

Spokane Register of Historic Places Nomination

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

1. Name of Property

Historic Name **DOROTHY DARBY SMITH HOUSE**

2. Location

Street & Number **612 East 19th Avenue**
City, State, Zip Code **Spokane, WA 99203**
Parcel Number **35292.1405**

3. Classification

Category of Property	Ownership of Property	Status of Property	Present Use of Property
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input 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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other

4. Owner of Property

Name **Michael Guilfoil & Jacqueline Van Allen**
Street & Number **612 East 19th Avenue**
City, State, Zip Code **Spokane, WA 99203**
Telephone Number/E-mail **509-868-6433 mguilfoil@seattletimes.com**

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 in Existing Surveys

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

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

Lot 6, Block 14, Addition: Manito Park

Verbal Boundary Justification

Nominated property includes entire parcel and urban legal description.

11. Form Prepared By

Name and Title **Michael Guilfoil & Jacqueline Van Allen, owners**

Organization

Telephone Number/E-mail **509-868-6433**

mguilfoil@seattletimes.com

Street and Number **612 East 19th Avenue**

City, State, Zip Code **Spokane, WA 99203**

Date **February 14, 2008**

12. Additional Documentation

Map **City/County of Spokane current plat map.**

12. Additional Documentation

Map **City/County of Spokane current plat map.**

Photographs and Slides: Nineteen color/B&W prints

13. Signature of Owner(s)

MICHAEL GULFOLL
Jacqueline Van Allen

14. For Official Use Only:

Date Received: _____ Attest: _____

Date Heard: _____ City Clerk _____

Commission Decision: _____ Approved as to Form:
Assistant City Attorney Michael P. Smith

Council/Board Action: _____

Date: _____

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

CITY ADMINISTRATOR, City of Spokane
or

CHAIR, Spokane County Commissioners

CHAIR, Spokane City/County Historic Landmarks Commission

Gregg Brun / km

OFFICER, City/County Historic Preservation Officer
City/County Historic Preservation Office
Third Floor - City Hall, Spokane, WA 99201

DESCRIPTION

Dorothy Darby Smith House is a two-story, single-family residence at 612 East Nineteenth Avenue. The first story is clad in steel faux-lap siding, and the second story is clad in wood shingles. The end gable roof has asphalt composition roofing. The front stoop is wood with concrete steps, and a small gabled roof extends over the front door. A total of four projecting bays with leaded windows extend from the east, south and west façades, and a gabled rear entry and breakfast nook (formerly a pantry) project from the home's southwest corner. A detached, gable-roof, single-vehicle garage sits on the property line southeast of the home.

CURRENT APPEARANCE & CONDITION

Site

The north-facing house sits on Lot 6, Block 14 of the Manito Park Addition. The property is identified as Spokane County tax parcel No. 35292.1405. The 7,500-square-foot lot measures 50 by 150 feet. The house is framed by two dramatic, century-old Norway maples. Most of the flat backyard is landscaped in lawn and bordered by evergreens and a flowering hawthorne tree. The side yards have minimal landscaping: mostly day lilies and shrubs. In addition to the large maple in the front, there is a Japanese maple on the northeast corner of the home, and a mature evergreen in the parking strip.

Exterior

Dorothy Darby Smith House has a 900-square-foot rectangular footprint, with four bays cantilevered beyond the stone foundation. The rear entry and breakfast nook also extend beyond the foundation, and exits onto a 300-square-foot wood deck that sits 36 inches above a pre-existing concrete patio.

The front, or north, façade suggests a one-and-a-half story structure with a gambrel roof. But second-story walls extend upward three feet behind the false gambrel-roof detail and are capped with a gable roof. From the front façade the illusion is of a gambrel roof with shed dormers on either side of the ridgeline, from the back façade the true end gable roof form is evident. The north elevation has a front door reached by four concrete steps leading to a simple, wood stoop covered in carpet. Over the front door is a gable pediment supported by generous scrolled brackets and no columns. The front door is flanked by a large living-room window to the east and a small, lead glass, bathroom window to the west.

The second story is punctuated by two small, lead glass, closet windows, and three larger windows – one square window flanked by two vertical ones – in the master bedroom.

All sides of the house are clad in steel faux lap siding on the first floor and wood shingles on the second. The steel siding is white; and the shingles and second-story window trim boards are painted “barn red.” The roof is covered in asphalt-composition shingles.

