



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649

Street Address: 600 4th Avenue, 4th Floor

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

LPB 282/17

Name and Address of Property: Bleitz Funeral Home
316 Florentia Street

Legal Description: Parcel A: Lots 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 and portion of Lots 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 in Block 78 of Denny & Hoyt's Supplemental Plat, according to the plat thereof recorded in Volume 3 of Plats, Page 3, in King County, Washington, described as follows: Beginning at the Northwest corner of said Lot 6; Thence South along the West line of said Lot, 120 feet to the Southwest corner thereof;
Thence East along the South line of said Lots 6 and 7, 60 feet to the Southwest corner of said Lot 8; Thence East along the South line of said Lot 8, 90 feet; Thence Northwesterly in a straight line to the Northwest corner of said Lot 10; Thence North along the East line of said Lot 7 to an intersection with the Southwesterly line of a tract of land condemned by the Northern Pacific Railway Company, in King County Superior Court Cause No. 66230; Thence Northwesterly along said Southwesterly line to the Point of Beginning.

At the public meeting held on April 19, 2017 the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Bleitz Funeral Home at 316 Florentia Street as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standard for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

- C. *It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, City, State or nation.*
- D. *It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or a method of construction.*
- F. *Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the City and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or the City.*

**Administered by The Historic Preservation Program
The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**

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DESCRIPTION

Neighborhood Context and Site

The subject property is located in Seattle's Queen Anne Hill neighborhood, in close proximity to Fremont due to the Fremont Bridge. The 27,720 square foot site makes up all of Block 78 of Denny and Hoyt's Supplement (King County property report). It contains five rectangular-shaped lots (No. 1-5) on the western 150' and five truncated lots (No. 7-10). The block is on the north side of Florentia Street. Its overall dimensions are 300' along the south, 120' along 3rd Avenue North on the west, 150' along an alley to the north, and 194' along the diagonal east line.

A dead-ended alley runs along the back (north side) of the property. Adjacent to the east, is a tract condemned by the Northern Pacific Railway Company which creates a triangular wedge at the east half of the property. To the west is 3rd Avenue North. Across Florentia Street to the south there is a triangular parcel at 318 Nickerson Street, that contains a two-story, wood framed commercial structure with a tavern/café and coffee stand, and large patio.

Historical records indicate that fill material was added to the property, likely during the construction of the nearby Lake Washington Ship Canal. The source of the fill material was not included in the available records (SoundEarth Strategies, February 10, 2016, p. 1). The site where the building stands is relatively flat, with a gradual slope approximately 5' down from south to north. The adjacent lot to the northeast along the ship canal is heavily vegetated, and slopes steeply down to the north, with an overall estimated grade change of approximately 22' to the ship canal. The building is situated to the east of a paved parking lot, finished with asphalt/concrete and striped with seven aisles for tandem parking. A service drive extends along the building's east side, via the entry portal, and wraps around to the north to connect to the dead-end alley on the north.

Landscaping features of the site include four mature street trees in the planting strip along Florentia Street, and evergreen foundation plantings, including rhododendron and juniper. The east lawn is framed by a low hedge along the sidewalk, and taller hedges and shrubs along the east, adjoining property line. Low rockery walls create raised plant beds flanking the south entry portal. A low hedge separates the west parking lot from the sidewalk. The balance of the site is paved for parking and vehicle access. A narrow wood-framed stair along the north facade links the parking lot with the alley.

The entire site currently is in a C2-40 zone, and the four easternmost lots make up part of a designated archaeological buffer area. Portions of the site are also designed a Shoreline Habitat zone, which make it subject to Shoreline Zoning restrictions, and a Steep Slope area, which requires confined development. A portion of the site is also within an Urban Stable overlay zone that calls for fostering of water-related activity and maximizing views of the water. The property also is within an area cited as a Frequent Transit Zone, which allows reduced parking with new development.

The Original Building

The original building was a rectangular-shaped, two story, stucco-clad concrete and wood framed structure with a full basement and an attic, capped by a hipped roof, with gable roofed dormers at each of the four sides. The original footprint measured 38' by 80', with the shorter dimension along the south (front) and north (back). A 17'-wide vehicular portal with a shallow pointed arch, known as a Tudor arch, extended east from the southeast building corner. A simple wood-framed, gabled porte cochere provided a covered entry on the secondary east facade. The secondary west facade faced onto the parking lot, and included windows, but no access door.

In 1963, a 40' by 42' flat roofed, concrete four-car garage and storage structure was excavated into the grade west of the original structure. Aligned with the north facade and facing north, it provided access to the original building at the basement level. This addition was largely unseen.

Historic tax assessor's records do not indicate the original roofing materials. The building appears to have been covered with either cedar or asphalt composition shingles, and had shaped gutters and downspouts by the mid 1930s. The current roofing consists of aqua colored metal panels with a distinct standing seam pattern. Soffits are open, and feature shaped rafters. A large sign, reading "Bleitz Funeral Parlors" was installed along the ridge of the main roof, and is shown in the 1937 assessor's photo; by 1960 the sign was modified to read "Bleitz Funeral Home." The gabled roof dormers on the east and west were originally finished with vertical half-timbering, visible in a contrasting color, but are currently painted a consistent color. The south gable features a carved bargeboard trim, and painted wood shingle siding. Each of the dormer gables has a decorative vertical wood post with shaped ends at the ridge joint and in plane with the barge boards, extending above the ridge, and below the barge board.

The primary south facade faces Florentia Street. Along the sidewalk the perimeter wall extends to a stepped parapet, which conceals the hipped roof. Details in the stucco or concrete include projecting horizontal trim bands and a water table, medallion tiles, and a clock face at the center, which is accentuated by a small gable in the parapet. Above the parapet is the gabled dormer, which contains a three-unit window, with six lites each. The wall is clad with painted shingles, and has a decorative carved barge board. The symmetrical composition contains a central entry portico, with a prominent arch-shaped opening, stepped parapet, arched alcove for a decorative urn, and stained glass doors and stained transom. Flanking the portico there are 9'-6" by 5' wide multi-lite wood windows, with paired casements containing transoms within a single opening, surrounded with rowlock brick sills and heads, and stacked brick jambs.

The vehicle entry portal extends from the building's southeast corner. The original portal, including the arched opening, the stepped, gabled parapet, and the banded pier courses, matched the front entry portico. By the mid 1930s, the stucco was painted a light color, while the window frames, brick sills, projecting trim bands, and medallions were painted a darker color.

The front entry portico was replaced in 1960 with a simpler form, composed of stucco-clad concrete block piers with flat-top terminations. A flat roof above the entry eliminated the Tudor arch. At that time a 16' deep by 16'4" wide marquee was installed that covered the sidewalk, and a ceramic tile applied to the entry steps. Apparent in the 1960 tax record photo is a clear intent to "modernize" the design through monotone paint color. At some point after this date, the entry portico was reconstructed to match the original details, and the marquee replaced with a steel-framed fabric canopy.

Currently the original west facade is largely obscured by the 1988 addition. It contained a gabled dormer north of center, with half-timber detailing, a horizontal window with four units of six lites each, flat barge boards, and a horizontal trim band at the pediment level. Three wood paired casement window units provided light to the chapel at the first floor level. Smaller windows at the second floor are 8:1 and 6:1 double hung wood sash.

The secondary east facade remains largely intact. Its gabled dormer matches the west one with vertical half timbers. (The effect of this detail is lessened due to the monotone paint color scheme.) The symmetrical composition includes the wood-framed porte cochere and side entry. The porte cochere is 16' x 10', with exposed rafters, a flat soffit, and non-original standing seam metal roofing. The entry, accessed by concrete steps with radiused treads, has a pair of multi-lite wood doors with a decorative metal screen, and a wood transom. Original windows are typically 6:1 wood-framed double- hung sash at the second floor, and 1:1 sash at the first floor. The southernmost window bay features the same larger paired casements and transoms as on the south facade at the first floor, and a pair of casements at the second floor. Only these southernmost windows have full brick surrounds; the balance have brick rowlock sills, and stucco returns at the jambs and heads.

