled wall.

The primary bedroom (on the north side of the house) has a three-sided bay facing north, with small double-hung wood windows on both sides and a central fixed stained-glass window in the center (Photographs 10 and 11). Immediately to the west of the bedroom is a bathroom with a clawfoot tub and octagonal tile flooring.

Another door from the bathroom leads south to the kitchen, which has two doorway openings at the east (back to the dining room and to a pantry), two at the west wall (one to an inset back porch and the other to a small anteroom with contemporary finishes) with modern counters, cabinets, and appliances at the north and south walls.

#### *Second Floor*

The doorway to the upstairs unit is at the top of the primary stair (Figure 5, floor plans). Going through this door to the hallway and turning west, there is a bathroom just to the right along the north wall of the house, with beadboard wainscot and octagonal tile floors. A contemporary kitchen and small dining room take up the northwest corner of the house (Photograph 12). A door from the dining room leads south to an outdoor porch with an exterior stair. At the southwest corner of the house, a small bedroom also has access to the outdoor porch, and a secondary stair leading up to the attic is behind a doorway. Another exterior stair landing is situated on the south wall and accessed by a door leading out underneath the attic stair on the south wall. There are two bedrooms, one at the southeast corner of the house and one in the center of the south floorplate. These rooms share a closet zone. The front room has a large pair of double-hung wood windows at the east (front) wall. The central room features the three-sided bay, with wood windows on both sides and a projecting volume enclosing the center chimney that rises from the fireplace on the ground floor (Photograph 13). Finally, a small room at the northeast corner of the house has matching double-hung windows on the north and east walls (Photograph 14).

#### *Attic/Third Floor*

The attic consists of one large unfinished space, accessed from the secondary stair at the south side. The floor level meets the roof rafters so there is virtually no vertical kneewall area along the north or south, except under the south dormer. Next to the stair, centered on the projecting south bay, there is a wood platform supporting a small heating/ cooling unit in front of the brick chimney. At the front (east) end, there are two small windows looking out to the street, one round and one square. The roof rafters have wood collar ties at the front half of the attic. At the back (west) side, there is a single contemporary door in the center of the wall, leading to a roof deck on the rear addition (Photograph 16).

#### *Basement*

The unfinished basement is accessed from the primary interior stair along the north side of the house. The basement walls are primarily brick, with a concrete-walled extension on the west corresponding to the rear addition, where a washer and dryer and water heaters are situated. The exterior walls of the basement follow the same plan as the main floor, with three-sided bays at the north and east and another bay at the south with central brick chimney foundation at the center (Photograph 15 looking east). A modern wood door has been inserted into the south wall towards the back of the house that leads to an exterior concrete stair up to the side yard. The basement floor is concrete and the ceiling is exposed floor joists, with modern metal rectangular ductwork below the wood joists.

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**Alterations: Exterior**

While there are no drawings or permits on record with the City of Portland for the original construction of the house, the city's leading newspaper reported that A. H. Devers received a permit for its construction in 1891.<sup>4</sup> The new house was said to be a two-story frame house, on 20<sup>th</sup> Street between N and M Streets (these were renamed Northrup and Marshall Streets in 1891), and it was completed in that same year.<sup>5</sup> The north-south streets were also renumbered in 1891, so the house address after its initial permitting became 21<sup>st</sup> Street (later Ave.), rather than 20<sup>th</sup> St. (see the current tax map, Figure 3). Since its completion, changes have included:

- In 1921, the then-owner of the house, Jack King, had porches repaired and added a freestanding garage.<sup>6</sup>
- 1971 photos of the house do not show the decorative turned front porch post, but rather a square wood post which does not appear to match the house style (Figure 8). These indicate that the existing turned post, while appropriate in style, is a replacement.
- At an unknown date between 1960 and 1975, a garage in the northwest corner of the property (built in 1921) was removed.<sup>7</sup>
- At an unknown date before 1971, a small second-floor porch or balcony was filled in at the northeast corner of the house. This change is evident in the proportion and detailing of the windows, both at exterior and interior. A 1992 survey also noted the enclosure of an upper story porch.<sup>8</sup>
- A fire on December 15, 1982, necessitated repair work which owner Ada H. Fildes had completed in early 1983.<sup>9</sup> The fire caused "heavy damage to joists and rafters over rear of house."<sup>10</sup>
- In 1989, under owner "Parish of St. Marks," an existing rear double-hung window at the rear of the house from the kitchen was removed and replaced with a door, and a one-story addition ("sunroom") was built at the rear of the house, inset from the side walls of the house.<sup>11</sup>
- At a date prior to 1992, the existing brick interior chimney (rising from roof of the south dormer) was rebuilt in a simpler style, without the corbels at the top. Possibly at the same time, another interior chimney was removed altogether at the north side of the house, towards the rear.<sup>12</sup>
- At a date prior to 1997, a wheelchair ramp was added to the back door.<sup>13</sup> It was removed later, probably in 2006 when the larger addition replaced the earlier addition (see below).
- In 2006, the small one-story "sunroom" bump-out at the rear of the house was replaced with a larger addition, extending up to the second level as a partial enclosed space and an open covered porch. An exterior wood stair was also constructed at this time, from grade to second floor.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "The Building Record," *Oregonian* July 11, 1891, 11.

<sup>5</sup> "Many New Buildings over 2000 were Erected During the Year Just Ended," *Oregonian* Jan 19, 1892, 9-10.

<sup>6</sup> City of Portland permits 98250 and 98251; 253 21<sup>st</sup> Street N. (address later amended to 1125 NW 21<sup>st</sup> Ave), July 15, 1921.

<sup>7</sup> PortlandMaps.com historical imagery

<sup>8</sup> Donovan & Associates/ Prohaska survey form ("Devers House"), Oregon SHPO Inventory of Historic Properties, Multnomah County, August 1992.

<sup>9</sup> City of Portland Fire inspection #18741, Dec. 15, 1982, and repair permit 105924, notations from 1/5/83 to 3/4/83.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> City of Portland permit 89-101992, May 8, 1989, lists the Fildes as owners but a notation on plan notes owner St. Marks.

<sup>12</sup> 1971 photos show both chimneys, and the 1992 survey described the single chimney as "corbeled."

<sup>13</sup> City of Portland Building Code Appeal 97-00207, owner Marvin Pearce, January 22, 1997.

<sup>14</sup> City of Portland permit 06-113600 RS, owner Jay Pierce, architect Todd Sloan, April 14, 2006.

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**Alterations: Interior**

- In 1947, the house was modified to accommodate two units, becoming a duplex. While no plans from this revision are on file, the permit record indicates that plans were drawn for owner Sam Arnold by the Universal Plan Service. Mr. Arnold was himself the builder and was listed as residing at the house until 1962.<sup>15</sup>
- The interior was undoubtedly affected, especially at the upstairs, by a 1982 fire (see "Alterations: Exterior").
- In 1990, the house was converted to a natural gas heating system by contractor Rose Heating.<sup>16</sup>
- A survey in 1992 noted that the house had some commercial uses as "Lionsgate Books & Gallery" and that prior alterations included "replacement of the upper stair balusters and railings."<sup>17</sup> The uses were in fact not commercial but part of a religious outreach (see 1992 photo, Figure 10).
- In 1994 the house was rewired with new electrical service.<sup>18</sup>
- A change of occupancy was granted to allow the duplex to be used for "temporary commercial use" in 1997, for an artist who rented both units and showed their work (downstairs) as well as lived in the house (upstairs).<sup>19</sup>

**Integrity**

Overall, the Devers House retains integrity. As described by the National Park Service, historic integrity is the composite of seven qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The Devers House is in its original *location* and has not changed substantially from its original 1890s *design*. Though no architect or builder information has yet been identified, the design of the house's exterior illustrates a layered, asymmetrical, surface-pattern approach typical of Victorian-era architecture in Portland. The front of the house has changed only slightly, with what was likely a small porch or balcony above the entry infilled at the second floor and clad in siding to match. The changes to the rear of the house, with a two-story inset addition at the west façade and a series of stairs at the south side, are more significant but do not face the street. While these extensive alterations to the rear (west) façade resulted in the loss of its original design, they do not preclude the property from retaining integrity under Criterion B. The essential physical features necessary to convey Arthur Devers's emerging status and his significance as a civic leader are located primarily on the public-facing east façade and within the retained primary interior spaces. The Queen Anne style's expression of high artistic values and social status—critical for demonstrating Devers's affluence—is fully retained in the prominent front elevation and the main-floor formal rooms, including the decorative fireplace and stained-glass windows. The property's original design also is seen in the house's continued relationship to the street, with a small front yard bisected by a set of steps and a walkway from the sidewalk. This residential yard aesthetic is now quite rare compared to other properties facing NW 21st Avenue.

Outside of the extant front yard, the *setting* of the Devers House has been altered considerably. The construction of the gas station on the adjacent property to the south, as well as the construction of a tall, windowless parking garage on the property to the west, have changed the once-residential setting of the

<sup>15</sup> City of Portland permit 292991, September 10, 1947. R. L. Polk City Directories for Portland, 1949, 1953-54, and 1955 to 1962. Mrs. Laura M. Arnold is listed as residing at 1125 NW 21<sup>st</sup> from 1963 through 1969.

<sup>16</sup> City of Portland Heating & Ventilating Permit 90-29214, December 14, 1990, owner listed as McClure (?).

<sup>17</sup> Donovan & Associates/ Prohaska survey form ("Devers House"), Oregon SHPO Inventory of Historic Properties, Multnomah County, August 1992. "Lionsgate" was affiliated with and owned by St. Marks Church, so a religious use rather than commercial.

<sup>18</sup> City of Portland Electrical case No. ELE94-03746 and ELE94-03747, March 18, 1994. The ownership may have been St. Marks Church by 1994.

<sup>19</sup> City of Portland Building Code Appeal 97-00207.

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house. The changes to NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue, with various commercial uses and typologies coming to dominate the streetscape over time, also contribute to some loss of integrity in the house's broader setting.

Most of the original *materials* and *workmanship* are retained throughout the house, even at the interior. These interior features and elements include the primary "public facing" elements such as the dining room with its ornamental fireplace, the stained-glass windows, and the dark wood banister and newel post. At the exterior, the house has most of its wood finishes and trim, its tall wood windows (some with original wavy glass), and the many details that illustrate the eclectic and tactile quality of the style such as the gable end shingles and stained-glass windows. As previously mentioned, the alterations to the rear façade have a negligible impact on the property's integrity as the rear of the building, which historically housed service functions, is not required to convey the house's association with Devers's public and social achievements achieved during the period of significance.

The *feeling* of the property is consistent with the period of significance, though it is no longer a single-family residence for a well-off family. The conversion to two separate living units has not affected the property's exterior expression, and at the interior, the changes have retained the primary "public facing" elements including the front parlor room, the dining room with ornamental fireplace, the stained-glass windows, detailed wood trim at openings on both floors, and the staircase with the dark wood banister and newel post. The property's historic expression is still conveyed, except in the paved back "yard" between the rear addition and the three-story wall of the parking garage to the west.

The house communicates its *association* with the Devers family, who had the house constructed for them in 1891 and lived there for 17 years. Indicators of their social status are still evident in its architectural features, including the highly decorative fireplace and overmantel in the dining room, where the family would have entertained guests; the stained-glass windows, which are consistent with the work of Portland's notable Povey Brothers studio; and the formal double-door entry. These high-quality, costly, and fashionable features reflect the affluence and prominence of the original owners at the time of the house's construction, though Devers became more successful and wealthy by the end of the period of significance in 1908. Illustrating what was important to an upper middle-class family in Northwest Portland just outside of "Nob Hill," the most exclusive part of town, the design and features of the house continue to communicate the house's association with successful businessman and civic leader Arthur H. Devers.

### **Conclusion and Character-Defining Features**

Despite the changes to the Devers House's setting and some exterior alterations over time, the house retains many of its character-defining features. Though its architect and/or builder are unknown, the Devers House reflects a picturesque asymmetry typical of the Queen Anne style. The builder's workmanship and craft, which is particularly evident in features such as the stained-glass windows and the stair balustrade, illustrate high artistic values and the social status of the time in the house's form and its assemblage of multiple decorative features.

Specifically, the house's character-defining features at the exterior include:

- The staggered front gables, one with a bullseye window and one with a small rectangular window;
- The three three-sided bays at north (full-height with hipped roof), south (full height cutaway bay with gabled dormer), and east (ground-level cutaway);
- Paired entry doors with transom;
- The three stained-glass windows (entry transom and bays on the east and north façades);
- Original wood "drop" siding and both rectangular shingles and fishscale shingles at gable ends; and
- Double-hung wood windows, mostly one-over-one except the pair of two-over-one windows at the front of the house, with their vertical Victorian-era proportions.

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At the interior, character-defining features include:

- The entry into a separate foyer, with direct entry into entertaining spaces (living room and dining room);
- The primary dark wood stair with turned balusters and decorative newel posts; and
- The decorative fireplace with tile surround and carved wood overmantel.

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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.)

COMMERCE

SOCIAL HISTORY

### Period of Significance

1891-1908

### Significant Dates

1891, date of house completion/Devers family

residency began

1908, Devers family moved out

### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Devers, Arthur Henry

### Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

N/A

### Architect/Builder

unknown

### Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance starts at the completion of the house for owner Arthur H. Devers, in 1891. In 1908, after 17 years of residence in the house, Arthur Devers, his wife Nellie, and daughter Mabel moved out, marking the end of his association with the house and the end of the period of significance under Criterion B.<sup>20</sup>

### Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

<sup>20</sup> "The Building Record," *Oregonian*, July 11, 1891, 11; R. L. Polk & Co, Portland City Directory, 1908, 456.

