

# Spokane Register of Historic Places Nomination

*Spokane City/County Historic Preservation Office, City Hall, Sixth Floor  
808 W. Spokane Falls Boulevard, Spokane, WA 99201*

## 1. Name of Property

Historic Name **CITY RAMP GARAGE**

## 2. Location

Street & Number 430 W. First Avenue  
 City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99201  
 Parcel Number 35191.2101

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input 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"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> residential
	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other

## 4. Owner of Property

Name B&H Enterprises LLC Number 1  
 Street & Number 1420 E. Overbluff Road  
 City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99203  
 Telephone Number/E-mail 624-1313, cityramp@cityramp.comcastbiz.net

## 5. Location of Legal Description

Courthouse, Registry of Deeds Spokane County Courthouse  
 Street Number 1116 West Broadway  
 City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99260  
 County Spokane

## 6. Representation of Existing Surveys

Title City of Spokane Historic Landmarks Survey  
 Date Federal\_\_\_ State\_\_\_ County\_\_\_ Local 1979  
 Location of Survey Records Spokane Historic Preservation Office

**7. Description**

<b>Architectural Classification</b> (see nomination, section 8)	<b>Condition</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent <input type="checkbox"/> good <input type="checkbox"/> fair <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/> ruins <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	<b>Check One</b> <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered  <b>Check One</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site <input type="checkbox"/> moved & date _____
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**8. Spokane Register Categories and Statement of Significance**

**Applicable Spokane Register of Historic Places Categories: Mark "x" on one or more for the categories that qualify the property for the 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 or 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	Lots 1, 2, 3 in Block 10, Railroad Addition.
Verbal Boundary Justification	Nominated property includes entire parcel and urban legal description.

**11. Form Prepared By**

Name and Title	Linda Yeomans, Consultant
Organization	Historic Preservation Planning
Street, City, State, Zip Code	501 West 27 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, Spokane, WA 99203
Telephone Number	509-456-3828
Email Address	lindayeomans@comcast.net
Date Final Nomination Heard	February 16, 2011

**12. Additional Documentation**

Map	City/County of Spokane current plat map.
Photographs and Slides	Black & white prints, CD-ROM color images.





*The City Ramp Garage at First Avenue & Stevens Street, Spokane, WA in 2011*

### **DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY**

The City Ramp Garage in downtown Spokane, Washington was built in 1928 as the first multi-level, staggered-floor, ramp-type parking garage in the city.<sup>1</sup> It is a six-story-and-basement fireproof reinforced concrete structure with a flat roof, a large recessed drive-in garage lobby, gasoline pumps and pump islands, parking stalls built in the basement and upper floors, and was originally constructed to house more than 350 automobiles. A fine illustration of the Art Deco style, the garage is architecturally prominent with a robust use of curved and vertical rectilinear geometric designs, rinceau and multi-colored terra cotta ornamentation, and a shaped parapet with tall pilasters and finials that extend past the parapet's top. The building's exterior has a vertical emphasis with tall concrete pilasters interspersed by recessed bays which are clad with tan-colored brick veneer. The brick

<sup>1</sup> "Party is Planned at Ramp Garage." *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 7 Nov 1928.

vener walls are punctuated by multi-paned steel-sash windows which are arranged in vertical rows. The City Ramp Garage was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003 as a contributing historic resource of the East Downtown National Historic District in Spokane, and retains a high level of exterior and interior architectural integrity in original location, design, materials, workmanship, and association as a parking garage built in the 1920s.

## CURRENT APPEARANCE & CONDITION

### *Site*

The City Ramp Garage is located in the Railroad Addition to Spokane on all of Lot 1 and part of Lots 2 and 3 in Block 10. The property is identified by Spokane County as tax parcel number 35191.2101. The garage has two primary facades at its southwest corner with one facade facing west at South Stevens Street and one facing south at West First Avenue. The property's footprint assumes an "L" shape with the longer part of the L running in a north-south direction along Stevens Street, and the foot of the L running east along First Avenue. The property measures 155 feet along South Stevens Street from Sprague south through the block to First Avenue, 125 feet along First Avenue, and 75 feet along Sprague Avenue.<sup>2</sup> The L-shaped footprint of the City Ramp Garage includes a six-story structure which consumes most of Lots 1 and 2, but also includes a small one-story "wing" which is attached to the east wall of the garage at the northeast corner. The one-story garage wing is 25 feet wide at its north face (part of the garage structure's 75-foot face extension along Sprague Avenue), and 80 feet deep as it extends south from Sprague Avenue south along part of the east side of the 155-foot-wide six-story garage structure. A two-story brick building (415 W. Sprague Avenue) built in 1890 is located adjacent to and shares a common wall with the small one-story garage wing at the wing's east exterior wall. Another two-story brick building (418 W. First Avenue), also built in 1890, is located adjacent to and shares the south half of the east wall of the six-story garage at the garage building's southeast corner. Eight-foot-wide paved sidewalks separate the garage from the road at Stevens Street and First and Sprague Avenues. A contributing historic property of Spokane's East Downtown National Historic District, the garage is surrounded by architecturally and historically significant commercial buildings and railroad viaducts that were erected from 1890 to 1945, and contemporary commercial infill that includes paved parking lots and commercial buildings.

