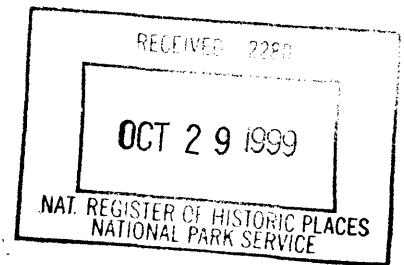


United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



1453

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.

1. Name of Property

historic: El Rio Apartment Hotel
other names/site number: Julie Apartments

2. Location

street & number: 1922 - 1928 Ninth Avenue not for publication
city or town: Seattle vicinity
state: Washington code: WA county: King code: 033 zip code: 98101

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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] SHPO 10-18-99
Signature of certifying official Date

Allyson Brooks, 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

4. National Park Service Certification

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] 11/30/99

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

USSDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Property Name El Rio Apartment Hotel

County and State King County, Washington

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		contributing	noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

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

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

6. Functions or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC / Multiple Dwelling

DOMESTIC / Multiple Dwelling

COMMERCE / Retail Stores

COMMERCE / Retail Stores

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT / Art Deco

foundation Concrete

walls Brick, Stone, Concrete

roof Tar, Gravel

other Cast Stone Decorative Detail

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

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Property Name El Rio Apartment Hotel

County and State King County, Washington

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory 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.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1929

Significant Dates

1929

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

John Alfred Creutzer, Architect;

West Coast Construction Company, Builder

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

Property Name El Rio Apartment Hotel

County and State King County, Washington

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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 (Univ of Washington)
- Other

Specify repository:

Seattle Public Library, Municipal Archives

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property: less than one

UTM References

1	<u>10</u>	<u>5/5/0/0/7/0</u>	<u>5/2/7/3/6/5/0</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

The building is bounded by a private driveway to the north, a parking lot to the south and a 16' wide alley to the east.
Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

See continuation sheet

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan D. Boyle, Partner, with assistance from Michael Benson

organization Boyle Wagoner Architects date 12/17/98

street & number 911 Western Avenue, Suite 300 telephone (206) 382-9651

city or town Seattle state WA zip code 98104

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 7 Page 5

7. Narrative Description

The Site

The site of the El Rio is a 60' by 120' lot, located at 1922-1928 Ninth Avenue in the Denny Triangle area of Seattle, Washington. The El Rio is bordered by a private driveway to the north, a parking lot to the south and a 16-foot-wide alley to the east. Building permits issued in 1901, 1908, and 1912 note a single-family residence previously on the site.

The site is a 7,200 square foot, partial block parcel located between Virginia Street to the northwest and Stewart Street to the southeast. Of the total site area, the El Rio occupies 5,914 square feet, or 82 percent of its lot.

In 1975 the Denny Regrade neighborhood (including the El Rio site) was analyzed for its architectural and urban features. This survey, one of fourteen across the city, categorized the El Rio as important to the community due to its special architectural character. In 1997, an Archaeological and Historic Resource Assessment Report declared the El Rio to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as it exemplified the Art Deco style. Later that year, a review under S.106 of the National Historic Preservation Act confirmed its eligibility for listing on the NRHP.

The Building Exterior

The El Rio is a five-story apartment building, with a footprint of 60' x 120' and a total area of approximately 26,850 square feet. Of this, 24,550 square feet contain 47 studio apartments (three on the ground floor; 44 on upper floors). The remaining 2,300 square feet encompass retail shops at ground level, divided into three bays along the Ninth Avenue facade. Storefronts remain unchanged, and boast original metal sash, plate glass windows (with ceramic tiles below, which have subsequently been painted) flanking recessed, single glazed, wood doors. The architect, anticipating that adjacent property owners to the north and south would build their sites to full density, designed the building with a T-shaped plan to enable natural light to enter the north- and south-facing apartments.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form

Section number 7 Page 6

7. Narrative Description

The Building Exterior, con't

In designing the El Rio, architect John A. Creutzer drew upon the Art Deco style, a decorative art form based on early twentieth-century popular culture. The style embodied such diverse influences as contemporary painting and sculpture and discoveries of ancient civilizations in Egypt and the Americas. Geometrically stylized and streamlined design elements represented pure exuberance and motion.

The French exposition *Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, held in Paris in 1925, exposed the style to a world audience. The Art Deco style quickly captured the imagination of American designers and architects. Its popularity extended beyond buildings, and was applied successfully applied to automobile, jewelry, furniture and graphic design.

In Seattle, most examples of the Art Deco style are commercial structures, built within a brief period that began in the late 1920s. The Great Depression of the 1930s drastically reduced new construction both nationally and locally, curtailing Art Deco's impact on the city skyline.

The El Rio's elegant Art Deco details in brick, cast stone, tile, and granite are better appreciated at close range than from a distance. The west facade, actually a veneer over the reinforced concrete structural wall, features prominent vertical piers with buff-color brick and recessed brick spandrels. These piers provide the vertical orientation characteristic of the Art Deco style. Cast stone ornament appears at the cap, coping, and raised parapet, and terminates each pier. Notable here are the stylized plant forms in bas-relief, a design feature also representative of Art Deco. Flush with the south wall of the tar and gravel roof is an elevator penthouse measuring 8' long, 5'6" wide, and 12' high.

Creutzer applied additional ornament at the window heads and sills, including cast stone flower boxes (with acanthus leaf detailing) projecting from the fourth-floor windowsills of the primary facade. By the late 1920s, manufacturers were producing cast stone in a variety of colors and textures, enabling architects to simulate any type of stone. Taking

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 7 Page 7

7. Narrative Description

The Building Exterior, con't

full advantage of this material, Creutzer was able to apply a high degree of ornamental detail without the expense associated with carved stone. When backed by reinforced concrete construction, cast stone also permitted buildings to be fire safe and storm proof.

The El Rio's storefront and entrance bulkheads feature granite and ceramic tile (later painted); glazed ceramic tile accentuates the entryways. The north, south, and rear elevations are absent of stylistic embellishment, and consist of one-over-one wood sash windows spaced uniformly across the painted plaster (over concrete) walls.

In reviewing the architect's original building plans, dated in 1928, and comparing them to the building's current condition, it is evident that the building exterior retains sufficient character. The exterior masonry and cast stone is soiled, but it clearly retains the original color. The cast stone forms are also in tact, with the exception of shallow planters at the upper floor windowsills which were removed on at unknown date. The original wood framed, one-over-one paired casement windows on the primary west façade were replaced by single pane aluminum casement windows, ca. 1960. However, the openings are unchanged and both planters and windows are scheduled to be reconstructed, using like materials and forms as the original. The El Rio's original perpendicular neon sign has also been removed, and the present main entry doors are aluminum rather than wood. At the first floor, however, all of the retail windows, recessed entries with wood doors, and ceramic tile have been retained; these too will be preserved and cleaned.

The Building Interior

Entering through the recessed, principal doorway near the south end of the building's primary facade, one passes under the building's name, recessed into stone. Above this, the building's original key-shape neon sign once stood, affixed to a vertical brick pier. Flanking the doorway are diamond patterned pilasters capped by Corinthian capitals; pilasters of similar design divide storefront bays.

Inside, the lobby retains its original terrazzo and concrete floor (currently covered with carpet); original plans by Creutzer show a pattern of small black diamonds marking the intersections of larger squares. This pattern imitates the popular *carreaux d'octagones* design, historically executed in stone or marble. By the 1920s, terrazzo became widely

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 7 Page 8

7. Narrative Description

The Building Exterior, con't

accepted as a floor surface, and renowned for its beauty, ease of maintenance, and durability.

Located along the lobby's south wall is a traction-type elevator made by the Montgomery Elevator Co., complete with its original concertina (accordion-style) swing gate. Throughout the lobby, a decorative frieze runs above the plaster walls. The plaster is intact, the terrazzo is hidden under carpet and no spatial alterations have been made to the efficiently elegant lobby.

East of the lobby, the ground floor leads to a boiler room, laundry facilities, workshop and three residential units. (These were originally four residential units; two were since combined for a manager's suite and office.)

The upper four stories are each almost identical in plan, and contain eleven studio apartments per floor, ranging in size from 380 to 400 square feet. On each floor, five apartments are situated along a north-south axis and six along an east-west axis, along double-loaded corridors. Ceiling heights vary on each floor: 13'4" on the first, 10'3" on the second, and 10' on floors three through five. Each apartment features a living room with steam heat radiator, dinette, kitchen, bath, and spacious dressing room (some large enough to accommodate a double bed). Interior wood finishes for door and window surrounds, picture rails, and baseboards are painted mahogany. Beneath the contemporary carpeting is the original colorful terrazzo and concrete floor; corridor floor surfaces are also terrazzo. (Promotional literature for buildings constructed during this period in Seattle often described terrazzo floors and mahogany finishes as "added" features.)

Ventilation fans located above dinette windows, while no longer functional, originally served a useful purpose. When activated, these fans could push approximately 500 cubic feet of smoke and fumes from the kitchen to the outside. If the occupant wished to have fresh air brought into the apartment, he or she simply switched the fan in reverse.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 8 Page 9

8. Statement of Significance

Constructed in 1929, the El Rio Apartment Hotel is more than 50 years old. In terms of the criteria for listing in the National Register, the El Rio Apartment Hotel's design, when built, represented a relatively new type of urban housing in Seattle: the efficiency apartment. This building type is directly related to Seattle's rapid growth during the first three decades of the twentieth century, emerging as a response to the needs of urban service workers. The construction of the El Rio Apartment Hotel in 1929 reflects Seattle's significant population growth during the 1920s.

The El Rio Apartment Hotel is also an architectural artifact that evidences key characteristics of the Art Deco style. Despite minor exterior changes it continues to embody distinctive qualities of Art Deco, incorporating modern materials such as reinforced concrete, brick veneer, and decorative cast stone. The Art Deco style reached the height of its popularity in the late 1920s and early 1930s, but is not represented by many extant buildings in Seattle. Here, architects used Art Deco primarily for commercial rather than residential designs; that the El Rio features this style renders it a rare residential example.

Due to its architectural significance as a type and style, the El Rio Apartment Hotel appears to meet Criterion C of the National Register program.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 8 Page 10

8. Statement of Significance

Historic Context

The El Rio is located east of the Denny Regrade neighborhood and south of the Cascade neighborhood (in what has recently been termed the Denny Triangle) approximately one-half mile northeast of Seattle's downtown retail core. By the 1890s, a concentration of single family dwellings was located between Virginia and Stewart streets, between Sixth and Ninth avenues. During this time, working class wood frame residences, or tenements, were erected in the area. The latter of these were rudimentary structures, meeting no more than minimum standards of sanitation, safety, light, and comfort. A brass foundry, cement works and mill were interspersed among these residences.

Following the fire of 1889, the retail core of Seattle migrated northwards. It did not, however, move in any consequential way into the northeast, due largely to the presence of Denny Hill. Expansion toward the northeast, city engineers argued, required the removal of this physical barrier. The first phase of the regrade took place between 1902 and 1910, the second phase between 1929 and 1930. Once completed, the Denny Regrade area spanned over thirty blocks.

With the completion of the first phase of the regrade in 1910, a number of brick buildings appeared in the Denny Triangle area. Most were small in scale, with only a few large hotels, office blocks, apartments and stores present. In the following decade, however, a number of large-scale commercial structures were constructed in the area. Directly west of the El Rio at 1925 Eighth Avenue is the A.V. Love Building, designed in 1925 by Heath Grove & Bell Architects in the Art Deco style. Seattle architect Victor W. Voorhees designed the Vance Hotel, at 620 Stewart Street, in 1926. The city's first zoning ordinance, adopted in 1923, influenced this influx of commercial development; all of the downtown area, including the Denny Regrade and Denny Triangle neighborhoods, was zoned for business and commercial use.

By the early 1920s, the new Interurban Depot (the present Greyhound station) was operating from 825 Stewart Street, between Eighth and Ninth Avenues. From here, residents of the area could access streetcar routes serving all parts of the city. The Mayflower Theatre at Seventh Avenue and Olive Way, the Paramount Theatre at Pine

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 8 Page 11

8. Statement of Significance

Historic Context, con't

and Ninth Avenue, and a farmers' market at Westlake and Seventh Avenue were all nearby.

Increased car ownership following World War II prompted the operation of a number of car dealerships and parking lots in the area, interspersed with low-rise commercial buildings. The auto era also enabled suburban living outside the city limits. In anticipation of the Seattle World's Fair in 1962, a number of hotel and motel buildings were constructed in the neighboring Denny Regrade. The El Rio took advantage of this demand for temporary accommodation; in April, 1962 the building owners received temporary authorization from the city to rent units in the building for periods of less than thirty days.

The Efficiency Apartment

Seattle's history of apartment residences contrasts with the more densely populated cities along the eastern seaboard, due largely to a relatively low population density. Even in periods of rapid growth, particularly the first two decades of the twentieth century, Seattle's population continued to spread out, with detached wood frame housing the preferred choice of both renters and purchasers.

However, construction of apartments did occur; indeed, the 1910s and 1920s witnessed the rise of a number of impressive buildings, each promoting itself to a middle- to upper-income clientele. These higher end apartments (and apartment hotels) included the Sorrento and Perry on First Hill, the Frye in Pioneer Square, and the Moore and Camlin at the north end of the retail district. These buildings promoted convenience, abundant tenant services, and extravagantly decorated common areas.

During this period, another apartment type appeared in Seattle: the efficiency apartment. These units were smaller and offered limited tenant services, but convenience and affordability ensured steady demand for this housing type. Available either furnished or

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 8 Page 12

8. Statement of Significance

The Efficiency Apartment, con't

unfurnished, a typical residence consisted of a living room, dinette, compact kitchen and large dressing room. The living room became sleeping quarters at night (often using a Murphy bed); alternatively, the larger dressing rooms accommodated a bed. By the mid-1920s, the demand for apartment and hotel accommodation had exceeded supply. An article in the *Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce* on January 24, 1925, (by Seattle Building Superintendent Robert Proctor) describes the situation:

“The phenomenal apartment house...development experienced last year was the result of delayed activity in that line, just as now an active hotel construction program is needed to even up the lean years of the past. Investors have avoided hotel development for several years so that now this city is behind with that type of housing.”

The proximity of the El Rio to downtown was a strong selling feature for it and other efficiency apartments in the Regrade in the late 1920s. A promotional brochure for the Faneuil Hall Apartments at Olive Way and Summit Avenue stated that “you can save \$10 a month in carfare alone by living here.” A 1926 promotional booklet by John Davis & Co. marketed the nearby President Apartment Hotel at Olive and Minor as situated within “easy walking distance of the theatre and retail shopping district, being only six blocks from Frederick & Nelson’s [Department Store].”

Nearby at Boren Avenue and John Street, the Clifford Apartments boasted living rooms furnished “by Frederick & Nelson exclusively” and kitchens with the latest built-in electric ranges and refrigerators. To allow for personal taste, the Clifford provided a choice of four color schemes, with davenport (sofa) covers to match. Other selling features commonly seen in these promotional materials included built-in furniture, broom closets and ironing boards, cut-glass doorknobs, tiled bathrooms and sanitary kitchen cupboards and counter tops.

A 1937 photograph of the El Rio depicts an advertisement on its south facade that promotes the building as featuring “modern three room apartments, furnished or

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 8 Page 13

8. Statement of Significance

The Efficiency Apartment, con't

unfurnished at reasonable rates," with accommodation provided by the week or month. Most El Rio tenants lived alone: the Polk's 1940 City Directory indicates that only 21 percent of all units contained two or more tenants.

Local Demographics

The El Rio's close proximity to Seattle's retail and commercial district was a positive attribute for most tenants. Of the El Rio residents listing an employer in Polk's 1939 Seattle City Directory, 83 percent were within easy walking distance to work. Employment types varied: in 1939, El Rio tenants performed both working class (mechanic, salesman, cook) and professional (engineer, nurse, business executive) jobs. Due to their efficient but small size (less than 400 square feet), most El Rio tenants lived alone. A review of the Polk's 1939 Seattle City Directory indicates that 21 percent of all units listed were shared accommodation (typically with a spouse). Directory listings further indicate that only 17 percent of residents had a telephone in their apartment.

The Greater Seattle Market, a consumer study published by R.L. Polk & Co. on March 19, 1932, provides an overview of 103,360 families living within the city of Seattle, including their buying habits and preferences and general economic status. Categorized into geographical zones and economic classes (A was high, C low), the study provides a general profile of the El Rio resident in the early 1930s. Following is a table that breaks down economic classes and compares ownership of (or access to) common items by residents of Zone I (Downtown, El Rio) versus Seattle as a whole:

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 8 Page 14

8. Statement of Significance

Local Demographics, con't

Category	Zone (Downtown/El Rio)	All Families (Seattle)
Class A (i.e., executive, professional)	6%	6%
Class B (i.e., salesman, semi-professional)	53%	59%
Class C (i.e., sales clerk, laborer)	41%	35%
Average Rent Per Month	\$35.58	\$32.21
Percentage Who Own Their Home	4%	58%
Telephone in Residence	37%	66%
Own Radio	61%	77%
Own Vacuum	12%	46%
Electric Clothes Washer in Residence	3.6%	32%
Electric Refrigerator in Residence	44%	18%
Own Automobile	29%	58%
Have Checking Account	25%	31%
Have Savings Account	38%	47%

The study results are not surprising. Rents were higher in this neighborhood due to its convenience to downtown. Few were homeowners: only a small number of single family residences remained in this area by the early 1930s. Most downtown apartment buildings provided shared laundry facilities rather than electric clothes washers in each unit. By the late 1920s, new apartment buildings featured recent innovations in kitchen equipment. This explains the high number of residences with electric refrigeration in the downtown area when compared to the city as a whole, where the process of switching to this food storage method was more incremental. Limited automobile ownership (exactly half the percentage in downtown versus Seattle as a whole) stemmed from lack of necessity. As the "place of work" analysis shows, the majority of downtown residents either walked or took public transportation to work.