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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 Devers House has local significance under Criterion B in the areas of Commerce and Social History for its association with late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Portland business and civic leader Arthur H. Devers. Arthur Devers was a well-known, well-regarded, and important businessman in Portland as one of the owners of Closset & Devers, one of the top coffee and tea importers in the Pacific Northwest during this period. His name lives on in the Devers Eye Clinic, which was founded in Northwest Portland, just a few blocks from the Devers House, by a \$1M gift from Devers in his will.<sup>21</sup> The house, which Devers lived in for 17 years with his first wife and young daughter, was built for the family in 1891, when Devers was about 33 years old.<sup>22</sup> The family lived in the house until 1908, the end of the period of significance.<sup>23</sup> By this date Devers had become an influential leader in Portland. He had played an important role in planning and executing the Lewis and Clark Exposition of 1905; advocated and found funding for the creation of the Dalles-Celilo canal, begun in 1905; and helped put together a "City Beautiful" committee that would become the Civic Improvement League, which would go on to hire Edward Bennett to create the progressive-era Bennett Plan for Portland. The Arthur H. Devers House is the only extant resource that is associated with Devers during the most productive time of his career and civic leadership in Portland, and it uniquely represents the time period during which Devers became an important figure in Portland's commercial and social development.

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

Arthur Henry Devers was born in 1858 in Chicago. His father, Henry G. D'Evers, was an apothecary (pharmacist) originally from Hanover, Germany; his mother Henrietta was from the same city.<sup>24</sup> Henry D'Evers emigrated in 1848, and moved to Chicago in 1853. In an interview in 1924, when he was about 66 years old, Arthur H. Devers explained:

There were five of us children, only one of whom is now living — myself. I attended the public schools of Chicago and later went to Wisconsin, entering Racine College. In 1875 I came west. I worked for my uncle, Frederick Roeding, in San Francisco [...] In 1879, when I was twenty-one, I went to work for Folger, Schilling & Company. Before long the firm dissolved and I went on the road for A. Schilling & Company, making [sales in] Oregon, Washington and Idaho. [...] Then I bought a half interest with Closset Brothers here in Portland and the firm name was changed to Closset & Devers.<sup>25</sup>

Arthur Devers came to Portland by steamship from San Francisco in September 1881, a young man of great intelligence but no appreciable family status or connections, ready to make a life for himself.<sup>26</sup> He became a partner in Closset & Devers in 1883 and married Ella H. (Nellie) Gollings in October 1885.<sup>27</sup> Nellie's younger siblings had been born in the U.S., but Nellie, her brother, and her parents George and Jane were immigrants from England.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Ernest W. Peterson, "Grant Backs Eye Clinic," *Oregon Journal*, July 1, 1959, 4.

<sup>22</sup> "The Building Record," *Oregonian*, July 11, 1891, 11.

<sup>23</sup> R. L. Polk & Co, *Portland City Directory*, 1908, 456.

<sup>24</sup> U. S. Census 1870 (Illinois) and 1900 (Portland, OR)

<sup>25</sup> Fred Lockley, "Impressions and Observations of the Journal Man," *Oregon Journal*, January 2, 1924, 8.

<sup>26</sup> At Racine College in 1875, Arthur Henry D'Evers was named Most Distinguished in Intellectual Work, as listed in *The Racine College Quarterly*, Vol 2 No. 2, November 1908, 36.

<sup>27</sup> Multnomah County marriage Index, 1855-1899. Vol 5, p373. (Recorded as "Arthur H. Deaves" and "Nellie H. Gollings")

<sup>28</sup> U. S. Census 1880 (East Portland). The Gollings family initially lived in East Portland, which was a separate municipality from Portland until 1891.

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After Nellie died in 1912, Arthur Devers married Nellie's sister Anne in 1916.<sup>29</sup> Arthur H. and his second wife resided at 2911 Cornell Road from 1917 until their deaths, Arthur in 1944 and Anne in 1958.<sup>30</sup> Arthur was said to have walked to work each day until he retired in 1924, and every Sunday took a 10-mile hike in Macleay Park, where he personally hired someone to prune back the undergrowth and keep the paths clear.<sup>31</sup> John Plagemann, their son-in-law, died in 1925 at the age of 51, and at this time Mabel Devers Plagemann and her two daughters moved in with the elder Devers.<sup>32</sup> Mabel Devers Plagemann died in 1933 at only 47 years old. Later in his life, Arthur Devers lost his eyesight due to a rare genetic disease, retinitis pigmentosa.<sup>33</sup>

### **1125 NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue's Association with Arthur H. Devers**

Lots 1, 2, 5, and 7 of the large block on which the Devers House sits were sold to Joseph Closset and Arthur Devers in 1886, three years after the men formed their business partnership.<sup>34</sup> Closset deeded his interest in lot 2 to Devers in 1889, and Devers had the Queen Anne style house that is the subject of this nomination built on the property two years later.<sup>35</sup> Though the initial permit for the house has not been located, the *Oregonian* newspaper reported that A. H. Devers had been issued a permit by July 6, 1891, to build a two-story residence on Twentieth (shortly to be renumbered to NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue).<sup>36</sup>

The house on 21<sup>st</sup> NW Avenue was the sole house the Devers family had built for them, and also the house where Arthur Devers resided during the most productive years of his civic life and his business career. It was reported to cost \$3,500, a sum that was considerably more than the city's average of about \$1,500, but not reaching the highest range of about \$5,000.<sup>37</sup> While the architect and/or builder are unknown, the house's substantial cost and high-quality details, such as the ornamental fireplace and the likely Povey Brothers stained-glass window, provide a material representation of Devers's status in Portland society at the beginning of the period of significance.

Specific aspects of the house highlight the family's social standing at the time of its construction. First, the house's style would have been very fashionable in 1891 Portland; though the Devers House is not as highly ornamented or extravagant as some of the ostentatious examples of the style first appearing in the early to mid-1880s, it exhibits the Queen Anne style, frequently employed by the wealthy and socially connected class as an outward display of their success.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, the house's three extant stained-glass windows, which bear the hallmarks of the famous Povey Brothers glasswork studio, are another indication of the original residents' wealth and status.<sup>39</sup> Other details at the interior also reflect the family's affluence; for instance, the fireplace

<sup>29</sup> The marriage was a second marriage for Anne as well; she was previously Mrs. W. H. Parker. "Portland Couple Wed," *Oregonian*, January 14, 1916, 6.

<sup>30</sup> "Home Sells for \$11,000," *Oregonian*, July 22, 1917, 56.

<sup>31</sup> Maryetta [sic], "On the Town: Annex History Told," *Oregonian*, August 1, 1972, 23.

<sup>32</sup> "John Plagemann Dies in Portland," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 27, 1925, 7.

<sup>33</sup> George A. Cioffi, *The Devers Manual: Ophthalmology for the Health Care Professional*. (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1997), ii.

<sup>34</sup> Donovan & Associates/ Prohaska survey form. The seller was Archibald D. Dick, who had been deeded the same property in 1885 by Douglas Dick.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> "The Building Record," *Oregonian*, July 11, 1891, 11. The streets were renumbered this same year; see Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1889.

<sup>37</sup> "The Building Record," *Oregonian*. Costs quoted in "Portland's Big Year: The City Not Booming, but Growing Very Rapidly," *Oregonian*, July 5, 1890, 9.

<sup>38</sup> William J. Hawkins III and William F. Willingham, *Classic Houses of Portland, Oregon, 1850-1950* (Portland, OR: Timber Press, 1999), 144.

<sup>39</sup> Stained-glass windows were popular in upper class houses, churches, hotels, and many other buildings of the 1880s and 1890s, and the Povey studio's work became increasingly highly regarded across the Pacific Northwest after they founded their shop in Portland in 1888. The colors, patterns, and types of glass used in the original stained-glass windows in the Devers House are consistent with the colors, patterns, and types of glass the Povey Brothers typically used. Povey Brothers glass typically has "a mixture of opalescent and translucent stained-glass members; use of amber, caramel and other warm, neutral tones (deemed especially appropriate for the environment of the Pacific Northwest); use of simple flower, particularly lily, motifs; and placement of a simple image at the center of a panel and "framing" it with

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surround, with highly decorative tile front and a carved wood overmantel, was a status symbol located just off the parlor where guests could be entertained. The house has a small room in the southwest corner of the second level next to the attic stair, where the household help may have resided.<sup>40</sup>

### **The Devers Family and the Development of Northwest Portland**

Arthur Devers seemed to have had a long-standing affinity for Northwest Portland. Just prior to building the house on 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue, Arthur and Nellie Devers and their only daughter Mabel resided at 133 D Street (on NW Davis Street between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenues), still in Portland's NW quadrant but considerably closer to the Willamette River than their later 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue location.<sup>41</sup> Before the address on D Street, Arthur Devers, presumably with Nellie and baby Mabel (born in 1886), was listed in 1886-1887 at 244 N 14<sup>th</sup> St. (on NW 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue, between NW Marshall and NW Northrup Streets). This earlier residence was demolished, probably with the construction of I-205 in the mid-twentieth century.

By 1891, when the Devers built the house at NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue, the surrounding neighborhood was gradually developing. The large size of the blocks in this part of Northwest Portland--measuring 200 feet by 480 feet, versus the downtown Portland block standard of 200 feet by 200 feet--drew institutional uses as well as wealthy owners, such as doctors, bankers and merchants, looking for larger parcels for their mansions in the 1870s into the 1890s. Good Samaritan Hospital, for instance, had been built in 1875 on NW Lovejoy Street between NW 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenues, a location that initially was very isolated from the center of Portland.<sup>42</sup> The area between NW 16<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Avenues, from W Burnside north to about NW Kearney Street, began to develop into "Nob Hill," an area of elegant homes.<sup>43</sup> In the 1880s, streetcars were introduced in Northwest Portland. The first lines ran along G (NW Glisan) Street as far as 22<sup>nd</sup> (St., now Ave), along 14<sup>th</sup>, and along S (NW Savier) Street to 26<sup>th</sup>.<sup>44</sup> With easy transportation, a workingman's neighborhood, "slabtown," began developing further north and west from the Devers property.

By the time that Devers purchased lot 2 in 1889, there were still not many houses constructed in Northwest Portland in the immediate vicinity, which was a bit too far north to be considered fashionable, yet still south of and distinctly separate from "slabtown." When the house was built for Devers, he was already on an upward trajectory in terms of his wealth and influence, but in 1891 he was perhaps not yet able to afford a larger mansion in the most exclusive and fashionable area, some five to ten blocks south. Single-family houses gradually dotted the area around Good Samaritan Hospital, six blocks to the south and crept northward, the slow pace probably in part due to a national depression in 1893 that suppressed construction activity for a few years in the mid-1890s. The 1889 Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows no structures on block 300 (the block Devers built on) or 301 (the next block to the south, between Lovejoy and Marshall), though Oscar Streibig did construct a house on the adjacent lot to the north (1133 NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue, extant) in 1892, soon after the Devers family moved in.

The Devers family, including Arthur, Nellie, and Mabel, resided at the NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue house from 1891 to 1908.<sup>45</sup> Arthur also possibly had a son, Arthur H. Devers Jr., who was born c.1885 and lived in Portland,

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geometric glass members" (City of Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board, "Report on Designation: (former) First United Methodist Church," LPB 334/09, 24-25). The Devers windows show some recurring motifs, specifically the use of a border and Dogwood flowers (another common floral theme in Povey windows) in all three, and a central geometric shape (an oval with "253" over the doors and a connected series of diamonds in the front room window) surrounded by curving shapes. It is highly likely, given all of these characteristics as well as the date of construction, that the three windows are the work of the famous Povey glassworks.

<sup>40</sup> The 1900 U. S. Census shows Annie Gavin, "servant" age 19, residing in the house with the Devers family.

<sup>41</sup> 1890 and 1891 directories; 1889 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Portland Oregon #16b.

<sup>42</sup> Mike Ryerson, Norm Gholston, and Tracy J. Prince, *Portland's Slabtown* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2013, 25).

<sup>43</sup> The *Oregon Historic Sites Database* shows many surviving houses from the 1880 to 1890 period on Everett, Flanders, Glisan, Hoyt, Irving, Johnson, and Kearney.

<sup>44</sup> Harrison et al, 8:333.

<sup>45</sup> R. L. Polk & Co, *Portland City Directory*, 1908, 456.

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though only for a year or two with the family.<sup>46</sup> Mabel Alice Devers went to school at St. Helen's Hall, newly completed in 1890, which was located on St. Clair Avenue between SW Park Place and SW Main Street, a little less than a mile south of the Devers' house.<sup>47</sup> The school was a boarding and day school for girls, which later moved and became the Oregon Episcopal School. The family attended St. Mark's Episcopal Church, which was originally located at NW 18<sup>th</sup> and NW Quimby, about five blocks from their house.<sup>48</sup> St. Mark's was where Mabel Devers and John Plagemann were married in 1908. In 1909 the church moved to NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue and NW Marshall Streets—less than a block from the Devers House.<sup>49</sup>

After years of gradual development, the neighborhood around the Devers House began a period of explosive growth and change beginning just before 1905. As a result of the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition in 1905, which took place in Northwest Portland at what was the edge of the city at the time, apartments and hotels were being constructed not just in Northwest Portland, but downtown and regionally as well. The area from NW 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue westward, including the Devers House on NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue, initially retained its primarily residential uses, though these were increasingly multi-family rather than single-family. In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 34 apartment buildings, as well as numerous single-family homes and several residential hotels were built in Nob Hill, west of 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue.<sup>50</sup> Several of these were in the area around the Devers House.

