



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649 Seattle WA 98124-4649
Street Address: 700 5th Ave Suite 1700

LPB 344/16

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

Name and Address of Property: **Firestone Auto Supply & Service Store
400 Westlake Avenue**

Legal Description: Lots 7, 8 & 9 in Block 95 of David T. Denny's First Addition to North Seattle According to Plat Recorded in Volume 1 of Plats at page 79, in King County Washington. Except the West 12 feet thereof condemned in King County Superior Court cause no. 47549 for the widening of Westlake Avenue.

At the public meeting held on June 1, 2016 the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Firestone Auto Supply & Service Store at 400 Westlake Avenue as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standard for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

- C. *It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, City, state or nation; and*
- D. *It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or a method of construction; and*
- F. *Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the city and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or the City.*

DESCRIPTION

Location And Neighborhood Character

The subject building is located at the northeastern corner of the intersection of Westlake Avenue N and Harrison Street in the South Lake Union Neighborhood. The subject site is northeast of Seattle's Central Business District, about seven blocks west of Interstate 5, and approximately one-quarter mile south of Lake Union. The immediate area has since the 1990s undergone rapid change from redevelopment of older properties, many by the Vulcan Development Company. Nearby City of Seattle Landmarks include the Seattle Times

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The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**

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Building (1120 John Street, Robert Reamer), the Troy Laundry Building (311-329 Fairview Avenue N), Supply Laundry (1265 Republican Street), the New Richmond Laundry (224 Pontius Avenue N), Immanuel Lutheran Church (1215 Thomas Street), and the Jensen Block (601-611 Eastlake Avenue E).

Building Site

The corner site measures approximately 107 feet east-west along Harrison Street and 180 feet north-south along Westlake Avenue N. The site is bordered on the south and west by concrete sidewalks. No street trees are located in the rights-of-way. A sixteen-foot-wide alley is located to the east of the site, and the northern property line is shared by a newly developed six-story office building. The site is near level and is fully occupied by the subject building.

Building Structure & Exterior Features

The subject building is a two-story terra cotta-clad building with a full basement. The main floor is supported by reinforced concrete columns spaced approximately fifteen to eighteen feet on center, and resting on massive reinforced concrete spread footings. A series of larger north-south reinforced concrete beams located along gridlines support east-west reinforced concrete purlins spaced approximately four feet on center, which in turn support a structural reinforced concrete slab. The mezzanine, second floor and roof are supported by steel columns, steel beams, and steel purlins. The mezzanine floor is solid laminated two-by-fours, while the second floor consists of two-inch-by-twelve-inch wooden joists spaced sixteen inches on center. The roof framing is two-inch-by-ten-inch wood joists spaced sixteen inches on center. The floor-to-floor heights are approximately as follows: ten feet six inches from the basement to the first floor, eleven feet two inches from the first floor to the mezzanine floor, twenty-two feet four inches from the first floor to the second floor, and eleven feet from the second floor to the roof. The overall height of the building from the sidewalk to the roof parapet is approximately thirty-seven feet. Interior partitions are generally wood studs with wire-mesh-reinforced plaster. The flat roof is covered with membrane roofing. The main floor has contemporary aluminum storefront glazing, while the eastern façade and second floor have painted-over industrial steel sash windows.

The western, Westlake Avenue façade is primary and consists of five irregular bays, with the northern bays smaller, the central bay slightly larger, and the southern bays large. Each bay is defined by fluted terra cotta-clad concrete columns supporting a wide terra cotta-clad lintel visually supporting the second floor. The lintel has repeated stepped scallop-and-shield fretwork. The columns ascend through the lintel to a projecting header course above the second floor windows, and terminate with an upper chevron with inner cartouche and flanking fern volutes. The column at the southwestern corner of the building is octagonal, as are the two columns to the east and north of the corner column. The corner and inside columns have fluted corbels with an incised floral upper medallion on both side of the column, while the outer columns only have corbels on the inner sides. (These columns originally did not have intervening walls and were open bays.) The outer columns on the southern and western façades have no corbels. The wall panels between the columns have intervening fluted baluster columns each with a flanking fern volutes. The wider bays each

have two pairs of four-baluster columns flanking a shield bearing an italic “F,” while the narrower bays have pairs of two balusters flanking the shields. Narrow six-light windows are placed between the corbel column groups, three in the pairs of four baluster columns, and one in the pairs of two baluster columns. All terra cotta and exterior wall surfaces have been painted, the main floor a light brown, and the upper floor a light buff.

The western façade has a blank northern bay, three open bays, and a southern bay with a commercial storefront glazing system and a central main entrance with a pair of aluminum store doors. The southern façade has an open western bay, while the next bay to the east has a contemporary roll-up garage door and a pair of non-original steel sash sixteen-light windows. The outer bay is nearly blank, but has a single egress doorway with a flush steel door.

The eastern façade, along the alley is non-primary and simply utilitarian, with spaced steel-sash divided-light windows that have been painted over. The building does not have a northern façade, as it abuts the building to the north.

Plan & Interior Features

The building’s current plan has the sales office at the main floor’s southwestern corner, enclosing the one full bay width. Three bays on the western side of the building are used for short-term customer parking. The central portion of the building, with an approximately twenty-foot-high ceiling, is used for tire balancing and installation. The eastern portion of the main floor, under the mezzanine, is primarily used for miscellaneous storage. The basement is used for tire storage. The mezzanine and second floor is vacant and unheated.

Finishes within the existing sales office are all contemporary with polished concrete floors, painted gypsum wallboard walls, and a dropped acoustical ceiling. The shop areas are strictly utilitarian. Some original finishes exist in the mezzanine and second floor, including fir floors, plaster walls and ceilings, and fir casing and trim, although they are largely in poor condition. The original southeastern stairway retains its original Art Deco-inspired metal balusters.

The building originally had a diagonal wall running from the second bays to the north and east, leaving the southwestern corner of the building’s main floor open for auto refueling. Originally there were three service islands distributing Shell, Richfield, and Union gasoline from the Pacific Northwest’s first electric gasoline pumps.

Documented Building Alterations

In 1937, architect Victor Voorhees designed alterations to the existing store portion of the building that fronts on Westlake Avenue and was adjacent to the original service station portion, located in the building’s southwestern corner. The alterations completed at that time included removal of a partial loft above the northern portion of the store and a stairway accessing the loft. First floor partitions and doorways located under the southern end of the loft were also removed at that time. The eastern wall of the store was also fitted with large glass-panel folding doorways, and additional store windows were located at the southern end of the store. Voorhees also designed alterations to the second floor to accommodate a retreading shop.

Between 1948 and 1949, Firestone’s internal design department executed construction documentation that eliminated the former triangular-shaped service station at the building’s southwestern corner, replacing it with a square-shaped sales room. The original store partitions were demolished and a portion was converted to shop space. A new store entry with glass-block walls and a store-door was created facing Westlake Avenue. Also, a new elevator was added to the building’s northeastern corner, and a new stairway was constructed at the building’s southeastern corner.

At some time within the last thirty years, the storefront windows along Westlake Avenue and Harrison Street were replaced with a contemporary aluminum storefront glazing system. All the second floor window glazing was painted, as was the original terra cotta cladding.

Significant Recorded Building Permits (as recorded)

Date	Designer	Description	Permit #
1929	The Austin Co.	Build	
1930		Erect partitions	291625
1934			312888
1937	V. Voorhees	Remodel	321970
1939			331396
1942			348123
1943			357414 & 358939
1949	Firestone	Remodel-Service Station	393103 & 359653
1950	NA	Remodel loading platform	401078
1985		New sign	
2001		Emergency earthquake repair	719649

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Historical Neighborhood Context: South Lake Union

The subject building is located in Seattle’s South Lake Union District, here defined for this report by Fairview Avenue N to the east, Denny Way to the south, Lake Union to the north, and Aurora Avenue (SR 99) to the west. The neighborhood is often associated with the Cascade Neighborhood to the east and the northern portion of Denny Triangle Neighborhood to the south, with the general collective area often grouped as South Lake Union. This more general area’s historical context is described below.

The immediate site area once lay in a marsh at the southern end of Lake Union. The lake was called meman hartshu by the Duwamish tribe, who had a traditional summer camp on a meadow on Denny Hill near the present Seattle Center. The residence of Tsetseguis and his family occupied an area to the north of immediate site area during the time that Denny’s

sawmill was operating. The area at the waterline north of the site was called “trail to the beach” or more literally “the foot at the end of the beach” by the native people.

The first industrial use of the immediate site area was a narrow gauge railroad built by the Seattle Coal and Transportation Company in 1872. The rail was supported on trestles that extended from the southern end of Lake Union to the Elliott Bay waterfront along what is now Westlake Avenue. From mines in Newcastle, coal was barged across Lake Washington, transported over the Montlake Isthmus, and loaded on barges for transport to the loading dock on South Lake Union that is now the site of the Center for Wooden Boats. This railway line was abandoned in 1877 when a new railway south of town was built. David Denny built his Western Mill sawmill at the southwestern corner of the lake in 1882. The mill would later become Western Mill Company and eventually the Brace Hergert Mill.

From the 1890s through the early 1900s, the area was predominantly residential, mainly comprising immigrant worker housing. The Cascade School (1894, John Parkinson, destroyed 1955) was built in 1894 at the intersection of Pontius Street and Harrison Avenue, with several churches of various ethnic groups scattered through the greater neighborhood. The largest commercial enterprise in the immediate area was the North Pacific Brewery (1889, later Hemrich Brothers Brewing Company), located between Lincoln (now Pontius) and Ward (now Yale) streets, and Mercer and Republican Avenues.

The development of streetcar lines by competitive companies spurred residential and commercial neighborhood growth in the late 1880s and 1890s. Seattle businessman L. H. Griffith purchased the former Seattle Coal and Transportation right-of-way for his Seattle Electric Railway and Power Company, and in 1889 built a street railway extending along the western side of Lake Union over a bridge at the northern end of the lake to the town of Fremont. In 1893, in expectation of serving the new state university and reaching the commercial area supporting it, David Denny ran the northern extension of his Rainier Power and Railway Company streetcar line along Howell Street, up Pontius and Howard (now Yale) avenues, along the eastern side of Lake Union along what is now Eastlake, over a trestle he built at Latona, and through Brooklyn northward to William and Louise Beck’s private Ravenna Park.

As the neighborhood grew, the Cascade School was expanded in 1898 with northern and southern wings (Saunders & Lawton), and the brewery became the Hemrich Brothers Brewing Company with a major brew house expansion (1903-04, Theobald Buchinger, destroyed). Residential development in the area remained the predominant use, although housing grew denser as blocks were developed. Westlake was paved for wagon and auto traffic in 1906, and extended northward from Pike Street to Lake Union. The Westlake Avenue and Pike Street intersection was the location of the first Interurban Depot—Seattle to Everett. The Seattle Electric Company, owned by the Stone and Webster cartel, bought the line in 1909, and made various improvements to this and their consolidated system of electric street railways. The Ford Motor Company constructed a five-story assembly plant (1913, John Graham Sr., City of Seattle Landmark), at the south end of Lake Washington in 1913.

Several churches were built in the neighborhood, catering to the various nationalities of its mainly immigrant population, including Scandinavians, Greeks, and Russians. A Norwegian Methodist Episcopal church was built on the northeastern corner of the intersection of John Street and Howard (now Yale) Avenue prior to 1893. In 1912, Immanuel Lutheran Church (Watson Vernon) was built on the northwestern corner of Thomas Street and Pontius Avenue, and in 1921, St. Demetrios Church (destroyed), serving the Russian and Greek communities, was completed on the corner of Yale Avenue N and N Thomas Street. The Russian Orthodox contingent eventually broke off and built St. Spiridon Orthodox Cathedral (City of Seattle Landmark, 1976) at the southeastern corner of Harrison Street and Yale Avenue between 1938 and 1941. The Bethany Lutheran Free Church (destroyed, ca. 1980) was built at the southeastern corner of John Street and Fairview Avenue in the early 1920s.

A number of apartment buildings were constructed throughout the neighborhood between 1900 and the 1920s, including the Jensen Block (1906, City of Seattle Landmark), the Grandview Apartments (1907, Henderson Ryan), the Hollister Apartments (ca. 1910), Carolina Court (1915, John A. Creutzer), all on the western side of Eastlake; the Brewster (1916, Warren H. Milner) at the southeastern corner of Minor Avenue and John Street; and the Carlton (1926, Emil Guenther with Charles Saunders) at the northwestern corner of Mercer Street and Pontius Avenue, among others.

By the early 1920s, the Great Northern Railway built railroad tracks along Terry Avenue, serving the growing industrial warehouse district north of the Central Business District. The tracks also looped around Lake Union, serving the water-dependent industries along the shoreline made possible by the construction of the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks and the Lake Washington Ship Canal constructed between 1911 and 1917. The small freight depot located on Terry Avenue North between Harrison and Thomas streets was a far cry from the massive central station called for at South Lake Union in Virgil G. Bogue's 1911 "Plan of Seattle," prepared for the Municipal Plans Commission.

In 1928, work commenced on the second and final Denny Regrade, which focused on a trapezoidal area bounded by Virginia Street to the south, Fifth Avenue to the east, Thomas Street to the north, and Westlake Avenue to the west, resulting in the lowering of the grade throughout that area, as well as Denny Park, which had for years loomed over the surrounding commercial district.

After the 1920s, the South Lake Union Area slowly evolved into a mixed residential and commercial district. Several commercial laundries were located in the greater neighborhood, including the Metropolitan Laundry Building (1917, later called the New Richmond Laundry, City of Seattle Landmark), built in 1917 at Pontius Avenue N and Thomas Street; the Supply Laundry (City of Seattle Landmark), initially completed between 1908 and 1912, at Yale Avenue North and Republican Street; and the Troy Laundry Building (V. W. Voorhees, with additions by Henry Bittman, City of Seattle Landmark), built in 1927 at the northwestern intersection of Fairview Avenue and Republican Street. See figures 31-32. In the mid-to-late 1920s, Puget Sound Traction, Light & Power Company was converting their interurban lines to bus service and created a bus garage and repair facility for their

North Coast Lines on the former site of the former Pontius mansion at Pontius Avenue N and Denny Way.

Between the mid-1920s and the beginning of World War II, several other major commercial business operations were located in the neighborhood. The Seattle Times relocated to a new site at the northeastern corner of the intersection of John Street and Fairview Avenue N in 1930, into an Art Moderne building (1930, Robert Reamer, City of Seattle Landmark). George Horluck built a large brewery at Westlake and Mercer in 1933, responding to the end of prohibition.

The Aurora Speedway was constructed in the early 1930s, east of Dexter Avenue, with the George Washington Memorial Bridge crossing high above the Lake Washington Ship Canal near Lake Union's northern end.

The United States Navy built a Naval Reserve Armory (1942, William R. Grant with B. Marcus Priteca, City of Seattle Landmark), serving as an advanced training facility, on the site of the Brace Hergert Mill between 1941 and 1942, using funds provided by the Works Progress Administration.

Fairview Avenue N continued to be the primary commercial street of the neighborhood. The Washington State Game Department built their new International-style headquarters (James C. Gardiner and Associates) on Fairview Avenue N near Mercer Street in 1948.

The neighborhood in many ways lost its center in 1949, when a major earthquake severely damaged the Cascade School. The School District closed the school and demolished the building in 1955, replacing it with the district warehouse, while retaining the old playground between Pontius and Minor streets as a city park. Further residential development within the neighborhood was officially discouraged in 1957, when the city's new zoning ordinance eliminated new residential uses in the Cascade neighborhood.

By the 1960s, Interstate 5 severed the area from Capitol Hill. In 1964, PEMCO built the first tower of its Eastlake Avenue office complex, with further construction continuing through 1983. REI built its new flagship store (Mithun Partners) in 1994 on an entire block on the western side of Eastlake Avenue between John and Thomas streets. See figures 34. The area remained fairly stable until property values increased as result of major land acquisition stimulated in the 1990s by the "Commons" proposal and redevelopment of these properties by major area developers. A new streetcar line running down Westlake now connects the South Lake Union, Cascade, and Westlake areas with the CBD.

The subject building was built in 1929, for Firestone Service Inc., an early automobile and truck tire and service company. Firestone tires had previously occupied 1520 Eleventh Avenue on Capitol Hill, across from the White Motor Company, and the Kelly Springfield Truck Company (both City of Seattle Landmarks). The move to the new South Lake Union facility marked a transition in the retail services offered by Firestone, offering auto service in addition to tire sales. In 1943 Firestone sold the building to Stimson Realty Company, and continued to occupy the building on a ten-year lease. The building was remodeled in 1937 by

Victor Voorhees, renovating the enclosed display room at the main floor. The main floor was remodeled again in 1949, enclosing the corner at Westlake Avenue and Harrison Street. The 1949 remodel was designed by the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company of California. During this remodel the three gas pumps were removed. The building continues to be occupied by Firestone Complete Auto Care.

Original Building Owner: Firestone Company

The subject building was originally constructed in 1929, as a retail store and service center for Firestone Service Inc.

Harvey Samuel Firestone (1868-1938) founded the Firestone Tire & Rubber Company in Akron, Ohio in 1900. At that time Akron was also home to two other tire companies, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, and B. F. Goodrich. Akron came to be known as the rubber capital of the world.

Before founding the company, Firestone attended college in Cleveland and then worked as a salesman for his uncle, Clinton Firestone, at the Columbiana Buggy Company. This led him to the idea of using rubber carriage tires instead of steel or wooden wheels. Firestone met Henry Ford in 1895, beginning a lifelong friendship and business association. At that time Ford was developing his first automobile, and Firestone sold Ford a set of rubber carriage tires. Firestone and a business partner established a rubber wheels company in Chicago in 1896, which he sold in 1899. He used the patent for attaching rubber tires to wheels from his former business and invested the money from the sale to establish the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company in 1900.

Firestone contracted the tire manufacturing for Firestone to other manufacturers for the first three years of operation. Firestone's first products were solid rubber sidewire tires. In 1903, the first Firestone factory began operation in Akron, Ohio, focusing on pneumatic tires for automobiles instead of carriage wheels. In that same year, Firestone delivered 2,000 sets of tires to the Ford Motor Company; at that time it was the largest single tire order from the auto industry. Firestone developed the first mechanically-fastened, straight-sided pneumatic automobile tire in 1904. In 1907, Firestone innovated the "dismountable rim," which allowed the wheel and tire to be removed together, and allowed for the use of spare tires. By 1910, the Firestone Company was financially successful, with profits of over \$1 million. It was at this time that Firestone constructed a factory building, called Plant Number 1, in Akron, designed by Harpster and Bliss. In 1915 a clubhouse designed by Trowbridge and Akerman joined the complex. In 1926, the Triangle Building, also known as the Warehouse and Shipping Building, was constructed, creating a large complex of buildings joined by an internal rail line. These three buildings were added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2014.

As automobile racing became popular, Firestone began to promote his tires by supporting racing teams. In 1911, Ray Harroun won the first Indianapolis 500 driving a Marmon Wasp equipped with Firestone tires. By 1913, the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company was among the top five tire companies in the country with sales of more than \$15 million. The Firestone Company continued to expand, constructing stores and office buildings around the country,

including the office building in Kansas City, Missouri in 1915. Also during this period Firestone sponsored the “Good Roads” movement as well as promoting a “Ship by Truck” movement, both to encourage and promote private cars and the rubber tire industry.

In 1923 the Firestone Company developed a new standard tire for motor vehicles, called a “balloon tire.” However, between 1922 and 1924, British and Dutch colonies controlled a majority of the world's rubber supply, driving up prices and becoming a critical problem for the tire industry. As a result, Harvey Firestone and Henry Ford developed rubber plantations in Liberia. By 1926, Firestone had established the largest rubber plantation in the world, the Firestone Natural Rubber Company, which occupied a million acres in Liberia. The Firestone Company became a major investor in the Liberian economy, and has suffered controversy for labor rights violations ever since. By the end of 1926, assured of price-controlled rubber, Firestone manufactured 25 percent of America’s tires, with an output of more than ten million tires that year.

Firestone Tires were sold in independent tire stores and in stores owned by Firestone that dealt exclusively in Firestone tires. Firestone established the “one-stop master service store” in 1926. The stores provided tires, gasoline, oil, batteries, and brake service in one place. Firestone established these stores throughout the country, and they eventually went on to provide auto parts and additional auto services. Early stores were constructed in an eclectic revival style, Art Deco style, as well as Streamline, Moderne or Populux styles. Harvey Firestone retired in 1932 and died on February 7, 1938, at the age of 69 in Miami Beach, Florida.

In 1988, the Firestone Company was acquired for \$2.6 billion by Japan-based Bridgestone Corporation, the largest global tire manufacturer, founded by Shojiro Ishibashi in 1931. This acquisition transformed the companies’ combined operations into the world’s largest tire and rubber company. The operations in the Americas were renamed Bridgestone/Firestone, Inc. and moved headquarters from Akron to Nashville in 1992. The Bridgestone/Firestone subsidiary was renamed Bridgestone Americas, which as of 2015, has fifty-two production facilities and more than 50,000 employees in North America.

Historic Architectural Context: Auto Showrooms, Dealerships, and Automotive Service Stores in Seattle

The subject building was designed as a two-story eclectic automobile parts and service building.

