



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

400 Yesler Building Seattle, Washington 98104 • (206) 625-4501

LPB 211/ 85

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

Name and Address of Property: Brooklyn Building
1222 Second Avenue
Seattle, WA

Legal Description: A.A. Denny's Second Addition, Block 5, Lot 1
At the public hearing held on July 2, 1985 the City of Seattle's Landmark Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Brooklyn Building as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following criteria of Ordinance 106348:

Section 3.01(4): It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or of a method of construction;

Section 3.01(6): Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the city and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or the city;

DESCRIPTION

The Brooklyn Building, 1222 Second Avenue, is situated in downtown Seattle, on the southeast corner of the intersection of Second Avenue and University Street. The building is sited gracefully on a hillside. It occupies half of a corner lot, resulting in a narrow rectangular plan, measuring 30 feet x 108 feet. Sharing the lot is a two-story commercial building which once housed a theatre. The rear elevation of the Brooklyn borders the alley which bisects the block.

Highrise buildings, including the Savoy Hotel, a 1906 structure at mid-block, and the Seattle Tower, a modernistic landmark located a block east, mingle with low scale commercial structures and residential hotels like the Brooklyn, in this transitional area of

downtown. The heart of the banking center is directly south, the retail core, northeast, and redeveloped First Avenue directly west. A redevelopment project planned for the block north of the Brooklyn, the Seattle Art Museum proposed for the block diagonally northwest, and the Wright-Runstad project planned for the Brooklyn block will significantly alter and revitalize this area of the downtown.

The Brooklyn is a four-story building with solid brick bearing walls, stone trim, and interior mill construction. The principal facades are located on the north and west elevations. (The south elevation was left blank, anticipating that the block would soon be infilled, and sidewalls shared.)

Each of the principal facades features trabeated openings on the lower two stories, changing to round-arched openings on the third and fourth levels. Decorative brick radiating voissours that comprise the Romanesque arches, coupled with two story high piers, add horizontal and vertical accents. The fourth floor is distinguished by arcading in a 2:1 relationship with the floor below. A decorative brick cornice completes the facade.

The facades are divided into three distinct zones; base, shaft, and capital, recalling the work of Louis Sullivan. The decorative brick work, masonry trim, and Romanesque style are reminiscent of the work of H.H. Richardson, whose grand scale architecture was adapted around the country for small commercial blocks like the Brooklyn Building in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

A segmental arched opening on the north elevation is topped by a terra cotta panel with the words "The Brooklyn." The recessed entry has marble wainscoting, oak-framed doors, and glazed transoms. The adjacent shop front has wood columns and wood mullions dividing display windows and tall transoms.

The Brooklyn Building has been altered, although the modifications have for the most part not detracted from the building's original ambience. The Second Avenue entrance, and first story of the north elevation were covered with terra cotta in the early twentieth century. (The original banded brick treatment of the facades is indicated in a 1904 photograph of the building.) The current Second Avenue entry features terra cotta piers with Ionic capitals, supporting a dentiled cornice. Rusticated terra cotta block accents the building's corner, while a plainer terra cotta treatment is used on the north elevation. Paired double hung windows with fixed transom lights, divided by thick mullions, are also shown on the 1904 photograph. These have been replaced by large glazed openings with transoms, on the second story. More critically, the brick has been sandblasted, and is in poor condition.

The interior of the Brooklyn has been extensively altered on the first two floors due to changes instituted by tenants. On the upper floors, original millwork remains indicating the size and configuration of the small apartments and common areas, which accommodated approximately thirty-two borders.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Brooklyn Building is one of the few remaining late nineteenth century commercial buildings of consequence remaining outside of the Pioneer Square Historic District in downtown Seattle. The others include the Austin A. Bell Building (1884), the Barnes Building (1888), and the Holyoke Building (1889).

This low scale masonry structure is an excellent example of the character of construction that dominated post-fire Seattle. Following East Coast architectural trends, the Seattle Building Code dictated fireproof stone and brick construction with a height maximum of five stories. While side elevations were left blank, anticipating the next adjacent structure, facades were highly embellished to capitalize on the most valuable resource, street frontage.

The Brooklyn Building also symbolizes the evolution of Second Avenue. Largely a residential street before the Fire, it grew to rival First Avenue as the main business thoroughfare in the first decade of the twentieth century. An 1884 map of Seattle indicates rows of small dwellings in the vicinity of Second Avenue and University Street. On the Brooklyn Building site stood a 1-1/2 story frame dwelling with a shingle roof. The first indication of the Brooklyn is an 1891 listing in the Polk Directory for the Brooklyn Hotel, Mrs. Sarah A. Kinnaman, proprietor, offering furnished rooms. The building owner, George W. Hadfield, maintained a crockery and furniture store on the lower floor until 1895.

In the ensuing years, the lower floor continued to be occupied by small businesses, such as a tobacco store, and a printer, in the early twentieth century, and in more recent years, an employment agency and currently a beauty parlor and exercise studio in the basement. The upper floors functioned as a residential hotel until 1950. In Henry Broderick's Mirrors of Seattle's Old Hotels, he writes, "... after the Great Fire of 1889, hotels sprung up like mushrooms." This construction kept pace with the booming population which rose from 9,786 in 1885, to 44,748 by 1890, and almost doubling to 80,761 in 1900. The Brooklyn and other residential hotels provided housing for laborers and others who lived and worked in the downtown area.

The heyday of this portion of Second Avenue was in the first decade of the twentieth century, when the Bon Marche, McDougall and Southwick, the Rhodes Department Store, and Frederick and

Nelson were located within two blocks of the Brooklyn Building. Despite current blighted conditions, redevelopment plans for the area, when combined with rehabilitation of the Brooklyn Building, promise to revitalize this area of downtown.

The features of the Landmark to be preserved, include: the north, south, and west exterior elevations.

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Karen Gordon
City Historic Preservation Officer

KG:dlv

cc: William Justen, DCLU (3)
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