The east façade faces the driveway. Four adjacent vertical windows allow light into the living room. The south end of the façade is broken by a one-story projecting bay from the dining room. The projecting bay features a large window with a leaded-glass upper sash. The second story has three windows: one to the master bedroom, one to the upstairs bathroom and one to the southeast bedroom. (None is leaded.)

The south façade has a single-story addition including a gabled portion intersecting a shed addition. The gabled addition includes eave overhangs supported by knee brackets that are not present on the main portion of the structure. The shed roof portion of this addition also includes four smaller leaded-glass windows. The second story had two windows – one each for the southeast and southwest bedrooms.

The west façade is punctuated by two projecting bays, both of which extend from the stairway between the first and the second floors. Both bays feature leaded glass windows. The lower window is sheltered by a shed roof and the upper bay is triangular with a pyramidal roof form. There are four additional windows on the west side of the house: two in the kitchen (both leaded), and one each in the master (or north) bedroom and the southwest bedroom. There also is an exterior door leading to the basement and first floor.

Interior

According to Spokane County tax records, the first floor is 889 square feet. The second floor is approximately the same. The unfinished, “three-quarter” basement does not extend all the way to the north façade, which is supported by a partial foundation.

The first floor includes a foyer, living room (with fireplace), dining room, kitchen (with breakfast nook), and a one-half bath. The first-story floors are oak except in the kitchen, where fir was used and covered with linoleum. The first-floor ceilings are nine feet high, except in the bathroom, which has a drop ceiling.

The stairway leading to the second floor has two landings. The first landing above the main floor has a door leading to a closet.

The second floor has a central hallway leading to three bedrooms and a full bathroom. The flooring upstairs is fir, and the ceilings are eight feet high.

ORIGINAL APPEARANCE & SUBSEQUENT ALTERATIONS

Dorothy Darby Smith House was built in 1910. According to the 1926 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, the structure apparently started out as a one-and-a-half story residence with a front porch running the full width of the home's north façade.

The structure subsequently underwent a major remodel. The east side of the front porch was incorporated into the existing living room; the middle portion was added to the foyer; and the west end of the porch became a walk-in closet. The remodel also included a full second story with the gambrel roofline that exists today. City building permits indicate the work was done in late 1934 at a cost of \$1,000.

A single-vehicle garage along the east property line was built in 1954.

The first-floor closet that was added when the porch was enclosed in 1934 was converted to a restroom with a sink and toilet in 1968.

The south-facing exterior deck was added sometime in the 1990s.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (Category B)

Areas of Significance
Period of Significance
Owner/Builder

Category B
1943-2007
D.E. Bedford

Dorothy Darby Smith: Actor, director, teacher, luminary

“The phrase *grande dame of theater* may sound exaggerated, but in the case of Dorothy Darby Smith, it’s perfectly correct.”

– Spokesman-Review drama critic Jim

Kershner

For six decades, Dorothy Darby Smith nurtured community theater in Spokane with unmatched energy, passion and tenacity.

As a co-founder of Spokane Civic Theatre and a driving force both behind the scene and onstage, she helped the group mature into one of the country’s most respected amateur theatrical organizations.

Mrs. Smith also taught literally thousands of acting students in a variety of settings – initially at her home on Nineteenth Avenue, where she lived for 64 years, and later at Holy Names Academy, Gonzaga University and Spokane Civic Theatre. And she brought the joy of live theater to tens of thousands more through the plays she appeared in or directed, from the fledgling Civic’s 1947 production of “State of the Union,” in which she starred, to a reader’s theater version of “A Man for All Seasons” she directed in 2000 at age 90.

Besides acting, directing and teaching, Mrs. Smith was a valued source of Spokane theater lore who always could be counted on for colorful anecdotes drawn from her decades of experience and delivered with her characteristic dramatic flair.

In an interview with Mr. Kershner in 1996, Mrs. Smith recalled the challenges faced by Civic Theatre volunteers during the company’s first full season 49 years earlier. “Let me tell you, it was an experience and a half,” she recounted. That year’s plays – “State of the Union,” “Blithe Spirit,” “Ten Little Indians” and “Mr. Pim Passes By” – were staged at the Post Theater, a busy movie house.

Spokane Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet

DOROTHY DARBY SMITH HOUSE

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“We’d have to go in at midnight (after Saturday’s last screening) and put up our set. The cast came in at 7 a.m. for rehearsal, and then we’d play that night.” Immediately afterward, the sets were struck. In other words, opening night and closing night all rolled into one.

