

HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM
University of Oregon Cultural Resources Survey
Eugene, Lane County, Oregon
Summer 2006, Updated 2025

RESOURCE IDENTIFICATION

Current building name: Esslinger (Arthur A.) Hall
Historic building name: Physical Education
Building address: 1525 University Street
Ranking: Tertiary

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Architectural style classification: Moderne
Building plan (footprint shape): Irregular L- shaped
Number of stories: 1.5
Foundation material(s): Poured concrete
Primary exterior wall material: Poured concrete with stucco finish
Secondary exterior wall material: N/A
Roof configuration/type: Flat
Primary roof material: Elastic sheet roofing
Primary window type: Grouped hinged sash
Primary window material: Wood
Decorative features and materials: Doors, concrete detailing around doors, gutters, paneling of concrete, planters at main entrance
Landscape features: Oaks at the entrance and shrubs in planting strip alongside west elevation, cast stone urns by PWA artist Walter Pritchard, bike racks on North Side
Associated resources: University Street Axis, connected to McArthur Court at southwest and Student Recreation Center at the northeast
Comments: The building is a low, horizontal, poured concrete structure that is simply but elegantly detailed. The building's decoration is furnished by the groupings of windows, geometric patterns in the doors and transom panels above the doors, and patterns in the concrete.

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

Date of construction: 1936
Architect: Lawrence, Holford, & Allyn
Builder/Contractor: Ross B. Hammond, General Contractor; Poole & McConigle, Inc., Structural Steel
Moved? (yes/no): No Date of move(s): N/A
Description/dates of major additions/alterations: Esslinger Hall has been remodeled periodically. The most significant alterations were the addition of a second story administrative wing, construction of the Leighton Pool, and connection to the Student Recreation Center. For details on the remodels and other alterations refer to Continuation Sheet 1.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS & SIGNIFICANCE

Original use(s) or function(s): Men's Physical Education

Current use(s) or function(s): Physical Education

Area(s) of significance: Education, Architecture, Social History

Period of significance: 1936

Statement of Significance (use continuation sheet if necessary):

The Physical Education Building is a good example of the association between campus planner and architect Ellis Lawrence with the Public Works Administration (PWA). The PWA provided the funding for the construction of the Physical Education Building and other projects built on the campus during the 1930s. The restrained quality of the building conforms to the PWA guidelines for economy as well as a growing trend in architecture toward simple forms. Esslinger Hall is a low, horizontal, poured concrete structure that is simply but elegantly detailed. The building's decoration is furnished by the groupings of windows, geometric patterns in the doors and transom panels above the doors, and patterns in the concrete. Detailing of the concrete provides the building's primary ornament. The detailing emphasizes the horizontality of the site with contrasting vertical elements highlighting the entries. The combinations of octagons and rectangles in the doors along with the horizontal band of rectangular, grouped hinged sash windows are in keeping with the emphasis on simple geometries in the Moderne style. Although the Physical Education Building is the only Lawrence project on the Oregon campus to employ the Moderne style, the massing and refined detailing is characteristic of Lawrence's work throughout the campus.

The original building contained two basketball courts, eight handball/squash courts, locker rooms, and office space. During construction, the building was attached to the existing McArthur Court by a set of doors at the southwest corner. Modifications include the addition of a second story administrative wing in 1954, construction of the swimming pool in 1958, and the remodeling of the second story to repair damage resulting from the 1971 fire. In 1975, the University renamed the building in honor of the contributions of Arthur A. Esslinger during his service as Dean of the College of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation from 1953 until 1971. The continuing growth of athletics and physical education at the University prompted the construction of the Student Recreation and Fitness Center in 1999 (designed by TBG Architects of Eugene and Cannon-Parkin of Los Angeles) which is attached to Esslinger Hall at the northeast corner.

Esslinger Hall has fair integrity. The connection of Esslinger Hall to the Recreation Center altered the north elevation of the building but the principle entry façade on the west remains intact. Updates to the interiors conform to the spatial arrangements and material quality specified by Ellis Lawrence in 1936. Esslinger Hall is well maintained and in good condition. Although it is simple in design (Criterion C), Esslinger Hall reflects the importance of athletics at the University of Oregon, as well as tell the story of the broader influence of the PWA on the design of public buildings in the United States during the 1930s (Criterion A). It has relatively low significance when considered with other campus buildings, therefore making it a tertiary resource.

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 type="checkbox"/> University archives | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UO Planning Office files | <input 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 type="checkbox"/> Historic photographs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biographical encyclopedias | <input type="checkbox"/> Obituary indexes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other see below |

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES*Books*

Shellenbarger, Michael. Ed. *Harmony in Diversity: The Architecture and Teaching of Ellis Lawrence*. Eugene: University of Oregon, 1989.

Shellenbarger, Michael and Kimberly Lakin. *Ellis Lawrence Building Survey*. Compiled by the Historic Preservation Program, School of Architecture and Allied Arts, University of Oregon. Salem, OR: State Historic Preservation Office, 1989.

Facilities Services Project Manuals

University of Oregon Facilities Services Office. *Project Manual Esslinger Hall Swimming Pool*. Facilities Services, University of Oregon, Eugene. 1958.

