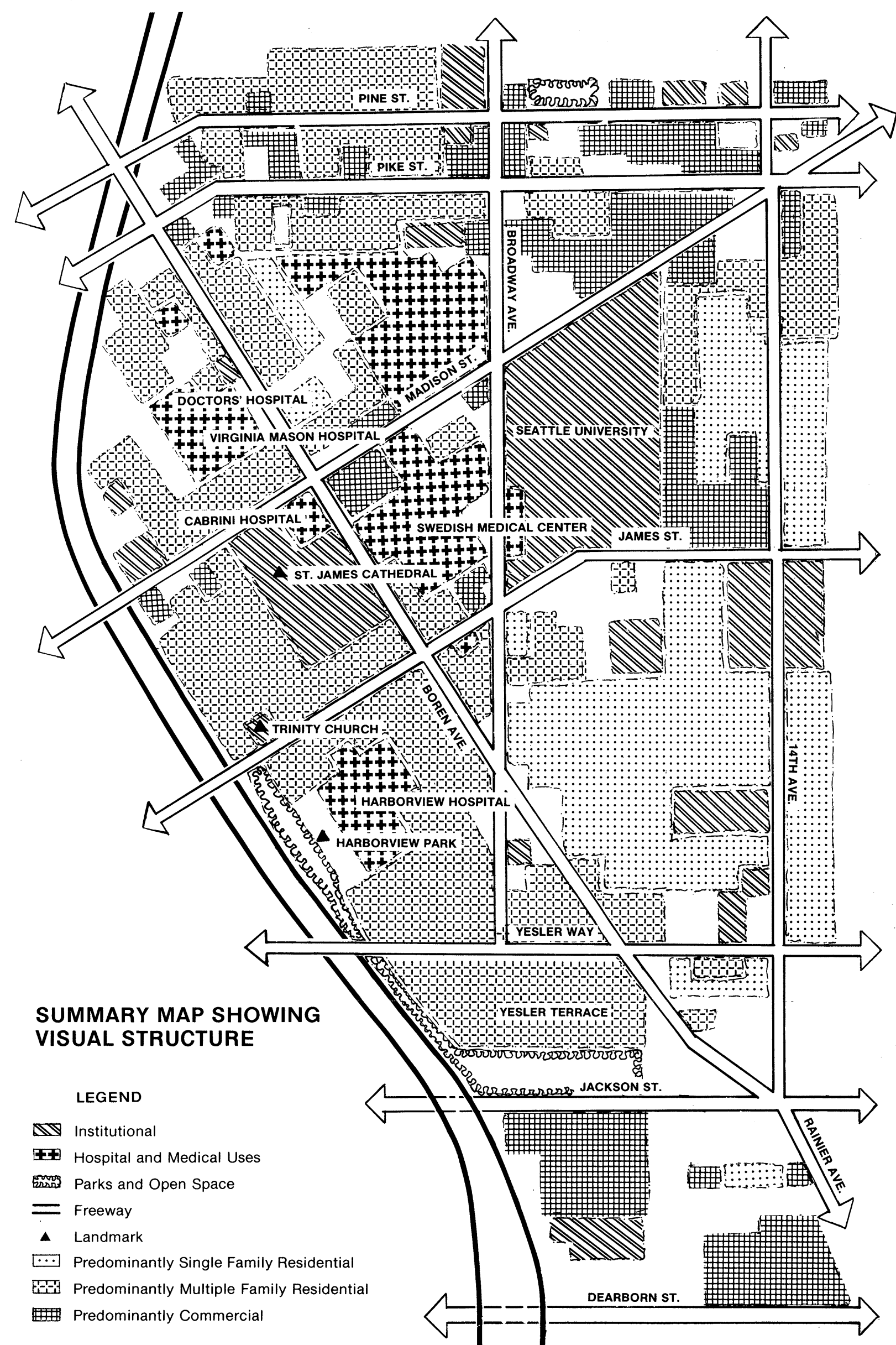


HISTORIC SEATTLE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

CONSULTANTS: FOLKE NYBERG
VICTOR STEINBRUECK

FIELD WORK, GRAPHICS AND RESEARCH: THE SEATTLE
JUNIOR LEAGUE HISTORIC SITES COMMITTEE



SUMMARY MAP SHOWING VISUAL STRUCTURE

LEGEND

- Institutional
- Hospital and Medical Uses
- Parks and Open Space
- Freeway
- Landmark
- Predominantly Single Family Residential
- Predominantly Multiple Family Residential
- Predominantly Commercial

HISTORY

In 1885 some of Seattle's financially substantial citizenry looked eastward to a wooded hill abounding with streams and springs jutting 344 feet above the small town of 12,000 as a place to build fine homes... a tribute to the passing of the first hard pioneer days and to the economic benefits of success. First Hill's first elegant home was built by Col. Grandville Haller and his house, stable and out-buildings occupied an entire block surrounded by what is now James, Cherry, Broadway and Minor. The second large residence to be built also in 1885 was referred to as the "mansion" and its owner was one of the Northwest's early contractors, Morgan Carkeek. Designed by a New York architectural firm in the Victorian style, the Carkeek home had 14 foot ceilings. A cupola crowned the top, mahogany and redwood came from afar for the paneling, marbles and bronzes graced the 10 fireplace mantles, and stained glass windows with ship motifs glorified the "Madison and Pilot" rooms. This home at Boren and Madison was a social and cultural center for many years, and Mrs. Carkeek was the founder of the Seattle Historical Society.

In the following two decades many of Seattle's wealthy citizens built expansive residences, and the list of First Hill families include the familiar names of Terry, Minor, Hanford, Burke, Lowman, Frye, Pigott, Malmo, and Denny, among others. Sophie Frye Bass, early Seattle author, referred to First Hill as "Auntie's Hill" as five of her Aunts lived there at one time. In its glory, First Hill boasted approximately 40 large homes with lovely gardens and views. Madison Street was lined with poplars donated by civic minded First Hill patrons.

Thursday was "at home" day when residents would receive social callers. Who could know that First Hill's exclusiveness would fall so quickly in the way of growth and progress? As the city expanded and the trolley lines spread, small wood-frame, tract houses were built on the east side of First Hill and business started encroaching.

St. James Cathedral was dedicated in 1907 and was described as one of the chief architectural attractions of the city... "situated on First Hill, its tall and graceful towers stand out conspicuously in the view of travelers entering the city by water, forming a landmark familiar to mariners." Trinity Church was dedicated in 1905 on the site of Grace Hospital, one of the city's pioneer hospitals.



A 1908 city plat shows First Hill to be mostly residential frame construction with scattered large stone and brick apartments. The automobile, which had been coming since 1900, brought to the north end of First Hill garages, auto dealers and related enterprises. Between the turn of the century and World War I many commercial establishments and grand Masonic Temples were constructed.

An old newspaper article states that "Society on First Hill had barely got started when up jumped the city". Newer and grander neighborhoods began to attract the large home builders and First Hill started losing residential posh. A portentous real estate transaction occurred when Judge Hanford sold his home (built in 1890) in 1907 and the Hotel Parry, later Columbus Hospital, now Cabrini, was built on the site. Swedish Hospital was founded in 1908, Providence in 1912 and Virginia Mason in 1920. Seattle University, founded in 1893, integrated into its present campus in 1931.

With the old order changing, many of the large mansions were sold to speculators and became rooming houses or were left vacant to fall into disrepair. In 1934, the "Carkeek Manse" (corner of Boren and Madison) was demolished for a "super service station". The event was preceded by a gala to which the guests wore costumes of the nineties. One prominent citizen was said to have brought a hatchet as he was promised first whack at the cupola. The Haller House, First Hill's first patial plum was torn down in 1939 to make way for 5 houses each with eight apartments. Of the original ornate homes of First Hill few remain, the most familiar being the Stimson-Green house at Minor and Seneca, and the University Club at Boren and Madison.