The Streibig family, who had built their house next door to the north (1133 NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue, extant) in 1892, constructed two houses on NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue to the south of the Devers House in 1907.<sup>51</sup> The same year, a three-story apartment building was constructed on the next block to the north, facing Northrup just west of NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue.<sup>52</sup> Comparing the 1901 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Figure 6) with the 1908-1909 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Figure 7) illustrates the growth of single-family house typology along NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a typology which would change to a mix of apartment buildings with a few commercial buildings by 1950 and then to mostly commercial by the 1980s.

In 1908, the Devers family moved out of the house at 1125 NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue, perhaps partly due to a planned 1908 trip around the world. Arthur, Nellie, and Mabel set out together in late January of that year, starting with Mardi Gras in New Orleans.<sup>53</sup> However, it appears their trip was cut somewhat shorter than planned; the death of Emile Closset as well as the death of Mabel's fiancé's father in August 1908 hastened their return to Portland.<sup>54</sup> Mabel subsequently married John Plagemann in September 1908.<sup>55</sup> Even after moving out of the 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue house, however, Arthur and Nellie Devers retained ties to Northwest Portland. In 1909, Arthur Devers was listed in the Portland directory at 53 Ella (now NW 20<sup>th</sup> Place), the residence of Benage S.

<sup>46</sup> A. H. Devers, Jr. was listed in Polk's 1908-1914 Portland directories working for Closset & Devers (also as such in the 1910 census), residing on 12<sup>th</sup> Street. In 1906 he was listed in Polk's directory at the family address on 21<sup>st</sup> Ave. Devers, Jr. may have been a biological son to Nellie or Arthur, or may have been a nephew. Nellie Gollings' legal name when she married Devers was Nellie Hastings, probably indicative of a marriage prior to her marrying A. H. Devers. Devers Jr. may be the same Arthur H. d'Evers who became a partner in a marine and shipping supply firm in Seattle; Sunde & d'Evers.

<sup>47</sup> St. Helen's Hall was torn down possibly in the late 1940s.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Harrison, Cielo Lutino, Liza Mickle, Peter Mye, Bill Cunningham, and Stephanie Gauthier. *Alphabet Historic District*. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. National Park Service, 2000, 7:10 Mr. Devers, for instance, sang at an Easter service at the church in 1907; "Easter Music in the City Churches," *Oregonian*, March 31, 1907, 30.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Harrison, Cielo Lutino, Liza Mickle, Peter Mye, Bill Cunningham, and Stephanie Gauthier. *Alphabet Historic District*. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. National Park Service, 2000, 7:10

<sup>50</sup> Jane Comerford, *A History of Northwest Portland, From the River to the Hills*. (Portland: Dragonfly Press, 2011), 114.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Shellenbarger, "An Index and Summary of Oregon Building Information in the Portland Daily Abstract (1906-1910)," Index 2B under "Streibig," listed 03/05/1907.

<sup>52</sup> Historic plumbing permits for 2129 NW Northrup, *PortlandMaps.com*.

<sup>53</sup> *Oregonian*, January 12, 1908, 2-5.

<sup>54</sup> "Appraise Closset Estate," *Oregonian*, August 26, 1908, 10.

<sup>55</sup> Society pages, *Oregon Journal*, September 13, 1908, 42.

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Josselyn (no longer extant).<sup>56</sup> It is probable that the Devers did not live at Josselyn's house but simply used it for a mailing address, as they left Portland for another tour of the world in 1910.<sup>57</sup> The 1910 trip was to include Egypt and other places they were unable to cover in 1908. In 1912, Mrs. Nellie H. Devers died after a protracted illness of many months, while the couple were "temporarily" living at NW 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue and NW Marshall Street.<sup>58</sup>

The Devers House represents what an up-and-coming merchant of the upper middle class would have considered important, and could afford, in a residence. It also illustrates the earliest phase of the major trends in the evolution of NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue; a street that was almost undeveloped north of NW Lovejoy in 1891, became predominantly single-family homes prior to 1908, and today is almost entirely commercial.

### **Coffee, Spices, and Tea Business in Portland: Closset & Devers**

In 1865, what may have been Portland's first coffee and spice import business was launched: J.F. Jones & Company.<sup>59</sup> Other early roasters and coffee importers in Portland included H.C. Hudson & Co.; Closset Bros.; Verdier & Closset; and Closset & Devers.<sup>60</sup> By 1901, Portland's "coffee and spices" commercial sector was important enough to be listed among the city's top 35 industries. Lumber was far and away the largest sector as reported in the newspaper, followed by flour and grist mill products, railroad cars, and fish canning. Coffee and spices as a category ranked twentieth, just above leather and dressmaking but below millinery and furniture.<sup>61</sup>

In 1880, two brothers from Belgium, Joseph and Emile Closset, formed a partnership in Portland as Closset Brothers, importing coffee, tea, and spices. Arthur H. Devers joined the firm in 1883, buying out Emile to form a partnership with the elder brother, Joseph Closset. "At that time," Devers said, "we had one man on the road selling our goods and Joseph Closset made sales from a wagon here in Portland" (see Figure 11).<sup>62</sup> According to a granddaughter of Arthur Devers, the pronunciation of both men's last names presented a problem for Devers, whose French surname d'Evers would have had the accent on the second syllable and without sounding the last "s." Similarly, the Belgian name would have been pronounced "Clossay." "We can't have French sounding names," the men agreed, and so the firm became known as "Clos-set and Deev-urs."<sup>63</sup>

Arthur Devers had been learning the coffee and tea business in the right place at the right time, working for both Folger and then Schilling in San Francisco as August Schilling split off from Folger's firm in 1881 and created his own coffee enterprise.<sup>64</sup> James (Jim) Folger had capitalized on the Gold Rush in California to build a coffee dynasty in San Francisco starting in the early 1850s, and by the 1870s the Folger firm was regionally dominant, with salesmen going as far as Montana, Oregon, and Washington.<sup>65</sup> A. Schilling had clerked for the Folger firm and then bought a half share of it in 1877.<sup>66</sup> Devers started work for the Folger Schilling Company a few years later, in 1879.

<sup>56</sup> R. L. Polk & Co, *Portland City Directory*, 1909. Also, according to the Historic Resource Inventory of Portland "Alexandra Court," c. 1982, Josselyn came to Portland in 1907 to head the Portland Railway and Portland General Electric Companies, and was not only Devers's age, but had also come from Illinois and received a public school education. The Josselyn residence was later torn down and replaced by the Alexandra Court Hotel.

<sup>57</sup> Society pages, *Oregonian*, January 9, 1910, 2-5.

<sup>58</sup> "Mrs. Nellie Devers Dies," *Oregonian*, July 29, 1912, 7.

<sup>59</sup> Webfooters Post Card club, "Portland's Coffee Connection," *Webfooter Extra*, February 2015, 4. Accessed on February 26, 2025, at [http://www.thewebfooters.com/html/newsletter\\_archives.html](http://www.thewebfooters.com/html/newsletter_archives.html)

<sup>60</sup> William H. Ukers, *All About Coffee* (New York: Tea and Coffee Trade Journal Co., 1922), 507.

<sup>61</sup> "Increase in Home Goods: Oregon Manufactures Win Wide Recognition," *Oregonian*, April 23, 1902, 8.

<sup>62</sup> Lockley, 1924.

<sup>63</sup> Maryetta [sic], "On the Town: Annex History Told," *Oregonian*, August 1, 1972, 23.

<sup>64</sup> Daniel Volkmann, "Sixty Five Years of A. Schilling & Company," Schilling Family website, accessed at <https://www.allelementsdesign.com/schilling/company/spices/65years.html>.

<sup>65</sup> Mark Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How it Transformed Our World* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 56-57.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

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Closset & Devers prospered in Portland. The company was located at SW 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue between SW Ankeny Street and W Burnside for many years, a location that the Closset Brothers had occupied starting in 1880. By the 1890s, Closset & Devers had become a very well-known import and wholesale business in Portland, and Devers was the partner often in the public eye. While this was partly because Joseph Closset resided in San Francisco during the early part of the period of significance (1891-1895), it was also because Devers was a rising star among the business elite and civic leaders of Portland. The *Oregonian* newspaper in 1893 called the firm Portland's "Leading Tea, Coffee, and Spice Importer," and noted that they occupied a three-story brick building on Second Street (now Avenue) as well as two three-story brick buildings at Burnside Street.<sup>67</sup> In 1900, Closset & Devers bought out another local coffee, tea, and spice importing business called Corbitt & Macleay, and the same year the firm moved to a new large building on Front Street (now Naito Parkway) after suffering a fire the year before at their 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue location (see Figure 12).<sup>68</sup>

By 1902, the Portland directory listed twelve distributors of tea, coffee, and spices.<sup>69</sup> While the local industry as a whole grew rapidly, listing approximately 20 tea, coffee, and spice firms in Portland by 1908, Closset & Devers distinguished itself from this expanding field not only by pioneering use of the vacuum coffee can in the Pacific Northwest, but also by maintaining consistent visibility: its reliable newspaper advertising contrasted sharply with the advertising of most other local distributors.<sup>70</sup> By at least 1907 the firm was capitalizing on Devers's name, with ads that still listed Closset & Devers but in larger type promoted "Devers Golden West."<sup>71</sup> The firm had a Seattle office by at least 1914.<sup>72</sup> This demonstrated commercial dominance ensured that Devers, alongside his partner Closset, was recognized as one of only two Portlanders among the "pioneer coffee roasters of the southern and western United States," a group of industry leaders primarily based in St. Louis and San Francisco.<sup>73</sup>

In Portland, the image of Devers the coffee importer was becoming inseparable from Devers the civic leader. In 1906, a caricature of Devers brewing coffee was published in the *Oregonian* (see Figure 14), along with caricatures of a few other publicly recognizable men such as architect Edgar M. Lazarus. Devers's face was known by many readers of the paper, and he was closely identified with, even representative of, the coffee and spices trade. The caricature itself suggests that he had achieved a level of public stature sufficient to be celebrated in the press, confirming that his combined business success and civic achievements constituted a significant role in early twentieth century Portland.

Arthur Devers retired from the business in 1924, and Anton Digman was subsequently named President of Closset & Devers. Digman, who had been Vice President since 1914, had started working at the firm at the age of 16 in 1882.<sup>74</sup> Digman was later succeeded by C. M. Stewart at the company. In 1944, Closset & Devers was sold to the Ben Hur Company in Los Angeles, though the new company stated that it would retain the (Closset & Devers) Golden West coffee brand throughout western states.<sup>75</sup>

The contemporary Portland coffee culture has a lineage stretching back to the earliest direct importers and roasters in the Pacific Northwest, such as Closset & Devers. Seattle became the heart of the U.S. coffee industry by the early 1990s with the launch of Starbucks, and San Francisco adds to the coffee culture's west

<sup>67</sup> "Closset & Devers," *Oregonian*, January 2, 1893, 3.

<sup>68</sup> "Absorbed a Big Concern," *Oregonian*, May 16, 1900, 7.

<sup>69</sup> R. L. Polk's Portland Directory, 1902, 1145. Four of these listings, three Chinese names along with the "Great Eastern Tea Co." were likely only importing tea, not coffee.

<sup>70</sup> Lockley, 1924; also, the vacuum can was first invented in 1900 by Hills Brothers in San Francisco; see Pendergrast, 163.

<sup>71</sup> [Ad], *Oregonian*, January 1, 1907, 29.

<sup>72</sup> 1914 listing in R. L. Polk & Co. Seattle directory on 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. A later article ["Seattle Housewives Will Give Christmas Cakes," *Seattle Star*, December 19, 1918, 2] indicates the Seattle location was on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South.

<sup>73</sup> Ukers, 504.

<sup>74</sup> John M. Tess and Richard Ritz, *Digman-Zidell House*, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. National Park Service, 1993, 8:7.

<sup>75</sup> "Old Portland Coffee Firm in New Hands," *Oregon Statesman*, April 11, 1944, 5.

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coast influence with multiple leading firms over time such as Peet's coffee (1966).<sup>76</sup> But Portland, as noted in the *New York Times* in 2012, has a coffee culture that "is arguably the country's most intimate. It's also one of the most relaxed."<sup>77</sup> The easy consumption of fresh, high-quality coffee in homes and specialty shops around Portland today owes a debt to early purveyors such as Arthur Devers, who traveled multiple times to Brazil to ensure high quality beans and was constantly upgrading the roasting methods and packaging of the delicate commodity.<sup>78</sup>

### Civic Leadership of Arthur H. Devers

Arthur Devers became part of a small group of early Portland businessmen who were considered the *de facto* leaders of the city in the period from about 1890 to the mid-1910s, when the first generation of pioneer merchants was giving way to a new generation of business leaders.<sup>79</sup> In an environment intentionally structured to keep elected governance weak, private enterprise provided and profited from many basic utilities and services across the city.<sup>80</sup> The commercial elite of Portland radiated confidence and civic pride, creating such Progressive Era events and movements as the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition; the Dalles-Celilo Canal, also started in 1905; and the Civic Improvement League, which hired Edward Bennett to create a Portland Plan in 1909-1910 (just after the period of significance).<sup>81</sup> Devers was prominently involved in all three of these major efforts, and others besides.

