



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

400 Yesler Building Seattle, Washington 98104 • (206) 625-4501

LPB 172/84

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

Name and Address of Property: Eagles Temple Building
1416 Seventh Avenue

Legal Description: A.A. Denny's Fifth Addition,
Block 65, Lots 8, 9, and 12

At the public meeting held on October 3, 1984, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Eagles Temple Building as a Seattle Landmark based on satisfaction of the following criteria of Ordinance 106348:

Section 3.01(3) 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;

Section 3.01(4) It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or of a method of construction; and

Section 3.01(5) It is an outstanding work of a designer or builder.

The Eagles Auditorium Building is a large six-story structure situated on a one quarter block lot at the northeast corner of Seventh Avenue and Union Street in Seattle's business district. This well-preserved building represents a high point in the development and use of architectural terra cotta. The beige, blue-flecked terra cotta faces two facades of the structure and is executed in a Renaissance Revival style. The building is surrounded by parking lots to the north and east and across Union Street on the south.

Directly across Seventh Avenue is a 34-story hotel. Located one block west of the Interstate 5 freeway, the Eagles Auditorium is prominently visible to passing motorists and can also be seen from Freeway Park.

Constructed of steel and reinforced concrete, the building measures 120 by 175 feet and encompasses approximately 21,000 square feet per floor. Interestingly, the concrete foundation, walls, and roof were constructed to accommodate four additional floors. Other levels include a penthouse and basement.

The arrangement of the facades is typical of many commercial buildings from this period in that it has a visually delineated base, center section and crown--an adaption of Sullivan's "Columnar" theory.

The south (Union Street) elevation is divided into five bays and the west (Seventh Avenue) side into nine. The monumental base of the structure is clad with granite base blocks and rusticated terra cotta. This base consists of first floor storefronts with a mezzanine office level above. These levels are discreetly separated on the exterior by recessed spandrels. The storefronts and mezzanine windows are set in modelled cast iron frames, although several storefronts have been partially altered since construction. The segmentally-arched mezzanine windows have console-type keystones and a running-wave pattern on the cornice. To accommodate the sloping grade of Seventh Avenue, the base steps down at intervals at street level and once at the mezzanine level.

Above the base, giant order fluted pilasters rise four stories to a terra cotta cornice which separates the fifth and sixth floors. Stylized composite capitals displaying an eagle motif adorn these pilasters. Rosettes fill the spandrel panels beneath the fifth and sixth floors and an engaged balustrade is incorporated into the spandrels of the fourth floor. Other details include embellished window surrounds and consoles beneath the sixth floor cornice. The seventh floor is less ornate, though cartouche-like panels decorate divisions. This level, together with an ornate copper cornice embellished with eagles, serves as the crowning visual element of the structure.

Of the two articulated sides, the south facade is more ornate than the west. The bays are also wider on this side and its third floor is considerably more detailed. On this floor, the center window in each of the tripartite-divided bays features a surround of engaged columns supporting a segmental arch pediment. Each pediment has a terra cotta eagle in its tympanum.

Two of three main entrances are also on the south facade. The auditorium or ballroom entrance is in the central bay. A large terra cotta eagle looks out from the archway above this entrance. The eagle, which has a wing span of seven feet, is cast in one piece (at a cost of \$2,100), an unprecedented achievement at the time it was made. Directly below the eagle, an inscription reads "Seattle Aerie No. 1, Fraternal Order of Eagles." "Eagles Auditorium" is inscribed on a frieze above the recessed entrance. Ticket offices are on either side of this exterior vestibule and an octagonal dome with a variety of ornate moldings appears above. Entry is through three sets of wood and glass doors. A recessed entrance serving the apartments upstairs is in the far right (east) bay. The floor tile work at this entrance is patterned to read "Senator Hotel."

Storefronts and offices fill the remaining bays on both sides, except for the left (north) bay of the west facade. Here, an entrance leads inside to the lodge meeting areas and the gymnasium. An eagle also graces this entrance with the date 1924 below and a sign inscribed "Fraternal Order of Eagles." A lighted sign reading "Eagle Temple" also projects out from above this entrance.

