

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAR 23 1977
DATE ENTERED	AUG 18 1977

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Empire State Building

AND/OR COMMON

Great Western Savings and Loan Building

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

W 901 Riverside

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Spokane

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

5th - Thomas Foley

STATE

Washington

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CODE  
53

COUNTY  
Spokane

CODE  
063

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
___DISTRICT	___PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	___AGRICULTURE ___MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	___UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL ___PARK
___STRUCTURE	___BOTH	___WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL ___PRIVATE RESIDENCE
___SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	___ENTERTAINMENT ___RELIGIOUS
___OBJECT	___IN PROCESS	___YES: RESTRICTED	___GOVERNMENT ___SCIENTIFIC
	___BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	___INDUSTRIAL ___TRANSPORTATION
		___NO	___MILITARY ___OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Great Western Savings and Loan

STREET & NUMBER

W 901 Riverside

CITY, TOWN

Spokane

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE  
Washington

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Spokane County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

W 1116 Broadway

CITY, TOWN

Spokane

STATE  
Washington

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Washington State Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

1975

\_\_\_FEDERAL STATE \_\_\_COUNTY \_\_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

CITY, TOWN

Olympia

STATE  
Washington

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

---

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Great Western Savings and Loan Building (originally the Empire State Building), is one of the most attractive buildings in Spokane's central business district. Located at 901-905 West Riverside, the six-story Great Western Building is linked to one of the most historic architectural groupings in the city. Sited on the southwest corner of Lincoln and Riverside, it adjoins the Cascade Block (1889) and the Crescent Building (sole structure in the center city which pre-dates the 1889 fire). The last building on the block is the Review Building (National Register), which with its massive red brick tower dominates the Riverside streetscape. Facing the Great Western Building across Riverside is the three-story Neo-classical Revival Post Office of 1908. Across Lincoln to the southeast is the historic Germond Block (1889).

The Great Western Building is situated on a lot 100 feet by 90 feet, occupying all but the rear five feet. Rising to a height of 96 feet, the building is rectangular in form. It consists of a structural steel framework with exterior brick facings. The walls are 16 inches thick on the street elevations. The ground floor has been modernized with a plate glass store front and is presently occupied by the offices of Great Western Savings and Loan. The flat roof is surfaced with tar and has skylights above the central court.

The street elevations of the Great Western Building are defined by continuous vertical piers and arcades from the third through the fifth stories. Horizontal movement is achieved by string courses at second, third, and sixth floor levels and by an elaborate cornice along the roofline. In addition, a curved corner at the intersection of these elevations continues the horizontal line of decorative spandrels and fenestration. The use of buff brick facing is unusual in Spokane where the majority of older commercial structures are finished with red brick. The buff-colored masonry of the Great Western Building is laid up in Flemish bond, with radiating voussoirs of brickwork above all second floor window openings. The exterior surfaces of the building are further defined by terra cotta ornament in the form of spandrel panels, keystones and consoles, pilaster capitals, and entablature details.

The fenestration of the Great Western Building is, for the most part, regular in design. All windows consist of double-hung, one-over-one light sash. However, the corner and outermost windows are approximately one and one-half the width of the outer windows on each facade. The most interesting unit of fenestration consists of arcaded window openings at the fifth floor level, within the central four or five bays of each street elevation. The round arches which form the uppermost portion of these openings spring from stylized Ionic capitals of terra-cotta, and the spandrels above are filled with ornament of the same material. The coupled outer windows of each facade are united from third to sixth floors by vertical mouldings of terra cotta. At the fifth story level, keystones above each window are linked to this moulding.

A distinctive feature of the Great Western Building is its projecting metal cornice. It is one of the earliest of such massive cornices to appear in Spokane's commercial architecture. The cornice is boxed and generously ornamented with modillions. Below it runs a continuous decorative frieze with abstract anthemion motifs. Above it is an articulated masonry parapet five feet in height.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAR 23 1977
DATE ENTERED	AUG 18 1977

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The Great Western Building has much surface detail, classical in flavor, that is expressed in the form of terra-cotta ornament. Mouldings around window openings and other decorative elements exhibit such motifs as the egg-and-dart, bead-and-reel, guilloche, and enriched talon. The principal motifs shown in the spandrels are floral in character, with accompanying shells, fruits, medallions, and geometric patterns. Two of the more intricate terra-cotta details are the stylized Ionic pilaster capitals, and the vertical pier panels at sixth-story level.

Equally as elaborate as the exterior, the interior of the Great Western Building is the most luxurious of any historic Spokane office structure. The lobbies feature marble wainscotting, copper-plated staircase newel posts, cast metal balusters and elevator cages, oak cornices and window and door surrounds. The lobbies themselves have been only minimally altered over the past 76 years.

