

Dr. K. A. J. and Cora Mackenzie House (1892)
615 NW 20th Avenue
Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

NRIS # 96000625
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Statement of Significance – Correction

The purpose of this continuation sheet is to identify McCaw & Martin as the architectural firm responsible for the design of the Dr. K. A. J. Mackenzie House. The architectural firm Whidden & Lewis has been incorrectly attributed as the designers. The supporting documentation includes: (1) citations and excerpts of contemporary news articles unambiguously identifying McCaw & Martin as architects of this house; (2) an analysis of the published record and other documentation which attributed the work to Whidden & Lewis; and (3) an update of information on the architects, McCaw & Martin.

Supporting Documentation

1. Contemporary Newspaper Articles

The following articles from the newspaper *Morning Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon) establish that McCaw & Martin was the architectural firm responsible for the Dr. K. A. J. Mackenzie House, a large, impressive stone house in Richardsonian Romanesque style. These articles precisely cite the architectural firm, the client, distinguishing feature of the home, correct historic and current address, and date. These articles have never been cited in publications describing the Mackenzie house.

- “A Fine Residence”, in “Pencil and Notebook.” *Morning Oregonian*, February 20, 1891, p. 5.
Quoting the article: “Plans and specifications are being prepared by Messrs. McCaw & Martin for a very handsome stone residence for Dr. K. A. J. Mackenzie, on the site of his present residence at Nineteenth and H streets. It will be a costly and handsome house, and the first residence built entirely of stone in the city.”
- “The Boom in Buildings. Fine Weather Having Desired Effect. Many New Contracts Awarded.” *Morning Oregonian*, March 4, 1891, p. 8.
Quoting from article: “Messrs. McCaw & Martin will soon ask for bids for the erection of Dr. K. A. J. Mackenzie’s stone house.”
- “The Building Boom. The Principal Improvements Now Being Made in the City. How the Work Is Progressing.” *Morning Oregonian*, March 14, 1891, p. 9.
Quoting the article: “Plans for the following residences have been prepared by Messrs. McCaw & Martin ... House of stone for Dr. K. A. J. Mackenzie, at Nineteenth and H; cost unknown.”
- “City News in Brief.” *Morning Oregonian*, August 20, 1892, p. 5.
Quoting from article: “Dr. Mackenzie has removed to his new residence, northwest corner of Twentieth and Hoyt (old Nineteenth and H streets).”

2. Whidden & Lewis as Architects of the Mackenzie House: An Analysis & Refutation

While contemporary newspaper accounts confirm that McCaw & Martin designed the Mackenzie house, it is appropriate to consider how Whidden & Lewis became part of the historical narrative, since that firm has long been associated with this Portland landmark. How the attribution to Whidden and Lewis evolved is reflected in the content of two unpublished inventories of Whidden & Lewis works. Copies of these inventories are in the possession of James Heuer and Robert Mercer, of Portland, Oregon, and the Architecture and Allied Arts Library, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

The first inventory, undated, was compiled by ‘Herb Fredericks’, according to an annotation on this list written by its original owner, George McMath. That inventory appears to be an authoritative, if not exhaustive, compilation because of the amount of descriptive detail provided for each work that includes square footage, cubic square footage, and cost per cubic foot, in addition to basic building information

such as client and address. Research in city directories for Portland, Oregon, and U. S. census records confirms that the likely compiler had the requisite background to form an authoritative inventory. The 1915 city directory confirms that Herbert Wal Frederick (1895-1976) was employed as a draftsman for Whidden and Lewis. In the 1920s, he was an officer for the P. T. Ainge Company, a firm that specialized in the design of bank interiors and fixtures. In the 1940s and later, he was an officer in the First Federal Savings and Loan Association, Portland. Since the date of sale for one building in the list is 1957, one can speculate that Mr. Frederick volunteered to compile the inventory for his old firm when the Whidden and Lewis archives were in the possession of the firm, Sutton and Whitney.

Of great significance, the 1892 house for Dr. K. A. J. Mackenzie does not appear on Frederick's extensive list which does include 19th century buildings. The list does include an entry for "Dr. K. A. J. Mackenzie" which describes a 1902 mixed-use two-story building on Sixth and Davis streets, Portland. The second inventory, dated 1984, compiled by George McMath, incorporates information from the Fredricks list and adds to it information from a list compiled by Richard Marlitt, according to McMath's notes on the inventory. In the McMath revision, the Dr. K. A. J. Mackenzie House is added and, curiously, the Mackenzie store of 1902 is omitted although works no longer extant are included.