The interior of the structure was designed to accommodate a variety of uses including office space, a gymnasium, apartments, a night club, and ceremonial halls. The foyer behind the Seventh Avenue entrance has a terrazzo floor, marble wainscoting, engaged columns, a barrel-vaulted ceiling with classical moldings, and several murals. The murals are particularly beautiful and present allegorical scenes of eagles protecting their young, perching upon a Bible, holding the scales of justice, etc. Two of the murals are purely pictorial in nature and depict Northwest scenes. The murals are signed "A.F. Shepard Co." There are also brass door fixtures embellished with eagles and similar hardware is found throughout the building.

The Union Street entrance lobby has been altered with mirrored glass wall tiles. Double ramps lead from this lobby up past the mezzanine lobby, which provides access to rest rooms, check rooms, lounges and offices, and to a vestibule for the third floor ballroom.

Paint and carpeting on the mezzanine floor are not in keeping with the original, and some rooms on this floor have been converted to offices. In the basement, the billiard room has been changed from recreational use to a meeting room. What formerly had been the aerie President's office has been converted into the office for the entire aerie. In addition, the bowling alley became a rifle range in 1945, and in recent years has been used as storage space.

The large ballroom takes up most of the area on second, third, fourth, and fifth floors. An elevated stage is at one end of the hall. There is an elaborate polychromatic coffered ceiling with a series of moldings and central rosettes. Hanging from this ceiling are six metal chandeliers decorated with eagles. Around the perimeter of the hall (excepting the stage) are aisles that extend to the second floor windows. Projecting over the dance floor is a balcony that extends around three sides of the hall. This balcony rests upon large brackets that are braced against the piers that separate the hall from the aisles. These piers are also decorated with brass sconces. Against the wall at this balcony level is a series of "blind" arches and doors. Fluted composite pilasters flank these elements and the doors have swan's neck pediments. At the entrance to the balcony is a gallery with an arcade that has a Palladian motif. The proscenium around the stage has anthemion moldings and the ballroom itself is extensively decorated with a variety of moldings including modillions, bundled oak leaves, and a frieze of eagles. There is a large one and one half-story auditorium on the level beneath the ballroom. Details of this auditorium include a balcony at one end, a molded beam ceiling that has been partially altered with acoustic tile, blind arches, and several plaster swags of wheat, fruit, and eagles. Wooden retables are against the walls. At various levels in the building are public lavatories. Some maintain their original tile floors, procelain sinks and marble partitions. Below street level in the basement is a gymnasium which has been altered, and a walk-in vault. The vault is enclosed by thick concrete walls. The interior is lined with safety-deposit boxes, ornamented with a steel balustrade, and sealed off by a safe door. It has retained its use and detail despite changes to other basement rooms.

The large meeting hall on this level was altered substantially in the 1950's. Also below street level but with a separate entrance on Union Avenue is the nightclub for the lodge. This bar has recently been altered, but the general configuration is the same with a brass-railed mezzanine level overlooking the dance floor.

The upper four floors of the building have small apartments. Most apartments are quite deteriorated but some do maintain period plumbing fixtures, built-in cabinets, and some built-in furniture.

The Eagles auditorium is significant as one of Seattle's best preserved examples of terra cotta architecture. Designed by noted local architect Henry Bittman, it was erected by the Fraternal Order of Eagles, Seattle Aerie No. 1 in 1924-25. The building was planned to be the most splendid fraternal building in the country. Also known as the Mother Aerie, Seattle's F.O.E. Aerie No. 1 has the distinction of being the first Eagles lodge ever formed. Since its construction, the Eagles Temple was in continuous use as the lodge for F.O.E. Aerie No. 1 until August, 1981.

On February 6, 1896, a group of theater managers met to discuss some business matters. Included in this gathering were John Cort, John W. Considine, Thomas J. Considine, H.L. Leavitt, Mose Goldsmith, Arthur G. Williams, and possibly Joseph Watkins. The men decided to take a walk along the tide flats, and upon reaching the Moran shipyards, settled upon some pilings, where the conversation took a philosophical turn. Combining their ideas on democracy and brotherhood, it was decided that an organization should be formed to reflect this spirit. On that day, the "Seattle Order of Good Things" was born.

On March 12, 1898, the first steps were taken to create a permanent organization. A constitution was drafted and a more dignified name was needed. On the wall, a picture of an eagle inspired John Cort, and at his suggestion, the "Fraternal Order of Eagles" was adopted. The emphasis of the organization was also changed, and as Cort later expressed, the purpose and objectives of the Order were to "make human life more desirable by lessening its ills and promoting peace, prosperity, gladness, and hope." The Order became dedicated to the "Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man."

The charter for the Grant Aerie, Fraternal Order of Eagles, was issued on May 13, 1898 by the Secretary of State in Olympia. Fifteen days later, the first subordinate aerie was established in Spokane. Within one year, eighteen additional aeries were founded with a total membership of over 3,000. These were organized in such cities as Everett and Tacoma (Washington); Portland and Astoria (Oregon); San Francisco, Oakland and Sacramento (California); Butte, Helena, and Anaconda (Montana); and Vancouver, Rossland, Victoria, and Nanaimo (British Columbia).

Within ten years, the Fraternal Order of Eagles had 1,800 member lodges scattered throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, Hawaii, and the Philippine Islands. Membership exceeded 350,000. This phenomenal growth can partially be explained by the social conditions of the time. At the turn-of-the-century, many religious, political, economic, and social injustices were prevalent, and the average individual generally had no recourse. The Eagles intended to provide a means to break through the "barriers set up against the unorganized thousands." Established at a time when the views of various social groups or classes were often disregarded, the Order sought to serve the common man and became a champion for his cause. Therefore, it became advantageous for the common man to join forces with an organization which could make him seen and heard. With its extraordinary growth in membership, the Eagles became a powerful lobby.

Another factor in the growth of the F.O.E. were the benefits afforded the individual member and his family. In addition to the social opportunities were the weekly benefits paid in

case of sickness, free medical attention for the member and his family, and a funeral benefit upon the member's death. These were valuable services at a time prior to the widespread availability of medical, disability, and life insurance.

The Eagles have always supported various types of reform which would benefit the average person. In 1900, they sponsored the nation's first Workman's Compensation Law. In 1910, they sponsored America's first Old Age Pension Law. They supported the enactment of the National Social Security Act in 1935, spending over \$1,000,000 towards its promotion. President Franklin D. Roosevelt presented the pen he used to sign the act to the Eagles, saying "the pen I am presenting to the Order is a symbol of my approval of the Fraternity's vision and courage. May its possession inspire your members to rededicate their efforts and those of the Fraternity to the insuring of such economic and political conditions as will bring a greater degree of happiness to our people."

In 1941, the Eagles contributed a dormitory to Boys Town, Nebraska, and made Father Flanagan a life member of the Order. Since then, the Eagles have built schools, cancer and heart research centers, libraries, and rallied in support of many projects and programs worldwide.

Following its inception in 1898, the Order's first meetings were held at various theaters (principally the Moore Theater, a National Register property) in the downtown area. In 1903, the Aerie purchased a lot at the corner of Seventh Avenue and Pine Street at the current site of the Roosevelt Hotel. Construction was begun on a two story, brick structure with high, arched second floor windows. The first floor contained stores fronting on Seventh Avenue, and the upstairs was used as the lodge quarters. The \$100,000 building was dedicated in 1904. Every workman employed in its construction was a lodge member.

The rapid increase in membership strained the accommodations of this building. In ten years, the members numbered 3,146 and meetings here again held at the Moore Theater. The lodge continued to serve the group until 1925 when it was sold, netting a profit of \$124,555.