The south end of First Hill was called Profanity Hill. The early loggers "profaned" when their horses slipped on the muddy steep grade and "cursing" was attributed to those who had to puff up the hill to the Court House (built in 1890) when the Street Car broke down. The Court House was abandoned in 1916 and the land later became the sight of Harborview Hospital built in the 30's.



In 1975 the Stimson/Green House, one of the few remaining mansions, was threatened with demolition to make way for redevelopment. Fortunately, Historic Seattle Authority quickly interceded and, by purchasing the house from Joshua Green's heirs, saved this important landmark from destruction. During 1976 Historic Seattle's volunteers conducted guided tours through the house so that the public could experience what it was like to live in a turn-of-the-century mansion. Over twenty thousand visitors toured the house during the year.

Profanity Hill at Yesler and Broadway, the top of the old Yesler Skid Road, is the site of Yesler Terrace Housing Project. Built by the Seattle Housing Authority, with Federal monies for slum clearing, it was finished in 1941. Controversy raged and its major proponent, Jesse Epstein, conquered many private-versus-public philosophical obstacles before this outstanding low income housing complex came to be. Designed by a combined group of architects, Yesler Terrace was well built, harmonious with the topography, and racially integrated.

More of the old houses came down, and the handsome structure at 702 Minor Avenue built by Dr. Thomas T. Minor and later occupied by the Collins family was mourned by many as a lost "Victorian great" when it fell to the wrecker in 1952.

The late 50's and early 60's saw First Hill cut off by the Freeway. Environmentalists proposed a lid, offering humane amenities, on top of the concrete scar. Twenty years later this idea became a reality, although at a reduced scale and a much greater cost, in the elaborately landscaped Freeway Park. The park is an inviting gateway to the once grand residential First Hill which is now an area of smaller homes, commerce, apartments and the medical center of our city.

REFERENCES

- Books**
Bagley, Clarence B. *History of Seattle*
Bass, Sophie F., *When Seattle Was a Village*
Bass, Sophie F., *Pig-Tail Days in Old Seattle*
Jones, Nard, *Seattle*
Morgan, Murray, *Skid Road*
Sale, Roger, *Seattle Past to Present*
- Periodicals**
Town Crier... Northwest Collection
Biographical Pamphlets... Northwest Collection
Mrs. Morgan Carkeek's scrapbooks... The Museum of History and Industry
The Guye scrapbooks... The Museum of History and Industry