### *Exterior*

#### *West Facade*

The west face of the garage extends from Sprague Avenue south to First Avenue along Stevens Street and features six stories and a flat roof. A named front entrance driveway at the first floor of the building is located in a center bay of the west facade. The front entrance driveway is 22.3 feet wide, one story high, paved with concrete, and leads from Stevens Street into a recessed, drive-in garage lobby at the building's first floor. A small,

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<sup>2</sup> Spokane County public tax parcel records. Spokane County Courthouse, Spokane, WA.

shallow-pitched, painted concrete tile roof marks the entrance, and protects a horizontal concrete beam. The words CITY RAMP GARAGE are etched in the concrete and painted black. Brackets made of painted concrete support the spandrel and the roof.<sup>3</sup> The entryway except for the roof appears to be covered with a coating of painted stucco.

The six stories at the west façade of the City Ramp Garage are separated vertically by seven pilasters and six recessed vertical bays which are located between the pilasters. The pilasters are made of reinforced concrete, extend more than six stories from grade past the top of a shaped parapet, and culminate in finials of molded concrete fashioned as pyramidal points.<sup>4</sup> The vertical concrete pilasters are symmetrically interspersed with recessed vertical bays, which are clad in brick veneer. Vertical rows of windows punctuate the vertical recessed bays. The windows are industrial type units made of fixed multi-paned, steel-sash with up to 16 divided lights each. The windows pivot open at each sash or have center ventilation sections that pivot open. Each window sill is made of terra cotta. Terra cotta panels articulated with rinceau (“an ornamental band of undulant and recurving plant motifs”<sup>5</sup>) are located between each window. The shaped parapet protects a flat roof which is surfaced with concrete and is used as additional parking space for cars. A first-floor recessed garage lobby is located under the southwest corner of the second floor and is accessible through the aforementioned described center west front garage entrance and through two open bays that are located next to and south of the front garage entrance. Three more bays are located north of the front entrance at the west facade but are enclosed with storefronts. The storefronts have plate glass windows, canted entrances, and bulkheads at street level which are located under each window. The bulkheads are covered with tan, gold, and blue-colored glazed ceramic tile. Canvas awnings with scalloped edges are attached to the building above the storefront windows at the west façade. Original multi-paned clerestory windows above storefront windows were covered in 1966 with decorative louvered metal panels that are hidden under the awnings (Spokane City building permit B59464<sup>6</sup>).

The *south facade* of the City Ramp Garage looks south onto First Avenue and is considered another primary façade of the structure. The south face of the building has symmetrical fenestration patterns and reveals six stories which are separated vertically by eight pilasters made of reinforced concrete. Vertical recessed bays covered with tan-colored brick veneer are located between the pilasters and are punctuated with windows at each floor. Like the west façade, windows are multi-paned steel-sash units with upper and lower sashes or center sections that pivot open for ventilation. Window sills are made of terra cotta, and windows are separated vertically by a combination of decorative

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<sup>3</sup> Circa 1928 City Ramp Garage elevation drawing #7 and plan drawing #26. See file for City Ramp Garage in Spokane City/County Historic Preservation Office, Spokane City Hall, Spokane, WA.

<sup>4</sup> Harold Whitehouse, the architect for the 1928 City Ramp Garage, refers to the pilasters as “piers” in his 1928 drawings of the structure. Historic Preservation Office, Spokane, WA.

<sup>5</sup> Harris, Cyril M. *Dictionary of Architecture & Construction*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000, p. 769.

<sup>6</sup> Spokane building permit, Spokane City Hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Spokane, WA.

brickwork panels and terra cotta panels. The decorative brickwork reveals rectilinear geometric designs made of bricks, including zigzags, basket weave, and herringbone patterns. The parapet is shaped, and like the parapet at the west façade, is accented with eight pilasters that extend through the parapet wall. The top of each pilaster culminates in a finial designed in the shape of a pyramidal point, all made of molded concrete. Multi-colored gold, tan, and blue terra cotta panels with rinceau patterns are located between each pilaster in the parapet. Two open bays located at street level at the southeast corner of the building's south face are open to the street and lead to the recessed drive-in garage lobby. The bay that is located adjacent east of the southwest corner bay at First Avenue is covered with a small shallow-pitched roof that matches the first-floor driveway entrance roof at the west façade.

The *north face* of the building fronts Sprague Avenue, abuts a paved sidewalk, and is 75 feet wide. It reveals a six-story building which measures 50 feet wide (two-thirds of the 75-foot-wide footprint extension along Sprague Avenue), and a small one-story wing that is attached to the six-story building on the east wall at the northeast corner. The wing is 25 feet wide, 80 feet deep, and is part of the 1928 garage. In contrast to the tall height of the six-story parking garage, the small 25-foot-wide attached wing is only one story in height.

The six-story parking garage is separated symmetrically by tall pilasters into three full-height bays. The walls and pilasters are made of reinforced concrete. The pilasters are unpainted concrete while the recessed bays above street level between the pilasters are clad with tan brick veneer which is punctuated with multi-paned steel-sash windows. Decorative brick veneer separates the vertical windows in the center bay while tan, gold, and blue-colored terra cotta panels separate the windows in the flanking bays. The parapet is shaped and accented like the west and south facades with pilasters that extend past the parapet wall and terminate in molded concrete finials. The parapet is further ornamented with tan, gold, and blue-colored terra cotta rinceau designs. The north face of the building at street level is marked by three bays with commercial storefronts. The three bays each have canted entrances with glass doors and metal door frames. The windows are plate-glass with a combination of original wood and 1960s metal sash. Beneath the glass windows are bulkheads which are clad with tan, gold, and blue-colored glazed ceramic tile. Above the windows are metal louvered panels which were applied over original multi-paned transom and clerestory windows in 1966. Scalloped canvas awnings were attached to the building when they were installed between the storefront windows and the transom/clerestory windows in 1964.<sup>7</sup>

As previously mentioned in this nomination, a small single-story wing (425 W. Sprague Avenue) is located at the northeast corner of the six-story garage building and was built in 1928 as part of the City Ramp Garage. It has a shaped parapet with parapet designs and embellishment that mimic the shaped parapets on the north, west, and south faces of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

the building. The parapet is prominently ornamental with molded concrete coping, curved and rectilinear geometric designs, and multi-colored terra cotta panels. A storefront with a canted entrance, plate glass windows, and a glazed ceramic tile bulkhead are located at street level at the north face of the single-story building. The bulkhead tile is black which does not match the tan, gold, and blue-colored bulkhead tiles of the six-story building, and may have replaced the original tile. A decorative metal louvered panel installed in 1966 is located above the storefront windows and entrance, and covers the building's original multi-paned transom and clerestory windows.

The *east rear face* of the building looks east at an adjacent paved parking lot and the flat roofs of two adjacent buildings which share common walls with the garage. The garage's east wall is plain, made of painted reinforced concrete, and has a plain parapet wall with no embellishment. Fenestration patterns are symmetrical with multi-paned steel-sash windows like the rest of the building.

### ***Interior***

According to the Spokane County tax assessor, the interior of the City Ramp Garage has six floors and a basement with 13,581 square feet of interior space. The first floor is open to the some of the weather in a recessed garage lobby under the southwest corner of the building's second floor. The first-floor drive-in garage lobby is unfinished with exposed, unpainted, reinforced concrete beams and joists, a concrete floor, and a pump island with gasoline pumps. A contractor's office is located on the east wall of the garage lobby, a garage office with a waiting room and restrooms, and an elevator hall is located on the north wall of the lobby. The north office and restrooms are currently under remodel construction. Built in the last 30 years, the east-wall contractor's office is plain and finished with painted sheetrock, carpeted floor, and fixed plate-glass windows. Three elevators in the elevator hall include an industrial-type open man-lift which is located in a circular shaft made of concrete and was designed for use by employees. A small wood-and-metal platform designed to hold one person at a time is attached to a vertical metal pole which is propelled up and down from the basement to the sixth floor by an electric motor. In contrast, adjacent twin electric-powered elevators were designed in 1928 by the Otis Elevator Company and were installed to accommodate patrons of the garage as well as service personnel that did not use the man-lift. The twin electric elevators are made of steel and brass with steel accordion-style doors and have a wood floor.

A 20-foot-wide concrete automobile ramp in the northeast corner of the first floor garage lobby rises eastward to a mezzanine level of the parking garage that is located between the first and second floors. A ramp at the mezzanine ascends to the second floor. Stalls for parking are located on the mezzanine and the second floor and can accommodate automobiles and trucks. The walls are made of unfinished, reinforced, poured concrete



which reveals “slip form” concrete construction.<sup>8</sup> Ceiling beams and joists are exposed, unfinished and unpainted, and are made of reinforced concrete. Each floor is supported by large reinforced concrete columns which are square. The square columns support concrete beams. The north-south running beams support east-west running floor joists which support each floor. The ramp-to-mezzanine-to-floor arrangement is repeated from the second through the sixth floors, and a garage door opens from the sixth floor to parking space on the roof of the building. A ramp from the first-floor garage lobby descends to basement parking space, car wash space, car repair and maintenance shops, storage, and mechanical and electrical rooms. Garage amenities include partially heated spaces (offices), running water, restrooms, elevators, electric lighting, gasoline pump stations, and parking for more than 350 cars. Interior spaces in storefront bays located at the west and north faces of the garage have a single-story each and have been remodeled many times for or by various leaseholders. No original design, fabric, or finish exists in the street-level commercial bays.

#### **ORIGINAL APPEARANCE & SUBSEQUENT MODIFICATIONS**

The original exterior appearance of the City Ramp Garage is recorded through a collection of remarkably well-preserved documents that include a chronological series of black and white construction photographs and newspaper/magazine articles that described the building in 1928:

The [City Ramp] Garage is to be six stories and basement, of reinforced concrete. The exterior will be the modern American vertical line type of architecture [which is] highly suitable for poured concrete construction. Color contrast will be afforded by brick panels between the pilasters, and the finishing touch of color will be given by polychrome terra cotta pinnacles and decorations at the top. All windows will be steel sash. The base between pilasters will be marble, and above the show windows will be ribbed glass to diffuse the light into the store rooms. Space on the ground floor not utilized by the service station and drive-in lobby to the garage will be rented to shops. No cars will be parked on the ground floor.

The garage has six stories but has 15 levels... Including the basement, there are seven floors and each has a mezzanine... The roof should be used if necessary. The ramps will be 20 feet wide, allowing cars to pass each other with plenty of room to spare. Cars do not travel directly from one floor to another; they travel from floor to mezzanine, thence to the next floor. Patrons who prefer to park their own cars will return to

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<sup>8</sup> Page 845 of the third edition of the *Dictionary of Architecture & Construction, 2000*, describes concrete slip form or sliding form construction as “a form designed to move upward slowly, supported by the hardened concrete of the wall section which was poured previously.” The inside of the forms are greased, allowing them to be lifted upwards past hardened concrete by screw jacks or hydraulic jacks.

the street level on automatic electric elevators.<sup>9</sup>

A November 9, 1928 article that appeared in the *Spokane Daily Chronicle* newspaper just before construction of the City Ramp Garage was completed gave the following account:

The building, now being given its exterior coat of paint, resembles a hotel more than a garage. All the main concrete surfaces, comprising the pilasters and vertical recessed panels, are being finished off in a heavy texture plastic paint in an ivory tone. The spandrels between the windows are set in brick of golden brown shades and inset with decorative panels of terra cotta in...gold and blue. The color scheme reaches its culmination at the top of the building, forming the parapet, where the lines of the architecture are richest in light and shade, and where the terra cotta is more ornate.<sup>10</sup>

The existing footprint of the building matches the original footprint which is illustrated on a revised 1935 Sanborn Fire Insurance map. Copies of original 1928 plans and elevation drawings for the building are retained by the property owners, resulting in excellent documentation of the original design and materials used for the building (copies of the architectural drawings are also located in the City Ramp Garage file in Spokane's City/County Historic Preservation Office, Spokane City Hall, Spokane, WA).

The exterior of the garage remains unaltered except for the street-level commercial storefronts located at the building's west and north faces. The storefronts and commercial bays were remodeled at the exterior and interior several times since the building was built in 1928. The interior of the garage remains untouched except for the first floor garage office, restrooms, and elevator hall which have been remodeled at least three times during the last 80 years. Modifications to the City Ramp Garage include information from garage records, city building permits, historic building photographs, newspaper articles, and recollections of previous building owners and tenants:

- 1934: A beer parlor was installed in the street level storefront at 429 W. Sprague Avenue (northwest corner of building).
- 1940: The garage office was remodeled.
- 1954: Three gasoline pumps installed (replaced earlier pumps).
- 1960: An office was built in 425 W. Sprague Avenue.

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<sup>9</sup> "Big Model of City Ramp Garage Helps Solve Building Problems." *Spokesman-Review*, 13 May 1928.

<sup>10</sup> "Party Is Planned at Ramp Garage." *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 7 Nov 1928.

- 1966: Aluminum and glass storefronts were installed, and metal panels were placed over original transom/clerestory windows located above display windows.
- 1971: Garage office remodeled again with lowered ceiling and paneled walls.
- 1982: Commercial bay at 429 W. Sprague was remodeled.
- 1990s: Commercial bays at 429-427 W. Sprague were remodeled.
- 2010-11: Garage office, restrooms, and elevator halls currently being remodeled; ceiling joists and beams currently being repaired; exterior paint removed from concrete pilasters and walls; terra cotta panels and roof repaired; terra cotta panels and ceramic tile work to be repaired.

Areas of Significance	Transportation, Architecture
Period of Significance	1928-1961
Built Date	1928
Architect	Harold Whitehouse of Whitehouse & Price
General Contractors	Alloway & Georg, Contractors
Electrical Contractors	Brown-Johnston Company
Mechanical/Plumbing	James Smyth P&H Company

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### *Summary Statement*

Built in 1928, and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003 as a contributing historic resource of the East Downtown National Register Historic District, the City Ramp Garage is a hallmark example of the Art Deco style, and is the first six-story, staggered-floor, ramp-type parking garage built in Spokane.<sup>11</sup> The idea of the multi-floor motor ramp parking garage was formed by three downtown Spokane building owners, who in 1928, banded together to “solve Spokane’s parking problem.”<sup>12</sup> They were owners of the August Paulsen Estate (Paulsen Building and Paulsen Medical & Dental Building), the Levi W. Hutton Estate (Hutton Block), and the Old National Bank Building. A newspaper article recalled that “because the garage was going in close to the downtown buildings of the three sponsoring groups, many thousands of dollars were spent on exterior decoration.” The garage owners did not want a “drab, warehouse-type building” but instead preferred something that would “harmonize with the rest of the neighborhood.”<sup>13</sup> Accolades mounted and a December 17, 1928 edition of the professional journal, *Buildings and Building Management*, praised the City Ramp Garage as having “more the appearance of a fine hotel than that of a parking garage.” A proud W. J. Kommers, who represented the Old National Bank’s ownership in the garage, exclaimed that “the City Ramp Garage is not only one of the most beautiful buildings of its kind in Spokane, but in the entire Pacific Northwest.”<sup>14</sup> The Art Deco-style parking garage was designed by Whitehouse & Price, a prominent and prolific Spokane architectural firm that was responsible for many homes, churches, schools, sorority/fraternity halls, and commercial buildings in the area. Harold Whitehouse, the firm’s leading principal architect, is most noted for his design of St. John’s Episcopal Cathedral on Spokane’s South Hill. The city-wide impact of the City Ramp Garage continues to be felt in Spokane and is associated with many “firsts” at the time it was built. These include the garage’s example as the first slip-form type of concrete construction in Spokane, the most modern ramp-type parking garage west of the Mississippi River, the first joint effort on the part of Spokane building owners to provide

<sup>11</sup> “Party is Planned at Ramp Garage.” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 9 Nov 1928.

<sup>12</sup> “City Ramp Purchased.” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 11 July 1973.

<sup>13</sup> “Garage Solved Parking in 1928.” *Spokesman-Review*, 27 Nov 1953.

