

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

AUG 24 2005

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instruction in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classifications, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Portland Garden Club

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 1132 SW Vista Avenue ☐ not for publication

city or town Portland ☐ vicinity

state Oregon code OR county Multnomah code 051 zip code 97205

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally.

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official/Title - Deputy SHPO

8.16.05
Date

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
Action

☒ entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

 determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain):

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper

Date of

10/7/05

Portland Garden Club
Name of Property

Multnomah, Oregon
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many as apply)

☒ private
☐ public - local
☐ public - state
☐ public - Federal

Category of Property
(check only one box)

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
1		sites
	1	structures
		objects
2	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL: clubhouse

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL: clubhouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Other: Northwest Regional

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: WOOD

roof: ASPHALT

Other: GLASS

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

See continuation sheets.

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DESCRIPTION

The 1954 Portland Garden Club is located at 1132 SW Vista Avenue in near southwest Portland, Oregon. Specifically, it is located on Lots 5-9 of Block 2 of Johnson's Addition to the City of Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon. Architect John Storrs designed the building as the headquarters for the Portland Garden Club, which has been in existence since 1924. The nominated parcel includes two contributing features, the building and the garden, and one non-contributing feature, the greenhouse.

Setting: The building is located on a 25,000-square-foot parcel fronting west onto Vista Avenue between Main and King's Court. Vista Avenue is a major thoroughfare leading to Portland's southwest hills; the Portland Garden Club is just north of the Vista Avenue Bridge. To the north of the clubhouse is a high-rise condominium building. The remaining surrounding area, however, is largely residential in nature, primarily with single-family homes, many dating to the early 20th century.

Site: The parcel occupies the north end of a full city block that runs 600 feet on the east/west axis and 200 feet on the north/south. The remaining block consists of five single-family structures. The block slopes down west to east roughly 15 feet at an approximate grade of 20%.

The parcel spans the entire width of the block, with a 200-foot frontage on the west along Vista. It runs 150 feet on the north along Main and 100 feet on the south along King's Court. The east, interior property line runs 100 feet from Main Street, turns at a right-angle west for 50 feet and then turns a right angle south for another 100 feet to King's Court. The closed-"L" shaped building is sited to the west and north on the parcel with each leg approximately 81 feet long. Directly in the elbow of the "L" framed by the two legs is a concrete patio; on the east, this patio is further defined by a brick and cast-stone balustrade with concrete retaining wall and steps leading down. To the north of the patio is a formal garden (see below). To the east, in the easternmost 5,000 square foot lot is a rectangular surface parking lot for 6-8 cars. Separating the parking lot from the garden is a small greenhouse, a kit design installed in 1978.

Along the perimeter of the property, the Vista leg is slightly set back with a low-rise brick wall and mature plantings screening the building. Along the Vista property line further north runs a large holly hedge predating the building and screening the property. This hedge continues along the north (Main Street) property line, interrupted only by an asphalt driveway with a pair of centrally opening black cast-iron gates. The holly hedge continues along the east property line. The King's Court leg runs the southern length of the parcel and is set back for parking on the east and an upper floor terrace on the north.

Structure: Architect John Storrs designed the Portland Garden Club building in the modern Northwest Regional style. It is "L" shaped, wood-frame on concrete slab with gabled asphalt roof. The building is one-story with a daylight basement under the eastern leg of the "L."

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Exterior: The Portland Garden Club fronts onto Vista with a secondary façade along King's Court. The most defining feature of the Vista street front is the holly hedge which predates the building. The façade is set back 12 feet from Vista and a slightly elevated planting bed with a low brick wall on the north and a large mature fir tree with planting beds on the south largely screen the building. A side-facing broad dark hipped roof and Redwood vertical siding further blend the building to the landscape. An opening in the landscape leads to a wide, recessed doorway. This doorway features paired, centrally opening, painted fir doors with flanking fir panels and a large single-light transom above. Fenestration is kept to a minimum with Redwood-framed casement style windows.

The southern façade faces onto SW King's Court with a continuation of the Redwood vertical siding and side-facing dark broad hipped roof. Here the building cuts into the slope of the parcel to create a daylight basement at the east for a basement level workroom with a secondary service entry. A brick stair and terrace at the west lead to a pair of upper floor secondary entries. Fenestration here is irregular yet more extensive than the west facade, and strategically placed: At the terrace, which opens to a kitchen, the entry is a single half-light door; two windows are located to the west of the door, repeating the light pattern across the width of the kitchen; the area below the window is defined with wood panel painted to match the door. Similarly on the terrace, which leads to the auditorium, is a larger entry with paired, centrally-opening glass doors flanked by sidelights. At the basement level, which opens into a workroom, the façade has a pair of centrally opening full-glass fir doors; to the east are two storefront-like panels of vertical tripartite glass on low wood bulkheads. To add additional light and to tie the façade together vertically, the east end is set back from the façade plan and features large fixed-pane glass rising the height of the building.

The east façade is purely utilitarian with Redwood siding and no windows.

The interior of the "L" on both the north and east is defined by floor to ceiling fixed pane glass. These are set flush at the corners and seem to join with no visible supports.

Interior: The building is entered from the west at the center. From the main entry, visitors enter a foyer with access to the south and east legs, as well as the stairs down. The immediate impression is the extensive vertical hemlock tongue-and-groove wall surface, blending with the generous use of glass opening onto the gardens at the northeast. Floors are black slate tile in the hallway. Ceiling is Redwood tongue-and-groove.

Forward from the hall is a large open auditorium space. The auditorium measures approximately 32 by 46 feet and features a stage at the east with built-in cabinets below, and fireplace on the west again with built in cabinetry. Again, vertical hemlock paneling is the featured wall covering. Floors are linoleum and the ceiling is fixed acoustical tile over gypsum board. On the north to the garden, and on the south to the terrace, is a pair of centrally-opening, full-glass doors.

To the right (south) of the foyer and west of the Auditorium are three small service rooms. The first of these is the kitchen. This is an elongated space that connects with a door at the southeast to the auditorium and at the south to the south terrace. Behind, to the west, is the ladies' room, the only toilet on the main floor. Finally between the kitchen

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and foyer is a small cloakroom. Both the kitchen and the ladies' room have been modernized. Finishes are utilitarian, with gypsum board walls and ceiling and linoleum floor.

Turning 90 degrees from the foyer to the north is an office and library. As planned, the north leg would house a caretaker's apartment with living room, dining room, bath, kitchen and office. Due to financial limitations, this was not built. In 1967, an office and library were built with essentially the same footprint. This addition featured painted gypsum walls and ceiling and parquet floors; the library also featured extensive use of floor to ceiling bookcases on the walls balanced by floor to ceiling glass overlooking the garden.

Down the stairs to the basement level, the lower level contained a 32-by-42-foot work room, broken by support pillars into three east-west bays. It also housed storage, the mechanical room, a men's room and additional storage areas. The basement hall continued the use of hemlock, linoleum and fixed acoustical tile, but the remaining spaces were largely utilitarian with concrete floors, open ceilings and gypsum walls.

Garden: The formal garden is located to the north of the clubhouse terrace and west of the parking lot. The garden is framed by a holly hedge along the west and north property line that pre-dates the Portland Garden Club. Other pre-existing elements are a north-south brick wall with balustrade that runs along the east end of the terrace, and concrete steps that lead east and south to the lower level. In developing the site, all existing trees were retained, except at the building area – though some trees were subsequently lost to storm damage.

The formal garden was designed by notable landscape architects Elizabeth Lord and Edith Schryver. It features a meandering oval path with perimeter planting beds, a central planting bed inside the oval and a second major planting bed to the east between the oval and the greenhouse. The oval bed features a formal walkway leading to a seating area at the north with a cross path in the center. At the seating area is a curved stone bench donated by relatives of the previous owners in memory of Rebecca Biddle Wood. The second bed slopes down to the east toward the greenhouse and is more informal. Surrounding are perimeter beds.

1967 Addition: As noted, the original plans called for the north leg of the building to be a caretaker's apartment. For financial reasons, this was not built. In 1967, the north leg was redesigned by John Storrs as an office and library. The addition maintained the design paradigm with extensive use of glass along the east wall overlooking the garden.

