

CONTEXT STATEMENT

DENNY TRIANGLE

HISTORIC SURVEY AND INVENTORY

PREPARED FOR: THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM
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2006 DENNY TRIANGLE UNION HISTORIC SURVEY AND INVENTORY

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Denny Triangle Neighborhood Boundaries and Definitions

The Denny Triangle neighborhood, as defined for this study, covers the area bounded by Denny Way to the north, Westlake Avenue to the west, Olive Way to the south and a portion of I-5 to the east. Other properties, sometimes associated with the “Denny Triangle,” which are sited along the west side of Westlake and beyond, were not covered in this survey and inventory. The expression “Denny Triangle” is fairly recent. The term and concept were used very little, until they appeared in planning discussions and studies, which date from the 1990s. The “Denny Triangle,” at first, was thought of as left-over space, set between a series of better known neighborhoods, which, except for South Lake Union/ Cascade, had been studied in greater depth. In fact, captions on some historical photographs identify buildings in the Denny Triangle area as being in “Cascade,” another area that has not always been clearly defined. In any case, since the 1990s, the Denny Triangle has become a much more distinct neighborhood, which nevertheless has strong ties with its neighbors.

The history of the Denny Triangle is therefore tied to that of the Cascade and South Lake Union neighborhoods to the north, to that of the official “Denny Regrade,” sited to the west, and to the general history of the Downtown Core to the south. Before the completion of I-5 in the 1960s, the area’s topography and history were also clearly tied to that of present-day Capitol Hill. In general, the topography and physical characteristics of the Denny Triangle area has evolved along with neighboring areas, first as a result of natural phenomena and then as a result of construction and major engineering feats.

Geological Formations

Geological studies suggest that, about 12,000 to 15,000 years ago, glaciers formed Denny Hill and the vicinity of the southern shores of Lake Union, as well as the neighboring Queen Anne Hill and

Capitol Hill area. When the glaciers retreated, a basin of organic peat was left on the site of the future Lake Union, while glacial till covered the nearby Denny, Queen Anne Hill and Capitol Hill ridge. The southern portion of what became known as Denny Hill was located just west of the present-day Denny Triangle and also extended north into the western portion the present South Lake Union area, (roughly from Aurora Avenue north to at least 9th Avenue North). In addition, we know that the site of the South Lake Union/ Cascade neighborhoods evolved into forested, sloping land. Based on this information and on later maps and photographs of the general area, it seems that the present Denny Triangle area merely constituted a southern portion of this forested area.

The northern portion of the area, the present South Lake Union/ Cascade neighborhoods consisted of a portion of Denny Hill and a lower area corresponding to the east side of South Lake Union neighborhood and the Cascade neighborhood. This northern area appears to have had a topography, which was somewhat more varied and dramatic than the Denny Triangle area and eventually sloped down to the South Lake Union basin; however, the more southern portion, now represented by the Denny Triangle, was generally accessible from the eastern portion of the South Lake Union area, as well as the present day Cascade (9th Avenue to Eastlake Avenue East).¹

Native Americans

Because the notion of a distinct area corresponding to the Denny Triangle is such a recent one, there are no specific early accounts of a Native American presence in the Denny Triangle area. By the early 1850s, however, pioneers did explore the general area associated with South Lake Union and Cascade, with which the present Denny Triangle is closely tied. They describe dispersed Duwamish encampments in several locations, not far from the Denny Triangle: sited next to a stream at 8th and Thomas Street or near what is now Westlake Avenue; and farther north, near the shores of South Lake Union. There are descriptions of Native Americans hunting for deer and elk, drying fish and clams for food and gathering root vegetables as well as plants, to supplement their fish and meat diet. Presumably, since the distances were not far, encampments, as well as hunting and gathering activities, would have spread into the Denny Triangle area, as well into present day Denny Regrade/ Belltown. The Duwamish also used a trail that connected the south end of Lake Union to Elliott Bay, which may have run along Dexter Avenue.² This route would have run close to the present western boundary of the Denny Triangle and therefore also suggests early use of the area. In any

case, by 1862, the pioneer settlers had built a road along what is now Dexter Avenue North, which connected Lake Union to Elliott Bay and were familiar with the general area.

The arrival of the pioneers saw transformations of the area, although, at first, these were gradual and somewhat subtle. Although the main pioneer settlement was originally concentrated within the original city of Seattle, located in the present Pioneer Square Historic District, the Bells, in addition to the Dennys and Mercers all staked claims north of the original heart of the city.³

William and Sarah Bell – the Bell Family and the Bell Properties

William N. Bell and his wife, Sarah A. Bell, were part of the original Denny Party, which arrived on the brig *Exact* in 1851. The Denny Party included the Denny, Terry, Boren and Low families, who originally settled at Alki. By 1852, the Bells, Dennys and Borens would relocate to homesteads off of Elliott Bay.

William Nathaniel Bell was the grandson of Nathaniel Bell, who had been born in North Carolina, but moved to St. Clair County, Illinois in 1819. William Bell was also the son of Susan Meacham, who was originally from Vermont and of Jesse Bell, a North Carolina native, who moved to Illinois in 1811. He was born on a farm near Edwardsville, Illinois in 1817. Bell was thirty four years old and his wife, the former Sarah Ann Peter, was thirty two, when they arrived at Alki in the winter of 1851. They had also brought their four children: Laura Keziah Bell, (born on November 19, 1842), Olive Julia Bell (born on March 20, 1846), Mary Virginia Bell (born August 26, 1847) and Alvina Lavis Bell (born in February 6, 1851). A son, Austin Americus Bell, was born in 1854 and was the second pioneer child to be born in Seattle.⁴

The Bell claim included the land sited between Elliott Bay and Yale Avenue and from Denny Way to Pine Street. The claim therefore included the present-day Belltown/Denny Regrade area, as well as the Denny Triangle. In fact, the Denny Triangle plats are described as belonging to the “Heirs of Sarah A. Bell,” (usually “second addition”). According to Mary McLaughlan, a direct descendant of Laura Keziah Bell, when William Bell took possession of his claim, he symbolically felled a tree. He cut the tree into lengths, which he then notched and used to build the “foundation” for the Bell cabin, which he began to build in April of 1852. David and Louisa Denny owned the neighboring

claim, which ran from the southern shore of Lake Union to what is now Denny Way, an area, which includes the present Seattle Center grounds, as well as the main part of the South Lake Union neighborhood.

The Dennys remained on their claim and showed a strong sense of civic duty and great endurance. They donated a five acre portion of their land for the creation of a public cemetery, which later became Denny Park.⁵ David Denny also purchased the existing Lake Union Lumber and Manufacturing Company in 1884 and renamed it the Western Mill. According to Clarence Bagley, this business, the first lumber mill not located along Seattle's waterfront, thrived under Denny's management for the next eleven years; although D.T Denny and sons lost a significant amount of money on streetcar investments right before the Depression of 1893.⁶ In contrast, the Bells, once they had staked their claim, were almost immediately beset by challenges, which did not encourage them to stay on their claim or even to remain in the Seattle area during the 1850s and 1860s.

