Clerk File No. 313883

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Landmarks Preservation Board Report on Designation of Metropolitan Press Printing Co./Brasa Building, located at 2107 Third Avenue.

Related Legislation File: CB 118142

Date Introduced and Referred:	To: (committee):
Date Re-referred:	To: (committee):
Date Re-referred:	To: (committee):
Date of Final Action:	Disposition:

The City of Seattle – Legislative Department

Clerk File sponsored by: _____

Committee Action:

Date	Recommendation	Vote

This file is complete and ready for presentation to Full Council. _____

Full Council Action:

Date	Decision	Vote

The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649 Seattle WA 98124-4649
Street Address: 700 5th Ave Suite 1700

REPORT ON DESIGNATION LPB 369/08

Name and Address of Property: **Metropolitan Press Printing Co./Brasa Building**
2107 Third Avenue

Legal Description: Lot 10, Block 48 of the addition to the City of Seattle, as laid out by A.A. Denny, commonly known as A.A. Denny's 6th Addition to the City of Seattle, according to the plat recorded in Volume 1 of Plats, Page 99, records of King County, Washington;

Except the Easterly 12 feet thereof condemned in Superior Court Cause No. 52280, as provided under Ordinance No. 13776 of the City of Seattle;

Situated in the City of Seattle, County of King, State of Washington.

At the public meeting held on July 2, 2008, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Metropolitan Press Printing Co./Brasa Building at 2107 Third Avenue, as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standard for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

D. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, period, or of a method of construction.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Neighborhood Context: The Development of Belltown
Belltown may have seen more dramatic changes than any other Seattle neighborhood, as most of its first incarnation was washed away in the early 20th century. The area now known as Belltown lies on the donation claim of William and Sarah Bell, who arrived with the Denny party at Alki Beach on November 13, 1851. The following year they established a claim north of the early settlement (Pioneer Square), on land largely covered with dense cedar and fir forests. A steep cliff rose from the beach, where a Duwamish winter village was located at the foot of the future Bell Street. The Bell claim extended from Elliott Bay east to today's Yale Avenue North, from Pine Street north to Denny Way.

The Bells returned to California in 1856, after their cabin burned in the Battle of Seattle, a skirmish between the settlers and Native Americans. Bell returned in the 1860s to plat the property, but it was not until 1870 that he and his son Austin returned permanently. They then began to actively encourage commerce to spread northward, although the topography and poor roads made it a difficult task. Before his death in 1887, the elder Bell built a home and a hotel (both now gone) on 1st Avenue near Battery Street. In 1889 his son hired the architect, Elmer Fisher, to design a large residential building in the same block. Soon afterwards, Fisher designed an Odd Fellows Hall next door and a retail/hotel/office building (the Hull Building) across 1st Avenue. These substantial brick buildings, some distance from Pioneer Square, combined with the area's isolation to give Belltown a distinctive identity separate from that of downtown Seattle.

Also in 1889, the first streetcar service arrived in Belltown, extending from James Street to Denny Way along 2nd Avenue. The Front Street Cable Railway erected its elaborate powerhouse and car barn near Denny Way and 2nd Avenue in 1893. Within a few years, lines would run along Western and Elliott avenues to Ballard and on 1st, 2nd and 5th avenues to lower Queen Anne, with connections at Pike Street to Eastlake, Westlake and points north and east.

But significant development on the Bell property was slowed by its isolating topography. A steep bluff rose from Elliott Bay to 2nd Avenue, then Denny Hill, too steep for horses to climb, extended between 2nd and 5th avenues north of Pine Street. With the economic growth following the 1897 discovery of gold in the Klondike, the business district expanded to the north, and many saw Denny Hill as a significant barrier to progress. City Engineer Reginald H. Thomson envisioned leveling the hill, using hydraulic jets to sluice the earth into Elliott Bay. In 1898, the first of three regrades in the vicinity occurred, lowering 1st Avenue between Pike Street and Denny Way by 17 feet. The area west of 1st Avenue was not regraded, and its steep slope kept it largely industrial.[1]

By 1910, Belltown was a thriving community of wood frame residences and small commercial buildings, with brick hotels for workers along 1st Avenue. The waterfront and the western slope bustled with wharves, the railroad, fish canneries, small manufacturers and livery stables. Small commercial buildings, brick workers' hotel and houses lined 1st and 2nd avenues. However, on June 10, 1910 a fire destroyed eight blocks on the western slope, from the waterfront to 2nd Avenue and Vine Street. The burned area was largely industrial, but with many small wooden cottages and workers' lodgings. Only one person died but hundreds lost their homes. The area was soon rebuilt with larger industries and new residences and apartments.[2]

The city's population continued to grow at a remarkable rate, nearly tripling to 237,194 by 1910. As the pressure for land increased, the city proceeded with regrading the remainder of Denny Hill. The second phase occurred between 1908 and 1911, when 27 blocks between 2nd and 5th avenues, from Pine to Cedar streets, were sluiced away. The greatest excavation was along Blanchard Street, which was lowered by 107 feet at 4th Avenue. This was the

1 Myra L. Phelps, *Public Works in Seattle: A Narrative History*, The Engineering Department 1875-1975, Seattle Engineering Department, 1975

2 Clarence B. Bagley, *The History of Seattle from its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time*, Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1916, pp. 514-515

largest such operation in the world up to that time, moving six million cubic yards of dirt. The regrade opened up access to Belltown, Queen Anne and Lake Union, greatly enhancing property values. The city regraded only the streets, with owners of individual lots required to hire their own contractors to level their property. Thus many pinnacles of land remained even into the 1920s. The embankment created along 5th Avenue remained for more than twenty years, until the third regrading phase. [3]

Everyone waited expectantly for the city to expand into the newly-cleared Regrade, but it remained filled with small commercial buildings and apartments. Perhaps the best known development in Belltown during this period was one that did not occur. In 1910 the Municipal Plans Commission hired Virgil Bogue to develop a comprehensive plan for the city. His plan, released in 1911, proposed a new civic center plaza and building complex at 4th Avenue and Blanchard Street, with broad boulevards radiating outwards. Voters rejected the ambitious plan, consolidating the city center downtown and forestalling any significant movement into Belltown for the next sixty years.

Belltown, like the rest of the city, evolved significantly during the 1920s. Its location close to downtown made it an ideal location for apartment buildings to house downtown and waterfront workers, with an accompanying array of cafes, taverns and small grocery stores. Belltown also became the center of the film industry in the Pacific Northwest. The numerous film exchanges and related suppliers made the vicinity of 2nd Avenue and Battery Street a Mecca for theater owners and managers from Montana to Alaska. The automobile had become a significant feature of the city, and Belltown's close-in, low-density location encouraged auto-oriented businesses such as service garages. It also attracted light-industrial uses such as printers and small-scale suppliers and assemblers servicing downtown businesses.

The third and final regrading phase began in 1928 and was completed in December 1930. This phase extended from Fifth Avenue to Westlake Avenue, between Virginia and Harrison streets. In volume it was about two-thirds the size of the second phase, removing 4,233,000 cubic yards of dirt on a conveyor belt to barges on Elliott Bay.[4] However, the project was completed just as the country was entering a major depression. Population growth virtually came to a standstill and manufacturing stalled. The expected development in the newly-regraded area did not occur. For decades the area east of 5th Avenue contained primarily car dealerships, parking lots, motels and other low-density uses. Only recently has development come to this area.

Seattle was transformed perhaps more than any other large city by World War II. Its North Pacific location made it a strategic military location for the war against Japan. Its airplane factories, shipyards and steel mills made it a crucial part of the war effort. Boeing alone increased employment from 4,000 to 50,000 between 1939 and 1945. Belltown's apartments, workers' hotels and taverns boomed. The district's proximity to downtown and waterfront industry also made it a center for union activity, with the Seattle Labor Temple

3 Phelps, pp. 18-20

4 Phelps, pp. 32-33.

relocating to 1st Avenue in 1942. This trend continued through the 1950s, with numerous other union halls being constructed.

However, growth was generally slow in the 1950s-60s, as the economy took some time to recover after the war. In 1953 the Battery Street Tunnel was completed from Aurora Avenue North to the foot of Battery Street, connecting the SR 99 highway through downtown. This new infrastructure, and the 1962 World's Fair just north of Belltown, led to the construction of several modern motels in the eastern part of Belltown. Otherwise, construction was primarily one- and two-story buildings at the eastern and northern edges.

Neighborhood Context: Printing Plants

The primary single category of industrial buildings in Belltown has been printing plants of all sizes. Seattle had many printing establishments in the early 20th century, increasing from 133 to 1,053 between 1909 and 1919.[5] Until the 1930s most of these shops were located in office buildings or light industrial buildings in Pioneer Square or downtown; there was a particular concentration near Western Avenue at the foot of Columbia Street. Western Avenue was attractive to larger print shops because of its proximity to rail lines. By 1915 directories list at least three larger printers in Belltown, all on Western Avenue. By the 1940s there were more than a dozen plants, scattered from Western Avenue to Fifth Avenue, reflecting the increase in truck transportation.

The Metropolitan Printing Press Company (1923) is the oldest and most intact of the remaining examples of this building type. Metropolitan Printing was so successful that it built a larger plant at 2603 Third Avenue in 1931. Although somewhat altered to accommodate a drugstore, this building is a good example of Art Deco design with a zigzag cornice and pilasters and a stained glass window with a chevron pattern. Two other Art Deco printing plants have been demolished in recent years: California Ink/Security Press at Western Avenue and Cedar Street and Far West Lithography on 3rd Avenue and Wall Street.

Other examples of Belltown printing plants remain in altered condition. One is the Western Printing Company building (1926, 2100 Fifth Avenue); it was a florist for many years and is now a catering facility (Palace Ballroom). Frayn Printing and Publishing Company (81 Vine Street) was located in a 1914 brick-and timber building converted from a previous industrial use; it has now been converted once again, to offices and condominiums.

Belltown was a center for newspaper printing as well as general printing for commercial customers. The *Daily Racing Form* was printed in the old Metropolitan Printing building after the company moved to its new quarters. A small plant for Seattle Home News was built in 1946 at 2314 Third Avenue. In 1964 it expanded into the adjoining 1924 print shop, becoming the News Publishing Company and later Pacific Publishing, which published most of Seattle's weekly community papers for many years. The combined building is slated for demolition.

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[5] Richard C. Berner, *Seattle 1900 - 1920: From Boomtown to Restoration* Seattle: Charles Press, 1991, p. 29

However, the major printing plant was that of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, the city's oldest newspaper, at Fifth Avenue and Wall Street. This distinctive office building and printing plant, designed in 1947, clearly reflects the Moderne aesthetic that was popular at the time. Because the newspaper was owned by the New York-based Hearst Corporation, the building was designed by the prominent New York industrial engineering firm of Lockwood Greene, with Henry Bittman as the local associate architect. The newspaper moved out in 1987, taking with it the building's most distinctive feature, a massive globe. The building was converted for office use and the expansive first-floor press room and the loading docks, key characteristics of a newspaper plant, were removed.

Building History

This commercial/industrial building was designed in 1923 by George Wellington Stoddard of Stoddard & Son, a local architect and engineering firm. The original owner was George F. Thompson, a broker representing Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company. However, the building was designed for its first tenant, the Metropolitan Printing Press Company, whose name appears above the entry on the original plans. Thompson had offices in the Central Building where the printing company had been located for many years.

Metropolitan Printing was founded early in the 20th century and operated for many years in the basement of the Central Building. In 1910 its president was Henry K. Owen. However, within a few years the Handley family took control of the company. The Handleys had long experience in printing and publishing. In 1910 George N. Handley was an engraver at Art Engraving Company in the Times Building and his sister-in-law Agnes Handley was manager of Coast Publishing Company at 417 E. Denny Way. According to city directories, Agnes went to Metropolitan Printing about 1914 as an accountant, and by 1920 she was the company manager. She continued to manage the company through the 1920s and 30s, as it expanded into two larger plants.

In 1931 Metropolitan Printing built a second. plant nearby at 2603 3rd Avenue at Vine Street. This larger building, designed in the Zig Zag Art Deco style popular in the 1930s, was also the work of George W. Stoddard. In 1956 Metropolitan acquired Western Printing and later that year, expanded the Third & Vine plant to add a rotary off-set press division.[6] Ultimately, Metropolitan Printing was itself a victim of the consolidation of the printing industry. In 1968, George Handley, Jr., who had begun working there in 1933 with his father and his aunt, sold a controlling interest in the firm to another Seattle printing company, Craftsman Press.[7] Craftsman, a web offset commercial printer specializing in regional magazines and catalogs, had a large plant in South Lake Union (the former Ford Motor Company plant, a city landmark). The company said that it bought into Metropolitan as an investment, and it continued to operate the Vine Street plant; however, it was eventually closed. Craftsman sold its South Lake Union plant to Shurgard Storage in 1996 and moved to Reno. It was subsequently purchased by Wisconsin-based Quad/Graphics, the nation's third largest printer with nine other plants.[8]