Alterations: In general, alterations have been slight. The primary change on the building is the 1967 addition, which is reminiscent of the original design and very compatible. Other changes include replacement of linoleum and upgrades of the front hallway flooring to granite tiles. The kitchen and toilets have also been modernized though generally limited only to updated finishes and fixtures.

The garden and grounds are largely intact as well. One major change was the insertion of the greenhouse just west of the parking area, thereby reducing the size of the eastern planting bed. The second major alteration in the gardens occurred in 1980-81. At that time, landscape architect Wallace Huntington renovated the garden. The core form was retained, but ice damaged and overgrown trees and plants were removed with the goal of opening the space visually

Portland Garden Club
Name of Property

Multnomah, Oregon
County and State

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and improving access to view plants while maintaining the fundamental design of the garden. At that time, a modern irrigation system was installed. Then too, over time, plantings have changed with the replacement of plants that die. Finally, for security, in 1987, a wrought-iron gate was installed at the parking entrance.

Portland Garden Club
Name of Property

Multnomah, Oregon
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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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1954-1957

Significant Dates

1954

1957

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 of age or achieved significance Within the past 50 years

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Storrs, John W., architect

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite books, articles, and other sources used in preparing the form on one or more continuation sheets) See continuation sheets

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36CFR67) 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

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government: City of Portland
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other: Oregon Historical Society

Name of repository: Portland Garden Club

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The headquarters building for the Portland Garden Club is individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its association with modernist architect John Storrs. Designed by Storrs in 1953, and completed in 1954, the Portland Garden Club was Storrs' first prominent work, catapulting his career as a leading architect in the Northwest Regional Style, and remains a premier example within his body of work. The period of significance is 1954-1957, and includes both the building and the garden as contributing features. While the garden was not designed by John Storrs, it was designed in visual concert with Storrs' building, and contributes greatly to the historic function of the building and to the site, both of which were intended by Storrs to meet the specific needs of the Portland Garden Club. The end of the period of significance is slightly beyond the fifty-year date typically utilized by the National Register to ensure objectivity in judging significance, which, in this case, would be 1955. However, it is believed that the 1957 garden contributes so clearly within the context established in the nomination, that objectivity in determining significance may be easily achieved, in this case, at forty-eight years instead of fifty, without proposing the property for nomination under Criterion G, for properties that have achieved significance within the last fifty years.

The Portland Garden Club is listed as a non-contributing resource in the King's Hill Historic District, which was added to the National Register in February 1991. It was considered non-contributing at the time that nomination was written because it was outside the period of significance for the district. In addition, the building is listed in the city of Portland's Inventory of Historic Resources. In 1957, it received the Award for Excellence in Design from the Portland Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

History of the Building and Grounds

The Portland Garden Club was formed on June 29, 1924. It was in part an outgrowth of the Portland Rose Society, founded in 1902. As the Rose Society grew in the early 20th century, various members began to wish for an organization of broader scope and interest. Both the rise of the Portland Rose Society in 1902, and the subsequent appearance of the Portland Garden Club, paralleled the City Beautiful Movement at the turn of the century. The movement, comprised of middle and upper-class reformers, was based on the belief that creating a beautiful city would inspire its inhabitants to moral and civic virtue. The origins lie in Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition of urban planning and classical architecture, but were also found in local campaigns for art and improvement led by civic organizations. It was manifest in grand urban parks, plazas and parkways. And its heart was found in a legion of professional and social organizations – on a national, regional, state and local level – focused on advancing social progress through beauty.

Generally stated, City Beautiful advocates sought to improve their city through beautification, which would have a number of effects: 1) social ills would be swept away, as the beauty of the city would inspire civic loyalty and moral rectitude in the impoverished; 2) American cities would be brought to cultural parity with their European counterparts through the use of the European Beaux-Arts idiom; and 3) a more inviting city center still would not bring the upper

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classes back to live, but certainly to work and spend money in the urban areas. The premise of the movement was the idea that beauty could be an effective social control device.

The rise of the Portland Garden Club however was not an explicit expression of the City Beautiful movement. The organization's origins suggest rather that the Club implicitly reflected the civic values of the times. It was in the spring of 1924 that Mrs. A. M. Ellsworth toured east coast gardens and became aware of The Garden Club of America. In that organization, she saw a framework for those in the Portland Rose Society wishing for more. To explore this new organization, Mrs. Ellsworth gathered over two dozen persons at the garden of Mrs. Edwin Caswell at NW 24th Avenue and Overton Street. With such interest, the assembled group agreed to have an organizational meeting to be held at High Hatch, the home of Mrs. Thomas Kerr. Dues were set at \$2, a constitution ratified and officers elected. The first official meeting of the Portland Garden Club was held on August 14, 1924, followed in October with a formal program at the Multnomah Public Library. Within a year, the club's roster would number 175 members.¹

While the early years focused on programs and flower exhibits, the Portland Garden Club very quickly demonstrated substantial community benefit. In 1916, the Portland Rose Society had established the Rose Test Gardens in Washington Park. However, the Rose Society was unable to fulfill the conditions of certification set by the American Rose Society. These included achieving a membership of 500 and employing a curator at the Test Gardens. The American Rose Society established an informal deadline of late 1925. The Portland Garden Club worked cooperatively with the Portland Rose Society to meet these deadlines; dues were raised 50% with every Portland Garden Club member gaining also membership in the Rose Society. In 1927, the Portland Garden Club hired Rev. S. S. Sulliger, a retired minister and nationally-renown grower of roses, as Rose Garden curator with a salary of \$100 a month. The membership also worked toward acquiring land in the West Hills for city parks. The first acquisition was 19-acres which came to be known as Macleay Park. A third community effort by the Club was the planning and landscaping for the Woodstock Boulevard edge of Reed College in Southeast Portland. Other projects included 4-H scholarships, plantings at the Portland Art Museum, Hoyt Arboretum, and Duniway Park. With continued growth in membership and activity, the Portland Garden Club also became a member of The Garden Club of America in 1929.²

As membership in the Portland Garden Club increased, the inadequacy of meeting space was increasingly a problem. Meeting sites included individual residences, the public library, and eventually the Portland Art Museum. However, members needed a permanent location for fast accumulating records, source materials, meetings, and other activities. By the 1930s, a growing number of members believed the solution lay in the Club owning a place of its own.³

The effort received a major advance in 1943, when Erskine Wood, acting for the heirs of his mother, Nanny Moale Wood, donated the half-block site of his parent's home, the old C. E. S. Wood mansion. The house had been demolished for some time; Nanny Wood died in 1933. The grounds however had rare and beautiful shrubs and trees.

¹ Cabell, Mrs. Henry F and Reed, Mrs. Benjamin, *The Portland Garden Club: The First Fifty Years, 1924-74*, pp. 9-11.

² Ibid., p. 12-17

³ Ibid., p. 17-22

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A building committee was formed and thousands of dollars raised, until the home front impact of World War II brought efforts to a stop. In 1946, fund-raising recommenced. The organization raised \$50,000 by April 1952.⁴

As the Portland Garden Club began to focus on building design, new and interesting concepts arose. One proposal was to move the Jacob Kamm House, scheduled for demolition by the school board, to the club property – perhaps in cooperation with the Junior League, which was looking for a headquarters. A similar idea was explored for the Harry Banfield house on upper Park Place. Some consideration was even given to returning the C. E. S. Wood property. By the end of the debate, however, the vast majority of club members opted to build new on the Wood site.⁵ Mrs. Henry F. Cabell, chair of the building committee, began a search for an architect. Candidates with a family tie to the membership were to be excluded. The committee consulted landscape architect and club member Florence H. Gerke. Mrs. Gerke suggested John Storrs, whom the club ultimately selected.⁶

The Portland Garden Club's needs were somewhat unique: A building was required to provide meeting and work space and to fit into the surrounding neighborhood of fine, older homes – while also in a garden setting. It also anticipated paying for ongoing maintenance and operations by allowing the site to be used for wedding receptions; these functions also had to be factored. Finally, club members wanted to be supportive of the meeting space needs of related groups (such as the American Rhododendron Club, headquartered in Portland).⁷

Following numerous committee meetings and plan revisions, final plans for a headquarters building were prepared in late summer 1953, with the groundbreaking in September. The building was completed a year later, with two stories, 2,900 square feet on the upper floor and 2,700 square feet on the lower, built into the side of sloping hill. The upper floor, at grade on the west, led to an impressive lobby area with a large staged auditorium space forward – both defined by vertical hemlock paneling; appropriately screened were kitchen and bathroom facilities. On the lower level, a daylight basement was a utilitarian work space. Plans for a caretaker apartment off the lobby were deleted to save money on the \$57,000 building.⁸

The building was sited to the south end of the property and existing landscape elements, including mature trees, a brick wall, and stairs with a balustrade, were retained. The remainder of the site was graded to create a flat terrace adjacent to the house and then sloping gently down to the east.

