

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name National Bank of Tacoma

Other names/site number National Bank of Washington; Tacoma Art Museum

## 2. Location

street & number 1123 Pacific Avenue

not for publication

city or town Tacoma

vicinity

State Washington code WA county Pierce code 053 zip code 98402

## 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.)

*Allyson M.*  
Signature of certifying official/Title

6-19-06  
Date

WASHINGTON STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
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 certifying official/Title

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 of the Keeper

Date of Action

*for*  
Edson H. Beall 8.2.06

## 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not incl. previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Non-Contributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing:**

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register****6. Functions or Use****Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/financial

bank

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

CULTURE/museum

cultural institution

**7. Description****Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals

Italian Renaissance

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Concrete

roof Built-up

other Stone: granite (base)

Stone: sandstone

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

**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.)

Property is:

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1921-1941

**Significant Dates**

1921 (date of construction)

1941 (renovation)

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Sutton & Whitney (Architects)

Albertson, Cornell Bros. & Walsh (Builders)

Lea, Pearson & Richards (Architects)

Liddle, Alan (Architect)

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

**9. Major Bibliographical References****Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.) SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

**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 Engineering
- Record# \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

**Name of repository:**

Tacoma Public Library Northwest Room;  
 Washington State Historical Society

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** Less than 1 acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM References on a continuation sheet.)

1	<input type="text" value="10"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/> <input type="text" value="425"/> <input type="text" value="10"/>	<input type="text" value="52"/> <input type="text" value="333"/> <input type="text" value="81"/>	3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing			
2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing			

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

See continuation sheet.

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See continuation sheet.

**11. Form Prepared By**name/title Michael Sullivan, Principal and Eugenia Woo, Associateorganization Artifacts Consulting, Inc.date March 6, 2006street & number 201 N. Yakima Avetelephone 253.572.4599city or town Tacomastate WAzip code 98403

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**Additional Documentation**

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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.  
Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps  
Pierce County Assessor's Map

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.  
Historic photographs

**Additional items**

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

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

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name 1123 Pacific Partners, LLC  
street & number 2905 Jahn Ave NW, Ste 7 telephone 253.858.8201  
city or town Gig Harbor state WA zip code 98335

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### NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION:

Located in the commercial core of the city of Tacoma in Pierce County, Washington, construction of the National Bank of Tacoma Building began in the spring of 1920 and was completed one year later in May of 1921. The three-story plus basement, rectangular plan, Italian Renaissance style National Bank of Tacoma Building stands at the northeast corner of Pacific Avenue and 12<sup>th</sup> Street (1123 Pacific Avenue) on a flat rectangular corner lot. The 26,804 square foot building is oriented to the west facing Pacific Avenue—historically Tacoma's main commercial corridor. The restrained Classical style of the building was appropriate for the well-established bank. Its design and construction showed a level of permanence and solidness.

Adjacent to the National Bank of Tacoma Building on the north is the sixteen-story, brick and terra cotta clad National Realty Building (1910). Across 12<sup>th</sup> Street to the south is a twenty-three story, concrete office building. To the east, across an alley, is the 1909, limestone-clad, three-story Federal Building (listed on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places). A seven-story, reinforced concrete commercial building (ca. 1980) is located across Pacific Avenue to the west. The topography in this part of Tacoma is flat.

The building retains its exterior character-defining features, massing, and scale and still exhibits a significant presence in downtown Tacoma and anchors the corner of Pacific Avenue and 12<sup>th</sup> Street. After 85 years, the National Bank of Tacoma Building remains a testament to Tacoma's history. It exhibits many years of constant use and wear, and vacancy in recent years, but the building is in excellent condition. The current owner has plans to return the building to commercial use, possibly as a bank.

### Exterior

The three-story National Bank of Tacoma Building is rectangular in shape, measuring 50' x 120', constructed of reinforced concrete, and clad in granite at the base and Wilkeson sandstone on the rest of the three exposed facades (west, east, and south). The north side abuts an adjacent building and is not visible. A stringcourse separates the first story and mezzanine level from the upper two stories, creating a distinct horizontal division. The spandrels for the upper story windows create the dividing line between the second and third stories. A projecting cornice with dentils underneath tops the building. Pilasters crowned with Corinthian capitals and framed in a spiral/rope motif characterize the upper stories. Other notable ornamentation includes the cartouches on the main and south facades. The large, oval cartouche above the

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front entrance bears the inscription, “NBT,” and Roman numerals for 1920, the year construction of the building began. The face of a lion is carved on top of the cartouche. Four smaller cartouches with coat of arms symbols are located above the two first-story windows on the main facade and the two first-story windows on the ends of the south facade.

### *Windows*

Original, arched, metal clad wood windows known as Kalamein windows with their original mullions and frame, remain on the first story. Upper stories feature bronze and anodized aluminum windows added ca. 1964-1969. Their design, while sympathetic to the original form, does not replicate the originals. Original spandrels divide second- and third-story windows. Originally the upper story windows featured sixteen divided lights with the center four lights operating as a pivoting window. The existing operable windows consist of six divided lights. An arched transom window above the main entrance has one operable pane. The non-historic first-story windows below the arched windows are fixed. A narrow window opening on the east (rear) facade is covered with metal grillwork.

### *Entrances*

The building contains three entrances—one each on the west (main), south (side), and east (rear) facades. The main entrance to the building leads through the original, bronze double doors off Pacific Avenue into a vestibule with a set of glass double doors providing access to the lobby. The frame that surrounds the entrance represents the building’s most decorative detail work. Constructed of Wilkeson sandstone, the door frame features detailed relief carvings carved in place. An inscription on a block of sandstone above the door frame gives the date the bank was founded (1885) and the year that construction of the building was begun (1920). A cornice, dentils, and water leaf and dart motif characterize the top of the frame. Below these features, two urns with flowers and fruit designs flank the sign band. The sign band, currently covered with a metal plate, originally bore the name of the bank, “National Bank of Tacoma.” Below the sign band and urns is a rope motif which gives the door frame a horizontal division. Below this rope motif runs an elaborately carved, symmetrical surround depicting images of urns and floral and leaf designs.

A secondary entrance on the south side near the rear of the building was added during the 1959-1960 renovation. This door opening replaced an original window opening. Granite lines the walls of this recessed entrance to match the granite base of the building. Aluminum framed, glass double doors provide access to the rear of the building. A large, non-historic, round awning provides coverage for the entrance. A service entrance with a metal door is located on the east (rear) side. This door opening was not original to the building.

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### *Roof*

The roof of the National Bank of Tacoma Building contains the usual rooftop features such as mechanical equipment and an elevator and stairs penthouse constructed of concrete masonry units and partially clad in stucco. Rooftop features are set back from the roof line and concentrated on the north side of the roof. The roof slopes gently down towards the north and is coated with a built-up bituminous roof material.

### **Interior**

The interior has seen changes throughout the decades, particularly when the bank underwent expansion of services requiring renovations of the interior, and when the building was converted into a museum. The existing materials, finishes, and floor plan comprise features from the original and from subsequent alterations.

### *First Floor*

The vestibule is the first space upon entry into the building from the front entrance. A set of metal and glass double doors separates the vestibule from the lobby. The marble floor in the lobby and vestibule is original with some newer patches added in the 1959-1960 renovation of the building. Walls are finished in the original Caen stone. The historic plaster ceiling in the lobby is banded in low relief with recessed square panels (and one center rectangular panel) containing a flower motif, egg and dart, and water leaf and dart borders. An historic ceiling light illuminates this space. To the south of the lobby is an office and coat room. To the north is one of two elevators in the building. The other elevator is located at the northeast corner. Stairs that lead to the basement and to a separate staircase for the upper floors are located in the northwest corner of the building. Two more staircases occupy the northeast and southeast corners of the building. The three staircases at the corners are utilitarian in design with painted concrete steps, iron railings, and wood banisters. The curved form of the staircase at the southeast corner sets it apart from the others. The stairs leading to the basement served a public role in providing access to safe deposit boxes and consequently exhibited the same marble used on the lobby floor. The lobby opens into a main space (former banking room). This large open space features wood-framed, sheetrock perimeter walls curved at the corners. The walls were installed at the time of the building's conversion to the Tacoma Art Museum in 1970-1971. The added south wall blocks the south windows. The main gallery flooring consists of vinyl over the original marble and a drop ceiling with lower level flexible museum lighting. The ceiling conceals air conditioning ducts and a fluorescent lighting system from an earlier bank renovation. The building's historic barrel vaulted ceiling and plaster beams, including their decorative relief work, remain intact but



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are not visible from the first floor due to the added drop ceiling. The drop ceiling added in the 1940-1941 renovation consists of acoustic-celotex ceiling panels. The original ceiling elements are visible from within the crawl space accessed through the mezzanine level. A workroom and service receiving area occupy the rear, east end of the first floor.

### *Mezzanine*

The mezzanine level projects above the lobby area only and does not extend any deeper into the building. The mezzanine level served as an office area overlooking the main banking room. Historic arched windows frame views from this space to the exterior. Finishes in this space consist of carpeted floors and plaster walls. The east wall was added during one of the renovations. An opening in the east wall of the mezzanine provides access to the crawl space between the first floor and the second floor.

### *Second Floor*

The second floor contains the following spaces: a lobby off the northwest elevator, offices, an auditorium, and a workroom. Finishes in the auditorium and workroom consist of vinyl flooring with carpet in the other spaces. The auditorium has wood-framed, sheetrock walls curved at the corners. The walls were installed at the time of the building's conversion to the Tacoma Art Museum in 1970-1971, and separate the auditorium from the offices. As on the first floor, these walls also block the windows. Fluorescent lights in the acoustical tile ceiling provide the only light source for the space. The large office at the southwest corner was the Museum Director's office. The wall panels date back to the days of the bank. The smaller offices have sheetrock walls and a drop ceiling.

### *Third Floor*

The third floor contains open spaces, a storage room, library, former Museum members' lounge, and men's and women's restrooms. Floors are carpeted throughout except in the restrooms and in the open space at the southeast corner. This room has wood floors, paneled wainscoting, a fireplace mantel, and molding. The restrooms have vinyl flooring, walls with tile and wallpaper, and standard fixtures and stalls. Display cases line the walls of some of the open spaces and the library contains a shelving system. Lighting is a mix of track and recessed canister lights.

### *Basement*

The building's basement level houses the original bank vaults and rooms for storage, supplies, and heating and ventilating systems. The museum used these vaults to secure artwork. The vault system is a 40' x 80' unit confined within 18" double-reinforced concrete walls in the center of the basement area. Separated

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from the remaining basement space by an encircling passageway, heavy steel doors and combination timelocks guard this vault system at each of its entrances. The basement retains its original plaster walls and ceiling, wood door frames and trim, and built-in wood cabinets. The flooring consists of concrete, carpet, and vinyl. The original marble floor is covered over in the more public spaces of the basement.

### Alterations

The interior of the National Bank of Tacoma Building has been altered over the years because of the bank's own renovation efforts undertaken to meet its changing needs and the Tacoma Art Museum's conversion of the use of the building. However, the building generally maintained its spatial relationships throughout these changes.

The local Tacoma newspapers followed the construction of the building and reported on its subsequent changes through much of the building's life. These newspaper accounts offer glimpses into the property as it developed over the years.

Following is a list of known alterations to the building:

- **1940-1941:** The bank undertook its first modernization efforts. Various bank departments were relocated to meet needs of the time. The main banking room on the first floor was changed to increase efficiency. Original tellers' cages were removed and replaced by a continuous counter with marble deal plates and mahogany cabinets. New chandeliers replaced the original fixtures in the main banking room. Acousti-celotex was applied to the vaulted ceilings to reduce noise. Indirect lighting and acoustic-celotex on the ceilings were added to the second floor work room and in the Installment Credit Loan Department on the same floor.
- **1954:** The third floor was renovated, adding new walnut paneling on walls, acoustical tile ceiling, recessed fluorescent lighting, carpeted floors, and air-conditioning. Spaces were divided into small and large conference rooms.
- **1959-1960:** The bank embarked on an extensive modernization. In the main banking room, a drop ceiling with fluorescent lighting was added, the tellers' counter from the 1940-1941 renovation was removed and replaced with new tellers' units. Walls were covered in walnut flexwood panels, and pilasters were sheathed in vinyl-coated, driftwood silver foil. All other floors received new finishes. A new entrance near the rear of the building on the south side was added for the convenience of customers.

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- **Ca. 1964-1969:** According to available records, some time between the 1964 and before the Tacoma Art Museum purchased the property in 1970, the building's original windows (except the arched windows on the first story) were removed and replaced by the existing bronze, anodized aluminum windows.
- **1970-1971:** The Tacoma Art Museum converted the building into a museum. The adaptability of the building meant few changes for the upper floors where administrative offices, a library, a board room, docent facilities, and small, intimate galleries for the museum were located. The large open space of the former main banking room allowed for easy adaptive reuse for the museum's main gallery without extensive renovation. The tellers' units were removed to create an unobstructed flow of space. Existing windows on the south side of the space were blocked out and wall carpeting used to cover four new walls with curved corners which were installed over the original walls. The existing drop ceiling, which concealed air conditioning ducts and fluorescent lighting system, was left intact and was supplemented with lower level flexible museum lighting. The floor behind the former tellers' units was originally linoleum laid over concrete. The main part of the banking room floor was originally marble. Vinyl was laid on the floor over the original marble, linoleum and concrete. A contoured wall on the second floor was added to separate a new 200-seat auditorium from the offices.

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### Narrative Statement of Significance

The National Bank of Tacoma Building, located in the heart of Tacoma's Central Business District, is eligible for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. The period of significance begins in 1921 when construction of the building was completed and ends in 1941 when the building underwent its first significant renovation. Commerce is the area of significance demonstrating the building's eligibility under Criterion A for its association with broad patterns of history, which led to the development of downtown Tacoma as a commercial center. The National Bank of Tacoma Building housed the oldest and longest-operating bank in Tacoma and was hailed as a monument to the city's financial security. For fifty years (1921-1971), the National Bank of Tacoma (founded in 1885 and renamed the National Bank of Washington in 1937) operated a well-regarded financial institution in the building which served as its headquarters. The building is also eligible under Criterion C (area of significance: Architecture) as an excellent example of the work of one of Tacoma's most prominent and prolific architecture firms, Sutton and Whitney. The building's Italian Renaissance style serves as a good local example of that style.

### Historical Development of Tacoma's Downtown

Located in western Washington, Tacoma is the second most populous city in the state. Geographically, the city continues to be shaped by its placement overlooking Commencement Bay in the southern Puget Sound region and by the steep contours of its topography. Puget Sound is the deep sea inlet arm of the Pacific Ocean named after Peter Puget, an aide to British Captain George Vancouver, the first non-native to discover the inlet in 1792. Rising prominently to the southeast is Mount Rainier (elev. 14,410 feet), an active volcano providing a dramatic backdrop to the city. Named after British Naval officer Peter Rainier, the mountain's Indian name is *Tahoma*. To the north and south of the city are the Puyallup and Nisqually rivers. The region's native populations, the Puyallup and Nisqually Indians, were hunters and gatherers living in an area that provided abundant sources for sustenance—salmon, shellfish, fowl, seal, deer, and bear, in addition to fruits, berries, and plant life.

Euro-American settlement along the shores of Commencement Bay began in the 1850s. Similar to many other western settlements, Tacoma's non-native origins began with the railroad. Known as Tacoma City and located a few miles north of the present downtown, the new settlement slowly attracted pioneer settlers. By the early 1870s, Tacoma City boasted a mill, school, public hall, store, hotel and a handful of other businesses supported by a population of about 100 people.<sup>1</sup> The area was largely forested, providing ample natural resources for the mill.