Construction of the El Rio Apartment Hotel

The El Rio is constructed of reinforced concrete, and features slabs, columns (with concrete spandrel panels at floors), beams and infill walls supported by conventional

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 8 Page 15

8. Statement of Significance

Construction of the El Rio Apartment Hotel, con't

strip footings around the building perimeter. Isolated pad footings brace the interior columns. Constructed without a basement, the building's first floor is a concrete slab on grade.

The origins of reinforced concrete date to 1877, and the published experiments of American engineer Thaddeus Hyatt. By the 1890s it was applied commercially, and soon thereafter marketed to the construction trades by competing interests. Its advantages over beam-and-girder construction included the ability to build fireproof flat slab buildings more quickly, and that they could resist heavy vibrations. Concrete's fireproof qualities made it an ideal selling feature, marketed by phrases such as "class 'A' fireproof construction."

Interior walls consist of wood framing members, metal lath, and plaster. Ceilings and walls of the lobby, service rooms, corridors and residential units are plaster finished. Knob and tube wiring throughout the El Rio is original and remains fully functional. A gas-fired steam boiler located at the ground floor provides steam heat to all residential units and retail stores.

On August 10, 1929, *The Pacific Builder & Engineer* announced the planned construction of the El Rio. The article described the proposed building as five stories tall, of fireproof construction, with a footprint of 60' x 120'. The main facade would feature a face brick exterior accented with cast stone trim. In the main lobby, a terrazzo floor was specified, with oak floors throughout the rest of the building. The article describes a decorative wrought iron grill surrounding the main entry. It also outlines the ground floor configuration; three stores, boiler room, and laundry room. The August 14, 1929 edition of the *Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce* provides a more detailed account:

"The West Coast Construction Co., [1101] Lloyd building, has secured the general contract for the construction of a \$135,000 apartment building on the southeast corner of Ninth Avenue and Virginia Street and work on the project, it was stated yesterday, will be started at once with the general contracting firm

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 8 Page 16

8. Statement of Significance

Construction of the El Rio Apartment Hotel, con't

named handling all sub-awards with the exception of the plumbing, heating and wiring. The plumbing, heating and sprinkler contracts, it was stated, have been given to the West Coast Heating Co., Lloyd building." The announcement was made by Architect John A. Creutzer, Lloyd building, who planned the structure.

As designed, the improvement will be 5 stories and basement, of fireproof construction, faced with brick and trimmed with cast stone. It will house 48 two-room suites on the four upper floors and three retail stores and lobby on the first floor. Features of the completed structure will include automatic oil heat, electric refrigeration, hardwood floors throughout, tile baths, and the latest in electrical and sanitary devices. [The building] will be the property of the Fairview Investment Co., 505 Lloyd Building."

By the end of August, 1929, the West Coast Construction Co. had awarded contracts to the Pacific Coast Steel Co. for reinforcing steel, the C.O. Larson Co. for placing steel, and the Crosby Lighterage Co. to supply the pre-mixed concrete. Isaacson Iron Works provided structural steel, and the Everett Sash & Door Co. was responsible for all interior millwork. Construction of the El Rio commenced in September, 1929 and was completed by June, 1930.

Architect John Alfred Creutzer

The El Rio Apartment Hotel was designed by the prolific Seattle architect John Alfred Creutzer. A native of Sweden, Creutzer immigrated to the United States as a boy, and settled with his family in Minnesota. He began his career in Minneapolis, but opportunity drew him west, first to Spokane, and then to Seattle, where he arrived in 1906.

In addition to securing his own commissions, Creutzer provided construction supervision and architectural work for Seattle architect and contractor Henderson Ryan, and local contractor Alexander Pearson. Creutzer's best-known works include the design of the Swedish Tabernacle (First Covenant Church) in 1906 and the Medical and Dental

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 8 Page 17

8. Statement of Significance

Architect John Alfred Creutzer, con't

Building in 1924-1925 (with consulting architect A.H. Albertson). The latter of these commissions was notable for its strict use of concrete, as cited by the Annual Edition of the *Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce*, January 24, 1925:

“Having climbed toward the sky at the rate of two stories a week while under construction and being one of the four tallest strictly concrete structures in America, the new Medical and Dental building...marks a record for rapid construction... [T]he new building features a departure in skyscraper construction destined to have material effect on future building.”

Although the Medical and Dental Building represents Creutzer's most significant commercial design commission, he also designed a number of smaller scale business blocks and retail buildings. Examples in Seattle include:

- a \$50,000 theatre at 1515 Fourth Avenue (1913);
- shops at 610-618 East Pike Street (1913);
- a two story masonry building at 1527 Broadway (1913);
- a two story store and loft building at 1633 Westlake Avenue (1915);
- a frame one story store building at 301 East Pine Street (1915);
- a two story laundry building at the corner of Eastlake Avenue and Republican Street (1917);
- a one story, three store commercial building clad with terra cotta ornamentation at the northeast corner of Second Avenue and Blanchard Street (1925); and
- a three story terra cotta clad business block at the southwest corner of Seventh Avenue and Pike Street (1925).

Research for the years 1913 through 1924 indicates that Creutzer designed at least fifteen apartment houses and hotels. These were located on First Hill and Capitol Hill, as well as in the Denny Regrade, Ravenna, University District, and the International District. The actual number is perhaps much higher; an article in the *Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce* (4/3/23), referring to a recent project by Creutzer, announced that “[t]his

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 8 Page 18

8. Statement of Significance

Architect John Alfred Creutzer, con't

building is the fourth large apartment announced during the past few weeks by Architect Creutzer.”

Examples of Creutzer's apartment design commissions from 1915 through 1925 include the following:

- a three story concrete apartment house at 527 Eastlake Avenue (1915);
- a three story, 32 suite building of brick construction at Fourteenth Avenue East and Thomas Street (1916);
- a three story, 37 suite apartment at University Street and Terry Avenue (1917);
- a 32 suite masonry and terra cotta clad building at the southeast corner of Jefferson Street and Terry Avenue (1923);
- a 33 suite brick veneer and terra cotta building (Campus Apartments) on 4200 block of Brooklyn Avenue (1923);
- a 32 suite masonry building at 420 Terry Avenue (1923);
- a three story masonry building at 1619 Minor Avenue (1924);
- a four story, 44 suite building at Republican Street and Eastlake Avenue (1924);
- an eight story, 48 suite building at the northwest corner of Olive Street and Belmont Avenue (1925); and
- a three story building at the corner of Main Street and Maynard Avenue (1925).

Creutzer also designed religious, single family residential, government, and institutional buildings. These include: a mausoleum at the Washelli Cemetery (1917); a private residence at 1941 Fifteenth Avenue North for A.M Atwood of the John Davis Investment Co. (1915); the interior decoration of the King County Courthouse (1917); and a “sanipractorium,” or hospital, (not built) abutting Lake Washington in Madison Park (1921). The latter would have represented an enormous undertaking: a six story, \$250,000 fireproof building to be built for Seattle doctor Eugene Jordan and a consortium of “drugless physicians” who advocated its construction. An article in the *Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce* (1/11/21) describes the proposed design:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 8 Page 19

8. Statement of Significance

Architect John Alfred Creutzer, con't

“The exterior will be faced with pressed brick and trimmed with terra cotta. On the ground floor will be located a large swimming pool, gymnasium, treating rooms for both men and women and rooms for gymnastic apparatus... On the top floor will be an auditorium seating 400 persons and equipped with a moving picture booth.”

Creutzer's last design commission would be the El Rio Apartment Hotel. On August 12, 1929, he secured a building permit for the project; twelve days later, on Friday, August 23, he suffered a heart attack as he entered his home in Wallingford. He was 55 years of age.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 9 Page 20

9. Bibliography

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"Seattle Will Soon Have New \$50,000 Theatre." (May 8, 1913), p.4.

"Building Permits Issued" (October 23, 1913), p.4.

"Important Permits for 1914." (January 1, 1915), p.1.

"Building Permits Issued" (February 16, 1915), p.6.

"Building Permits Issued" (March, 9, 1915), p.6.

"Building Permits Issued". (April 21, 1915).

"Building Permits Issued" (May 18, 1915), p.4.

"Building Permits Issued" (October 23, 1915), p.6.

"New Apartment on Thomas Street; J.A. Creutzer Drawings Plans for Three Story, \$40,000 Building." (June 26, 1916).

"Taking Bids for Apartment; Three Story Building for University and Terry Will Cost \$55,000." (March 16, 1917), p.1.

"Bids Now Being Taken for Decoration of [New] King County Courthouse." (April 20, 1917), pp. 1,5.

