

# Spokane Register of Historic Places Nomination

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

## 1. Name of Property

Historic Name **RIDPATH HOTEL**  
and/or Common Name

## 2. Location

Street & Number 515 W. Sprague Avenue  
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99201  
Parcel Number 35191.2002 and 35191.2004

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> vacant	<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 type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other

## 4. Owner of Property

Name The Ridpath Tower Condominium Association  
The "Y" Condominium Association  
Street & Number 1325 W. First Avenue  
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99201  
Telephone Number/E-mail 509-624-8050

## 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

*Final nomination reviewed/recommended by SHLC October 16, 2013*

**7. Description**

<b>Architectural Classification</b> (see nomination, section 8)	<b>Condition</b> __excellent <u>X</u> good __fair __deteriorated __ruins __unexposed	<b>Check One</b> __unaltered <u>X</u> altered  <b>Check One</b> <u>X</u> original site __moved & date _____
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*Narrative statement of description is found on one or more continuation sheets.*

**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:**

- X 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.
- X 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	Railroad Addition, Block 9, Lots 3-4, south 68 feet of Lots 5-6.
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	October 16, 2013

**12. Additional Documentation**

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

13. Signature(s) of Owner(s)

*[Handwritten Signature]*

Lawrence V. Brown, Jr. President

Ridgely Tower Condominium Association and "Y" Condominium Association

14. For Official Use Only

Date nomination application filed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Landmarks Commission Hearing: \_\_\_\_\_

Landmarks Commission decision: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of City Council/Board of County Commissioners' hearing: 11/4/13

City Council/Board of County Commissioners' decision: Approved

I hereby certify that this property has been listed in the Spokane Register of Historic Places based upon the action of either the City Council or the Board of County Commissioners as set forth above.

*[Handwritten Signature: Kristen Griffin]*

12-4-2013

**Kristen Griffin**  
City/County Historic Preservation Officer  
City/County Historic Preservation Office  
Third Floor—City Hall  
808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.  
Spokane, WA 99201

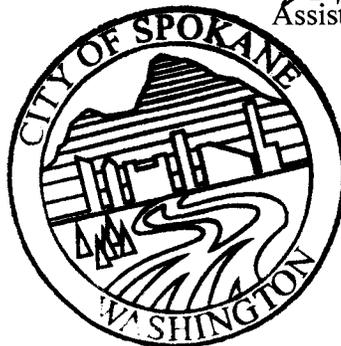
Date

Attest:

Approved as to form:

*[Handwritten Signature: Leri Zappala]*  
City Clerk

*[Handwritten Signature: J. Brown]*  
Assistant City Attorney





***RIDPATH HOTEL***  
***515 W. Sprague Avenue***



***Ridpath Hotel's east wing***  
***10 S. Stevens Street and 504-514 W. First Avenue***

***DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY******Summary Statement***

One of Spokane's most historically and architecturally significant hostelrys, the Ridpath Hotel, is located in the center of the city's arts and entertainment district in downtown Spokane, Washington. The hotel is comprised of two historic buildings: a tall multi-story, International-style, brick-veneered, steel-reinforced, high-rise tower built and completed in 1952, and an attached four-story brick masonry construction commercial building built in 1905. The 1952 building is commonly called the Ridpath Hotel "tower" while the attached 1905 building is called the Ridpath Hotel's "east wing." Together, the buildings offer more than 300 furnished hotel guest rooms, lobby and lounge, cocktail and dining rooms, meeting/convention rooms, commercial shop/store space, a drive-in parking lobby, and a below-ground drive-in parking garage for 100 cars. With 13 floors, the Ridpath Hotel tower rises above surrounding commercial buildings and offers some of the finest and most spectacular panoramic views of Spokane and the surrounding landscape. Like so many historic commercial buildings across the country, the hotel's street-level storefront facades were modified in the 1970s-1980s with a compatible-contemporary design. Albeit some modifications, the Ridpath Hotel retains a high degree of historic integrity in original location, design, materials, workmanship, and association.

***CURRENT CONDITION AND APPEARANCE******Site***

The Ridpath Hotel is located in the heart of downtown Spokane in the Railroad Addition, city Block 9, on Lots 3 and 4, and the south 68 feet of Lots 5 and 6. Block 9 is sited between Sprague Avenue to the north, First Avenue to the south, Howard Street to the west, and Stevens Street to the east. Located in the center of the city block, lots 3 and 4 extend from Sprague Avenue south through the block to First Avenue. Lots 3 and 4 are each 50 feet wide for a total frontage of 100 feet, and are each 155 feet deep. The south 68 feet of lots 5 and 6 are located in the southeast corner of the city block, and together total 101.16 feet wide and 68 feet deep. The south half of Lots 5 and 6 are fronted by First Avenue to the south and Stevens Street to the east. All four of the lots on city Block 9 reveal a slight downhill north-facing grade which results in Sprague Avenue along the building's north facade being lower than First Avenue which faces the building's south facade. The Ridpath Hotel is surrounded by a directionally correct grid work of paved city streets and an eclectic mix of new and historic single-story and multi-story high-rise commercial buildings that were built mostly between 1900 and 1990.

***Ridpath Hotel Tower (built 1952)******Exterior***

Soaring above surrounding buildings at 130 feet, the Ridpath Hotel faces north at 515 W. Sprague Avenue and is tall with 13 floors. Built in 1952, the Ridpath Hotel is constructed with a fire-proof steel frame which is covered with concrete and smooth red brick veneer. The first, second, and third stories of the building are 100 feet wide and

155 deep, and comprise all of lots 3 and 4. Centered above the building's base at the third floor is a small multi-storied tower with a narrow width of 45.6 feet (from east to west). Like the building's first, second, and third stories, the tower extends the full depth of the block for 155 feet from the north façade to the south façade of the building. Due to its narrower width, the tower permits unrestricted hotel guest room windows at the east and west sides of the building. The 1952 hotel building is attached to the 1905 east wing at the east side of the 1952 building and the west side of the east wing. The west side of the tower's base is adjacent to two next-west historic buildings.

The hotel's roof is a nearly flat truncated hip with widely overhanging eaves that help shade the top floor of the tower. The sloped sides of the roof are covered with metal shingles while the center truncated, flat part of the roof is covered with a combination of built-up tar and vinyl sheeting. An exterior reinforced concrete stair tower built in 1967 is attached to the east side of the building and terminates at the roof. The building is clad with a combination of stack bond and common bond red brick veneer. Tower and third-floor base windows are original vertical aluminum sash units with undivided lights arranged as singles and/or pairs in horizontal window bands and vertical window rows. Street-level storefront windows and doors on Sprague Avenue and First Avenue reveal contemporary-compatible designs from 1978 and 1981 when they replaced original storefront fenestration. Windows along the top 13<sup>th</sup> floor of the Ridpath Hotel are floor-to-ceiling undivided plate-glass units with metal frames that are placed side-by-side to form a continuous horizontal band of windows.

#### *North Façade*

The north face of the building along 515 W. Sprague Avenue is considered the building's primary façade. It is distinguished by a full-width three-story base prominently marked by a horizontal ribbon/band of original vertical-shaped metal-sash casement windows located at the third floor. Below the casement windows are street-level storefront windows and doors installed in 1981 (they replaced original storefront windows and doors). The existing storefront windows have multi-paned lights with metal frames. A front entrance is located in the center of the north façade at street level and is distinguished with multi-paned French doors that are flush with the planar wall surface of the building. A recessed plain metal security door is located at the west end of street level. Green marble cladding covers the wall between and around the windows and doors. A continuous full-width dark green galvanized metal shed-style awning with boxed eaves extends across the façade of the building above the street-level windows and doors. The metal awning projects from the planar wall surface of the building and contains recessed lighting which illuminates the sidewalk and the building's street-level façade. A recessed parking bay is located east of the front entrance French doors to the hotel. When the building was built in 1952, the parking bay was called a "drive-in lobby." From the drive-in lobby area, the parking bay leads south to an underground parking garage designed to hold 100 cars. Metal-framed multi-paned French doors that match the hotel's front doors at the north facade are located in the parking bay/drive-in lobby on the

recessed bay's west wall. The multi-paned street-level windows continue around the corner of the street-level façade and flank both sides of the French doors on the west wall in the recessed parking bay. Recessed lighting illuminates the parking bay. Parking bay walls are clad with dark green-painted stack bond brick veneer. A metal cyclone fence and security gate protects the garage entrance at the sidewalk. The underground hotel parking is provided at the basement level below the first floor of the building, and is accessed by a concrete ramp. Large 24-inch-square reinforced concrete columns support the basement parking garage. The walls, ceiling, floor, and ramp are all made of reinforced concrete.

The tower above the hotel's three-story base is narrower than the base, and rises to the 13<sup>th</sup> floor at the top of the building. The tower is a very tall, large, rectangular vertical box with a nearly flat truncated hip roof. The north façade of the building is distinguished from the south façade and east and west sides of the building by window placement and brick bonding patterns. At the north façade, the tower is clad with smooth red pressed face brick in stack bond. The window placement pattern for the north façade reveals three symmetrical vertical rows of tripartite units with minimal reveals. The windows have metal sash, are undivided, and have a fixed pane flanked by two casement windows. The east and west vertical rows of windows extend through the 12<sup>th</sup> floor but the center row of windows extends through the 13<sup>th</sup> floor. A large metal sign designed in a vertical orientation spells "RIDPATH" and is attached to the north façade of the building above the third floor between the vertical center row of windows and east row of windows. A larger metal sign in a horizontal orientation spells "RIDPATH" and is attached to the building's roof.

#### *South Facade*

The south façade of the building faces First Avenue and is considered the building's secondary façade because the primary front entrance to the building is located at the north face of the hotel. Commercial storefronts are located at street level, and feature recessed merchandise bays and plate glass display windows/doors installed in 1978. The windows and doors have metal frames and are covered by a continuous seamed metal awning (also installed in 1978) in a shed design. Walls between and around the recessed commercial bays are clad with red brick stack bond veneer. Above the metal awning at the third floor is a continuous ribbon/band of original metal sash undivided casement windows that are identical to windows on the third floor above the awning at the north façade. Above the third-floor windows at the south facade is the hotel's tower, which rises to the 13<sup>th</sup> floor. In contrast to the north façade's brick stack bond cladding, the south facade tower is clad with common bond red brick veneer and is distinguished with a different window pattern and placement than the north façade. Windows at the south façade tower are metal-framed tripartite units with a center fixed-pane flanked by two casement windows, and are located at the east and west corner ends of the tower's south face. The two vertical rows of windows extend up through the 12<sup>th</sup> floor.

*East and West Sides of Building*

The east and west sides of the building reveal a third iteration of brick veneer patterns for the building. Both sides of the hotel's tower are clad with red brick veneer in a combination of stack bond and common bond. Horizontal bands of brick veneer in stack bond separate the hotel windows while the sections of brick veneer that flank each window are clad with common bond brick veneer. Each window is a metal-framed tripartite unit similar to tower windows at the north and south facades of the building albeit with three features that differentiate the east and west wall windows from other windows. In contrast to other windows on the tower, windows at the tower's east and west walls are arranged in vertical rows of tripartite pairs. Each tripartite window has a larger center fixed-pane which is flanked by two casement windows. The entire tripartite window unit is capped with a transom window divided into three parts with vertical muntin bars that match the division points of the fixed-pane and casement windows.

*Interior*

The interior of the 1952 Ridpath Hotel has 133,300 square feet of interior space from the basement through the 13th floor.<sup>1</sup> The first two floors comprise a lobby, bar, restaurant, and dining room on the first floor, and a lounge and meeting/convention rooms at the second floor which were all remodeled in 1981. Metal-framed multi-paned French doors open from the north façade of the building at street level and from the west wall in the recessed parking garage into a first-floor lobby. The floor is covered with marble tile and the walls and ceiling are covered with painted drywall. A five-foot-wide semi-supported "floating" stairway with an open stringer winds up to the second floor from the north end of the first floor lobby (the stairway was originally built without supports but a 1981 remodel added two walls and a door under part of the stairs to form a closet). The balustrade design is made of transparent plexi-glass panels divided and anchored to stair steps by metal balusters. The stairway's handrail is made of polished walnut and curves around corners as the stairway ascends from the first floor to the second floor. The stairway is made of reinforced concrete and the steps are covered in carpet. The lobby leads south to a built-in wood lobby desk on the east wall. The ceiling is made of painted drywall and has recessed lighting. South of the lobby desk is a set of elevator doors. The doors are plain metal and painted gold. They are surrounded by marble tile which covers the south and west walls in the elevator lobby area. A circular stairway winds from the first floor to the second floor at the south end of the lobby adjacent east of the elevators. The stairway is similar to the north lobby staircase and is made of reinforced concrete, is five-feet-wide with carpet that covers stair steps, features a transparent plexi-glass paneled balustrade, and is finished with a curved polished walnut handrail.

A door in the center of the first-floor lobby's west wall opens to what was originally called the King Cole Dining Room & Lounge. Remnants of the 1981 remodeled room exist intact and include painted drywall and marble tiled walls, recessed and pendant

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<sup>1</sup> Spokane County Assessor Records. Spokane County Courthouse, Spokane, WA.

lighting, built-in bars, serving counter, and restaurant booths, and some stainless steel kitchen fixtures. Floors are covered with a combination of marble tiles, carpet, wood, and ceramic tile.

Both the north lobby and south lobby stairways rise to the second floor of the building, which when originally built in 1952, was called the hotel mezzanine. The mezzanine area features an open lounge with a fireplace on the west wall. The fireplace design and the mezzanine were remodeled in 1981. The floor is covered with wall-to-wall carpet, the west wall is covered with marble tile, the east, north and south ends of the mezzanine lounge are protected by half-walls made of transparent plexi-glass panels anchored to the floor with metal posts (same design as stair balustrades). A center section of the lounge is open to the first floor lobby below the second floor, and is protected at the second floor by half walls made of transparent plexi-glass panels. The handrail atop the plexi-glass paneled half-walls is a continuation of the stair rail, and is made of polished walnut. A five-foot-wide staircase on the east wall at the south end of the mezzanine leads up to the third floor, and is finished with a transparent plexi-glass paneled balustrade and curved walnut hand rail.

A corridor leads south to a hotel entrance at First Avenue at the second floor. The third floor contains offices, and the fourth floor through the 12th floor contains hotel rooms. Hotel guest rooms each have 240 to 350 square feet, at least one window, eight-foot-high ceilings, painted metal lathe and plaster, wall-to-wall carpet, full bathrooms, and closets. Hallway corridors are five to eight feet wide, covered with wall-to-wall carpet, and directionally extend north-and-south and east-and-west in the center of the tower. The hotel guest rooms and hallway configurations, and the hotel window placements are all original and reveal the original design and floor plan for the hotel rooms, hallways, and windows when the hotel was built in 1952. Two elevators are located in the center of the tower. Last used as a roof-top dining room, the top 13th floor contains remnants and partial demolition of a kitchen, food-prep area, dining room, restrooms, and two elevators (the demolition occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s before the current owner purchased the building).

