

# Historic Report / 652 S. Dearborn Street, Seattle

April 10, 2025

## Introduction

This document has been prepared by Sonja Molchany, Principal, Fieldwork Studio LLC at the request of SCIDpda, to aid in review by the International Special Review District (ISRD) Board. The subject property is located in the Chinatown-International District (C-ID), west of I-5.

## Property Data

**Address:** 652 S. Dearborn Street (sometimes known as 650 S. Dearborn)  
Seattle, WA 98134

**Tax Parcel:** 524780-2485

**Date of Construction:** 1963

**Original Use:** dry cleaners (Spic'N Span Cleaners)

**Present Use:** vacant

**Original Designer:** Bittman & Sanders

**Original Builder:** unknown

**Original Owner:** Louis Ostroff

**Present Owner:** Mayborn LLLP

**Property Size:** 12,960 sf (per King County Parcel Viewer)

**Building Size:** 4,750 gross sf store / 1,805 gross sf laundromat (per King County Parcel Viewer)

**Zoning:** IDM 85/85-170

## Physical Description

The subject site is located on the northeast corner of the intersection of S. Dearborn Street and Maynard Ave S., in the southern portion of the Chinatown-International District. The property is within the ISRD, but outside (south) of the Seattle Chinatown Historic District (National Register Historic District). S. Dearborn Street is a principal arterial, and it continues under the I-5 overpass, which passes overhead approximately three blocks to the east. Nearby properties are varied in age and scale, and include surface parking lots.

The subject property is situated on the southwest corner of its block, which is bounded by S. Dearborn Street on the south, S. Lane Street on the north, Maynard Ave S. on the west, and 7th Ave S. on the east. A 16'-wide alley runs north-south through the block. The balance of the block consists of a single, L-shaped parcel, containing a three-story Key Bank office building (1979) and two surface parking lots. The surface lots are on the northwest and southeast quadrants of the block, with the bank building to the northeast. South across S. Dearborn Street at 800 Maynard Ave S. is the four-story RDA Building/Crescent

Manufacturing (1925). West across Maynard Ave S. from the subject site is a single-story former KCW Furniture building dating from 1970, and to the west of that is the three-story Nikkei Manor (1998). The mixed-use Uwajimaya Village is two blocks west/northwest of the subject property.

The parcel is approximately 120' (east-west) by 108' (north-south), for a total of 12,960 square feet. The site is relatively level. The 95' by 84' overall building footprint is situated at the northeast portion of the property, with 24' setbacks on the south (Dearborn) and west (Maynard) sides. The balance of the lot is paved, with angled surface parking along the west side. Three driveways—two from Maynard Ave S. and one from S. Dearborn Street—provide vehicular access. A large, free-standing sign is located at the southwest corner.

While it appears as a single building, the original drawings as well as the Tax Assessor records identify the property as having two buildings connected by an arcade. The 95' (east-west) by 50' (north-south) "production room" comprised the southern building, and behind it to the north was a 95' by roughly 14' linear building that was divided into five rooms: storage, tumbler room, dry cleaning room, shirt wash room, and boiler room. The archival property record card notes a concrete and pile foundation. Both buildings are flat-roofed, with tilt-up precast concrete exterior walls. The exterior panels have a rough-textured finish. The larger, southern building has a roof structure of glu-lam beams, which continue and project out beyond the face of the south façade, supporting a slight roof overhang. A substantial, 50' wide by 20' deep, flat entry canopy projects from the western portion of the south façade. Emergency structural repairs to the canopy element in 1991 replaced original glu lam beams with steel. Aluminum-framed entry doors were located near the west end of the south façade, with additional glazing to the east of the entry assembly. Clerestory windows along the south façade also allowed natural light into the production room. Most of the east, north, and west sides had no windows. The building has been vacant since 2019 and all glazed openings are now infilled or boarded up. The original covered passage between the front and back buildings was altered with an extension of its roof. Additional visible changes to the building include extensive painting of the textured concrete exterior walls, likely to cover over repeated graffiti.

