

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

1587

RECEIVED

OCT 14 1992

NATIONAL REGISTER

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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 10-900-a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name FREMONT BUILDING

other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number 3419 Fremont Avenue N.

not for publication

city, town Seattle

vicinity

state Washington code WA

county King

code 033

zip code 98103

### 3. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

#### Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

#### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>—</u>	buildings
<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	sites
<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>—</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

### 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.

Mary M. Sampson  
Signature of certifying official

9/09/92  
Date

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:)

Greg M. Lapsley  
Signature of the Keeper

entered in the National Register

11/12/92  
Date of Action

for Signature of the Keeper

---

**6. Function or Use**

---

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE: business, specialty store  
DOMESTIC: hotel

COMMERCE: business, specialty store

---

**7. Description**

---

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals

foundation brick, concrete  
walls concrete  
  
roof other: tar  
other tile

---

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Located in the heart of Seattle's Fremont district, the Fremont Building is a frame commercial structure characterized by a rusticated concrete block facade, large storefront bays, and second floor double hung windows lighting the historic Fremont Hotel. The building is situated at the pivotal five-point intersection of Fremont Avenue N., N. Fremont Place, and N. 35th Street, a key position in a "streetcar" commercial district still characterized by one and two story buildings from the first decades of the 20th century.

The Fremont Building is built on an irregular plan, which like others in the district, reflects the diagonal street pattern constructed about 1911. The elongated facade of the building curves gently along the district's main arterial, following the route of Fremont Place as it merges into Fremont Avenue at North 35th Street. Of the several "flat iron" and trapezoidal buildings in the district, the Fremont has the most dominant facade along the main streets, and greatest storefront visibility at the key intersection.

The Fremont Building is a wood frame structure resting on a brick and poured concrete foundation and rising to a flat roof with built-up tar roofing. The building is two stories on the principal eastern facade, and three and four stories on the rear wings, although this taller portion is not visible from the facade.

Despite its conventional frame construction, the most distinctive feature of the building is the concrete block veneer that covers the expansive east facade and gives the building its substantial character. The concrete blocks are laid in regular courses and are finished in a rusticated pattern, suggesting rough-faced ashlar.

The facade is horizontally divided into first floor storefronts and upper story hotel rooms. The first floor level consists of six large storefront bays divided by thin piers faced with concrete block. The three large center bays are composed of central recessed entries, with double leaf doors, flanked by beveled display windows with cast iron posts. Smaller storefront bays, with similar display windows but with flush entries, are located to the north and south. Each storefront bay is surmounted by large multi-light transom windows. Above the transom lights, the first floor is capped by a cast iron lintel with subcornice

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number 7 Page 2

---

molding. Historic photographs from the early 1920s indicate that the only exterior changes at the storefront level have been some new glazing set within the existing display window openings on the southernmost bay, and the placement of tile along the bulkheads below the display windows.

The second floor facade features regularly spaced double-hung wood sash windows, resting on a metal sill course and rising to metal lintel course. The windows feature upper sashes with four vertical lights above a single light lower sash. The building is crowned by a projecting metal cornice, which includes a plain architrave and projecting cornice underscored by brackets. The cornice is surmounted by a low concrete block parapet. A new nameplate is located in the panel where the original nameplate identified the structure as the "Fremont Building." Historic photographs indicate that this is the only change to the upper story facade.

The interior of the storefronts still retain their original floor plans, although finishes have been altered. Little has changed in the interior configuration of the hotel rooms, which are small rooms located along double loaded corridors. The original lath and plaster walls in the 11 hotel rooms were replaced with modern wall board, but fir floors, doors, and window surrounds remain. Many of the rooms, reflecting hotel use, have small attached washrooms.

The non-street elevations of the building are faced in horizontal wood siding and nonhistoric aluminum siding. Two projecting rear corridors, one rising three stories and one rising four stories, project off the main two-story wing. The bays are faced in aluminum siding and are lighted by metal frame windows. A fire in the mid-1970s destroyed an adjacent building on the south; the lot is currently vacant, although new construction is proposed.

## 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)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture

1911 - 1941

1911

Commerce

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

N/A

Not known

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

Located in the center of an early 20th century business district, the Fremont Building is an architecturally significant community landmark, distinguished by a rusticated concrete block facade with large storefront bays and a projecting cornice. The structure was built in the first years of the 20th century but remodeled to its present form in 1911 following realignment of the district's streets. The resulting long, curving facade and distinguished veneer give the Fremont Building a visual prominence that underscores its historical associations with long-term business and civic institutions in the Fremont district. A 1991 comprehensive survey completed by the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods identified the building as a "keystone in the core of old Fremont" which "establishes the basic character of the district." Although the rear elevations have been resided and windows replaced, the facade's character retains its integrity and strongly reflects the commercial heritage of a streetcar suburb which prospered in the early 20th century.

