

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name J. K. Gill Company Building

other names/site number Gladys McCoy Building

Name of Multiple Property Listing Historic Resources in Downtown Portland, Oregon, 1915-1931 MPD

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

2. Location

street & number 408 SW 5th Avenue not for publication

city or town Portland vicinity

state Oregon code OR county Multnomah code 051 zip code 97204

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

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

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action _____

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		site
		structure
		object
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCIAL/TRADE: Business

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCIAL/TRADE: Business

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE
walls: CONCRETE
STUCCO
roof: SYNTHETICS
other: _____

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Narrative Description

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

Summary Paragraph

The J.K. Gill Company Building is located on a 100' x 100' quarter-block lot at the southeast corner of SW 5th Avenue and SW Harvey Milk Street in downtown Portland. The surrounding properties are commercial in nature and built to their street-facing lot lines except for a surface parking lot across the street to the north. Completed in 1923¹, the J. K. Gill Building was designed in the Commercial Style. It is ten stories tall with a basement and the total interior area is 101,000 square feet. The reinforced concrete structure is divided into bays marked by vertical concrete pilasters and has a smooth painted concrete stucco finish. The first three levels of the building are within its architectural base. This consists of large storefront windows with tall transoms at the first floor and second-floor mezzanine levels and large plate-glass windows and transoms at the third-floor level. The six stories above have one-over-one wood windows that are grouped in pairs. The tenth floor is behind the parapet and does not have street-facing windows. Typical of the Commercial Style in the 1920s, architectural ornamentation on the building is restrained and includes belt courses, pilaster capitals, and a frieze with medallions featuring printing press imagery and the initials JKG at the parapet level. The level of integrity on the exterior is high as the building retains most of its original windows, its stucco finish, and decorative features. The interior of the building has a moderate level of integrity, retaining its plastered concrete structural columns and beams, and floorplates that are largely open. The noteworthy alterations that occurred since the period of significance include replacement of the storefronts with new matching wood storefronts; the creation of a new building entrance at a prior service entrance on the north elevation; replacement of some windows with mechanical louvers; covering the south elevation wall with an aluminum grid with metal scrim; removal of interior casework and applied finishes associated with the J. K. Gill use; and the addition of a new elevator/restroom core and lobby finishes.

Narrative Description

SETTING

Built in 1923, the J. K. Gill Company Building rises ten stories tall at 408 SW 5th Avenue in downtown Portland. It is situated on a 100' x 100' quarter-block lot and is surrounded by other commercial buildings of varying heights and ages, as well as a surface parking lot. The building is constructed to the property line and has wide sidewalks on its two street-facing elevations. On the building's west side, SW 5th Avenue is a southbound transit mall street that has auto, bus, and light rail traffic. The building's north elevation faces SW Harvey Milk Street (previously named SW Stark Street), which is an eastbound auto and bicycle street. Neighboring buildings abut the nominated property on its east and south sides.

EXTERIOR

The J. K. Company Building is a reinforced concrete structure built on a concrete foundation. The north and west street-facing facades have a smooth stucco coat that is painted. These street-facing facades are highly regular in their rhythm of architectural elements and are virtually symmetrical. Vertical

¹ With respect to how the construction date is known: Figure 9 provides a December 1, 1922 photograph in the Oregon Historical Society's collections (#024157) showing the exterior of the building still under construction. Articles appear in 1923 showing completed photos of the building, such as "Arrangement of J. K. Gill Co. Store," *Office Appliances*, Vol 38, September 1923, 37-38.

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concrete pilasters divide the façade into five bays on the north and the west. Above the storefront level, each bay is further divided in half vertically by a concrete mullion.

As shown in Photo 1, the building has a tall base with large storefront windows topped with tall transoms. While not original, the aluminum-clad wood storefronts were installed in 2020 to closely replicate the historic design. Each bay of storefronts is comprised of two large glazing units divided by a mullion. The storefront transoms, which coincide with the second-floor mezzanine level, are original to the building. The pilasters that divide the storefront bays are topped with Corinthian capitals. The third-floor level features original plate-glass windows with two transoms above each window. These windows can be seen in an interior view provided in Photo 12. There are two of these per bay divided by the aforementioned concrete mullion. The six stories above have one-over-one wood windows that are grouped in pairs. A historic photo of the building (Figure 10) shows that the windows historically operated with an awning function. These windows were fixed at a date unknown, but operability was restored on many of them in 2020 and is shown from the interior in Photo 15. There are four windows per bay with each pair being divided by the concrete mullion. The pilasters dividing the upper six stories are also topped with Corinthian capitals.

Considering the elements that organize the street-facing facades horizontally, there are two major concrete belt courses—one at the top of the storefront level and one above the second floor. These belt courses provide visual strength and emphasis to the building's base. Below each of the one-over-one windows is a concrete spandrel panel. These are slightly recessed behind the plane of the vertical pilasters and mullions. Shown in Photo 2, the top of the building features a tall parapet with a small decorative cornice that has a scroll motif. The parapet is a smooth band that features two decorative panels where the north and west elevation meet that feature winged figures. Circular medallions that align with the mullions depict images of the printing press and also display the J.K. Gill initials. Overall, the architectural ornamentation is restrained. Instead, the aesthetic strength of the design emphasizes the articulation of the of the façade's structure and fenestration, which is typical of the Commercial Style.

While the two street-facing facades are fairly homogenous in design, the following descriptions provide information about the features that are unique to each elevation.

WEST ELEVATION

As shown in Photos 1, 3, and 4, the west elevation features the historic main entry. The entry doors are located in the center bay and are slightly recessed. The aluminum-clad wood doors are not historic and were most recently replaced in 2020.

Figure 10 shows that the southernmost storefront bay appears to have historically been a service/loading entry, as it has no storefront glazing in this historic photo. At a date unknown, this opening is infilled with an ATM machine. In 2020, the ATM was removed and the opening was replaced with storefronts. Within this same bay, a metal fire escape ascends to the roof. While original, the fire escape is utilitarian and does not have any character features.

NORTH ELEVATION

As shown in Photos 1, 5 and 8, the north elevation contains the main building entry to the elevator lobby within the easternmost bay. While difficult to see in historic photos, it appears this bay was also a service entrance historically. All original materials were removed at a date unknown. There are presently two pairs of contemporary metal doors with relites. Above the doors is a large aluminum canopy that spans the entire width of the bay. Changes to this entry have occurred in several renovations after the period of significance and were improved again in 2020. Where there were four transom windows historically above the canopy, there are now four HVAC mechanical louvers. In this same easternmost bay, the

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easternmost set of windows on all floors has been replaced with mechanical louvers within the original window opening. The louvers were added at a date unknown, but before c. 1990.

EAST ELEVATION

Shown in Photo 6, the building's east elevation is another concrete party wall and is adjacent to a neighboring low-rise building. The building's tenth-floor penthouse, mechanical units, and elevator tower are visible on this elevation. Historically, this elevation featured painted signage for J. K. Gill's that could be easily seen from the eastside of the Willamette River, as shown in Figure 13.

SOUTH ELEVATION

The building's south elevation is shown in Photo 7. The elevation abuts the neighboring KeyBank Building that was constructed in 1965. The south wall is made of concrete and has no window openings. In 1965, an aluminum grid with perforated metal scrim was placed over the concrete wall as part of the design for the KeyBank Building. The rehabilitation in 2020 removed the metal and repaired the wall.

ROOF

Photo 8 show the building's roof from an aerial perspective. While not visible from either of the primary elevations (west and north), the building features a rooftop penthouse that provides daylighting to the tenth floor added within the area behind the parapet. The penthouse has a flat roof with a curb-mounted, hip-roofed atrium skylight. The perimeter walls of the penthouse have aluminum-framed clerestory windows.

Taller than the tenth-floor penthouse, the roof also features an elevator tower and enclosed mechanical penthouse. These items are set back against the east side of the building. There are also mechanical air handlers at the northeast corner of the roof.

INTERIOR

The interior of the J.K. Gill Building totals 101,000 square feet, including the basement and the tenth floor, the latter of which was likely added after the original construction (date unknown).² The primary character-defining features are the large round concrete columns with canted capitals that are plastered and painted. On the ground floor and mezzanine, these capitals have modest detailing as shown in Photo 9. As one travels higher in the building, the columns become more simplified. A column on Floor 5 is pictured in Photo 14. On the 8th and 9th floors, which historically were not accessible to the public, the plaster finish on the columns is less refined. The columns are regularly spaced on a grid system and are approximately 20 feet apart. The concrete ceiling structure is also plastered and painted on all floors except the top three floors where the board-formed concrete is exposed. The plastered ceilings are shown in Photos 12 and 13, and the concrete ceiling is shown in Photo 16.

The floorplates were largely open during the historic period with some demising of office space for certain uses such as the J. K. Gill offices. In 1967, the General Services Administration (GSA) became a tenant on floors five through ten, which was built out with a medical clinic and offices. Later, Multnomah County Health Department occupied this space and continued to take more square footage until J. K. Gill vacated in 1991. Numerous tenant improvements were made since 1967; however, all of this was removed in 2020 when the building underwent extensive renovations.

² While only a partial set of Sutton & Whitney plans for the building could be found, it appears that a future tenth floor was contemplated due to notes on the drawings.

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The ground floor features a large elevator lobby that is accessed from the pair of double doors on the north elevation. There is an entry vestibule with another set of double doors that proceeds into the main part of the lobby and a service door that provides access to the freight elevator. Along the east wall, there is a bank of three passenger elevators and an enclosed, fire-rated stairwell. As shown in Photo 10, the rest of the floor is a large open suite that is accessed from the historic entry on the west elevation. The twelve bays within the northwest corner of this floor plate are double-height. A mezzanine, shown in Photo 11, wraps along the east and south walls and looks down into this first-floor space. The historic condition featured such a mezzanine (see Figure 11). It was infilled in c. 2002 and then brought back in 2020. Fire code required that the mezzanine be separated from the main floor. To accomplish this but also maintain the historic visual connection, full-height glazing was installed to separate the two spaces.

Shown in Photos 12, 13, and 16, floors three through ten have an open floor plate with the elevator, mechanical, and restroom core along the east wall. As mentioned earlier, the tenth floor has no windows at eye level since it is primarily within the area behind the roof parapet. The penthouse clerestory windows and atrium skylight provide daylighting to this floor.

Shown in Photo 17, there is an original wide concrete stair to the basement that features a metal balustrade and ball finial newel posts. Code-required guardrails and handrail extensions were installed in 2020. The basement also retained the original scale used by Gill's during the historic period, shown in Photo 18. As part of the 2020 rehabilitation, the basement is demised into several large spaces including bike storage, mechanical and electrical rooms, locker rooms, tenant storage, and leased office space.

ALTERATIONS

The following is a list of alterations to the building:

- Historically-compatible storefronts replaced c. 2000 metal storefronts as part of the rehabilitation in 2020. Original transoms remain.
- Ground-floor entries were altered beginning c. 1967 and updated again in the 2020 rehabilitation.
- Exterior louvers were installed in window openings to vent mechanical equipment likely after the period of significance but before 1991. The louvers were better organized with some windows restored in 2020.
- The mechanical penthouse on the roof was added sometime in the last 40 years.
- An aluminum metal grid with perforated metal scrim was applied to the south elevation, likely at the time the neighboring KeyBank building was constructed in 1965. This was removed in 2020.
- All floors were built-out for the GSA and Multnomah County's use in 1967 - c. 2000. This included a new lobby, new elevators, and new restroom cores. The 2020 rehabilitation removed the non-historic drywall partitions, doors, drop ceilings, light fixtures, and acoustical tile associated with Multnomah County's ownership. The lobby, elevators, and restroom cores were updated in 2020.
- The mezzanine above the ground floor originally was on the south and west sides of the building and had a large opening that looked down on the main floor. This open area was infilled in c. 2002 to create a full second floor. In 2020, a new mezzanine was created with glass separating it from the ground floor.
- An additional floor was added to the building at the parapet level. There are skylights, but no exterior windows at this floor, so it has no impact on the exterior of the building. This additional floor was contemplated in the original Sutton & Whitney plans, but the work was done at a date unknown. A large skylight was added to this floor in 2020.

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- Gill's signage from the building was removed at a date unknown. This included painted signage on the east elevation and a large blade sign at the northwest corner.

INTEGRITY

Overall, the J. K. Gill Building retains its historic integrity and conveys its significance as the company's flagship retail store that also housed all other aspects of their business including wholesaling and publishing. The exterior has a high level of integrity with its primary elevation exterior wall materials, wood windows, and architectural details intact. While the storefronts were previously modified, the 2020 rehabilitation reversed these modifications and installed compatible storefronts based on the original design. Although the interior does not contain any of the casework or store fixtures associated with the J. K. Gill Company use, it still has a moderate level of integrity. The interior continues to convey the prior commercial use of the property that was characterized by large visible plastered columns and ceiling structure, abundant natural light from large storefronts and windows, and open floor plates.

The following is an analysis of the property's integrity:

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

Design. Integrity of design is high on the exterior, as the building largely conveys the key aspects of its design from the historic period. The replacement storefronts match the character of the originals and still retain the historic transoms. The main building entrance for the upper floors has been located within the historic service entry on the north elevation, so this has minimal impact to the design. The alterations at the roof with the mechanical equipment and the penthouse are also insignificant due to the fact that they cannot be seen from the primary elevations when standing at street-level.

Integrity of design is moderate at the interior. Alterations have been made to modernize the interior, including new elevators, restrooms, and lobby improvements. However, the character-defining aspects of the interior including the historically-exposed columns and ceiling structure are retained.

Setting. Located in downtown Portland, integrity of setting is high. The building is surrounded with other commercial buildings that are built to the property line. The grid of streets with wide sidewalks is intact as it was in the historic period.

Materials. Integrity of materials is high on the exterior. The building's stucco-finished concrete structure is intact and in good condition. The original wood windows are extant and the replacement storefront windows are compatible. Ornamentation from the historic period is also intact on the building. Changes to materials on the exterior are seen at the entry doors and the replacement of the service entry bays with new storefronts on the west elevation and new doors on the north elevation.

Integrity of materials is moderate on the interior. Some original finishes have been removed, including the original wood mezzanine balustrade. Other finishes that are unknown due to a lack of historic documentation have also been removed. These include original elevator finishes, restrooms fixtures, etc. The primary character-defining materials of the interior include the plastered columns and ceilings, both of which are intact.

Workmanship. Integrity of workmanship is high at the exterior. Workmanship is seen in the concrete structure, windows, and historic detailing, including belt courses, medallions, and cornice. Workmanship at the interior is less due to the removal of materials; however, the original design for the interior of the building was essentially a painted concrete shell, which was the simple backdrop for the display of J. K. Gill's products.

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Feeling. Integrity of feeling is high at the exterior. The building evokes the aesthetic sense from the historic period with the original materials and the building's setting in downtown Portland. Integrity of feeling is moderate at the interior. The building does evoke the aesthetic sense from the historic period through the retention of the open floor plate and general feel of a retail and wholesaling building, even though changes have been made.

Association. Integrity of association is high, as the building still very much looks and feels like a historic downtown retail building at the exterior.

