

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Pioneer Square-Skid Road National Historic District

Introduction

The City of Seattle Pioneer Square Preservation District was created in 1970, although the original nomination was presented to the Seattle City Council in 1969 and rejected. The district, with slightly different boundaries, was also listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1970. Since then, there have been two subsequent boundary expansions, one in 1978 and one in 1988. All of the buildings in the district date from after the Great Fire of June 6, 1889, which reduced roughly 30 blocks or more of the original City of Seattle to ashes.

Buildings within the district date from four successive periods of significance. The first period of significance spans from right after the Great Fire of June 6, 1889 to 1899, during which Seattle's commercial district, known as the "burnt district," was rebuilt. The second period, a time of explosive growth, spans from 1900 to 1910. In the original nominations, the third period spanned from 1911 to 1916 and a final pre-World War I surge of construction. For this update, the third period has been extended to encompass buildings associated with the war effort during World War I and/ or completed between 1911 and 1927. A fourth period, from 1928 to 1931, is associated with the Second Avenue Extension, a public works project which continued to have far-reaching consequences on the open spaces and architecture in the district until 1931. It created not only the Second Avenue Extension and modified buildings in its path, but it also caused important changes in the streetscape along 4th Avenue South, between Yesler Way and King Street. The end date 1931 also coincides with the completion of the last major public building in the district, the City County Building, now the King County Courthouse.

The district is being nominated based on the following National Register Criteria: "A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history"; and criterion C: "Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction

or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.” The district is clearly associated with the “broad patterns” of United States History, beginning with 1889, after the Great Fire and ending with the Second Avenue Extension, which had a far-reaching effect on both the buildings and the streetscape of the district until 1931. In terms of Criterion C, the district presents many examples of buildings that are architecturally distinctive and are the work of a large number of well known, although local architects. In addition, the district has several public squares and a small collection of artifacts of significance. The areas of significance for the district, based on National Register categories, are: architecture, commerce, community planning and development, engineering, industry, landscape architecture, politics/ government, social history and transportation.

The Pioneer Square-Skid Road National Historic District has significant history that predates the Great Fire of 1889, so the early part of this narrative will also describe briefly the peoples who originally inhabited the area, subsequent relations with the early pioneers, as well as the early platting and history of the area.

The Duwamish and Suquamish Peoples

The area that was to become the Pioneer Square Historic District had long been inhabited by Native Americans. They are thought to have called themselves the “duwAHBSH,” meaning “inside people,” a reference to the location of their settlements inside the protected waters of Elliott Bay. Eventually, “duwAHBSH” became “Duwamish,” still used today, although the tribe is currently not recognized by the U.S. Government. They also lived along Lake Washington, (at one point, known as Lake Duwamps), and the Duwamish River (apparently known by various names, including the “t-hwuh-DAH-o, then the ‘Dewams,’ the ‘D’wmampish” and finally the “Duwamish.”).

By the 1850s, Chief Seattle was the leader of the Duwamish, as well as of the Suquamish tribes. Both tribes had villages and encampments along the Puget Sound. They were part of the Puget Sound tribes, and, with the larger group of Coastal Salish, whose lands extended from the Powell River through the Georgia Strait in British

Columbia to the Puget Sound and the Chehalis River Valley to the Pacific Ocean, they shared common Salish linguistic and cultural traditions.¹

The rich cultural traditions of the Duwamish and Suquamish tribes were based on reverence for the natural elements that surrounded them and, in particular, on the change of seasons. Like all the Coastal Salish, the tribes had evolved sophisticated fishing techniques, which included nets, weirs and hook and line. They typically fashioned clothes and baskets, matting for bedding and shelter from strips of cedar bark. Split cedar trees were also used to make canoes, winter lodges and longhouses. Longhouses were gathering places, used for important social ceremonies. These included marriages, healing ceremonies, dancing and singing or the transmission of tribal legends – *syayahub* (pronounced “syah-yah-hobe”). While remnants of these longhouses are no longer in evidence, Duwamish myths and family histories, archeological evidence, in addition to stories handed down by early pioneers, have given anthropologists, archeologists and ethnographic historians clues, and sometimes even definite information, concerning the location of Duwamish encampments or villages.²

Several Duwamish winter villages were sited in what is now the Pioneer Square area, including two along what were then salt-water marshes, near the subsequent location of train stations at King Street Station and the former Union Station. The site of Pioneer Place, a public square built by pioneers at the end of the nineteenth century, is considered unique, because, it began as the site a Duwamish winter village and continued to function as a gathering place through the pioneer era and into modern times. The original site of the Duwamish village, roughly at the intersection of Yesler Way and First Avenue, consisted of a low isthmus that connected high ground to the north with an island to the south, set along a tidal marsh to the east. A path crossing the isthmus gave the location its name, Djicjila’letc (dje-djee-lah-letsh), which in Lushootseed means “little crossing-over place.” There, the Duwamish are supposed to have built eight, large longhouses, each about 60 feet by 120 feet. This was one of the most important villages along Elliott Bay and had a population of as many as 200 people. Among the modern Duwamish, the site is still sometimes known as Djicjila’letc.³

The long history of Djicjila’letc is now partially memorialized by the modern panels in transcribed Lushootseed and in English, which are set prominently in this public square. Another Native American artifact, the totem pole, is actually from the Tongass in Alaska and not carved by local tribes.⁴

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European Exploration and the Arrival of the Early Pioneers

The first known European explorers did not arrive anywhere near Djicjila'letc until the end of the eighteenth century. Lieutenant Francisco Eliza, the leader of a team of Spanish explorers, traveled close to Elliott Bay and charted most of the San Juan Islands in 1790. In 1792, Captain George Vancouver and his crew ventured a little closer and found themselves anchored off Bainbridge Island. The present Puget Sound was named after Captain Vancouver's Second Lieutenant, Peter Puget, who explored the area west of present day Vashon Island. The next explorers who ventured into the Puget Sound in 1824 were members of the British Hudson's Bay Company. In 1841, Lieutenant Charles Wilkes, exploring the Puget Sound's natural harbors for the U.S. Navy, produced detailed reports that included descriptions of Elliott Bay. He named Elliott Bay after Reverend J. L. Elliott, the Chaplain who had accompanied him on the expedition.⁵

By the 1840s, the Americans and the British, the later mainly represented by the Hudson's Bay Company, argued over land holdings in the Pacific Northwest. This was solved by the Oregon Treaty of 1846, which established the border between British Columbia, and the Oregon Territories, of which the future Washington State was the northern part. The United States Government also established the Donation Land Law of 1850, which allowed each male citizen in the Oregon Territories a land claim of 320 acres, with an additional 320 acres for his wife, if he were to marry.

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As pioneers began to settle in the Puget Sound Area, they edged closer to the present site of Pioneer Square. In 1850, a former California Gold Rusher, Isaac Ebey, further explored the Duwamish River and Elliott Bay, which he called “Dewams,” no doubt influenced by the local natives who brought him there by canoe. In the same year, John Holgate, while investigating Elliott Bay and the Duwamish River, actually staked a claim, but went home for a time to his native Iowa, only to find, on his return, that his homestead had taken over by Luther Collins. Collins, his wife Diana and their daughter Lucinda and other homesteaders, Henry van Asselt, Jacob Maple and his son Samuel, were settled on the banks of the Duwamish, close to modern Georgetown.⁶

By 1851, a vanguard of settlers, Lee Terry, David Denny and John Low traveled from Illinois to Portland in the Oregon Territories and then north. They began to settle on Alki Point in present-day West Seattle. The rest of what were to be Seattle’s first settlers arrived at Alki later in November 1851 on the brig *Exact*, after a rough journey from Portland. Among these early pioneers were Arthur Denny, Carson Boren and William Bell, who began exploring Elliott Bay.

By 1852, men, women and children from the Boren, Bell, Denny and Terry families, collectively known as the “Denny Party,” as well as a more recent arrival, Dr. David Maynard, decided to relocate to an area along Elliott Bay, centered roughly around present-day Washington Street and Occidental Avenue South, at Piner’s Point. Arthur Denny used his skills as a surveyor to pick the present site, which was chosen because it was a deep water harbor. Known as Duwamps, the little town that was built during the next thirty years or so, was to become the original city of Seattle. Maynard, who was on friendly terms with Chief Seattle, moved his general store, the

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“Seattle Exchange” to the village of *Duwamps*. Sometime around 1853, he convinced the other settlers, as the first plats were being filed, that *Duwamps* should be renamed after Chief Seattle.⁷

Early Plats and Physical Infrastructure

The first homestead stakes that became the City of Seattle were driven on February 15, 1852 by Carson Boren, Arthur Denny and William Bell. In late 1852, Henry Yesler, a native of Washington County, Maryland, who had previous experience operating a sawmill in Massillon, Ohio, was persuaded by Carson Boren and David Maynard to set up the first Seattle sawmill in an area of the waterfront called the “Sag.” They also gave Yesler a piece of land to the east of the waterfront, which provided a corridor down which logs could be dragged. Known as the “Skid Road,” this corridor became Mill Street, later renamed Yesler Way. Platting of what became the essential part of the future Pioneer Square-Skid Road National Historic District occurred in 1853, amid some confusion. Maynard’s Plat covered an area south of Yesler Way. It ran in the north-south direction and parallel to the shoreline. Arthur Denny’s plat, north of Yesler Way, was also parallel to the shoreline, which now veered to the northwest. As a result, subsequent street grids north and south of Yesler Way did not line up and there was a left-over triangular piece of land at Yesler Way.⁸

As Seattle proper annexed other outlying areas, what later became the historic district continued to be considered the heart or center of the young city. This urban center grew and changed, but remained the commercial center of the city as it expanded, until as late as the 1910s. In the 1850s, however, the area was still undeveloped. David Maynard played an important political role in its development.

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Early Relations between the Native Tribes and Early Pioneers

David (“Doc”) Maynard, who had originally arrived at Alki independently of the Terry, Denny, Boren and Bell families, is supposed to have been drawn to the area, because of the suggestions of Chief Seattle. Chief Seattle had converted to Catholicism and had been baptized with the Christian name, Noah Sealath, but is supposed to have only spoken Lushootseed. He frequently traveled to buy pelts and other wares in the Fort Nisqually area, (Olympia area), where he made an acquaintance with Maynard. As a son of a Suquamish father and Duwamish mother, Seattle represented both tribes. He was the chief of the tribal members from the Cedar River to Bainbridge Island and Port Madison. Maynard continued to be on friendly terms with Chief Seattle. Unlike other early pioneers in the 1850s, Maynard did not live in a stockade, but practiced medicine and moved freely within the native community.

It was Maynard who arranged the treaty conference held at Point Elliott (now Mukilteo, Washington). An important, and ultimately unfortunate, milestone in the history of Native American and pioneer relations in Washington State and particularly in Seattle, it took place from January 21 to 23, in 1855. Chief Seattle, Chief of the Duwamish and Suquamish tribes, along with the leaders from other Puget Sound Tribes, such as the Snoqualmie, Snohomish, Lummi and Skagit, put his mark on this treaty. These tribes agreed to cede their lands in return for relocation to reservations, access to traditional hunting and fishing grounds, and cash. Leaders of the Hood Canal and upper Puget Sound tribes signed similar treaties at Point- No- Point (near Hansville on the Kitsap Peninsula).

