



The City of Seattle

## Landmarks Preservation Board

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

### REPORT ON DESIGNATION

LPB 513/11

Name and Address of Property: **Pacific Net & Twine Building**  
**51 University Street**

Legal Description: Lots 1 and 2, Block 180 of Seattle Tide Lands, according to the official survey thereof, situated in the City of Seattle, County of King, State of Washington.

At the public meeting held on November 2, 2011 the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Pacific Net & Twine Building at 51 University Street as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standards for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

- C. It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, City, state, or nation; and*
- D. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, period, or of a method of construction; and*
- E. It is an outstanding work of a designer or builder.*

### **PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

The Pacific Net and Twine Company Building, later known as Pacific Marine Supply Company Warehouse is located at 51 University Street, on the west side of Western Avenue. Historically the building address was listed as 1213 Western Avenue. Designed by John Graham, Senior and completed in 1918, it shares the block between University and Seneca St with the former John B. Agen Warehouse, also designed by Graham and completed in 1910.

This is a six story building, which also has basement and penthouse levels. The building is sited between Western Avenue to the east and Alaskan Way to the west and between University Street to the north and an alley adjoining 1201 Western Avenue to the south. The building footprint is rectangular, with the shorter dimension parallel to both Western Avenue and Alaskan Way. The roof is partially flat, although there are several small penthouses, mainly original, which are mostly not very visible from the street; however, they do have some impact on the parapet levels of both the north and western elevations. Most of the penthouses, as originally built, had skylights.

**Administered by The Historic Preservation Program**  
**The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**

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## **Plan and Structure**

The building footprint is 120 feet by 134 feet, with the shorter dimension parallel to both Western Avenue and Alaskan Way. The exterior structure is of reinforced concrete and, in particular, includes reinforced concrete piers. These are part of a structural grid, which includes the original interior structure. The interior structure consists of regularly spaced concrete columns, which are octagonal in plan.

## **General View**

In general, visual interest is added to the building exterior by a variety of repeated motifs in the ornament and at the parapet level, based on triangular shapes, which are added or subtracted from rectangular, square or cross-shapes. Further interest is added by the contrast between light colored concrete and brick cladding, as well as the contrast between solid masonry elements and fairly big expanses of multi-pane glass. The building exterior features an east façade, consisting of six bays, set along Western Avenue, a northern façade, consisting of seven bays along University Street and a western façade, also of six bays, along Alaskan Way.

## **East Façade on Western Avenue**

The Western Avenue façade has six recessed bays, separated by concrete piers. The piers run from the ground level to the parapet level and end in a pointed, two sided shape. In addition, a distinctive geometrical shape in ornamental brick is set near the top of each pier. Akin to a shield motif turned upside down, the shape of the brick ornament resembles that of a triangle added to a rectangle and basically mirrors the shape of the top of the pier. Between the concrete piers, spandrels are in brick, but lintels and sills are in concrete. For the top four floors, window openings, which run from pier to pier in the horizontal direction, are filled with multi-pane industrial sash.

Below these four floors, the second floor bays are divided into three openings by small, brick clad columns. Below, at a mezzanine level, each of the bays feature a row of three single rectangular openings, with window frames inset and recessed within the exterior wall. The ground level bays consist mainly of new storefront, which includes new glazing and hardware, but maintains the tripartite division, established at the two levels above. A continuous awning, constructed of fairly hefty circular metal pipe, has been added (during the late Twentieth Century) above the storefront.

## **Fenestration and Ornamental Elements**

Glazing at the ground level and mezzanine is clearly new, although compatible with the original design. The ground level storefront, facing Western Avenue and along University Street, reflects more recent design trends in storefront detailing, although original changes to the ground level occurred as early as the 1980s. Until at least 2007, at the upper four levels, the openings retained what appears to have been original multi-pane industrial sash glazing. All the glazing has since been replaced. At the second level, each bay is divided into three openings. Each of the openings now contains a clear glass pane, topped by a clear glass transom. At the top four levels, each large opening originally had a large expanse of multi-pane sash, with an implied tripartite division. Each of the openings now has three clear glass panes, also topped by a clear glass transom. On the other hand, major elements of the original exterior fabric remain.

Other original design elements include a variety of geometrical ornamentation. Aside from the ornament at the top of each of the piers, there is a recurring recessed cross-shape, which is cut into each of the piers above the mezzanine level. The shape is fairly prominent and each of its

arms ends in a characteristic pointed shape. The exterior of the shape is in concrete. This is inset with tiles, which create an interior cross shape, which echoes the outer shape, within which are interlocking squares and diamond shapes in a variety of colors and shades, including yellow, green, blue and dark blue. Also directly above each storefront, are repeated bands of a third geometrical shape, essentially a square with a small triangle cut out from the center of each of its sides.

### **North Elevation Facing University Street**

Overall, the north elevation, which faces University Street, has the same basic composition and design detailing as the Western Avenue elevation, except that there are seven bays instead of six bays. Even here, there are a few obvious differences. The penthouse level, (described as a “loft” on the King County Tax Assessor’s record cards), presents an elevation, which ties in with the main parapet in front of it, so that the elevation has a central raised bay. The shape of this portion of the north elevation is that of a modified triangle, which has been flattened out at its apex and has a short amount of horizontal parapet to each side of it. The horizontal elements to each side of the modified triangle have simple, flat caps, instead of the usual pointed endings. The signature brick ornamental motif, observed at the top of the piers along Western Avenue, is used to adorn most of the University Street piers. (It does not occur on the most eastern pier, since originally a flag pole was affixed in the usual location for the ornament). It also occurs under the flattened apex of the penthouse/ loft.