One of the turning points in the life of the Bell Family was the Battle of Seattle in 1856. This was a one day battle in Seattle between Native American tribes and local pioneers. It was part of a larger set of clashes, which had been occurring for months, mainly in southern King County, between the end of 1855 and early 1856. The clashes were caused by dissatisfaction among some of the Native American tribes over a series of treaties between them and the U. S. Government. In treaties such as the Point Elliott Treaty, tribes had typically agreed to relocate to reservations and to cede their lands, in return for cash and access to traditional hunting and fishing grounds. The provisions of many of the treaties had begun to seem questionable to many of the tribes. In addition, the treaties were often not ratified by the U. S. Congress for long stretches of time. For instance, the Point Elliott Treaty, which had been accepted by Chief Seattle, Chief of the Duwamish and Suquamish tribes, along with the leaders from other Puget Sound Tribes, such as the Snoqualmie, Snohomish, Lummi and Skagit, in early 1855, was not actually ratified by the United States Congress until 1859.⁷

According to most accounts, on January, 1856, Chief Seattle and his daughter, Princess Angeline, gave friendly warning of the imminent attack to local pioneers. The Seattle pioneers, as well as

refugees from south King County, found safe haven in a blockhouse, located on what is now First Avenue and Cherry St, in the present-day Pioneer Square Historic District. Artillery fire from the U. S. Navy sloop, Decatur put an end to the attack.⁸ During the one day battle, however, the Bell house, built on the site of the earlier cabin, was burned to the ground, although the outhouses remained. Around the time of the war, Bell had actually removed with his family to a house he shared with the Holgate Family at Second and Cherry.⁹ Still, the destruction of his Belltown house, made a profound impression on him. In a letter written to Arthur Denny two days after the Battle, William Bell seemed convinced that the attacking tribes would return: “The Indians we suppose are back near the lake (Washington) where they must be from 500 to 1000 strong and say they will give us three months siege..” In fact, later attacks, which were rare, also turned out to be very minor.¹⁰

Another serious challenge was Sarah Bell’s health. According to Marilyn McLaughlan, Sarah Bell had tuberculosis.¹¹ Even before the Battle of Seattle, the Bell daughters had been caring for their mother. It is generally thought that the fears over another possible attack and the problem of Sarah Bell’s health convinced the family to move away from Seattle to a sunnier clime.¹² Soon after the Battle of Seattle, William and Sarah Bell and their children moved to Napa, California. Unfortunately, Sarah Bell only survived until June 27 of 1856. After the marriage of his first daughter, Laura, in Napa Valley in 1858, Bell also spent some time in Nevada. Only at the request of David Denny, did Bell return for a time to the Seattle area in the 1860s, in order to plat his land. William Bell, however, did not permanently return to his land claim until 1870.¹³

Upon his return to Seattle in 1870, Bell found that his land was very valuable. He sold a number of his lots, although he seems to have kept the bulk of his original claim.¹⁴ He is credited by Clarence Bagley for his generosity and his civic engagement upon his return to Seattle. Bell apparently donated houses or sold them at very low prices to “poor men,” when the local economy was in a particularly bad state. He donated two blocks of his waterfront property to an old barrel factory and another Belltown site for a church. He was a lifelong member of the Oddfellows and helped to establish Lodge 7 of the Oddfellows in Belltown.¹⁵ He also built the Bell Hotel, just north of the site of the future Austin Bell Building, originally commissioned by Austin Bell.¹⁶ In both Belltown and the Denny Triangle area, one of William Bell’s most obvious legacies is the naming of streets, several of which he named after his children. For instance, Olive Street was named after Olive Julia

Bell and Virginia Street was named after Mary Virginia Bell, who was usually called Virginia.¹⁷ In addition, Stewart Street was named after Olive Bell's husband, Joseph H. Stewart.¹⁸

William Bell mostly remained in Seattle from 1870 until his death in 1887, although he apparently traveled to Illinois in 1872 to marry Lucy Gamble.¹⁹ He was subject to fits of depression and by 1881, was an invalid. Meanwhile, Austin Bell, who was about two years old, when his mother, Sarah Bell died, had remained in California for most the decade between 1877 and 1887. Upon William Bell's death, Austin returned to Seattle to administer the properties he had inherited. He commissioned Elmer Fisher to design the building now known as the "Austin Bell Building," but never saw its completion. Although Austin Bell was very financially successful, he was afraid that he had inherited his father's mental problems and took his life in April of 1889.²⁰ The lives of the various members of the various Bell family members, including their personal reverses, partially explain the way in which the Denny Triangle developed, particularly in the 1880s and 1890s.

The Physical Development of the Denny Triangle in the 1880s and 1890s

The development of the Denny Triangle area is less well documented than that of the neighboring David and Arthur A. Denny land holdings. According to historic sources and maps, these appear to have developed more consistently between 1852 and 1893. The Denny Triangle area does not even appear in any detail on Sanborn Maps from 1888.²¹ The Bell Family's absence from the Seattle area between 1856 and 1870, as well as William Bell's subsequent illness between 1881 and 1887, partly explains this. In addition, the area represented by Belltown, located along Elliott Bay and closer to the heart of Seattle, would have been considered more valuable and worthy of development. What became the Denny Triangle area, although laid out in lots by 1888, does not appear to have been given as much attention. Austin Bell's death in 1889, as well the Fire of 1889 in what was considered the "heart of the city", (Pioneer Square Historic District), caused Belltown and what became the Denny Triangle area to be further neglected.²²

Nevertheless, the famous panoramic map of Seattle, produced by Augustus Koch in 1891, shows that, even in this period, the Denny Triangle area was somewhat built up. David Denny's neighboring property had a street grid, which would be more or less recognizable today, but still had street names such as Moltke, (Boren Street), Bismark (Terry), Rollin (Westlake) and Orion (9th

Avenue). In comparison, within the future Denny Triangle, the named streets, especially Virginia, Olive and Stewart Streets, are already shown on Koch's map. Still there are also some very obvious differences with today's names. The present Denny Way was named "Depot Street." It had been given this name by David Denny, who anticipated that the street would eventually lead to a train depot, but it never did. Depot Street was later renamed in David and Louisa Denny's honor.²³ What became Terry Avenue was "10th Avenue; Boren Avenue was "11th Street"; Minor Avenue was 12th Avenue and what later became Howard Street and then, Yale Avenue, was 13th Avenue.

According to the 1891 map, as in the case of the David Denny property, developed lots in the future Denny Triangle are the site of modest, frame buildings with pitched roofs. Some lots are undeveloped and are shown with green pasture, especially in the northwest portion of the area. Other lots, such as the rectangular lots located between Lenora and Virginia Streets and 8th and 7th Streets (now Avenues) or between Virginia and Stewart Streets and 8th and 9th Streets, are clearly filled with many frame buildings. Rollin Street, later called Westlake Avenue, runs from the South Lake Union shore near David Denny's Western Mill to where Lenora crosses 8th and simply stops. Between Howell and Olive streets, to the east of 13th St, (later renamed Howard Street and then Yale Avenue), there is one more developed lot.

To the east, in the area corresponding to present-day I-5 and to Capitol Hill, development thins out considerably. Not surprisingly, the entire neighboring Capitol Hill area is sparsely developed, although Broadway is already clearly represented. To the west, Belltown is shown with both frame houses, as well as a few multi-story brick buildings, especially along Front Street (First Avenue), several of which remain today. Also in the vicinity of the future Denny Triangle, but slightly outside of the boundaries, several brick buildings, which are identified, stand out. On the south side of Howell, between 5th and 6th Avenues is the "Power House of the South Electric Street Railway." And, although, it was, in fact, located well outside the Denny Triangle boundaries, a large, imposing pile was the Denny Hotel, located at 2nd and Virginia.²⁴

A Baist Map of 1893 gives further clues concerning the Denny Triangle's physical development. Some of the present triangular blocks, located due south of Depot Street/ Denny Way did not exist. Instead, the prevailing regular grid of the other streets tended to cut through what are now triangular

blocks. Particularly as one moves east, in a few cases, streets and alleys were marked as not yet having been opened up. Toward the south of the area, there are several notations, which refer to “tenements” and “vacant tenements,” particularly in the vicinity of 9th and Stewart St. Also, the “Hotel Bowers” was located at the northeast corner of Stewart and 6th.

The 1893 Baist Map gives further indications concerning the economy and demographics of the area. There were a few industrial businesses, such as the “Brass Foundry,” located just south of the southeast corner of 7th and Virginia Street. Close to this and south of it, was the “Central Mill” owned by James Buchanan. Not far from these, to the northwest, at 6th and Virginia, was the Norwegian Baptist Church at the corner of 6th and Virginia St. A Swedish Church, identified in later maps as the Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Church, stood at the corner of 8th Avenue, between Stewart and Olive Streets and adjacent to Pacific and Puget Sound Bottling Works. Located along Stewart Street, way to the east, were several additional industrial businesses: Dyer and Fred Stone & Sewer Pipe was sited on the east side of 12th. Seattle Artificial Stone and Sewer Pipe and a “copper shop” were located between Stewart and Howell Streets, on the west side of Thirteenth Street.