The automobile entered the American national commercial market in the early 1900s, when manufacturers developed nationwide retail sales networks. Franchises were granted to “agents” to develop dealerships to sell, repair, and promote the dozens of available models. In the beginning, these dealerships were often associated with other transportation-related sales including livery stables, blacksmiths, or bicycle shops, and the sales buildings themselves reflected these products and services. Automobile sales soon eclipsed these sideline businesses. By 1913, local Seattle dealerships included Ford, Buick, Overland, Cadillac, Studebaker, Chalmer, Winton, Packard, Hudson, Pierce Arrow and several others.

Around that time the first buildings designed exclusively for automobile sales began to appear in American cities.

Between 1910 and 1920, automobile manufacturers began to influence the design of dealer showrooms, which in turn influenced service centers. Manufacturers encouraged dealers to build grand, even palatial, buildings that were on par with downtown banks and hotel buildings. These showrooms became corporate status symbols, and showrooms became virtual sales palaces, where affluent potential buyers were entertained with subtle salesmanship. These buildings built just before and during the 1920s, were often two or three-story buildings flush with their streetfront property lines and featured large plate glass windows that allowed better views of the automobiles inside. The exterior façades were patterned similar to other contemporary commercial buildings. The buildings were often constructed of reinforced concrete to allow fireproof construction and to accommodate heavy loads of vehicles that were often serviced on upper floors above the showroom. Brick masonry, cast stone, and terra cotta were used on the exterior, the latter two often highly ornamented with eclectic compositions of Classical detailing. The Pacific McKay Building on Mercer Street, designed by architect Harlan Thomas and Clyde Granger, is probably the best example of a 1920s dealership extant in Seattle. Other auto row buildings with terra cotta cladding included the White Motor Company Building on Capitol Hill and the Murray Marsh building on Westlake Avenue. Examples of brick-clad auto showrooms include the NK Packard dealership at Belmont Avenue and Pike Street and the Great Western Motor Company Building on Broadway. All of the auto dealerships used large plate glass windows for their showrooms, including Taggart Motors in Georgetown.

These new dealership buildings were often clustered, often near wealthy residential areas, creating “auto rows.” The first auto row in Seattle was on Capitol Hill’s Broadway, but others developed along Westlake Avenue, Mercer Street, and Pine Street. Service centers and other automotive-related parts stores were also located near these “auto rows.”

As automobiles became popular, the need developed for auto and parking services, and new businesses sprang up to serve this demand. Prior to the early 1900s, auto service shops had no distinct typology, as they were usually associated with other transportation-related sales, including livery stables, blacksmiths, or bicycle shops. Gasoline was originally sold at businesses such as hardware stores and blacksmith shops, but in 1907 Standard Oil opened Seattle’s first drive-in filling station. By 1909, there were at least eight stores selling tires in Seattle. These included the Ajax-Grieb Rubber Company, Firestone Rubber Company, Chanslor & Lyon selling Hartford Tires, Gorham Rubber Company selling Goodrich Tires, Michelin Tire, Republic Tire Company, and Diamond Tire Company. Three of the tire businesses—Firestone, the Fisk Rubber Company, and Chanslor & Lyon—were located in a retail space on the ground floor of the Roe Apartment building. In 1911, the Mitchell Motor Car Company opened a dealership in Seattle at the corner of Broadway and Pike Street, with a service department as part of the business.

By the 1920s, filling stations also offered parts and repair, as did auto dealerships and independent auto service stations. Auto service buildings took different forms, from humble gas stations to multi-story utilitarian garages such as the Garage Building for George L.

Seibert in Westlake, and to more elaborate parts and service stores and garages, such as the Donahoe Garage by Charles Haynes built in 1916.

During these years Seattle was also undergoing profound changes in character, including rapid population growth. Private automobiles began to replace public transit. As Susan Boyle reported in the Landmark Nomination Report for the Pacific McKay and Ford McKay Buildings:

“Seattle had grown to over 80,670 residents by 1900 as the city’s economy had boomed during the Alaska Gold Rush of 1897. By 1910, the city’s population had risen to 237,194. Growth was even more expansive in the years preceding World War I, and by 1920 Seattle numbered 315,312. The population began to stabilize the following decade, and in 1930 it was 365,583. During the first three decades of the 20th century, auto ownership grew rapidly in Washington as it did nationwide. Motor vehicle registration in the state rose steadily from 1914 through 1929, before dropping sharply with the onset of the Depression. Percentage of the population with registered autos rose from just over 11% in 1921, to nearly 25% in 1929. The greatest increases in number of vehicles registered occurred between 1916 to 1917, 1922 to 1926, and 1928 to 1929. Between 1928 and 1929, more than 35,000 new vehicles were registered in Washington State. In the following year, with the onset of the Depression, fewer than 3,000 new autos were registered.”