Thirteen years after the building was completed, the Portland Garden Club approached John Storrs to design a library and office wing. Storrs returned to his original siting, transforming the caretaker's apartment footprint into the library. That library today houses more than 2,000 color photographic transparencies and some 1,250 volumes on horticulture, botany, landscape design and similar subjects.⁹

⁴ Ibid., p. 22-23

⁵ Ibid., p. 22-23.

⁶ Ibid., p. 24-25

⁷ Ibid., p. 25

⁸ "A Home of its own . . . bought and paid for," *Sunset Magazine* (October, 1957), pp. 95-98.

⁹ Cabell, Mrs. Henry F and Reed, Mrs. Benjamin, *The Portland Garden Club: The First Fifty Years, 1924-74*, pp. 23.

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The Garden

In 1957, two club members, notable landscape architects Elizabeth Lord and Edith Schryver, designed a terrace and garden for the remaining land to the north. There is no evidence that suggests that either Lord or Schryver collaborated with Storrs on the siting or site development. It is likely that had such collaboration occurred, elements as the concrete walks and stairs that were installed with the landscape design would have been incorporated into the construction of the building; these elements were not included in Storrs' plot plan.

Lord & Schryver was a noted and respected landscape architecture partnership. Elizabeth Lord was born in 1887. Her father was Chief Justice of the Oregon Supreme Court and later Governor, William P. Lord, while her mother founded the Salem Portland Garden Club. Elizabeth Lord died in 1976. Edith "Nina" Schryver was born in 1901 and worked for five years in New York under the guidance of landscape Ellen Shipman. She died in 1984. Both women graduated from New England's Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture for Women in Massachusetts. They met on a European tour of famous gardens in 1927. During their 40-year partnership, based in Salem, they designed and supervised work in Salem, Portland, Seattle, and Tacoma. In total, they designed approximately 250 gardens. In the firm, Schryver concentrated on design and construction while Lord focused on plant composition. Their work was consistently of high quality, earning them both regional and national recognition. Typically, Lord & Schryver designs were formal adapted to demanding sites where sloping property and existing trees precluded more formal treatments. Though using axial relationships and compartmented spatial divisions, their designs could never be anticipated. One of their first projects was the Powell Garden added to the Dr. Luke Port House in Salem. It was begun in 1929 and added to for over a decade. Other major projects in Oregon include the Sir James and Lady McDonald garden in Portland, the Dr. and Mrs. Charles G. Robertson Garden, and the Elizabeth Lord Garden in Salem.

Not surprisingly, Lord and Schryver were sensitive to the Portland Garden Club site, the Storrs design and the opportunities they offered. With an enormous expanse of glass, nearly a whole wall of it, looking north at the garden, one's view flows naturally across the terrace and up in to the garden. The old balustrade, brick walls and steps had been incorporated into the new terrace, with specific notes by Storrs that they were to be protected during construction. Lord and Schryver carefully worked much of the existing planting into their garden design. A new low, broad flight of brick steps between the two birches, led from the terrace up to the garden where new formal pathways were laid out in an oval with a central axis. The areas within the paving were planted with white gumpo azaleas. At the northern end of the oval was placed a curved stone bench, donated by Erskine Wood, Sr. and Erskine Wood, Jr. in memory of Rebecca Biddle Wood, an early PGC member and wife and mother of the donors who also provided the funds for the reconstruction of the garden. Behind the bench was a Carrier thorn. An informally meandering path encircled this central area. Between this path and the holly hedge, flowering trees and shrubs were added to the major trees remaining from Nanny Wood's previous garden. Osmanthus and other types of hollies were added to extend the substance of the holly hedge in the garden.

Lord and Schryver greatly appreciated the holly hedge for the enclosure it provided—a very important element to them. They had it trimmed differently on each side. On the street side, it sloped in toward the top in conventional hedge form. Inside, it was pruned straight up and down to represent a wall, as though enclosing a room, and providing

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background for the planting within. The holly hedge originally was solid from its beginning on Vista around the corner and down Main Street to the northeast corner of the property. Just a few feet west of this corner, a portion of the hedge was removed to allow truck access during construction. This then became the entrance to the parking lot Storrs laid out in that part of the property. Lord and Schryver continued the screening with a hedge of native cedar from where the holly left off to the end of the parking lot. This hedge is still in place and effectively shuts out the house next door. This version of the garden was maintained, more or less intact for the next twenty years.¹⁰

In 1975, the landscaping at the front entrance was redone by master designer Hoichi Kurisu, formerly head gardener for the Portland Japanese Garden. The Japanese style planting and use of large stones were perfectly suited to the architecture.

A greenhouse was the major feature added to the garden in 1978. It was located just above the parking lot, which made it more convenient for the delivery of supplies and less visible from the clubhouse.

The biggest change was made in 1980-1981 when Lord and Schryver's design for the garden was altered by Portland landscape architect Wallace K. Huntington. His idea was to open the garden, to lighten it to create a feeling of space and improve access to viewing plants. The two birch trees from the original Wood garden, damaged by ice storms, were removed as were the gumpo azaleas and various other large, overgrown shrubs. The azaleas were replaced by grass with trimly clipped boxwood hedges bordering the two northern sections and a Sargent crab apple tree placed in the center of the two southern sections. In opening, this space it also increased visibility of the Lord & Schryver formal path design. The major trees were extensively pruned to let in more light and the large rhododendrons now behind the memorial bench were pruned into trees. To the east of them were planted three Japanese umbrella pines. Deciduous shrubs and perennials replaced overgrown hybrid rhododendrons and camellias. Native plants were introduced along with choice hearty perennials. The parking lot was reconfigured with angled planting beds to improve its function.

Architect: John Whitmore Storrs, Jr. (1920-2003)

"I'm the greatest architect in Oregon's history." John Storrs¹¹

"I might be a big sham." John Storrs¹²

The architect of the Portland Garden Club building was John Storrs, acclaimed statewide for his innovative designs in the Northwest Regional Style that gave definition to modern Oregon architecture. The Portland Garden Club headquarters was his first major design, completed while he was employed by the architectural firm of Scott & Payne.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Attributed by William Church in Randy Gragg, "Remembering John Storrs," Oregonian, September 3, 2003.

¹² Ibid.

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After a four- decade career, it remained one of a handful of his premier works, a list that includes Oregon's Salishan Lodge at Gleneden Beach, St. Mary's Catholic Church in Corvallis, and the World Forestry Center in Portland.¹³

Storrs was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut in 1920. He graduated from Roger Ludlow High School in Fairfield, Connecticut, where he was voted the "best dressed, tallest and most nonchalant." He was active in the Boy Scouts, eventually reaching its premier rank of Eagle Scout. After high school, he went to the Ivy League, attending Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. There he became an Olympic hopeful as a record-setting All-American swimmer. World War II forced an early graduation and ended dreams of Olympic gold. Storrs graduating in 1942 and he joined the U. S. Navy. In the war, he commanded a subchaser in both the Atlantic and Pacific Theaters. In particular, he participated in the battle of Anzio and was most proud of aiding in the evacuation of American soldiers from Borneo.¹⁴

Following the war, in 1946, Storrs married Mary Whalen of Greenwich, Connecticut. The wedding took place in Beverly Hills, California. The newlyweds traveled cross-country to New Haven, where Storrs enrolled at Yale to study architecture. He received his Masters degree in 1949.¹⁵

