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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

historic name Hazel Block
other names/site number Merton Block

street & number 2 N. Howard St. not for publication
city or town Spokane vicinity
state Washington code WA county Spokane code 063 zip code 99201

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____
Mary Thompson, State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register. _____
 See continuation sheet _____
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet _____
 determined not eligible for the National Register. _____
 removed from the National Register. _____
 other, (explain:) _____

Signature of Keeper _____ Date of Action _____
1920s name changed
1924 - Merton Hotel
Emma Merton
1920 - Merton Hotel
21524 Sprague name change
Mrs. Nellie Whipple
1918 - Merton Hotel same
PRO?
Chas. W. Carson
d. 1912?

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Property Name Hazel/Merton Block

County and State Spokane, WA

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Ownership of Property

private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property

building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

No. of Resources within Property

contributing	noncontributing
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
	Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a
multiple property listing.)

NA

No. of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register:

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE: business-professional

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE: business-professional

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS:

Commercial Style

LATE VICTORIAN:Richardsonian Romanesque influence

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation Stone

walls Brick and Stone

roof Tar/Built Up

other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Property Name Hazel/Merton Block

County and State Spokane WA

8. Statement of Significance

National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of
- 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 or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE, COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance

1889-1953

Significant Dates

1889-90

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

Architect: Herman Preusse/Builder: Charles Carson

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Property Name Hazel/Merton Block

County and State Spokane WA

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67, has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Spokane Public Library Northwest Room

10. Geographical Data

UTM References

1	<u>1/1</u>	<u>4/6/3/4/9/3</u>	<u>5/2/7/8/0/8/4</u>	3	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	4	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>

See continuation sheet

Building is located at 2. N. Howard Street, Spokane, WA, tax parcel number 35184.2707, Township 25N, Range 43E, Section 18, southeast ¼ section, southwest ¼ ¼ section. Legal description parts of Lots 4 & 5, Block 20, re and ex to Spokane Falls Addition.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jonn Mann, Preservation Planner date 3/25/2003
 organization Spokane City-County Office of Historic Preservation telephone (509) 625-6985
 street & number 808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd. # 614 state WA zip code 99201
 city or town Spokane

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Reugh Construction
 street & number Tapio Office Center, Yellow Flag Building, Suite 209, 104 S. Freya Street
 telephone (509) 838-3641
 city or town Spokane state WA zip code 99202

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Hazel/Merton Block
Spokane WA

Narrative Description:

No architect designed as many buildings during Spokane's rebirth in the wake of the Great Fire of 1889 than Herman Preusse. The Hazel/Merton Block, completed in 1890, is one of only ten that remains of the hundreds of buildings he designed between the fire and 1893, when he formed a partnership with architect Julius Zittel. It is typical of designs that Preusse rendered for buildings during these, the busiest years of his career: utilitarian rectangular brick commercial buildings with stone sills and/or lintels and limited ornamentation used to set one façade apart from the next.

Setting:

The Hazel/Merton Block is located in the heart of the central business district of downtown Spokane, Washington, on the northeast corner lot at the intersection of Sprague Avenue and Howard Street. It abuts the Art Deco style Rookery Building, erected in 1933-34, to the north, and a remaining portion of an earlier (ca. 1890) Rookery Building, to the east. Across Sprague to the south it faces the historic Symons Block, built in 1917. The Seafirst tower and its garage (1980-81) to the east and southeast of the Hazel/Merton stand in stark contrast to the intact historic streetscape along Riverside to the building's north; the juxtaposition of old and new illustrates the evolution of architectural technology and materials during the course of the twentieth century. The Seafirst Building is one of the more recent additions to Spokane's skyline, while the Hazel/Merton Block represents its earliest beginnings.

The Hazel/Merton Block: Exterior

The Hazel/Merton Block is a four-story brick commercial building with rough-faced stone detailing, a flat roof, and a stone foundation. The exterior has been painted a crème color, masking the contrast between the red brick and gray stone of the facade.

The storefronts on the south and west elevations have seen extensive alterations over the years as one would expect with a building of this age and type. Indeed, alterations to the ground floor commercial spaces of the Hazel came early and often. When completed in 1890 the Hazel had two commercial spaces on Howard and one on Sprague, with access to the upper floors on both elevations. By 1902 another storefront had been added to the Howard Street façade and by 1910 the ground floor was further subdivided to

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Narrative Description:

accommodate a total of six commercial spaces; four on Howard and two on Sprague. To make way for the new spaces the stairway on Howard was eliminated.¹ Historic photographs reveal subsequent exterior changes. A ca. 1910 photograph shows the ground level exterior much as built, with two central entrances beneath rough-cut stone arches between storefronts at either end. Originally, the storefront to the north had opened into the northern commercial space while that to the south had accessed a stairwell. By the time of the photograph, however, the doors each led to smaller commercial spaces. An inset entrance provided ingress to the northern commercial space while the corner store retained its original inset corner entrance, behind a cast iron support column. The Sprague Avenue elevation was a brick wall pierced by two arched window openings at the west end with an arched entrance providing access to the upper floors to the west of a storefront located at the east end of the façade.² A later photograph, from 1924, shows the building under a new name—it was renamed the Merton in 1917—but with the same configuration on the ground floor, although the corner storefront had been extensively altered. The corner entrance had been enclosed and a large storefront window added on the south elevation, where there had formerly been a brick wall.

The current appearance of the ground floor commercial spaces represents the culmination of over a century of similar sorts of alterations. These have restored the original corner storefront, though the cast iron support post has been encased in a wood column. The display window to the east has been reduced in size through the application of wood siding that may hide the earlier window. Likewise, wood siding above the storefront may cover the band of windows that wrapped around the corner. This storefront is painted red and orange. To the east, on the western elevation, the original entrances, with their rough-cut stone arches, are gone, and the two store fronts that occupied the center of the building have been unified into one composed of display windows above a wood base angling toward an inset door in a deep reveal. At the northern end is a third storefront clad in thin horizontal courses of stone. The south elevation, east of the corner storefront, has been faced in brick veneer pierced at center by two modern metal and glass doors

¹ Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1890, 1891, 1902, 1910, 1928, 1952.

² Historic Photograph Collection (Buildings, Hazel/Merton, ca. 1910) Spokane Public Library Northwest Room.

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Spokane WA

Narrative Description:

accessing a tiny barbershop and a stairway. At the east end of this façade there are two modern metal and glass storefronts.

A continuous rough-faced square cut stone sill serves as a stringcourse articulating the break between the ground floor commercial spaces and the vacant residential spaces (originally used for office space) on the floors above. On the south elevation, there are 12 symmetrically spaced arched window openings on the second floor. Original double-hung wood sash windows here, as everywhere on the primary elevations, have been replaced with modern tripartite aluminum sash units that are shorter than the originals, to accommodate lowered ceilings masked by infill at the top of each opening. Rear elevations retain original 3/3 double hung wood-sash units. On the west elevation of the second floor there are two central pairs of square windows with flat heads formed by embedded cast iron crossbeams flanked on either side by a pair of arched openings like those on the south elevation. The crossbeams may be original; they might have been installed in these windows after portions of the second story front of the building failed shortly after it was completed (see narrative statement of significance).

A corbelled brick stringcourse indicates the second story ceiling level. Above, the third story treatment is the same as below, with a continuous stone sill and the same window configuration. This story is distinguished, however, by corbelled brick tracery above the segmental arched windows in the stead of the continuous stringcourse that spans above the windows below.

The Richardsonian Romanesque influence is most evident on the top floor. Windows here share the continuous stone sill with the second and third stories but these openings are framed by round arches, forming an arcade, with stone springers. The arcade is highlighted by corbelled brick tracery.