### ***Ridpath Hotel East Wing (built 1905)***

A three-part, masonry construction, commercial building sited at the southeast corner of First Avenue and Stevens Street on the south 68 feet of Lots 5 and 6 was constructed in 1905 with two stories. Two additional stories were added to the building in 1910 plus a swimming pool in the basement. Used in concert with the Ridpath Hotel, the building was known as the Ridpath Hotel's east wing, and was connected to the 1952 building at the west wall of the east wing. The building has a plain parapet with a flat roof of built-up tar and vinyl sheeting. At the First Avenue and Stevens Street facades (south and east), the building has plain cornices and is faced with blonde/buff-colored face bricks at the second, third, and fourth floors. In contrast, the exterior north and west sides of the building are made of red construction bricks (due to a shared wall, the bricks at the west

side of the building are not visible and are covered with a fireproof concrete fire wall that was installed in 1950). The rear, north wall of the building supports small black iron balconies located below each window (installed in circa 2000). Hotel room windows on the second, third, and fourth floors of the four-story building are symmetrically placed at the exterior and illuminate hotel rooms that ring the perimeter of the second, third, and fourth floors. Brick soldier courses with center keystone designs cap the upper edge of each upper-story window at the south and east facades. The original 1/1 double-hung wood-sash windows at the second, third, and fourth floors were replaced in 1978 with undivided dark brown-colored aluminum-sash fixed units. Street-level storefront windows at the east façade of the building along Stevens Street and at the south façade along First Avenue were replaced and 1978. They reveal dark brown-colored aluminum sash, aluminum bulkheads, plate glass windows and doors, and a dark brown-colored metal standing-seam awning that extends south along Stevens Street and west around the corner along First Avenue above the storefront windows. The awning covers storefront windows not just in the 1905 east wing but also on the attached 1952 hotel building.

The interior of the east wing has four floors and basement for a total of 33,518 square feet of space.<sup>2</sup> An in-ground swimming pool, dressing/change rooms, bathrooms, and storage areas are located in the basement. All finish and interior partition walls were removed in 1978. The first floor reveals a wood sub-floor, brick masonry construction perimeter walls, wood framing, wood floor joists, and wood beams. The second, third, and fourth floors of the building hold a total of 48 hotel rooms with 330 square feet of interior space per room, full bathrooms, a combination of metal lathe and plaster and sheetrock walls and ceilings, wall-to-wall carpet, and at least one window in each room. Corridor hallways are five to eight feet wide and are covered with wall-to-wall carpet. The east wing hotel room and hallway configurations, and the hotel window placements are mostly original and reveal most of the original design and floor plan for the hotel rooms, hallways, and windows when the hotel was built in 1905.<sup>3</sup> An original stairwell contains service stairs with wood newel posts and wood balustrade panels, and is located at the interior east wall of the building.

#### ***ORIGINAL APPEARANCE AND SUBSEQUENT MODIFICATIONS***

Archival photographs and Sanborn Fire Insurance maps reveal original designs and building footprints for the 1905 east wing and 1952 tower that comprise the Ridpath Hotel. According to the footprint maps, the footprints of the east wing and the tower are original and have not changed. Modifications made to the Ridpath Hotel during its period of significance from 1952 to 1963, and past its period of significance include the following:

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<sup>2</sup> Spokane County Assessor's Records. Spokane County Courthouse, Spokane, WA.

<sup>3</sup> A 1978 Spokane building permit indicates northeast and southeast corner guest rooms in the east wing were enlarged and remodeled. A current inspection of the existing remodeled rooms reveals that the corner rooms were each enlarged to make one large room. However, current finished walls that remain intact are original supporting walls built in 1905. The walls hold plumbing and electrical systems.

*1955:* The top 13<sup>th</sup> floor was completely enclosed with glass windows, and the interior was remodeled for use as a dining room and lounge.

*1967:* A concrete stair tower was built at the exterior of the center of the east wall of the tower. Hotel rooms in the east wing were remodeled but original room and hallway configurations were retained. Hotel tower lobby, mezzanine lounge, and first-floor dining room were remodeled.

*1978:* The original storefront design for the east wing at the south and east facades of the building along First Avenue and Stevens Street and the south façade of the tower were remodeled with a continuous metal awning and corresponding metal storefronts with plate glass display windows and doors. The east wing's first floor was removed of all finish and interior partition walls. Interior hotel guest rooms on the second, third, and fourth floors in the east wing were remodeled<sup>4</sup> (Spokane building permit B-20493, 21 March 1978).

*1981:* The rooftop restaurant atop the tower was remodeled, and the name was changed from the Ridpath Roof Dining Room to Ankeny's Restaurant. Hotel rooms, the hotel lobby, mezzanine lounge, and King Cole Room (northwest corner first floor) were remodeled but the lobby stairways, balustrades, and walnut hand rails retain most of their original design. The original 1952 floor plan and room configurations for hotel rooms and hallway corridors were retained but hotel guest room furnishings were replaced. The exterior Sprague Avenue storefront façade was remodeled.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Areas of Significance	Social History
Period of Significance	1952 through 1963
Built Dates	1905, 1952
Architects	Ned H. Abrams (San Francisco) Richard E. Lytle (Seattle)
Builder/Contractor	Utah Construction Company

### **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

#### **Summary Statement**

*“The Ridpath Hotel—Spokane’s Contribution to America’s Fine Hotels—Tuned to the Tempo of The Times—A Dramatic New Note in Gracious Living.”*<sup>5</sup> These accolades described Spokane, Washington’s newest shining star in 1952: the Ridpath Hotel. Historically and architecturally significant at the local level, the property meets registration requirements for listing on the Spokane Register of Historic Places under Categories A and C in the areas of “commerce” and “architecture.” The hotel’s period of significance began in 1952 when the building was built, and ended in 1963 just before the hotel was expanded to include a separate structure located across the street. The 13-story Ridpath Hotel was built as the tallest hostelry in Spokane in the 1950s, and is one of Spokane’s finest commercial building examples of mid-century modern styling defined by the International style and building type. The property is the work of professional master architects Ned H. Abrams from San Francisco and Richard Lytel from Seattle, and was constructed by the Utah Construction Company, a prominent San Francisco contractor. The Ridpath Hotel is associated with innovative concepts that led to broad trends in the design and success of modern hotels in Spokane. For example, the Ridpath Hotel provided a convenient “drive-in lobby” at grade with a below-ground parking garage. The hotel’s novel drive-in lobby design was claimed to be the first offered in the Western United States as an off-street parking area sheltered by the hotel where patrons were able to safely embark/disembark their vehicles. The Ridpath Hotel’s drive-in lobby was immediately successful and helped impact successful designs for future hotels built throughout Spokane and the surrounding area.<sup>6</sup> Praise and promise offered in the following excerpt from a local Spokane newspaper described and stimulated the community’s hopes for the future in 1952:

*The opening in Spokane today of the new Ridpath Hotel is a notable event of importance throughout the whole Inland Empire. In its comfortable accommodations for the traveler, its interior decoration, its novel public rooms, the Ridpath is a modern attraction that will be a real asset to the community. Aside from its normal commercial and tourist trade that the hotel will help to stimulate, the Ridpath*