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[6] *Daily Journal of Commerce*, 2/21/1956

[7] *Seattle Times*, 12/24/1968

[8] http:www.piworld.com/story.bsp?sid=34638&var=story

The building remained in use as a printing plant for some time, although it is not clear whether Metropolitan Printing was involved. In 1937 the building was the home of the *Daily Racing Form.* In order to tailor its information to horse racing in each region, this publication is published in 25 daily local editions, so it had a local office and printing plant.[9] One floor of the building was used as the Grand Furniture Company warehouse. During the 1940s-60s the building was used for various warehouse and light industrial uses. The last industrial tenant of the building was Puget Sound Tent & Awning (now Rainier Industries), a company founded in 1896 to provide tents for gold miners.[10] In the 1980s the company expanded by acquiring a similar company, and moved to a new location. This building was converted for office use in the 1980s, and housed the Donald Young Gallery from 1991 until 1998, when the current restaurant moved into the space.

The Architect: George Wellington Stoddard

George Wellington Stoddard's prolific architectural career spanned four decades, from 1920 until 1960, and can be divided into three fairly distinct periods. Stoddard (1896-1967), a native of Detroit, attended the University of Illinois, where he earned a degree in architectural engineering in 1917. Following graduation, he served with the U. S. Army in France until 1920. He then moved to Seattle, where his father, Lewis M. Stoddard, had established a practice as a naval architect. He joined the practice and the firm was renamed Stoddard and Son.[11]

During this early part of his career (1920-29), Stoddard is known to have designed a number of commercial buildings, including several in Belltown. The same year that he designed Metropolitan Press, he designed Hewitt's Café (now Two Bells, 2315 Fourth Avenue) and, in 1929, the nearby Seville Building (2226 3rd Avenue). His two largest early works are Tacoma's Winthrop Hotel (S. 9th Street at South Broadway) built in 1925, and an ornate parking garage at 6th Avenue and Olive Way. He also designed a number of large residences in Broadmoor, Queen Anne, Capitol Hill and Laurelhurst. The Dutton house at 3355 E. Laurelhurst Drive was featured in a display of American houses at the International Congress of Building Societies in Salzburg, Austria. One example of his residential work is the large Russell Ulrich residence (1927) at the southwest corner of Queen Anne. All of these buildings show the influence of various Revival styles, with both the Seville Building and Metropolitan Printing expressing a Mediterranean influence.

Following his father's death in 1929, he established his own firm, George Wellington Stoddard & Associates. The firm did a wide variety of work, including apartment buildings, clinics, banks and other commercial structures. In keeping with the times, his designs trended toward the modern Art Deco and Art Moderne styles. He appears to have developed a specialty in light industrial buildings, with four examples having been identified:

- Second Metropolitan Printing Press Company (now Rite-Aid, 2601 3rd Avenue)
- Harlan Fairbanks Company (1931, 1405 Elliott Avenue W.)

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[9] http://www.drf.com/about/about_history.html
[10] http://www.rainier.com/history.html
[11] *Seattle Times*, 3/27/1960

- Puget Sound News Company (2621 2nd Avenue N.)
- Canada Dry Bottling Plant, Seattle University campus.

The two latter buildings were done as the local associate architect for a prominent New York industrial architect, Walter Monroe Corey. The bottling plant has been altered into a bookstore/office building for Seattle University, but its principal (east) façade is largely intact. The others are relatively intact. Two smaller examples of the Zig Zag Art Deco buildings have been identified at 777 Thomas Street and 227 9th Avenue (1931). As the Depression continued, Stoddard, like his colleagues, undertook government contracts. In 1940-43 he joined several of the city's best-known architects--William J. Bain, J. Lister Holmes, William Aitken and John T. Jacobson--in designing Yesler Terrace, Seattle's first public housing project. [12]