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In 1873, the Northern Pacific Railroad (NP) announced that it would locate a terminus on Commencement Bay. Tacoma City had been chosen for the end of the line and Tacomans were elated as they anticipated economic and population growth and prosperity. However, the NP chose to create a town called New Tacoma on property it had purchased closer to the head of the bay, creating an instant rivalry between Tacoma City (Old Tacoma) and New Tacoma. The Tacoma Land Company, the NP's property development firm, acquired land which included two miles of waterfront and 2,700 acres of what would become downtown Tacoma. The two towns eventually united in 1884 to become one, Tacoma.

Formation of the city's seminal land use pattern was dominated by the Tacoma Land Company which developed most of the city. The Tacoma Land Company controlled the use of parcels by insisting on specific uses before it sold the land. The company essentially created districts defined by use (such as the wholesale warehouse district, industrial district, business district, etc.) by virtue of its tight control, and sold land only to those who were interested in developing within a small geographic area. The city experienced two periods of intensive building: 1888-1892 and 1902-1912. Like the rest of the country, Tacoma experienced severe economic depression during the panic of 1893 but rebounded for its biggest building boom in the early 1900s. Between 1900 and 1910, the population grew from 37,714 to 83,743 people. Growth and development continued after 1912. By 1920, the population was 96,743.<sup>2</sup>

Commencement Bay also played a large role in the development of the city. The City Waterway, created in 1902, improved commercial activity going into and leaving Tacoma. The waterway allowed Tacoma to grow into one of the busiest waterfronts in the country, accessible by sea and rail. Vast grain warehouses and lumber and flour mills developed along the west side of the waterway between the entrances to Commencement Bay and Eleventh Street. Downtown Tacoma stood above on the bluffs and bustled with commercial activity. Industrial areas continued to expand south of downtown along the railroad and east along the tideflats. The wholesale business was a major industry that developed during Tacoma's building boom. Substantial buildings that were constructed for the jobbers (wholesalers) were among the most expensive and impressive buildings erected during the city's 1902-1912 building boom. Pacific Avenue served as the main commercial thoroughfare in downtown Tacoma but hotels, office buildings, apartments, and stores bustled with activity on other downtown streets.

Even after downtown expanded, Pacific Avenue between 9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> streets remained the heart of downtown Tacoma where most major commerce was conducted within several dense blocks. The northeast corner of Pacific Avenue and 12<sup>th</sup> Street held promise as a prime location for a bank. It was on this corner that the National Bank of Tacoma chose to build its monument to commerce in 1920 (construction was completed in 1921).

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### National Bank of Tacoma

The history of the National Bank of Tacoma inextricably ties to the growth and development of Tacoma itself. The bank resulted from a merger in 1913 between Pacific National Bank and the National Bank of Commerce. In 1885, one year after Tacoma was incorporated, the Pacific National Bank was chartered to conduct general banking business in the city. The bank opened its doors for business on January 2, 1886, in the newly built Chamber of Commerce Building at the southeast corner of Pacific Avenue and 12<sup>th</sup> Street. The bank's original capital amounted to \$50,000 but this would soon grow. At the time, there were only two other banks in the city—Tacoma National Bank (at Pacific Avenue and 10<sup>th</sup> Street) and Merchants National (at Pacific Avenue and 11<sup>th</sup> Street). In 1885 the city's population numbered only approximately 6,900, underscoring both the importance the city's growing industrial and commercial development held for the banking industry as a revenue source and the degree to which industry and commerce with their increasing regional, national and international transactions depended upon banks.

The city of Tacoma as it was in 1885 is described by L.R. Manning, one of the founders of Pacific National Bank, on the institution's thirtieth anniversary in 1915:

*“The business portion of the city occupied only a few blocks on Pacific avenue from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> streets, with a few scattered buildings above 9<sup>th</sup> and below 13<sup>th</sup>. The principal industries were the Tacoma Mill at Old Town; Hatch's mill, located about where Commercial dock now stands; the Tacoma Flouring mill; Snyder & Stevens' mill, and J.F. Hart mill at the head of the bay; and some repair shops of the Northern Pacific, which landed passengers once a day at the station on 17<sup>th</sup> and Railroad (now Commerce) street. The first few years in the history of the Pacific National bank were busy ones indeed, new industries, business enterprises, and transportation lines were constantly being launched and the foundation of the commercial and industrial greatness of the city was firmly established.”<sup>3</sup>*

In the summer of 1887, a year and a half after the Pacific National Bank opened for business, the first direct transcontinental train into Tacoma arrived, establishing Tacoma as the true western terminus of the Northern Pacific Railroad. This created widespread interest in developing Tacoma into a full-fledged city. The completed rail line made transportation of wheat possible from Eastern Washington to Tacoma for shipping abroad. The city had no facilities for handling the storage and loading of transported wheat, and individuals from the Pacific National Bank joined with local businessmen David Wilson and I.T. Reese to create the Tacoma Dock and Warehouse Company in April 1887. “Nine hundred feet of waterfront, just south of the Tacoma Mill, were leased from the Northern Pacific, and the first wheat warehouse was constructed thereon, in time for that season's crop. The dock and warehouse were afterward sold to the Puget Sound Flouring Mills company...”<sup>4</sup> By the early 1900s, Tacoma's waterfront was lined with over a

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mile of wheat warehouses, making the city's port one of the most significant on the West coast.

With the growth of business and industry in Tacoma, the Pacific National Bank quickly increased its capital, its growth mirroring the intense growth of the city. It soon outgrew its small quarters in the Chamber of Commerce Building and in 1888, purchased a lot on the corner of Pacific Avenue and 13<sup>th</sup> Street and erected its own building in 1891.

The Pacific National Bank was one of the few banks in Tacoma to survive the Panic of 1893 which struck the nation on May 4<sup>th</sup>. Like many other cities, Tacoma experienced cycles of boom and bust. Business conditions changed in 1893, when the United States toppled into a devastating depression started by the panic. Tacoma businesses and industries closed. Crash followed crash.

*“The gigantic liquidation was in progress and it paralyzed every industrial sinew. The Northwest suffered most. Rich men sawed wood, picked blackberries and dug clams for livelihood. Women with diamonds and valuable deeds resorted to kitchen labor to keep the larder replenished. Men who had ridden in carriages walked, though the empty street cars, rattling in their own poverty, would carry them for five cents. Fine properties, once rich revenue producers, were a drug, and were given rent-free in return for mere guardianship...Hatred soured every community. Those who had been rich and especially the bankers, were held responsible for the cataclysm, and were threatened with personal violence.”<sup>5</sup>*

At the time, there were twenty-one banks in Tacoma. Only seven survived: Pacific National, National Bank of Commerce, London & San Francisco Bank, Bank of British Columbia, State Bank of Puget Sound, Citizens National Bank, and Fidelity Bank. Pacific National Bank's survival was testament to both the solid foundation upon which it was created and high standing in the community of the men who founded it.

Tacoma began to recover from the depression by the mid-1890s. The Pacific National Bank soon began acquiring other banks such as Citizens National Bank (1895), Lumbermen's National (1905), and in 1913, it consolidated with the National Bank of Commerce, forming the National Bank of Tacoma with \$1,000,000 in capital. When the Pacific National Bank joined forces with the National Bank of Commerce, it assumed the functions of a much larger institution. The consolidated institution retained and worked under the original charter of the Pacific National Bank, but changed its name to the National Bank of Tacoma to better reflect its place in the city.

After years of occupancy in the old National Bank of Commerce Building on Pacific Avenue and 13<sup>th</sup> Street, the National Bank of Tacoma desired a new home for the sole use of the institution. In May 1920, construction began on the bank's new building on the northeast corner of Pacific Avenue and 12<sup>th</sup> Street. In

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just over one year on June 1, 1921, the bank occupied the building and opened its doors to the public.

### National Bank of Tacoma Building Development and Use History

When the National Bank of Tacoma decided to build a new headquarters, it chose a prominent location in the city's central business district—the northeast corner of Pacific Avenue and 12<sup>th</sup> Street, which the bank believed would always be a central point in the city's business life. National Bank of Tacoma president, Samuel M. Jackson, took great interest in the building's design, even creating a bank building committee which approved the plans for the modern, state-of-the-art structure. Jackson also visited all the large Pacific Coast cities to collect design ideas. He then reported his findings to the architects.

Excavation of the site began on May 20, 1920, followed shortly by construction. The building's progress was of great interest to the local newspapers which called the design by the Tacoma architecture firm, Sutton and Whitney, one of the handsomest bank structures in the country. The construction of the new National Bank of Tacoma as well as another bank in Tacoma was seen as indicative of the economic health, stability, and progress in the entire city drawing the media attention of the entire West coast, which speculated on and chronicled the progress of Tacoma's banking industry.

Architects Sutton and Whitney designed the National Bank of Tacoma Building in the Italian Renaissance style. Like the style's predecessor, Italianate, it was inspired by the Renaissance buildings of Italy and was popular from the 1880s through the 1920s. Features of this style include distinct horizontal divisions, usually separated by a belt or string course, different window trim or surrounds from story-to-story, formal design, projecting cornices, and rusticated masonry at ground level. The National Bank of Tacoma Building exhibits features of the Italian Renaissance style and serves as a good example of the style in Tacoma. The building rises from a granite base. A stringcourse divides the first story from the upper stories, creating a distinct horizontal division. The building is topped with a projecting cornice. The restrained Classical style of the building was appropriate for the well-established bank. Its design and construction showed a level of permanence and solidness.

On May 29, 1921, three days before the National Bank of Tacoma opened its doors to the public on June 1, the *Tacoma Daily Ledger* (Sunday edition) published a special, eight-page supplement devoted to the bank. Articles covered every conceivable aspect of the construction of the building and the bank's history. Because the bank used many locally-owned businesses to provide contractor services and materials in the construction of the building, many people took great pride in having had a hand in the project. Albertson, Cornell Bros. & Walsh of Tacoma were the general contractors. The Wilkeson sandstone was furnished by



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Walker Cut Stone Co., Inc. of Tacoma. The newspaper offered the public an early glimpse of the building's exterior and interior in photographs. On May 20<sup>th</sup>, the wood scaffolding covering the building was removed and hundreds of pedestrians stopped to admire the new building. Constructed of reinforced concrete and clad in granite at the base and Wilkeson sandstone on the rest of the building, the Italian Renaissance style bank stood three stories in height. As the *Tacoma Daily Ledger* described,

*"From the huge bronze doors at the entrance of the building on through the main floor, and from the remotest corner in the basements to the top floor, nothing has been left undone to make the quarters the finest possible. While nothing useless or over-elaborate has been attempted by the builders of the structure, there is nothing that is incomplete or lacking in making the interior consistent with the exterior of the building, or with the justified high position of the bank in the community."*<sup>6</sup>

The bank's entrance featured a set of large bronze double doors measuring 7' x 15' which served as artistic portals to the interior—first into a vestibule and lobby, and then into the main banking room. The bank spared no expense creating an entrance that spoke to the first-rate financial institution housed inside. The bronze doors were manufactured by the Art Metal Construction Company of Jamestown, New York. The doors swung on ball bearings and despite their great weight, were designed to be operated with ease. The doors were to remain open during bank hours and closed after hours since a set of swinging glass doors were located beyond the vestibule.

The main entrance is framed by Wilkeson sandstone hand-carved with intricate, decorative details. The detail work was done on site by the Walker Cut Stone Company after the sandstone was set in place. The Tacoma company also provided the sandstone material for the building. The sandstone originated from a quarry in the town of Wilkeson, south of Tacoma. The town and sandstone were named after Samuel Wilkeson, a Northern Pacific Railroad official, who noted the sandstone outcropping while conducting a geological survey for the NP in 1869. First used as a building material in the 1880s, Wilkeson sandstone became known for its high quality. Wilkeson sandstone has been used in many buildings throughout the Pacific Northwest, including the Washington State Capitol Building. The Walker Cut Stone Company operated the quarry from 1911-1959. The Walker Cut Stone Company (the quarry and associated buildings) is listed on both the National and Washington Registers of Historic Places.

The lobby was flanked by mahogany doors. The door on the right (south) led into a private entrance to the president's office; the door on the left (north) led into an automatic electric elevator. A grille-protected stairway led to the Bond, Trust and Savings Department in the basement.<sup>7</sup>

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The building was erected as a monument to capitalism but was restrained in style and constructed with the utmost attention to detail and quality. The interior finish and general color scheme employed created a harmonious effect throughout the building. The walls of the vestibule were faced in square blocks of Caen stone with Sansaba marble wainscoting. The floor was of Tennessee marble with a border of verde antique. The plaster ceiling was banded in low relief and painted the color of old ivory.

The first floor was used as the main banking room. It was one large room with a high arched ceiling supported by steel trusses, eliminating the need for columns. As described in the *Anniversary Souvenir of the National Bank of Tacoma, 1885-1921*:

*"Its walls of Caen stone, rising to an imposing height and broken by nine tall windows hung with Venetian blinds, curve gracefully in the elliptical vault of the ceiling which is pierced at the window openings and on the opposite side by barrel vaults, their intercessions forming interesting groins. Between these vaults plaster beams in low relief, having the old-ivory finish, span the arch of the ceiling. In the lobby the wainscoting is again of Sansaba marble, as is also the entire phalanx of counters and cages circling the room, together with check-desks occupying its center, the latter supported by hand-carved pedestals."*<sup>8</sup>

The twenty-two tellers' cages and bank officials' offices were arranged in a horseshoe shape. Metal furnishings and equipment took their cues from the verde antique border of the main banking floor and were of green-toned bronze. The tellers' cages were bronze with a tinge of green. Lighting consisted of six, multi-globed, pendant lights suspended from the ceiling and two large wall torches made of green-frosted bronze.

The second floor was accessed either by a marble stairway leading from the front of the building or by elevators located at the front and rear. This floor was one large room which served as a workroom for the bank and was occupied by the general bookkeeper and auditor, individual bookkeepers, statement clerks and clerks of the transit department, interior clearings department and mail department. A meeting room and a vice-president's office were located at the front of the second floor.<sup>9</sup>

The third floor housed the bank's Directors' Room, Board Chair's office, employees' rest rooms, lunch room, and kitchen. The Directors' Room had warmer finishes than the hard marble surfaces of the first floor. The room had buff colored walls and a ceiling banded in low relief with a finish of old ivory. Paneled wainscoting, oak furnishings, and maple floors provided a darker motif. Windows on the south wall and metal skylights set into a beamed ceiling provided ample natural light, and ceiling lights provided additional illumination. The Directors' Room also doubled as an Assembly Room for use by the entire

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bank personnel, meetings, and social occasions.<sup>10</sup> A feature of the top floor was the metal skylights which provided considerable natural light.

The building's basement level housed the bond, trust, and safe deposit departments of the bank. Vaults and rooms for storage, heating and ventilating systems, elevators, and supplies were located on this floor. As described in the bank's anniversary booklet,

*"The vaults of the bank are built in what is known as the island system, the entire series being a 40 x 80-foot unit confined within 18-inch double-reinforced concrete walls, to the center of the basement area. Separated from the remaining basement space by an encircling passageway, this 'island' is double guarded at each of its entrances by heavy steel doors and combination timelocks."*<sup>11</sup>

Vaults were divided into two main sections, the front section which contained steel safe deposit boxes for customers and the rear section which stored bank valuables. As in the upper floors, the basement was finished throughout in Caen stone, with marble wainscoting and floors.<sup>12</sup>

The opening of the National Bank of Tacoma was celebrated with great fanfare in the city. Hundreds of Tacomans visited the bank to tour its facilities. The bank enjoyed continued growth in the ensuing years and survived the Great Depression of the 1930s.

