

SPOKANE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Nomination Form

OPR 92-746

City/County Historic Landmarks Commission
Sixth Floor - City Hall
Spokane, Washington 99201-3333

Type all entries--complete applicable sections

1. Name The Eldridge Building

historic The Eldridge Buick Building
and/or common

2. Location

street & number 1319-1325 West First Avenue
city/town Spokane vicinity of
state Washington county Spokane

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<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 & Julie W. Wells
street & number 911 East 20th Avenue
city,town Spokane vicinity of state WA 99203

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc Spokane County Courthouse
street & number 1116 West Broadway
city,town Spokane state WA 99201

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Landmarks Survey: City of Spokane
date 1979 federal state county local
depository for survey records Spokane City/County Historic Preservation Office
city,town Spokane City Hall, 808 W. Spokane Falls Bv. state WA 99201

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7. Description

Condition	Check one	Check one
--excellent	--deteriorated	--unaltered
X--good	--ruins	--altered
--fair	--unexposed	--original site
		--moved date -----

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located on the southeast corner of First Avenue and Cedar Street on the western edge of Spokane's central business district, the Eldridge Building was erected in 1925 as an automobile sales and service center. This three-story Commercial Style building is rectangular in shape, and constructed of reinforced concrete. Its two principal elevations, finished in red brick with terra cotta accents, are symmetrical, with extensive window area. In nearly original condition, the Eldridge Building has sustained few alterations over time. Exterior changes are limited to doorway replacement and sign removal. Currently vacant, the building is in good condition.

The Eldridge building is located just south of Spokane's Riverside Avenue Historic District and north of the Northern Pacific Railroad's elevated downtown rail line. To the west is the Browne's Addition residential area, and to the east, the western portion of Spokane's commercial core, including its arts and entertainment district. An area of mixed residential and commercial uses, this four-block area of West First has historically been associated with transportation and automobile services.

Done in a style associated with automobile sales and service buildings, the Eldridge stands apart due to its size, its careful design detail, and its innovative features. The use of reinforced concrete as a construction material, a technology developed late in the 19th century, and gradually put into practice, allows its considerable window surfaces. One-hundred feet wide on First Avenue, and 156 feet deep on Cedar Street, the structure rises three stories over a below-grade basement. The flat roof, originally designed to store additional automobiles, provided the building with five useable levels. The Eldridge bears a resemblance to the Ford Motor Assembly Plants, designed by prominent Seattle architect John Graham, Sr.

On the primary facade, east and west halves are mirror images. At street level, each half has a central entry, flanked by piers that rise to the cornice and form a shallow pavilion. Above the cornice, the pavilions end with geometric shapes on the roof's parapet, suggesting modern design, except for the application of classical swags. On either side of the pavilions are large plate glass windows recessed in wood frames. Above the windows are transoms of leaded glass with mullions. The red brick

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piers create six vertical divisions, of two widths, for the recessed, steel-framed windows with multiple panes, on the second and third floors. The red brick, laid in stretcher bond, connects the piers between floors with terra cotta corner accents. Terra cotta also trims the cornice with horizontal banding, and the entablature with framed panels at the pavilions, and is used for the large circle and small side squares of the parapet detail.

Over the entries, shallow metal canopies with a central peak extend past transom lights. They rest on scroll-shaped brackets, and have antheniums at the corners. On either side of the doorways are wrought iron light fixtures with plain white globes. The east entry's double doors are wood, with a single glass panel, and a second, single-paned transom above. The west entry has been altered through the addition of metal framing and a contemporary plate glass double door. At sidewalk level, footings for the piers and plate glass windows are concrete. Inside the parapet surrounding the roof, a safety rail and original flagpoles at the pavilions are intact.

The secondary facade on Cedar Street is nearly identical. Divisions or bays of nearly equal size, and two additional bays at either end, extend the length of this elevation. At street level, the fourth of five consecutive plate glass windows contains a small entry door. The sixth and seventh bays, once a garage entry and a plate glass window, respectively, have been closed in. The last bay contains an original, and still functional, automatic overhead garage door. The sidewalk adjacent to this elevation contains an original lift, still functional and in use.