<sup>5</sup> Hotel Ridpath Advertisement. *Spokesman-Review*, 6 April 1952

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

*will increase...facilities for handling conventions and will doubtless contribute much to the growth and prosperity of the city.<sup>7</sup>*

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

#### ***Spokane, Washington***

In 1872, Spokane began as a small Eastern Washington town centered around Spokane Falls, a natural topographic feature and now an important source of hydro-electric power. The town grew quickly and became nationally recognized as an important distribution center for mining, lumber, agriculture, and railroad transportation in the western United States. As was popular in the late 1880s and 1890s, the town's downtown business district was built with mostly wood frame commercial and business blocks, warehouse buildings, and lodging houses. In 1889, a fire began in the heart of the town's business core and quickly grew to huge proportions, engulfing the city and destroying more than 32 city blocks, nearly the town's entire central business district. After the fire, building codes were changed and fire retardant building materials and practices were mandated to prevent the possibility of damage from future fires. Brick and stone were the fire-retardant construction materials of choice, and hundreds of brick and stone multi-story buildings were erected, some with steel reinforcing. Downtown re-building efforts boomed. Plain no-frills brick masonry construction single room occupancy hotels were quickly erected side-by-side along downtown streets to house the influx of immigrants and people who flocked to Spokane to find jobs. In contrast, other brick and stone buildings were designed and erected as prominent, high-style commercial/business blocks, upscale apartment buildings, and luxury hotels. At 12 stories, the tallest, largest, and most luxurious hotel erected at that time in Spokane was the Davenport Hotel, constructed in 1912 by owner Louis Davenport. Two prominent Spokane architects designed the hotel which held sway for nearly four decades as the city's finest and most popular hostelry.

By 1950, Spokane was ready for new hope and new beginnings. As the ravages of World War 2 (1939-1945) were becoming distant memories, technological advances in steel reinforced concrete building designs were utilized. "Form followed function" became an architectural mantra, personal automobile transportation gained popularity, and housing styles changed from large Arts & Crafts and period revival-style homes to smaller, more affordable, single-story contemporary houses with attached garages that accommodated increasingly popular private automobiles. In addition to domestic architecture, modern contemporary architectural styles/types, such as the International and Miesian styles, were used for ecclesiastic and commercial construction. Modern building types included tall multi-story, high-rise, steel-reinforced, brick-veneered examples with sleek contemporary styling. One hotel more than any other in Spokane epitomized the community's post-war hope and energy, and demonstrated the city's willingness to embrace a new type and style of hostelry—one that was very tall, centrally located in downtown Spokane, illustrated new cutting-edge technology and modern designs, and

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<sup>7</sup> "New Ridpath Will Be Welcome Spokane Asset." *Spokesman-Review*, 5 April 1952

one with contemporary high-style looks and amenities that would attract local and national hotel guests, celebrities, dignitaries, and performing artists. With public support followed by growing anticipation, the hostelry was built in 1952 as the new Ridpath Hotel.

### *Colonel William Ridpath*

The new 1952 Ridpath Hotel replaced two previous Ridpath Hotels. Constructed in 1899, the first Ridpath Hotel building was destroyed by fire in 1903, and rebuilt in 1904. The 1904 hotel was listed in city directories as both the Ridpath Hotel and Hotel Ridpath with “100 daylight rooms...50 private baths” and room rates advertised at \$1, \$2, and \$3 per day.<sup>8</sup> The hostelry offered guest rooms on the upper floors, and restaurants/bars and shops at street level in the hotel’s commercial bays that faced Sprague and First Avenues. The property was named for Colonel William Ridpath, a Civil War officer in the United States Union Army, who relocated to Spokane in 1888. A successful Spokane attorney and mining exploration investor, Colonel Ridpath died a wealthy man in 1914. The Ridpath family owned and managed the property for the next 74 years until 1988, at which time the property was sold.

### *1952 Ridpath Hotel*

The third iteration of the Ridpath Hotel occurred when fire completely destroyed the 1904 hotel in 1950. Clean-up efforts commenced immediately, and the *Spokesman-Review*, a local newspaper, announced “work on the 250-room structure to begin in June.”<sup>9</sup> The new hotel was to be “modernistic” with 12 floors and include outside views from all guest hotel rooms. The hotel featured private bathrooms with bathtubs, showers, and floor-to-ceiling ceramic tile in each room, a garage lobby and underground parking for hotel tenants, two hotel entrances (one at Sprague Avenue, the other at First Avenue), and commercial and business space available at street level and on the third floor. Two years later in August 1952, a competing local newspaper, the *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, noted changes to the Ridpath Hotel—including an even taller tower:

#### *FOOTINGS POURED FOR NEW HOTEL*

*The new structure will be 12 stories high and include a rooftop garden, or 13<sup>th</sup> floor, to be occupied by the [Spokane] University Club.<sup>10</sup>*

With mounting public anticipation, heightened interest, and much fanfare, the Ridpath Hotel opened for business in April 1952. The cost of construction was higher than projected, up 300 percent from \$1 million to \$3 million. The new hotel was unique, elegant, and lavish. Instead of 250 hotel guest rooms, the building was built with 300

<sup>8</sup> Polk, R. D. *Spokane City Directory*, 1904. Page 7

<sup>9</sup> “Ridpath to Cost Million.” *Spokesman-Review*, 22 April 1950

<sup>10</sup> “Footings Poured for New Hotel.” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 28 Aug 1950

“weather conditioned rooms,” a “drive-in lobby,” “underground storage for 100 guest cars,” and outstanding modern interior design and furnishings that totaled \$450,000.<sup>11</sup>

A March 30, 1952 article in the *Spokesman-Review* beamed the following accolades:

*RIDPATH CLAIMS UNUSUAL CHARM*

*City's New Hotel Has Individuality, Glamour*

*The Ridpath sticks a feather in Spokane's cap...a metropolitan hostelry in the center of the city's business district. The new hotel...combines elegance and practicality, and is unique in not only housing its guests but their cars.*<sup>12</sup>

A few days later, the *Spokesman-Review* pictured a full page of photographs of the new Ridpath Hotel with a headline that read:

*FIRST PHOTOS OF SMART INTERIOR OF SPOKANE'S NEW \$3,000,000 HOTEL*<sup>13</sup>

Devoted to the new hotel, another full page in the newspaper featured artists' renderings of the exterior and interior designs of the Ridpath Hotel and its Oval Terrace, King Cole Dining Room, King Cole Lounge (separate from dining room), Breakfast Bar, and Drive-In Lobby with captions that read:

*THE RIDPATH HOTEL*

*Spokane's Contribution to America's Fine Hotels*

*Tuned to the Tempo of The Times*

*A Dramatic New Note in Gracious Living*

*In All the West, Only the Ridpath Offers This Feature: A Drive-In Lobby*<sup>14</sup>

Advertisements in various Spokane city directories pictured drawings of the Ridpath Hotel with captions that said:

*The West's Newest!*

*Drive-In Lobby [where] you go up, your car goes down*

*Completely weather conditioned*

*Home of distinctive King Cole Room, Oval Terrace, and Terrace Room*<sup>15</sup>

Excitement grew, and a preliminary preview press conference was held on Wednesday, April 2, 1952. Three days later on Saturday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, the hotel's much-awaited public

<sup>11</sup> “Interesting Facts about Spokane’s New Drive-In Lobby Hotel Ridpath.” Ridpath Hotel brochure, 1952

<sup>12</sup> “Ridpath Claims Unusual Charm.” *Spokesman-Review*, 30 March 1952

<sup>13</sup> “First Photos of Smart Interior of Spokane’s New \$3,000,000 Hotel.” *Spokesman-Review*, 2 Apr 1952

<sup>14</sup> Hotel Ridpath Advertisement. *Spokesman-Review*, 6 April 1952

<sup>15</sup> R. D. Polk, 1955 *Spokane City Directory*, page. 65

“grand opening” and dedication premiered when the Ridpath Hotel opened its doors to Spokane.