A stringcourse of corbelled brick delineates the ceiling level of the top floor. Above, corbelled brick work in relief along the cornice forms an arcade below the projecting stone-capped parapet wall. The parapet steps up in the center of the western elevation to frame the building's nameplate on the entablature. This raised portion of the parapet consists of a balustrade of rough-faced stone framed by two corbelled brick columns with stone detailing that terminate at bottom at the cornice. The portions that project above

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the parapet were reduced in height by half at some point in the past. The southern elevation also features a central nameplate on the entablature between two fire escapes that descend from the roof but on this elevation the parapet is uniform.

The Hazel/Merton Block: Interior

The constant reconfiguration of the ground level commercial spaces of the Hazel, related above, has left few of the original features intact, as one might suspect with a building of this age and type. The corner storefront, however, retains its original pressed tin ceiling. The configuration of the ground floor, moreover, despite the loss of some interior features, speaks volumes about turn-of-the-century Spokane, when a population growth put a premium on commercial space downtown. Commercial spaces, accordingly, were subdivided to make maximum use of space. It is only by understanding this trend that one can make sense of the improbable little barbershop that still operates at 526 W. Sprague. It consists of a single chair with barely enough room for the maneuver around.

The next door to the east provides access to the stairway to the upper floors. These floors were built for office space but gradually evolved into an SRO in response to the demand for housing created by the population growth that occurred in Spokane during the decades around the turn of the twentieth century. The original tile floor is still evident at the base of the two flights of stairs that leads to the second floor. Upper floors have T-shaped halls accessing single room units with sinks on each side. A shared bathroom is located at the base of the T (at the eastern end of the building) on the second and third floors. On the fourth floor the shared bathroom is on the north side of the building at about the center, just east of the stairway, which retains its original banister. A skylight, now covered, once provided light to the stairwell. Original doors and transom windows also remain in many places throughout the building. The building, however, has seen a good deal of damage resulting from water and resident pigeons, especially on the third floor.

Integrity

The storefronts on the ground floor of the Hazel/Merton Building have seen extensive alterations, as one would expect in a building of this age and type, but the turn-of-the-

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century storefront arrangement is largely intact even if its original materials are not much in evidence at present. The exterior of the upper levels does retain its original appearance and materials with the exception of the windows, which have been replaced with aluminum sash units and infill at the top to cover lowered ceilings within. The only other changes to the exterior have been the replacement of the nameplate to reflect the renaming of the building in 1917, and the application of paint to the façade, partially obscuring the stone detailing. Despite these changes, the Hazel/Merton Block retains many of its character-defining features, which convey Preusse's design concept during that pivotal moment in Spokane history after the Great Fire of 1889, when he was responsible for much of the new city that emerged from the ashes.

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Hazel/Merton Block
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- Hyslop, Robert. *Spokane's Building Blocks*. Spokane, WA: Standard Blueprint Co., 1983.
- McAlester, Virginia, and McAlester, Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.
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- Stimson, William. *A View of the Falls: An Illustrated History of Spokane*. Northridge: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1985.
- Whiffen, Marcus. *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*. Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1969.

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Spokane Daily Chronicle

December 31, 1890, 1.

Spokane Falls Review

August 5, 1890, 1.
September 26, 1890, 5:4.

Spokane Spokesman

September 25, 1891, 6:1.

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Bibliography:

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May 1, 1893, 6:1-2.

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Libby Photograph Collection.

Spokane City Hall

Building Department, 3rd Floor

Building Permits (microfiche).

Historic Preservation Office, 6th Floor

Database.

Property Files.

Vertical Files.

Spokane Public Library Northwest Room

Historic Photograph Collection.

Polk's City Directories, various years.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.

Vertical Files.

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Hazel/Merton Block
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Narrative Statement of Significance:

The Hazel/Merton Block possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. Specifically, the Hazel/Merton building stands as one of the few extant commercial blocks dating to the rebuilding effort that followed Spokane's Great Fire of 1889. The destruction and rebirth of the city in the crucible of fire was a pivotal moment in the history of Spokane. For Spokane, like many other young Western cities, surviving and rebounding from a devastating fire signaled permanence. Several other commercial blocks—the Fernwell Building (1890), Grand Armory Hall/Lang Building (1890), Levy Block (1892), Miller Block (1890), Palace Department Store/Hill Bros. Building (1890), Whitten Block (1889), and Woodward Building (1890)—have already been listed on registers for their association with Spokane's rebirth and growth after the disaster, clearly establishing the historic significance of these events. The building, moreover, is also eligible under Criterion C (architecture) as a representative example of late 19th century commercial blocks built in Spokane and elsewhere, and as the work Herman Preusse, one of Spokane's earliest and most prolific architects, who played an important role in rebuilding Spokane after the Great Fire. During Spokane's decade of phenomenal growth and corresponding building boom at the beginning of the twentieth century, the upper floors of the Hazel Block were converted from office space into a Single Room Occupancy Hotel. Therefore, the Hazel is also significant as a representative example of that building type in Spokane, as documented by Craig Holstine in a 1993 Multiple Property Documentation.¹

Spokane and the Great Fire of 1889

When James N. Glover and Jasper N. Matheny set out to establish a town in the Inland Northwest in 1873 they found a likely spot along the Spokane River Falls, and bought out squatters at the site with the aim of establishing a trading post and saw mill. By 1877-78 Glover engaged a surveyor to lay out blocks for the future city he envisioned, but in 1880 the young town of Spokane was still only a collection of wooden shacks with a population of some 350 people. Over the course of the next decade, however, Spokane

¹ Holstine, Craig, "Single Room Occupancy Hotels in the Central Business District of Spokane, WA, 1900-1910," NRHP Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1993.

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begin to realize its potential as a regional distribution center; the Northern Pacific Railroad reached town in 1881, and by 1883, when the line became transcontinental, it could connect to markets east and west. Population reached around 5,000 by 1885, and 12,000 by the decade's end. By the turn of the 20th century, Spokane's status as the hub of the "Inland Empire" was assured; nine railroads, five of them transcontinental, ran through the city, bringing in goods from abroad and carrying regional products—lumber, agricultural commodities, and other forms of wealth—to distant markets. Population growth continued apace. In 1900, the population of Spokane totaled approximately 36,000 and by 1910 it surpassed the 100,000 mark. But Spokane's emergence as a regional distribution center was not without its setbacks; in August of 1889, a devastating fire leveled most of the central business district, destroying 32 city blocks.²

This fire, and the rebuilding effort that came in its wake, marked a pivotal moment in the city's history. The Great Fire of 1889 destroyed the city, certainly, but in another sense the blaze represented a rite of passage that confirmed Spokane as a major city of the American West. Historian Katherine Morrissey explains:

Because of the many fires in nineteenth-century cities and towns, tales of destruction and rebirth had long been incorporated into progressive stories of urban growth. By the late nineteenth century, fires had become defined as part of the maturation process for a "young city." Central to these narratives was the Chicago fire of 1871 and the dramatic rebuilding of that city. In their private and public writings, Spokane Falls residents compared their situation to this nationally identified disaster. The well-known story of the Great City rising from the ashes fostered a sense of confidence in an eventual rebirth. In some senses, the blaze validated Spokane Falls—other great cities had experienced great fires, therefore Spokane, which had now experienced a great fire, would emerge as a great city. It had been "tested by fire."³

The resurrection of the city transformed the landscape in short order and already in 1890

² William Stimson, *A View of the Falls: An Illustrated History of Spokane* (Northridge: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1985), 20-47.

³ Katherine Morrissey, *Mental Territories: Mapping the Inland Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 46.

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Spokane hosted the Northwestern Industrial Exposition to show off its rebirth as well as the natural resources of its hinterlands.⁴ By year's end, Spokanites looked back at what they had accomplished in wonder and with a deep sense of pride. The headline for the December 31, 1890 issue of the *Spokane Daily Chronicle* touted the city's progress:

THE WONDERFUL CITY OF SPOKANE
How It Sprang, at a Bound, From a Scant
Hamlet to a Bustling City.