Historical Background: Located at the northwest corner of Lake Union, Fremont developed in the 1880s as a mill town immediately north of Seattle. The Fremont Milling Company started operations at "Fremont Bay" in 1888; in 1896, the mill was purchased by the Bryant Lumber and Shingle Mill Company, which expanded its output to include cut lumber as well as shingles. Although the sawmill remained in operation until 1932 (when it burned to the ground), the real impetus for growth in the community was its strategic location at the northwest corner of the lake, placing the district at the intersection of north-south and east-west traffic.

Train service to the area was inaugurated in 1887 by the Seattle Lake Shore and Eastern Railroad; the community served as an early hub of water traffic as well (a role it continued to play in the early 20th century when it served as a stopping point on the ship canal that connected Lake Union with the Puget Sound, passing the southern edge of Fremont). By the turn of the century, the Seattle Electric Railway Company carried passengers to Fremont via a wooden trestle on the west side of the lake. Other streetcar and interurban connections soon linked the community with the rest of the metropolitan area. For example, Guy Phinney, who owned Woodland Park north of Seattle, started his own streetcar line from lower Fremont to the park; eventually, local streetcars ran from Fremont to Green Lake, Ballard, and Wallingford. By the early 20th century, Fremont

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number 8 Page 2

---

was connected with the larger metropolitan area through the Seattle-Everett Interurban Railroad.

As a transportation crossroads, Fremont grew quickly with residents and small businesses. As early as 1891, when the area was annexed to Seattle, Fremont claimed 5,000 people. By the first decades of the 20th century, the commercial district was dense with two story buildings. The construction of the ship canal and the new Fremont Bridge (1917) contributed to the business district's prosperity, and Fremont flourished through the 1920s.

The evolution of the Fremont Building closely reflects the growth of the district in the early 20th century. Although a wood frame structure was built on the property as early as 1903 according to city building permits (1906 according to King County assessor records), the simple one-story building was dramatically remodeled into the present Fremont Building in 1911 after the business district street pattern was realigned from a simple grid to an angular pattern to better access the proposed bascule bridge over the canal. The construction of Fremont Place, proposed in 1909 and completed in 1911, intersected with Fremont Avenue and N. 35th Street on a diagonal from the northwest. The new five-point intersection became the hub of the district, and buildings constructed at the site assumed flatiron, trapezoidal, or other irregular forms.

Most notable of these was the re-built Fremont Building whose irregular plan allowed the facade to gently follow the curve of Fremont Place into Fremont Avenue, providing storefront addresses and visibility along all three principal streets. When completed, the building took such advantage of the site as to physically and architecturally dominate the district.

The dominant location of the building was reinforced by the choice of rusticated concrete block as a veneer for the structure's facade. The prefabricated building material, popularized in the first decade of the 20th century and promoted as an inexpensive and quick alternative to traditional masonry construction, contrasted with the less imposing frame and brick structures nearby. At least one contemporary building in the district followed suit, but the Fremont Building was the larger and more substantial.

The rusticated blocks, large storefront bays, and bracketed cornice created a strong character that today underscores the historical role of the structure. From its rebuilding, the building occupied an important place in the social and economic history of the district. In 1913, the Fremont Public Library was established in the building and remained in the location until its own building--the last Carnegie Library constructed in

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number   8   Page   3  

---

the state— was opened in 1921 on N. 35th Street. A wide variety of business firms and restaurants located in the storefronts, most notably the Fremont Drug Company, which conducted business in the building from 1912 until 1955. Upstairs, the building served as the Fremont Hotel, the district's hostelry, with modest rooms for rent. Some activities were less mainstream: during the 1930s, with the closure of legitimate businesses, it was reported that the hotel functioned as a brothel, and the interior hall known as the Fremont Auditorium was reputedly a speakeasy during Prohibition.

After the 1920s, as automobiles replaced streetcars and the new Aurora Avenue bridge bypassed the community entirely, Fremont entered a long period of decline. But in recent decades, the community has been reinvigorated with new small businesses and the rehabilitation of several district buildings. The Fremont Building is among the most significant components in the well preserved historic commercial center, and is a designated City of Seattle landmark.