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Not surprisingly, the treaties, many of which were not ratified for another four years, did not insure a lasting piece between the pioneers and the native tribes in the mid-1850s: the Point Elliott Treaty was not ratified by the U.S. Congress until 1859 and some tribal leaders began to find that even the apparent advantages, promised by the treaties, were in dispute. As a result, there were several months of clashes between native tribes and U.S. Federal troops, mainly in the southern part of King County, between the end of 1855 and early 1856.⁹

On January 26, 1856, the clashes moved north to Seattle and proved to be an all-day affair. According to some reports, Chief Seattle and his daughter Angeline warned the fifty or so pioneers of the imminent attack. The pioneers and several refugees from the south King County wars took refuge in a blockhouse, located at what is now First Avenue and Cherry Street. The attack was quelled by artillery fire from the U. S. Navy sloop, Decatur, which was anchored in Elliott Bay. The one day battle is now called the “Battle of Seattle.” It is commemorated by a plaque, also affixed to the State Building, at the corner of Occidental Way and Main Street. (There is also a monument commemorating the battle, donated by the Daughters of the American Revolution, in City Hall Park). Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens held the Klickitat/Yakima Chief Owhi and Chief Leschi of the Nisqually Tribe responsible for the attack. Both Chief Owhi and Chief Leschi were eventually captured and put to death. Chief Leschi was found guilty of the murder of Colonel A. B. Moses, despite the work of sympathetic pioneers, who fought a hard legal battle to prove him innocent.¹⁰ (In 2004, in a very posthumous retrial, the chief Justice of the Washington State Supreme Court exonerated Chief Leschi).¹¹

Seattle’s Growth from the 1850s to the late 1880s- the Fire of June 6, 1889

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While relations between pioneers and native tribes were not always peaceful outside of Seattle, within the town, they were reasonably amicable and Seattle continued to grow. Henry Yesler's decision to locate his sawmill at the "Sag" in late 1852 proved to be the major force in Seattle's economic development. The first steam driven sawmill on the Puget Sound, Yesler's mill began producing cut lumber by March of 1853. For ten years, the mill was the main source of livelihood for the male pioneer population, but also employed many local natives. The city and the mill, however, were somewhat affected by an early case of gold fever during the late 1850s, when many able bodied, unmarried men departed for eastern Washington to prospect for gold. This temporarily shut down Yesler's mill for the summer of 1860, but work resumed soon after. By this period, the city's economy sustained itself primarily on the export of lumber and had lively commerce with San Francisco.¹²

By the late 1850s, small business establishments were also an important feature of town life. The first store, David Maynard's Seattle Exchange, was an eighteen by twenty six foot log cabin, built in late 1852 at the northeast corner of First Avenue South and Main Street. Not long after, there were two or three other general stores, including Arthur Denny's slightly larger, thirty by twenty foot store. There were also "two taverns, or boarding houses," and about five shops devoted to necessary services such as carpentry, joinery, shoemaking and blacksmithing.¹³

By the 1860s, while lumber and fishing, in addition to farming and local enterprises were basis for the economy, the cultural life of the city also began to develop. The Territorial University, which later became the University of Washington, was founded in 1861. Its main building, distinguished by a centrally located bell tower,

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was constructed on “Denny’s Knoll,” at the location of the present Olympic Hotel, and north of the Pioneer Square-Skid Road National Historic District. The first local newspaper, the Seattle Gazette, appeared, although in fits and starts, beginning in 1863. By 1864, thanks to telegraphic cables, the Seattle Gazette was able to provide coverage of the Civil War. Predecessors of the current Seattle dailies or early versions of them were also founded: the Weekly Intelligencer appeared in 1876 and became the Seattle Post-Intelligencer in 1881 and the Seattle Times was first published in 1871.¹⁴

Not surprisingly, the town also evolved physically. In the early 1850s, Seattle was described as having “only one street and nothing to mark the different lots.” In particular, the “sides” of the very uneven streets were interrupted by mud holes and many tree stumps. One of the earliest buildings, which served as a meeting house, town hall and court room, was Yesler’s cookhouse, built of logs. Once Yesler’s mill was providing sawn lumber, however, both public buildings and houses were of frame construction and had white painted, clapboard siding. Public buildings had gable roofs, but often had false fronts facing the street, while dwellings were typically one to one and half stories in height with gabled roofs. Important buildings remained fairly modest: the earliest schoolhouse was a former dwelling and the first hotel, the two-story Felker House, was considered the “best built building,” because its interior had lath with plaster finish. Built in 1853, it was still visible in a view of Seattle taken in the early 1880s.¹⁵

By the early 1870s, the downtown frame buildings were often a story or so higher, more sophisticated in design and had modest Victorian exterior detailing. In 1872, local reports counted 575 buildings. All through the

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1860s and early 1870s, Seattle vied with Olympia, Tacoma and Port Townsend, all nearby towns in Washington State, to be the terminus of the Northern Pacific Railway. In 1873, just four years after Seattle's incorporation, Tacoma was chosen to be the Northern Pacific terminus. Despite this setback, Seattle had a population of about two-thousand people and continued to grow. The town itself had more services than in the 1860s. Not only did it have a tannery, a blacksmith, carpenters and joiners, but there were now two sawmills as well as a brickyard. In addition, coal mining was becoming an important local industry.¹⁶

The Early Chinese Quarter – Anti-Chinese Agitation – Chinese Contributions

Also, contributing to the economic growth of the town were Chinese sojourners, who came to Seattle to earn money, usually with the intention of eventually returning to China. In the meantime, they established a Chinese quarter, which until the mid-1870s, was centered on what is today First Avenue South and Yesler Way. During the early 1880s, the center of the Chinese quarter moved to Washington Street, between Second and Third Avenues. During the period from 1885 and 1886, however, there was serious anti-Chinese agitation, probably further encouraged by the nation-wide Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This agitation came to a head in 1886 with the forced deportation of many of the Chinese from Seattle.

Despite this, by the late 1880s, enough people remained, so that the Chinese population had rebounded and was in the vicinity of 350 people, although it was about half of what it had been in 1886. The population worked in lumber mills, logging, general construction and in the mines. Retail and import businesses, which provided labor contracting services, were also typical and became increasingly prevalent. A very early business of this type, which prospered into the 1880s and after, was the Wa Chong Company, founded in 1868 by Chin Chun

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Hock, who had arrived in Seattle in 1860. Despite adversity and the hostility of white settlers, the Chinese community, although diminished in numbers, continued to contribute to the prosperity of the town throughout the 1880s.¹⁷

Early Japanese Presence by the 1880s

As a result of the sudden dearth of available labor following the anti-Chinese riots of 1886, many businesses turned to Japanese labor. The first known Japanese Seattle resident was Kyuhachi Nishii, who arrived in Portland in the Oregon Territories from Ehime Prefecture in 1884. By 1888, Nishii, along with a partner named Azuma, founded the Star Restaurant, not far from the Chinese Quarter at Second and Washington Street. Eventually, Nishii opened a second restaurant in Seattle and continued to be a successful businessman in Tacoma. Obviously, many Japanese newcomers did not see Nishii's success. Most worked as laborers on the railroads, in sawmills or in the canneries, as domestic help or as shop personnel, while others saw really hard times and fell into gambling or prostitution. The Fujin Kai (Women's Organizations), in particular, rescued women, who frequently had been forced into prostitution. The Japanese quarter, Nihonmachi, (meaning Japanese town"), emerged along Main Street, close to the early Chinese quarter.

Seattle was gradually emerging as an area of many contrasts and sometimes intense political problems. These problems mirrored those of many cities along the west coast. While the town had started out with only a few log buildings, it had turned into a commercial downtown district, whose sophistication and population were steadily growing.

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The Late 1880s and the Fire of June 6, 1889

By the late 1880s, just before the Great Fire of June 6, 1889, Seattle's population had increased to more than 40,000 people. The hub of Seattle's business district consisted of a half dozen blocks along First Avenue (known as Front Street) and First Avenue South. This included various retail stores, a blacksmith, a tannery, hotels, saloons, bawdyhouses, banks, office buildings, wholesale houses, and waterfront piers. While Seattle was still a fairly primitive outpost with mostly frame buildings and planked streets, there was also a sense of grandeur in some of the newer buildings, such as Frye's Opera House, which included a Mansard roof and rose to four stories on Front Street.¹⁸ It housed not only a 1,300 seat theater, but also shops on the ground floor of Front Street, as well as offices. John Collins' Occidental Hotel was constructed in brick and designed by Donald MacKay in the French Empire Style. The Victorian Yesler-Leary Building, designed by W.E. Boone in brick and wood, rose across the street from the Occidental Hotel.¹⁹

Despite the attempts to construct a few lavish buildings, the preponderance of wooden construction in early Seattle would pose a not completely unforeseen problem. By the late 1880s, many nineteenth century American cities and towns suffered dramatic fires, with San Francisco subjected to six major fires by 1852. Chicago had a famous "Great Fire" in 1872. More locally, devastating fires burnt down major portions of the cities of Spokane and Ellensburg in 1889.²⁰ On June 6, 1889, Seattle's business district would also burn. The fire started at 2:30 in the afternoon in a cabinet shop in the basement of the Pontius Building at First and Madison Street, slightly north of the present district. According to testimony from a worker at the cabinet shop, a Swedish

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employee called “Back” or “Berg,” depending on the account, was responsible for accidentally spreading the fire, when he tried to douse a smaller fire, started by an overturned glue pot, with water.²¹

The fire was able to work its way easily from building to building, because most walls were not of sturdy or of fireproof construction, and interior walls, in addition to not being fire resistant, frequently did not continue down to the basement level. This made it easy for the fire to travel laterally. In the end, at least 30 blocks or more of the city, from Jackson Street to University Street, were destroyed. Few buildings in this area survived.²² Today, at the corner of Third Avenue and James Street, the wooden two-story Drexel Hotel, raised on a solid masonry ground floor dating from 1890, is thought to be the only remaining pre-fire building in Pioneer Square. If this is the case, its original historic exterior is now covered by modern day siding.

The Aftermath of the Fire – The Tent City

Despite the incredible destruction, the day after the fire, Mayor Moran called a meeting at the Armory at Third and Union Street to discuss the reconstruction of the “burnt district,” as the area was called for several years in contemporary newspaper accounts. Six hundred businessmen, in Clarence Bagley’s words, “representative of the city’s best energy, hope and confidence,” participated and made a series of far-reaching decisions concerning Seattle’s future and its downtown: wooden buildings would be prohibited and only buildings with brick and stone exteriors erected. Front and Commercial Streets, (now First Avenue and First Avenue South), originally part of two different tracts of land that followed different geometries, would be tied together.

