

# Bressi Garage

## City of Seattle Historic Landmark Nomination

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## Building Information

**Name (Historic):** Bressi Garage

**Name (Current):** Pottery Northwest and Seattle Gardener's Complex

**Year Built:** 1923

**Street & Number:** 226-232 1st Avenue N.

**Assessor's File No.:** 198920-1515

**Plat/Block/Lot:** Denny's D.T. North Seattle Addition, Block 30, Lots 5-12

**Present Owner:** Seattle Center / City of Seattle

**Present Use:** Warehouse/Artist Studio

**Present Owner Address:** 305 Harrison Street

**Original Owner:** Dominick Bressi

**Original Use:** Auto garage

**Original Architect:** Morse (M.C.) Heinemann

**Legal Description:** DENNYS D T NORTH SEATTLE ADD LOTS 6 THRU 12 & S 6 FT OF LOT 5 BLK 30 TGW POR VAC ALLEY ADJ AS VACATED BY CITY OF SEATTLE ORD NO 117474

## Architectural Description

This nomination addresses the former Bressi Garage building, currently known as Pottery Northwest the Seattle Center Gardener's Complex. The building is located at 226-232 1st Avenue N., at the southeast corner of First Avenue N. and W. Thomas Street.

## Adjacent Neighborhood Context

The nominated build is located at the south edge of the Uptown neighborhood (please refer to Figure 1). Officially called Uptown but also referred to locally as Lower Queen Anne, the neighborhood is bordered by the Queen Anne neighborhood to the north, South Lake Union to the east, Belltown to the south, and the waterfront to the west. The neighborhood reflects a wide range of construction dates and types with a mix of commercial and residential uses.

The earliest street grid for the neighborhood was established by 1870 with names still in use today, including Warren, Mercer, Republican, Harrison, Thomas, and John.<sup>1</sup> In 1883, the area between McGraw Street and Denny Way, from the top of Queen Anne Hill to Lower Queen Anne, were annexed to the City of Seattle. By the late 19th century, the Uptown neighborhood began to develop. Construction predominately consisted of 1- to 2-story wood frame dwellings—single family and multi-family units—as well as the occasional commercial structure.<sup>2</sup> The neighborhood's density increased over the next couple decades as vacant lots were replaced with single-family dwellings, apartment buildings, and small scale commercial buildings, like drugstores and service stations.<sup>3</sup> The Warren Avenue School (built 1902, demolished 1959), on Warren Avenue between Republican and Harrison, and the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Chapel and School (built 1928) at the corner of Warren Avenue and John Street, served as educational and social anchors for the surrounding neighborhood.

Development (and redevelopment) leading up to the adjacent 1962 Seattle World's Fair further shaped the neighborhood. Commercial and apartment building growth expanded and many single-family residences were demolished and relocated to provide for fair parking.<sup>4</sup> Mid-century development included the 1962 Seattle World's Fair site and its redevelopment following the fair, as well as additional commercial and multi-family construction.

## Site

The Bressi Garage stands on a gently sloping site, sloping to the south from the northwest corner at Thomas Street and First Avenue N. The site is zoned NC3-65 and is within the Uptown Urban Center zoning area.

The property is located within tax parcel 198920-1515. This tax parcel is L-shaped, covering the entire western half of a city block with a small ell into the eastern half. The parcel is bounded by Thomas Street to

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<sup>1</sup> Florence K. Lentz and Mimi Sheridan, *Queen Anne Historic Context Statement*, prepared for the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, Historic Preservation Program and the Queen Anne Historical Society (October 2005), <http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Neighborhoods/HistoricPreservation/HistoricResourcesSurvey/context-queen-anne.pdf>, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> "Seattle, Washington," *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, 1904-1905, volume 3, sheets 276 and 253.

<sup>3</sup> "Seattle, Washington," *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, 1917 update, volume 4, sheets 438 and 479.

<sup>4</sup> Artifacts Consulting, Inc., "Northwest Rooms and International Fountain Pavilion," City of Seattle Historic Landmark Nomination (2013), p. 4.

the north, First Avenue N. to the west, and John Street to the west. The parcel extends to the east along John Street to Warren Avenue N. The Bressi Garage, which consists of two storefronts separated by a party wall, is sited on the northern third of the parcel. A surface parking lot and a portion of a parking garage comprise the rest of the parcel. A two-story parking garage (parcel 198920-1460, 225 Warren Avenue N.) abuts the property to the east, separated by a north-south running alleyway.

## Bressi Garage

### Exterior

The Bressi Garage is a good example of a building designed to accommodate automobiles and its design and scale reflect the historic mixed-use character of the Lower Queen Anne/Uptown neighborhood. The one-story brick Bressi Garage features a square footprint, with 120 feet per elevation. The building has 14,400 square feet with an additional 1,250 square feet from a mezzanine level (per the King County Department of Assessments). The building is technically two buildings which share a party wall. The building stands on a poured concrete foundation with an unreinforced masonry structure. The red brick is laid in the common bond with a header course every seventh course and buff-colored tooled mortar joints. A hipped roof with parapet walls shelters the building's interior. Metal coping caps the parapet walls. The northeastern portion of the building does not have roofing material and is an open air facility. The building's brick corbeling and shaped parapet provide some ornamentation to an otherwise utilitarian design.

The west elevation, fronting First Avenue N., is the building's primary elevation. The west elevation is divided into two storefronts with stepped parapet walls highlighting each half. Each storefront features five bays, separated by wide brick pilasters. The southern storefront features a central entrance flanked by two bays of windows. The northern storefront features five bays of windows. The windows are deeply recessed with brick corbelling highlighting the lintels above the windows. A brick bulkhead runs beneath the windows, capped by bricks forming a sloped sill for the windows. The bulkhead height follows the slope of the site. According to historic photographs (see Photograph 16), each storefront featured a central entrance with a door to accommodate automobiles entering the building. Simple wall sconces with white glass globes flanked these central entrances and a "Bressi Garage" sign existed above each entrance.

The north elevation is divided into six bays, wider than those on the west elevation. Wide brick pilasters separate each bay. Brick corbelling highlights the lintel. Windows, a roll-up garage door, and a metal personnel door with a transom punctuate this elevation's bays.

The east elevation, like the west, is divided in two with five bays each. Angled parapet walls provide definition for the north and south half of the elevation. Each bay features a recessed opening, marked by a sailor header course. The recessed openings in the northern five bays of the east elevation have been infilled with concrete block. A painted mural covers the concrete blocks and partially extends onto the brick. The recessed openings in the southern five bays of the east elevation retain their original windows and door. This half of the elevation features a central door flanked by two bays of windows; roll up metal security doors are located above all five openings.

The south elevation, like the north, is divided into six bays. A shed roof lean-to obscures much of the south elevation, providing outdoor workspace as a kiln shed for the current tenant, Pottery Northwest. Drawings for the kiln shed were received by the City of Seattle in 1974. A door located in the second bay from the east

provides access from the interior of the building out to the shed. The shed extends 25-feet to the south and runs along the south elevation.

Most of the bays retain the original wood, multi-lite fixed sash windows. Slender wood muntins separate the panes of glass. Wood brick molding and a wood sill frame the windows within their recessed openings. The west elevation original windows consist of sets of 28-lite windows with 14-lite transoms. The north elevation original windows consist of 32-lite windows. The east elevation original windows consist of 35-lite windows. Replacement windows, including the five northernmost windows on the west elevation and the westernmost window on the north elevation, are double-paned fiberglass windows with muntin grids sandwiched between the panes. Although these windows have been replaced, their openings retain the original wood brick molding and sills. Some of the window panes on the east elevation have been replaced to accommodate venting or electrical equipment.

The building retains one original door, a large wood sliding door on the east elevation. The door features a pair of 12 lites over a beadboard recessed panel, separated by a wood mullion. Slender wood muntins and putty hold the panes of glass in place. A simple metal replacement handle operates the door.

#### Interior

The interior of the building is divided in two, separated by a party wall running east to west. Due to its original function as an auto garage, the interior volume would have been largely open and devoid of interior partitions. Per the original drawings, which only details the northern storefront, the building featured an open interior with a small corner office and washroom with a toilet and sink. The office and washroom were located in the southwest corner of the northern storefront. Per a 1936 assessor sketch of the building, the southern storefront was entirely open. An arched brick opening in the party wall at the eastern end of the building provided access between the two storefront spaces. Elements of this character of a large open volume remain in both the north and south portions of the building. Composite Howe roof trusses, featuring timber chords and compression members and steel rod tension members, support the roof and are visible throughout the building. Corrugated metal sheathing covers the wood trusses exposed to the elements in the open-air portion of the building. Wood tongue and groove car decking covers the pitched ceilings on both sides of the building, where new drop ceilings have not been added.

Concrete floors are present throughout the space. Vinyl composition tiles cover the concrete in the western portion of the north half of the building where offices now exist. Perimeter walls are exposed brick, painted in some locations. The northern half of the building, which currently functions as the Gardener's Complex for Seattle Center, has been subdivided to create office spaces in the west, break and locker rooms in the middle, and an open-air garage in the east. Partition walls separate these reconfigured spaces. An attic level mezzanine was added above the offices to house mechanical items. The southern half of the building, which currently houses Pottery Northwest, remains largely open with clear sightlines from west to east within the interior. Partition walls create a gallery space for pottery in the northwest corner and an office in the southwest corner, but the partition walls stop short of the windows. A mezzanine added in the attic space runs along the west and south end of this space.

