

**Historic Property** Armory  
**Inventory Report for** 515 South Eastside Olympia, Thurston 98501

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**LOCATION SECTION**

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Historic Name: Armory Field Site No.: 569  
Common Name: (#34-413) OAHP No.:  
Property Address: 515 South Eastside Olympia, Thurston 98501  
Comments: OLYMPIA/OLYWOMEN

County Township/Range/EW Section 1/4 Sec 1/4 1/4 Sec Quadrangle  
           T18R02w 14 SE TUMWATER

**UTM Reference**

Zone: 10 Spatial Type: Point Acquisition Code: TopoZone.com  
Sequence: 0 Easting: 508560 Northing: 5209890

Tax No./Parcel No. Plat/Block/Lot  
78204900000 Swans Blk 49

Supplemental Map(s) Acreage  
City of Olympia Planning Department 1.72

**IDENTIFICATION SECTION**

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Field Recorder: Shanna Stevenson Date Recorded: 9/18/1985 Survey Name: OLYMPIA

Owner's Name: State of Washington Owner Address: G. A. Building City/State/Zip: Olympia, WA 98504

Classification: Building Resource Status Survey/Inventory Comments

Within a District? Yes

Contributing?

National Register Nomination: 0

Local District:

National Register District/Thematic Nomination Name: 690

**DESCRIPTION SECTION**

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Historic Use: Defense - Arms Storage

Current Use: Defense - Arms Storage

Plan: Rectangle No. of Stories:

Structural System: Balloon Frame

Changes to plan: Intact

Changes to original cladding: Intact

Changes to windows: Intact

Changes to interior: Slight

Changes to other:

Other (specify):

Cladding Concrete

Style Art Deco - Streamlined Moderne

Roof Material Asphalt / Composition - Rolled

Foundation Concrete - Poured

Form/Type

Roof Type Unknown

Barrel Vault

**NARRATIVE SECTION**

Study Unit

Other

Date Of Construction: 1939

Architecture/Landscape Architecture

Women's History

Architect: Wohleb & Borhek

Builder:

Engineer:

Property appears to meet criteria for the National Register of Historic Places:

Yes

Property is located in a historic district (National and/or local):

No

Property potentially contributes to a historic district (National and/or local):

**Statement of Significance**

The Armory is a fine example of the Art Deco/Moderne style as interpreted by Joseph Wohleb for a public structure. The building was designed jointly by Wohleb and Roland E. Borhek in 1939. The structure was home of the 248th Coastal Artillery and the building displays the crest of that group on its front façade. The National Guard mobilized here in 1943. During World War II, the state militia held forth at the Armory and it is currently used by the National Guard. The 248th was later the 205th Coastal Anti-Aircraft Unit.

During World War II, the Armory was the location of the "Filter Board" which was an aircraft monitoring center. Enemy aircraft spotters reported via radio to volunteer staff, many of whom were women, at the Armory on what kinds of aircraft were noted. The range of the Olympia Filter Board was as far away as the Olympic Peninsula because the Olympic Mountains prevented radio waves from reaching Seattle to which Olympia reported. Filter Board workers staffed "jacks" to listen to spotters.

**Description of Physical Appearance**

The Armory, along with its grounds, occupies a full city block. Fronted by a circular driveway and a tall flagpole, the imposing Art Moderne-style concrete structure is two stories tall and has a central vaulted roof surrounded by flat-roofed extensions. The smooth concrete walls form a plinth at their base, above which they are punctuated by recessed vertical bands of fluted concrete containing the windows, which are narrow steel casements. The alternating smooth and fluted concrete bands form a slightly crenelated parapet at the top of the walls. Centered on the symmetrical front (east) facade and approached by wide steps, the triple doors of the main entrance are recessed within a wide segmental arch topped by a row of small sculpted shields and moderne-style letters spelling "Armory". Flanking the archway are tall fluted pilasters which rise to the roofline, ornamented by small vertical bands of glass block at their bases. Above the entry at the apex of the vaulted roof is a large streamlined eagle, sculpted in relief. The projecting stair towers on the north and south facades are also ornamented with vertical bands of fluted concrete and lit by bands of glass block. The building is unaltered from the original and still used for its original purpose. It is maintained in good condition.

**Major Bibliographic References**

Stevenson, Shanna, "Victorian Olympia Walking Tour," 1981.  
Maddox, Dawn, "Joseph Wohleb: resident architect of the State Capital," Landmarks Vol. IV No. 4.  
Interview with Caroline Hartsuck Wright who served as a Filter Board operator in 1942 in Olympia.  
Gregory, V. J. Keepers at the Gate, Port Townsend: Port Townsend Publishing Co., 1976.

**PHOTOS**



View of East facade, SW corner, entry detail

taken 9/18/1985

Photography Neg. No. (Roll No./Frame No.):

17-31A

Comments: