

New Market Block and Theater
1035 S.W. 2nd Avenue
Portland, Multnomah County
Oregon

HABS No. ORE-51

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
450 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, California

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PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
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NEW MARKET BLOCK AND THEATER

Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

ADDRESS: 1035 S.W. 2nd Avenue
OWNER: The D. P. Thompson Co. and Margaret Biddle
OCCUPANT: New Market Garage
USE: Parking and Repair Garage

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Alexander P. Anken's New Market Block was an ambitious attempt to wed commerce and culture in the Portland of the 1870's. Begun in 1871, the building was completed on its lower floor by October 1872 - when the market was opened. Construction of the theater in the space occupied by second and third stories was delayed by the panic of 1873, but it was finally opened triumphantly in 1875. Unfortunately, its popularity was brief, as competition from newer and more commodious theaters caused it to close in the later 1880's. It was then converted to a warehouse and now has become a garage. Though the interior has lost almost all of its original glitter, the exterior is of exceptional architectural character.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

This important historical and cultural landmark of 19th century Portland was built for Captain Alexander P. Ankeny - riverman, lumberman, merchant, etc. - founder of Ankeny and Sons. Just prior to starting the New Market Block, Ankeny had commissioned the Ankeny Building, with a one hundred foot frontage on Front Street, and extending through (two hundred feet) to First; it was of two stories

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and had cost \$50,000. The market and theater (market stalls on the first floor and a theater to occupy the space of the second and third stories) was to be located with its facades on First and Second - between A (now Ankeny) and Ash Streets. The architect was W. W. Piper, a notable figure in the early 1870's of Portland. Nelson, in his excellent study of Piper, "Architects of Oregon: Piper and Williams", p. 7, says: "Immediately following the success of the Masonic building, Piper designed the Ankeny New Market Block...Portlanders were curious about the planning of Captain Ankeny's 'high class theatre'...When a reporter from the Oregonian visited Piper's office, he was given a complete room-by-room description. Piper labelled the style a 'combination of Corinthian and the Modern'...A public market occupied the ground floor...Work was begun in 1871, and the formal opening of the market was attended by a large crowd on October 5, 1872." The theater opening was delayed by the panic of 1873; its official debut came on March 24th, 1875, with a performance of Rip Van Winkle by the James A. Herne company of actors. "Besides Rip Van Winkle there was a dance between acts, called 'The Silver Clog'...The box office had been open from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, and had done a satisfactory business. (Seats were \$1.00 in the balcony, \$1.50 on the parquet, and from \$4.00 to \$7.50 for the boxes.) The theater opened at 7:00 PM and the play commenced on time at 8:00 PM." (Oregon Journal, May 19, 1940)
"The new and popular place of amusement...able to seat 1200 people.¹ Stage and auditorium present a scene of dazzling brilliance under the glamour of a hundred gas jets, the like of which has never been seen in this city." (Oregonian, Sunday, October 17, 1948) The rules of the theater said: "Kerosene, coal oil or other burning fluids as light (only candles and gas allowed) is strictly forbidden". F. W. Stechlan became lessee of the New Market about 1880 when A. P. Ankeny disposed of it, and the structure came into the hands of Mayor D. P. Thompson. (Ankeny died at Salem on March 24, 1891, aged 78, on the sixteenth anniversary of the opening of his theater.) It continued to be a center for drama, and especially for light and heavy opera. The building was remodeled in 1884, but competition increased - with the Tivoli at the corner of First and Madison and later, the Casino Opera House. The last performance came in 1887; the manager defected to the Casino. The theater section was converted into two floors, as a warehouse for Keating and Flood, etc. It is now a car garage, with car storage on the second and third floors, and repair work on the first.

The addresses of this building have been (at different times) as follows: 1887 - 23-33 First Street; 1890 - 1-33 First Street; 1902-11 - 7 First Street.