In the latter stages of his career (1946-60) Stoddard completed numerous institutional projects. In the post-war years he did a considerable amount of school design, including Overlake High School in Bellevue (1946-47), two additions to Arbor Heights School (1950, 1953) and an addition (1953) to Genesee Hill School, both in West Seattle.[13] Other school-related projects included Memorial Stadium (1947; now part of Seattle Center), and an addition to the University of Washington Stadium South Stands (1950). Probably his best know work of the period, however, was the Green Lake Aqua Theater (1950). This unique open-air amphitheater on the south shore of Green Lake was a very popular summer venue for water ballet, comedy, musicals, fireworks and other events. Usage declined in the late 1960s, and it fell into disrepair and was dismantled in the 1970s.[14]

As he neared retirement in 1955, Stoddard formed a partnership with Francis Huggard; the firm was known as George W. Stoddard-Huggard Associates, Architects and Engineers. Identified projects from this period include two downtown branches of the National Bank of Commerce, one at 2401 3rd Avenue (1954, now US Bank) and another at 5th Avenue and Olive Way (now Bank of America, 1956). After Stoddard's retirement in 1960, the firm continued as Stoddard and Huggard.[15]

Stoddard was an extremely active citizen and served on numerous boards and committees, such as the State Hospital Advisory Council Executive Committee (1948 - 1949), the Seattle Civic Arts Committee, the King County Educational Advisory Committee (1950 - 1951) and the King County Juvenile Advisory Committee (1952). He served on the board of the Seattle Symphony for many years. A member of the Washington State Chapter of the American Institute of Architects since 1922, Stoddard served as president of the chapter in 1946-1947. Stoddard retired in 1960, and died in 1967 at the age of 71.[16]

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[12] *Seattle Times*, 3/27/1960

[13] Nile Thompson and Carolyn Marr, *Building for Learning: Seattle Public School Histories, 1862-2000*, Seattle School District No. 1, 2002

[14] "Aqua Theatre—Seattle, Historylink.org" Louis Fiset, 4/25/1999.

[15] *Seattle Times*, 3/27/1960

[16] *Seattle Times*, 3/27/1960

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Setting

The Metropolitan Printing Company building sits on a 6,480 square foot lot near the northwest corner of 3rd Avenue and Lenora Street. To the south is a small gas station building, similar in age and style to the Metropolitan Printing building. To the north a large low-income housing development by Plymouth Housing Group is under construction. A similar housing project is located across the street, and a third one in the block to the south. Interspersed among these are smaller buildings from the 1920s-50s, many of which have been considerably altered. An alley runs along the rear (west) side of the building.

Exterior description

This building's decorative combination of tall arched windows, an arched parapet, a red tile roof and buff brick facing show its Mission or Mediterranean influence. The two-story building has 12,960 gross square feet and is rectangular in plan, measuring 60 feet wide and 108 feet deep. The building is of ordinary masonry construction of common brick and hollow tile, faced on the main elevation with buff-colored brick accented with green tiles.

The main façade on 3rd Avenue is composed of five two-story arches. They are arranged symmetrically, with a center entrance bay flanked by three window bays on each side. The wider center bay has a recessed arched entry with a tall arched multi-paned window above. The two flanking bays are two-story arches. The lower part of each arch has a display window with a three-light transom. The second story has arched 9-light pivoting windows. Spandrels between the stories have a circle motif; according to the original plans these are made of wood. Each of the outer bays also has a tall second story window matching the others, but with a smaller arch on the first story. The small arch at the southeast corner contains a multi-paned window, while that at the northeast corner contains the entry to the upstairs offices. This entry has an original multi-paned wood door with an arched transom.

The arched entry at the center is deeply recessed and enclosed with a highly decorative modern gate of wrought iron. A new door, with modern glass sidelights and transom, provides access to the restaurant. Above the entry is a large V-shaped projecting sign with the name Brasa.

The decorative front of the flat roof reflects the composition of the arches, with the parapet rising in a wide Mission-style arch above the entry and two smaller arches at the corners. Each of these arches is ornamented with a narrow arch-shaped area filled with stucco and dark green tile. Similar tile are placed between the tops of the arches on the second story. The roofline between the parapet arches is ornamented with red metal roof tiles, emphasizing the Mission influence.