On the north facade, the driveway drops the grade to the basement level. The original structure maintains its symmetry and features, including a gabled dormer, clad with painted shingles, and containing a three-unit window of six lites each. A small gable breaks the eave of the main hipped roof at the center. Pairs of double hung sash flank the center bay at first and second floors, with a single unit at the center of the second floor. At the first floor, a single multi-lite wood door leads to a small wood-framed Juliet balcony. (This may at one time have been an exit stair, but there is no access to grade at present.) All the openings have brick surrounds and sills, set flush with the stucco, and currently painted. A non-original roll-up garage door is provided at the basement level. At the northeast corner, the foundation is chamfered at the basement level, presumably to allow vehicular access at the tight corner.

Additions

In 1988, a highly visible, one-story, flat-roofed addition measuring 42' wide and 72'-6" deep was constructed on the west side of the original building. Set above the 1963 garage, it was attached to the original building at the north and south ends, with an open space between the two building masses. The addition was constructed with wood framing instead of concrete, but the finishes and details of the addition are highly replicative of the original structure, and the primary south facade composition derived from the original portal and entry, with the stylistic

features applied to both the south, west and portions of the north façade). The style of the addition reads as a diminutive version of the original building's taller south facade.

Another wood-framed addition was constructed in 1991 on the north side of the 1988 addition to provide space for two new crematory retorts. It extends 17'-6" to the north, and is 42' wide to match the width of the 1988 addition. This is primarily a one-story structure at the basement level, but a smaller wood framed tower structure extends up to conceal the two retort flues and a stair, rising to a height of 35' above grade. The stucco and details on this portion are similarly replicative, as are the projecting bands, and medallions.

The 1988 addition to the west is separated from the original with a glazed hallway, set back from the primary facades. The mass of the addition is diminutive, but it matches the size of original windows and detailing. It contains a projecting block with metal lantern on the west end to mimic the edge of the vehicle portico.

The 1988 addition contains casement and transom window units, which somewhat match those on the original south facade. A concrete access ramp with metal railings was constructed in 1992 at the southwest corner of the 1988 addition, and leads to the entry portico. At the north end of the 1988 addition's west facade, there is another entry with a small projecting portico, Tudor arch opening, and is topped by stepped parapets. A 1992 addition at the north end extends up to the level of the first floor window sills with similar stucco finish and projecting coping on the parapet. Above this addition is a small tower, containing the retort flues, which extends above the parapet of the 1988 addition. The tower, similarly detailed with stucco, projecting bands, and medallions, is tied back to the addition via an interior stair, framed between the flue stacks.

The west portion of the original north facade is connected to the 1988 addition by a one-story wall at the first floor level. The 1992 addition projects northward at the basement level, with two large louvers for the retort air intake, and a canted northeast corner. The stuccoed wall matches the projecting line of the water table band, with a parapet and projecting coping above. Set back is the flue tower, also stucco-clad, banded, and decorated with medallions. It contains a single multi-lite wood window unit at the center, serving the interior stair between the flues.

The Interior

The layout and finishes of the interior of the original structure remains relatively intact with exception of the entry sequence. Presently the primary lobby in the later addition accesses an anteroom, which is fitted with leaded doors. This space leads to the chapel along the west side of the original building. This space, used for funerals and memorials, is the largest in the building. It is flanked on the east by small sitting rooms, which accessible by a hallway. The building was provided with a pipe organ originally, and it was apparently located in one of the east rooms.

The original east entry from the porte cochere enters along the first floor hall. An office is in the southeast corner, adjacent to the anteroom. The casket elevator to the basement is located in the northeast portion of the building, and additional service spaces are located along the

north end of the chapel. The first floor has 12'-tall ceilings, with plaster and lath wall and ceiling finishes. Public spaces are detailed with paneled wainscot, crown molding, and leaded Tudor arch head doors. Fir floors identified in the historic tax record have been covered with carpeting throughout.

The 1988 addition on the west contains offices, arrangement rooms and restrooms, organized by a double-loaded corridor. The entry lobby in the addition is a Post-Modern design, with Roman arched openings, columns, and pyramidal skylights. Finishes are painted gypsum walls and ceilings, and carpet. A hall leads east from the lobby to the original anteroom, and looks north into the open space between the original and addition.