During this period the Firestone company built the subject building to include gas pumps and repair bays, so as to focus on both tire sales and service.

The Great Depression of the 1930s had severe consequences on automobile manufactures and their dealerships. Many closed entirely; others drastically cut back operations. Automobile manufacturing capacity was redirected to the war effort in the early 1940s. Post-war prosperity and new highway construction brought increased automobile production and expansion of dealerships and service centers.

As automobiles became streamlined, so did the buildings that housed them, including service stations, parking garages, and dealerships. The former S.L. Savidge dealership (now the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library) designed by Naramore, Bain, Brady, and Johanson, and built in 1948, is undoubtedly the finest example of an Art Deco automotive showroom in Seattle. However, even humble gas stations adopted a more modern style.

As the growing cult of the automobile allowed for the expansion of suburbia in the 1940s and 1950s, automobile dealers were encouraged to leave the decaying city cores for outlying areas with land that was less expensive and allowed for large car lots and sprawling one-story showrooms and service centers. Early expansion areas included Ballard, Roosevelt Way, and Lake City, but soon dealerships opened east of Seattle, to the north in Lynnwood, and south as far as Auburn. Architectural style for these new low-rise buildings included Streamline Moderne or boxy International Style knockoffs, evolving into futuristic “George Jetson spaceports.”

Building Materials and Methods: Local Terra Cotta Manufacture

As the demand for lighter and fireproof exterior cladding material grew in Seattle in the 1880s, four west coast terra cotta manufacturing companies grew to dominate the industry. Two of these companies were locally based: the Puget Sound Fire Clay Company and the Northern Clay Company.

The Washington Brick, Lime, and Sewer Pipe Company was based in Spokane, while the Gladding-McBean Company was located in Lincoln City, California.

The Denny Clay Company was organized in 1882, after Arthur A. Denny took over the assets of the Puget Sound Fire Clay Company whose factory was near Van Asselt, a former town on the Duwamish River where the current Boeing factory is now located. By 1900, the company was marketing its tile along the West Coast from California to Alaska. Around that time the company relocated to Taylor, Washington, just east of Buckley, opening large clay mines and building a large factory.

The Denny Clay Company merged with the Renton Clay Company in 1905, forming the Denny-Renton Clay Company. This company produced terra cotta for many well known downtown Seattle buildings including the King County Courthouse, the Arctic Building, and the Times Building.

The Northern Clay Company was organized in 1900, in Auburn, and supplied terra cotta for the Coliseum Theater, the Washington Securities Building, the Crystal Swimming Pool, the Joshua Green Building, the Securities Building, and the Frederick and Nelson Department Store.

The Washington Brick, Lime, and Sewer Pipe Company had a large plant in Spokane that was capable of a monthly production of 450 tons.

Gladding-McBean was the “preeminent producer of terra cotta in California, and produced terra cotta for the Smith Tower, the Pioneer Building, and the Federal Office Building.” In 1925, the Denny-Renton Clay Company merged with Gladding McBean. Gladding McBean is presently the only terra cotta manufacturer in the United States. Original drawings do not specify where the subject building’s terra cotta was manufactured.

Building Contractor and Designer: The Austin Company of California

The subject building was designed and constructed by the Austin Company’s California branch office.

The Austin Company was incorporated on April 16, 1916. The company had its origins in a Cleveland, Ohio, contracting firm founded in 1878 by Samuel Austin, a young English carpenter who had recently immigrated to the United States. Austin took on his first commercial project, a bank, in 1889, and in 1895 constructed a factory for the Western Mineral Wool Company in Chicago, followed that same year by a factory for Cleveland’s first electric lamp factory.

In 1904, Samuel's son, Wilbert J. Austin, joined the firm, creating the Samuel Austin & Son Company. Wilbert was a graduate of Case School of Applied Sciences (now part of Case Western Reserve University). Wilbert developed the concept of an integrated building company. Deemed the Austin Method©, it combined architecture and engineering with construction, streamlining the building process and leading to a turnkey product. In 1907 the company constructed Cleveland's first reinforced concrete company building for the H. Black Company, which housed a factory for the Wooltex cloak factory, a large women's clothing manufacturer. In 1911, the National Electric Lamp Association (predecessor to General Electric) awarded Austin a contract to construct a large research complex in the city of East Cleveland. The project is considered the world's first planned, campus-type, industrial research center. A large lamp manufacturing plant was also constructed within a mile of the complex. Due to the size of these projects, Austin located their offices in East Cleveland.