The busiest drama school in Spokane back then was at 612 East Nineteenth Avenue – Mrs. Smith’s residence two blocks east of Manito Park. “In 1949,” recalled her daughter, Sarah Nichols “Nikki” Smith, “teaching slots at public schools already filled, she lined up the first of a generation of Spokane-area youngsters on her Oriental rug in the living room for private speech and drama lessons that would salt Civic Theatre stages for decades.” A typical week saw 60 aspiring actors and actresses pass through the front door.

By the mid-1950s, Mrs. Smith had joined the faculty at Holy Names Academy, an all-girls Catholic high school. In 1961, she moved on to the speech department at Gonzaga University, where she completed her master’s degree and created what is now the university’s Theatre Arts Department. Throughout her teaching career, she continued to lend her expertise and energy to Spokane Civic Theatre, on one occasion directing Thornton Wilder’s “The Skin of Our Teeth” at the Civic while simultaneously directing Arthur Miller’s “The Crucible” at Gonzaga.

Mrs. Smith’s extraordinary contributions to Spokane’s cultural life brought numerous citations over the years, including an honorary doctorate from Gonzaga in 1996 and a prestigious Spokane Arts Commission award in 2002. But the true measure of her influence – the joy she brought and the lives she changed through community theater – is inestimable.

Dorothy Darby was born in Spokane on April 10, 1909, the only child of Ethel Standley and Hunter Darby. She was introduced to live performance as a teenager by way of vaudeville acts, touring road shows and the occasional play produced by local groups at the Hippodrome and Pantages theaters.

She graduated from North Central High School in 1927, and earned a bachelor's degree in business at Washington State College. While in Pullman, she had a role in the play "Craig's Wife," the cast of which included future television-news pioneer Edward R. Murrow. The two remained friends the rest of Murrow's life.

Upon graduation, she considered leaving for the East Coast to pursue an acting career. "But I had a strong mother," she told a reporter in 1988, and commitments to her family temporarily tied her to her hometown. She went to work for a Spokane mortgage company. But gradually her fear of ending up in a mundane office job compelled her to quit her job and leave for Evanston, Ill., where she studied speech and drama at Northwestern University. She later took graduate courses at Stanford and the University of Alberta.

During the mid-1930s, she taught speech at a girls' finishing school in tiny Nevada, Mo. "One breathless letter home recounts the nail-biting anxiety of mounting her first show," daughter Nikki said. She also indulged another of her passions – travel – visiting Japan and China in 1936.

After her journey to the Far East, she returned to Spokane, where she met Montgomery H.L. Smith. The son of a New Jersey banker, Smith had been lured West by a sister who lived in Colville. Dorothy and Montgomery married in 1939.

The couple's first home was a converted cable car on the Little Spokane River. Later they moved to a South Hill apartment. Upon the arrival of their first child, Nikki, the Smiths decided to buy a home. They settled on a 1910 two-story residence with faux gambrel roof, leaded-glass windows, a grand living room-dining room space and three bedrooms upstairs. The house at 612 East Nineteenth Avenue was purchased on Dec. 1, 1943, from the estate of William E. Fraser for \$5,000. A dog named Penny soon joined the family there. A second child, Montgomery Lewis Smith, was born the following summer.

Then in December 1944, tragedy struck: Dorothy's husband died of pneumonia. "She never remarried," said Nikki. "In some sense, she never recovered." Yet, the young widow Smith persevered, and soon was metaphorically writing the script she would follow the next 63 years.

In February 1947, Mrs. Smith helped found Spokane Civic Theatre, and went on to direct more than 100 productions for the Civic, Spokane Children's Theatre, Gonzaga University and other amateur theatrical groups. Musicals – including "Oklahoma," "Carousel," "Kiss Me Kate," "The King and I," "My Fair Lady," "Music Man" and "South Pacific" – were a specialty of hers. But she also loved the Greeks and Shakespeare, edgy contemporary works such as "Waiting for Godot," and developing new plays written by regional dramatists such as Spokane's Bryan Harnetiaux.

It was during the 1960s, '70s and early '80s – her second act, so to speak – that Mrs. Smith earned a reputation as a tough, exacting director. "No doubt about it, Dorothy can be demanding," local actress Joan McKenzie told a Spokesman-Review reporter in 1988. "People either love her or they hate her. But she knows more about theater than anyone else here."