<sup>14</sup> Spokane newspaper, 1928.

parking for clients, and one of the region's first parking garages open to the public.<sup>15</sup> In 1983, Robert Hyslop, a structural engineer who worked for Whitehouse & Price at the time the parking garage was built, extolled the City Ramp Garage as "a true pioneer in its field and sufficiently foresighted in its planning to still be operable and operating."<sup>16</sup> The City Ramp Garage achieved importance from 1928 to 1961, the property's period of significance, from the time it was built through the following consecutive 50 years. The building continued to have importance in the areas of "transportation" and "architecture" during its period of significance, and has no specific date other than 50 years that would end the historic period (see NPS Bulletin 16A, page 42). The City Ramp Garage is nominated to the Spokane Register of Historic Places under Categories A and C.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

By the 1920s when the popularity of private motorized automobile transportation was growing at a cataclysmic rate, available curbside street parking and dedicated parking lots for public use in downtown Spokane were scarce. Public transportation was available but more and more people preferred transportation via their own private automobiles as evidenced by robust auto sales, construction of private residential garages, and the construction of state and national highways. W.J. Kommers, vice president and trust officer of the Old National Bank and Union Trust Company stated that "as in all growing and progressive cities, the parking of automobiles in Spokane developed into a very serious problem and...was particularly true in the downtown office building section" in Spokane's central business district.<sup>17</sup>

In order to help solve the downtown parking problem, the owners of five high-rise neighboring office buildings located within an area of three city blocks in downtown Spokane formed a corporation for the purpose of acquiring a suitable site for a parking garage followed by construction of said garage. The building owners were the August Paulsen Estate represented by Joel Ferris, the Levi Hutton Estate represented by Charles Gonser, and the Old National Bank represented by W. J. Kommers. The men pooled their resources but needed additional money for the expensive garage project. To gain needed financial help, they sold bonds at a rate of return of 5.5%. "More than half of the \$225,000 issue of...first mortgage bonds of the City Ramp Garage were sold in the first day of the offering... The high character of the security and the interests backing the project are believed to have stimulated the demand."<sup>18</sup>

A site along the east side of Stevens Street was chosen and extended through an entire city block from Sprague Avenue south to First Avenue—a short walk from banking and merchant activity at Riverside Avenue in the center of Spokane's central business district.

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<sup>15</sup> *Spokesman-Review*, 27 Nov 1953.

<sup>16</sup> Hyslop, Robert B.

<sup>17</sup> Kommers, W. J. "Building Owners Join Forces to Provide Parking Facilities for Their Tenants." *Buildings and Building Management*, 17 Dec 1928.

<sup>18</sup> "Grab Ramp Garage Bonds." *Spokesman-Review*, 2 Nov 1928.

The garage building site cost just under \$200,000, and construction of the building cost just over \$300,000 for a total project cost around \$500,000. By the end of 1928, construction of the City Ramp Garage was complete.

Harold Whitehouse and Ernest Price, principals of Whitehouse & Price Architects, were chosen as the architects to design and oversee the construction of the City Ramp Garage. Construction of the six-story parking garage was a popular topic as evidenced by numerous newspaper and journal articles that were printed at the time. One newspaper reported that architects' fees for the project were \$66,055,<sup>19</sup> and another newspaper interviewed Harold Whitehouse, who said that "in designing the building, we consulted...everyone we could contact who had had experience in garage construction and operation. We feel we have evolved a combination plan built on the experience of others that will give Spokane one of the finest structures of this type in the west."<sup>20</sup>

The building's architects, Whitehouse & Price, chose the d'Humy Motoramp System for the garage, and was described as "an inclined driveway or so-called ramps, rising half a story at a time."<sup>21</sup>

The intermediate floors are termed mezzanines as distinguished from regular floors. The ramps connecting these floors and mezzanines are 20 feet wide and banked on the turns. In addition, they are eased into the aisle floors in such a manner as to eliminate bumps.<sup>22</sup>

D'Humy Motoramp System ramps were installed in the building which was built of fireproof reinforced concrete construction, strong enough to hold more than 350 cars at one time when it was built in 1928. A slip-form type of construction was used, a more expensive but time-saving method used in concrete construction where "a [greased] form [is] designed to move upward slowly, supported by the hardened concrete of the wall section which was poured previously."<sup>23</sup> The slip-form concrete construction had not been employed previously in Spokane before the City Ramp Garage was built in 1928 but proved successful, and is still used today in 2011 as evidenced especially by Marietta Slipform Silos and other structures.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to the building's advantageous site in the center of Spokane's central business district, the implementation of the d'Humy Motoramp System, and the slip-form type of concrete construction, the building—designated for an industrial-type use—was not designed as an industrial warehouse building but instead was planned to be

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<sup>19</sup> "Award Contract on Ramp Garage." Spokane newspaper, 1928.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> *Buildings and Building Management*, p. 34.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Harris, p. 844.