Permit and drawing records on file at SDCI Microfilm Library indicate the following, along with additional signage and electrical permits over the years:

- 1947 (#384315) Build store bldg. per plan [never built]
- 1963 (#502315) Construct buildings (2), \$80,000, dry cleaning workshop
- 1963 (#502766) Install underground storage tank
- 1963 (#504338) Erect & maintain sign, \$3,000
- 1964 (#505683) Extend existing cov. passageway arcade between (2) exist. bldgs.
- 1965 (#513852) Canopy support remodel / install new steel beam to support ex. Canopy
- 1967 (#520950) Erect & maintain 2 dual-faced electric signs
- 1991 (#658351) Emergency structural repair to canopy located over customer pick-up area

### Property/Building Location

The subject property is within the International Special Review District, which encompasses areas both west and east of I-5. Chinatown and Japantown are west of I-5, including a portion of the neighborhood that is listed as the Seattle Chinatown National Register Historic District. The ISRD west of I-5 is

characterized largely by three- to six-story brick or stucco[-clad] buildings built during the late 1800s and early 1900s and many served as Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels. These buildings...[have] identifiable features such as flat roofs, masonry wall surfaces, punched openings, decorative cornices and ground floor storefronts. They are built right up to the property line and create very strong urban street fronts.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "International Special Review District Design Guidelines." Final draft, September 22, 2023, p. 45.

The former Spic’N Span property is located near the south edge of the ISRD, where there is a mix of low- and mid-scale buildings of varying ages, along with scattered surface parking lots. It is a single-story building constructed in 1963 and does not appear to be of a type that characterizes the ISRD.

### Architect or Builder

Drawings on file at SDCI identify **Bittman & Sanders** as the architect for “A New Dry Cleaning Plant for Spic N Span Cleaners” at 652 S. Dearborn in 1963. These drawings were signed by architect Dean H. Sanders. The firm of Bittman & Sanders was established by partners Dean Sanders and Herbert J. Bittman in 1955 (following Bittman, Adams & Sanders from 1953-54), after the death of architect Henry W. Bittman. Herbert Bittman was the nephew of Henry.<sup>2</sup> A brief review of archival newspapers indicates the firm primarily designed low-scale commercial and light industrial projects, including for Bartell Drugs, Langendorf Bakeries, and Richfield Oil Co. The firm subsequently became Bittman, Sanders, Hasson & Associates from 1969-79.

### Property/Building History

The subject property is approximately two blocks west of the edge of the Dearborn Regrade, an area that was regraded between 1909-1912, following the nearby Jackson Street Regrade. A 1916 Sanborn Map showed the subject property and surrounding area with numerous modest store buildings, dwellings, lodging, and light industrial uses. A 1936 aerial map shows the property without any structures at that time.

According to the archival property record card, **Louis Ostroff** purchased the property in March 1960. Previous owners had been Emil Gaupholm & wife (purchased 1954), J.E. Lembcke (no date), and Augusta M. Preston et al. (purchased 1939). In 1947, a building permit was issued to Lembcke for construction of a one-story store building designed by architect Max Van House, however that project was never built.<sup>3</sup>

Ostroff was the owner of the Spic’N Span Cleaners, a dry cleaning business with a chain of locations by 1949.<sup>4</sup> The earliest newspaper mention of the business name was in a 1942 classified ad, seeking a “silk finisher for modern plant” located at 1501 Dearborn.<sup>5</sup> Louis Ostroff and his wife Emma lived in the Atlantic neighborhood at that time, at 1851 S. King; Louis was associated with both Sav-On Cleaning and Spic’N Span Cleaners.<sup>6</sup> The following year, the Ostroffs had moved to a house at 1612 E. Lynn in the Montlake neighborhood.<sup>7</sup> A review of archival newspapers identified the following branch locations of Spic’N Span over the years, in addition to the subject property:

- 816 Dearborn
- 127 W. Mercer Street
- 8501 35th Ave NE
- 7801 Bothell Way NE
- 3304 Rainier Ave S.
- 6500 15th Ave NE
- 435 15th Ave E.
- 1315 Madison Street

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<sup>2</sup> “Sanders, Dean Harris,” in Ochsner, *Shaping Seattle Architecture*, pp. 472-473.

