

# Mapping Neighborhood Identity in Seattle's Cascade District

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## INTRODUCTION

What role does the past play in shaping or defining identity? On a personal level, it is difficult to define oneself without resorting to a historical narrative (in terms of parentage and the various major and minor events that inform one's opinions and behavior in the present). These circumstances and events conspire to create the person in the present; those things we do in the present are instantly added to the register of past events as our life unfolds into the future. Neighborhood identity, too, is shaped and defined by the past. A district develops according to the whims and actions of its inhabitants, and the actions and influence of outside players (banks, industries, governments). These actors inscribe their intentions on the locality (state, region, city, neighborhood) in various ways, but the most lasting and telling act of inscription is building. An act of building is inherently local - the building is "placed", "located" in its site; once located, the building participates in the life of the community, changing its identity while contributing to the act of defining it.

Since a building conveys meaning (some meaning is conveyed architecturally - that is, by intent, and other meaning is inherent in the building's existence as an artifact, a fossilized or crystallized aggregation of the needs and assumptions of those who constructed it), the accumulation of buildings within a neighborhood becomes a record of the actions and intentions of the people who paid for, constructed, worked and lived in the assorted structures that constitute it. Because



Easels on the lawn of the Cascade School, probably in the 1920s or 1930s. *Seattle School District Archive*

these actors change over time, new meanings are inscribed on the building as it survives and (possibly) adapts to changes in the neighborhood. These multiple inscriptions constitute the physical memory of the place, which is the basis of its identity.

Current real-estate trends threaten to disrupt the accumulation of this “physical memory”; large-scale development focuses on the aggregation of discrete properties into larger entities, which are then scraped clean and rebuilt with large, single-use buildings (residential or office complexes). This redevelopment wipes out the multiple accumulated memories of the smaller buildings, replacing their contribution to the local identity with a “branded” identity provided by the developer. As a consequence, the collective identity of the neighborhood is disrupted; eventually, the new buildings and their inhabitants will generate and accumulate their own layers of meaning (which may or may not build upon the developer-supplied identity), but continuity with the past is lost. It will be a “place”, but it may not be as deeply “local” as it could be if it changed more gradually, or if sudden change incorporated more of the actual physical structure of the existing locale. This form of redevelopment (a top-down form of identity realignment driven by real-estate and capital), is different from “traditional” gentrification, which describes the smaller-scale shifts of capital that transform neighborhoods in a more gradual, grass-roots (and physically adaptive) way. Both forms of redevelopment alter the neighborhood identity, but the former, which I will call “branded” gentrification, seeks to impose a new identity upon the neighborhood. Conventional gentrification gradually transforms a neighborhood, as individuals and small-scale developers move into an “affordable” district and renovate or alter the properties there on a lot-by-lot basis (frequently displacing the populations that live there). In this paper, I will first explore the identity of a neighborhood in the throes of this type of redevelopment – the Cascade neighborhood in Seattle. My hope is that an exploration of the spatial changes of the neighborhood informed by primary sources will help to bring reveal the distinct character of the neighborhood, and provide some material for a more informed redevelopment.

The Cascade neighborhood in Seattle has always suffered from an ambiguous identity. Sophie Frye Bass<sup>1</sup> identifies and names the various small towns around Lake Union which arose in the 1880s and 1890s. These

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<sup>1</sup> Bass was the daughter of George Frye, who came to Seattle as Henry Yesler’s sawyer, and later became a business and community leader. Bass published her memoir in 1947 when she was more than eighty years old. It is a reminiscence of her childhood in Seattle, which developed from a pioneer community into a regional metropolis over her lifetime.

settlements were focused on timber-processing operations, which used the lake as a log transport and storage facility. Some of these towns, such as Fremont and Ballard, have maintained distinct identities even after they were incorporated into the city of Seattle. Other communities, such as Ross (which sat between contemporary Fremont and Ballard, along Leary Way), and Edgewater (which extended along Interlake Avenue between lower Wallingford and Fremont) were distinct communities at the time, but have been absorbed into the city with little beyond an occasional place name (Ross Park, for instance) to mark them. Cascade and the adjacent South Lake Union district were settled at the same time, and for the same reasons, but failed to make Frye's list.

South Lake Union as a distinct neighborhood in Seattle has gained an identity in the public mind recently, as a result of its proposed redevelopment as the Seattle Commons in the early 1990s, and more recently because of its actual transformation which is currently underway. Cascade's identity remains ambiguous, if not invisible. If it is recognized at all, it is likely to be in conjunction with South Lake Union or with the Eastlake neighborhood. For the purposes of this paper, I will define the Cascade district as follows: the district lies between Denny Way and Lake Union in the north-south direction and between Fairview Avenue North and Eastlake Avenue East in the east-west direction. As mentioned above, this neighborhood developed around lumber-processing activities on Lake Union, and it has continued to be a neighborhood defined by work. In this paper, I will outline the link between Cascade's living and working lives.



Notice of proposed development in Cascade district.

*photo by author*



Contemporary view of Cascade district, looking south on Pontius Ave. N. NBBJ's Alley 24 complex sits across the street from the 1904 Immanuel Lutheran Church.

*Photo by Author*

## METHODOLOGY

### Mapping

Using historic maps (primarily Sanborn's fire insurance maps<sup>2</sup> and Kroll parcel maps<sup>3</sup>), I have charted the spatial changes in the neighborhood from 1893 to present. My original intention was to look at this development on a fifteen-year cycle. This proved difficult for several reasons: first, I could not locate maps that were updated as frequently as would be required for such a frequent interval; second, the maps that were available were updated over a range of time (the Sanborn maps dated 1904, for instance, were updated and include information up to 1914). The resulting analysis are arranged chronologically, and each map represents a "snapshot" of the district which may not be entirely accurate to a given year, but hopefully conveys a sense of the spatial character of the place during that phase of its economic and social life. The phases that I identified are: 1893-1904 (resource economy), 1904-1914 (neighborhood economy), 1914-1928 (industrial economy: ascent), 1928-1960 (industrial economy: decline). The post-freeway changes in the neighborhood have also contributed much to the neighborhood's identity, and much of that material is also at risk now. I plan to continue this research as part of my master's thesis, and will address those time

<sup>2</sup> I worked with pdf files from <http://sanborn.umi.com>, a database available to cardholders from the Seattle Public Library's website ([www.spl.org](http://www.spl.org)).

<sup>3</sup> The Kroll maps were photographed from the atlases in the University of Washington's Special Collections.



1928 Kroll Atlas page. Photo by Adam Shick, from volume in University of Washington Special Collections.

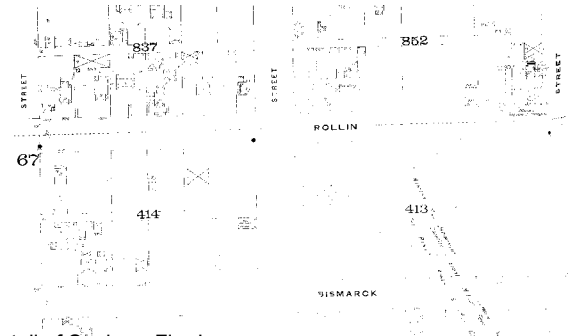


periods there.

Another issue that I encountered with the maps was in the level and type of information (other than spatial arrangement) that I could glean from them. The Sanborn maps were excellent resources for separating buildings by use – buildings were labeled as dwellings, and most businesses were named. Unfortunately, these maps were only available through the 1917 edition (which probably includes updates through the 1920s), after which I relied on Kroll maps, which did not separate buildings by use.