ITS TIDE OF PROSPERITY WILL NEVER RECEDE.
Its Population and Its Wealth Rapidly and Steadily Increasing

ONE OF AMERICA'S NOTABLE COMMUNITIES

A Review of Building Operations for Eighteen Short Months—A Record So Marvelous
as to Almost Exceed Belief...⁵

The article that followed listed the major commercial blocks erected since the fire. Among these was the Hazel Block, designed by architect Herman Preusse, a man who left a larger imprint on the resurgent city, perhaps, than any other.

Architect Herman Preusse, 1847-1926

Herman Preusse was one of the earliest practicing architects, perhaps the first, in Spokane. Born in the province of Hanover, Germany in 1847, Preusse studied engineering for three years at a school in Halle, before working for three years in his stepfather's firm of architects. He completed his formal training as an architect at the college of architecture at Holzminden. Members of the faculty there, upon completion of his technical training, selected Preusse to supervise the construction of a large steel works in Osnabruck, his first professional job. The reasons for Preusse's decision to leave Germany are unclear but he arrived in Spokane in 1882 via Chicago, California and Kansas. His pre-1889 designs were obviously mostly destroyed in the fire, but he held

⁴ Ibid., 57-59

⁵ *The Spokane Daily Chronicle*, December 31, 1890, 1.

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more contracts for buildings in the wake of the fire than any other architect.⁶ F. W. Lester, one of several architects working under Preusse, recalled preparing fifty-six plans for buildings in the first eight months after the fire.⁷ Preusse's firm, then, must have designed hundreds of buildings in the years after the fire, including the Woodward and Fernwell Buildings, mentioned above, before he formed a partnership with Julius Zittel in 1893. Together, Preusse and Zittel designed a number of Spokane landmarks, including the Armory Building, the Gonzaga Administration Building, the Carnegie Library, and Our Lady of Lourdes Cathedral, among others. While the Hazel Block is not as prominent or elaborate as these later structures, it is clearly significant, like the Fernwell and Woodward, as a representative example of the work of Preusse, a master architect, during his most prolific years, and for its association with Spokane's rebirth in the wake of the Great Fire.⁸ The general style of the commercial blocks erected after the fire was fairly homogeneous, in imitation of the Chicago school of architecture, which emphasized utilitarian, functional construction. The "rectangular blocks, tall and wide, included courses of different materials at the sill level to emphasize horizontality. Despite subtle variations on the facades, in the aggregate the buildings presented a remarkably uniform appearance."⁹ Likewise, historian William Stimson explains that "The city that was built over the next couple of years [after the fire]—buildings with red brick facades, studded with granite blocks and dignified by arched windows in the upper stories—was the city Spokanites would know for the eighty years, until the Expo '74 renewal." Stimson goes on to note that traces of that old Spokane remain, and specifically notes some of the buildings designed by Preusse.¹⁰

A total of only ten buildings designed by Preusse from 1889-1893 remain. These are concentrated in two areas. Three, all of which have suffered some loss of integrity, are located on the north side of the 800 and 900 blocks of West Sprague Avenue. The Hazel block is the southwestern anchor of the other concentration, which forms a corridor on Howard and Stevens streets, between Spokane Falls Boulevard, which fronts the Spokane

⁶ Lisa Kalhar Melton, "Herman Preusse, Spokane's First Architect: His Commercial and Public Buildings" (Master's Thesis: University of Oregon, 2001), 19-20.

⁷ Morrissey, 55-56.

⁸ Architects file and historic property inventory, Spokane City-County Office of Historic Preservation.

⁹ Morrissey, 56.

¹⁰ Stimson, *A View of the Falls*, 35.

F. C. Drug Co.
1930s +

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River, and Sprague. There are three contiguous buildings—the Union, Rima, and Moore blocks, on the east side of the north 200 block of Howard, and one, the Woodward, on the west side of the north 100 block of Howard. The Bodie Block, also known as the 1889 Building, is located on the corner of Main and Stevens. The corridor terminates with the block that the Hazel occupies, with the Fernwell on the northeast corner and the Hazel on the southwest.¹¹ While the Fernwell and Hazel were larger than the other structures Preusse designed during this time period, the buildings do indeed present a “remarkably uniform appearance.”

The Hazel/Merton Block

The Hazel/Merton Block is one of the few remaining quintessential buildings dating to the rebuilding effort that followed the Great Fire of 1889. It is a four-story brick commercial structure on a corner lot with continuous stone lintels emphasizing horizontality and Richardsonian Romanesque design elements, such as bands of round-arched window openings, which served to set it apart from other, similar contemporary structures. It was built for Charles W. Carson, a Spokane restaurateur, at a cost of \$60,000. Construction was complete by mid-May 1890.¹² Early occupants of the building included businesses that have played a prominent role in Spokane’s history. The second floor was initially occupied almost entirely by the Edison Electric Illuminating Co., which operated a generating plant where Post Street intersected with the Spokane River. The building also housed the Washington Water Power Co., the predecessor of today’s Avista Corp. Indeed, the Hazel Block may have been the first home of WWP since it had just incorporated earlier that year to build the Lower Falls Plant and acquire the Edison plant and company, which it did before moving into different quarters in the Symons Block in 1893. Another well-known early occupant of the building was William H. Cowles’ *Spokane Spokesman*, which operated here from 1891 to 1893, when it merged with the *Spokane Falls Review* to form today’s *Spokesman-Review*. Finally, the Inland Telephone and Telegraph Company, incorporated in 1889 when W. S. Norman and C. B. Hopkins combined the first telephone systems in Spokane, occupied the third floor of the Hazel until 1892, when it built its own building. IT & T, which was already connected to

Early 1890s
2nd floor
occ. by
Edison Elec.
Illum. Co./
WWP Co.
until
after 1893
3rd floor
Inland
Tel. & Teleg.
Co. till
1892

¹¹ Spokane City-County Office of Historic Preservation inventory form database of buildings designed by Preusse from 1889-1893.

¹² *Spokane Falls Review*, August 5, 1890, 1.

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Hazel/Merton Block
Spokane, WA

Narrative Statement of Significance:

with the Bell system, became Pacific Telephone and Telegraph in 1901.¹³ For a time, then, the Hazel Block was arguably the most important building in the city that emerged after the fire, housing, as it did, the premier power and communications services in Spokane.

Shortly after the Hazel Block was erected, Carson, who was suffering from health problems, sought to sell the building. He turned down an offer of \$110,000 from a Seattle syndicate in 1890, demanding at least 120,000, or double his initial investment.¹⁴ The failure of the second floor front of the building shortly thereafter probably did not help his efforts to fetch a higher offer, and precipitated a bitter legal dispute over the matter with Preusse. A jury determined in 1892 that the materials, and not the design, were at fault.¹⁵ Despite this flaw in the building, Carson was able to sell it to San Francisco investors less than two years later, in the midst of the financial panic of 1893, for the earlier asking price of \$110,000. The transaction made headlines in the economic climate of the times; it was the largest real estate transaction that had taken place in Spokane in over two years.¹⁶

During the first decade after the turn of the century, Spokane experienced a period of rapid population growth and an accompanying building boom to accommodate the growing city. Single Room Occupancy Hotels, or SROs, sprang up all over the city, to provide housing for the laborers that arrived in Spokane to fill jobs in the city and surrounding hinterlands. The prevalence of this property type has been well documented by Craig Holstine, in his 1993 Multiple Property Documentation.¹⁷ In addition to new construction, however, existing structures were also modified to take advantage of the housing demand that resulted from this period of urban growth. The Merton/Hazel Block provides a case in point. During the first decade of the twentieth century the building saw significant alterations to make maximum use of available space, on both the ground

¹³ Robert Hyslop, *Spokane's Building Blocks* (Spokane: Standard Blueprint Co., 1983), 141-2.

¹⁴ *Spokane Falls Review*, September 26, 1890, 5:4.

¹⁵ *Spokane Spokesman*, September 25, 1891, 6:1.

¹⁶ *Spokesman-Review*, May 1, 1893, 6:1-2.

¹⁷ Holstine, Craig, "Single Room Occupancy Hotels in the Central Business District of Spokane, WA, 1900-1910," NRHP Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1993.

