Name: Avon Apartments (historic), Capitol Crest Apartments (current)

Year Built: 1905

Street and Number: 825 E Denny Way and 1831-35 Broadway Avenue, Seattle WA 98122

Assessor's File No.: 600300-1310

Legal Description: Lot 7, Block 34, Addition to the City of Seattle, as laid out by D. T. Denny, Guardian of the Estate of N. H. Nagle (commonly known as Nagle’s Addition to the City of Seattle), according to the Plat thereof, recorded in Volume 1 of Plats, page 153, in King County, Washington.

Plat Name: Nagle’s Addition  Block: 34  Lot: 7

Present Use: Mixed-use building (apartments and retail)

Present Owner: Champion Development, Inc.
Owner’s representative: George Ma
Registered Agent for the Owner, Champion Development, Inc.
3011 78th Avenue SE
Mercer Island, Washington, 98040
gma5@hotmail.com
206-414-9893

Original Owner: Ahrens & Kimball

Original Use: Mixed-use building (apartments and retail)

Architect: William P. White, architect

Builder: W. R. Bowser & Son

Submitted by: David Peterson Historic Resource Consulting
301 Union Street #115
Seattle WA 98111
(206) 376-7761 / david@dphrc.com

Reviewed by: (Historic Preservation Officer)

Date: August 1, 2019
Avon / Capitol Crest Apartments

825 E Denny Way & 1831-35 Broadway Avenue

Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board

August 1, 2019
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Cover: Historic photograph of the building, looking to the southeast in 1937 from the King County Assessor archival property record card (Puget Sound Regional Archives).
1. INTRODUCTION

Background

This report documents a mixed-use building, located at **825 E Denny Way and 1831-35 Broadway Avenue on Capitol Hill**. Known historically as the Avon Apartments and currently as the Capitol Crest Apartments, the building is a three-story wood-frame and veneer brick structure constructed in 1905. This report was written at the request of George Ma, registered agent for the current owners, Champion Development, Inc., in order to ascertain its historic significance. As the local property owner and building manager, he is seeking an evaluation of the building’s status by the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board as part of a proposed redevelopment of the property.

Research

This report was written and researched by historic resource consultant David Peterson in collaboration with Susan Boyle, AIA, of BOLA Architecture + Planning. Unless noted otherwise, all images are by the author and date from May 2019.

Sources used in this report include:

- Material on file at the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) microfilm library, including early permits and copies of drawings for alterations to the property. No original architectural drawings exist.
- Newspaper, book, city directories, and maps referencing the property (see bibliography).
- Author’s on-site photographs and building inspection.
- Historic photographs of the subject property to assess changes to the exterior to the building, including 1937, 1956, ca. 1978, and 1989 tax assessor photographs and images in the Seattle Municipal Archives.
- King County current and historic tax records; the former accessed online, and the latter obtained from the Puget Sound Regional Archives at Bellevue College in Bellevue, Washington.

Research also included several site visits to view and document current conditions of the neighborhood, site, and building.

Seattle’s Landmarks Process

(Note: This section summarizes information for readers unfamiliar with the local landmark process.)

Historic landmarks are those individual properties that have been recognized locally, regionally, or nationally as important resources to the community, city, state, or nation. Official recognition is provided by listing in the State or National Registers of Historic Places and locally by the City of Seattle’s designation of a property as historic landmark. The local landmarks process is a multi-part proceeding of three sequential steps by the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board:

1) a review of the nomination and its and approval or rejection
2) a designation
3) negotiation of controls and incentives by the property owner and the City’s Historic Preservation Officer and its approval by the Landmarks Preservation Board

A final step in this landmarks process is passage of a designation ordinance by the City Council. These steps all occur with public hearings to allow input from the property owner, applicant, the public, and other
interested parties. Seattle’s Landmarks Preservation Board is quasi-judicial, with the Board ruling rather than serving as in advisory capacity to another commission, department, or agency.

The City’s Preservation Ordinance (SMC 25.12.350) requires a property to be more than 25 years old and to “have significant character, interest or value, as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, State or Nation.” It must have integrity, or the ability to convey its significance. The ordinance also requires that a property meet one or more of six designation criteria:

**Criterion A.** It is the location of, or is associated in a significant way with, an historic event with a significant effect upon the community, City, state, or nation.

**Criterion B.** It is associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the history of the City, state, or nation.

**Criterion 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.

**Criterion D.** It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or of a method of construction.

**Criterion E.** It is an outstanding work of a designer or builder.

**Criterion 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.

More than 460 individual properties have been designated as local landmarks under the city ordinance, along with others located in one of eight historic districts. Anyone can prepare a landmark nomination. However, the Landmarks Board’s review cannot consider future changes or uses, or other land use issues.
2. BUILDING INFORMATION

Historic Name: Avon Apartments

Current Name: Capitol Crest Apartments

Location: The property is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of E Denny Way and Broadway Avenue on Seattle's Capitol Hill.

Address: 825 E Denny Way and 1831-35 Broadway Avenue, Seattle WA 98122

Assessor's Parcel No.: 600300-1310

Plat/Block/Lot: Plat: Nagle's Addition / Block: 34 / Lot: 7

Legal Description: Lot 7, Block 34, Addition to the City of Seattle, as laid out by D. T. Denny, Guardian of the Estate of N. H. Nagle (commonly known as Nagle's Addition to the City of Seattle), according to the Plat thereof, recorded in Volume 1 of Plats, page 153, in King County, Washington.

Construction Date: 1905

Original Designer: William P. White, architect

Original Builder: W. R. Bowser & Son

Original Use: Mixed-use building (apartments and retail)

Present Use: Mixed-use building (apartments and retail)

Original Owner: Ahrens & Kimball

Joey Investors, Inc./Jane E. Thielmann, 1971 – ?

Present Owner: Champion Development, Inc.

Owner's Representative: George Ma
Registered Agent for the Owner, Champion Development, Inc.
3011 78th Avenue SE
Mercer Island, Washington, 98040
gma5@hotmail.com
206-414-9893
3. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Site and Neighborhood Context

The subject property is located at the southwest corner of Broadway Avenue and E Denny Way in the center of Seattle’s Capitol Hill neighborhood. The parcel is rectangular in plan, measuring approximately 128 by 60 feet, oriented east-west. The site is essentially flat, dropping approximately three feet from southeast to northwest property corners. There is no alley. The subject building occupies the approximate east half of the site. A paved surface parking area for thirteen vehicles occupies the rest. [See Figures 1 - 6]

Surrounding buildings vary in terms of age and type. To the west of the subject property, sharing a property line, is the Pantages Apartments, a five-story wood-frame apartment building constructed in 2005. The apartments wrap two sides of the Alexander Pantages Residence, at the corner of Harvard Avenue E and E Denny Way, a ca. 1907 wood-frame Eclectic Queen Anne style house which forms a part of the apartment complex. The Pantages House is a designated Seattle landmark. To the south of the subject site, sharing a property line, is the west entry to the Capitol Hill Link Light Rail Station, a one-story reinforced concrete building constructed in 2016, which provides below-grade access to the underground light rail system under Broadway Avenue. Across Broadway Avenue to the east from the site is another light rail station, also one-story and constructed of reinforced concrete. The properties beyond, which were demolished ca. 2014 in order to construct the light rail stations, are currently being redeveloped with new multi-family structures, to be completed ca. 2020. To the north of the subject site, across E Denny Way, is a six-story, 44-unit, wood-frame mixed-use building constructed in 2017; prior to that time, the site was occupied by the Capitol Hill branch post office.

