The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649 Seattle WA 98124-4649
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LPB 244/13

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

Name and Address of Property: **Puget Sound Power & Light Co. Utilities Building**
800 Aloha Street

Legal Description: All of Block 8, Eden Addition to the City of Seattle, according to the plat thereof recorded in Volume 1 of Plats, page(s) 61 ½, in King County, Washington; and that portion of Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4, Block 80, lying west of the alley deeded to the City of Seattle, and that portion of Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, Block 82, lying west of the alley deeded the City of Seattle in Lake Union Shorelands, in King County, Washington, as shown on the official maps on file in the office of the Commissioner of Public Lands at Olympia, Washington; also that portion of the vacated street adjoining said land, described as follows: beginning at the most westerly corner of Lot 1, Block 82 of Lake Union Shorelands as shown on the official maps on file in the office of the Commissioner of Public Lands at Olympia, Washington; thence southeasterly along the southwesterly line of said lot to the most southerly corner thereof; thence northeasterly along the southeasterly line of said Block 82 to the west line of said alley; thence south along said west line to the northwesterly line of said Block 80; thence southwesterly along said northwesterly line to the easterly line of said Block 8 of Eden Addition; thence northerly along said line to the east line of Eighth Avenue North; thence northerly along said east line to the point of beginning. (Being all the land lying south of the south line of Aloha Street, north of the north line of Roy Street, east of the east line of Eighth Avenue North, and west of the west line of the alley as deeded to the City of Seattle under Auditor's File Number 1394444, in King County, Washington.)

At the public meeting held on May 1, 2013 the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Puget Sound Power & Light Co. Utilities Building at 800 Aloha 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, Station or nation.

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

DESCRIPTION

Urban Context

The subject property consists of the western half of a long block bounded by 8th Avenue North on the west, Roy Street on the south, 9th Avenue North on the east, and Aloha Street on the north. A 16'-wide alley bisects the block and runs along the east side of the property. Across the alley on the east side of the block are three low-scale, unreinforced masonry commercial buildings, dating from 1922, 1924, and 1949. A historic map indicates that several of these were occupied by the Mack Truck Company.

The site is located approximately one block west/southwest of Lake Union and a block north of Mercer Street. Street widening along Mercer Street, underway for more than a half-decade, has recently been completed, and construction is ongoing on nearby Broad Street, just south of the subject property. Plans are underway to revise the Battery Street tunnel and reconnect several east-west streets across it as part of the revisions to the Viaduct and tunnel. The transportation projects are anticipated to enhance pedestrian experience, ease traffic throughout the neighborhood, and improve access to and from Interstate 5 and Highway 99.

Existing development to the north of the site and on nearby blocks to the south tends to be larger-scale and newer. North and east of the subject property there is a mix of old and new commercial and light industrial buildings, particularly along the edge of Lake Union, and newer development of up to seven stories. (This height is represented by the nearby Courtyard Marriott hotel, located on the block immediately north of the subject parcel.) Proposed zoning changes to the South lake Union area, currently under review by the City Council, will allow construction of much taller buildings of up to 24 stories.

The Site

The 571' by 116' property contains a surface parking lot on its northern 271' portion, and the former service building is located on the southern portion or the southwestern quarter of the block. The U-shaped mass is comprised of a center section approximately 200' wide by 75' deep, with a 50' by 116' deep block on the north end and a 70'-8" by 116' wing on the south wing. On the east or back side there is an approximately 178' by 40' open area and parking lot. The primary west facade extends approximately 300' along 8th Avenue North. An 11'-wide sidewalk and a lengthy curb cut runs along this side of the building, while the original sidewalk along Roy Street had 2' and 3' planting strips on either side of a 6' sidewalk. Original drawings indicate the building mass is set back 7' from the south property line, but this may not be consistent with existing conditions. The northern 271' by 116' portion of the property, which was originally used as a "pole yard" for outdoor storage, is fenced. There is no landscaping on the site, a condition that underscores the property's utilitarian nature.

The topography is relatively flat on the west side, with an overall grade change of approximately 4’ over the 300’ width of the building’s primary facade. The grade slopes slightly downward toward the east along the north and south sides. Along the east side, the grade from the alley slopes down toward the building, to access a paved 40’ by 178’-8” open space and parking lot between the north and south wings. This grade change also allows most of the basement level to be open to daylight.

Structure and Exterior Facades

The building is a tall, single-story assembled structure made up by three distinct sections, each characterized by different framing materials, massing and differentiated facade compositions. The roof forms also distinguish these sections with a flat roof over the south wing, a gabled roof over the north wing, and an asymmetrical gable over the loading dock in the western portion of the center section and a low sloped roof over the eastern, remaining portion. The structure consists of reinforced concrete 9”-wide perimeter walls with 7”-deep pilasters, concrete floor slabs, heavy timber columns at the first floor and concrete columns at the basement, and wood and steel and heavy timber roof trusses. Infill walls are made of concrete, concrete block, and hollow clay tile.

The structural grid is represented by columns exposed at the basement level by octagonal concrete piers with flared caps, which make up six east-west bays and sixteen north-south bays. Bay spacing varied in response to the functional needs and layout of the building, ranging from 16’-6” to 20’.

The primary building facades and floor plans are legible representations of the separate parts and functions of the building. The primary west facade clearly expresses three separate interior components, with taller north and south wings flanking a long central portion.

The northern, front-gabled wing is the tallest portion, rising approximately 32’ above grade, with a high-bay warehouse space within its truss-supported gable form. It features a single glazed wood, panel-type person door along with a centered 12’-wide by 15’-tall vehicle door. The original coiling steel door has been replaced by a metal panel type door. This door is set within a decorative, Classical-style surround of engaged piers, topped by simple caps and engaged finials, with a plain frieze band and molded cornice, all of smooth-finished cast stone. Centered above this there is a circular opening, which originally contained a divided light steel sash window and is presently louvered. A cast stone cornice with eave returns emphasizes the gable roof line. There are three windows approximately 4’-10” wide by 8’-6” tall and one, set above the person door, that is 3’-6” tall. The original steel sash windows in this portion of the west facade have been changed to aluminum frames with large glazing panels. The southern portion of this facade is made up by the west end of the south wing. This portion has a flat roof with a parapet and rises to 21’-3” above grade. It features five similar windows, each approximately 4’-10” by 8’-6” tall, set above a continuous cast concrete sill.

The center section of the west facade is a long “arcade” comprised of ten bays with its sloped roof edge terminating approximately 19’ above grade. This section features nine openings defined by hexagonal concrete columns set between 17’-4”-wide steel coiling doors with prominent cast concrete wheel guards. (The northernmost bay is symmetrically composed

with two tall windows on each side of a person door. The cast concrete window sill extends across this section and continues in the northern wing.) A continuous curb cut extends into the building, where it slopes down to meet the raised loading dock. The sloped roof above the vehicle doors is clad with Mission-style barrel clay roofing tiles, while the north and south wings, which project slightly, are defined by cast concrete quoining at their outer corners.

The primary south facade also features the same quoining at its outer corners and the same decorative cornice as the flat roof parapet cap. The height of this portion of the building is 21'-3" from first floor level to the top of the 3'-tall parapet. The south facade contains two entries, each accessed by concrete steps. The westernmost door assembly is symmetrically composed with risers and an 11'-2" by 5' deep landing leading to a pair of entry doors that access the original building's entrance hall. The door surround features cast concrete quoins and a flat arch defined by voussoirs. (Original drawings show an elaborate arched head opening with quoining and voussoirs, but this detail apparently was not executed.) The easternmost entry is more informal, with an exterior side stairs leading to a 3'-wide opening to an interior vestibule that led to the storeroom office. Large window openings, in typical sizes of 5'-6" or 8'-6" tall by 5'-8" wide, are featured on this facade, detailed with a continuous cast concrete sill line. These windows were originally steel sash windows with operable pivoting sections, but have been replaced with aluminum windows. Due to the grade change, the south facade appears to sit on a plinth finished with cement plaster, while above this the wall is treated with a heavy textured, stucco finish. This treatment is the typical finish on the primary facades, where it contrasts with the smooth finish of the cast stone elements.

The north and east facades are utilitarian. The east (alley) facade is largely two stories due to the exposed the basement level. It contains large, 8'-6" by 11'-4"-wide window openings in the east ends of the north and south wings and even larger 8'-6" by 14'-11"-wide window openings, with industrial steel sash on the three walls that surround the open back "courtyard." There are also smaller window openings into the basement, with heights of 3'-6" or 1'-8". All of the windows are made up by sections approximately 5'wide, each section typically containing 20 lights (four wide by five tall). The larger windows feature pivoting sections for ventilation.

The north and east walls are made up by poured, board-formed concrete, with a short parapet above the roof line. Original doors were cited on drawings as wood panel types, some with glazed panels; these have been replaced with steel doors and frames.

As noted, most of the larger windows provided ample natural ventilation through operable sections. In addition there were a total of 14 shed and hipped skylights, made of steel frames and wire glass. Some of these featured ventilators, and there were independent exhaust vents as well. These elements have been removed, and the present roof features only mechanical equipment on its southernmost section. Originally a tall exhaust chimney was situated near the southeast corner, where it was visible from the south; this element has been removed. Large sheet metal ducts have been installed in front of the central portion of the west facade, apparently for ventilating the basement.

A few of the original divided-light steel sash windows have been replaced with aluminum units in the smaller window openings along the west and south facades. Most of the larger, multi-light industrial steel sash windows remain in place on the north and east facades. The windows on the north facade are covered by plywood attached to the exterior of the building, but the original industrial steel windows remain in place.

Interior Plan and Features

Both the central and northern sections of the building are made of fire-resistant materials consistent with their industrial use. The north wing is an open-span clear volume with its gabled roof supported by load-bearing, heavy timber trusses and solid wood decking. The trusses are comprised of 8x8 and 8x10 members and metal rods, with gussets at the central peak of each one, while their side ends are bolted onto pilasters on the north and south walls. The lower chords support a craneway for carrying heavy goods, a portion of which remains. The heavy timber and wood framing are painted a light color to reflect day light from the north and east windows within the space. (Presently the large steel sash windows on the north facade remain, but are covered with plywood.)

According to a period newspaper account, the north wing originally contained the tall garage space and a small superintendent's office, a small storeroom for auto supplies, a wash rack and mechanical equipment used for vehicle repairs, locker room for mechanics and drivers, and adjacent blacksmith and curtain shops. Several of these smaller rooms were finished with painted plaster walls and suspended plaster ceilings, along with polished concrete walls and cast-in-place concrete base. Toilet and shower rooms were clad with cement plaster wainscot, concrete floors and base.

The front or western portion of the center section contains a continuous loading platform and truck loading dock in an approximately 178' by 33' space, which is fitted with a narrow, I-beam overhead carrier. Visible above this craneway are the asymmetrical steel roof trusses, with bolted gussets, and car decking that supports the asymmetrical gabled roof.

A large room of approximately 178' by 28' is situated on the back or east side of the center section, which was used for parts storage and linemen's rooms. This space is characterized by a series of 10" heavy timber posts, heavy timber beams, and "steel storage of the latest design." Similar to the north section, this part of the central section is painted a light color to enhance lighting. Smaller spaces within this large area are partitioned with wood-framed windows, allowing for daylight and supervision. Between the two major spaces of the central section there were two staff offices, an elevator, and a series of small wire compartments, which were for the use of different line crews for overnight secure storage of their equipment and supplies. Originally, there were eight large and four smaller skylights in the roofs of the central section. Made of hipped metal frames and wire glass, they brought daylight into its deep interior spaces, along with the large windows on the east perimeter wall. These skylights have been removed and/or covered over. Presently, the lighting in the western loading area is minimal when the large vehicle doors are shut.

The south wing contained the linemen's rooms and lockers and a storeroom where records and supply books were kept, and a suite of offices identified as the Foreman's Office on the

original drawings. The ceilings of these spaces were dropped below the typical 17' overall height to approximately 12', and finished with plaster. Additionally, a full basement, daylighted by large windows on the east (alley) side, contained vehicle storage, general storage, transformer testing and storage, along with the elevator and an adjacent elevator machine room. A coal room and boiler room were placed at the southeast corner. (Seattle Times, November 21, 1926.)

All of the large, clear-span spaces within the original building were left unfinished, with exception of paint. Because of this, the volumes are open and the heavy timber roof trusses in the north garage wing, made up by 8x8 and 8x10 members and metal rods, are visible. Similarly, the asymmetrical bolted and gusseted steel trusses that make up portions of the roof structure over the center section are visible below the car-decking structure in the loading dock area.

The first floor and basement of the building were originally accessed by several interior stairs and by a large elevator with a 9'-4" by 8'-10" cab. In addition, the northern wing and center section, which were set at different elevations, were linked by a narrow stair that made up the 3'-6" height difference.

On the interior, the current south (office) wing has been updated for evening and night use as a homeless shelter. The north wing, center loading and warehouse space, and basement retain original features and finishes. The center warehouse space is presently used for storage, and the north wing is used for storage and has previously been leased for varied short-term uses, such as a shooting set for advertisement or films. The basement is occupied by two tenants and used for vehicle storage and motorcycle sales and repairs.

Stylistic Features

The primary west and south facades of the building are characterized by simple Classical Revival and Mission Revival details, while the secondary north and east facades are utilitarian in nature, but characterized by consistently-sized and evenly-spaced window openings that represent the rational structure and reinforce the enduring aspect of Classicism. The Classical Revival influence is visible in a gable-shaped pediment on the west facade of the north wing, cast stone quoining at the slightly projecting corners of both the north and south wings, and a molded cast stone cornice. Mission Revival characteristics include the long "arcade" of garage door openings along the west facade, bracketed by the taller north and south blocks; textured stucco finish; and a narrow clay tile roof—the west slope of a gabled roof—over the central portion.

While the construction technology of the building's structural systems cannot be characterized as a style, they clearly embody both vernacular and engineering design concepts, as well as construction methods and materials of the early 20th century. The lengthy heavy timber posts and beams, heavy timber roof trusses, and solid car decking all speak of readily available timber materials, while the bolted connections, asymmetrical roof trusses, and craneways were also regionally available and likely manufactured by the city's early steel industry. Though the unfinished materials and the structural connections are robust, the hand of the builder is evident. The building's structural systems allowed creation

of inherently flexible, large clear-span volumes that differentiate activities associated with storage and movement of a range of equipment and goods.

It remains unknown if the building's Classical Revival aspects were intended to recall the design of generating facilities constructed by both Puget Sound Power & Light and Seattle City Light. Certainly the hydroelectric and steam generating power plants of the early to mid-20th century are consistent with one another. All of these buildings are concrete structures, typically with flat roofs and a clear pattern of repetitive bays, often finished with stucco, with large rectangular window openings. They embody a sense of strength and permanence befitting their use and the intentions of their builders.

Changes over Time
The building appears well-built and in fair to good condition. Permit records and drawing available from DPD microfiche files indicate the following changes:

Date	Description
1937	Incinerator
1938	Balcony for garage locker room, clothes drying cabinet
1945	"Budgit" hoist installation
1952	Construct oil storage building (est. cost $50,000)
1955	Construct retaining wall
1955	Construct rockery, pave lot areas, construct canopy, construct oil storage house (est. cost $20,000)
1955	Remove coal hopper (heat conversion plan)
1958	Remove partition in existing building and occupy as warehouse
1958	Install temporary partitions in basement
1959	Install partitions in basement for office
1966	Erect and maintain sign
1967	4,000-gal. diesel fuel tank and piping
1975	Alter and install ductwork and cyclone dust collector separator and concrete foundation for dust collector per plan, basement carpenter shop
1976	Install boiler automation single fuel
1977	Install paint spray booth in existing building
1979	Construct foundation for storage building
1982	Interior alteration and change of use in portion of 1st floor from storage to workshop (2,000sf)
1982	Install ventilating system in existing workshop
1985	Add mezzanine and stairs to existing building, change portion of existing shop to office, add storage
1986	Replace roof over portion of building
1987	Interior alterations to ground floor
1987	Wire office, wire lunchroom and surrounding hallways
1988	HVAC improvements
1991	Interior alterations to existing office building
1991	Wire six new offices
1992	Install prefabricated accessory storage building in parking lot

1996 Extend existing sprinkler system to office area (main floor & lower level)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Development of Industrial South Lake Union

The South Lake Union neighborhood is located north of the city's Central Business District, and north and east of Belltown / Denny Regrade. It is bordered by the lake on the north, Interstate 5 on the east, Denny Way on the south, and Highway 99 / Aurora Avenue on the west. Early maps and photos from the 1870s depict the area as primarily residential in character. The topography in the South Lake Union area gradually slopes down to the north, toward Lake Union, while the west side of Queen Anne Hill slopes more dramatically. The grade along Westlake Avenue North is lower than other parts of the South Lake Union neighborhood, as it was once the location of a streambed, while along the west side of the lake it was constructed on graded fill.

Very early maps and photographs from the 1880s show the east slope of Queen Anne and the Westlake area of South Lake Union with small wood frame houses. Early industrial development focused on the lake, which became an early transportation route for shipments of logs and coal, which were cut or extracted east of Lake Washington. Sawmills and shingle mills were predominant early industrial uses along the lake. In 1883, Seattle annexed what had been David Denny's original claim. Gradually, both the South Lake Union and Cascade neighborhood to the east of it developed as mixed-use urban communities with apartment buildings, boarding houses and single-family houses, a public school, and churches identified with different immigrant groups. Early industries also included breweries, candy manufacturers, commercial bakeries and laundries, tanneries and cooperages, and several clothing manufacturing plants. Wharves were constructed along the lake, and commercial service businesses developed along the main north-south access, Westlake Avenue North. The construction of electric streetcars in the 1880s and 1890s connected passengers from downtown to South Lake Union and beyond. The streetcars ran along the lakeshore and extended to "streetcar suburbs" throughout the city.