Historic records indicate the original owners lived on-site in the 1920s, presumably on the second floor. The present second floor of the original building contains service and storage spaces. It is accessed by a stair in the anteroom, and contains one large room above the chapel, and smaller spaces accessed from a double loaded corridor. There is no kitchen space, and only a toilet room. The ceiling height is 9'. Finishes include painted plaster and lath walls and ceilings, carpet and wood flooring. The unfinished wood-framed attic is a cruciform shaped space due to the dormers, with sloped ceilings of exposed sheathing. Two small partially finished office spaces are at the north and south ends.

The configuration of the basement and funeral preparation spaces has been reconfigured multiple times. In 1969, two new crematory retorts were added in the northeast corner. These were removed along with a third in 1992, and the current configuration was created, with two retorts in the north addition separated by a new interior stair. One vehicle bay with a roll-up garage door is located along the original north wall. The ceilings are 9'. Exposed concrete walls and floor slabs indicate the original structure, wood framing at the 1988 west addition, and a suspended acoustical tile ceiling in the north crematory addition. Walls are exposed concrete or drywall finishes.

SIGNIFICANCE

Development of North Queen Anne Hill

The property is located adjacent to the southwest abutment for the historic Fremont Bridge (1917), and northwest of Westlake Avenue North and Nickerson Street. It is situated near the northeast edge of Queen Anne Hill. The Lake Washington Ship Canal is about a half-block away to the north.

Seattle's Queen Anne Hill rises over 450 feet in elevation above the city center, and its south slope and plateau were some of the earliest areas to undergo residential development with the construction of many blocks of single family residences in the late 19th century. Development along the northern, lower edge of the hill followed a different pattern, however. Graded parts along the west side of Lake Union serving as a rail spur line and roadbed. The northern part of the hill was once a gentle slope to what was once a drainage ditch. This area was graded also to support construction of early roadbeds and nearby commercial and industrial buildings that followed the construction of the ship canal in 1917. Nearby businesses included lumber mills

and ship-building and ship repair yards. These were interspersed with small workers' cottages. Further to the southwest, Seattle Seminary was established by Free Methodist pioneers in the early 1890s; it grew and was renamed Seattle Pacific College in 1915. The campus of Seattle Pacific University is located approximately six to eight blocks from the subject property.

Throughout the 20th century, development of the immediate area in which the Bleitz Funeral Home is located was impacted by the nearby rail line and bridge and converging roadbeds that brought vehicular traffic and congestion to the intersections of Dexter and 4th Avenues N, and Nickerson and Florentia Streets. Surrounding commercial development emphasized auto-related businesses throughout most of this period. A retail gas and service station was located on the parcel to the south, across Florentia Street, from 1925 to 1931, and another similar station on the parcel to the west at 224 Nickerson Street (from 1957 – 1967). To the southeast there was a dry cleaner at 314 Nickerson Street and another auto repair facility from 1920 to 1925; this property presently houses the Nickerson Street Saloon. Another service station was located to the south at 2917 Dexter Avenue N.

To the northwest, at 3031 2nd Avenue N, was an auto repair shop (from 1946 – 1975), while on the site of the Ponti Seafood Grill (the restaurant to the north at 3014 3rd Avenue N) there was a blacksmith's shop in 1922, followed by an iron works, which operated on the same property between at least 1925 and 1980. On the south side of Nickerson Street was another auto repair shop, at 307 Nickerson Street, from 1929 to 1960, and the Enterprise Dry Cleaners at 301 Nickerson Street, at the presently site of Kinsella Woodworks (SouthEarth Strategies, February 10, 2016, p. 1-2).

The Early Funeral Industry in Seattle

The earliest history of funeral homes in Seattle is not documented in this report, but it is known that undertakers as a profession operated in the city in the late 19th century. Edgar Ray Butterworth was one of Seattle's first undertakers. A successful coffin salesman by the time he moved to Seattle in 1892, he bought a controlling interest in an existing undertaking business. In 1903, his company – E. R. Butterworth & Sons – moved into the Butterworth Building at 1921 1st Avenue, Seattle's first purpose-built mortuary building. (The Butterworth Building, located within the local and National Register boundaries of the Pike Place Market Historic District, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971.)

