

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

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received 9/17/76  
date entered SEP 11 1984

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic A.E. Larson Building

and or common

**2. Location**

street & number 122 E. Yakima Ave., ~~or~~ 6 S. Second St. not for publication

city, town Yakima vicinity of

state Washington code 053 county Yakima code 077

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Larson Associates

street & number P.O. Box 1001

city, town Bellevue vicinity of state Washington 98009

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Assessor's Office, Yakima County Courthouse

street & number North Second and East B Streets

city, town Yakima state Washington 98901

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title none has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" 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 A.E. Larson Building is an eleven-story office structure situated at the hub of Yakima's commercial center on Second Street and Yakima Avenue. Designed by architect John W. Maloney and constructed in 1931, the building is a truly sophisticated example of Art Deco architecture. At the time of its completion, the Larson Building was the city's first skyscraper and it continues to dominate the city's low-lying skyline. Its bold profile is starkly visible from all directions upon descent from the surrounding hills into the Yakima Valley.

The structural system of the Larson Building consists of piers and slabs of reinforced concrete, described as "Class A, fire-proof construction" in a promotional pamphlet issued prior to its completion. Setbacks were incorporated in the building's uppermost stories. Although this design feature was currently popular, it was both legally and environmentally unnecessary in Yakima's vertically undeveloped downtown. The Larson Building measures 65 feet by 130 feet, and stands 188 feet high to the top of its flag pole. Over much of its exterior, the building is faced with salmon-colored brick of custom dimensions, and is trimmed in various locations with granite, travertine, bronze, cast stone, terra cotta, and copper. The juxtaposition of these materials results in a texture that is extremely rich and one that, for the Art Deco Style, is unusually warm.

A number of the Larson Building's shop fronts remain as originally designed. In addition to the main lobby entrance, there are four separate shop entrances on Second Street and three on Yakima Avenue. Those shops entrances, which remain unaltered, are recessed, their covered entryways paved with terrazzo. Plate glass display windows are set within cast bronze frames ornamented with geometrically patterned reliefs. The facing materials, which unify these shop fronts in a single horizontal base, are polished Viper black Swedish granite and cut travertine.

The corner shop fronts were altered in 1963, creating a single large rental unit for a commercial bank. The remodelling involved replacement of the original granite veneer and the carefully detailed bronze window trim, with stark wall surfaces of plate glass and granite. This manipulation has affected three of the seven original shop fronts but, fortunately, it constitutes the building's only exterior alteration.

The main entrance to the office building, situated on Second Street, is simple yet precisely detailed. Above the recessed entryway on the outer surface of the facade, dimensioned units of travertine are overlapped and stepped upward to form an abstract keystone motif. Three glazed, bronze doors are topped by vertical panels of bronze grillwork cast in a geometric design consistent with the building's Art Deco theme. The grillwork forms an overlay which originally screened an art glass transom. The transom, identified as "hammered Cathedral glass" on the architect's elevation drawings, has since been replaced with clear plate glass. Below the grillwork, a central panel carries the words "A.E. Larson Building" in Art Deco Style bronze letters.

The upper stories of the Larson Building are particularly pleasing in texture and proportion. Nine floor levels have continuous brick-faced piers and connecting brick spandrels. All window openings display double steel casements with clear plate glazing and terra cotta sills. At the tenth and eleventh floor levels, setbacks and variations in materials begin. Stamped copper and terra cotta spandrel units are substituted for brick spandrels. All piers are capped with faceted or stepped terra cotta copings which, taken together, form an irregular horizontal tie at the building's uppermost extremity. However, verticality is by far the strongest force expressed by the Larson Building. This

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only	
received	AUG 1 1984
date entered	

Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

2

is achieved by the uninterrupted rise from base to roof of each elevation's centermost piers.

