

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

For NPS use only

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

received SEP 14 1983
date entered

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

1. Name

historic William Volker Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 1000 Lenora Street not for publication

city, town Seattle vicinity of

state Washington code 053 county King code 033

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Morris Piha Company

street & number 300 Elliott Avenue West, Suite 310

city, town Seattle vicinity of state Washington 98118

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. King County Courthouse

street & number Fourth Avenue

city, town Seattle state Washington 98104

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

| | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|------------|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input 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 William Volker Building is a large commercial structure constructed on a triangular sloping lot in central Seattle. The building has two distinct sections. The most prominent part is a five story rectangular structure facing Lenora Street. Attached to the northwest side of this building is a lower triangular section that varies in height from one to two stories according to the slope of the land. The Volker Building is constructed of reinforced concrete and faced on most facades with a brick veneer and cast stone ornament. The building was designed in the Art Deco Style and it exhibits large plain windows more commonly seen in industrial structures. The neighborhood surrounding the Volker Building includes a variety of commercial and warehouse structures as well as vacant lots and parking lots.

The Volker Building has concrete slab floors that are supported on thick concrete columns with plain flared capitals. The exterior of the building is faced with a glazed yellow brick and highlighted by details in cast stone and cement plaster with very large window openings on each floor. These large multi-paned industrial type windows have iron frames. Most panes are fixed while some are hinged. Large windows such as these were used to provide natural light to the work spaces within. This ratio of window to wall space is typical for utilitarian building of this period.

The five story section of the building contains the most striking decorative elements found on the structure. In the center of the five bay elevation facing Lenora Street is a slightly projecting pavilion. In typical Art Deco fashion, the pavilion is stepped out in several planes from the line of the main wall. The pavilion terminates in a flat-roof penthouse with parapet wall and stepped cast stone piers at the corners. The windows in this pavilion are tall and narrow and separated by concrete mullions. The main doorway to the building is on the first floor of this pavilion and recessed under an arched granite block. The large windows on the rest of the building are separated by stepped projecting piers that terminate above the roof's parapet wall and are topped with a cast-stone coping similar to that of the penthouse. The northeast and northwest walls of this five story section are not ornamented but have exposed concrete walls and the flared capitals of the structural columns project beyond the exterior wall plane.

The interior of this section of the building has an elaborate lobby finished with marble and marbelized plaster; brass hardware, grills, and railed staircase; and an arched ceiling with a plaster swag frieze. These details are of classical inspiration; only the lamp fixtures utilize the Art Deco designs of the exterior. The rest of the interior consist of open floors interrupted only by the support columns, two Otis elevators and non-structural partitions constructed by later tenants.

The other section of the Volker Building is attached to the rear of the five story structure at the level of its first floor. The land slopes downward from this point of attachment, but this wing maintains a uniformly flat roofline while its height varies from one to two stories. The roof of this wing facilitates parking when accessed on the Denny Way facade. To accomodate the commercial manufacturing and shipping which went on in the building, an enclosed truck loading dock was incorporated in the design. This functional element is placed in the rear wing beneath the parking deck and is opened by large roll-up doors. One of these doors is located at the truncated corner of the wing at the intersection of Terry Avenue and Denny Way. The visual symmetry of the five story building is not broken by the low-lying wing, and both sections of the Volker Building share similar Art Deco details.

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 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 1928 **Builder/Architect** Henry Bittman and Harold Adams, Architects

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The William Volker Building is significant as a well-preserved and early example of Art Deco design in the city of Seattle. The structure was designed by the prominent architect Henry Bittman and his associate Harold Adams. In this project, the architectural team was able to use both its considerable skills in engineering and its talent in architectural design. They produced a strong utilitarian building that is graced with prominent Art Deco details.

Henry Bittman established himself in Seattle in 1906 and began an architectural firm that still continues to practice today. He had moved to the Northwest from New York where he had been trained as an engineer and exposed to the new structural possibilities of steel and concrete. Bittman worked as an engineer on bridges and small building projects until the end of World War I. In the early 1920's, however, he and an associate, Harold Adams, began to design commercial and office buildings. Their early work gained attention for its soundness of design. With this recognition came the flexibility and confidence to explore new principles and ideas in engineering and architectural design. In 1923, Bittman, with Adams's help, designed a building which departed dramatically from the ubiquitous Commercial Style buildings which made up Seattle's skyline. This was the Terminal Sales Building on First Avenue, one of the city's first examples of high rise reinforced concrete. The structural system of the Volker Building is similar to the pioneering Terminal Sales Building. In both of these structures Bittman internalized and minimized the brawny structural elements in his buildings and developed on the exteriors a generous proportion of window glass and ornamentation. The use of large window openings was common in 1920's era industrial and commercial buildings, though it was usually limited to one or two elevations. In these two structures, Bittman displayed huge window spaces on all facades and floors, sometimes enframed in brick and terra cotta.

Art Deco was essentially a system of ornamentation, and simplified Art Deco motifs were commonly applied to utilitarian buildings. Structures such as garages could often boast chevroned friezes or stepped piers. However, the Art Deco details of the Volker Building are more finely articulated than those found on most utilitarian structures. The stepped pavilion, cast stone piers, and tower-like penthouse were all nicely developed by Adams, and are good illustrations of the Art Deco principles of linear detail and block-like masses. Constructed in 1928, the Volker Building was one of the first buildings in the city to employ these Art Deco motifs.

Other works by Bittman include the Harborview Hospital, additions to the King County Courthouse, the United Shopping Tower (an Art Deco skyscraper also designed with Adams), and the Eagles Auditorium Building. The latter two buildings are listed on the National Register.

The William Volker Company was a Kansas City-based manufacturer and wholesaler of furniture and window shades. The company occupied this building until the late 1970's. The present owners have maintained the structure and erected some non-structural improvements to accommodate its present use as a furniture showroom and wholesale outlet.

The exterior of the structure is intact and in a fine state of preservation. The building remains an interesting and early example of the application of Art Deco designs to a large utilitarian building.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Polk Directories, Seattle, WA. 1907-1953, Northwest Collection, University of Washington.
 Seattle Post-Intelligencer, November 18, 1953.

Interview: Herbert Jay Bittman, May 11, 1983; Dean Sanders, May 20, 1983.

Miscellaneous Pamphlet File, Furniture Trade, Northwest Collection, University of Washington.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Seattle South

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

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Verbal boundary description and justification Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4, Block 39, Heirs of Sarah A. Bell Second Addition together with portion of vacated alley adjacent.

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 Michael Sullivan, Consultant Edited by Mark L. Brack
 O.A.H.P.

organization Chronicles and Design date May 30, 1983

street & number 1313 North Shore Drive telephone (206) 733-6897

city or town Bellingham state Washington 98225

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 *Jacob E. Johnson*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 9/9/83

For NPS use only

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

J. Delores Byers **Entered in the National Register** date 10/13/83
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration