

Spokane Register of Historic Places Nomination

*Spokane City/County Historic Preservation Office, City Hall, Sixth Floor
808 Spokane Falls Boulevard, Spokane, Washington 99201-3337*

1. Name of Property

Historic Name **MORGAN BLOCK**
Common Name Standard Building, Fairmont Hotel

2. Location

Street & Number 315 W. Riverside Avenue, 314 W. Sprague Avenue
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99201
Parcel Number 35184.2901

3. Classification

Category of Property	Ownership of Property	Status of Property	Present Use of Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both		<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> residential
<input type="checkbox"/> object	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes, restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes, unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other

4. Owner of Property

Name R. Ronald and Julie W. Wells
Street & Number 1325 W. First Avenue Suite 300
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99204
Telephone Number/E-mail 624-8050, rronwells@aol.com

5. Location of Legal Description

Courthouse, Registry of Deeds Spokane County Courthouse
Street Number 1116 West Broadway
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99201
County Spokane

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Title City of Spokane Historic Landmarks Survey
Date Federal__ State__ County__ Local 1979
Depository for Survey Records Spokane Historic Preservation Office

Final Nomination 15 November 2000

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair
 deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check One

unaltered
 altered

Check One

original site
 moved & date _____

Narrative description of present and original physical appearance is found on one or more continuation sheets.

8. Spokane Register Criteria and Statement of Significance

Applicable Spokane Register of Historic Places Criteria--mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for Spokane Register listing:

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Spokane history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory history.

Narrative statement of significance is found on one or more continuation sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography is found on one or more continuation sheets.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre.
Verbal Boundary Description Resurvey Spokane Falls Addition L1, B18.
Verbal Boundary Justification Nominated property includes entire parcel and urban legal description.

11. Form Prepared By

Name and Title Linda Yeomans, Planner/Consultant
Organization Historic Preservation Planning
Telephone Number/E-mail 509-456-3828 or lyeomans@qwest.net
Street and Number 501 West 27th Avenue
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99203
Date 15 November 2000

12. Additional Documentation

Map Spokane City/County plat map, 2000
Photographs and Slides 15 black & white prints, 20 slides

13. Signature of Owner(s) **X**
[Signature]

14. For Official Use Only:

Date Received: _____

Attest: [Signature]
City Clerk

Date Heard: _____

Commission Decision: _____

Approved
As to form: [Signature]
Assistant City Attorney

Council/Board Action: Approved

Date: 11-27-00

We hereby certify that this property has been listed in the Spokane Register of Historic Places.

[Signature]
MAYOR, City of Spokane
or

CHAIR, Spokane County Commissioners

CHAIR, Spokane City/County Historic Landmarks Commission

[Signature]
OFFICER, City/County Historic Preservation Officer
City/County Historic Preservation Office
Sixth Floor – City Hall, Spokane, WA 99201

Narrative Description

Summary Statement

Built in 1909, the Morgan Block is a typical example of the property type “single room occupancy hotel” (SRO) as identified in the National Register Multiple Property Listing *Single Room Occupancy Hotels in the Central Business District of Spokane, Washington, 1900-1910*. Fronting two streets, the rectangular building extends through the block from the north side of West Sprague Avenue to the south side of West Riverside Avenue in downtown Spokane. The six-story building is constructed of unreinforced brick and retains original exterior fenestration patterns above street-level. Although extant due to fire damage, the interior floor plan of the Morgan Block above street-level conveys its use as an early Spokane single room occupancy hotel.

2000 - Present Appearance and Condition

Site

The Morgan Block is located on Lot 1, Block 18 of Spokane’s Resurvey Addition and fills the entire lot between Sprague and Riverside Avenues. Two street addresses identify the building at 314 West Sprague Avenue and at 315 West Riverside Avenue. A small, two-story building is attached to the Morgan Block to the east, and a five-story brick building is attached to the west. The footprint for the Morgan Block measures 65 feet wide and 179 feet deep with over 10,000 square feet on each floor. A paved sidewalk borders the building on the north and south elevations.

Exterior

The six-story Morgan Block is constructed of 18-inch-thick load-bearing walls that are supported by a basalt stone foundation. The building rises more than 50 feet to remnants of the sixth floor which was severely damaged in a 1999 fire. Buff-colored pressed brick veneer clads the building’s north and south facades, and the building’s structural walls composed of common red brick are partially exposed on the east and west elevations. The south elevation has five stories, and the north elevation has six stories due to a drop in grade. Above street level, the building’s brick facade design is the same for the north face and for the south face of the building. The facades are evenly divided into three vertical bays separated by brick pilasters. Each facade has a center bay that projects out 12 inches from the wall plane and features tripartite window units on each floor above the second floor. A segmented arch embellished with decorative brick quoins and a large center keystone cap the tripartite window unit on the sixth floor. A brick course outlines and surrounds the center bay. A corbelled-brick window sill forms the base of the bay under the third-floor windows. The facade’s remaining windows on the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth floors flank the center bay and are embellished with brick flat arches and decorative keystones that mark the center of each arch. The partially visible east and west elevations of the building feature segmentally arched windows arranged in a

symmetrical pattern and three arched casement windows with divided lights on the west elevation's third floor. Except for the three casement windows, all of the windows above street-level were replaced in 1999 with one-over-one aluminum-sash windows.

The street-level facade on the north face features a contemporary storefront design implemented in 1989-1990. The design includes concrete bulkheads, metal-framed plate-glass windows, transom lights, and metal-framed glass doors. The street-level facade on the south face is comprised of contemporary brick-veneer bulkheads, metal-framed plate-glass windows, and glass doors. The space where transom windows were once located above the plate-glass merchandise windows is covered with wood paneling.

Interior

The interior of the Morgan Block was extensively damaged due to a fire in 1999. The entire building was gutted except for remnants of original staircases located on the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth floors and remnants of wood framing that supported the interior walls. The building's two light wells and two elevator shafts are still in place, and an original terrazzo floor exists on the first floor.

Original Appearance and Alterations

The Morgan Block was originally designed with seven floors. Black and white photographs taken in 1916, 1921, and 1923 picture a decorative shaped parapet with corner battlements, ornamental colonettes, a corbelled cornice, and a stepped parapet design over a center bay. A recessed panel located in the center of the stepped parapet originally held block letters that spelled "MORGAN," proclaiming the building's name. The original windows on the second through seventh floors were one-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash units. Transom lights capped window units located in the center bay and third floor. The street-level facade of the north face of the building along Riverside Avenue featured a storefront design with two canted bays, plate-glass merchandise windows, transom lights, paneled bulkheads, and three separate entry doors. A square marquee with a scalloped edge was suspended over the western-most entrance. A row of multi-paned windows were located on the second floor above the street-level storefront. A paneled belt course separated the storefront from the second story and held advertisement signage. Fronting West Sprague Avenue, the south elevation of the building was originally a mirror image of the design for the north facade. The east and west elevations of the building were partially exposed, and fenestration included segmentally arched one-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows. Multi-paned casement windows were visible on the west elevation's third floor. Advertisements for the Fairmont Hotel were painted on both the west and east elevations of the building, and various signs made of metal and wood hung from the south

and north faces of the building. Iron fire escapes were attached to the building's north and south faces.

The interior of the Morgan Block was originally designed with 140 single occupancy hotel rooms that wrapped around two large interior light wells. Every room had a window that could be opened for outside fresh air, and common lavatories were shared by the residents of each floor. The first floor that fronts Riverside Avenue was one-half floor lower than the first floor on Sprague Avenue due to a drop in grade. The center portion of the first floor on the north half of the building was originally designed as a hotel lobby and office. The remaining first-floor space surrounding the lobby and the first-floor in the south half of the building was designed for use as commercial merchandise bays. Two interior staircases and two elevators led to the basement and to the upper floors of the building.

In 1941, the Morgan Block was damaged by fire. The roof, parapet, block letters proclaiming the building's name, and the entire seventh story were destroyed, including 23 single occupancy hotel rooms on that floor. Two years later, the building was repaired and reconstructed without the seventh floor and without the decorative parapet detailing that embellished the original building. The interior was remodeled and the remaining 117 hotel rooms were reduced to 99. The second floor had 11 rooms, and the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth floors held 22 rooms each. A Pullman-style kitchen and small bathroom were built in each room. Sometime before 1989, the street-level storefront designs for the building's north and south facades was altered, and in 1990, the storefront on the north face of the building was remodeled. In 1999, the Morgan Block sustained severe fire damage again. The roof, windows, storefronts, and most of the interior were destroyed.

Areas of Significance	Architecture
Period of Significance	1909-1950
Significant Dates	1909, 1941, 1943
Architect	Alfred Jones
Specific Dates	1909

Statement of Significance

Summary Statement

Operating continuously for over 90 years, the Morgan Block is one of Spokane's oldest and longest-running single room occupancy hotels. The brick building was designed by prominent Spokane architect Alfred Jones, and was built in 1909 for Daniel Morgan, a former Washington State senator and Spokane property developer. The Morgan Block is eligible for listing on the Spokane Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as a good example of the property type "single room occupancy hotel" identified in the National Register Multiple Property Listing (MPL) *Single Room Occupancy Hotels in the Central Business District of Spokane, Washington, 1900-1910*. Architecturally significant, the Morgan Block meets the National Register of Historic Places requirements for single room occupancy hotels established in the MPL.

Historical Context

Early Spokane

The town of Spokane began to grow in the 1870s when fur trappers and pioneers settled in the area, joining Native American Indian tribes who lived and fished along the banks of the Spokane River. The small community grew and was soon recognized as a center for mining, lumber, agriculture, and rail transport. Experiencing phenomenal growth, Spokane's population tripled from 36,000 in 1900, to over 100,000 by 1910. Thousands of men, women, and children seeking employment and a better life flocked to Spokane. Reports exclaimed that "so many homeless men were thronging in that the hotels and lodging houses could not care for them. Many slept on chairs or floors in hotels and saloons." Answering the call for living space, hotels, apartments, and lodging houses were built to hold the growing number of homeless immigrants, laborers, and fortune seekers. The Morgan Block was one such facility.

Daniel Morgan

Daniel Morgan was born in Benton County, Oregon in 1869. After studying law for a short time, Morgan became interested in real estate development. He came to Spokane, partnered with investor George Colborn, and developed the Colborn-Morgan Addition in Hillyard. He later purchased land adjacent to the Colborn-Morgan tract, platted it, and called it Morgan's Acre Park Addition. It was reported that Daniel Morgan was noted for his "innovation in the methods of development" in these areas, and "like all previous

efforts, was successful from the start.” The tract was divided into one-acre lots instead of the standard small 50-foot-wide lots, thus affording prospective property owners with the chance for “remuneration and pleasure in cultivating their own crops.” In addition to real estate development in Spokane, Morgan invested in Coeur d’Alene mining operations and small town planning efforts in Lamont, Washington. He initiated the organization and building of Lamont and proposed to make it “the greatest little town in the United States.” Daniel Morgan served briefly as a Washington State senator and later as managing governor of the International Dry Farming Congress.

Morgan married Pendleton, Oregon native Jessie May Smith in 1892. In Spokane, they lived at 242 Manito Place in a house designed for them by Whitehouse and Price, and raised three sons. A civic-minded man, Morgan was active in the philanthropic organization called the Knights of Pythias, and was also a member of the Spokane Club, the Spokane County Club, and the Spokane Amateur Athletic Club.

The Morgan Block

The aerial perspective *Spokane 1884*, and the *1891 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* show a residential neighborhood dotted with frame buildings on Block 18 where the Morgan Block now stands. The Lewis family lived in a house on the north half of Lot 1, and the Swart family lived in a house on the south half of the property. The area remained primarily residential until 1900 when Spokane’s population began to rapidly increase. Increased population demanded increased services, and by 1905, a two-story brick building had replaced the frame houses located on the Morgan Block site. The building was occupied by the Standard Furniture Company for four years. By 1909, the housing shortage in Spokane was critical, and the two-story brick building was replaced with the Morgan Block--a seven-story building built to accommodate both commercial business and people needing a place to live.

Realizing the city’s need for more housing and seizing his chance at speculative success, Spokane real estate developer Daniel Morgan commissioned architect Alfred Jones to design a hotel. Named after Morgan, the Morgan Block was seven stories tall and was supported by thick load-bearing walls. Newspaper accounts reported the building was “considered among the most heavily constructed in the city” for its time. The building could be entered from both Riverside and Sprague Avenues and had a hotel lobby as well as merchandise bays designed for use as commercial space on the first floor. The building’s lodging facility was called the Fairmont Hotel and contained 140 single occupancy rooms above street level. Each room was finished with lathe and plaster walls, vertical grain fir floors, electric light fixtures, and windows that opened to the street or large interior light wells designed to help ventilate the building with fresh outside air.

Lodgers and tenants leased space in the Fairmont Hotel immediately after construction of the building was completed. The *United States Census Record* for 1910 reported that mostly men leased the hotel rooms, and they were from states and countries as far away as Pennsylvania, New York, Sweden, Germany, England, and Canada. The men were young at an average age of 28, mostly unmarried, and were employed as hotel keepers, traveling salesmen, restaurant cooks, janitors, hardware store managers, electricians, professional baseball players, and as laborers, mechanics, brakemen, engineers and passenger agents for the hub of railroads located in downtown Spokane. The *Spokesman-Review* reported the new Fairmont Hotel was “a center for much of Spokane’s social life.”

In 1941, a fire destroyed the entire seventh floor of the Morgan Block, and the building was repaired, but without the seventh floor. Two years later, the Morgan Block was sold to the Schiffner and Watkins real estate investment company for “approximately \$40,000.” The investment company then leased the building to the Home Owner’s Loan Corporation, a federally funded war relief program designed to provide housing for veterans of World War II. More than \$200,000 was spent to repair fire damage sustained by the building and for an interior remodeling project that reduced the number of single occupancy hotel rooms in the building from 117 to 99. The *Spokesman-Review* reported that all of the “apartments” were “modern” and included “one or two rooms each with kitchenette, air-conditioning and bath.” Monthly rental rates ranged from “\$37.50 to \$47.50, including all utilities and equipment consisting of rangettes and electric refrigerators.” Building owners Schiffner and Watkins explained the building’s future with the following statement:

“This building is set up for an apartment hotel when the government’s lease expires. It is the type of hotel needed in downtown Spokane. We have great faith in Spokane’s future and are confident of the city’s growth to over 250,000 within five years after the conclusion of the war.”

The Fairmont Hotel was renamed the Fairmont Apartments after the rooms were remodeled in 1943. There were 11 apartments on the second floor and 22 apartments each on the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth floors. The apartments were rented by working-class men and women employed in a variety of jobs as hotel and sales clerks, seamstresses, cooks, laborers, bartenders, shipping clerks, waiters, and one as a vendor for the state liquor control board. By 1999, 108 tenants lived in the building and monthly rental rates had increased ten-fold to between \$325 and \$460. On July 17, 1999, a huge fire broke out in the adjacent Arlington Hotel building and jumped to the roof of the Morgan Block, causing extensive damage to the building. Noted for his award-winning

restoration work on historic buildings in Spokane and the development of Carnegie Square at West First Avenue and South Cedar Street, architect/developer Ron Wells purchased the Morgan Block in 2000. He plans to rehabilitate the building during the next two to five years.

Commercial Tenants

In addition to housing working-class men and women in the Fairmont Hotel and Fairmont Apartments for over 90 years, the Morgan Block also provided leased commercial space on the first floor to various businesses. Built in 1909, the Morgan Block served as the location for the Standard Furniture Company, which had previously occupied the circa-1905 building the Morgan Block replaced. The furniture company was owned and operated by Isadore Mandel Cuschner and sold “everything” including “carpets, portieres, lace curtains, rugs, linoleums, oil cloths, crockery, furniture, office desks, iron beds, stoves, steel ranges, heaters, and tin and graniteware.” Except for the Fairmont Hotel’s lobby and office located in the north center portion of the first floor and small electrical businesses located in the northeast corner of the building, the Standard Furniture Company occupied the building’s entire street-level floor space. *Polk’s Spokane Directory* listed the furniture company at 313-317 W. Riverside Avenue and at 314-316-318 W. Sprague Avenue. Cuschner proved a successful merchant and leased space in the Morgan Block for over 24 years from 1909 to 1933. The Standard Furniture Company was so well known at the Riverside and Sprague addresses that the Morgan Block was commonly called the Standard Building and was listed as such in city directories during that time.