The interior plan of the Larson Building is based upon a central core of elevator shafts, corridors, and stairwell, with office units arranged around the perimeter. All mechanical and electrical systems incorporated in the building were designed to take full advantage of recent technological advances. The original elevators were gearless and self-leveling, and equipped with electric ventilation fans. A promotional brochure proudly stated "one ride in these elevators will convince you that they represent the last word in efficiency, safety, speed, and comfort." Mechanical exhaust ventilation insured fresh air flow to all rentable spaces from basement to penthouse. A constant, even water supply was to be maintained through the use of a water storage tank on the penthouse floor. Heat was regulated throughout the building by the "Webster Automatic Moderator System." Certain floors were outfitted with technical features for the medical and dental professions, such as X-ray equipment and storage vaults, gas and compressed air service, and specially designed plumbing and electrical layouts.

The ornamentation of the vestibule and main lobby constitutes the Larson Building's tour de force in terms of its total decorative scheme. As one enters the building, the relatively restrained treatment of the exterior of the main entryway is transformed into full-blown Art Deco exuberance. A terrazzo and marble inlay floor contributes color and pattern to the entire lobby space. The walls are sheathed with black and red Italian marble. A cast plaster cornice, elaborately polychromed, remains intact. Above the elevator entrances, along the cross axis of the lobby, is an original light fixture. Unfortunately, its art glass or "hammered Cathedral glass" has been lost. Bronze elevator doors with stylized floral and geometric reliefs are still in excellent condition. Although more modern cabs have been installed in two of the original three passenger elevators, a third cab, now used for freight, remains in service. Its interior is a bright combination of chrome fixtures and flashy designs in red, black, and yellow-gold lacquered on metallic wall surfaces. Completing the glittering interior is the original directory board located near the grand staircase and mail deposit box, both of which are executed in cast bronze.

The upper stories of the Larson Building have undergone surprisingly few interior alterations. Carpeting and accoustical ceilings have been installed in various locations, and the walls of certain offices have been panelled in the course of individual redecoration projects. On the whole, however, interior partitions remain as originally constructed. Mahogany doors, door frames and baseboards remain intact and untouched by paint. In the corridors, marble wainscoting and door sills have also survived.

The office windows were a special and apparently somewhat unique feature of the Larson Building at the time of its construction. The promotional booklet previously mentioned specifically describes the building's "365 flawless new improved Browne windows." These steel-framed casements, still in use throughout the building, are vertically hinged at their centers. Their scissor-like motion permits easy washing of exterior glass surfaces from the interior of each office. The Larson Building was believed to be the first structure in the Pacific Northwest to install the "new improved type" of Browne window.

## 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1931 **Builder/Architect** John W. Maloney, Architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The A.E. Larson Building is the city of Yakima's most prominent architectural landmark. The structure is an excellent example of Art Deco or "modernistic" design, and is by far the finest and most monumental example of this style in the central Washington region. Designed by the architect John W. Maloney and completed in September of 1931, the Larson Building has undergone minimal alteration. The building is also the largest commercial structure in the city and is an important reminder of the career of businessman A.E. Larson.

Alfred E. Larson was exceptionally significant in the physical and organizational development of Yakima's business community. A builder, financier, civic worker, and entrepreneur, Larson arrived in the Washington Territory in 1884 as a young pioneer from Minnesota. After a stint in a lumbering camp in the eastern Cascades and pilgrimages to Oregon and California, Larson established himself in Yakima in 1891. His first business venture was the purchase of interest in a local lumber yard, followed by repeated investments in real estate development within Yakima's commercial district. Larson constructed a theater at North Second and "A" Street (first known as "Larson's Theatre," later as the Yakima Opera House), the Donnelly Hotel, and other commercial structures, all prior to the Larson Building project of 1931.