Under city land use zoning, the site is in a NC3P-75 zone, and located within the Capitol Hill Urban Center Village, and within the Light Rail Station Overlay district, but outside the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District.

The immediate surroundings, particularly south of the site, are dominated by Seattle Central College, but the neighborhood is generally a dense mix of commercial, mixed-use, institutional and civic buildings, with many apartment buildings and some single-family houses nearby. Although a primary arterial elsewhere in Seattle, E Denny Way adjacent to the subject site is a less busy street, due to a jog in the topography which leads arterial traffic onto E Olive Way. Extending a mile north of the site, Broadway Avenue forms the primary commercial spine for the neighborhood. Cal Anderson Park is one block to the east. A fixture in the neighborhood since the early 1900s, it includes playfields, tennis courts, and a new open space installed over the city water reservoir which was covered and sealed in 2004.

While the neighborhood has been continuously developed every decade from the 1880s to the present, the area was heavily developed in the decades between 1900-1930. The blocks along Pike and Pine Streets, connecting downtown to Capitol Hill and First Hill, make up an area associated with automobile-related service buildings and showrooms built between about 1905 and 1925, known as the city’s first “Auto Row.” The neighborhood in general is notable throughout the city for a vibrant urban environment, particularly in recent decades, and continues to undergo commercial and residential development.

Seattle historic landmarks within a quarter-mile radius include:

- Cal Anderson Park, Lincoln Reservoir and Bobby Morris Playfield (1901, Olmsted Brothers, altered), at Nagle Place and 11th Avenue between E Pine Street and E Denny Way.
- The Alexander Pantages House (1907), at E Denny Way and Harvard Avenue E.
- White Motor Company Building (1918, Julian Everett), at E Pine Street and 11th Avenue.
• Eldridge Tire Company Building (A.H. Albertson, 1925) at 1519 Broadway Avenue.
• San Remo Apartments (Wm. van Siclen, 1906) at E Thomas Street and Belmont Avenue E.
• The Ward house (1882) at E Denny Way and Belmont Avenue E.

Notable nearby buildings in the neighborhood that are not Seattle landmarks include:

• Broadway Performance Hall (Edgar Blair, 1911, altered), at Broadway Avenue and E Pine Street.
• Cornish School of Music / Booth Building (Thompson & Thompson, 1906, altered).
• Egyptian Theater (former Masonic Temple, Saunders & Lawton, 1916), at Harvard Avenue and E Pine Street.
• Odd Fellows Temple (Carl Breitung, 1908-10), at 10th Avenue and E Pine Street.

Building Description

The subject building was constructed in 1905 for real estate investors Ahrens & Kimball as a mixed-use structure, with two stories of apartments over first floor commercial spaces. The building is located at the southwest corner of Broadway Avenue and E Denny Way. [See Figures 7 – 36 for current photos of the building, and Figures 79 – 88 for historic photos and drawings]

Exterior and Structure

The building is three stories of wood-frame brick veneer construction over a concrete basement, with a flat, built-up roof wrapped by a tall parapet with a deep projecting wood cornice on the street-facing facades. Massed as a simple block measuring approximately 60 by 75 feet in plan, oriented east-west, the structure is built to the property line at the street corner, and shares the parcel with an accessory surface parking lot located on the west side. Although the brick facades have been painted (a non-original condition), the street-facing north and east facades feature face brick, while the rear or west facade is clad with common brick. Between the first and second floors, a wood horizontal trim board wraps the two street facades.

The south facade is a party wall condition and is built to the property line at the first floor, but features a shallow light well measuring approximately 5 by 25 feet in plan notched into the second and third floors, clad with painted wood drop siding.

The building is notable for a total of six two-story chamfered-corner bay windows which extend the full height of the second and third floors, engaging the cornice—two bays each at the two street-facing facades (north and east), as well as the parking lot facade (west).

All windows in the building are non-original—vinyl single-hung sash replacements of the original wood double-hung sash at the upper floors, installed at some time after 1989. At the rear or west facade, the first floor windows are aluminum sash or glass block replacements, which likely date to the mid-20th century. The projecting window bays are wood frame with painted wood and sheet metal cladding, and wood trim. Upper-story window openings in the masonry veneer wall are typically grouped into pairs, and feature rough-dressed painted stone sills at the street-facing north and east facades, but plainer smooth-faced painted sills (possibly cast stone or concrete) at the rear or west facade. Windows are ornamented with flat arch headers at the north and west facades, and simple projecting brick decorative hoods at the north and east facades.

When originally constructed, there was a recessed porch between the bay windows on the Broadway Avenue facade, which is visible in historic photographs. At the second story, the porch featured a wood railing in plane with the exterior wall, while at the third story, there was a projecting balcony and railing supported by
two end brackets. The recess apparently served as a fire escape, as a fire ladder is visible in the 1937 tax assessor photograph. Although the recessed balcony was enclosed during 1972 alterations updating the building’s fire stairs and exits, the projecting balcony was not removed until some time between 2008 and 2011. Today, this recess in the facade is clad with painted plywood panels and wood trim. The rear or west façade may have also featured a similar stacked, recessed pair of balconies when originally constructed, as evidenced by an apparently non-original vertical wood infill panel which extends between the second and third floors, between the two bay windows. The vertical panel is constructed of painted plywood with wood trim, and features paired, contemporary vinyl sash windows at each floor. However, there are no historic photographs or drawings showing the original condition of the rear of the building to confirm this.

At the north and south ends of the east or Broadway Avenue facade, there are two street-level storefronts which are divided by a length of non-original masonry wall with a recessed entry for the south commercial space. The northeast corner storefront wraps around to the E Denny Way facade to the depth of one window bay. Above, a steel and glass marquee installed around 1989 covers the sidewalk. These storefronts are not original and they have been completely and repeatedly altered over time; at present they are stick-built bronze aluminum glazing. Historic tax records and photographs indicate that the original condition featured three fully glazed wood storefronts on wood bulkheads, with copper trim sash, each with recessed entries, and a continuous transom above; all of this was removed by the mid-1950s.

The north or E Denny Way first floor facade has been altered over time, but unlike the Broadway Avenue storefronts, it retains some original elements. A review of historical photographs shows that the large store window at the center was originally two small windows set high in the wall, enlarged to the current condition at some time between about 1978 and 1989. At the west part of the north facade, there is another recessed building entry, reached by four concrete steps from the sidewalk, providing access to the upstairs apartments, and to one additional commercial space at the northwest building corner (likely originally the location of the office/building manager’s unit). The recessed entry is framed by two brick pilasters with simple capitals supporting a small cornice-like projection of the horizontal trim board, enhanced with deeply projecting block modillions. This recessed entry vestibule, which is aligned with one of the projecting bay windows above, features oak panel wainscoting, coved ceilings with decorative florid plasterwork, hexagonal tile floor with decorative tile edging, simple granite base molding, and two high entry doors with large transoms, all of which may be original. The actual glazed doors to the apartments and to the commercial space are non-original, nor are the inset tenant mailboxes in the vestibule.

At the northwestern building corner are concrete steps along the west facade leading down to secondary basement access, enclosed by chain link fencing and protected by a non-original metal shed roof. The primary entry to the basement is from interior stairs at the southernmost commercial entry on the Broadway Avenue facade.

Interior

Tax records indicate that ceiling heights are 11 feet 6 inches at the first floor, and 9 feet at the basement, second, and third floors. There is no elevator. When constructed, original finishes included plaster walls, fir floors, fir trim, and no tilework except at the entrance. Tax records in 1937 noted three commercial spaces, and twelve apartments; however, permit drawings from the 1970s suggest there had originally been four apartments per floor at the two upper floors, for a total of eight.

The ground floor commercial spaces are now occupied by two restaurants along Broadway Avenue, and a hair salon in the commercial space at the northwest building corner. The spaces have been completely and repeatedly altered by various tenants over time, with present finishes dating to recent decades, and they retain no significant historic features. The basement is an accessory space to one of the ground floor commercial
spaces, and is used as a kitchen and dining area by one of the restaurants. While there are no significant features intact, the basement’s post and beam structure is exposed and visible.

The twelve upper floor residential units are accessed from the E Denny Way building entrance, which opens to a stairway and wide east-west oriented corridor. Portions of the stair appear to be original, including a painted wood balustrade with simple square profile pickets, and rectangular newel posts with frame trim. The stair, which is carpeted, leads to an unusually wide double-loaded corridor at the second and third floors, giving access to individual unit doors. A secondary fire exit stair is located at the east end of the corridor, where the original recessed balcony used to be. Although the main stair appears to be original, the rest of the second and third floors date to recent decades, when the units were gutted and rebuilt in 1988 to updated unit plan configurations. Today, there are six 1-bedroom units per floor. Three units were investigated for this report; interior finishes included painted gypsum wallboard walls, contemporary painted wood window and door trim, and modern tile or engineered wood flooring. Units are outfitted with contemporary fixtures and appliances.

Summary of Primary Alterations

Historic tax assessor photographs from 1937, 1956, ca. 1978, and 1989 provide the primary information regarding alterations to the exterior of building since original construction. While no original architectural drawings exist, some drawings for real or proposed building alterations are on file at the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections microfilm library, and these help provide insights into the changes to the building over time. There are also numerous historical permits on file, although most relate to alterations to mechanical systems for the commercial tenants. Below are the major permitted alterations to the property, excluding those for signage or mechanical systems:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permit</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Est. Cost</th>
<th>Comments on permit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34739</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>Build (3 stories, 60x75, brick, store &amp; apt bldg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>190982</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>396815</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>Repair plaster etc. (9 apts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>397361</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>$125</td>
<td>Alter existing apt. (apts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>441763</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>$5,500</td>
<td>Alter building, 3 store fronts (tavern, store)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>533049(?)</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>Alt. por. exist. bldg. &amp; occupy as offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>537835</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>$700</td>
<td>Replace exist. window frames (stores, apts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>543067</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>Alter exist. bldg. &amp; occupy as a delicatessen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>544685</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>Alter exist. bldg. [drawings show fire stairs revised]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A visual inspection of the current property reveals the primary alterations to the building:

- Broadway Avenue storefronts have been completely altered over time, and presently date to recent decades. The ground-floor store window opening at the east end of the E Denny Way facade was enlarged between 1978 and 1989.
- All windows are non-original; all are contemporary vinyl sash windows in non-original wood frames, except for mid-century aluminum sash and glass block at the first floor rear facade only.
- Original recessed balconies at the second and third stories of the primary Broadway Avenue facade no longer intact (infilled ca. 1972; third floor projecting balcony removed 2008-2011).

1 Likely work following the damaging April 13, 1949 Seattle earthquake.
• Face brick and common brick masonry has been completely painted, a non-original condition.
• All commercial space interiors are altered and non-original. All residential unit interiors are non-original, having been rebuilt ca. 1988. Stairwell to residential units appears to be the only original interior feature remaining in the building.
4. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Development of the Broadway/Capitol Hill Neighborhood

The subject property is situated at the corner of E Denny Way and Broadway Avenue, one block west of Cal Anderson Park. The site is located at the southern edge of what is today called the Capitol Hill neighborhood, where the area begins to overlap the First Hill neighborhood several blocks to the south, connected by the Broadway Avenue commercial corridor. The area around the subject site was originally called the Broadway District at the turn of the 20th century. Easy access to downtown, and the intersection of residential, commercial, and institutional development patterns, were important factors in the growth of this area. [See Figures 37 – 54 for historic maps and photos of the neighborhood]

The area developed early in the city’s history. Seattle’s founders had settled on Elliott Bay in 1852, and incorporated as a town in 1869. City limits by 1875 only extended as far north from downtown as Howell Street, one block south of the subject site. In 1883, the strip of land between Howell and Galer Streets, including the subject site, was annexed to the city. At that time, the area around Broadway Avenue was known as Broadway Hill, centered around the north-south Broadway Avenue commercial and residential spine that was rapidly beginning to develop north from First Hill.2

First Hill had developed by 1880 as a fashionable neighborhood, with large homes of the city’s elite near but removed from downtown. Expanding north, Seattle pioneer David Denny, acting as the executor of the John Nagle Estate, platted, sold, and leased property along Broadway Avenue beginning in 1880. Almost two miles to the north, James Moore and his Moore Investment Company developed 160 acres through a series of plats between 1900 and 1906 in the 40 blocks east and south of Volunteer Park, itself established only a few years earlier. Moore named the site “Capitol Hill,” possibly after another neighborhood of the same name in Denver, Colorado (where he once lived), or possibly based on an expectation that the state capitol might be located there.3 This area also became popular with Seattle’s elite. Over time, “Capitol Hill” came to refer generally to a much larger area than Moore’s original development, extending southward along and encompassing the Broadway district to First Hill, the Cascade neighborhood on the west, and the Madison Valley and Central District to the east.

Both First Hill and Capitol Hill were convenient to downtown, enjoyed water views and fresh air, and were some of the earliest areas served by streetcar lines. A map of 1896 street railways shows two lines serving First Hill via Yesler Way and James Street, while several lines were serving Capitol Hill via Pike, Union, Howell, Stewart, and other streets. Dividing these neighborhoods, approximately six blocks south of the subject property, Madison Street sliced at a southwest to northeast angle, connecting downtown to what is now the Madison Park neighborhood on Lake Washington waterfront. A cable car installed in 1889-1891 along Madison Street was one of the earliest streetcar lines in the city, and helped develop Madison Street into a major thoroughfare in later years.4

Cal Anderson Park was established in 1901 as “Lincoln Park” and was the first in Seattle designed by the Olmsted Brothers. The large site was the location of Lincoln Reservoir, which was constructed after the Great Fire of 1889 and rapid population growth prompted the need for establishing a municipal water system. Water from the Cedar River first flowed into Lincoln and Volunteer Park reservoirs in January 1901.5

3 Williams, The Hill With A Future, pp. 15-17.
The reservoir largely dominated the northern portion of Lincoln Park (now located underground since 2005). The southern portion had one of the city’s first children’s playgrounds to be developed (1907), with the “playground” concept having been introduced to Seattle by the Olmsteds. The southern portion of the park also included a baseball field. In 1922, the Park Board renamed it “Broadway Playfield” to avoid confusion with a new major park in West Seattle which was to be named Lincoln Park. (Later name changes in 1980 and 2003 resulted in the current nomenclature, Bobby Morris Playfield and Cal Anderson Park).

By 1915, development in the area had attracted a refined class of First Hill residences and institutions only six blocks south of the subject site, including impressive structures such as St. Mark’s Episcopal Church (1897, demolished, the forerunner of St. Mark’s Episcopal Cathedral) at Seneca and Harvard; the Academy of the Holy Name near Broadway Avenue and Union (ca. 1900, demolished); Fire House No. 25, at Harvard and Union (1909); Minor Hospital at Harvard and Spring (1910); First Baptist Church (1912); and an imposing Scottish Rite Cathedral at Broadway Avenue and Harvard Avenue (ca. 1912, demolished). The Garrand Building (1894), on the south side of Madison at Broadway Avenue, represented the beginnings of Seattle University, an institution which would eventually become a dominant presence in the First Hill neighborhood.

Closer to the site, several institutions had built significant structures by the mid-1910s, including the Seattle or Broadway High School at Broadway Avenue and Pine (1902, demolished except for the Auditorium portion of 1911, now known as Broadway Performance Hall); First Christian Church at Broadway Avenue and East Olive Street (1902, demolished and rebuilt in 1923, then demolished again in 2005); the Odd Fellows Temple (1910) at 10th and Pine; the Masonic Lodge (1916), known in recent decades as the Egyptian Theater; and the original Cornish School at Broadway Avenue and Pine (Thompson & Thompson, 1906, altered), now known as the Booth Building.

On the interior of the hills and on lower slopes of Capitol Hill and First Hill—for example, the areas north and east of the Lincoln Park and playfield—working-class homes and small apartment buildings had been built, with scattered churches and commercial buildings, by the 1910s. More modest wood-frame homes and duplexes, and grittier commercial uses such as horse liveries and wagon works, were located in the vicinity of 10th, 11th, and 12th Avenues along Pike and Union Streets. The dense neighborhood at that time is apparent in period photographs.

From about 1905 to about 1930, the Pike-Pine-Broadway area a few blocks south of the subject site developed into an early “Auto Row,” characterized by numerous automobile dealerships, auto repair shops, parts suppliers, paint shops, and parking garages. This district largely followed the blocks along Pike and Pine Streets from Melrose Avenue to Madison Street, and in the triangle formed by Broadway Avenue, Madison Street, and Pine Street. Part of this development extended as far north as the subject site—the adjacent property south of the Avon Apartments was a one-story brick automobile and motorcycle service garage, built in 1917 (demolished ca. 1975), and across Broadway there was another one-story brick garage, built in 1915 (demolished ca. 2014).

North of the subject site, the Broadway District was associated with shops and stores, with single family homes and apartment buildings close by. In the 1920s, the Broadway district boomed to become one of the city’s premier shopping areas, and apartment and commercial development expanded. However, the economic depression of the 1930s led to general stagnation, and the neighborhood changed significantly after World War II. Broadway High School closed in 1946, replaced by the Edison Technical School, a vocational training institution. Its successor, Seattle Central Community College, was established in 1966. It demolished and replaced most of the old high school buildings and other adjacent commercial buildings along Broadway Avenue, just south of the subject site, in the 1970s. The college continued to expand in more recent decades, as evidenced by the construction in 1993 of the student activities building on two blocks at the west side of Cal Anderson Park.
Since 2000, growth of the city has led to increased development in the immediate neighborhood. Cal Anderson Park was redeveloped in 2005. An underground rapid transit light rail station was completed across Broadway Avenue and adjacent to the subject site in 2016, which required the demolition of two blocks of one-story commercial buildings, single family houses, and apartment buildings located on the east side of Broadway from E John Street to E Howell Street. Additionally, a surface light rail connection to First Hill and Pioneer Square was installed at the same time, the terminus of which is located one block south of the subject site. North of the site, zoning along Broadway Avenue was changed to allow taller buildings and higher densities, resulting in increased development.

Development of the Building, the Building’s Owners, and Occupants

The subject parcel is located in Nagle’s Addition, which was platted in 1880. Prior to the construction of the subject building in 1905, building permits and the 1905 Sanborn fire insurance map indicate that the site was occupied by two wood frame dwellings fronting E Denny Way—a two-story Victorian style, single-family home built in 1899 at the northeast property corner, and a ca. 1890 one-story “shack” at the southwest corner. The latter building received a 12 by 24 foot addition in 1903. Perhaps serving as an indicator of the rapid pace of development in the neighborhood at that time, in 1905, just two years later, the one-story dwelling was demolished, and the two-story house was moved westward to its place and set on a brick foundation, to make room at the corner for the subject building. That house remained there until the mid-20th century. [See Figures 79 – 86 for historic photos of the building]

Little news coverage regarding the design, construction, or opening of the subject building was found for this report. The original owner, Ahrens & Kimball, likely commissioned architect William P. White in late 1904 or early 1905 to prepare a design for the building. A brief news item in March 1905 noted that White was preparing plans and specifications for the building, which was to contain three large stores, nine four-and-five-room flats on the upper two stories, and an entrance finished in tiles.

Plans were filed and building permit received in early May 1905, with the construction cost estimated at $15,000. Over the summer, the subject building was constructed at the now-cleared east end of the parcel, with the residential entrance remaining on E Denny Way, and storefronts at street level along Broadway Avenue. Classified ads announced the building ready for occupancy four months later, in September 1905. Apartments were advertised as four to five room steam-heated flats, with gas ranges, janitor service, and fine Sound and mountain views. The three ground-floor store spaces were advertised for lease, recommending them as a choice location for a drugstore, dry goods store, grocery, or hardware store. By November 1905, the building was being referred to as the Avon Apartments.

Original owners

Newspaper articles and the building permit state that the original owners and developers of the subject building were Ahrens & Kimball, but offer no other details about them. The subject building appears to have been developed as an investment property.

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6 SDCI permits #1610 (1899, $2,000, “Build”); #19878 (1903, $100, “build addition,”); #32891 (1905, $700, “move res. & put on brick found.”); #32966 (1905, $50, “tear down frame shack”).
“Ahrens” was probably Edlef H. Ahrens, who, with his brother Melvin M. Ahrens, operated the E. H. Ahrens Company, a women’s apparel store located at 1412 Second Avenue in downtown Seattle in the early 1900s. Edlef was born in Denmark around 1862, and operated a department store with Melvin for thirteen years in Great Falls, Montana, before coming to Seattle in 1902 at age 40. Edlef and his wife Linda, who was from Iowa, had married in 1901, and lived in Seattle’s new Capitol Hill neighborhood near Volunteer Park at 945 17th Avenue E, where they raised three children. The family formed the Ahrens Investment Company, and was active in Seattle real estate beginning in the early 1900s as evidenced by numerous real estate transactions cited in the Seattle Times. Melvin moved to Oregon in the mid-1910s. In 1915, Linda died at age 48, leaving a community estate of over $72,000 (equivalent to over $1,800,000 today), which included a considerable real estate portfolio. Around 1931, Edlef retired and devoted his time to managing properties and investments, and was active in local Masonic fraternal groups. When he died in 1951 at age 89, he left an estate valued at $100,000 (equivalent to just under $1,000,000 today) in real estate to his family.

“Kimball” of Ahrens & Kimball was not identified, but could have been several persons active in the city in 1905 who had the financial wherewithal to invest in properties. There were over thirty Kimballs listed in the 1905 Polk’s Seattle directory; possible associates of Ahrens in this project could have been Charles W. Kimball, secretary and manager of the Northwest Rubber Company; Ephraim E. Kimball, president and general manager of the Pacific Mutual Co-operative Investment Company; George N. Kimball, a dentist with offices on Broadway Avenue; John H. Kimball, a real estate professional; William D. Kimball, an architect; or several others. It is also possible that Kimball was not a Seattle resident, or was an out-of-state investor.