"New Laundry for Republican & Eastlake; John A. Creutzer Completes Plans for One Story Structure to Cost \$12,000." (November 2, 1917), p.1.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 9 Page 21

9. Bibliography

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"Mission Structure Will Be Erected at 9th Avenue and Weller Street at Cost of \$170,000." (May 10, 1920), p.1.

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"New Apartments on Belmont Avenue will Cost \$110,000; John Creutzer Announces Plans Underway." (December 10, 1924), p.1.

"New Apartments to Cost \$125,000; Architect John A. Creutzer Announces New Structure." (December 18, 1924), p.1.

"\$50,000 Building Proposed for 7th Avenue and Pike Street." (December 23, 1924), p.1.

"Huge Structure is Now 75 Per Cent Complete." (December 31, 1924).

"\$75,000 Apartment Building to be Located...[at] Main and Maynard Streets." (January 20, 1925), p.1.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
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Section number 9 Page 22

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United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation Form**

Section number 9 Page 23

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number 9 Page 24

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form

Section number 9 Page 25

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The building is bounded by a private driveway to the north, a parking lot to the south and a 16' wide alley to the east.

Boundary Justification

The parcel historically associated with the nominated property is Lot 5, Block 35, Heirs of Sarah A. Bell's 2nd Addition.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number Photo Continuation Page 26

Image and Photo Continuation Sheet

1. Historic photograph, the El Rio Apartment Hotel, 1937.
Source: King County Tax Assessor's Files, State Regional Archives, King County Branch.

The following photographs of the El Rio Apartments in King County, Washington were taken in November 1998 by Michael Benson.

2. Context view of block, looking northeast.
3. View of north elevation.
4. South Elevation.
5. East Elevation.
6. West elevation, looking southeast.
7. West elevation detail (Corinthian pilaster).
8. View of El Rio, looking northeast.
9. Cast stone parapet, looking south from roof.
10. Art Deco inspired plaster frieze, main lobby.
11. View of entryway in lobby with Art Deco arch above and articulated ceiling beams.
12. Typical living room with walk-in closet and Moorish arch vestibule.
13. View from typical living room to dinette (note original radiator and built-in ironing board).
14. Original cast iron light fixture in apartment suite vestibule.
15. Original light fixture in dinette area of apartment suite.
16. Glass door knob, typical to all apartment suites
17. Colorful terrazzo flooring, installed in all apartment suites.
18. Original wood frame, one-over-one sash window.
19. Interior woodwork showing mahogany beneath paint.
20. El Rio Storefronts.
21. Closer view of 1924 Ninth Avenue. Note tile bulkheads and original doors.
22. Closer view of 1926 Ninth Avenue.
23. Closer view of 1928 Ninth Avenue

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Form**

Section number Photo Continuation Page 27

Original Drawings

The drawings on the following three pages are reduced-scale copies of original permit drawings. Source: Microfilm Files, City of Seattle Department of Construction and Land Use.

“Apartment House for Fairview Investment Co.,” East and West Elevations. Drawing by John A. Creutzer, Architect.

“Apartment House for Fairview Investment Co.,” West Elevation Details. Drawing by John A. Creutzer, Architect.

“Apartment House for Fairview Investment Co.,” Cross Section of South Elevation. Drawing by John A. Creutzer, Architect.

1



HEIRS OF S.A. BELL & 2ND

B. 35

MODERN APARTMENTS
FURNISHED & UNFURNISHED
REASONABLE RATES
BY THE MONTH
L. 5
NO. 2593

1922 - 1928 - 9 AVE

2.