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During the general reconstruction of the district, streets would also be widened and regraded to improve street drainage.²³

Businessman and banker Jacob Furth, who was originally from Bohemia and had come to Seattle in 1882, was one of the businessmen who played a key role in the reconstruction and recovery of the “burnt district.” As president of the Seattle National Bank, he pledged that in no way would the bank try to profit from the fire and backed his promise with \$ 150,000 in bank loans. He also expressed the optimistic view, repeated in various forms in local newspapers: “The time is not far distant when we shall look upon the fire as an actual benefit. I say we shall have a finer city than before, not within five years, but in eighteen months.”²⁴

In fact, the renewed spirit of the city was unflagging and described by local journalists as the “Seattle Spirit.” While, during the early months after the fire, the commercial district operated out of tents, the fire’s aftermath was seen as an opportunity for newcomers, including developers, construction workers and architects.²⁵ Seattle saw an unprecedented population boom in the first year after the fire alone and this spurred a massive rebuilding effort. While W. E. Boone was already practicing architecture in Seattle, it was at this time that several of the architects now known for designing the district’s early buildings arrived in Seattle. These included Elmer Fisher, John Parkinson, Charles Saunders and E. W. Houghton. Before the reconstruction could begin, however, Seattle sought information about better methods of construction and set out to create a series of guidelines that would ensure a safe and reasonably fireproof downtown.

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Building Ordinance No. 1147

Seattle's builders, contractors and architects sought advice from other cities that had suffered major fires. In late June of 1889, Francis Porter, Chief of the Underwriters' Inspection Bureau of San Francisco, traveled to Seattle to speak about "slow burning construction." According to a June 20, 1889 Post-Intelligencer article concerning Porter's visit, "slow burning construction" referred to construction that would resist the spread of fire with exterior walls of brick or stone and an interior structure of materials such as heavy timber. Porter also advocated shaft and stair enclosures, as well as draft stopping between floors.²⁶ The equivalent of Seattle's first building code, Ordinance No. 1147, which incorporated some of Porter's suggestions, was enacted. The ordinance was also said to be based on similar ordinances for the cities of Kansas City and San Francisco. The full text of Ordinance No. 1147 was carried in the July 5th, 1889 edition of the Post-Intelligencer.

Ordinance No. 1147 required that inside the fire limits of the commercial district, exterior walls be constructed of masonry, that is, of brick or stone. The requirements for these exterior walls were set forth in some detail and depended on the height of the walls. For instance, for the masonry bearing walls of a four-story building, the basement walls were not to be less than twenty one inches thick, the first, second and third story walls not less than sixteen inches, and the fourth floor walls not less than twelve inches thick. For a five-story building, the basement walls were to be not less than 24 inches thick, the first story not less than 21 inches, the second, third, fourth stories not less than 16 inches thick and the top story 12 inches minimum.

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In addition, foundations were to extend at least 4 feet below grade. In general, header courses were required at regular intervals. Brick or stone arches, or stone or metal lintels were to top exterior door and window openings. Within larger buildings, masonry “division” walls, spaced no farther apart than 66 feet, to prevent the spread of fire, were required. Arched openings walls were permitted within the division walls to allow movement, but the ordinance gave a size limit. Wood cornices were strictly prohibited and bay sizes limited. Party walls were required to extend over roofs, which were to be covered with fireproof materials.

The requirements for interiors were less well defined. At the very least, interiors were to be made of “slowly-combustible” construction, which might include heavy timber, iron or steel columns. Such columns were required for spans greater than 27 feet and in the former “burnt district” turned out to be most often of heavy timber. There was less detail in the ordinance concerning the framing and construction of floors. In actual fact, most of the floor systems consisted of heavy timber girders and beams, as close as 12 to 18 inches on center, covered with wood flooring. The ordinance did require the use of metal anchors between floor beams and exterior masonry walls (a controversial practice in the period, since many builders’ handbooks noted that during a fire, if an unattached wooden beam were allowed to burn away freely, it would not pull down the wall to which it was attached). Despite Porter’s suggestions, there were no requirements for stair or shaft enclosures. Standpipes were required in all buildings of more than three stories.²⁷

Older scholarship has sometimes described the heavy timber interiors of Seattle’s early buildings erected after the fire of 1889 as “mill construction”; however, many of Seattle’s buildings were built as warehouses and

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had to carry much heavier loads than the typical late nineteenth century or early twentieth century textile mills to which “mill construction” refers. The expression “slow-burning” was used in newspaper articles of the period, but, in fact, seems to have had several definitions. Some more recent scholarship simply refers to Seattle’s version of heavy timber interiors and masonry exteriors, as first described in Ordinance No. 1147, as “warehouse construction.”²⁸

In any case, the new building regulations allowed fires within buildings to be controlled much more easily. One of the best examples of the advantages of the new regulations is the case of the fire at the Schwabacher Building, (on First Avenue and Yesler Way), which took place in 1892. The building sustained a fire that destroyed a good portion of it, in addition to the First Avenue façade, but the fire was contained within the building and did not spread. While somewhat vague on certain points, Ordinance No. 1147 not only served to contain fire, but to a large extent dictated the physical appearance of the new commercial buildings in the district.²⁹

To enforce the new building regulations, another ordinance created of the position of “Inspector of Buildings.” Described in the July 10, 1889 Post-Intelligencer, the ordinance required that the inspector must be an experienced builder and, during his term of office, not employed or involved with “building or furnishing materials for the State.”³⁰

The Replatting and Regrading of the Streets

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Street drainage and sanitation had been a consistent problem in the new city. As part of the rebuilding of the district, Seattle's City Council voted to elevate portions of the city streets and to replat them. This was a major undertaking. For instance, it decided to widen "Front Street, (later First Avenue), to 84 feet. Second and Third Streets, (now Second and Third Avenues), were widened by 24 feet to 90 feet. An ordinance also established by how much each street would be raised. James Street, for example, was scheduled to be raised at the east line of Front Street, 18 feet; at Second Street, 32 feet." Yesler Way, Washington, Jackson and Main Streets were all to be raised by similar amounts. What later became the major avenues, for example, West Street (now Western Avenue), Commercial Street (now First Avenue South), Second, Third and Fourth Streets (now Occidental, Second, and Third Avenues South) were also to be raised by anywhere from 6.5 feet to about 19 feet.³¹

At the same time, Front Street (later First Avenue) and Commercial Street (now First Avenue South), originally disconnected because of the earlier "miscommunications" between Carson Boren and David Maynard, were tied together. As a result, Henry Yesler lost a corner of his property near the future Pioneer Building. At the time, this enraged him and he was quoted at length in the Post Intelligencer. This also created a new triangular public square, today called Pioneer Place. It is the most significant and most intact historical open space in the current historic district. Not far from Pioneer Place, along the waterfront, the wharves, a very important part of the future commercial district, were also gradually rebuilt.³²

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Seattle Begins to Rebuild Itself

With a building ordinance and an inspector of buildings, the new district, built of brick, stone, cast stone and terra cotta rose very quickly, following the devastation of the Great Fire. Since construction on some buildings had already begun, ground floors suddenly became basement levels. This created the district's underground areaways. In addition, square glass prism blocks, set into the sidewalk pavement, which can still be seen today, allowed light to penetrate to the basements of these early buildings.

Within a month of the fire, eighty-eight buildings were either projected or already underway. The Seattle newspapers of 1889 took real delight in recounting the rebuilding of Seattle.

“There is a feature of the new life in Seattle which will not grow old and that is the work of building. The scene in the burnt district is gradually changing for the better and excavations and foundations for many new buildings are already under way... New announcements of proposed buildings continue to be made and they are always met with interest and pleasure by the general public.”

“Rise Like a Phoenix” and “wings of the phoenix” were two typical references to Seattle's rebirth.³³ There were very frequent articles on the rebuilding of the district, in the 1889 Post-Intelligencer, for instance, from the day of the Great Fires all through 1889. The articles contained elegantly phrased descriptions of future buildings and usually included the name of the owner, of the architect and of the builder. In addition, they described, often in glowing terms, the seemingly rich materials and exterior ornamentation, which would make these buildings truly

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worthy of the reborn city. At the same time, the articles did not usually discuss architectural style, although the new buildings often presented an interesting reinterpretation and recombination of known styles.

Seattle Clients and Architects- Construction in 1889 and the very early 1890s

The style of the buildings, erected right after the fire, especially Elmer Fisher's designs, varied from the fussiness of the late Victorian style, which was really more suited to wood, to a stately Richardsonian Romanesque, based on the work of H.H. Richardson, as well on the work of contemporary Chicago architects such as Burnham and Root. Typical of the Victorian façade composition, was the tendency to divide the façade into a grid, marked by vertical bays, with additional horizontal and vertical elements. The early Seattle architects, whose knowledge of building design was often gained through experience in the building trades, were usually not formally trained as architects. They tended to reinvent, often in a naïve way, their version of the Late Victorian style and created their own versions of the Richardsonian Romanesque and of the Chicago School, based on what was available in architectural journals of the time. As a result, among the earliest buildings, one of the most prevalent styles was even characterized by a combination of Victorian façade composition with typical Richardsonian elements, such as heavy masonry, Romanesque arches, and echoes of façade arrangements with a recognizable base, shaft and capital arrangement.³⁴

Elmer Fisher's early work particularly reflected this tendency. While, because of the number of buildings his office produced, he played a significant role in defining the district, he should not be given sole credit. W. E. Boone, Charles Saunders, E. W. Houghton and John Parkinson among others, all played extremely important

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roles in the early rebuilding of Seattle's "burnt district," right after the fire. Nevertheless, since only a small number of architects contributed to the early rebuilding, the district had a distinctive architectural harmony. Later in the 1890s and then from 1900 to the 1910s, another wave of architects or architectural partnerships would take over, adding new elements into the architectural mix, which still contributed to an overall harmony. Associated with the early architects, are early settlers and adventurous businessmen, often slightly later arrivals from other parts of the country, who took a chance on real estate ventures in the rising urban center.

A number of the early entrepreneurs consistently hired the same architectural firms, so that there is often a clear association between patron/entrepreneurs and architects. For instance, W. E. Bailey, then a young entrepreneur and son of a wealthy Pittsburgh iron and steel manufacturer, would hire architect Charles Saunders and then the architectural firm of Saunders and Houghton for several projects. Architect William E. Boone did a number of projects for the lumber baron Cyrus Walker, while architect John Parkinson had several early patrons, involved in both banking and real estate, such as William Ballard and Guy Phinney. Other early architects do not have such clear ties with specific patrons. This is true of the architectural firm of Comstock and Troetsche, a California firm, or for architect Herman Steinmann, who has one known extant building in Seattle.

The following will describe the buildings erected right after the fire of 1889 and note the ties between these early patrons and their architects, when known. The most famous of such associations is between Henry Yesler, the mill owner and developer of real estate in the district and local architect Elmer Fisher, who was later

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succeeded by his former employee, Emil DeNeuf. Fisher would also work for the local Schwabacher family, who had been selling drygoods in the Pacific Northwest since the late 1860s.

Henry Yesler, the Schwabacher Brothers, Elmer Fisher and Emil DeNeuf

By 1889, Henry Yesler had become an influential entrepreneur, politician and owner of prime real estate in the area north of Yesler Way and around Pioneer Place. He commissioned several of the buildings erected near this public square. At the time, his preferred architect was Elmer Fisher, whose office was responsible for the **Yesler Building** (resource # 31) and the **Mutual Life Building** (formerly known as the Yesler Building - # 30), all on the west side of the public square. Directly facing Pioneer Place, is the **Howard Building** (# 60) attributed to Fisher and what is considered Fisher's masterpiece, also built for Yesler, the **Pioneer Building** (# 61). Completed in 1892, the Pioneer Building won an award from the American Institute of Architects for "being the finest building West of Chicago." Other early known buildings in the district by Fisher include, on Yesler Way, the **Padden Block (now the Bohemian)**, the **Korn Block** built for Moses Korn and the **New England Hotel** on First Avenue South and Main Street (# 91, 92 & 41). 700 First Avenue, located on the northeast corner of First Avenue and Cherry Street, is also attributed to Fisher.³⁵

Fisher was responsible for the original **Schwabacher Building** (# 32) on First and Yesler (before it sustained a fire in 1892).³⁶ It was designed for the Schwabacher Brothers, drygoods wholesalers, who had been in business since 1869 on this site, and whose previous branch stores were located in such places as Colfax,

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Washington, Idaho Falls and Boise, Idaho. The official name of the building is currently the Gatzert and Schwabacher Building. Bailey Gatzert was a partner and general manager of the Seattle branch of Schwabacher Brothers and the husband of Babette Schwabacher. Born in Hesse Darmstadt (Germany) in 1829, he was a key figure in Seattle, particularly before the Fire. He became Seattle's first and only (to date in 2004) Jewish mayor in 1875, was an original member of the Chamber of Commerce founded in 1882 and served as its second president from 1884 to 1890.³⁷ On Main Street and Occidental Way, Elmer Fisher also designed the **State Building** (# 116), a warehouse for the Schwabacher Brothers, who soon needed more space than what the earlier Schwabacher Building could provide. After the fire which destroyed the original First Avenue facade of this building in 1892, the State Building, for a time, served as the main headquarters of the Schwabacher Company.³⁸

Fisher's life and career remain something of a mystery. He produced an incredible number of buildings, especially between 1889 and 1891 and is considered the most prolific of the post-fire architects; but his account of his birth in Scotland in 1840, arrival in Massachusetts at age 17 and architectural apprenticeship in Worcester, Massachusetts now appears to be untrue or at least completely uncorroborated. It is fairly certain, however, that he came to the Pacific Northwest in 1886 and designed buildings in Vancouver, Victoria and Port Townsend, before coming to Seattle in 1889. Despite the number of buildings he designed in the district, his most well-known work in Seattle is the Pioneer Building. By 1891, despite the praise the Pioneer Building received in 1892, Fisher had abandoned his career as an architect to run the Abbott Hotel in Seattle, which he had also designed and built.

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One of his associates, however, Emil DeNeuf, who had begun his career in Seattle as a draftsman in the Fisher office, had an independent practice by the end of 1891. He was often the architect who made subsequent changes on buildings that had been begun by Fisher in this early period. This is particularly true of the Yesler Building and the Mutual Life Building. DeNeuf also designed the First Avenue South façade of the **Schwabacher Building** (#32), located near Yesler Way, after the 1892 fire. Fisher and DeNeuf also worked on 606 Post Avenue, adjacent to the Mutual Life Building. DeNeuf seems to have inherited Yesler and some of Yesler's associates as clients, although Yesler himself died in 1892.⁴⁰

Charles Saunders – The Saunders and Houghton Partnership & William Elder Bailey

Another entrepreneur, who played an important role in the rebirth of Seattle, was William Bailey. Originally from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Bailey was the son of a leading Pennsylvania iron and steel manufacturer. Like many adventurous businessmen drawn to Seattle after the fire of 1889, he became involved in the city's rebuilding. He provided capital for many local ventures in real estate, railroads and newspapers. Only several months after the fire of 1889, he created the Washington Territory Investment Company, which offered help with real estate transactions, investments and insurance in Seattle to investors from outside the Pacific Northwest. He first commissioned the firm of Saunders and Houghton to design the Washington Territory Investment Company Building, which is no longer extant.

A second building commissioned by Bailey was the Harrisburg Block, not long after known as the **Bailey Building** (# 120), and currently called the Broderick Building. It was begun in 1889.⁴¹ It was built "slowly, surely

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and well,” and completed in 1892. Before the building’s completion, the Post Intelligencer of 1889 announced: “Firmness, massiveness, elegance and architectural simplicity are an especial feature of the imposing structure.” Later, the press described the finished Bailey Building as a “Symphony in Stone.”⁴²

Saunders and Houghton also began the imposing **Terry Denny Building** (# 33) for Charles Terry and Arthur Denny in 1889. Because of its grid-like composition and interesting juxtaposition of ornamental elements, it has more in common with the demolished Washington Investment Company Building.⁴³

Another project by the Saunders and Houghton Partnership, and apparently one of the first projects taken on, when the partnership was formed, was the **Maud Building** (# 44). Built for William Maud, it housed one of the early hotels built on First Avenue South after the Fire.

Charles Saunders grew up in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Little is known about his early professional career. By 1886, he was practicing architecture in Pasadena, California, along with his wife, Mary, and by September of 1889, he had formed a partnership with Edwin Houghton, whom he may have also met in California. Edwin Houghton was born in Hampshire, England in 1856 and came from a family of quantity surveyors and architects. He was apprenticed in the London architectural office of Thomas Houghton, his brother and in Chelsea. Before arriving in Seattle in September 1889, he had first worked as a farmer outside of El Paso, Texas; then had opened an independent architectural practice in Pasadena, California. He moved with his family to Port Townsend, Washington in early 1889.⁴⁴

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The Saunders and Houghton Partnership dissolved around 1891, when Saunders established an independent practice for a time. Saunders later became a partner in the firm of Saunders and Lawton, responsible for a profusion of buildings in the district from 1900 to 1910. After his association with Saunders, Houghton also had an independent practice and was responsible for the original designs of the **Cannery Building** (# 146) on the corner of Main Street and Second Avenue Extension and of the **Lippy Building** of 1902 (# 68).⁴⁵

John Parkinson, Guy Phinney & Daniel Jones, William Ballard

John Parkinson, a native of Scorton in the United Kingdom, was trained in that country in the building trades and design. After working for a time in California, he arrived in Seattle, right after the Fire of 1889. The architectural partnership of Parkinson and Evers was begun in 1889 and dissolved by June of 1890. One of the important projects of the firm was the **Phinney and Jones Building**, later the **Butler Block** (#121). The July 3, 1889 Post-Intelligencer article entitled “Live Times for Builders, A Five Story Block at Second and James Streets” announced: “Architects Parkinson and Evers are completing plans for a big brick building to be built by Mr. Guy C. Phinney and Mr. Daniel C. Jones on the northwest corner of Second and James Streets. The plans show that it will be a handsome structure and an ornament to the city.” Guy Phinney, a Seattle businessman, involved in banking, insurance and real estate, was the primary developer of the property. His partner in the venture, who held a minority interest, was Daniel Jones, described by Parkinson in later memoirs, as “a typical frontiersman,” who apparently carried a gun in both hip pockets and whose every other word was an imprecation.⁴⁶

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On April 30, 1890, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer also announced the impending construction of the **Seattle National Bank Building** (# 113), now more commonly known as the **Interurban Building**: “The exterior of the building will be Romanesque in style and nothing but pressed brick, stone and terra cotta will be used. The corner will be rounded and the whole building will present as fine an appearance as any other building in the Northwest.”⁴⁷ William Rankin Ballard (1847-1929) was a prominent Seattle business leader, involved in early investments in street railways, banks and real estate in Seattle. In 1883, he had also founded the new town of Ballard (now a “neighborhood” of Seattle proper). After a competition for the project, he commissioned the building for the newly formed Seattle National Bank. Ballard and the Seattle National Bank investors wanted the building to be the finest business block in Seattle. While the architectural firm of Parkinson and Evers may have been involved in the early stages of the project, by 1890, the firm had dissolved. John Parkinson is given main credit for the design of the building and his name is also inscribed on it.⁴⁸

Parkinson was a young, fairly inexperienced architect at this point of his career. The Seattle National Bank project proved John Parkinson’s skill as a designer, and in particular the care with which he translated the requirements of Ordinance No. 1147 into building form: the horizontal divisions above the second floor and above the fifth floor actually correspond to changes in the thickness of the walls, as required by the ordinance. After designing the Seattle National Bank, Parkinson continued to work in Seattle for a few more years. With the economic panic of 1893, many architects and well as business people had financial difficulties. Parkinson moved back to California, to the Los Angeles area and founded the very successful Parkinson and Associates, responsible for many Los Angeles landmarks.⁴⁹

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Comstock and Troetsche, Judge Burke, Watson Squire, Norval Latimer

While Parkinson established roots in Seattle, but eventually returned to California, the architectural firm of Comstock and Troetsche was a California firm, known for its work in San Diego, where the practice thrived in the mid-1880s.⁵⁰ As a result of an acquaintanceship with Judge Thomas Burke, partners Nelson Comstock and Carl Troetsche opened a Seattle office in 1889. They contributed to the rebuilding of Seattle after the Fire of 1889, although their partnership dissolved in 1890.

Comstock and Troetsche designed the **Squire Latimer Building**, now “**Grand Central on the Park**,” in 1889-1890 (#73). The southern half of the building was constructed on the site of Watson Squire’s Opera House, which opened in 1879 as Seattle’s first real theater and which was destroyed by the Great Fire of 1889. The building was commissioned by Watson Squire, a former territorial governor and senator and Norval Latimer, an important early Seattle businessman, who was involved with the Dexter Horton Bank.⁵¹ Comstock and Troetsche also designed the **J. H. Marshall Block**, now commonly known as the J & M Café (# 36).⁵² A few architects, responsible for buildings in post-fire Seattle had been practicing architecture in Seattle for several years before the Great Fire, but then did not remain in Seattle for a long time after. This is the case of architect Hermann Steinmann.

Herman Steinmann

Herman Steinmann practiced architecture in Seattle before the Fire of 1889. The only extant post-fire building by Steinmann is the Delmar Building, originally built for two joint owners, Terry and Kittinger. In its early days, it was known as the **Terry-Kittinger Block** (# 70) and remains one of the most distinctive early buildings in

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Pioneer Square. Herman Steinmann was born in 1860 and practiced architecture in St. Louis, Missouri from 1883 to 1887, before arriving in Seattle in 1887. He designed several buildings before the Great Fire of 1889, including a Squire Building in 1888, which was destroyed. He also designed a brewery building in Vancouver B.C. in 1890. He later worked in New York City, where he designed breweries. Sadly, he also committed suicide there in 1905.⁵³

Architect W. E. Boone and Lumber Magnate, Cyrus Walker

W.E. Boone, born in Pennsylvania in 1830, also practiced architecture in pre-fire Seattle, but remained in Seattle for the rest of his long life. He was described in his 1921 obituary in the Post-Intelligencer as a direct descendant of Daniel Boone. He began his career in railroad construction in Chicago, and later was involved in building construction in Minneapolis and the Bay Area. He first became known as an architect in Oakland and other East Bay towns. He arrived in Seattle around 1882, when he was in his fifties and had a known practice before Seattle's Great Fire, during which he produced the **Yesler-Leary Building**. After the fire, he continued to practice architecture until 1905. During this time, he formed two successful partnerships, Boone and Willcox and Boone and Corner.⁵⁴

W. E. Boone designed the Sanderson Block in 1889, right after the fire (# 90).⁵⁵ Now known as the building that houses the **Merchant's Café**, its exterior is a very pared down version of the Victorian style, combined with elements from the Richardsonian Romanesque/ Chicago School styles. Boone's other well-known and extant work from this period is the **Globe Building**, formerly the **Marshall-Walker Block** (# 74). The two

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portions of the building were jointly developed by Ezekiel L. Marshall and Cyrus Walker, who separated their respective portions with a brick wall. Cyrus Walker was a successful Puget Sound lumberman and the head of the Puget Mill Company in Port Ludlow and also developed several other properties in the district.⁵⁶ Somewhat later, he appears to have developed a “**Walker Building**”(# 93), which now houses Al & Bob’s Saveway and was designed by Boone and Willcox (1891-92).⁵⁷ In 1905, he was responsible for a second “**Walker Building**,” now the **Seattle Quilt Building**, designed by Boone and Corner (# 77).⁵⁸

Building in the Post-Fire Chinese Quarter and the Boone Connection

William E. Boone had also designed a pre-fire building for the Wa Chong Company, run by Chin Chun Hock. The building was destroyed during the fire. It seems likely that Boone designed a second building, located at Second Avenue and Washington Street for the Quon Tuck Company, owned by Chin Gee Hee, a former associate of Chin Chun Hock in the Wa Chong Company. The Quon Tuck Company, like the Wa Chong Company, was a retail and import business, which also functioned as a labor contractor. The building is still extant and located at 400 Second Avenue Extension (#163). It is the last obvious vestige of the original Chinese quarter, centered at Washington Street and Second Avenue. While this and other buildings remained for some time, the actual Chinese community left the area, during the next decade, relocating to the present Seattle Chinatown National Historic District.

Early Hotel Buildings

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Contrasting with the more ambitious buildings by William Boone, Elmer Fisher, Saunders and Houghton, John Parkinson and Hermann Steinmann, were a series of slightly more modest buildings of the early post-fire period. These buildings housed basic hotels and later became associated with the rough and tumble life created by the Klondike Gold Rush in 1897. Following is a description of some of these buildings.

The “Cadillac Hotel”

The former Wittler Block, now more well-known as the **Cadillac Hotel**, was designed by Hetherington, Clements and Company (# 135). It was built on Jackson Street, when new brick buildings would have been a rarity on that street. This building appears to have consistently served working people in the area and had few pretensions. When the building opened, early main floor businesses included a bar, a drugstore, cheap restaurants and the main tenant on the upper floors was the 56 to 59 room Derig Hotel. By the time of the Klondike Gold Rush, the building housed prospectors, loggers, shipyard and railway workers.⁵⁹

First Avenue Hotels

Early on, in addition to the Maud Building, the New England Hotel and the J. H Marshall Building / J & M, several other buildings, containing hotels, were developed soon after the fire. These include the St. Charles Hotel, located off of First Avenue, on Washington Street (# 13) and along First Avenue itself, the Matilda Winehill Block, now the Bread of Life Mission, the Skagit Hotel Building, now the home of the Central Tavern, the Hotaling Block at 209 First Avenue South and the Parker Building at 211 First Avenue South and 213 First Avenue South (# 42, #37, # 38, # 39, # 40).

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The Slow-Down in the First Building Boom After the Fire

Toward the end of 1890 and in 1891, there was a slow-down in building and business activity, which presaged the Panic of 1893. This is reflected in the small number of new buildings completed after 1890. This period also saw a shake-up in the Seattle architectural community, when, for instance, Elmer Fisher stopped practicing architecture and the Saunders and Houghton partnership was dissolved. Another group of architects, successors to established architects or new arrivals from the northeast of the United States, began to have an impact. The following patrons and architects were responsible for the handful of well-designed buildings during this short period before the Panic of 1893.⁶⁰

The Lowman and Hanford Printing Company and Emil DeNeuf

The slow-down years of this first boom were marked by the fire in 1892 at the Schwabacher Building, which was then remodeled by Emil DeNeuf and the completion (around 1892 or 1893, depending on the source) of DeNeuf's **Lowman and Hanford Building** (# 59). That building was commissioned by James Lowman and Clarence Hanford, both civic and business leaders in early Seattle, with important ties to Seattle's earliest Pioneer settlers. The building was built for the Lowman and Hanford Stationery and Printing Company, which had operated in the area since 1885.⁶¹

The Union Trust Company Building – Skillings and Corner

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The **Union Trust Company Building** was designed by architects Skillings and Corner as a warehouse building (# 107). On completion, it housed a series of wholesale businesses, including Roy & Company, H N. Richmond and Company and John B. Agen. The building was designed to carry heavier loads – 250 pounds per square foot – and the walls and piers were of “extra size.” Warren Porter Skillings was an 1880 graduate of Bowdoin College and had worked in “several leading” architectural offices in Boston before coming to Seattle after the Great Fire of 1889. James Corner was a recent arrival from Boston. The use of light brick in the building’s façade was considered something of a rarity at the time of the building’s construction, according to contemporary accounts. Emil DeNeuf also used light brick for the First Avenue Schwabacher Building façade and the Lowman and Hanford Building.⁶²

Another building from this time, the **Collins Building**, designed by Arthur Bishop Chamberlin, who worked as an illustrator for John Parkinson, is remarkable for its brick detailing (# 154). It also shows the influence of H. H. Richardson and the architectural firm of Burnham and Root.⁶³

While, during this period, building design gradually gained in sophistication, Seattle, as a city, was also expanding outside of the district.

The Downtown District and the Expanded City - Trolley and Railway Connections

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To the end of the 1880s, the history of the district reflects the history of all of Seattle. By 1891, however, Seattle would expand considerably outside of its historic downtown area. It is important to place the district within the context of Seattle's growth during this period.

The early 1890s saw Seattle's land area double to about 30 square miles and its population grow markedly, thanks to the early emphasis on public rapid transit. To the north, Seattle annexed several areas: "Brooklyn," now the University District, Ravenna, Green Lake, Fremont, Wallingford and Magnolia. While there had been electric streetcars in Seattle before the Great Fire, new streetcar lines, both cable and electric traction lines, were developed with greater or lesser success by such enterprising citizens as F. H. Osgood, L. H. Griffith and David Denny. The streetcar lines knit the district to the other parts of Seattle, allowing further expansion, as well as easier access to nearby cities, such as Everett and Tacoma. Also to the north, in 1899, after his death, the widow of Guy Phinney, a developer of the Butler Block, would donate their 200 acre estate, Woodland Park, actually a park and menagerie, to the City of Seattle. By 1902, new interurban railroad lines would also link Seattle and specifically Seattle's downtown to Georgetown and to Renton, located to the south. These southern areas would not be actually annexed for more than a decade, with Georgetown holding out until 1910.

During the early 1900s, the Puget Sound Traction Light and Power Company, a subsidiary of Stone and Webster, the national utility company, which also controlled local utilities in Seattle and greater King County, bought up most of Seattle's street railways and interurban lines. The consolidation of the lines, which were previously owned by a variety of independent owners, would make these transportation systems more seamless. It

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also tied the district more closely with other parts of Seattle. Stone and Webster's power over local utilities and the streetcar lines, however, would eventually cause a revolt by advocates of public ownership of these services and the establishment of the public City Light in 1902. By 1918, Seattle residents also voted to purchase the city's rail lines at an inflated price, which eventually bankrupted it and contributed to the dismantling of the entire trolley system.⁶⁴ Despite these frictions and the ultimate demise of the trolley system, its initial consolidation played an important role in further connecting the district to other parts of Seattle.

New railroad lines also tied Seattle and the district to an even wider sphere, to the rest of the nation. Seattle had long hoped to be a major railway terminus, but appeared to have lost that honor in the early 1870s. Not long before the Panic of 1893, Seattle would become an important transcontinental railroad terminus with the arrival of James J. Hill's Northern Pacific Railway in 1893.⁶⁵ The city's prosperity and economic depressions were increasingly tied to forces outside of Seattle and to national trends. The effects of the Panic of 1893 would show how much Seattle was connected economically to the rest of the nation.

The Panic of 1893

On May 5, 1893, the New York Stock market experienced an economic panic and decline, signaled by the failure of the National Cordage Company. Within a year, the Seattle economy was in serious decline with eleven local banks out of business. Among those surviving, but with some difficulty, were the Dexter Horton Bank, the First National Bank and the Seattle National Bank, which saw their deposits shrink dramatically. Loans were called in by desperate investors and the population influx ceased. Jacob Furth, at this time, President of the Seattle

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National Bank, forestalled further disaster, by convincing the Board of Directors of his bank not to call in all their loans: “If you do this you will create a financial situation that we can perhaps weather, but will bring other institutions crashing down around us. What you propose may be good banking, but it is not human.” Not long after, during a trip to New York, Furth secured enough backing to save his bank and other rival banks.⁶⁶

Despite Furth’s efforts, middle and upper class investors, nevertheless, were seriously hit. The Panic of 1893 sealed the fate of many business enterprises, which had thrived in better times. Leigh S. J. Hunt, the owner of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, lost the paper. William Elder Bailey, who had provided capital for many local ventures in real estate, railroads and newspapers in the commercial district right after the Great Fire, had already been experiencing obvious financial difficulties in 1892. With the Panic of 1893, he left Seattle. He had also been an investor, along with Thomas Burke and Thomas Ewing, in the lavish Rainier Hotel, designed by Charles Saunders of Saunders and Houghton and completed in 1890 (between Marion and Columbia Streets, between 5th and 6th Avenues). Considered by many one of Seattle’s best hotels, it closed its doors.⁶⁷

In July 1893, architect Edwin Houghton explained that buildings that were under construction would be finished, but that new building would have to wait for an upturn in the economy. In fact, building in the downtown remained at a virtual standstill for the next five years. A hotel designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for Yesler Way and Fifth Avenue was described in the January 10, 1894 Seattle Post-Intelligencer, but was never built.

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During the financial crisis, a number of architects left Seattle for good, some for greener pastures in California. John Parkinson, who had resigned as City of Seattle schools architect and was unsuccessful in securing commissions by competition during the 1893 Depression, left for Los Angeles. There, he started a well-respected and thriving office, responsible for many local landmarks. Emil DeNeuf closed his office in 1894 and moved to Guatemala, where he practiced architecture until 1900 and then returned to Seattle. Warren Skillings, after a stint in Alaska, moved to Eureka and then to San Jose, California, where he worked as an architect until 1930.⁶⁸

The Klondike Gold Rush

True to Seattle's long history of booms and busts, another boom arrived with the Klondike Gold Rush in 1897. Seattle's reputation as the gateway to Alaska and the Yukon was first forged by Erastus Brainerd, the Secretary of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce in 1897 and former editor of the Press-Times (which had been reinvigorated after the Fire of 1889, thanks to the backing of William Elder Bailey). Seattle newspapers and the Seattle Chamber of Commerce continued to promote the city as a point of departure for the Klondike Gold Rush and a place where all the necessary provisions could be obtained.⁶⁹

Prospectors in the Klondike were typically required to bring provisions to last at least one year. Such businesses as the well-established Schwabacher Brothers, Cooper and Levy Outfitters, the Seattle Woolen Mill, and Lilly, Bogardus and Company provided these wares and thrived. The commercial district, the former "burnt district," was once again transformed: "Up First Avenue and down Second Avenue is one train of fanciful, kaleidoscopic pictures from real life. The stores are ablaze with Klondike goods; men pass by robed in queer

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garments; teams of trained dogs, trotting about with sleds, men with packs on their backs, and a thousand and one things which are of use for the Klondike trade.”⁷⁰ In fact, Seattle businesses gained more from the Klondike Gold Rush than most of the prospectors and miners. Sometimes, unscrupulous purchasing agents took advantage of naïve consumers.