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Hazel/Merton Block
Spokane, WA

Narrative Statement of Significance:

and upper levels, in response to high demand for both commercial and residential space downtown.

The 1890 Sanborn Fire Insurance map for Spokane shows a newly completed Hazel Block with three commercial spaces on the ground floor—two on Howard and one on Sprague. A pair of arched entrances on Howard accessed the northern commercial space and the stairwell; early photographs show a recessed corner entrance to the southern commercial space, occupied by the Bank of Columbia. On Sprague another arched opening led to a second stairway. By 1902, the ground floor had been subdivided to accommodate an additional commercial space on Howard, and upper floors offered a mix of office space and lodgings. Sanborns from 1910 show that two additional storefronts had been carved out of the ground floor, necessitating the removal of the stairway on Howard. One of the spaces, on Sprague, remains in use today as a peculiar little barbershop with a single chair and barely enough space for the proprietor to maneuver around the customer—a testament to fact that commercial space was at a premium in the early twentieth century. A 1912 Polk's City Directory for Spokane lists the upper floors as furnished rooms for rent by S. D. Stoddard. The transformation of the upper floors from office space to SRO was complete by 1917, when the Merton Hotel opened on the upper floors. The "Hazel" nameplates on the parapet walls were removed and replaced with new ones reading "Merton."¹⁸

The upper floors of the Hazel/Merton Block are still configured as a typical SRO (as described above), although the rooms are vacant except for the resident pigeon population. The twentieth century saw a continuation of the frequent alterations to the ground floor commercial spaces that occurred during the building's first decade, but the historic character of the building is still in evidence. This character is even more pronounced on the exterior of the upper floors, which evoke a time when master architect Herman Preusse helped to rebuild a permanent City of Spokane out of the ashes of the Great Fire of 1889.

¹⁸ Polk's Directories, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Historic Photograph Collection (Buildings, Hazel/Merton ca. 1910), Spokane Public Library Northwest Room.

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Spokane WA

Additional Documentation

Maps

1. Assessor's Plat Map
2. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps (1890, 1891, 1902, 1910, 1952)
3. Sketch Site Map
4. USGS Quad
5. Full size US Geological Survey Topographic

Photographs

Historic

1. ca. 1910 photo from Spokane Public Library Northwest Room
2. 1924 Libby photo, NW MAC
3. 1942 Libby photo, NW MAC

Contemporary

1. View of both elevations taken from southwest
2. South elevation looking west
3. Looking south down stairs from second floor
4. Looking east down second floor hallway
5. Interior door, second floor
6. Stairway between third and fourth floors

Slides

1. View of both elevations taken from southwest
2. South elevation looking west
3. West elevation looking north
4. South elevation looking east
5. View taken from southwest
6. Tile in entry
7. Stairway, second to third floors

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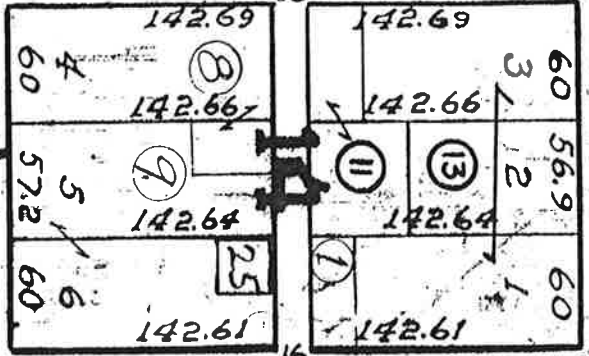
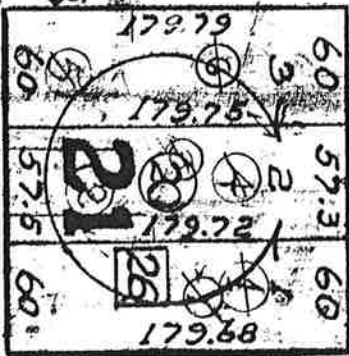
Hazel/Merton Block
Spokane WA

8. Stairway, third to fourth floors
9. Third floor room
10. Shared lavatory
11. Shared lavatory

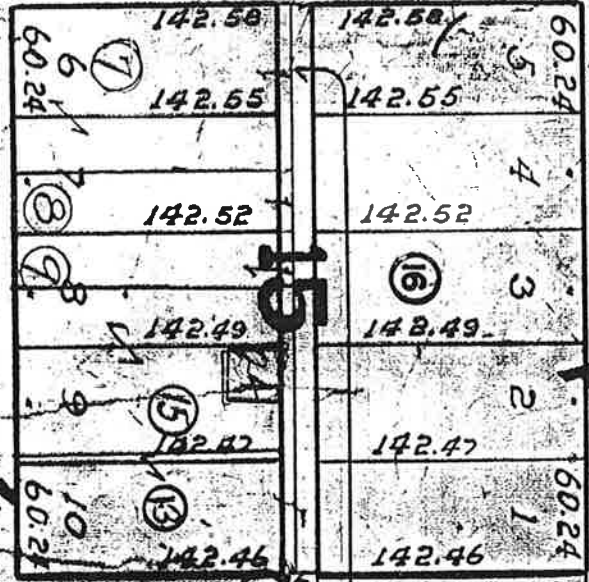
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WALL

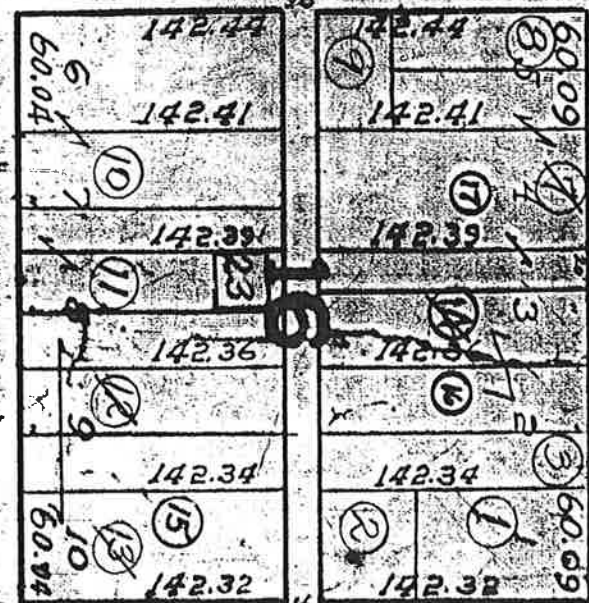
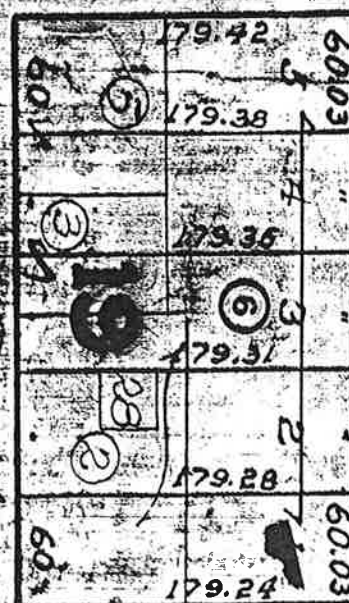
SURVEY