The south elevation faces the Northern Pacific elevated railroad tracks, and originally had a bridge connection to the railway at the third floor. The industrial style windows of the other elevations are repeated here, but window and roof line configuration reflects the rise of the interior auto ramp. A small doorway and a service entry at ground level are original. Except for a contemporary entrance at the north end, the east elevation is windowless below the second story, where another building once abutted. Concrete block faces this surface. The steel-sash windows of the other elevations are symmetrically spaced on second and third floor levels. Both on the south and east elevations, the concrete surface of the building is exposed.

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The interior of the Eldridge Building featured a large showroom that extended across the full front along First Avenue. The room, unobstructed by supporting columns, is mostly intact, however partitions have been added. Some wall partitions have been removed as well, leaving free-standing square columns. The original black and cream tile floor, laid in a square pattern, is in place, showing some wear. Piers, matching the columns, are spaced along the walls. Support beams that were originally exposed as part of the architectural design, and trim at the head of the columns and piers, have been concealed by a false ceiling. The original finish for the concrete was Caenstone, still exposed on many surfaces. Beyond the showroom, some original interior office walls, the upper halves composed of windows with multi-paned transoms, remain, as does a central stairwell.

On the south side of the building, the ramp that permitted automobiles to be driven from one level to the next, is in place, with original interior doors. Additional modifications to the interior have included new bathrooms, and replacement of the original elevator. Skylights that provided window wells for all three floors have been sealed or painted over.

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8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance-Check and justify below		
--prehistoric	--archeology-prehistoric	--economics	--military
--1400-1499	--archeology-historic	--education	--music
--1500-1599	--agriculture	--engineering	--philosophy
--1600-1699	X architecture	--exploration/settlement	--politics/government
--1700-1799	--art	--industry	--religion
--1800-1899	X commerce	--invention	--science
X 1900-	--communications	--landscape architecture	--sculpture
	--community planning	--law	--social/humanitarian
	--conservation	--literature	--theater
			X transportation
			--other(specify)

Specific dates 1925

Builder/Architect G. Albin Pehrson

The Eldridge building is historically significant as a distinctive example of the commercial structures associated with the evolution of the automobile culture. Constructed in 1925 for one of the northwest's leading Buick dealerships, the Eldridge building was acclaimed as "The largest building in the State of Washington devoted to the sales and service of motor cars". Located on West First Avenue, the building established an anchor for an area of downtown Spokane historically linked to commercial transportation resources. Associated with the carriage trade before 1910, First Avenue, along with Sprague Avenue between Madison and Cedar, came to be known as "automobile row" by the mid-twenties. The building, which incorporated numerous modern features and innovations, is architecturally important as an indicator of the versatility and skill of G. Albin Pehrson, one of Spokane's most influential and important architects.

The first automobile appeared in Spokane in the fall of 1899. A ten-horsepower Haynes and Apperson, it broke down shortly after its 50-mile trial run, and was returned to the factory in Indiana. Typically, the early autos were prone to an array of problems, from frequent break-downs and flat tires to a lack of replacement parts and skilled mechanics. Poor roads and limited gas supplies added to the auto's image as a frivolity.

In 1907, when Park Board President Aubrey White and the renowned landscape architect John Olmsted toured the city in an auto to consider sites for a parks system, Spokane had only a handful of car owners. Four years later, the automobile was an established part of Spokane life. By early 1911, the Spokane area had 1100 registered motor vehicles for approximately 125,000 citizens, and 23 miles of recently-paved city streets, with an additional 10 miles contracted for. So popular was the car, the Sunday

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Spokesman-Review began devoting a full section to automobile news. The ability to commute led Jay P. Graves to choose a site far north of town on the Little Spokane River for his mansion.

