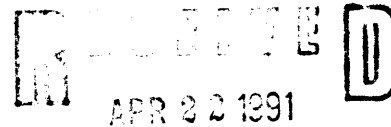


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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# 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 10-900-a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name 1411 Fourth Avenue Building  
other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number 1411 Fourth Ave.  not for publication  
city, town Seattle  vicinity  
state Washington code WA county King code 033 zip code 98101

### 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>	<u>—</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</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.

*Jack E. Johnson*  
Signature of certifying official  
Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

3/28/91  
Date

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. Interested in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet. 5/28/91  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

*Julia*  
Signature of the Keeper  
Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

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## 6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Commerce: business

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Commerce: business

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## 7. Description

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Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Moderne  
Art Deco

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete  
walls stone

roof other: composition  
other

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Built in 1929, the 1411 Fourth Avenue Building is a 15-story steel frame skyscraper faced in cut grey stone and decorated with restrained modernistic ornament. The structure is located at a prominent intersection in the heart of the central Seattle business district, and is distinguished from many other tall buildings because of its stone veneer, modernistic use of piers and spandrels, and the evocation of Celtic and Art Deco motifs. Designed by architect R. C. Reamer (whose nearby Skinner and Great Northern Buildings also feature stone facades), the building is a well preserved reflection of the commercial architecture of the period in an area of intense recent development.

The 1411 Fourth Avenue Building is built on a L shape plan that provides for maximum office space with window exposures. The wings of the tower are placed along Fourth Avenue and Union Street, with a light court formed at the interior juncture. The building rests on a two story base level of retail businesses crowned with a cornice molding. Above the base, the shaft of office floors rises 11 stories to a sub-cornice at the top of the 13th floor. Two additional stories crown the building, forming a parapet-like cap.

The box-like form of the building is articulated by the planar corner bays (two windows wide at the southeast and southwest corners and three windows wide on the northeast) which flank the recessed central bays on the east and south facades. The central bays are given a strong vertical emphasis through unadorned piers which rise unbroken from the base cornice to the cornice at the thirteenth floor and continue to the parapet where they taper to form fluted spires rising above the roofline.

The modernistic verticality of the piers relieves the blockiness of the structure and is further emphasized by the deeply recessed spandrels in the central bays. Two ornamental horizontal bands of Art Deco motifs unite the piers at the parapet level. The band at the parapet is decorated with button friezes and surmounted, in the recesses between the piers, by curving urn-like sculptures placed in front of diamond and sunburst panels. A second band of cream-colored glazed terra cotta friezes with interlocking patterns decorates the spandrels between the fourteenth and fifteenth floor windows. This ornament contrasts sharply with the stone surface in both color and reflective qualities. Mock balconies appear below the 14th floor windows.

The two base floors of the 1411 Fourth Avenue Building reveal a remarkable combination of decorative patterns borrowing from the Art Deco and Celtic traditions. Between the windows along the second floor are panels of Celtic interlacing motifs incorporating different animals from the Bestiary. Above the entry portal, at the northeast corner of the building, is another intricate interlacing design, as well as the "1411 Fourth Avenue" name incised in stone. All display windows along the ground floor originally were

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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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

Period of Significance

1929

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Reamer, Robert C., architect

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

Built in 1929 and designed by prominent architect R. C. Reamer, the 1411 Fourth Avenue Building is a significant example of modernistic commercial architecture in Seattle's central business district. When completed, the building was immediately distinguished from other structures in the burgeoning commercial core as the tallest edifice in the city to be faced entirely in stone. But the building was further distinguished by its restrained modernistic vocabulary of soaring piers, recessed spandrels, and highly decorative Celtic and Art Deco motifs. Yet despite its modernity, the building complemented the restrained classicism and scale of buildings in the adjacent Metropolitan Tract, and helped contribute to the city's most significant City Beautiful district. Today, the building retains considerable integrity, and is an important reflection of the urbane commercial design of the 1920s.

**Historical Background:** Owned by the Stimson Realty Company and opened by the Metropolitan Building Company, the 1411 Fourth Avenue Building followed the examples of earlier buildings in the adjacent Metropolitan Tract, like the Skinner Building (1926) and the Great Northern Building (1928), which were designed by the same architectural firm and surfaced in stone. These buildings represented a move in the 1920s away from the original design concept of the area, in which buildings employed tan brick and terra cotta with Beaux-Arts ornamentation. By 1928, the modernistic Art Deco style, first popularized in New York and Chicago, had reached Seattle; its sophisticated application under the watchful eye and creative hand of architect Reamer made the corner of Fourth and Union Street one of Seattle's most contemporary.

The 1411 Fourth Avenue Building was constructed by the same development firm that had been responsible for implementing improvements in the heart of the city as early as 1904. In that year, the University of Washington, which owned a ten-acre tract where its original campus stood, contracted with the Metropolitan Building Company to improve the area with permanent structures that would become the property of the university at the expiration of fifty year leases.