Upscale hotels, such as the Hotel Seattle, the Butler Hotel and the Northern Hotel provided elegant accommodations. Particularly along First Avenue South, hotels in buildings erected in the first building boom, such as the New England Hotel, the Skagit Hotel Building, the former Hotaling Block at 209 First Avenue South, the former Parker Building at 211 First Avenue South and 213 First Avenue South, provided less well-appointed accommodations. Prostitution, gambling and drinking often occurred in these hotels. In the lower level of the Merchant’s Café, its owner F. X. Schreiner, operated a “Sunday bank,” where miners with names like “Whisky Sam” and “Swedish Crown Prince” could exchange gold dust for cash. Morphine and opium consumption, robberies and assaults, were also not uncommon.⁷¹

By the end of 1897, Seattle had earned an unofficial title as the “greatest petty larceny town on the Coast.”⁷² Vice and virtue would continue to fight for the soul of the city. Relief organizations were a necessary part of the district, since many Klondike miners returned from their adventures discouraged and poor. The Olive Branch Mission, run by African Americans Lloyd and Emma Ray and located in the district, was one of the charitable organizations that ministered to the former Klondike miners and to the down and out.

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Notwithstanding hardship cases, by this time Seattle had become the financial center of the Pacific Northwest. Just south of the present Pioneer Square-Skid Road National Historic District, the Moran Brothers Company, which was started as a machine shop in 1882, became a major supplier of steamships for passage to the Klondike. As a result, the company became one of the largest shipbuilders in the United States. This was only one of many examples of Seattle's economic recovery.⁷³

In tandem with this economic recovery, came further growth, urban development and increased national recognition for both Seattle and the district.

Further Expansion – General Trends 1900-1910

John C. Olmsted – The Alaska Yukon Exposition and Pioneer Place

Clearly, The Klondike Gold Rush and Seattle's relation with Alaska were an important factor in Seattle's economic upswing. The Gold Rush and the railroads were responsible for explosive growth, not only in the district, but also throughout Seattle. While building boomed within the city, the Seattle land area continued to expand. In 1907, Seattle annexed six towns, including Ballard, West Seattle and most of southeast Seattle. Georgetown was annexed in 1910. The University of Washington was already located at its present site, but was not yet developed into its present campus.⁷⁴

The decade continued to be marked by City Engineer R. H. Thomson's regrading zeal, particularly in what became the Denny Regrade and present day downtown. The decade was also marked by the important work of

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The Olmsted Brothers firm in Seattle. Headed by John C. Olmsted and Frederick Olmsted, Jr., the firm continued the traditions Frederick Law Olmsted. John Olmsted first arrived in Seattle in 1903 and was responsible for a system of parks and boulevards, collectively known as the Emerald Necklace. This new system of parks would have a far reaching effect on the entire urban experience of Seattle, but it was the design of the fairgrounds for the Alaska Yukon Exposition of 1909, which left a permanent imprint on the new campus of the University of Washington, as well as an important legacy in Pioneer Square.

Originally scheduled to mark the tenth anniversary of the Klondike Gold Rush, the Alaska Yukon Exposition's opening was delayed because of the national recession of 1907.⁷⁵ The exposition reflected Seattle's new role as the gateway to the Yukon and Alaska, as well as its position as a city of potential national and even international importance. As part of the celebration, the area near Pioneer Place was spruced up and Pioneer Place itself was transformed. Not only was a Chief Seattle fountain by sculptor James Wehn added to the public square in 1909, but to greet visitors, an elegant pergola, complete with an underground "comfort station," was designed by architect Julian Everett and built between 1909 and early 1910.⁷⁶ Thanks to these added elements, Pioneer Place remains the most memorable and important historic public square in the district and perhaps in all of Seattle (# 62-65).

Buildings Related to the Klondike Gold Rush

The significance of the Klondike Gold Rush and Seattle's role as the gateway to Alaska is also symbolized by two buildings in the district.

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The **Alaska Building** (# 151) was completed in 1904. It was designed by Eames and Young, a St. Louis architecture firm with the local architectural firm of Saunders and Lawton, as supervising architects. In its day, it was the first steel frame building of any height in the Northwest and Seattle's first skyscraper. It remained Seattle's tallest building for ten years after it was built. The top penthouse level housed the Alaskan Club, founded to promote business ventures between Alaska and the Pacific Northwest and as a social club. The Alaskan Club reading room featured a collection of Alaska newspapers and mineral exhibits. Its leaders also promoted the Alaska Yukon Exposition of 1909.⁷⁷

About four years later, the Arctic Club, formed as a result of the merger of the Alaskan Club and the Arctic Brotherhood, would erect a building for itself at Third Avenue and Jefferson Street, now the **Morrison Hotel** (#168). The building was designed by the local firm Schack and Huntington and completed in 1908. In 1909, Alaska Yukon Magazine reported that the new Arctic Club was "one of the most important business structures in the city." The Arctic Club, which actually took up the second floor of the structure, was founded both as a social club for the veterans of the Klondike Gold Rush and to promote business ventures between Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. Its promotional literature stressed its prime function as a social club, in contrast to the earlier Alaska Club, which was seen as more business oriented. The building also housed the Seward Hotel.⁷⁸

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While the Alaska Building and the Morrison Hotel had a special relation to the Klondike Gold Rush, the period from 1900 to 1910 produced a series of buildings which represent wider trends in the urban and architectural development of the district.

Major Architects, Clients and Buildings and Trends - Explosive Growth, 1900-1910

The period 1900-1910 ushered in a wave of building, marked by increased architectural sophistication. Architects who came to Seattle during this era often had a more worldly background and were formally trained in architecture. As a result, these architects injected a new flavor into the commercial district.

In particular, during the early 1900s, a number of buildings along First Avenue South expanded the original commercial center and heart of Seattle, which had previously been centered closer to Pioneer Place. Architects contributing to this expansion were Max Umbrecht, Charles Bebb and Louis Mendel. The architectural firm of Boone and Corner would contribute several notable buildings during the first half of the decade. Bebb and Mendel, and particularly Saunders and Lawton, were some of the main architectural firms, who contributed to the expansion of the district throughout the decade.

L. C. Smith and Max Umbrecht

L. C. Smith, later responsible with his son, for the construction of the Smith Tower, commissioned the Smith Building, situated, along with the Squire (Squires) and the Crown Buildings, along First Avenue South. These buildings formed part of an extension of the original “heart of Seattle,” located closer to Pioneer Place. The

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building, along with many of the buildings from this period, was built as a warehouse with a storefront at its ground level. The Smith Building was designed by Max Umbrecht and completed in 1900. This is one of the first Seattle projects by Umbrecht, who later became a well-known Seattle architect. He had previously practiced architecture in Syracuse, New York and New York City and had come to Seattle at the Smith family's request.⁷⁹

Charles Bebb, Bebb and Mendel – a New Center of Downtown

The early years of architect Charles Bebb's career in Seattle contributed to the second building wave in the commercial district. Bebb, later one of Seattle's pre-eminent architects, was born in England in 1856 and educated in London. He attended a preparatory school in Switzerland before attending the University of Lausanne. He also studied engineering at the School of Mines in London. In 1890, as an employee of Adler and Sullivan, he was sent to Seattle to supervise the building of the Seattle Opera House. The project was never built and later in 1890, Bebb went back to Chicago; however, he returned to Seattle in September 1893 and became a designer for the local Denny Clay Company. By 1898, he had established an independent architectural practice and by 1901, formed a partnership with Louis Leonard Mendel, originally a native of Mayen, Germany.

A relatively early project by Bebb was a building commissioned by Samuel E. Squires, who had become rich during the Klondike Gold Rush. More commonly known as the **Squire Building** (the s was somehow dropped), the building dates from 1900 (# 46). The building adjoins the Smith Building. To the north is the Crown Hotel, which has similar detailing and may have also been designed by Bebb.

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Not long after this building was completed, Bebb formed a partnership with Louis Mendel. Louis Mendel had begun his architectural career in the offices of Lehman and Schmidt and with the Schweinfurth Brothers in Cleveland. He may also have worked for Adler and Sullivan. Across the street from Max Umbrecht's Smith Building, Bebb and Mendel designed the **Schwabacher Hardware Company Building**, completed in 1905 (# 48). The Schwabacher Hardware Company was another business venture of the Schwabachers, who had thrived during the Klondike Gold Rush, but also had a history in the area that goes back to 1869. Built as a warehouse, the building is distinguished by its Sullivanesque terra cotta ornament and its repeated recessed bays set between brick piers.

Around the same time, Bebb and Mendel were also responsible for the **Corona Building** (1903), adjacent to the Alaska Building and located between Cherry and James Streets, on Second Avenue (# 152). The Corona Building is noted for its striking Sullivanesque terra cotta ornament. Both the Corona and Alaska Buildings marked a northern expansion of the commercial district and new center for downtown. Not far from these buildings, Bebb and Mendel also designed the Beaux Arts style **Frye Hotel**, (now the Frye Apartments - #171), at Yesler and Third Avenue and completed in 1908.⁸⁰

Boone and Corner

The architectural partnership of Boone and Corner was formed in 1900 and lasted until 1905, the end of Boone's long career, which had started before the Great Fire.⁸¹ They designed the **Chapin Building** for Henry Chapin, an early investor in Seattle real estate and developer of retail and other commercial properties. Now more

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commonly known as the **Fuller Building** (# 136) and part of the Court in the Square, the building has recessed bays, framed by a simple brick roll molding, a device that Boone and Corner also used on the Walker Building, now known as the Seattle Quilt Building and located on First Avenue South, between Main and Jackson Streets. That building was commissioned by Cyrus Walker, the very successful Puget Sound lumberman, also a partner in the Marshall-Walker Building (now called the Globe Building), designed by Boone earlier in his career. Another well-designed warehouse by Boone and Corner and representative of the second building wave and the expansion of the district, is the U. S. Rubber Building (1902) at Third Avenue South and Main Street (# 148).⁸²

Saunders and Lawton

The decade from 1900 to 1910 produced a large number of buildings, many of them warehouse buildings. Characteristically, they usually had a strong base, shaft and capital arrangement. Furthermore, their facades frequently were composed of recessed bays, set between multi-story brick piers. This was often true of the buildings of the architectural firm of Saunders and Lawton, who, of all the known architects of this period in the district, appear to have been the most prolific. The Saunders and Lawton partnership was formed in 1898 by Charles Saunders and his former draftsman, George Lawton.⁸³ Saunders' career in Seattle goes back to 1889, right after the Great Fire, when he appeared in Seattle, probably as a result of an association with William Bailey.