As a specialized coffee, tea, and spices importer, Devers had an interest in building up Portland's central role as a port and trade center. He had been involved in various Portland business-centric transportation and shipping issues since the early 1890s, when he worked on behalf of the Northwestern Fruitgrowers' Association to push beneficial shipping and refrigerated rail car transport options.<sup>82</sup> He also served as president of the Manufacturer's Association during the late 1890s.<sup>83</sup> Devers led the organization to support various industries in bringing manufacturing to Portland or to Oregon. For instance, the group provided sugar beet seeds and capital to the eastern Oregon town of La Grande for the development of a sugar factory there. As a key member of the Open River Association, he was thanked by name by Oregon Governor George Chamberlain in Chamberlain's 1903 inaugural address.<sup>84</sup> The Open River Association was a multi-state group pushing for a canal to be dug around Celilo Falls on the Columbia River, thereby allowing for shipping traffic to pass unimpeded from Lewiston, Idaho to the Pacific Ocean.<sup>85</sup>

The Dalles-Celilo Canal was constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers between 1905 and 1915, thanks in part to Devers's significant leadership and advocacy role in its planning, funding, and public campaigns during the period of significance.<sup>86</sup> Devers was an incorporator, along with J. A. Smith and Harry Hahn, of the Open River Transportation Company in 1905, and was also one of its directors. This company was formed to show the possibilities of shipping via waterways, in order to provide competition to railroad rates.<sup>87</sup> After the Dalles-Celilo Canal construction, Devers and a partner, W. G. McPherson, ultimately lost

<sup>76</sup> Pendergrast, 368-372.

<sup>77</sup> Strand, Oliver. "In Portland, Ore., a D.I.Y. Coffee Culture," *The New York Times*, February 10, 2012.

<sup>78</sup> "A. H. Devers to Tour Southern Continent," *Oregon Journal*, January 21, 1911, 1.

<sup>79</sup> City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and Portland Parks and Recreation, *City of Portland Civic Planning, Development & Public Works, 1851-1965* (Portland, Oregon, 2009), 21.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Carl Abbott, *Portland: Planning, Politics and Growth in a Twentieth-Century City* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 57.

<sup>82</sup> "Fruitgrowers' Convention," *Oregon City Courier*, January 7, 1898, 3.

<sup>83</sup> Abbott, 47.

<sup>84</sup> Governor George E. Chamberlain, [transcript of] Inaugural Address, 1903 (pdf p.41), accessed online at <https://records.sos.state.or.us/ORSOSWebDrawer/Recordhtml/6777843>

<sup>85</sup> The Dalles-Celilo Canal is about 9 miles in length. "The Celebration of the Open Columbia," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, June 1915, V. 16, No. 2, 107.

<sup>86</sup> Marshall N. Dana, "The Celilo Canal—Its Origin—Its Building and Meaning," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, June 1915, V. 16, No. 2, 110-111.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 117-119.

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money on an independent boat line on the Columbia River between Portland and The Dalles.<sup>88</sup> Due to his persistence and ability to reach consensus, Devers took part in the National Rivers and Harbors Congress in December 1907, representing Oregon as part of the Pacific Coast district. There he was elected to the board of directors of the Congress.<sup>89</sup>

Devers got involved in various political campaigns and fundraising to support public docks and harbor facilities, as well.<sup>90</sup> At one time, Devers and W. G. McPherson each invested \$10,000 in the Alaska Steamship Company, to promote trade between Portland and Alaska, but as Devers said, "we were unable to get cargo for our boats and had to give it up."<sup>91</sup>

In a general sense, Arthur Devers was constantly working to showcase Portland as a place where people should move to, invest in, and visit. He was lauded by the *Oregonian* in 1901, complete with a page 1 photo, for convincing the Travelers' Protective Association to hold their national convention in Portland that next year. The photo caption reads "Arthur H. Devers, who works for Portland first, last, and all the time."<sup>92</sup> This act of boosterism for the city was one of many by Devers, including, with the Commercial Club, putting on a "Carnival and Exposition" of 1901.<sup>93</sup> Devers was from its inception a part of Portland's Chamber of Commerce, and in 1901 he was appointed to no less than four separate committees of the Chamber of Commerce, including the Public Improvements and Manufactures committee.<sup>94</sup> He was Transportation committee chair by 1905.<sup>95</sup>

As a man who grew up in Chicago and had no family connections to the Pacific Northwest, Arthur Devers seems to have made a meteoric rise into the ranks of wealthy, socially connected men of importance during the period 1891 to 1908. Devers and his peers in commerce, including banker A. L. Mills, flour manufacturer Theodore B. Wilcox, and electric power executive Henry Goode, were not only flexing their influence as commercial business owners, but seeing that influence translate into civic leadership and decision-making as the 20<sup>th</sup> century began.<sup>96</sup> Yet unlike Devers, many—if not most—of these industry titans had pre-existing family and industry ties to Portland.

By 1902, Arthur Devers was neck-deep in the planning and organizing necessary to create the transformative Lewis and Clark Exposition of 1905. The Lewis and Clark Exposition, the city's first and only world's fair, was initially conceived as a way to commemorate the new century and also to banish the lingering economic doldrums from the depression of 1892-93.<sup>97</sup> Hand-selected by prominent businessman and former U.S. Senator from Oregon Henry W. Corbett in late 1901, there were an initial fifteen members of the Lewis and Clark executive committee, including Arthur Devers, representing Portland's business elite.<sup>98</sup> The executive committee, including Devers, visited various Portland sites and decided where the fair should be held in 1902.<sup>99</sup> By 1903, Devers's task was to sell the idea of the Exposition to governmental and business leaders in

<sup>88</sup> "What a Future," *Oregon Journal*, July 16, 1933, 6.

<sup>89</sup> "Oregon to Front for Deep Rivers," *Oregonian*, December 7, 1906, 1 &7.

<sup>90</sup> "Declares Public Docks Indicate a City's Progress: A. H. Devers, Who Has Studied Subject, Surprised..." *Oregon Journal*, June 20, 1910, 1.

<sup>91</sup> Lockley, 1924.

<sup>92</sup> "Worked for the T.P.A. National Convention," *Oregonian*, June 9, 1901, 1.

<sup>93</sup> "Wound Up Good Work," *Oregonian*, November 9, 1901, 10.

<sup>94</sup> "Committees Named," *Oregonian*, January 24, 1901, 12.

<sup>95</sup> "To Build at Once," *Oregon Journal*, June 15, 1905. Other men on the committee were listed as L. A. Lewis, T. D. Honeyman, S. M. Mears, Henry Hahn, and Edward Newbegin.

<sup>96</sup> Abbott, 47.

<sup>97</sup> Trudy Flores and Sarah Griffith, *Oregon History Project*, Oregon Historical Society, 2002. Accessed at <https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/central-vista-lewis-and-clark-centennial-expo/>

<sup>98</sup> "At the City Park: Probable Location of the 1905 Fair," *Oregonian*, July 8, 1902, 1. The committee was later expanded to 30 members; Abbott, 37. Also see "The Money Rolls In: Volunteer Offerings for Great 1905 Centennial," *Oregonian*, November 8, 1901, 1.

<sup>99</sup> "For Light on Site: The Fair Management Begins Grand Tour Today," *Oregonian*, April 26, 1, noted that the executive committee, composed of H. W. Corbett, H. W. Scott, Rufus Mallory, Paul Wessinger, W. D. Wheelwright, F. Dresser, A. H. Devers, Charles E. Ladd and A. L. Mills, will inspect all these locations at once."

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other states, and gain capital support. "As a result of an energetic canvass of the members by Arthur Devers and H. R. Lewis, the Lewis and Clark resolution... went through with a whoop" at the 1903 meeting of the Trans-Mississippi Commercial Congress held in Seattle.<sup>100</sup> Devers not only served as a member of the Lewis and Clark Exposition board, but of 15 total committees, each tasked with some portion of putting on the 1905 Exposition, Devers was on at least six of them during the planning of the Exposition.<sup>101</sup> The degree of participation and work that Devers put into the Exposition for approximately four years leading up to 1905 appeared to be almost unmatched.<sup>102</sup>

Devers was part of the "new guard" of younger business executives that took the reins from the first wave of pioneer business owners in Portland such as Henry Corbett (b. 1827); H. W. Scott (b. 1838); and Rufus Mallory (b. 1831). These older men, all part of the Exposition's executive committee, were joined by peers of Devers born in the late 1850s, including Paul Wessinger, who inherited his father-in-law Henry Weinhard's brewery; Charles E. Ladd, the son of the mayor; Abbot L. Mills, banker and son of a prominent east coast family who married into the local Couch family; and railroad executive and banker J. C. Ainsworth (b. 1870, a little younger than most), son of Oregon Steam Navigation Company founder Captain Ainsworth. Arthur Devers, the son of a Midwestern immigrant pharmacist, was one of only a few of his peers during the period of significance to vault himself into the ranks of the civic elite without pre-existing family ties and status in Portland.<sup>103</sup> "Beyond pride and prosperity, the Lewis and Clark Exposition affected Portland most deeply by introducing both the men and the approach that guided the search for land-use planning over the next quarter century."<sup>104</sup> The men who had planned and managed the Exposition, including Devers, almost universally went on from its success to have a strong hand in shaping Portland.<sup>105</sup>

Immediately after the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906, Devers, who was at that time the President of the Portland Association of Credit Men, served on a panel of men of similar positions from California and Washington. The panel gauged how insurance firms allocated monies to various Bay Area businesses affected by the disaster. Arthur Devers also provided direct help to one of his former firms in San Francisco; the A. Schilling Company. August Schilling, the owner of the firm, lost his entire factory and inventory in San Francisco, but he was able to start a factory in New York and also to "borrow" facilities elsewhere, for instance coffee for Schilling's label was processed in Closset and Dever's plant in Portland.<sup>106</sup>

By the end of the period of significance in 1908, Devers had achieved a very high level of prestige and influence in Portland and Oregon. In 1910, many tried to convince Devers to run for a state senatorial position, but he was not interested in throwing his hat into that particular ring.<sup>107</sup> He and his wife and daughter, during long stretches of 1908 and 1910, were traveling around the world, including to Egypt, Europe, and South America.<sup>108</sup> Devers donated two mummified cats from Egypt to the city museum when he returned to Portland.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>100</sup> "Fair is Indorsed [sic]: Commercial Congress Recognizes Worth," *Oregonian*, August 22, 1903, 1. The Trans-Mississippi Commercial Congress was a series of annual meetings of all western states and territories to promote economic interests of the region.

<sup>101</sup> *The Centennial*, Vol. 1 No. 1, January 1903, 3. (This short-lived bulletin was published for only two copies. Courtesy of Multnomah Public Library's online Gallery). Exposition committees Devers served on included Finance & Supply, Amusements, Manufactures, Legislation, "Ceremonies and Music," and the "Ways and Means" Committee.

<sup>102</sup> Devers, W. Fenton, and P. Wessinger were all members of six committees in addition to being on the board. Most other board members were on two to three committees. Some committees, of course, may have entailed more work than others.

<sup>103</sup> Ferdinand Dresser was one of the few other "self-made" businessmen to have been appointed to the Executive committee for the fair.

<sup>104</sup> Abbott, 47.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Volkmann, "Sixty-Five Years of A. Schilling & Company."

<sup>107</sup> "Bourne Picks Men for Legislature," *Oregonian*, August 5, 1910, 11.

<sup>108</sup> "Personal Mention," *Oregonian*, February 28, 1910, 14.

<sup>109</sup> "Portlander Presents Cats to Museum, *Oregon Journal*, July 6, 1910, 3.

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Before embarking on these trips, however, and while still living at the house on 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue, Arthur H. Devers helped to organize a "City Beautiful" committee, later to become the Civic Improvement League, which was eventually able to get Edward Bennett's plan for Portland passed in 1909-1910.<sup>110</sup> The Civic Improvement League had hoped for Chicago architect Daniel Burnham of the "White City," the famous World's Columbian Exposition, but accepted Bennett in his stead. Bennett worked on the plan for about a year, during which he gave lectures, collected data, and talked at length "with Ainsworth, Devers, and other leaders of the Civic Improvement League."<sup>111</sup> The Bennett Plan was extremely ambitious and perhaps aspirational, but necessary to vault Portland into the realms of other great cities, according to the Greater Portland Plans Association, an influential group of local businessmen and other civic leaders. As the new President of the Greater Portland Plans Association, succeeding Charles Merrick after Merrick's death in the autumn of 1912, A. H. Devers gave a public address on November 20, 1912.<sup>112</sup> The Bennett Plan, a product of the City Beautiful era of urban planning, was a significant achievement in Portland's social and developmental history.

During World War I, Devers sold Liberty bonds and started a long advocacy for the Red Cross and the charity organization "Community Chest."<sup>113</sup> In 1942, he finally resigned as chair of the Red Cross in Portland "after piling up records for 'going over the top,' year after year."<sup>114</sup>

Devers also acted as a business mentor and investor to many Portland firms. He is mentioned as a mentor and advocate in John Zehntbauer's account of the founding of the internationally known Portland swimwear firm, Jantzen Company in 1917-1918.<sup>115</sup>

In his retirement years, Devers continued to stay involved with many local organizations. He was elected president of the Auld Lang Syne Society in 1931 and was later honored as a lifetime member of the club.<sup>116</sup> He was President of the Board of Trustees for a new charitable corporation formed in 1936 called the Portland Remedial Loan Association.<sup>117</sup> Devers was invited to take the first shovelful of dirt to begin construction of the Bonneville Dam in c.1934, reflecting his long support of the Columbia River as a "working" river for navigation and shipping. As one of four devotees of the cause of improving the upper Columbia River for transportation uses, Devers was, by this date, the only one still living (Figure 16).<sup>118</sup>

### Philanthropy

Arthur Devers made his fortune in Portland, and he gave back not just in his efforts and advocacy, but also through direct donations, either through Closset & Devers or from his personal accounts. During the period of significance, 1891-1908, the firm Closset & Devers regularly and reliably donated money to various enterprises such as the YMCA-YWCA building in Portland; relief to citizens of Heppner, Oregon, after a devastating landslide; and aid to Cuba.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Abbott, 47.

