The City of Seattle
Landmarks Preservation Board
Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649
Street Address: 600 4th Avenue, 4th Floor

LPB 398/25

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

Former American Can Company Factory
2601 Elliott Avenue

Legal Description:

Blocks 7 and 12 of the portion of the Town of Seattle as laid out on the land claim of William H. Bell and the Northwestern [illegible] of the claim of A.A. Denny (Commonly known as the Bell and Denny's addition to the City of Seattle), as per plat recorded in Volume 1 of Plats on Page 29, records of King County, and blocks 196b and 169c of the Supplemental Plat of Seattle Tidelands, as shown on the official maps of Seattle tide lands on file in the office of the Commissioner of Public Lands at Olympia, Washington, Together with that portion of vacated Cedar Avenue adjoining said Blocks 7 and Blocks 169b and 169c.

At the public meeting held on December 17, 2025 the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Former American Can Company Building at 2601 Elliott Avenue as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standard for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

C. It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, City, state or nation.

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

F. Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the city and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or the City.

The Features of the Landmark to be Preserved Include*:*
The site and the exterior of the building.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The subject building is located on the waterfront in the Belltown neighborhood.

Generally, the Central Waterfront area is considered to extend from Columbia and Pier 50, the ferry terminal, northward to Broad Street and Pier 70, and consists of the piers, waterfront, and one to two blocks east of Alaskan Way. The Central Waterfront includes the western edge of Belltown, the Pike Place Market, and the western edge of the Central Business district.

Belltown covers the area from Olive Way to Denny Way, north of the Pike Place Market, with its eastern edge jogging from Fifth Avenue to Seventh Avenue as the neighborhood extends north, and the western edge defined by the waterfront. Uptown and South Lake Union are located north of Belltown, the Denny Triangle is east, and the Pike Place Market and the Central Business District are south of Belltown.

The immediate subject area in the waterfront area of Belltown is a mix of newer mixed use and multifamily housing complexes to the north and east, a large garage building to the east, and older brick commercial and industrial use buildings to the south, and the Seattle Art Museum Sculpture Garden to the north. Pier 69, now in use by the Port of Seattle, is situated directly west across Alaskan Way, formerly Railroad Avenue.

The designated City of Seattle Landmark in the area most closely related to the former American Can Company Building is the Belltown Cottages at 2512 Elliott Ave. These cottages were originally called the “Cannery Cottages,” and were constructed by Booth Fisheries for workers in their facility directly to the south of the subject building. The subject building, the American Can Company, unlike Booth Fisheries, did not pack fish or other products, but manufactured the cans and machinery that were used in the process. For reference, The Belltown Cottages share a site with the Belltown Pea Patch, however, the P-Patch is not related to former American Can Company building. Other nearby Seattle landmarks that share historical themes with the American Can Company include: The Ainsworth and Dunn Warehouse at 2815 Elliott Avenue and The Seattle Labor Temple at 2800 First Avenue. Although not landmarked, the former Booth Fisheries building, now Vine Street Storage, is located directly to the south of the subject building, as stated above.

Nearby City landmarks include:

- New Pacific Apartment Building, 2602 1st Avenue
- Seattle PI Globe, 101 Elliott Avenue W
- Hull Building, 2403 1st Avenue
- Latona Hotel/Ace Hotel, 2419-2423 1st Avenue
- Bon Marche Stables, 2315 Western Avenue
- Seattle Empire Laundry Building, 66 Bell Street

SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject site is comprised of two city blocks measuring almost 78 thousand square feet located between Elliott Avenue and the east side of Alaskan Way and, from Clay Street to Vine Street along with a vacated portion of Cedar Street. The subject building, the former American Can Company building, occupies almost the entire site, except for a strip of open land adjacent to Alaskan Way about 25 feet deep along the entire western property line. This open space is planted with evenly spaced coniferous trees. There is pedestrian access along paved sidewalks adjacent to the northern, eastern, and southern façades of the building. These three sidewalks contain mature street trees. The western property line is adjacent to the railroad tracks and is separated from Alaskan Way by the tracks, a paved sidewalk, and deciduous street trees. The site slopes steeply from east to west, so that the main floor of the building is near the level of Elliott Avenue and the basement level is at or above the level of Alaskan Way.

BUILDING STRUCTURE & EXTERIOR FEATURES

The building is currently considered a five-story & basement, 345,000-square-foot, Class A office building. The building has a full basement story opening to the west and a flat roof with a parapet. The fifth story, a penthouse, only covers the southern portion of the building. The basic shape is a long rectangle, approximately 70-80 feet tall measuring approximately 545’ north-south and 119’ east-west, with an approximately 30’ long diagonal corner located at the southwest adjacent to Vine Street and Alaskan Way. The 4-5 story building spans two city blocks, from Clay to Cedar Streets and includes a full basement.

The building is constructed of poured-in-place reinforced concrete. The board-form texture of the original concrete is visible at the exterior street level. The northern section of the building was constructed in 1916, and the southern section in 1924.

The older section is generally four stories tall, while the newer section rises to five stories due to a penthouse. The four stories each have an approximately 14’-4” floor to floor height, while the finish floor of the basement is approximately 12.5’ below the main floor and the penthouse measures approximately 12’ from the finish floor to the top of its short parapet. The structure features regularly spaced concrete columns and exterior concrete walls, with brick-clad spandrels and concrete lintels and sills. The structural bays are delineated at the exterior by large window openings. At the interior, the older 1916 columns are octagonal in shape, and the 1925 columns are circular. All columns have flared capitals and flat plate concrete reinforcing, typical of a two-way concrete slab with drop panels. All columns increase in size as they carry more load on the lower levels.

The main floor level is topped by a projecting belt-course and a cornice is located below the parapet above the fourth-floor windows, dividing the building into horizontal sections. The cornice at the standard bays of the western façade is reduced to a string course. The main and basement levels are painted a dark grey, while the upper levels are painted white. The

1916 portion of the building is marked by another belt course at the fourth-floor windowsill level. Both portions of the building typically exhibit arched windows at the standard bays of the fourth floor.

The architectural language of the building consists of standard bays with demarcating corner bays and center bays. Standard bays differ slightly between the 1916 and 1924 portions of the building, with the standard bay of 1924 being slightly wider than that of 1916. A 1916 standard bay was arranged vertically in a classical manner with base, shaft and capital. The base was the main and basement floors capped with a belt course. The shaft was the second and third floors, and the fourth floor was the capital, delineated by a belt course at the fourth-floor windowsill level. A standard bay in the 1924 addition eliminated the "capital" by eliminating the fourth-floor belt course. The penthouse has a lower floor to ceiling height, shorter windows, and a simple roof termination. The corner bays are marked by a raised parapet, wider wall sections flanking narrower window openings, and the second and third level windows are grouped in a two-story opening with a brick spandrel only under the third-floor window. The center bays of each portion of the building are only differentiated on the eastern façade.

All original windows on the building were multipaned steel-sash industrial windows with operable sections. Typically, there were three of these industrial steel-sash windows per bay, with two 30-light windows flanking a 24-light window. 9-light and 6-light operable sections were called out on the 1916 original drawings, but not on the drawings for the 1924 addition. The third and fourth floors had brick spandrels and concrete sills under the windows. At the fourth-floor level the windows were arched with 25-light windows flanking a 20-light window with operable sections similar to the lower floor windows, and varying heights at the top row of window lights under the arch. Today these windows have been replaced by four equally sized fixed double-pane aluminum-sash windows in each bay at the 1916 portion of the building, and four identically sized aluminum-sash windows flanked by narrow windows in the 1924 section of the building where standard bays are slightly wider than those in the 1916 portion of the building. In instances where the bay pattern differs, the number of aluminum-sash windows used depends on the width of the window opening.

The 1916 Building

The original 1916 portion of the building was constructed with a main 12x4 bay block and a 9x2 bay block projecting across what was formerly a rail access at the northern end of the western side. The projecting 9x2 bay block was open at the main and basement floor levels and enclosed at the upper three levels. A raised butterfly roof with monitor windows facing east and west is located in a 5x2 bay section in the middle of the main block. Today the lower levels have been enclosed with glazing and spandrels at the main floor level. Only the 9 westernmost bays of the 1916 portion of the building are still visible, as the 1924 portion of the building infilled the southwestern corner of the building. A concrete structure which once held up a water tank is located at the center of the 9x2 bay western portion of the 1916 building. There are only three remaining visible facades of the 1916 portion of the building as the southern façade and a portion of the western façade were covered by the

1924 addition.

The western façade of the 1916 portion of the building had typical corner bays with raised parapets, wider wall sections flanking narrower window openings, and the second and third level windows grouped in a two-story opening with a brick spandrel only under the third-floor window. As mentioned above a belt line marks the windowsill level at the fourth floor. The cornice is located above the fourth-floor window head and wraps to the northern façade at the northern end bay. Originally there was a sky bridge to Pier 69 (formerly Pier 13) in the center of the façade at the second-floor level, and a fire escape at one of the center bays. The fire-escape bay had a door at each floor level and thicker mullions separating the central 42-light window from the flanking door and multipaned window. Today the original mullions are still in place and replacement aluminum sash windows infill all three levels. The bay where the skyway was once located is no longer differentiated by its window pattern, as the current windows match those on all typical bays.