In 1935, the National Bank of Tacoma celebrated its fiftieth birthday and was the oldest and largest bank in the city. Considered one of the finest financial institutions in the Pacific Northwest, the bank was managed conservatively in times of stress and depression, as well as in times of prosperity and expansion. Beginning with \$50,000 in capital in 1885, the bank reached \$2,000,000 in capital and surplus by 1935, with deposits totaling approximately \$13,000,000. To celebrate its half century of service, the National Bank of Tacoma commissioned twenty-two, large, oil tinted photographs depicting Tacoma in 1885 for display in the main banking room. Since the bank's history was inseparably linked to the history and development of Tacoma, bank officials decided to pay homage to its home city as it celebrated its own birthday.<sup>13</sup>

### *Expansion and a New Name*

In 1937, the National Bank of Tacoma set forth to accomplish two goals. The first was to establish branches in several communities in southwestern Washington that were part of the Tacoma trade area. These smaller communities would benefit from the services of a large bank and the bank would assist in developing industrial and agricultural growth of Tacoma's trade area. The National Bank of Tacoma started

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expanding by buying smaller community banks in the Puget Sound region, including the National Bank of Auburn and the National Bank of Kent. It was already operating a branch at Fort Lewis. In order to better reflect the territory it served, the National Bank of Tacoma changed its name to the National Bank of Washington in 1937.

The second goal was to provide more complete banking service to existing and new customers. This was done by offering individuals installment credit loans, known as “Timeplan,” an idea that the bank pioneered in the Pacific Northwest. Anyone could obtain a personal loan at low bank rates, repayable over a period of one year, to purchase items such as a car, washing machine, or refrigerator. There was a Timeplan available for home remodels, repayable over a three-year period. The expansion of services made it necessary for the complete modernization of the banking quarters in order to handle the substantial and increasing volume of the installment loan business. The bank’s personnel also increased greatly from 69 in 1938 to 118 in 1940. The National Bank of Washington also qualified as an FHA lending agency and began making FHA home loans to assist people in buying homes on long-term contracts at low interest rates. By the late 1940s, the bank made more mortgage loans than any other lending institution in Tacoma. During World War II, the National Bank of Washington helped the war effort by selling defense bonds through the Bond Department. The bank treated all its customers—small and large, urban and rural—with the same respect. In agricultural communities, the farmer was given special consideration with Farmplan bank credit tailored to fit individual needs. Regular savings depositors received higher interest rates at the National Bank of Washington while other banks were lowering their interest rates. The Christmas Club was also introduced to encourage customers to save regularly for a particular purpose.<sup>14</sup>

By 1941, the National Bank of Washington had nine branches in the western part of the state. Since its expansion program begun in 1937-1938, it rose to become a \$32,000,000 state-wide banking system. Bank president Arthur Brouse commented on the bank’s growth in the *Tacoma News Tribune*,

*“Until we began our expansion program, practically all banking in the State of Washington was controlled in Seattle. We feel that Tacoma’s unique and strategic commercial and industrial position warrants a large institution with offices in many communities, to tie together this city’s business activity. We are modernizing our policies and customer services, improving our banking offices and laying the groundwork for a great and useful Tacoma-operated institution that will reflect credit on this city.”<sup>15</sup>*

In order to accommodate the growth of employees and departments and to better serve its own needs and those of its customers, the bank’s interior was modernized in 1940-1941. Various bank departments were relocated to meet needs of the time. Bank employees enjoyed a new lunch and break room and kitchen. The Trust and Bond Department occupied the former Directors’ Room, Assembly Room, and private

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conference quarters. Indirect lighting and acoustic-celotex on the ceilings were added to the second floor work room and in the Installment Credit Loan Department on the same floor. The main banking room on the first floor was changed to increase efficiency. As the *Tacoma News Tribune* described,

*“The old style tellers’ cages are no longer in evidence, having been replaced by a continuous counter with marble deal plates and mahogany cabinets. Neon lighting illuminates each teller’s window. Two new commercial windows have been provided to handle the increasing number of customers and entirely new office equipment is in evidence throughout....Modern indirect lighting chandeliers replace the old direct fixtures and provide a wealth of artificial daylight in all parts of the lobby. Acousti-celotex installation has here again been applied to the vaulted ceilings, and lobby noise has been eliminated to an appreciated extent. Intricate scroll work graces the huge beams and lends much to the beauty of the room.”<sup>16</sup>*

### *Continued Expansion and Modernization in Mid-Century*

The total deposits at the National Bank of Washington grew steadily every year, particularly during the post World War II economic boom. In 1951, the bank had twelve branches and employed 428 people. Its resources totaled \$119,691,335 with deposits of \$109,695,386. The same year, the bank completed construction of a two-story, reinforced concrete annex across the street to the south of its headquarters building. Designed by the local architecture firm of Lea, Pearson and Richards, this building housed the Installment Loan Department and the Directors’ Room for the bank.

In 1954, the bank renovated the third floor of the headquarters building, adding walnut wall paneling, acoustical tile ceiling, recessed fluorescent lighting, carpeted floors, and air-conditioning. Spaces were divided into small and large conference rooms.

The National Bank of Washington celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1960. The number of branches had increased to twenty-seven and the bank employed 626 people. Innovation in service to customers was a major factor in the institution’s success. Banks established in the late 1800s through early 1900s primarily served business and industry rather than individuals. The National Bank of Washington was a leader in commercial banking from its inception and became a leader in personal banking as needs changed. In order to respond to continued growth, better meet the needs of its customer base, and compete with other financial institutions, the bank embarked on an extensive modernization effort in 1959 and completed the work by November 1960. Lea, Pearson and Richards served as the renovation architects and Ketner Bros. Inc. served as the general contractor. The *Tacoma News-Tribune* featured two full pages of articles on the

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bank's history, progress, and newly renovated facilities. The publication described the bank's new look on the interior,

*"The lobby of the Tacoma main office of the National Bank of Washington today is a strikingly handsome and beautifully lighted banking room. Gone is the décor of the 1920s—the high vaulted ceiling, the inadequate lighting and the old-fashioned tellers' windows of steel grillwork. Instead, there is a feeling of warmth and harmony achieved by the successful blending of woods, marble, fabrics and color."<sup>17</sup>*

The main banking room (lobby) walls were covered in walnut flexwood and pilasters were sheathed in vinyl-coated, driftwood silver foil. All other floors received new finishes as well. A new entrance near the rear of the building on the south side was added for the convenience of customers using the parking lot across 12<sup>th</sup> Street.

### *Adaptive Reuse: The Bank Building Becomes a Museum*

A milestone in the National Bank of Washington's growth was reached in 1962. Its deposits reached over \$200,000,000 for the first time in its 77 year history. By the mid-1960s, the bank's original headquarters building and the annex across 12<sup>th</sup> Street were no longer adequate to serve all its functions and house the employees. In 1970-1971, the bank demolished the annex building on the southeast corner of Pacific Avenue and 12<sup>th</sup> Street and erected a 23-story office tower with an underground garage and pedestrian plaza. This building served as its new headquarters, centralizing operations. The original building was sold to the Tacoma Art Museum which moved into the old bank building in the spring of 1971.

With the National Bank of Tacoma Building as its new facility, the Tacoma Art Museum emerged into national prominence. The building enabled the 79 year old art institution to enlarge its exhibition and collection programs and develop new projects. The conversion of the bank building into a museum worked well in terms of the space as well as security for artwork in the basement's vaults. The adaptability of the building meant few changes for the upper floors where administrative offices, a library, a board room, docent facilities, and small, intimate galleries for the museum were located. The large open space of the former main banking room allowed for easy adaptive reuse for the museum's main gallery without extensive renovation. The main gallery was used for special exhibits. The museum's architect was Alan Liddle, with Charles Rueger as associate architect. No changes were made on the exterior and interior changes were performed on a minimum budget of \$100,000. The project was described in *Interiors Magazine*:

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*“To convert the main banking area into the museum’s main gallery, existing windows along one side of the space were blocked out and wall carpeting used to cover all four walls. The existing dropped ceiling, which concealed air conditioning ducts and fluorescent lighting system, was left intact and supplemented with lower level flexible museum lighting. Vinyl was laid on the floor. A contoured wall on the second floor was devised to separate a new 200-seat auditorium from the offices.”<sup>18</sup>*

The National Bank of Tacoma Building was home to the Tacoma Art Museum until 2003 when it moved into a new building designed specifically for the museum. In 2002, the Tacoma Art Museum sold the building to the Asia Pacific Cultural Center for approximately \$1.3 million to be used as a regional center for Asian and Pacific Island arts, culture and business. In 2005, the Cultural Center sold the building to the current owner, Commencement Bay Development Company, LLC. Plans are to rehabilitate the building and bring back some historic features and to use the building for commercial office space.

### Architects of the National Bank of Tacoma

The National Bank of Tacoma retained one of the most prominent firms in Tacoma to design its headquarters building—Sutton and Whitney. Albert Sutton and Harrison A. Whitney formed their partnership in Portland, Oregon in 1912. In 1918, the firm established an office in Tacoma with Earl A. Dugan as associate.

Albert Sutton was born in Victoria, British Columbia, in 1867, but grew up in Portland, Oregon. After attending Portland’s public school system, he studied for two years at the University of California. After his time in Berkeley, he became a draftsman for the Southern Pacific Railroad for three years, working on bridges and buildings associated with the railroad. Sutton first moved to Tacoma in 1888 during the city’s early boom years and formed a partnership with James Pickles. Together, they designed at least six commercial buildings in Tacoma’s downtown. The practice dissolved in 1893. Sutton then formed a short-lived partnership with Ambrose J. Russell from 1893-1895. After his partnership with Russell ended, Sutton moved to San Francisco where he worked mostly with Charles Peter Weeks. The firm of Sutton and Weeks was established around 1901 and lasted until 1910. After this venture, Sutton moved back to the Northwest and opened a practice in Hood River, Oregon. He also operated a ranch outside of town. In 1912, he formed a partnership with Harrison A. Whitney of Portland, but maintained his residence in Hood River until 1916 when he returned to Portland. In 1918, Sutton returned to Tacoma to establish an office of Sutton and Whitney with Earl A. Dugan as associate. As a prominent member of the architectural community, Sutton was a member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) as well as a Mason. He suffered a sudden heart attack in Tacoma on November 18, 1923, and died at the age of 56. He was

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survived by his wife, Mary (Hewitt) Sutton, whom he married in 1909, and their two children, Rocena and John. Sutton also had two daughters from a previous marriage—Anna and Alberta.

Harrison A. Whitney was a prominent and prolific architect who practiced for nearly sixty years in Portland, Oregon. Born in 1877, in Osage, Iowa, he worked his way through the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and graduated in 1904 with a degree in architecture. Moving to Portland after graduation, Whitney worked in the offices of the Lewis & Clark Exposition and was then employed at the firm of Whidden and Lewis, one of Portland's leading firms. In 1912, he left Whidden and Lewis to establish his own firm with Albert Sutton. Whitney was a member of the AIA and served on the committee that established the Oregon chapter in 1911. He died in Portland on August 18, 1962, at the age of 85. He was survived by his wife, Mary, and two daughters.

An associate with the firm of Sutton and Whitney, Earl N. Dugan was born in 1877 in Boone County, Iowa. He received his degree in architecture from the University of Illinois in 1906. He worked in Chicago before moving to San Francisco to help in rebuilding efforts of the city after the devastating 1906 earthquake. He came to Tacoma in 1910 and worked for different architecture firms before joining the firm of Sutton and Whitney. He collaborated on designs with Sutton and Whitney, including the National Bank of Tacoma, and became of partner in the firm in the mid 1920s. He supervised the construction of buildings at the College of Puget Sound from the 1920s until his retirement in 1951. Dugan served as vice president of the Washington State Chapter of the AIA and was instrumental in founding the Tacoma Society of Architects, which grew into the Southwest Washington Chapter of the AIA. Dugan died in Seattle at the age of 79 in 1956. He was survived by three daughters and a son.

The firm of Sutton and Whitney designed some of Tacoma's most prominent buildings. In addition to the National Bank of Tacoma Building, the firm is known for its W.R. Rust Building (1920), Scottish Rite Cathedral (1921), Annie Wright Seminary (1924), campus of the College of Puget Sound (1923-1924; renamed University of Puget Sound in 1960), and numerous residences. A comprehensive architectural survey of all dwellings, institutional buildings and business blocks was conducted in 1927 by a committee of prominent Washington State architects for the state chapter of the American Institute of Architects. The survey was the first of its kind attempted in Tacoma. The committee presented awards to exceptional projects. Sutton and Whitney, as the architects of many of the chosen projects, received the more awards than other Tacoma firms. The highest Honor Award was given to the National Bank of Tacoma for combining "a simple, direct, well-thought out plan with a well-proportioned and dignified exterior expressed in lasting materials and carefully studied and skillfully executed in every detail."<sup>19</sup> The College of Puget Sound and Annie Wright Seminary also received Honor Awards. The committee was quoted in the *Tacoma News Tribune* that the two "are very good examples of Tudor collegiate architecture. It is refreshing to note the restraint observed in the design of these dignified groups of buildings. The beauty of



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these designs depends largely in the composition of the masses, the scale and grouping of the windows rather than in the elaboration of meaningless detail.”<sup>20</sup> All together, Sutton and Whitney received eleven awards from the committee for work ranging from commercial buildings to residences and schools.

Some of the firm’s buildings in Tacoma have been demolished but its most significant works remain. The National Bank of Tacoma is one of the firm’s finest works and survives as a testament to its legacy in Pacific Northwest architectural heritage.

The two other Tacoma architecture firms associated with the National Bank of Tacoma Building were the firm of Lea, Pearson and Richards for the alteration design of the interior in 1954 and 1960, and Alan Liddle for the building’s conversion into the Tacoma Art Museum in 1971.

Charles Winthrop Lea, Jr. was born in Tacoma in 1903 and received his education at the University of Washington, University of Pennsylvania, and New York University. He worked as a draftsman in various architecture firms in Pennsylvania and New York before moving back to Tacoma in the 1930s. He formed a partnership with Charles Pearson and John Greenway Richards in 1937.

Charles Pearson was born in Chicago in 1905 and earned a degree in architecture from the University of Washington in 1931. He worked as a draftsman with two prominent Tacoma firms—Heath, Gove & Bell and John Maloney—before forming his own firm with Lea and Richards.

John Greenway Richards was born in Waltham, Massachusetts in 1908 and received his education at the University of Washington. For seven years (1930-1937), he worked at the firm of Heath, Gove & Bell, first as a draftsman and later as a designer. He left the firm to form Lea, Pearson and Richards. The National Bank of Washington used the firm to design branches in Chehalis (1949) and Parkland (1950). Other principal works include their buildings at Pacific Lutheran College (later changed to Pacific Lutheran University) in Parkland (1947-1955), Whitman Elementary School in Tacoma (1952), Tacoma Savings and Loan in Tacoma (1958), Franklin Pierce High School in Parkland (1953), and Lakewood Center in Tacoma (1951).

Alan Liddle, a long-time practicing architect in his hometown of Tacoma, was born in 1922. He received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Washington in 1948 and served as a draftsman at Lea, Pearson and Richards (1948-1949) before furthering his architectural studies in Switzerland (1950-1951). His firm, Alan Liddle, Architect, was formed in 1952 in Tacoma. An architect of regional renown and one of the leading Modernist designers in the Pacific Northwest, Liddle was among a group of Tacoma architects that operated successful practices during a time of economic strength, population growth and suburbanization in the Puget Sound region in the 1950s and 1960s. Among his principal works are the

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master plan and first buildings for the Charles Wright Academy in Tacoma; the Oceanography Research Building at the University of Washington in Seattle with partner Richard Jones; the State of Alaska Building and Home of Living Light at the Seattle World's Fair in Seattle (1962; Liddle and Jones); the Chauncey Griggs Residence in Tacoma, a Frank Lloyd Wright designed house with Liddle as supervising architect (1954); Liddle's own mountain cabin near Mount Rainier (1950), and Liddle's private residence in Tacoma (1969).