On the north elevation, the two western bays at grade were originally occupied by a large garage door opening. As part of a late Twentieth Century remodel, this opening and a third adjoining bay were modified to create a major showpiece entrance to the uppers floors. This includes a curved wall set back within what was the larger garage opening and an entry in the adjoining bay with modern double doors, transoms and modern hardware. As part of the same remodel, the fenestration in the central bay was removed entirely, although the spandrels and other elements remained. At the ground level, the bay has a new double door, as well as an opening which exposes large mechanical pipes. This mechanical equipment, including large vents, is intentionally exposed and dramatically highlighted, as it rises vertically to the top of the building. Despite these somewhat dramatic new design flourishes, the north elevation is very large and retains much of its original fabric and detailing.

### **West Elevation, Facing Alaskan Way**

The western elevation along Alaskan Way exhibits essentially the same composition and original detailing as the other elevations. Originally the northwest corner of the building at the ground level was taken up by a garage. Consequently the first level bays consisted of wide garage door openings. With the modification of the interior function of the former garage space, the exterior bays have also been modified. At the four central openings, there is new, but compatible multi-pane glazing. There are also new concrete steps and platforms, which lead to entries at the second and fifth bays (counting from the north), as well as new, but compatible sheet metal awnings at these bays. Typical stair platforms at the second and fifth bays are partially circular in plan and are inset with ceramic tile squares. The central bay has glazed multi-pane transoms and a roll-up door, which is at grade. Above the ground level, the southernmost bay above the ground level has also been modified: glazing has been removed and concrete, set behind the original window opening, fills most of the bay opening at each floor.

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Pacific Net & Twine Building is an important building within the former Commission District, whose main thoroughfare was Western Avenue. In turn, the Commission District, located south of the present Pike Place Market, had a strong connection, both geographically and historically, with Seattle's developing central waterfront. The wider historical context of the Pacific Net & Twine Building therefore touches not only on the Commission District and Western Avenue, but also on the early development of Seattle and of its central waterfront.

### **Native American Encampments and Early Development**

Before the arrival of the Pioneers in the 1850s, the general area was associated with several Duwamish encampments, including "Djicjila'letc" ((djee-djee-lah-letsh), centered roughly at the intersection of First Avenue South and Yesler Way and Ba'qbaqwab, located farther north, on a ravine at the foot of Bell Street. There was also a known burial site located close to Seneca Street. After the official creation of the town of Seattle, centered around "Djicjila'letc," and the expulsion of the Native Americans by ordinance in 1865, most of the Duwamish who had formerly lived in the southern encampment are thought to have moved to "Ba'qbaqwab," then located outside of the official town. The Seneca Street burial site was also abandoned.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, especially during the 1880s and the 1890s, the Duwamish were still able to camp on Ballast Island, a mound created from the ballast and other material dumped by ships, at the foot of Washington Street.<sup>2</sup> By the end of the 1890s, however, the Native American encampments along the waterfront and its vicinity had disappeared.<sup>3</sup>

Following the arrival of the Pioneers in the early 1850s and the discovery of the deep water harbor off of Elliott Bay, David Maynard, Carson Boren and Arthur Denny platted what became the essential part of the future town of Seattle in 1853. In late 1852, Boren and Maynard had already persuaded Henry Yesler to set up the first sawmill on the waterfront, roughly at present day First Avenue and Yesler Way. They also gave him land east of the waterfront, which provided a corridor down which logs could be dragged, dubbed the "skid road." The mill building, which expanded to the west into Elliott Bay into what became Yesler's Wharf, was to play a major role in Seattle's growth as a city and port.

Yesler's Wharf was, in fact, Seattle's first pier. Yesler continued to enlarge it from the 1850s to the 1880s. He created additional support for the mill and wharf, as well as new land mass for further expansion, by dumping ballast, sawdust and other detritus created by his mill, onto the marsh and surrounding shore.<sup>4</sup> By 1882, although there were other piers, Yesler's wharf was clearly the largest and operated as the Puget Sound's main transportation center.<sup>5</sup> At this time, the

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<sup>1</sup> Dorpat, p 19-23, (with reference to David Buerge).

Hershman, Heikkala & Tobin, p 16-19.

David Buerge, "Seattle, 3000 B.C.-1851 A.D.: Seattle Before Seattle," The Seattle Weekly, 17 December-23 December, 1980, p 17-20 & 55.

<sup>2</sup> Hershman, Heikkala & Tobin, p 16-17

<sup>3</sup> Hershman, Heikkala & Tobin, p 19.

Dorpat, p 145 and p 89.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Benoit, The Man Induced Topographic Change of Seattle's Elliott Bay Shoreline from 1852 to 1930 as an Early Form of Coastal Resource Use and Management, Master of Marine Affairs (Thesis), Institute of Marine Studies, University of Washington, Seattle, 1979.

<sup>5</sup> Hershman, Heikkala & Tobin, p 31-33.

shoreline, particularly from about Cherry Street to Pike Street, did not extend much beyond present-day First Avenue.