Spokane’s new Ridpath Hotel proved to be a bustling hub of activity. With facilities for conventions and conferences, dinners and banquets, the Ridpath Hotel leased dining, convention, and meeting rooms to various businesses, associations, organizations, social clubs, churches, and schools for luncheons, conventions, professional sessions, retreats, reunions, wedding receptions, balls and galas, pageants, and high school graduation proms. A sample of some of the lessees included the American Association of University Women, Armed Services Club, Association of Anesthesiologists, Associated Industry’s Board of Directors, Spokane Bar Association, Boy Scouts of America, Certified Public Accountants of Spokane, Spokane Chamber of Commerce Membership & Relations, Community Welfare Board, Exchange Club of Spokane, Fairmont Memorial Park Board, Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship, General Agents & Managers, Inland Automobile Association, Inland Empire Veterinarians, Ladies Lions Club, Women of Rotary Club, Mortgage Men, Safety Council & Safety Engineers, Study Club, University Club of Spokane, Avon Producers, Christian Women’s Club, Independent Insurance Agents of Spokane, Inland Empire Dental, Inland Empire Insurance Underwriters, Rotary, Spokane Public Relations Council, Wampum, and the Spokane Lilac Association.

At different times from 1950 to 1985 the Ridpath Hotel leased commercial space in the hotel to various businesses, including the Global Travel Service, Peters & Sons Florists, Vallin’s English China Shop, Michael’s Shoe Salon, Barclay & Brown Furniture, Gallery West Art, and Air-Sea-Land Travel Service—anything a hotel patron might desire. In addition, the hotel housed various hotel-owned businesses that retained the Ridpath name, including the Ridpath Cigar Shop, Ridpath Tailors, Ridpath Beauty Salon, Ridpath Hotel Catering, and the Ridpath Gift Shop. The King Cole Cocktail Room operated in the northwest corner of the hotel’s first floor, and the Ridpath Roof Restaurant served food, drink, live music, and dancing on the top, 13th floor of the hotel. The rooftop restaurant commanded a spectacular view of Spokane, and became one of the most popular eateries in Spokane. In 1981, the name of the restaurant was changed to Ankeny’s in honor of the Ridpath Hotel’s founder’s daughter, Mary Ridpath, who married John Ankeny.

In 1963, with the Ridpath Hotel’s business booming, the hostelry purchased land just south of the hotel along W. First Avenue, and built a large facility called the Ridpath Motor Inn. Like the hotel, the motor inn offered guest rooms, a drive-in lobby and inside parking, dining rooms, lounges, and breakfast bars. Connecting the two buildings and designed to safely transport pedestrians across the street from the Ridpath Hotel to the Ridpath Motor Inn, a skybridge was installed over First Avenue, one of the first skywalks built in Spokane.

***The Vance Corporation***

One of Washington state's lead hotel management companies—the Vance Corporation (called Vance Affiliated Hotels in 1952 when the Ridpath Hotel was built)—helped manage the Ridpath Hotel during its heydays in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. The Vance Company's management experience and expertise was utilized by the Ridpath Hotel to implement new types of customer service and render it successful as a hotel for travelers, business professionals, speakers, politicians, and entertainers in contrast to residency hotels that leased rooms to patrons who wished to stay indefinitely.

A December 7, 1950 *Spokane Daily Chronicle* newspaper article announced “Vance Properties, Incorporated, Seattle operator of several well-known Northwest hotels, will help the Ridpath company operate the new Ridpath Hotel.”<sup>16</sup> An advertisement published in the 1955 *Spokane City Directory* described the Vance Corporation:

***A HIGH STANDARD OF HOTEL SERVICE ACROSS WASHINGTON STATE***

*More and more commercial and pleasure travelers are coming to recognize the Vance Affiliated Hotels as guideposts to the most complete, the most modern, and the most considerate hotel service in the State of Washington. These five friendly hotels—the Camlin Hotel and Vance Hotel in Seattle, the Desert Inn in Richland, the Chinook Hotel in Yakima, the Ridpath Hotel in Spokane—leave little to be desired in facilities, accommodations, and thoughtful service.*<sup>17</sup>

The Vance Corporation was started in 1906 by Joseph Vance as Vance Lumber Company in Malone, WA. In 1918, he sold the lumber mill, moved the company to Seattle, and invested in real estate. He built the Vance Building, the Lloyd Building, and the Vance Hotel, and purchased the Camlin Hotel in downtown Seattle. In the 1930s, George Vance (Vance's son) assumed leadership of the company, bought the Tower Building, built the Plaza 600 Building, purchased hotels in Washington and Hawaii, and ran the company until his death in 1981. The Vance Corporation was sold to Swedish investors in 1985, but was purchased by the Vance Corporation in 1998. A prominent and successful company, the Vance Corporation continues to offer hotel management to hotels in the state as WestCoast Hotels.

***1905 Ridpath Hotel East Wing***

The east wing of the Ridpath Hotel is a 1905 four-story brick building attached to the tower's east wall. In 1904, Spokane businessman, John Sengfelder, bought the south half of Lots 5 and 6 located on the southeast corner of First Avenue and Stevens Street in downtown Spokane. The next year, he built a two-story brick masonry construction building which he called the Trenton Hotel (also called the Trenton Block), and listed the

<sup>16</sup> “Coast Company to Help Ridpath at New Hotel.” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 7 Dec 1950

<sup>17</sup> R.D. Polk, 1955 *Spokane City Directory*, page 65

hostelry in the alphabetical and classified sections in Spokane city directories from 1905 through 1910. A large sign attached to the building above the building's front entrance on First Avenue read THE TRENTON in capital letters. Another sign hung suspended over the sidewalk in front of the building and simply read TRENTON.<sup>18</sup> The Trenton Hotel's lobby, the Trenton Bar, and Clough Printers were located in the building's street-level storefronts along First Avenue.

In 1907, John Sengfelder leased the building to businessman, H. P. Nicholas, who, in 1910, constructed two additional stories atop the second floor, and a swimming pool in the basement of the building. At that time, swimming pools were called "swim tanks," "plunges," and "baths," and were used by mostly men. The *1910 Spokane City Directory* listed the building as the St. Nicholas Hotel complete with a Turkish bath in the basement. The proprietor of the Turkish bath was the Spokane Turkish Bath Hotel Company, who placed an advertisement in the June 12, 1910 edition of the *Spokesman-Review* newspaper. The advertisement read:

*ST. NICHOLAS HOTEL*

*Corner Stevens and First*

*A New Hotel Equipped With a Fine TURKISH BATH and SWIMMING TANK*

*Apply at the office for a bathrobe, dress and re-dress right in your own room,  
and take the elevator to the bath parlors in the basement*

In addition to the Turkish bath, the St. Nicholas Hotel included a hotel lobby at the first floor, the St. Nicholas Hotel Barber Shop at 504 W. First Avenue, and the St. Nicholas Hotel Bar at 506 W. First Avenue.