This money was used to help pay for the construction of a new building. Not only was more room needed for the aerie, but the officers hoped that such a structure would attract new members, raising Aerie No. 1 to the top of the Order's membership rolls.

The preliminary design indicated a projected building cost of over one million dollars. In order to partially finance the construction, Aerie No. 1 sold second mortgage bonds at 5 percent interest. The officers stressed that they did not

want contributions. Rather, they felt that this offer should constitute an investment for the members, and that families should not be deprived for the sake of the building.

Construction was begun in 1924 with Sound Construction and Engineering Company as the general contractors. When the cornerstone was laid on February 22, 1925, a grand ceremony, including a parade and various exhibitions was planned. Every member was urged to turn out for the celebration as a physical display of the numbers and unity of Aerie No. 1. When the cornerstone was sealed, among the memorabilia it contained was a list of the members who invested in the construction bonds.

The Eagles held the grand opening celebration of the new Aerie No. 1 on July 16, 1925 and the building was dedicated on September 27. In the program, the Eagles called it "the one living example of what can be accomplished by concerted effort on a \$5.00 initiation fee and \$10.00 annual dues." It was indeed an accomplishment for the total building cost was \$1,180,985. A breakdown from the Mother Aerie News showed that \$106,200 was spent for the site; the building, including architectural services, plans, and specifications came to \$1,120,985; decorations, furnishings, and fixtures added another \$60,000.

As architect for the new lodge, the Eagles chose the local firm of Henry Bittman, which specialized in the design of commercial buildings. Henry Bittman himself was a colorful figure in Seattle's architectural community. He was born in 1882 in New York City, where his father was a well-known interior designer. After graduating from Pratt Institute he began practicing as a structural engineer. With his forceful and talented wife, Jessie, who later became a renowned horticulturist, he settled into a Bohemian lifestyle in the old mining town of Newcastle. Later, they moved to an electric Tudor house which Bittman designed in the then suburban area of Wallingford, where Jessie could have ample space for her large and impressive garden. He was noted as a patron of the arts and he commissioned original works that were displayed at lavish entertainments given in the big Tudor house.

In 1906-07, Bittman had formed a brief partnership with the architect William Kingsley, but after this was dissolved he again practiced alone as a structural engineer. In later years, as his business expanded, he employed more staff and operated as an architectural and engineering firm, but always under his own single name.

Bittman was prominent in the design of large scale buildings. His engineering background allowed him particular expertise in the solution of structural problems such as those created by the enormous 48 foot high auditorium in the Eagles

building. Some of his more notable works include a substantial portion of the King County Courthouse (Bittman's name as architect appears on a plaque at the Third Avenue entrance); the Terminal Sales Building (lauded as the tallest flat slab building on the West Coast when constructed in 1928); the Wright Cemetery Mortuary; and the United Shopping Tower (Olympic Tower) which is listed in the National Register.

The Eagles Auditorium Building is one of the most beautiful terra cotta structures in Seattle. Its Renaissance style facades manage to be both serene and imposing at the same time. As is typical of many fraternal halls, commercial interests were considered in the design of the building with a retail level on the first floor and rental apartments on the top. However, the size of this particular lodge obviously distinguishes it from its bretheren, and the scale and detail of the interior ceremonial spaces is so grand as to be only rarely repeated in other period structures. The elaborate terra cotta facades are in an excellent state of preservation and they bolster the claim of terra cotta manufacturers that the material was both durable and attractive. The history and beauty of this remarkable building certainly make it one of the most important landmarks in the downtown area.

The features of the Landmark to be preserved include: the exterior of the building including the roof, and certain interior features consisting of the foyer behind the Seventh Avenue entrance lobby, the Union Street ticket and entrance lobbies, the ballroom to include ramps, stairs leading to the balcony, and anteroom off the Union Street entrance, the vault in the basement, and the Lodge Room off Seventh Avenue.

Submitted:



Ellen Miller-Wolfe
Landmarks Board Coordinator

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