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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

Period of Significance

1923-1966

Significant Dates

1923: Date of construction

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

N/A

Architect/Builder

Sutton & Whitney: Architect
Dinwiddie, William F.: Builder

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Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance for the building begins in 1923 when the building's construction was completed and ends in 1966. Although the founder and namesake of the business—Joseph K. Gill—passed in 1931 and his family continued to own the company until 1970, the 1960s brought about a noticeable change in retail shopping trends. Suburban J. K. Gill stores became more popular and profitable than the downtown location as people preferred the automobile accessibility of shopping malls. By 1967, J. K. Gill leased the five upper floors to the General Services Administration. As the flagship J. K. Gill store and a prominent business in downtown Portland, the J. K. Gill Company Building had its greatest significance from 1923 through 1966.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

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 J. K. Gill Company Building has statewide significance under National Register Criterion A for commerce as the custom-built, flagship building that housed this important business for 68 years in downtown Portland. It is nominated under the *Historic Resources in Downtown Portland, Oregon, 1915-1931 MPD*. Joseph K. Gill began working in the book and stationery trade in Salem in 1868 and established a bookstore in Portland in 1871. Over time, he expanded into printing, wholesale trade, and the publication of books, lithographs, and maps. Retail offerings included more than just books and stationery with items ranging from art supplies to sheet music to office furniture. The firm grew steadily since its inception and, in Portland, regularly relocated because of the need for more square footage as well as to follow the downtown epicenter as it migrated west. With a gross income of nearly \$2 million in 1921, the J. K. Gill Company was the largest distributor of books and stationery in the Pacific Northwest at the time. They were also the designated state depository for school textbooks and an influential retailer and publisher in the regional publishing movement. By the 1920s, the company had reached a level of success whereby they could purchase land to erect a custom-built structure that would house their retail and wholesale business. The prominent architecture firm of Sutton & Whitney was hired to design the nine-story building and total project costs reached \$600,000. The new building advanced the company's image as a "going concern,"³ increased their efficiency, and provided significantly more floor area for product display, sales generation, and wholesaling. Even after Joseph Gill's passing in 1931, the company continued to grow and opened additional stores in Oregon, Washington, and California. However, by 1960, the downtown store was less profitable due to the growing popularity of auto-accessible suburban stores and by 1967 they began leasing space in the building. For this reason, 1966 closes the period of significance that begins in 1923 when the structure was completed. After selling the building in 1988, the J. K. Gill Company remained a tenant with reduced square footage until the downtown store closed in 1991. With a significant 123-year tenure in Oregon, the J. K. Gill Company spent more than half of that time in the nominated property. While three other buildings remain that previously housed the firm, this building best reflects the company's growth, economic prowess, and the significant place it holds in the history of commerce in Oregon.

³ Used commonly in everyday language around the turn of the century, the phrase "going concern" is an accounting term meaning a business that is making a profit.

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

The J. K. Gill Company Building showcases the success of the J. K. Gill business and its importance to Portland's downtown retail environment and the commerce history of Oregon during the building's period of significance—1923 to 1966. First established in Salem in 1868, J. K. Gill Company was the largest distributor of books and stationery in the Pacific Northwest at the time the subject building was completed in 1923. The property is nominated under Criterion A for significance related to commerce and meets the registration requirements for single-use buildings in the *Historic Resources in Downtown Portland, Oregon, 1915-1931MPD*.

This narrative statement of significance begins with how the property meets the registration requirements of the MPD. Next, an early history of the company in Salem and Portland is recounted, describing how Joseph Gill got his start in the book business, how the firm developed, the chronology of their locations, and the factors that led to the construction of the nominated property. Following this is a discussion of the 1923 building including how it was financed, its important cornerstone celebration, the way the building was set up and used during its early years, and factors that led to the end of the J. K. Gill tenancy. While the company's presence as a prominent downtown retailer has a clear physical link to the building, there are other aspects of the company's achievements that have broad commerce significance with a less obvious connection to the architecture. Discussion of these topics follows the history of the nominated property and they include Joseph Gill's work to develop a wholesale trade for books in Portland and the Pacific Northwest, the company's significance related to the distribution of school textbooks across the state, and their multifaceted involvement in the growth of the regional publication movement of the early 20th century. Next, competitors of J. K. Gill are discussed to provide evidence of Gill's preeminence as a book-related business. To close out the statement of significance, a historic context for downtown Portland is summarized from the MPD and comparative analysis is provided between the nominated property and other J. K. Gill properties.

Throughout this document, the company is referred to by its historic company name variations, which include J. K. Gill & Co, J. K. Gill Company, and Gill's. For clarity, whenever the founder and namesake of the company is discussed, Joseph Gill's full name is used rather than initials.

MPD REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

The registration requirements for the *Historic Resources in Downtown Portland, Oregon, 1915-1931 MPD* are listed below along with an explanation of how the J. K. Gill Company Building fulfills these requirements:

- *Integrity: To be eligible for listing in the National Register under this multiple property context, a building must convey its sense of historical character by retaining sufficient exterior and interior integrity. Generally a resource will possess most of the following seven aspects of integrity: Association, Location, Setting, Feeling, Design, Materials and Workmanship. Generally, these tests are not especially critical for ground floor retail or non-public upper floor interior spaces; modernization of these spaces should not be a basis for disqualification. In addition, modernization of ground floor exterior retail spaces should not be a basis for disqualification.*

As discussed in Section 7, the J. K. Gill Company Building retains all seven aspects of its historic integrity. Integrity is highest at the building's exterior; however, key character-defining features of the interior are present through the retention of historically-exposed structural elements and the stair to the basement. While the interior has been modernized, as stated in the MPD, this is not a basis for disqualification.

- *Date of Construction: The structure must have been built between 1915 and 1931.*

The nominated property was completed in 1923.

- *Geographic area: The structure must be located within the downtown geographic area.*

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The nominated property is located at SW 5th Avenue and SW Harvey Milk Street, which is the heart of downtown Portland and within boundary established in the MPD.

- *Use: In order to be listed, it is not critical that the building be retained in its original use.*

As the J. K. Gill Company stopped operating in the building in 1991, the building is no longer in its original use. Today it is used primarily as general office space.

In addition to the above four registration requirements, the MPD outlines registration requirements for four different building types: offices, hotels, apartments, and single-use buildings. The MPD inventory identifies the J. K. Gill building under the office property type. Most buildings within the office property type were speculative, although the MPD notes there were some exceptions such as the Public Service Building. While the J. K. Gill Building presents itself to the street with an architectural typology consistent with a downtown office building, the building does not meet the registration requirements for this category. Namely, the building does not have upper floor offices accessed from a corridor. In terms of use and historical significance, the J. K. Gill Building was a custom-built retail/wholesale/light industrial building that would fall under the category of a “single-use building” in the MPD. This category has the following additional registration requirement:

- *The resource must retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic use.*

The J. K. Gill Company Building was constructed as a single-use building with multiple floors of retail space, in addition to wholesaling, manufacturing, office, and storage spaces. The building crucially allowed for the flexible reworking of these uses. During the period of significance, the areas devoted to retail, office, storage, and manufacturing expanded, contracted, and shifted in the building, although the ground floor was always devoted to retail. The primary characteristics of the interior were the fairly open floor plates with visible columns and ceiling structure. While there were offices and demising walls in some locations as well as restrooms, closets, and storage spaces, the overarching experience of the building’s interior was one of large volumes of space with visible structure. These primary characteristics are still intact and convey the building’s historic use. The exterior of the building is largely the same as it was during the historic period, thereby also conveying its historic use. Therefore, the building retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic use and meets this registration requirement.

Joseph Gill’s Early Life, Introduction to Oregon, and the Business of Books

The J. K. Gill business was named for its founder, Joseph Kaye Gill, who got his start in the book business in Salem, Oregon—45 miles south of Portland. Gill’s early life is interesting and noteworthy, adding to the understanding of how the J. K. Gill Company came about. It is provided here to give the reader further insight into the factors that resulted in Gill’s involvement in the book trade in Oregon.

Joseph Kaye Gill was born on August 13, 1841 in Yorkshire, England and immigrated with his family to the United States in 1854.⁴ He was the eldest of eleven children born to parents Mark Gill and Amelia (nee Kaye) Gill who settled in Worcester, Massachusetts. Gill attend public school, but also worked in a cotton mill and as a machinist to help his family and to save money for the private education he desired.⁵ Harvey Scott’s biographical sketch of Gill states that he studied at Worcester Academy beginning at age 18 and later entered Wilbraham Wesleyan Academy—a preparatory school in Wilbraham, Massachusetts.⁶

While pursuing his studies, Gill began having significant trouble with his eyesight and was forced to take a break from school. His physician advised him that a sea voyage might be beneficial to his eyes, which led him to come to Oregon by steamer in 1864. Oregon was chosen due to the connections he made while boarding as a student with Chloe (nee Clark) Willson and her three daughters—the oldest, Frances, also being a student

⁴ “J. K. Gill Co., of Portland, Ore., to Erect New Building,” *The American Stationer and Office Outfitter*, Vol 90, 1922, 10.

⁵ “Educational Books for Schools and Colleges,” *Oregonian*, December 6, 1914, 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*

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at the Academy. Chloe was the widow of Dr. William Holden Willson, who had been recruited to come to the Oregon Territory in 1837 to join Reverend Jason Lee's Methodist Mission. Jason Lee was a former student of Dr. Wilbur Frisk—an early principal at the Academy. Frisk's call for missionary work amongst Native Americans resulted in Lee's Methodist mission in Oregon. In 1839, Willson claimed land in the Willamette Valley and seven years later he platted a town he named Salem—the state capitol. Chloe Clark, whom he married in 1844, was a fellow Methodist missionary. Described as “four feet of greatness,” she was the first teacher at the Oregon Institute (which became Willamette University in 1853).⁷ William Willson died in 1856 in Salem and his wife and children moved to Wilbraham to be closer to family.⁸

While boarding with the Willsons, Gill also met Joseph Holman and Joseph Schoewalter Smith, who were early white settlers in Oregon and knew the Willsons from their time in Salem. Collectively, Gill learned about their experiences in the wild and unspoiled Pacific Northwest and decided to make the voyage by steamer in 1864 to Salem. After one year, his eyes had much improved and he returned to Wilbraham with the hopes of finishing his education. However, his eyesight problems relapsed and he abandoned the idea of completing the level of education he had originally hoped to attain. While he graduated in 1866, it is unclear to what equivalent level his degree was by current standards.

After graduating, Gill returned to Salem where he and Frances Willson married. His personal journal indicates that he contemplated a career in education and that he and Frances considered “taking on a school in Jefferson or Lebanon” shortly after their 1866 marriage.⁹ One account states that due to Chloe Willson's connection at Willamette University, Gill was offered a teaching position there, which he accepted.¹⁰ At some point, she also asked him to take temporary charge selling books in her half ownership in a Salem drugstore.¹¹ Finding success in his efforts and preferring business over teaching, he went on to open his own book and stationery store in Salem in 1868.

The Early History of the J. K. Gill Company

Gill partnered with C. F. Yeaton and bought a lot in downtown Salem to build a two-story brick bookstore on State Street, which they opened on September 8, 1868 as “Gill & Yeaton.” The business primarily revolved around the sale of books and stationery with a particular emphasis on textbooks, but they were also a dealer for organs and other musical instruments.¹² Gill dissolved his partnership with Yeaton on July 9, 1869¹³ and thereafter operated the store as J. K. Gill & Co. The building is still standing and is discussed in the comparative analysis.

In 1870, William S. Ladd and Henry W. Corbett—prominent Portland businessmen and political leaders—approached Gill at the State Fair in Salem and suggested that he take over the Harris & Holman book business in Portland.¹⁴ Ladd had heard that Gill was at his store every morning at 7 o'clock and did most of the work himself—habits that Ladd found admirable. Desiring to expand his business reach, Gill sold the bookstore in Salem and moved to Portland in 1871. He went into business with George A. Steel, although it is unknown how he came to know Steel and what led to their business partnership.

⁷Dede Montgomery, “Early bookselling: Ticknor Field to Gills,” November 19, 2018, <https://dedemontgomery.com/2018/11/19/early-bookselling-ticknor-fields-to-gills/>, accessed May 7, 2020.

⁸ Dede Montgomery, “J. K. Gill in 5 minutes or less,” July 1, 2019, <https://medium.com/@dedemontgomery/j-k-gill-in-5-minutes-or-less-da9653918072>, accessed May 7, 2020.

⁹ Dede Montgomery, “Early bookselling: Ticknor Field to Gills.”

¹⁰ “Educational Books for Schools and Colleges, 2

¹¹ Dede Montgomery, “Early bookselling: Ticknor Field to Gills.”

¹² “Books & Stationery,” *Polk County Times*, November 27, 1869, 4.

¹³ “Dissolution of Partnership,” *Statesman Journal*, 8/4/1869, 4.

¹⁴ “J. K. Gill Co., of Portland, Ore., to Erect New Building,” 10.

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As a town with a population of 8,300, there were four booksellers in Portland when Gill arrived in 1871. Stephen J. McCormick's Franklin Bookstore was the earliest bookstore in Oregon, founded in 1851. Gill & Steel ultimately descended from a bookstore that started in the mid-1850s by Adam R. Shipley, who sold it to J. L. Parish in c. 1862, who sold it to Harris & Holman in c. 1868. Gill & Steel took over Harris & Holman's tenancy in a building on Front Street at Washington (see Figure 6; demolished) and purchased all of their stock.¹⁵ As the story goes, they were to pay for the stock in installments but, when the inventory was completed, William Ladd inquired how much it amounted to and told Gill to "go and see Mr. Harris and see how much he will throw off for cash." Gill reported back that the amount was \$22,000 and Ladd instructed him to write a Ladd & Tilton Bank check in that amount despite that fact that Gill and Steel had no money in the bank. This was an extraordinary line of credit for the time and historical documentation has suggested the basis for Ladd's financial backing was Joseph Gill's reputation for industry at his Salem shop.^{16, 17} Later, in 1890, Harvey Scott would also sing the praises of Gill's business acumen in *The History of Portland, Oregon*: "[Gill] is methodical to a degree rarely seen in men at the head of an extensive business. He personally attends to every detail, exercising a supervision over every branch of his business, which would be impossible to one without great mental and physical endurance. The business, which his industry and sagacity have built up, therefore, represent perhaps more clearly the individual work of one man than any in Portland."¹⁸ These characteristics of Joseph Gill's work ethic persisted through his life and Gill remained highly involved in his business into his old age, influencing all key business decisions.

Gill & Steel's "astonishing variety and quantity" of book stock was said to be on-par with East Coast book stores.¹⁹ However, their business included more than just books and text books. They also sold stationery as well as teaching supplies such as globes, maps, charts, and crayons. There was a large music department that included sheet music, instructional books, and a wide variety of instruments such as pianos, organs, flutes, violins, and accordions.²⁰ While there were changes to their products over time, the J. K. Gill business would always be known for its range of offerings and excellent selection of books.

Gill & Steel only operated under that name for approximately one year, as the two were dissatisfied partners according to Gill's great-granddaughter Dede Montgomery.²¹ They settled their differences by breaking the business in two with Gill taking charge of books and stationery, while Steel headed up the musical department. In 1872, they moved the shop to the Holmes Building (demolished) on SW 1st between Stark and Washington, adjacent to the Ladd & Tilton Bank.²² A photo is provided in Figure 6, which shows a large J. K. Gill & Co sign on the front of the building. George Steel's "music warerooms" were located on the second floor.²³ Although they shared the building tenancy, in City Directories the businesses are listed separately.²⁴ While the Holmes Building was less than two blocks from the original Front Street store, Gill was cautioned of the dangers of leaving a well-established location for one that was "remote from business."²⁵ However, Portland's center was shifting west as the city's population nearly doubled between 1870 and 1875, and this new location proved to be successful as it was right in the heart of the new downtown area.²⁶ Sometime between 1875 and 1878, George Steel retired and the music showroom was disbanded.^{27, 28} However, sheet music would always be a part of the selection at Gill's.

¹⁵ "Firm Plans Investment of \$600,000," *Oregon Journal*, February 19, 1922, 25.