Liddle was active in the architecture and art communities, serving on numerous boards and teaching architecture at the University of Washington. He served as president of the Southwest Washington Chapter of the AIA in 1967-1968 and was elected to the organization's College of Fellows in 1970. At the time, only 957 members of the 23,300 in the AIA had received the College of Fellow honor. As an active member of the former Tacoma Art League which became the Tacoma Art Museum, Liddle served as a founding member of the museum, making him an appropriate choice as the renovation architect for the National Bank of Tacoma Building when the museum acquired the property. Liddle and his associates designed over one hundred residences and more than fifty public buildings, drawing national media attention and winning numerous awards. Liddle is retired and resides in the same Gravelly Lake home in Tacoma he built for himself in 1969.

### Summary

The National Bank of Tacoma Building exemplifies commercial enterprise and growth in Tacoma in the twentieth century. For forty-nine years, the building was home to the city's oldest bank (established in 1885 as Pacific National Bank) which served many local industries, businesses and individuals. The bank pioneered programs and services in the industry and was one of the city's leading financial institutions for decades.

The building was a monument to commerce and served the bank well, adapting to growth over the years until 1971, when it built a larger headquarters across 12<sup>th</sup> Street to the south. With changes in banking industry involving mergers and acquisitions in the 1970s and 1980s, the National Bank of Washington (as it was known since its name change in 1937) ceased to exist by the early 1980s. With its prominent location on Pacific Avenue, downtown Tacoma's main commercial corridor, the National Bank of Tacoma Building has helped serve as an anchor in the central business district for 85 years. The building is an excellent example of the work of the locally prominent architecture firm, Sutton and Whitney. The National Bank of Tacoma Building remains in its original location and maintains a setting, feeling, and association similar to when it was built. Its exterior is largely unchanged and some of the interior spaces, volumes, and finishes have been retained.

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## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Murray Morgan. *South on the Sound*. (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, 1984), 43.
  - <sup>2</sup> United States Census Records.
  - <sup>3</sup> Tacoma Daily News, October 16, 1915.
  - <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>5</sup> Bonney, William. *History of Pierce County*. (Chicago: Pioneer Historical Publishing Co.), 112.
  - <sup>6</sup> Tacoma Daily Ledger, May 29, 1921.
  - <sup>7</sup> *Anniversary Souvenir of the National Bank of Tacoma, 1885-1921* (Tacoma: National Bank of Tacoma, 1921), 3.
  - <sup>8</sup> Ibid, 7.
  - <sup>9</sup> Ibid, 21.
  - <sup>10</sup> Ibid, 25.
  - <sup>11</sup> Ibid, 13.
  - <sup>12</sup> Ibid, 13, 19.
  - <sup>13</sup> Tacoma News Tribune, October 1, 1935.
  - <sup>14</sup> Tacoma Times, 1949.
  - <sup>15</sup> Tacoma News Tribune, December 3, 1941.
  - <sup>16</sup> Tacoma News Tribune, December 4, 1941.
  - <sup>17</sup> Tacoma News Tribune, November 4, 1960.
  - <sup>18</sup> Interiors Magazine, June 1973, 6-8.
  - <sup>19</sup> Tacoma News Tribune, Nov 30, 1927.
  - <sup>20</sup> Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet -

NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA  
PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Section number 9 Page 1 of 3

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*Interiors Magazine*, "Bank Recycled into Museum." June 1973.

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*Progressive Architecture*, "Old Bank Becomes New Tacoma Art Museum." March 1973.

*Tacoma Daily Ledger*. January 2, 1921: B6.

\_\_\_\_\_. February 27, 1921: B4.

\_\_\_\_\_. March 6, 1921: B5.

\_\_\_\_\_. May 29, 1921: A11 and Section F, Bank Section (Eight page supplement).

\_\_\_\_\_. June 5, 1921: A2.

\_\_\_\_\_. January 1, 1922: B5.

\_\_\_\_\_. July 1, 1923: E8.

\_\_\_\_\_. January 18, 1925: E8.

\_\_\_\_\_. August 18, 1935.

\_\_\_\_\_. October 1, 1935.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet -

NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA  
PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Section number 9 Page 2 of 3

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- \_\_\_\_. August 25, 1940: 15-C. (Combined *Tacoma Sunday Ledger-News Tribune*).
- \_\_\_\_. April 11, 1954: A-12. (Combined *Tacoma Sunday Ledger-News Tribune*).

Tacoma Public Library, Northwest Room. Photographic collection and original drawings of the National Bank of Tacoma by Sutton & Whitney.

*Tacoma Times*. January 29, 1924.

- \_\_\_\_. February 6, 1932.
- \_\_\_\_. February 13, 1936: 7.
- \_\_\_\_. August 17, 1937: 1.
- \_\_\_\_. December 3, 1941: 10.
- \_\_\_\_. July 1, 1943: 2.
- \_\_\_\_. Unknown month 25, 1949.

*Tacoma News Tribune*. October 16, 1915.

- \_\_\_\_. June 24, 1920: 22.
- \_\_\_\_. July 26, 1920: 6-7.
- \_\_\_\_. November 30, 1927.
- \_\_\_\_. April 5, 1928.
- \_\_\_\_. September 30, 1935.
- \_\_\_\_. August 17, 1937.
- \_\_\_\_. November 14, 1939.
- \_\_\_\_. January 10, 1940.
- \_\_\_\_. April 7, 1940: 6-A.
- \_\_\_\_. April 23, 1941: 5.
- \_\_\_\_. November 29, 1941.
- \_\_\_\_. December 4, 1941:4.
- \_\_\_\_. February 25, 1942.
- \_\_\_\_. February 13, 1951.
- \_\_\_\_. November 15, 1951.
- \_\_\_\_. November 4, 1960: B5.
- \_\_\_\_. January 9, 1963.
- \_\_\_\_. May 5, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_. July 17, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_. May 6, 1966.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet -

NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA  
PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Section number   9   Page 3 of 3

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- \_\_\_\_\_. March 8, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. January 9, 1970: 1.
- \_\_\_\_\_. January 11, 1970: A-18.
- \_\_\_\_\_. May 23, 1971: A-22.
- \_\_\_\_\_. February 14, 2002: 1.

University of Washington, Tacoma Branch. Alan Liddle collection.

Washington State Historical Society. Photographic collection.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet -

NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA  
PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Section number 10 Page 1 of 1

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## Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is located in the NW ¼ of Section 04 in Township 20, Range 03E in Tacoma, Washington.

Legal description: Lots 11 & 12 of Block 1103, New Tacoma Addition.

Parcel number: 2011030044

## Boundary Justification

The nominated property encompasses the entire tax lot historically associated with the National Bank of Tacoma Building.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet -

NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA  
PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Section number \_\_\_\_\_

Page 1 of 2

## Contemporary Photograph Log

<p><b>1 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Eugenia Woo Date: December 2005 View: Pacific Avenue, looking north</p>	<p><b>7 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Eugenia Woo Date: December 2005 View: First story window, west facade</p>
<p><b>2 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Eugenia Woo Date: December 2005 View: West (main) and south facades, looking northeast</p>	<p><b>8 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Eugenia Woo Date: December 2005 View: Cartouche on west facade</p>
<p><b>3 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Eugenia Woo Date: December 2005 View: South and east (rear) facades, looking northwest</p>	<p><b>9 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Eugenia Woo Date: December 2005 View: Pilasters and non-historic windows at second and third stories</p>
<p><b>4 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Eugenia Woo Date: December 2005 View: West (main) facade, looking east</p>	<p><b>10 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Eugenia Woo Date: December 2005 View: First floor lobby, looking north</p>
<p><b>5 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Eugenia Woo Date: December 2005 View: Main entrance with historic bronze doors</p>	<p><b>11 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Eugenia Woo Date: December 2005 View: Historic ceiling and light fixture in first floor lobby</p>
<p><b>6 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Eugenia Woo Date: December 2005</p>	<p><b>12 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Eugenia Woo Date: December 2005</p>



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

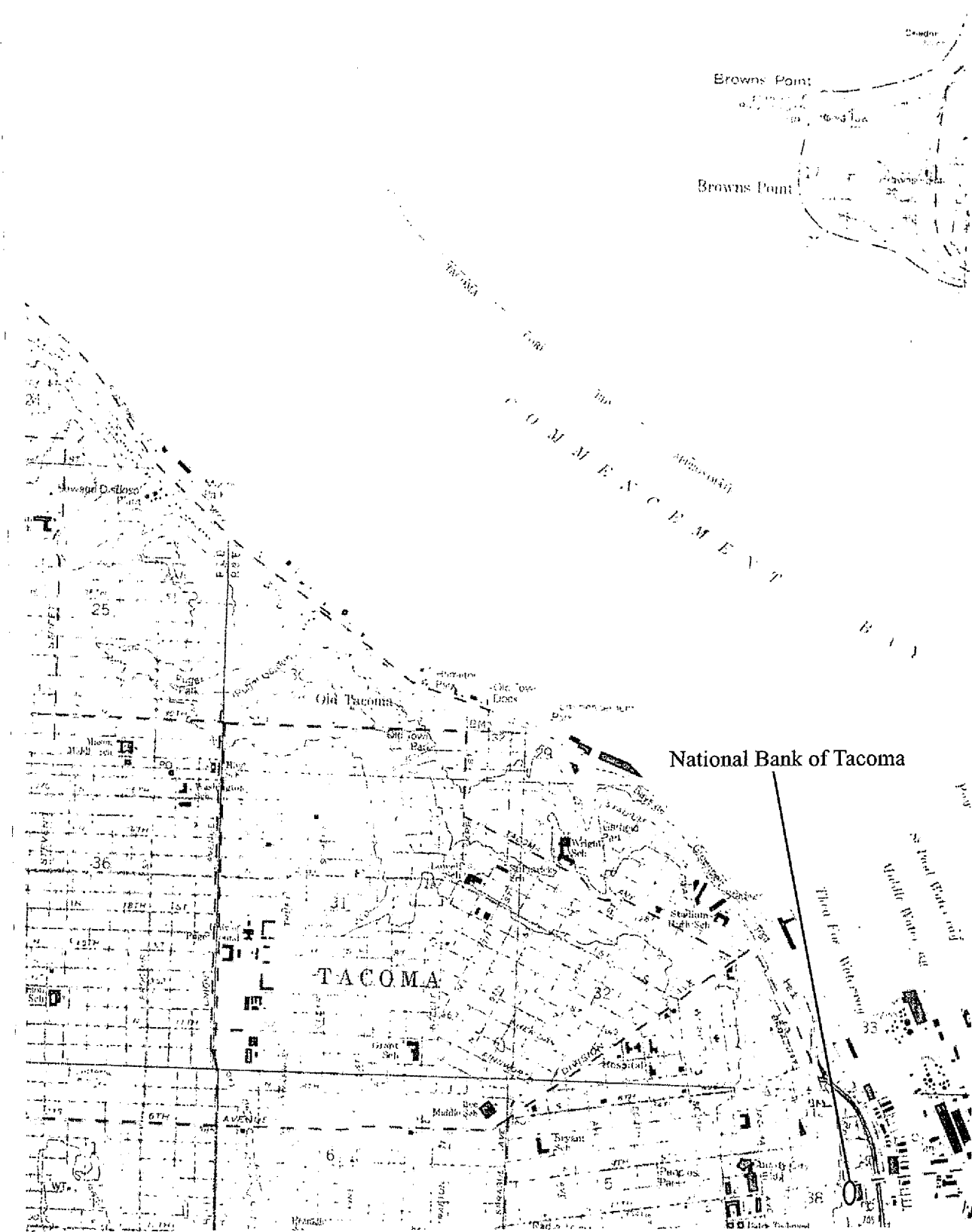
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet -

NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA  
PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page 2 of 2

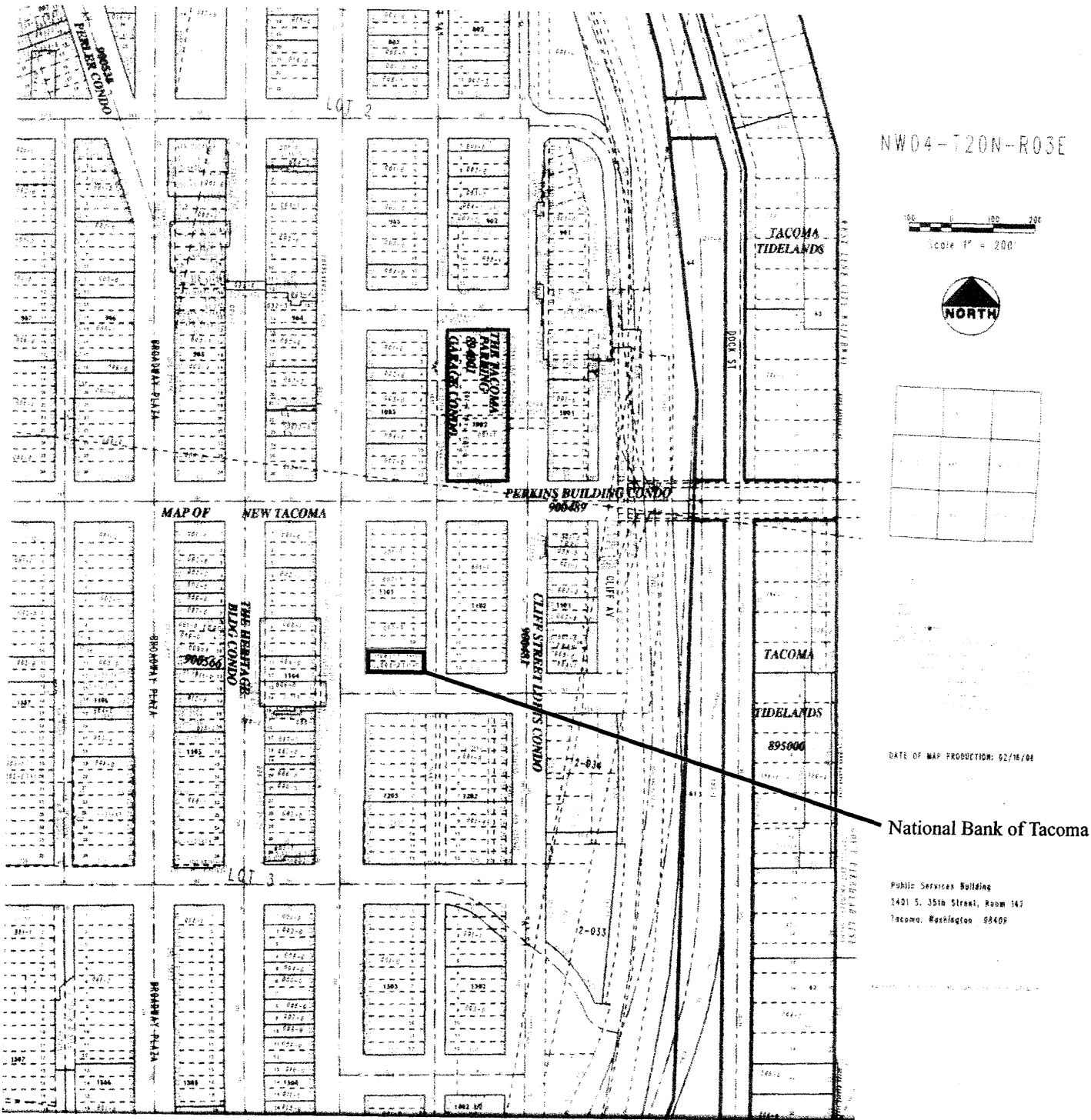
View: Arched transom above main entrance and door frame details carved in Wilkeson sandstone	View: First floor former main banking room/main gallery space
<b>13 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Eugenia Woo Date: December 2005 View: Second floor main space	<b>17 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Spencer Howard Date: October 2005 View: Historic curved stairs at southeast corner
<b>14 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Eugenia Woo Date: December 2005 View: Second floor office at southwest corner	<b>18 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Spencer Howard Date: October 2005 View: First floor, historic decorative beam in barrel vaulted ceiling
<b>15 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Eugenia Woo Date: December 2005 View: Third floor office at southeast corner	<b>19 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Spencer Howard Date: October 2005 View: Basement - historic safe
<b>16 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Spencer Howard Date: October 2005 View: Historic stairs at northeast corner	<b>20 of 20</b> National Bank of Tacoma 1123 Pacific Ave Tacoma, Pierce County, WA Photographer: Spencer Howard Date: October 2005 View: Basement - historic safes

NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA, 1123 PACIFIC AVE., TACOMA (PIERCE COUNTY) WA  
MAPS



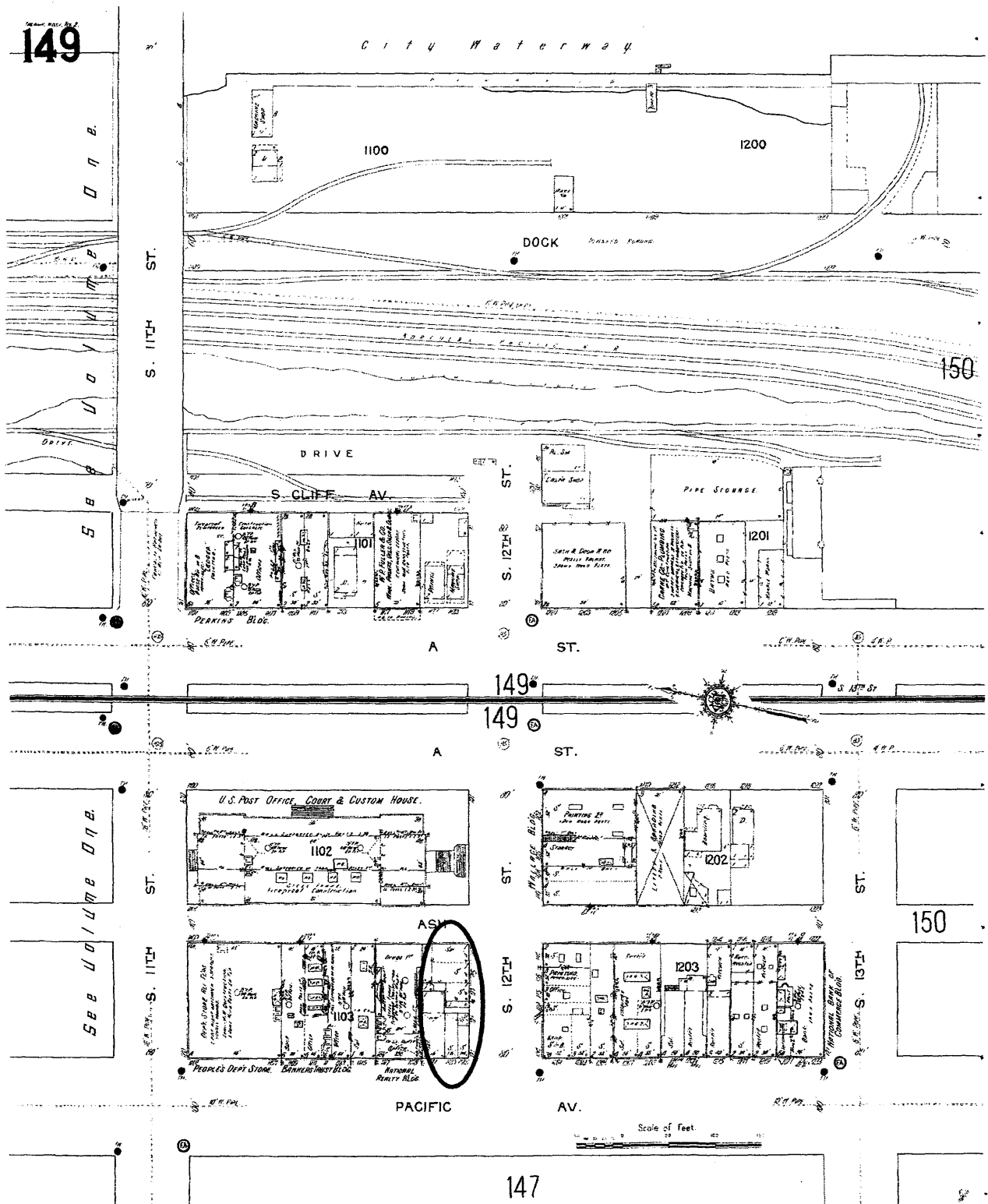
USGS map detail showing the location of the National Bank of Tacoma Building in circle at lower right.

**NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA, 1123 PACIFIC AVE., TACOMA (PIERCE COUNTY) WA  
MAPS**



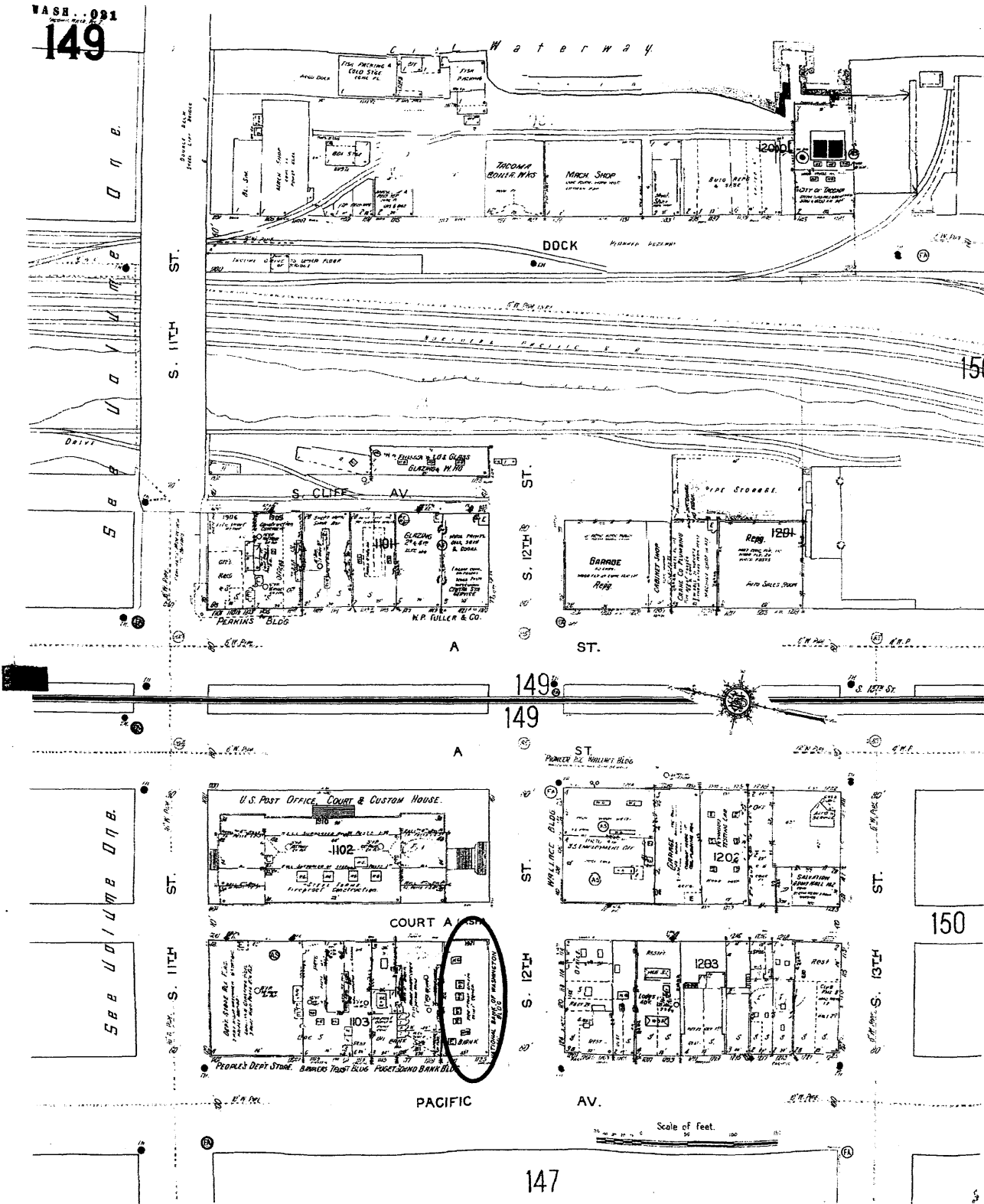
Assessor's plat map detail showing the location of the National Bank of Tacoma Building.

**NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
 NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA, 1123 PACIFIC AVE., TACOMA (PIERCE COUNTY) WA  
 MAPS**



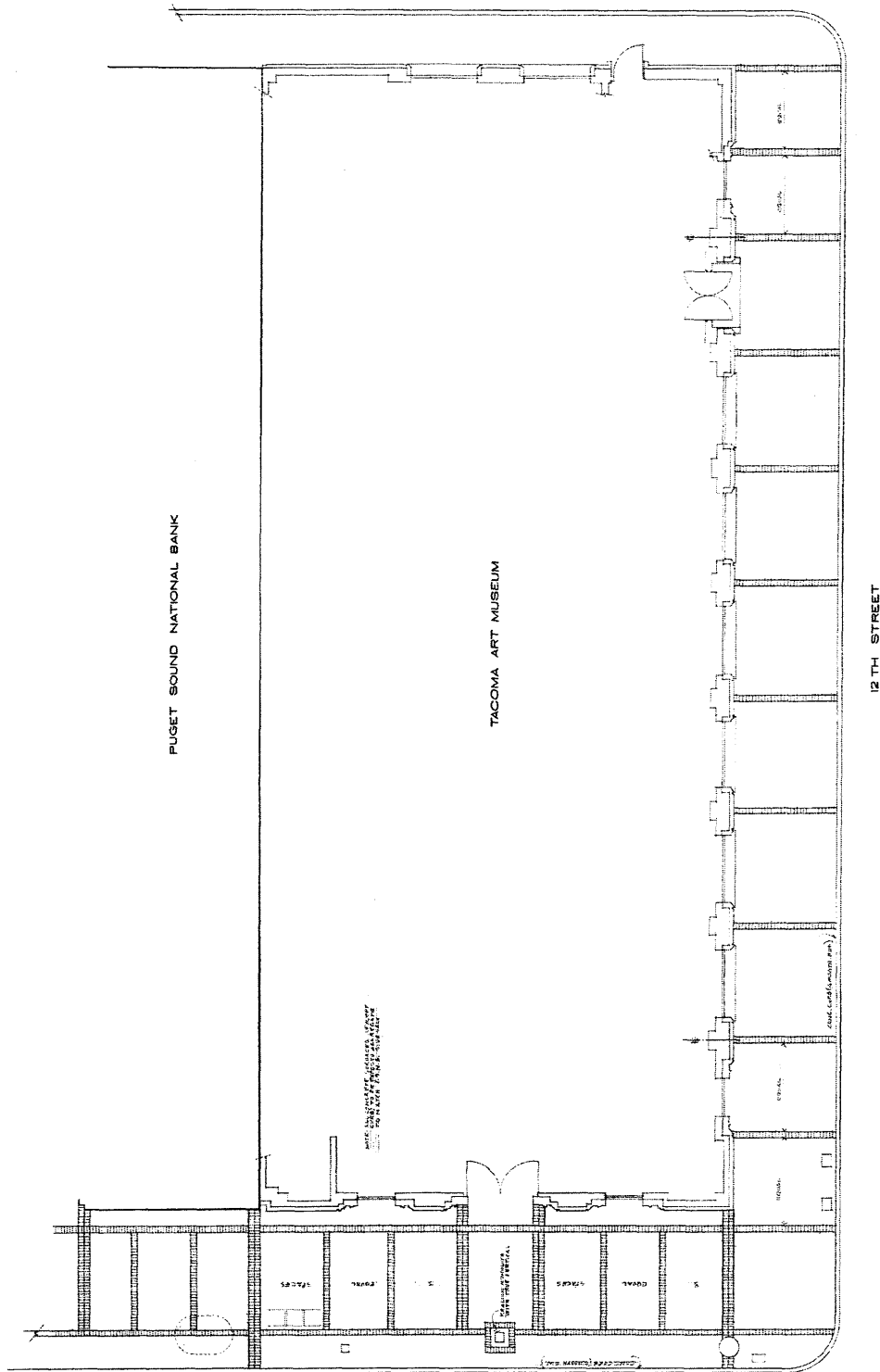
1912 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing site of future the National Bank of Tacoma Building with previous buildings on the property.

NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
 NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA, 1123 PACIFIC AVE., TACOMA (PIERCE COUNTY) WA  
 MAPS

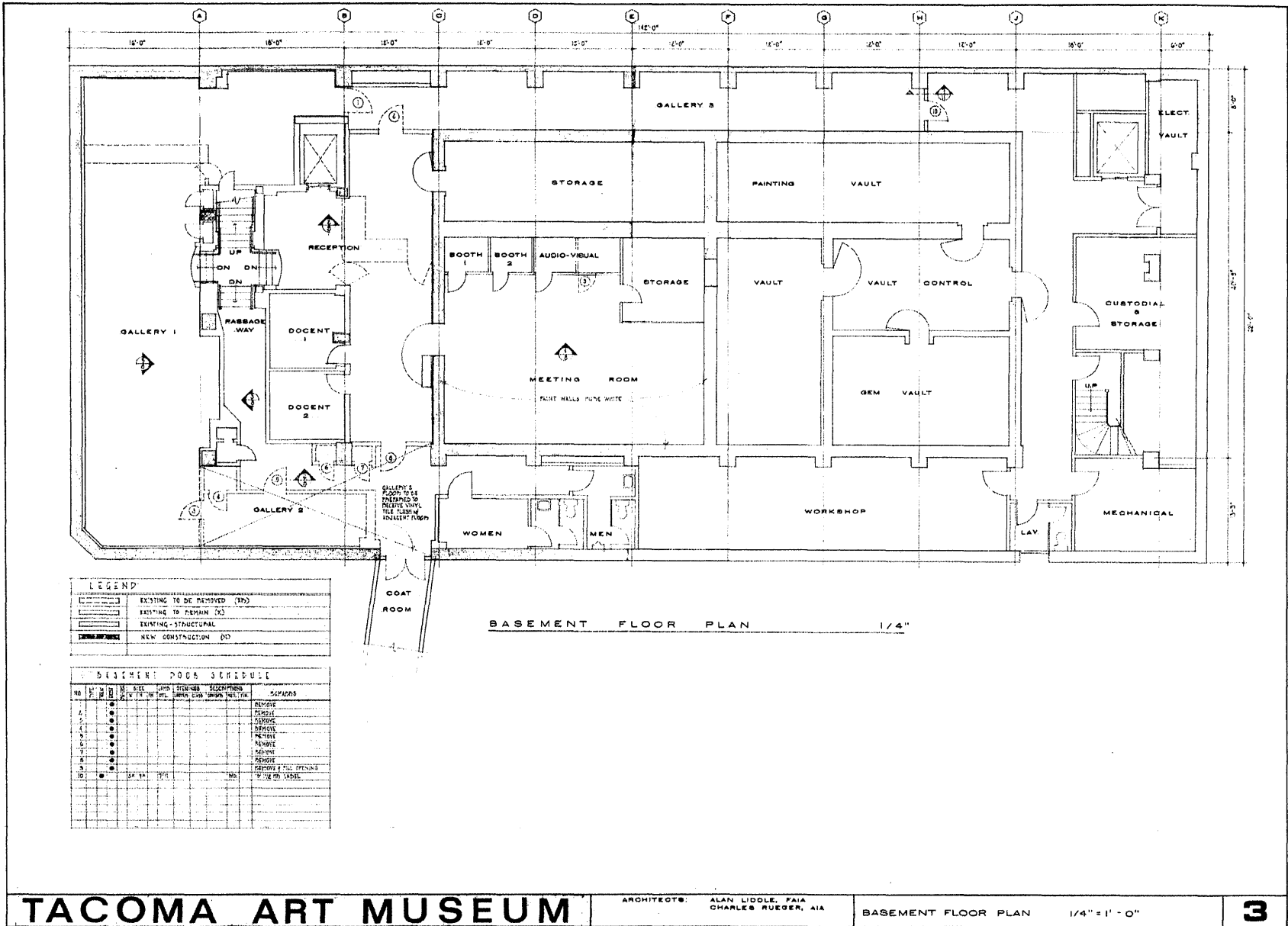


1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing the National Bank of Tacoma Building.

NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA, 1123 PACIFIC AVE., TACOMA (PIERCE COUNTY) WA  
DRAWINGS



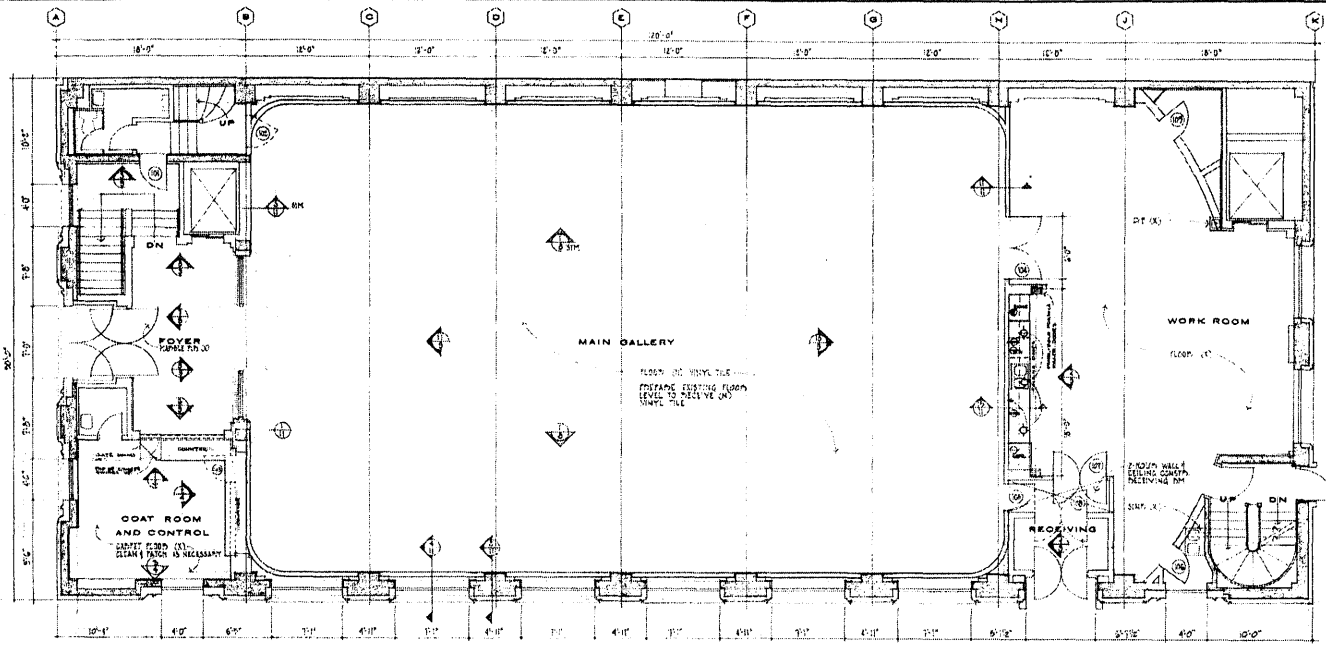
1970. National Bank of Tacoma Building. Site plan, as-built (Tacoma Art Museum).



**TACOMA ART MUSEUM**

ARCHITECTS: ALAN LIDDLE, FAIA  
 CHARLES RUEGER, AIA

BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN 1/4" = 1' - 0"

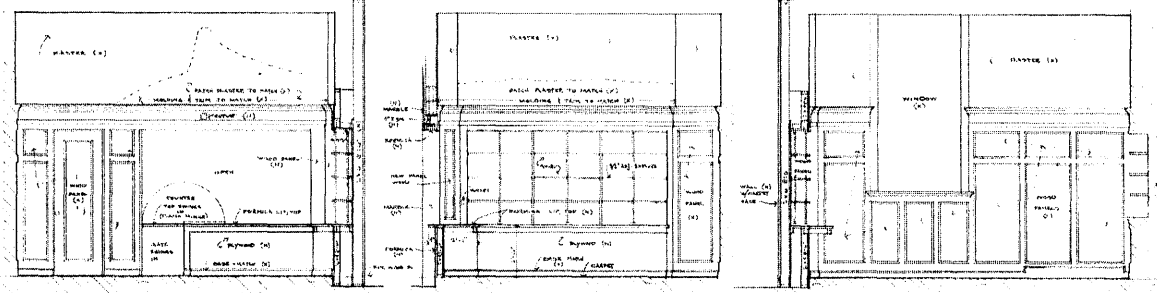


MAIN FLOOR PLAN 1/4"

LEGEND	
	EXISTING TO BE REMOVED (XRD)
	EXISTING TO REMAIN (XR)
	EXISTING STRUCTURAL
	NEW CONSTRUCTION (ND)

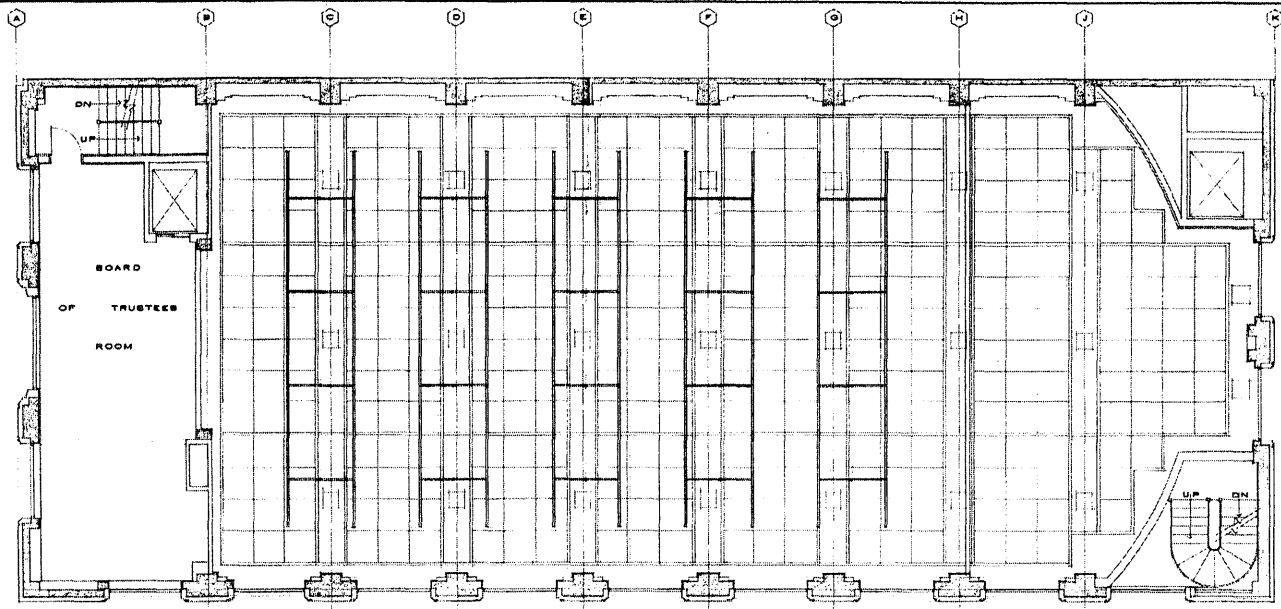
MAIN FLOOR DOOR SCHEDULE										
NO.	SYMBOL	TYPE	SIZE	SWING	GLASS	FINISH	REMARKS	REVISIONS	DATE	BY
001		SW	3'0\"	R	0	WOOD	TO MAIN GALLERY			
002		SW	3'0\"	L	0	WOOD	TO MAIN GALLERY			
003		SW	3'0\"	R	0	WOOD	TO MAIN GALLERY			
004		SW	3'0\"	L	0	WOOD	TO MAIN GALLERY			
005		SW	3'0\"	R	0	WOOD	TO MAIN GALLERY			
006		SW	3'0\"	L	0	WOOD	TO MAIN GALLERY			
007		SW	3'0\"	R	0	WOOD	TO MAIN GALLERY			
008		SW	3'0\"	L	0	WOOD	TO MAIN GALLERY			
009		SW	3'0\"	R	0	WOOD	TO MAIN GALLERY			
010		SW	3'0\"	L	0	WOOD	TO MAIN GALLERY			

NOTE: FLOORING DOORS WITHOUT NOTATIONS TO REMAIN UNCHANGED.



1) N. WALL COAT CONTROL RM 1/4"  
 2) E. WALL COAT CONTROL RM 1/4"  
 3) S. WALL COAT CONTROL RM 1/4"

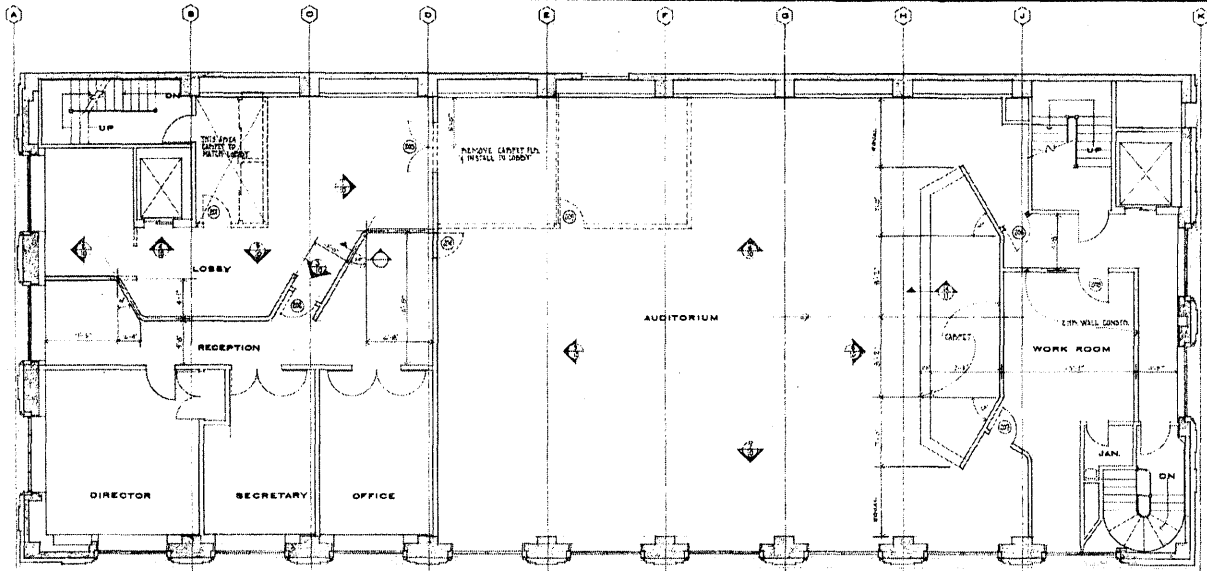




MEZZANINE FLOOR PLAN & MAIN GALLERY REFLECTED CEILING PLAN 1/4"=1'-0"

LEGEND	
	EXISTING TO BE REMOVED (RD)
	EXISTING TO REMAIN (EX)
	EXISTING STRUCTURAL
	NEW CONSTRUCTION (NO)

MEZZANINE DOOR SCHEDULE									
NO.	SYMBOL	SIZE	SWING	OPENING	FINISH	REMARKS	DATE	BY	CHECKED



SECOND FLOOR PLAN 1/4"

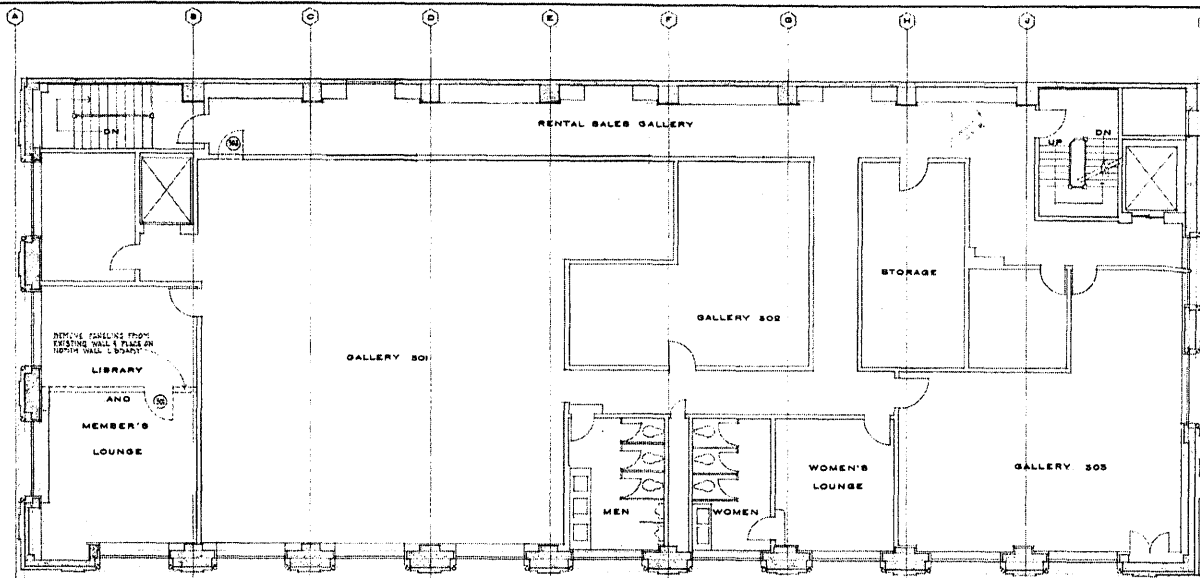
LEGEND	
	EXISTING TO BE REMOVED (AND)
	EXISTING TO REMAIN (R)
	EXISTING - STRUCTURAL
	NEW CONSTRUCTION (N)

SECOND FLOOR DOOR SCHEDULE									
NO.	SYMBOL	SIZE	TYPE	FRAME	FINISH	REMARKS	REVISIONS	DATE	BY
001									
002									
003									
004									
005									
006									
007									
008									
009									
010									
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012									
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049									
050									

TACOMA ART MUSEUM

ARCHITECTS: ALAN LIDDLE, FAIA  
 CHARLES RUEGER, AIA

SECOND FLOOR PLAN 1/4" = 1' - 0"