South of Olive Way, just outside our present boundaries, the area in 1893 was slightly more heavily developed, with additional industrial businesses. Non-residential tenants included what is described on the 1893 Baist map as the “Union Electric Company, formerly Home Electric Company/ Seattle Consolidated Street Railway,” shown in the 1891 Koch Map as the “South Electric Street Railway”; the “Cascade Laundry Barn” on the northwest side of 6th and Pine St; “5th and Pine Livery Feed and Sales ” on the southwest corner of 5th and Pine St; the “Portland Cracker Company Candy Block” located at 6th and Pine Street and just south of it, the “Crescent Manufacturing Company.” (This is most likely the same company that by 1914, was housed in Pioneer Square off of present day Occidental Mall and Jackson Street). In the vicinity, there were also additional religious edifices, such as the Welsh Presbyterian Church on the southeast side of Olive St and 7th Avenue and the German Evangelical Church, located mid-block, off of the southwest corner of Olive Way and 7th.²⁵

Early Religious Buildings and Populations –1880s to the early 1900s

Throughout the 1890s at least until the early 1900s, the area, much like the Cascade/ South Lake Union to which the Denny Triangle is tied, was a combination of modest frame houses, church buildings and a few industrial businesses. Churches played a particularly important social role. Usually distinctly identified as “Lutheran,” “Baptist” or by other denominations, they often served congregations with well-defined national backgrounds, many originally from Scandinavian countries. Of course, since by 1910, it is estimated that Scandinavians represented 31.9% of the Seattle population, this is perhaps not that surprising.²⁶

The Norwegian Baptist Church, sometimes described as the Norwegian Danish Baptist Church, located at the corner of 6th and Virginia, was photographed by Frank LaRoche in 1891.²⁷ Like most of the early churches from this period, it was a striking vernacular wooden building with Gothic revival detailing. It served members of Danish and Norwegian backgrounds. In addition, an earlier Immanuel Lutheran Church was built in 1892 at Olive and Minor Avenue. It too served a congregation composed of recent Norwegian immigrants. In 1907, the Immanuel Lutheran congregation picked a site for a new building at Thomas Street and Pontius Avenue North, in the present-day Cascade neighborhood. The later church building, completed in 1912, is one of the few extant early wooden churches in Seattle (and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places).²⁸ Early photographs and the exterior of this building, give a strong sense of the general appearance of the early wooden church buildings in the Denny Triangle and Cascade. In addition, the relocation of the Immanuel Lutheran Church building suggests that there was no real distinction between present-day Cascade and the Denny Triangle area.

A church building for the Swedish Lutheran Evangelical Church, the original name for the present-day Gethsemane Lutheran Church, stood originally on 8th Avenue between Stewart and Howell Streets. The church built a second wooden building on the present Gethsemane Lutheran Church site in 1901. This second wooden church remained on the site until its demolition during the second phase of the construction of the Modernist church, around 1960.²⁹ In addition, by 1905, the Swedish Hall was located in the vicinity of the northeast corner of Olive and Pine Street. The German Evangelical Church located in 1893, mid-block, off of the southwest corner of Olive Way and 7th, had moved to the east side of the Swedish Lutheran Church by 1905. Welsh Presbyterians were

well represented by their church located on the south side of Olive, east of the Seattle Electric Company, well into the 1900s.³⁰

In addition, in 1895, slightly to the north of the Denny Triangle, on the edge of the present Cascade neighborhood, an ensemble of wooden buildings was erected at 817 Lakeview Avenue to house St. Spiridon church. The congregation included Serbs, Russians and Greeks, who continued to live in the general neighborhood, for years to come.³¹

In general, the Denny Triangle developed very much in the same way as Cascade. By the 1900s, the population was a mix of nationalities, with a preponderance of Scandinavians, but also most likely included Greeks and Russians. From the 1850s to the 1900s, the neighborhood evolved from a wilder landscape to a neighborhood of frame houses, often workingmen's cottages, gardens and picket fences, interspersed with several churches, as well as a few industrial businesses, where the local population was often employed.³² Unlike the Cascade/ South Lake Union area, however, there are currently no remaining frame houses from this period. The Denny Triangle area and the Cascade/ South Lake Union area, however, particularly in this early period, continued to be tied together by transportation lines.

Early Transportation

Transportation lines from what became the South Lake Union and Cascade neighborhoods to downtown Seattle and the waterfront often ran close to or within the Denny Triangle. By the early 1880s, Frank Osgood's horse drawn car system, the Seattle Street Railway Company, ran several lines from South Lake Union to downtown, including one that ran along what later became Westlake Avenue, at least north of Denny Way.³³

By the late 1880s, Luther Henry Griffith and several other notable Seattleites organized an electric streetcar system, the West Street, Lake Union and Park Transit Company. The system included a line which would carry passengers from Pike Street, along a new thoroughfare, corresponding to present day Westlake Avenue, to the shores of Lake Union (and back). Not long before the Great Depression of 1893, D. T. Denny & Sons, David Denny's company, bought Griffith's streetcar holdings. Given the economic situation, David Denny lost a large amount of money on the streetcar

lines and was insolvent.³⁴ He sold both the Western Mill and the streetcar lines, which by 1900, were consolidated with other streetcar lines as the Seattle Electric Company.³⁵

The Seattle Electric Company maintenance buildings and freight yard were sited on two blocks located between Olive and Pine Streets and between Fifth and Seventh Avenues. The 1905 Baist Map shows that several electric street car lines ran from the South Lake Union and Cascade area through the Denny Triangle and then to Downtown and back. The map indicates a dotted line, anticipating the future construction of the future Westlake Avenue, south of Denny Way. It also shows a streetcar line, which starts north of Denny Way and then more or less follows the short length of Westlake (from Denny Way to 8th and Lenora Street, shown on the 1891 and 1893 maps), then veers for two blocks along Eighth Avenue and then turns at Stewart Street, which it follows for two more blocks, before turning south and following Sixth Avenue, veering again onto Seneca Street, to eventually arrive closer to the waterfront. The same map also includes an electric car line, which runs along Eastlake, from north of Denny Way and then along Howell, south of Denny Way, within the Denny Triangle. It then turns south at the northwest corner of Olive Way and Seventh Avenue, turns again at the southeast corner of Pine and 8th Avenue and runs west along Pike Street to the waterfront.

The transportation connections between the areas close to Lake Union and the Downtown continued to be important. By 1908, the western street car route had been simplified, with, south of Denny Way, a straight path set along Westlake Avenue, which, by then, had been built and paved. This is represented on the 1908 Baist Map.³⁶ Transportation was also the main impetus behind the far reaching attempts to regrade many portions of the city, begun by City Engineer R. H. Thomson at the end of the 1890s.

R. H. Thomson - the Regrading of the City

Reginald Heber Thomson first arrived in Seattle in 1881 and became City Engineer in 1892. He was responsible for altering major parts of the City, to the west, north and south of the Denny Triangle, but also within the area itself. Thomson believed that Seattle's many hills, and particularly Denny Hill, were a severe hindrance to transportation and to Seattle's development as a commercial center and major city. The Denny Regrade took place in several phases from 1898 to 1930. It

involved the gradual removal of Denny Hill and the regrading of major streets. Thomson's autobiography documents the earlier phases of the regrading of Denny Hill and of neighboring thoroughfares. Other players were more deeply involved with the last phase of Denny Regrade, finally completed with the leveling of Denny Park in December of 1930.