In 1909, the Northern Pacific Railway was granted a franchise by the City to extend a spur line to the neighborhood, by way of Fremont and along the western shoreline of Lake Union. The line split at Valley Street, with one portion continuing south on Terry Avenue North to just north of Harrison Street, and another continuing east to Fairview Avenue North. This line was used by the Ford Assembly Plant, which operated from 1913 to 1932 near the southeast edge of the lake. Other vehicle manufacturers in the area—the Kenworth Truck Company at Yale Avenue North and Mercer, and Mack Trucks at Westlake and Roy Street—may also have benefited from the railroad's presence. Seattle City Light constructed a small hydro house on the southeast edge of the lake in 1912, followed by the large oil-fired steam plant, which was built in three phases between 1914 and 1921. The plant's initial output was used for nearby industries and streetlights. It announced its presence with a dramatic sign, composed of illuminated, full-height letters along its lake-facing west facade, reading "CITY LIGHT." The plant was operative until the late 1980s.

When the Lake Washington Ship Canal finally opened July 4, 1917, it dramatically transformed Lake Union, industrializing it further. The small manufacturers declined and were displaced by docks for fishing vessels, asphalt and gravel plants, huge sawmills, and boatyards and shipyards.

The Kroll Atlas to Seattle of ca. 1912-20 shows the footprint of the subject building despite its having been constructed in 1926. Large nearby institutional buildings included the Seattle School District Administration Building, located at 822 Dexter Avenue North (later demolished and relocated) one block northwest of the subject building. The blocks to the west of this, on the lower slope of Queen Anne Hill, primarily contained single-family houses and apartment buildings. Directly east across the alley, there was a Mack Trucks facility in three buildings at 701-721 9th Avenue North. Two large gas tanks (for a private gas company known as Seattle Lighting) were prominent features on the block between 8th and 9th Avenues and Mercer and Republican Streets. Two showroom buildings of the McKay Ford and Lincoln Dealership were constructed in 1922 and 1925, a block away on Westlake Avenue North, followed by related service facilities. Pioneer Sand and Gravel owned the land that extended along the west side of the lake's Waterway No. 3, while the former Denny/Brace Mill between Waterways No. 3 and 4, were noted as "City Property." The map shows the presence of the former high water line of the lake, which receded with the lake's lowering, and the former Northern Pacific rail spur that ran along the shoreline on Westlake Avenue, to Terry Avenue to a freight depot, and east to the Ford Assembly Plant. Shipyards and dry docks around the lake and a propeller casting facility near its the southeast shore served tall sailing ships until construction of the Aurora Bridge in 1932, and private pleasure boats and large fishing boats before and after that date. During World War I, navy ships were repaired at these facilities, and after World War I, the lake was partially filled with surplus ships that were essentially wet-docked. The large Naval Reserve Armory was completed at the lake's south end in 1942, and during World War II, Lake Union again served military ship repair needs.

After the war, the South Lake Union industrial base contracted and much of the housing stock in the community deteriorated as the residential population declined. Meanwhile, commercial and manufacturing uses continued to increase, as evident in building permit records and photographs. Auto warehouses and retail showrooms became common along Westlake Avenue from the late teens and continued through the post-World War II era. Large distribution facilities and warehouses for building material suppliers and the construction trade became a common building type after World War II.

In 1952, the Battery Street tunnel was built beneath the Denny Regrade and southern portion of the South Lake Union area. This tunnel served to connect Aurora Avenue North, two blocks west of 8th Avenue North, to the new viaduct for highway 99 along the city's central waterfront. The area north of the tunnel (north of Thomas Street) was bisected into east and west halves, with only Broad and Mercer Streets, one-half block and one block south of the subject building, providing access across Aurora in South Lake Union.

In the early 1960s, the construction of I-5 further defined the identity of the South Lake Union neighborhood, linking it more closely with the lake as a result. The freeway's Mercer

Street access ramps divided the northeastern part of the neighborhood, placing several blocks of it in what might be considered the Eastlake area. Meanwhile, Broad Street was widened and its underpass was built below Aurora Avenue, along with a circular vehicle ramp onto Highway 99 just south of the subject property, extending the dominance of vehicles over pedestrians in the immediate area.

Vehicle traffic on Mercer Street continued to increase in the post-war decades, effectively separating the area south of Mercer from the lakeside amenities. At the same time, the proximity to I-5 and downtown made the area increasingly attractive for business development. Maps made after the mid- to late-1960s show increasingly large-scale parcels and development, alley vacations, and replacement of small-scale buildings by empty sites, typically with parking lots.

In a historic urban survey from 1975, the neighborhood was described as "a collection of auto showrooms, small businesses and manufacturing enterprises, and parking lots supplementary to, rather than integral with downtown" (Nyberg and Steinbrueck). Those neighborhood industries persisted into the late 1980s. They included older auto repair businesses and retail showrooms near Westlake Avenue, headquarters for general contractors, construction supply distributors, and floral and furniture warehouses. Business that moved into the area in the 1980s included printing/photography, childcare facilities, and telecom concerns. The northeast portion of the neighborhood, north of Mercer Street was redeveloped extensively by the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and Zymogenetics after it completed a rehabilitation that adapted the former City Light Steam Plant in the 1990s.

In the last two decades, the neighborhood has largely shifted from lower-scale light industrial and manufacturing buildings and warehouses to commercial and mixed-use structures of up to 12 stories on consolidated, full- and half-block parcels. University of Washington Medicine opened a biotechnology and research hub approximately a block south of the subject building, and other biotech organizations have moved into the neighborhood as well. The South Lake Union streetcar line was completed in 2007, and in 2010, Amazon moved its headquarters and corporate campus to the neighborhood. With the recent influx of thousands of workers, many new retail and food service businesses have opened as well. They tend to complement larger restaurants with parking lots and several hotels that were constructed along the lake shoreline in the 1990s.

