**RESOURCE IDENTIFICATION**

Current building name: Erb Memorial Union (the EMU)

Historic building name: Donald M. Erb Memorial Student Union, Student Union, Building 23

Building address: 1222 East 13th Ave.

Ranking: Secondary

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

Architectural style classification: International Modernism (1950), Brutalism (1972)

Building plan (footprint shape): Irregular

Number of stories: 3

Foundation material(s): Concrete

Primary exterior wall material: Brick

Secondary exterior wall material: Cut Stone and Concrete

Roof configuration/type: Flat

Primary roof material: BUR (Built Up Roofing)

Primary window type: Fixed wood frame with 8 and 12 lights and steel single-pane casement

Primary window material: Wood

Decorative features and materials: Marble at main entrance, stained glass over entry, brick and travertine fireplace

Landscape features: Brick planters, EMU lawn on the east side with established trees including the Douglas Fir “Moon Tree.” The Douglas Fir at the northeast corner of the EMU lawn grew from a seed that was among four fir seeds carries to the moon aboard Apollo XIV in 1971 by Astronaut Stuart Roosa. In 1978 the seedling was planted where Willamette Hall now stands; it was transplanted in 1987 to accommodate construction of the additions to the Science complex.

Associated resources: Amphitheater Green, 13th Ave Axis, University Street Axis, Straub Hall Green

Comments: The original portion of the EMU is a brick building with many different types of wooden and metal framed windows. It has a large concrete amphitheatre on the west side of the building and a green lawn on the east side of the building. There was a major addition in the 1970’s on the northeast side of the EMU. Built in the Brutalist style, the addition’s main building material is concrete with large metal framed, non-operable glass windows.

**ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY**

Date of construction: 1950

Architect: H. Abbott Lawrence, Tucker, & Walman

Builder/Contractor: Ross B. Hammond Company of Portland

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

**HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS & SIGNIFICANCE**

Original use(s) or function(s): Campus center, student lounges  
Current use(s) or function(s): Campus center, student lounges and offices  
Area(s) of significance: Education; Student Activism, Architecture  
Period of significance: 1950  

Statement of Significance (use continuation sheet if necessary):

Though construction of the Erb Memorial Union ended in 1950, plans, developments, and budgeting for the building started as early as 1924. There was a renewed vigor and interest in 1944 and in 1946 preliminary building plans were developed by the architectural firm of Ellis Lawrence, Tucker, and Walman. The original design was actually by Ellis Lawrence, but he passed away before the design process was completed. It was finished by his son, H. Abbott Lawrence, and the building lost much of the monumental character of the original design but still maintained its large massing. It is a reinforced concrete building with a brick veneer that covers one-third of a block in the "Heart of Campus." Construction began in 1949 and finished in 1950. Named after an ex-university president, Donald M. Erb, the student union held a cafeteria, soda bar, clubs, offices, bowling alleys, and room for dances. The second floor of the north wing is an exact replica of the Knight Library's original browsing room. It was built with intention to move some collections to this secondary browsing room to free up space in the library.

The first addition (the north addition) was completed in 1962. It consisted of a newer and larger cafeteria with more dining seats available, the finishing of the basement and first floors, and the refurbishing of eight bowling alley lanes. The architects for this addition were H. Abbott Lawrence, Tucker, & Walman. The second addition (the east addition) completed in 1972 was the construction of what is today known as the "the skylight" lounge built in the Brutalism style. Its upper floors are surrounded by glass on all sides. One of the interesting aspects of this addition is the unique old growth Douglas fir wood flooring. The architect for this addition was Colburn/Sheldon, Lutes/Amundson with James Lambert and Associates as the Landscape Architect. There were also renovations to the Fishbowl in 1980, ballroom alterations in 1986, and in 1998 an amphitheater was built at the front entrance. These additions and other interior alterations have significantly changed the original building and the landscape.

The class of 1912 gave the university a replica brass Oregon Seal. It was moved from its original location of the north walk of Villard Hall and rededicated at the Erb Memorial Union upon its construction completion.

The EMU's association with student activism is significant. The EMU was a catalyst for the students to approach the administration about an important student issue. As previously mentioned, planning for the EMU started as early as 1924, and this was mostly student organized. After WWII, there was renewed interest and involvement among students in this project, so much in fact that the administration became involved with the EMU. Alumni and the general public donated money for its construction. It was student initiated and the administration and community were drawn together in its realization.

The EMU holds some distinction for its designers (criterion C), its role in student activism (criterion A), and its continued function as a place were students could study or relax. The original portion of the EMU is in very good condition but has compromised integrity. There have been two large additions, both of which severely marred the original building in an irreversible manner. Also, the interior of this building has been remodeled many times and holds little integrity. Because of only having a fair level of integrity, the EMU is not eligible for National Register nomination. However, it is of high significance to the campus and therefore categorized as a secondary resource by the UO Planning Office.

For more information about the history of the Erb Memorial Union please reference "A Common Ground" by Adell McMillian (in Bibliography).

**NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT**

Historic Significance (check one): _X_ High _ Medium _ Low _ Very Low or None  
Integrity (check one): _ Excellent _ Good _ X Fair _ Poor  
Condition (check one): _ Excellent _ X Good _ Fair _ Poor  

Building designation: _ City Landmark _ National Register _ National Historic Landmark _ Not listed

Preliminary National Register eligibility findings:

Building is potentially eligible: _ Individually _ 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 important

If applicable, building qualifies under NR Criterion Considerations: _ Yes _ No  
If yes, which apply:

Building is NOT eligible: _ Intact but lacks distinction _ X Altered/loss of integrity _ Not 50 years old
DOCUMENTATION

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

- University archives
- Sanborn maps
- State Archives
- Local Historic Society
- Biographical encyclopedias
- UO Planning Office files
- Building permits
- State Library
- Personal interviews
- Obituary indexes
- Newspapers
- SHPO files
- State Historic Society
- Historic photographs
- Other: see below

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

“A Common Ground: the Erb Memorial Union from 1950-2000”
By: Adell McMillian
Published/Printed by: the University of Oregon
Copyright: 2003 by the Erb Memorial Union

“The Getty Foundation Campus Heritage Grant”
Published by: the University of Oregon
Copyright: 2005 by the University of Oregon

“Oregon Inventory of Historic Property: Ellis Lawrence Survey”
By: Ellis Lawrence
Published/Printed by the University of Oregon, Historic Preservation Program School of Architecture and Allied Arts for SHPO, Copyright: 1989

University of Oregon Campus Planning Office and Facilities Services files and building plans

RECORDING INFORMATION

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