<sup>3</sup> SDCI permit records.

<sup>4</sup> “Cleaning Firm Asks Picket Bar.” *Seattle Times*. June 10, 1949, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Classified ad. *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. March 10, 1942, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> 1942 Polk directory.

<sup>7</sup> 1943 Polk directory.

The 652 S. Dearborn location opened in 1964 with the construction of the subject buildings, and Spic’N Span operated there until 2019. It was reportedly the only dry cleaning business in the C-ID.<sup>8</sup> Louis Ostroff died in 1994, and the family sold the business (but not the property) in 2002.<sup>9</sup> During his life, Ostroff was affiliated with Congregation Bikur Cholim-Makzikay Hodath, Herzl Ner Tamid, the Masons, and the Shriners.<sup>10</sup>

The property title had been transferred in 1992 from Louis and Emma Ostroff to the Ostroff Living Trust, and in 2024 Louis and Emma’s son Gerald Ostroff sold the property to current owner Mayborn LLLP.

Following closure of the dry cleaning business in 2019, remediation of the site was undertaken to clean up the soil and groundwater. The building has been vacant since that time.

## Conclusion

The former Spic’N Span property at 652 S. Dearborn Street consists of a vacant, two-building assembly. As originally designed, the property exhibited some basic elements of Miesian style, including its flat-roofed form and flat wall planes with repeating panels to give the impression of a grid. However, it does not embody the distinctive visible characteristics of the style and does not appear to have architectural interest. The property was associated with proprietor Louis Ostroff and Spic’N Span Cleaners, as one of a number of branch locations. While the dry cleaning business served the community for many years, the existing building assembly does not appear to contribute to the District’s cultural and social character and does not embody the rich history of the District.

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“Louis Ostroff” (obit). *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. November 22, 1994, p. 9.

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<sup>8</sup> Robinson, Chetanya. “SCIDpda to build affordable housing on site of former Spic N Span dry cleaners.” *International Examiner*. March 5, 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Brody, Richard. “Season’s Cleanings!???” Richard’s Substack, December 24, 2024.

<sup>10</sup> “Louis Ostroff” (obit). *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. November 22, 1994, p. 9.