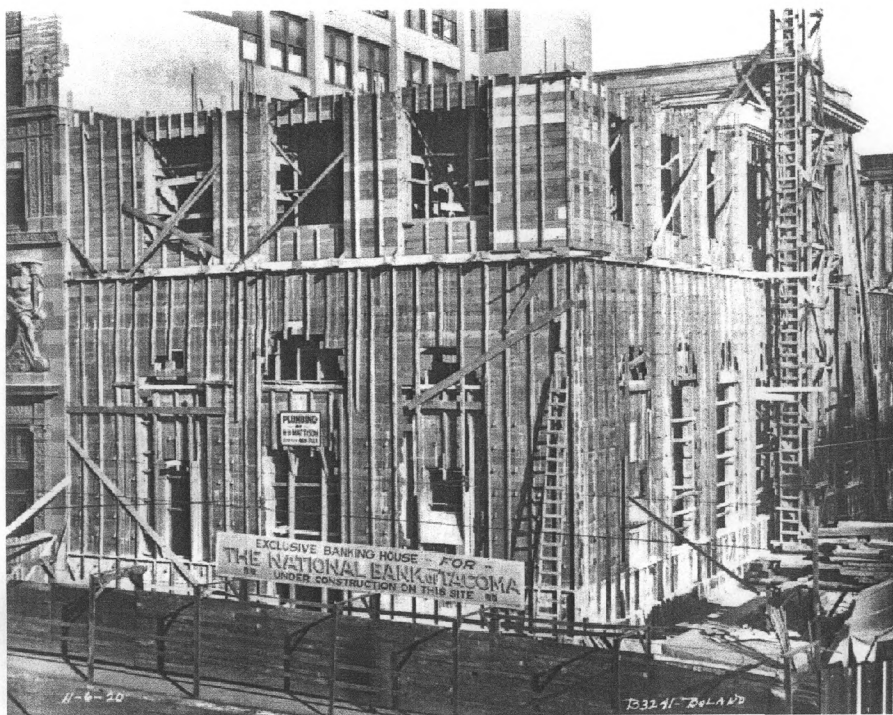


THIRD FLOOR PLAN 1/4"

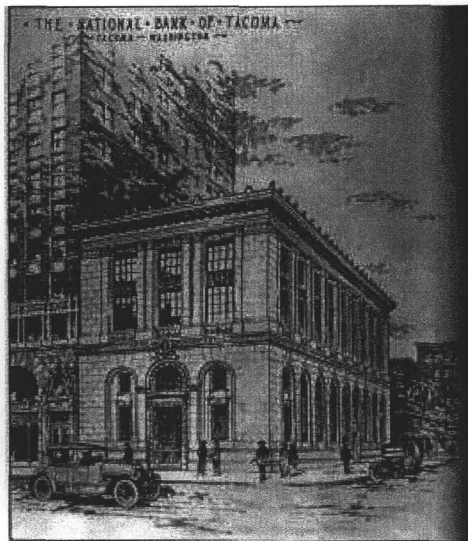
LEGEND	
(Symbol: Dashed line)	EXISTING TO BE REMOVED (ND)
(Symbol: Solid line)	EXISTING TO REMAIN (E)
(Symbol: Dotted line)	EXISTING - STRUCTURAL
(Symbol: Thick solid line)	NEW CONSTRUCTION (N)

THIRD FLOOR DOOR SCHEDULE					
NO.	TO	FROM	NO.	NO.	REMARKS
1	101	102	101	102	EXISTING
2	102	103	102	103	EXISTING
3	103	104	103	104	EXISTING
4	104	105	104	105	EXISTING
5	105	106	105	106	EXISTING
6	106	107	106	107	EXISTING
7	107	108	107	108	EXISTING
8	108	109	108	109	EXISTING
9	109	110	109	110	EXISTING
10	110	111	110	111	EXISTING
11	111	112	111	112	EXISTING
12	112	113	112	113	EXISTING
13	113	114	113	114	EXISTING
14	114	115	114	115	EXISTING
15	115	116	115	116	EXISTING
16	116	117	116	117	EXISTING
17	117	118	117	118	EXISTING
18	118	119	118	119	EXISTING
19	119	120	119	120	EXISTING
20	120	121	120	121	EXISTING
21	121	122	121	122	EXISTING
22	122	123	122	123	EXISTING
23	123	124	123	124	EXISTING
24	124	125	124	125	EXISTING
25	125	126	125	126	EXISTING
26	126	127	126	127	EXISTING
27	127	128	127	128	EXISTING
28	128	129	128	129	EXISTING
29	129	130	129	130	EXISTING

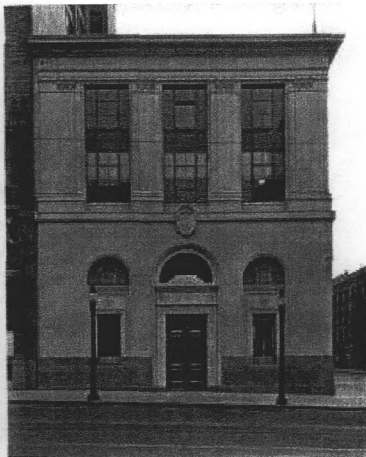
NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA, 1123 PACIFIC AVE., TACOMA (PIERCE COUNTY) WA  
PHOTOGRAPHS



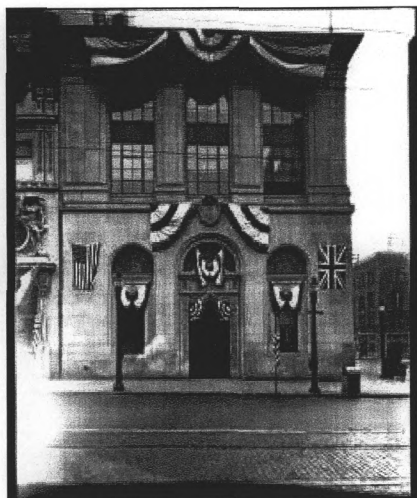
1920. National Bank of Tacoma Building under construction. View: looking northeast. Washington State Historical Society. Marvin Boland photographer.



Architects Rendering



Circa 1922

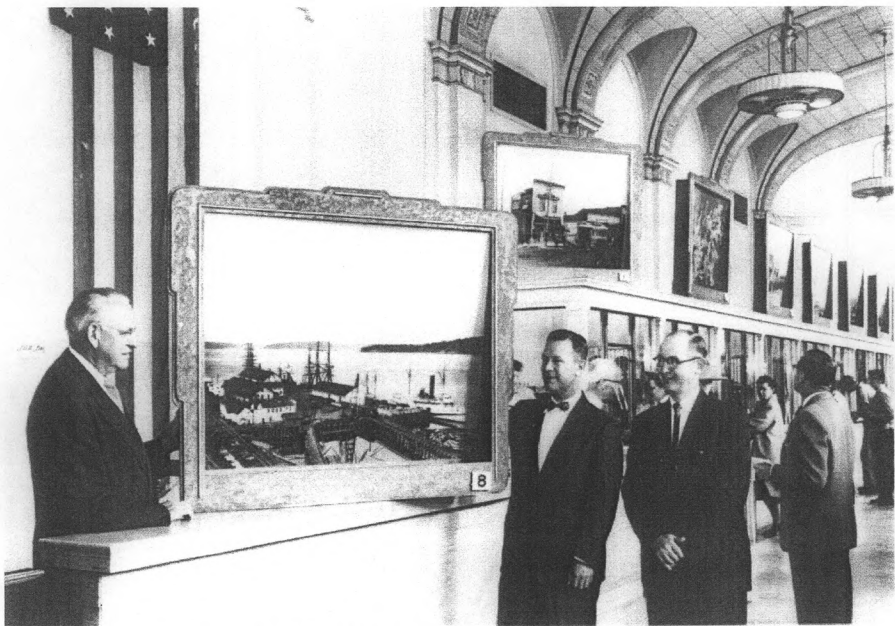


Circa 1923



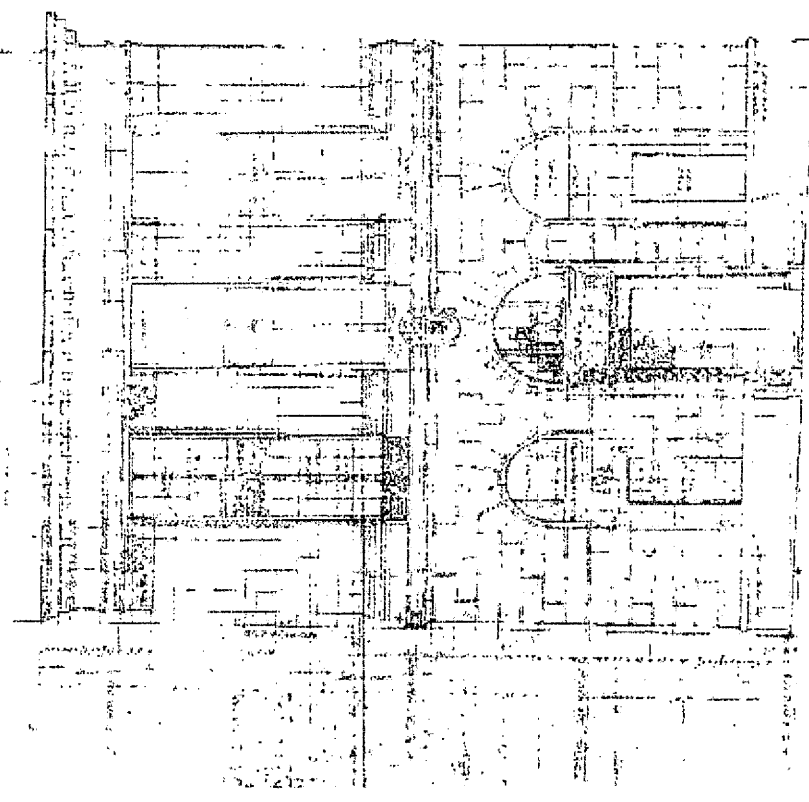
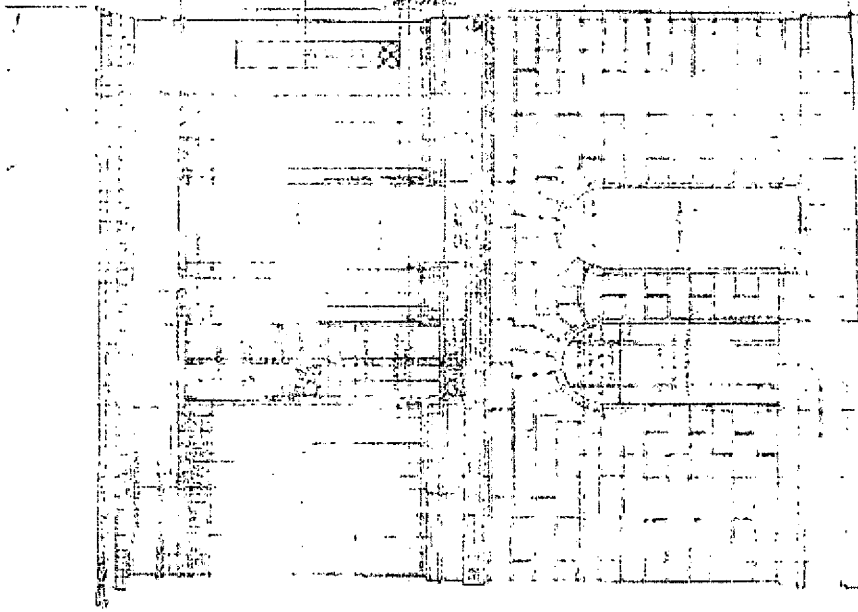
Circa 1946

NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA, 1123 PACIFIC AVE., TACOMA (PIERCE COUNTY) WA  
PHOTOGRAPHS



1953. National Bank of Tacoma Building. Interior - main banking room. Bank celebrating Northwest Territory Centennial Days. Tacoma Public Library.

**NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA, 1123 PACIFIC AVE., TACOMA (PIERCE COUNTY) WA  
DRAWINGS**



NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA, 1123 PACIFIC AVE., TACOMA (PIERCE COUNTY) WA  
DRAWINGS

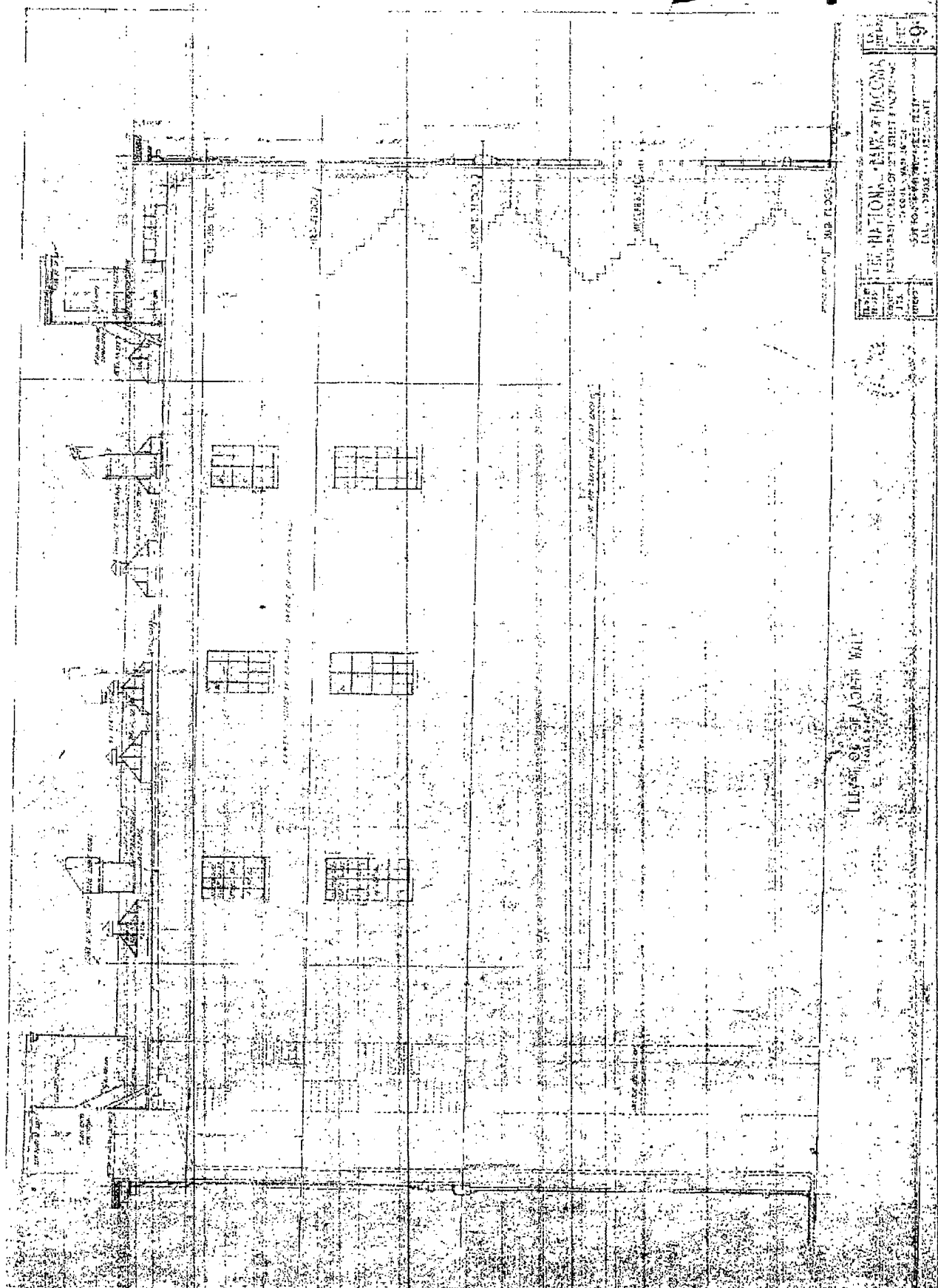


THE NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA  
1123 PACIFIC AVENUE  
TACOMA, WASHINGTON  
ARCHITECTURAL DRAWING  
NO. 1000