HOWARD



STEVENS



RIVERSIDE

SPRAGUE

WASHINGTON

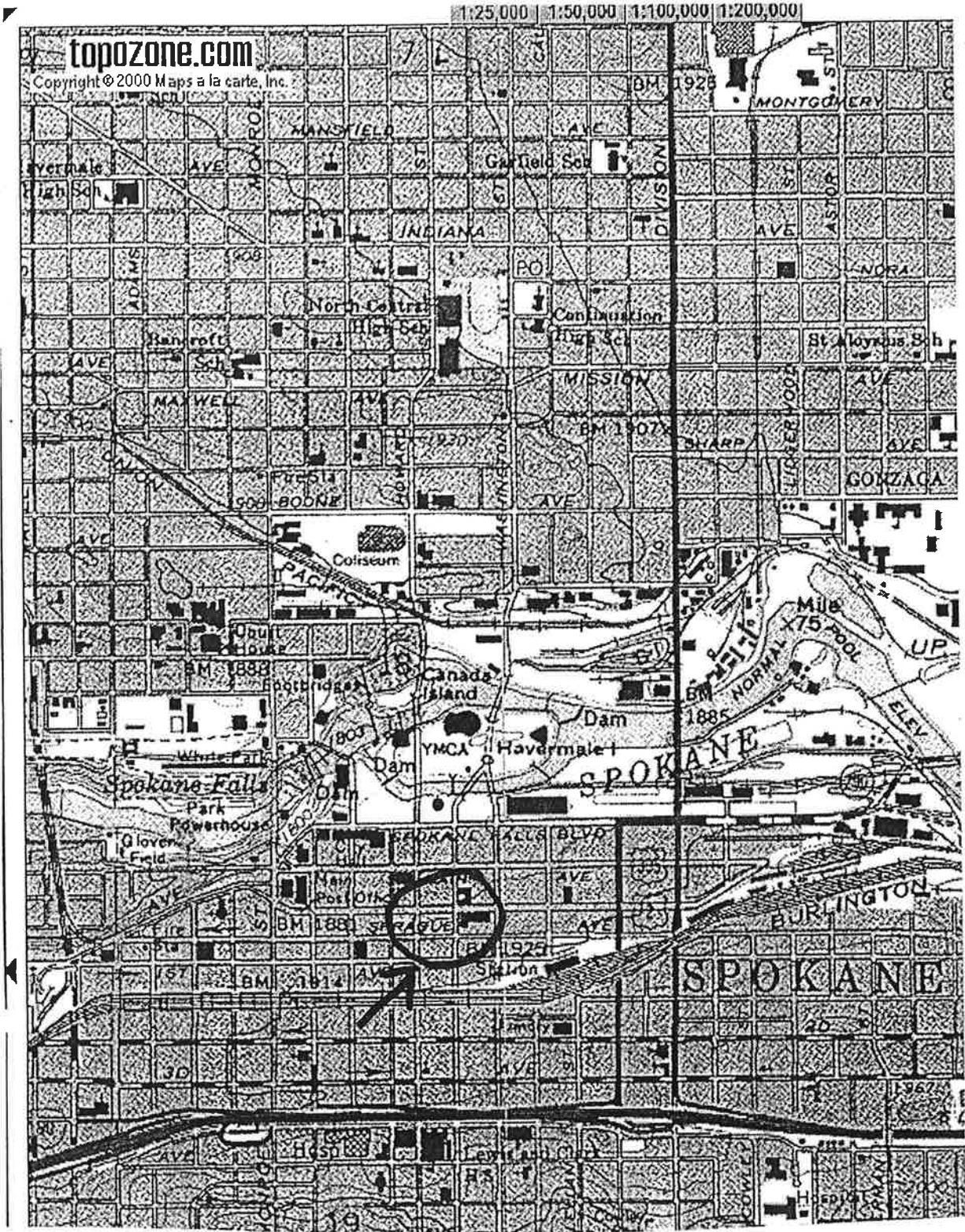
MAIN

EVAL. AND CROSS

Scale 1:100

SE 18-25-43





SCALE: 1:25,000



Hazel/Merton Block

Source: USGS 7.5' series
 Spokane NW Quadrangle
 Washington – Spokane County

ZIEGLER BLOCK.

D.H.

6" W.R.

14 12

D.H.

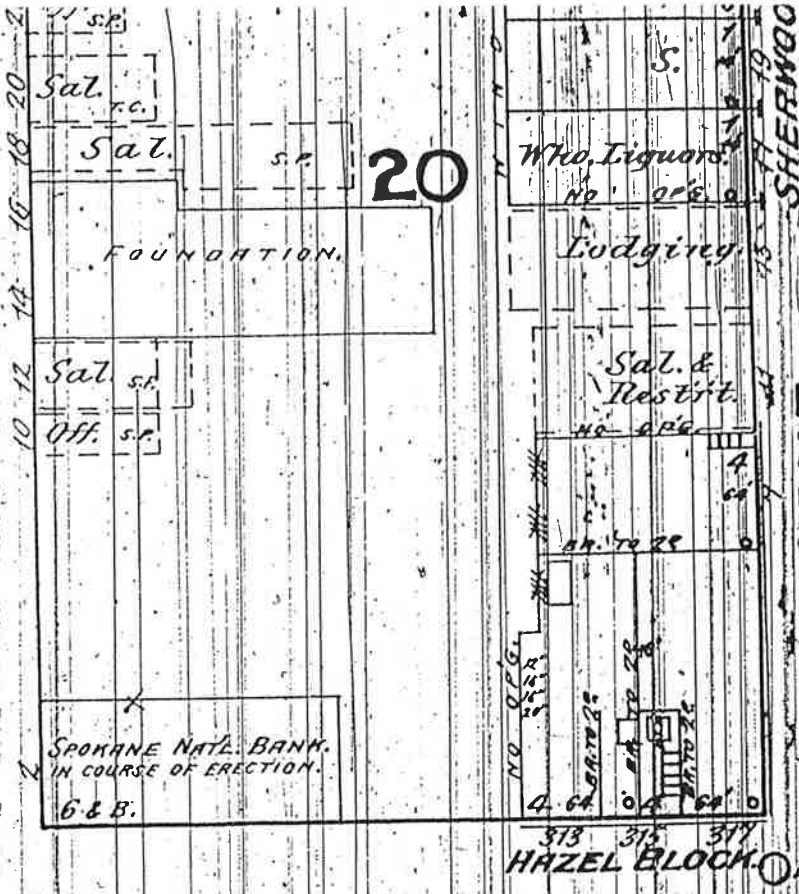
AV

E. RIVERSIDE

W. RIVERSIDE AV.

29

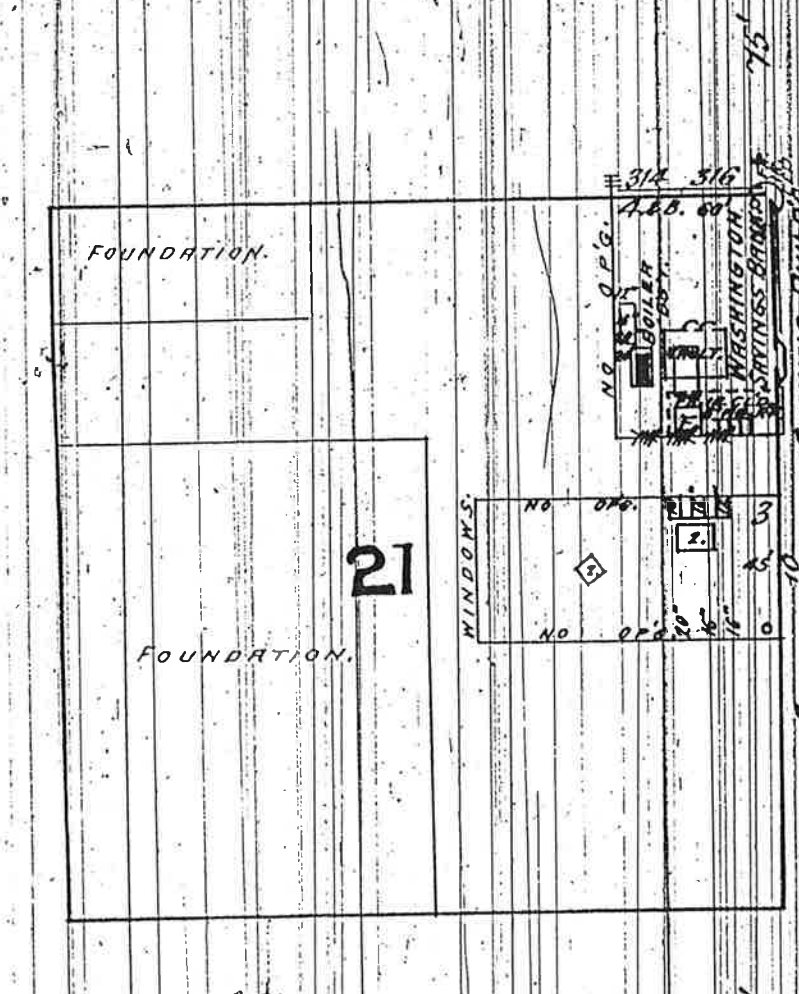
1890



E SPRAGUE

D.H.