<sup>111</sup> Abbott, 62.

<sup>112</sup> See finding aid for Marshall Newport Dana Papers, 1869-1969. *Archives West*, at <https://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:80444/xv76615>.

<sup>113</sup> [Editorial], "Our Community Loses Arthur Devers," *Oregon Journal*, September 17, 1944, 18.

<sup>114</sup> "Arthur Devers, Colorful Figure of City, Dies," *Oregon Journal*, September 16, 2.

<sup>115</sup> John A. Zehntbauer, "History of Jantzen," compiled by Tor Lundgren from the stories originally published in the Jantzen

company paper, *Jantzen Yarns*, between 1928 and 1956. April 2009, 51-52.

<sup>116</sup> "News and Comment," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Mar. 1936, V. 37, No. 1, 81.

<sup>117</sup> E. B. MacNaughton, "Portland Remedial Loan Association: Organization, Growth and Final Liquidation," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, March 1957, V. 58, No. 1, 43.

<sup>118</sup> "What a Future," *Oregon Journal*, July 16, 1933, 6. The other three men noted were Joe Teal, C. S. Jackson, and W. G. McPherson.

<sup>119</sup> "Thirty Days More to Raise \$127,776," *Oregonian*, October 7, 1906, 10; "Help on the Way," *Oregonian*, June 7, 1903, 1; "To Swell the Fund," *Oregonian*, February 20, 1898, 24.

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The most generous and long-lasting example of Devers's philanthropy is the founding of the Devers Eye Institute and the gift to University of Oregon medical school after his death. The eye clinic, at NW 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and NW Northrup Street, was initially established as part of Good Samaritan Hospital's ophthalmology department in 1959, as expressed in his will after the death of Devers's second wife in 1958. Devers stated that no one should lose his sight due to a lack of funds.<sup>120</sup> Also through Devers's will, he established a similar \$1M to the University of Oregon medical school in order to support the teaching of ear, eye, nose, and throat studies at the school.<sup>121</sup>

### **Criterion B, Commerce and Social History: Conclusion**

The Devers House has local significance under Criterion B in the areas of Commerce and Social History for its association with late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Portland business and civic leader Arthur H. Devers. Devers made an indelible mark on Portland, not only as the purveyor of the most prominent Portland coffee, tea, and spice business of the era, but also as a civic leader during the Progressive Era, making Portland a better place to live and do business. During the period of significance, 1891 to 1908, Devers and his family resided at 1125 NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue. This was also the period of time in which Devers achieved much of his importance to Portland's history, and the beginnings of Devers's rise into the upper echelon of commercial and social circles are reflected in the location, style, and high-quality finishes of the house that the family had constructed for them in 1891. While living here, Devers held numerous civic leadership positions, from local to national, on matters of transportation, finance, and city planning; played a large role in the success of the Lewis and Clark Exposition of 1905; procured political approvals and federal funding for the Dalles-Celilo Canal, which commenced construction in 1905; and helped put together a "City Beautiful" committee that would become the Civic Improvement League, which would go on to hire Edward Bennett to create the progressive-era Bennett Plan for Portland. While any person who played a large part in the same events can be considered an important historical figure, Devers's ascendancy is especially remarkable considering his lack of family connections, as these roles were in no way handed to him. He was also highly regarded locally for his commercial success: by the end of the period of significance, Devers was so synonymous with Portland's coffee industry that he was caricaturized brewing coffee in the leading local newspaper (Figure 14), and he was described in another newspaper article as "one of the best known business men of the Pacific coast" (Figure 13).<sup>122</sup> Because of its association with the most productive period of Devers's commercial and civic life, the house at 1125 NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue has local significance under Criterion B in the areas of Commerce and Social History. As detailed in the "Comparative Analysis," below, this property is the one that best reflects Devers's significance.

### **1125 NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Vicinity after 1908**

The Devers family retained the house on NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue after their 1908 move and rented it out at least through 1916.<sup>123</sup> The next owner may have been Jack King, who continued to rent it to tenants in the 1920s. Mrs. Anna Alden was a renter from 1929 to 1931, but the house appears to have been mostly vacant throughout the 1930s.<sup>124</sup>

For various reasons, the neighborhood did experience a decline starting in around 1920. The City of Portland had been studying the need for zoning in the years prior to 1920. A 1919 report pointed to hospitals in the vicinity as creating depreciation of property values. Assessor Henry Reed claimed that "after the good Samaritan Hospital was built, all the property facing it was reduced ten percent in assessment," and that the same was true of a hospital at 20<sup>th</sup> and Marshall.<sup>125</sup> These local hospitals, one at Lovejoy and 23<sup>rd</sup> about three

<sup>120</sup> "Eye Clinic Services Expanded," *Oregon Journal*, July 14, 1972, 4.

<sup>121</sup> Ernest W. Pederson, "Grant Backs Eye Clinic," *Oregonian*, July 1, 1959, 4.

<sup>122</sup> "Pledged Men Cannot be Released: A. H. Devers, Republican, Puts Senatorial Situation in Business Terms," *Oregon Journal*, December 2, 1908, 1.

<sup>123</sup> City of Portland plumbing permit (unnumbered) under Mrs. M. Plagermann (Mabel Devers Plagermann) for a toilet replacement, 1916.

<sup>124</sup> R. L. Polk Portland directories 1928-1940. In 1933 a cobbler resided at the house; Ray Everett, shoe repair.

<sup>125</sup> George R. Funk, L. Burdick; *City Planning and Housing Survey 1919*, City Archives AF/1879.

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blocks away and the other only about a block away from the Devers House, may have indeed contributed to the depreciation in the general vicinity.

By 1947, Sam Arnold and his wife Laura had moved into the house as owners, and took out a permit to convert the house to a duplex.<sup>126</sup> By 1950, the Arnolds lived in the downstairs unit.<sup>127</sup> After Sam's death in about 1962, Laura Arnold continued to live there through 1969. The unit upstairs was rented by Ada Helen Fildes and (Mrs.) Willie Tucker, but sometime after Sam Arnold's death, the ownership of the house was shared in thirds between the two women upstairs and Mrs. Arnold (downstairs).<sup>128</sup> Mrs. Willie Tucker worked at Meier and Frank and did Corning Glassware and General Electric demonstrations.<sup>129</sup> When Laura Arnold died, Mrs. Tucker and Mrs. Fildes bought out her third and became co-owners.<sup>130</sup> The Portland directories list Mrs. Willie Tucker continuing to reside at the house into the 1980s, sometimes with other people as boarders.<sup>131</sup> In 1984, the house was inherited by Susan and Larry Fildes after Larry's aunt Ada Fildes passed; they also bought out Mrs. Tucker, who lived there until she died in 1988.<sup>132</sup>

Susan and Larry Fildes sold the house to St. Marks Church, a block to the south. The church intended the upper unit to be residential for the deacon, while the downstairs would serve as "Lionsgate," an evangelism and outreach center for the church.<sup>133</sup> By 1997, though, the building was being leased to an artist who lived upstairs and sought a permit to allow the lower unit to be a commercial gallery for her work. This use appeared to have been temporary, however; the house was occupied by two different tenants by at least 2003. Save repairs and maintenance, no alterations have been made to the house since the 2006 two-story rear addition.

The subject property is the oldest and only remaining residential building without commercial uses to still front onto NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue, a street that is now predominantly a commercial corridor. As noted in the Alphabet Historic District nomination (approved in 2000), the many alterations within Northwest Portland over time were especially concentrated along major arterials such as NW 21<sup>st</sup> and NW 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenues.

### Comparative Analysis

This section describes the buildings plausibly associated with Arthur H. Devers and explains why the Devers House at 1125 NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue is the most intact and representative of Devers's contributions to Portland as compared to any other property.

The buildings that are associated with A. H. Devers include the commercial buildings that housed his business, Closset & Devers; his later home on Cornell Road; and the house at 1125 NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue.

1. The Closset Brothers' first advertisements, at the end of March 1880, list the firm at 7 N Second Street between A and B Streets (soon to be Ankeny and Burnside Streets), in a building that was possibly constructed in 1879 or 1880.<sup>134</sup> Devers joined the firm in 1883. The 1889 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows the Closset & Devers building as a long, narrow midblock brick building at that address (now SW 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue), internally connected to a perpendicular one-story building labeled "one spice mill" with frontage on what is now W Burnside Street. This second building was apparently replaced by a three-story brick building prior to 1895, when property owners J. Closset and W. Mackintosh had the adjacent wood buildings between these two brick connected buildings torn down and replaced by another three-story brick building at the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> and Burnside (now 9 SW 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue).<sup>135</sup> Although the 1901

<sup>126</sup> City of Portland permit 292991, September 1947. No drawings were included.

<sup>127</sup> 1950 U.S. Census

<sup>128</sup> Kristen Minor's notes from a Feb. 10, 2025 phone conversation with Susan Fildes.

<sup>129</sup> Spencer.

<sup>130</sup> Kristen Minor's notes from S. Fildes conversation.

<sup>131</sup> R. L. Polk Portland directories 1970-1983.

<sup>132</sup> Kristen Minor's notes from S. Fildes conversation.

<sup>133</sup> Suzanne Richards, "Portland Residence Becomes House of Lord," *Oregonian*, June 23, 1988, F04.

<sup>134</sup> See *Oregonian*, March 29, 1880, 2.

<sup>135</sup> "Two More Buildings," *Oregonian*, July 26, 1895, 5.

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Sanborn Fire Insurance Map seems to show a full quarter-block building, it may be an accretion of the three structures constructed between c. 1880 and 1895, which had probably also received repairs as a result of a fire that took place there in December 1899.<sup>136</sup> The historic plumbing permits for the quarter-block building at least in the 1920s show the owner as the "Closset estate," so Joseph Closset and his descendants retained ownership of the property for decades. The original building that housed Closset & Devers from 1883 to ca. 1900 is likely still extant as part of 9-13 SW 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue (13 SW 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue appears different, and likely older, than the building to the north at 9 SW 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue). The building's association with Arthur Devers, however, is limited to his commercial ownership in Closset & Devers, and it is also not as representative of the time period during which Devers made his biggest contribution to Portland's growth and development since Closset & Devers relocated (see below) several years before Devers participated in the years of pre-planning for the Lewis and Clark Exposition of 1905.

2. By 1900, the Closset & Devers company was located on what is now Naito Parkway between Ankeny and Burnside, facing east. The building is no longer extant and has been replaced by the addition to the Reed Building (45 SW Ankeny Street) (see Figure 12).
3. During the 1920s, Closset & Devers was located at the corner of NW 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue and NW Pettygrove Street. None of the buildings from this era are still present at this intersection.
4. The home that Devers purchased with his second wife Anne is located at 2911 NW Cornell Road. He acquired that house from W. C. Moore of Seattle in 1917, when he was approximately 59 years old.<sup>137</sup> Though Devers lived in the Cornell Road house for 27 years, and his wife even longer, for 41 years, the Cornell Road house does not represent the period of time during which Devers became an important figure in Portland's history.
5. The Devers House at 1125 NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue is the only resource that Arthur Devers and his family had built for them. Devers and his family resided in the house from 1891 to 1908, during the most productive years of his civic life and his business career.

While Arthur H. Devers certainly accrued much of his initial civic standing from his business, the Closset & Devers firm was a shared endeavor, and was in fact started as the Closset Brothers before Devers bought out Emile Closset (who joined forces in the mid-1880s with another partner to become Verdier & Closset for a time). While Devers's importance to Portland was in part due to his business interests, it was more directly tied to his leadership in various Progressive Era events that transformed Portland's social and commercial landscape, especially the Lewis and Clark Exposition of 1905.

The Devers House on NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue is more representative of Devers as an individual than any building associated with the Closset & Devers company. Built in 1891, the house illustrates the Devers family's social standing at that time, when Arthur H. Devers was just beginning to become one of the influential businessmen of the Progressive era in Portland, a position he forged himself without family wealth or connections. The house is associated with him during the period of his life when he achieved the respect and public standing that he earned by his civic leadership, business acumen, and boosterism on behalf of Portland.

<sup>136</sup> "Absorbed a Big Concern," *Oregonian*, May 16, 1900, 7.

<sup>137</sup> "Home Sells for \$11,000," *Oregonian*, July 22, 1917, 56.

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Devers, Arthur H., House  
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**Newspapers:**

*Oregon City Courier*, 1898

*Oregonian* (Portland, OR), various dates

*San Francisco Chronicle*, 1925

*Seattle Star*, 1918

*The Oregon Journal* (Portland, OR), various dates

*The Oregon Statesman* (Salem, OR), 1944

*The Centennial* (Portland, OR), 1903

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

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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	45.531007° Latitude	-122.694891° Longitude	3	Latitude	Longitude
2	Latitude	Longitude	4	Latitude	Longitude

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated area includes all of tax lot number 1N1E33BA 3800, also known as COUCHS ADD, BLOCK 300, LOT 2 (Figure 3). The standard 100-foot by 50-foot lot fronts onto NW 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue at the east.<sup>138</sup>

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The site corresponds to the original property, deeded to A. H. Devers with his business partner Joseph Closset in 1886 and then to Devers alone in 1889.<sup>139</sup> The property boundaries have not changed since the end of the period of significance in 1908.

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kristen Minor date July 30, 2025  
organization Minor Planning & Design for F. Dixon & D. Volkmer telephone 503-706-9618  
street & number 2146 NE 17<sup>th</sup> Ave email kristen.minor.pdx@gmail.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).

<sup>138</sup> 1N1E33BA 3800 boundaries confirmed against Multnomah County Surveyor's Office data (<https://www3.multco.us/H5V/?viewer=surveysail>) on July 31, 2025.

