

# Spokane Register of Historic Places

## Nomination Form

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

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

### 1. Name

historic The Fernwell

and/or common

### 2. Location

street & number West 503-507 Riverside Avenue

city, town Spokane 99201 vicinity of

state Washington county Spokane

### 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied (partially)	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input 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 Heritage Group LTD.

street & number 100 South King Street

city, town Seattle \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of state Washington 98402

### 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Spokane County Courthouse

street & number West 1116 Broadway

city, town Spokane \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of state Washington 98402

### 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 City Hall, Spokane \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of state Washington 99201

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Fernwell office and commercial building is located on the southwest corner of Riverside at Stevens facing north on Riverside. The building occupies Lot 1 and part of Lot 2 of Block 20 in the resurvey and addition of Spokane in the Central Business District.

The Fernwell is a flat roofed six story red brick building measuring 90 x 94 feet. Brick for the structure came from Hyde's brickyard which was located on Hangman Creek. The main floor of the building had a saloon on Stevens (east side) and three store fronts on Riverside in addition to the main entrance to the building itself. At present it has two store fronts and the main building entryway. The upper floors have been remodeled into offices.

The facade is symmetrical with five major bays across floors two through four; there are three major bays on the fifth and sixth floors. The street floor has been altered, but was storefronts which had cast iron piers and window divisions from indications in the approximately 1891 photograph. The County Assessor's Office indicates alterations to the store fronts in 1914, 1928, 1934, 1958, 1960 and 1966. There are four belt courses articulating floor divisions. Fenestration is regular but varied; single hung sashes with transoms across the second floor in the central bay, the rest are one-over-one double hung sash windows. The sills are of cast concrete. There are giant piers between bays of the third and fourth floors topped with decorative terra cotta capitals and with cast stone bases. Small decorative terra cotta piers with rosettes separate windows on the second floor. There is a belt course of flemish bond with inset headers topped with a secondary cornice line of dentils, and Sullivanesque terra cotta panels in relief which articulate the division between the fourth and fifth floors. The fifth floor windows have transitional arches with radiating stretch voussoirs. A slightly corbelled secondary cornice articulates the division between the fifth and sixth floors. In the outer bays of the sixth floor the windows are arched and articulated by spandrels of Flemish bond with projecting headers. The cornice is made up of paneled frieze, curved modillions beneath a crown mold, and is topped by a parapet stepped to a taller section over the central bay. The parapet is paneled, finished with a cast stone mold and cast stone finials. The name "Fernwell" is set in raised letters in the large central panel of the parapet. The east side is the same as the front of the building except there is no central bay.

## 8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1890 Builder/Architect Hermann Preusse

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Fernwell Building was designed by Hermann Preusse, one of Spokane's leading architects. It is one of the few remaining buildings built in the year following the fire of 1889 which burned most of the central business district of Spokane Falls, Washington Territory. The building is located in what was then the heart of the city's commercial center. Housing a men's clothing store for 90 years on its main floor, it provided office space for prominent doctors, lawyers, dentists, architects and insurance firms on the 2nd and 3rd floors. Hotel rooms were located on the 4th and 5th floors with a dining room occupying part of the 6th floor. The owner and builder was Rollin Charles Hyde, who was prominent in real estate dealings throughout the 1880s and 1890s. The land itself had first belonged to James N. Glover, called the "Father of Spokane," who had sold part interest to A. M. Cannon and J. J. Browne. Hyde acquired title to both lots in 1888.

Spokane Falls was a booming little town prior to the fire of 1889; the Northern Pacific Railroad came into the town in 1881, gold was discovered in northern Idaho and Spokane Falls became an outfitting point for those seeking to make their fortunes. A stage line to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, with a steamer ride up Coeur d'Alene lake and river to Kingston offered transportation into the Idaho mining areas. The town could boast of a library, newspapers, plenty of hotel rooms and lots of saloons. A railroad connected north with the Canadian Pacific and short feeder lines ran in all directions bringing in the products of the mines, orchards and ranches.

August 4, 1889, was an evening of disaster to the community. "The most devastating fire that ever occurred in the history of the word (sic), according to population, swept over the business portion of this city Sunday night," read the headlines of the paper. But only one year later the Tuesday morning edition of the paper had a different story to tell: "Spokane has spent in round numbers six millions of dollars in business blocks since last August, and is even now preparing for even greater expenditures in the same line, the tangible results of the energy and confidence of the citizens of Spokane. Big brick buildings, great piles of solid masonry; over one and a half miles of street frontage."