An early business was operated by Bonney and Stewart, Funeral Directors and Embalmers, who reportedly maintained a parlor at 3rd Avenue and Columbia Street in Seattle's Pioneer Square in 1900 (Michelson, PCAD). Both the Butterworth Company and the Johnson & Hamilton Company were originally located on 1st Avenue in downtown Seattle (Figure 38). Butterworth moved to 1600 Melrose Avenue and Johnson & Hamilton moved to 1400 Broadway in 1912. By this date Capitol Hill had become a popular location for funereal homes. Bonney-Watson Funeral Home moved to 1702 Broadway from an earlier downtown location at Columbia Street and 3rd Avenue sometime before 1914. In 1922, Butterworth & Sons built a second mortuary at 300 East Pine Street on Capitol Hill. This move represents an apparent trend of funeral parlors moving from the downtown locations to new buildings in rapidly growing residential areas. As the result of this relocation, some funeral homes stressed

residential designs to fit into their neighborhoods, such as the Green Lake Funeral Home, and the Columbia Mortuary in Columbia City. The Johnson & Hamilton Funeral Home, at 1103 E Madison, was built in the mid-1920s.

Jacob Bleitz had moved to Seattle from Wichita, where he worked as an undertaker, and established his business as a local mortician in 1904, with funeral home business in the Green Lake area. By 1908 he and John Rafferty Company had established an undertaking company at 617-621 Kilborne (near 36th and Phinney) in the Fremont neighborhood. (Later references in the *Polk Directory* and obituaries cited it as a funeral home.) The business advertised its affordable services: The Bleitz-Rafferty Co. Has Brought the Cost of Funerals Down to Where IT OUGHT TO BE,' citing costs of an "\$85 Trust Price Casket" for \$35 and cremation service for \$20, and a "complete funeral" for \$47.50 (*Seattle Star*, February 18, 1915 and June 24, 1915). This business continued until at least 1919, but ceased operations by 1921, the same year that the Bleitz Funeral Home opened at 316 Florentia Street in the Queen Anne neighborhood.

While funeral homes were common in Seattle through the late 19th century, cremation did not become popular until the early 20th century. Arthur Wright established a crematorium on Queen Anne Hill in 1898, the first in the state, and built a columbarium (crypt) for 800 niches around that same time. In ca. 1904, he established the Washington Cremation Society. Over the following 17 years, seven crematoriums were established in the city (Engler, 2012). Wright's mortuary was replaced with a larger building in 1930, allowing for a full range of services, including burials, funeral services, cremation and inurnment. By the 1950s, the term "undertaker" had fallen out of use in the city business directories, having given way to the less macabre "funeral director" according to the 1953 *Polk Directory*).

Various funeral-related businesses were established in the greater Seattle area in the late 19th through the first half of the 20th century, typically near residential neighborhoods. The following funeral home buildings in the Seattle area (cited in chronological order) recall the history of these businesses and the architectural expressions of their buildings.

- The Johnson-Hamilton funeral home, 2127 1st Avenue (1902)
- Hoffner, Fisher & Harvey Funeral Home, 508 N 36th Street (1902)
- Manning's Funeral Home, 1634 11th Avenue (1902)
- Johnson-Hamilton Funeral Home/Colonial Chapel 1400 Broadway at Union Street (ca. 1912)
- Yarrington's/White Center Funeral Home 10708 16th Avenue SW (1918)
- Butterworth Mortuary (ca. 1903 at 1921 1st Avenue, relocated to 300 E Pine Street (1922)
- Washelli Crematory & Columbarium, 111th and Aurora Avenue North (ca. 1922)
- Johnson-Hamilton Funeral Home, 1103 E Madison Street (1926)
- Acacia Memorial Park, 14957 Bothell Way NE (1928-39)
- Arthur A. Wright & Son Mortuary & Columbarium, 520 W Raye Street (1929)
- Forest Lawn Crematorium & Columbarium, 6701 30th Avenue SW (1947)
- Bonney Watson Mortuary, 1732 Broadway Avenue (1962)

- Washelli Columbarium Corporation, 11111 Aurora Avenue (1970, new buildings)