Thomson was responsible for the regrading of First Avenue from Pike Street to Denny Way in 1898 and of Second Avenue, from Yesler Way to Denny Way, begun in 1903, as well as the regrading of 3rd Avenue from Yesler Way to Pine Streets, begun in late 1905. His efforts were mainly concentrated in or close to present-day downtown and Belltown, extending east to Fifth Avenue. Of more immediate import to Denny Triangle was the regrading of Pike and Pine Streets in 1902, which facilitated transportation to Capitol Hill. In 1907, as represented on the 1908 Baist Map, the portion of Westlake Avenue, south of Denny Way, was regraded and constructed and a significant amount of fill added north of Denny Way. Major streets such as Valley Street, Dexter Avenue and Fairview Avenue in the South Lake area were also regraded around the same period, between 1907 and 1910. Most importantly for the Denny Triangle, 9th Avenue and 12th Avenue were regraded, (in addition to 9th Ave S. and 12th Ave. S), in 1910.³⁷ As part of the regrading of 9th Avenue, a steep grade along Stewart Street, between 8th and 9th Avenue was also leveled out in the same year.³⁸

Tied with the regrading of major parts of the city, was Seattle's explosive physical growth, which occurred particularly from the 1900s to the early 1910s. The coming of the railroads and the Klondike Gold Rush were responsible for this growth throughout the City. In 1907, the platting of Capitol Hill was complete.³⁹ In the same year, Seattle annexed six towns, including Ballard, while Georgetown was annexed in 1910. The Alaska Yukon Exposition of 1909 underlined the importance of the new city. The Olmsted Brothers designed the exposition site, which became the new campus of the University of Washington. Located north of Seattle's downtown, the site was also accessible by an electric streetcar line, which also passed through the Denny Triangle.⁴⁰

Building and Development between the 1900s and the early 1910s

Seattle's growth, particularly between the late 1900s and the early 1910s, was reflected in the addition of a variety of buildings, including single family dwellings, apartment buildings and hotels. In the case of the small area represented by the Denny Triangle, the addition of apartment buildings

and hotels to the original mix of single family homes, churches and the handful of industrial buildings, is especially noticeable.

After its construction in 1907, Westlake Avenue became a thoroughfare. The Hotel Westlake, which still stands on the east side of the avenue, was completed in 1907. Its triangular plan reflects the geometries created by Westlake Avenue, which cut through a once fairly regular street grid. The Hotel Westlake is a three-story brick-clad building, with a projecting, wooden ornamental cornice. Its first level features a series of storefronts set between piers, which have shafts clad in brick and modified Tuscan capitals. On the west side of Westlake Avenue, is the Larned Hotel, which also has a triangular footprint and dates from 1909. To the north, at 2120 Westlake Avenue, a one story (with basement) commercial building, which also dates from 1909, has a trapezoidal plan. It is distinguished by its rusticated terra cotta cladding, its repeated storefronts set within segmental arched openings, and by its slightly overhanging classical cornice.⁴¹

There were several other hotel buildings close to Westlake Avenue. The Hotel Wiltshire, at 7th and Virginia St, is no longer standing. A photo from 1909 by the photographer Asahel Curtis shows a simple, three story building, probably clad in light-colored stucco and with a deep, flaring overhang. The two top stories had repeated double-hung windows and little ornament, while the ground level, which faced both Virginia Street and 7th Avenue, consisted of mostly continuous storefront. The Hotel Vancouver, with a smaller footprint, was located on the same block, but to the south of the Wiltshire Hotel and faced 7th Avenue. According to the 1912 Baist Map, there were other hotels, including a building located on the site of the future terra cotta clad building at 2030 8th Avenue. Another hotel was the Hotel Virginius, located not surprisingly on the northeast corner of Virginia Street and 8th Avenue. Also located on 8th Avenue, but on the northeast corner of 8th and Howell St was a hotel building, completed in 1909, which is still standing (1806 8th Avenue). Originally a three story building and known as the Ray Hotel, it retains a two-part design, with storefront and cream colored terra cotta cladding on the ground floor and two upper floors, clad in brick. It has since gained another floor and is part of the Bonair Ray Apartments.⁴²

Farther to the east, the 1912 Baist Map notes a storage warehouse, later occupied by Beebe and Runyon, which is still standing at 9th Avenue between Lenora and Virginia Streets. The concrete clad building is distinguished by its three ground level segmental openings, which contained

storefront, and by an overhanging belt course above the ground level. While the building dates from 1910, and there are only a handful of buildings remaining in the Denny Triangle from the 1900 to 1912 period, its integrity may be in question.

The 1908 Baist Map indicates that, by this period, there were several new apartment buildings within the Denny Triangle. This coincides with the increased construction of apartment buildings all over Seattle, a fact that was noted in 1907 in the January 1 edition of the Seattle Daily Bulletin.⁴³ Within the Denny Triangle, the largest of these was the Manhattan, which took up a full city block, bounded by Howell St and Olive Way and by Boren and Minor Avenues. To the east, across Minor Avenue, was “The Verne,” with a much smaller footprint. There was also the Rossmore, which was built on a lot south of the Arion Court at 1814 Minor Avenue. Arion Court, which dates from 1905, is still standing on Minor Avenue, between Stewart and Howell Streets, but its façade has been altered in a recent remodel. Another early apartment building, which dates from 1907, but has an altered façade, is the Graham Apartments, located on Terry Avenue, between Lenora and Virginia Streets. Evidence from historical sources suggests that it was built for owner Duncan Grant by the construction firm of Edelsvard and Sankey.⁴⁴

The 1912 Baist Maps shows additional apartment buildings or complexes. Examples include the “San Telmo Apartments,” located in the northeastern portion of the Denny Triangle, on the eastern side of Minor Avenue, between Stewart and Howell streets. Located north of the Arion Court, the “San Telmo Apartments,” took up a good portion of the block. On the southeast corner of Stewart St and Terry Avenue, an H-shaped apartment building, called the “Oronoco Apartments,” appears to be the same building as the current Williamsburg Apartments (1007 Stewart St). Known by the 1930s as the Terry-Stewart Apartments, this three story frame building is mainly clad in brick veneer, with wood shingles at the top dormer level and resembles an oversized Colonial house, with intersecting gambrel roofs. It is the only reasonably intact example of the Denny Triangle’s early apartment buildings.

The development of these early apartment buildings in the Denny Triangle coincides with the increased construction of apartment buildings, beginning roughly in the mid-1900s in such neighborhoods as Cascade and Capitol Hill. Extant examples of early apartment buildings, located

outside, but in the vicinity of the Denny Triangle, include the Jensen Block of 1906 or the Grandview of 1907, both located on Eastlake Avenue East, in the Cascade neighborhood or the San Remo Apartments (1907), located on Thomas Street on Capitol Hill.⁴⁵

The Bogue Plan

With increased development pressures, the city government and local business interests considered further possibilities for Seattle's growth. By 1911, the Denny Regrade had already significantly flattened the topography of a major part of the city and also regularized certain major streets in the South Lake Union area. Parts of South Lake Union and especially Cascade were now more accessible from Seattle's downtown, still located near Pioneer Square. They were more easily accessible from the Denny Triangle, which was sometimes considered part of the Cascade neighborhood. While R. H. Thomson's visions for the city were often built, other plans were not as successful, but are still relevant to the history of the development of Seattle and of the Denny Triangle.

The Municipal Plans Commission, created with the consent of Seattle voters in 1910, hired Virgil Bogue, a civil engineer and city planner of national repute, to provide a new design for Seattle's downtown. In 1911, Bogue proposed a master plan, which involved relocating Seattle's downtown business district near the intersection of Blanchard Street and 4th Avenue. Meanwhile, other business interests wanted to maintain the center of the business district in the vicinity of Second and James Street, located within the present day Pioneer Square Historic District.

Bogue's plan included a grouping of Beaux Arts buildings, forming an ellipse in plan, with foci roughly at 4th and 5th and Blanchard streets, as well as a train station and ferry terminal on South Lake Union. The scheme was a typical "City Beautiful" plan, with boulevards radiating north and diagonally east and west. The western boulevard, an extension of Blanchard Street, would have been extended to Westlake Avenue and, as shown in the main plan, would have cut through the northwestern edge of the Denny Triangle. The projected plan would have placed the city center to the west and very close to the Denny Triangle. While Seattle voters rejected the Bogue Plan in 1912, the University of Washington Metropolitan Tract was being developed. As a result, the center of the business district was eventually relocated north of Seattle's original "heart," and closer to the

Denny Triangle, but not as close to the Denny Triangle as the Bogue Plan had proposed. On the other hand, the proposed plan opened up an important discussion concerning the further expansion of Seattle's downtown.⁴⁶

Changes and Trends between the 1910s and early 1920s

Major physical changes within the Denny Triangle area between the 1910s and the 1920s, were not particularly remarkable; however, in this period, continued development in surrounding areas - in downtown, Capitol Hill and South Lake Union/ Cascade - are relevant to the smaller area's development. In particular, Denny Triangle and South Lake Union are tied together by a variety of trends in industrial development, transportation, politics and culture. This is reflected in a few buildings, some long demolished and others still standing.

