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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OCT 8 1987

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Semar Block
other names/site number Semar Building, West Coast Creamery

2. Location

street & number 501 Q Avenue not for publication
city, town Anacortes vicinity
state Washington code 053 county Skagit code 057 zip code 98221

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

James E. [Signature] Date 9/29/87
Signature of certifying official
Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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): _____

Alvina [Signature] Entered in the National Register 11-5-87
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Health Care - HospitalAgriculture/Subsistence - ProcessingCommerce/Trade - Business

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade - Specialty Shop

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late VictorianOther: Commercial Vernacular

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Other - unknown (assumed brick)walls Brick

roof Unknownother Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Semar Block is a two-story brick commercial building constructed in 1891 and designed by Anacortes architect J.C. Jepson. The building, which is embellished with a variety of Victorian decorative elements, is in fair condition and has had some alterations. In general these changes reflect the natural evolution of a building which has had a number of different uses during its lifetime. Most of the alterations were prior to 1920. Originally constructed for offices and retail space, the Semar Block has also served as a hospital, a creamery, residential apartments, and a machine shop. Since 1956, the first floor has been occupied by A-1 Metal Craft, a welding and machine works; the second floor has been vacant.

The building is located on the north 50 feet of Lots 8, 9, and 10, Block 6, of the Original Plat of Anacortes, Skagit County, Washington. Prominently sited on the southeast corner of the intersection of Fifth Street and "Q" Avenue, the building is located in a transitional area between the historic commercial core one block to the west and residential neighborhoods to the east. The majority of buildings in the adjacent area were constructed in the early years of the 20th century. Across "Q" Avenue to the west is a large municipal parking lot adjacent to City Hall (formerly the Elks Lodge). Constructed early in the 20th century, the former Elks Lodge acts as an important visual element in conjunction with the Semar Block anchoring the east side of the city's central business district. Across Fourth Street to the north are several modest bungalow-era homes, and immediately adjacent to the east of subject building is a turn-of-the-century vernacular style residence. The lot immediately south of the subject building is in use as a parking lot with a minor storage building located at its northwest corner. At one time it was occupied by a large wood frame warehouse, constructed c. 1900. To the south of the parking lot is a concrete block activities building for the local boxing club.

Looking north down "Q" Avenue, the waterway of Guemes Channel is visible in the near distance. Together with the railroad right-of-way several blocks to the east, these vistas act as important reminders of the vital role which water and rail transportation played in the initial development of the community.

Exterior: The Semar Block is a two-story rectangular building, approximately 50 by 70 feet, of brick construction. The walls are 18 inches thick. The flat roof, with two skylights, is encased by a prominent parapet wall which is crowned by nine corbeled brick chimney pots. A profusion of ornamental brickwork and decorative treatment of window and door openings adorns the west (facade) and north elevations; south and east elevations are devoid of decorative features and have a minimum of openings. Foundation material is probably brick although it cannot be seen. There is no basement.

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The symmetrical facade has a central, round arched, recessed entrance fitted with two paneled doors, each with transom, which are separated by a projecting panel. A large fanlight is located above. Beaded wainscoting and bull's-eye molding further enhance the entry. The entry is flanked by large, twelve-over-twelve double-hung sash windows with multi-light transoms. These in turn are flanked by 10 foot wooden doors with decorative "stick style" detailing. A large multi-light window, similar to those flanking the entrance, exists on the north elevation.

The second story floor line is delineated by a brick belt course. There is a rounded bay at the second floor above the main entrance which is crowned by a dentil course and concrete "eyebrow" above which the name "Semar Block" stands in relief. The central projecting bay of the facade extends several feet above the roof line.

Second story windows are narrow, double-hung sash with transom lights. All of the glass panes have been removed and the openings have been boarded over from the inside. The original wooden frames, however, remain intact. Each has a "voussoir" with alternating colors of red and black brick. The south elevation of the building has a recessed lightwell at the second story with two one-over-one, double-hung sash windows. A remnant of the roof of the building which once abutted subject building is visible. The east (rear) elevation has two windows at the second story and three at the first. Those on the first floor still have their original two-over-two double-hung frames intact. There are four small windows on the first floor of the north elevation which originally had radiating bars suggesting a fanlight. They have since been replaced with solid panes.

Other notable features include the profusion of ornamental brickwork above window and door openings and particularly at the parapet wall. Here corbeled brick is arranged in several different patterns. The wall surfaces are further broken by strip pilasters which extend the full height of the building on the north (side) elevation.

A tall, narrow, 15 foot door opening is located at the rear of the building on the north (side) elevation. It has been boarded over, but originally accessed a stairway to the second story. Adjacent to it is a large wooden door on overhead rollers with a small window above. Also on the north elevation, barely visible, is a painted sign which reads: "Golden West Butter."