Once Yesler's mill was running, public buildings as well as dwellings were built from sawn lumber and typically had clapboard siding. By the late 1880s, in the main parts of town, while there were a few buildings of sturdier materials, most of the buildings were of wood.<sup>6</sup> By the end of the decade, despite the relative sophistication of such buildings as the Frye Opera House at Front and Marion Streets and the Yesler-Leary Building on Yesler Way, many houses and commercial buildings were simple in design, with perhaps a modest amount of Victorian detailing. On the waterfront, Yesler's Wharf remained one of the largest and most important piers, while the waterfront itself was becoming a very important transportation hub.<sup>7</sup>

The railroads also had a strong impact on the physical development of the central waterfront and the future Commission District. In 1873, Seattle's hopes to become the terminus for the Northern Pacific Railway's transcontinental service had been dashed, when Tacoma was chosen instead, but Seattle was not easily deterred. In 1875, Seattle set out to build its own railway, the Seattle and Walla Walla, although its railroad tracks, which passed along the future Railroad Avenue, never ran far enough to provide transcontinental service.<sup>8</sup> In 1887, the Seattle, Lake Shore and Eastern tracks were constructed along a very uneven path, which followed the shoreline. The odd shape of the track was known as the "Ramshorn." The Seattle Lake Shore and Eastern depot was built near the foot of Columbia Street, on Western Avenue. This building later served for a time as Seattle's official train depot.

During the early 1890s, the Seattle, Lake Shore and Eastern tracks were purchased by the Northern Pacific. During the same period, James J. Hill's Great Northern Railway became Seattle's second transcontinental line. In order to create space for both the Great Northern, as well as the Seattle, Lake Shore and Eastern's "ramshorn" track arrangement, Railroad Avenue was given a width of 120 feet. Its eastern boundary was set outside the high tide line, which meant that the avenue was located in the water.<sup>9</sup>

Seattle's economy also relied on a system of independently owned steamers and schooners, which, during the 1890s, became known as the "mosquito fleet."<sup>10</sup> Ocean-going vessels had begun transporting lumber from Seattle to San Francisco as early as 1853. By 1880, exports shipped from the Seattle region included not only lumber and coal, but also grain and wheat and other products. By the end of the 1880s, Seattle had developed a much larger network of steamers, as well as sailing vessels. The presence of both the railroads and of ocean going vessels played a very important role in the development of the waterfront and of the warehouse district on the east side of Railroad Avenue. While in early June of 1889, the harbor continued to thrive, the Great Fire of 1889 also caused major transformations.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Bagley, p 38-39, p 46, p 223 ; Morgan, p 34.

Crowley, National Trust Guide Seattle, New York: Preservation Press/ John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1998, p 4.  
Murray Morgan, Skid Road, An Informal Portrait of Seattle, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1995 (first publication 1951, reprint 1995), p 6.

<sup>7</sup> Hershman, Heikkala & Tobin, p 31-33.

<sup>8</sup> Bagley, p 243-245.

<sup>9</sup> Bagley, p 251-258.

Walt Crowley, "Municipal Ownership Movement – A Snapshot History," October 17, 1999, rev. October 13, 2003, database available online at <<http://www.historylink.org/>>

<sup>10</sup> Padraic Burke, A History of the Port of Seattle, Seattle: Port of Seattle, 1976, p 3.

<sup>11</sup> Bagley, p 102, p 117-121

## **The Great Fire of 1889 and Development after the Fire – The Commission District in the 1890s**

On June 6, 1889, a fire started in a cabinet shop on First Avenue and Madison Street. Based on historian Clarence Bagley's description, the fire was at first concentrated on First Avenue around Madison, Marion and Columbia Streets; but it soon spread, both north and south, igniting about thirty blocks of the heart of Seattle. Along First Avenue, the fire spread as far north as Spring Street. Along the waterfront, it obliterated all the waterfront structures until Union Street, including Yesler's Wharf, but spared the Schwabacher Dock. This meant that the future Pacific Twine and Net Building site and everything in its vicinity, located along the waterfront, was obliterated.<sup>12</sup>

After the Great Fire, much energy was put into the rebuilding of the heart of the city, now the Pioneer Square Historic District, in brick, stone and terra cotta. Augustus Koch's famous map, "Seattle and Environs," from 1891 and Sanborn Maps from 1893 show the Pioneer Square area, much as we know it today, but also give a good sense of the central waterfront and of the Commission District. The railroad tracks of both the Seattle Lake Shore and Eastern Railroad and the Great Northern Railroad were mostly set out on the water between the docks or near the shore, particularly from Virginia Street and points north. To the west of the train tracks, a variety of docks, named after their owners, were set perpendicular to the shoreline. To the east of the train tracks, West Street, now Western Avenue, was already a long street, which ran from as far north as Depot Street, now Denny Way, south to past Columbia Street.<sup>13</sup>

Particularly south of Union Street, West Street, now Western Avenue, operated as a main thoroughfare within the Commission District, an area filled with a variety of wholesalers, and especially grocery wholesalers. In fact, the neighborhood gained its name from the middlemen, who bought produce from farmers on a "commission basis" and then resold it, sometimes cheating the farmers of a decent profit. Eventually, in 1907, the Pike Place Market, located between Virginia and Pike Streets, was founded to allow producers to sell directly to consumers, without the intervention of the middlemen. Before the Great Fire, the Commission District mainly consisted of somewhat haphazardly sited utilitarian shed buildings. Not long after the devastation of the Fire, the area, which ran roughly from Railroad Avenue to Post Alley, was still mostly composed of makeshift structures, often corrugated iron warehouses or metal and wooden sheds. Even by the late 1900s, Western Avenue was still a noisy, planked street, crowded with teams of horses, haggling wholesalers and farmers, and piles of boxes of vegetables and fruit.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Bagley, p 419-428.

Caroline Tobin, Planning for the Urban Waterfront: A Historical Case Study of Seattle's Waterfront, Master of Urban Planning (Thesis), University of Washington, 1977, p 14.

Also see: Jeffrey Karl Ochsner and Dennis Alan Andersen, Distant Corner: Seattle Architects and The Legacy of H. H. Richardson, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2003.

Mildred Andrews, Editor, Pioneer Square: Seattle's Oldest Neighborhood, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2005.

"Narrative Statement of Significance – The Pioneer Skid Road National Historic District," National Register Nomination Update, 2005, Historic Preservation Program, City of Seattle website.

<sup>13</sup> Augustus Koch, "Seattle and Environs, King County, Wash., 1891," Seattle: Historic Northwest Images, LLC, reprint, no date.

Seattle Fire Insurance Maps, Sanborn Map Company, 1893.

<sup>14</sup> Alice Shorrett, "A History of the Pike Place Marketing District," (Research Paper Prepared for the City of Seattle, Department of Community Development), Seattle, 1972.

The Commission District developed in tandem with the waterfront and it was not uncommon for owners of waterfront piers to own corresponding warehouses on the east side of the tracks in the Commission District. For instance, the Schwabacher Dock and “Warehouse No.1,” which had survived the Great Fire, were located on the waterfront near the foot of Union St. They were owned by the Schwabacher Company, which had been dealing in dry goods and other supplies in Seattle since the late 1860s. (The company was also responsible for several well-designed buildings which still stand in the present Pioneer Square Historic District). The Schwabacher Dock had several associated warehouses, which were located between the railroad tracks and West Street (Western Avenue). These included a second warehouse, Schwabacher Warehouse No. 2, as well as a larger Schwabacher Brothers building. This last building or, most likely, a successor building, designed by Saunders and Lawton in 1910, still stands (1414 Alaskan Way).<sup>15</sup>

In the same way, during the early 1890s, farther south, Harrington and Smith, wholesale dealers in groceries, hardware and building supplies, owned a wharf at the foot of Washington Street. They also owned a corresponding building, built in 1890, which still stands and is located on the east side of Railroad Avenue (Alaskan Way) and Washington St. On the block between Marion and Columbia Streets, Risdon Cahn & Co., wholesale grocers, were located between the tracks and West Street, while another wholesale grocer, F. H. Hill, was located across the street, on the east side of West St. Moving north on the western side of West St, there were two large Commission warehouses between Marion and Madison Streets, as well as a grain and feed business. A block south of the future Pacific Net and Twine site, the Badera Milling company had a warehouse located on the west side of Western Avenue, as well as a related a wharf, located at the foot of Spring Street.<sup>16</sup>

Several other warehouses along West Street/Western Avenue were used to store “hay grain and feed.” Between Spring and Seneca Streets, for instance, Atkinson and Zerwech Hay Grain and Feed, as well as Harkness and Hibbard Hay Grain and Feed, were such businesses. On the east side of West Street, the “Seattle Feed Mill” and the “Teamsters Feed Stable” were located between Seneca and University Streets. On the opposite side of West St, on the block later occupied by both the Pacific Net and Twine Company Warehouse and the former John B. Agen Warehouse, stood the Lilli Bogardus Hay and Feed Warehouse, on the north side of the block, the Washington Produce Hay Feed Warehouse and the Union Ice Company Offices Barn.

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Dorpat, p 115.

Baist Map, 1912, Plate 2.

<sup>15</sup> Augustus Koch, “Seattle and Environs, King County, Wash., 1891,” Seattle: Historic Northwest Images, LLC, reprint, no date.

Seattle Fire Insurance Maps, Sanborn Map Company, 1893.

Jeffrey Ochsner and Dennis Andersen, Distant Corner: Seattle Architects and The Legacy of H. H.

Richardson, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2004, p 288-289.

Pioneer Square: Seattle’s Oldest Neighborhood, Mildred Andrews, Editor, Seattle: University of Washington Press, p 37.

<sup>16</sup> The Lowman Building, 107 Cherry Street, Historic Preservation Certification Application, Part 1,” 5 February , 2004.

The Conservation Company, “ Lowman-Hanford Building, 612-616 First Avenue, Historic Preservation Certification, Part 1,” April, 1982.

More industrial uses could also be found. Diamond Ice Storage, which beginning in 1894 would play an early role in creating electricity in Seattle, owned a building between University and Union Streets. To the south, stood the Vulcan Iron Works and the McLellan Machine and Blacksmith Shop. Between Marion and Columbia Streets, other businesses included the “Griffin Chemical Company,” the “Washington Shoe Manufacturing Company.” Although the Harrington and Smith Warehouse and what are probably later versions of the Schwabacher Warehouse No.2 and the former Diamond Ice Storage building still stand, all the other buildings in the Commission District from this time are gone.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Tidelands and the Rebuilding of the Piers**

Although clearly an area of great activity, the Commission District continued to be a run-down area and an area in transition. Further to the west, from the late 1880s, “tideland jumpers” competed with upland owners for the right to portions of the tidelands, including those along the central waterfront. The tideland developers made all sorts of “improvements,” from building docks to cultivating oysters. Until the declaration of statehood in 1889, the official stance of the U. S. Government was that it was holding the tidelands in trust for the future state and that all such activities were illegal<sup>18</sup>

At Washington’s first state convention in 1889, delegates attempted to resolve some of the problems posed by the tidelands. They agreed to a compromise measure in which the state affirmed its ownership of the tidelands, but those who owned or claimed ownership would be able to substantiate these claims, by applying to the courts. The efforts to control the development of the tidelands coincided with City Engineer R. H. Thomson’s early regrading of many of the major streets to the east of the railroad tracks. Real development of the tidelands was held up for a time, however construction increased dramatically by the early 1900s on formerly marshy land along the east side of the railroad tracks and along Elliott Bay.<sup>19</sup>

The development of the tidelands was also tied to Seattle’s explosive growth, which occurred especially from the 1900s to the early 1910s. The arrival of the two transcontinental railway lines, the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern in the 1890s, as well as the Klondike Gold Rush, beginning in 1897, were major factors in this economic and physical growth.<sup>20</sup>

Tied to all of this activity - the arrival of two major railroad lines, the reclamation of the tidelands, the regrading of city streets and the growth of Seattle - were new plans for the waterfront itself. City

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<sup>17</sup> Augustus Koch, “Seattle and Environs, King County, Wash., 1891,” Seattle: Historic Northwest Images, LLC, reprint, no date.

Seattle Fire Insurance Maps, Sanborn Map Company, 1893, especially plates 1a, 1b, 4a and 4b.

<sup>18</sup> Benoit, p 22-25.

Hershman, Heikkala & Tobin, p 25-27.

Padraic Burke, A History of the Port of Seattle, Seattle: The Port of Seattle, 1976, p 13-14.

Tobin, Planning for the Urban Waterfront, p 15.

“The Compass Center, Historic Preservation Certification Application, Part 1, 77-79 South Washington Street,” 24 January, 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Burke, p14.

Tobin, p 15.

Walt Crowley, “Municipal Ownership Movement – A Snapshot History,” October 17, 1999, rev. October 13, 2003, database available online at <<http://www.historylink.org>>

<sup>20</sup> Walt Crowley and HistoryLink Staff, Seattle and King County Timeline, Priscilla Long, Editor, Seattle: HistoryLink with the University of Washington Press, 2001, p 29.



Engineer R. H. Thomson played a significant role in the redesign of the waterfront and its environs, particularly from the end of the 1890s. He is credited with assuring that the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern Railroads did not build large showpiece railroad stations along the waterfront.<sup>21</sup> Instead, James J. Hill of the Great Northern Railroad built King Street Station, completed between 1904 and 1906, on reclaimed tidelands at Third Avenue between Jackson and King Streets.<sup>22</sup> A second station, Union Station, was constructed close by, also on reclaimed tidelands, between 1910 and 1911 for Edward Henry Harriman's Oregon-Washington Railway, a subsidiary of his Union Pacific.<sup>23</sup>

City Engineer Thomson also convinced James J. Hill to build the Great Northern Tunnel. It ran from the southern portal, at Fourth Avenue South and South Washington Street, close to King Street Station, to a northern portal at Elliott Avenue between Stewart and Virginia Streets. The tunnel, which began to be used upon the completion of King Street Station in May of 1906, ensured a direct connection to the waterfront and, for a time, helped to free Railroad Avenue from excessive congestion.<sup>24</sup>

Thomson and Assistant City Engineer George Cotterill were also responsible for the 1897 Tideland Replat that also required that all the waterfront piers would be rebuilt based on a new northeast-southwest alignment.<sup>25</sup> The pier sheds themselves had a similar footprint and a heavy timber interior structure, often with distinctive truss work. Because all of the piers (with the possible exception of one or two) were rebuilt according to the new alignment, they mostly dated from after 1897, with the earliest piers usually dating from the early to mid-1900s.

After the rebuilding of the piers, the ownership and tenancy of the piers changed considerably from what it had been during the 1890s. This would have an effect on the Commission District. For instance, the Northern Pacific Railway was responsible for the construction of Piers 3, 4 and 5 (now 54, 55, 56) all constructed in the early 1900s. Pier 6, (Pier 57), originally built by entrepreneur John B. Agen to house his Alaska Butter and Cream Company, was bought by the Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway Company in 1909. The older historic Schwabacher Pier, also known as Pier 7, according to Thomson and Cotterill's new numbering system, was enlarged and relocated in the late 1890s to conform to the new alignment. In August 1896, the Miike Maaru docked there, forging future and important trade relations between Seattle and Japan. In 1897, the ship Portland, carrying "a ton of gold," docked at the slip between the Schwabacher Pier and the Pike Street Pier, marking the beginning of the Klondike Gold Rush.<sup>26</sup>

The Pike Street Pier, also known as Pier 8 (now Pier 59) was initially constructed in 1896 for Ainsworth and Dunn, owners of the Seattle Fish Company and previous owners of a "Fish, Hay and

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<sup>21</sup> Bagley, p 258-259.

Dennis Meier, "Evolution of Seattle's Downtown," Research Paper for Downtown Use and Transportation Project, Seattle: City of Seattle, December 1980, p 23.

<sup>22</sup> Bagley, p 258-263.

<sup>23</sup> Bagley, p 258-263.

Margaret Corley, "Union Station- 4<sup>th</sup> South and South Jackson, National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination," July 1969.

<sup>24</sup> Beaton, p 59.

<sup>25</sup> Tobin, p 18.

Dorpat, p 144.

<sup>26</sup> Walt Crowley, p 69 and p 76.

Dorpat, p 161.

Feed” business at the foot of Seneca St. The pier, rebuilt to conform to the required northeast-southwest alignment, was completed in 1904. By 1912, the pier’s owner and main tenant was Dodwell Dock and Warehouse Company, a steamship agent; however in 1916, the Pacific Net and Twine Company, who would later commission this building, took over the pier.<sup>27</sup>

Between the early 1900s and the end of the 1910s, the physical changes to the central waterfront were dramatic. Not only was there was an impressive increase in activity, but new dock structures, some architecturally sophisticated, began to grace the waterfront. James Colman built successive versions of the Colman Dock, which included an elegant clock tower. Another impressive dock building was designed by architect James Blackwell for the Grand Trunk Railroad.<sup>28</sup> As before the Great Fire of 1889, there were interesting connections between the piers along Elliott Bay and the Commission District. Changes along the central waterfront, especially from Pike to Columbia Streets, including patterns of ownership, are reflected in the development along Western Avenue.

### **The Commission District during the 1900s to the 1910s**

From the 1900s to the 1910s, the “Commission District,” reflecting the changes along the neighboring waterfront, became more upscale. Western Avenue acquired notable buildings, many of which are still standing. Tying in with its presence on the waterfront, the Northern Pacific Railroad Company bought up land in the Commission District and built several warehouses along Western Avenue. One of the earliest of these, as well as an excellent example of the more substantial buildings developed in the district between the early 1900s and the 1910s, is the National Building. Designed by Kingsley and Anderson and completed between 1904 and 1905, it became the main center for the National Produce Company, one of the West Coast’s largest grocery wholesalers, which remained in the building until 1930.<sup>29</sup>

Even with the development of these more upscale buildings, however, photos of the period show a busy area, bustling with horse drawn carriages, grocery wagons, and tradesmen. To the south of the National Building, in the location of the Old Federal Building, between Madison and Marion Streets and on the east side of the street, was a one story masonry wholesale warehouse building, with continuous and busy storefronts along Western Avenue. By 1910, the imposing Maritime Building, stood directly opposite this building, on the west side of Western Avenue.<sup>30</sup> Other

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<sup>27</sup> Dorpat, p 163 -164.

Drawing Files and Permit Records, Department of Planning and Development, City of Seattle.  
Webster and Stevens (Photographer), “Ships on waterfront, Seattle, ca. 1905,” ca 1905, Image No. 1983.10.6984, Museum of History and Industry Photograph Collection.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Dorpat, Seattle Central Waterfront Tour, Part 4: From Mosquito Fleet to Ferry System at Colman Dock,” HistoryLink Essay 2474, May 24, 2000, database available online at <<http://www.historylink.org>>

Walt Crowley, National Trust Guide: Seattle, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 1998, p 70.  
Dorpat, Seattle Waterfront: An Illustrated History, p 196.

Clarence Bagley, “James Eustace Blackwell,” History of Seattle, From the Earliest Settlement to the Present Time, Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1913, p 633-634.

Kroll Map of Seattle, 1940, revised 1960, Plate 43 E.

<sup>29</sup> No Author, “The National Building,” National Register Nomination, circa 1982.

<sup>30</sup> Webster and Stevens, photographer, “Western Avenue from Marion Street, Seattle, ca. 1905,” ca. 1905 (more likely ca. 1910), Image No.1983.10.7471, Museum of History and Industry Photograph Collection.

buildings, some demolished, others since altered, were built as part of this new building wave in the Commission District.

On the east side of Western between Marion and Columbia Street, stood a striking, three-story rusticated stone building with repeated arched openings at the top level. One of its main stores, 820-822 Western Avenue, was owned by John B. Agen.<sup>31</sup> Across Western, the former Carstens Building, now the Commuter Building at 815 Western Avenue and the former Mutual Creamery Building at 809 Western Avenue, (only half of which is left), were completed in 1906. Still standing on the west side of Western Avenue, they have classical detailing and are distinguished by, overhanging cornices. Continuing the line of buildings, south on the western side of the avenue and across wide Columbia Street, are the Polson Building and 611 Western Avenue, both designed by the architecture firm of Saunders and Lawton and completed in 1910 (these two buildings are technically part of the present Pioneer Square Historic District).<sup>32</sup>

On the west side of Western Avenue, on the southern half of block between Seneca and University Streets, the Agen Warehouse by John Graham would be completed by 1910. It was originally built to house John Agen's Alaska Butter and Cream Company, which had been previously housed on the new Pier 6 (Pier 57), itself completed in 1902.<sup>33</sup> Of course, the Pacific Net and Twine Building would be completed eight years after the completion of the Agen Warehouse.

While the warehouses erected along Western Avenue in this period now tended to be substantial and well-designed buildings, there was also a continuing need for steam power in the neighborhood and points north and south. Located across University St from the Pacific Net and Twine Warehouse site, the older steam plant building located mid-block between Union and University Streets, dated from 1895. Under the new direction of the Puget Sound Traction Light and Power Company, owned by Stone and Webster, the older building was augmented by a new addition, also designed by Stone and Webster and completed in 1918. As part of these alterations, Stone and Webster introduced a then pioneering technique of producing steam, based on the burning of pulverized coal. The present Seattle Steam Company, (which includes these buildings, as well as the Old and New Post Plants at Columbia Street), still provides steam to downtown Seattle and neighboring areas. The two buildings, although altered, still stand.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> "John B Agen Store, 820-822 Western Avenue, ca. 1897," photograph, ca. 1897, Negative No. UW5749, University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections.

Webster and Stevens, photographer, "Grocery Wagons on Marion Street, Seattle, ca. 1905," photograph, Image No. 83.10.7. 360 W & S 3, 302, Museum of History and Industry Photograph Collection.

<sup>32</sup> Drawing Files and Permit Records, Department of Planning and Development, City of Seattle.

<sup>33</sup> Jeffrey Roush, Partner and Dianne Cole, Executive Assistant (Martin Smith Real Estate Services), "John Agen Warehouse," National Register Nomination, October 8, 1997.

<sup>34</sup> Drawing Files and Permit Records, Department of Planning and Development, City of Seattle. King County Tax Assessor Records, ca. 1932-1972.

"Seattle Steam Company's Walking Tour 2006," Seattle: Seattle Steam Company, 2006. Amanda Robertson, "An Investigation of Post Avenue Steam Plants," Report for URBDP 586, University of Washington, 2003, City of Seattle, Department of Neighborhoods, Historic Preservation Program Files.

Baist Map, 1905, Plate 2.

Located mid-block between Union and Pike Streets, is the former Schwabacher Warehouse, already mentioned. It appears to have replaced an earlier Schwabacher Warehouse, which stood at this location in 1893. Based on extant drawings, the present building was designed by the architectural partnership of Saunders and Lawton in 1910, but then was altered significantly by architect Louis Mendel in 1917. The main eastern façade, primarily the work of Mendel, is distinguished by a variety of brick corbelling, used in subtle configurations as ornament and to mark bay divisions.<sup>35</sup>

Across the street, on the east side of Western Avenue, the U.S. Immigration Building, which is still located south of the Pike Place Market, was completed in 1915. Designed by Bebb and Gould, it was the regional headquarters for the Federal Immigration Service from 1916 to 1931.<sup>36</sup>

These new Western Avenue buildings tied in with the Pike Place Market, created in 1907 and neighboring hotels along First Avenue. Several were elegantly designed buildings by architect Max Umbrecht, including the Colonial, the Hotel Cecil, the Beebe Building and the Globe Building. In general, the fairly direct connection between waterfront piers and warehouses along Western was repeated north of the official Commission District, to as far north as Broad Street. In the same way, during the 1900s and 1910s, hotel buildings lined First Avenue, to at least Battery Street.

### **The 1920s to the present**

Western Avenue in the vicinity of the Maritime Building did not change markedly during the 1920s; however, during this decade, Seattle's downtown center moved from the Pioneer Square area to an area centered around the Metropolitan Tract.<sup>37</sup> In order to formalize its development, in 1923, Seattle passed its first zoning ordinance, which created six zones or "Use Districts": the First Residence District, the Second Residence District, the Business District, the Commercial District, the Manufacturing District and the Industrial District.<sup>38</sup>

Zoning maps split Western Avenue into two zoning areas, the "Commercial District" for its eastern flank up to at least First Avenue and the "First Manufacturing District" for the western flank. The "Commercial District" could include residences and hotels, stores, offices, banks, restaurants, service stations, police or fire stations, printing establishments, telephone exchanges, theaters, dance halls, automobile salesrooms or storerooms, garages, hand laundries and some limited light industry. The "First Manufacturing District" allowed anything permitted in the "commercial district," a wider

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<sup>35</sup> Drawing Files and Permit Records, Department of Planning and Development, City of Seattle. King County Tax Assessor Records, ca. 1932-1972.

William Baist, Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Seattle, Wash. Philadelphia: W. G. Baist, 1905, 1908 and 1912.

Ochsner, Jeffrey and Dennis Andersen, Distant Corner: Seattle Architects and The Legacy of H. H. Richardson, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2004.

Ochsner, Jeffrey, editor. Shaping Seattle Architecture: A Guide to the Architects. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press (in association with the American Institute of Architects Seattle Chapter and the Seattle Architectural Foundation), 1994.

<sup>36</sup> John Tess (and edited by Leonard Garfield, OAHF), "The U. S. Immigration Building," National Register Nomination, 1987.

<sup>37</sup> Crowley, National Trust Guide, p 93-95.

<sup>38</sup> "Zoning Ordinance of the City of Seattle," Approved September 25, 1923, Seattle: City of Seattle, p 1.

assortment of light industrial uses, but nothing that would emit foul odors.<sup>39</sup> It is not clear that this caused significant changes along Western Avenue during the 1920s, but the light manufacturing zoning along the western side of Western may have formalized the uses in the existing warehouses, so that the buildings were able to endure more easily. Many of the older warehouses along the eastern flank have since been demolished.

For several decades after the 1920s, however, Western Avenue in the vicinity of the Pacific Net and Twine Company Building/ Pacific Marine Warehouse Company Building does not appear to have changed markedly. There are no extant buildings from the 1920s or 1930s, except for the Old Federal Building (1932). By the late 1960s, along with the Pioneer Square area, the area was rundown, but the 1970s and 1980s saw a significant amount of renovation along Western and in the general area, including on the central waterfront and on First Avenue, particularly from Seneca to Columbia Streets.

The buildings along Western Avenue, located in the former Commission District, were mainly renovated during the 1980s. On Western Avenue, Cornerstone Development rehabilitated the National Building, which also was listed on the National Register of Historic Places during the early 1980s. The development company also renovated the former Pacific Net and Twine Warehouse in 1980. Work on 1201 Western Avenue, the former Agen Warehouse/ Olympic Cold Storage, appears to have been completed as late as 1997.<sup>40</sup>

### **Building History**

The building was originally designed by John Graham (Senior) as a warehouse for the Pacific Net and Twine Company, an important supplier of marine and fishing gear. It was completed in 1918. Original drawings by Graham indicate that the building was originally projected to be only four stories in height. Aside from this, it appears that the Graham drawings were followed pretty carefully.

Around the time of the building's completion, the Pacific Net and Twine Company was also a tenant of Pier 8, now Pier 59. During the mid-1920s, the company merged with the Marine Supply Company at Pier 1 to form the Pacific Marine Supply Company. This building then became the home of the Pacific Marine Supply Company offices. Like its predecessors, the Pacific Marine Supply Company was associated with Seattle's shipping industry along the central waterfront. It was an important supplier of marine and fishing supplies. Under President D. B. McBride, a Portland entrepreneur, it became one of the largest marine supply companies in the Pacific Northwest.

