

**Landmark Nomination Report Analysis of the
Franklin Apartments
2302 Fourth Avenue, Seattle, Washington 98121**

Submitted to the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board
as Public Comment
Prepared by Historic Seattle

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Introduction

This Landmark Nomination Report Analysis of the Franklin Apartments, located at 2302 Fourth Avenue in Seattle's Belltown neighborhood, was prepared by Historic Seattle for submission to the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board as public comment for the Board's consideration as it reviews the nomination reports. Eugenia Woo, Director of Preservation Services at Historic Seattle, reviewed the nomination report prepared by The Johnson Partnership for TeamRise, dated December 2014. The nomination report is an update of a nomination prepared by Mimi Sheridan in 2009 for the City of Seattle Historic Preservation Program as part of the 2007 Survey and Inventory of Downtown Historic Resources project. The 2009 nomination form was also reviewed by Historic Seattle.

Historic Seattle conducted additional research online and at various Seattle area libraries and archives in 2015. This report also evaluates research resources and information found which yielded more content to supplement the landmark nomination reports from 2009 and 2014. The additional resources help place the Franklin Apartments in better context with the development of Belltown and of apartment buildings and inform our analysis of the significance of the property. The following resources were reviewed: 1908 and 1912 Baist maps; 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps; Polk City Directories, Seattle; "Seattle Apartment Buildings, 1900-1957, Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2008" National Register of Historic Places (prepared by Mimi Sheridan); and *Belltown Historic Context Statement and Survey Report*, November 2007 (prepared by Mimi Sheridan).

Historic Seattle also conducted a field survey of the Franklin Apartments and other apartment buildings (built before 1930) in Belltown for the purpose of comparing integrity levels and confirming which older apartment buildings remain extant.

The landmark designation standards in SMC 25.12.350 were reviewed and applied to the Franklin Apartments.

Threshold Criteria: Age and Integrity

Built in 1918, the Franklin Apartments is more than twenty-five (25) years old and therefore, meets the age criterion.

The Franklin Apartments retains a **very high degree of integrity**. The architectural descriptions in both nomination reports note very minor changes.

The Franklin Apartments meets the threshold criteria of age and integrity and maintains its ability to convey significance.

Significance

Influence of the Denny Hill Regrade and Expansion of Belltown

Both landmark nomination reports provide a good overview of the development of Belltown, a neighborhood shaped by the Denny Hill regrade (developed in two phases between 1906-1911 and 1929-1931) and expanding growth in the early twentieth century north of the city center. The nomination reports also provide a comprehensive overview of the development of apartment buildings in Belltown. The Franklin Apartments, on the northeast corner of Fourth Avenue and Bell Street, was constructed in 1918 after the first phase (1906 - 1911) of the regrade "when twenty-seven blocks between Second and Fifth Avenues, from Pine to Cedar streets, were sluiced away." (Sheridan, 2009)

The history of Seattle has been one of boom and bust. After the Klondike Gold Rush, Seattle's population grew tremendously from 42,830 in 1890 to 237,194 in 1910. Between 1910 and 1920, the population increased to 315,685. The growth meant new housing was needed. The regrade that was completed in 1911 made it possible for Belltown to expand, creating more buildable lots. Before the 1911 regrade, residential development in Belltown was mostly characterized by small frame dwellings and workers' hotels (aka Single Room Occupancy hotels) without individual baths and kitchens.

Following the 1911 regrade, Belltown saw larger apartment blocks, such as the Franklin, where units contained kitchens and bathrooms. As described in the Seattle Apartments Multiple Property Document, "In 1917 the area of the first Denny Regrade, roughly between Second and Fifth avenues and from Steward Street north to Cedar Street, was promoted as 'the city's coming apartment zone.'" (Sheridan, 2008) Built in 1918, the Franklin was an investment property for real estate developer Frank M. Jordan. Its close in-town location and access to public transit made it a desirable residence for the middle class. A 1919 advertisement in the *Seattle Daily Times* for the unfurnished Franklin Apartments noted the size and rent, "Two and 3-room apartments to let, \$45 and \$60. F.M. Jordan & Co." Who lived in the Franklin Apartments? A review of the 1940 City Directory (twenty-two years after the building was erected) reveals the names of the thirty-five residents who lived in the building, including a resident manager. About half the residents were women, either single or widowed, and half were single men.

The development of multi-family housing in Belltown continued and was at its greatest in the 1920s, a decade that saw a lot of growth and construction throughout Seattle. "Apartments were well established as a viable and acceptable housing option for the middle class." (Sheridan, 2008) In 1923, the City of Seattle adopted a "comprehensive zoning ordinance to regulate land uses. This ordinance determined, for the first time, the location and form of new apartment buildings." (Sheridan, 2008) Belltown, along with First Hill and western Capitol Hill

where apartments were clustered already, was identified as an area of the city where more apartments were allowed.

The Numbers: What Was Built? What Remains?

