



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

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

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

LPB 257/08

Name and Address of Property: Central Building
810 Third Avenue

Legal Description: Lots 1, 4, 5 and 8, Block 26, C.D. Boren's Addition to the City of Seattle, as per plat recorded in Volume 1 of Plats, Page 25, records of King County; Except the southwesterly 9 feet of said lots condemned for 3rd Avenue; Situate in the City of Seattle, County of King, State of Washington.

At the public meeting held on May 7, 2008, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Central Building at 810 Third Avenue, as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standards 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, period, or of 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.*

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Central Building is directly associated with the initial period of downtown commercial expansion that occurred between 1902 and 1920 as a result of local economic prosperity after the Klondike Gold Rush and in tandem with explosive population growth and suburban neighborhood development. During this era, modern downtown urban scale began with the construction of the earliest steel-frame highrise buildings and the establishment of a concentration of banking enterprises and department stores along Second Avenue from Cherry Street to Pike Street. The initial regrading of Denny Hill and the commercial redevelopment of the former University Grounds (University/ Metropolitan Tract) were major factors that facilitated northward and eastward commercial expansion. In 1914, the

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The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**

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owners of the Frederick and Nelson Department Store purchased property with the intention of constructing a large, five-story department store building at Fifth Avenue and Pine Street, thus solidifying the location of the future downtown retail core. A significant number of extant commercial properties dating from this era remain within the downtown commercial core, including: numerous hotels, banks, business blocks and early highrise commercial buildings, as well as specialty and department stores, clubhouses, and theaters.

The Central Building is a particularly important and illustrative office building dating from this pivotal period of downtown commercial real estate development. Furthermore, the building exhibits distinct architectural character; it is a notable example of Beaux-Arts design and is directly associated with early civic center planning efforts. Although the storefront level has been altered and modernized, the majority of the exterior of the Central Building is relatively well-preserved and a significant portion of the original elegant entry lobby has been preserved.

Historic Context

Shortly after the turn of the century, newly gained Klondike wealth and local economic prosperity generated major commercial real estate development. These favorable investment conditions triggered the construction of Seattle's earliest tall, steel-frame and ferroconcrete office buildings near the northern edge of the established commercial district, north of Yesler way and along Second Avenue. The 14-story Alaska Building (1903-04), the 12-story American Savings Bank/Empire Building (1904-06, destroyed), and the not fully realized 12-story Melhorn Building (1906-07) were among the earliest highrise buildings in the city. They were generally designed and constructed to exhibit elegant brick and terra cotta cladding and ornament in architectural modes heavily influenced by eastern precedents, especially the Chicago School and prevailing Beaux-Arts design influences. While the commercial district included numerous commercial office blocks that had been constructed in the immediate post-fire era, they were typically heavy timber with masonry-bearing wall construction. Steel-frame construction allowed for much greater height and significantly greater flexibility in office layout. Thus, modern steel-frame buildings could accommodate a much wider variety and number of tenants. Distinctive early highrise buildings exhibiting similar scale and design character would continue to be constructed elsewhere in the expanding commercial business district over the subsequent ten years, including: the Eitel Building (1906); Northern Bank and Trust Company Building (1906-09); the Central Building (1907); the White Building (1908, destroyed), the Henry Building (1909, destroyed), Cobb Building (1909); and the eighteen-story Hoge Building (1911) and the Joshua Green and Securities Buildings (1913).

Central Building History

In mid-September 1906 the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* reported on the severe shortage of suitable office space in "good" buildings. The article noted the progress on the final phase of construction to complete the twelve-story American Savings Bank/Empire Building and anticipated that the construction of the Melhorn Building would eventually help relieve the situation. Other publications lamented the difficulties of obtaining and developing full

business blocks or half-blocks due to the fact that the typical small (formerly residential) lots along most of the block faces were owned by multiple separate individuals. The concept of unifying entire blocks or half blocks with the construction of large, efficient and fully equipped modern office buildings was gaining momentum.