¹⁶ "Educational Books for Schools and Colleges," 3.

¹⁷ H. W. Scott, *History of Portland Oregon*, (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & Co. Publishers, 1890), 625-626.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ "Growth of a Business and of a Great City," *Oregonian*, December 6, 1914, 2.

²⁰ "Gill, Steel & Co" *Willamette Farmer*, April 13, 1872, 7.

²¹ Dede Montgomery, "J. K. Gill Returns," February 29, 2020, <https://dedemontgomery.com/2020/02/29/j-k-gills-returns/>, accessed June 6, 2020.

²² "Educational Books for Schools and Colleges," 3.

²³ "Our Illustrations," *The West Shore*, November 1, 1875, 5.

²⁴ Scott, 626.

²⁵ "Educational Books for Schools and Colleges," 3.

²⁶ "The J. K. Gill Company," *Publishers Weekly*, Vol 73, February 8, 1908, 814.

²⁷ Dede Montgomery, "J. K. Gill Returns."

²⁸ Sources differ on the date of Steel's retirement.

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In 1881, the J. K. Gill Company relocated to the newly-built Union Block (demolished)—an impressive full-block cast iron building on SW 1st between Oak and Stark that was considered the finest business building in the city at the time.^{29,30} However, the tremendous increase in business that followed the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883 prompted Gill to relocate the wholesale department to a building (demolished) adjacent to Skidmore Fountain.³¹ That same year, he also formed a short-lived partnership with Winslow B. Ayer³² and the retail arm of the company operated under the name W. B. Ayer & Co until 1886, while J. K. Gill & Co remained as the wholesale arm.³³ In late 1886, the retail and wholesale branches of the company came back together under the same roof and under the J. K. Gill & Co name when the business moved into the newly-built Failing Building (standing). Located across the street from the Union Block at 235 SW 1st Ave, Henry Failing constructed the building expressly for the J. K. Gill Company and they filled the entire building with retail on the ground floor and printing and wholesale activities on the upper floors.³⁴

The year 1893 was an important one for the business as it was incorporated with stockholders listed as Joseph Gill, his brother John Gill, his son Mark W. Gill, and his son-in-law William A. Montgomery.³⁵ (Their photos are shown in Figure 8.) This was the year that the firm made one final move before commissioning the nominated property. The Failing Building location was no longer desirable from a retail perspective, as Portland's downtown retail district continued to shift to the west. In the late nineteenth century, the retail center was considered to be SW 3rd Avenue from Washington to Alder Streets.³⁶ Historic records indicates that the company leadership indeed felt strongly that 3rd Avenue was now Portland's primary "business artery" and their store needed to be located on such a prominent street.³⁷ As such, they leased space in the architecturally-prominent Masonic Temple Building at SW 3rd and Alder (demolished; shown in Figure 7). They found Alder as a cross street to be highly desirable as well, given that it was a pedestrian thoroughfare for those seeking shade and quiet. This location was additionally favorable as all streetcar lines came to 3rd and Alder without requiring a transfer. In 1912, J. K. Gill counted approximately 10,000 patrons entering their store in one day.³⁸ It is unclear if this customer count is marketing hyperbole, although it nonetheless gives some indication of the draw their store could generate.

In 1893, J. K. Gill initially occupied the basement, first, and second floors of the Masonic Temple with major renovations to adapt the building to their needs. When the Masons built a new temple in 1908, Gill's further expanded into the rest of the building. Again, they undertook significant work to increase the usable square footage within the voluminous lodge rooms, adding three mezzanine floors within the four-story building.³⁹ However, even this now-seven-story building was insufficient. They had long leased warehouse space for their wholesale goods and overstock, with the closest warehouse being the Starr Block on SW Front Ave at Pine Street (demolished).⁴⁰ There were several others "at inconvenient distances" from their store. Looking to make their business more efficient, in 1913 they leased the five upper floors of the adjacent Hamilton Building at 529 SW 3rd Avenue (standing) and had architects Doyle & Patterson design a renovation to connect these floors with the Masonic Temple Building.^{41, 42}

²⁹ "The J. K. Gill Company," 814.

³⁰ "J. K. Gill to Build \$300,000 Structure," *Oregonian*, February 19, 1922, 2.

³¹ "The J. K. Gill Company," 814.

³² "The J. K. Gill Co." *Geyer's Stationer*, vol 42, 1906, 19

³³ "Business Notes," *Publisher's Weekly*, vol 30, no 767, October 8, 1886, 519

³⁴ *Educational Books for Schools and Colleges*, 3.

³⁵ "The J. K. Gill Company," 814.

³⁶ John Tess, *Historic Resources in Downtown Portland, Oregon, 1915-1931*, NRIS No. 64500893, June 24, 2008, E-14.

³⁷ "Growth of a Business and of a Great City," *Oregonian*, December 6, 1914, 2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ "Entire Northwest Served by Wholesale Department," *Oregonian*, December 6, 1914, 8.

⁴¹ "Firm Plans Investment of \$600,000," 25.

⁴² Hamilton Building National Register Nomination, no. 77001112.

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J. K. Gill's expansion in the Masonic Temple and the Hamilton Buildings was no doubt influenced by the economic growth and population boom that Portland experience after the 1905 Lewis & Clark Exposition. Portland's population expanded from 161,000 to 270,000 between 1905 and 1910. J. K. Gill's business success that followed the Exposition are well reflected in an eight-page section in the *Oregonian* that ran on December 6, 1914. Devoted to Gill's in its entirety, it provides a detailed history of the company, photos of past and current locations, discussion of their many retail offerings, as well as numerous product advertisements.

By 1921, J. K. Gill Company's gross annual revenue had reached \$1,972,287.^{43,44} Not only were they a landmark retailer in Portland, but they did a significant amount of business as a wholesaler, operated as a book publisher with an increasing number of books in their portfolio, and were the designated textbook distributor for Oregon. These activities will be described in greater detail in subsequent sections; however, they are mentioned now to demonstrate that their ever-growing business necessitated an even larger building. Gill's track record of success and financial solvency made it possible for the company to obtain the financial backing needed for a custom-built flagship store that would include their publishing and wholesale divisions. A large, built-to-suit structure was anticipated to allow the company to increase their economies of scale and improve efficiencies in their operations.⁴⁵ Transitioning from leased space to ownership of a significant new building in downtown Portland was evidence of their growth and stability as a company in its most tangible form.

The J. K. Gill Company Building

The J. K. Gill Company spent a full year searching for an appropriate downtown site for their new building. Following the 1905 Exposition, the huge population growth and real estate boom pushed the heart of downtown further west to SW 5th Avenue and Alder Street.⁴⁶ Only two blocks north, they negotiated to purchase a quarter-block parcel at SW 5th and SW Stark. This gave them not only a prime retail location on 5th Avenue, but also provided enough land for a large building and good access for deliveries and shipping.⁴⁷ The property was owned by the King Estate—an important pioneer family significant in the early history of Portland—and had a three-story building that the *Oregonian* noted was one of the oldest structures in downtown.⁴⁸

The new reinforced concrete building was designed by the notable architecture firm of Sutton & Whitney. Albert Sutton and Harrison Allen Whitney formed the partnership in 1912, though most of their important work did not start until 1919. Significant designs prior to J. K. Gill include the 1920 Ballou & Wright Building and the 1922 Meier & Frank Warehouse. The year 1923 was a prolific one for the firm with their designs for the Imperial Garage, Shrine Hospital, Multnomah County Hospital, and the J. K. Gill Company Building all being completed that year. The newspaper noted that structural strength and light were of particular importance in the design for the J. K. Gill Building, as well as being fireproof and having "all the latest modern conveniences."^{49, 50} Richard Ritz notes in *Architects of Oregon* that the firm produced "some of the most outstanding designs in the Northwest during the 1920s and 1930s."⁵¹

To finance the construction, Ladd & Tilton Bank and Freeman, Smith & Camp Company underwrote \$300,000 in mortgage bonds in March of 1922.⁵² The bond issue sold out in two days, demonstrating the level of

⁴³ "J. K. Gill to Build \$300,000 Structure," 2.

⁴⁴ "The J. K. Gill Company First Mortgage 7% Serial Gold Bonds," *Oregonian*, March 27, 1922, 17.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Tess, E-14.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "Site for J. K. Gill Home is Cleared," *Oregonian*, April 2, 1922, 3.

⁴⁹ "J. K. Gill to Build \$300,000 Structure," 2.

⁵⁰ "Site for J. K. Gill Home is Cleared," 3.

⁵¹ Richard Ellison Ritz, *Architects of Oregon*, (Portland: Lair Hill Publishing, 2002), 379.

⁵² "The J. K. Gill Company First Mortgage 7% Serial Gold Bonds," 17.

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confidence that local investors had in the company and what this new building could mean for J. K. Gill's business growth.⁵³ The yield on the bonds was 7%.

Construction on the nominated property started in April of 1922⁵⁴ and the builder was William F. Dinwiddie, who founded his construction company in Portland in 1911.^{55, 56} The *Oregonian* noted that the J. K. Gill building was "one of the first large business structures to be commenced in the city since the war."⁵⁷ Although not completed until 1923, a highly-publicized cornerstone laying ceremony was held on September 18, 1922.⁵⁸ Several notable writers spoke at the ceremony including George Palmer Putnam (future husband of Amelia Earhart), Frederick O'Brien, George S. Chappel, Charles Wellington Furlong, Charles Hansen Towne, and Wallace Irwin. Local newspapers noted the significance of having so many distinguished people come to Portland for the affair.⁵⁹ Additionally, all prominent editors, educators, and businessmen in Oregon were invited to the shindig, which included a 200-person banquet hosted by the Chamber of Commerce.⁶⁰

Gill's had hoped to take occupancy of the lower three floors in November 1922 while the upper floors were still under construction; however, Figure 9 shows that the building was far from habitable in December of that year.⁶¹ The building was completed in 1923 and provided the business with approximately 91,500 square feet including the basement and mezzanine. In Figure 13, the building is seen within the downtown context in c. 1930, demonstrating that it was a major building that could be easily visualized from a distance.

One newspaper article⁶² described how J. K. Gill intended to occupy the building at completion and a 1923 article in *Office Appliances* provided interior photos and a description of the newly-opened building.⁶³ These photos are shown in Figure 11. The following details were noted in these articles:

- The basement housed the "Mathematical Department."
- The ground floor was 22-foot-high with a 40,000 square-foot mezzanine balcony. A wide aisle separated the book department from displays of office equipment and commercial stationery. There was also a "Poet's Corner" dedicated to Oregon writers and also acted as a reception space. The Poet's Corner included a decorative non-functioning stone fireplace.
- The mezzanine was occupied by the "loose-leaf section" that carried "a complete line of Irving-Pitt loose leaf books, ledgers, and post binders." They also carried envelope sealers, typewriter supplies, pencils, pens, erasers, envelopes, tablets, desk accessories, desk lamps, and "many time and labor saving devices."
- The second floor housed the engraving department.
- Displays of office furniture and J. K. Gill Company general offices occupied the third floor. They carried Glove-Wernicke filing cabinets, sectional bookcases, office chairs, steel stationery cabinets, and lockers. Along the south wall of this floor were furniture arrangements for several complete office suites.
- The fifth floor housed books and stationery.
- The upper floors were dedicated to the J.K. Gill's publishing and wholesale division.

⁵³ "Investment Information," *Oregon Voter*, April 8, 1922, 26.

⁵⁴ "Site for J. K. Gill Home is Cleared," 3.

⁵⁵ "J. K. Gill to Build \$300,000 Structure," 2.

⁵⁶ Although under different ownership, Dinwiddie is still in business under the name "Dinwiddie Hathaway" at the time this nomination was written in 2020.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ "Distinguished Gathering at the Laying of the Cornerstone of the J. K. Gill Company," *The Bookseller and Stationer*, October 15, 1922, 8.

⁵⁹ "Authors to Lay Stone," *Oregonian*, September 17, 1922, 14.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² "Firm Plans Investment of \$600,000," 25.

⁶³ "Arrangement of the J. K. Gill Co. Store," *Office Appliances*, Vol 38, September 1923, 37-38.

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As their retail square footage increased from their previous location, so did their offerings, which came to include office furniture, architect and engineer supplies, commercial and fine stationery, leather goods, sheet music, children's toys, art supplies, photographic supplies, and, of course, books. The arrangement of the store interior changed over time. Later accounts of the building have mentioned that there was a children's floor,⁶⁴ an extensive art supplies department in the basement,⁶⁵ and an entire floor dedicated to sheet music.⁶⁶ The store had a pianist who would play sheet music at a customer's request so they would get an idea of what a piece sounded like.⁶⁷ At one time, J. K. Gill was the largest retail outlet for sheet music in the Pacific Northwest.⁶⁸ On the uppermost floors, books were packed and then sent down a twisting chute to several floors below where they were shipped out.⁶⁹ A historic photo of the ground floor in the 1940s is provided in Figure 12.

Even after Joseph Gill's passing on October 1, 1931 at the age of 90, the company continued to grow until the early 1990s, including the opening of many branch locations. However, in the 1960s, patronage of their downtown store was dwindling in favor of Gill's suburban outposts.⁷⁰ Ownership of the company remained with the Gill family until 1970, when the firm was sold to Young & Rubicam.⁷¹ At that time, there were eleven J. K. Gill stores in Oregon and Washington with \$13.8 million in annual sales. In 1973, they moved their furniture division to 105 NW Park Ave (standing).⁷² Young & Rubicam expanded the business and by 1979 there were 36 stores in three states and annual sales exceeded \$40 million.⁷³ J.K. Gill was acquired by Bro-Dart Industries in September 1980, becoming a subsidiary of that company. At the time, the company employed about 500 people with 27 stores in Oregon and Washington, and nine in California.⁷⁴ There were 63 stores in 1990. However, during that decade, business declined due to increased competition from big-box stores like Office Depot. The downtown Portland store closed in 1991 after several years of reducing their square footage in the building.⁷⁵ The General Services Administration had begun leasing the upper five floors in 1967 followed by Multnomah County in 1978 for use as the County Health Department. The latter eventually purchased the building in 1988.⁷⁶ In 1999, the final seven J. K. Gill stores closed, ending Joseph Gill's 131-year bookselling legacy in the Pacific Northwest.⁷⁷

In 2019, Gaw Capital purchased the J. K. Gill Building from Multnomah County and hired Urban Renaissance Group to manage the rehabilitation of the building for retail and office use in 2020.

J. K. Gill's Role in Book and Stationery Wholesaling

In addition to being an important downtown retail business in Portland's history, J. K. Gill & Company made their mark as a significant company in several other areas—the first being wholesaling. In the 1870s, Gill quickly expanded the business to include a wholesale division and a jobbing press (precursor to the modern

⁶⁴ Louisa Scioscia Stevens, "J. K. Gill's Bookstores," *River Run Bookshop Blog*, April 2, 2009, <http://riverrunbookshop.blogspot.com/2009/04/jk-gills-bookstores.html>, accessed May 7, 2020.

⁶⁵ See comment from Dale Fuller at this blog post: Dede Montgomery, "On the eve of Wordstock, still talking about J. K. Gill," *Dede's Blog: Musings About Life in Oregon*, November 4, 2016, <https://dedemontgomery.com/2016/11/04/on-the-eve-of-wordstock-still-talking-about-j-k-gill/>, accessed May 7, 2020.

⁶⁶ David F. Ashton, "Classic sheet music, by the thousands, given to help outer East Portland needy," *East Portland News*, <https://eastpdxnews.com/general-news-features/classic-sheet-music-by-the-thousands-given-to-help-outer-east-portland%E2%80%99s-needy/>, accessed May 7, 2020.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Stevens, <http://riverrunbookshop.blogspot.com/2009/04/jk-gills-bookstores.html>.