<sup>24</sup> <http://mariettasilos.com/slipform>

architecturally compatible with Spokane's downtown built environment. The design for the City Ramp Garage depicts one of finest Art Deco-style facades in Spokane and was praised as having "more the appearance of a fine hotel than that of a parking garage."<sup>25</sup>

A 1953 article in the *Spokesman-Review* applauded the City Ramp Garage at its 25-Year Silver Anniversary and said it was the parking garage that "solves Spokane's parking problem."<sup>26</sup>

The six-story "auto hotel" at Sprague and Stevens opened to public parking November 28, 1928 and has a long string of "firsts" to its record. Those "firsts" include first slip-form type of construction in Spokane, the most modern ramp-type parking garage west of the Mississippi River at the time it was built, first joint effort on the part of building owners to provide parking for clients, and among the first public parking garages in Spokane.<sup>27</sup>

In order to serve and accommodate patrons of the garage and the general public alike, street level commercial bays were designed and built in the building, and were located at 3, 5, and 7 S. Stevens Street and at 425, 427, and 429 W. Sprague Avenue at the west façade and north faces of the structure. The commercial spaces were popular and were leased during eight decades of use by a plethora of businesses since the City Ramp Garage was erected in 1928. The first two leaseholders in 1928 were the Ramp Food Shop at the northwest corner of the building at 427 and 429 W. Sprague, and Nim's Café at 425 W. Sprague Avenue (the café occupied the small single-story structure of the City Ramp Garage). The Ramp Food Shop featured food and wares from the A&K Meat Market, Burgan's Grocery, the Model Bakery, and Mike Scaler's fruit and vegetables. After Nim's Café no longer leased the commercial space at 425 W. Sprague Avenue, it was occupied at different times by the Paulsen Linoleum Shop, Inland Floor Covering, Russell Floor Covering, Western Union Telegraph Company, and the Standard Blue Print Company. The space leased at the northwest corner of the building by the food market was eventually rented and occupied at different times by the Spokane Bottle Supply, the Ramp Beer Parlor, Joseph Murphy Beer Parlor, Merrill's Tavern, Blue Note Tavern, Merrill's Palace of Sweets Restaurant, Dahnken's wholesale merchandise, Beeman's Catalogue Warehouse, and Patti's Accent on Flowers. The corner space is currently (in 2011) leased by the Satellite Diner & Lounge, and the space at 425 W. Sprague Avenue is currently occupied by the Satellite Grill. Just after construction was completed, the commercial bay closest to the garage entrance at Stevens Street was used as a customer waiting room. It and an adjacent north commercial bay were later occupied at different times by the Ramp Barber Shop, Spokane Ladies & Gents Tailors, Marugg's Clothes

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<sup>25</sup> *Buildings and Building Management*, p. 31-33.

<sup>26</sup> *Spokesman-Review*, 27 Nov 1953.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

Shop for Men, South Seven Jewelers, All About Nails Beauty Shop, and Beacon Cleaners & Laundry (in 2011).

The City Ramp Garage advertised in newspapers, magazines, and city directories as a full-service parking garage with “storage, washing, greasing, gasoline, oil, accessories, brake service, U.S. Tires, and complete repair services.”<sup>28</sup> The building operated as a parking garage since it was built in 1928, and continues in that use today in 2011.

In 1973, Spokane businessman, George P. Prekeges, bought the garage for \$475,000 from the Old National Bank and the Paulsen and Hutton estates and interests. Prekeges was born in Spokane, attended school in Warden, graduated with a degree in Business Administration from the University of Washington, and in 1961 established an Airways-Rent-A-Car franchise which he located in the City Ramp Garage. In 2008, Prekeges sold the garage and two adjacent 1890 brick buildings (415 W. Sprague Avenue and 418 W. First Avenue) to current owners, B&H Enterprises LLC Number 1 of Spokane. In 2010, the City Ramp Garage, its National Register designation, historic structure and use, were honored when it was selected and featured in the National Building Museum’s “House of Cars” exhibit in Washington DC.<sup>29</sup>

## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

### *Category A*

The City Ramp Garage is nominated to the Spokane Register of Historic Places under Category A for its historical significance in the area of “transportation” as the first multi-story, multi-floor, motor ramp garage built in Spokane. When it was erected in 1928, the City Ramp Garage was praised as the parking structure in Spokane that solved the downtown parking problems in the city’s central business district, and was applauded as the “most modern ramp-type parking garage west of the Mississippi” River.<sup>30</sup> It was further venerated for its successful example associated with the joint efforts of private building/business owners to provide parking for clients and also to the public. The erection of the City Ramp Garage in 1928 was followed by the construction of subsequent high-rise garage structures in Spokane. Well-known examples from the 1960s, 1970s, and 2000s include but are not limited to the 17-story Sixth Avenue Medical Building parking garage which was built in 1964, and at that time, was reported to be “the tallest mechanical parking garage in the nation.”<sup>31</sup> In 1967, the Parkade Plaza was erected in Spokane’s downtown central business district as a multi-level public parking garage. It was designed with commercial bays at street and skywalk levels, which were leased by a variety of businesses that helped further Spokane’s downtown shopping. In 1974, a newspaper article featured a photograph and description of the “Riverpark Square

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<sup>28</sup> *Spokane City Directory*, 1935.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.nbm.org/exhibitions-collections/exhibitions/house-of-cars.html>

<sup>30</sup> *Spokesman-Review*, 27 Nov 1953.

<sup>31</sup> *Progress Magazine*, 1 July 1964.



Parking [garage], a public parking facility [built] to accommodate 780 vehicles.”<sup>32</sup> Almost 30 years later, the Riverpark Square Parking garage was rebuilt as a public-private venture with a shopping mall. The shopping mall links Nordstrom’s and Macy’s department stores; includes a variety of shops, eateries, food courts, restaurants, and movie theaters at multiple levels; and offers public parking in the multi-story parking garage, which is adjacent to the mall. To help offset its parking problem, the Spokane International Airport built a multi-level parking garage next to the main airport terminal. As Americans continue to use private automobiles and motor vehicles, the necessity for large parking garages will increase.

## ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

### *Category C*

The City Ramp Garage is nominated to the Spokane Register of Historic Places under Category C for its architectural significance. It is one of the few high-style examples of the Art Deco tradition depicted in Spokane.

### *Art Deco Style*

The Art Deco style was popularized in the 1920s, beginning with an award-winning building at a world-wide competition in Chicago in 1922.

Adopted in America primarily in the 1930s, the Art Deco style was seldom used for single-family houses, but reached its apogee in New York, Los Angeles, and Miami, primarily in apartment buildings and city skyscrapers, which seemed best suited to this style of applied, concentrated decoration.<sup>33</sup>

Identifying features of the style include built dates from about 1920 to 1940, verticality in form, tall piers or pilasters, pinnacles and finials at the roof, articulated and embellished parapets, smooth wall surfaces (stucco and/or concrete), geometric motifs such as zigzags and chevrons, polychromatic effects achieved by the use of terra cotta and glazed ceramic tile, and ornamentation that is mostly rectilinear with secondary geometric curves.<sup>34</sup>

*Art Deco style features at the City Ramp Garage* include the building’s built date of 1928; the building’s tall, six-story, vertical form; geometric curved and rectilinear designs and ornamentation; vertical piers and pilasters that extend past the roof parapet; parapet ornamentation; polychrome detail as glazed ceramic tiles and multi-colored terra cotta ornamentation; zigzag and chevron motifs/patterns; and reinforced concrete exterior walls.

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<sup>32</sup> *Spokesman-Review*, 27 April 1974.

<sup>33</sup> Carley, Rachel, p. 228.

<sup>34</sup> Whiffen, Marcus, pp. 235-240.

***Harold C. Whitehouse, Architect (1884-1974)***

Harold Whitehouse and his partner, Ernest Price, founded the architectural firm of Whitehouse & Price, and were responsible for designing and overseeing construction of the City Ramp Garage. The lead architect for the garage, Harold Whitehouse was educated in Boston, worked in Massachusetts and North Dakota, and came to Spokane in 1907, entering into partnership with architect, George Keith. In 1911 Whitehouse left his practice with Keith, studied architecture at Cornell University, and traveled extensively in Europe where he became interested in cathedral architecture. He returned in 1914, partnered with Spokane architect, Ernest Price, and founded the architectural firm of Whitehouse & Price. The firm was prominent and prolific, responsible for hundreds of homes, schools, churches, fraternity and sorority houses, and commercial buildings throughout Spokane and Washington State, Idaho, Montana, and Oregon, and continued until Price's retirement in 1964. Harold Whitehouse is best known for his church and cathedral designs and is responsible for St. John's Episcopal Cathedral on Spokane's South Hill. His genius is expressed in the ornamental Art Deco style of the City Ramp Garage and its fireproof structure, reinforced concrete slip-form construction, and multiple parking levels and ramps.

***Summary***

To summarize, the City Ramp Garage is one of the finest buildings in Spokane and was built as the community's first multi-level, fireproof, reinforced "slip-form" concrete, multi-ramp motor and parking garage in the city. The building is a hallmark interpretation of the Art Deco style, and a prominent example of work rendered by master architect, Harold Whitehouse. Historically and architecturally significant, the City Ramp Garage is nominated to the Spokane Register of Historic Places under Categories A and C.

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ADDRESS/BLDG. NAME: **W. 429 Sprague Avenue** **W. 430 1st Avenue**  
**S. 3 & 7 Stevens Street** **City Ramp Garage**

YEAR	LAND VALUE	BLDG. VALUE	APPRSR.	DATE
1987	285,000	236,500	SD	4-1-87
1984	287,000	236,500	DW	7-21-84
1983	283,000	230,000	RW	7-17-83
2004			CG	4/04

PARCEL NUMBER **Sheet 1 of 2**  
**19531-2101**

LEGAL DESC: **Spo 81 Railroad Addition**

**Ptns of Lts 1 & 2 & 3, Bk 10: All of Lt 1, W 1/2 of & Also E 1/2 of S 75 Ft of Lt 2, W 1/2 of S 75 Ft of Lt 3**

Floor	Square Feet
7*	13,435
6.	13,435
5.	13,435
4.	13,435
3.	13,435
2.	13,435
Mezzanine	3
1	13,201
Basement	13,084**
<b>Total</b>	<b>108,213</b>

\*This is the open roof area.  
 \*\*This is the west 75 plus 14 feet.  
 Note: The structure of this garage is split-level. The west 75 feet is higher than the east 50 feet. The square footages for the 7th to 2nd floors above include the principal exterior walls and pilasters but exclude the brick and concrete decorative facades.