Preusse, who was hired by Hyde to design the building, had received most of his architectural training in his native Germany. He came to the United States and, after traveling around the country, settled in Spokane Falls in 1882 (The Falls was dropped from the name of the town in 1891). After the fire he led the city's architects in building commissions, with over \$2,000,000; some of his most famous include: Jamieson/Zuker (burned 1980), Blalock, Granite, Victoria (all razed),

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

see attached sheet

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property LESS THAN 1 (ONE) ACRE

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 Nancy Compau (with assistance from the Spokane City/County HPD)

organization Historic Preservation Office

date November 18, 1985

street & number Fourth Floor - City Hall

telephone (509) 456-4378

city or town \_\_\_\_\_

state \_\_\_\_\_

12. Signature of Owner(s) Richard K. Sontgerath

For Office Use Only:

Date Received: 12-9-85

Date Heard: 2-12-86

Commission Decision: APPROVE

Council/Board Action: APPROVE

Date: July 21, 1986

Attest:

Elizabeth Davidson  
Deputy

City Clerk

Approved as to form:

B Burns  
Ass't. Corporation Counsel

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

Vicki S. McNeill  
Mayor, City of Spokane

Scott J. Hill 16-5  
City/County Historic Preservation Officer

[Signature]  
Chair, Spokane City/County Historic Landmarks Commission

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and the Fernwell. Later Julius Zittel became his partner; some of the notable buildings on which they collaborated include the Gonzaga University Administration Building, the Carnegie Library and Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Cathedral.

Hyde was a member of a remarkable family who had come to Spokane Falls in 1881 from Wisconsin when the town had a little over 200 inhabitants. Brother Samuel Hyde was a lawyer, County Prosecutor, Justice of the Peace and representative to the 54th Congress, who, through his efforts and eloquence, was influential in having Spokane selected as the site of Fort George Wright. Another brother, Eugene, served as the first town marshal, president and principal stockholder of the Citizens National Bank, real estate developer and builder of the Hyde Building (National Register, now demolished). Sister Martha was one of the two first women teachers and taught the upper grades in the tiny wooden schoolhouse. She married John B. Blalock, owner of a boot and shoe store who dealt in real estate and built the Blalock Building in 1890 (now demolished). Rollin, the youngest, took homestead and timber stands near Davenport, Washington, then owned and dealt in land in the Chandler's, Havermale, Saunders and Chamberlin Addition, as well as the resurvey and addition (downtown area) of Spokane Falls.

Originally called the Rollin C. Hyde building to differentiate from the Hyde Building built by his brother, Eugene, the building opened in the fall of 1890 as the Chamber of Commerce. Rollin Hyde might have been hoping to attract the newly organized Chamber of Commerce/Board of Trade into taking quarters in the building. In the summer of 1890 that group had announced plans to seek offices in the central business section. There is no record to show the Chamber ever occupied space in the building, but it kept the name until 1893 when a terse announcement appeared in the paper stating that: "The name of the building on the southwest corner of Riverside and Stevens, formerly called the Chamber of Commerce building, has been changed. It will hereafter be known as the Fernwell." Family history indicates that the Hydes decided to name it after their firstborn son, Fernwell, who died in infancy. From 1893 to the present, it has retained that name.

Starting with the Imperial Clothing House owned by Thomas M. Rasin, quality men's clothing stores would occupy 503 West Riverside, on the corner, until 1980. R.J. Hurd and Company Clothiers were located there the longest period of time, from 1895 to 1933. Various enterprises at 505 included a stationary store, jewelry store, two cigar stores and then shoe stores, from 1907 to 1960, including Jake Hill Shoe Company, one of the oldest shoe stores in Spokane. Ritters Drug and Bates Drugs, which are still operating in Spokane, were among the many drug and jewelry stores which occupied 507 West Riverside. At the back of the building facing Stevens Street, was the M.M. Lang Saloon, later "The Cobweb Saloon," which went out of business with Prohibition. That space was then incorporated into the clothing store.

Lost to Hyde when aftermaths of the 1893 panic caused financial difficulties,

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the property was sold at a sheriff's auction in 1900. Charles Bibbins owned it until 1914 when it sold to Levi Hutton, part owner of the Hercules Mine in Idaho and a very colorful, prominent philanthropic man in early Spokane. Upon Mr. Hutton's death in 1928, the property became a part of the Hutton Settlement (National Register property for orphans and founded by the Huttons) financial support which it remained until the Hutton Settlement Board sold it in 1975. It then passed to the Fernwell Investment Company until 1979, when it was purchased by the Thomas Meagher Estate.

Occupancy of the building remained relatively stable until the 1950s. As the building declined in prestige, office space was given to philanthropic organizations. In 1967 the upper floors were closed. Although the building is at present empty except for an architectural firm, it is still considered an important and solid piece of real estate and plans have been drawn which would rehabilitate the building.

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