While attending Yale, he was inspired by famed Portland architect Pietro Belluschi, who had risen to national prominence in the early post-war years with striking designs such as the Equitable Building in downtown Portland. Perhaps for that reason, Storrs moved to Portland in 1950, or perhaps as he would tell friends, he came to Portland after throwing a dart on a map of the United States. Regardless, in 1950 at the age of 30, Storrs arrived in the Rose City eager, married and jobless.¹⁶

Initially, Storrs found employment as a draftsman for the firm of Scott & Payne, under the direction of Gerald G. Scott and James C. Payne. In 1953, while he was still employed by Scott & Payne, the Portland Garden Club selected him to design their headquarters. That project marked a period of frenetic activity both personally and professionally. A daughter Anne was born in 1953, joining a three-year-old son, David. Two years later, a second daughter, Julia, was born.¹⁷ Storrs left Scott & Payne in early 1954 to establish his own office at 1125 SW 13th Avenue, before the actual construction work on the Portland Garden Club was finished. It is unclear whether the Portland Garden Club was Storrs' personal commission or a Scott & Payne commission. While the construction documents show the Scott & Payne firm stamp, Storrs is noted on the plans as the designer. In addition, period documentation and newspaper accounts clearly indicate Storrs as the designer of the Portland Garden Club, as opposed to the firm of Scott & Payne. Secondary literature also treats the clubhouse as a personal commission rather than a firm project, as did Storrs, who, even after he left the firm, attended the opening ceremonies at the Club as the architect, and continued to consult with club members when they later required an addition to the building.

¹³ Ibid., John Armstrong, "Storrs Leads His Own Parade," Northwest Magazine, December 16, 1979.

¹⁴ Ibid., John Storrs Obit. Oregonian, September 3, 2003.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

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Mary Storrs, John's wife, died in 1967. A year later, he married Frances Judy and shortly thereafter fathered a fourth child, son Leather. Storrs non-architectural life included travel, gardening, music, cooking and spirited entertainment. He was a colorful teacher of English as a second language and delivered meals to the elderly for Loaves and Fishes. When he died in 2003, he was survived by his second wife, four children, three grandchildren, brother and sister.¹⁸

Comparative Analysis: The Portland Garden Club Building and the Works of John Storrs

"I like to walk around the site with an eye-level, see where the trees are, get the feel of the land, and then decide where the building goes." John Storrs¹⁹

"Johns Storrs was one of the stalwart regionalists who defined Oregon's most distinct phase of 20th Century Architecture." Randy Gragg, *Oregonian*, September 3, 2003²⁰

In a career spanning three decades, John Storrs became a dynamic force for what has become known as the Northwest Regional Style. The style is characterized by a sensitive approach to the natural environment, taking into account the region's mild climate, predominate gray skies and abundance of wood and wood products. Its origins date to A. E. Doyle's simply designed cottages in Neahkahnie, built in 1916 using natural materials. The first buildings appeared in the 1930s, with works by John Yeon and Pietro Belluschi; most typically, these were international style houses using regional materials. Some of the first examples were the Aubrey Watzek House (1061 SW Skyline Blvd.) in Portland, designed by Yeon in 1937, and the Sutor House (1100 SW Skyline Blvd.), designed by Belluschi in 1938. The style proliferated in the post World War II years, most often in houses such as the 1950 Swan House (4645 SW Fairview Blvd., Portland) by Yeon and in churches such as the Central Lutheran Church (1820 NE 21st Avenue) by Belluschi. Interpretations can be seen in the period works of Wade Pipes, Herman Bookman and Van Evera Bailey.²¹

Following Belluschi to Portland, Storrs wrapped himself in the Northwest style. His first major commission was the Portland Garden Club and it launched his career. Storrs designed a "modernist building, one that nestled comfortably into the generously wooded yet tightly urban neighborhood of older homes." The success of the building is best measured by the dozens of commissions for houses that followed for Portland's progressively minded upper crust.²²

Through 1980, he designed fifty to eighty house and over a dozen major non-residential projects. Following the Portland Garden Club, he designed the Forest Pavilion at the Oregon Centennial in 1959, Beaverton's US Bank Building in 1962, Salishan Lodge (7760 Hwy 101N, Gleneden Beach) on the Coast in 1965, Catlin Gabel School (8825 SW Barnes Road) also in 1965, Corvallis' St. Mary's Catholic Church (501 NW 25th Street) in 1968, Lake Oswego's Lakeridge High School (1235 Overlook Drive) in 1969 and the World Forestry Center (4033 SW Canyon

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ John Armstrong, "Storrs Leads His Own Parade," *Northwest Magazine*, December 16, 1979

²⁰ Randy Gragg, "Remembering John Storrs," *Oregonian*, September 3, 2003

²¹ Ibid., Clark, Rosalind. *Oregon Style: Architecture from 1840s to the 1950s*. (Portland, OR: Professional Book Center, 1983); pp. 215-219; Hawkins, William J. III and Willingham, William F., *Classic Houses of Portland, Oregon, 1850-1950*. (Portland, OR: Timber Press, 1999), pp. 519-548.

²² Randy Gragg, "Remembering John Storrs," *Oregonian*, September 3, 2003

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Road) also in 1969 (and a later addition in 1979). He was also responsible for Johns Landing (5331 SW Macadam Avenue) in 1972-73, rehabilitating a former mattress factory into a retail complex, one of the first industrial adaptive reuses in the city.²³

Both Salishan and John's Landing were designed for developer John Gray. Following John's Landing, the duo parted and Storrs went into a period of professional seclusion. He felt his creative juices had left him, so Storrs became Bob Straub's campaign manager in the race for Governor in 1974. Shortly after the primary victory, Storrs went to Scandinavia to live, and then to London, where he studied cooking.²⁴

By 1975, Storrs was back in Portland, as active and articulate as ever. Works include the Glass Butterfly (29 W. Powell) retail store in Gresham, Dundee's Sokol Blosser Winery (5000 Sokol Blosser Lane) in 1978, Oregon School of Arts & Crafts campus (8245 SW Barnes Road) in 1979, and the Allergy Clinic (233 NW 16th Avenue) in 1979-80.²⁵

A large man (6'1", 260 pounds), Storrs was a large voice, known for making a large entrance, often with a zinger or two: "The AIA (American Institute of Architects) is for those who want initials behind their names." Or "If more people would say screw the common ordinary way of doing things, we might get a different kind of creative urge." And he was also not content to limit his comments to his field of expertise. By one account, "For the past 25 years he has become the most visible, most vocal, and the most colorfully articulate of his local counterparts."²⁶

After his mentor Belluschi, Storrs was one of the most nationally recognized architects working in Portland. His strength lay in innovative design and planning approaches. He liked to get a feeling for each site, how the building would relate to it and how it would serve the people who would use it. For example, when designing Lakeridge School, he involved students in the planning. Frequently, he would lead his clients toward an understanding of how space should be utilized.²⁷

Most often he worked in wood, because, as he says, "It's an understandable, romantic material . . . People like to understand buildings; they can understand wood, but they can't understand concrete or strange, manufactured materials." He was a first-rate architect who created a string of architectural accomplishments that "will stand the test of time." As Randy Gragg of the Oregonian has written, "Storrs turned each of his buildings into an architectural manifesto."²⁸

²³ John Armstrong, "Storrs Leads His Own Parade," Northwest Magazine, December 16, 1979, Randy Gragg, "Remembering John Storrs," Oregonian, September 3, 2003

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

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John Storrs and the Northwest Regional Style

The Portland Garden Club is an outstanding and early non-residential example of the Northwest Regional Style. As described in Architecture, Oregon Style: "John Storrs designed this example which features all the earmarks of the Northwest Regional style: broad, hipped roof with deep eaves, a generous use of glass, attention to the relationship between the building and its site, and naturally finished wood building materials."

The style came to prominence in the period 1936-1951 as a regional redefinition and reinterpretation of modernist design that drew considerable professional attention to the design and its practitioners. The origin of the style is attributed to A. E. Doyle's cottages at Neahkahnie, built in 1916 using native materials. However, the first buildings in the style did not occur until the late 1930s when Pietro Belluschi and John Yeon began to design houses in the International style using regional materials. The origins here are said to be tied to Belluschi and Yeon discussing design philosophy under the tutelage of Harry Wentz, a respected artist and teacher at the Portland Art Museum. They traveled for sketching and architectural explorations to Wentz's cottage, one of the Doyle structures at Neahkahnie.