The South Lake Union area contains a number of landmark designated former industrial facilities that have been adapted for new uses. They include the following designated Seattle Landmarks, which are located within three blocks of the subject building:

- Van Vorst Building/Amazon Office (1909), at 413-421 Boren Avenue North
- Ford Assembly Plant/Public Storage (1913), at 1155 Valley Street
- Lake Union Steam Plant / Zymogenetics (1914-21), at 1179 Eastlake Avenue East
- Lake Union Hydro House / Irwin's Café (1912). at 1201 Eastlake Avenue East
- Kelly Goodwin Hardwoods / Brave Horse Tavern and Cuoco Restaurant (1915). at 320 Terry Avenue North

- Pacific McKay & Ford McKay Buildings (1925 and 1922, presently disassembled and historic elements in storage). at 601-615 Westlake Avenue North
- Naval Reserve Armory / Museum of History and Industry (1941-42), at 860 Terry Avenue North

Early Electrification of Seattle

In its early years, Seattle essentially went dark at sundown. The city's 1869 charter authorized the municipal government to provide street lighting, and its first streetlights—powered by coal gas—were lit on December 31, 1873. The first electric light bulb arrived in Seattle in 1881, and five years later representatives from the Edison Electric Light Company demonstrated the use of an electric light bulb in the city (Wilma & Crowley, p. 8). An incandescent lighting plant constructed in Seattle in 1886 was the first one west of the Rocky Mountains.

While horse-drawn trolleys and gas lighting characterized Seattle into the mid-1880s, conditions quickly changed as electricity came into common use. In 1886, the Seattle Electric Light Company acquired a permit for street lighting, and several years later Seattle became the fourth city in the world to establish an electric "street railway" system. (A prototype electric streetcar had been introduced in Richmond, Virginia in 1887, and "electric traction" was soon a primary market for new electric utilities.) Newly developed alternating current technology also enabled the transmission of power over long distances, unlike the distance limitations of direct current. Numerous inventions and patents led to the manufacture of electric cars, appliances, telegraphs, and "wireless telegraphy" around the turn of the century. Such inventions—particularly domestic appliances and electric motors—were quickly embraced by the marketplace.

Four electric light companies, two light and power transmission machinery firms, and an electric railway machinery and supply company were listed in the 1890 Polk Directory. These included Edison General Electric, which was located at 711 3rd Avenue. By 1892, two early local firms had merged to form the Union Electric Company in Seattle, which became a principal firm of many electric generating and distribution companies vying for a share of the market in Seattle. Numerous small operators established localized steam plants in downtown building basements, and the field was characterized by mergers and reorganizations.
In 1899 Union Electric was acquired as a subsidiary by Boston-based engineering company Stone & Webster, which was then on a dramatic rise as a national power concern. By the following year, Stone & Webster, in conjunction with prominent Seattle resident Jacob Furth, had consolidated operations of virtually all the existing lighting, traction, and related subsidiary businesses in Seattle—nearly 20 locally-based utility companies—under the aegis of the Seattle Electric Company. In 1902, the company acquired a 50-year franchise to operate a private electric utility system within the City of Seattle. Stone & Webster's local agents were Jacob Furth and J.D. Lowman.

Jacob Furth was cited in the 1890 Polk Directory president of the Puget Sound Telephone Company and as the president of Puget Sound National Bank / People Savings Bank in the 1899 Directory. James D. Lowman, an early property developer in Pioneer Square and co-founder of a large printing business, Lowman & Hanford, was the secretary of the early

Union Trunk Railroad line, and prominent investor in several local banks and insurance companies.

The Seattle Electric Company, predecessor of Puget Sound Power & Light, also obtained a franchise from the City for the street railway system, gaining the firm exclusive rights to operate the system. Despite opposition from parties concerned about private utility ownership and Seattle Electric Company's monopoly, the consolidated system was improved and extended under the new management.

Meanwhile, populist sentiment and support for a municipal utility system was growing. Also in 1902, Seattle residents approved a $590,000 bond issue to develop a hydroelectric facility on the Cedar River, inaugurating public power in Seattle. The Cedar River plant, located 30 miles southeast of Seattle, first generated power in 1905 and was the first municipally-owned hydroelectric project in the country. The City's distribution station was located downtown at Yesler Way and 7th Avenue. Initially the Cedar River project was under the control of the City Water Department, but as a result of good performance and high demand for power, a separate lighting department was created on April 1, 1910.

Hydroelectric power produces electricity from the energy of falling water. Its superiority over steam power production became apparent in greater efficiency, resulting in lower rates for consumers. Prior to the construction of the Lighting Department's Cedar River plant, independent engineer Charles Baker had begun construction on his Snoqualmie Falls Hydroelectric Project in April 1898. In 1904, Stone & Webster followed suit, creating the Puget Sound Power Company to establish a major hydroelectric plant at Electron, on the Puyallup River.

The City Lighting Department, aka City Light, offered Seattle residents, businesses, and industries lower electric rates, and its competition had the effect of keeping the Seattle Electric Company's rates low as well. However, until 1914 the City had only one plant and transmission line and struggled with service interruption as a result. The Seattle Electric Company had more power sources and therefore more reliable service. In the early years, City Light and the Seattle Electric Company had a controlled connection between their systems and would at times share power distribution. This element of cooperation ended in 1912 when Stone & Webster again consolidated, merging its Seattle Electric Company with the Seattle-Tacoma Power Company (Snoqualmie Falls), Pacific Coast Power Company, Puget Sound Power Company, and Whatcom County Railway and Light Company. The new corporation—called Puget Sound Traction, Light & Power—consisted of four major hydroelectric plants in addition to four steam plants in Seattle and Tacoma, and established regional electrical service throughout western Washington. The merger resulted in better dependability and lower rates for customers, and the company continued to acquire small utilities in the region, despite resistance from rural entities such as the Washington State Grange and early public utility districts. Within the city limits, the relationship between City Light and Puget Sound Traction, Light & Power became one of bitter rivalry.

As previously noted, City Light constructed the Hydro House in 1912 and the adjacent Lake Union Steam Plant incrementally in 1914, 1918 and 1921 as auxiliary facilities. A masonry

dam on the Cedar River was completed in 1914, but the project initially failed, and City Light continued to search for a hydropower site. Puget Sound Traction, Light & Power attempted to block the City from developing a hydropower site, but in December 1917 the federal government revoked Puget Power's claim to the Skagit River, which essentially had been made to deter City Light. The City did eventually succeed in exploiting the power of the Skagit—with Skagit power reaching Seattle in 1924.