The Original Owners, Jacob J. Bleitz and the Bleitz Family

Jacob J. Bleitz established the Bleitz Funeral Home in 1904. Bleitz was born in Sandwich, Illinois, around 1865. He received his training from the Chicago College of Embalming in Illinois, graduating in 1900, and practiced for several years in Kansas. He came from Wichita to Seattle in 1904, and continued working as a mortician in the funeral industry, establishing a location near Green Lake (*Seattle Daily Times*, February 27, 1939). In early 1906, Bleitz moved his business to the Fremont area, partnering with Edgar Ray Butterworth, an established Seattle undertaker. Their business operated under a few different titles, including Bleitz & Butterworth and Fremont Undertaking Company; Bleitz & Butterworth. The latter business title raised conflicts with a nearby competitor, M.O. Carton, who had been operating his business as Fremont Undertaker (*Washington Reports*, April 10, 1911).

Bleitz and Butterworth stay partners only until in September 1906. For a period of about two years, Bleitz operated the Bleitz Undertaking Company. However, in November 1908; J.J. Bleitz and J.W. Rafferty joined to incorporate Fremont Undertaking Company (*Seattle Times*, November 11, 1908). (This name again stirred up conflict with the operators of Carton's business, and a lawsuit ensued over the claim to the business name.) The undertaking company operated as a tenant of the Doric Masonic Lodge on 317 Kilbourne Street, present-day N 36th Street (Doric Lodge History). Bleitz and Rafferty ended their partnership in 1919, and Bleitz then established his own business (Bleitz Undertaking & Cremation Co.), moving two blocks down on the street to 315 Kilbourne (*Seattle Star*, August 22, 1919, p. 10 and October 3, 1919, p. 11). It was from this site that he relocated to the building on 316 Florentia Street in 1921. According to Polk Directory listings, John Rafferty later opened a funeral directory business at 3518 Fremont Avenue, along with other partners Clark and Putnam, in 1953 to 1968.

Jacob Bleitz family was active in the community as a member of the Free Mason Society at Green Lake Lodge and later the Doric Society in Fremont. Irene C. Bleitz, his second wife and co-owner of the funeral home, was a member of the local Ladies' Literary and Music Club and the Central Presbyterian Church, and hosted social functions. After the new funeral home location on Florentia Street was constructed, Jacob and Irene moved from their residence at 8610 8th Avenue NE to 318 Florentia Street, presumably to an apartment above the funeral home. Soon after the couple moved to 1900 Magnolia Boulevard in 1929. (Jacob and Irene were involved in at least one other funeral business, the Greenwood Funeral Home, according to the 1937 *Polk Directory*.) Jacob and Irene had a daughter, Jeanne, and two sons, James C. (identified also as Jasper and Jas) and Lawrence L. Bleitz (*Seattle Times*, February 26, 1939). According to *Polk Directory* listings, James began working in the family business in 1922 as an assistant in Bleitz Undertaking Company. Lawrence became an assistant in 1927, along with James' wife, Margaret. For a short period after 1932 Lawrence's wife, Ebba M. Bleitz (also listed as Effa M.), joined the business as an embalmer-mortician.

For several decades the Bleitz Funeral Home was closely connected with a local member-owned association, the People Memorial Benefit Association, which was organized as a non-

profit cooperative in to provide low-cost funeral services to its members. As noted on the PMA website:

It was in Seattle at the end of the great depression that small group of citizens, outraged by the high prices and high pressure sales tactics of the funeral industry, banded together to form PMA ... An outspoken spiritual leader, named Rev. Fred Shorter from the Church of the People in Seattle's University District rallied other like-minded citizens together to create an alternative. This was at the height of the cooperative movement ...

Prevailing funeral customs stressed embalming, display of the body and burial in a costly casket. The founders of PMA felt these practices ostentatious and emphasizing the material rather than spiritual aspects of death. Their aim was to present a meaningful and beautiful service at a fraction of the cost ... On January 12, 1939, the PEOPLE'S MEMORIAL Association was formally organized [Note: This would have occurred shortly before Jacob Bleitz's death.] ... The biggest problem facing the newborn non-profit was finding a mortuary willing to do business with it.