By 1916, Austin had secured contracts for light manufacturing plants in New England, Canada, Chicago, St. Louis, and California. As a result, the company established regional offices to expedite operations in various sections of the country. That year the company was renamed The Austin Company.

The Austin Company grew rapidly during World War I, entering into contracts for manufacturing military materials. In 1918, Austin designed and constructed the world's largest manufacturing facility for the Curtis Aeroplane and Motor Company in Buffalo, New York. Following the Armistice of 1918, Austin established an overseas office in Paris to coordinate the delivery and erection of a dozen modularized prefabricated factories in France.

During the 1920s, Austin became the nation's preeminent designer and builder of hangers and aircraft maintenance facilities, developing the "canopy door" for wide-span hangers. Austin also established a leadership position in the automobile industry, constructing what was then the world's largest building for the Oakland Motor Car Company in Pontiac, Michigan. Austin's reputation led to a contract to design and build a \$60 million integrated automobile complex in the town of Gorki in the Soviet Union. The project also included infrastructure for a worker's town of 50,000 people.

Largely due to these projects, the company survived the Depression years unscathed, while pioneering such innovations as fluorescent factory lighting. In 1933, Austin established a division devoted to the design, production, and erection of insulated steel buildings. It became a major source of prefabricated porcelain-enamel service stations throughout the country.

By the time Samuel Austin passed away in 1936, the company had completed more than 5,000 projects, representing an aggregate value of \$252 million. Wilbert Austin died in a plane crash in 1940, shortly before the start of World War II.

The company designed and constructed numerous critical defense facilities during the war, many under government sponsorship, including aircraft-assembly plants, military airports, Air Force training stations, and naval facilities.

Post-war, the Austin Company branched into aviation, broadcasting, newspaper publishing, food processing, and pharmaceutical manufacturing, as well as building specialized facilities for research, manufacturing, distribution, and computer operations for a variety of industries. From the 1970s and to the 1990s, the Austin Company faced a decline in business. In 1984, the company was purchased by the National Gypsum Company. Following National Gypsum's bankruptcy, in 2005 Austin became a wholly-owned subsidiary of Kajima USA Group. The Austin Company continues to maintain an office in suburban Cleveland, with additional offices in Irvine, California; Atlanta, Georgia; Kalamazoo, Michigan; and St. Louis, Missouri; and a joint venture company in Mexico.

Other buildings by the Austin Company in the Seattle area include:

- Asbestos Supply Company (1925, 5033 First Avenue S, demolished)
- Huston-Swanstrom Building (1925, 2993 Fourth Avenue)
- Boeing Administration Building (1930) See figure 71.
- Boeing Company Plant #2, Seattle, WA (1936, 7755 E Marginal Way S)
- Alaska Airlines' maintenance facilities at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport
- Naval Air Station Sandpoint, five runways, shops and barracks (1941)
- Admiral's House, 13th Naval District (1944, 2099 West Garfield Street, architect Roger J. Gotteland, City of Seattle Landmark) See figure 73.
- KOMO Broadcasting Studio #1, Seattle (1948)

Subsequent Building Architect: Victor W. Voorhees

Seattle architect Victor W. Voorhees designed a remodel of the subject building in 1937. Victor Wilbur Voorhees, Jr. (1876-1970) practiced as an architect in Seattle starting in 1903 or 1904, until his retirement in 1942. He is best known for publishing *Western Home Builder*, a plan book published in several editions, each containing plans for several dozen residences, ranging from small bungalows to large American four-square houses, known locally as "Seattle Boxes." The majority of Voorhees' designs, however, were commercial commissions, including small factories, warehouses, stores, banks, theaters, auto showrooms, laundries, and apartment buildings.

In the late 1920s, Voorhees also designed the ten-story Lloyd Building (1927, 601 Stewart Street, City of Seattle Landmark), the ten-story Vance Hotel (1927, 620 Stewart Street), and the nearby Vance Building (1929-1930, 620 Stewart Avenue).

Voorhees moved to Santa Barbara in 1958, and died there on August 10, 1970, at age 94.

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The features of the Landmark to be preserved include: The exterior of the building.

Issued: June 13, 2016

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