In 1919, Puget Sound Traction, Light & Power sold the electric streetcar system to the City of Seattle, dropping the "Traction" and becoming Puget Sound Power & Light. Development of domestic appliances and the radio broadcasting increased residential power needs, and both Puget Sound Power & Light and Seattle City Light promoted consumption of electrical power through displays and direct sales of appliances, as well as print and radio advertisements, and billboards. As noted in a history of Seattle City Light:
By 1930, more Seattle residents cooked on electric ranges than did residents in any other large city in the nation. They consumed twice the electricity for half the average cost. Across the United States, seven homes in 10 had electricity, but in Seattle, virtually every home was connected. Competition in the electricity market in Seattle saved consumers approximately $10 million a year. (Wilma & Crowley, p. 52)

The Battle Between Public and Private Power
The struggle over the provision and control of electric power in Seattle as a publicly- vs. privately-owned utility reached its zenith in the middle of the 1920s, when Seattle City Light and Stone & Webster's holding company fought over hydro sites and service areas, and federal licensing and the establishment of state utility commissions set the context of converging interests. Delays in resolving this conflict arose due to the Great Depression and World War II, but were finalized in 1951 when the City purchased all of the private resources within the city limits. By this late date, Seattle's hydroelectric sites outside the city were assured (Hirt, pp. 103-23, and pp. 316-7).

By 1928 City Light had two hydroelectric plants and one steam plant in operation, and plans for a total of six plants. That year, Seattle City Light Superintendent J. D. Ross noted that the city served 91,000 customers within the city limits versus the 30,000 customers of "the competing company." Extolling the benefits of municipal power, he cited City Light's 1,000 employees and its $2,000,000 annual payroll, and comparable electric rates of 50-60% lower within Seattle versus outlying areas. Ross characterized overcapitalization as the greatest weakness of the "Power Trust," along with their extended need for capital. The fight between public and private power was personal, with clear accusations of graft, greed, and corruption by one party, and fear-mongering over communism by the other.

It may be hard to gauge the tumultuous effects of progressive politics and the conflict that the struggle between public and private power interests played in the city through the 1920s, especially given the current, relatively civil state of local political discourse. The career of Seattle Mayor Bertha K. Landes (1868–1943) is telling in this regard. Landes, a progressive and prohibitionist, was the first woman mayor of a large city in the nation when she became the acting mayor in 1924. She was elected two years later in 1926 as a reform candidate espousing "moral uplift, public decency, and effective civic management… the city manager

form of government and municipal ownership of utilities" (Pieroth, p. 135-138). Upon taking office Mayor Landes signed a new contract with J. D. Ross, the head of City Light, and proclaimed June 18th as "Power Day." She fought for ballot approval of an imitative that authorized greater opportunities for publicly-owned utilities to market and sell their power (the "Bone" bill).

In 1918 the City had purchased nearly all of the Municipal Street Railway system in a controversial transaction. Reportedly Stone & Webster and its subsidiary, Puget Sound Power & Light, secured a greatly overvalued price for the purchase, leaving the city with a crushing debt. Facing the financial crisis the resulted from the city's $15 million purchase and annual interest payments of $833,000, Landes cut municipal personnel and expenses and negotiated refinancing of the system. In these actions she clashed directly with private power interests in Seattle and Olympia and alienated streetcar employees, police, and firemen. These actions are attributed as the cause of her defeat in the 1928 mayoral election after only one term in office (Berner, 1992, p. 96-103).

Public-private competition reportedly kept rates low, but it also resulted in wasteful duplicate systems. Period photographs show tall, seemingly overloaded power poles with numerous electrical lines strung from them. A single pole would carry multiple wires and equipment of both City Light and Puget Sound Power & Light. These poles and wires, shown in historic photos as criss-crossing the city, served as visible evidence of the double service. A 1948 map, "Transmission Lines in and Adjacent to Competitive Area as of Jan. 1, 1948" (Seattle Municipal Archives) also shows that both Puget Sound Power & Light and Seattle City Light had substations and transmission lines throughout the city.

In 1934, the Stone & Webster "cartel" was broken up by the federal government, and Puget Sound Power & Light was reorganized under a local board of directors. In Seattle, private and municipal electric utilities continued to compete until Seattle City Light acquired Puget Sound Power & Light's Seattle-area properties in 1951. During the first half of the 20th century, the battle between the two concerns persisted in the local and state-wide political realms, extending arguments over private, for-profit enterprise and collective, government-operated endeavors that continue to resonate today. Labor strife played a part in this battle as well since Stone & Webster operated its companies with open-shop policies and fought the type of union organizing common to Seattle City Light's employees. Throughout the state in the late 1920s, when farmers facing production losses, and during the Depression years in the 1930s, big business and the "power trusts" were blamed by many for poor economic conditions.

Between 1920 and 1940, the increase in residential accounts held by City Light was nearly 40%, while the population increased less than 17%. By 1940 Seattle was said to be "…the best lighted city, not only in America, but in the world. It is the world's most modernized city electrically, and the largest user of electric ranges of any city in this or any other country" (Schmidt, p. 35).

In 1943, the Seattle City Council had resolved to buy Puget Sound Power & Light properties when the company's franchise expired in 1952. Seattle voters narrowly approved a ballot

proposition on November 7, 1950, supporting municipal acquisition of private power assets within city limits and thereby unifying service under Seattle City Light. The measure passed by fewer than 800 votes. In March 1951, the City agreed on a price for all Puget Sound Power & Light's Seattle properties, including the distribution system but excluding the hydro plants. Under this agreement, City Light acquired three transmission substations and ten distribution substations, as well as the subject building, which served as a shops and warehouse facility. Because of deferred maintenance, much of the old system was gradually dismantled and replaced.