⁷⁰ Jim Hill, "J. K. Gill Will End Operation," *Oregonian*, December 25, 1998, D1.

⁷¹ Donald J. Sorensen, "J.K. Gill Purchase Predicted," *Oregonian*, August 16, 1980, A21.

⁷² "We're moving the furniture division!" *Oregonian*, February 4, 1973, 21.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Julie Tripp, "Pioneer J.K. Gill Co. to Move to San Diego," *Oregonian*, January 21, 1984, B4.

⁷⁵ Hill, D1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

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photocopier that printed short runs such as personal stationery or handbills).⁷⁸ One of his most important early business decisions was to establish direct connections with East Coast and European publishing houses.⁷⁹ These connections allowed him to buy large quantities of books directly from the publishers at lower prices to be marked up for retail sales. He made book-buying trips to the East Coast and, therefore, likely forged in-person relationships with these publishing houses. He likewise set out to develop a wholesale trade in the Pacific Northwest, selling books and stationery to other dealers in the region.

A 1914 account of the company's history states that up until 1877, dealers in books and stationery throughout Oregon, Washington, and Idaho procured nearly all of their stock from San Francisco outfits.⁸⁰ Only rush orders placed with more expensive shipping came directly from the East Coast to Portland. In 1877, Joseph's brother John Gill started making regular business trips around the region to make wholesaling connections. His first tour of smaller Willamette Valley towns was not particularly successful as the article explains he gained "a few friends and fewer sales." However, subsequent trips to Roseburg, Eastern Oregon, and the Puget Sound area brought in valuable business. By buying wholesale from East Coast publishers and cutting out the San Francisco dealers, J. K. Gill's was able to offer more competitive prices and gain wholesale business throughout the region.⁸¹

The business generated by Gill's wholesale department required a number of representatives who traveled throughout the Pacific Northwest, going as far east as Salt Lake City and down to Northern California. Alaska was also added to their wholesale network in the early 1900s. Charles D. Lowndale, who was connected with the firm since 1876, traveled for Gill's in western Oregon. There were at least ten other men who traveled around the region as wholesale solicitors. Early on, those in the eastern region drove a "four-in-hand" horse team and traveled with "eight and ten trunks" until the automobile eased their rugged journey.⁸²

In addition to books, the J. K. Gill Company saw the opportunity to wholesale high-quality, yet affordable, stationery lines. The same 1914 article professed that by 1883, "every dealer in stationery from Astoria to Boise City, from Yreka to Victoria" was familiar with Gill's three lines of stationery named "Mount Hood," "Cascade," and "Columbia."⁸³ San Francisco stationery lines that were once commonplace in the Pacific Northwest became less popular after Gill's established themselves as a stationery wholesaler. By 1888, wholesale buyers in Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane, Walla Walla, Whatcom, Astoria, and Salem were placing orders from Gill's. The company was also touted for helping to establish "the great stationery concerns of nearly all these cities" ("concerns" meaning profitable businesses).⁸⁴ It is unclear what this assistance consisted of, but J. K. Gill's had an interest in promoting business owners who would continue to place wholesale orders. Over the years, the J. K. Gill Company doggedly pursued wholesale business opportunities across the region and these efforts are part of the reason why it remained such a fixture in the Pacific Northwest for so many decades.

J. K. Gill's Role in Regional Book Publishing

While J. K. Gill started publishing maps in 1878, it appears that their book publishing efforts began in 1881 when the company acquired many copyrights from Stephen J. McCormick along with the stock from his Franklin Bookstore. This included what would become known as *Gill's Dictionary of the Chinook Jargon*, which was a reference for trappers and traders doing business among the Chinook people. McCormick had already published eleven editions of the book and Gill's went on to publish ten more between 1881 and 1933.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ "Growth of a Business and of a Great City," *Oregonian*, December 6, 1914, 2.

⁸¹ "An Extensive Establishment," *The West Shore*, October 1, 1877, 32

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ "Growth of a Business and of a Great City," *Oregonian*, December 6, 1914, 2.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

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McCormick had also published early Portland City Directories and J. K. Gill published at least two volumes until R. L. Polk purchased the copyright in 1885.^{86, 87}

During the first half of the 20th century there was a flourishing of publishers in the United States that specialized in books with content targeted for regional audiences. J. K. Gill & Co was one of these publishers. However, the significance of this aspect of their business is not a topic that has been well-addressed either in period sources or in subsequent historical analyses. For that reason, it is difficult to accurately place the company within a context of Pacific Northwest publishers. What is known is that they almost exclusively published works related to the region and did so at least into the 1950s.⁸⁸ It appears that the 1920s-1940s were their most prolific publishing years, which is consistent with the rise in interest in regional literature. However, less than one hundred books could be identified as works published by J. K. Gill. A sampling of book titles include *Oregon Geology*, *A Short History of Oregon*, *Oregon Literature*, *A First Book Upon the Birds of Oregon*, *The Columbia*, and *The Empire Builders*.

By comparison, J. K. Gill was not on the scale of Portland-based Binfords & Mort Publishing Company—one of the largest regional publishers west of the Mississippi. Beginning in 1930, Binfords & Mort published works of fiction, history, poetry, children's literature, and natural history by local authors with content focused on the Pacific Northwest. In a 54-year period, they published around a thousand book titles and became one of the leading influencers on the Oregon literary scene.⁸⁹ As a publisher, they were known for their high-quality book design and curated list of titles. Although regional books in general tended to not receive widespread praise from national literary critics, the books sold well to Oregon readers. During the heyday of the regional literature movement, Binfords & Mort's was headquartered in the Graphic Arts Building at 102 NW 9th Ave (standing). Their enlargement of this facility in the 1940s further allowed them to print paperback books and phone books, which further increased their profits and expanded their publishing range beyond that of J. K. Gill.

There were several factors that came together to bring about regional publishing including adequate retail outlets, lower production costs, and a stable market.⁹⁰ The growth of the publishing economy was gradual, but ultimately J. K. Gill's touched each of those factors. As will be explained, Gill's provided the largest retail outlet in the Pacific Northwest and specifically promoted regional publications, which created market stability. Joseph Gill also invested in paper mills and developed supply chains, which lowered production costs. Not only did this benefit the larger regional publication economy, but it directly benefited J. K. Gill's own publishing business.

In his thesis on Binfords & Mort, Jeremy Skinner writes that newspaper publishers kicked off the regional publishing movement early in the history of Oregon. Operating on small budgets and relying on advertising revenue, they developed distribution networks, generated a readership base, established trade networks for publishing supplies, and helped develop a group of writers with an interest in producing content about the region.⁹¹ Some newspaper publishers then began experimenting with job printing and book publication, but found it to be risky and expensive. The first successful book publisher was the aforementioned Stephen McCormick who also owned the Franklin Bookstore. Having his own shop to sell his publications helped lessen the risk of book publishing, but ultimately the Oregon market was too small to support local book publishing at the time. Magazines like *The West Shore* became a popular media for the publication of regional history and literature because it benefited from advertising revenue and did not have the expenses required for book production. As local magazine authors gained name-recognition, the interest in books written by authors

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ It could only be verified that J. K. Gill published the 1882 and 1884 editions under their name. The preceding source states that they published city directories for five years.

⁸⁸ The book with the most recent publication date that was found in the research for this nomination was 1955.

⁸⁹ Jeremy Skinner, *The Binfords and Mort Publishing Company and the Development of Regional Literature in Oregon*, Portland State University, 2011, 5.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Skinner, 44.

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of the region increased. Job printers were sought out by these authors who paid to have their books printed and then they handled the sales and distributions of the books themselves. As the state's population grew, so did the number of bookshops, making this "vanity" self-publication business financially viable. Observing the success of vanity press books helped push job printers into the publishing business, as was the case for Binfords & Mort.

Expansion of the paper industry in the Pacific Northwest after 1900 also helped local publishers flourish. Increased efficiencies, timber holdings, and capital for modernization allowed paper companies to produce significant amounts of paper sold at competitive prices. Portland's location near the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers allowed nearby printers access to locally-produced paper without paying added transportation costs. Along with Henry Pittock (owner of the *Oregonian* newspaper) and William Lewthwaite (paper manufacturer from California), Joseph Gill was a partner in the Columbia River Paper Company that opened in Camas, Washington in 1884. It was the Pacific Northwest's first ground-wood pulp mill and produced the region's first paper suitable for use in books.⁹² In the 1880s, this allowed local authors to afford to fund self-publications that, for some, later resulting in contracts with publishing houses. Having access to locally-produced paper also meant lower production costs for books published by J. K. Gill (and other local publishers) and more competitive prices that could be offered to their retail and wholesale buyers.

The presence of a bookseller like J. K. Gill, who had established distribution networks was also a necessary ingredient for the success of regional publishers. Gill's dedicated a section of its store to Pacific Northwest literature, regularly hosted readings by local authors, and sponsored book clubs. The combination of Gill's longstanding presence in Portland and their promotional work for local authors created a community of avid readers who were interested in regional literature.⁹³ Skinner notes that Gill's endorsements and promotion of regional publications were crucial to how well these books sold.⁹⁴ In fact, there are many examples of books about the region that started with East Coast publishers and did not sell well. When a regional publisher purchased the copyright, marketed these books to local schools, and had them placed in the Pacific Northwest sections of stores like J. K. Gill and Meier & Frank, their sales were substantially improved.⁹⁵ For instance, beginning in 1916, *Marooned in Crater Lake* by Alfred Powers, was published by small Boston and New York publishing houses. However, when Binfords & Mort bought the copyright and published the book in 1930, it generated the largest order ever placed by Oregon school libraries at that time, which was processed through J. K. Gill.⁹⁶

By the beginning of the 20th Century, regional publishing houses became viable businesses due to a growing state population, the presence of adequate book retailers, improvements in the paper industry, and local authors who demonstrated demand for their writing through self-publication. As such, regional readership accelerated in the 1920s and peaked around 1950. Throughout this time, Gill's provided regional publishers with a stable and nearly guaranteed market due to their position as the largest bookseller in the state as well as their role in providing books to Oregon schools.

J. K. Gill's Role in Educational Books

J. K. Gill & Company also played a role in the early history of education in Oregon. As previously discussed, Joseph Gill he had interest from a young age in being educated and becoming a teacher. Although he ultimately chose to pursue business instead, his connections with Willamette University as well as his personal interest in education led him to be an early dealer in textbooks. In 1901, a State Board of Textbook Commissioners was formed in Oregon, which created a formalized textbook selection process for all schools across the state. The commission would select books to be used in schools for six-year periods. The

⁹² Skinner, 14.

⁹³ Skinner, 130.

⁹⁴ Skinner, 42.

⁹⁵ Skinner, 103.

⁹⁶ Skinner, 85.

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selections were made from a catalog and the State contracted with the selected publishers who were required to sell books in designated towns across Oregon. J. K. Gill Company was the official depository for the State and they distributed the textbooks to all local dealers. In 1915, Oregon was one of 24 “uniform textbooks states” where there were regulations for using the same textbooks across the state.⁹⁷ Like Oregon, the majority of the other uniform textbook states also used a single depository. In the research for this nomination, efforts were made to determine how long J. K. Gill maintained this relationship with the State of Oregon. No exact information could be found, although it appears to at least have been maintained into the 1930s. A 1914 article described that J. K. Gill’s textbook distribution also extended to Washington, Idaho, and Northern California.⁹⁸

At their Masonic Lodge Building location, the education department headed up by John Gill had a dedicated room for viewing samples of the educational books, a separate restroom for teachers and other patrons of this department, and freely available stationery and telephone service.⁹⁹ Most likely there was an equivalent space in the nominated property, although no description was found. Regardless of when this official relationship may have changed, J. K. Gill remained a prominent textbook seller in Oregon for many decades. In 1947, for instance, Mark Gill helped place college textbooks at the co-op bookstore at the Vanport Extension Center prior to the devastating flood of 1948.¹⁰⁰ It is also unclear to what extent J. K. Gill’s role as the state depository was an act of community service versus a profitable wholesale monopoly. The company’s own writing on this topic has emphasized their service to the state and thanks received from noteworthy figures such as Harvey Scott on behalf of “all the school patrons of the state of Oregon.”¹⁰¹ However, the filling of such consistently large orders during the busy summer season likely contributed to the financial success of the company and contributed in some shape or form both their need and ability to erect the nominated property.

J. K. Gill Competitors

J. K. Gill had a significant corner on the bookselling market in Oregon for a century. Throughout the state’s history, no other city or town has rivaled Portland in terms of size, population, and commerce activity. As such, J. K. Gill did not have any serious competitors in Oregon outside of the city. Furthermore, as determined through City Directory research, no other bookselling business in Portland had a tenure that came close to that of J. K. Gill’s. When Joseph Gill and George Steel took over Harris & Holman in 1871, there were four other booksellers in Portland. The aforementioned Franklin Bookstore was the earliest and the largest bookstore in the state when they began business in Portland. Ten years later there were a total of seven. By 1900, none of the booksellers from the 19th century were present in Portland except for J. K. Gill. At the turn of the century, there were now 17 retail outfits listed under “Books & Stationery” within the City Directory—most being small individual proprietors—and there were four wholesalers in the same category. At the time the nominated property was constructed in 1923, City Directory listings were broken out into several categories. Under “Books,” J. K. Gill and Hyland’s Bookstore were the only listings. Hyland’s was also listed as the only second-hand book dealer. While this bookstore appears to have been longer-lived than most, no information could be found to determine its significance and the building that once housed the store no longer exists. Under “Books & Stationery – Wholesale,” J. K. Gill’s was the only listing. Under “Books & Stationery Retail,” Gill’s was one of 15 businesses (again, many were individual proprietors) and its largest competitor was Meier & Frank Department Store.

In 1923, Meier & Frank Department Store was located 1.5 blocks away from Gill’s at 621 SW 5th Avenue. Located on a full block, the fifteen-story story building was constructed in 1909. During the historic period, Meier & Frank was the largest and most popular department store in Portland. In addition to clothing, furniture,

⁹⁷ A. C. Monahan, *Free Textbooks & State Uniformity*, US Bureau of Education, 1915, 33.

⁹⁸ “Educational Books for Schools and Colleges,” 3.

⁹⁹ “Educational Books for Schools and Colleges,” 3.

¹⁰⁰ Lisa Loving, “From Descartes to Diapers,” *Portland State University News*, January 29, 2006, <https://www.pdx.edu/news/descartes-diapers>, accessed May 1, 2020.

¹⁰¹ “Educational Books for Schools and Colleges,” 3.

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and housewares, they also had a large selection of books and also stocked Pacific Northwest literature during the first half of the 20th century when demand was particularly strong. While Meier & Frank had a huge customer draw due to the range of products they sold, as well as their in-store amenities that enhanced the shopping experience, they were not as specialized as J. K. Gill. Gill's was essentially its own version of a department store, but with its product lines focused to all things related to books, office needs, art/architecture/engineering supplies, educational products, sheet music, and anything related to stationery, engraving, and printing. Furthermore, Meier & Frank did not have a pivotal position in wholesaling and educational textbook distribution as Gill's did, and the store had a less multifaceted role in the regional publishing movement.

Powell's Books located at 1005 W Burnside is another notable present-day Portland bookseller that is significant in the City's recent history. Many long-lived Oregonians consider Powell's and Gill's to be defining businesses both in terms of local literary history as well as their role as retail landmarks in Portland's central city. Powell's opened in 1971, making it less than 50 years old at the time this nomination was written and outside the period of significance for the J. K. Gill Building. At the time Powell's was established, Gill's was still operating in the nominated property; however, Powell's began primarily as a used bookstore and was not a true direct competitor of Gill's at the time.

Historical Context for Downtown Portland in the Early 1920s

The Multiple Property Document *Historic Resources in Downtown Portland, Oregon, 1915-1931* provides a well-researched history on Portland's urban center, detailing the events and trends that resulted in a substantial building boom in the 1920s around the time the nominated property was constructed. This section of the Statement of Significance will summarize this context and place the J. K. Gill building within the events of this time period.

Portland saw its first major peak in growth during the nine years following the Lewis & Clark Exposition of 1905. Approximately 117,000 new residents were added to the City's population during that time. There was a significant uptick in construction and a surge in real estate values. The downtown area substantially increased in size and in the number of rentable square feet, ushering in an era of taller, high-rise buildings that replaced the three- and four-story business blocks of the 1900s. However, the boom ended in 1914 due to several factors and construction drastically slowed during World War I when there was a shortage of building materials.

Following the war, Portland experienced another period of growth and prosperity during the 1920s. As was the case across the nation, there were rising per capita incomes, low interest rates, stability in the labor markets, and favorable building materials costs. Portland again had a large population increase—16.9% between 1920 and 1930. The local economy was strong in large part due to Portland being a leading manufacturing and distribution center. Unemployment was low and wages for skilled workers were high. Local bank resources doubled during this period, with most of the loan money going to developers and land speculators for higher-cost projects. Lending policies became more aggressive, allowing higher amounts of debt on building projects. Building permits in Portland averaged 11,369 per year with an average annual value of \$24 million. The year 1922 was the most intense year for building in the city with 14,518 permits issued and the highest number of downtown buildings constructed during the decade. This was also the year that the J. K. Gill building started construction.

In many ways, the downtown building boom of the 1920s continued the architectural form, massing, and styles of the earlier Lewis & Clark Exposition boom. However, the MPD notes that buildings from the earlier 1906-1914 era often looked to be cutting edge and appeared to be making architectural statements, while 1920s buildings used tried-and-true styles that were more humble. Nearly all downtown buildings of this later era were designed by professional architects and in the Commercial Style. As is seen on the J. K. Gill building, the character of building façades in this period was driven primarily by a pattern of regular and symmetrical fenestration with ornamentation being subordinate. Most of these buildings were five to sixteen stories tall,

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with flat roofs, clad in brick or terracotta, and accented with simple belt courses, cornices, and classical-derived detailing. Designs tried to fit into the surrounding context rather than redefine it. The J. K. Gill building is aligned with the trends, as Commercial Style building is well-designed, but reversed in its presentation.

The MPD states that the buildings built between 1915 and 1931 are collectively important for how they defined the city’s present downtown. This period saw twenty acres of new structures and three million square feet of building area added to Portland’s urban center. While the boom that followed the Lewis & Clark Exposition elevated Portland’s status as a major city, this second boom of the 1920s was considerably larger and had a more profound effect on downtown’s built environment.

The J. K. Gill Company Building was constructed during the peak conditions of 1920s economic prosperity in Portland. The success of the company owed much to Joseph Gill’s early efforts to make Portland the Pacific Northwest’s distribution point for books and stationery. And, like many Portland businesses, the city’s population growth after the Lewis & Clark Exposition translated into many more customers and large increases in revenue for the company. As outlined earlier, Gill strategically moved his retail operations to follow the growth of downtown as it expanded and migrated westward. Since its inception in 1871, his store was part of the epicenter of Portland’s retail district. In 1920, the growth of Gill’s retail and wholesale operations coincided with favorable local economic conditions like a stable construction market and the availability of mortgage bond money to finance the project. These factors ultimately resulted in the construction of their large-scale, custom-built building that would facilitate further business expansion and cost-cutting efficiencies. The 1923 J. K. Gill Company Building epitomizes the success of a Portland business that experienced growth mirroring that of the city—prosperity they would leverage during this economic high point to take their business to even greater levels of recognition and success.

Comparative Analysis

Buildings chosen for comparative analysis are associated with the J. K. Gill Company to demonstrate that the nominated property is the best resource to convey the significance of the business in Portland. Related to the MPD, J. K. Gill’s is the only single-use property of its kind within the MPD study area. Other single-use buildings include social clubs, churches, schools, and a newspaper office. These types of properties are not comparable to the nominated property as they had significantly different historic uses, which drove their size, interior programmatic elements, and character features. For this reason, no comparative analysis is provided with these disparate single-use buildings. The earlier section on J. K. Gill’s competitors also established that there were no peer retail or wholesale booksellers that had nearly the impact that Gill’s had on the local retail and wholesale bookselling economy, not to mention the add-on effects tied to regional publishing and textbook distribution. For this reason, no further comparative analysis is provided with other book-related businesses in Portland.

The following table provides a recap of the buildings known for their association with the J. K. Gill business. Those that are still standing will be discussed as comparative properties. The property on NW Park is excluded due to the tenancy in the building being less than 50 years ago and only furniture-related.

Building Name	Business Name	Address ¹⁰²	Occupancy	Status
J. K. Gill Building	Gill & Yeaton (1868-1869); J. K. Gill (1869-1870)	356 State St, Salem	1868-1870	Individually Listed; Contributing in State Street HD
Unknown	Gill & Steel	317 SW Front St, Portland	1871	Demolished
Holmes Building	J. K. Gill Co. G. A. Steel Co.	SW 1 st between SW Stark and SW	1872-1880	Demolished

¹⁰² Portland overhauled its addresses in 1931. Addresses here are the modern equivalents to the historic addresses.

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		Washington, Portland		
Union Block	J. K. Gill Co. W. B. Ayers Co.	SW 1 st & SW Stark, Portland	1881-1886	Demolished
Unknown	J. K. Gill Co., wholesale division	Block 9 ¹⁰³	1883-1886	Demolished
Failing Building	J. K. Gill Co.	235 SW 1 st Ave, Portland	1886-1892	Contributing in Skidmore Old Town NLHD
Starr Block	J. K. Gill Co., warehouse	SW Front & SW Pine	c. 1893 - ?	Demolished
Masonic Temple Building	J. K. Gill Co.	SW 3 rd Ave and SW Alder St, Portland	1893-1922	Demolished
Hamilton Building	J. K. Gill Co.	523-529 SW 3 rd Ave, Portland	1913-1922	Individually Listed
J. K. Gill Company Building	J. K. Gill Co.	408 SW 5 th Ave, Portland	1923-1991	Nominated property
Unknown	J. K. Gill Co., furniture division	105 NW Park Ave.	1973- c.1983	Standing

J. K. Gill Building

356 State Street, Salem

Constructed in 1868, the J. K. Gill Building is one of the oldest resources in the Salem Downtown State Street Historic District and was also individually listed in the National Register in 1978. Shown in Figures 14-15, it is a small, two-story brick Italianate building measuring 24 feet wide by 80 feet deep. As described earlier, Gill and his business partner C. F. Yeaton commissioned this building to house their book and stationery business “Gill & Yeaton.” A year later the partnership dissolved and Gill was a sole proprietor until he and his family moved to Portland in 1871. A bookstore continued to operate in the building under new ownership with a new name until 1886 when it became a saloon. With respect to integrity, early in its history, the second floor windows were reconfigured. Later, the entire ground-floor storefront area was altered with metal panel, rusticated stone, and small rectangular windows.

The National Register nomination states that this building is significant in the area of commerce as the first building associated with the J. K. Gill business, which became the largest bookseller in the Pacific Northwest.¹⁰⁴ Other areas of significance are also mentioned, including architectural significance, as it is representative of the types of early brick business buildings in the Italianate style that were constructed in Salem. Many of them are no longer standing or are extensively altered.

While this resource is significant as the building where J. K. Gill got his start as a young bookseller and made his first mark as dealer of educational books, the building does not reflect the breadth of business achievements that the company attained over the following decades in Portland. Gill’s success as a retailer, wholesaler, distributor of textbooks, publisher, and critical business in the rise of a regional literature movement were all realized in Portland. The nominated property reflects the culmination of those achievements where all aspects of J. K. Gill’s significance as a company came together under one roof, operating at peak capacity and efficiency. Furthermore, the nominated property retains a higher level of integrity reflecting the commerce area

¹⁰³ The 1884 City Directory lists the wholesale business at 28 & 30 First and 29 & 31 Front. The 1886 “Notice of Consolidation and Removal” lists the wholesale business at 28 & 30 First. These addresses denote the block between Burnside and Couch Streets where the White Stag, Bickel, Skidmore, and Blagen buildings are located. These buildings were constructed after 1886 when Gill’s vacated. Some sources state that the wholesale department was located “in the stores now occupied by the Fleischner Mayer & Co,” but this should not be confused with the Fleischner Building at 115 NW Couch, which was not built until 1906.

¹⁰⁴ David C. Duniway, J. K. Gill Building National Register nomination, No. 80003351, 1978.

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of significance. The loss of the storefronts on the Salem building in particular makes it difficult for this building to embody the significance of the J. K. Gill business.

Failing Building

235 SW 1st Ave, Portland

Shown in Figure 16, the Failing Building is located at the northwest corner of SW 1st Avenue and Oak Street and contributes to the Skidmore Old Town National Historic Landmark District. At three stories tall, it is constructed of masonry and finished in painted stucco and decorative cast iron. The exterior of the building has a high level of integrity including retail storefronts that, while likely not original, are reflective of the character of building during the J. K. Gill occupancy from 1886 to 1892. The ground floor interior has been remodeled many times for different tenants, the two most recent being a restaurant and a bar/lounge. The integrity of the upper floors is unknown.

The district nomination notes the building's developers were successful merchant-capitalists Henry Failing and Simeon Reed, and the building's architect was Warren Williams. However, some information in the nomination is inconsistent with other historic sources. The nomination states that the building was constructed in 1883 as a wholesale and office facility and lists Sichel & Mayer and J. K. Gill early building tenants. Historical documents found in the research for this nomination establish a timeline for J. K. Gill's presence in the city and indicate the building was constructed in 1886 and that Gill's was the building tenant through 1892. Sichel & Mayer was not a tenant during this period after the building was first constructed. A history of the company penned in 1914 states that Failing expressly built the building for the J. K. Gill tenancy in 1886, which facilitated the reunion of their wholesale and retail arms under the same roof.¹⁰⁵ As a well-established and credit-worthy company willing to lease an entire building, this certainly would have been an attractive real estate opportunity for the developers. It demonstrates the J. K. Gill's increasing prominence in the city and ability to attract capital. Occupying the Failing Building was a milestone for the J. K. Gill Company; however, given that their tenancy only lasted approximately six years, the building does not rise to the level of significance when compared to the nominated property. The 1923 building was custom-built for Gill's expanding business needs and represents the culmination of their business success. Furthermore as a building owned by the company for 65 years and occupied for 68 years, it reflects a much greater significance compared to the Failing Building.

Hamilton Building

523-529 SW 3rd Ave, Portland

Built in 1893, the six-story Hamilton Building was commissioned by Henry Corbett and designed by architects Whidden and Lewis. The building is shown in Figure 17. When constructed, it was described as Portland's most elegant new office building. Individually listed in the National Register, the nomination states it was Oregon's earliest and very likely the best example of the Commercial Style in classical form and detail. It is described as being significant as an outstanding example of the work of Whidden and Lewis, as well as for its association with pioneer industrialist and banker, Henry Corbett. The nomination mentions J. K. Gill's tenancy in the physical description, but does not describe it as a source of the building's significance. After Gill's vacated in 1922, the building was sold to the Masonic Building Association, who in turn sold it to Sealy-Dresser Co.—a wholesale and retail grocery business.

J. K. Gill Co occupied floors two through six of the Hamilton Building from 1913 to 1922, when they also occupied the adjacent Masonic Temple Building. Their occupancy in the Masonic Temple began in 1893 and Gill's expanded into the Hamilton Building ten years later as they continued to need more space. The nomination notes that, according to the lease agreement, the Hamilton Building owners were to perform certain alterations on the upper floors to accommodate Gill's. As designed by Doyle & Patterson, the improvements

¹⁰⁵ Educational Books for Schools and Colleges," 3.

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included removal of office partitions, installation of seven openings in the party wall with the Masonic Temple, and filling in the light well.¹⁰⁶

The building has a high level of exterior integrity, retaining its exterior character features including masonry exterior, columns, windows, and storefronts. The integrity of the interior is unknown. Due to the demolition of the Masonic Temple, the openings between the two building created by Gill's were bricked in. Likely, most or all of the improvements from Gill's tenancy have been replaced with subsequent tenant improvements.

Occupancy in the Hamilton Building was a logical expansion for Gill's when the Masonic Temple alone plus outside warehouse space could not accommodate their business needs. Taking 25,000 square feet of building space was a significant expansion and once again demonstrates the ever-growing nature of the J. K. Gill business. Historical documents do not provide information regarding exactly how this increased floor area was utilized, but that it was needed to make their growing company more efficient. The population increase that occurred after the 1905 Lewis & Clark Exposition would have significantly increased their business. Portland gained nearly 100,000 residents in the five years after the fair. In particular, in their role as the State's textbook depository, the company would have seen a large uptick in the distribution of textbooks as the state's population grew from 415,000 in 1900 to 788,000 in 1920.

Similar to the Failing Building, Gill's occupancy in the Hamilton Building was another milestone for the J. K. Gill Company, yet it does not rise to the level of significance as the nominated property. Their tenancy in the Hamilton Building was less than ten years and they did not have a retail presence on the ground floor of this building, which was occupied by Eggert Young & Co. The 1923 building was owned and not leased by the company and it was custom-designed for their business needs. In comparison, the nominated property better represents the culmination of the achievements and significance of the J. K. Gill business in Portland.

Conclusion

This nomination establishes the statewide significance of the J. K. Gill Company Building as the preeminent bookseller, distributor, and retailer of book and stationery-related items in Oregon. It also demonstrates that the building meets the registration requirements for the *Historic Resources in Downtown Portland, Oregon, 1915-1931 MPD*. No other similar business had such a significant and multifaceted effect on Oregon's commerce history. Not only was Gill's a major retailer and wholesaler, but the business played a noteworthy role in the regional publishing movement and the distribution of textbooks. As the comparative analysis demonstrates, the nominated property best reflects the company's pinnacle of success. When constructed in 1923, the J. K. Gill Company Building was a major downtown Portland destination located in the city's retail epicenter. With nearly 100,000 square feet, it advanced their image as a going concern and allowed all branches of their business to operate under one roof. With a 123-year tenure in Oregon, the J. K. Gill Company spent more than half of that time in the nominated property. While three other buildings associated with the business still stand, this building at 408 SW 5th Avenue in Portland best reflects the company's growth, economic prowess, and the significant place it held in the state's history of commerce.

¹⁰⁶ Hamilton Building National Register Nomination, no. 77001112.

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<http://riverrunbookshop.blogspot.com/2009/04/jk-gills-bookstores.html>, accessed May 7, 2020.

The American Stationer and Office Outfitter, "J. K. Gill Co., of Portland, Ore., to Erect New Building." Vol 90, 1922: 10.

The Bookseller and Stationer. "Distinguished Gathering at the Laying of the Cornerstone of the J. K. Gill Company." October 15, 1922: 8.

Tess, John. *Historic Resources in Downtown Portland, Oregon, 1915-1931*. NRIS No. 64500893. June 24, 2008.

The West Shore. "An Extensive Establishment." October 1, 1877: 32.

Tripp, Julie. "Pioneer J.K. Gill Co. to Move to San Diego." *Oregonian*. January 21, 1984: B4.