<sup>139</sup> Donovan & Associates/ Prohaska survey form.

**Devers, Arthur H., House**  
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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**

<b>Name of Property:</b>	Devers, Arthur H., House		
<b>City or Vicinity:</b>	Portland		
<b>County:</b>	Multnomah	<b>State:</b>	OR
<b>Photographer:</b>	Kristen Minor (Photographs 1, 2, 4, and 6-16); Nicholas DiGiallondo (Photographs 3 and 5) via drone		
<b>Date Photographed:</b>	February 5, 2025 (Photographs 1, 2, 4, 7, and 15); April 16, 2025 (Photographs 6, 8-14, 16); July 21, 2025 (Photographs 3 and 5)		

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

**Photograph 1 of 16:** OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0001  
Looking northwest at the front (east) of the house.

**Photograph 2 of 16:** OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0002  
Looking west at the Devers House.

**Photograph 3 of 16:** OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0003  
Looking southeast at the north and west façades.

**Photograph 4 of 16:** OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0004  
Looking southwest at front porch.

**Photograph 5 of 16:** OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0005  
Looking northeast at southwest corner from back yard.

**Photograph 6 of 16:** OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0006  
Looking southeast at shed in southeast corner of property.

**Photograph 7 of 16:** OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0007  
Interior, ground floor looking east at entry doors and stair.

**Photograph 8 of 16:** OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0008  
Interior, ground floor looking southwest at fireplace in dining room.

**Photograph 9 of 16:** OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0009  
Interior, ground floor looking east at front room.

**Photograph 10 of 16:** OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0010  
Interior, ground floor looking north at stained-glass window in north bedroom.

**Photograph 11 of 16:** OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0011  
Interior, ground floor looking northeast in north bedroom.

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**Photograph 12 of 16:** OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0012  
Interior, second floor looking northwest into kitchen and dining room.

**Photograph 13 of 16:** OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0013  
Interior, second floor in center bedroom looking south.

**Photograph 14 of 16:** OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0014  
Interior, second floor looking southeast into front bedroom and small room.

**Photograph 15 of 16:** OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0015  
Interior, looking east at the basement level.

**Photograph 16 of 16:** OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0016  
Interior, looking west at the attic level.

**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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**List of Figures**

(Resize, compact, and paste images of maps and historic documents in this section. Place captions, with figure numbers above each image. Orient maps so that north is at the top of the page, all document should be inserted with the top toward the top of the page.)

**Figure 1:** Regional location map. Google Earth application, 2024 imagery.

**Figure 2:** Local location map. Google Earth application, 2024 imagery.

**Figure 3:** Tax lot map. Accessed on PortlandMaps.com 2025.

**Figure 4:** Site Plan/Roof Plan. Plan by Todd Sloan, City of Portland 2006 permit set 06-113600-00-RS and updated with shed, stairs, and south fences, by Kristen Minor, 2025.

**Figure 5:** Ground Floor and Second Floor Plans. Plans by Kristen Minor, 2025.

**Figure 6:** 1901 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, No. 84 (excerpt).

**Figure 7:** 1908-1909 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, No. 33.

**Figure 8:** Devers House, 1971, looking northwest. Portland City Archives AP/98899.

**Figure 9:** Devers House, 1971, looking west. Portland City Archives AP/98898.

**Figure 10:** Devers House, 1992, looking southwest. Donovan & Associates/ Prohaska survey.

**Figure 11:** Closset & Devers coffee wagon, no date (c. 1880s). Image from Webfooters Post Card club, "Portland's Coffee Connection," *Webfooter Extra*, February 2015.

**Figure 12:** *Oregonian* sketch of the Closset & Devers building on Front Street (June 3, 1900, p. 8).

**Figure 13:** Front page (partial) article discussing Devers's political views, *Oregon Journal*, Dec. 2, 1908, 1.

**Figure 14:** Caricature of Arthur Devers, "As We See 'Em," *Oregonian*, 1906.

**Figure 15:** Portrait of A. H. Devers, 1905. Courtesy of Multnomah County Library.

**Figure 16:** Devers at Bonneville Dam. c. 1934. Oregon Historical Society (OHS) image, originally *Oregon Journal*. no date (c. 1934). Written on back: "Arthur H. Devers took the first shovelful of dirt for the Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River, northeast of Portland, Oregon."

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**Figure 1:** Regional location map. Google Earth application, 2024 imagery (blue pin shows location).



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**Figure 2:** Local location map. Google Earth application, 2024 imagery (red pin shows location, blue line indicates nominated boundary).



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**Figure 3:** Tax lot map 1n1e33ba, accessed on PortlandMaps.com 2025 (star indicates property, blue line indicates nominated boundary).



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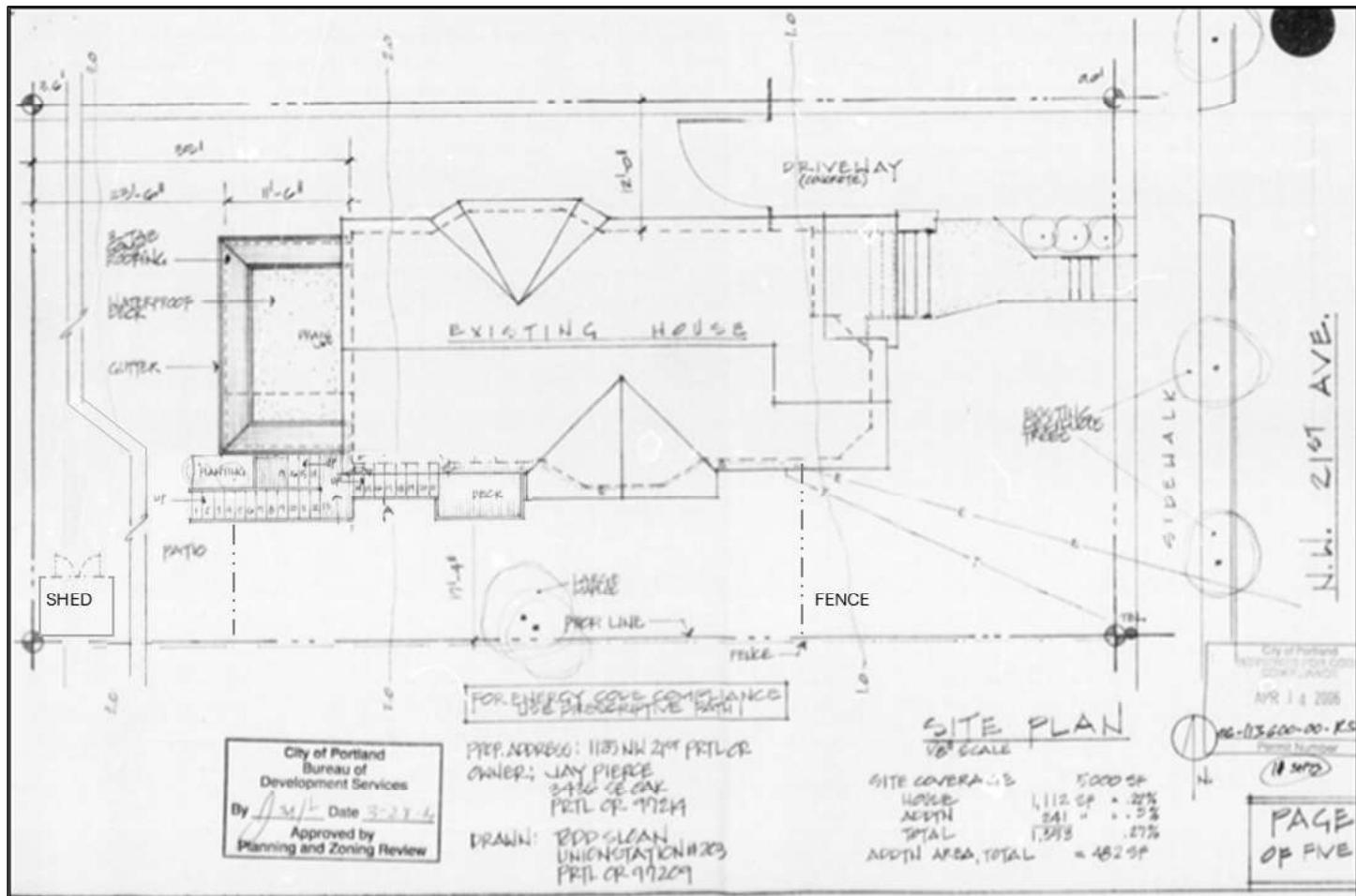
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**Figure 4:** Site Plan/Roof Plan. Plan by Todd Sloan, City of Portland 2006 permit set 06-113600-00-RS and updated with shed, stairs, and south fences, by Kristen Minor, 2025.



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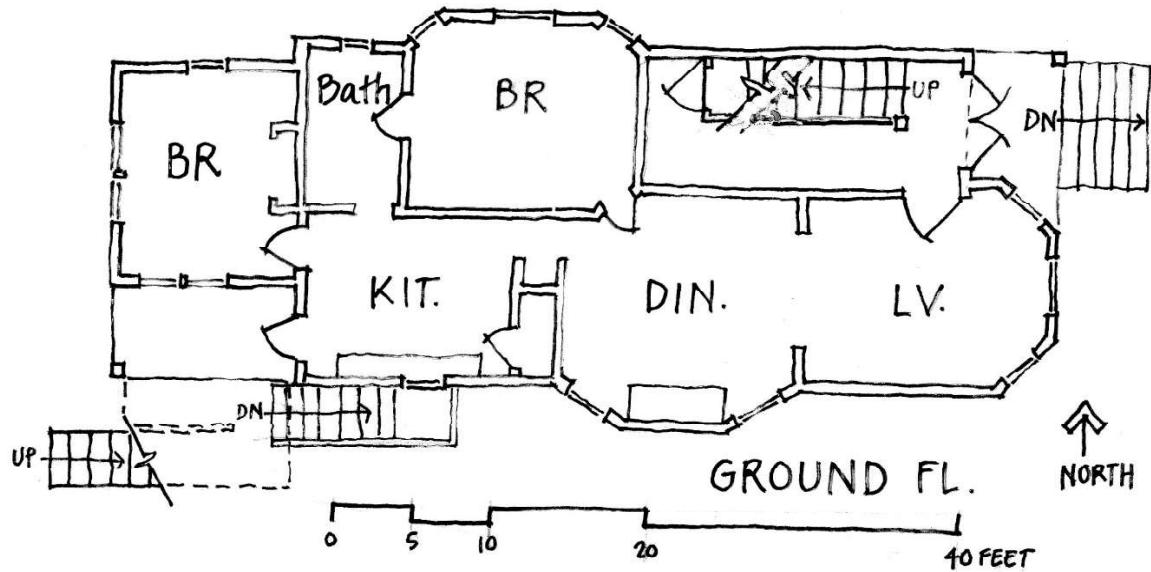
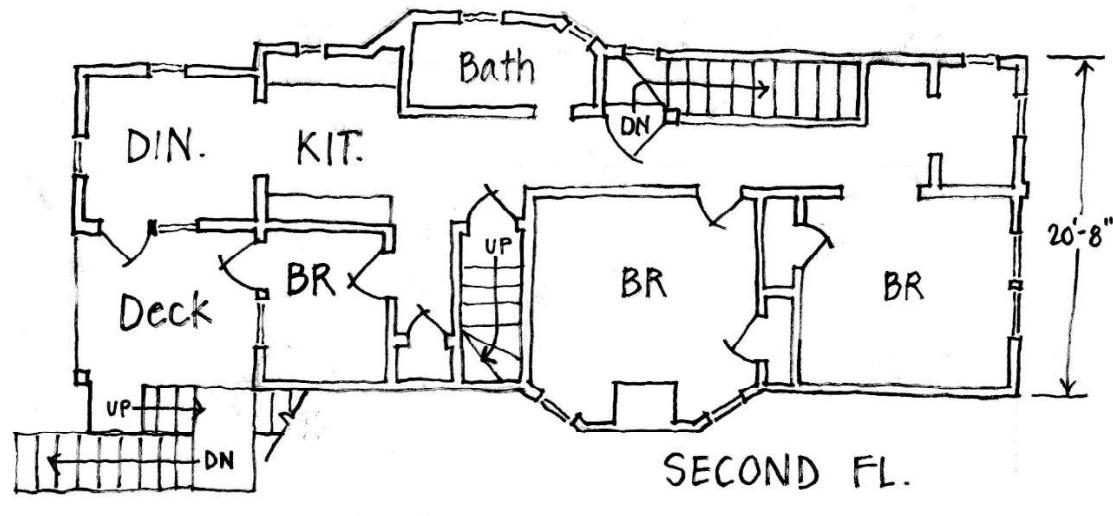
County and State

N/A

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**Figure 5:** Ground Floor and Second Floor Plans. Plans by Kristen Minor, 2025.



