

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

**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 13<sup>th</sup> 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 carried 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, 13<sup>th</sup> 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  
Description/dates of major additions/alterations: 1954 electronic chimes installed (as a gift from classes of 1943, 1953, and alumni leaders); Northwest Addition 1962; East Addition 1972; interior renovation (Fishbowl) 1980; Ballroom alterations 1986; Amphitheater (1998) by Landscape Architects Cameron McCarthy Gilbert & Scheibe; interior remodels between 1951-2005; glass replacements 1980; bowling alley conversion 1986; reroofing 1987, 1992, and 1995; brick paving 1986; tunnel addition 1990; Child Care and Development Center remodel 1996; Craft Center expansion and Women's Center expansion 2004.

**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 where 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): ☒ High    ☐ Medium    ☐ Low    ☐ Very Low or None

Integrity (check one):    ☐ Excellent    ☐ Good    ☒ Fair    ☐ Poor

Condition (check one):    ☐ Excellent    ☒ Good    ☐ Fair    ☐ Poor

Building designation:    ☐ City Landmark    ☐ National Register    ☐ National Historic Landmark    ☒ Not listed

Preliminary National Register eligibility findings

Building 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 important

If 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 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**

"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**

Researched: Erin Pochert and Jennifer Flathman, Winter 2006

Recorded: Susan Johnson and University Planning Office, Summer 2006

Photo number or name: EMU pic

**PHOTOGRAPH****SITE PLAN**