Not even the Civic Theatre hierarchy was spared the force of Mrs. Smith's convictions. The same 1988 newspaper story recounted an incident that occurred during the company's annual Playwright Forum. One of the playwrights, Daniel Stein, had entered two one-act works that were intended as companion pieces, but festival organizers decided to present only one of them. Mrs. Smith, who was directing the Stein play, wrote a harsh letter to the theater board, accusing the festival committee of betraying the artistic integrity of the playwright.

For his part, Mr. Stein could see the logic of doing only one play. "Doing both would have taken too much time. But the letter shows that Dorothy will go out on a limb.... She respects the playwright and his words. She represents the 'old guard' of theater in the best sense. She has strong feelings about the theater. You can disagree with her taste, but you have to admire the way she pushes for plays she wants to see done."

Speaking of taste, no description of Mrs. Smith would be complete without mentioning her inherent flair for the dramatic. She favored sporty hats, capes and ponchos, often bedecked with exotic pins and broaches acquired during her annual vacations to places as far afield as Bombay. Her speech has been described as self-consciously theatrical, with loud laughs, head poses and open-jaw stares of disbelief to punctuate her remarks. According to Pamela Kingsley of Spokane Civic Theatre, Mrs. Smith's persona was "very much a broad caricature she does of herself. It's as though she's performing this grand role of Dorothy Darby Smith."

While some may have thought Mrs. Smith a bit over the top, she had no shortage of admirers. Actress Pattie Gallwas, who as a child in the late 1940s and early '50s attended drama classes in Mrs. Smith's living room, told a reporter, "I worship her. And I worshipped her when I was just 9. She was just as serious and demanding back then as she is now," forty years later. "She's the greatest thing that ever happened to this town."

When directing, Mrs. Smith was feared as much as she was admired. It was said she possessed "the loudest pencil in town." "You could hear it on stage even when she'd sit in the back row," recounted Marilyn Langbehn, a fellow director and frequent performer. She added, "I found that if you don't agree with her, you just stand up and tell her what you think. But if you're wrong, the best thing is to keep your mouth shut, because the woman knows what she's talking about."

When Mrs. Smith retired from Gonzaga University in 1974, she confessed she thought she might "dry up and blow away." Far from it. In 1978 she played Big Mama in the Civic Theatre production of "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof." Two years later, she created, produced and directed "Spokane – Children of the Sun," a centennial pageant telling the story of early settlers and some of the famous people who claimed the city as their hometown.

In the 1990s, she appeared at the Civic in “Driving Miss Daisy” and in “Road to Mecca” at Spokane Interplayers, a semi-professional troupe, and continued performing into the new millennium with a group that toured local homes for the elderly. In 2002, the Spokane Arts Commission honored her with its Individual Artist Award.

Dorothy Darby Smith never lost her passion for the stage, but she did mellow late in life, during her third act. As she revealed to a reporter at age 78, “I’ve learned to be careful not to say too much. Egos are very fragile, and mine is fragile, too.”

Spokane’s undisputed “grande dame of theater” died on March 16, 2007, at the age of 97. Appropriately, her life and contributions to the dramatic arts were celebrated before a packed house at her beloved Spokane Civic Theatre.

R.L. Polk Spokane city directory, 1910, 1911

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1926, 1952

Spokane City Building Permits, Spokane City Hall, Spokane, WA

"60 Years in the Making: The Story of Spokane Civic Theatre" (DVD, written and directed Philip Sondericker)

Sarah Nichols "Nikki" Smith, daughter of Dorothy Darby Smith: personal correspondence

Program: Spokane Civic Theatre Presents "State of the Union" 1947

"Last Curtain for The First Lady," SIGNUM of Gonzaga University, May 1974

Newspaper Articles

"Play Director 'Taskmaster,' " by Beverly Vorpahl. *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, March 10, 1978.

"Dorothy Darby Smith is Civic Theatre's ... Doyenne of Drama," by Tom Sowa. *The Spokesman-Review*, January 17, 1988.

"Director turns to writing: Dorothy Darby Smith reading original centennial production," by Beverly Vorpahl. *The Spokesman-Review*, April 10, 1989.

"Solid Gold Spokane Civic Theatre Approaches its 50th Year of Award-Winning Excellence," by Jim Kershner. *The Spokesman-Review*, September 22, 1996.