Larson's business connections expanded rapidly. He served as vice-president of the Yakima First National Bank, president of the Sunshine Mining Company, and owner of the Burrows Motor Company (a Ford franchise), to name only a few. For many years, he was avidly interested in the reclamation of the Yakima Valley, spearheading requests for federal funding of local irrigation projects. Politically, Larson was active in the Democratic party of the state, and for a time served as chairman of the local Democratic Committee. He was further involved in the organization and leadership of the Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club. A.E. Larson's contributions to the social, civic, and business life of the Yakima community were widely recognized and publicly proclaimed at his death in 1934.

Motivated by his faith in the continuing growth and prosperity of Yakima, Larson invested approximately \$600,000 in the Larson Building project in spite of the unfavorable economic conditions which prevailed in 1930-31. Lowered construction costs were undoubtedly a major incentive in his decision to build on a large scale. However, in the preface to a promotional pamphlet published prior to the building's completion, Larson expressed his public sentiments:

Progress is the result of foresight and vision. . . . I have seen this Valley change from a sage brush desert into a veritable Eden. Yakima is now the trading and distributing center for a Valley population of 106,474 people (1930 Census). The plans of the Reclamation Service embrace a program that will irrigate another quarter million acres, so that the future holds great things in store for Yakima. [The investment risk in this project] has been overshadowed by an earnest desire to do something in a substantial and a serviceable way for Yakima and its people.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

The A.E. Larson Building. Promotional brochure published during construction of the Larson Building. No author, no date.  
 Crawford, Jean, comp. and ed. As the Valley Was. Yakima Federal Savings and Loan Association. (Yakima, 1968).

(continued)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Yakima West

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

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6	9	1	1	9	0
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5	1	6	3	7	7	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

C 

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Verbal boundary description and justification Parcel 191319-2347-9, consists of the east 15 feet of Lot 10 and all of Lots 11 and 12 of Block 31 of the Yakima Plat.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state n/a code county code  
 state n/a code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ms. Florence K. Lentz

organization date 1977, revised April 1984

street & number 4018 S.W. Orchard Street telephone (206) 935-7605

city or town Seattle state Washington, 98136

## 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 

title State Historic Preservation Officer date July 24, 1984

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

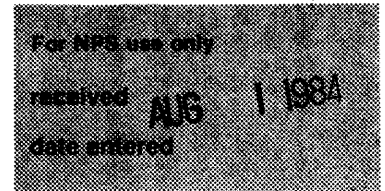
  
 Keeper of the National Register

date 9/11/84

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page

2

By virtue of its scale and period of development, the Larson Building was obviously one of the most important commercial undertakings in the history of Yakima.

At the time of the Larson Building commission, John W. Maloney was an independent architect practicing in Yakima. Born in Sacramento, California, Maloney was educated in the Catholic schools of Grass Valley, California. He received his architectural training at the University of Washington. Following military service in World War I, Maloney apprenticed himself for a time with an architectural firm in Tacoma. He had established his own practice in Yakima by 1922. His offices were located in the Larson Building itself upon its completion.

In 1946, Maloney moved to Seattle and subsequently became less active in the work of his Yakima office. In 1957, he sold the Yakima firm to the partnership of Cowan and Paddock, now Paddock and Hillingbery, whose offices still occupy the same unaltered suite in the Larson Building. Maloney continued to practice independently in Seattle until 1963, when he formed the office of Maloney, Herrington, Freesz, and Lund. John Maloney retired from the firm in 1970 and died in January of 1978. His long career spanned a critical era in the history of American architecture and his completed works reflect the eclecticism of the early twentieth century, the Art Deco and Streamline Moderne movements of the 1930's and 1940's, and the International Style of the post-World War II decades.

John Maloney was quite successful and his buildings are found throughout the western states. His major works include a large number of institutional structures, notably hospitals and university buildings:

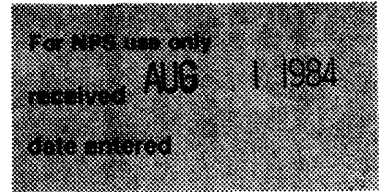
- St. John's Hospital, Santa Monica, California
- Holy Cross Hospital, Salt Lake City, Utah
- Penitentiary Hospital, Walla Walla, Washington
- Sacred Heart Medical Center, Spokane, Washington
- Buildings for St. Mary's Convent, Notre Dame University, Notre Dame, Indiana
- McConnell Building, Central Washington University, Ellensburg, Washington
- Johnson Tower, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington
- Mt. St. Vincent's and St. Joseph's Residence, Seattle, Washington
- Rogue Valley Manor, Medford, Oregon

In addition to the architectural services of John W. Maloney, Larson engaged the building planning service of the National Building Owners and Managers Association to participate in the design process. A commission of experts from various cities around the country met in Yakima to discuss and approve every phase and detail of the project plans. General contractors for the project were Hans Pederson Construction Company with bids for heating, ventilation, plumbing, and electricity considered separately. Larson sought above all to offer future tenants efficiency of service, the ultimate in modernity and comfort, and prestige of address. For the mutual benefit of tenants and developer, Larson hoped to attract chiefly professional businesses of established reputation for occupancy.

Choice of location for the Larson Building was naturally a key factor in insuring the building's success. The site at the corner of Second Street and Yakima Avenue had long

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page 3

been the core of the city's commercial sector. Prior to construction of the Larson Building, the lot was occupied by the First National Bank, a handsomely ornate two-story brick structure. The application of the Art Deco Style to the new skyscraper was a significant choice in itself. A jazzy and futuristic mode of expression, the Art Deco veneer was seemingly independent of historically-based architectural styles and of utilitarian local building traditions. To contemporaries, the blatantly modern appearance of the new building on both its interior and exterior was clearly representative of "progress." It was an assurance to the inhabitants of Yakima that culturally, socially, and economically, the "modern age" had arrived in their valley.

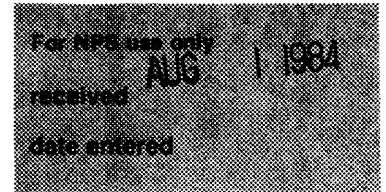
Against its natural and man-made surroundings, the architectural impact of this sophisticated monument was (and so remains) very powerful. The building soars above its two and three-story neighbors, its setbacks and streamlined piers silhouetted clearly against the sky. From outlying areas of the city and from further vantage points beyond its boundaries, the structure identifies the centerpoint of Yakima's business district. The brown desert-like slopes of the hills, which so closely encircle the city, form an unlikely backdrop for this unusual image of sophisticated urbanity.

As an example of Art Deco design, the Larson Building is unsurpassed in quality and scale throughout central Washington and, indeed, it is one of the finest examples of the style to be found in the state. The Larson Building achieves its high level of impact primarily because every detail consistently contributes to the total design. The repeated use of bronze elements cast in intricate geometric and naturalistic relief patterns sets the tone for the street level facades. This theme culminates in the lavish bronzework of the vestibule and lobby. Juxtaposed surfaces of granite, travertine, brick, cast stone, and terra cotta on the exterior with marble, mahogany, terrazzo, and polychromed plaster on the interior provide abundant variations of color and texture.

The Larson Building exemplifies a serious and thoroughly-considered monument to the Art Deco phenomenon. Its public image is one of "vision" and "foresight," a fitting architectural embodiment of A.C. Larson's aspirations for the whole of the Yakima Valley.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number

9

Page

2

- Maloney, John W. Blueprints from original tracings of Larson Building. On file in the offices of Paddock and Hollingbery, Architects, Larson Building, Yakima.
- Merz, Donna. Former secretary to John W. Maloney. Telephone conversation, June, 1976.
- Paddock, William. Architect, Larson Building, Yakima. Interview and telephone conversations, May - June, 1976.
- Pollard, Lancaster. A History of the State of Washington, Vol. IV. The American Historical Society, Inc. (New York, 1937).
- Yakima Sun. "A.E. Larson . . . A Business Leader with Pioneer Instincts." March 18, 1976.