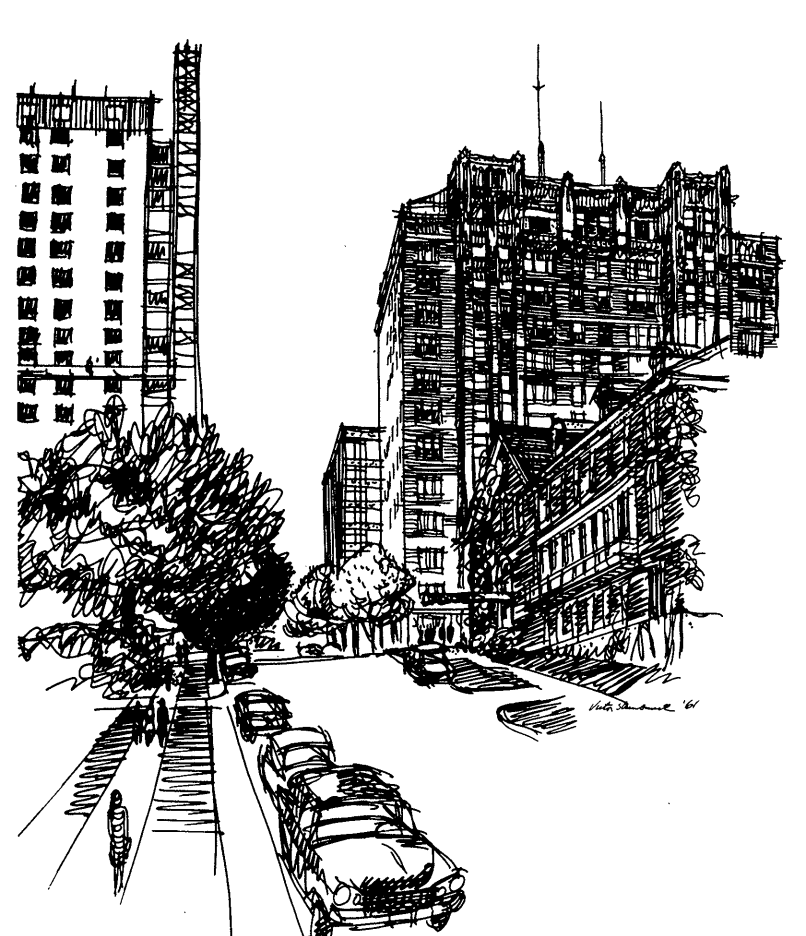
GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Of Seattle's legendary seven hills, First Hill is the closest to the Central Business District. Its name suggests two origins. The area was the first hill to be developed as Seattle expanded in the late 19th Century, and it began as an exclusive residential neighborhood and as the home of Seattle's "first families". Not only did the hill's western slopes offer commanding views over the fledgling city, but equally significant, they provided sites for prestige houses which visually dominated the less affluent segments of society below. Today, the hill has been severed from the downtown by the freeway, the commanding views of water blocked by high rise buildings; and its exclusive single family character replaced by a wide range of commercial, institutional, and multiple family residential activities.



This widely varying and often conflicting mix of land uses is First Hill's most striking and important physical characteristic. In terms of area, the major part of First Hill land is about evenly distributed between residential (25%) and institutional (27%). Business and commercial activities occupy 9%. Street right-of-way and parking account for most of the remainder of the space.

The residential units cluster primarily in the north western and the south portion of the community. The few remaining pockets of single family houses are located east of Broadway Avenue and South of Seattle University. Multi-family residential areas vary dramatically from the turn-of-the-century wood frame hotels and boarding houses to the substantial brick apartments built in the last twenty years. After 35 years, Yesler Terrace remains one of the most environmentally successful federally sponsored low income housing projects both because of planning and design, and the integrated social policies.



There are a large number of semi-public (non-medical) institutions such as Seattle University, schools, Masonic lodges, churches, and clubs. In many ways these organizations are assets to the community, providing diversity and a sense of continuity with the past. However, since many of them do not relate directly to the local residential community they are often intrusive; adding to traffic, noise, and parking problems.

Community oriented businesses which serve the local population are focused along Madison Street, however, the smaller businesses are gradually being replaced by medical uses. The loss of local commercial services is critical to the area's residents, especially the elderly and low income population. Heavier commercial uses such as auto dealers and repair shops are concentrated in the vicinity of Pike and Pine Streets, which was once known as "Auto Row."

First Hill is Greater Seattle's most important medical and hospital center. There are six major hospitals and numerous medical clinics, offices, and research laboratories, giving rise to First Hill's nickname of "Pill Hill." In addition, there are numerous parking support facilities serving the medical institutions. During the past 13 years, the land occupied by medical services has increased 53%, and hospital expansion plans indicate continued growth. This continuing expansion of medical institutions on First Hill is having a severely adverse impact on the residential community. New hospital construction has been responsible for the elimination of 270 existing residential units as well as for congesting the streets and disrupting the residential qualities of the community.

In addition to the losses through expansion of medical services, freeway construction and the enforcement of the "Ozark" fire code has resulted in the removal of 1400 housing units. This has brought about a 55% reduction in housing units since 1960. Hospital expansion has not only directly contributed to the reduction in housing through demolition but has also restricted new apartment construction by increasing land prices with the development of this most significant regional medical center.