No other projects developed by Ahrens and Kimball have been identified for this report, or found in a review of historic Seattle Times newspaper articles. By 1937, historic tax records indicate that the property was wholly owned by the Ahrens Investment Company, rather than Ahrens & Kimball.

In 1961, under the Ahrens ownership, building permits indicate that the house directly west of the subject building, which had been located on the same parcel, was demolished. At that time the existing surface parking lot was presumably installed.

Later owners

Tax records and newspaper articles provide some indication of later owners. In 1966, the property was purchased by Harold Tomlinson, whose father Albert had established the New Richmond Laundry Company in Seattle in 1916. Over the years, the company acquired several other laundry businesses, consolidating them under the name Prim Laundry and Dry Cleaners, which amounted to about 25 stores. The firm at its height was the largest dry-cleaning company in the city, including commercial and industrial divisions. After 1960, Harold Tomlinson became active in real estate investments, and in the 1970s he began selling off divisions of the dry-cleaning business. By the time of his death in 1990, Tomlinson’s real estate company included large commercial and industrial holdings.

In 1970, Harold Tomlinson sold the subject property to Ronald O. Nelson. In 1971, the property was sold to Joey Investors, Inc. and/or to Jane E. Thielmann. No additional information could be found about any of these people or entities. Notes in the post-1972 tax records indicate that the upper floors were no longer used

11 “Mrs. L.M. Ahrens dies,” Seattle Times, July 26, 1915, p. 8. Linda’s name is unclear, and appears variously in news articles and city directories over the years as Linda, Lila, or Lida.
14 “Ahrens estate set at $100,000,” Seattle Times, February 28, 1951, p. 18.
as apartments for a time presumably in the 1970s, but leased instead as office space. Post-1972 tax records further indicate that the property was sold in 1988 prior to its renovation that year. In 1997, the owners were Broadway & Denny Associates LP, which sold the property to Champion Development, Inc., the current owners.

Commercial occupants

The subject building was originally built with three commercial storefronts along Broadway Avenue. A review of the searchable database of historic Seattle Times articles provided some indication of early tenants of these stores. In the period 1905-1937, they included a cigar store (1908-?), a market, the Broadway Fruit Company (1909-?), a restaurant (?-1911), F.C. Clydell grocer and fishmonger, Powell’s Pharmacy (1915-1928), and a cleaner/dyer. The 1937 tax assessor photograph shows Henry’s Grocery occupying one space (ca. 1934-1945), which was operated by Henry T. Woo; a photoprinting/printing shop in the other; and a pharmacy in the third.

After 1938, Polk’s Seattle Directory provides a listing of the store tenants. From 1938 to about 1968, the three stores were continuously occupied by a grocery, a laundry/drycleaner, and a tavern—although names of the establishments changed. Two long-time tenants were the Broadway Cleaners & Dyers (ca. 1930-ca. 1968), and the Broadway Tavern (ca. 1938-ca. 1968). By 1978, the commercial spaces were completely occupied by a single restaurant, Kelly’s on Broadway. In 1988, the storefronts were occupied by two restaurants, and in the mid-1990s, by a photocopy store and a pizza franchise. Today, the Broadway Avenue storefronts are occupied by two restaurants— Albacha, located at the northeast building corner; and Annapurna, which includes a basement dining area and a bar at the first floor northwest building corner.

The commercial space at the northwest building corner, accessed from E Denny Way, may have been an original manager’s office for the apartments. It appears to have been converted into a commercial tenant space in the 1970s. In 1978, it was occupied by Liberation Books for a time, and in 1988 by a Chinese restaurant which remained there through the mid-1990s. Today, the tenant is a hair salon.

Residential occupants

The Avon Apartments upper floors have been leased to residential tenants since original construction in 1905. Tax records indicate that the original configuration was twelve apartments—four 4-room units, five 5-room units, two 2-room units, and one 1-room unit. Since ca. 1906 classified advertisements for the property state only that 4- and 5-room units (likely meaning 1 or 2 bedrooms) were available, the smaller apartments may have been for the building manager or janitor. The apartments of 4- and 5-rooms were likely intended to attract singles or young couples, rather than large families. Hand-written notation on tax records (undated, but between 1937 and 1972) indicates that the unit mix at some point was changed to only eleven units—eight 4-room apartments, two 2-room, and one 1-room—suggesting that the target market was single persons.

In 1940, the Avon Apartments were leased to Mrs. Helen McCullum, according to a short newspaper piece, which also mentioned that the building consisted of nineteen units. The significant increase in the number of units—presumably achieved by subdividing the existing apartments, with shared kitchens and bathrooms—may have reflected a late Depression-era and pre-war housing shortage. No additional information could be found about McCullum.

By the 1970s, tax records state that the residential portion of the building consisted solely of eight 2-bedroom apartments.

A review of Polk’s Seattle city directories over the decades provide some indication of the property’s tenants between 1938 and 1968; by the next decade, the directory no longer listed individual apartment residents for this building. While too numerous to detail individually, the residents appear to have primarily occupied the units for a few years rather than long-term, and many appear to have been single persons (split evenly between men and women). Unfortunately, the directory does not list the tenants’ occupations. For any given year, vacancies are rarely indicated. Some of the residents appear to have been widows, based on the prefix “Mrs.” identifying them in the directory—they amounted to 29% of the residents in 1938, 33% in 1948 (the high percentage notably just after World War II), 18% in 1958, and 10% in 1968. In following years, the building residents were not individually identified in the city directory.

The Architect, William P. White

The original building permit states that the architect of the subject building was W. P. White, a prolific designer in pre-World War I Seattle who designed a wide range of building types, but specialized in apartment houses. White’s designs frequently employed restrained Neoclassical styling. [See Figures 55 - 68]

William Pole White was born around 1863 in New York or possibly Connecticut, but little else is known about his early life or education. In 1890, he was living in Moscow, Idaho, where he married Carrie Belle Vandewalker, a Minnesota native. In 1892, the first of their five children was born there. Later in the mid-1890s they lived in Great Falls, Montana, where William was working as an architect, apparently having received a commission for the new high school. From 1897 to 1902 he was in a partnership in Butte (Silver Bow), Montana, with a Finnish architect, Anton Werner Lignell. Known projects during this period include the F. F. Weirick house, an apartment building for George Dailey, and St. Paul’s Methodist Episcopal church.

Around 1902, White appears in Seattle city directories, when he would have been about 39 years old. He apparently immediately began receiving commissions for buildings of all types. Single-family house projects by White include several homes for the Building Investment Company in the Capitol Hill neighborhood (1902); the J.S. Klickner House (1903); the Ella Mann House (1903); and the G. Maher House (1904). Early apartment building projects include the Skinner Flats (1903), address unknown; the Knickerbocker Apartments (ca. 1904, demolished), at the northwest corner of Boren Avenue and Union Street; and the Bovingdon Flats (1904, demolished), at 1139-1161 11th Avenue, seven blocks south of the subject site. In late 1904 or early 1905, White was hired to design the subject building, which was permitted and constructed over four months in the summer and fall of 1905. The project appears to have been a relatively typical small project for White at the time; the Seattle Times lists a dozen other projects underway by White for 1905 alone, including stores, hotels, larger apartments, and single family homes. Other apartment projects during this period would have been the Jefferson Apartments (ca. 1905), address unknown; the Imperial Apartments (1905), at 1427 E Pike Street, which was constructed by the same builder as the subject apartments, W.R. Bowser; the Renton (later Alta Vista, now Madkin) Apartments (1905), at 1625 E Madison Street; and the Villa Apartments (1906), address unknown. Single family house projects during this period included three rental homes for Edgar & Clara Synder (1905); the B.E. Gates House (1905, altered), at 736 12th Avenue E; and the M.B. Jackson House (1905). Commercial buildings the Bigelow Building (1906) at

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19 Demolished in 2011, the Bovingdon Flats in recent decades was well known colloquially as the Undre Arms Apartments.
314-1/2 Pike Street; the Klodt Building (1906, unbuilt) proposed for the southwest corner of Stewart Street and Second Avenue; the Bamberg Block (1906); and the Smith Block (1906). Outside of Seattle, White also designed the San Juan County Courthouse (1906) in Friday Harbor, Washington, an atypical commission he received for reasons that could not be discovered for this report. During this time, White’s office was located in the Washington Building at 701 First Avenue downtown, and his family resided at 323 15th Avenue E, on Capitol Hill.

In 1907, White wrote an article championing apartment buildings and apartment living in the March issue of Pacific Builder and Engineer, a weekly Seattle publication covering construction and engineering projects in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and British Columbia. At the time, apartment buildings would have been a relatively new building type in the region, having become popular in the Midwest and East Coast only a few decades earlier. The first apartment building in Seattle, the St. Paul, was constructed in 1901 at the corner of Seneca Street and Summit Avenue.²⁰ White’s article revealed his careful study of the building type, including its history, design, aesthetics, practical features, and the fundamental economics of apartment building development.²¹

Perhaps due to this publicity, White was hired to design a number of apartments that year and following, including the Wellington Court (1907, altered), at 1703 12th Avenue; the Kinnear Apartments (1907), at 905 W. Olympic Place; Chapman Apartments (1907), address unknown; the Manhattan Flats (ca. 1907, demolished); the Cyrus Apartments (1908, later known as the Silver Bow, and Petra), at 1703 Harvard Avenue, unusual for White as a wood-clad rather than masonry building;²² the Wrexhall (1909, demolished), at 916 Howard (now Yale) Avenue N; and the C.B. Richardson Apartments (1909), address unknown. The Manhattan Flats project was unusual for its scale, a multi-building complex covering the entire city block bounded by Boren and Minor Avenues, and Howell and Olive Streets. The four, three-story structures featured flat roofs and projecting bays, and offered for its residents a range of unit sizes, laundry and storage rooms, common telephones, fully outfitted kitchens, and a common courtyard in back which could serve as a play area for children. Six publicly-accessible stores were located at street level, which could be reached from the courtyard as well.²³ The buildings were demolished in two phases in the mid-20th century.

In the decade prior to World War I, White’s designs began to reflect a more elaborately detailed, Beaux-Arts or American Renaissance Revival style, perhaps due to the expanding local economy or the taste of his clients. A good but unbuilt example was the 1909 design for the luxury Budlong Apartments, proposed for the northwest corner of Eighth Avenue and Columbia Street on First Hill. The seven-story steel and concrete building was to have featured an elaborate brick and cast stone facade, and an interior with a billiard room and common lobby, tiled corridors, and separate elevators for residents and freight. Another elaborate example, which was built and has been described as a quintessential luxury apartment building of its time, is the six-story Olympian Apartments (1913, altered) on a trapezoidal hilltop site at 1605 E Madison Street in Seattle. White’s design featured a complex floor plan with generous suites of rooms arranged to maximize views, light, and air, and units included servants quarters, dining rooms, and dumbwaiters in the kitchen.²⁴

White also designed a number of hotels during this period, including the Richmond Hotel (1908), address unknown;²⁵ the Astoria Hotel (ca. 1909, demolished); and the Hotel Nelson (1909, demolished), at 2013 2nd Avenue. Two others have been identified as historic properties—the Freedman Hotel (1909), at 515

²¹ Pacific Builder and Engineer, March 16, 1907, v.5, no. 11, pp. 5-6.
²² James, p. 152.
²³ James, p. 101; and Sheridan, pp. 26-27.
²⁴ James, pp. 78-79.
²⁵ Not to be confused with the New Richmond Hotel (1911, Gould & Champney), at 308 4th Avenue S, near Union Station.
Maynard Avenue S is located within the local and national Chinatown historic district; and the Calhoun Hotel (1910), at 2000 2nd Avenue, now known as the Palladian Hotel, is a designated Seattle landmark. The Calhoun/Palladian is unusual in Seattle for its architectural styling, which has been described as a mix of Neoclassical Beaux-Arts, Art Nouveau, and Jugendstil. Other buildings in Seattle at that time included the Kaufman Warehouse (1910), address unknown; and the Skinner Block (1910), address unknown. Outside of Seattle, work included a multi-story building in downtown Mount Vernon, Washington, housing the Mount Vernon Hotel and a Bank (1909); and the Sumas Bank (1911) in Sumas, Washington.

White’s reputation by this time led him to receive a number of commissions across the border in Vancouver, British Columbia, where he shared office space on Pender Street with the architecture firm Randall & Baker. During a two-year period he completed approximately twenty-two apartment buildings and several residences in the Vancouver area. These include the Englesea Lodge (1911, demolished), on Beach Avenue; the Leonard/Wenonah Apartments (1912); the four-story Del Mar Inn (1912), at 553 Hamilton Street; and the eight-story Sylvia Court Apartments (1912), now the Sylvia Hotel overlooking English Bay. Some of these works were in partnership with Jesse M. Warren, a Seattle architect who had moved to Victoria, British Columbia, in 1911.

White practiced architecture in Seattle until about 1918, with some of his final work being large apartment houses, including Sagamore/Queen View Apartments (ca. 1917, altered), at 621 W. Galer Street; and the Alfaretta Apartments (ca. 1917, demolished), at 802 Seneca Street on First Hill.

During World War I, William and Carrie White relocated to Bremerton, where William was employed as an architect for the Public Works Department of the Puget Sound Navy Yard. Outside of work, White was active in the Shriners and the Elks fraternal orders, and had been a charter member of the Arctic Club in Seattle. William White died in Bremerton in 1932 at age 69. Carrie remained in Bremerton until her death ten years later, in 1942.

The Builder, W. R. Bowser & Son

The original building permit identifies W. R. Bowser & Son as the contractor, who constructed the subject building in 1905. That year, they were listed simply as carpenters in the Polk’s Seattle Directory, but in 1906 were listed as a contracting company owned by William R. Bowser and William G. Bowser. Only a little additional information was found regarding their history and other works.

Federal census records, as well as birth, death, marriage and other records, provide some information about the Bowser family. William R. Bowser was born in 1845 in Fulton, Ohio, to John Bowser, a Pennsylvanian, and Susan Guyer, a native of Germany. Nothing is known of his early life, but as a young man he enlisted in a Michigan infantry regiment in the Civil War, serving from 1862-1865, was promoted to full corporal, and was wounded in service. After the war, William married Anna “Fanny” M. Swindells, an Englishwoman, in 1869, in Portland, Michigan, where they resided. Their son William Goulding Bowser was born in 1872 in Michigan. According to the 1880 federal census, in that year they were living in Little Traverse, in northern Michigan, where William was a farmer and served as the Emmet County clerk. From about 1898 to about

26 Krafft, p. 12.
1902, they resided in Chicago, Illinois, where William R. was listed in the 1900 census as a contractor, and William G. as a wood carver.

