



**City of Seattle**

Department of Community Development/Office of Urban Conservation

## Landmark Nomination Form

**Name** Liggett Building/4th and Pike Building **Year Built** 1926  
 (Common, present or historic)

**Street and Number** 431 Pike/1424 Fourth Avenue

**Assessor's File No.** 197570-0410

**Legal Description** **Plat Name** Denny's 3rd Add. **Block** 20 **Lot** 1

**Present Owner** Fourth and Pike Association **Present Use** Office and retail

**Address** 3900 Sea-First Building, Seattle, WA 98154

**Original Owner** Bigelow Building Co. **Original Use** Office and retail

**Architect** Lawton and Moldenhauer **Builder** ---

#### DESCRIPTION:

#### Liggett Building/4th and Pike Building

The August 1926 issue of Washington State Architect included the rendering of a soon-to-be-completed office and retail building, ten stories high, at the southeast corner of Fourth Avenue and Pike Street, costing approximately \$600,000. Gothic in detail, the building was constructed of reinforced concrete and structural steel with a terra cotta facing. The architectural firm of Lawton and Moldenhaur designed the building with the provision for five additional floors in the future; these were never built. The ground floor was occupied by the Lewis Liggett Company, which had a chain of stores throughout the country and leased the space for 99 years.

The building has a highly sculptural, vertically oriented facade of ivory terra cotta that applies both Tudor English and Venetian styled Gothic arches and tracery. Individual details, combined with a consistent set of design motifs, Gothic arch reliefs, and leaf and flower moldings, create a harmonious and distinctive building.

Above a two story retail base of very modern design, the eight story office portion of the building presents a consistent Gothic character in identical facades on both Pike Street and Fourth Avenue. The elevation consist of seven rows of Chicago styled pivoting windows with transoms separated by narrow terra cotta piers that terminate in spindle-like finials. Framing these interior windows are corner bays of three sectioned windows and transoms set between wide and fluted piers; these piers rise from miniature turrets placed at the second floor level and terminate in finialed pinnacles above the roof line. All the window spandrels are delineated with narrow, circular shafts that surround each eight story high section and culminate, above the tenth floor windows, in segmental or ogee arches. Spandrel friezes are decorated with panel tracery of inscribed quatrefoils.

The crown of the building is decorated with arched panels high-lighted, at the building's corners, by sloped gables inscribed with ogee arches and trefoil tracery. The extension of piers to form finials or turret-like appendages above the roofline defined by these arched friezes and the ascending affect of the rich vertical tracery of the Gothic styled ornament make this building appear slender, tall, and graceful.

In contrast to the traditional Gothic design elements of the rest of the building, the ground and second floors were distinctly contemporary. Prior to its 1970's remodelling, the ground floor incorporated a black granite base with large expanses of plate glass and metal mullions to define the display windows and entrances to the Liggett Company Store. Uninterrupted by the terra cotta clad piers that occur at the upper floors, the lightweight character achieved at ground level would have made the



building appear to float. Likewise, the second floor (which remains virtually unaltered) is notable for its large expanse of plate windows with transoms and narrow metal mullions. With the exception of the eight primary corner piers, these windows provide an uninterrupted band of glass surrounding the second floor. Separating the ground floor from the second floor is a border molding of leaves. Another band, this one of flowers, is placed above the second floor windows. A frieze consisting of shields and panel tracery wraps around the building above this floral band to further separate the retail base from the office floors above it.

The main entrance portal, located at the southwest corner of the building on 4th Avenue, extends two floors in height. A Tudor arched portal surrounds bronze tone entrance doors and a tripartite transom. Ogee inscribed terra cotta arches identify and articulate this entrance. The structural piers framing the entrance, as well as the piers at the Union Street end and the corner of the building sprout from floral corbels.

The vestibule or outer lobby has ivory veined marble walls and a ribbed ceiling surfaced in gold leaf with blue ray and salmon-toned stenciled borders of vines and flowers. The wood ribbing springs from small sprouting corbels. The vestibule is lit by two chandeliers hexagonally shaped with lancet arched sections and amber colored glass. Two sets of entry doors lead into the main lobby; the main set of three doors is unified beneath a Tudor arched transom with ogee and pointed arched tracery glasswork. A secondary dooreway to the sound leads to the basement stairway.

The main lobby, also walled with ivory veined marble, consists of five bays of cross ribbed groin vaults. The entire ceiling is gold leaf with stenciled edges. Three bronze lattic chandeliers, more delicate in design than those in the vestibule, illuminate the space. They incorporate ogee arches rather than lancet or pointed arches and a light toned translucent glass in their hexagonal forms. Ogee ached friezes appear again above the four elevator portals.

The design of the Liggett Building must have impressed other private developers in downtown. The March 27, 1927, Washington State Architect discussed the construction of the Republic Building (on Third Avenue and Pike Street), also by Lawton and Moldenhour and identical in plan and elevations with the only change being the adaptation of a classical styled ornamentation rather than a Gothic style.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Liggett Building/4th and Pike Building

The Liggett Building's Gothic terra cotta ornamentation is the finest of its type in Seattle. In terms of its intricacy, the quality of its detailing, and the consistency of its application of design elements over the exterior and into the lobby interior, this building's Gothic decoration is outstanding. The Shafer Building (1921) at Sixth and Pine Street was the first major office building in the district to adapt Gothic decoration to its terra cotta surfaces; it is a much simpler application. The Liggett Building draws from the rich decorative traditions of the Tudor Gothic and the more exotic Venetian Gothic periods, replete with ogee arches and multifoil tracery and, consequently, has one of the city's most sculptural and textural terra cotta facades. Of particular interest are its three dimensional miniature turrets and parapet finials.

Of added significance is the fact that the Liggett Building, despite its ground floor retail space remodelling, retains its architectural integrity far better than comparable buildings of that period, such as the Medical Dental Building at Sixth and Olive.

(The latter building originally had a magnificently scaled groin-vaulted lobby complete with elaborate spreading palm branch ribbing. This lobby disappeared in 1950 when the new addition and ground floor refurbishing was completed.) The Liggett Building, like the Northern Life tower, is one of the very few remaining downtown office buildings whose lobby remains virtually unchanged, allowing the pedestrian to see a correlation between the exterior and interior ornamentation.

From an urban design standpoint, the Liggett Building was a successful addition to a major corner of downtown Seattle. Its height and choice of materials and colors made it a good neighbor to the 1908 Seaboard Building and the 1912 Joshua Green Building. Its major retail outlet only served to emphasize the magnet of this northeast section of the downtown as the prime retail district.

Bibliography:

The American Architect, October 20, 1926, Plate 253, 254  
(Medical Dental Building)

Washington State Architect, August 1926  
Washington State Architect, March 1927

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Photographs:

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Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone 625-4501  
Date October 25, 1985

Reviewed Karen Gordon Date 10/25/85  
Historic Preservation Officer