By 1909, the Seattle Electric Company, privately financed by Stone and Webster, still owned two whole blocks on the south side of Olive Way, which were used as freight yards. The Seattle Electric Company, later renamed the Puget Sound Traction, Light and Power Company, provided electricity to Seattle until around the mid-1900s, when it was supplanted by the publicly owned Seattle City Light. It continued, however, to operate a consolidated city trolley system, as well as interurban trolley lines that ran from Seattle to Everett, Tacoma and Puyallup, as well as other lines within Western Washington.⁴⁷

An office building for Seattle Electric Company/ Puget Sound Traction, Light and Power Company freight was an important building located on the Denny Triangle property. It was a large frame shed building, which included an open first level, partially supported by free-standing, braced, timber columns. Photographed by Asahel Curtis in 1909, the utilitarian building exterior was distinguished by a long ribbon of clerestory windows, as well as two raised parapets on the shorter main façade, clad in wood siding. In 1918, the City of Seattle bought the local trolley lines from the private company and in the same year, the building was demolished. Most of the two blocks were soon occupied by the Frederick and Nelson Department Store, designed by John Graham.⁴⁸

Meanwhile the South Lake Union area was becoming an even more attractive location for industrial development, particular close to the Lake Union shore. The victory of Seattle City Light over the

Seattle Electric Company was marked by the construction of Seattle City Light's Lake Union Steam Plant in 1914.⁴⁹ In the same year, the brick and terra cotta Ford Motor Plant, the first model-T assembly plant built west of the Mississippi, was designed by John Graham, Senior and built on Valley Street (South Lake Union). While Seattle's first auto row was mainly located on or near Broadway and in the Pike-Pine corridor, (with some distributors in north First Hill), from about 1905 to the mid-1920s, a second auto row developed on Westlake, north of Denny Way, between the mid-1920s and the 1930s.⁵⁰ The development of the second auto row was in part influenced by the easy availability of electricity and by the Ford Motor Company's choice of its plant site near South Lake Union, but also by later decisions about zoning.⁵¹

The development of the first and second auto rows would also be echoed in the Denny Triangle, especially in the 1930s and after World War II; however, drawings for a one story brick clad garage building would be produced for William Fransen in 1921. The building is still standing on the northwest corner of Terry and Virginia Street at 922 Virginia Street. It is distinguished by the stepped parapet and tripartite organization of its main façade and repeated segmental arched openings. The brick clad building has consistently served as an auto related structure.

In the period between the 1910s and early 1920s, while areas closer to the downtown might become more upscale, as in the case of the Seattle Electric Company/ Frederick and Nelson site, several other extant buildings reflect the Denny Triangle's utilitarian nature. The architecture firm of Stephen and Stephen designed a dairy building, a typical early warehouse in 1919, which is still standing on Minor Avenue, off of Howell St (1809 Minor Avenue). By the 1930s, the building housed the Purity Ice Cream Company. Henry Bittman, an engineer, but not yet licensed as an architect, designed a candy manufacturing plant, a simple, but well-designed masonry warehouse, completed in the same year. By 1935, the Salvation Army occupied the building, which is now the home of the Spruce Street School.⁵²

The utilitarian nature of the buildings also reflects the working class background of many of the Denny Triangle workers and inhabitants. Labor unions and strikes became a hallmark of Seattle politics, especially in the decade from the 1910s to the early 1920s. During this time, South Lake Union and Cascade, in particular, were known for their association with labor activity and

especially laundry workers. In the neighboring Denny Triangle, by the early 1910s, the former Presbyterian Church, located on Olive Way between 7th and 8th Avenues, served as the Seattle headquarters for the Industrial Workers of the World, more commonly known as the IWW (There was apparently an IWW building in the Pioneer Square neighborhood, as well).

On July 18, 1913, during the annual Potlatch Celebration, which included a parade in Pioneer Square, there were a series of political speeches, including one by the visiting Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels. A melee between pro-union supporters and a group of belligerent sailors and soldiers ensued. The Seattle Times reported the incident in a biased manner and attacked the IWW and other groups, dwelling especially on the “display of red flags.” The same evening, anti-union rioters, with similar sympathies, vandalized Socialist and IWW buildings.⁵³ They broke windows and damaged a piano at the Olive Way headquarters building. Photographer Asahel Curtis documented the damage to the former church in several photographs.⁵⁴ The transformation of this simple Carpenter Gothic church into an IWW headquarters, which was then the subject of anti-union vandalism, reflects the neighborhood’s historical ties to the turbulence of union struggles in early Twentieth Century Seattle; however, the building is no longer standing.

On the other hand, an enduring testament to an important aspect of the area’s history and culture, and a City of Seattle landmark since the 1970s, is Norway Hall, which was built in 1915 for the Sons and Daughters of Norway. It was designed by architect Sonke Englehart Sonnichsen, who was born in Norway in 1879 and educated as an architect and engineer at Norway’s Technical Institute. He was employed by several well-known Seattle architects, including Somervell and Cote and John Graham, Senior. The design of Norway Hall, which echoes traditional Norwegian building types, such as stave churches and other vernacular buildings, reflects the influence of National Romanticism.⁵⁵

The Zoning Ordinance of 1923

A look at the nature of the sites and buildings that coexisted in the Denny Triangle in the decade roughly before 1922 points to the mixture of uses within the area. This was true throughout Seattle. Since 1912, there had been building regulations that stipulated the height limits for three basic building construction types (three stories for frame buildings, five for ordinary masonry and six for

“mill buildings,” that is buildings with brick exterior walls and heavy timber interior structures); however there had never been regulations concerning building uses.⁵⁶

In July 1923, The City of Seattle passed its first zoning ordinance, which was amended several times shortly thereafter and finally approved as amended by the mayor on September 25, 1923. Harland Bartholomew from St. Louis lead the Zoning Commission’s effort to create the 1923 ordinance, while other distinguished contributors included James E. Blackwell, A. H. Dimock, as well as C.B and Joseph Blethen.⁵⁷

The ordinance created six zones or “Use Districts”: the First Residence District, the Second Residence District, the Business District, the Commercial District, the Manufacturing District and the Industrial District.⁵⁸ Based on accompanying maps, the present Denny Triangle was located within the “Commercial District.” The commercial designation allowed a greater variety of uses than in the primary part of downtown, which was then projected for the area located roughly between 4th and 8th Avenues and between Union Street and Yesler Way. This part of downtown was considered the “Business District.” The business district was, in fact, not that limited in its uses. It could include residences, apartment buildings, stores, offices, banks, restaurants, service stations, police or fire stations, printing establishments, telephone exchanges, theaters, dance halls and the like, retail stores, automobile salesrooms or storerooms, garages (but “without public repair shop”), hand laundries and establishments that did clothes cleaning and pressing.⁵⁹

The present Denny Triangle, as a commercial district, could include any of the above uses. In addition the area could include “any trade, industry, or use” except for a huge list of industrial uses, which ran from “Airplane manufacture,” “Acid manufacture,” and “Automobile manufacture” to “Dog Pound,” “Kelp reduction and the extraction of its by-products,” to “Tar roofing or tar waterproofing manufacture,” “Yeast plants,” and anything prohibited in the “Manufacturing District.” In the Manufacturing District, anything that might emit “dangerous, unwholesome, foul, nauseous or offensive gases or fumes” was prohibited. The Belltown area was also zoned as “commercial,” except for the waterfront which was zoned as “manufacturing.” North of Denny Way, distinctions were more subtle: The area between Broad Street and Boren Avenue up to Republican Street was mostly “Commercial,” except for Terry Avenue, north of Thomas Street,

which was zoned as “manufacturing.” North of Republican Street, the manufacturing area in South Lake Union splayed out from 8th Avenue to Fairview and included the Lake Union shore. Given this new zoning, even though the “commercial” zone was not excessively limited in use, the nature of the buildings developed within the Denny Triangle changed.⁶⁰

Development and Extant Buildings from the Time of the First Zoning Ordinance

The buildings erected in this period, although often utilitarian in nature, were also more elegantly designed. They usually featured a ground floor store level, with relatively large storefront windows along the street. An example of this is 2004 Westlake Avenue (at one time given the address 2004 7th Avenue). It is located close to Westlake Avenue on the northwest corner of 7th Avenue and Virginia Street. Designed by architect W. R. Grant, it is a well-proportioned three story building, with regular, wide, window bays and is clad in gleaming white terra cotta. It includes a variety of careful and subtle ornamentation. It was completed in late July of 1923, around the same time that the zoning ordinance was first passed (although the ordinance was slightly amended a month later). It is not clear if or how the code may have affected the building design; but, the building exterior appears to reflect the area’s status as a possible northern extension of the downtown business district. It contrasts strongly with the buildings from the late 1910s. The building also stands out, because of its use of terra cotta cladding, a material that would be increasingly used, especially in the 1920s.