After City Light assumed ownership of all electrical facilities in Seattle, it had two service buildings—the subject building at 8th and Roy and one at 4th Avenue South and Spokane—and there was a service building under construction at 1300 North 97th Street. The 4th and Spokane service building was constructed around the same period as the subject building, and similarly featured a long loading bay and storage and office space. (The utility's earlier service building, a wood-frame and wood-clad structure at Airport Way and Lander Street, was demolished in 1936.) As of 1956, City Light had customer offices in Ballard, the University District, Lake City, West Seattle, Burien, and White Center, in addition to its downtown headquarters on 3rd Avenue, and substations at 814 East 75th Street, 3839 4th Avenue South, 10000 West Marginal Way, North 165th and Meridian Street North, 614 West 45th Street, and at 6th Avenue North and Broad Street (Wilma & Crowley, p. 79).
Seattle City Light had always promoted consumption, selling electrical appliances through its own showrooms and stores, and offering free repairs. As environmental concerns gained increasing attention and consideration in the 1960s and 1970s, City Light adjusted its message and policies as well. In August 1973, City Light shifted to promoting conservation rather than consumption.

Presently Seattle City Light is the ninth-largest public power system in the nation, and it is responsible for all electrical and streetlight services, as well as residential and commercial/industrial conservation within the city. Because it is publicly owned it provides low-cost power to approximately 395,000 customers in Seattle and the neighboring municipalities of Burien, Lake Forest Park, Normandy Park, Renton, SeaTac, Shoreline, Tukwila, and unincorporated King County.

James Delmage Ross
James Delmage (J. D.) Ross (1872–1939) played a critical role in the development of Seattle and the success of the progressive, public power movement in the United States. Born in Ontario, he arrived in Seattle in 1899 and soon became assistant city engineer, working with George Cotterill and R. H. Thomson. He and Thomson shared a vision for the city's future, which was enabled by its acquisition of watersheds and construction of municipal power plants, starting with the one on the Cedar River in 1902. Under his direction, residents voted to authorize the City's acquisition of the private Seattle Electric Company's street lighting system in 1905 when the new utility was organized as part of the water system and began serving private customers. In 1910, a City Charter amendment created a separate Light and Power Department (later Seattle City Light after 1978), which J. D. Ross led beginning in 1911. By the end of that year, the City's two-year-old project of ornamental street lighting

installation was completed, with the illumination of downtown and neighborhood streets throughout Seattle (Crowley, "Seattle Voters").

Ross's vision and his vehement and articulate support of public power is evident in records of his speeches and in publications, such as those for the Super Power League, Public Ownership League, and Municipal Utilities Protective League, as well as in Seattle City Light's annual reports. He took up direct challenges to Stone & Webster and its powerful local interests, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Manufacturers Association of Washington. The clash between expansion of public and private power interests dominated the political scene in the mid-1920s and it was the central issue between the City of Seattle and the State legislature in 1923. By 1924 Seattle's system was the second-largest municipal plant in the nation, while Stone & Webster had acquired nine plants in Wenatchee, Vashon, Arlington, Edmonds, Stanwood, Elma, Montesano, Port Townsend, and South Bend in northwest Washington, and operations in five other locales in the southwest part of the state—Vancouver, Kelso, Chehalis, Tenino, and Kalama. The political and financial stakes were high, and they eventually led to the ascendance of City Light and its dominant position as a public utility. The impact of Ross's activities brought both control and financial benefits to Seattle and its municipal government. By 1928, the Lighting Department earned a profit of over $992,000 on revenues of approximately $4,872,000 (Berner, pp. 65-120).

Ross's leadership and support of public power led to accusations of socialism and his being fired by Mayor Frank Edwards, a "known agent of Stone & Webster," in March 1931. However, the voters backed Ross and his support of public power, and subsequently recalled the mayor. The newly appointed Mayor Robert Harlin rehired Ross in just over four months. In 1930, Stone & Webster and its private utility interests attempted to outlaw public ownership of electrical systems, but the bill was defeated in a state-wide vote.

J. D. Ross went on to see the ascendance of SCL, and construction of its Diablo Dam project in 1930 and the first phase of its three-dam project on the Skagit River in 1936. Late in his life, Ross was appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to head the Bonneville Power Administration in 1936 (Stein, July 22, 2002). He died unexpectedly of a massive heart attack after a surgery in 1939.

Stone & Webster

Charles A. Stone and Edwin S. Webster, two electrical engineering graduates from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, started a firm together in 1889 after finishing school. The Massachusetts Electrical Engineering Company, as they initially called it, undertook equipment testing and feasibility studies in Boston. A year after its opening, they had their first significant contract—to design and install a direct-current hydroelectric generating plant in Maine.

By the early 1900s, Stone & Webster was a power plant specialist, involved in engineering, building, and managing power plants. The firm also had gained recognition for its ability to build and operate integrated systems, and its interests extended to lighting systems and electric street railway systems. Due to a heavy project load, in 1906 Stone & Webster formed a subsidiary, the Stone & Webster Engineering Corporation. This arm managed all

engineering, construction, and purchasing activities, including construction of Seattle's Georgetown Steam Plant in 1906. (The City of Seattle annexed Georgetown in 1907 but did not acquire this steam plant until it purchased Puget Sound Power & Light's Seattle facilities in 1951.)

Stone & Webster developed projects across the country, and as of 1910, 14% of the nation's total electrical generating capacity had been designed, engineered, and built by the firm. Stone & Webster provided general managers and constructing engineers for numerous utility companies throughout the country, including the Pacific Coast Power Company, the Seattle Electric Company, the Puget Sound Electric Railway, Whatcom County Railway and Light Company, the Galveston-Houston Electric Company, Savannah Electric Company, Tampa Electric Company, the Minneapolis General Electric Company, and Cape Breton Electric Company Limited, to cite a few. The company continued to grow through the 1920s and remained active through the 1930s, although it was forced by federal anti-monopoly legislation to divest many of its subsidiaries in 1934.

Heavily involved in wartime projects in the 1940s, Stone & Webster remained involved in power generation after the war, and did much of the early work on nuclear power generation. The firm continued to work in power generation and petrochemical plant construction into the 1990s, adding environmental services as well. Stone & Webster was acquired by the Shaw Group, an international corporation, in 2000. It remains a subsidiary focused on construction and engineering projects, hazardous waste management, and environmental services.

The Building's Designer, Architect John Graham, Sr.
Original architectural drawings, dated June 18, 1926, identify John Graham (1873–1955) as the designer. Born in England, Graham moved to Seattle in 1901, where he had a productive career spanning more than four decades. Well-known buildings he designed include Seattle's Ford Assembly Plant, the Dexter Horton Building, the Bon Marche, and the Exchange Building. Research has not revealed any specific connection between Stone & Webster and Graham.