In 1918, John Sengfelder and his wife, Elizabeth Sengfelder, sold the property to the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) for \$116,000. An October 14, 1918 article in the *Spokane Daily Chronicle* announced the YWCA planned to "move into its new building in about three months," and explained that the "new quarters are the old St. Nicholas Hotel."<sup>19</sup> The front entrance to the YWCA was listed in city directories as 502 W. First Avenue. Three other entrance doors located in front of the building along First Avenue opened to the YWCA Café, the YWCA's Traveler's Aid Society of Spokane, YWCA Girl Reserves, and the YWCA Employment Office. After 20 years, the YWCA outgrew its four-story brick building and sold it in 1937 to the Ridpath Hotel for \$57,500.<sup>20</sup>

In June 1937, the Ridpath Hotel hired the Spokane architectural firm, Rigg & Vantyne, to establish and construct connections from all four floors of the building to the 1904 Ridpath Hotel. The construction work was completed for \$12,000 as noted on Spokane

<sup>18</sup> *Trenton Building photo archive, 1908, MAC L87-1.970-08*

<sup>19</sup> "Y.W.C.A. To Move in New Home Soon." *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 14 Oct 1918.

<sup>20</sup> "Sale of Y.W.C.A. Building to Ridpath Hotel Is Forecast." *Spokesman-Review*, 29 April 1937.

city building permit #B-49929, dated 11 June 1937. The newly attached building was known as the Ridpath Hotel's "east wing." A front entrance was located at 10 S. Stevens Street, and led to hotel rooms in the building on the second, third, and fourth floors. Hallway corridors inside the building led west to fire doors that opened to the interior of the 1904 Ridpath Hotel building. Street-level storefronts along West First Avenue in the hotel's east wing held a plethora of cafes and restaurants, beauty salons and barber shops, clubs and associations, and offices—all easily accessible and convenient necessities for hotel patrons who stayed, boarded, or resided in the hotel. At different times, the street level storefronts at 502-506 W. First Avenue housed Toby's Fountain Lunch (1940), Von's Coffee Shop (1945), the Ridpath Coffee Shop (1950), Mettler's Coffee Shop (1952-53), Hunt's Coffee Shop (1956), Colony House Restaurant (1960-1965), Panorama City Inc. (1970), Dial Finance of Washington (1975-1980), and the offices of Michael Hagan, Attorney at Law in 1990. The commercial bay at 508 W. First Avenue was occupied through the years by the Western Machinery Company/Ingersoll-Rand Machine Company/Western-Knapp Machine Company (1940), LeRoi's House of Beauty (1945), Von-a-Lue's House of Beauty (1950-1953), Ridpath Beauty Salon (1960-1970), Natural Noggin's Styling (1980), Carlos Beauty Shop (1985), and the First Avenue Salon (1990). The storefront addressed at 510 W. First Avenue was leased at different times by NW Mining Association (1940), Mirror Barber Shop (1945), Clifford Brown Barber Shop (1950), Ridpath Tailors (1952-53), Stitchin' & Stuff Needlepoint (1980-1985), and Lynn Tiffany Boutique (1990). The hotel's storefront commercial bays were occupied continuously by a variety of shops, offices, and businesses for more than ten decades, and provided a microcosm of human services that helped render the Ridpath Hotel one of most popular hostelrys in downtown Spokane.

### ***ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE***

The Ridpath Hotel achieved architectural significance during the time period from 1952 to 1963 as one of the finest and most unique hotels built in Spokane, Washington. The hotel had a 130 foot-tall, rectangular box-like tower, and was one of the first examples of the International style and building type introduced in the region. When the hotel was constructed in 1952, there were no other hotels like the Ridpath Hotel in existence in Spokane or the surrounding area. The hotel was touted as the first all-welded steel-frame, multi-story, high-rise hotel building constructed west of the Mississippi River<sup>21</sup> and was praised as offering the West's first "drive-in parking lobby," defined as an off-street parking area where hotel patrons could embark and disembark easily and safely from their cars or other transportation. The drive-in lobby led down to an underground, below-hotel parking garage, providing convenience and protection from weather and traffic for hotel patron's vehicles. The Ridpath Hotel featured windowed hotel guest rooms with exterior views, modern bathrooms with tub/shower combos, and floor-to-ceiling ceramic tile walls. Wide hallways were equipped with high-speed self-leveling elevators to transport passengers throughout the building. The hotel was designed with an interior lobby, mezzanine, cafes, restaurants, dining rooms, cocktail lounges, meeting/convention

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<sup>21</sup> Hadley, Nancy. "Fellowship Nomination." *The American Institute of Architects Archives*.

rooms, and a spectacular rooftop restaurant on the 13th floor atop the hotel's tower. High-end materials were used for the Ridpath Hotel, including Swedish red granite, Arizona Kaibab stone, Vermont slate, Italian marble, Montana travertine, and Mount Rainier sandstone. The Marble Institute of America featured the Ridpath Hotel on one of their brochure covers. In 1952 when the hotel was built, the Ridpath Hotel set the architectural standard in downtown Spokane where turn-of-the-century hotels were perceived as out-of-touch, out-of-style, and out-of-date.

### *The International Style (1925-1960)*

The International style and type of building emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries from many architect's dissatisfaction with the use of non-functional period revival styles, a rapidly industrializing society that built quick/economical buildings and houses, and the development of new technologies and materials like iron, steel, reinforced concrete, and glass. The International style began to grow in central Europe and spread to the United States in the 1920s and 1930s, the formative years for Modern architectural expression. The style and type matured, embraced new building methods such as steel frame construction and reinforced concrete, and became the "dominant tendency in Western architecture during the 1950s and 1960s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century".<sup>22</sup> The International style/type espoused boxy, simplistic, geometric shapes; cantilever construction; light/taut exterior surfaces without applied ornamentation or decoration; flat roofs usually without a ledge/coping at roof line; and prominent rectangular ribbons or bands of windows (usually casements) with metal/steel sash set flush with outer walls. Windows sometimes wrapped around exterior corners of buildings and helped strengthen asymmetrical façade designs. Emphasis was on volume rather than mass—walls were not used for structural support but functioned as "curtains hung over a structural steel skeleton."<sup>23</sup> Famed French architect Le Corbusier stressed the idea that houses and buildings were "machines for living"<sup>24</sup> where all superfluous ornamentation and decoration were absent, and technical perfection, excellent proportions, efficient designs, and intrinsic qualities of building materials were revered. An eclectic mix of artistic expression, function, and technology characterized the International style, defined by some as an "austere and disciplined new architecture."<sup>25</sup> In 1982, the *American Building Surveys* through the U.S. Department of the Interior offered the following summary of the International style and building type:

*As a set of principles emphasizing functionalism, stark simplicity, and flexible planning, the International style continues to exert a great influence on modern architecture.*<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Britannica Online Encyclopedia*. 2013. <http://www.britannica.com>

<sup>23</sup> McAlester, Lee & Virginia. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Knopf, 1989, p. 469

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 470

<sup>25</sup> *Britannica Online Encyclopedia*.

<sup>26</sup> Poppeliers, John C. and S. Allen Chambers, Jr. and Nancy B. Schwartz. *What Style Is It?* U.S. Dept. of the Interior: Preservation Press. 1983, p. 92

The Ridpath Hotel well illustrates tenets of the International style and building type, including the year the hotel was built in 1952, steel framing, reinforced concrete construction, prominent geometric shape, asymmetrical designs, low hip roof that appears flat due to building's 13-floor height, smooth brick veneer, ribbons and bands of windows (both vertical and horizontal) with minimal reveals, building volume versus mass (especially seen in windows with minimal reveals and flush with exterior walls), and technological perfection.