In early October 1906 the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* reported that the Trustee Company had completed the purchase of all of the lots on an entire half block along Third Avenue between Columbia and Marion Streets, the site of the old First Methodist Church and several smaller commercial and residential buildings. The news story included a fully illustrated rendering of the Central Building (at the “The Central Point”), which the company intended to construct. The architectural plans called for a riveted-steel and concrete structure to be fully clad in terra cotta. It was planned to be some eighteen to twenty stories in overall height including its central clock tower section. The footprint, overall height and massing of the planned building was well beyond any prior commercial development project. The newspaper article elaborated on the various attributes of the planned building, including: fireproof and modern construction with all non-combustible interior marble, metal and cement plaster finishes; the most modern steam heating, electric lighting, wiring and ventilation systems and its overall safety, convenience and durability.

The design of the Central Building is credited to Charles R. Aldrich, an architect/engineer and educator who had recently settled in Seattle from St. Paul, Minnesota. Mr. Aldrich was an employee of the Trustee Company where he served as supervising architect. The published rendering indicated that the base and the shaft of the building would be twelve stories in height with a five-story cap culminating in a central stepped tower. The cap would include three stores of offices with an ornate clock tower raising another two to three stories in height. The building would house some 750 individual offices served by a bank of seven elevators and include spacious lobbies and corridors and nine retail storefronts at street level.

The news article also served as an advertisement for investors; however, deep within its long text was the fact that “at the present time only eight stories of this building will be constructed, and the other stories will be added as soon as possible thereafter to supply the demand for offices.” Only four of the seven elevators would be initially installed and there would be only 350 offices actually built. The full building addition was to be completed in “a few years as office demand calls for the space.” The cost for the construction of the first eight floors together with the land purchase was anticipated to be \$1,500,000. This approach of partial construction was not unusual. The 12-story American Savings Bank Building/Empire Building had been constructed with the basement and first three floors being completed prior to the construction of the final nine floors. The 12-story Melhorn Building was also being constructed in a phased process, which did not progress beyond the initial construction phase. Despite the phased approach, the only partially realized Central Building would provide more office space in one building than any other commercial building previously constructed.

During the summer of 1906, Third Avenue was being regraded to create the gentlest grade of any of the business district streets and property values along the street were said to be 50% that of Second Avenue, the principal retail trade and banking business street. The prospect

for future commercial and retail development along Third Avenue was further enhanced by the construction of new wider sidewalks and the installation of a modern a street lighting system. Reportedly, a least a half dozen skyscrapers were being planned for other sites along Third Avenue.

The Trustee Company was headed by local entrepreneurs Arthur L. Hawley and Judge W.D. Wood. They promoted this major commercial real estate development project using an innovative concept of “unit ownership.” This concept involved 1500 “unit-interests” that were sold at \$1,000 each to investors in order to raise capital and cover the cost of construction. Investors would then own shares in the developed and income-producing commercial property. The Trustee Company regularly placed public advertisements that typically stated “Investment Bankers General Investment - Trustee & Safe Deposit Business - Business Property Investments - Financial Trusts Investments Bonds - Care of Estates.” Arthur L. Hawley and W.D. Wood, who were both prominent in business and public affairs had gained wealth in the Yukon River trade and established the Trustee Company in 1903. Mr. Hawley is credited with conceiving of the “Unit Ownership” idea for the financing and construction of properties for real estate investment purposes. The Central Building was identified in newspaper articles and on the original architectural plans as “Trustee Property No.6” indicating that the company had already developed or was developing at least five other properties. The Trustee Company was apparently only able to assemble sufficient capital to build the initial eight-story block of the Central Building. However, they continued to advertise for investors and promote the project for at least three more years.

In early June 1907, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reported on the progress of the construction of several modern buildings in the “business district” including: the “enormous” Central Building on Third Avenue; the Moore Theater and Hotel nearing competition at Second Avenue and Virginia Street; the Chapin Building at the SE corner of Second Avenue and Pike Street, the J.A. Baillargeon Department Store Building at Second Avenue and Spring Street, and the “rushed completion” of the first five floors of the Melhorn Building. The article also noted that the final interior work on the top floors of the American Savings Bank/Empire Building was proceeding.