McMath's reference to a list compiled by Richard Marlitt is significant because Marlitt's book, *Matters of Proportion; The Portland Residential Architecture of Whidden & Lewis* (Portland, Oregon: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1989), is presumed to be a definitive work. In the book, Marlitt indicates his research was based on personal examination of the no longer extant Whidden and Lewis archives in the possession of the firm Sutton and Whitney. However, recent scholarship has uncovered several errors of attribution in *Matters of Proportion*, thus verifying that Marlitt introduced anecdotal information not based on primary evidence. For example, Marlitt definitively asserts that the Edward A. King house in Portland was designed by Whidden and Lewis, and on page 9, inserts in the annotation: "In 1912 Nahum King commissioned Whidden and Lewis to design this house for his son Edward." However, thanks to continuing efforts by the Oregon Historical Society (OHS) to catalog and make accessible its collections, one can see the complete drawings for this house in OHS's Morris Whitehouse Architectural Collection and verify that it is a 1910 work designed by the firm, Lazarus, Whitehouse and Fouilhoux. Similarly, another house that Marlitt suggests is by Whidden and Lewis (*Matters*, page 24) is in fact the Larry Sullivan house designed by Emil Schacht as evidenced by drawings of the work in the University of Oregon's Cachot Therkelsen Collection. Marlitt's inclusion of the Dr. K. A. J. Mackenzie house in *Matters of Proportion*, in which it is erroneously dated 1902, should not be considered authoritative.

Another source to consider is the guidebook, *A Century of Portland Architecture* (Portland, Oregon: Oregon Historical Society, 1967), by Thomas Vaughan and George A. McMath, which might be the first publication to identify Whidden and Lewis as the architects of the Mackenzie house. The book's entry for the house cites its only source as, "The Oregon Historical Society archives" and Nancy Raymond is cited as the recorder of the house information. One finds in the OHS archives an eleven-page manuscript by Ms. Raymond entitled "Mackenzie House," dated 1965, which states that "Whidden and Lewis are believed to have been the architects for his home." The OHS vertical files for the Mackenzie house do not counter the evidence that McCaw & Martin designed the home.

Finally, the 1996 National Register documentation for this building cites no newspaper articles earlier than 1968 for architect information. Instead, secondary sources are referenced, some of which have been demonstrated to contain anecdotal information.

3. McCaw and Martin; An Update

Perhaps inadequate information about McCaw and Martin has encouraged the inclination to marginalize their importance in Portland's building history. Biographical sketches of Richard H. Martin, Jr. (1858-1950), William F. McCaw (1850-?), and the firms associated with them can be found in the Richard Ritz's *Architects of Oregon: A Biographical Dictionary of Architects Deceased---19th and 20th Centuries* (Portland, Oregon: Lair Hill, 2002). While uncharacteristic of Whidden and Lewis, the Richardsonian Romanesque style of the Mackenzie house is typical of the work of McCaw and Martin, who practiced as a partnership from 1890 to 1897. The Dekum Building (NRHP# 80003363) in Portland is probably their

finest work, and after its opening in 1892, Dr. Mackenzie moved his office there, as did McCaw and Martin. Probably because Martin lived in Portland, his biography is better developed. That his father was a stone mason in addition to being an architect and builder is not incidental to the fine craftsmanship one sees in the Mackenzie house. New research about William McCaw greatly expands upon what is found in Ritz, and reveals him to be a gifted designer well versed in Richardsonian Romanesque tendencies long before his arrival in Portland in 1882. In 1872, McCaw emigrated from Ireland to Toronto, Canada, and was initially employed in the office of William Irving. He then partnered with Edward J. Lennox to form McCaw & Lennox whose practice is chronicled and illustrated in the monograph, *Edward James Lennox: Builder of Toronto* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1995). While Ritz speculates that McCaw died in 1897, he actually moved to San Francisco where he partnered briefly with the eminent architect William Curlett, to form Curlett & McCaw (*California Architect & Building News*, v. 20, 1899, has several works identified) and is listed in the *San Francisco-Oakland Directory* (1903) and the 1910 and 1920 U. S. censuses as an architect in the Bay Area. When McCaw died is yet to be discovered, as is a complete picture of his architectural legacy.

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