Approximately 47 apartment buildings in Belltown (all built by 1930) were listed in the 1940 Seattle City Directory (including the Franklin Apartments). The second phase of the Denny Hill regrade occurred between 1929 and 1931, but due to the Great Depression and World War II, there was no apartment building construction in Belltown from 1930 until 1949 when the Grosvenor Apartments on Fifth Avenue and Wall Street was built. Historic Seattle cross-referenced the 1940 City Directory list with the 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps for Belltown. With these two documents as reference, Historic Seattle conducted online and field research to confirm which buildings are extant. Of the approximately 47 apartments that existed in 1940-1950, 28 buildings remain—3 were built between 1908 and 1910; 7 were built between 1911 and 1918; and 18 were built in the 1920s.

Of the 28 remaining pre-WWII apartment buildings in Belltown, the Franklin ranks high in terms of retaining integrity—it is one of four that retains its exterior character defining features. The others have had replacement windows installed.

Frank M. Jordan, Real Estate Developer

The two nomination reports give a brief biography of Frank Morrell Jordan. This report adds to his biography. Frank Jordan was significant for his contribution to the development of Seattle. Arriving in Seattle around the time of the Great Fire of 1889, he was engaged in real estate development and the insurance business. He was a member of the Seattle Commercial Club, the University Club and the Athletic Club. In 1913, Jordan and his wife, Ada, commissioned the prominent architecture firm, Bebb & Mendel, to design a large (almost 9,000 sf) Craftsman style residence on Capitol Hill (1205 22nd Avenue East). The house is extant and remains in excellent condition and is completely intact. It is noted in the Department of Neighborhoods Historic Resources Survey as appearing to meet the criteria for the National Register of Historic Places and Seattle Landmarks Preservation Ordinance.

Jordan's biography appeared in Clarence Bagley's *History of Seattle, Volume III*, published in 1916. According to the biography, "He has been connected with Seattle throughout the entire period of its development since the fire of 1889 and has been in hearty sympathy with the movement for the building of the city upon broader and more beautiful municipal lines. He cooperates in various movements for civic progress and holds to all those things which are a matter of civic virtue." (Bagley, 1916)

As a real estate developer, Jordan saw great opportunity in Belltown, having witnessed the Denny Hill regrade and expansion of the neighborhood. He purchased property in the heart of the neighborhood and built and managed the Franklin Apartments as an investment. The nomination reports note that the length of Jordan's ownership is unclear. L.A. Black purchased the building in 1932. Further research by Historic Seattle yielded information about the change in ownership. Jordan fell victim to the Great Depression. A January 22, 1931 *Seattle Daily Times* article reported his death, a suicide, was the result of financial troubles. He died in Seattle at the age of 67.

Why is the Franklin Apartments Significant?

The "Seattle Apartments Multiple Property Document Form, National Register of Historic Places" (2008) is a very well-researched context statement that comprehensively describes the development and evolution of Seattle multi-family housing since 1900. It helps place the Franklin Apartments in context with the development of apartments in Belltown and Seattle. The document includes the Franklin in the list of buildings surveyed and provides a biography of George Lawton, architect of the Franklin Apartments. As described in the Multiple Property Document,

The purpose built apartment building is significant to the history of Seattle both for the expanded residential choices it brought to Seattleites and for its impact on the urban fabric and form of the city. The availability of apartment dwellings in the early 20th century made it possible for people of many income levels to move to the city and live comfortably and independently from their families. They provided an affordable and socially-acceptable housing alternative for teachers, store clerks, office workers and others who either could not afford to purchase a house, or were not ready to do so. More elegant buildings provided extensive amenities to wealthier people who preferred not to maintain a household, primarily single men, widows or childless couples. (Sheridan, 2008)

The three-story (plus daylight basement) Franklin Apartments is a fine example of a purpose built multi-family building in Belltown. For decades, it provided comfortable housing for men and women who sought the convenience of living near downtown, close to work and social activities. It is noted in the City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods 2007 Downtown Historic Resources Survey as a "Category 2" building which determined that the Franklin Apartments appears to meet the criteria of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance.

The Franklin Apartments is significant primarily in the area of Architecture. It meets Designation Standard D because it embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style and period. It is a virtually unaltered example of the single purpose apartment block in Seattle. The nomination reports call out the character-defining features of the building. The Franklin exhibits the following features of the low-rise (two to four stories)

apartment block: rectangular in plan with a light well on the north side; red brick cladding; primary building entry on Fourth Avenue; terra cotta ornamentation (most notable is the surround framing the entry); prominent dentilled cornice; original double-hung wood windows; and typical interior plan and features (see nomination reports for more details.) The combination of the building's original form, massing, Georgian Revival style elements and high level of integrity demonstrate the Franklin's architectural significance.

Standard D does not say that a building has to be the best or most outstanding example of an architectural style, period or method of construction in order to meet the standard. The Franklin definitely *embodies* the visual characteristics of the early 20th century Seattle/Belltown apartment block, and therefore, meets **Standard D**.

The nomination reports provide a good overview of the architects, George Lawton and Herman Moldenhour. The Franklin is a fine example of the work of the firm and compares well with their other projects.

The Franklin Apartments is associated with a significant aspect—development of apartments in Belltown—in the cultural and economic heritage of the community and City. It represents the everyday story of middle class residents who lived in affordable housing near the center city. Early 20th apartment blocks are important to the community and greatly defines Belltown.