Another building that is part of Seattle’s legacy of elegantly designed, terra cotta clad buildings is the two story building designed for George L. Seibert, and located on the southeast corner of Lenora St and 8th Avenue (2030 8th Avenue). Designed by architect Earl Roberts and completed in 1925, the building features regular and repeated, wide, glazed openings, as well as cream colored terra cotta, accented by multi-colored tiles, particularly at the parapet level. Designed as a “Store and Loft Building,” the building resembles other structures designed as automobile showrooms, however, it has housed a number of uses over the years. It is only described, for certain, as an automobile showroom by the 1930s, when it housed the Transport Motor Company.

Located at a diagonal from this building, across Lenora St, is a concrete building, with similar bay divisions, although here the openings are rectangular (2101 9th Avenue). It resembles a typical

Seattle warehouse building and is distinguished, in particular, by its remaining multi-pane transoms above the first floor storefronts. It too was designed by Earl Roberts for George Seibert in 1924, and served as the companion garage for the more ornate building.

South and west of George Seibert's "Store and Loft" is a "Loft Building for Mr. J. C. McHugh," designed by architect O. F. Nelson and completed in 1925 (2030 Westlake Avenue). Its most distinguished elevations, which include storefront, are clad in matte terra cotta, which has a purplish cast. The elevations are sited along or off of Westlake Avenue and feature details inspired by Italian Late Medieval and Renaissance architecture.⁶¹

All of these buildings are sited on the west side of the Denny Triangle and follow a serpentine pattern, close to Westlake Avenue. They provided a more elegant front for Westlake Avenue, which was located south of the second auto, which was developing mainly to the north of Denny Way around the same time. Westlake Avenue also remained a thoroughfare and a major streetcar route, with small shelters located at streetcar stops, located along the way. At this time, the advent of the automobile began to cause discussions concerning the viability of the streetcar and the nature of public transportation.

To the east of this group located on 8th Avenue and Virginia Street stood the now demolished A. V. Love Dry Goods and Loft Building, designed by the Tacoma architecture firm of Heath, Gove and Bell and built in 1925.⁶² This was a four story warehouse which served the textile industry. It had concrete exterior walls, clad in brown brick and a wood post and beam interior structure. The exterior street facing elevations on Virginia Street and 8th Avenue were distinguished by distinct bays, which were emphasized by pilasters, in addition to corbelling at the parapet level of the corner end bays and multi-pane industrial sash glazing. The building was demolished in order to accommodate the new Justice Center.⁶³

Moving south and following the more or less serpentine route near Westlake Avenue are three other buildings from the same period. All three buildings were located in the small southwestern portion of the area, which, according to the 1923 ordinance, had a height designation for "Maximum Height," while the rest of the Denny Triangle was designated for 100 feet maximum. According to

the ordinance, no building in the Maximum Height District was to “exceed a height of two-and-a half times the width of the street on which the building abuts, except that towers for occupancy may be erected above said height limit, if they are twenty-five (25) feet from any lot line other than the street line; if they do not exceed an area of 25% of the lot area; and if they do not exceed sixty (60) feet in length or breadth.”⁶⁴

Two of the resultant buildings within the present Denny Triangle’s “Maximum Height District” are elegant ten story buildings, which have a concrete interior structure, (making taller buildings possible), and feature terra cotta and buff brick cladding. One is the Vance Hotel, recently renamed the Hotel Max, located on the northwest corner of 7th Avenue and Stewart St. The other is the Lloyd Building located on the southeast corner of 6th Avenue and Stewart St. Both were designed by architect Victor Voorhees, who, in both cases, adapted the Beaux Arts style to taller buildings. They were completed in 1926 and but do not yet feature the setbacks and towers of taller buildings, which were soon to be erected in and closer to the projected Business District toward the end of the 1920s.

Still moving south, the last building in this group, located at 600 Olive Way, also has a ground level storefront along Westlake Avenue and Stewart St. This is topped by seven stories of garage. The building exterior was designed in a paired down Gothic Revival style, sometimes described as influenced by Art Deco, by architect George Stoddard. Stoddard did, in fact, design Art Deco buildings around the same time in several locations in Seattle, including the South Lake Union area.

These buildings, which are all substantial in their own way, show that the Denny Triangle was an area in transition in this period. Among the group, earlier buildings, which were lower in height, were built with less expensive and traditional construction methods. The buildings blend in with several older structures, two of which are still standing and date from the late 1900s. Not surprisingly, taller, more ambitious buildings, which were made possible by advances in the knowledge of concrete structures and encouraged by the ordinance, were erected closer to the projected business district.

The second auto row, located north of Denny Way, was not really yet extended into the area, but the influence of the automobile is obvious, particularly in the construction of the store/ garage building at 600 Olive Way in 1925. During 1927, the Central Terminal for Pacific Northwest Traction Company, the terminus for the Everett Interurban railway line, was being built on Stewart St between 8th and 9th Avenue. It was a three story brick clad building with cast stone ornament and a tile roof. Although mostly reclad in the 1960s, it is still standing and serves as the Greyhound Bus Terminal.⁶⁵ Issues of transportation had an impact and were extremely important in Seattle at this time. Not long after the construction of the terminal, the Trimble Report, published in 1928, would consider the problems of public transportation, as well as the future impact of the automobile.⁶⁶

Transportation issues would also be the impetus behind the completion of the last phase of the Denny Regrade. All of these Denny Triangle buildings, which date from 1923 to 1926, mark a transition between the passage of the Zoning Ordinance of 1923 and the last phase of Denny Regrade, begun in 1928.

The Last Phase of the Denny Regrade

By the mid-1920s, it was clear that the remaining portion of Denny Hill was a serious problem for transportation. Its existence made east-west transportation difficult, particularly within various parts of the general downtown area and South Lake Union. Since Denny Hill land owners had been expected the regrading of their properties for more than a decade, many did not bother with their upkeep. Mostly, business interests worked hard to make sure that the last phase of the Denny Regrade was completed.

The Second Denny Regrade lowered the topography of land located directly west of our study area. The regrading effort affected everything from Westlake Avenue to 5th Avenue and from Denny Way to Pine Street, and the area north of this, from Denny Way to Harrison Street and from Broad Street, east to 9th Avenue. The regrading of Dexter Avenue North, (a half block east and west of Dexter), from Harrison Street to slightly north of Mercer Way, was also included. Dexter Avenue North was regraded so that it could flow south into 7th Avenue.⁶⁷

Projected topographical information concerning the regrade was apparently provided to architects who were designing buildings for sites within it. For instance, as early as 1926, architect W. R. Grant, who was designing a warehouse for A. J. Eberharter at Dexter Avenue North and Republican St, received projected grade information concerning the warehouse site from the City Engineering Department. Unfortunately, some of the information was incorrect, causing the building not to meet the street curb correctly, so the client sued the City of Seattle.⁶⁸

Such situations did not directly affect the Denny Triangle area, which was located east and south of the Second Regrade. On the other hand, the Denny Triangle area, which had been partially cut off from the Waterfront and Belltown, and from the western portion of South Lake Union, was now more accessible. In particular, access to everything west of Westlake Avenue and of Westlake Avenue North was facilitated. As a result, at this time, land prices in the Denny Regrade rose considerably, and presumably adjoining land was expected to rise in value, as well.