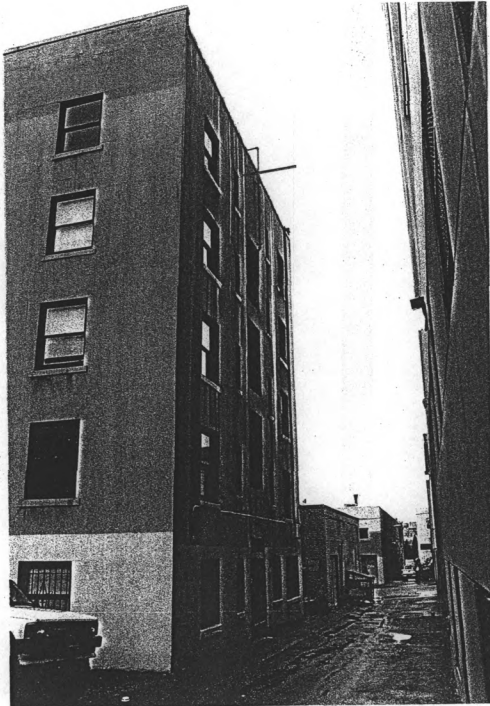
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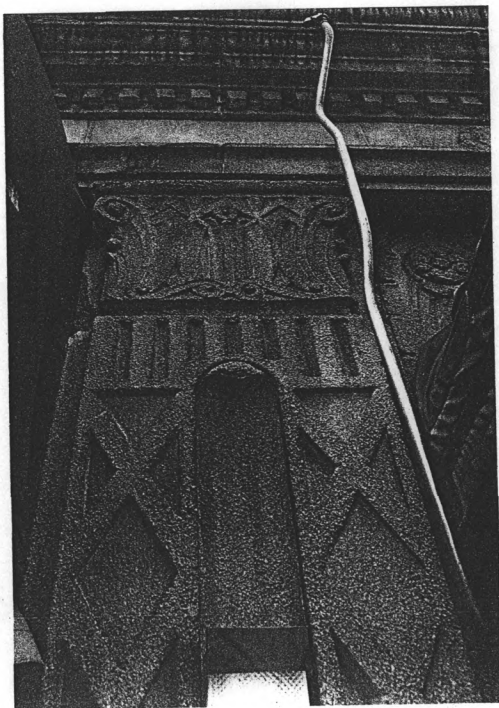
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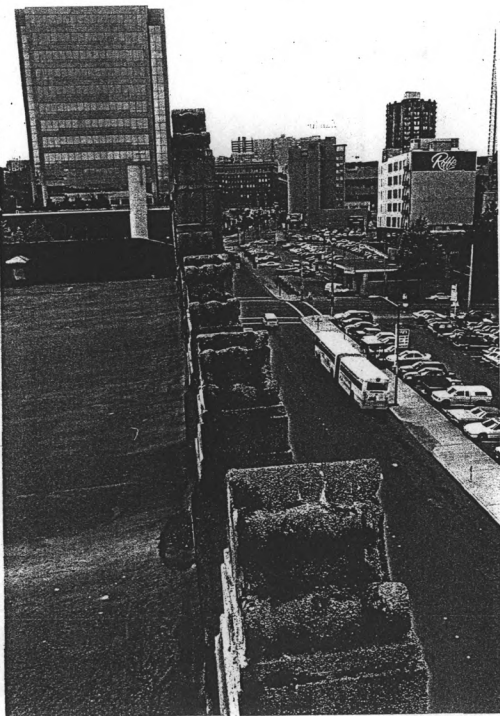
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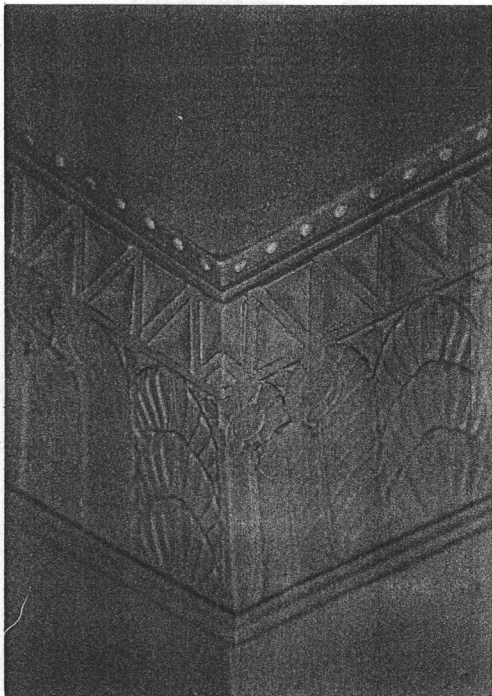
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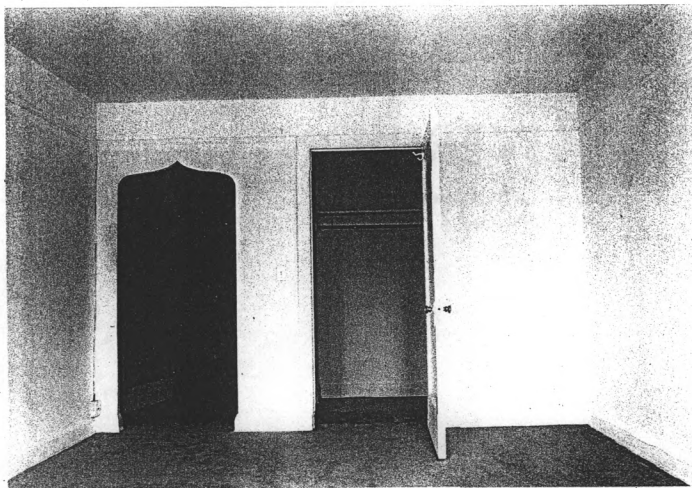
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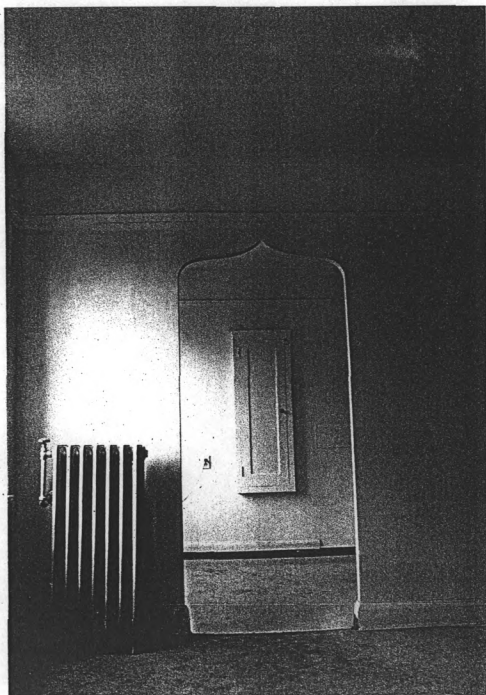
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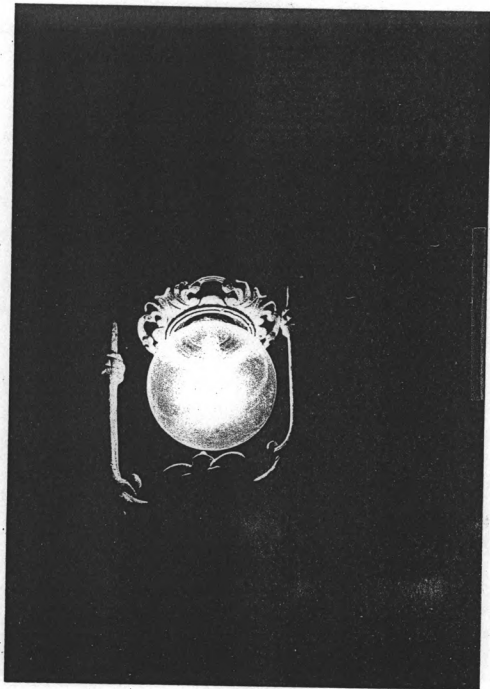
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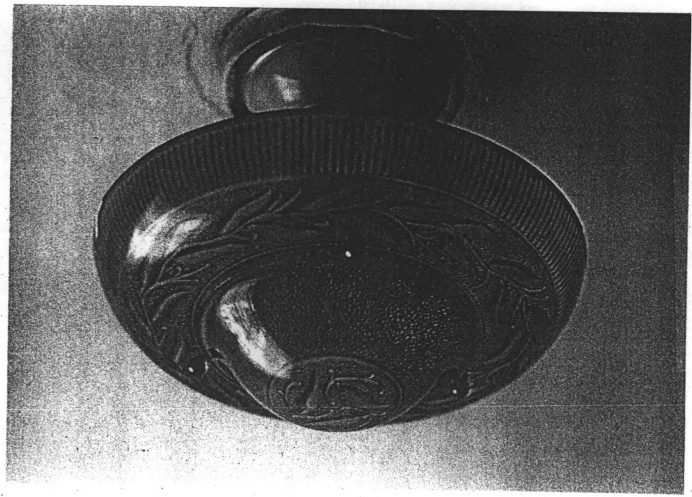
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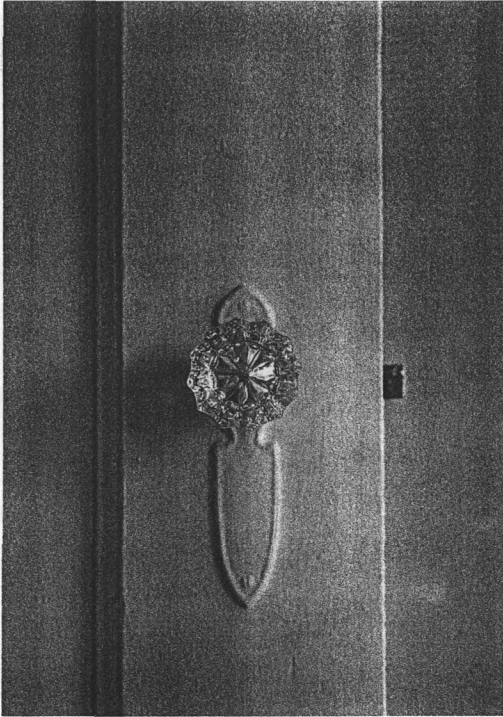
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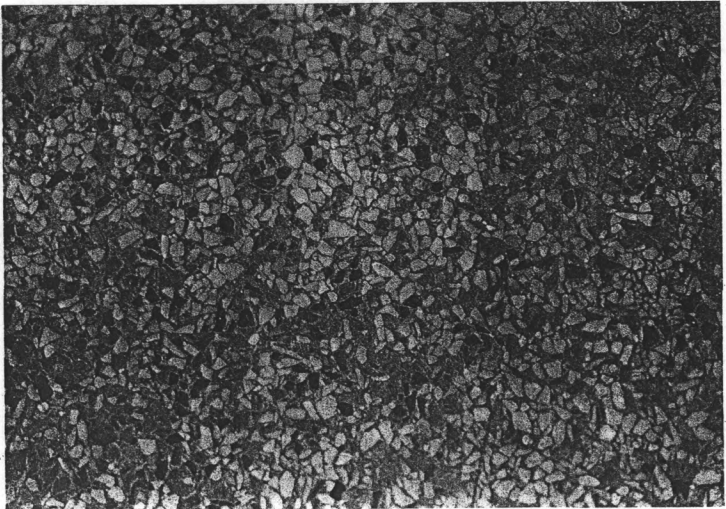
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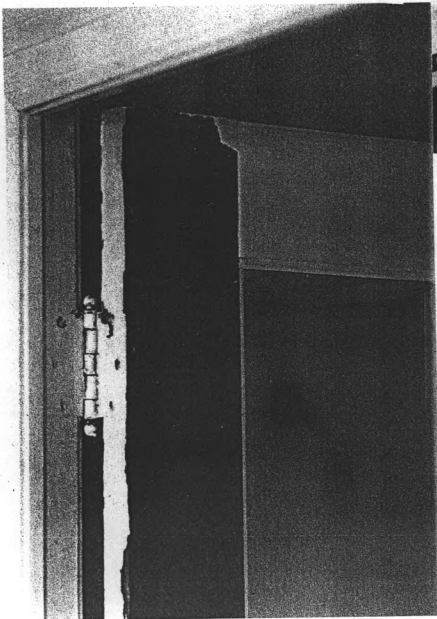
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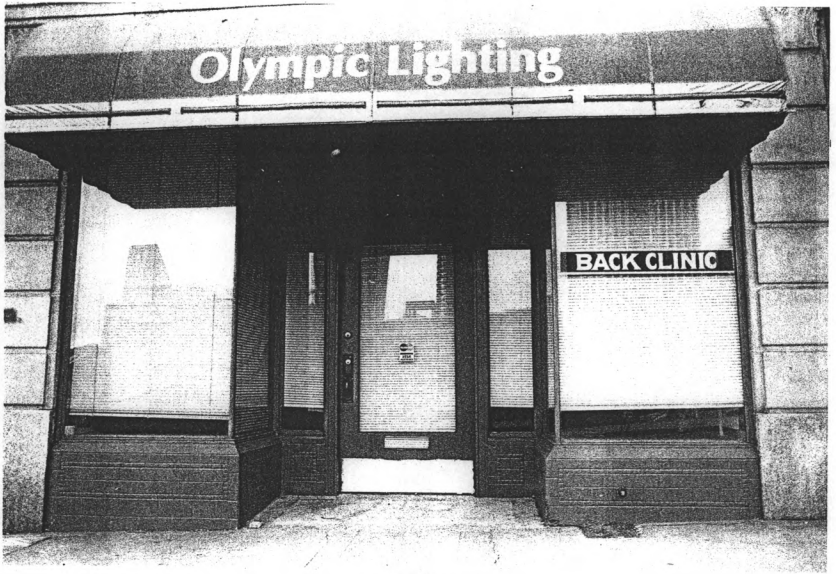
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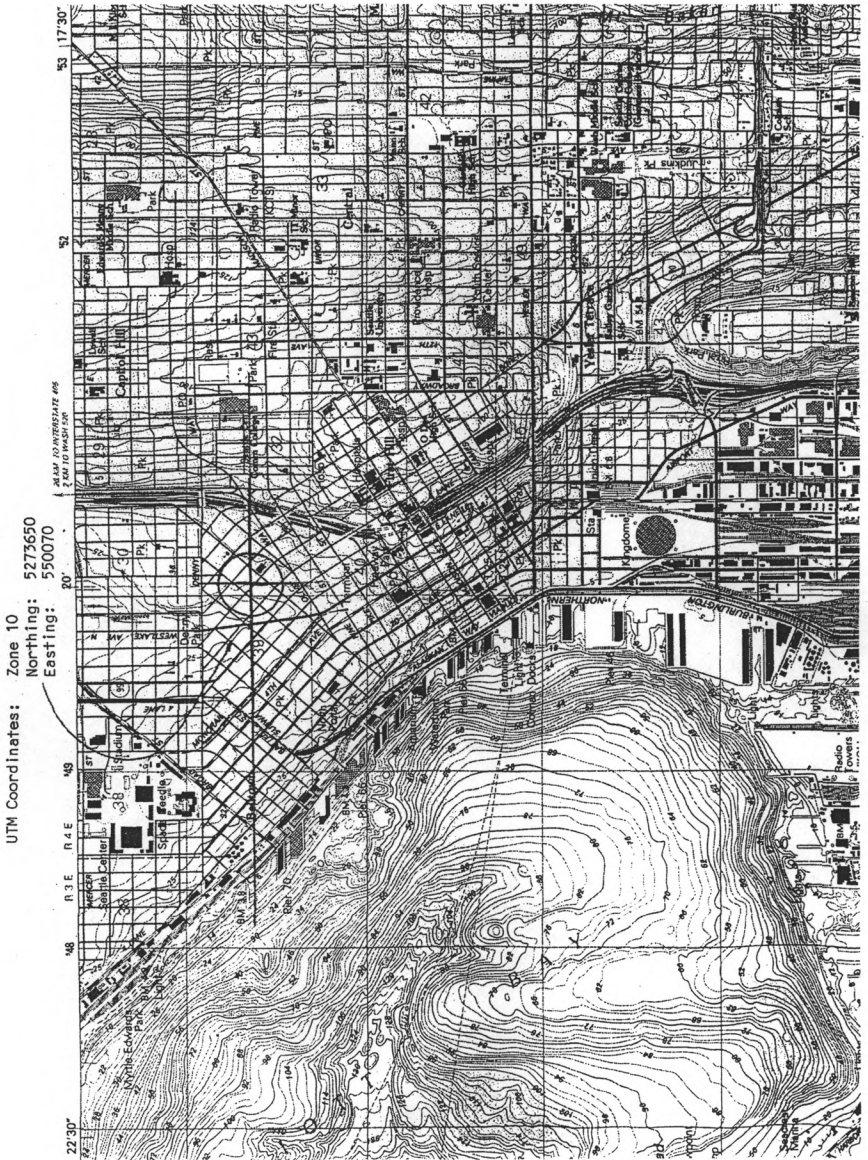