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## Photographs

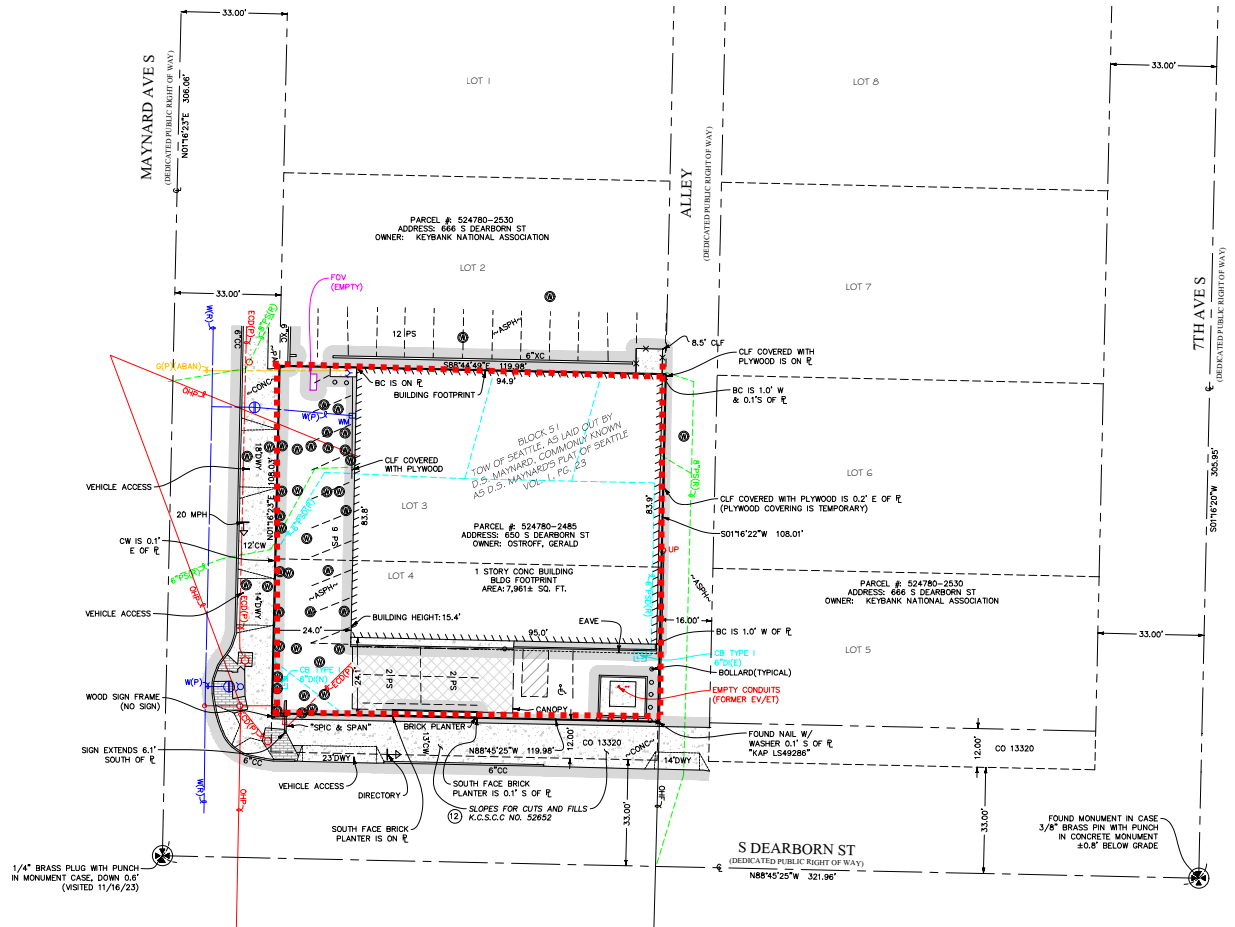
Contemporary photos by author and date from March 2025 unless noted otherwise.



An overview map showing the approximate property location, marked with a blue asterisk. North is up. (King County iMap)



A 2023 aerial photo, showing the property with a dashed red outline. North is up. (King County iMap)



Excerpt from a 2023 survey, property shown with a dashed red outline. North is up. (Bush, Roed & Hitchings)



A 1936 view looking east on Dearborn from about 6th Ave S., approximately one block west of the subject property. (Courtesy Seattle Municipal Archives, 10965)



A 1966 view looking northwest from Beacon Hill during I-5 construction. (Seattle Public Library, Seattle Room Digital Collections, spl\_wl\_fnh\_00151)