Building between 1928 and 1931

Land on both sides of Westlake Avenue was developed. In fact, the Triangle area, east of Westlake and south of Denny Way, derives much of its historical flavor from a large number of buildings, all completed between 1928 and 1931. Several of these are sited close to Denny Way.

The Volker Building, which has a triangular footprint, was designed by Henry Bittman and built during 1928. The Art Deco Building, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, is located between Denny Way, Terry Avenue and Lenora Street. Another building sited on a triangular lot, located between Denny Way, Boren Avenue and Fairview Avenue, is the former Fashion Craft Building, home of “Fashion Craft Cravats,” and built for the Schoenfeld Brothers (2022 Boren Avenue). Also designed by Henry Bittman, this is a somewhat elegant one story factory building, which includes Spanish Revival and Art Deco ornamental elements. It was completed in 1929. Yet another Bittman design is a three story store and warehouse at 1916 Boren Avenue. It is located southeast of the Fashion Craft Building and faces Boren Avenue. Probably created for the Bartell’s Drugstore offices, it was completed sometime between 1928 and 1929. Facing the Volker Building, across Lenora Street, at 1001 Lenora Street, is another Art Deco building constructed between 1929 and 1930. Originally designed by architect Louis Svarz as a “store building” for the Puget Sound

Notion Company, this building was designed for a utilitarian use, but still boasts a visually interesting façade.

Farther south, the El Rio Apartment Hotel, now known as the Julie Apartments, is located on the east side of 9th Avenue, between Stewart and Virginia Streets at 1922-1928 9th Avenue. The Art Deco main façade is clad, in large part, in brick veneer but also includes cast stone, tile and granite elements. It was designed by architect John Creutzer, who also designed the Medical Dental Building with A. H. Albertson, (1924-1925), located on the west side of Westlake Avenue. The apartment hotel represented a new building type for Seattle, when it was constructed between 1929 and 1930. Now a City of Seattle landmark, it stands on the block east of the now demolished A. V. Love Dry Goods and Loft Building.⁶⁹

Moving south and to a lot just east of the Ray Apartments, 812 Howell Street is a four story office building, designed by Louis Svarz and originally completed in 1929. Two floors were added in 1946, but the somewhat paired down Art Deco ornament at the parapet level of the four story facade was either taken down or replicated and reattached to the top of the six story façade, creating an effect similar to the original façade. The building's fenestration has been altered since the 1946 changes.

To the south, the small triangular Maximum Height Zone established within our Denny Triangle study area is located between 7th Avenue, Westlake Avenue and Olive Way. Sited within this area, with a main façade along 7th Avenue and a second major elevation along Olive Way, is the former Textile Tower, now called the Tower Building. It was designed by architect Earl Morrison in 1930 and completed in 1931. This is a classic Art Deco office building, which has an imposing fourteen story tower, emphasized by vertical elements and reveals and is set back from a wider two story base. The building façade, especially the tower, is decorated with a spirited combination of Art Deco ornament, which includes stylized floral motifs, chevron patterns and other geometric designs, often enhanced by color.

In addition, the neighborhood was associated with several theaters, which unfortunately have since been demolished. Slightly outside the Denny Triangle, the New Orpheum Theater, clad in brick and

terra cotta, was located at the intersection of Westlake and 5th Avenue, on the site of the present Westin Hotel. It was designed by B. Marcus Priteca, completed in 1927 and demolished in 1967.⁷⁰ The former Fox Theater, later called the Music Hall, was designed by architect Sherwood Ford and completed in 1928. The theater building, distinguished by its cast stone Spanish Revival ornamentation, had an enduring presence into the early 1990s, but was demolished in 1992. The Paramount Theater, designed by B. Marcus Priteca with Frederick Peters, as well as the firm of Rapp and Rapp, was completed in 1928 and thankfully is still standing.⁷¹

With the arrival of the Depression in 1929, the national economy was in a serious downturn. Despite this, buildings were, in fact, completed after 1929. On the other end of the downtown, work on the Second Avenue Extension, in the Pioneer Square area, was done through 1931 and the Seattle Tower, the subject of front page stories in several editions of the Seattle Daily Bulletin before the Depression, was also completed. After about 1931, however, building stopped in the Denny Triangle area.

A panoramic photo from the 1920s looking east along Stewart and Olive Streets and Olive Way shows that outside of the new buildings completed by 1931, the neighborhood still consisted primarily of frame houses and apartment buildings, as well as Carpenter Gothic churches on Stewart St, at the site of the present Gethsemane Lutheran Church. There would be no change throughout the 1930s and no additional building until after World War II.⁷²

Building and Trends in the 1940s

While the Second Auto Row developed north of Denny Way, beginning in 1925, an extension of auto row south of Denny Way seems to have occurred after World War II. By the mid-1940s, Westlake Chevrolet had bought up several properties including the terra cotta clad 2030 8th Avenue and its companion garage at 2101 9th Avenue. In addition, in 1947, Westlake Chevrolet owned 2120 Westlake (originally built in 1909) and had it remodeled by the architecture firm of Thomas Grainger and Thomas as an automobile showroom.⁷³

Samuel Leigh Savidge, who founded the S. L. Savidge Dealership in 1926, became the Dodge distributor for Western Washington and Alaska. He bought up property in the Denny Triangle, such

as the utilitarian 1932 9th Avenue (originally from 1918), whose storefront he altered. He also commissioned a beautifully designed two story concrete building at 2101 9th Avenue. Completed in 1948, it was the S. L Savidge Dodge Plymouth showroom and now houses the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library. Its distinguishing features include: a curved streamline corner at 9th Avenue and Lenora Street, emphasized by a continuous ribbon of metal frame windows, which is surmounted by a ribbon of glass block.⁷⁴ A Kroll map from 1940 also shows that Savidge owned a good portion of the lot west of the showroom site.

Another name involved in the automobile industry also made its presence felt in the Denny Triangle. O. M. Gandy had owned a warehouse at 114 Westlake Avenue North, which was completed in 1925 in the Second Auto Row.⁷⁵ Stuart and Durham Architects designed a large automobile repair garage for Smith Ford Gandy, which was completed in 1947. Located at 1100 Olive Way, the building features rounded, streamline corners, especially at Boren Avenue and Olive Way. The street facing elevations also once presented a generous amount of glass block and multi-pane windows, which have since been replaced. Based on original drawings and photographs, this was a striking early Modernist building, which must have made as strong an impression as the S. L. Savidge showroom.

Two buildings, both from 1947 and located on Minor Avenue, between Virginia and Stewart Streets, are relatively modest and designed in the Modernist style: the former sales building for the M. J. Glerup Company, which now houses Advance Marking Systems, at 1914 Minor Avenue; and the former “office and service building” for a company that once sold tractors, located at 1921 Minor Avenue. Even simpler and also from 1947, is the concrete parking garage for the former Vance Hotel, now the Hotel Max. The façade appears to have been resurfaced and there have a few other functional alterations.⁷⁶

The 1950s and 1960s

While there was a major earthquake in Seattle in 1949, it is not clear that it had any major impact on the Denny Triangle. Subsequently, in the 1950s, the few new buildings were unremarkable. A former Safeway store, which dates from 1950, but has odd Moderne details, such as fluted pilasters, is still standing at 1711 Boren Avenue, across the street from the former Smith Ford Gandy repair

garage. It was designed by Simonson and Putnam, an architecture and engineering firm that claimed a Seattle address, but was producing drawings for “Bramwell Construction Company, a division of Safeway Stores, Inc.” The design of the building may actually have been based on a stock plan. If that is the case, there do not seem to be any remaining examples of this Safeway type, at least in the main parts of Seattle. The building now serves as an automobile repair shop.

On Stewart Street, the western wing of the new Gethsemane Lutheran Church was completed in 1954. Emil Anderson, in association with the architecture firm of Young Richardson Carleton and Detlie, produced the Modernist church design, which may now seem uninspired. The original 1901 frame church also shared the church site until 1960, although its demolition was already projected in the 1950s construction drawings.