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: Property Owner

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 1-005-00408

J. K. Gill Company Building
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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 45.311392° -122.403484°
Latitude Longitude

3 _____
Latitude Longitude

2 _____
Latitude Longitude

4 _____
Latitude Longitude

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

The boundary for the J. K. Gill Company Building is the tax lot, which measures 100 feet in all directions. The tax lot is described as PORTLAND, BLOCK 64, LOT 7&8.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary was selected because this is the historic tax lot and the building is constructed to the property lines.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jessica Engeman, Historic Preservation Specialist date July 1, 2020
organization Meritus Consulting, LLC telephone (503) 943-6093
street & number 1111 NE Flanders St., Suite 206 email Jessica@merituspg.com
city or town Portland state OR zip code 97232

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).

J. K. Gill Company Building
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Photographs:

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

Photo Log

Name of Property: J. K. Gill Company Building
City or Vicinity: Portland
County: Multnomah **State:** Oregon
Photographer: Jessica Engeman
Date Photographed: August 12, 2020

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

- Photo 1 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGillBuilding_0001)
Storefront frames have been built, but glass is not yet installed. Plywood provides construction security. West elevation, camera facing east.
- Photo 2 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGillBuilding_0002)
Parapet details, August 2020. North elevation, camera facing south.
- Photo 3 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGillBuilding_0003)
Pre-rehabilitation in 2019. East elevation, camera facing west.
- Photo 4 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGillBuilding_0004)
West elevation, August 2020. Storefronts await glass installation. White-painted wood provides secure construction entrance. Door installation forthcoming. Camera facing east.
- Photo 5 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGilBuildingI_0005)
North Elevation. Pre-rehabilitation in 2019
- Photo 6 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGillBuilding_0006)
East elevation, August 2020. Camera facing west.
- Photo 7 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGillBuilding_0007)
South elevation, August 2020. Protective covering wraps scaffold while concrete wall is patched and painted. South wall will look like east wall when completed.
- Photo 8 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGilBuildingI_0008)
Aerial view of roof and north elevation, August 2020.
- Photo 9 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGillBuilding_0009)
Main floor looking southeast, August 2020.
- Photo 10 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGillBuilding_0010)
Main floor looking northwest from mezzanine, August 2020.
- Photo 11 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGillBuilding_0011)
Mezzanine looking west, August 2020.

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- Photo 12 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGillBuilding_0012)
Third floor looking northwest, August 2020.
- Photo 13 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGillBuilding_0013)
Fourth floor looking northwest, August 2020.
- Photo 14 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGillBuilding_0014)
Fifth floor column floor looking northeast, August 2020.
- Photo 15 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGillBuilding_0015)
Wood windows looking northwest, August 2020.
- Photo 16 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGillBuilding_0016)
Ninth floor looking east, August 2020.
- Photo 17 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGillBuilding_0017)
Basement stair, August 2020.
- Photo 18 of 18:** (OR_MultnomahCounty_JKGillBuilding_0018)
Basement scale, August 2020.

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
- Figure 2:** Local location map
- Figure 3:** Tax lot map
- Figure 4:** Site plan and Ground Floor Plan
- Figure 5:** Second floor plan
- Figure 6:** Typical floor plan levels 3 to 9
- Figure 7:** J. K. Gill Company Locations
- Figure 8:** Officers of J. K. Gill Company in 1914
- Figure 9:** Construction of J. K. Gill Company building on December 1, 1922
- Figure 10:** J. K. Gill Company Building, 1928
- Figure 11:** J. K. Gill Company Building interior in 1923
- Figure 12:** J. K. Gill Company Building, ground floor interior c. 1940
- Figure 13:** J. K. Gill Company Building as seen from the east side of the Willamette River, c. 1930
- Figure 14:** J. K. Gill Building, Salem, c. 1868
- Figure 15:** J. K. Gill Building, Salem
- Figure 16:** Failing Building, Portland
- Figure 17:** Hamilton Building, Portland

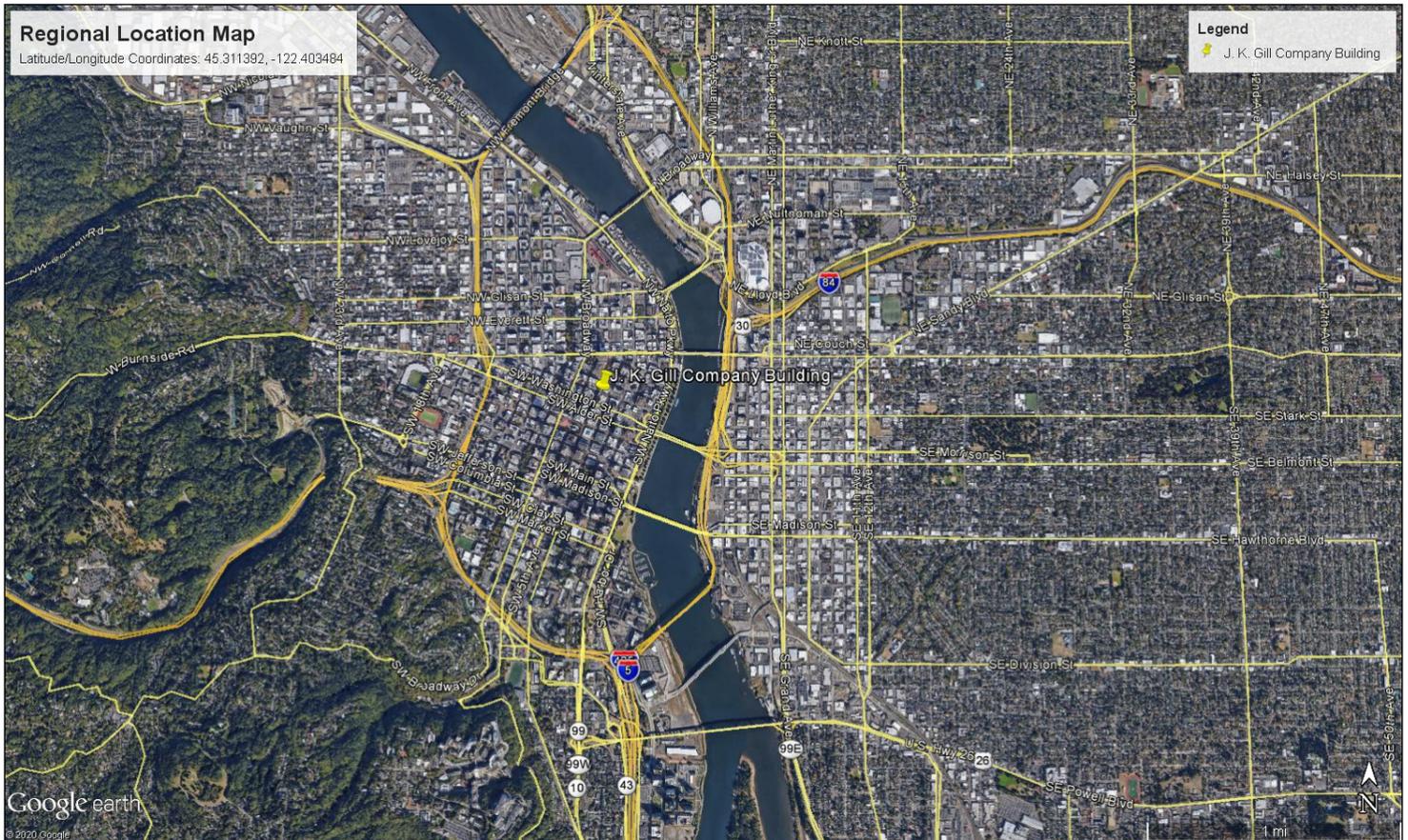
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Figure 1: Regional Location Map. Latitude 45.311392° and Longitude -122.403484°.



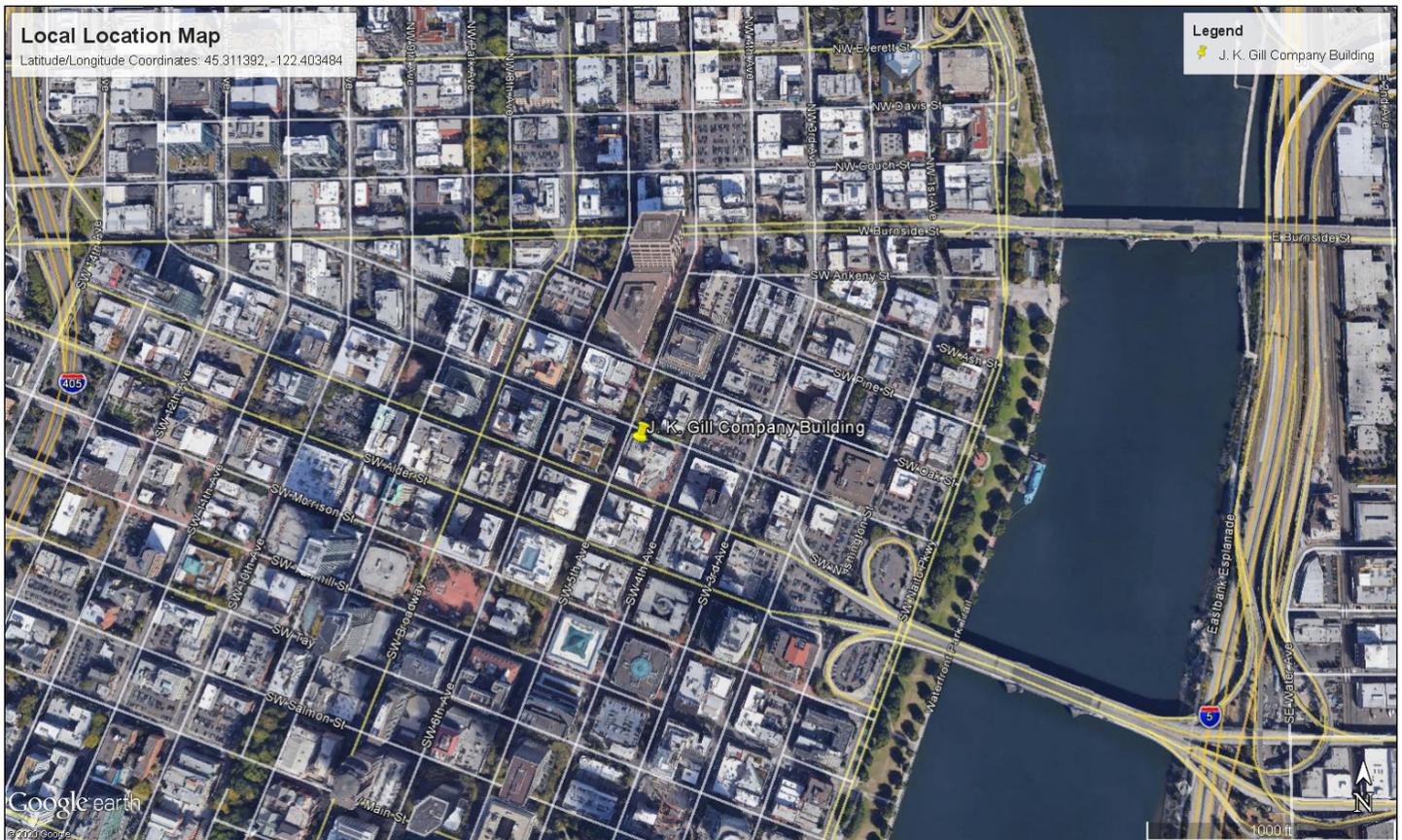
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Figure 2: Local location map. Latitude 45.311392° and Longitude -122.403484°.



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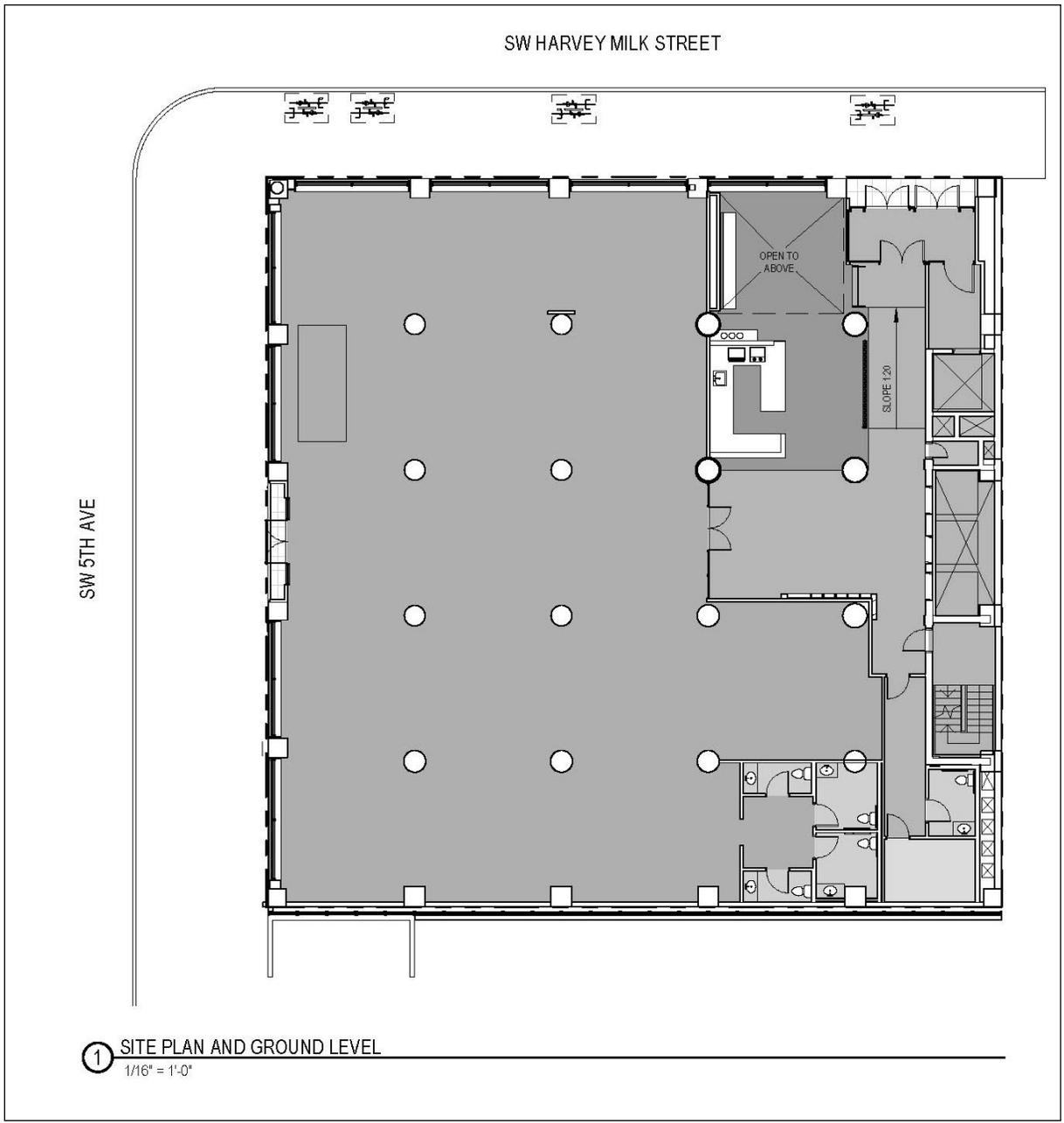
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Figure 4: Site Plan and Ground Floor Plan



