

HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM
University of Oregon Cultural Resources Survey
Eugene, Lane County, Oregon
Summer 2006

RESOURCE IDENTIFICATION

Current building name: Fenton Hall

Historic building name: The Library Building, Old Libe, The Libe, Law School

Building address: 1021 East 13th Ave.

Ranking: Secondary

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Architectural style classification: Italian Renaissance Revival

Building plan (footprint shape): irregular

Number of stories: original/east portion is 2; addition/western portion is 5

Foundation material(s): concrete

Primary exterior wall material: brick

Secondary exterior wall material: stucco

Roof configuration/type: hipped

Primary roof material: metal

Primary window type: 1:1 double hung

Primary window material: wood

Decorative features and materials: modillions, brick quoins, diamond quarrel window panes, buff colored brick, balustrade railing; stacks addition has brick parapets, concrete coping

Landscape features: many mature trees, raised planter beds along south side

Associated resources: Hello Walk, drinking fountain (gift of Class of 1920), fountain to north of building (gift of Class of 1913), Old Campus Quad, 13th Ave Axis

Comments: Fenton Hall is the only example on the U of O campus of the Italian Renaissance Revival style. It is constructed of structural masonry executed in brick. The variety of window types (arched vs. square, single light vs. diamond quarrels) for each story is a common mark of this style, as are the broadly overhanging eaves. Light posts were intended for the main entry but only the bases were ever installed. Judge Fenton, for whom the building was named, was an Oregon attorney and early benefactor of the Law School.

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

Date of construction: 1906

Architect: Y. D. Hensill (1906 original); addition by W. C. Knighton; alterations by Lawrence and Holford

Builder/Contractor: unknown

Moved? (yes/no): no Date of move(s): N/A

Description/dates of major additions/alterations: c.1911-1914: addition of elevator/stair tower; and 3 story stacks addition (west), entrance remodeled from wooden columns to brick facing; 1924: fourth and fifth story stacks were completed (west); 1937: Lawrence

(See Continuation Sheet 1)

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS & SIGNIFICANCE

Original use(s) or function(s): Library, classrooms, faculty offices

Current use(s) or function(s): Classrooms, Math Department offices

Area(s) of significance: Education, 20th c. Architecture, Social History

Period of significance: 1906-1936

Statement of Significance (use continuation sheet if necessary):

Designed by prominent Eugene architect Y. D. Hensill in 1906, Fenton Hall was built to house the University's library collections, which at that time were dispersed among several buildings. Fenton is located in a prominent site on the Old Campus Quad along what became the primary campus pathway, the "Hello Walk." The first floor was intended to house the library, a reading room, and related spaces while the second story was for classrooms and faculty offices. Within ten years of its construction, the library collection had increased dramatically (from less than 15,000 volumes to 53,000), necessitating the expansion of the stacks. Oregon's first State Architect, W. C. Knighton, designed a five-story stacks addition for the west elevation in 1914. Around this time, the elevator and stair tower were also added and the front façade's classical wooden columns and detailing were replaced with brick veneer. The original building and the first three floors of the western addition are built of brick bearing walls, while the upper two stories of the stacks addition are of steel frame with brick veneer. The first 3 stories of the stacks addition were completed in 1914 and the upper 2 in 1924. The 1937 completion of Knight Library left Fenton to be remodeled as the Law School. Alterations at that time were funded by the Works Progress Administration, designed by Lawrence and Holford, and included a new lecture room to hold 200 people, lowering the main entrance, thus altering the front façade once more, underpinning the foundation, and various cosmetic changes to windows and doors. Wayne Morse, who would later be Oregon's eminent member of Congress, was the Dean of the Law School at the time and assisted with design decisions. Light posts were intended for the main entry but only the bases were ever installed. In 1944, steel beams were added to reinforce the first floor as the basement lecture room was completed. Also at that time, lower south windows were bricked in and the Civilian Pilots Corp moved into the building. The Law School moved to a new facility in 1970 and was replaced by the Math Department, Fenton's current occupant. Additional interior remodeling has not drastically changed the integrity of the interior and much original woodwork survives as well as several original offices at the top of the stairs.

Fenton Hall is the only example on the U of O campus of the Italian Renaissance Revival style. Ellis Lawrence recommended Renaissance and Colonial styles for use in buildings of secondary importance (though for a long time Fenton Hall was the heart of the University of Oregon), so the building seems to contribute to Lawrence's plan even though Fenton Hall predates it. The variety of window types (arched vs. square, single light vs. diamond quarrels) for each story is a common mark of this style, as are the broadly overhanging eaves. Also, the building corners were detailed to imitate stone "quoins". The stacks addition has brick parapets and concrete coping while the original building has a balustrade railing over the projecting main entryway. The understated decorative features belie this building's significance on the U of O campus. There are also several significant associated resources for Fenton Hall including the fountain to the north, Gift of the Class of 1913; the drinking bubbler, Gift of the Class of 1920; and the "Hello Walk" connecting Fenton and Villard Halls. In the early years of the 20th century students were required to greet each other on this walk. The name "Hello Walk" indicates its importance to the social character on campus. It extended through what was then the center of campus life, from 13th Avenue to Villard Hall. The 1913 fountain is missing the bronze water lily that once spouted water and does not appear to be operational. The drinking bubbler was restored and currently works. The south side planter beds and steps were added in 1989 as part of the "13th Ave. Improvements" initiative. It is still unknown when the south entry and window(s) were altered but likely since 1989. (See Continuation Sheet 2)

NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENTHistoric Significance (check one): High Medium Low Very Low or NoneIntegrity (check one): Excellent Good Fair PoorCondition (check one): Excellent Good Fair PoorBuilding designation: City Landmark National Register National Historic Landmark Not listedPreliminary National Register eligibility findingsBuilding is potentially eligible: Individually or As a contributing resource in a district only