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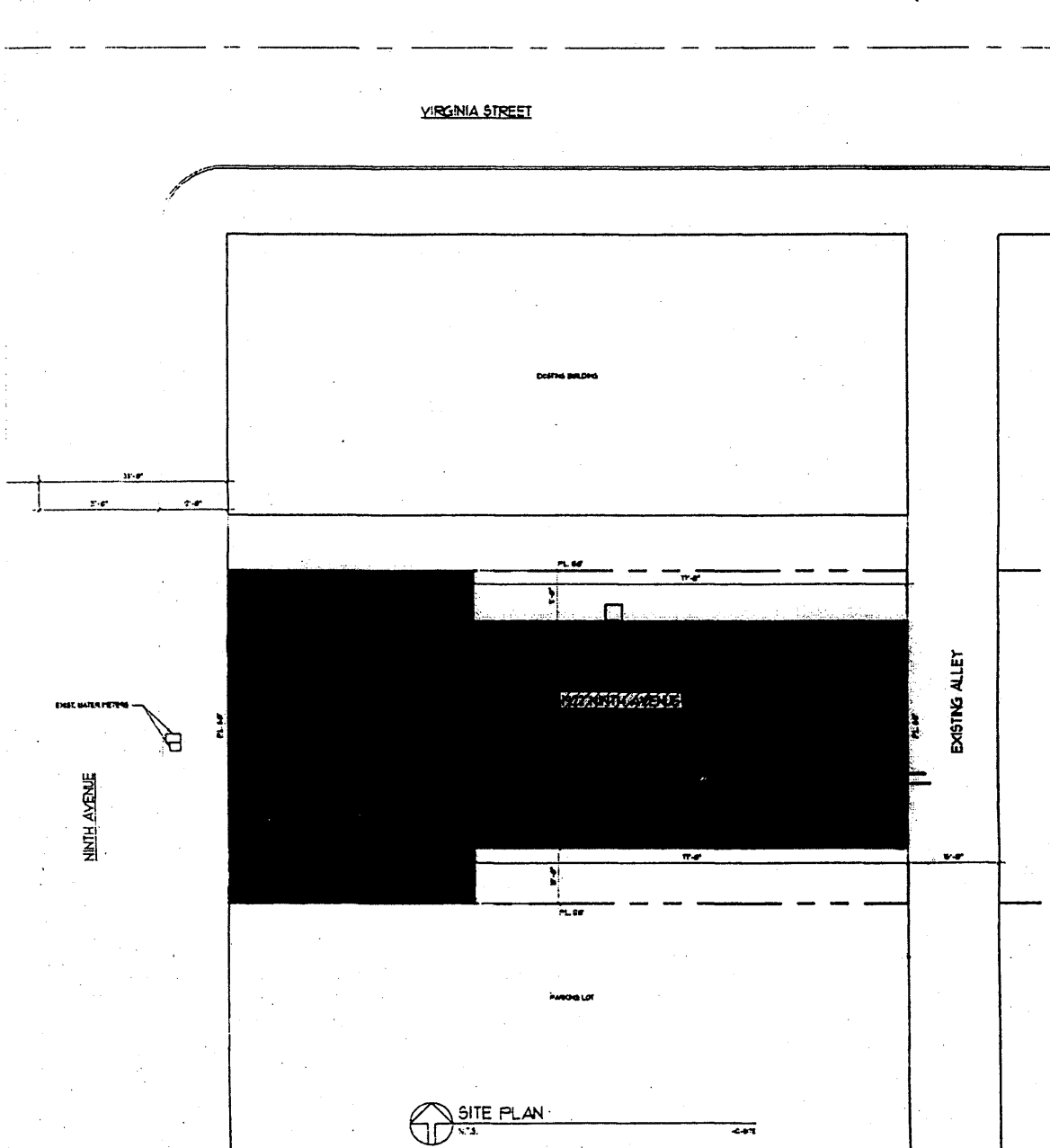
Photos and Graphic Images

Figure 1. Photocopy, Partial U.S.G.S. map with property circled, 1989.



El Rio Apartment Hotel/El Rio Apartments
National Register Nomination

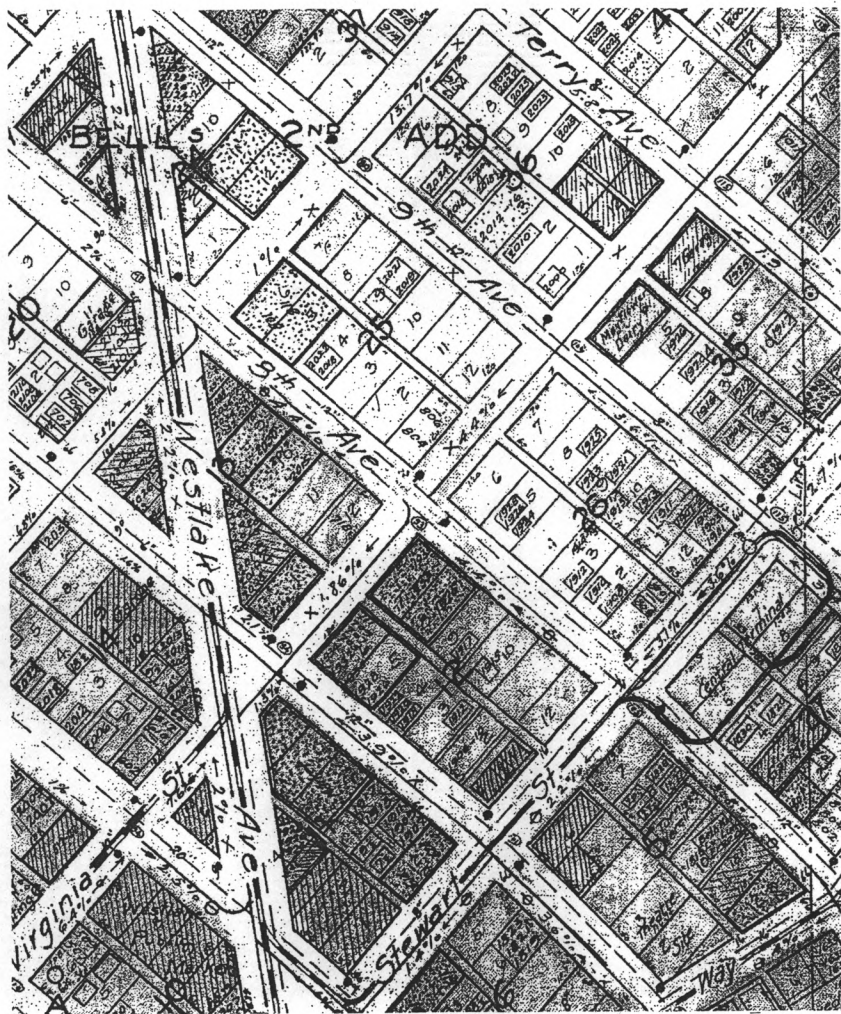
Figure 2. Photocopy, El Rio Apartments site plan.
Source: Tonkin/Hoyne/Lokan



