Portland blocks 178 and 212 are part of the core of the city’s vibrant downtown business district and have been central to Portland’s development since the founding of the city. These blocks rest on a historical significant area within the city which bridge the unique urban design district of the park blocks and the rest of downtown with its block pattern and street layout. In addition, this area includes commercial and office structures along with theaters, hotels, and specialty retail outlets that testify to the economic growth of Portland’s during the twentieth century.
The site of the future city of Portland, Oregon was known to traders, trappers and settlers of the 1830s and early 1840s as “The Clearing,” a small stopping place along the west bank of the Willamette River used by travellers en route between Oregon City and Fort Vancouver. In 1840, Massachusetts sea captain John Couch logged the river’s depth adjacent to The Clearing, noting that it would accommodating large ocean-going vessels, which could not ordinarily travel up-river as far as Oregon City, the largest Oregon settlement at the time. Portland’s location at the Willamette’s confluence with the Columbia River, accessible to deep-draft vessels, gave it a key advantage over its older peer. In 1843, Tennessee pioneer William Overton and Asa Lovejoy, a lawyer from Boston, Massachusetts, filed a land claim encompassed The Clearing and nearby waterfront and timber land. Overton sold his half of the claim to Francis W. Pettygrove of Portland, Maine. Portland aquired its name by a coin flip and Pettygrove won. It was already the largest settlement in the Pacific Northwest, was known by outsiders as “Stumptown” and “Mudtown.”
The unique street grid of Portland was developed by Thomas Brown in 1845. Brown’s design provided Portland with two defining characteristics that are integral to the downtown layout. He surveyed and developed a 200x200 foot grid for the first sixteen blocks of the city that extended two blocks west of the river and eight blocks running parallel to the river rather than true north points. This provided emphasis on the importance of the river and the city’s future growth through commerce. In 1851, Portland was officially adopted as a city.

During the Victorian Era of 1853-1904, Portland’s downtown commercial district had developed from the Willamette River’s industrial waterfront to S.W. 3rd, leaving most of the city West as predominately residential. In the 1870’s with the arrival of the railroad, Portland began to grow which coincides with the importance of the shipping and agricultural trade. At this time, the concentration of the commercial development was along the riverfront, but natural forces wreck havoc on the earlier wooden structures. With the introduction of the streetcar and the learned experiences of the natural forces; the city’s commercial development pushed westward. By 1900, Portland was the third fastest growing city in the country with the commercial district shifted west away from the waterfront via the streetcar corridors of Yamhill and Morrison. Morrison was becoming the primary commercial street in the emerging city. With new growth and technological advantages in construction, a new commercial district was being establishing and at its core was the Portland Hotel, the Marquam Grand Opera House and the Federal Post Office.
Building Height / Vertical Density Maps: Portland, Oregon, 1879, 1908 & 1926
Portland Blocks

178 & 212

Sanborn Map 1889
Block 212

Sanborn Map 1889
Block 178

1889 massing in present day context
Portland Blocks

178 & 212

1901 massing in present day context
Portland Blocks

178 & 212

Sanborn Map 1909
Block 212

Sanborn Map 1909
Block 178
Portland Blocks

178 & 212

present day massing
Portland Blocks 178 & 212
Helen F. Spalding (1888) resided at 144 Park St. which she turned into an apartment house during Portland’s boom. After her death in 1909 the apartment house was demolished in 1917 by her estate to construct a two story structure in 1918. The building was constructed of brick masonry walls, decorated with decorative sheet metal and bracketed cornice. The building was demolished in 1998 to make room for the Westin Hotel.

The Westin Hotel is considered by the industry as a boutique hotel providing amenities for the average business man. The Westin Hotel was design by Fletcher, Farr, Ayotte containing 20 stories with 205 room in 123,022 s.f. The interiors are designed in a traditional but updated European style.
Adler Building

Built in the late 1890’s on the former home site of Judge, Matthew P. Deady, the Adler building was part of a large collaboration of building making up the Deady Block. In 1912 the Deady Block was used as the Hotel Elwell which went through structural repair and in 1920 the building was renamed the Benton Hotel. Woolsworth store occupied the space for 1921 to 1936 leaving the building to Chandler Boot Shop until 1970.

The Adler Building is a three story building which used glazed- terra cotta exterior sheathing material which was used in Portland buildings from about 1900 to 1930. The terra cotta blocks which are similar to concrete blocks were made by pressing fine clay into plaster molds. The blocks were then glazed, dried and fired. This material being fireproof, lightweight and inexpensive to produce became the favored material for the larger commercial structures.
Charles F. Berg Building

Constructed in 1902 on the site of the Dolph home, the three story, steel framed building was erected during the time the business district moved west. The building was remodeled by the Grand Rapids Store Equipment Company in 1929 by Charles F. Berg in a modern Art Deco style.