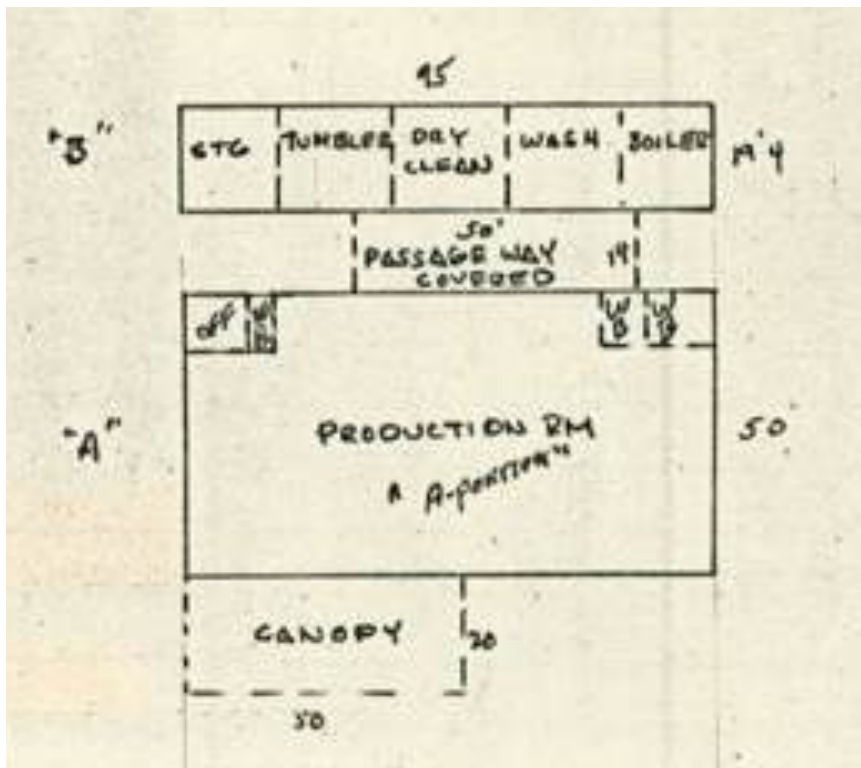


A 1969 aerial looking southeast; the intersection in the foreground is S. Jackson Street and 6th Ave S. The subject property is visible near the upper right corner of the photo, indicated with a red arrow. An enlarged partial view of the same photo is shown below. (Courtesy Seattle Municipal Archives, 77926)





A 1963 view looking northeast toward the south and west façades of the building. Below is a sketch of the building plan from the property record card. (King County Tax Assessor property record, Puget Sound Regional Archives)







Views of the building from 2018, while it was still operating as Spic'N Span Cleaners. Top view is looking northeast toward the primary south façade on S. Dearborn Street; bottom view is looking east from Maynard Ave S. toward the west façade. (Google street view, both images)



Context view looking west along S. Dearborn Street; the subject building is indicated with a red arrow.



Context view looking east on S. Dearborn Street; the subject building is indicated with a red arrow. (Google street view, 2023)





Context view looking south on Maynard Ave S.; the subject building is indicated with a red arrow.



Context view looking southwest from the alley that runs through the block; the subject building (rear/north side) is indicated with a red arrow.





Looking northeast across S. Dearborn Street, toward the primary south and east façades of the building.



Looking northwest along the primary south (Dearborn) façade of the building.



A closer view at the eastern end of the south (Dearborn) façade of the building.



Looking east at the south end of the building, where the canopy extends over the former customer drop-off area.





Looking southeast along the west (Maynard) façade of the building.



Looking northwest in the alley, along the east façade of the building.



Looking southwest from the porch of the neighboring Key Bank building, toward the east façade of the subject building.



Looking southwest from the alley, toward the north (rear) façade of the building.



**FOLIO** 2414  
**PERMIT NO.** 502315  
**DATE** 6-11-63

**ADDITION** MAYNARD'S PLAT  
**Section** SW 5 **Top** 24 **Range** 4 **Evan. Block** 57 **Lot or Tract** 5F4 **Area** 5.121 ac. ±

**Address** 650 S. DEARBORN ST

**Fee Owner** SPIC & SPAN CLEANERS **Architect** BITTMAN & SANDERS **Contractor**

**Condition of Exterior** B **Interior** A **Foundation** C **Floor Plan** Good **Accept** Y **Good**

**USE** LAUNDRY

**ROOF CONSTRUCTION**  
Frame ☒ 14' x 14' 1/2"  
Mill Construction ☒ 1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2"  
Rein. Concrete ☒ 4" x 4" x 4"  
No. Trusses  
Wood ☐ Steel ☐  
**ROOFING MATERIAL**  
Tar and Gravel ☒ BU