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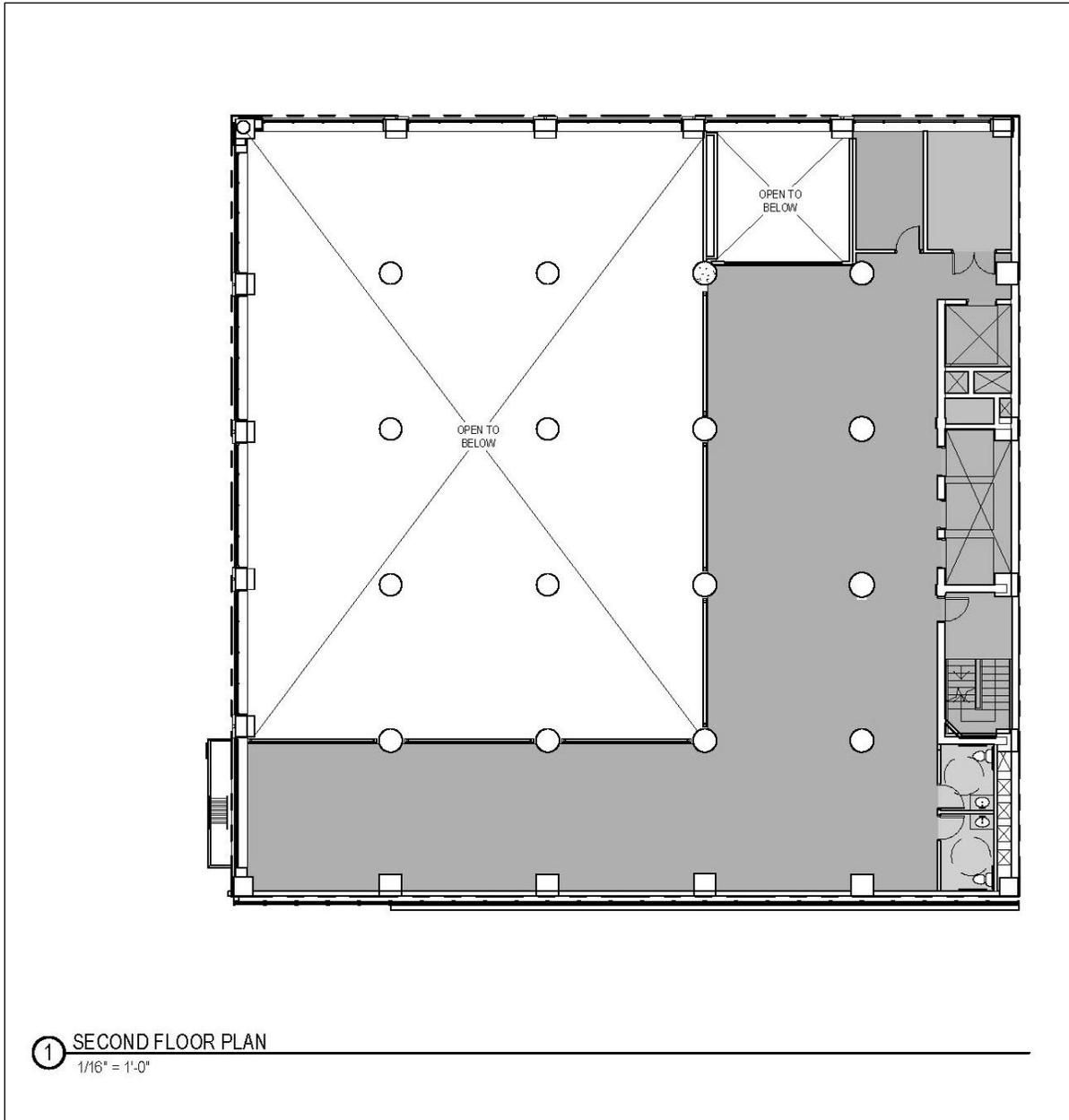
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Figure 5: Second Floor Plan



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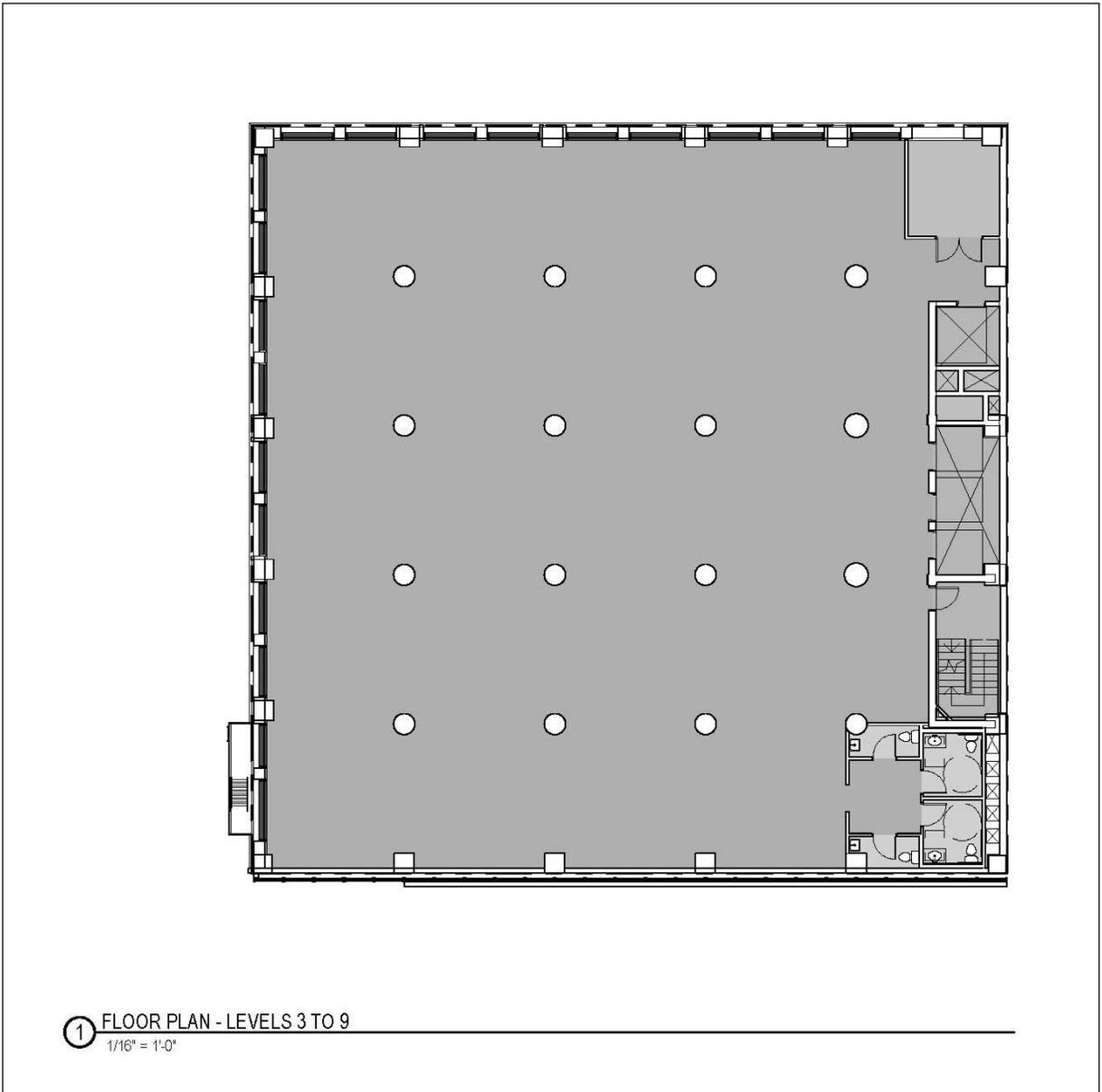
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Figure 6: Typical Floor Plan Levels 3 to 9



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Figure 7: J. K. Gill Company Locations.¹⁰⁷ Top: First location on Front Street in 1871; Middle Left: Holmes Building on SW 1st; Middle Right: Failing Building on SW First; Bottom: Masonic Temple Building and Hamilton Building on SW 3rd.



¹⁰⁷ "Educational Books for Schools and Colleges," Oregonian, December 6, 1914, 3.

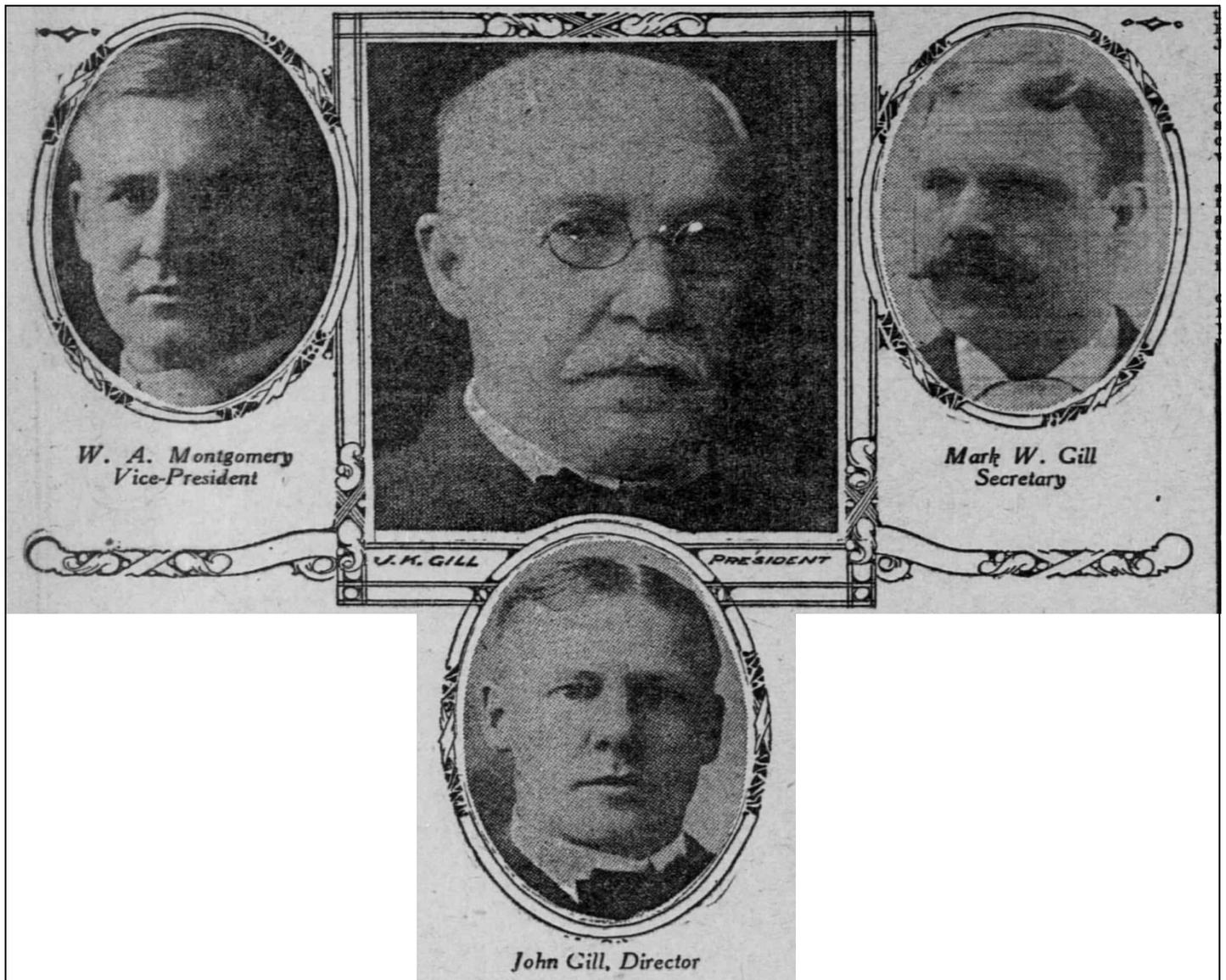
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Figure 8: Officers of J. K. Gill Company in 1914.¹⁰⁸ William A. Montgomery, Joseph K. Gill, Mark W. Gill, and John Gill.



¹⁰⁸ "Growth of a Great Business and a Great City," *Oregonian*, December 6, 1914, 2.

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Figure 9: Construction of J. K. Gill Company building on December 1, 1922.¹⁰⁹



¹⁰⁹ Oregon Historical Society, 0352P157.

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Figure 10: J. K. Gill Company Building, 1928.¹¹⁰



¹¹⁰ Oregon Historical Society.

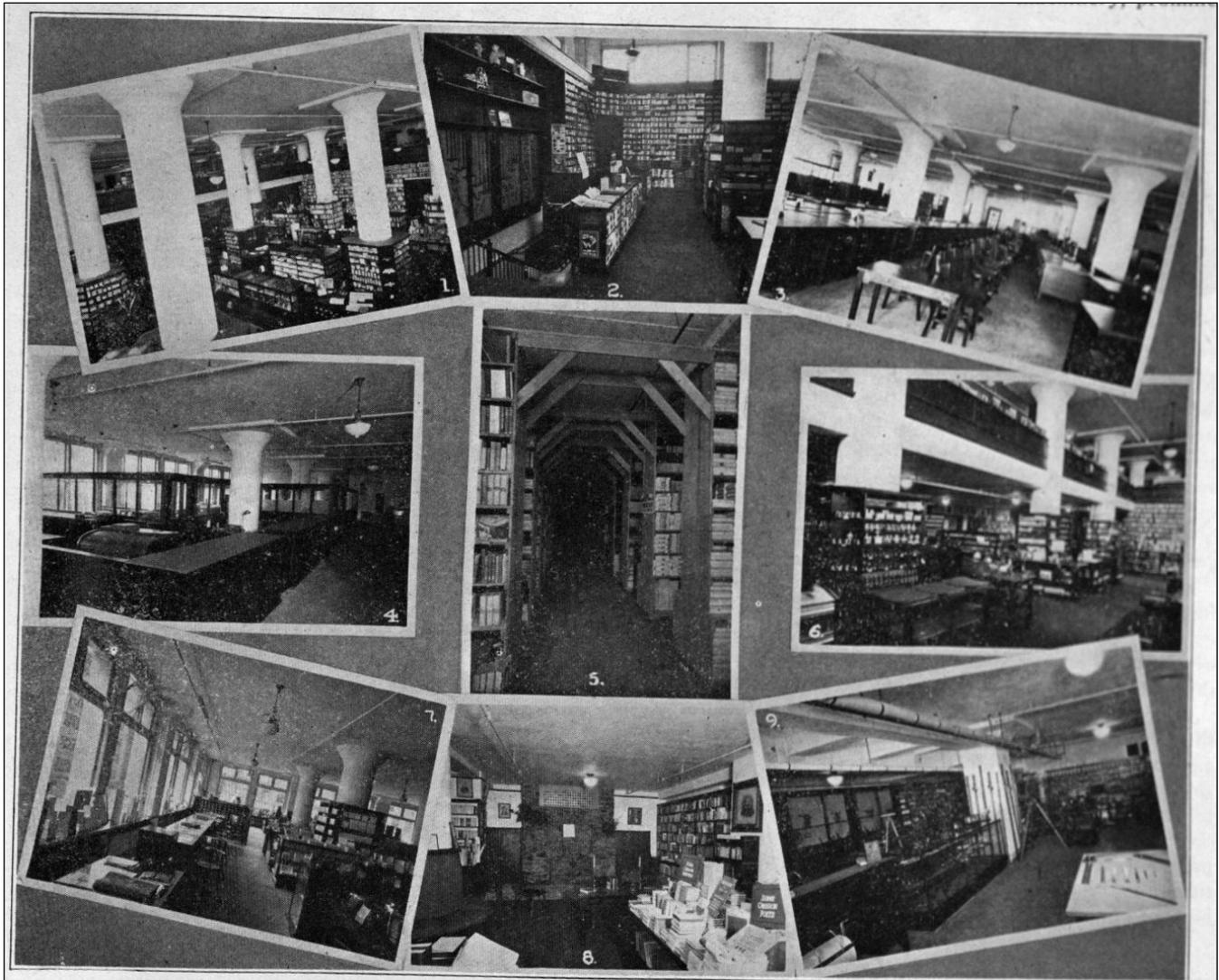
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Figure 11: J. K. Gill Company Building interior in 1923.¹¹¹



¹¹¹ "Arrangement of the J. K. Gill Co. Store," *Office Appliances*, Vol 38, September 1923, 37-38.