TYPE-USE-QUALITY	EXT. WALLS	BASEMENT	EXTRA FEATURES
Apartment	Brick	Full Pias	Marquees
Office	Stone	Size 5 x 10	Canopy
Warehouse	Concrete	Finished Rigid	Balcony
Gas Station	Siding	Utility Service	Insulation
Motel	Con. Blk.	Fire Alarm Service	Cold Storage
Garage	Cast Panel	HEATING	Sound Proofing
Store		Hot Air	
No. Stories		Hot Water	INT. WALLS
No. Rooms	ROOF CONSTR.	Air Cond.	See Bldg. 1000
No. Apts.	Flat	Gas	Sheet 2 of 2
ANNUAL GROSS INC.	Pitched	Electric	INT. PARTITIONING
DATE	Steel Truss	Oil Burner	Lin-Foot
See Specs	Wood Truss	Coal Stoker	ELEVATOR
See Spec. #1	Reinforced	Steam	Kind 1 Elevator
Masonry	Concrete	Central	Stops 150 ft
Shale walls	ROOF COVERING	Toilets	100 Safe - Stairs
in Old Files	Asphalt Shingles	Tubs	APPLIANCES
	Corr.	Basins	RG & OV
	Tar-Gravel	Sinks	HF
See Plans	FLOOR STRUCTURE	Showers	DW
New base on	Reinf. Conc.	Laundry Trays	Washer
	Conc. Slab	H. W. Tanks	Dryer (Mechanical)
	Joisted Const.	Sprinkler System	Dr. Machine (toilet)
	Steel Frame	FLOOR FINISH	1 - 3.00 Ballon
	Reinf. Cont.	Asphalt Tile	2 - 1.00 St. Allen
Brick	Brick	Fir. See Above	Notes: There is
Con. Blk.	Con. Blk.	Linoleum	believe that
FOUNDATION	FOUNDATION	Cement	believe that
Con. Stone Blk	Con. Stone Blk	Hrdwd	Northwest 41'
Concrete	Concrete	W/W	by 29' from 41'
			of the floor.
Yr. Built	% Fin.	Sq. Ft. 1st Sq. Ft. 2nd	Height
			Per
			A. V.
			220,000
BLDG. DESC	BLDG. #	BLDG. # Offices	BLDG. # NF
Const.	West 2 Rm	Ad of 3 Rm	Central 2
Fndtn.	Chimney Area		Fin Area
Floors	W/W		W/W
Ext. Walls	Finishing	Floors	Drill, Windows
Roof	W/W	2nd Floor	Plaster
Plumb. Fix.			
Year Blt./Life			
\$ PSF			
Sq. Ft.	400	529	453
Value			
LAND: 1st Bldg #			





Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet  
**CITY RAMP GARAGE** **Section 10**

**Photos**

Photo 1

Southwest corner of garage in 2011.

Photo 2

Northwest corner of garage in 2011.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet  
**CITY RAMP GARAGE** **Section 10**

**Photos**

Photo 3

North face and northeast corner of garage in 2011.

Photo 4

Rear back of building (east side) in 2011.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet  
**CITY RAMP GARAGE** **Section 10**

**Photos**

Photos 5 and 6

South side of building and detail in 2011.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet  
**CITY RAMP GARAGE** **Section 10**

**Photos**

Photos 7 and 8

West façade garage entrance and detail in 2011.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet  
**CITY RAMP GARAGE** **Section 10**

**Photos**

Photos 9 and 10

Storefront at west façade, 9 S. Stevens Street, in 2011.



**PUBLIC PA**  
FIRST HALF HOUR  
3 - 4 HOUR  
1 - 1.5 HOURS  
1.5 - 2 HOURS  
2 - 2.5 HOURS  
2.5 - 3 HOURS  
3 - 4 HOURS  
4 - 10 HOURS  
10 - 24 HOURS  
8 AM - 4 PM

**WEEKLY & MO\***  
24 HOURS  
1 YEAR  
1 MONTH

**BIENN**  
WEEKDAYS  
SATURDAYS  
CLOSED SUNDAYS

\*THANK YOU TO SPANISH  
FOR PARKING #2115 OF  
ALL 8070.00M  
WE POSTED #2115  
# 4.12.6.11

Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet  
**CITY RAMP GARAGE** **Section 10**

**Photos**

Photos 11 and 12

Storefronts at 5 and 7 S. Stevens Street in 2011.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet  
**CITY RAMP GARAGE** **Section 10**

**Photos**

Photos 13 and 14

North face of building at 427 W. Sprague, Satellite Diner & Lounge in 2011.





Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet  
**CITY RAMP GARAGE** **Section 10**

**Photos**

Photos 15 and 16

427 W. Sprague Avenue, Satellite Diner & Lounge, at north face of bldg. in 2011. Ceramic tile bulkhead detail.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet  
**CITY RAMP GARAGE** **Section 10**

**Photos**

Photos 17 and 18

Satellite Diner & Lounge at 425 W. Sprague, east entrance, at north face of bldg in 2011. Notice parapet and terra cotta work.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet  
**CITY RAMP GARAGE** **Section 10**

**Photos**

Photo 19

Southwest entrance to City Ramp Garage, looking southwest from center of first floor in 2011.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet  
**CITY RAMP GARAGE** **Section 10**

**Photos**

Photos 20 and 21

Elevators and man lift in 2011, located in center of first floor.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet  
**CITY RAMP GARAGE** **Section 10**

**Photos**

Photos 22 and 23

Ramp from first floor to parking areas in 2011.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet  
**CITY RAMP GARAGE** **Section 10**

**Photos**

Photo 24

Ramp up to Floor Two from floor between Floors One and Two in 2011.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet  
**CITY RAMP GARAGE** **Section 10**

**Photos**

Photos 25 and 26

Floor Two parking in 2011, looking south at windows.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet  
**CITY RAMP GARAGE** **Section 10**

**Photos**

Photos 27 and 28

Floor 5, looking southwest down ramp, then looking west  
In 2011.





Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet  
**CITY RAMP GARAGE**

**Section 10**

**Photos**

Photos 29 and 30

Floor 5, looking southwest and looking northwest in 2011.