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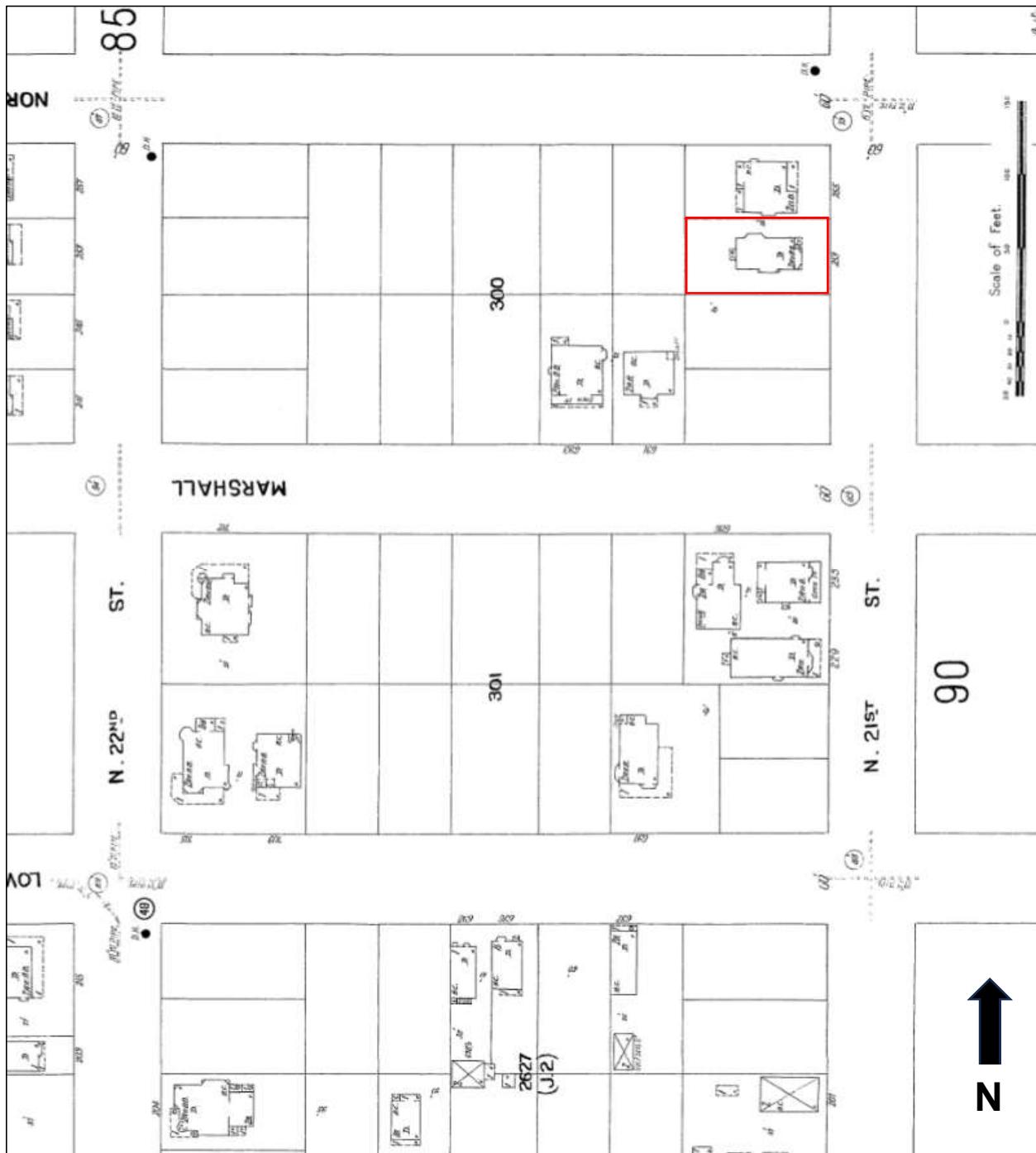
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**Figure 6:** 1901 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, No. 84 (excerpt). The Devers House property is outlined in red.



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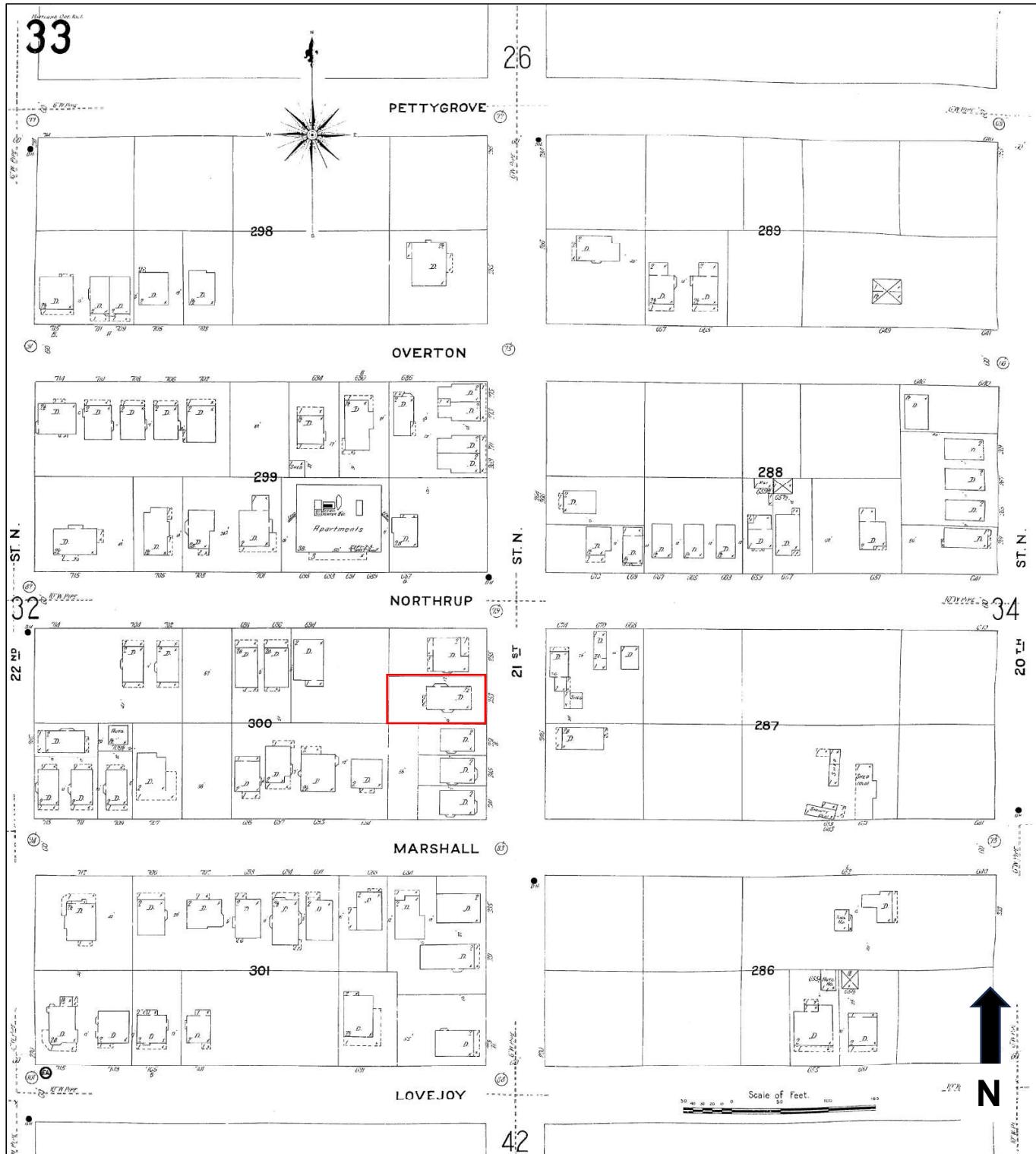
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**Figure 7: 1908-1909 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, No. 33. The Devers House property is outlined in red.**



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**Figure 8:** Devers House, 1971, looking northwest. Portland City Archives AP/98899.



**Figure 9:** Devers House, 1971, looking west. Portland City Archives AP/98898.



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**Figure 10:** Devers House, 1992, looking southwest. Donovan & Associates/ Prohaska survey.



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**Figure 11:** Closset & Devers coffee wagon, no date (c. 1880s). Image from Webfooters Post Card club, "Portland's Coffee Connection," *Webfooter Extra*, February 2015.



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**Figure 12:** Oregonian newspaper sketch of the Closset & Devers building on Front Street (June 3, 1900, p. 8).



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**Figure 13:** Front page (partial) article discussing Devers's political views, *Oregon Journal*, Dec. 2, 1908, 1.

**PLEDGED MEN  
CANNOT BE  
RELEASED**

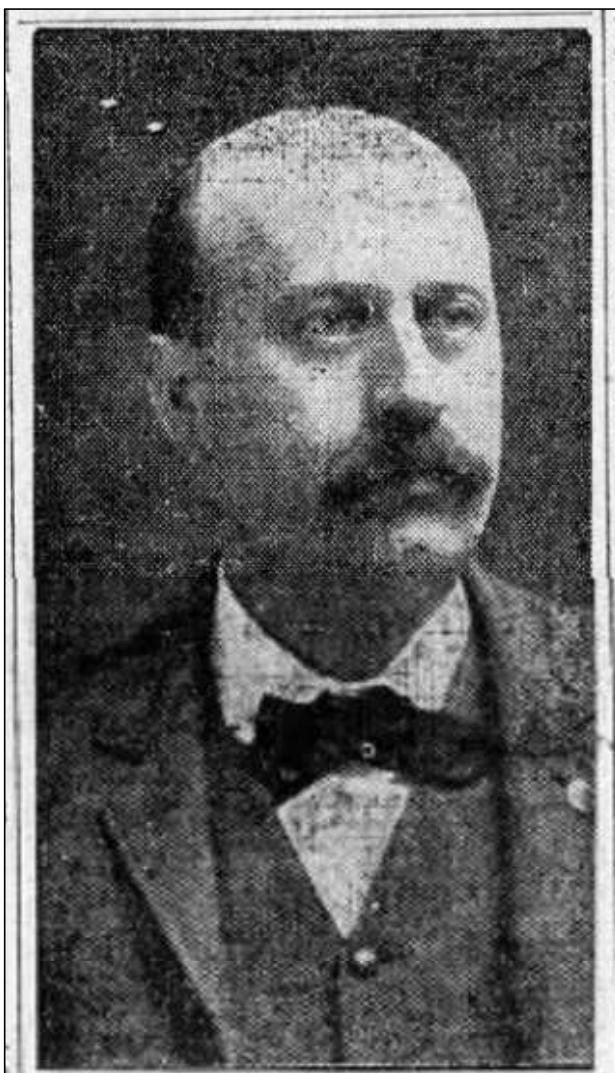
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A. H. Devers, Republican,  
Puts Senatorial Situation  
in Business Terms—Leg-  
islators Can Only Be Ab-  
solved by Electors.

---

"A pledge is a pledge, whether given by a politician to the people who elected him to office, or by a business man in business life. I cannot for the life of me see how any honest man is to find any honorable means of evading such a pledge."

This is the belief of A. H. Devers, one of the best known business men of the Pacific coast. Mr. Devers was discuss-



A. H. Devers.

ing the agitation now being conducted by the old line machine politicians of the state to break down the Statement No. 1 majority in the legislature and elect some other man for United States senator than Governor Chamberlain. The Portland merchant takes a vigorous stand on the question.

"Always a Republican."

"I have always been a Republican," continued Mr. Devers. "For the important offices I have always supported

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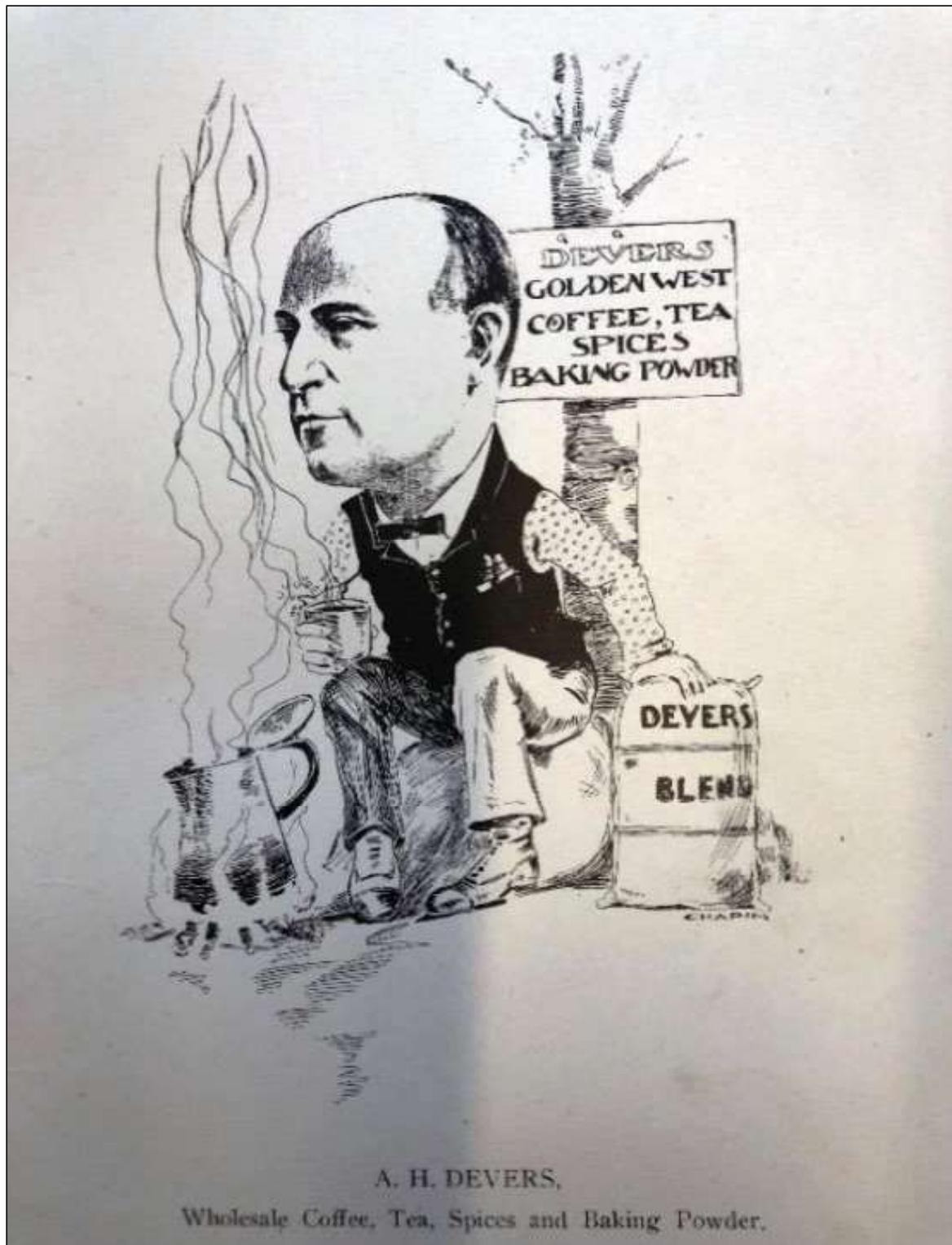
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**Figure 14:** Caricature of Devers, "As We See 'Em," *Oregonian*, 1906.