Around 1902, the family moved to Seattle, and first appearing in the 1903 Polk’s Seattle directory, located at 1807 37th Avenue, across the street from what became the McGilvra School in the Madison Park neighborhood—at that time, an underdeveloped area. William and son William immediately began working as carpenters and contractors, doing so as late as the mid-1910s. They likely built their Madison Park house, since tax assessor records indicate that it was completed in 1907 (today intact but slightly altered).

In 1905-06, the Bowsers constructed the subject building, which was designed by architect W. P. White. They had worked with White at least one other time, in 1905, building a 3-story 60 by 70 foot brick apartment house of his design for owner Roy Gress, valued at $22,000, located at 1427 E Pike Street. Still intact today, the building is called the Imperial Apartments.

The Bowsers also built houses speculatively, purchasing land, building a dwelling, then selling it or trading it for another piece of vacant property. Projects of this type built by the Bowsers include a two-story frame residence at 2709 19th Avenue S built in 1908; a two-story American Foursquare style house at 312 32nd Avenue in the Madrona neighborhood, which according to tax records was built in 1907; and at least two other view homes in Madrona on 34th Avenue between Pike and Pine Streets, completed in 1912.

As late as 1910, son William G. Bowser at age 37 was still living with his parents, then 65 and 63, according to the federal census of that year. In 1914, William G. Bowser married Bertha Frederica Arnold, a native of Michigan and fourteen years younger, who at that time had been living in San Jose, California. By 1920, federal census records indicate that both Bowser families had moved to the rural Avondale Road area in Redmond, Washington, living on farms next door to each other—father William R.’s occupation was listed as a farmer, and William G. listed as a carpenter. No other works built by Victor G. from this period could be identified for this report. Bertha and William G. had two young children, Victor and David, both born in the late 1910s. In 1927, William G. Bowser’s wife Bertha died by her own hand at age 39. William G. died in 1928 at age 55; and his father, William R. Bowser, died in 1932 at age 87, in Bremerton.

Comparable Buildings in the West Capitol Hill Neighborhood

The Avon Apartments was constructed in 1905 as a mixed-use building, a building type characterized by commercial space at the ground floor with residential on the upper floors. It might also be described as a apartment building with commercial space at the ground level. Buildings of this sort were typically found in denser urban areas along street car lines in Seattle in the late 19th century, where early retail nodes developed. The Avon offered a modest common interior stairwell, no lobby, few additional services besides an on-site janitor, and eight to twelve intermediate-class apartments (neither luxury nor efficiency) which featured individual kitchens and bathrooms. [See Figures 69 - 78]

In 1905, multi-family living options in Seattle had only been available for a few decades. The residential landscape of early, circa 1850s Seattle was dominated by single family dwellings which housed the one hundred or so residents. Visitors or new residents had the opportunity to stay at the Felker House, Seattle’s

first hotel, which was established in 1853 and offered food and bedding to lodgers. In 1862 the population was only 182 persons, but the town grew steadily, reaching 1,107 by 1870, 3,553 in 1880, and jumping to 42,800 in 1890. Multi-family housing options available for those who could not afford single family homes (which by the 1880s could be found as detached, semi-detached, or attached) were essentially limited to boarding houses and hotels.

After the late 1890s, Seattle experienced rapid urban and population growth, and the demand for housing became more acute in the following years. From 1890 to 1900 the Seattle population nearly doubled over the decade, to 80,761. City boundaries expanded through several 1907 annexations, such that by 1910 the population had nearly tripled to 237,194, and to approximately 327,000 in 1920. The pace of growth slowed considerably in the 1920s, so that by 1930, the population had reached only 365,500. In the first decades after 1900, apartment buildings began to play more of a role in housing Seattle’s population, particularly in the denser neighborhoods.

According to Shared Walls: Seattle Apartment Buildings 1900-1939, by author and historian Diana James, the City of Seattle building code in 1907 defined the following multiple-dwelling structures: Boarding houses, lodging houses, hotels, and apartments.

Boarding houses were defined by the ordinance as offering five to twenty sleeping rooms. By custom, they generally offered meals in a family-style setting. James describes the typical boarding house as operating like a family, and typical tenants of boarding houses might be teachers, gentlemen, families, or sometimes women only. By contrast, lodging houses were defined by ordinance as offering the same number of rooms, but differed in that they offered no food. Meals were taken at restaurants. This low-cost form of housing typically attracted laborers, recent immigrants, railroad workers, and the like.

Hotels offered furnished rooms to visitors as well as locals, and terms were offered by the day, week, or month, as was typical across the country in the early 20th century. Hotels ranged from luxurious to modest, and every price range. Larger hotels had spaces available to the public, such as dining rooms, reception rooms, or outdoor verandas.

Apartments offered an alternative to boarding houses, lodging houses, and hotels. They were defined by the City of Seattle in 1907 as a building containing separate housekeeping units for three or more families, having a street entrance common to all. More specifically, apartment buildings (unlike boarding houses, lodging houses, or hotels) offered the same spaces and utilities that could be found in a single-family house—full bathroom on the premises, a kitchen for preparation of meals, hot and cold running water, standard-sized rooms, operable windows, and a street address. Apartment buildings could also sometimes offer additional semipublic spaces not found in single-family houses, such as foyers or rooftop gardens, to be shared by all the residents.

Apartment buildings as we know them today in the United States began to appear in the larger, denser East Coast cities in the latter half of the 1800s. They were initially slow to gain popularity due to public apprehension about a perceived lack of privacy and the perils of living in the same building with strangers, but these fears were eventually outweighed by the convenience of living near the city center or near transit routes.

35 Ochsner, Shaping Seattle Architecture, pp. xviii.
36 Ochsner, Shaping Seattle Architecture, pp. xviii-xxxii.
37 James, Shared Walls: Seattle Apartment Buildings 1900-1939, pp. 8-10.
38 James, pp. 8-10.
39 Hunter, pp. 210-212.
Some of the early buildings were tenement apartments, which housed large numbers of residents in rooms that often lacked windows, fire exits, or plumbing. Building codes aimed at preserving basic health and safety standards for apartment dwellers developed in cities like New York around the turn of the 20th century. By about 1900, Seattle—although never as densely populated as such cities as New York or San Francisco—had adopted similar measures as well.\(^{40}\)

In the early 1900s, apartment buildings proliferated as the increasing value of close-in land prices made the construction of apartments more attractive to land owners. Nodes of apartment buildings developed—along with commercial buildings housing shops and services—along streetcar routes, both in-city and in developing streetcar suburbs.\(^{41}\)

In the first decades of the 20th century, Seattle apartment buildings often advertised new or standard conveniences in units that might not have been available in older houses, including running hot and cold water, gas, and electricity; kitchens with gas or electric ranges; cooler cabinets, iceboxes, or refrigerators; dishwashers; even built-in radios. Buildings might include laundry rooms, additional storage space, or a parking garage, or feature extras such as elevators, or telephone service.\(^{42}\)