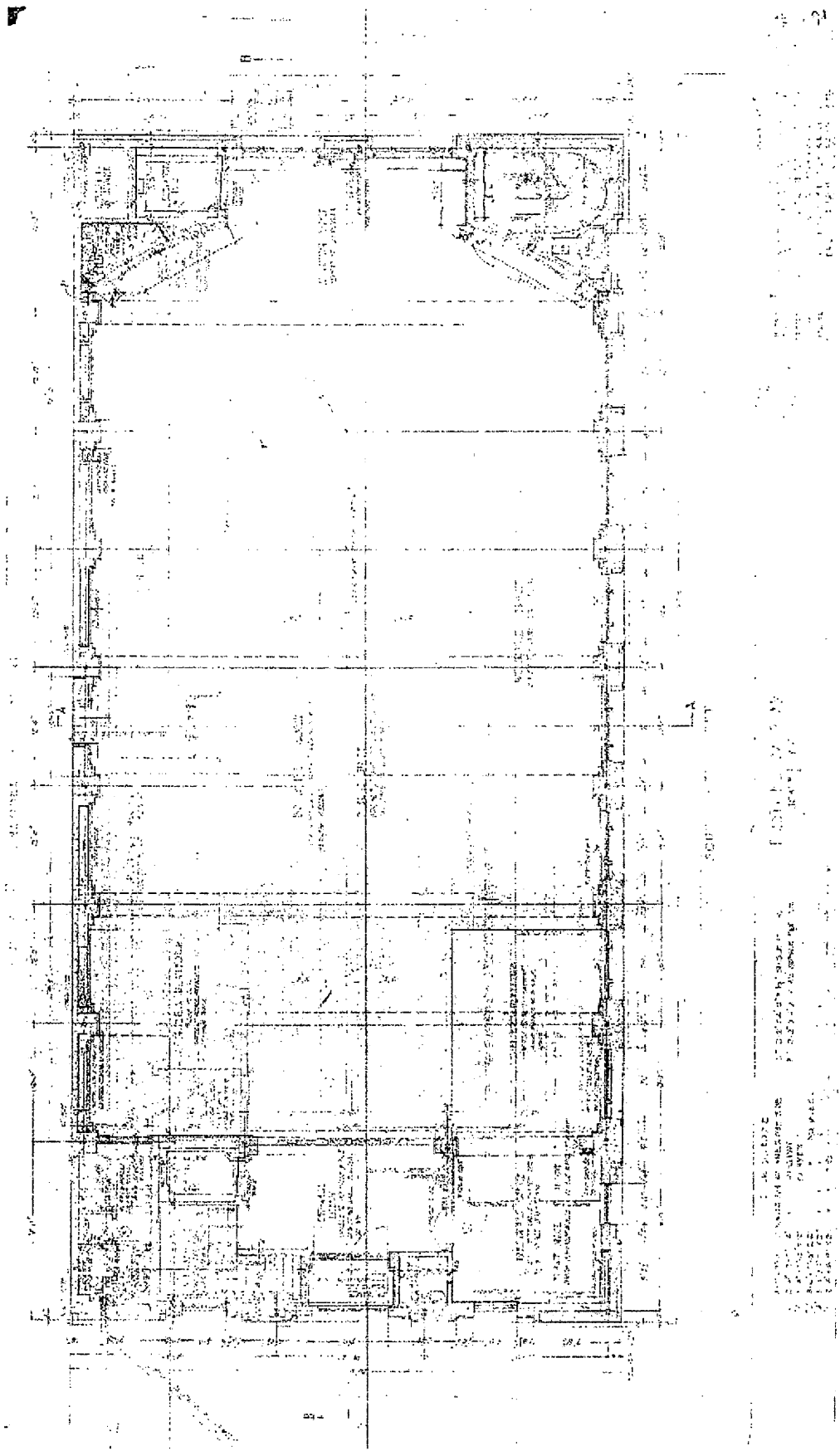
ST. JOHN'S ARCHITECTURE  
1123 PACIFIC AVENUE  
TACOMA, WASHINGTON



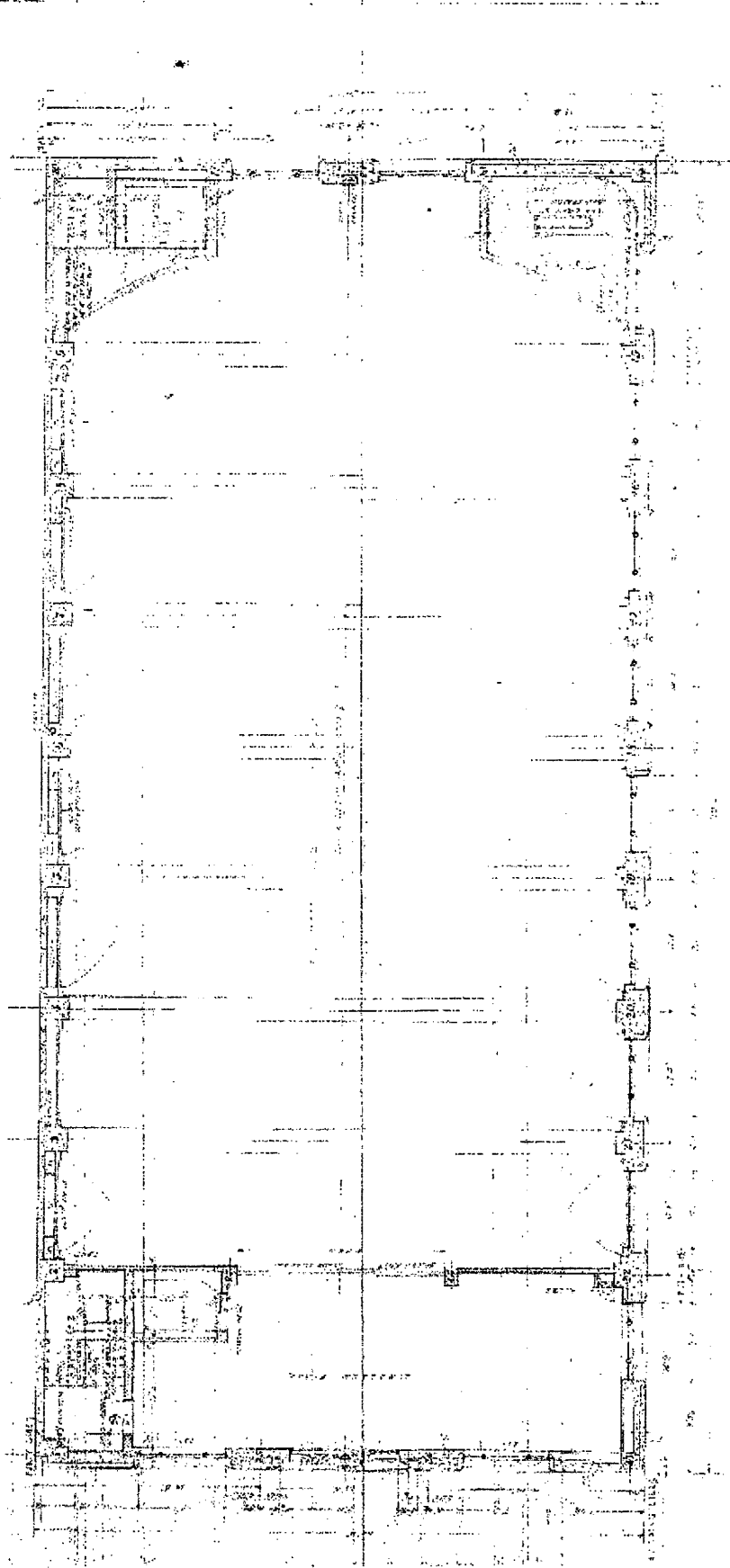
NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA, 1123 PACIFIC AVE., TACOMA (PIERCE COUNTY) WA  
DRAWINGS



NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA, 1123 PACIFIC AVE., TACOMA (PIERCE COUNTY) WA  
DRAWINGS

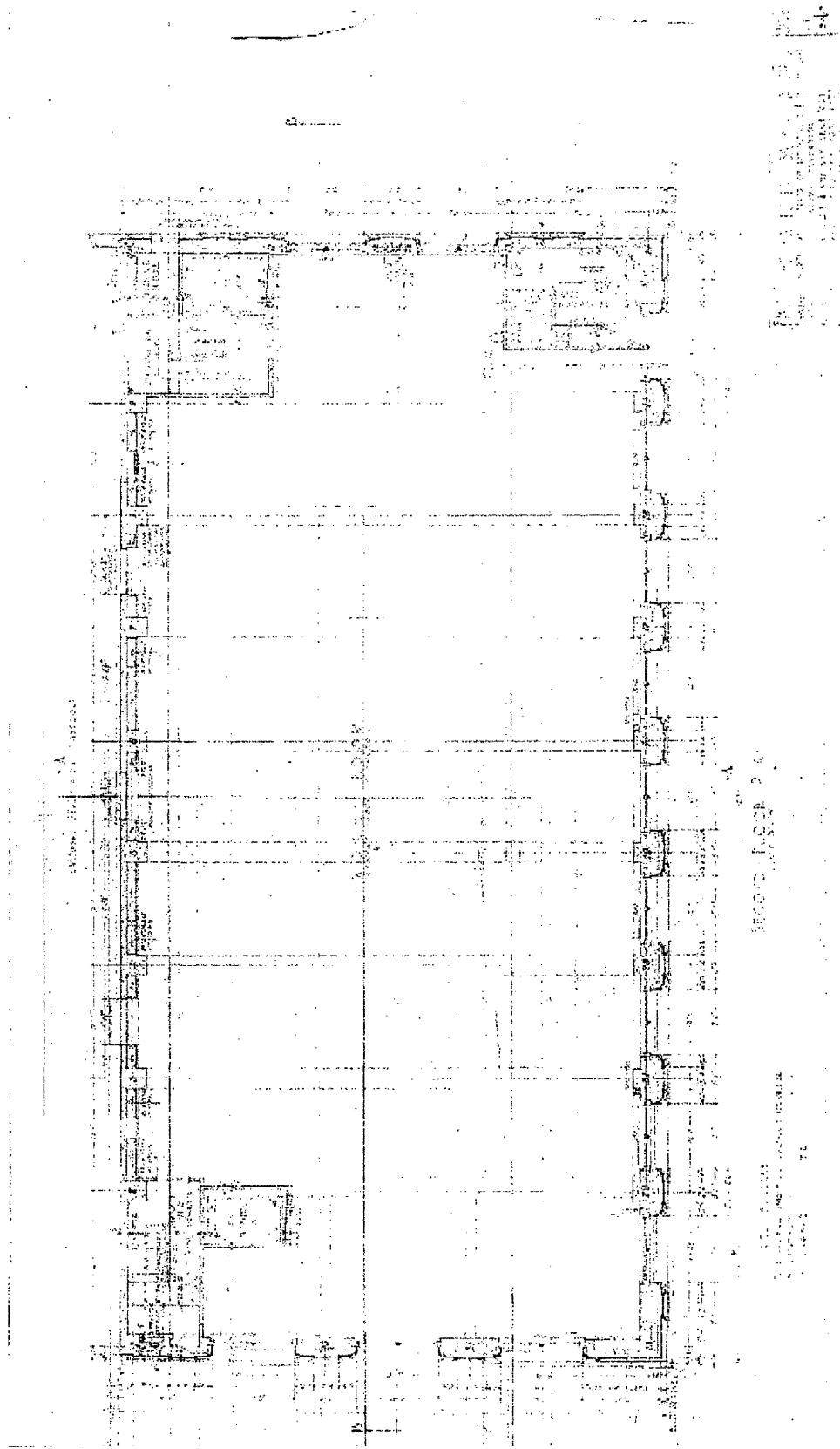


**NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA, 1123 PACIFIC AVE., TACOMA (PIERCE COUNTY) WA  
DRAWINGS**



1123 PACIFIC AVE. TACOMA WASH.

NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA, 1123 PACIFIC AVE., TACOMA (PIERCE COUNTY) WA  
DRAWINGS

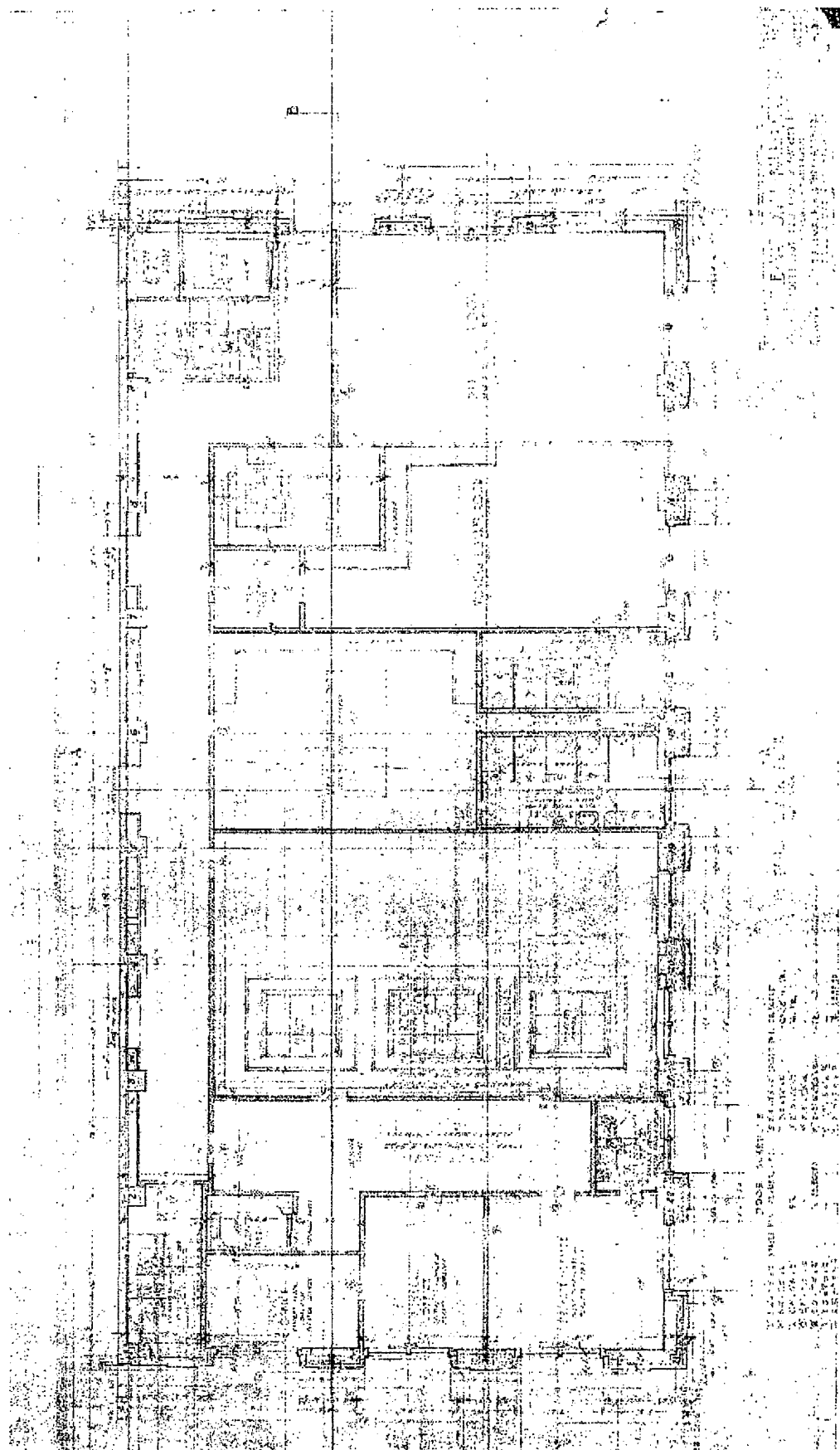


1123 PACIFIC AVE.

SECOND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA, 1123 PACIFIC AVE., TACOMA (PIERCE COUNTY) WA  
DRAWINGS



DOOR SCHEDULE  
1. 1/2" x 6" x 6"  
2. 1/2" x 6" x 6"  
3. 1/2" x 6" x 6"  
4. 1/2" x 6" x 6"  
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**NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
NATIONAL BANK OF TACOMA, 1123 PACIFIC AVE., TACOMA (PIERCE COUNTY) WA  
DRAWINGS**