## Summary of Alterations

The building's exterior remains largely intact, apart from some replacement windows and doors. Most of the building's alterations have occurred on the interior to support the building's current tenants—Seattle Center and Pottery Northwest.

- 1973: Pottery Northwest leased the south portion of the garage from Seattle Center. Audrey L. Van Horne of Van Horne & Van Horne Architects designed the subsequent remodel to convert the garage into an artist studio and add a kiln shed along the south elevation. This remodel included partitions to create a storage and mixing room in the northwest corner, a display room in the southwest corner, and an office, locker room, restrooms, and storage room along the south portion of the building. A mezzanine with lounge and seminar areas, accessed by two staircases, was also added.
- 1986: Building remodeled to support its use as a gardener's facility for Seattle Center maintenance staff. Ing & Associates designed the remodel, which included the addition of a roll-up door and single door on the north facade, and hanging planters along the building's exterior. The remodel also included the removal of a west elevation double door (with original brick used to infill the opening) and the original windows along the northern portion of the east elevation (with concrete block used to infill the openings).

## Significance Statement

### Seattle and Uptown (Lower Queen Anne) Neighborhood

The land that became the 74-acre (13 square blocks) site for the 1962 Seattle World's Fair and the current Seattle Center, was part of David and Louisa (nee Boren) Denny's 1853 donation land claim. By the late 19th century, the site of the Bressi Garage building had been platted and had developed into an urban neighborhood comprised of wood-frame homes, some small businesses, and a few boarding houses. Many of the earliest settlers in the developing neighborhood were employees at Western Mill, the city's largest sawmill, located nearby. The Warren Avenue School (built 1902) and adjoining Mercer Playground (built 1910) served neighborhood families, who were predominantly working class.

According to a 1905 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map, the block bounded by 1st Avenue N., Thomas Street, Warren Avenue, and John Street contained mostly 1- and 2-story wood-frame houses. A two-story building with a cigar factory occupying the first floor and housing on the second occupied the portion of the block where the kiln shed of the nominated building currently stands (see Figure 5). Over the next three decades, the block increased in density and the character began to shift towards a mix of commercial and residential along 1st Avenue. In 1910, a large, 3-story, 75 room apartment building went up at the northwest corner of Warren Avenue and John Street, just southeast of the nominated property.<sup>5</sup> In 1913, a two-story brick veneer building with a laundry occupying the first floor and an apartment on the second, replaced the cigar factory building.<sup>6</sup> By 1917, two more commercial buildings had been constructed on the east side of 1st Avenue N, including a 1-story bakery with a storefront (218 1st Avenue N.) and an auto garage (216 1st Avenue N., Victor Garage).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> "118 John Street," King County Property Report Card. Available through Puget Sound Regional Archives.

<sup>6</sup> "220 1st Avenue N.," King County Property Report Card. Available through Puget Sound Regional Archives.

<sup>7</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Co., "Seattle, Washington," map, volume 4, 1917, sheet 479.

## Bressi Garage

The Bressi Garage was constructed in 1923. Drawings, dated March 20, 1923, identify M.C. Heinemann, a successful local contractor, as the designer of the structure. Once constructed, Dominick Bressi operated the garage. A listing for an auto garage, under Bressi's name, first appears in the Seattle city directories in 1924. It seems the garage served predominately as a parking garage for automobiles rather than a repair facility. In the early years of automobile ownership, people needed secure places to park their cars and facilities like the Bressi Garage helped meet that need, particularly in dense neighborhoods.<sup>8</sup>

Mr. Bressi managed the garage through the 1920s and 1930s, but by 1942 it was operated as a truck rental facility for Hertz. Bressi continued to work as a garageman at the building until his retirement in 1948. Despite retiring, Bressi continued to own the building, which housed tenants such as the City Transfer & Storage Company and the World Wide Distributors Inc. during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>9</sup>

The proximity of the building to the 1962 World's Fair development nearly spelled the end of the Bressi Garage building. In 1959, the State of Washington began the process of acquiring property on which to construct the Century 21 Coliseum (KeyArena) and the Hall of Science (Pacific Science Center). As the desired property was private property, the state had to begin commendation proceeding. Sixteen property owners, including Bressi and even the Catholic Archbishop of Seattle on behalf of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church and School, who disagreed with the commendation of their property banded together to block the effort.<sup>10</sup> The property owners appealed the decision of Judge Malcolm Douglas of King County Superior Court, who issued the certificate of public use and necessity which would permit the condemnation.<sup>11</sup> Although the State Supreme Court indefinitely postponed their review, planners for the World's Fair moved on without the four blocks bounded by 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue N., Thomas Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue N., and Denny Way.