One of the first and finest examples in the style is the Aubrey Watzek House (1061 NW Skyline Blvd, Portland), designed in 1937 by John Yeon. The year before, Belluschi had used the trademarks of the style in designing his own home on Council Crest. Other early homes in the style include the Sutor and Jorgensen Houses. The style surged back in the post-war years under architects as Herman Bookman, Van Evera Bailey and Walter Gordon.

For the most part, the style is associated with residential architecture. However, Belluschi successfully extended the style to the St. Thomas More Chapel in southwest Portland in 1939-1941. Following the war, Belluschi continued to explore the style in ecclesiastical designs for the Central and Zion Lutheran Churches. Storrs' design for the Portland Garden Club represents one of the few applications of the design to a non-residential, non-ecclesiastical use.

As noted, the hallmarks of the Northwest Regional style blend the International style with native materials:

- Broad overhanging gable or hipped roofs covered with shingles, often with broken or asymmetrical slopes;
- Non-academic forms and details;
- Asymmetrical plans, often connecting with gardens and with open floor plans;
- Large expanses of glass windows;
- Wood-frame construction with unpainted siding of native materials; and
- The integration of the structure and the landscape²⁹

As with most non-revival styles, categorization and labels are better accomplished in retrospect. Yet, the Portland Garden Club -- Storrs' first work -- is a near textbook example of the style. Well-integrated into the site, the building is nearly invisible at the street though fronting on the lot. With an asymmetrical plan, low hipped roof, vertical natural wood exterior paneling and strategic use of windows, both limited on the street perimeter and exhaustive on the

²⁹ Hawkins, William J. III and Willingham, William F., Classic Houses of Portland, Oregon, 1850-1950, pp. 524; Dole, Philip, Potter, Elisabeth Walton, and Ross, Marion Dean, Oregon Style: Architecture from 1840 to the 1950s, pp. 215-219.

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Section number 8 Page 10

interior, the building features all the earmarks of the style. What is impressive of Storrs' work, however, is not that he was able to assemble all the pieces correctly, but to do it in a manner that fully captures the inspiration and spirit of the style, not simply the technical aspects.

From this point, Storrs became perhaps the prominent practitioner of the Northwest Regional style applied to large-scale projects. Certainly, he continued to produce residential designs; in total, he was responsible for nearly 80. But increasingly, this large man with a large voice was seeking a large canvas. Storrs' portfolio was noted for tackling projects such as Salishan in 1965, a 750-acre world-class, full-service destination coastal resort with over 200 guest rooms. The design fully integrated the landscape of the area with the demands of the resort, establishing a paradigm increasingly common in the state and region. Shortly thereafter, Storrs designed the World Forestry Center – museum, education and meeting center in Portland's Washington Park. Ten years later, by the end of the 1970s, Storrs was working with the eleven-acre site for the Oregon College of Arts & Crafts, designing nine buildings for its campus.

In a very real sense, the Portland Garden Club headquarters building represented a well-spring for Storrs, a point of beginning, a point of departure, keyed particularly to the interplay of landscape and building in Oregon. For the rest of his life, often on very large canvases, he worked at integrating the two elements in a particularly Oregonian way.

Summary

The Portland Garden Club headquarters building is individually eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C for its association with architect John Storrs, who was a leading proponent and practitioner of the Northwest Regional style. This building was Storrs' first prominent work in Portland and was responsible for catapulting his career as a preeminent modernist designer. The building remains a premier example within his body of work.

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Portland Garden Club
Name of Property

Multnomah, Oregon
County and State

NPS Form 10-900-a

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Section number 9 Page 2

OTHER SOURCES

Cabell, Mrs. Henry F and Reed, Mrs. Benjamin, *The Portland Garden Club: The First Fifty Years, 1924-74*.
(unpublished)

City of Portland Office of Planning & Development Review microform and card files.

Heritage Consulting Group historic Portland research files.

Multnomah County Tax Assessor Records

The Oregon Journal

The Oregonian

Portland Garden Club records and research files

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Portland, Oregon.

Portland Garden Club
Name of Property

Multnomah, Oregon
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .57 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 10 523668 5040589
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____

4 _____

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John M. Tess, President

organization Heritage Investment Corporation date April 2005

street & number 1120 NW Northrup Street telephone 503-228-0272

city or town Portland state OR zip code 97209

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation sheets

Maps: A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs: Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name Portland Garden Club

street & number 1132 SW Vista Avenue telephone 503-222-2845

city or town Portland state OR zip code 97205

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 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Portland Garden Club
Name of Property

Multnomah, Oregon
County and State

NPS Form 10-900-a

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

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Section number 10 Page 1

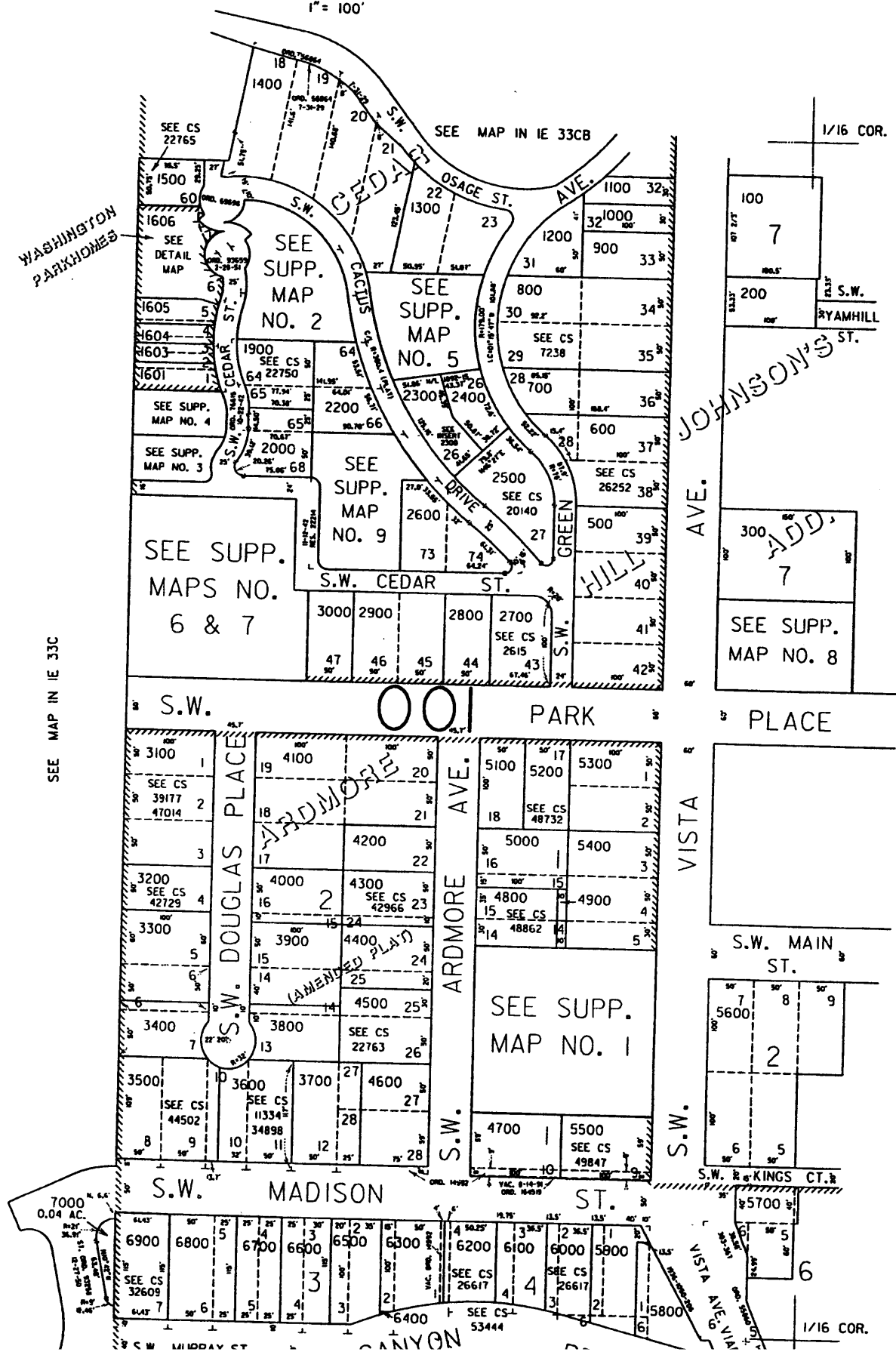
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Portland Garden Club is located on Lots 5-9 of Block 2 of Johnson's Addition to the City of Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary indicates the legally recorded boundary lines historically associated with the nominated property.