### **The Lucky Ones**

In an attempt to flesh out the spatial picture provided by the mapping exercise, I selected four buildings that have survived into the present time – each from a defined phase of the neighborhood’s history. The four properties are: 1216 Republican Street (a worker’s cottage from the Resource Economy phase), 516 Yale Avenue North (a wood-framed commercial structure from the Neighborhood Economy phase), 429 Yale Avenue North (the Supply Laundry building, representing the industrial phase), and 1255 Harrison Street (a thin-shell concrete warehouse on the site that once housed the Cascade School). I had originally planned to research only these four properties in an attempt to learn more about the people who had built and occupied them. I examined the King



Detail of Sanborn Fire Insurance map.

<http://sanborn.umi.com> (Seattle Public Library database)



1206 Republican Street, an 1890 worker's cottage.

Photo by author, inset from Washington State Archive



516 Yale Avenue North, a 1905 wood-framed commercial building.

Photo by author, inset from Washington State Archive

County tax records in order to determine who had paid taxes on these properties, then consulted the Polk directories<sup>4</sup> in order to find out more about the names on the tax rolls. After looking at the tax roll entries for these four properties, it became clear that this would not provide an adequate overview of the neighborhood's development, so I decided to broaden my inquiry to include the full block surrounding each. The blocks included in the property analysis are: Pontius 3rd Addition, block 15 (the Cascade School / School District Warehouse site), and block 16 (where the Supply Laundry occupies lots 1, 2, and 10-12), Anderson's Addition, block 20 (where 516 Yale Ave N. occupies lot 5), and the Fairview Homestead Association, Block 6 (1206 Republican occupies a portion of lot 6). The tax rolls and Polk directories presented their own inconsistencies, which complement and somewhat compensate for the different types of information provided by the maps. The tax rolls, which were only available through 1941, identify the person who actually paid tax on each parcel; in some cases this may be the occupant of the property, but in others it might be an absentee landlord or a bank. After 1938, the Polk volumes offer reverse directories, which provide the name (and frequently the occupation) of the resident(s) by address. This offers a much better picture of the social makeup of the neighborhood. As a result, I was able to get more detailed social information after 1938, which somewhat balances the loss of detail from the maps of that period, and

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<sup>4</sup> Polk's City Directories are annual publications, and are available in the University of Washington Special Collections, and at the Seattle Public Library, both in the Seattle Room, and in the history stacks on the 9th floor. These directories list occupations and addresses of city residents.



429 Yale Avenue North (Supply Laundry).

*Photo by author.*



Cascade School, 1920s view, with 1955 view of School District Warehouse. *Seattle School District Archive, inset from Washington State Archive*

I was able to use the more detailed Sanborn maps from the early part of the century to compensate for the lack of demographic information from the tax rolls. Since the mining of identity is an inexact pursuit, I hope that the multiple branches of my inquiry will make up for their inconsistency.

## 1893 – 1904: RESOURCE ECONOMY

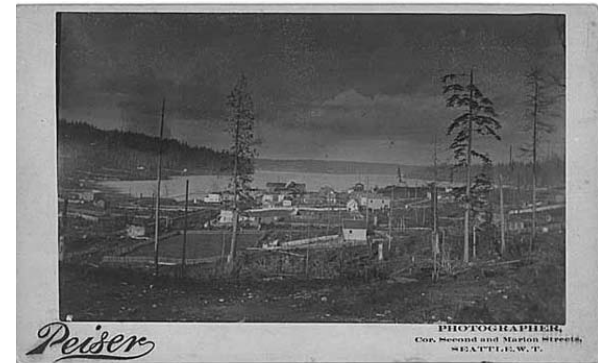
### Historic Context

Seattle's population in the last decade of the 19th century more than doubled, from roughly 43,000 inhabitants in 1890 to almost 81,000 a decade later.<sup>5</sup> Several factors influenced this growth. First, the Great Northern Railroad established a terminal in Seattle in 1893, which connected Seattle and its economy to the East coast and the interior states. Prior trade and immigration had relied on coastal routes or on arduous overland transport. Second, the 1897 Klondike gold rush established Seattle as the outfitting hub and stateside contact for that enterprise<sup>6</sup>. The city center (including much of the pioneer settlement) had burned in 1889. The business center (the Pioneer Square area) was rebuilt in stone and brick, and the residential component began to develop on First Hill.