W. SPRAGUE SHEET



35

33



HAZEL BLOCK. D.H.

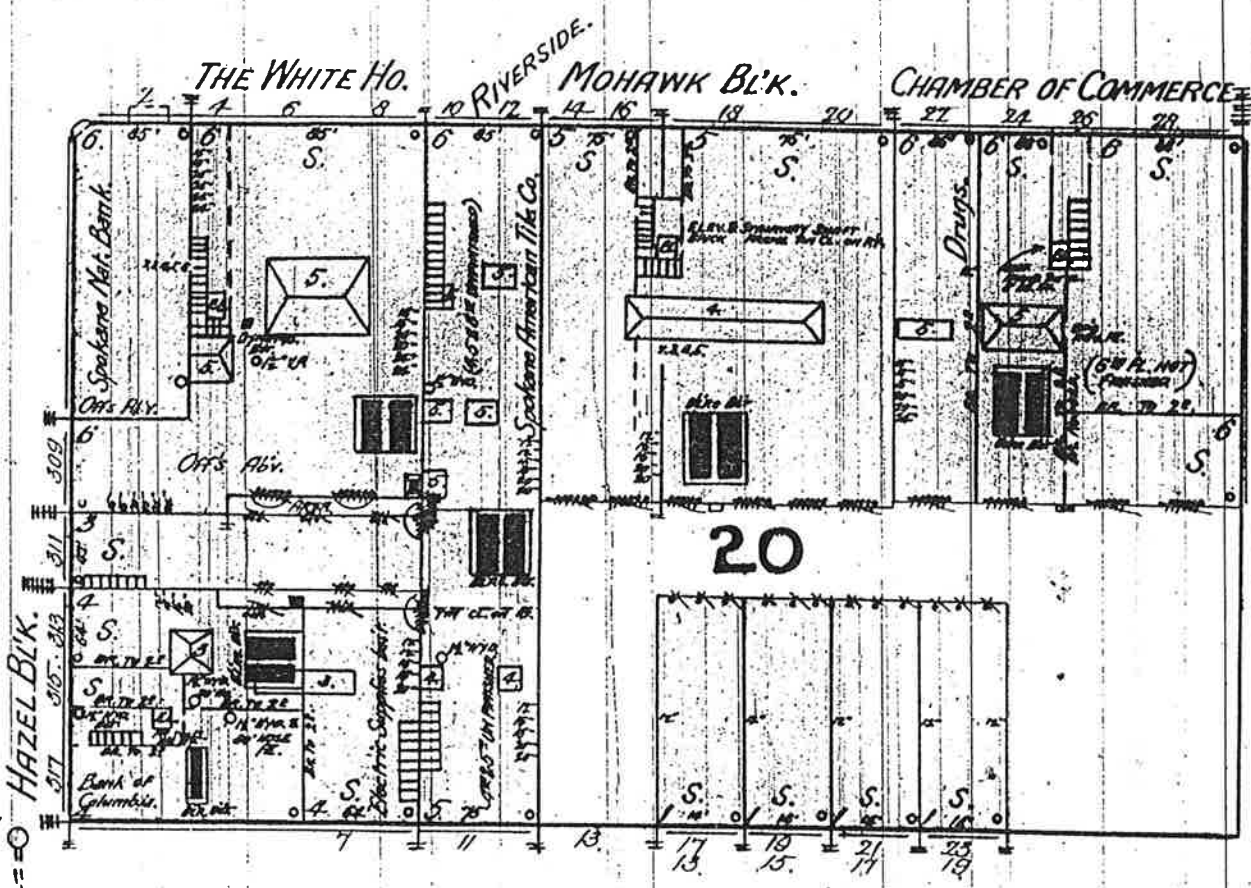


66'

No 4.

E. RIVER SIDE AV.

100'



20

E. SPRAGUE (75 FT. WIDE)

75'

1891

BLALOCK BLK.

(37)

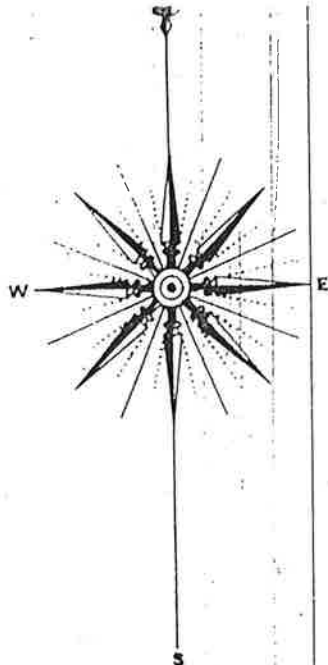
8" W.P.

DH.

DH.

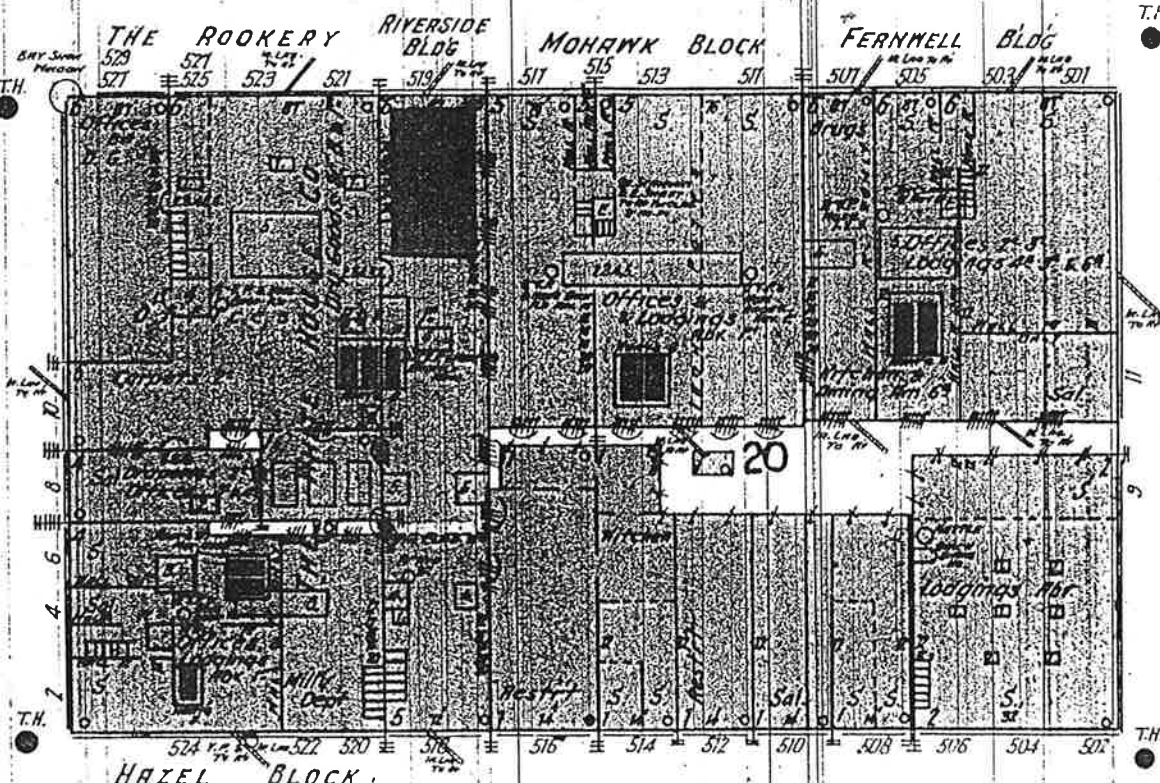
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1893