The only documented alteration to the exterior of the building is the replacement of the large plate glass windows flanking the entry with multi-light windows. This was done in approximately 1956 by the current owner, as was the replacement of the window panes in the small windows on the north elevation. No photographic or other documentation has been uncovered to determine precisely what the original facade looked like; however, several informants believe that the large wooden doors probably replaced plate glass windows typical of early storefronts and that it was done in approximately 1914, the year that West Coast Creamery moved into the building. This conjecture seems likely to be true as the building was reportedly constructed for office and retail space, and large doors of this nature would be uncharacteristic. They are, however, consistent with the needs of a creamery operation which would require openings of that size for storage and/or loading of wagons and trucks. The only other alteration is the addition of a small sliding door and window on the north elevation, also presumably for use by the creamery.

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Interior: In addition to the back stairway mentioned above, the second floor of the building was originally accessed by two separate staircases which were entered via the two doors at the main entrance. Only one remains. The northernmost of the two stairways was removed some time prior to 1956. This is the only major structural change to the second floor which otherwise remains relatively intact as built. It consists of a central foyer at the top of the stairs off of which two halls extend running the length of the building. Part of the foyer has been enclosed for use as a bathroom. There are five offices off each of the two halls, all of which have their original paneled and glazed door and transom intact.

Door and window trim throughout the second floor is simple, repeating the same motifs found in the entry including fluted surrounds and bull's-eye molding as well as beaded wainscoting to a height of five feet. Three inch wood floorboards run the length of the building. Walls are lath and plaster throughout. Water damage from a leaky roof has done damage to the ceiling and walls, from which the plaster is falling away in a number of areas. Of particular note is the handsome balustrade and newel post at the second floor landing.

The first floor consists of two large rooms which are divided east-west the length of the building. A large opening has been cut in the wall separating the rooms and has been fitted with a sliding door. The west end of both interior rooms has been partially partitioned into two small rooms. The room to the north is used as office space and the room to the south was a cooler room, currently in use as storage. The floor is poured concrete throughout although a portion of the floor at the rear of the southernmost room is dirt and was reportedly a freezer area for dairy products.

In general the building is in fair to poor condition. Damage to walls and ceilings on the second floor has been extensive; however, floor boards and other interior finishes remain intact as do both existing staircases. Brick walls on both the interior and exterior are deteriorating: in a number of places crumbling brick needs to be replaced and all brick is in need of repointing. The quality of the brick is quite low and the mortar is equally poor. The building appears to be in fair structural condition; however, the facade has settled somewhat and is in need of shoring up.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Health/Medicine

Period of Significance

1891
- c.1905-1908

Significant Dates

1891
c.1905-1908

Cultural Affiliation

N.A.

Significant Person

N.A.

Architect/Builder

Jepson, J.C.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Semar Block is a well-preserved and rare example of an early brick commercial building in Anacortes. Constructed in 1891 during the phenomenal boom period associated with railroad speculation, the building is the finest of only four prominent brick buildings which survive from the period. The building, designed by local architect J.C. Jepson, is distinguished by the rich use of Victorian decorative elements, including elaborate brick corbelling, a raised parapet, and decorative window heads and arches. In addition, the building is historically significant for its role as the community's first hospital and is associated with the West Coast Creamery, the longest operating creamery in the history of the city.

Architectural Context: In the 1870's and 80's there were a number of small settlements scattered throughout Fidalgo Island. There was, however, no real town until 1889-91 when the settlement of Anacortes exploded into a thriving community in anticipation of the coming of the railroad. Promoters believed the community would become the terminus where transcontinental rail traffic and trans-Pacific shipping would meet. The bubble burst when the railroad selected Tacoma as its terminus. But during this three year period numerous commercial buildings were constructed as well as homes, churches, docks and wharves.

At least nine substantial brick commercial buildings were built, four of which remain. In addition to the Semar Block these include the Anacortes Hotel, the Wilson Hotel, and a fraternal building which now houses Village Pizza. The latter building bears no resemblance to its original form, having been stuccoed over some years ago. The Anacortes Hotel is severely deteriorated having lost its roof and upper story. The exterior of the Wilson Hotel retains all of its original fabric on the second and third floors; however, the interior has been extensively remodeled in recent years, as has the storefront, which seriously detracts from the building's architectural integrity.