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Figure 12: J. K. Gill Company Building, ground floor interior c. 1940.¹¹²



¹¹² Dede Montgomery, "On the eve of Wordstock, still talking about J. K. Gill, November 4, 2016, <https://dedemontgomery.com/2016/11/04/on-the-eve-of-wordstock-still-talking-about-j-k-gill/>, accessed June 5, 2020.

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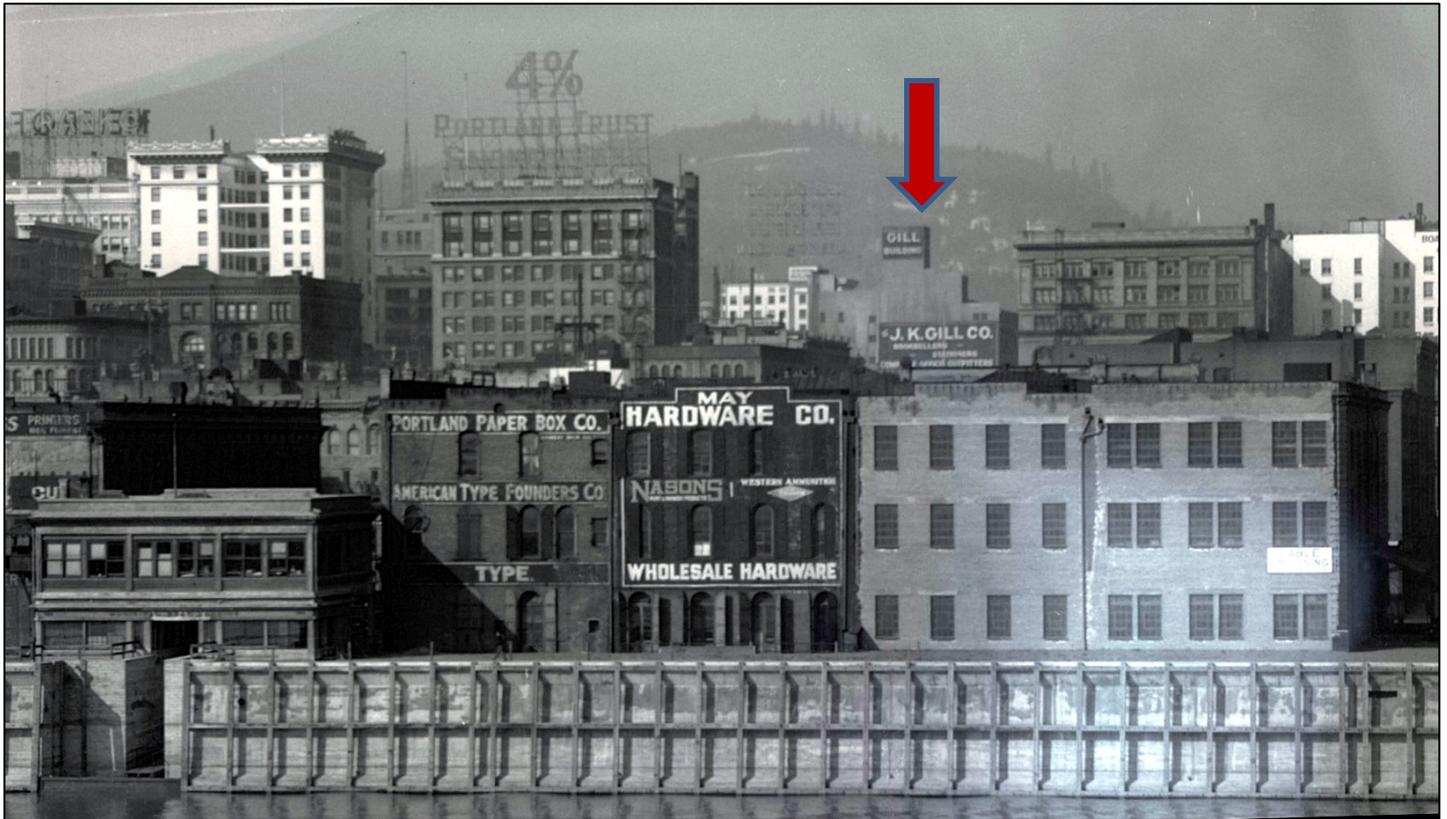
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Figure 13: J. K. Gill Company Building as seen from the east side of the Willamette River, c. 1930.¹¹³



¹¹³ Dead Memories Portland, <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=10157753682714833&set=g.129942427034587>, accessed July 27, 2020.

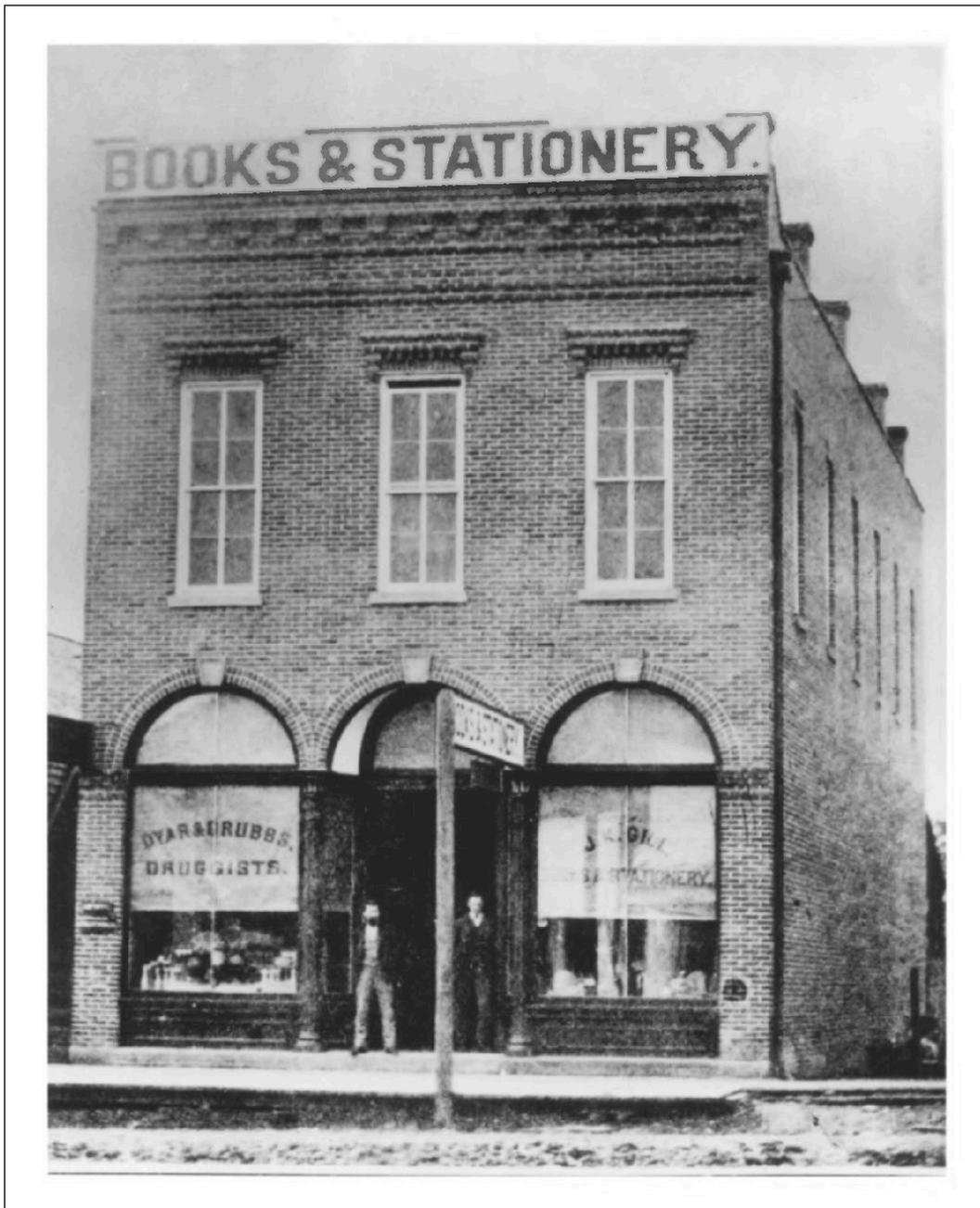
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Figure 14: J. K. Gill Building, Salem, c. 1868.¹¹⁴



¹¹⁴ National Register Nomination for the J. K. Gill Building, Salem, no. 80003351.

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Figure 15: J. K. Gill Building, Salem.¹¹⁵



¹¹⁵ J. K. Gill Building, Salem, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:J. K. Gill Building - Salem, Oregon.JPG>, accessed 6/5/2020.

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Figure 16: Failing Building, 235 SW 1st Ave, Portland.



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Figure 17: Hamilton Building, 529 SW 3rd Ave, Portland.



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Photo 1 of 18: North and West Elevations, August 2020.

Storefront frames have been built, but glass is not yet installed. Plywood provides construction security.



Photo 2 of 18: Parapet details, August 2020.

J. K. Gill Company Building
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Photo 3 of 18: West elevation. Pre-rehabilitation in 2019.



Photo 4 of 18: West elevation, August 2020. Storefronts await glass installation. White-painted wood provides secure construction entrance. Door installation forthcoming.

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Photo 5 of 18: North Elevation. Pre-rehabilitation in 2019.

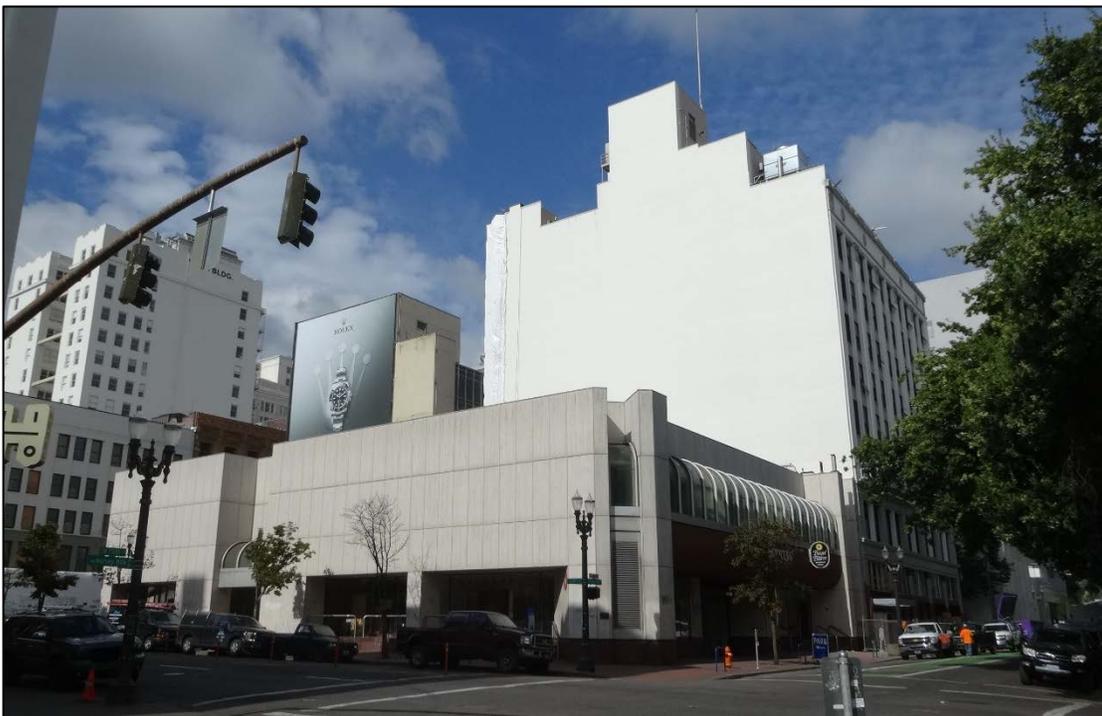


Photo 6 of 18: East elevation, August 2020.

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Photo 7 of 18: South elevation, August 2020. Protective covering wraps scaffold while concrete wall is patched and painted. South wall will look like east wall when completed.



Photo 8 of 18: Aerial view of roof and north elevation, August 2020.

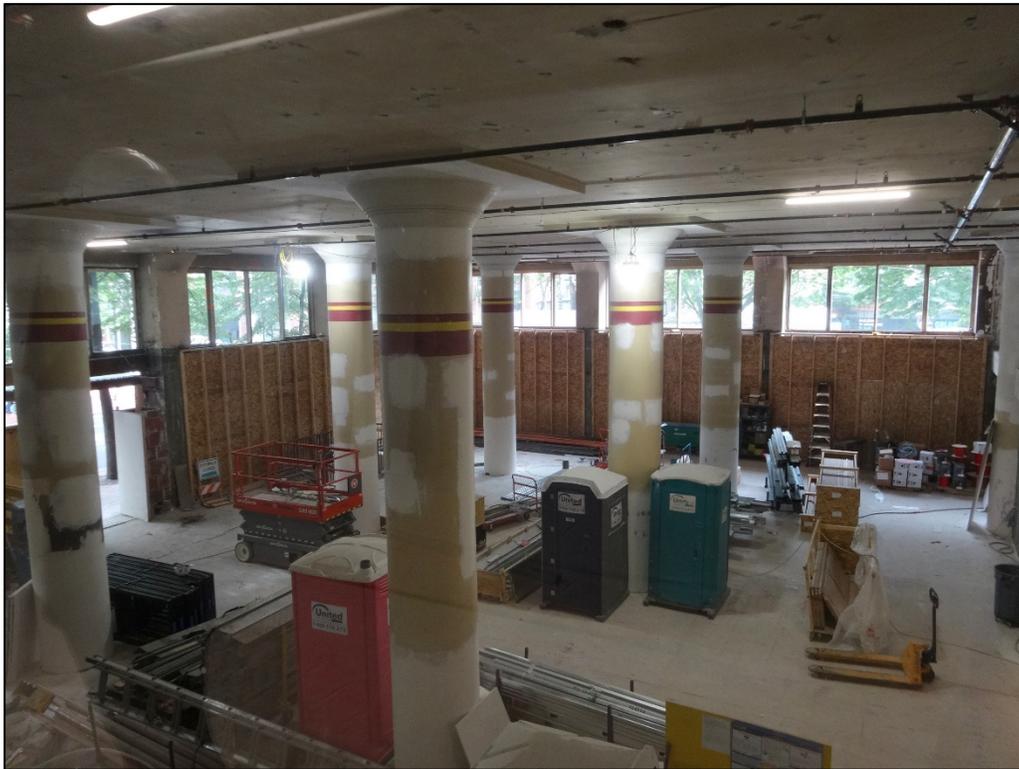


Photo 9 of 18: Main floor looking southeast, August 2020.



Photo 10 of 18: Main floor looking northwest from mezzanine, August 2020.



Photo 11 of 18: Mezzanine looking west, August 2020.



Photo 12 of 18: Third floor looking northwest, August 2020.



Photo 13 of 18: Fourth floor looking northwest, August 2020.



Photo 14 of 18: Fifth floor column floor looking northeast, August 2020.



Photo 15 of 18: Wood windows looking northwest, August 2020.



Photo 16 of 18: Ninth floor looking east, August 2020.



Photo 17 of 18: Basement stair, August 2020.



Photo 18 of 18: Basement scale, August 2020.