Other businesses leased space in the Morgan Block in addition to the Standard Furniture Company. From 1917 to 1928, Murray and Esser Lighting and Supply (later called E. W. Murray Lighting Company) occupied the northeast corner of the building’s first floor followed by Duncan Electric in 1929. After the Standard Furniture Company left the Morgan Block in 1933, first-floor commercial space was leased by various businesses including the Spokane Merchants Association, McCaffrey Manufacturing and Plumbing Supply, a beauty shop owned by Mrs. Luella Hanks, Leslie Newton Musical Instruments, Sprague Avenue Furniture Exchange, Triangle Home Improvement Company, Schiffner and Watkins Real Estate and Insurance, C. J. Mast Hardware, Men’s Welcome House Service Center, union offices and meeting rooms for United Steel Workers and Woodworkers of America, and the Rennel School of Beauty. During the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the building’s first floor was occupied by Auntie’s Bookstore and Cafe, Clarke’s Book Store, and the Buckaroo Bagel Bakery.

Architectural Significance

The Morgan Block is architecturally significant as one of Spokane's oldest examples of the property type "single room occupancy hotels" as identified in the National Register Multiple Property Listing *Single Room Occupancy Hotels in the Central Business District of Spokane, Washington, 1900-1910*. The building's commercial style, exterior fenestration patterns, interior room configuration, and historical context exemplify the typical early 20th-century single room occupancy hotel. An SRO is identified as a two or three-story building constructed of unreinforced masonry with street-level commercial bays and upper-level single-occupancy rooms. The rooms shared common lavatory facilities and were sometimes furnished with washbasins and closets. Centrally placed interior light wells and skylights were characteristically surrounded by wide hallways and rooms that ringed the building's interior parameter.

The Morgan Block is similar to other SROs in downtown Spokane. These include the Globe Hotel, the Montvale Block, the Commercial Block, the New Madison Hotel, and the Parsons building. All of these buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as SROs and meet the requirements for single room occupancy hotels established in the MPL *Single Room Occupancy Hotels in the Central Business District of Spokane, Washington, 1900-1910*. Like the Morgan Block, these buildings are all good examples of their type and once served as early SROs. In contrast, the Globe, New Madison, and the Parsons have all been altered, and the Globe and Parsons no longer serve as SROs. Until it was damaged by a fire in 1999, the Morgan Block had no alterations to the single occupancy rooms on the upper floors during the last 56 years. In addition, the Fairmont Hotel continuously served as an SRO from the time it was built in 1909.

Bibliography

Durham, N. W. *History of the County of Spokane and Spokane County, Washington*, Vol. II, Spokane: S. J. Clarke, 1912.

Eastern Washington State Historical Society, photo archives.

Edwards, Reverend Jonathan. *An Illustrated History of Spokane County, State of Washington*, Spokane: W. H. Lever, 1900.

Hyslop, Robert B. *Spokane's Building Blocks*, Spokane: Standard Blueprint Company, 1983.

Polk, R. L. *City Directory*, Spokane, 1883-2000.

Pratt, Orville Clyde. *The Story of Spokane*, Unpublished MS, Northwest Room, Spokane Public Library, 1948.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Spokane Public Library.

Spokesman-Review, various articles.

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Spokane Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet
MORGAN BLOCK

Section 12

Photos 1 and 2

North facade of building and close-up of east elevation advertisement painted on brick wall of building; November, 2000 photos.



Spokane Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet
MORGAN BLOCK

Section 12

Photos 3 and 4

North facade of building in November, 2000.



Photos 5, 6, and 7 North facade of building in November, 2000.



Spokane Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet
MORGAN BLOCK

Section 12

Photos 8 and 9

South facade of building along Sprague Avenue; November, 2000 photographs.



Photo 10
Photo 11

First floor interior looking south.
Second floor looking northeast.



Photo 12
Photo 13

Stairs from first-floor lobby area to second floor.
Second floor (representative of third, fourth, fifth, and sixth floor
plans.



Photo 14
Photo 15

Third floor looking south.
Interior light well looking up to sixth floor.