The general work for the construction of the Central Building was handled directly by the Trustee Company and its department of architecture and construction, headed by C. R. Aldrich. By June 1907 the concrete foundation of the Central Building was in place and local sub-contractors Gerrick & Gerrick had began to erect the steel frame to be completed by that August. Newspaper reports indicated that lower portions of the building might be completed and occupied before the full completion of the upper floors, due to the severe demand for office space. By September 1907 the steel frame was complete and concrete walls with terra cotta cladding were in place at the lower floor levels. Terra cotta and granite cladding were provided by F.T. Crowe & Company. Reportedly, the construction required some 1200 tons of structural steel, 370 tons of reinforcing steel and 12,000 barrels of concrete. The mechanical and electrical systems required 10 miles of electrical conduit, about 29 miles of electric lighting wire, 12 miles of telephone lines and 500 plumbing fixtures. The interiors were finished in Philippine mahogany and Alaska marble.

The building included a compressed air system for dentists, a vacuum cleaning system, mail chutes, two telephone systems, four electric passenger elevators, two electric freight elevators, a fire alarm system, and wet and dry stand pipes. It also included a “mob-proof” armor-plated vault built at the cost of \$30,000 that was built in connection with the offices of the Trustee Company. The vault contained more than 5,000 small safes and was considered to be the strongest and best equipped safety deposit vault in the Pacific Northwest.

From its beginnings the Central Building was considered a civic center due to its “central point” location in the business district and due to the number of civic and official agencies, organizations, libraries and governmental representatives with offices housed there. This included the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, which occupied the entire eighth floor and operated a public observatory on the southwest corner of the rooftop. The Central Building was featured in a lengthy article published in the July 1912 issue of *The Architectural Record*, which described Seattle as a city of great architectural promise.

There are several examples of other buildings that were constructed during this era with only partially realized original designs, including: the Melhorn Building; J.A. Bailleargeon Building; Securities Building; the County-City Building (King County Courthouse); Rector/Governor Hotel (St. Charles Hotel), and the YWCA Building.

It is not known what specific circumstances may have occurred that the construction of the anticipated additional upper floor levels of the Central Building was not undertaken. The cost of the full construction may have proven to be too great in conjunction with the subsequent construction of a number of other highrise buildings and large commercial blocks, which diminished the market for office space. The “Unit Ownership” concept may have also proven to be unsuccessful due to a financial panic that occurred in 1907 and created an unfavorable securities market for several years. However; the Trustee Company appears to have continued to advertise and develop properties in other cities until c.1911.

Arthur Hawley apparently managed the Central Building for the investment group until the mid-1920s or later. He also remained closely associated with the Central Safe Deposit Vaults that were housed within the building. In 1923, an eight-story annex to the Central Building that included a public parking garage was proposed for construction at the northwest corner of Fourth Avenue and Columbia Street. It was designed by Schack Young and Myers for James Campbell of the Campbell Lumber Company. Mr. Campbell may have recently purchased the building. In 1932, John Graham and Company proposed a substantial remodel and addition that would have realized the original central tower massing concept in a modernistic Art Deco design mode. Neither of these proposals went beyond the schematic design phase. It is not known how long the Trustee Company retained ownership of the building. By 1937, the Central Building remained a “Class A” commercial building; it housed the offices of New York Life Insurance Company and included at least eight retail stores. In 1961, J.P. Buehl purchased the building.

The Central Building and Civic Center Planning

The phenomenon downtown commercial development that occurred in the early 1900s brought about a strong interest in city planning influenced by the broader City Beautiful

movement. The Olmsted Brothers were hired in 1903 to develop an ambitious park development program and the University of Washington selected the Metropolitan Building Company to plan and develop the 10-acre former University Grounds. During this era, the Washington State Chapter of the AIA began efforts to promote the creation of a plan for the future development of the downtown district of Seattle. A variety of concepts and proposals specifically focused on the development of a new civic and governmental center were promoted including an initial 1908 plan prepared by A. Warren Gould. In 1910, the City Charter was amended to establish the Municipal Plans Commission. The role of the Commission was to “procure plans for the arrangement of the city to meet probable future demands.” Ultimately, the Commission hired Virgil G. Bogue to prepare the city’s first comprehensive plan - the *Plan of Seattle* – commonly known as the *Bogue Plan*, which was completed in 1911.