***Ned Hyman Abrams, Architect (1915-1999)***

Spokane building permit #B-2825, dated August 10, 1950 listed Ned Abrams as the architect who designed the new Ridpath Hotel. The building permit listed an estimated construction cost of \$1,200,000; however, the actual cost eclipsed the initial estimate and capped \$3 million.

Ned Hyman Abrams was venerated by other architects and professionals as a “super architect” and was immensely successful in his career. He was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1915, and graduated in architecture with a Masters Degree in Architecture and honors from the University of Pennsylvania. He served as a United States War Department architect and draftsman, and then founded his own architectural firm, Ned H. Abrams & Associates, in Sunnyvale, California. He later reorganized and founded Ned Abrams Architecture & Planning Consultants in San Francisco. A busy architect with the ability to practice his trade in almost half the states throughout the country, Abrams was registered in Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and Washington. His work included the following areas: residential, commercial, industrial, religious, educational, health facilities, penal institutions, public buildings, mortuary structures, and city planning. Among jobs he completed, Abrams listed principle works in Sunnyvale, San Francisco, and San Jose, California; Memphis, Tennessee; and Spokane, Washington. He designed the General Mills Cereal Plant in Lodi, California in 1948; a public safety building in Sunnyvale in 1952; and with architect Irving Dickstein, 500 units of Capehart housing at Travis Air Force Base in 1958—all well illustrating stylistic aesthetics of modern, contemporary influences and building types.

A life-long member of the American Institute of Architects (A.I.A.), Ned Abrams was nominated in 1989 by the Santa Clara Valley, CA Chapter of the A.I.A. for the coveted and honored Advancement to Fellowship Standing in the A.I.A. Ned Abrams' achievements in the science of construction were summarized in the nomination for fellowship as follows:

*Mr. Abrams designed the first precast concrete building in California for General Mills, Lodi, using parts constructed in Salt Lake City. The year was 1946, and he subsequently initiated the use of precast, tilt-up*

*concrete buildings. In 1951, he applied for the first of three precast concrete storage facility patents, and developed the “Design System That Produces Contract Drawings” which, in the March 1970 A.I.A. Journal, disclosed and described his system to approximately 50,000 members and staff. Under sponsorship of the A.I.A. Continuing Education Department and Design Production Techniques, Inc., Abrams presented these advanced methods to over 3,900 firms at eleven university seminars, three State and four National A.I.A. Conventions, twelve component meetings, fourteen architect’s seminars, and eight seminars for allied firms and organizations, in addition to over 500 participants at the Design Production Technique Laboratories, established at his Sunnyvale, CA office for the express purpose of sharing these innovative ideas.<sup>27</sup>*

In 1952 when Ned Abrams completed his work on the Ridpath Hotel, there existed no other hotel buildings in Spokane like the Ridpath Hotel. So different from hotel buildings built from 1890 to 1949, the Ridpath Hotel reflected Abrams’ knowledge and expertise, familiarity with contemporary architectural styles, and with the highest technological advances. Construction of the Ridpath Hotel utilized state-of-the-art technology in the early 1950s, and gained national attention, for example, through unique methods of erecting steel as reported in April 1951 in the *Spokane Daily Chronicle*:

*The most novel innovation has been the use of a truck crane [in contrast to a guy derrick] to install steel for upper floors of the structure... Using the truck crane saved two-thirds the time normally required for such steel work... There are approximately 900 tons of steel in the new Ridpath, which...is the largest all-welded steel structure in the Pacific coast area.<sup>28</sup>*

Ned Abrams’ work proved him a professional master architect. His design for Spokane’s Ridpath Hotel looked to the future and captured the interest and passion of Spokane’s citizens, prospective hotel patrons, builders, and designers throughout region.

### ***Richard Edward Lytel, Architect***

For the interior design of the Ridpath Hotel, Ned Abrams relied on an architect named Richard Lytel, a well-known successful Seattle architect of domestic and commercial buildings and one who specialized in hospitality projects. Lytel’s reputation proved him to be an established designer and respected architect of hotel interiors and restaurants throughout Washington State. A graduate of the University of Washington’s School of Architecture, and a Fountainebleau scholar, Lytel studied in France at l’Ecole des Beaux-

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<sup>27</sup> American Institute of Architects. 2013. [Communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/A-B/AbramsNedH\\_FAIA.pdf](http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/A-B/AbramsNedH_FAIA.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> “Method of Erecting Ridpath Hotel Steel Gets Wide Attention.” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 11 April 1951

Arts. He later became a partner with Seattle architects Shorett and Lamonte. His work included the Dunbar Room in Seattle's Sorento Hotel (now the Hunts Club), El Gaucho in Seattle's Tower Building, the Tyee Hotel in Olympia, modifications for the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, and Pacific First Federal home designs.

Lytel designed the interior of the Ridpath Hotel in 1952, and later completed modifications for the Ridpath Roof Restaurant & Dining Room on the 13th floor of the Ridpath Hotel in 1955. Lytel was further commissioned to render designs and complete modifications for the Timber Topper Room in Spokane, the Spokane Country Club, and the Early Birds Breakfast Lounge in Spokane. Lytel's interior designs and use of materials for the Ridpath Hotel immediately made it a one-of-a-kind hotel, decorated with the most fashionable features and materials. An article in the April 1952 *Spokane Daily Chronicle* noted some of professional architect Richard Lytel's contributions to the interior design of the Ridpath Hotel:

*INNOVATIONS ADD TO BEAUTY AND CONVENIENCE IN NEW HOTEL*

*Aside from all its modern conveniences, the new Ridpath Hotel...has a number of innovations. The Oval Terrace (mezzanine) is so constructed that...the... main lobby may be seen from any point. The sculptured wall flower border against the fluted walnut east wall on the terrace is the work of two Spokane [artists]...Harold Balazs and Patrick Flammia. Paintings in the illuminated shadow boxes along the walls were done by Flammia and [artist] Robert Reynolds. The free-standing staircase—no visible means of support—is in Terrazzo marble from Italy. Much of the credit for the unusual features can go to Richard Lytel, design consultant and architect in charge of the interior.*<sup>29</sup>

***Utah Construction Company***

Founded by the Wattis brothers in 1900 in the San Francisco, CA bay area, the Utah Construction Company became a prominent contractor for diverse types of construction from tunneling, grading, and railroad track projects for rapidly expanding railroads in the West, to building dams throughout the American West. Including the Hoover Dam in 1931, Utah Construction constructed 58 dams between 1916 and 1969. In 1942, Utah Construction planned and built the Alaskan Highway, in the 1950s when they built the Ridpath Hotel in Spokane, Utah Construction was active in mining construction and land development, and in the 1960s Utah Construction was the lead contractor for the military silos built throughout the United States. By the 1970s, Utah Construction changed its name to Utah International, and was sold to the General Electric Company in 1976. The Wattis brothers' original \$8,000 investment in 1900 grew to \$478 million in the 1970s.

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<sup>29</sup> "Innovations Add to Beauty and Convenience in New Hotel." *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 3 April 1952

Architect Ned Abrams' choice for the Utah Construction Company as the contractor for the construction of the Ridpath Hotel in 1952 confirms a company that knew and used the most professional technological advances in building construction, and one that could implement those advances to the success of the Ridpath Hotel. Since the hotel was designed as a reinforced concrete building with 13 floors, an experienced respected professional contractor was needed for the erection of the building. The choice of Utah Construction to build the Ridpath Hotel helped legitimize the hotel's use of 1952 state-of-art construction techniques and building technology.