<p>Tonkin/Hoyne/Lokan ARCHITECTURE & URBAN DESIGN</p> <p>204 FIRST AVENUE SOUTH, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98104 PHONE: (206) 624 7880 / FAX: (206) 622 1766</p>	<p>The El Rio Apartments SEATTLE, WASHINGTON</p> <p>LOW INCOME HOUSING INSTITUTE SEATTLE, WASHINGTON</p>	<p>SCALE: N.T.S. DATE: 11/16/98</p>
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Figure 3. Photocopy, Kroll Map of Seattle, 1920. The site of the El Rio is lot 5 of block 35, directly south of the Mayflower Dairy. Note the presence of a single family residence on site and of numerous garages in the area.

Source: The University of Washington, Special Collections Division.



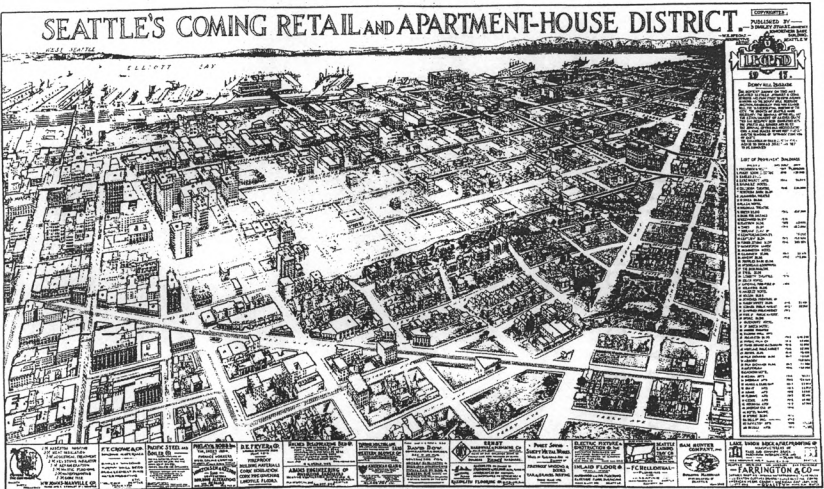


Figure 4. Birds-eye view of Seattle's Coming Retail and Apartment-House District, 1917.
Source: The University of Washington, Special Collections Division (Hotel and Apartment Pamphlet File).

Figure 5. Historic photograph showing phase two of the Denny Regrade, looking south from Fifth Avenue and Battery Street. This photo, taken on November 6, 1929, coincides with the El Rio's construction.

Source: Seattle Municipal Archives Photograph Collection



Figure 6. Historic Photograph of the Denny Regrade, taken on March 18, 1929. This picture, looking west from Seventh Avenue and Virginia Street, is only two blocks from the El Rio.
Source: Seattle Municipal Archives Photograph Collection.



Figure 7. Historic photograph (laser copy) by Asabel Curtis, c.1926, showing the Interurban Depot at 825 Stewart Street.

Source: The University of Washington, Special Collections Division.



Figure 8 Historic photograph, the El Rio Apartment Hotel, 1937.

Source: King County Tax Assessor's Files, State Regional Archives, King County Branch.



Figure 9. Artist rendering, c. 1920s, of Apartment House for the Apartment Investment Co. Inc. by John A. Creutzer, Architect.

Source: The University of Washington, Special Collections Division (John A. Creutzer File).

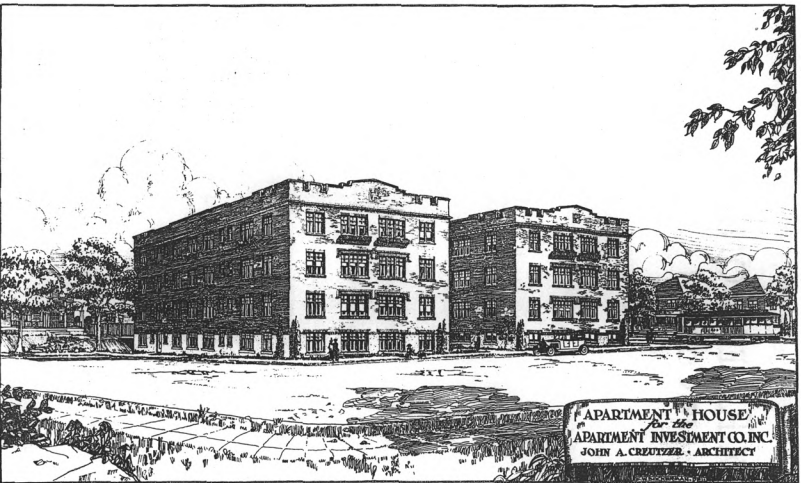
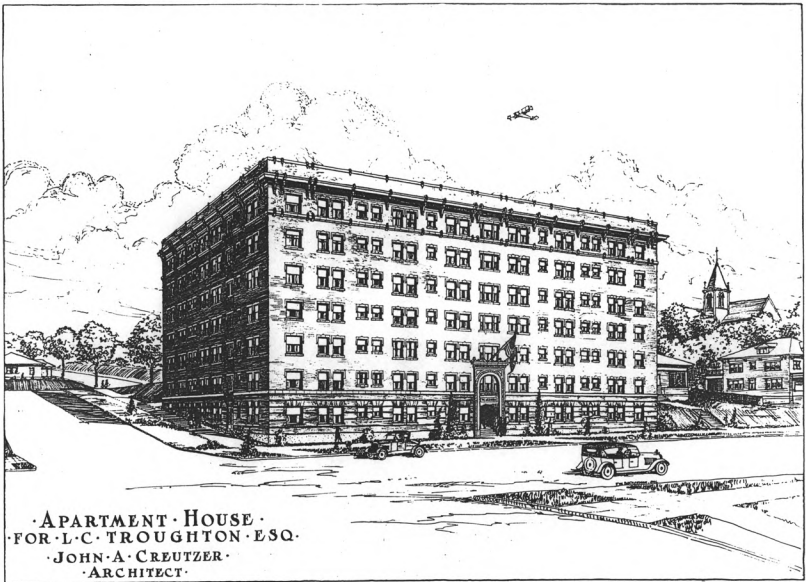


Figure 10. Artist rendering, ca.1920s, of Apartment House ("The Grenada") for L.C. Troughton Esq. Designed by John A. Creutzer, Architect. Source: The University of Washington, Special Collections Division (John A. Creutzer File).



·APARTMENT HOUSE·
·FOR L.C. TROUGHTON ESQ·
·JOHN A. CREUTZER·
·ARCHITECT·

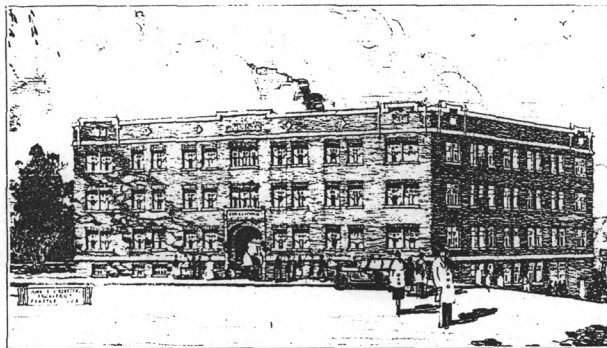
Figure 11. Artist rendering, ca. 1920s, of the Union Arms Apartments, located at East Union Street and Boylston Avenue. Designed by John A. Creutzer, Architect.

Source: The University of Washington, Special Collections Division (John A. Creutzer File).

First Mortgage

7%

Serial Gold Bonds



UNION ARMS APARTMENTS
Located at East Union Street and Boylston Avenue
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

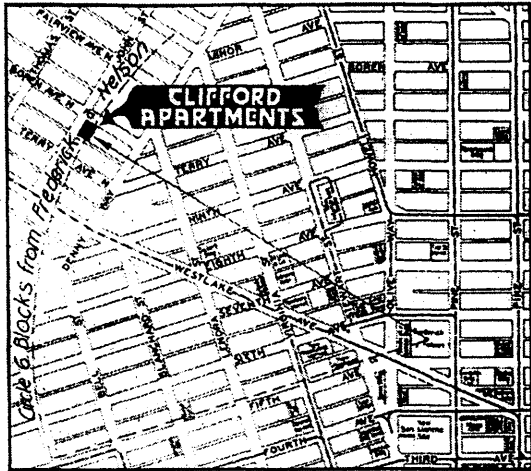
Offered by

JOHN E. PRICE & CO.