SWI/4 SWI/4 SEC. 33 T.1N. R.1E. W.M.
MULTNOMAH COUNTY

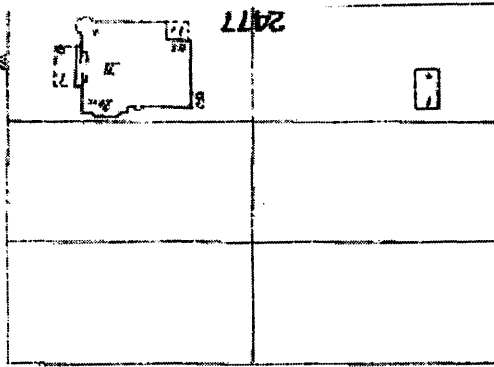
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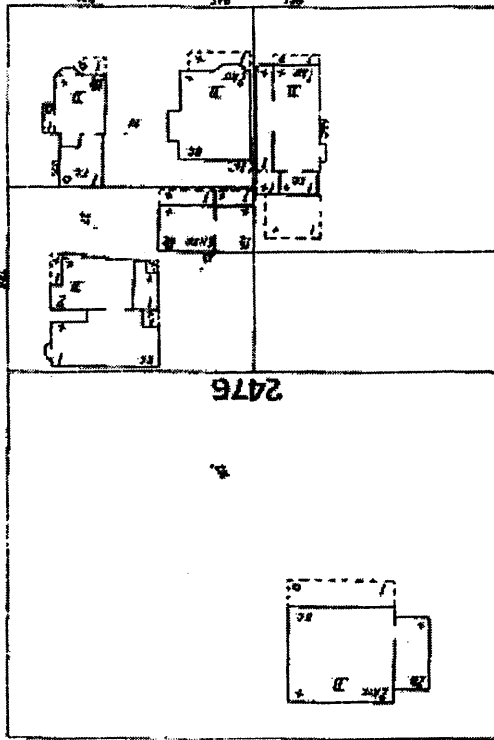
SEE MAP IN IE 33CD

2481

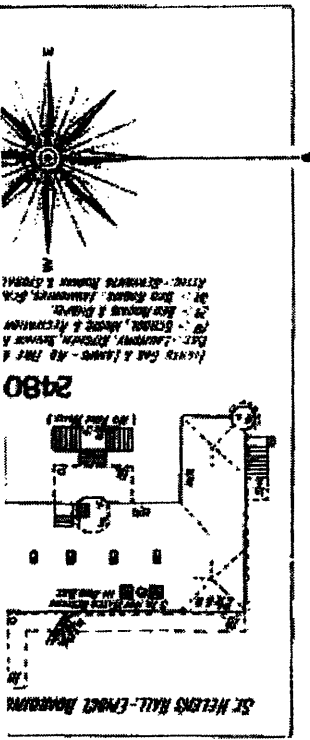
ST. HELEN'S HALL PLAY



ST. CLAIR



MADISON

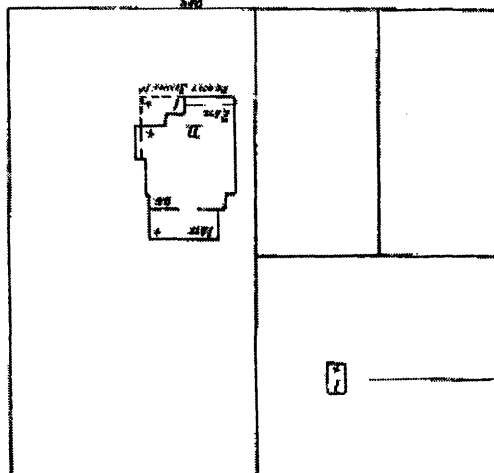


2480

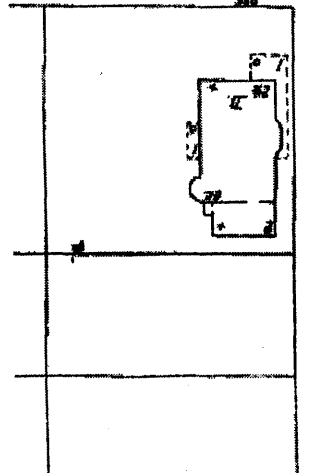
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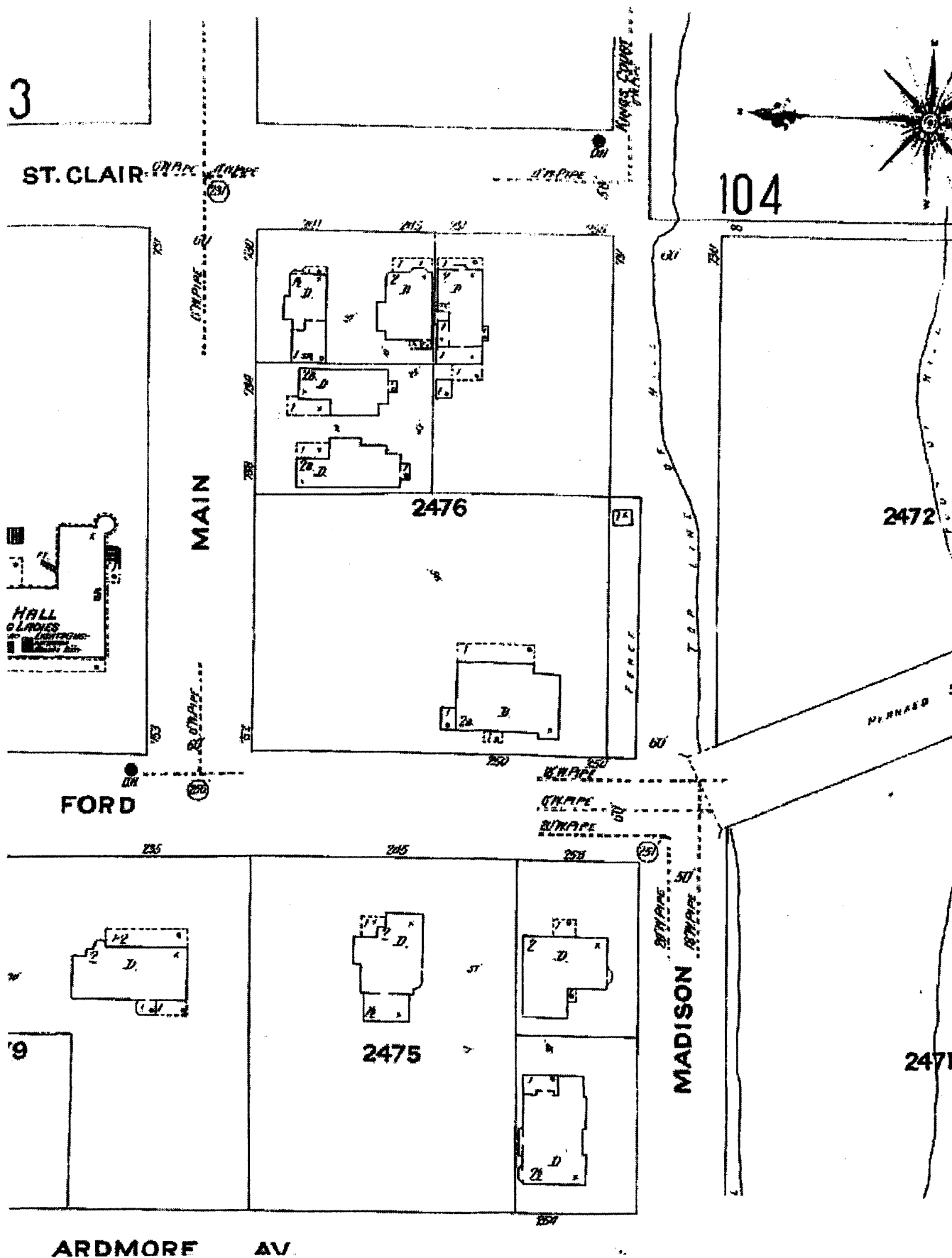
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Bldg. Laundry, Kitchen, Storage &
for School, House & Recreation
Bldg. House & Garage.
Bldg. House, Laundry, for
Kitchen, Laundry & Storage
Notes for 2481 - No Part of