Another building from the 1950s is the irregularly shaped Modernist bank building, located at 500 Olive Way, on the block bounded by Westlake Avenue, Stewart St and Olive Way and 6th Avenue. Now a Bank of America, it was designed as the National Bank of Commerce by architect George Wellington Stoddard and completed in 1955. Stoddard’s earlier work showed a grasp of historical styles. He was also the architect of the garage building across the street from this bank at 600 Olive Way, which dates from 1925.⁷⁷

While few buildings were erected in the 1950, larger decisions concerning zoning and transportation in Seattle would have an effect. For instance, in 1957, the South Lake Union area was rezoned for manufacturing,⁷⁸ while the Denny Triangle remained “commercial.” The Denny Triangle found itself sandwiched between a more upscale downtown and an area where manufacturing uses would be increasingly prevalent. This tended to make both South Lake Union/Cascade and the Denny Triangle less desirable, ultimately depressing land values.

From 1959 to 1962, the construction of Interstate 5 also had a dramatic effect on the Denny Triangle and on South Lake Union/ Cascade, which were now effectively cut off from Capitol Hill. The demolition of buildings and homes and the presence of I-5 changed the character of these neighborhoods. In particular, it changed the nature of their eastern edge, which became less desirable land. To the west of the South Lake Union area, between the late 1950s and 1962, the

Century 21 planners created the Seattle World's Fair grounds. Although, in many respects a boon to Queen Anne Hill and to Seattle, the Seattle World's Fair encouraged many owners in South Lake Union/ Cascade to convert to their properties from single family residences to parking lots.⁷⁹ Once again, the Denny Triangle area, would be sandwiched in the north-south direction between downtown and a neighborhood which included manufacturing uses and parking lots, which would increase into the 1970s.

Few buildings were added to the neighborhood during the 1960s, although there was some building activity. On Stewart Street, the 1901 frame building for Gethsemane Lutheran Church was demolished, making way for the second phase of the Modernist version of the church, completed in 1960. In 1962, the same year as the Seattle's World's Fair, the former Central Terminal building, now the Greyhound Station, was modernized. The original brick clad building was mostly reclad with a pink ceramic material, although some of the original brick veneer is still visible and the original Spanish tile roofing remains. Located not far from the Greyhound Station, at 1800 Terry Avenue, is a Brutalist office building, which features precast concrete panels on all four elevations. The architecture firm of Grant Copeland Chervenak and Associates designed the building, which was completed in 1964.⁸⁰ Following this, there were few new major additions to the neighborhood until the early 1980s.

The 1970s to the 1990s

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Denny Triangle remained an area clearly in transition. An important event in 1970 was the Ozark Fire, which occurred in the Hotel Ozark, located on Westlake and Lenora St, north of 2030 Westlake Avenue. Twenty people died and ten others were seriously injured. As a result, stricter building codes and regulations were enacted for historic buildings. These codes and regulations have been blamed for being partially responsible for the demolition of many SRO (single room occupancy) hotels, which once provided housing for low income tenants.⁸¹

There was more noticeable development in the 1980s. In 1980, Metropolitan Park I, was developed at 1701 Minor Avenue by Martin Selig, next to the former Smith Ford Gandy repair garage, which was also altered. Across 8th Avenue from the Bonair Apartments and Ray Apartments, later renovated, a nineteen story, brick clad office building at 720 Olive Way was completed in 1981. In

1988, Metropolitan Park II, also developed by Martin Selig, was completed. Metropolitan Park North, which is eleven stories high, was completed relatively recently in 2000.⁸²

The end of the 1980s saw the beginnings of discussions over the fate of the former Fox Theater, known by the 1930s as the Music Hall and by the late 1980s as the Emerald Palace. The theater had opened on April of 1929 and was bought by the Clise Family in 1936, who renamed it the Music Hall. Over the years, the theater weathered a series of financial crises and by the late 1980s was doing very poorly financially. In 1988, the owners announced that they would demolish the building. For several years thereafter, local activists and preservationists, many associated with Allied Arts, fought unsuccessfully to save the theater building. The Music Hall was finally demolished in January of 1992. Its demolition and that of other historic theaters was responsible for a new movement to save Seattle's historic theaters.⁸³

Another important event for development was the passage by Seattle voters of the Citizens' Alternative Plan initiative, known as the CAP initiative, in May of 1989. The CAP set density and height limits on buildings in downtown Seattle, including a basic limit of 85 feet for most new buildings; however, there were notable exceptions to this limit. For instance, a department store containing a theater could be 150 feet in height, while office buildings could be as high as 450 feet. Since 1989, the height limits have been in place, although over the years zoning changes and other exceptions have sometimes loosened up these restrictions. Still, until very recently, the Citizens' Alternative Plan has played a important role in the development of the downtown area, including the Denny Triangle.⁸⁴

The 1990s to the Present

The early 1990s saw the completion of housing projects on Terry Avenue at 2020 Terry Avenue and east of that at 1000 Virginia Street, both in 1992. The apartment buildings were of frame construction and therefore not excessively tall. 2020 Terry Avenue, designed by GGLO for the Housing Resources Group, was seven stories and 1000 Virginia Street was five stories in height. At the same time, the older Graham Apartments, which originally dated from 1907, was also renovated as part of 2020 Terry Avenue, and now somewhat resembles it.⁸⁵

By the late 1990s, a variety of planning efforts concerning downtown and related areas was initiated (The downtown related neighborhoods included the Downtown Core, Denny Regrade, Capitol Hill, Denny Triangle, the International District and Pioneer Square). Headed by City of Seattle planners, these efforts also involved active citizen participation. Each neighborhood produced a neighborhood plan, as well a matrix of desired outcomes for the neighborhood.

The Denny Triangle was described as a future location for downtown core expansion in the 1985 Downtown Plan and the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Association had actually been founded sometime around 1994 or 1995. Before these efforts, the concept of the “Denny Triangle” as a particular neighborhood had not gained any currency. A summary report and map, dating from 1999 and presented to the Seattle City Council, described the Denny Triangle as bounded by Denny Way, Interstate-5 and 5th Avenue, and also including an area south of Olive Way, bounded by Olive Way, 7th Avenue, Pike Street and I-5.

This report and public presentations presented the key points of the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan. They were: “1). Amend the Zoning and Bonus System to Stimulate Housing Development; 2). Neighborhood Improvements to Create Residential Enclaves among Designated Green Streets; 3). Transportation and Traffic Circulation Improvements; 4). Convention Place Station Development.” In public presentations, representatives of the Denny Triangle Planning Group spoke in very positive terms about the viability of using TDRS (from other properties in King County) to allow for taller buildings and housing development. They also emphasized the notion of creating residential enclaves around green streets.⁸⁶

Since the presentation of the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan to the City of Seattle, there has been a strong impetus to accelerate development in the Denny Triangle. The most striking development is the block developed by the General Services Administration for the U.S. Courthouse. The courthouse building was designed by NBBJ and completed in 2003.

So far, the Denny Triangle area has only four properties listed as landmarks. The Volker Building, designed by Henry Bittman, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Three properties are City of Seattle landmarks: the El Rio Apartment Hotel, now the Julie Apartments, designed by

John Creutzer; Norway Hall designed by Sonke Englehart Sonnichsen; and McGraw Place, (redesigned and repaved). Outside of the former S. L. Savidge Inc. Dodge Plymouth showroom, (which dates from the 1940s), all of the most historically significant buildings date from the late 1900s to the early 1930s, at the latest. In this time period, however, many irreplaceable buildings were constructed in the Denny Triangle. It is hoped that if the Denny Triangle undergoes accelerated and intense development, that it will take into account and preserve these early and priceless buildings.

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Archives, Museum of History and Industry, Seattle.

Manuscripts and Special Collections, Suzzallo-Allen Library, the University of Washington.

Municipal Archives, City of Seattle.

Puget Sound Regional Archives, Bellevue, Washington (especially the King County Assessor's Property Record Cards from 1930s and after).

Additional Website Sources

City of Seattle Historic Neighborhood Inventory Database

<<http://www.seattlehistory.org/>>

Museum of History and Industry website, especially digital images.

The Seattle Times website.

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer website.

<http://content.lib.washington.edu/>

University of Washington Libraries Digital Collections.

Additional Periodicals and Newspapers

The Seattle Daily Bulletin and Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

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