Graham was born on the Isle of Man in England in 1873, and grew up in Liverpool. He was educated in architecture through apprenticeship in England, and traveled extensively before moving to Seattle in 1901. In addition to residential work, Graham designed a reconstruction and expansion of Trinity Episcopal Church (1902-03), which dated originally from 1891 but had been destroyed by fire in 1901. From 1905 to 1910, Graham had a partnership with architect David J. Myers. Their projects included several apartment buildings, houses, the Kenney Presbyterian Home in West Seattle, and several pavilions for the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, as well as the Lyon Building, in which Graham had his office for a short time. He also had his office in the Globe Block and the L.C. Smith Building, before moving to the Dexter Horton Building and remaining there for many years.

In 1910, Graham established a sole practice and subsequently designed the Plymouth Congregational Church (1910-12, demolished), at 4th Avenue and University Street, and the Joshua Green Building (1913), on 4th Avenue at Pike Street. He designed Seattle's Ford

Assembly Plant at Fairview Avenue North and Valley Street in 1913, and from 1914 to 1918 worked directly for the Ford Company, designing Ford assembly facilities in seven other cities, including Portland, Oregon. After his work for the Ford Company, Graham's focus shifted to predominantly large-scale commercial and institutional work. His commercial projects during this period include the following buildings in downtown Seattle:

- Frederick & Nelson Building (1916-19)
- Dexter Horton Building (1921-24)
- Bank of California Building (1923-24)
- The Bon Marche (1927-29)
- Roosevelt Hotel (1928-29)
- Exchange Building (1929-31)

A 1929 newspaper advertisement for Graham's office mentions "some of the buildings designed by this office," including: Bellingham National Bank, Washington Mutual Savings Bank, Pacific Marine Supply Building, two dairy products plants, a Bellingham department store, University Temple, Sacred Heart Orphanage, St. Vincent's Home, Providence Hospital in Everett, Providence School of Nursing in Seattle, an addition to Virginia Mason Hospital, St. Paul's Infants' Home, Victoria Apartments, Spring Apartments, Seattle Yacht Club, and Broadmoor Golf Club (Seattle Daily Times, August 4, 1929, p. 18).

Graham also undertook institutional work. He designed Physics (1927-28, altered and now known as Mary Gates Hall), Guggenheim (1928-29), and Johnson (1929-30) Halls on the University of Washington's Seattle campus. He collaborated with architects Charles Bebb and Carl Gould on the U.S. Marine Hospital / Pacific Medical Center on Beacon Hill (1931-32). From 1936 to 1942, Graham was associated with William L. Painter, with whom he established a New York office. The former Coca Cola Bottling Plant (1939) in Seattle dates from the Graham and Painter years.

From 1942, Graham's son, John Graham, Jr., increasingly took over his father's firm. Graham, Jr. was born in 1908 and attended architecture school at the University of Washington and Yale University. He assisted in opening the firm's New York office in the late 1930s and returned to Seattle in 1946 to assume ownership of his father's company. John Graham, Sr., retired in 1945 at age 72 and died in 1955 in Hong Kong. Graham worked skillfully in styles ranging from Art Deco to Neoclassical. "[His] work shows no allegiance to any particular theoretical stance, nor is it dependent on any particular personal idiom. Rather, Graham worked eclectically, bringing to each project his skill in plan organization, a good eye for the basics and the nuances of historical styles, and a keen sense of urban scale," (Hildebrand, pp. 92-93).

The Building's Construction and Occupants

The subject building was constructed by Puget Sound Power & Light as a warehouse, shop, office, and garage complex in 1926. The 1920s were a period of growth for the company's electrical operations due to the increase in the city's residential population from approximately 315,000 to 365,000 (16%), and a greater rise in demand for electric power resulting from unparalleled residential, commercial, and industrial use along with the appearance of new electrical products on the market. During this period of heightened

competition, the city's public and private power entities both responded to the rapid expansion of their customer base with increased available power for sale, and linemen services in wiring and maintaining infrastructure, along with separate repair services for individual customers.

Puget Sound Power & Light announced its plans for a new service building on March 11, 1926, along with plans for expanding its Baker River hydroelectric plant and the "[f]inest interurban and stage terminal station in the Northwest." Citing plans for a 35,000-square-foot, one-story building of reinforced concrete by architect John Graham, the company noted that the building was designed to accommodate additional stories should the need for expansion arise, and was estimated to cost $175,000. As noted in a newspaper article, operations within the building would include "headquarters for the company's line department, for housing automobiles, the storage of electrical equipment and supplies of every description and for various other purposes." Surprisingly, despite the specificity of the design, the site had not yet been selected by this date. (Seattle Times, March 11, 1926, pp. 1 and5). Prior to this date the utility had a service facility along with its office in a large brick masonry structure, no longer extant, on the southwest corner of Olive Street and 7th Avenue. Upon completion of construction, the company's maintenance and service departments were relocated to the 300'-long by 115'-wide building. Functions included store and repair spaces for the company's automobiles and trucks, mechanics' and drivers' locker room, curtain and blacksmith shop, linemen's rooms and lockers, and loading platforms and storerooms. The basement was cited for general storage and transformer testing. An adjacent yard was used for storage also (Seattle Times, November 21, 1926, p. 18). Puget Sound Power & Light used the building as its construction headquarters, according to a listing in the 1940 Polk Directory.

Seattle City Light used the building from the time of its purchase until ca. 1975. It was transferred to the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation, which used the building from at least 1975 until 1994. The center section and north bay are largely vacant, used for Seattle City Light storage and occasionally used for film shoots or other performances. The south wing was remodeled recently for use as an overnight emergency shelter for homeless individuals and families.

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The features of the Landmark to be preserved include: The exterior of the building; the following first floor interior spaces: the high-bay warehouse room in north wing, and the loading dock truck bay room and the raised warehouse platform room of the center section; and the site, but excluding the adjacent parking lot to the north described as the portions of Lots 2, 3, 4 and 5, Block 82 of Lake Union Shorelands lying west of the alley.

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