In August, 1914, the Northwest Buick Company of Seattle opened its Spokane store, committed exclusively to the sale of Buicks, at 1225 Sprague Avenue. The following January, A. S. Eldridge, the manager, rode in a railroad official's private train car to Sandpoint to meet his second shipment of 200 Buicks, destined for salesrooms throughout Washington State. The cars were placed on display at Spokane's Great Northern depot for a day. In May of 1915, the Davenport Hotel hosted its largest gathering since its opening the previous September. The occasion was the awards ceremony and celebration for Spokane's first automobile show. A Buick was among the cars receiving prizes for the "Hill Climb" contest up South Monroe Street.

In January, 1916, having outgrown its accommodations, the Northwest Buick Company moved to a 12,000 square foot building at 1308 First Avenue. Records indicate 10,000 vehicles were operating in Spokane County that year. More affordable motor cars, due to assembly line production methods, and the introduction of the automatic starter, further increased auto sales, and the Northwest Buick Company, now Eldridge Buick, leased additional warehouse space in 1918 and 1921.

The automobile's popularity enjoyed a particularly rapid increase in the northwest between 1910 and 1920. With its open spaces and scenic vistas, the west offered great recreational opportunities for car owners. "Auto touring" once the pastime of the wealthy, became common. Eventually, what started as a diversion and a convenience turned into a necessity as suburban electric rail lines experienced decreased use, and then reduced service in the face of shrinking profits.

In 1924, E. C. Finlay, the former manager of Spokane's Eldridge Buick business, held a grand opening for his own auto sales and service facility, the Finlay Studebaker building, at the corner of Sprague and Madison. The building, a one-story concrete and brick structure designed by G. A. Pehrson, featured the latest in commercial lighting design, illuminating the night sky.

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By early 1925, when A. S. Eldridge asked G. A. Pehrson to design his new Buick sales center, the western edge of downtown on Sprague, First and Second was sprinkled with one and two story buildings devoted to meeting the needs of Spokane's motoring community. Completed in December of 1925, the three-story Eldridge Buick building had over 60,000 square feet of floor space, with a modern showroom to display its cars to advantage, and with spaces designed for the pleasure and comfort of its customers. The structure featured the latest in indirect lighting, automatically timed; a used car showroom; complete service and parts department; and the resources for complete painting and top replacement. Other innovations included an automatic elevator for customers, automatically operated garage doors, and a modern air exhaust system. The features reflect both the engineering skill of the architect, and the entrepreneurship of Mr. Eldridge, who traveled to California and the East, gathering information on buildings of this type.

Eldridge Buick continued to operate on West First until 1936, when the dealership was sold and became Kauffman Buick. The Eldridge Family retained ownership of the building and the auto finance corporation associated with it. In 1958, the building was leased, and eventually purchased, by Seeley Business Systems. The first floor showroom was partitioned and Simchuck Sporting Goods leased the west half for several years. Most recently, the Sampson-Ayers Music Company occupied the building.

Deeded in the mid-1880's from the Northern Pacific Railroad Company to Spokane mining investor Isaac N. Peyton, lots 1 and 2 of Block 21 of the Railroad Addition changed hands numerous times over the next few years as real estate speculation became common with properties on the western edge of the fledgling city. Among the owners were early Spokane mayors Daniel Drumheller and Charles Clough, as well as Jay P. Graves. As the area west of downtown developed, a predominant use along West First Avenue became blacksmith shops, livery stables, feed stores, and carriage companies. For several years between 1890 and the early 1900's, lots 1 and 2 of block 21 contained the livery stables and carriage shed of the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company. Before its purchase by Northwest Buick, the Mitchell, Lewis, and Staver Company, dealers in agricultural implements, tractors, and autos, used the land for warehouse storage. The area south of the Riverside Avenue District and east of Browne's Addition developed with apartment houses and

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commercial uses. Commercial use was most often related to the automobile, and by 1920, the area became referred to as "auto row". The addition of the Eldridge building affirmed the pattern of urban geography.

Born in Sweden in 1883, G. Albin Pehrson received his technical training at Uppsala University and went on to study in Germany and Oxford University in England. He emigrated to the United States in 1906, working briefly as a draftsman for a Chicago architectural firm before settling in Spokane in 1907. Qualified in both engineering and architecture, he secured a position as a draftsman in the offices of Kirtland K. Cutter and Karl Malmgren. By 1913, the firm was working on the Davenport Hotel, and Pehrson, who was responsible for the drafting of the plans, was placed in charge of overseeing construction. In 1915 he married and, a year later, opened his own office on West Riverside Avenue.