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NOTE (Historical Information)

1. "Entering the new theater with its gay crowd, we find two commodious boxes on each side of the stage. Around the parquet, with its horse-shoe circle, are long red plush benches." (No one now living can remember the exact disposition of the theater interior: 1963.) The drop curtain was forty by forty feet, with an exotic Mediterranean scene: it cost \$400. (Oregonian, October 17, 1948)

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL AND SOURCES

Newspapers:

- Oregonian (Portland), Sunday, October 17, 1948, p. 1 of the Magazine Section: article by Alice Henson Ernest, Associate Professor of English, University of Oregon, drawing upon period sources and her own research.
- Oregonian, March 24, 1957, 34:1-2
- August 30, 1959, 32:5-7
- September 3, 1959, 18:4-7
- September 23, 1962, 39:1-5
- Oregon Journal (Portland), May 19, 1940.

Periodicals:

- Nelson, Lee H. "Architects of Oregon: Piper and Williams", The Call Number, Spring, 1959 (Vol. 20, No. 2), Eugene, Library of University of Oregon, p. 7.
- Ross, Marion Dean. "Architecture in Oregon: 1845-1895", Oregon Historical Quarterly, March, 1956 (Vol. LVII, No. 1), p. 51.

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The best general description of the building is found in an article which appeared in the Oregon Journal for May 19, 1940: (the parenthetical comments are by Baird), "When the New Market theater building was constructed, running through from First to Second, a distance of two hundred feet, there was an open space between it and Ankeny (called A at that time), closed in with a board fence, while on the Ash Street

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side (south) it had a twenty foot wide alleyway. The alleyway was later filled in with a narrow building, still standing (as it is in 1963), under which the alleyway ran. The two entrance arches (to this alley) - one for incoming and one for outgoing wagons - may yet be seen, now enclosed. (The area to the north was also an alley of access to the market, although photographic evidence suggests that provision was made during construction of the building for the addition of a narrow wing at this side, not built until the 1880's probably; it was called the North Wing of the New Market Block, apparently more appropriate once the market and theater activity had declined, so that access to the building from the side was not so necessary.) In the beginning the land under it and where the Skidmore Fountain was erected was Portland's Pioneer Cemetery...the last bodies being taken away in 1854. After that the parcel of land was occupied by warehouses and sheds...(and later) with business buildings. The man who set his mark on the building boom and erected the New Market Theater was Alexander P. Ankeny...He arrived in Oregon in 1850 from Pennsylvania...In 1871 he began the New Market Theater building...It was the greatest gesture of his career and he spared no expense, beginning with an estimate of \$85,000; but finally expending more than \$100,000.

"The ground floor had a huge public market with twenty-eight splendidly arched stalls, asphaltum floors, and marble counters presenting an unbroken appearance from the spacious center aisle. (This is technically incorrect, as, although there were twenty-eight spaces inside the first floor, some of those were used for access to the alleys and could not be occupied entirely with produce.) On both sides of the market, outside the building, were passageways for teams that brought produce.

"The New Market Theater occupied the second and third stories. There were main entrances on First Street, on either side of the market entrances with stairways leading to the cafe which took in part of the third floor. (The entrances on First Street were converted to windows when the building was revised as a warehouse in the late 1880's.) From the cafe, stairs led down to the theater proper, sixty by one hundred-forty feet, with balcony, orchestra floor ("parquet"), private boxes and a ceiling thirty-five (or thirty-eight?) feet high. Beside the main entrances there were three minor places of egress - one on "A" Street (that is on the alley to the north, not technically on "A" Street), one in the south wall (that is to the alley on the south, covered over with a building), and one on Second Street (or two? as on First, at either side of the market entrances?)." The facades were sixty feet high.

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From the interior wall surface, it is possible to see that the brick courses were laid (as was usual in the later 19th century in the west) in six of stretchers with one of headers. On the exterior, of course, this was not necessarily true - particularly where the ornamental character of the facades occasioned a more individual pattern of brick-laying. Although the interior was divided into compartments by two rows of thirteen pillars down the center (originally only on the main, first floor; but since the late 1880's on each of three floors), the fenestration is not exactly correspondent to these interior divisions. On the north side (which is the only side easily studied in old photographs) there were three tall arched windows flanking an arched door on the main level. Above, on the second level, there were five windows - spaced evenly from the west over each of the windows (or door) below. Over the two first floor windows nearest the east facade of the building, was a larger, arched opening - which was unglazed in the old photographs. This may have been needed for bringing large sections of scenery into the theater area. On the top floor there were originally six windows, evenly spaced from the west. Some of these windows have been filled in with brick - and all of the windows on the south side have been thus filled. An elevator (for cars) runs up the north interior wall of the building at about a third of the distance from the west wall. More or less in the center of the south wall is a wooden staircase going to the second and third floors (not safe to use at the present time). This latter stair must have been built at the time the theater-market was converted into a warehouse.