If eligible individually, applicable criteria (check all that apply):

 A. Associated with significant events C. Distinctive architecturally B. Associated with significant persons D. Archaeologically importantIf applicable, building qualifies under NR Criterion Considerations: Yes No If yes, which apply:Building is NOT eligible: Intact but lacks distinction or Altered/loss of integrity or Not 50 years old

DOCUMENTATION

Indicate resources consulted when researching this building (check all that apply):

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> University archives | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UO Planning Office files | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspapers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sanborn maps | <input type="checkbox"/> Building permits | <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO files |
| <input type="checkbox"/> State Archives | <input type="checkbox"/> State Library | <input type="checkbox"/> State Historic Society |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Historic Society | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal interviews | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic photographs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biographical encyclopedias | <input type="checkbox"/> Obituary indexes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <u>see below</u> |

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Plans and specifications for Fenton Hall, Facilities Services Office, University of Oregon.

Shellenbarger, Michael. "Fenton Hall." University of Oregon Architecture--A Personal Tour. (University of Oregon, 1986), 3-4.

Teague, Edward H. "Fenton Hall." The Architecture of the University of Oregon. 10 Oct. 2004. Accessed 15 Mar. 2005 from <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/architecture/uoregon/>

"Tour of the University of Oregon Campus," Eugene, OR: University of Oregon, 2001. <http://anniversary.uoregon.edu/tour.html>

University of Oregon Library, (scrapbook) [ca. 1915].

Newspaper Articles (arranged by date) [from Teague]

"The University Library." *Oregon Weekly* 7 June 1908: 13.

"Outdoor reading room planned for library." *Daily Emerald* 9 Mar. 1914: 1.

"Ground to be broken May 8, Work on library extension will start June 1." *Daily Emerald* 2 May 1914: 1.

"Ground broken by S. Friendly." *Daily Emerald* 9 May 1914: 11.

"New wing to Library will be ready soon." *Daily Emerald* 7 Nov. 1914: 2.

"Library addition is now completed." *Daily Emerald* 5 Jan. 1915: 4.

"New lighting at library." *Daily Emerald* 20 Apr. 1916: 4.

"Installs light system, Semi-indirect lighting to be used." *Daily Emerald* 13 Feb. 1917: 1.

"Library adds more room; Many new magazines filled with current news on shelves." *Daily Emerald* 23 Oct. 1919: 1.

"Fire escapes on library provide additional exit." *Daily Emerald* 18 Jan. 1924: 2.

"Early occupancy of new libe seen in WPA grant for remodeling old one." *Daily Emerald* 31 Mar. 1931: 1.

"Face-lifting begins on old libe in time to get WPA . Law tomes assured new quarters." *Daily Emerald* 24 Apr. 1937: 1.

"Water line to law building being laid." *Daily Emerald* 29 Mar. 1938: 2.

"Fenton Hall is name of new law school." *Daily Emerald* 16 Aug. 1938: 1.

"Remodel room in Fenton Hall." *Daily Emerald* 17 Nov. 1944: 3.

"Campus 01' swimmin' hole catches Senate eye tonight." *Daily Emerald* 23 Oct. 1952: 1.

"Fenton remodeled: Offices moved." *Daily Emerald* 1 Oct. 1953: 4.

"That's water, Carol." *Daily Emerald* 5 May 1953: 1.

"Fenton Remodeled: Offices Moved." *Daily Emerald* 1 Oct. 1953: 4.

"Sprinklers and Fenton pool signs of spring on campus." *Daily Emerald* 2 Apr. 1954: 6

"'O' to punish violators at Fenton Pool today." *Daily Emerald* 13 May 1954: 2.

"Planning group talks of Fenton Hall use." *Daily Emerald* 9 Nov. 1972: 4.

RECORDING INFORMATION

Researched: Jeremy Mauro, Shawn Lingo, Winter 2006

Recorded: Susan Johnson and University Planning Office, Summer 2006

Photo number or name:

PHOTOGRAPH



(See Continuation Sheet 3 for additional photos of this building)

SITE PLAN



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Continuation Sheet 1

Section Architectural History Page 1

and Holford entrance remodel (lowering), foundation underpinning, creation of a large lecture room; 1944: completion of basement lecture room for Civilian Pilots Corp; 1968: wheelchair accessible elevator added for 1st and 2nd floor access; 1975: west entry ramp added and interior rehabilitated; 1983: north entrance, roof repairs (elastic membrane roofing added); 1989: "13th Ave. Improvements" initiative altered the southern entry and added the concrete planters and steps; 1994: reroofing, removal of two skylights, wood balusters replaced, brick columns cleaned and repointed; 2002: lower floor classroom remodel, door converted to window on south side and previously bricked in window restored on south side.

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Continuation Sheet 2

Section _____ **Statement of Significance** _____ **Page** 2

Fenton Hall is primarily significant under National Register Criterion A as the first permanent library on the UO campus and also for its association with public works programs (through the WPA) of the New Deal era. In addition, under Criterion C, it is noteworthy for its original design by Hensill, listed in the City of Eugene's register of historically significant people. Furthermore, its association with both W. C. Knighton and Ellis Lawrence, significant architects themselves, during later periods adds to the building's importance. Unfortunately, major alterations (although they are now historic themselves) have lowered the building's level of integrity. Despite the lowered integrity, Fenton Hall's significant role in early campus development and its association with architects of regional historical importance indicates that it may be considered individually eligible for the National Register.

Fenton Hall has been ranked as a secondary resource for campus planning considerations due to its high significance but fair integrity.

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Continuation Sheet 3

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Figure 1. Fenton Hall, south elevation



Figure 2. Fenton Hall, drinking bubbler