Actively practicing his profession through the 1950's, his legacy is impressive for both the number of major structures he designed or remodeled, and the variety of architectural styles and forms he experimented with during his long career. Recognized for his engineering skills, he left his mark on Spokane's skyline with such notable contributions as the Paulsen Medical and Dental Building and its elegant rooftop apartment designed for August Paulsen's widow, and the Chronicle Building with its gothic detailing. He designed several other downtown structures, many now altered or demolished, such as the Spokane and Eastern building, once Spokane's most outstanding example of Art Deco styling.

With Kirtland Cutter's departure in 1917, Pehrson inherited some of Cutter's most important clients. For Louis Davenport, he designed a major addition and did various interior remodelings for the Hotel, as well as "Flowerfield", the Davenport home on the Little Spokane River. He supervised the remodeling of the Western Union Life Building, today the Catholic Diocese's Chancery in the Riverside Avenue Historic District. For the Cowles Publishing Company, he did Spokesman-Review interior remodelings throughout his career. His engineering and design skills were sought regularly for reinforced concrete structures. The imposing Centennial Flour Mills on Trent are an example.

Pehrson's residential designs, both modest and high style, dot the South Hill. They include Tudor, Spanish, and International style homes with such prestigious addresses

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as Sumner Avenue, Rockwood Boulevard, and Overbluff Road. The Woman's Club Cottage on Ninth Avenue is also his work.

Pehrson's influence extended well beyond Spokane. He designed the Stevens County Courthouse, major hotels in Missoula and Minot, a department store in Portland, and schools, churches, hospitals, and residences in many Eastern Washington communities. In the midst of World War II, he worked under contract to the United States War Department at Hanford. Among his responsibilities was the design and construction of the town of Richland, complete with community facilities. Active in civic affairs, Pehrson was a well-known figure on Spokane's downtown streets. He received national recognition and publicity for many of his works.

The Eldridge Building, one of several commercial-industrial structures done by Pehrson, is a distinctive example of his work and demonstrates his design and engineering skills, particularly in using reinforced concrete. In addition, the design process for the Eldridge Building marks a change in the practice of his profession, which Pehrson would describe four years later when he worked on the Paulsen Medical Center in the following manner:

Now it is all different. Under the new system, men who have devoted their business life to handling, management, and construction of buildings pool their ideas.

Pehrson praised the contribution of A. S. Eldridge, a trained engineer. Eldridge worked closely with Pehrson and brought many ideas to the design process after studying the latest innovations in automobile service buildings.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Approximately 1/3 acre (100' x 156')

Railroad Addition, Lots 1 & 2, Block 21

Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state

county

state

county

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sally R. Reynolds, Consultant: Planning & Historic Preservation

organization

date June 30, 1992

street & number 7015 East 44th Avenue

telephone (509) 448-0311

city/town Spokane

state WA 99223

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Bibliography

Durham, N. W. Spokane and the Inland Empire. Spokane; 1912
Edwards, J. Illustrated History of Spokane Co. Spokane, 1900
Polk, R. L. City Directories. Spokane
Pioneer Title Company. Tract Books
Spokesman Review Selected articles, 1910-1960
Spokane Public Library, Northwest Room. Vertical Files.