On the ground floor, the interior pillars originally had Corinthian cast iron capitals (that is, pieces of cast iron ornament around a wooden core); some vestiges of these capitals survive. Above, spanning from capital to capital down the interior length of the building, were wooden arches, with a wooden keystone at the top of each arch (the keystone having a beveled face). The thirteen wooden pillars, each about ten feet high, occupied half the height of this story; the arches abutted on a wooden ceiling (non-structural) with coved surface above each of the three main longitudinal interior divisions. It is impossible to make certain where the staircases originally went up to the theater and cafe from this floor, nor do the marble counters in the market stalls survive. The second and third floors are similar now; Tuscan wooden pillars, under relieving brackets, support beams built up of approximately three inch by eighteen inch wood timbers, running longitudinally. The ceiling construction is of three by eighteen

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Joists running cross-wise and extensively braced with other large wood members; this ceiling supports the third floor over the second level, and the roof area over the third.

The most richly ornamented parts of the present building are the east and west facades. They are virtually identical, although (as noted before), on the east facade windows replaced the side doors in the late 1880's. The west facade has the older arched window-doors (a kind of French door or window) - now unused. The first level of each facade is heavily garnished with cast iron ornament; the structural arches (a pair) which are the principal entrances of each facade are of brick. Cast iron double (paired) Roman Doric pilasters at the outer sides and single cast iron pilasters at the inner sides of the windows lead to cast iron Cornithian columns of heavy proportions, flanking each side of the central arches with a cast iron covering of the intrados above. The columns show the Mannerist flavor of so much of this period in their lower shafts, broken into criss-cross patterns interspersed with rings of studded banding; the shaft above is panelled rather than fluted. There are cast iron rincaux in the recesses of the brick spandrels. Over each main door (the great arched pair in the center of this level) is wooden tracery in what might be called a "Florentine" manner - semi-circular tracery supporting a circle, all within the arch shape; it is reminiscent of the windows of early 15th century Florentine palaces, and suggests the last stages of the Gothic merging into the Renaissance. (Thus, this particular building, while it has a number of Mannerist features and is closely related to the commercial palatial Italianate architecture so common in the west in the 60's and early 1870's, is best called "Florentine" - which is what the period would have termed it.) The first level of the facades has a wooden frieze (with pierced scrolled patterns) and wooden cornice (with small modillions with pierced scroll-work patterned sides). Iron brackets carry a wooden canopy over the central double doors.

On the second and third stories, brick with very thick mortar joints is the principal decorative as well as structural material. Cast iron capitals (Roman Doric) and cast iron rosettes on the lower shaft of the brick pilasters, as well as cast iron keystones over the windows, carry the crisp metal enrichment into these stories. Wood is used for the friezes and cornices with modillions and also for the tall twisted columns which frame the arched windows, as well as for the tracery in the arch above (similar to the "Florentine" tracery in

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the main arches of the first floor). It is the strongly articulated brick Roman Doric pilasters (two sets of paired pilasters at the sides; one single pilaster in the center) and the equally strong, salient arches around the windows, with their triple moldings in depth, which contribute to the vivacity of the second and third stories. Smaller Roman Doric brick pilasters are set between the main pilasters. Over the third story is a more massive wooden cornice than that on the second - but similar in type, supported on bracket modillions with a dentil course beneath the cornice proper. An elaborate brick and wood ornamental piece crowns the upper center, with the legend "New Market Block, 1872". The roof would seem to be very slightly gabled; it is difficult to see behind the wooden balustrade with its finials on posts and the great arched sign board with its own cornice on brackets, flanked by side finials. There were originally thirteen chimneys on the north (and south?) sides.

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June 1964

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