Fortunately, James C. Bleitz, president of a funeral home at the foot of Queen Anne Hill, had an open mind and a strong sense of business integrity. . . Memorial Societies such as PMA remained controversial for many years. At one point, PEOPLE'S MEMORIAL Association was even accused of being part of the communist movement! Even Bleitz was wary of having his name publicly associated with a reformist organization. Not until 1957 was there a written contract between his funeral home and the PMA.

On February 25, 1939, Jacob Bleitz died suddenly of a heart attack. After his death his widow, Irene, continued to own the business until her death in 1952, while his sons, James and Lawrence Bleitz, maintained and operated the business, as the funeral director and mortician respectively, along with other family members. In the 1948/1949 *Polk Directory* both men were listed as funeral directors.

The King County property tax record card indicates the property was purchased for \$13,000 by James C. Bleitz on December 14, 1955. The 1960 *Polk Directory* indicates the business had incorporated. The family members involved in it at that time included Jas C. Bleitz, president, Mrs. Dorothy Bleitz, secretary, and Lawrence L. Bleitz, treasurer. In the 1970 directory James was still listed the company president while the vice president and treasurer was Roy Moe, and Harriett Bleitz was the secretary. By 1979 the family's interests had ended, and Rita Moe had become the company president, along with Tom Rollin, the vice president, and John R. McCarthy, the secretary-treasurer.

This finalized PMA contract would have been made with Lawrence Bleitz, the company's president. The PMA later contracted with several other funeral businesses in the Seattle area. In 1990 Uniservice Corporation of Portland, Oregon, purchased the property. Uniservice, a nation-wide funeral company, was acquired by the Services Corporation of Houston, Texas, in 1995. At that time the Bleitz funeral home was one of ten that it operated. The funeral home property and a nearby separate vacant site were recently sold to the current owner, a local development company for \$4.2 million. While

the funeral home continues to operate for the time being, a restrictive covenant as part of the sale agreement prevents this use in the future (*Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce*, January 3, 2017).

The Building's Eclectic Style

The original two-and-a-half story funeral home is a combination of a vernacular building with an eclectic revival style front facade. It appears to have been the work of a designer, although the identities of the original designer or architect and builder remain unknown, and no original design drawings have been discovered.

Stylistic features of the main building include the simple massing, the hipped roof with gabled side dormers, and evenly spaced window openings. The front, south-facing facade featured a carved bargeboard along the front of the shingle-clad gabled dormer. The cross-gable dormers at the roof, which opened into the attic, once contain decorative half-timbering on the east and west ends, and the porte cochere at the middle of the east side is detailed with exposed wood framing and brackets – all features of a Craftsmen style design.

The most visible design features are provided by the outermost wall and vehicle portal on the south facade, which face onto Florentia Street, which makes up a Mission-style false front. At the center the light colored stucco-clad wall of the building extends to create a two story a stepped parapet with a small gable, detailed with diamond and square medallion tiles, and a stylized clock face. The stucco or concrete also includes projecting horizontal trim bands and water table trim. This entry portico features a slight pointed arch, cited in several surveys as reminiscent of the Tudor Revival style, along with an arch shaped alcove for a decorative urn. The false front element extends to a vehicle entry portal at the east end of the south facade extends beyond the building mass, with a similar arched opening, raised parapet with gabled center, and banded piers and a cheekblock. The formality of the stepped walls is clearly visible from the roadbed and sidewalk and nearby bridge.

The design of this building seems to contrast with the design styles of other funeral homes in Seattle from the early 20th century. Most were created using more identifiable revival styles, often with classical elements and details. These buildings used Greek and Roman precedents to connote a sense of permanence and eternity. The buildings suggested, through the symbolic use of historical styles, a lasting legacy. Also in contrast, there are some other funeral homes that appear as large residences, set in bucolic landscape settings.

While it was designed in an effort to “match” the original design, the west addition from the late 1980s appears Post-Modern in style, particularly on the interior with the mix of contemporary and classical styled decorative elements and the highly compressed spatial qualities of its lobby space.