After the World's Fair ended in October 1962, Seattle began the process of converting the fair site into a civic center, known as Seattle Center. Over the years, the city and Seattle Center acquired additional property to help with parking and storage needs. Although not purchased in time for the fair, many of the properties along the east side of 1st Avenue N. between Thomas and John Streets were eventually purchased by the city. The Bressi Garage property was purchased in 1966, preceded by 220 and 214 1st Avenue N. in 1965. The buildings at 214 and 220 1st Avenue N. were demolished in 1967 and 1969, respectively. Diamond Parking also purchased properties on the block and demolished the buildings to provide surface parking.

The Bressi Garage remains as the only building on its block which reflects the historic, pre-World's Fair Lower Queen Anne neighborhood character. When the city acquired the Bressi Garage it first utilized it as a parking facility. In 1973, Pottery Northwest leased the south portion of the garage from Seattle Center and remodeled it for use as an artist studio. In 1986, Seattle Center remodeled the north portion of the garage building for use as it's gardener's facility. Both Seattle Center and Pottery Northwest continue to use the building.

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<sup>8</sup> C. Wickwire, "Bressi Garage," Historic Property Inventory Form, Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, November 14, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Wickwire, "Bressi Garage."

<sup>10</sup> "High Court Will Review Decision on World Fair Land," *The Seattle Times*, March 26, 1958: 11.

<sup>11</sup> "Review Asked in World Fair Condemnation," *The Seattle Times*, March 12, 1958: 23.

## Dominick Bressi

Dominick Bressi was born in Calabria, Italy—an area in southern Italy—in ca. 1885. He immigrated to the United States, via Brooklyn, in 1903. He then moved westward, settling in Seattle in 1907. He began working as a laborer, alongside his family member Vincent Bressi, and the two lived in the LJ Mignon Apartments.<sup>12</sup> By 1910, Dominick was employed as a window cleaner, but by 1914 was working as a janitor at the Peoples Savings Bank building.<sup>13</sup> Dominick went into business with Vincent by 1916, working as a grading contractor.<sup>14</sup> Vincent continued as a contractor, while Dominick became a grocer.<sup>15</sup>

Once the auto garage building was constructed in 1923, Dominick's career shifted to garage owner and employer. By 1926, Dominick married his wife, Elizabeth. Together the Bressis had two sons, Philip and Paul. Dominick operated the garage for over 20 years, retiring in 1948.<sup>16</sup> Dominick passed away at the age of 81 in February 1968.

## Morse (M.C.) Heinemann

Morse Heinemann was born in 1860 in Cincinnati, Ohio, to German-born Charles and Christina Heinemann.<sup>17</sup> By 1880, the Heinemann family had settled in Saginaw, Michigan. Morse eventually began working as a builder and married his wife, Lena (b. 1866), in 1887. The Heinemann's had two children: Robert (b. 1889) and Hilda (b. 1892).<sup>18</sup> Per city directory entries in both Saginaw and Seattle, it appears Morse relocated to Seattle in 1905 or 1906. He established himself as a building contractor in the community. Buildings constructed by Heinemann include the Bressi Garage (1923), Prospect Congregational Church (1924).<sup>19</sup> In his free time, Heinemann was a member of Arcana Lodge, F. & A.M., served as a deacon at Prospect Church, and was active in the Capitol Hill community. Morse passed away on July 14, 1943, at the age of 83.

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"220 1st Avenue N." *King County Property Card*. Puget Sound Regional Archives.

"232 1st Avenue N." *King County Property Card*. Puget Sound Regional Archives.

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<sup>12</sup> R. L. Polk & Co., *Polk's Seattle City Directory* (Seattle: R.L. Polk & Co., Inc., 1908).

<sup>13</sup> R. L. Polk & Co., *Polk's Seattle City Directory*, 1910, 1914.

<sup>14</sup> R. L. Polk & Co., *Polk's Seattle City Directory*, 1916. Vincent's business eventually became a partnership, Jahn & Bressi.

<sup>15</sup> R. L. Polk & Co., *Polk's Seattle City Directory*, 1917.

<sup>16</sup> "Dominick Bressi," *The Seattle Times*, February 6, 1968, p. 41.

<sup>17</sup> Ancestry.com and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. *1880 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010. Year: 1880; Census Place: Fair Haven, Huron, Michigan; Roll: 582; Family History Film: 1254582; Page: 64B; Enumeration District: 109; Image: 0132

<sup>18</sup> Ancestry.com. *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2004. Year: 1900; Census Place: Saginaw Ward 2, Saginaw, Michigan; Roll: 739; Page: 6B; Enumeration District: 0045; FHL microfilm: 1240739.

<sup>19</sup> "Mr. Heinemann Funeral is Set for Tomorrow," *The Seattle Times*, July 15, 1943: 28.



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