In James’ analysis of Seattle apartment buildings, three classes of apartments are identified which developed concurrently in the first third of the 1900s—luxury, efficiency, and intermediate. At the higher end, for those who could afford them, luxury apartment buildings featured distinctive exteriors, ornate lobbies and finishes, large suites of rooms, and occasionally servant’s quarters. Most affordable were efficiency apartment buildings, which emphasized compact living quarters, and did not focus expense on luxurious common areas. These apartments had one to five rooms—usually a living/sleeping room, small kitchen or kitchenette, eating alcove or dinette, bathroom, and a dressing room/closet which often concealed a hideaway bed. Space in efficiencies was maximized through the use of built-in cabinets, benches, or tables, and multipurpose rooms. Intermediate apartment buildings occupied the middle range of the three apartment classes—they offered more space than the efficiencies, and some finer finishes or amenities, but not at such higher rates as the luxury market.\(^{43}\)

The first purpose-built apartment building in Seattle was the St. Paul, built in 1901 at the corner of Summit and Seneca on First Hill. The building, which still exists but has been substantially altered, was intended to attract the upper classes by featuring in each apartment an entry hall, reception room, library, parlor, dining room, kitchen, and two to three bedrooms.\(^{44}\) Besides First Hill, apartment buildings were also widely constructed in close-in neighborhoods or denser neighborhoods served by streetcar, such as the Denny Regrade, lower Queen Anne, the University District, and Capitol Hill.

The west side of Capitol Hill—the neighborhood of which the subject building is part, from Melrose to Broadway and Galer to Pike—is noted by James as having a high number of exemplary apartment buildings.\(^{45}\) The close proximity to the central business district, and the early expansion of streetcar lines along Pike and Pine Streets, and Broadway, Bellevue, and Summit Avenues facilitated a dense neighborhood and made it

\(^{40}\) James, p. 8; Hunter, pp. 225-227; Sheridan, 1994, p. 34.
\(^{41}\) Sheridan, 1994, p. 28.
\(^{42}\) James, pp. 20-34.
\(^{43}\) James, pp. 68-79. James also addresses the term “apartment hotel,” which she describes as a subcategory of efficiency apartments. Beginning in the 1920s in Seattle, this term began to be applied to some multi-family buildings which offered hotel-like amenities such as housekeeping or dining service, as well as hotel-like ornate exteriors, elaborate lobbies, public dining rooms, elevators, and roof gardens—but the units inside were essentially efficiency apartments. (James, pp. 71-72).
\(^{44}\) James, pp. 131-133.
\(^{45}\) James, p. 180.
Attractive for investors to construct apartment buildings in the area. “Schools, churches, entertainment venues, fraternal organizations, and women’s clubs, in addition to mom-and-pop stores, accommodated the growing number of people who were moving into newly-constructed apartments, as well as the resident population who lived in a wide range of single-family homes.”

Apartment building in this area remained strong throughout the 1920s, although World War I and a subsequent recession slowed development somewhat. Apartment buildings ranged from three story walk-ups to six or more stories with elevators. Materials were generally brick and terracotta for newer buildings, or wood for those constructed in the earlier part of the century, and often in eclectic styles. James cites over two dozen notable extant apartment buildings in this neighborhood—of those, about half were built prior to 1910. These include the Celeste (1906) at 304 E Olive Place, the Glencoe (1907) at 1511 Boylston, the Starbird (1907) at 1512 Boylston, the St. Johns (1907) at 725 E Pike, the Chardonnay (1907) at 203 Bellevue Avenue E., the Bel Fiore (1907) at 1707 Bellevue, Rialto Court (1907) at 1729 Boylston, Buena Vista (1907) 1633 Boylston, the Cyrus/Petra (1908, W. P. White) at 1703 Harvard Avenue E, the Carroll (1908) at 305 Bellevue Avenue E, Summit Arms (1909) at 1512 Summit, the Alexander (1909) at 1711 Bellevue, and Thomas Park View (1909) at 411 East Thomas.

Other apartment buildings constructed after 1910 include the Lauren Renee (1912) at 312 Olive Place; the Melrose (1916) at 1520 Melrose; the Porter (1917) at 1630 Boylston; and the Lenawee (1918) at 1629 Harvard. Nearby apartment buildings from the later years of the 1920s were often brick and terracotta in a Colonial Revival or Tudor Revival styles which were popular by that time; examples cited by James include the Olive Crest (1924) at 1510 E. Olive Way, and the Biltmore (1924) at 418 Loretta Place.

**Mixed use - Apartments with commercial space**

Apartment buildings along commercial streets often had storefronts along the sidewalk, with residential units on upper floors, as in the case of the subject building. These mixed-use buildings were attractive to owners and investors because they provided two sources of rent—residential tenants, and commercial tenants. In some examples, such buildings originally operated as hotels, such as the Hotel Avondale (1908) at 1100 Pike Street, or the Wintonia Hotel (1909) at 1431 Minor Avenue. Currently these are both apartment buildings, with ground-level retail spaces.

Examples of mixed use apartment buildings near the subject building on Capitol Hill, from the period of 1900-1910, include the Lorraine Court Apartments, now known as the Winston (1907, Breitung & Buchinger) at 1019 E Pike Street; the Hayden (now Roe) Apartments (1908) and the adjacent Bluff Apartments (1909) at 910 and 920 E Pike Street; and the Chester Apartments (1910) at 1323 E Pine Street, all nearby in the Pike and Pine Street corridor. Farther afield are the Fredonia Apartments (1907, Henderson Ryan) at 1509 E Mercer Street in the 15th Avenue commercial corridor; and the Chalmers Apartments (1909, W. D. Van Siclen, altered) at 606 19th Avenue E in the 19th Avenue commercial corridor. Both of these commercial areas were located on early streetcar routes.

**“Seattle-centric” form**

In *Shared Walls: Seattle Apartment Buildings 1900-1939*, author Diana James identifies a common building form which appears in Seattle apartment houses from the period—calling it “Seattle-centric.” Apartments of this type are “best described as rectangular or square in shape and featuring at least one bay on either side of a centrally located and recessed opening at each floor above the entrance…variations on this theme exist in every Seattle neighborhood.” James theorizes that form may have been popular because it responded well to Seattle’s often gray climate—bay windows allow more light to enter the units; the recessed areas could act as

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46 James, p. 144.
porches, increasing ventilation to the units adjacent to them; and the recesses could occasionally serve as the building’s fire escape, holding ladders running from floor to floor. She also notes that over time, these recesses were sometimes filled in.47

The subject building, as it was originally constructed, meets James’ description of a “Seattle-centric” apartment building. However, the recessed balconies have been infilled. While the bays remain, the building no longer meets the characteristics of the form.

Examples of apartment buildings near the subject building on Capitol Hill, from the period of 1900-1910, which appear to meet James’ criteria include the Sherbrook Apartments (1906) at 1068 E Thomas Street; the Moana Apartments (1908, altered) at 1414 E Harrison Street; the Hillcrest Apartments (1909) at 1616 E Howell Street; Thomas Park View Apartments (1909) at 411 E Thomas Street; and the Allen (now Celeste) Apartments (1906, altered) at 304 E Olive Place.

47 James, pp. 66-68.
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Vintage Seattle. www.vintageseattle.org

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Note:
The abbreviations below are used in source citations for the following figures and images:

- DON: Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, Seattle Historic Building Inventory
- KCTA: King County Tax Assessor
- MOHAI: Museum of History and Industry
- PSRA: Puget Sound Regional Archives, historic tax assessor records
- SDCI: Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections, microfilm library
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*(Seattle Times, May 28, 1905, p. 56)*

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