The Metropolitan Building Company employed the New York architectural firm of Howell and Stokes, who prepared a plan which reflected the Beaux Arts ideals of the City Beautiful movement. The 1907 plan featured uniform 11-story buildings on both sides of Fourth Avenue between Union and Seneca streets, a central plaza between Fourth and Fifth avenues called University Place, and an eastern edge of residential apartments along the same blocks of Fifth Avenue.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

*Washington State Architect*, Vol. VIII, No. 12, November 1928, pg. 1.  
Kreisman, Lawrence, *Art Deco in Seattle*, Allied Arts of Seattle: Seattle, 1979.  
"1411 4th Avenue," City of Seattle Landmark Nomination Form, Office of Urban Conservation, 1988.

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 Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than one

UTM References

A	<u>10</u>	<u>549980</u>	<u>5272880</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 10 and 11, Block 21, A. A. Denny's Third Addition to the Plat of Seattle.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the 1411 Fourth Avenue Building.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

Name/title City of Seattle (edited by L. Garfield, OAHF)  
 organization Office of Urban Conservation  
 street & number 700 Third Avenue  
 city or town Seattle

date February 1991  
 telephone (206) 684-0228  
 state Washington zip code 98104

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highlighted by cast bronze ornamental panels with spiraling vines and flowers, some of which have been retained despite the remodelling of storefronts into smaller display windows for the current tenant. The main entrance portal, with its gold chevrons and floral edged vestibule ceiling, includes a small octagonal glazed retail bay that housed the original tobacconist shop. The bronze frame for this store, as well as the bronze details around the entrance doors, are adorned with acorn and sprouting leaf motifs, as well as chevron patterns.

Although changes have been made to the main lobby of the building, several original architectural features remain. These include polished brass elevator doors and surrounds, diamond patterned carved wood elevator indicator panels, mahogany spiral columned moldings, vine and flower motif carved wood friezes edging the ceiling, flower and spiral decorated balusters and newel posts, and green marble wainscoting and flooring (partially covered with carpeting). The combination of dark woods, polished metals, and colored marble form a richly textured environment. Upper story floors feature double loaded corridors with offices, many of which have been remodelled over the years.

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Between 1909 and 1929 significant portions of the Howell and Stokes plan were carried out in such structures as the Cobb Building (1910) and the now-demolished White-Henry-Stuart Building. Later buildings in the tract, like the Reamer-designed Skinner Building and George Post's Olympic Hotel, deviated from the original plan but reflected a compatible scale and restrained classical style.

Although not in the tract, the Metropolitan Building Company's 1411 Fourth Avenue Building occupied adjacent land just north on Fourth Avenue, extending one of the major corridors envisioned in the original City Beautiful Plan. Built for \$1.1 million, the building originally housed a variety of rail and steamship line offices. Together with the Great Northern Railroad ticket offices across the street, the building helped create a focal point for transportation-related businesses in the city's center.

Architect Robert C. Reamer had been brought to Seattle in the 1920s after he completed Old Faithful Inn and other major buildings in Yellowstone National Park to become the chief architect for the Metropolitan Building Company. Reamer was equally at home with classical, exotic, and modernistic detailing. His concern for detail, proportion, texture, and simplicity carried through to all of the major commissions executed by his firm in the late 1920s and early 1930s. His most notable commissions included the Skinner Building and Fifth Avenue Theater in the Metropolitan Tract (1926), the nearby Great Northern Building (1928), the Seattle Times Building (1931-1932), and the Meany Hotel in the University District (1931-1932).

Reamer's skill as a designer is clearly seen in the 1411 Building. It is rich in textural details derived from Celtic interlacing and bestiary motifs, as well as from the more familiar chevron and floral motifs associated with the French-derived Art Deco movement. The exquisite bas-relief ornament in the cornices, spandrels and at the entry portal (designed by Lloyd Lovegren) relieves and gives a pictorial quality to the otherwise sleek austerity of the design.

Reamer's handling of the massing of the building was at once subtle and evocative. Like other modernistic buildings of the period, the 1411 design, with recessed windows and spandrels and unadorned piers, suggests soaring verticality. The boxy form of the building is relieved by this verticality, which culminates in the tapered spires which rise above the parapet, piercing the sky above. Finally, the stone veneer adds to the general harmony and repose of the building. As the Washington State Architect, which described the design in 1928, wrote, "the lovely soft light gray cut stone exterior lends impressive dignity to the architectural lines and weaves soft shadows which seem to deepen the vertical lines and give a picture effect, restful and pleasing." The urbane design is at once modern and comparable with the more traditional architecture of the nearby Metropolitan Tract, a quality that contrasts sharply with the more idiosyncratic office towers constructed in recent decades.

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The 1411 Fourth Avenue Building was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places by the Keeper of the National Register in 1984.