Notwithstanding varying ornamental characteristics, buildings by Saunders and Lawton represent the recessed bay prototype, influenced by the Chicago School of architecture. They include the Norton Building of 1904 (# 187), the former **Stewart and Holmes Building**, later called the **McKesson and Robbins Building**,⁸⁴

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which now houses F. X. McRory's Restaurant at Occidental Way South and King Street (# 112), the **Westland Building** (1907) at First Avenue South and King Street (# 80), and the Polson Building (1910) at Western Avenue and Columbia Street (# 1). In addition, the exterior composition of the early **Mottman Building** of 1900 and the **Goldsmith Building** of 1907 relied on repeated bays, which were not recessed, as well as trabeated openings (# 147, # 137).

During this period, the district gained a number of showpiece buildings and also expanded, to the east and to the west. The eastern expansion, in particular, created several unique areas, some with distinctive cultural backgrounds and architecture.

The Japanese presence – The example of the M. Furuya Company

By the early 1900s, a Japanese quarter, Nihonmachi, (meaning "Japanese town"), had emerged along Main Street from Second Avenue eastward, as well as on Washington, Jackson, King and Weller Streets from Fifth Avenue eastward. In 1908, S. K. Kanada, a representative of the Japanese Government explained in an article in Washington Magazine: "If you walk up Main Street from Second Avenue South, you will find where the Japanese town is."⁸⁵

An important built vestige of the early Nihonmachi, located on Main Street at 200-220 Second Avenue South, is the Furuya Building (# 140). The building was commissioned by Masahiro Furuya, a very influential business leader and for a time, considered the pre-eminent Japanese businessman in the Pacific Northwest. The M.

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Furuya Company began as a retail store that sold groceries and Japanese goods, including artwork and eventually branched into real estate, construction, printing and banking. In 1907, Masahiro Furuya would create the Japanese Commercial Bank and become its president. The bank was located in the southwest corner of the ground floor of the Furuya Building. After a series of mergers and the Stock Market Crash of 1929, however, the Pacific Commercial Bank, as it was called by then, went bankrupt in 1932.

Nevertheless, the building is a significant reminder of the Japanese presence and contributions to the district. The Furuya Building itself was built in two stages: In 1900, the basement and two floors were constructed and housed the main office and retail outlet of the M. Furuya Company. In 1904, the building gained three floors, with the upper floors housing a Japanese Hall and a variety of businesses.⁸⁶

Eastern Edge of the District

To the north and east of the Furuya Building, at the northeastern edge of the district, a new area, which began to be associated with city government, also began to develop in the late 1900s and early 1910s. Significant buildings are the **Prefontaine Building** of 1909 and the Beaux Arts style **400 Yesler Way**, which served as the City Hall until 1952 (# 194, # 204). The development of this area was part of the impetus to keep the center of Seattle's downtown from moving farther north. Businessmen, such as Lyman C. Smith, before he decided to build the Smith Tower, would extract a promise from city government that its buildings would remain in the area.⁸⁷

The Reclamation of the Tideflats – Railroad Avenue

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On the western side of the district, expansion would also occur, thanks to the reclamation of the tideflats. A result of the regrading of Seattle's topography, orchestrated by City Engineer Reginald Thomson, a home was sought for the large amount of left-over dirt. Most of it was used to reclaim the tideflats along Elliott Bay, south of the commercial district and from Beacon Hill to West Seattle. Seattle's tideflats along Elliott Bay, south of Washington Street, for instance, were filled in with some of the dirt from the South Canal Project (1895-1904), the Great Northern Tunnel Excavation (1903-04) and the Jackson Hill and Dearborn Regrades (1907-1909).

Reclamation of state owned tideflats by "any person or company" was first sanctioned by Washington State law in 1893, but no reclamation really took place until 1895. Because of disputes over the disposition of the wharf structures and platting of the new streets along Railroad Avenue, as well as finances, reclamation and building construction did not really start to take off until the early 1900s. As the tideflats along Elliott Bay were gradually reclaimed, Railroad Avenue, (now Alaskan Way), remained, particularly in the 1900s and 1910s, a dangerous hodge-podge of wood-planked streets, supporting many railroad lines and surface traffic. Although congested and makeshift, it would also emerge as a vital manufacturing and industrial area.

While a few early masonry buildings appear to have already been built along Railroad Avenue not long after the Great Fire, the new and solid masonry buildings usually replaced shed buildings set on pile-supported wharf structures. Typical building examples include: a 1903-04 building at Washington Street for the Pacific Coast Company, later known as the Pacific Railroad Company (now occupied by the Lutheran Compass Center). The Pacific Coast Company also built a pier on the waterfront at the former site of Yesler's Wharf, (the location of the

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current Waterfront Park). Two other examples are the current Daily Journal of Commerce Building, whose ground floor is supposed to have been completed in 1898 and upper floors in 1914 and the more utilitarian Polson Building of 1910.⁸⁸

It took time to transform Railroad Avenue. Its wood planking was only completely converted to paved thoroughfare by 1936. At this time, its protective seawall was also completed and it was renamed Alaskan Way. This avenue was long associated with heavy railroad traffic, but the construction within the district of King Street Station and of an associated tunnel would mitigate some of the congestion.⁸⁹

The Railroads – King Street Station and Union Station

Built to serve James J. Hill's Great Northern and Northern Pacific Railroads, **King Street Station** (# 179) was constructed between 1904 and 1906 on reclaimed tidflats at Third Avenue between Jackson and King Street. The first of two train stations erected within the district, but at the edge of Seattle's original commercial district, it was designed by the architectural firm of Reed and Stem. It replaced a run-down wooden train depot located on Railroad Avenue at the foot of Columbia Street. The new depot site was chosen because it was not directly visible from the water, but still allowed a reasonably easy connection to cargo ships berthed on the waterfront.⁹⁰

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Before the completion of King Street Station, Engineer Thomson prevailed upon James J. Hill to build a tunnel. This ran from the southern portal, close to King Street Station, at Fourth Avenue South and South Washington Street to a northern portal at Elliott Avenue between Stewart and Virginia Streets. The tunnel was complete by the end of 1905, but was not used until the completion of King Street Station in May of 1906. It ensured a direct connection to the waterfront, and helped free Railroad Avenue from excessive congestion.⁹¹

The second station, **Union Station** (# 198) was constructed close by, between 1910 and 1911, also on reclaimed tideflats, for Edward Henry Harriman's Oregon-Washington Railway, a subsidiary of his Union Pacific. Designed by D. J. Patterson, Union Station's Beaux Arts detailing and interior barrel vaulting reflected a new elegance. It was regarded as the "handsomest on Harriman's lines." By the completion of Union Station, Hill and Harriman agreed to collaborate and share tracks between Seattle and Portland. Both buildings mark Seattle's victory in the competition to become the major railroad terminus over Tacoma, Port Townsend and Mukilteo.⁹²

The proximity of the two showpiece railway stations and of the railroad tracks made the commercial district even more desirable for future development during the 1900-1910 period. It encouraged the building of manufacturing and industrial warehouse buildings, which needed easy access to the railroads. For instance, the Chapin and Crane Buildings, (now part of the Court in the Square), were intentionally built near a spur of the Great Northern Railroad line. The proximity of railroad lines also hastened similar development of previously underused areas along First Avenue South, south of King Street.⁹³

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First Avenue S., south of King Street, from the early 1900s to 1910

The early 1900s to 1910 also saw significant development of First Avenue South, south of King Street. It was also associated with the reclamation of the tideflats and the railroads' need for direct access to the harbor. By 1903, this portion of First Avenue was still planked and the adjacent tidelands were still being filled, but by 1904, a mile and a quarter of First Avenue south of King Street was a paved boulevard. The new buildings that were constructed on the fill were primarily masonry warehouses, often designed or built by well-known Seattle architects or contractors.

Among the new warehouses was the Seattle Plumbing Company Building, now commonly known as the "Johnson's Plumbing Building," at the corner of Occidental South and Railroad Avenue (# 89). It originally housed two tenants, a general hardware supplier and a plumbing supplier. George Hoffman's warehouse at 542 First Avenue S. was completed in the same year (# 84). It operated as a carriage factory and blacksmith shop and then housed an auto parts and bodies manufacturing company. A year later in 1904, contractor David Dow built an adjacent warehouse to the south for the Carstens' Packing Company (# 85). The upper floors were used for cold storage and the basement for meat packing.

A few years later, by 1908, A. Warren Gould, then in partnership with Edward Champney, designed a "substantial wholesale building" for the Fobes Electrical Supply Company, at 558 First Avenue South (# 86). The company had been in existence since 1895. Fobes had also commissioned Gould to design the American Savings Bank and Trust Building, for which the Fobes Electrical Company supplied electricity. In 1909, the Bornstein and

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Sons Warehouse, possibly designed by the architectural firm of Josenhans and Allen, was built next door at 562 First Avenue South (# 87). Bornstein's Golden Bazaar, one of Seattle's first department stores, founded around 1885, had been destroyed in the Great Fire of 1889 and rebuilt after the fire. By 1909, this building housed his wholesale department store supply business, which operated throughout the Northwest and Alaska. In 1910, the adjacent Provident Building, designed by Saunders and Lawton, was completed at 568 First Avenue South (# 88).

The end of this period also saw the completion of the mammoth Seattle Security Company warehouse (# 82), now the **Florentine Apartments** at 508-34 First Avenue South, in 1909. The warehouse was sited next to the freight yards and for a time, conveniently next to a rail spur. In 1910, the tiny **Kaufman Warehouse** (at 538 First Ave S) was built on the location of the rail spur (# 83). Also in 1910, architect C. A. Breitung's **Triangle Hotel**, located at the corner of Railroad Avenue and First Avenue South (# 55), was completed for Seattle financier and real estate investor Victor Hugo Smith. President of the Peninsular Land and Building Company when the Triangle Hotel was built, Victor Hugo Smith played an important role in Seattle's real estate boom from 1889 to the height of the tidelands development in 1907.

1911 to 1926- The Search for a Downtown Center- Later Pioneer Square Buildings

While the district developed to the southeast, by the 1910s, the original commercial district was challenged by a series of major engineering schemes and projected or real urban plans.