In addition to modernization of the exterior shop fronts, the interior offices at ground-floor level have been seriously altered. Only the corner entrance to the building remains largely unchanged. The recessed entryway is lined with white marble facing and plate glass windows. Just inside is a small foyer whose walls are entirely surfaced with white marble.

The main lobby itself is narrow and forty feet in length. Its terrazzo floors are patterned in pink marble with a dark green border. A white marble facing is coursed to one-half the height of the walls. A brass radiator and original brass directory remain intact. The ceiling is coffered with light-stained mahogany beams. The principal decorative feature of the main lobby, however, is the staircase. It has elements of marble, including balusters which are enriched with a variety of carved, classical motifs. Atop the newel post is an ornate, copper-based lamp with multiple bulbs that illuminate the lobby. From the first landing upward, the staircase balusters are of metal cast in a lily and rosette pattern, with oak handrails.

Office interiors on the upper floor levels have also been significantly remodelled. However, most retain their original oak doors with glazed panels and moveable glazed transoms. Each office is separated from the interior court, or elevator lobby, by partitions that consist chiefly of oak-framed plate glass extending from wainscotting to ceiling. Thus on each floor level, exterior light is permitted to flow freely from the outside through each office, into the central lobby.

The central lobbies are formed by the elevator shafts, stairwell, and encircling offices. The east elevator has been replaced by a modern, enclosed unit. The west elevator is no longer in service and the cab has been removed. However, the cages have been retained on the upper floors as decorative features of the lobby areas. The cages are of metal with elements of oak and copper-clad metal. Similar materials are employed in the staircase. Marble wainscotting and oak cornices add to the richness of these interior courts, which are provided with an additional light source from one remaining central skylight.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1899-1900

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

J. K. Dow

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The economic growth that created the beautiful Empire State Building in Spokane, Washington sprang from the mineral wealth of the Coeur d'Alene district of Idaho, North Montana, and British Columbia. Two developers of that wealth, Charles Sweeny and F. Lewis Clark, with international connections, planned some of the most elaborate of Spokane's structures, including the six-story Empire State Building (later known as the Great Western Building). In 1900, John K. Dow, a Spokane pioneer architect, designed the Empire State Building as the first fireproof building in the city. Today it is the best remaining example of his skill in the design of business structures and is little altered by 76 years of use.

The name of the building is derived from the interests of one of its promoters, Charles Sweeny. An Anglo-Irishman, Sweeny was born in New York in 1849. He served as a youth in a New Jersey cavalry regiment under the command of Custer during the Civil War. After a brief term as a soldier of fortune in the later 1860's, Sweeny married in San Francisco. After participating in mining ventures in various areas he arrived in Spokane in 1882. With substantial mineral rights vested in the Last Chance mine, he attempted to protect his claim despite the fact that the adjoining Bunker Hill and Sullivan mines claimed the same veins. The conflict of interest flared into one of the fiercest mining litigations ever known.

During the suit Sweeny was virtually without funds and was forced to accept a job as deputy U. S. marshall during the violence of the Coeur d'Alene labor riots. After the violence faded, Sweeny went north to Rossland, British Columbia. With an initial \$30 in savings, Sweeny emerged in 1896 with \$100,000 in cash. In the interim he learned that the Supreme Court upheld his claims. An underpaid lawman-turned-millionaire in one year, Sweeny swiftly reasserted his friendship with the Rockefellers, Goulds and others. In 1900 he formed the Empire State-Idaho Company to manage his holdings. With a board of directors comprised of many of the most prominent New York capitalists, Sweeny became the West's leading mining man. He died in 1916 in the city he favored over all others, Spokane.

Sweeny's partner in many Spokane ventures was F. Lewis Clark, another mining man who became even more widely known than Sweeny. Born in Bangor, Maine in 1861 to a prominent New England family, Clark graduated from Harvard in 1883. He arrived in Spokane shortly thereafter. His early prominence in the city was the result of his founding the C&C Mills, an enterprise that grew from a small site on the Spokane Falls to a complex of grain elevators along all branch railroads out of Spokane. His later wealth came from mineral and railroad interests as well as real estate development in the city. Clark's two beautiful homes (one on the South Hill in Spokane, and a second at nearby Hayden Lake) are among the best known of the many beautiful mansions in the region.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Bean, Margaret. "Clark's Great Homes Much in Use Today" - Spokesman-Review  
 December 9, 1956.  
 "Business Blocks" - Spokesman-Review, July 24, 1899.  
 "Car of Marble for the Empire State" - Spokane Daily Chronicle, October 10, 1900.

continued on attached page

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 0	4 6 8 1 5 0	5 2 7 8 1 4 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Patsy M. Garrett, Historic Preservation Specialist

ORGANIZATION

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

DATE

April, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

2316 W. First Avenue

TELEPHONE

(202)753-4011

CITY OR TOWN

Spokane

STATE

Washington

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Jeanne M. Welch*

TITLE

Acting State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

3/16/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*Charles H. ...*

DATE

8-15-77

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAR 23 1977  
DATE ENTERED AUG 18 1977

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Clark gained international fame as a yachtsman. He acquired the "Spokane" in 1907, and with her won a second place in the prestigious German regatta. His international reputation was strengthened by his friendship with the Kaiser and other Prussian nobility. He maintained his high ranking with further wins in Spain and elsewhere.