While Bogue was developing a broad and far-reaching scheme for the city’s future development, it appears that local architects, property owners and entrepreneurs sought to influence the Municipal Plans Commission and decisions related to the location and design of a future civic center. Some may have sought to gain public interest and support for proposals that could potentially benefit their interests.

An ambitious civic center plan proposal was put forward by Arthur L. Hawley and W.D. Wood of the Trustee Company - the principal owners of the Central Building. Reportedly, this plan was prepared at the request of City Engineer, R.H. Thompson. The formal plan was made public in early October 1910 in anticipation of presentation to the Municipal Plans Commission later that month. It involved a tiered, ten-block site in the commercial district and along the base of First Hill between Third and Seventh Avenues and bounded to the south by Columbia Street and by Spring Street to the north. The plan called for a formal Beaux Arts- inspired civic center with a symmetrical layout; a central open space or mall to be surrounded by seven major public buildings each essentially occupying a full city block. A new city hall, county courthouse, education buildings and a hall of records would be constructed in a formal relationship to two pre-existing buildings, the Carnegie Library (1903, destroyed) at Fourth Avenue and Spring Street and the Central Building.

Under this proposal the Central Building would be to be fully completed according to the original design concept and expanded to the east side of the block; a second identical building would be built to duplicate it at the corner of Third Avenue and Spring Street. One of the most innovative aspects of the scheme was the proposal to construct a system of underground “subways” and elevators. This system would interconnect the public spaces and the buildings within the civic center with buildings located downhill along First and Second Avenues. The plan appears to have been well received by various public officials and members of the Commission; however, it did not advance any further than the discussion and presentation stage. Several others schemes were also considered by the Commission, including a revised civic center plan presented by A. W. Gould and E.F. Champney in January 1911.

The visionary *Plan of Seattle* addressed a 150 square-mile area and included concepts for future port and harbor facilities, railroads, street car lines, roads, streets and highways. A

centerpiece of the plan was a proposed monumental civic center to be located in the newly regraded area, known as the Denny Regrade to the north of Virginia Street where Denny Hill had stood. The *Bogue Plan* generated great controversy and proved to be unpopular and infeasible for a variety of political and financial reasons. Principal among its opponents were property owners within the older commercial business core near Yesler Way who feared a decrease in their property values. In the end, only the proposed harbor development concepts of the plan were actually implemented.

Arthur L. Hawley and W.D. Wood

The Trustee Company was headed by entrepreneurs and building developers Arthur L. Hawley and Judge W.D. Wood. Mr. Hawley and Mr. Wood were responsible for the construction of the Central Building and were also the promoters of a civic center design concept that included the building.

Arthur Lyman Hawley (1868 – n.d) was born in Aurora, Illinois and appears to have been informally trained in electrical engineering and financial management. He began to reside in Seattle in 1890. He was initially part of a private business venture involved in the development of electrical light and power service and became a leader in advocating for the concentration of all of the city's electrical service into a single enterprise. He is credited with extending public and private lighting service to city's then burgeoning neighborhoods. By 1897, he began advocating before the city council for the development of a municipally owned power system. He offered to build a light and power plant for the city and be paid "out of revenue" – however - the concept was rejected at the time. In 1897, Hawley entered into a business partnership with W.D. Wood; during the Klondike era they operated the Seattle-Yukon Transportation Company, a steamship business between Seattle and points on the Bering Sea, as well as the steamboat and merchandizing business on the Yukon River from St. Michael to Dawson City.

Mr. Hawley had a strong interest in municipal development and advocated for reorganization of the municipal street car system and the creation of a "Rapid Transit System." He appears to have been the more active of the two partners as a proponent of the civic center plan that they proposed in August and October of 1910. Press coverage noted that Arthur Hawley had studied the "subject of civic development" and that he had become a "leading specialist" – possibly the *only* specialist – in building city business centers. One newspaper article stated that "For four or five years Mr. Hawley has been much away from Seattle, traveling all over the United States...in his travels and studies of the business districts of many cities, public buildings and their locations he has become a specialist on the subject..." Reportedly, he provided consultation on the subject in New York City, St. Louis, Detroit, Milwaukee and a several smaller cities.

He appears to have been involved with various business ventures in addition to the Trustee Company and the Central Building; however, these have not been fully identified. By 1924, his principal interests were said to be in the Central Building, which he took credit for financing and building. He was also closely associated with the Central Safe Deposit Vaults - housed within the building - and a number of other investment and manufacturing

corporations. He apparently managed the Central Building for the investment group until the mid-1920s or later.

William D. Wood (1858- 1917) was born in Tomales, California, educated in the Napa County area and attended law school at the University of California. He was admitted to the California Bar in 1882 and in July of that year moved to Seattle. He formed a partnership with Judge J.T. Ronald and in 1884 was elected a probate judge for King County. After 1888, Wood became involved with the development of the Green Lake suburb, where he purchased, cleared and platted several hundred acres of land in connection with the construction of the Green Lake Electric Railway. He served as president of the Green Lake Electric Railway Company. Interestingly, he was married to Emma Wallingford Wood, the daughter of John N. Wallingford, a pioneer residential real estate developer during the 1880s and 1890s and for whom the Wallingford neighborhood is named.

In 1889, he was elected a member of the first Washington State Senate and in 1893 appointed a University of Washington Regent. He assisted with securing the 320-acre campus site in north Seattle and with the construction supervision for Denny Hall, the first campus building to be erected there. In 1895, he was appointed mayor of Seattle due to the resignation of Frank D. Black; however, he resigned that position in August 1897 to order to join the Humboldt expedition to Dawson City, Yukon Territory. The expedition plan was to travel by way of St. Michael and the Yukon River; it proved to be a much greater challenge than anticipated.

From 1897 until 1901, Judge Wood served as the president of the Seattle-Yukon Transportation Company, a steamship business running between Seattle and points on the Bering Sea, as well as the steamboat and merchandizing business on the Yukon River from St. Michael to Dawson City. W.D. Wood handled the Alaska end of the business and his partner Arthur L. Hawley handled the Seattle based business operation. Needless to say, the business was very successful; it reportedly grossed \$1,000,000 per year. In 1901, Wood and Hanley sold the business to the Alaska Commercial Company and other San Francisco-based companies already engaged in the Yukon River trade. It is likely that Mr. Wood and Mr. Hanley had been prior business associations given their common interests in the distribution of electricity and construction of electric railways.

In 1903, Mr. Wood and Mr. Hawley organized the Trustee Company of Seattle along with several other Seattle businessmen. The purpose of the company was to erect business buildings and sell investment securities on those properties utilizing a “Unit Ownership” investment concept. The company is well known for the construction of the Central Building; however, they did develop other yet-to be-identified properties in the wholesale warehouse district of Seattle. The business did not prove to be successful possibly due to a financial panic that occurred in 1907 that created an unfavorable securities and investment market for several years. However; the *Pacific Builder and Engineer* reported in March 1909 that the Trustee Company was developing properties in Los Angeles and Spokane and planning a project in Portland, Oregon using the “Unit Ownership” method.

Charles R. Aldrich

The architect responsible for the design of the Central Building was Charles Ronald Aldrich; however, minimal biographical information is known about him or his career in Seattle or elsewhere.

Charles Ronald Aldrich was born in Utica, Michigan July 12, 1866. He is believed to have attended schools in Detroit prior to migrating with family in c.1885 to Minnesota, at age of nineteen. He attended the University of Minnesota where he took courses in architecture and mechanical engineering. By 1888, he had been appointed as an instructor at the University of Minnesota, School of Agriculture, where he continued to teach for fifteen years, until c.1904. He initially taught a “manual training” course that included mechanical drawing and wood working skills. By 1895, the course had become popular enough that a second instructor was added and an “agricultural engineering” program was introduced to the curriculum. The course included planning farmsteads and designing farm buildings and structures in conjunction with a wide range of contemporary agricultural issues.

C.R. Aldrich is reported to have also been employed by William Channing Whitney, a Minneapolis architect. It is unclear whether he was teaching and also working for the Whitney firm during this period. Aldrich is known to have designed his own home in the Saint Anthony neighborhood of St. Paul in 1895 and a major three-story, turreted stone building, the Armory at University of Minnesota in 1895-96. Reportedly, he established his own practice sometime prior to 1899. He is known to have designed the M.H. Reynolds House in the Saint Anthony neighborhood in 1900; the Physics Building (Jones Hall) at University of Minnesota in 1901; an I.O.O.F. Hall in St. Paul in 1902, and the Pillsbury Branch Library in Minneapolis in 1902-04.

C.R. Aldrich moved to Seattle c.1905 where he was listed in the 1905 Polk’s Directory as a draftsman. He continued to reside in Seattle and by 1906 was an employee of the Trustee Company, serving as the company architect and supervising architect until c.1910. The Central Building was identified as “Trustee Property No.6” indicating that the company had already developed or was developing at least five other properties. Aldrich is credited with the design of the Exchange Building, a component of the Tashiro - Exchange Building (now commonly known as the Tashiro Kaplan Building), which was also constructed in 1907 and is believed to be one of the Trustee Company properties. Newspaper articles and press coverage indicates that the Trustee Company developed properties in Spokane, Portland and Los Angeles, which would presumably have been designed by Mr. Aldrich. He is identified as the architect of a large full city block, five-story department store building that was constructed in Portland, Oregon in 1910, which is now known as The Galleria. Interestingly, A.E. Doyle is identified as the local supervising architect. It is not known whether this property is associated with the Trustee Company.

By 1911, C.R. Aldrich had formed a Seattle-based partnership identified as Aldrich and Hunt – architects and contractors. In May of 1914 the *Pacific Builder & Engineer* reported that “Chas. R. Aldrich of the firm of Aldrich & Hunt” had been appointed by the King County commissioners to serve as the superintendent of construction for the King County Courthouse. Aldrich appears to have remained in the region and by 1928 he was employed as

a construction engineer for the Western Washington State Fair. He died in Puyallup, Washington on June 30, 1939.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Site, Setting and Urban Context

The Central Building is located on an entire half block site along the westward sloping east side of Third Avenue between Columbia and Marion Streets. A north-south alley bisects the entire block and runs along the entire east side of the building. The 42-story Bank of California Building (1971-74) and the 76-story Columbia Tower (Bank of America Tower, 1985) are both located in the next block uphill to the north and south, respectively. The IDX Tower (2002), a 40-story office tower and the YMCA Building (1931) are located directly across Marion Street to the north, the 47-story Wells Fargo Center (1983) is located kitty-corner to the northwest at the opposite side of Third Avenue and the Pacific Building, another modern highrise office building, is located directly across Columbia Street to the south. Modern low-rise buildings are located directly across Third Avenue to the west and the highly distinctive Chamber of Commerce Building (1924) is located kitty-corner to the southwest at the opposite side of Third Avenue. The Leamington/Pacific Hotel and Apartments (1915-16) and a low-rise older parking garage are located across the alley to the east. Due to the scale, massing and architectural character of the Central Building, it contrasts with its immediate surroundings and is a distinctive component of the streetscape and the downtown urban environment.

This Central Building is an eight-story commercial office building that was designed and constructed in 1906-1907; as initially designed it was intended to be some twenty stories in height with a massive stepped-back central clock tower. It measures 111' x 240' at the base; the central bay of the façade is set back 18' at the upper five floors and light courts off the rear elevation above the second floor level create an irregular "E" shaped general building plan. It exhibits an unusual two-part vertical block façade composition since portions of the planned vertical shaft and cap with tower were not constructed. However, as constructed the Central Building incorporates fine Beaux Arts style architectural detailing indicative of the original architectural design and intent.

Current Exterior Appearance

The steel frame and reinforced concrete structure has a full concrete foundation and basement and is entirely clad with exquisite gray-speckled glazed terra cotta. Terra cotta panels at the base are formed to simulate rusticated stonework while the terra cotta cladding at the shaft has the appearance of smooth cut stone. The north and south elevations nearly mirror each other and are entirely unified with the long west elevation/façade in terms of fenestration, ornament and architectural character. Both of the side streets slope steeply to the west with a nearly one and one-half story difference in height from the east to the west corners of the building. Third Avenue slopes only very slightly to the south.

The base of the building encompasses the lower three floor levels of the building along Third Avenue and is accentuated from the shaft by a variation in terra cotta cladding. Due to the sloping side streets the base is reduced to one and one-half story at the east end of both of the side elevations. The façade is dominated by a three-story central entrance bay formed by a central 16' deep setback loggia and capped by a terra cotta balustrade at the third floor level. The building entry is defined by four tapered and polished grey granite columns that extend two stories in height. This colonnade is surmounted by a lintel inscribed with "CENTRAL BUILDING" and flanked by terra cotta ornament including shields encircled with leaves and scrolls. Above the prominent three bays of the entrance colonnade are three bays of simple rectangular window openings separated by piers decorated with composite pilasters that are capped by lions' heads.

To each side of the main central entrance bay are side wings; each wing is divided into two wide central storefront bays flanked by narrower side bays. The side wings are further divided horizontally by intermediate cornices and bands of leaf moulding that accentuate the third floor level and correspond to configuration of the central entrance bay. The intermediate cornice at the sill of the third floor windows is decorated with small shields and blank plaques surrounded by leaf motif decoration. The cornice above the third floor windows is decorated with larger shields and blank plaques surrounded by leaf motif decoration. Rectangular second floor level window bays include narrow terra cotta spandrels. Rectangular storefront openings correspond vertically with the fenestration and structural pier pattern at the third floor level and the shaft above; the central and side window bays are divided by ornate terra cotta spandrels/piers that accentuate the retail storefronts. Windows at the third floor are set in groups of three divided by terra cotta mullions at the central bays and wide single windows at the side bays. Windows at the second floor level read as wide mezzanine openings and are set in groups of four and three without prominent mullions. Original wooden, one-over-one, double-hung windows appear to remain in place at the third floor level.

The side elevations are divided vertically into eight window bays with the same terra cotta banding and detailing as the facade; six evenly spaced central bays are flanked by wide corner bays that correspond with the rectangular storefront and second floor level openings at the street level. Windows at the third floor are set in groups of two divided by terra cotta mullions at the central bays and wide single windows at the side bays. Windows at the second floor level read as wide mezzanine openings and are typically set in groups of three without prominent mullions. Original wooden, one-over-one, double-hung windows appear to remain in place at the third floor levels of both elevations. The north elevation includes an intact original recessed entry vestibule at the second bay west of the alley. The vestibule retains original marble cladding, plate glass display windows with mahogany trim and marble bulkheads, mahogany entry doors with sidelight and transom assembly and traditional signage. The south elevation may retain portions of historic storefronts at the first, second and third bays from the alley including plate glass display windows with painted wood trim and traditional signage. The rectangular storefront bays at the west end of the elevation appear to have had narrow terra cotta spandrels added at the mezzanine window level similar to those at the second floor level window bays.

The shaft encompasses the upper five floor levels that form a U-shaped configuration around the loggia at the façade. The shaft is distinguished by smoothly laid terra cotta cladding and regularly spaced rectangular window openings; typically set in pairs on the north and south elevations and in groups of threes on the west façade. The verticality of the shaft is subtly articulated at the corners of each wing or vertical block by slightly projecting corner window bays with larger single window openings. Original wooden, one-over-one, double-hung windows appear to remain in place at all of the upper floor levels. The shaft is terminated by a heavily denticulated sheet metal cornice. A small one-story pavilion is located at the southwest corner of the roof level. It is visible from the street level and was part of the original construction. It originally served as the Chamber of Commerce observation deck. Windows appear to be modern metal sash units.