Construction History

Earlier buildings on the site of the Bleitz Funeral Home included a residence, which was positioned near the back of the parcel near the existing parking lot, and a storage shed to the

west. These dated from 1917, and were demolished for the building's construction. The original funeral home was built in 1921 at a construction cost of \$16,492 (SDCI permit records). Major changes include the three-car garage, which was added in the rear in 1960-1962, and the 5,000 square-foot single story addition along the original building's west side, designed by KSWA Architects, and built in 1989-1991.

In August 2005 the original pipe organ was removed from the building and donated through the Pipe Organ Foundation to the Blessed Seelos Catholic Church in the ninth ward of New Orleans as part of the recovery efforts following Hurricane Katrina. Embalming occurred on the property until 2007 (Bleitz Funeral Home of Seattle website).

SDCI permit records, noted below, cite the many changes over the past 55 years:

- June 1960 “Replace Deteriorated Porch for Bleitz Funeral Home,” New Entrance marquee; Weisbeck and Konzen Architects and Consulting Engineers
- March 12, 1962 New garage addition; Weisbeck and Konzen Architects and Consulting Engineers, stamped by Arnold R. Weisbeck, architect
- May 22, 1969 Remodel of cremator for Dave Larson, contractor; Edwin R. Gamon, architect
- July 16, 1978 Shoreline substantial development permit to est use for future constr of accessory office addition"
- March 4, 1985 Add cooler to garage; Stjern Contracting
- Sept. 24, 1986 Shoreline substantial development permit (to establish) use for future constr of accessory office addition
- October 18, 1988 “A Commercial Addition for Bleitz Funeral Home,” James Hartman, Architect, Addition of one story office area to mortuary (includes work in basement)
- March 13, 1989 Install mechanical equipment for building addition
- 1991 “A New Addition for Bleitz Funeral Home, KSWA Architects, AIA
- Sept. 10, 1992 Construct handicap ramp; KSWA Architects, Greg Parsons
- Sept. 23, 1992 Install HVAC system
- Oct. 30. 1992 Install 10x4 sign
- March 16, 1993 Construct basement and 1st floor addition, and interior alterations; Remove 3 existing crematory retorts, add 2 new retorts in new addition KSWA Architects

January 12, 1994 Install ductwork; Design Air, Ltd.

Sept. 15, 2004 First floor renovation and addition and second floor renovation; Leitzke Architects, stamped by Leonard Leitzke, architect

Nov. 7, 2006 Install mechanical unit; Merit Mechanical Inc.

Changes to the original Bleitz Funeral Home include the major addition on the west side, and a small addition on the north end of it, which date from 1988 and 1992, and the installation of standing seam metal roof panels. The design of the west addition overtly adapted some of the design elements in an effort, as noted on permit drawings, to “match existing.” This mimicry focused largely on the false front components of the original building rather than its simple hipped roof gable form. It included double-glazed, painted wood framed windows with divided lites. The construction of the addition, with wood framing, differed from the concrete structure of the original building, and the newer windows do not feature the same deep wall placement or the brick window sills and surrounds of the original building. The form and Post Modern style of the addition, a low single story, contrasts with the original building mass.

Prior Surveys of the Property

The Bleitz Funeral Home property has been the subject of several recent surveys. A survey form was developed for the DON Historical Sites Inventory (Inv. #QA0004), along with a 2002 HPI form for DAHP’s database, WISAARD. The city survey form indicates that the building has sufficient significance and appeared to meet the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places and the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Ordinance, and that it is also located in a potential historic district. DAHP has not yet undertaken a review of the HPI form to determine if the property is eligible for National Register listing. (Because of its location, the property was not included in the Historic Seattle-sponsored urban surveys of Queen Anne Hill or Fremont by Nyberg and Steinbrueck in 1975.)

The Bleitz Funeral Home website recognizes the building’s architectural features, noting that, “the Tudor-style funeral home is located at the cusp between the scenic Fremont and the elegant Queen Anne neighborhoods of Seattle. The City of Seattle considers the original building to meet the criteria of a historical landmark.”

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Arthur A. Wright & Son Mortuary & Columbarium, 520 West Raye Street.
Bonney Watson Mortuary, 1732 Broadway Avenue.
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The features of the Landmark to be preserved include: *The site (excluding Lots 1,2 and 3), and the exterior of the building (excluding the 1989 and 1991 additions).*

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