The south elevation, facing the parking lot, is clad with red common brick and has an old painted sign but no other particular features. The rear elevation, on the alley, is clad with red brick on the upper level and concrete on the ground floor. It has original 12-light metal window sash on the second floor. At ground level are a secondary entry, large louver vents and a considerable amount to utility equipment and ducting for the restaurant.

Interior Description
The original plans show that the building was constructed as an industrial loft of post-and-beam construction, with concrete floors and large open spaces on each floor. Ceiling heights reflect this industrial use, with 15 feet 10 inches on the first story and 13 feet 7 inches on the second story. The first floor was originally a large open space with an office and small toilet room near the entrance at the southeast corner. Another restroom was at the rear, with the stairs at the southwest corner and a freight elevator at the northwest corner. The floor was concrete. Girders measuring 10 by 26 inches supported the second story.

The second story is accessed by an entry and stairs at the northeast corner. Plans show it as a large open space with a wood floor, 10 by 18 inch beams and a row of 10 by 10 inch posts down the center. Two large (8 by 12 foot) skylights, one at each side, provide light. There are two toilets, above those on the first floor.

Building Alterations
The earliest building permit located at the Department of Planning and Development was for 1985, although alterations probably occurred prior to that time. Despite the changes in use, the interior appears to remain essentially similar to the original plan.

• In 1985 an awning was installed over the main entrance for the building's last industrial tenant, Puget Sound Tent & Awning.

• In 1991 (permit #658239) the use was changed from manufacturing to gallery, and the building was remodeled for the Donald Young Gallery (Peter Stoner, architect). A new HVAC system was installed during the same period (#658236).

• In 1996 (permit #689379) the second story was improved for office use. The changes appear to have been relatively minor, with the open ceiling and overall industrial feel of the space being retained.

• In 1998 (permit #702637) the first floor was remodeled for a restaurant, Brasa (Arellanos/Cristofides, architects). A small mezzanine and office were built along part of the south wall, with a curving staircase near the southeast corner.

• In 2002 a new sign was installed on the main façade.

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The features of the Landmark to be preserved include:

The exterior of the building.

Issued: July 9, 2008

Karen Gordon
City Historic Preservation Officer

cc: William Justen, The Justen Company
Melody McCutcheon, HCMP, P.S.
Larry Johnson, The Johnson Partnership
Stephen Lee, LPB
Stella Chao, DON
Diane Sugimura, DPD
Cheryl Mosteller, DPD
Ken Mar, DPD

DoCoMoMo-WeWA.org/architects.detail.php?id=62 (G. W. Stoddard)