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**Figure 15:** Portrait of A. H. Devers, 1905. Courtesy of Multnomah County Library.



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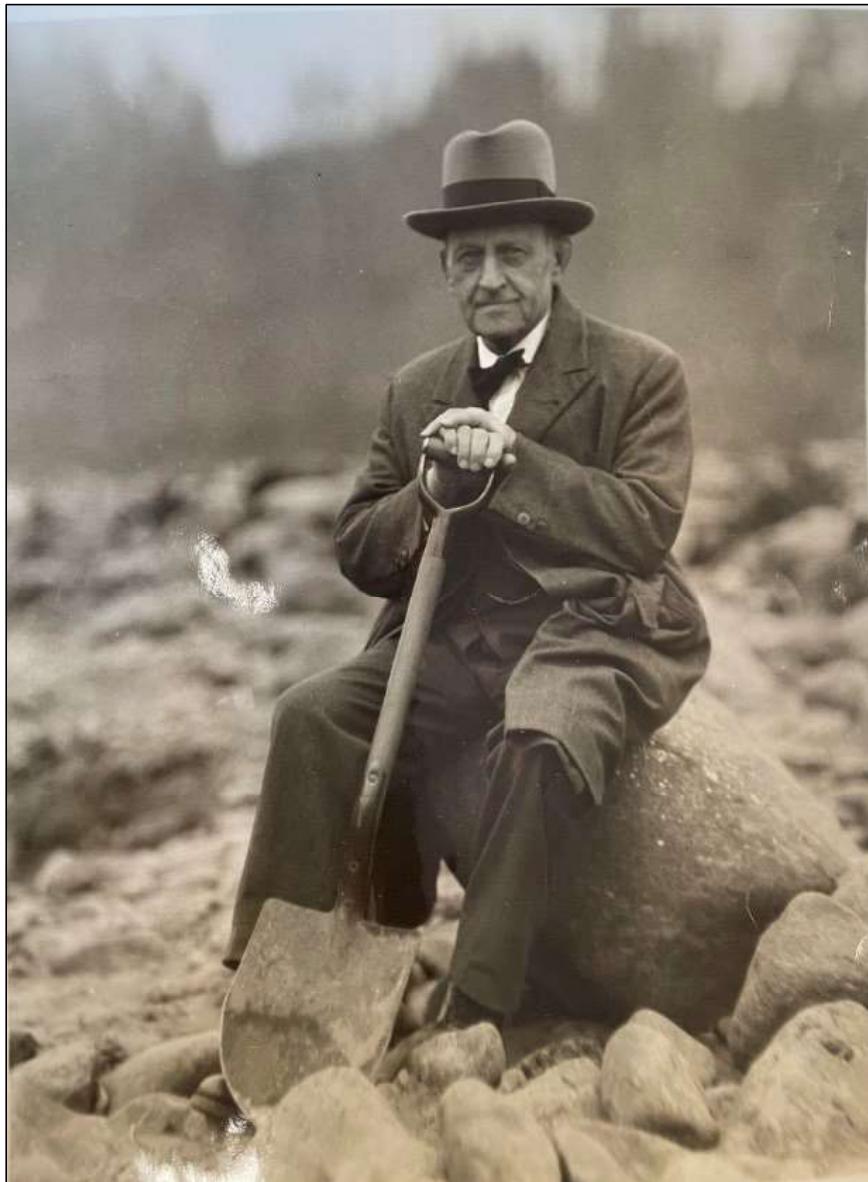
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**Figure 16:** Devers at Bonneville Dam. Oregon Historical Society (OHS) image, originally *Oregon Journal*, no date (c. 1934). Written on back: "Arthur H. Devers took the first shovelful of dirt for the Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River, northeast of Portland, Oregon."



**Devers, Arthur H., House**  
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**Photograph 1 of 16: OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0001**  
Looking northwest at the front (east) of the house.



**Photograph 2 of 16: OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0002**  
Looking west at Devers House.

**Devers, Arthur H., House**  
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**Photograph 3 of 16: OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0003**  
Looking southeast at the north and west façades.



**Photograph 4 of 16: OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0004**  
Looking southwest at front porch.

**Devers, Arthur H., House**  
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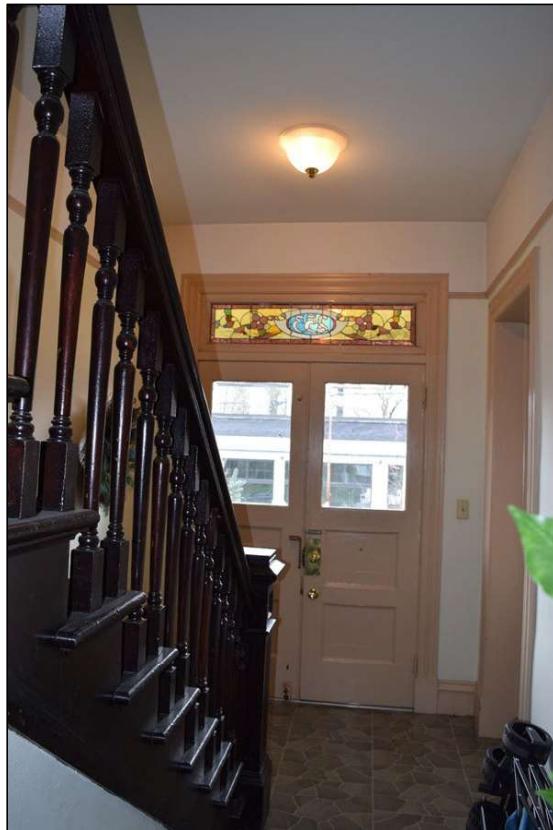


**Photograph 5 of 16: OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0005**  
Looking northeast at southwest corner from back yard.



**Photograph 6 of 16: OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0006**  
Looking southeast at shed in southeast corner of property.

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**Photograph 7 of 16: OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0007**  
Interior, ground floor looking east at entry doors and stair.

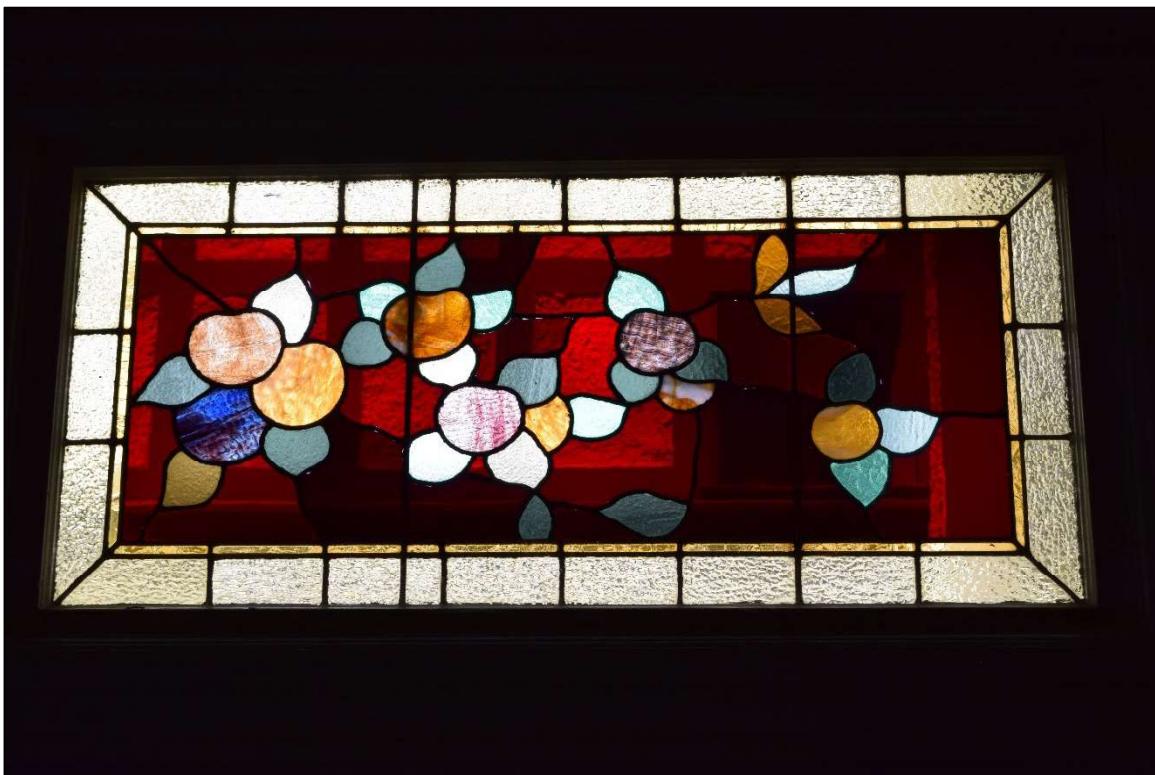


**Photograph 8 of 16: OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0008**  
Interior, ground floor looking southwest at fireplace in dining room.

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**Photograph 9 of 16: OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0009**  
Interior, ground floor looking east at front room.



**Photograph 10 of 16: OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0010**  
Interior, ground floor looking north at stained-glass window in north bedroom.

**Devers, Arthur H., House**  
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**Photograph 11 of 16: OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0011**  
Interior, ground floor looking northeast in north bedroom.



**Photograph 12 of 16: OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0012**  
Interior, second floor looking northwest into kitchen and dining room.

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**Photograph 13 of 16: OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0013**  
Interior, second floor in center bedroom looking south.

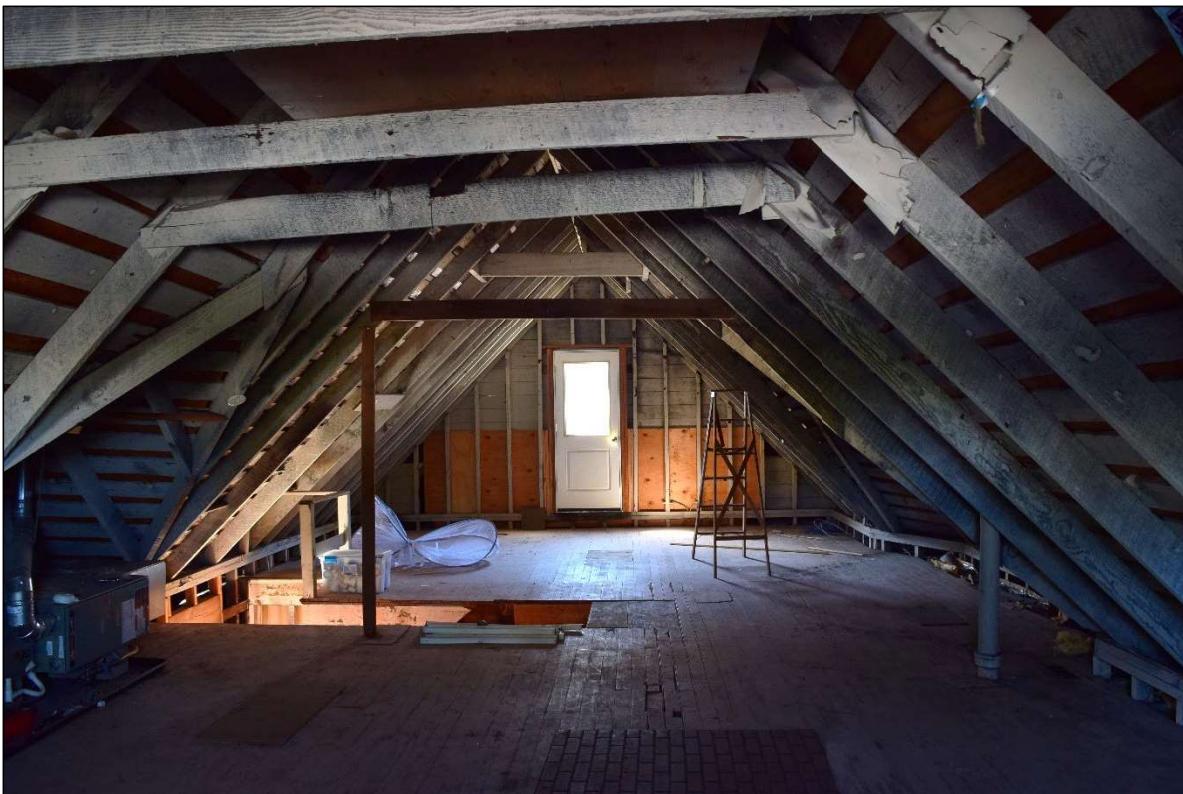


**Photograph 14 of 16: OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0014**  
Interior, second floor looking southeast into front bedroom and small room.

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**Photograph 15 of 16: OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0015**  
Interior, looking east at the basement level.



**Photograph 16 of 16: OR\_MultnomahCounty\_DeversArthurHHouse\_0016**  
Interior, looking west at the attic level.