Conflicting land use and loss of residential accommodation, have resulted in other problems which appear to plague the area. Neighborhood residents are feeling increasingly less secure for their personal safety, and there is an erosion of neighborhood integrity with a drastically incompatible social mixture ranging from the lowest to highest income brackets. Traffic congestion is apparent and has resulted in making it more difficult to get around within the area.



In an effort to deal with these concerns, the Office of Neighborhood Planning of Seattle's Department of Community Development is preparing a Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP) for First Hill. This study has as two of its primary goals the achievement of a balance between institutional residential and commercial land uses and the improvement of environmental conditions for local residents. Despite the problems outlined above, First Hill possesses valuable characteristics which make it a very desirable in-city residential location. However, as the draft NIP report indicates, the new development plans should sensitively consider the requirements of the existing residential population; especially the elderly and low income groups.

REFERENCES:

- Sale, Roger, *Seattle, Past to Present*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976.
Seattle Department of Community Development, Draft First Hill Neighborhood Improvement Plan, 1976.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This inventory and report are projects of the Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority; Executive Director, Lawson A. Elliott; Project Coordinator, Ann Brians; Council Members, Ralph D. Anderson, Kay Bullitt, Brewster C. Denny, Polly Friedlander, Gary Gaffner, David Ishii, Paul Hayden Kirk, Geri Lucks, Louis Michaelson, Vicki Reed, Frank Soderling, and Bruce Zielsdorf; Inventory Review Committee, Kay Bullitt, Peggy Corley, Lee Elliott, Earl Layman, Gerald Pomeroy and Vicki Reed.

Appreciation is tendered to the National Endowment for the Arts and the City of Seattle for financial assistance.

Urban design and architectural consultants, Folke Nyberg and Victor Steinbrueck were responsible for the educational program and inventory review process as well as this report.

John Owen was responsible for the administration, research and graphic production of this report.

Cover Sketch courtesy of Earl Layman



Since the information included is preliminary, corrections and additional information is solicited to provide refinement of the documents. Please send information to Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority, 714 Smith Tower, Seattle 98104

Most importantly, the project was dependent upon the work of the volunteers from the Historic Sites Committee of the Junior League whose cooperation and efforts were crucial to its success.

JUNIOR LEAGUE SURVEY VOLUNTEERS

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Teri Akin | Linda Helsell |
| Susan Amato | Ivaly Hoedemaker |
| Phoebie Andrew | Judy Holder |
| Suzanne Cluett | Cathy Johnson |
| Kay Clark | Sally Morbeck |
| Sharon Easter | Sharon Patterson |
| Sandy Frederick | Pam Powers |
| Marcia Freeny | Lynn Pyles |
| Gena Gorach | Vicki Reed |
| Kathy Gugliemetti | Barbie Robinson |
| Linda Hanson | |

Special thanks to go to Sue Barclay who coordinated the Junior League's efforts with the general inventory program. In addition, several members of the Historic Sites Committee served as technical staff workers and accomplished the background research, writing, and graphic production. They were:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Phoebie Andrew: | Historic Research, Graphics |
| Sue Barclay: | Photography, Graphics |
| Sandy Frederick: | Research |
| Marcia Freeny: | Map Drafting, Graphic Layout |
| Cathy Gugliemetti: | Visual Structure Map |
| Linda Helsell: | Community History |
| Judy Holder: | Research |
| Ivaly Hoedemaker: | Map Drafting, Graphics |
| Vicki Reed: | Historic Research, Graphics |

The publishers and the authors assume no legal responsibility for the completeness or accuracy of the contents of this publication or any legal responsibility for appreciation or depreciation of the value of any premises listed or not listed herein by reason of their inclusion or omission in this publication.

Copyright © 1975 by Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage or retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publishers.

This project was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a Federal Agency. Upon recommendation of the National Council of the Arts, the "City Options" program has been designated a Bicentennial activity. Funds were allocated to projects which can have a demonstrable impact by 1976.