12. Signature of Owner(s)

Parmer

Julie W. Wells

For Office Use Only:

Date Received: 7-1-92

Date Heard: 7-15-92

Commission Decision: Approved

Council/Board Action: Approved

Date: August 24, 1992

Attest: Marilyn J. Montgomery
City Clerk

Approved as to Form:

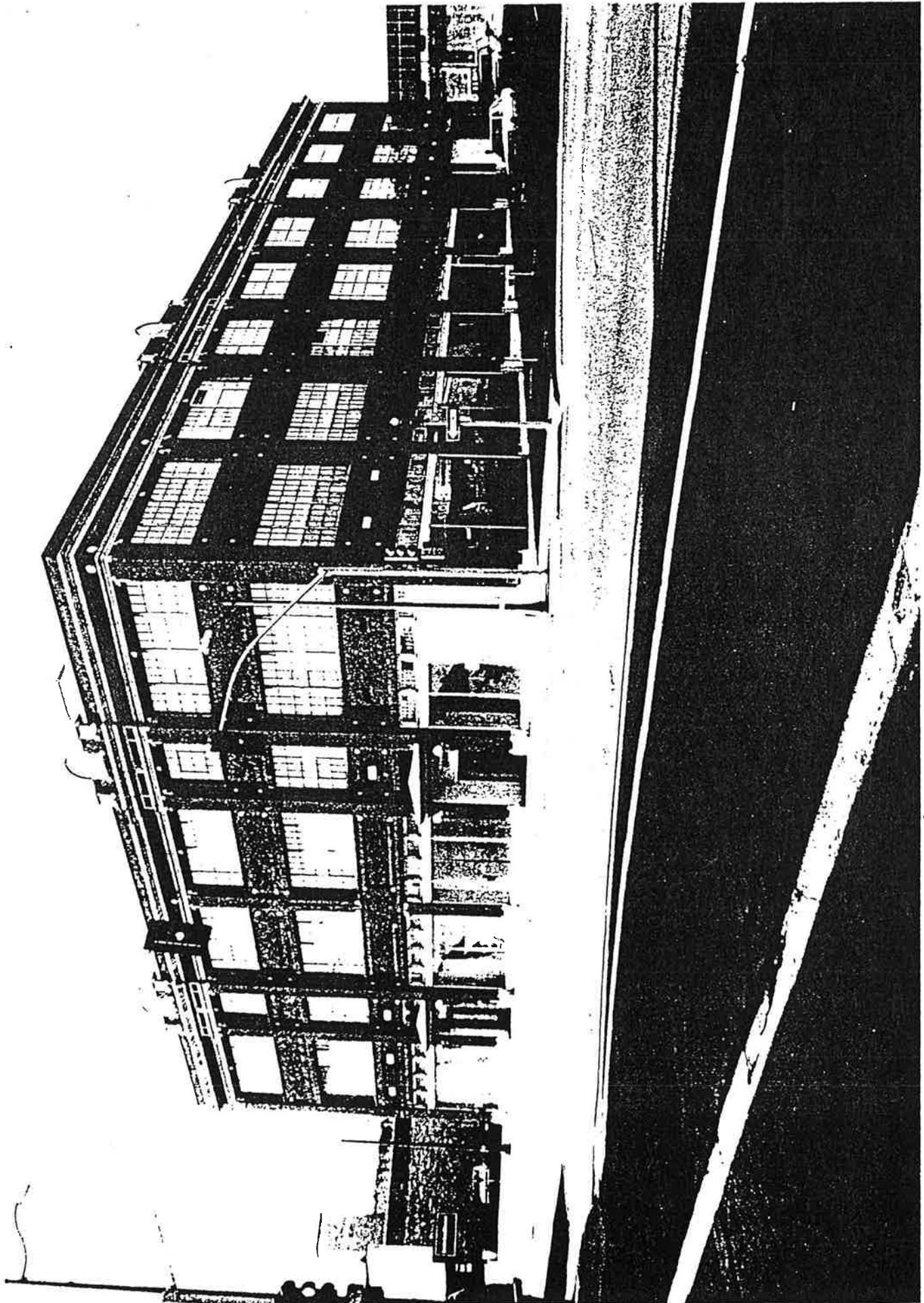
Laurie Flynn Connelly
Ass't City Attorney

We hereby certify that this property has been listed on the Spokane Register of Historic Places:

Sheri S. Barnard
MAYOR, City of Spokane or CHAIR, Spokane County Commissioners

Robert Ogden
CHAIR, Spokane City/County Historic Landmarks Commission

Katherine W. Barrett
City/County Historic Preservation Officer



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