FORD

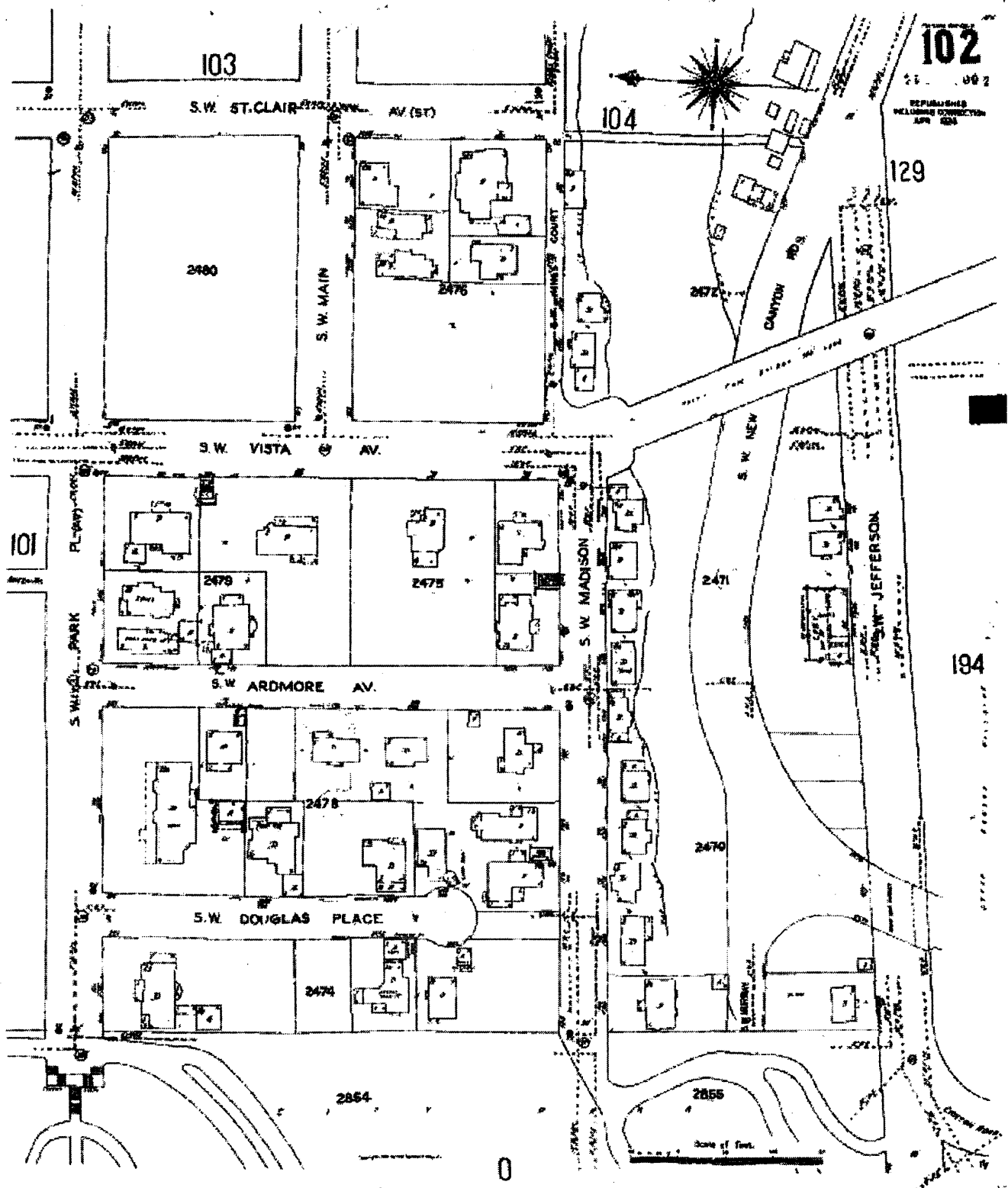


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Sanborn Map - 1909



Sanborn Map - 1950

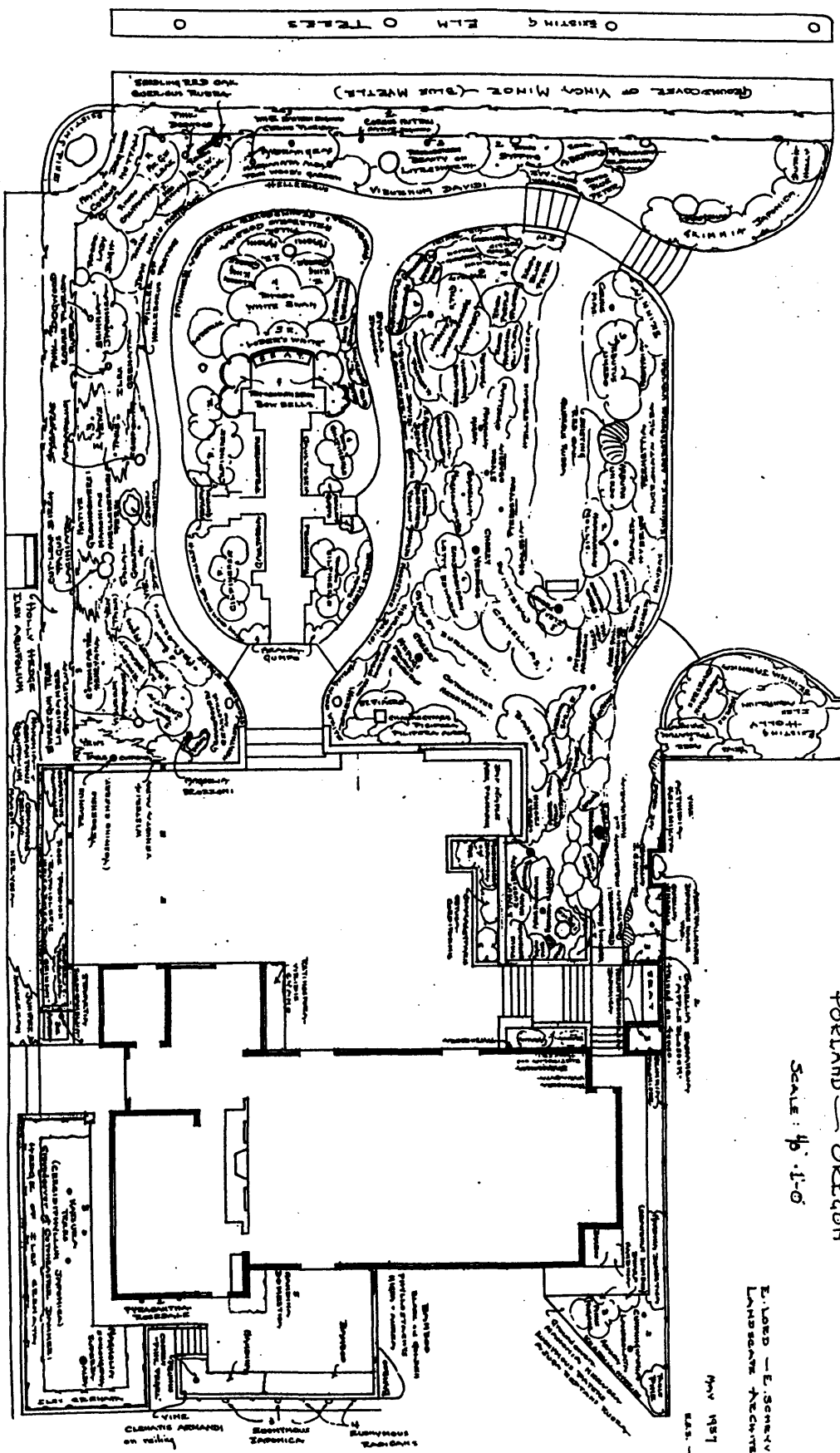
EXISTING TREES
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PLANTING RECORD PORTLAND GARDEN CLUB GROUNDS AND GARDENS PORTLAND — OREGON