The northern façade consists of 6 bays. Originally the main entry to the building was located at the easternmost of these bays. This bay is highlighted by a raised parapet and is similar to the eastern façade end bays, with wider wall sections flanking narrower window openings, with the second and third level windows grouped in a two-story opening. However, the spandrel is located at the landing level of the stair located at the interior in this corner of the building. The main entry consisted of a double door with a concrete lintel and three punched clearstory windows above. This door is no longer in use and has been boarded over. The next two bays are typical with wide window openings between pilasters, brick spandrels at the third and fourth floor levels, a belt line at the fourth-floor windowsill level, and arched windows at the fourth floor. It is at these two bays where the basement level becomes apparent, with a concrete spandrel separating the main floor level from the basement windows. The fourth bay of the northern façade is bifurcated, slightly projecting on the western side, creating two narrower window openings at each level. The spandrel and arched window pattern in this bifurcated bay mimics those of the standard bays, however, the bay has a rectangular raised parapet with a window at a penthouse above. The two westernmost bays are similar to the northern bay of the western façade.

On the eastern façade the northern and southernmost bays are highlighted by raised parapets, and the two middle bays have a taller raised parapet with two windows in front of a small elevator penthouse. These 9-light windows are original. A vertical brick medallion marks the center of the raised parapet. The two center bays of the 1919 portion of the building have pairs of rectangular windows at each level flanking a central wall section, marking the elevator at the interior of the building. This center potion originally featured a bronze plaque naming the American Can Company but now appears as a blank recess. Decorative cast-in-place concrete shields are located under the cornice at the center two bays and both end bays. The end bays have wider wall sections and narrower windows than the standard bays and lack the arched window openings at the fourth floor that standard bays have. Originally a loading dock was located at the two center bays of the northern half of the façade. These original loading dock bays have been infilled with standard aluminum fixed windows with stucco spandrels below. Another entry is located at the southernmost

standard bay of the eastern façade. Originally a pair of glass double-doors with a clerestory above a concrete cornice, the doors have been infilled with a single flush-steel man door and a double aluminum-sash window.

The 1924 addition

The southern addition mimics the original's architectural language with similar board-form concrete walls, brick spandrels at the third and fourth floors, and arched openings at the fourth floor in the standard bays. A penthouse level, initially above the southern nine bays, was later extended to cover eleven bays. The addition infilled the 3x2 bay section of the southwestern corner of the 1916 building and added an additional 13x6 bays to the south with a narrow spacer bay between the two main blocks of the building.

The 1924 western façade originally extended the open arcade of the 1916 portion of the building by three bays where the corner was infilled and along the entire western façade of the addition. As mentioned above the arcade has since been infilled. The spacer bay is located between the infill bays and the southern addition bays, with a narrower window and spandrel pattern. The main body of the western façade of the 1924 addition is flanked with corner bays with raised parapets. The southernmost of these has penthouse windows, the northernmost is lower and does not. Because the southwestern corner is chamfered, the southernmost raised parapet is located one bay to the north of the southern end of the building. Originally a fire escape was located at one of the center bays of the façade. The bay is marked by a three-story white painted vertical mullion that once divided the fire escape doors at each level from the windows.

The southern façade consists of the chamfered southwestern corner, and two typical corner bays separated by three standard bays. The chamfered corner is treated differently than a standard bay. Originally open at the basement and main floor levels, it has now been infilled with glazing, acrylic stucco spandrels, and an entry with storefront doors. There are no brick spandrels at this portion of the façade, and the fourth-floor window has a rectangular head. Basement-level windows get progressively taller as the slope reveals the basement floor.

The eastern façade features a corner bay at the southern end and a raised center bay, but unlike the western façade has no corner bay at the northern end. This southern corner bay has a double-door entry door with a transom flanked by sidelights at the main-floor level. Another double-door entry was located one bay south of the center bay but has since been infilled. Between the corner bay and the center bay one of the standard bays has all the window openings boarded up and painted. Changes at the main floor of this section of the façade include the addition of a glass garage door and a storefront entry system. The center bay is six stories tall, with three windows at each story level. The upper two stories are shorter, with shorter windows. Another storefront entry system with a steel canopy is located one bay north of the center bay. The narrow spacer bay at the eastern façade, unlike that of the western façade, doesn't have an arched window at the fourth floor.

Building changes:

- Replacement of the original multi-pane sash glazing
- Enclosure of the western arcade
- Expansion of the penthouse in 1959.
- Storefront systems installed in the eastern façade, infill of the loading docks, and other revisions at the street-level eastern elevation in 1976
- Internal atrium installed in 1976
- Additional entry at the southeast corner
- The addition of garage entries on the northern façade
- Filled-in window openings at the eastern façade, fourth bay from the south, and infill at original entries.

INTERIOR LAYOUT & FINISHES

Inside, vertical circulation is generally located in the easternmost bay, with stairs at the northeastern and southeastern corners of the 1916 building and at the southeastern corner of the 1924 addition. These original stairs have their original guardrails from 1916 and 1924 respectively. Elevators are located behind the two eastern center bays. Additional elevators were located on the northern façade and in the southwestern corner of the 1916 building, but these have been removed. Restrooms flank the 1916 center bay elevator. In 1976 when the building was rehabilitated to become the Seattle Trade Center, an atrium was cut through the third and fourth floors of the 1924 addition and capped with a large skylight. The atrium connects the second, third and fourth floors with stairs and overlooking balconies in each of the atrium corners. The original layout of the floor levels was mostly open factory space with industrial equipment. The flared column capitals are typical of the construction, as mentioned above, the round columns were used in the 1916 portion of the building and octagonal columns with flared octagonal caps.

In 1924 the penthouse was added as an office floor level and contained partitioned offices at the perimeter. Since the 1970s, various interior remodels have added closed offices at the northern and southern ends of the building at the second, third, and fourth floors, in addition to partitions at certain areas of the interior of the floor plates.

Interior finishes include both painted and raw concrete, with the original form marks, painted brick at the vertical circulation, and non-original floor and wall coverings, including commercial carpet and painted gypsum wallboard, non-original lighting, and other non-original fixtures and finishes.

DOCUMENTED BUILDING ALTERATIONS

The original permit for the subject building, number 153345, was issued in 1916.

Major subsequent alterations included the addition of the southern portion of the building in 1924, and the conversion of the building into the Seattle Trade Center in 1976. The permit record includes numerous mechanical, electrical, conveyance, and building permits,

including the addition of a portion of the penthouse in 1959. It is assumed that the building reglazing occurred in 1976, however, permit evidence also indicates there was reglazing activity in the 1950s.

A timeline of permits for the subject building includes, but is not limited to the following:

Date	Description	Permit No.
1916	Build a fireproof can factory. Permit 150430 covers the pile foundations.	153345
1924	Construct Factory Warehouse per plan	239820
1930	Interior partitions for office	296612
1930-1946	Various permits for minor interior alterations	
1950	Catwalks, etc.	399310
1952	Build steel stairway	415888
1954	New elevator	425989
1956	Alter bldg. (remodel ext. windows)	444407
1959	Alter exist building (penthouse addition)	481419
1976	Alter Space, occupy as Trade Center	567565
1977-1979	Various interior partition revisions	
1987	Skybridge removal	628424
1995	Art Institute of Seattle, Change of use	682198
2000	Real Networks, TI build out (owner Martin Smith)	714709, 715071, 717215
2005	Seattle Art Institute TI	6078180-CN
2008	Argosy University TI	6179925-CN
2013-	Various TI improvements	

2014		
2013	Interior alterations to tenant "Zulily" on 3rd floor of existing commercial building, subject to field inspection (STFI)	6408203-CN
2015	Establish use as restaurant, enclose former loading dock, construct tenant improvements, and occupy as Starbucks Cafe, per plan.	6458553-CN
2020	Spray Applied Fire Proofing Construct alterations to add/replace fireproofing at upper level of commercial building, per plan.	6788927-CN
2022	2601 Elliott Lobby & Restroom Renovation Construct tenant improvements to L1 lobby area and L5 bathroom facilities, subject to field inspection	6883036-CN

SIGNIFICANCE

HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT: BELLTOWN & THE WATERFRONT

The subject building is located both in the waterfront area and the Belltown neighborhood. Because the building is associated with waterfront industry as well as the Belltown neighborhood, the context statement will address both.

Indigenous Origins and Early Settlement

Prior to colonization by white settlers, the land that makes up present day Seattle was inhabited by the Coast Salish Duwamish people. The Duwamish spoke Southern Lushootseed of the Coast Salish language group.

A village site called babáqWab was located near the waterfront of what is now known as Belltown, at the approximate location of present day Bell Street. babáqWab—whose approximate meaning is "Little Prairies"—was the location of two Duwamish longhouses. Middens have been found along the Elliott Bay waterfront, documenting the shellfish processing that occurred in this area. A prairie, rich with fruit-bearing salal, stretched east and north of these structures, up to the south end of what is now known as Lake Union.

After the 1851 landing of the Denny Party at Alki Point, the area saw a rapid influx of settlers. A year after the landing at Alki, William and Sarah Bell established a claim north of the early settlement. The Bells' cabin was burned by Indigenous raiders in the "Battle of Seattle," but the family returned and re-settled on their land claim in 1870. In 1889 the Bells' son hired architect Elmer Fisher to design a large residential building in the same

block. Soon afterwards, Fisher designed an Odd Fellows Hall next door and a retail/hotel/office building (the Hull Building, 2401 First Avenue, City of Seattle Landmark) across First Avenue. These substantial brick buildings, some distance from Pioneer Square, combined with the area's isolation, gave Belltown a distinctive identity separate from that of downtown Seattle.

As the settlers established themselves, they relied on the labor and assistance of the native people. The Duwamish, as well as members of other native groups who were drawn to the growing settlement by trade and job opportunities, formed the majority of the population of the settlement; they worked in the mill and provided labor that made the founding and construction of Seattle possible. After the Treaty of Point Elliott in 1854, and the "Battle of Seattle" in 1856, so-called "Indian agents" of the United States government attempted to remove the Duwamish from within the town boundaries. However, native settlements were still to be found along the waterfront, and at the edges of the town boundaries. Soon after the city was incorporated in 1869, an ordinance banned Native people from living or "camping" inside the City boundaries, once called Djicjila'letc. The original incorporated area of the city extended south from Howell Street to Atlantic Street. The area along the waterfront north of the established downtown, what is now Belltown's waterfront, was a central location for the congregation of the displaced people and native workers. A steep bluff served to separate the developed area of Belltown from the settlement area of native people along the waterfront.

Urban Development & the Denny Hill Regrades

Belltown's urban growth was initially hindered by its rugged terrain, including Denny Hill, a steep obstacle between downtown and the north. In 1890, Virgil Bogue, a nationally known civil engineer, and R. H. Thomson, the engineer for the City of Seattle, made recommendations to the Harbor Commission that led to the creation of the Port of Seattle, and affected the future of Railroad Avenue, now Alsakan Way. The 1897 Klondike Gold Rush spurred economic demand, leading to a series of massive regrades that reshaped the landscape. The first phase of regrading began in 1898 with the lowering of First Avenue by 17 feet. The second phase, between 1908–1911, removed 6 million cubic yards of earth. Regrading between 1928 and 1930 shaped the current topography of Belltown.

The urban development of Belltown dates to 1889, when the first streetcar service arrived, extending from James Street to Denny Way along Second Avenue. The Front Street Cable Railway erected its elaborate powerhouse and car barn near Denny Way and Second Avenue in 1893. Within a few years, lines would run along Western and Elliott Avenues to Ballard and on First, Second, and Fifth Avenues to Lower Queen Anne, with connections at Pike Street to Eastlake, Westlake and points north and east.

Significant development of the Bell land was slowed by its isolating topography. A steep bluff rose from Elliott Bay to Second Avenue, and Denny Hill, which was too steep for horses to climb, extended between Second and Fifth Avenues north of Pine Street. With the economic growth following the 1897 discovery of gold in the Klondike, the business district

expanded to the north, and many saw Denny Hill as a significant barrier to progress. In 1898, the first of three regrades in area using hydraulic jets to sluice the earth into Elliott Bay began, lowering First Avenue between Pike Street and Denny Way by seventeen feet. The area west of First Avenue was not regraded, and its steep slope kept it largely industrial.

By 1910, Belltown was a thriving community of wood-frame residences and small commercial buildings, with brick hotels for workers along First Avenue. The waterfront and the western slope bustled with wharves, the railroad, fish canneries, small manufacturers, and livery stables. Small commercial buildings, brick workers' hotels and houses lined First and Second Avenues. In June 1910, a fire destroyed eight blocks on the western slope, from the waterfront to Second Avenue and Vine Street. The burned area was largely industrial but included many small wooden cottages and workers' lodgings. Only one person died but hundreds lost their homes. The area was soon rebuilt with larger industrial buildings and new residences and apartments.

As the city's population continued to grow—nearly tripling to 237,194 by 1910—the pressure for land increased, and the city regraded the remainder of Denny Hill. The second phase occurred between 1908 and 1911, when twenty-seven blocks between Second and Fifth Avenues, from Pine to Cedar streets, were sluiced away. The greatest excavation was along Blanchard Street, which was lowered by 107 feet at Fourth Avenue. This was the largest such operation in the world up to that time, moving six million cubic yards of dirt. The regrade opened access to Belltown, Queen Anne and Lake Union, enhancing property values. The city regraded only the streets, with owners of individual lots required to hire their own contractors to level their property, thus many pinnacles of land remained even into the 1920s. The embankment created along Fifth Avenue remained for more than twenty years, until the third regrading phase.

An interesting side note in history concerns a never-built plan for the city that Virgil Bogue created for the Municipal Plans Commission in 1911. This plan, called the Bogue Plan proposed a comprehensive transportation system, and expansion of parks and boulevards, waterfront development, and a civic center. Seattle voters rejected the plan in 1912.

The Waterfront

Before the turn of the twentieth century, Seattle's waterfront had been reshaped from tidal flats, short beaches, bluffs, and cliffs to the industrial face of the city. Railroad Avenue was a wooden structure supported on piers traversing tidal flats. The intersection between the railroad and the harbor became the city's economic engine. Piers and rail lines sprang up to support shipping, lumber, fishing, and passenger transport. Among the most significant piers in the area north of downtown—now considered part of Belltown—were Piers 68, 69, and 70. Originally named Piers 12, 13, and 14, the piers were renamed after World War II.

These three piers located in Belltown's waterfront were used for the fishing and canning industry in the early 20th century. First Ainsworth and Dunn's Seattle Fish Company

relocated to Pier 70, across from the now landmarked warehouse on Elliott in 1901. Although the Roslyn Coal and Coke Company constructed what is now Pier 69 in 1900, by 1916 the American Can Company took over the site and built the subject building. Directly south of the subject building, Booth Fisheries was using 11 Vine Street and Pier 12 (now Pier 68) for cold storage, fish processing, and canning by 1920. The industrial waterfront stretched north of the subject site along Elliot Avenue north to Denny and to the Piers at Smith Cove.

In 1935, Seattle's Railroad Avenue was officially renamed Alaskan Way, chosen over more fanciful suggestions like "Matrima" and "Cosmos Quay." This renaming marked the beginning of a series of transformations that would reshape the city's waterfront over the next several decades.

By the 1940s, Alaskan Way had yet to be fully paved, a goal finally realized in 1940 under Mayor Arthur Langlie. Nearby, Western Avenue underwent improvements as well, with streetcar tracks removed by 1943. This period coincided with World War II, which brought significant activity to Seattle's shipyards, particularly on Harbor Island. The U.S. Army's Port of Embarkation, located at the southern end of the waterfront at Piers 36 to 39, became a critical departure point for troops and military supplies. The same piers served as a departure point for Japanese Americans sent to concentration camps starting in 1942.

During the war, the piers were renumbered under a new system—Piers 3 through 14 became 54 through 70. Though modernized somewhat, the central waterfront's aging infrastructure began to show its limitations.

In 1946, Port Commission President E.H. Savage called the central waterfront a relic of the "Gold Rush period" and proposed a sweeping redevelopment, envisioning modern concrete docks for ocean-going vessels. This proposal, like many, was never realized. By the 1950s, Seattle's prominence as a port was in decline. Newer cargo-handling methods and the growing prominence of trucking moved much of the shipping activity south to Harbor Island and made the central waterfront piers increasingly obsolete.

One of the largest infrastructure projects of the 1950s was the construction of the Alaskan Way Viaduct for State Route 99. Completed in stages between 1953 and 1959, the elevated highway imposed a major physical and visual barrier between the city and its waterfront until it reached Battery Street where State Route 99 entered a tunnel. Not even 10 years later architects and planners were criticizing the viaduct as a blight on the urban landscape. George Rockrise, a noted San Francisco architect, was commissioned to draft proposals in 1968. His designs imagined the viaduct's removal and a reimagined a waterfront with mixed-use developments and expansive public spaces. Though none of his ideas were implemented, they laid the groundwork for future plans.

The 1960s ushered in a wave of ambitious, often controversial, redevelopment plans inspired in part by the 1962 World's Fair. Early concepts, like the unbuilt "Seattle Piers" project and the Port of Seattle's 20-Year Plan, envisioned transforming the waterfront into a

tourist and commercial hub with high-rise apartments, convention centers, and marinas. Although none of these large-scale visions came to fruition, they shaped future discourse and sparked a growing interest in the area's tourism potential.

After the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Ordinance of 1974 was passed, focus shifted from radical redevelopment to adaptive reuse and historic preservation. Many piers—such as Piers 54 through 59—were renovated and repurposed for shops, restaurants, and attractions. Ivar Haglund's purchase and renovation of Pier 54 in the 1960s played a major role in the waterfront's transformation into a tourist destination. Similarly, Piers 56 and 57 became homes to businesses like Trident Imports and Jean Fraley's "Pirates Plunder."

In 1977, the Seattle Aquarium opened at Pier 59, designed to use the original structure. Nearby, the Pike Street Hillclimb was completed, creating a vital pedestrian connection between the waterfront and Pike Place Market. This era also saw the introduction of a waterfront trolley system and completion of Myrtle Edwards Park in 1976. Across Alaskan Way, historic buildings such as the Grand Pacific Hotel, the Hotel Cecil, and the Colman Building were preserved and restored, revitalizing First and Western Avenues.

In the mid-1980s and beyond, the focus continued to shift toward tourism and residential development. The Bell Harbor Pier and Conference Center replaced older structures, while proposals for a new Seattle Aquarium sparked debates over the future of historic piers like Piers 59 and 62/63. Ultimately, Pier 59 was preserved and designated a City Landmark.

In 1993, the Port of Seattle redeveloped Pier 69, across from the subject building, as its headquarters and new terminal for the high-speed Victoria Clipper catamaran ferries.

The 2001 Nisqually Earthquake exposed the vulnerabilities of the Alaskan Way Viaduct and the seawall, built on loose fill soil prone to liquefaction. Public discourse intensified around replacement options for the Alaskan Way Viaduct, eventually leading to the demolition of the viaduct, and its replacement with an underground tunnel, a surface road along Alaskan Way, and additional reinforcement and amenities along the seawall. This new era for the waterfront emphasized sustainability and public access. Discussions reflected the central waterfront's layered history: Gold Rush-era piers, wartime embarkations, mid-century industrial decline, and 21st-century revitalization.

Seattle's Cannery Industry

Seattle's cannery industry began in the late 19th century. The canning industry was closely tied to the fishing industry in the Pacific Northwest. Salmon, a key resource for both native people and settlers, was central to Seattle's rise as a key fishing and canning hub. By the late 19th century, as demand for preserved seafood grew, Seattle emerged as a strategic center for salmon canning, with early factories playing a vital role in exporting the bounty of Puget Sound and Alaskan waters.

The city's first cannery is believed to have been established around 1880 by George T.

Myers at the foot of Blanchard Street, later moving to Dearborn Street as G.T. Myers and Company. This marked the beginning of a booming industry that would transform the local economy. As fishing grounds expanded and canning technology advanced, companies like Astoria & Puget Sound Canning Company and Pacific Packing & Navigation Co. became major players, some eventually absorbed into larger conglomerates like the Alaska Packers' Association.

The American Can Company was instrumental to local canneries, although it was not a cannery itself, but a warehouse and factory for the production of cans and canning equipment used in canneries and on fishing boats in Alaska. Salmon was required by law to be canned within 48 hours of being caught, leading the American Can Company to produce mobile canning equipment that it leased to fishing boat operators.

The canning industry, unlike the can manufacturing industry, depended heavily on seasonal labor, much of it provided by Asian immigrants. The first Chinese cannery workers arrived in the 1870s, quickly proving themselves indispensable. These workers handled the grueling tasks of butchering, cleaning, and packing salmon. They were typically organized into work gangs managed by Chinese labor contractors who acted as intermediaries between the workers and cannery operators. Though these contractors helped bridge cultural and linguistic gaps, the system was prone to abuse and left workers vulnerable to exploitation.

Following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the labor pool began to shift. Japanese immigrants entered the cannery workforce in increasing numbers after 1885. Initially working under the existing Chinese-run contracting system, some Japanese workers rose to positions of leadership and eventually became independent contractors themselves.

Much of the labor used inside the American Can Company in its first three years was represented by white unions. In the early 20th century, the stevedores and longshoremen working on Pier 13, American Can Company's dock, (now Pier 69) would have been represented by Riggers and Stevedore's Local 38-12 and those working in the subject building by Truckers and Warehousemen's Local 38-22. However, after the General Strike of 1919 the influence of the workers unions flagged against the strength of the employers' unions. Employers began to hire based on efficiency and citizenship, and local 38-12 dissolved by 1920. Unions during this period were segregated by race and only open to men. The unions representing American Can Company workmen evolved into Local 117, Warehousemen & Helpers Union, Lodge 79, International Association of Machinist & Aerospace Workers, both a part of the American Federation of Labor (A.F. of L.) by the 1960s.

By the 1920s, a new labor force began to dominate the canneries: Filipino immigrants. The United States took possession of the Philippines in 1898 making Filipinos American nationals. They were not restricted by the immigration laws that had barred Chinese and Japanese workers. Itinerant Filipino workers who transferred from Alaska salmon canneries in the summer to agricultural fields in the Pacific Northwest were known as Alaskeros. They became the backbone of cannery crews. Over time, some ascended to leadership roles

within the old contractor system and began to challenge the harsh labor conditions and wage exploitation plaguing the industry.

The Alaskeros would not have worked inside the American Can Company building but would have used the canning machinery it produced and packed the cans it manufactured in the field.

The 1930s saw a turning point in cannery labor history. Filipino Alaskeros experiencing systemic exploitation, led efforts to unionize. In Seattle, the Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers Union Local 18257 was founded in 1933, representing primarily Filipino American workers. This was the first Filipino-led union organized in the United States. Two union founders, President Virgil Duyungan and Aurelio Simon, secretary, were murdered in 1936 by opposition from the old contracting system. However, the union grew stronger, becoming effective up and down the West Coast. Later on, in 1981, another famous assassination, this time of Filipino American labor activists Gene Viernes (1951-1981) and Silme Domingo (1952-1981) would heavily impact union organizing in the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU).

The union evolved from the 1930s through the 1980s. First becoming Local 7 of the CIO-affiliated United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America in 1937, and later Local 37 of the ILWU. It played a crucial role in dismantling the contractor system and securing better wages, conditions, and protections for cannery laborers of all ethnic backgrounds. The union has survived, becoming Region 37 of the Inland Boatman's Union (IBU-ILWU) today.

In 1951 the section of Alaskan Way at the foot of Belltown was described by Charles Regal of the Seattle Times:

Now park your car, you can park for an hour in this part of Alaskan Way, and walk down the waterfront. You will pass the American Can Co dock where freighters load cans for Alaska, the east coast, and world ports. Then a series of fishdocks where brawny men in yellow oilskins unload fishboats and silvery piles of fish are iced down for shipment to markets all over the world.

The salmon canning industry was dependent on the machinery and cans produced by the American Can Company. The company, as the biggest can and canning machine producer in the country, was instrumental in Seattle’s economic development. Other existing examples of Puget Sound region canning history include the Kirkland Cannery, the ILWU Local 37 headquarters, and the American Can Company Building. Although these buildings have been altered by time, they remain physical testaments to the city’s canning past. Exhibits, community memory, and scholarship continue to honor the vital role of Asian American workers in Seattle's labor and maritime heritage.

The American Can Company Building represents the remaining industrial context of the Belltown waterfront along with the former Ainsworth and Dunn Warehouse (now the Old

Spaghetti Factory restaurant, City of Seattle Landmark) the Ainsworth and Dunn Pier (former Pier 14, now Pier 70), the former Booth Fisheries Plant, and Booth Fisheries housing, now the Belltown Cottages (2512-16 Elliott Avenue, City of Seattle Landmark).

Belltown in the 20th Century

Belltown's current 21st century form arises from significant regrades and uses established in the 1920s. Its location close to downtown made it an ideal location for apartment buildings to house downtown and waterfront workers, with an accompanying array of cafés, taverns, and small grocery stores. Belltown also became the center of the film industry in the Pacific Northwest. The numerous film exchanges and related suppliers made the area around Second Avenue and Battery Street a mecca for theater owners and managers from Montana to Alaska. The automobile had become a significant feature of the city, and Belltown's close-in, low-density location encouraged auto-oriented businesses such as service garages. It also attracted light industrial uses such as printers and small-scale suppliers and assemblers servicing downtown businesses.

The third and final regrading phase began in 1928 and was completed in December 1930. This phase extended from Fifth Avenue to Westlake Avenue, between Virginia and Harrison Streets. In volume it was about two-thirds the size of the second phase, removing 4,233,000 cubic yards of dirt on a conveyor belt to barges on Elliott Bay. The project was completed just as the country was entering the Great Depression, and the expected development in the newly regraded area stalled. For decades the area east of Fifth Avenue contained primarily car dealerships, parking lots, motels, and other low-density uses. Development again increased in the late 20th Century.

During World War II, Belltown's apartments, workers' hotels and taverns boomed. The district's proximity to downtown and the waterfront industry also made it a center for union activity, with the Seattle Labor Temple relocating to First Avenue in 1942. This trend continued through the 1950s, with numerous other union halls being constructed here.

Growth was generally slow in the 1950s and 1960s, as the economy took some time to recover after the war. In 1953 the Battery Street Tunnel was completed from Aurora Avenue North to the foot of Battery Street, connecting the SR 99 highway through downtown. This new infrastructure, and the 1962 World's Fair just north of Belltown, led to the construction of several modern motels in the eastern part of Belltown. Otherwise, construction was primarily one and two-story buildings at the eastern and northern edges.

In 1974, the City of Seattle created the Denny Regrade Development Plan to preserve existing buildings and encourage new housing development. Local and federal funding supplemented the construction of both new buildings and the rehabilitation of older apartment buildings.

SITE & BUILDING HISTORY

The Roslyn Coal and Coke Company constructed Pier 13 (now Pier 69) in 1900 along with a coal bunker. They added to the pier and bunker in in 1902, 1904, and 1906, adding a brick chimney, gravel bunkers, and a paving plant.

The American Can Company in Seattle

In 1916 the American Can Company took over both Pier 13 and the subject site and constructed the first portion of the subject building. It was announced in the Seattle Times on September 24, 1916. By 1916 the American Can Company was a large multinational corporation, and the Seattle factory manufactured cans for beer and other beverages, seafood - including salmon, fruits, and vegetables processed in Washington and Alaska.

The American Can Company employed its own engineers headquartered in New York. It was New York engineer N. M. Loney who designed the Seattle factory building and warehouse on Pier 13 (now Pier 69) in 1916. The American Can Company became a major employer in Seattle hiring men to work in the factory as machinists, truckers, and metal workers, and women to work as packers for "light factory work." The offices of the Seattle plant also required boys and men as office clerks, typists, stenographers, timekeepers, and salesmen and women as invoice clerks. The factory had an in-house cafeteria and employed a full-time cook. The schedule for the day shift was 7 am to 3:30 pm and the swing shift was 3:30 pm to midnight. Much of the swing shift work was cleaning the can making machines and packing the cans for shipment.

The offices of the American Can Company in Seattle administered the company's business in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. The company's salespeople, efficiency experts, managers, and supervisors travelled to the many sites where the canning equipment was used but used the Seattle factory as home base. As a major employer, the company also sponsored sports teams in the commercial league. American Can Company teams included baseball, bowling, table tennis, and later, basketball. Their baseball teams often played other company and non-profit sponsored teams at Civic Stadium.

In 1918 the American Can Company prepared for its factory expansion by purchasing the block of land directly south between Cedar and Vine Streets from the Diamond Ice Co. for $92,000. The same year it launched a service boat, the CANCO.

A $750,000 dock expansion at Pier 13 in 1924 went along with the factory expansion designed by American Can Company Engineer C. G. Preis. The expansion of the factory more than doubled the factory space.

The company rebuilt Pier 13 and obtained a permit to repair the factory building in 1931. This work included a skybridge across Alaskan Way to move manufacturing materials from ships or railcars directly to the plant. The warehouse on Pier 13 stored rolls of aluminum and other materials used in the production of cans.

Beginning in 1934 the American Can Company began to financially contribute to the Northwest Laboratory for the National Canners Association (est. 1919) located at Pier 24. This laboratory was responsible for quality control of canned salmon coming though Seattle's port.

The American Can Company factory was renovated in 1942 for wartime use. It was also during this period that labor became increasingly scarce, and the American Can Company advertised for workers daily from 1942 until 1946. The factory operated from 7 am to midnight 6 days per week, with a day shift and a swing shift. Laborers like packers, truckers, and machine operators worked 48-hour weeks over 6 days. Administrative workers like typists, clerks, stenographers, comptrollers worked 5 ½ day weeks of either 35 or 37 ½ hours. Packers were generally women (as male packers were represented by a union) and worked both day and swing shifts. Machine operators and truckers were (white) men represented by a Union. During the war and in the years directly afterwards, the work at the American Can Company was considered "essential."

During the 1950s labor was not as scarce as the previous decade and advertising for factory employees emphasized there were a "limited number" of positions available. It was during this period that the American Can Company's basketball team entered the commercial league. Members of the A.F. of L. in their meeting at the Labor Temple, voted to strike in October of 1953. This action was part of nationwide strike activity that lasted until January 12, 1954. It was during this time that a warehouse fire caused approximately $1,000,000 of damage to the Pier 13 warehouse.

Renovations on the building in the 1950s included the installation of "Seattle's Largest Boiler" in 1956 and the expansion of the penthouse office floor in 1959.

Another strike closed the American Can Company on March 26, 1967. Striking workers included 250 members of Local 117, Warehousemen & Helpers Union, picket lines were being respected by 130 members of Hope Lodge 79, International Association of Machinist & Aerospace Workers. The strike ended almost a month later April 21, 1969.

In 1971 500 machinists were employed at the American Can Company. Five years later less than half the workforce remained and in 1976, the American Can Company closed its factory. The 239 people laid off represented a loss of $2.8 million in payroll to the Seattle economy. After the Factory closure, the American Can Company found office space south of the Ferry terminal closer to the industrial port facilities on the southern end of Elliot Bay. By 1984 the American Can Company had removed all operations from Seattle and the Puget Sound area.

The Seattle Trade Center

On May 19, 1976, Seattle Trade Center, Inc. filed an application with the city for a substantial shoreline development permit. The proposal outlined an ambitious adaptive reuse project: the redevelopment of the former can plant and the Pier 69 warehouse into a

trade center and retail complex.

By the end of that month, details of the plan were emerging. The $11 million redevelopment would transform the 340,000-square-foot building into a merchandise mart and specialty retail hub, featuring wholesale showrooms, exhibition space, and a 500-stall parking garage. The building would be renamed the Seattle Trade Center, and construction of the first phase was slated to begin before year's end, with completion aimed for the summer of 1977.

Behind the project stood a group of Canadian developers and investors, led by Leon Kahn, Irving Kates, and Joseph Segal, representing Vancouver-based companies including Waisman Architectural Group, Fields Stores, and Laurelton Investments Ltd. The architectural redesign was headed by Ralph D. Anderson & Partners, a Seattle firm known for its sensitive approaches to urban renewal and preservation. Ralph Anderson was one of the earliest preservation architects in the city, leading adaptive reuse and rehabilitation projects and advocating for preservation in both Pioneer Square and at the Pike Place Market. His activism, along with that of Victor Steinbrueck was instrumental in creating the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance of 1974. Anderson put his skills to work to create a trade center building to function as a merchandise mart and retail complex in 1976. The John Sellen Construction Company won the contract bid.

The project also considered Seattle's transportation future. The city decided to cancel a $75,000 rail switch project initially intended to serve American Can, as the company was vacating the Pier by January 1, 1977. Instead, developers explored the idea of housing historic streetcars within the building's vast interior, but this plan did not come to fruition.

Meanwhile, the waterfront's maritime function was not forgotten. In July 1976, the British Columbia Steamship Company revealed plans to relocate its Victoria ferry service from Pier 64 to Pier 69, drawn by the promise of ample parking and new passenger amenities. Plans were also underway to construct a cruise ship terminal, including a loading dock, waiting area, and ticketing office, which would be completed by May 1977.

By early 1977, the transformation was visibly underway. Demolition crews began repurposing the building for its new commercial use. An Environmental Impact Statement, released in the spring, detailed plans for a pedestrian-oriented complex with 32,000 square feet of restaurant space, 36,000 square feet of retail mall, and 73,600 square feet of office space on the second level. The tenant improvements partitioned and repartitioned the interior spaces between 1976 and 1979.

The Seattle Trade Center officially opened in August 1977, debuting as a hub for the Pacific Northwest apparel industry. During "market weeks," buyers from across the region—especially Alaska and California—descended upon the building's showroom floors, now bustling with fashion lines and brand launches. The launch coincided with the debut of FashionWest, a new trade publication edited by former Miss Washington World, Debra

Simmonds.

As Phase II of the project got underway later that year, focus shifted to renovating the Pier 69 structure itself, maintaining the exterior's wood and concrete pilings while upgrading interiors for high-end retail and exhibition use. The Seattle Times described the project as “a $6.5 million recycling of a former manufacturing plant,” underscoring the city’s commitment to sustainable urban transformation.

Over the next decade, the Seattle Trade Center evolved into the Seattle International Trade Center, reflecting its growing international scope. In 1987 the skybridge to Pier 69, rendered obsolete in 1976, was removed. By 1990, the building hosted high-profile global events, including the controversial U.S.-China trade conference, which drew protests over China’s human rights record. In the years that followed, it welcomed health fairs, international business expos (featuring firms from Ireland, Slovenia, and beyond), and cultural showcases, all underscoring Seattle's expanding role as a gateway to the Pacific Rim.

The Tech Era

The Port of Seattle acquired Pier 69 in 1993 and constructed a new office building along Alaskan Way. This move severed ownership of the International Trade Center from Pier 69.

In 1995 the Art Institute of Seattle applied for a change of use permit to convert a portion of the building from retail to office and classroom space. The Art Institute of Seattle and Argosy University continued to occupy space in the building through 2005 and 2008, even as internet company Real Networks moved into other portions of the building in 2000. This put the building at the frontier of yet another economic wave, as Seattle emerged as a technology hub. In 1998, RealNetworks leased up to 180,000 square feet in the building. The architecture firm Zimmer Gunzul and Frasca (ZGF) produced designs for the renovation of the building for both Real Networks and the Art Institute of Seattle. In 1998 Darsi Properties sold the building to Shorenstein Properties for a little over $26 million. JP Morgan Chase bought the building and parking garage in 2006 for slightly over $107 million.

In 2013, another internet company, Zulily, moved into the 3rd floor of the building. Two years later, Starbucks established a Cafe in the former loading dock of the building along Elliott Avenue. Shorenstein Properties acquired 2601 Elliott for $184.9 million again in 2021. At the time it was 90% leased to Zulily. The next year a roof deck was added north of the penthouse. Zulily ceased operations and went into liquidation in 2023, leaving the building empty. The building was foreclosed on and sold in 2025.

BUILDING OWNERS

American Can Company (1916-1976)

The American Can Company was the developer and original owner of the subject building. The company owned the building from the time of its construction in 1916 and 1924 until 1976.

The American Can Company, colloquially called “Canco,” was a major force in the American can-making industry known for innovation in food preservation. It was founded in 1901 by the merger of 123 small American companies, including Norton Brothers Company in Baltimore, Maryland and the Empire State Can Company in Geneva, New York. The articles of incorporation were filed in Trenton, New Jersey on March 19, 1901, although the headquarters of the company were in New York, New York. The merger made the American Can Company the largest can manufacturer in the United States. The company grew to a billion-dollar multinational corporate conglomeration.

One of the first consolidated can companies to make up the American Can Company was the Norton Brothers Company, which had pioneered mass-production methods for cans using mechanically soldered lids. The American Can Company continued the legacy of innovation in food preservation. Research was initially conducted in a “Chemical Department” of the Company established by 1906. It was researchers and inventors in Baltimore at the former Norton Brothers plant where the American Can Company was experimenting with the canning of common fruits and vegetables by 1908. Baltimore, Maryland became known as “the home of canning.” In 1913, American Can Company acquired the Sanitary Can Company with several factories located throughout the northeast including the home of the company in Fairport, New York, branch plants in New Jersey, Indianapolis, and Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada. By purchasing the Sanitary Can Company, the American Can Company acquired that company’s patent for closing the top of the can with a seam at the edge of the can top.

The American Can Company’s rapid expansion and acquisition of smaller canning companies led the US government to sue the American Can Co under the Sherman Antitrust Act in 1914. A portion of the trial was held in Seattle where testimony was given by local Washington and Oregon canning innovators whose patents and facilities were purchased by the company. The case was decided in 1916 by a Federal Judge who ruled that the American Can Company and its “Tin Can Trust” was not involved in “unfair or unethical” behavior, even if it had attempted to achieve monopoly. The American Can Company, although one of the few large-scale producers of tin cans in the US, prevailed in the suit and remained intact.

The American Can Company was one of the 50 largest companies in the United States in 1917. It’s closest rival, the Continental Can Company, was a much smaller operation. Growth was spurred by new product lines developed from new technologies in food preservation and greater demand for container-delivered foods. The American Can Company had an interest in keeping its industrial technologies secret, beginning when it absorbed the company of George W. Cobb, Sr. in 1908. Cobb invented the technology of the "sanitary" can, with the top and bottom lids crimped to the body without solder. The American Can Company was said to be a "master of container technology” and continually developed new processes and technologies for food preservation.

The cans produced by the American Can Company were of two types: "packer's cans" used exclusively for fruits, vegetables, and seafood; and the "general line" of containers used for

commodities like coffee, beer, motor oil, paint, shortening, milk and tobacco.

During World War I (1914-1918), The American Can Company manufactured about two million brass shell casings in support of the Czarist Russian government. The company also played an important role by providing canned goods for the war effort. The first 27 years of the company was a time of rapid expansion, until the stock market crash of 1929. During the 1929-1941 economic depression the company developed a work plan of “one week on and one week off” so that it could provide as many jobs as possible.

During World War II, the business of the American Can Company ramped up once again as the factories became essential to defense industries. American Can Company factories not only produced cans for food preservation, but their engineers also designed machinery to mass-produce torpedoes and other military equipment for the war effort. American Can Company was among the top 100 private corporations receiving military production contracts during WWII.

In the middle of the 20th century the company trademarked “Canco” and continued to be a major employer and well-known brand. By the time the company celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1951, it operated 60 plants, which produced both canning machinery and various types of containers. The company continued to expand and merged with Dixie Cup in 1957, acquiring a paper container production business to complement its empire. With the acquisition of Dixie, the company also began producing high speed machinery used in packaging and paper products. These mergers lead to growth years in the 1960s for the American Can Company.

The 1970s and 1980s, however, were not as prosperous for the company. The American Can Company moved headquarters from the Pershing Square Building in Manhattan, New York City, to Greenwich, Connecticut in 1970. This move, changes in technology, a weakening economy, and a redirection of the company all took their toll. This was especially true in Seattle, where the economy took a downturn from the “Boeing Bust” of 1970-1971. The Seattle Factory closed in 1976, and plants in New York and elsewhere were closed by 1989.

In the 1980s a series of mergers and acquisitions spelled the end of the American Can Company. The major breakup of the company started in 1982 when The James River Corporation of Virginia purchased American Can Company’s paper business. Triangle Industries acquired the packaging business of American Can Company in 1986, and then in 1987 The American Can Company merged with the National Can Company forming the American National Can Company. During this series of mergers and acquisitions many of the traditional factories around the county were sold. In 1987 American Can changed its name to "Primerica".

Subsequent building owners

Seattle Trade Center was developed by a group of Vancouver Investors: Leon Kahn, Irving Kates, and Joseph Segal.

BUILDING DESIGNERS

American Can Company Engineers: N. M. Loney & C. G. Pries

The American Can Company Building in Seattle was designed and constructed in 1916 and 1924 by two engineers based in New York and employed by the American Can Company. The two principal figures are N. M. Loney (1916) and C. G. Preis (1924), each of whom contributed significantly to the corporation's industrial architecture across the nation during a period of rapid national expansion. They were alternately referred to as both engineers and architects.

In 1916, the title block for the Seattle factory lists N. M. Loney as the engineer of record. Loney had joined the American Can Company in 1906 after resigning from a career in railroad engineering. At the time, he was newly promoted to master mechanic of the Chicago Terminal Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Despite this advancement, Loney pivoted to consulting work with the American Can Company, relocating to New York while maintaining a grueling travel schedule as part of his engineering responsibilities. His reach was expansive: in 1912, he oversaw work at the company's Baltimore, Maryland factory, followed by projects in Ogden, Utah (1914), Portland, Oregon (1915), and both Los Angeles and Seattle in 1916. His career continued with assignments in Fairport, New York (1917), and in 1919, dual projects in Portland, Maine and Honolulu, Hawaii. . That same year, Loney left the company to become vice president of industrial work at Thompson-Starrett Company. By 1947, he remained active professionally, based in New York City and traveling frequently in association with work for a division of General Motors.

By 1924, a new name appeared on the Seattle facility's title block: C. G. Preis, a German-born engineer who had settled in Brooklyn, New York by the early 1900s. Preis began his long tenure with the American Can Company as early as 1914, when he was listed as the architect for their Chicago factory. In 1918, he traveled to Hawaii, likely in preparation for the 1919 construction of the Honolulu factory, and two years later he was responsible for the design of a new facility in Portland, Oregon. His projects expanded throughout the 1920s: Cincinnati (1922), a warehouse in Hawaii (1923), and significant renovations and additions to the San Francisco and Seattle facilities in 1924. Preis's work continued into the late 1920s with factories in Sacramento (1926), Monterey (1927), and a return to Chicago in 1928.

By 1920, Preis had risen to the position of chief engineer for the company, eventually retiring decades later as vice president of engineering and architecture. His professional duties mirrored Loney's in their intensity and mobility. In the 1930s and early 1940s, Preis oversaw major construction projects including the Houston factory (1937), the Tampa, Florida facility (1941), and the Saint Louis, Missouri factory (1941). Despite his demanding schedule, he continued to travel for personal and professional reasons, including a pleasure trip to Hawaii in 1939. In recognition of his contributions to industrial engineering, Preis was awarded an honorary Doctor of Engineering from Dartmouth College. After retiring from

American Can sometime after 1948, he relocated to Tampa, Florida in 1956, where he served as president of Eversharp Pen and Razor. Preis died in 1959.

Together, the work of Loney and Preis in Seattle was part of a larger corporate pattern of factories built to support regional industries such as the Alaskan salmon canning trade, and the Hawaiian pineapple trade.

Subsequent building designer: Ralph D. Anderson

Ralph D. Anderson (1924–2010) was a local architect noted for both his practice of Pacific Northwest Modernist architecture and his practice of, and advocacy for, historic preservation.

Born in Seattle on October 21, 1924, Anderson grew up in the city's Magnolia neighborhood. He graduated from Queen Anne High School in 1943, just as the United States was deep into World War II. Drafted into the Army Air Corps, Anderson was stationed at Boca Raton Field in Florida, a technical training center. Due to illness, he never saw combat and spent much of the war in recovery. After the war, he returned to Seattle and took advantage of the GI Bill to enroll at the University of Washington. There, he earned his Bachelor of Architecture in 1951, graduating in the same class as fellow modernist Robert Chervenak.

From 1951 to 1954, he worked in the office of Paul Hayden Kirk, a leading figure in Northwest modernism. Kirk's emphasis on regional modernism left a lasting impact on Anderson. In 1954, Anderson became a licensed architect in Washington and opened his own architectural practice. One of his earliest residential projects, the F.A. Tucker residence (1954), received a Sunset Magazine Western Home Award in 1957. Anderson's residential portfolio includes the Dr. Tucker House (1954), the Jans House (1959), the McNair House (1961), the Miller House (c. 1963), the Broback Residence (1964), the Gordon K. Schowe Residence (1965), the Strom House (1965), Harry and Jeannette Glickman residence (1959–60), Roy E. Strom residence (1965), and the Drury and Virginia Pifer residence (1970).

Many of these homes, located in affluent communities such as Mercer Island and Bellevue, were featured in national and regional publications including Sunset, House Beautiful, and Architectural Record. Despite designing for elite clients, Anderson humbly referred to himself as the "poor man's Roland Terry," acknowledging his admiration for Terry while positioning himself as more of a "people's architect."

It was during this early period that Anderson began his interest in preservation. His renovation of the Capital Brewing & Malting Building (also known as the Jackson Building) in 1963 was among his earliest preservation efforts. Two years later, in 1965, he rehabilitated the Union Trust and Union Trust Annex Building (1893, Skillings and Corner, and 1902, Saunders & Lawton), in what was then called Skid Road, and is now Pioneer Square.

His Runion residence (1971–72) and Lamphere House (1973) display characteristics of the

Northwest Regional style with hovering rooflines, the use of natural materials, and an integration with the landscape. Many of his designs employed a formal T-shaped plan and celebrated the structural beauty of local timber. As one of the leading proponents of this emerging style, Anderson stood alongside other modernists such as Gene Zema, Carl Arne Bystrom, and his mentor Paul Kirk in forging a new regional modernism.

In 1971, Anderson formed Ralph D. Anderson & Partners. That same year, he began work on the rehabilitation of Seattle's Grand Central Building (1971–73), soon followed by the Pioneer Building (1973–74) and Fischer Studio Building (1974). These projects were instrumental in the transformation of Pioneer Square from a neglected warehouse district into a vibrant urban neighborhood.

Anderson played a pivotal role in preserving Pike Place Market, which faced demolition and urban renewal in the 1960s. His vision, coupled with grassroots activism, helped ensure the market's survival and transformation into a thriving cultural and commercial hub. His later preservation projects included Market Place One and Two (1978–81, in collaboration with Richard Haag & Associates). This project included several buildings which Anderson adaptively reused, such as the Butterworth Building (1903, John Grahm Sr.).

Anderson's body of work includes commercial and institutional architecture including: the Bellefield Office Park (1972) in Bellevue, the Middleton, Berner & Wood Medical Building (1974), the Ambaum Medical & Dental Clinic (1965) in Seattle, and multiple buildings for the University of Washington's Institute of Oceanography (1962–67) on Orcas Island. He also designed the UW Fisheries Center Addition in 1968, a project praised for its sensitivity to site and function.

Anderson's design for the adaptive reuse of the former American Can Company Plant into the Seattle Trade Center in 1976 was grounded in his preservation work.

In 1978, as his practice expanded, Anderson formed a partnership that included T. William Booth, Robert Koch, and later Glen Duarte. His firm became a training ground for a generation of talented Northwest architects, including George Suyama, Jim Olson, Gordon Walker, and Dan Calvin. These protégés remember Anderson as a generous mentor who offered creative freedom and fostered an environment of artistic collaboration. His influence on Seattle's architectural community was profound, despite his refusal to join the American Institute of Architects—an organization he viewed with skepticism.

Ralph Anderson's architectural contributions extended internationally, with projects in Canada, Mexico, Japan, and Turkey. He was an inveterate traveler and avid art collector, drawn to primitive, Oriental, and modern pieces that reflected his eclectic tastes and intellectual curiosity. Anderson lived his later years at the Horizon House retirement community in Seattle and died there on October 24, 2010, at the age of 86.

Subsequent building designer: Zimmer Gunsel Frasca (ZGF)

ZGF was the architect for the transformation of the subject building from the Seattle Trade Center to the World Trade center, designing improvements for both Real Networks and the Art Institute of Seattle (1996-1998, 1996-1999).

In 1942, Norman Zimmer launched his practice in Portland, Oregon, laying the groundwork for what would eventually become ZGF. In 1966, Brooks Gunsul and Robert J. Frasca joined Zimmer to form the Zimmer Gunsul Frasca (ZGF) partnership. Over the years as the firm took on other partners it operated under longer names including Wolff, Zimmer, Gunsul, Frasca, and Ritter, before adopting the simpler name ZGF Architects.

Norman Cunningham Zimmer (1924–2019) was born in Denver, Colorado. He studied at the Museum Art School in Portland and began his career after serving with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during World War II. He partnered with architect Richard Wolff in the 1950s, before taking on Gunsel and Frasca as partners. Zimmer was active in the American Institute of Architects, serving as president of the Portland Chapter and being named a Fellow of the AIA in 1968. Beyond practice, he taught at the University of Oregon and mentored generations of architects in the region.

Robert J. Frasca (1933–2018) graduated from the University of Michigan (B.Arch., 1957) and MIT (M.C.P., 1959). Pietro Belluschi mentored Frasca and encouraged him to relocate to Portland. Under Frasca's leadership, ZGF became known for research and healthcare buildings that prioritized natural light, and healing environments. Among his projects were the Oregon Health and Sciences University Vollum Institute and, Doernbecher Children's Hospital in Portland Oregon. He was also responsible for the design of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, and the NIH Mark O. Hatfield Clinical Research Center in Bethesda, Maryland, along with numerous other university facilities.
It was under Frasca's creative direction that ZGF received the AIA Architecture Firm Award in 1991, one of the profession's highest honors. Frasca served 27 years on the University of Washington Architecture Commission and chaired multiple AIA juries. He remained active in design until he died in Portland on January 3, 2018, at age 84.

Brooks R.W. Gunsul (b. 1928) is a graduate of Washington State University. Gunsul joined Zimmer's practice in 1959 and became a partner in 1966, leading ZGF's technical design. His portfolio includes early and influential projects in Portland such as the Multnomah County Justice Center (1983), KOIN Tower (1984), Oregon Convention Center (1990), Banfield Light Rail stations (1986), Portland International Airport expansions (2020-2026). Bellevue Library, California Science Center, Los Angeles California, (1998) and the NIH Mark O. Hatfield Clinical Research Center, Bethesda, Maryland (1997-2005). A founding member of the Architecture Foundation of Oregon, Gunsul supported the profession through philanthropy and mentorship.

ZGF's expanded into Seattle in 1988, followed by offices in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and beyond. In 1991, ZGF earned the AIA Architecture Firm Award, citing its high standards

and regional impact. By 2005, the firm employed 350 professionals across several offices; by 2011, it ranked as the 14th-largest U.S. architectural firm. As of 2022, ZGF operated seven offices across North America with over 750 staff.

Notable examples in the ZGF portfolio include:

- Multnomah County Justice Center (Portland, OR, 1984)
- Oregon Convention Center (Portland, OR, 1989)
- Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, (Seattle, WA, 1988-present)
- Second & Seneca Building (Seattle, WA, 1990-92)
- Bellevue Regional Library (Bellevue, WA, 1990-93)
- World Trade Center West and East buildings, (Seattle, WA, 1996-1998 & 1996-1999)
- Millennium Tower, (Seattle, WA, 1999-2001)
- IDX Tower, now the Fourth & Madison Building (Seattle, WA, 2000-2002, with Kendall/Heaton Associates)
- SAFECO Headquarters campus (Redmond, WA, 2000-2003)
- Communications Building, Western Washington University, (Bellingham, WA, 2001-5)
- Biosciences Building, Washington State University, (Pullman, WA, 2003-7)
- Molecular Engineering Building, University of Washington (Seattle, WA, 2008-12)
- 801 5th Avenue Office Building, (Seattle, WA, 2015–17)

BUILDING CONTRACTOR

A. W. Quist Company

The building contractor for the original 1916 construction was the A. W. Quist Company.

The A.W. Quist Company was active in the early decades of the twentieth century, engaging in both public and private construction projects. The firm's founder, Alarik Wilhelm Quist, was born in Finland around 1884 and immigrated to Seattle in 1902 at the age of 17. Just five years later, he married Jennie Erene Wickstrom, also of Finnish descent, and founded the A.W. Quist Company shortly thereafter. The couple had three surviving children, two girls and a boy.

Quist first gained prominence through his early work on federal contracts. One of his initial assignments took him to Alaska, where he built relief stations at Point Barrow under a government contract. Quist's early documented works also include the Seattle Times Headquarters, also known as the Times Square Building, (1912, Bebb and Gould) at the corner of 4th Avenue and Olive Way. Quist's contract was valued at nearly $226,000.

The first phase of construction of the American Can Company factory and warehouse pier in 1916 was another of Quist's early documented works and used his specialty in over-water construction. The A. W. Quist company continued contracting with the American Can Company, later building both the 1924 portion of the factory, and the pier extension of 1931.

During World War I, the firm played a pivotal role in one of the first large-scale federal housing efforts. When the federal government launched the U.S. Housing Corporation under the Department of Labor to construct quality housing for shipyard laborers, Quist was selected as the principal contractor to construct housing in Bremerton. By 1918, more than 1,000 workers descended on the town to carry out a coordinated building campaign that resulted in nearly 300 new residences. Many of these houses still stand today.

In 1923, the A. W. Quist Company was selected as the general contractor for the construction of the Providence Mount St. Vincent Home for the Aged in West Seattle. The five-story brick complex opened in 1924 under the care of the Sisters of Providence.

Over the next two decades, Quist's construction portfolio expanded with commercial, institutional, transportation, and cultural projects such as: the Medical-Dental Building, the Medical Arts Building in Tacoma, and the Exchange Building, the Rainier Brewery, Roosevelt Hotel, Sick's Seattle Stadium. and the Cowen Park and McGraw Street bridges. The A.W. Quist Company was active in Washington, Alaska and Hawaii, constructing the Baranof Hotel in Juneau, Alaska. A specialist in underwater concrete construction, Quist partnered with the Hawaiian Bridge & Dredging Company to build piers at Pearl Harbor in 1934 and 1935.

Besides acting as the head of a large multi-state construction company, Quist was also well known for his role as the Finnish Consul in Seattle. He served as Finnish Consul for over 20 years, eventually becoming dean of the Seattle consular corps in 1936. He held memberships in the Rotary Club, Arctic Club, Seattle Lodge No. 2, the Knights Templar, Nile Temple of the Shrine, the Association of General Contractors, and the Emmaus Lutheran Church.

Quist retired from active construction in 1942, continuing to serve as a consulting engineer until his death. Following a long illness, A.W. Quist died in 1944 at the age of 60.

Subsequent Building Contractor: Sellen Construction

Sellen Construction was founded in 1944 in Seattle's South Lake Union neighborhood. Sellen remains a prominent commercial builder in the Pacific Northwest. Initially named John H. Sellen Construction Co., the company started by winning bids for the U.S. Navy. Over its 80-year history, Sellen has become a leading force in the region, known for its work in commercial office, healthcare, life science, and arts and non-profit sectors.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

Factories, Warehouses, And Waterfront Industrial Uses

The American Can Company had its regional headquarters inside the factory building at 2601 Elliott Avenue between 1916 and the early 1980s, when their operations moved to another site before restructurings dissolved the business. The factory building served both administrative and industrial functions and was linked with the warehouse located on Pier

13/69.

At the turn of the 20th Century the vast majority of commercial buildings and warehouses in the western portion of the United States were designed within a range of vaguely eclectic architectural styles derived from European models. Buildings were adorned with relatively minor exterior details attempting to enhance otherwise utilitarian designs. Façades typically followed regular bays defined by structural systems. The style of these industrial buildings is closely tied to broader architectural trends.

Early factory and warehouse buildings built in Seattle were constructed with the intention of securely enclosing as much space as economically as possible. Building exteriors were often board-formed concrete, or brick masonry, with regular, repeatable bays. These structures often exhibit typical industrial design elements, such as board-formed concrete or brick walls, water tower platforms, raised parapets, and minimal ornamentation like corner quoins or brick spandrels. Many were strategically located along railroad lines or waterfronts, facilitating efficient transportation of goods.

Early examples, like the Ainsworth & Dunn Warehouse (1902, S. A. Jennings), the Frederick & Nelson Warehouse (1907, W. D. Van Siclen), and the Van Vorst Building (1915), illustrate typical brick and mill construction.[9] Later, reinforced concrete became the material of choice, as in the Polson Building (1910, Saunders & Lawton) and the National Grocery Company Warehouse (1930, The Austin Company).

