



VALLE'S SANDWICH SHOP

ADDRESS

660 Forest Avenue

Architect

William Nelson Jacobs Associates

DATES

1964

Style

Modern/Contemporary

The building at 660 Forest Avenue was purpose-built in 1964 to house Valle's Sandwich Shop, a short-lived smaller-scale arm of Valle's Steak House, a very successful restaurant business with 25 locations along the East Coast that operated from 1933 to 2000. The building was designed by the Boston-based firm of William Nelson Jacobs Associates and it remains one of Portland's few extant and largely unaltered Modern/Contemporary structures.

Located in the center of Woodford's Corner, this Mid-Century Modern building faces the Chapman Building and the block erected for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows across the main intersection of Forest Avenue, Woodford Street, and Deering Avenue. Although distinct in both scale and architectural style from these older structures, the building at 660 Forest Avenue echoes their flatiron façades in its diagonally-oriented placement on the corner. Its dynamic positioning re-interprets their strong street level presence with a projecting three bay façade, large floor-to-ceiling windows capped with a tripartite parallel gable roof, and exaggerated angular overhangs. The rear ell of the building is rectangular and has a flat roof. Other Valle's locations also featured this unique three-bay façade and exaggerated roofline, a characteristic referenced in the company's mid-century logo (Fig. 2).

Donald Della Valle emigrated from Italy to Portland in 1912 and opened the 12-seat Valle's Café in the Woodford's Corner area at the end of Prohibition in 1933. The first steak house, located at 660 Forest Avenue after World War II, was a one story building and contained a large sign projecting from the flat roof

above the front door (Fig. 1). In 1960, the restaurant business was moved from this location in Woodford's Corner to Brighton Avenue and in 1962, Valle was granted permission to demolish a theater adjacent to his Woodford's Corner lot with the notation, "Land to be built on later". The current structure was built on the site of the former steak house and theater in 1964 and operated as a sandwich shop for a short period, before serving as the corporate offices for Valle's Steak House from 1966 until 2000.

As with the current building, the space at the rear of the earlier structure was shared with another commercial enterprise; in 1950, the popular New England chain Benjamin Franklin general store occupied the secondary space and today the commercial space in the rear ell is used by a combination dry cleaners and tanning salon. Since the building's construction, no major alterations have taken place. Valle's Incorporated, which retains ownership of the building, received permission in summer 2015 to convert the office space back into a restaurant; in the plans submitted, no major alterations will be made to the structure, and no business name or estimated opening date have been filed.



Figure. 1



Figure. 2