The remodeled building was finished with glazed terra cotta in black, 18 kart gold, cream and aquamarine covering the facade. There are decorative motifs in the terra cotta including peacocks, sunburst, rain clouds and zig-zag patterns. This facade is a great example of both the use of polychrome terra cotta and Modern Art Deco design. There are only two other buildings in the nation that introduced 18 kart gold decoration at the time of the remodel. The interior is also a notable example of Modern decor such as: elevator doors finished in silver stripped lacquer, rubber floor tile floors, light fixtures of bronze and satin silver and frosted glass.
Leibes Building

In 1889, lot 3 contained a two and a half-story female boarding house and in 1901 much of the block was redeveloped and a three story building with storefront on the ground floor and rooms on the upper. In 1907, the Calumet Hotel replaced the boarding house and eventually incorporated the other buildings on the block. The building was sold and in 1916 and demolished for the current five story Leibes building designed by John V. Bennes in twentieth Century Classical, Commercial Style. The building was designed with a three-bay facade in off-white glazed terra cotta with Chicago-style tripartite windows.
Pioneer Park Building

Architect E.B. MacNaughton designed the Pioneer Park (Broadway) Building for the Multnomah Security Company after demolishing the existing frame building that was part of Jacob Risley’s estate. This building had a fast paced construction time of one floor per week, closing the ten-story building in March of 1913 reaching a height of 122 feet. The construction of the building was made of reinforced concrete with brick veneer. The facades are made of white pressed brick laid in common bond with sheet metal trim. The two story base consists of a giant order of flattened pilasters. Decorations includes belt courses with bull’s-eye motifs, friezes, sheet metal cornice work.
The Calumet Hotel of 1906 replaced a formally female boarding house and a dwelling unit operated by Mrs. Louise E. Hamilton. The year the Calumet Hotel was constructed, it was the time of much construction in Portland following the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition. With the east side of the river opening up for development, temporary housing was needed. The Calumet Hotel was one of those establishments being erected per demand. The original build contained eighty rooms in both American and European style plans.

The hotel size was determined by the lot size and market conditions that would provide high occupancy rates. Eventually with other larger hotels being constructed along Broadway, the Calumet Hotel was turned into a family hotel. IN the 1900’s the hotel was part of a larger complex of buildings on the block.

Architect Joseph Jacobberger designed a 6 and half story building in twentieth Century Edwardian Baroque, French Renaissance style. Some of the main features are the mansard roof with pedimented dormers, a decorative roof cornice with dentils and large consoles, paired double hung windows have flat brick arches and keystones and a wrought iron fire escape.
American Bank Building

The American Bank Building was designed in the Twentieth Century Classical style by Doyle, Patterson and Beach in 1913. The construction type is steel framed with reinforced concrete flooring. Special features of the building are the three part vertical composition of the glazed terra cotta on the lower and upper parts of the building and the buff colored brick on the center portion. The glazed terra cotta was decorations include the pilasters in Corinthian order, with eagles, a frieze with griffins and acanthus leaf scroll, and a decorative roof cornice. The upper windows are double hung and the lower windows are set in decorative cast-iron frames. Granite plinth are at the sidewalks.
The Oregon National Building formally the Selling Building was designed by Doyle and Patterson in 1910 in the Twentieth Century Classical, Twentieth Century Italian Renaissance style. This was the first building design by Doyle and Patterson on a 70 ‘x 125’ lot. The building is constructed of riveted steel frame with concrete slab floors. A light court runs along the west wall. Special features of this building are the buff-colored brick with cream-colored glazed terra cotta decoration. There are Florentine windows on the upper two stories and double hung windows with wood sash below. The roof is capped with a decorative glazed terra cotta roof cornice with medallions. In 1931 the entire retail base was redone in the Art Deco mode for the Lerner store.
610 Broadway Building

The 610 Broadway Building formally known as the Maegly-Tichner Building was designed by Schacht, Emil and Son in 1911 in the Streetcar Era Commercial style. In 1927 there was a storefront alteration and in 1962 the second floor windows were replaced. The original elevations showed two additional floors decorated with glazed terra cotta cornice and round-arched window grouping. Special features of the building are the buff brick walls with corbelled cornice, glazed terra cotta window sills, belt course above the second story and paired one-over-one double hung windows.
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