In the mid-1930s reinforced concrete with modular steel structural systems became more commonly used. Floors were either concrete or heavy timber planks. Ceilings were relatively high, allowing for high exterior windows that allowed natural light to penetrate into the interior. Roof monitor skylights were common. An early example of a concrete warehouse structure is the Polson Building, designed in 1910 by Saunders & Lawton. A later example of a concrete warehouse is the National Grocery Company Warehouse (1930, The Austin Company).

After a major fire in 1889 destroyed Seattle's nascent central business district, fireproof construction was mandated for new buildings in downtown Seattle. At the same time and as a direct consequence of several other disastrous downtown fires throughout the United States, national building codes were developed, initially to protect property and eventually to save lives. Buildings were often constructed of reinforced concrete to allow fireproof construction. Starting in the 1930s Art Moderne and Art Deco styles were widely adopted for warehouse and utilitarian structures. Beaux-Arts-style ornamentation can be seen on the A. L. Palmer Building warehouse (1910, George C. Dietrich). Minimal neoclassical detailing can be seen on buildings such as the Boren Investment Company Warehouse (1925, Stuart & Wheatley, City of Seattle Landmark).

Warehouses were grouped in industrial areas of the city, initially alongside railroad spurs or freight depots, but later, as industries switched to trucking companies to move their products, near major highways. Flexible freight delivery to building interiors was essential

for warehouses with on-grade access doors, and loading docks were essential for the efficient receipt and distribution of freight.

There were cold storage facilities in industrial districts all around the city, many of which stored seafood. The Seattle Ice Company/Olympic Cold Storage building (1909), at 2200 First Avenue S, is an example of mill construction with brick outer walls and storefront bays. Other notable companies included Diamond Ice and Rainier Cold Storage. Diamond Ice was in business as early as 1900 on Western Avenue at Union Street, in a collection of wooden industrial buildings. The surviving building at that location was built in 1912, and is a concrete building used for self-storage. The Rainier Brewery brick building at 6000-6004 Airport Way S is now a designated City of Seattle Landmark.

An interesting example of a government-sponsored industrial facility is the Kirkland Cannery Building (1936), constructed by the Works Progress Administration. Operated cooperatively during the Great Depression and World War II, it eventually housed Kirkland Custom Seafood, producing hundreds of thousands of pounds of smoked salmon before closing in 2001.

Labor history is another crucial layer to Seattle's industrial building narrative. The cannery and union hall at the corner of 2nd Avenue Extension S and S Main Street served as headquarters for the Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers Union (CWFLU), the first Filipino-led union in the U.S. The building, originally constructed in 1900, housed union offices and was used for nearly 50 years. Damaged in Seattle's 1949 earthquake, it was originally designed by E. W. Houghton and adapted to serve both the union and local businesses.

Some notable examples of Seattle's industrial buildings include:

- The Black Manufacturing Building (1914, Andrew Willatsen), a mill construction type with heavy timber supporting the interior and brick masonry exterior walls. This was a standard building type for manufacturing in the early 20th century, including those in the Pioneer Square Historic District.

- The Ford Assembly Plant Building at 1155 Valley Street (1914, John Graham Sr.), featuring an early concrete frame and floor system with brick masonry exterior walls.

- The Lake Union Steam Plant at 1179 Eastlake Avenue E (1914, Daniel Huntington), an early poured-in-place reinforced concrete building.

- The Coca-Cola bottling plant (1939, Jesse M. Shelton and John Graham Sr., Graham & Painter), an Art Deco concrete structure that demonstrates mid-century industrial design.

The American Can Company building exhibits several characteristics common to industrial waterfront buildings:

- Board-formed concrete with concrete columns, or brick with heavy timber.
- Water tower platform
- Former bridge connection over railroad tracks to wharf.
- Raised parapet
- Pilasters defining bays
- Minimal classical ornament such as brick spandrels

Development of Concrete Technologies

The American Can Company building was constructed in 1916 and 1924 using concrete structural systems of a two-way slab construction for the floors and drop-cap concrete columns, concrete exterior walls, and spandrels clad in brick veneer.

Concrete is a composite material composed of fine and coarse aggregate bonded together with a fluid cement paste that hardens, or cures, over time. Concrete has been in use as a construction material since ancient times all around the world with the earliest use recorded in the 6th century BCE. Early concrete utilized "natural cements" that combined select crushed and processed rocks with lime to develop a low-strength binding material when combined with aggregate. The Romans developed a more lasting concrete using lime and volcanic ash in their cement mixture. The earliest concrete forms, like those used by the Romans, were made of reeds. Timber later became the preferred concrete formwork, as it was both strong and removable after the concrete cured.

Modern concrete utilizes “Portland cement,” a patented hydraulic cement mixture developed in England in 1824 that provides superior strength and quality control. Today’s concrete is a complex mix design composed of detailed specifications for aggregate (types and sizes), cement mixture, water, ratio of liquid to solid, and often admixtures that modify the properties of the wet mix or the finished material.

Concrete is inherently strong in resisting compressive loads and weak in dealing with tensile forces. Reinforced concrete adds iron, steel, or fibers (carbon, glass, aramid, plastic) to carry tensile loads. Early experimentation with iron reinforcement began in the mid-nineteenth century by Frenchmen Joseph-Louis Lambot, Joseph Monier, and Francois Hennebique. Americans Thaddeus Hyatt and William Ward were also instrumental in the invention of steel reinforcing. Early concrete floor systems were developed from the desire for fireproof construction. Between the 1870s and 1940s fireproof construction methods consisted of what are now called “archaic” fireproof hybrid structural systems of cast iron, wrought iron, terra cotta arch construction, cinder concrete slabs, structural steel and reinforced concrete framing systems, and other proprietary systems.

However, it was the invention of English-born architect and engineer Earnest L. Ransome that was first used in the Pacific Northwest as a proprietary steel reinforcing system. Ransome’s design to twist reinforcing iron to improve bond strength led to the development of an entire system for reinforced concrete construction that was used for bridges and buildings from the mid-1880s into the 20th century. Ransome’s system led to

the world's first reinforced concrete skyscraper, the 16-story Ingalls Building in Cincinnati, Ohio, designed by Elzner & Anderson Architects in 1903.

The development of concrete technology and the construction of concrete buildings in Seattle and the Pacific Northwest was contemporary with evolving concrete construction throughout the world. Three major cement suppliers, the Washington and Superior Portland Cement Companies and the Olympic Cement Company organized in 1914 to standardize their products and ensure quality. In 1917 the National Association of Cement Users (later the Portland Cement Association) opened an office in Seattle. The City of Seattle building code was updated in 1914 to better reflect the structural capacity of reinforced concrete buildings, and to increase the height limit to twelve stories. However, it wasn't until 1921 that the code was updated to remove certain restrictions on reinforced concrete construction and promote concrete buildings in the city. This updated code ensured the quality of concrete structures while removing height limits and led to a period of tall building concrete frame construction and innovation in Seattle.

Elsewhere in the county, Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Church (1906) in Oak Park, IL, and his later Johnson Wax Complex (1937) in Racine, WI, showed the fluidity and rigid expression available to ferro-concrete construction. The Unity Church is widely recognized as the first building in America to be constructed entirely in concrete, although in 1904, architect S. A. Jennings, a local proponent for ferro-concrete construction, claims to have designed the first entirely reinforced concrete building in the United States, the Adrian Court Apartments (demolished) on Seattle's First Hill. Jennings also utilized reinforced concrete in the five-story Haight Building, at Second Avenue and Pine Street, constructed in 1909.

Charles Bebb, a Seattle architect originally trained as an engineer and a recognized expert in fireproof building construction, incorporated reinforced concrete construction in several of his early projects. His eleven-story Frye Hotel (1911) incorporates both structural steel and reinforced concrete. Other relatively early reinforced concrete buildings in Seattle include the Corner Market Building (1911-12, Thomas & Granger) at First Avenue and Pike Street, and the US Government Locks Building (1916, Bebb & Gould). The American Meter & Appliance building (1919, Henry Bittman, City of Seattle Landmark) also has a concrete frame but does not have concrete floor systems.

Steel formwork began being manufactured in the United States in 1910. Steel formwork had superior longevity and derived economy over wooden forms due to how often it could be re-used. Thomas Edison used an early steel formwork system for building concrete homes. In 1928, corrugated steel pans, such as those visible at the underside of the second floor on the subject building, were being used as formwork.

Concrete structural systems such as one-way concrete joist construction, also called steel lap pan forming systems were being developed in the first half of the 20th century, although they did not become widely used until the second half of the 20th century. These economical structural systems relied on removable metal formwork. This type of construction was standardized in 1932 by the U.S. Department of Commerce. However, the

technique was being used earlier, such as at the subject building in 1929. The pan forming system evolved from other techniques for lightening concrete flooring systems by using hollow clay tile or other methods to form one-way structural system of reinforced concrete joists.

By the mid 20th century, steel formwork was the preferred option for large projects like skyscrapers and highway and transportation projects. Modular steel concrete forms are still preferred for durability and economy.

Early concrete buildings in Seattle include the Prefontaine Building at 110 Prefontaine Place (Hans Peterson, contractor, Pioneer Square NR no. 194) constructed of poured-in-place concrete in 1909. Charles Bebb, a Seattle architect originally trained as an engineer and a recognized expert in fireproof building construction, incorporated reinforced concrete construction in several of his early projects. His eleven-story Frye Hotel (1911, Pioneer Square NR no. 171) incorporates both structural steel and reinforced concrete.

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