The Semar Block is the only surviving brick building dating to the boom period which retains a relatively high degree of physical integrity. Alterations which have occurred took place primarily during the historic period and reflect the evolution of the building through several different uses. These changes are significant in and of themselves due to their association with the historically significant uses. Although the Semar Block does not reflect as strong a Romanesque revival character as some of the other structures did, it is the best example in the city of the eclecticism of Victorian commercial architecture.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Funk, Wallie. Telephone interview, June 17, 1987, Oak Harbor, Washington.
Hibbler, Russell. Interview, June 28, 1987.
Land Title Co. Records, Mt. Vernon, Washington.
Mitchell, Bill. Interview, June 20, 1987.
Willis, Margaret. Skagit Settlers Trials and Triumphs, Skagit County Historical Society, Mt. Vernon, 1975.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property less than one

UTM References

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Zone Easting Northing

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

North 50 feet of Lots 8 through 10, Block 6, Original Plat of Anacortes. Within the North-west quarter of the Southwest quarter of Section 18, Township 35 North, Range 2 East.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city lots that have historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Julie Kohler
organization Koler/Morrison Consultants date 06/30/87
street & number 3121 NE 35th Place telephone (503) 249-1949
city or town Portland state Oregon zip code 97212

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Like many of the prominent early buildings in the city, the Semar Block was designed by local architect J.C. Jepson, who designed substantial edifices such as the Goodwin-Benedict-Havekost Block which was located at the intersection of Seventh and Commercial and the Fry-McMillan Block which was located on the same block as the subject building just to the south. Neither of these buildings is standing today; however, both were similar to the Semar Building with a preponderance of decorative brickwork.

J.C. Jepson was a native of Hartford, Connecticut, and a graduate of the Westfield Normal School in Massachusetts. He worked for a time as superintendent of drafting at the Westinghouse Company and later went to Minneapolis where he designed a number of buildings including City Hall and the Court House. It is unclear when he came to Anacortes but it is likely he was attracted by prospects of the impending boom. It appears that he left soon after the boom, as there is no record of any subsequent activity and there is no death record. Advertisements in city directories report that he specialized in fireproof buildings.

Historical Background: The original owners of the Semar Block were John Semar and David Wilson. Little is known about these individuals except that Semar reportedly had extensive land holdings on Padilla Flats east of Anacortes. Wilson had come from Tacoma and was founder and owner of the Wilson Hotel mentioned above. Wilson sold his interest in subject building to Semar shortly after it was constructed.

The Semar was constructed for \$6,000. The contractors are believed to have been Long and Merritt, a local firm who worked with Jepson on several other buildings. Brick was undoubtedly supplied by Captain See's brickyard which reportedly supplied brick for all of the early buildings. The yard was located on Fidalgo Bay in the present vicinity of 26th Street. It is noteworthy for the consistently low quality of the brick which was produced and which was undoubtedly a factor in the short lifespan of many of the early buildings.

Early use of the building has not been verified although it was reportedly occupied by a variety of retail shops between 1891 and 1905. During this period title to the property changed hands a number of times. John Semar sold it to Anton Semar in 1895. In 1902 Anton sold it to Mary Corndorffer who in turn sold it to W.V. Wells in 1906. The property remained in Wells ownership until 1956 when his estate sold it to the current owner. Wells was a prominent attorney and civic leader who owned a great deal of property throughout the city. During the time he owned the building it was leased to a number of different tenants.

The first documented use of the Semar Block is 1905 when Drs. Butler and Appleby established the community's first hospital on the second floor. Between the years 1900 and 1910 Anacortes experienced tremendous population growth associated with the burgeoning lumber and fishing industries. Corresponding with this growth was a steady increase in industrially-related accidents, particularly in the lumber mills. The hospital was a necessary outcome of these developments.

Prior to establishment of the hospital, as in most frontier communities, patients were treated at any of several physicians' offices or homes scattered throughout the area. Serious cases were sometimes treated in Seattle or Bellingham. There was also a "pest house" where people with contagious diseases were confined; however, one source writes that

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it was "more akin to a sentence than to hospitalization" (miscellaneous newspaper clipping, n.a., n.d., probably the Anacortes American). The same source writes that the hospital had an enameled operating room, electric lights, and accommodations for twelve patients. The hospital operated in the building for several years before moving into an apartment house between "I" and "U" Avenues on Fourth Street. The precise date of the move has not been established.

A cafe and rooming house (and, according to local lore, a sporting house as well) occupied the building between the time the hospital left and 1914 when the West Coast Creamery (Dairy) moved in. It was established by Jack Raymond and a small group of shareholders. A number of informants believe that the large doors on the facade and the smaller sliding door on the north elevation were installed at this time to accommodate the wagons, and later trucks, of the company. The creamery operated at this location until 1946 when expansion necessitated a move to larger quarters on Commercial Avenue.

The earliest recorded creamery operating in the community was the Anacortes Creamery located on the waterfront, near the foot of "O" Avenue, which was established c. 1900. It appears that it went out of business at about the approximate time the West Coast Creamery was established. The West Coast Creamery operated for many years as the community's only creamery.

The Semar Block has played a vital role in the development of the city since its construction. As the sole surviving brick building dating to the boom era which has retained integrity from the historic period, it is a colorful symbol of the community's heritage.