"Spokane's Civic Theatre loses 'grande dame'," by Jim Kershner. *The Spokesman-Review*, March 25, 2007.

Chain of title

March 27, 1905: Lot 6, Block 14 of Manito Park Addition sold by the Spokane Washington Improvement Company to William Leininger for \$150. Stipulation: "No residence shall be erected upon said lot that shall cost less than \$800 and be of modern style of architecture, and no outhouse or barn shall be erected and used as a dwelling before the construction of the main dwelling house."

May 14, 1909: Lot 6, Block 14 of Manito Park Addition sold by William and Louise Leininger to Mary E. Bedford for \$550.

April 4, 1916: D. Elmer Bedford and Mary E. Bedford, husband and wife, were forced to sell their house at 612 E. Nineteen Avenue to settle a court claim brought by May Mae Calla Foster. Walter C. Sivyer & Son Co. purchased the house at a sheriff's auction for \$3,013.56.

March 18, 1920: Walter C. Sivyer & Son Co. sold the house to S.E. Gates for \$4,900.

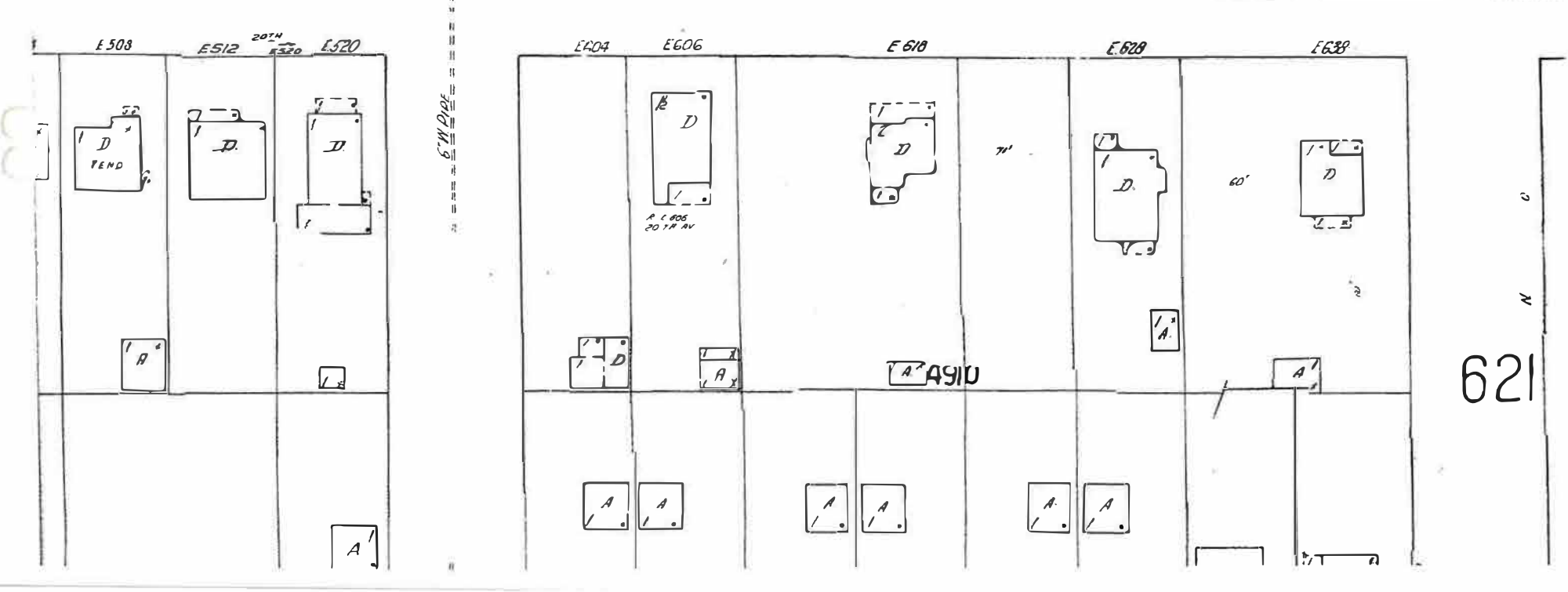
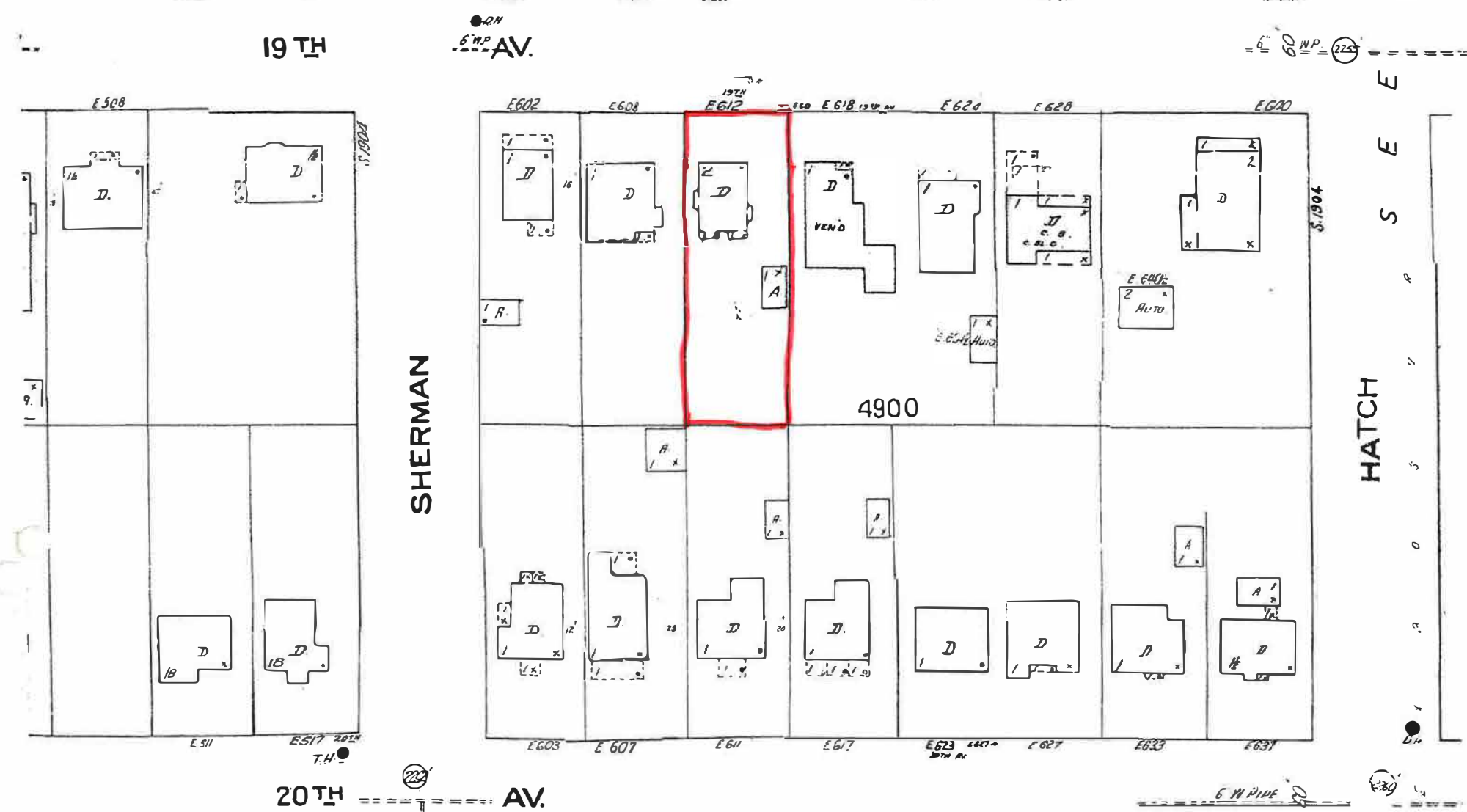
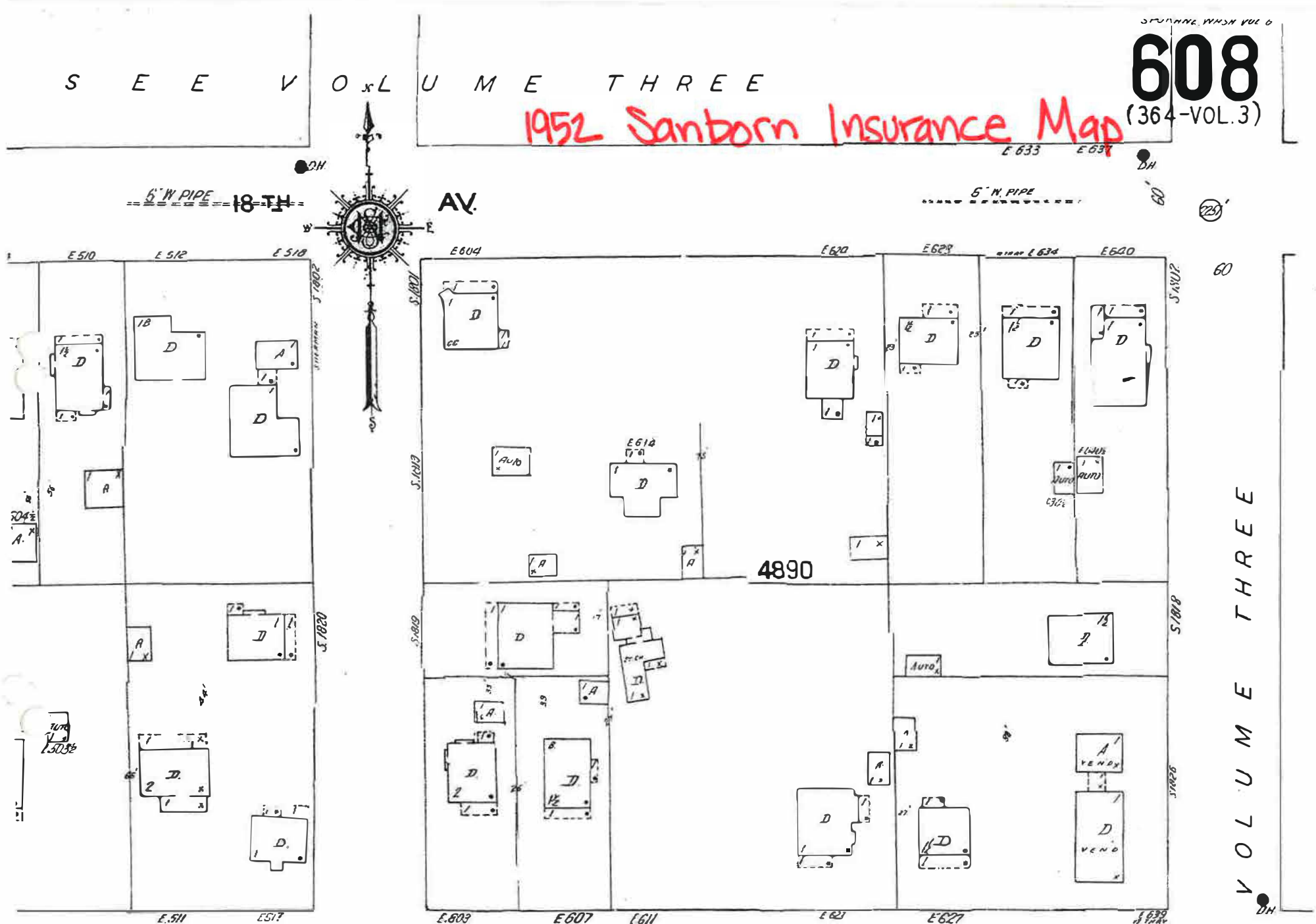
Nov. 25, 1921: S.E. Gates sold the house to S.E. Lambert. (No price recorded.)

Dec. 8, 1922: S.E. Lambert and Helen Lambert sold the house to William E. Fraser and Alice Fraser. (No price recorded.)

Dec. 1, 1943: The estate of William E. Fraser sold the house to Montgomery H.L. Smith and Dorothy Darby Smith for \$5,000.

Sept. 4, 2007: The estate of Dorothy Darby Smith sold the house to Michael Guilfoil and Jacqueline Van Allen for \$185,000.

1952 Sanborn Insurance Map





612 East Nineteenth Avenue: Neighborhood context



612 East Nineteenth Avenue: North elevation



612 East Nineteenth Avenue: West elevation



East elevation



612 East Nineteenth Avenue: South elevation



612 East Nineteenth Avenue: Backyard



Garage, south elevation



612 East Nineteenth Avenue: Living room, looking south



Dining room, looking north



Stairway from foyer to second floor



Second-floor bathroom



Foyer, looking south



Living room, west wall



612 East Nineteenth Avenue: Kitchen



612 East Nineteenth Avenue: Dining room, south wall



Dining room, east wall