### ***HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE***

The Ridpath's fire-proof and safety features, cutting-edge technology, and modern design rendered it immediately and immensely popular. The Ridpath Hotel was the chosen venue for conventions, balls, banquets, art shows, and other events in Spokane, and regularly hosted politicians, entertainers, dignitaries, and luminaries from around the country. In 1985, the Ridpath Hotel was used for filming the movie, "Vision Quest," and in 1957 and 1973, the Ridpath Hotel twice housed Elvis Presley. The following excerpt is one man's recollection of Elvis Presley's visit to the Ridpath Hotel in 1957:

*My mother was a pantry cook at the Ridpath Hotel at that time and she was the only one in the kitchen when Elvis sent his eggs back. They were undercooked. So she slapped them on the grill 'till they were hard as a rock and sent them back. Apparently that's the way he liked them, and there were no further complaints.<sup>30</sup>*

By 1973, Elvis Presley had earned worldwide acclaim and was accompanied by a large, diverse staff of managers and entourage to his concerts. A local Spokane newspaper reported that during his 1973 concert in Spokane, Elvis stayed again at the Ridpath Hotel, which provided 55 guest hotel rooms on three floors for Elvis and his troupe.<sup>31</sup>

The Ridpath Hotel was designed as a "first-class hotel" with many modern conveniences and numerous amenities when it was built, including a lower-level ramp-type parking garage, interior hotel lobby, mezzanine lounge, cafes, restaurants, dining rooms, cocktail lounge, meeting/convention/banquet rooms, in-hotel and street-level storefront shops, and a spectacular rooftop dining room on the thirteenth floor with a commanding view of the city. As noted in newspapers and advertisements when the hotel was built in 1952, the Ridpath Hotel was the first hostelry in the Western United States to provide a "drive-in lobby" to hotel guests. The Ridpath Hotel started a trend in Spokane, the surrounding region, and neighboring states that utilize the drive-in lobby theme. For example, the Coeur d'Alene Hotel in neighboring Coeur d'Alene, Idaho has a covered parking lobby located at the hotel's front entrance. Hotel patrons may enter the covered drive-in lobby, leave their vehicles, and enter the hotel. Hotel attendants park the patron's vehicles in an

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<sup>30</sup> Wagner, David. 28 Aug 1957

<sup>31</sup> "Crowd Greet Elvis." *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 28 April 1973

adjacent parking garage equipped with underground and above-ground parking. Both hotel patrons and their vehicles are safe from weather and traffic.

The Ridpath Hotel became one of the most popular and sought-after hotels in Spokane during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and helped start a trend towards the construction of modern, multi-story, high-rise hotels in Spokane.<sup>32</sup> For example, multi-storied hotels were erected in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s after the Ridpath Hotel was built, including the Ridpath Motor Inn, Holiday Inn, and Spokane House in the 1960s-1970s, followed by the Sheraton Hotel, Fairfield Inn & Suites, Mirabeau Park Hotel & Convention Center, Red Lion Hotel, Best Western Hotel, and Marriott Hotel in the 1980s and 1990s. The trend for a drive-in automobile lobby started by Spokane's Ridpath Hotel in 1952 continues in designs for hotels built today.

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<sup>32</sup> Wikipedia. Internet.

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Photos 1 and 2      Ridpath Hotel, northeast façade in 2013



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Photos 3 and 4      Ridpath Hotel, Sprague Avenue street level in 2013



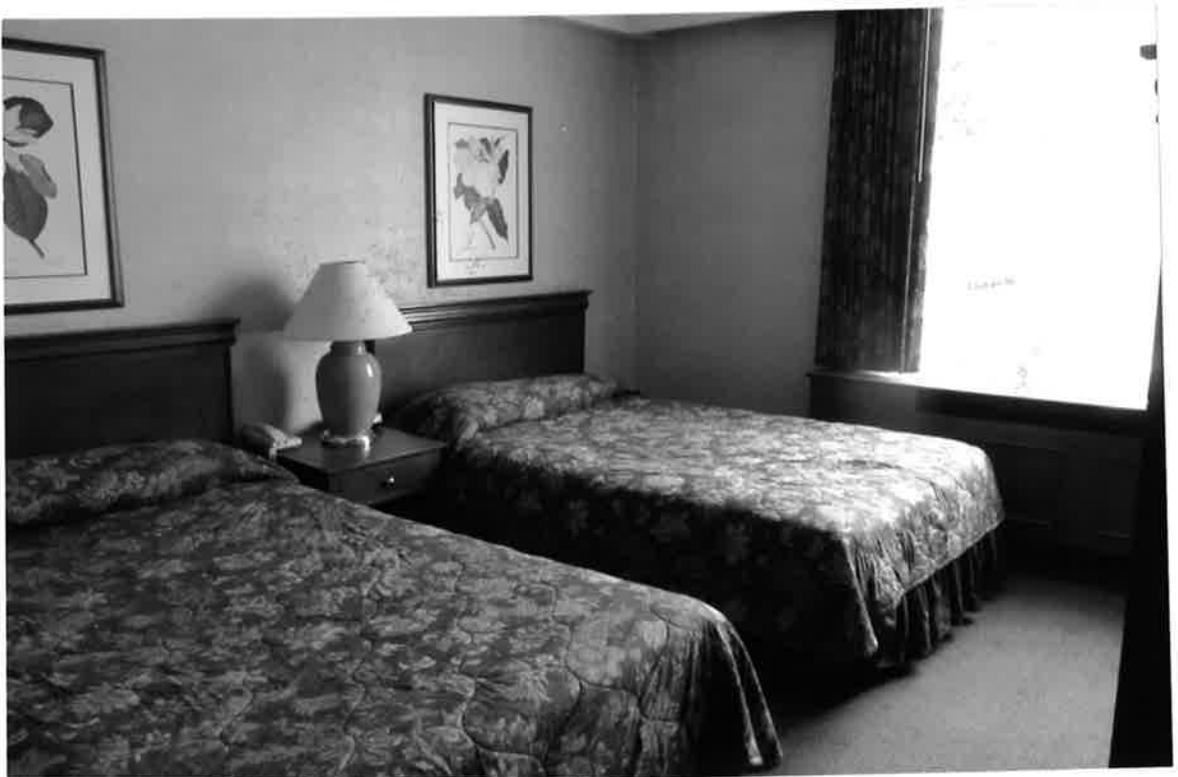
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Photos 5 and 6      Ridpath Hotel, Sprague Avenue street-level façade in 2013, parking entrance



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Photos 7 and 8      Ridpath Hotel, 515 W. Sprague Avenue, King Cole Dining Room, looking east; representative guest hotel room, looking south in 2013



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Photos 9 and 10      Ridpath Hotel Annex/Southeast Wing in 2013, southeast façade; looking west along First Avenue from Stevens Street along street-level storefronts of Annex/Southeast Wing of Ridpath Hotel in 2013



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Photos 11 and 12      Ridpath Hotel Annex/Southeast Wing in 2013; looking north along Stevens Street from First Avenue at street-level storefront of Ridpath Annex/Southeast Wing; Annex/Southeast wing's rear exterior wall (shown at left-hand side of photo)



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Photos 13 and 14: Ridpath Hotel, 514 W. First Avenue, in 2013, south facade



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Photos 15 and 16: Ridpath Hotel, 514 W. First Avenue, in 2013; street-level marquee and storefronts along First Avenue; notice where 1952 Ridpath Hotel Tower connects to 1905 Ridpath Hotel Annex/East Wing; notice where 1963 skywalk is attached to 1952 tower