Alley (East) Elevation

The east (alley) elevation including the walls within the light courts are utilitarian in character. The east elevation is complex due to the ‘E’ shaped footprint at the upper floor levels. It is also generally divided into one central recessed bay, flanked by two light courts and two narrow, full building depth outside bays. The southern bay includes a steel fire escape. The distinctive terra cotta cladding and typical terra cotta detailing and ornament extend at the building corner at the north and south ends of this elevation. The steel-reinforced concrete walls at all of the various recessed portions of the rear elevation are otherwise finished with painted concrete plaster or stucco. The windows at the east elevation appear to be original typical wooden, double-hung, primarily multi-pane 3/3 units set in unframed individual openings. Modern hollow metal doors have been installed at some original door openings. Other minor window and door alterations appear to have occurred on this elevation.

Non-Historic Exterior Alterations

The storefront level of the Central Building appears to have been altered at various points in its history. Originally, all of the retail spaces were oriented toward Third Avenue and there were no storefronts on Columbia Street. The sidewalk at Marion Street was held away from the building and a walkway provided access (at the Third Avenue level) to storefronts below the steep grade at that street. The corner storefront bays at Columbia and Marion Streets appear to have been open vestibules with access to several basement level shops; however, the original architectural drawings indicate typical retail storefronts at these locations. The typical original storefronts had wide plate glass windows with low marble bulkheads and central recessed doorways. Each storefront included mezzanine level windows of prism glass. Many of these features appear to have been changed or altered by the 1960s.

The Central Building recently underwent a fairly complete rehabilitation project. A modern, non-obtrusive, steel and glass entry canopy was installed at the central entry bay of the facade. The design of the canopy does not obscure or block views for the cladding or architectural features above the entrance. With the exception of the recessed entrance vestibule at the north elevation and the aforementioned storefronts on the south elevation, all of the storefronts including display and mezzanine level windows have been reconstructed

with modern non-obtrusive storefront assemblies. Originally, the second floor level windows were tripartite wooden units with a wide central panel and narrow, double-hung side lights. Several of these windows appear to have been altered to the current configuration by c.1937. Originally, a highly ornate terra cotta cartouche carved to include “cTc” (for Trustee Company *or* Corporation) was located above the entryway and part of the balustrade. It was removed sometime after 1937, possibly as a result of the 1949 earthquake.

Significant Interior Features and/or Finishes

The Central Building exhibits a particularly distinctive main lobby embellished with Greco-Roman inspired decorative motifs. The lobby walls and pillars are entirely clad with a mottled light-gray Alaska marble. Distinctive inlaid bronze Greek meander pattern moulding decorates portions of the marble walls. Other distinctive interior features and finishes include; coffered, ornate plaster ceilings decorated with garlands and dentil moulding, white marble tile flooring with inlaid black marble patterns and green marble panels at the elevator bays. Ceiling coves and column caps include egg-and-dart mouldings. The symmetrical formal lobby plan is accentuated by open flared marble-clad stairwells with wide curved marble banisters and newel posts located to each side of the lobby space. Ornate – possibly retrofitted original - pendant light fixtures that are decorated with Roman cross motifs are in place in the main lobby. Modern entry doors and finishes are in place at the front of the lobby and a modern alcove is located at the east end of the lobby.

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The features of the Landmark to be preserved include:

The exterior of the building, and the interior main lobby including the following features: the Alaska marble wall and pillar cladding, the coffered ceilings, the marble flooring and green marble panels at the elevator bays, and the open flared marble-clad stairwells with marble banisters and newel posts located to each side of the lobby space, but excluding the modern alcove at the east end of the lobby.

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Karen Gordon
City Historic Preservation Officer

cc: Joseph Munoz, LaSalle Investment Management
Jessica M. Clawson, McCullough Hill PS
Stephen Lee, LPB
Stella Chao, DON
Diane Sugimura, DPD
Cheryl Mosteller, DPD
Ken Mar, DPD