The storybook aspect of the Clark's life ended abruptly in 1914. In January of 1914, F. Lewis Clark suddenly sent his wife and faithful chauffeur north to Spokane from their winter residence at Santa Barbara. Shortly thereafter Clark's hat was found floating off the dock. While his wife waited for years at Hayden Lake with a fortune dwindling to a mere \$10,000, no further clues were ever discovered in one of the most mysterious disappearances of the early 20th Century.

The year 1900 was a key period for the Clark-Sweeny partnership in real estate development, for they constructed a number of significant buildings during that time. Designed by J. K. Dow, the Spokane Club (now the American Legion Building), was widely considered one of the finest non-commercial structures in the city. However, their major effort of that year was the Empire State Building. In comparison to it, all other buildings in Spokane were overshadowed. While other buildings would make greater claims to fireproofing, height and/or mass of cornice, no other building would boast as distinctive an exterior for a decade. Only the Davenport Hotel in 1914 would produce an interior that surpassed its elegance.

John K. Dow, designer of the Empire State Building, was born in Gaylord, Minnesota in 1862. He died 99 years later in Kirkland, Washington. Over 72 years of his life were spent in Washington; half a century in Spokane. Arriving in Spokane before the massive fire of 1889 he first gained major prominence in 1900 as a commercial architect with the design of the Spokane Club and the Empire State Building. Other significant structures included the Masonic Temple (Riverside Avenue Historic District), August Paulsen residence, and numerous other buildings. Best known of all his structures is the eleven-story August Paulsen Building, hailed as the first skyscraper in the city with the largest cornice in the west in 1908.

Described as the first fireproof building in the city, the Empire State Building was considered by Spokaneites to be the finest structure erected since the Review Building (National Register 1975). With open elevator cages believed to be "the fastest lifts west of Chicago", its thrill to young and old far surpassed that of the nearby Review Building. Originally estimated by Clark and Sweeny to cost about \$100,000, the final cost was closer to \$800,000 as completed by Peter Petersen, the general contractor. Cost overruns were caused by the price of Carnegie steel, imported oak and marble, and a shortage of brick in the Spokane kilns created by a massive building boom in the Inland Empire.

The building was owned by the same company, Central Business Property, from 1912 to 1958. Since that time Great Western Savings and Loan has owned the building, retaining the ground floor for their company offices. Prior to that time, from 1900 to 1958, Washington Water Power was the major ground floor occupant of the structure.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAR 23 1977
DATE ENTERED	AUG 18 1977

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

As the pride of the city in the early part of the Century, the Empire State Building was probably the most photographed structure in town with the exception of the Court-house. Virtually all City Directories prior to 1917 feature at least two photos of the building in advertisements or in Chamber of Commerce literature.

Dow's architectural talent and Clark and Sweeny's money made the exterior of the Empire State Building one of the most elaborate and ornamental of the downtown district. However, it is the interior that is most impressive today. The darkening of the terracotta has obscured the beauty of the Mercury busts, Ionic pilasters and other detail of the exterior. The interior, however, retains its stately grace. The restraint used in the rich marble and oak is equalled only by the extravagance of the steel and copper grillwork.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAR 23 1977
DATE ENTERED	AUG 18 1977

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

- "Clark and Sweeny Build" - Spokesman-Review, May 26, 1899.
- "Fine Office Buildings" - Spokane Daily Chronicle, February 25, 1899.
- "F. Lewis Clark" - Spokane Falls and Its Exposition, October 1890.
- "John Dow" - Seattle Times, September 20, 1957.
- Kalez, Jay J. "Up and Up Went Spokane". Chronicle, May 6, 1971
- Malott, Conner. "Charles Sweeny" - Spokesman-Review, July 23, 1916
- Polk's Directory to the City of Spokane - 1900-1917.
- "Rites for John Dow" - Kent News Journal, June 7, 1961.
- "Sale of Building on Riverside Set" - Spokane Daily Chronicle, August 2, 1958.
- "See This City Grow" - Spokane Daily Chronicle, March 11, 1899.
- "Six Story Block" - Spokesman-Review, April 2, 1899.
- "Work on the Empire State Block" - Spokesman-Review, June 24, 1899.