During the 1930s, the building boasted a variety of signs, some large and apparently painted, some consisting of individual letters, possibly metal lettering, which were affixed to the spandrels. Much of the signage clearly announced Pacific Marine Supply Company's ownership of the building. In particular, set behind the parapet and looming up from the penthouse level, there was a huge sign, which appears have almost covered the length of the Alaskan Way elevation. A sign over the garage on the west side of the University Street elevation also explained what the company sold: "Fishing Supplies, Marine Hardware, Ship Stores."

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<sup>39</sup> "Zoning Ordinance of the City of Seattle," p 9-14 and Plate 39.

<sup>40</sup> Drawing Files and Permit Records, Department of Planning and Development, City of Seattle. King County Tax Assessor Records, ca. 1932-1972.

The Pacific Marine Supply Company remained in the building at least until the mid-1960s, but by 1966, appears to have merged with the former Schwabacher Company, to become the “Pacific Marine Schwabacher Company.” In 1966, the company also commissioned a new loading dock design for the building. Between 1970 and 1976, the building continued to be known as the “Pacific Marine Schwabacher Building” and the official address was 1213-1223 Western Avenue. Drawings by the architecture firm of Olson Walker from 1980 indicate that the warehouse was changed at that time to “retail” for Cornerstone Development. The Olson Walker drawings, incidentally, simply call the building “Schwabacher.” By 1983, the building address at 1213 Western Avenue, was associated with a large furniture store, known as “Abodio.”

The first set of extant drawings that indicate that Immunex was taking over any part of the building also date from 1983. It is in the 1980s, probably around 1983, that the major changes, such as the addition of the highly visible mechanical equipment and the addition of the curved wall behind the opening for the original garage, were completed. Alterations to various parts of the building, mainly interior changes for Immunex, continued to occur throughout the 1980s, at least into the early 1990s. The alterations were designed by a variety of well-known local Seattle architecture and engineering firms, including in the 1980s, the architecture firms of Olson Walker, Bumgardner & Associates and Wyatt Stapper and the engineering firms, Bouillon Christopherson and Schairer, as well as Robert Fossatti Associates. According to current reports, the building continues to be owned by Immunex and is described as the “Schwabacher Building,” however, it is more commonly known as the “Immunex Building.” A variety of retail stores have occupied the ground floor space, which faces Western Avenue. The space is currently occupied by the French furniture store, Ligne Roset.

Despite the change in ownership over the years and changes to the building, the exterior of the building is surprisingly intact and has kept the essential features and much of the exterior fabric of its exterior design. The building was consistently associated with Seattle’s maritime history and economy at least until the 1970s. It was also designed by one of Seattle’s most well-known early architects and in addition, is a worthy example of his work. Following is biographical information on John Graham, Senior.

### **John Graham, Senior**

John Graham practiced architecture in Seattle from 1901 to the 1940s. Born in Liverpool in 1873 and initially trained in architecture in the United Kingdom through apprenticeship, he first visited the United States in 1900, arriving in Seattle in 1901. Early in his career, he worked in the partnership of Graham and Myers with architect David J. Myers, with whom he produced several buildings for the Alaska Yukon Exposition of 1909. He began his independent practice in 1910.

His output, which expanded at the end of the 1910s, includes major buildings in downtown Seattle or its vicinity. During the 1910s, aside from the Pacific Net and Twine Building and the John B. Agen Warehouse, Graham produced the Joshua Green Building of 1913, the Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant of 1913-14 and the Frederick and Nelson Department Store Building of 1916-1919 (now Nordstrom’s). It is significant that of these buildings, the Ford Motor Company Building most closely resembles the Pacific Net and Twine Building/ Pacific Marine Supply Company in both function and design. Both buildings include repeated bays, separated by continuous piers, large expanses of industrial sash, as well as brick-clad spandrels, with the edges marked by a lighter colored material (terra cotta in the case of the Ford Motor Company Building, concrete in the case of this building). From 1914 to 1918, Graham was, in fact,

supervising architect on the design of Model T assembly plants for the Ford Motor Company all over the United States. The Pacific Net and Twine Building was also designed toward the end of this period and was presumably influenced by Graham's repeated design of Ford Motor plants.

Other notable buildings designed by John Graham include the Dexter Horton Building of 1921-24, the former Bank of California Building of 1924-1924, designed in the Classical Revival style and located in downtown Seattle (now a Key Bank), and several Art Deco Buildings, including the Exchange Building of 1929-31 and the Bon Marche Department Store of 1928-1929. John Graham's practice evolved into a well-established firm, with a branch in New York, which his son, John Graham, Jr., joined in the late 1930s. John Graham, Sr. died in 1955. John Graham, Jr. inherited the firm, which became known as John Graham & Company and remained in business until the 1980s.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Grant Hildebrand, "John Graham, Sr.," in Shaping Seattle Architecture, Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, editor, p 90-95.  
Grant Hildebrand, "John Graham, Sr.," in Impressions of Imagination: Terra Cotta Seattle, Lydia S. Aldredge, editor, Seattle: Allied Arts, 1986, p 25-29.

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The Seattle Post-Intelligencer website.

<http://content.lib.washington.edu/>

University of Washington Libraries Digital Collections.

### **Additional Periodicals and Newspapers**

The Seattle Daily Bulletin and Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

### ***The features of the Landmark to be preserved include:***

The exterior of the building.

Issued: November 4, 2011

Karen Gordon  
City Historic Preservation Officer

cc: Wendell Hill, Equity Residential  
Larry Costich, Schwabe Williamson & Wyatt  
Mark Hannum, LPB  
Bernie Matsuno, DON  
Diane Sugimura, DPD  
Alan Oiye, DPD  
Ken Mar, DPD