RIVERSIDE

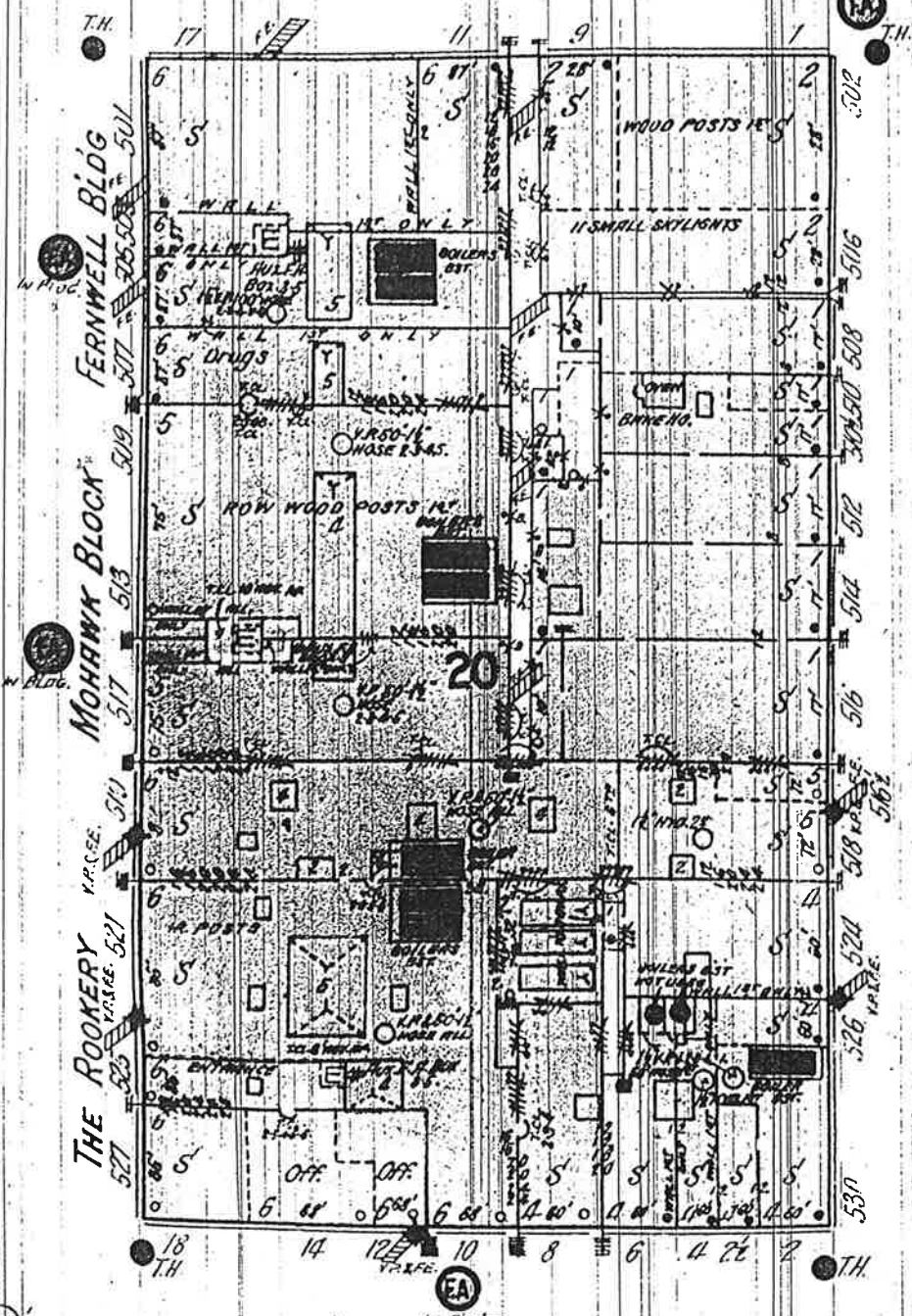
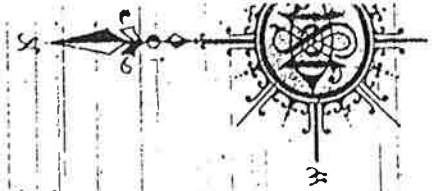
HOWARD



SPRAGUE

1902

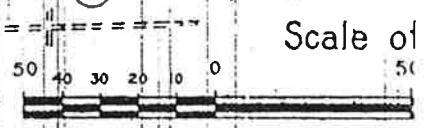
STEVENS



FERNWELL BLDG
 MOHAWK BLOCK
 THE ROOKERY

HOWARD
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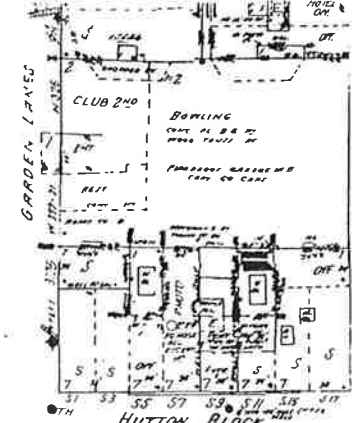
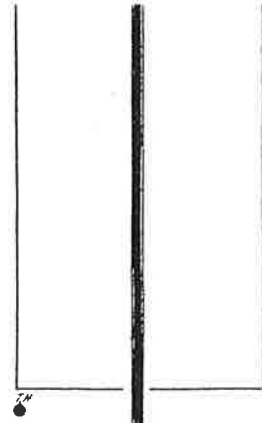
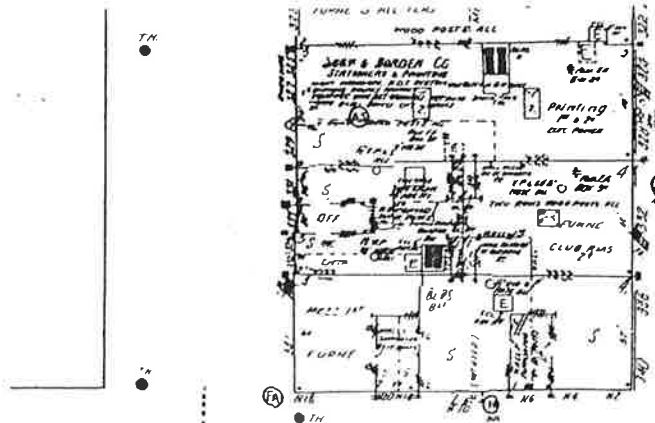
1910



13

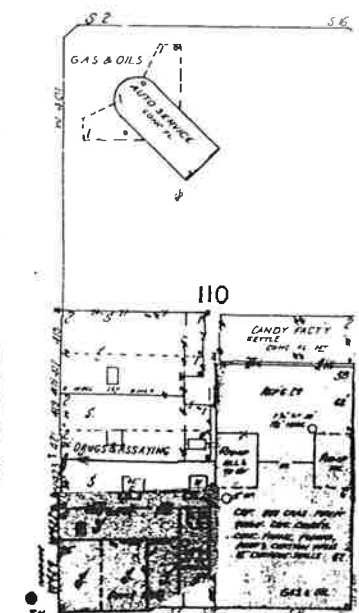
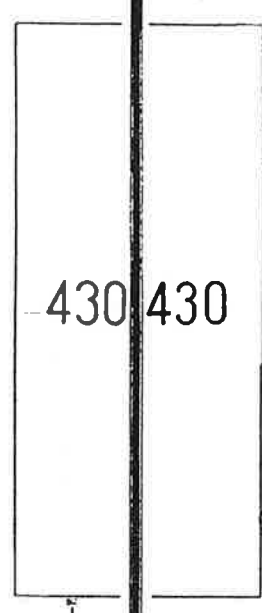
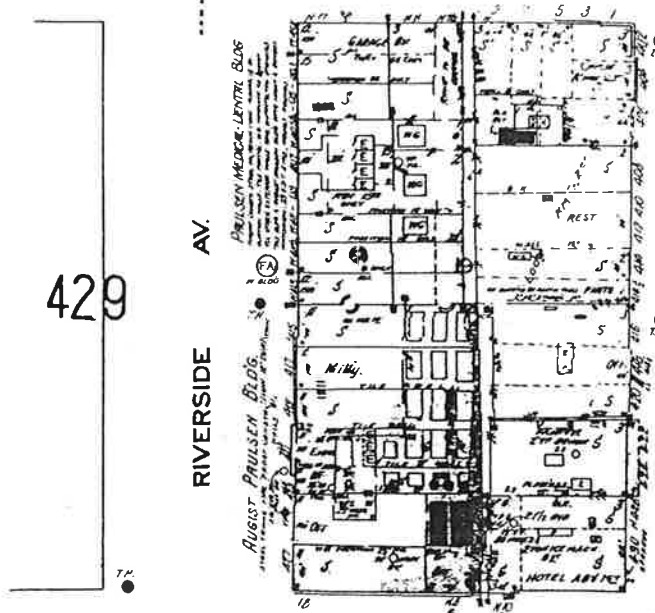
1896

1900



WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON



429

430 430

110

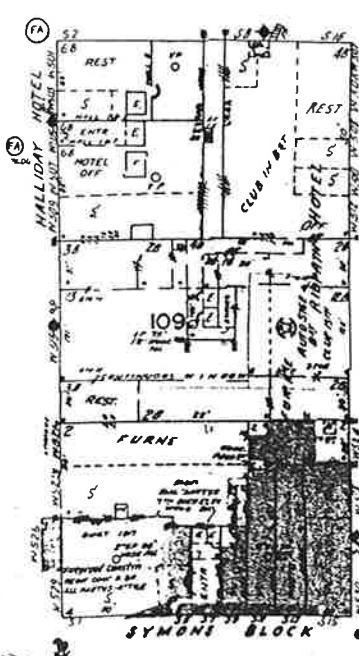
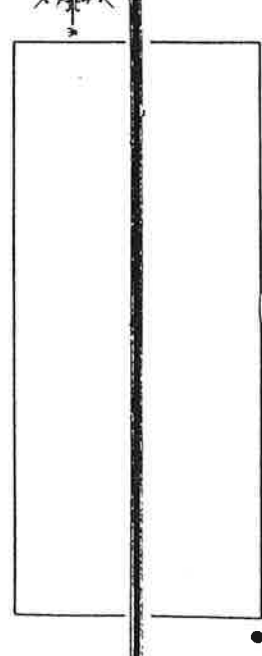
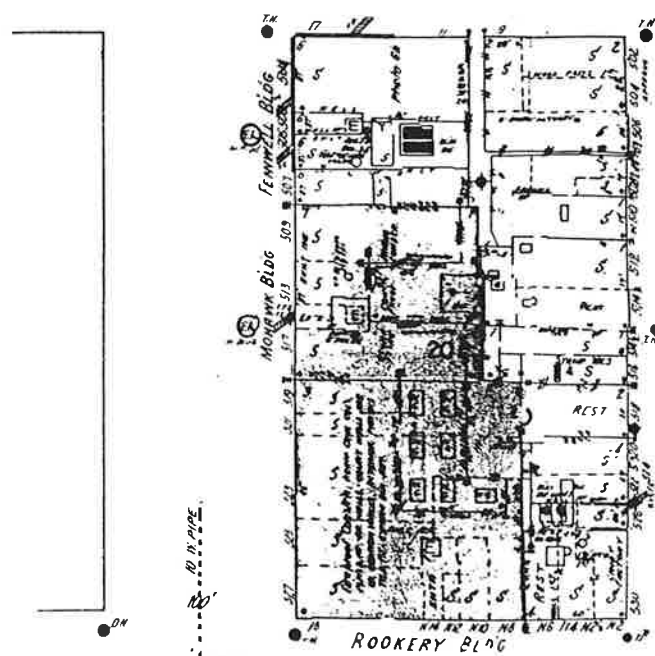
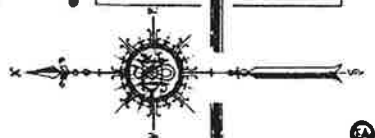
RIVERSIDE AV.

SPRAGUE AV.

SPRAGUE AV.

STEVENS

STEVENS

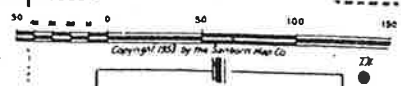


HOWARD

HOWARD

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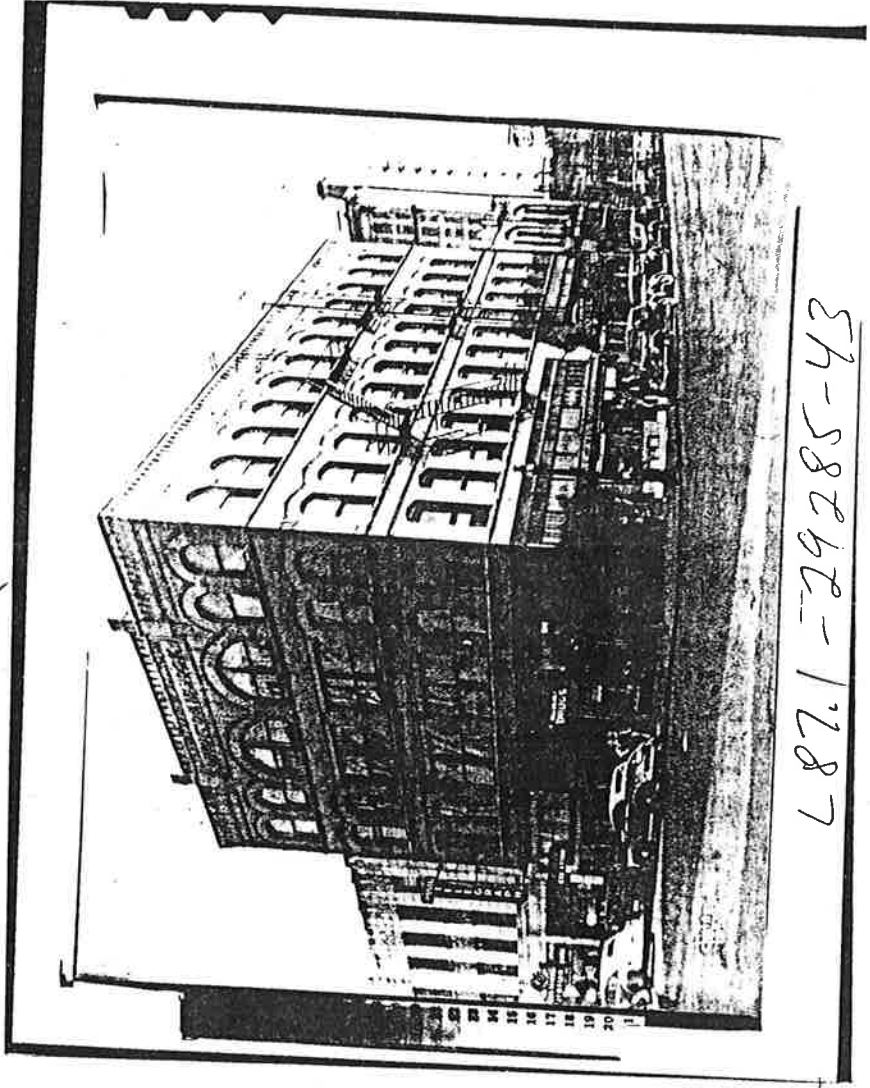


HOWARD, NORTH-00- (SPRAGUE TO RIVERSIDE)
Merton Block on Northeast Corner of
Sprague & Howard. 1943
Built in 1890

L87-1.29285-43

4x5 A/P / 4x5 Poly CN
4x5 Interpositive
8x10 ~~PK~~ or SFN

Photographer: Libby Studio
Collection: Libby Studio



L87.1-29285-43



