

# Building Remodels and an Open House, 1969-71



One of the historic moves that occurred in this office was due to a consolidation of functions. In 1969, the **Vancouver Newsletter** reported that “Federal Projects Division personnel transferred to Vancouver the week of November 10.”

Up until then, the Vancouver campus had been home to Survey, Design, Materials, and Electronics offices, as well as the Equipment Depot for BLM roads. “Administrative

functions were all handled out of the Regional Office in Portland,” recalled retiree **Vern Ford** in a 2008 interview. The Federal Projects “oversight work was done by the Division Offices in each State...”

Additional staff on the premises required additional office space, so the facilities crew went to work making room for them. Most of the work would be done on the current two-story building, then known as “Building

C,” and on the building which stretched to the west along Fifth Street, “Building A.”

“When I first came to work here in 1954,” Vern recalled, “the design section was upstairs in the front half of the building.”

The offices terminated at a fire door near where the second floor restrooms are located. The north end of the second floor was all warehouse space.

## Western Federal Lands Highway Division

### *A Glimpse into an Earlier Era*

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**Compiled from Newsletters (1969-71) and Interviews (2008)**

*Moving the Federal Projects Division into Vancouver required a series of upgrades to the buildings and office space, and the Vancouver Newsletter chronicled the office and staff relocations.*

Above: The building that originally stood on East 5th Street to the west of WFLHD’s existing facilities. The elevator tower of the current building shows above the roof in this 1965 photo. WFLHD Archives.

## Survey and Design Branch move to first floor



Before the 1971 remodel, the second floor design section would have looked much the same as in this 1965 photo.

Moves to accommodate the new staff and new arrangements were outlined week by week in the Vancouver Newsletter, and February 5, 1970, was moving day for the Survey and Design Branch:

“The ground floor offices are now finished and the following sections are now located there: Aerial Surveys, National Park Projects, Oregon Forest Highway Projects, and BLM Projects.”

Beyond that second floor fire door, retiree **John Bucholtz** recalled, “there was a partition made of plywood, and two flat desks, and a coffee urn, and that was the coffee room.”

The newsletter reported that “effective February 13, the new coffee-lunch room facilities will be in operation on the ground floor and coffee service on the second floor will be discontinued.”

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### *Office moves were reported week by week in the Vancouver Newsletter*

On June 19, it was noted, construction of “new office space for Mr. Mors and the Administration Branch is underway and should be ready for occupancy July 1.”

John Mors was the Division Engineer; the Division Director’s office still occupies the same space it did after that remodel.

“Upgrading the conference room lighting has been

studied and plans are to have this work accomplished the first week in July,” the newsletter continued. “The Idaho Design Section will be moved as soon as possible to this space.

“An interior stairway has been designed and will be advertised for June 29 bid opening.”

About a month later, on July 24, the report was that “work is now being done on the Property and Supply Section.

“Relighting of the old classroom is completed and as soon as telephone service is available, the Idaho Design Unit will be moved into that space.”

When the stairway was completed, the September 4 newsletter warned employees: “Please do not use new stairway until temporary covering has been applied. Carpeting is on order which will be applied with adhesive. If stairs get dirty, adhesive will not stick.”



The southwest corner of Building C, 1965.

## Interior stairway is added

By September 25, it was reported that the “Interior Stairway will be open for use as soon as hand rails are installed.”

Until that time, the only entrance to the design floor was the outside stairway on the southwest corner. Just inside the entrance, John Bucholtz remembered, was a cubicle. “The secretary was there, and they had an office back in the corner for the head of the Design Section.”

He added that the area that now includes the Washington Conference Room “was all open, with flat desks for design, when I walked in the door in 1958.”

Both Vern and John recalled that an automotive paint shop originally occupied the southwest corner of the first floor. At some point after it was turned into office space, it was occupied by Contracting staff.



Another 1965 view of second floor office space, looking toward the northeast corner.

### *An automotive paint shop once occupied the SW corner of the first floor*

The September 25 Newsletter reported that the “Contracts and Procurement move and consolidation of functions will be completed as soon as telephone service is installed.” That was accomplished November 6.

John remembered that the first computer room was built in the 1960’s “right by the windows” on the second floor. “They had an old IBM that was probably as big as” a small office.

By the end of October, the “Computing Section” was ready to be relocated to Building A: “moving of the computer and peripheral equipment is scheduled for Friday, October 30. The major portion of the relocation is planned to be accomplished over the weekend.”

The final remodel of 1970 was reported November 13: “Remodeling of former ADP space for Design Section purposes is expected to be completed the first week in December. Relocation of personnel will be accomplished as soon as space is available.”

By February 1971, most of the major moves had been completed, and an open house was organized to celebrate this accomplishment. “All FHWA employees and retirees, as well as the general public, will be invited to view our remodeled quarters February 23. Conducted tours will visit Materials,



A display in the foyer during a 1973 open house.

## Western Federal Lands Highway Division

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<http://www.wfl.fhwa.dot.gov/about/history/articles.htm>



*The stories in this series have been developed by Marili Reilly from archive files, interviews, and correspondence.*

### *A Glimpse into an Earlier Era*

## An Open House is held during National Engineers Week

Electronics, Survey, Design, and the warehouse and shops. The date was selected to coincide with National Engineer's Week."



Above and at right: Employees and visitors at a 1973 Open House.

Among the visitors to the Division and the open house were Hobson Adkins and Bob Stanley from Washington, D.C.; Fred Behring from Region 7; J. L. Budwig from Region 15 FHWA; O. L.

Homme, Idaho Division; J. P. Clark, Washington Division; R. E. Simpson, Oregon Division; H. N. Stewart, Montana Division; and R. A. Quist, Alaska Division.

Messrs. French, Tarbet, Struble, and Roy Davis were among retirees who attended. Also present were the Vancouver Mayor, staff from BLM,



Washington's State representatives, Ridgefield school children, a Cub Scout den, and Channel 6 TV.

"More people are now aware of the proposal to move Region 8 to Seattle," the newsletter noted, "and our reluctance to leave the Portland-Vancouver area."