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

ELMER E. SCHREYER
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

MAY 1937
E.S.S. - 1937



Club

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Photos Page 1

Portland Garden Club
Name of Property

Multnomah County, Oregon
County and State

General Information

Information for items 1-5 is the same for all photographs

1. Portland Garden Club
2. 1132 SW Vista Boulevard, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon
3. Photographer: Mrs. David Finch
4. Date of Photo: September, 2004
5. Negatives: John Tess, Heritage Consulting Group
1120 NW Northrup Street
Portland, OR 97209

Photo 1 6. Exterior View: Looking E at west entry
7. 1 of 23

Photo 2 6. Exterior View: Looking N at south façade
7. 2 of 23

Photo 3 6. Exterior View: Looking NW at south façade
7. 3 of 23

Photo 4 6. Exterior Detail: Looking NW at south façade service entry
7. 4 of 23

Photo 5 6. Exterior Detail: Looking N at south façade meeting room entry
7. 5 of 23

Photo 6 6. Exterior View: Looking SE at garden
7. 6 of 23

Photo 7 6. Exterior View: Looking S at garden lower level
7. 7 of 23

Photo 8 6. Exterior Detail: Looking N at garden seat
7. 8 of 23

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Section Photos Page 2

Portland Garden Club
Name of Property

Multnomah County, Oregon
County and State

- Photo 9 6. Interior View: Looking N at entry hall
7. 9 of 23
- Photo 10 6. Interior View: Office, looking N
7. 10 of 23
- Photo 11 6. Interior View: Library, looking NW
7. 11 of 23
- Photo 12 6. Interior View: Library, looking NE to garden
7. 12 of 23
- Photo 13 6. Interior View: Meeting Room, looking SW
7. 13 of 23
- Photo 14 6. Interior View: Meeting Room, looking SE
7. 14 of 23
- Photo 15 6. Interior Detail: Meeting Room Doorway to Garden
7. 15 of 23
- Photo 16 6. Interior View: Kitchen, looking N
7. 16 of 23
- Photo 17 6. Interior View: Bathroom, looking S
7. 17 of 23
- Photo 18 6. Interior View: Hallway/Stairs to Lower Level, looking N
7. 18 of 23
- Photo 19 6. Interior View: Lower Level, looking NE
7. 19 of 23

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Section Photos Page 3

Portland Garden Club
Name of Property

Multnomah County, Oregon
County and State

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| <u>Photo 20</u> | 6. Interior View: Lower Level, Looking NW
7. 20 of 23 |
| <u>Photo 21</u> | 6. Interior View: Lower Level, Looking E
7. 21 of 23 |
| <u>Photo 22</u> | 6. Exterior View: Greenhouse
7. 22 of 23 |
| <u>Photo 23</u> | 6. Exterior View: Greenhouse
7. 23 of 23 |



Portland FARMER CLUB

Portland, Oregon

#1



Portland GARDEN CLUB

Portland, Oregon

2



PORTLAND GARRISON Club

Portland, Oregon

3



PORTLAND GARDEA CLUB

Portland, Oregon

4



Portland Garden Club

Portland,
Oregon

5



PONTLAND GARDEN Club

PONTLAND, OR

6



PORTLAND GARDEN CLUB

PORTLAND, OREGON

7



Portman Garden Club

Portman, Oregon

#8



Portlands GARFIO Club

Portlands, August

9



Portlands Garb DSW - 12.6

Portlands are from

#10



Pontinas Gasen Club

Pontinas Orogen

11



Portland Gadsen Club

Portland, Oregon

12



Portland GARDEN Club

Portland Oregon

13



PORTLAND GARDEN Club

PORTLAND Oregon

14



PONTIAC GARAGE CLUB

PONTIAC, OREGON

15



Portlands GARDEN Club

Portland, Oregon

16



Portland GARDEN Club

Portland, Oregon

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Postlans GARDEN Club

Postlans, Oregon

18



PORTLAND GARDEN Club

PORTLAND Oregon

#19



Portlano GARDEN Club

Portlano, Oregon

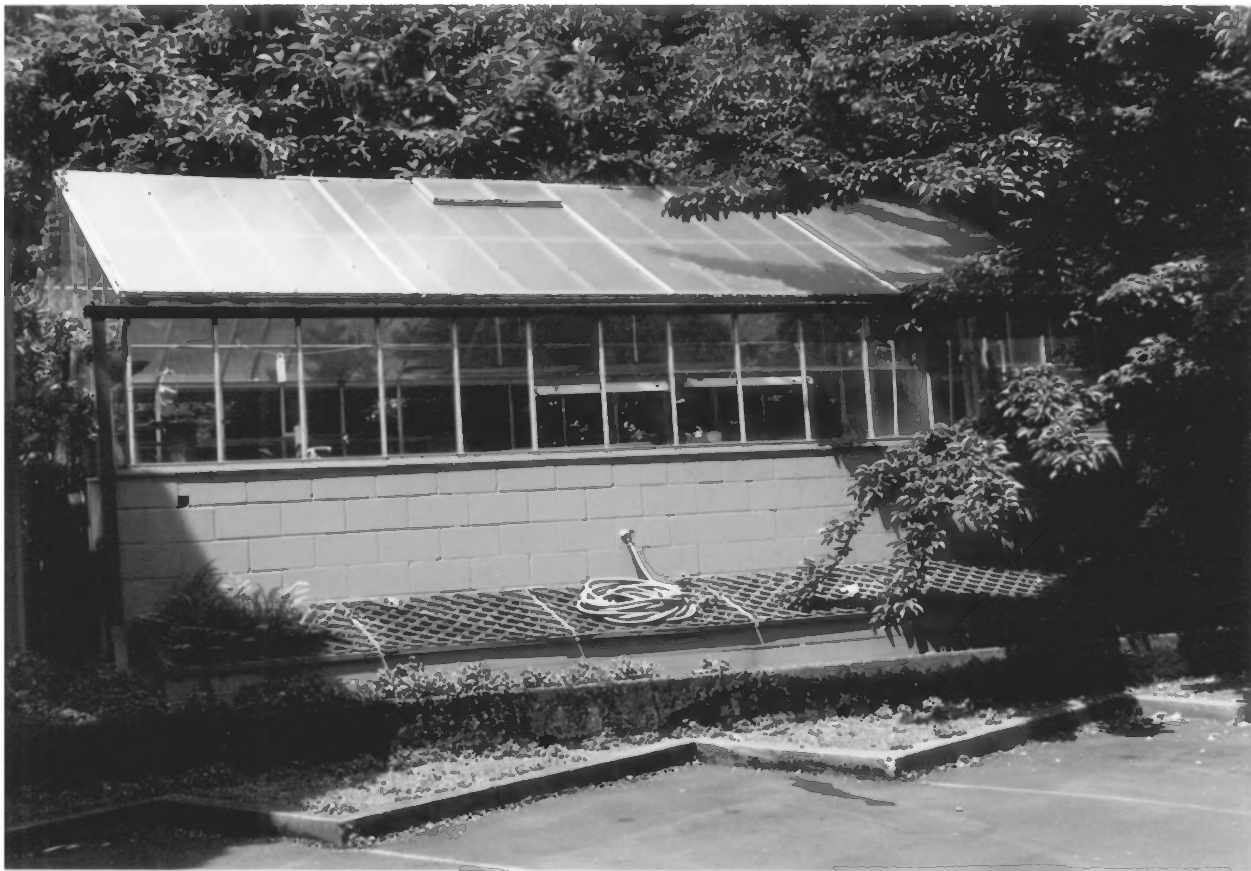
20



Portland Garden Club

Portland, Oregon

21



Portlands Garden Club

Portland, Oregon

#22



Portland Garsea Club

Portland, Oregon

23