.*Project Manual Esslinger Hall Human Performance Lab*. Facilities Services, University of Oregon, Eugene. 1961.

Project Manual Esslinger Hall Reflooring. Facilities Services, University of Oregon, Eugene. 1964.

Project Manual Esslinger Hall Restoration Remodeling. Facilities Services, University of Oregon, Eugene. 1970.

Project Manual Esslinger Hall Men's Physical Education Building Remodeling. Facilities Services, University of Oregon, Eugene. 1975.

Project Manual Esslinger Hall Fire Protection Systems. Facilities Services, University of Oregon, Eugene. 1978.

Project Manual Esslinger Hall Energy Conservation Measure. Facilities Services, University of Oregon, Eugene. 1985.

Project Manual Academic Counseling Center. Facilities Services, University of Oregon, Eugene. 1995.

Project Manual Esslinger Hall Reroofing. Facilities Services, University of Oregon, Eugene. 1998.

Esslinger Hall Building Plans. University of Oregon Campus Planning and Facilities Services Office, Eugene.

Guides

Teague, Edward. *The Architecture of the University of Oregon A History, Bibliography, & Research Guide*. Eugene, OR: University of Oregon, 2004-2005.

University of Oregon Planning Office. *A listing of Capital Construction needs: A workbook for Capital Construction Program Preparation*. Campus Planning Reports Box 1 of 1, Special Collections, University of Oregon, Eugene. November 1987.

RECORDING INFORMATION

Researched: Jennifer L. Flathman, Erin Pochert, 01-02-2006

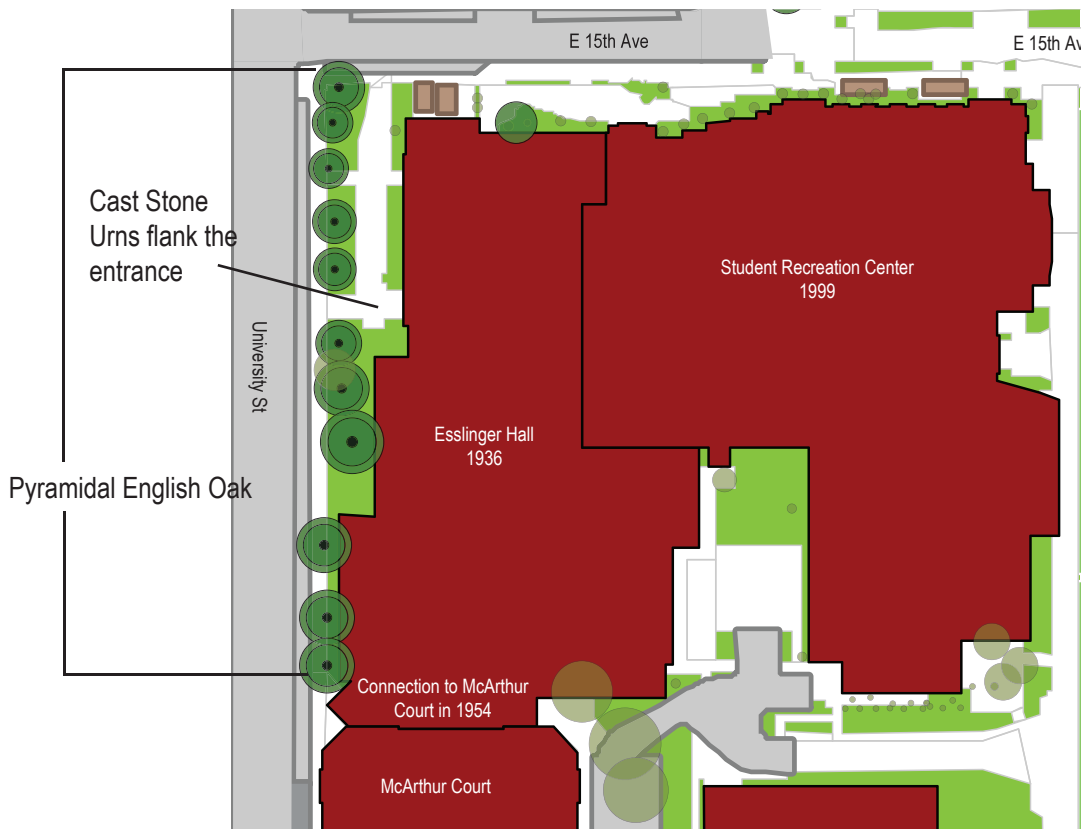
Recorded: Susan Johnson and University Planning Office, Summer 2006

Photo number or name: Esslingercropped.jpg

PHOTOGRAPH



SITE PLAN



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Continuation Sheet 1**Section Architectural History Page 1**

1954 Construction of 2nd Story Administrative offices

1958 Construction of Leighton swimming pool

1961 Remodeling of Human Performance Lab

1964 Installation of new floor

1970 Repairing and cleaning of exterior, reglazing of windows

1971 Fire

1975 Creation of women's locker room

1978 Upgrade to Fire Protection Systems

1985 Retrofits to ductwork as part of Energy Conservation Measures

1995 Remodeling for Academic Counseling Center including air distribution system and finish materials

1998 Installation of new roof

1999 Joining with Student Recreation Center addition