**FLOOR FINISHES**  
Fir ☐ Maple ☐  
Oak ☐ 1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2"  
Lino. ☐ 1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2"  
Cement ☒ BAL  
Terrazo  
Rasomith  
Tile ☒ 1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2"

**Tile** ☐ **Line** ☐  
Baths ☐ Fl. ☐ Walls  
Sq. Ft. ☐ Floors  
Sq. Ft. ☐ Walls  
Lin. Ft. ☐ Dr. Bds.  
Sq. Ft. ☐ Floors  
Sq. Ft. ☐ Walls  
Lin. Ft. ☐ Dr. Bds.  
Kit's ☐ Fl. ☐ Walls

**PLUMBING**  
7 No. Fixtures  
3 Toilets  
3 Tubs, Log or Pans  
3 Sinks  
Urinals  
Showers (Tub) (Stall)  
Laundry Trays  
H. W. Tank Fl. Drains ☐  
Sprink. Sys. No. ☐ Hds.

**HEATING** NONE  
Stove  
Pipelin Furnace  
Gravity H. A.  
Air Cond. Fan  
Suspended Gas, Hot Water  
Steam Heat  
Hot Water  
Oil Burner

**TYPE OF CONSTRUCTION**  
Frame ☐ Double  
Single ☐ Double  
Ordinary Masonry  
Mill Construction  
Class A Rein. Con. ☒ POR  
Steu. Steel and Con.  
Tile ☐ Brick  
Con. ☐ Rein. Con.  
Good ☒ Med. ☐ Cheap

**FOUNDATION**  
Mod. Sills  
Post and Pier  
Brick  
Concrete ☒  
Pile ☒

**BASEMENT**  
Full ☐ %  
Sub-Basement  
Size  
Garage ☐ No. Cars  
Floors  
Plastered  
Living Rooms  
Service Rooms

**EXTERIOR WALL CONST.**  
Single ☐ Double  
2" x 4" Stud Walls  
2" x 6" Stud Walls  
Brick Walls ☒ 1/2" x 1/2" x 1/2"  
Brick with Pilasters  
Concrete Walls  
Con. with Pilasters  
Tile Walls  
Rein. Con. Steel  
Filler Walls  
Laminated Walls

**EXTERIOR FACING**  
Siding ☐ Shingles  
Shakes ☐ Stones  
Brick Veneer ☒ Kind  
Stone ☐ Cast S.  
Terr. Coats  
Stucco Glass  
Trim

**FLOOR CONSTRUCTION**  
Joint Con. Slab ☐  
O.C. ☐ In Bridge ☐  
Mill Construction  
Rein. Con.

**INTERIOR WALLS**  
Stud and Plaster  
Lino. ☐ Plastered  
Plywood  
Coiled  
Plaster Board ☒ PARTS  
Plaster ☒ CONCRETE  
Stain ☐ Varnish  
Kalamina  
Whitewashed  
Unfinished ☒ POR  
CONCRETE WALLS

**INTERIOR TRIM**  
Fir ☒  
Mah. ☐ Oak  
Metal  
WOOD BANQUET  
WOOD Windows  
Stained  
Varnished  
Painted  
Unfinished

**GROUND FLOOR AREA** 6587  
**TOTAL FLOOR AREA** 6587

**Diagram:**  
A rectangular layout of a laundry facility. At the top, a horizontal strip contains boxes labeled "ETG", "TUMBLER", "DRY", "WASH", and "SOILED". Below this is a "PASSAGE WAY COVERED". The main central area is labeled "PRODUCTION RM" and "A-PORTION". At the bottom, there is a "CANOPY" area. Dimensions are noted: 45' for the top section, 50' for the main production room, and 30' for the canopy. A vertical dimension of 14' is also indicated.

The 1963 property record card. (King County Tax Assessor property record, Puget Sound Regional Archives)