GOVERNMENT BONDS MUNICIPAL
SECOND AVE. COR. COLUMBIA, SEATTLE

Figure 12. Promotional brochure for the Clifford Apartments, ca. 1928, located at John Street and Boren Avenue North.
Source: The University of Washington, Special Collections Division (Hotel and Apartment Pamphlet File).

Location



Just six blocks walking distance from Frederick & Nelson's, over paved well lighted streets — a great saving of time and carfare to every family.

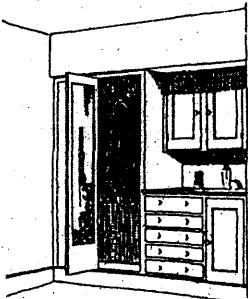
Your Living Room

Large (12 by 18 feet) and well lighted.
Papered in soft neutral tones.
Three electric base plugs.
Individual radio aerial plug in every room.
Furniture—by Frederick & Nelson exclusively.
Rugs of heavy carefully selected colorful velvet.
Four color schemes to choose from.
You may pick davenport coverings to harmonize:
Rich Taupe.
Steel Gray.
Deep Spanish Green.
Lovely Copper Tones (the very newest).
Comfortable Windsor chairs, occasional chairs, Spinet desks, wrought iron bridge lamps, cut glass mirrors, mahogany or wrought iron end tables, all bespeak comfort and livableness.

Your Kitchen

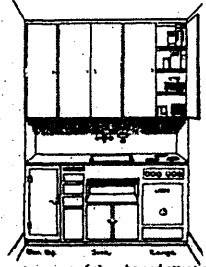
Equipped with Electric Ventilating Fan in every kitchen. This is an innovation for Seattle buildings. A Western Blower Whirlwind Ventilator in the outside wall of each kitchen. Press the button and in 40 seconds it pulls all smoke and odor out of the kitchen. Reverse the fan and cool, fresh air is forced into the kitchen as you wish it.
Seventy-five feet of shelf room in every cupboard. Twenty-five square feet of drawer bottom space.
Clean, sanitary metal cupboards with Duco finish—as easy to wash as a china plate.
Drainboards of porcelain and baked enamel.
Built-in electric ranges with ovens of baked enamel.
ELECTRIC REFRIGERATION

Actually Room for Your Things



A large dressing room with built-in features.
A built-in cabinet, eighteen inches deep and six feet wide, with five deep drawers.
A dustproof wardrobe.
A full length mirror conveniently placed.
Room for a wardrobe trunk and extra hanging space. (Also a ventilated trunk room in the basement).
A brightly colored bathroom, directly connected, with both a shower and tub, and an abundance of hot water.
No beds to interfere.

The Kitchen



A great amount of thought and attention has been given the design of the kitchen. The electric stove, the electric refrigerator, the plumbing and sink, the porcelain covered (same as bathroom) drain board, stove top, work table and splash back, with the metal cupboard (duco finished) all built into one big unit, by a hospital furniture supply company.
Each kitchen is ventilated with a West Wind blower fan, forcing 500 cubic feet of smoke and fumes from the kitchen every minute. When the fan is reversed it brings the same amount of fresh air into the kitchen from the outside.
A built-in broom closet and ironing board.

Meals at home are pleasant. The dinette table seats five people in comfort.

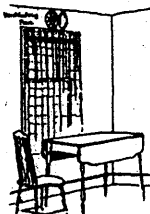


Figure 13. Historic photograph (laser copy) by Asahel Curtis, c.1925, showing the recently completed Medical and Dental Building, designed by John A. Creutzer (with consulting architect A.H. Albertson). When constructed, it was one of the four tallest strictly concrete buildings in the United States.
Source: The University of Washington, Special Collections Division.



Figure 14. Artist rendering of All Saints Church, Seattle, ca. 1920s. Designed by John A. Creutzer, Architect.

Source: The University of Washington, Special Collections Division (John A. Creutzer File).



Swedish All Saints Church - Seattle
John A. Creutzer - Architect

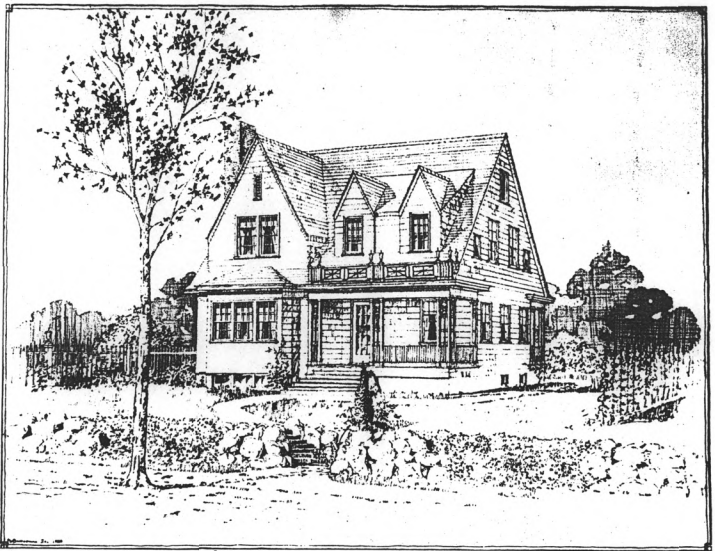


Figure 15. Artist rendering of private residence, 1920. John A. Creutzer, Architect.
Source: The University of Washington, Special Collections Division (John A. Creutzer File).

Figure 16. Artist rendering of Auditorium for The Sherman Co. Ltd., Vancouver, B.C., ca. 1920s.
John A. Creutzer, Architect.
Source: The University of Washington, Special Collections Division (John A. Creutzer File).

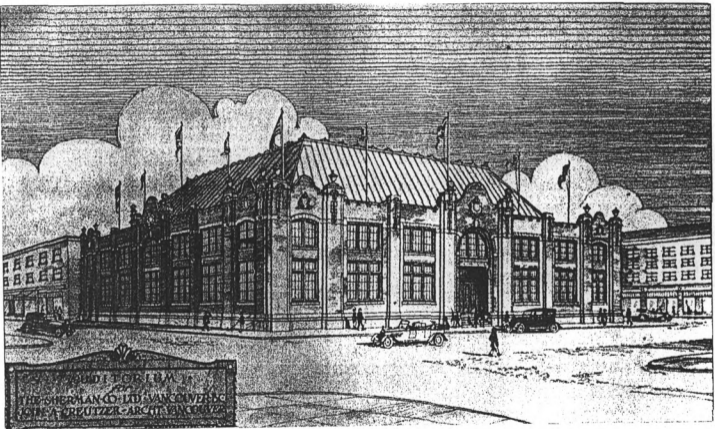
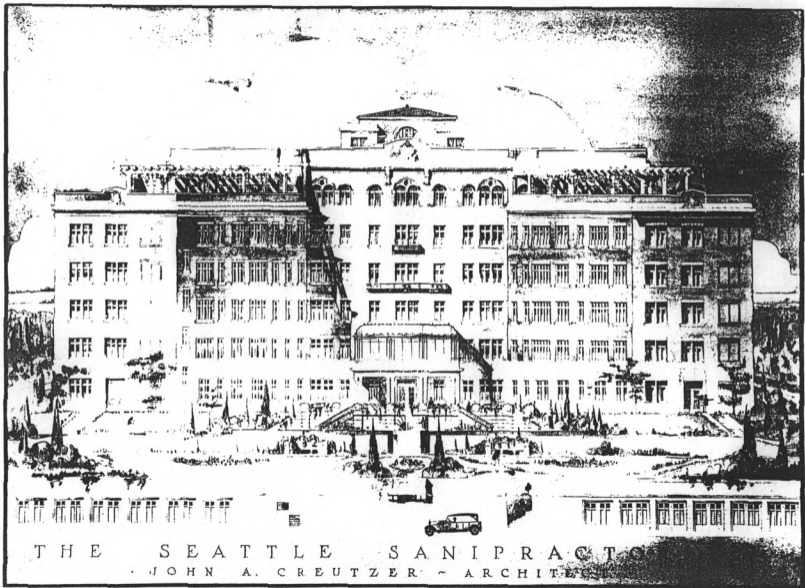


Figure 17. Artist rendering of The Seattle Sanipractorium (to be located at Madison Park, abutting Lake Washington), 1921. John A. Creutzer, Architect.
Source: The University of Washington, Special Collections Division (John A. Creutzer File).



THE SEATTLE SANIPRACTORIUM
JOHN A. CREUTZER ARCHITECT

Figure 18. Photocopy of artist rendering showing The First Presbyterian Church, Oriental Evangelical Society, 1920. This building, designed by John A. Cruizer, was to be erected at the corner of Eighth Avenue and Weller Street.
Source: *Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce* (5/10/20), p.1.