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By 1911, one major phase of R. H. Thomson's scheme to flatten Denny Hill, north of the Pioneer Square area, was complete. The operation changed the topography of a major part of the city and created a new area that could be redesigned into a major downtown center. Seattle residents had voted in 1910 for the creation of a Municipal Plans Committee, which in turn hired Virgil Bogue, a civil engineer, to design this new center. The Bogue Plan would have moved the center of the business district to about Blanchard Street and 4th Avenue, north of Pioneer Square. The scheme is a typical "City Beautiful" plan, with boulevards radiating north and diagonally east and west from Blanchard and 4th Avenue. Drawings, published as part of the plan, also show a grouping of Beaux Arts buildings, including a train station and ferry terminal near South Lake Union. At the same time, other interests wanted to keep the center of the business district farther south, close to James Street and the string of well-designed buildings on Second Avenue. Finally, in 1912, voters rejected the Bogue Plan.⁹⁴

As part of the attempt to stem the northward tide, L. C. Smith built the Smith Tower, but only after gaining assurances that the City government would remain in the original commercial district. The **Smith Tower**, built from 1911 to 1914, is considered the crowning achievement of the decade (# 156). By 1911, the area where the Smith Tower was to be sited was close to Seattle's cosmopolitan center on Second Avenue, with many, new shining examples of Seattle's most sophisticated architecture, including Eames and Young's Alaska Building of 1904, Bebb and Mendel's Corona Building of 1903, and Arthur Bishop Chamberlin's Collins Building of 1893-94 (# 151, # 152, # 154).⁹⁵

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Another important project from this period was the first six floors of the **City County Building**, which were designed by A. Warren Gould and completed in 1916 (# 180 -The upper floors of the building, now the King County Courthouse, were built between 1930 and 1931. This will be discussed later.).⁹⁶

The Smith Tower and the City County Building temporarily consolidated the center of the commercial area during the 1910s, setting it slightly to the northeast of the original center near Pioneer Place, but still within the original district. Outside of these buildings, there was little construction, except along Railroad Avenue. Prior to and during World War I, there was increased industrialization in the vicinity of the waterfront. A handful of buildings were completed. These included two neighboring workingmen's hotels, both designed by Albert Wickersham, the **Travelers Hotel** of 1913 and the **Yesler Hotel** of 1914, now called the Pioneer Square Hotel (# 8, # 9). Farther south, the **O.K. Hotel** was completed around 1917 (# 16). Existing buildings along Railroad Avenue increasingly were used for industrial or war related uses. The former **Heffernan Engine Works Building** was completed in 1918 (# 10).⁹⁷ Farther south, the **Hambach Building** of 1913, on First Avenue South, was commissioned by Albert Hambach, a successful wholesale dealer in steam and plumbing supplies (# 150). He also owned the 1905 **Hambach Warehouse**, later the **Northwest Supply Company** building designed by Josenhans and Allan (212 Second Avenue/313 Second Avenue Extension) and the 1907 **Westland Building** (# 139, # 80).⁹⁸

During the same period, however, just north of the Pioneer Square area, the site of the recently leveled Denny's Knoll, (not to be confused with Denny Hill, still further north), and the former site of the Territorial University, was beginning to be developed. From 1907 to 1908, as part of the leveling of this area, 4th Avenue

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from about University Street to Yesler Way was regraded, also affecting the topography of the northern part of the Pioneer Square area. The former site of Denny's Knoll continued to belong to the University of Washington –(it still does)- whose regents wanted to raise money from its development. By 1907, it had been leased by the Metropolitan Building Company and from that time on, has been known as the Metropolitan Tract.⁹⁹ Between 1907 and 1924, the Metropolitan Tract was developed by a series of Seattle entrepreneurs.

As a result, by the 1920s, the new center of the business district, consisting of a series of well-designed buildings, named after major Seattle businessmen, such as H. C. Henry, C. H. Cobb and D. E. Skinner as well as the Olympic Hotel, were built on the Metropolitan Tract. By the 1920s, this was Seattle's new downtown center, south of Bogue's proposed Blanchard and 4th Avenue center, but north of the district.¹⁰⁰ While the early effects of the development of the tract merely affected the topography of the streets in the northern part of Pioneer Square area, by the 1920s, it caused the entire Pioneer Square area to be viewed as the southern part of downtown, rather than Seattle's main commercial center.

Until 1928 and the Second Avenue Extension, an important public works project, there was little construction in the original district during the 1920s. Only a handful of buildings were built: Albert Wickersham's 1923 two-story addition to the original eight story Seattle Hardware Company Building, also designed by Wickersham in 1904, was built along First Avenue South, south of Jackson Street (# 52); the Frye Garage was erected on 3rd Avenue South, off of Yesler Way, in 1926 (# 172). In the vicinity of the projected city government

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center are 420 4th Avenue, clad in pressed rug brick and cream-colored terra cotta, which dates from 1924 (# 199); and 400 4th Avenue, a Mission style parking garage, from 1927 (# 203).¹⁰¹

The Second Avenue Extension – 1928 to 1931

By the late 1920s, because of the shift of the downtown center to the vicinity of the Metropolitan Tract, direct access from this new center to what was now considered the “southern” part of the business district and its railroad stations was considered essential. In 1928-29, the Second Avenue Extension, a public works project, cut a huge swath from Yesler Way to past Jackson Street, near the train terminals, slicing into buildings in its path. Although destructive, the public works project was praised by the local press for removing a “traffic barrier of long standing.” Not only would it knit together the various parts of downtown, they claimed, but it would improve conditions for businesses located all along First and Second Avenues, particularly in the new downtown area.¹⁰² One early newspaper illustration depicted Second Avenue Extension, before it was built, as a major boulevard ending at Jackson Street in a central oval square, sort of a “rond point” with a central monument, and surrounded by a wide oval vehicular street. The same drawing even shows one building with a concave façade, mimicking the oval shape, while other buildings face the new oval center.¹⁰³

While the oval elements of the design were never built, the public works project not only created Second Avenue Extension, but also had an immediate physical impact on both the new downtown and on the Pioneer Square area, the former commercial center to the south. The City of Seattle condemned many properties from 2nd Avenue to 4th Avenue South and from Yesler Way to Jackson Street. The city also demolished and repaved

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streets along Yesler Way, South Washington St, South Main St, from First Avenue South and to at least 4th Avenue, and Jackson Street from First Avenue South almost to 5th Avenue. Period photos from 1928-1929 in the Seattle Municipal Archives show the streets of Pioneer Square under demolition or completely torn apart, even when many buildings seem to be intact. On the other hand, the Second Avenue Extension also had a far reaching effect on many of the district's buildings.

Several existing buildings were directly in the path of the Second Avenue Extension. Surprisingly, many of these buildings were not completely demolished, but somewhat radically remodeled, and often lost one or more of their facades. After remodeling, for instance, an early building might exhibit a façade from the 1900s, as well as a façade, dating anywhere from 1928 to 1931 and usually in the Moderne style. For example, at 318 2nd Avenue Extension, the former **Ace Hotel**, (now Union Gospel Mission), originally designed in 1904, has an eastern façade from the same year, which combines elements of Chicago School design with Beaux Arts ornamentation. On the western side of the building, where the Second Avenue Extension sliced through it, the western façade dates from 1930 and is Moderne (# 165).

Across Second Avenue Extension, the former **Hambach Warehouse** or Northwest Supply Building, now part of Masin's Furniture Store, has an eastern Moderne façade, as well as a western façade from 1905 (# 139). Even more emblematic of the far-reaching changes wrought by the Second Avenue Extension is the **Apex Building**, built on the triangular lot north of Hambach Warehouse/ Northwest Supply Building and completed in

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1928 (# 138). The triangular shape of the lot and the trapezoidal plan of the Apex Building were a direct result of the way the new avenue sliced directly through the original lot.¹⁰⁴

Moving north, the western elevation of the former **Monterey Hotel** is also the direct result of the Second Avenue Extension project and dates from ca. 1928-29 (# 162). The brick detailing, particularly the special pattern of dark and buff brickwork at the parapet level, reflects the 1920s. Moving north into what was, for a time, an important area within the district in the 1910 at Second Avenue and James Street, we find the Moderne **Hartford Building**, designed by John Graham, Senior and completed in 1929 (# 153).¹⁰⁵

Other buildings, sited in the vicinity of the area affected by the public works project, although not directly along Second Avenue Extension, reflect the Moderne style. Two Moderne designs stand out: the Graybar Building of 1930 at 416 Occidental Avenue South¹⁰⁶ and the 1929-30 Art Deco facade of 115 S Jackson Street (# 199, # 111). In the case of this building, the 1929-30 facade covers two older buildings, originally constructed in 1890.¹⁰⁷

Along Main Street and Second Avenue Extension, the former **Cascade Laundry**, commonly known as the Cannery Building and originally designed by E. W. Houghton in 1900, also has an angled eastern facade dating from the time of the Second Avenue Extension (# 146). The actual ornamentation on this facade, however, is more Jacobethan Revival, than Moderne. To the west of this building, on Second Avenue, is the eclectic Fire Station No. 10, which dates from 1928. It was rebuilt in its present location to replace the previous station, which was destroyed as a result of the Extension project.¹⁰⁸

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Another interesting result of the public works project is that the area over the Northern Pacific railroad tracks, located along 4th Avenue South from Washington to Jackson Street, was completely rebuilt. City Engineer Barkhuff, writing in 1928, explained that the Second Avenue Extension, as designed, interfered with “the diagonal crossing of the railroad tracks on the west side of Fourth Avenue South,” which appears to be a spur than ran west and south between buildings on Jackson and King Streets.¹⁰⁹ Rather than causing a change in the design of Second Avenue Extension, this resulted in the rebuilding of the structure supporting the street around the tunnel tracks. This was a major engineering endeavor all by itself and changed the nature of 4th Avenue South and the edge of the district. Of note are openings at street grade above the tunnel on 4th Avenue South, surrounded by characteristic concrete or metal railings (# 195 to # 197). Although the work on this part of the Extension project was supposed to be mainly complete in August of 1929, serious problems relating to a leaking drainage system were still only being discussed at the end 1930, which brought work related to the project to the end of 1930, at the very earliest.¹¹⁰

The effects of the Second Avenue Extension project on construction in the Pioneer Square area were still felt in 1931, with some building remodels or new buildings still being completed, although sparsely as result of the Depression, which began in 1929. Although the first six floors of the City County Building, designed by A. Warren Gould were completed in 1916, the top floors were designed by Henry Bittman, with J. L. McCauley and constructed between 1929 and 1931. The first six floors had been built, despite the impetus to move the center of downtown farther north. The work by Bittman and McCauley was completed, after the major engineering and

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construction work of the Extension, with far-reaching effects, just to the south of it. (# 180) It seems as though the Second Avenue Extension project may have influenced the completion of this unfinished work.

Following the completion of the King County Courthouse, very few buildings were added to the district, which by 1931 was almost completely built up. Thankfully, few buildings were destroyed. The Second Avenue Extension and the King County Courthouse represent the last major construction of historical significance, fifty years old or older, within the Pioneer Square-Skid Road National Historic District.

Conclusion

What became the Pioneer Square-Skid Road National Historic District has a detailed and colorful history, despite the relative youth of the city of Seattle. Often described as the “heart” of Seattle, the district continued to attract a stream of enterprising, adventurous and strong-spirited newcomers, not easily deterred by destructive fires, economic reverses or problems of construction and engineering. The first wave of Victorian/ Richardsonian Romanesque buildings, which rose from the ashes of the Great Fire of 1889, set the stage for the larger and thriving city. For a long time, Seattle’s commercial center, the district continues to play an important role within Seattle’s larger downtown. Despite the physical and economic transformations from 1889 to the early 1930s, there has always been a thread of continuity in the history and architecture of the district. This thread remains unbroken to this day, thanks to the perseverance and unflagging energy of local preservationists, who were responsible for the creation of the Pioneer Square-Skid Road National Historic District in 1970.

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