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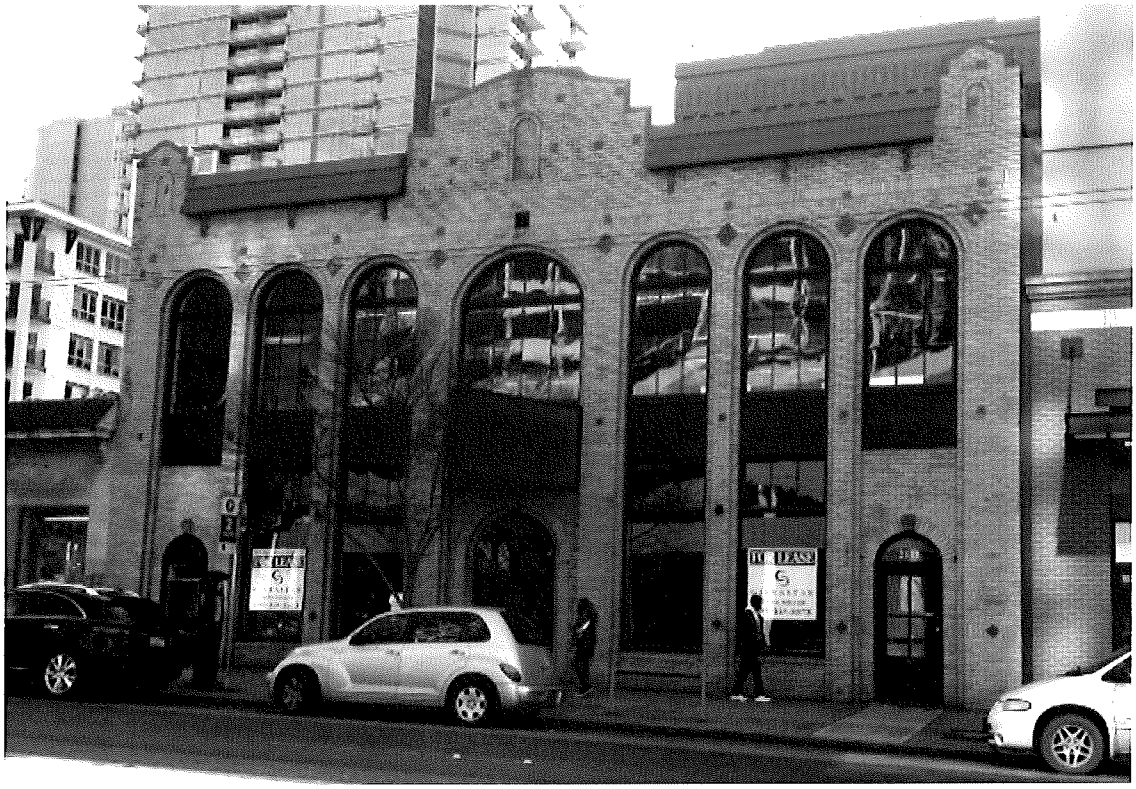
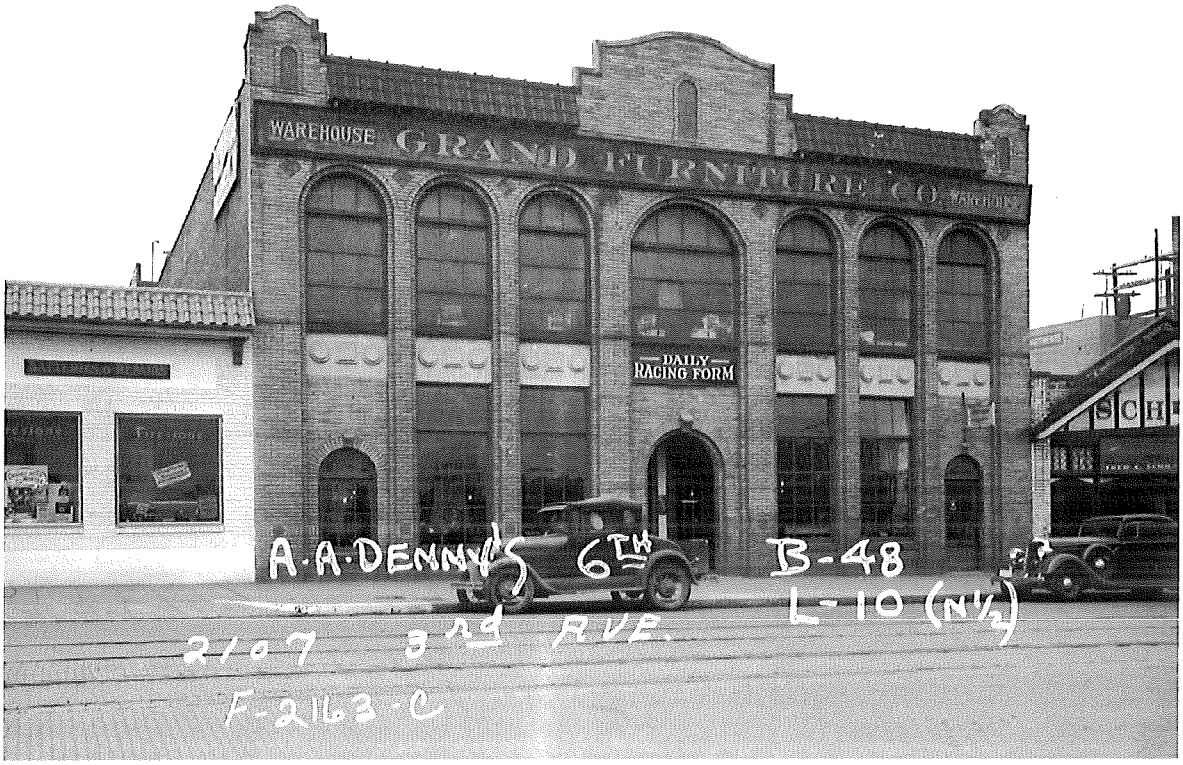


Metropolitan Printing Press Company Building, 2107 Third Avenue, current



Metropolitan Printing Press Company Building, 2107 Third Avenue, c . 1936