The Lake Union area during this decade was in the process of being cleared. The lake itself served as a lumber transport and storage mechanism for the land-clearing process; a hand-dug canal (constructed

<sup>5</sup> Richard C. Berner. *Seattle in the 20th Century, vol. 1: Seattle 1900-1920 – From Boomtown, Urban Tolerance, to Restoration*. p. 61

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 11



1885 view of Cascade district, looking Northwest.

*University of Washington Special Collections*



1890 view of Cascade; Western Mill in background.

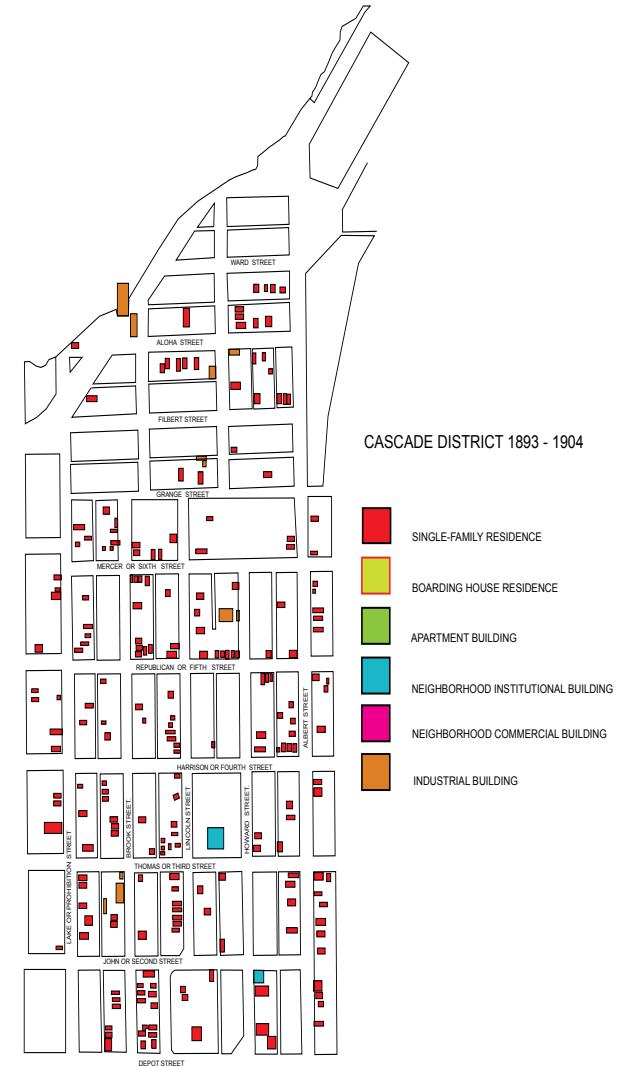
*Museum of History and Industry*



by Chinese laborers)<sup>7</sup> between Lake Washington and Lake Union allowed access to resources from the east side – especially to coal that was mined in Newcastle, Issaquah, and Roslyn. Several large landowners from the pioneer phase of Seattle’s history owned much of the property around the lake. One of them, David Denny, ran the Western Mill at the south end of the Lake. Other mills and wood-processing facilities (sash and door companies, shingle plants, etc.) dotted the shoreline around the lake. Many of these industries spawned associated settlements (as noted above). An electric streetcar linked the South Lake Union area to downtown, and a rail line on Westlake connected the industries to the downtown waterfront. Ferry services and several bridges connected the area to the communities on the northern side.

### Spatial Development

The 1893 Sanborn Map shows a scattering of small buildings in the Cascade district. Most are wood-framed dwellings, and the majority of those are small, with associated outhouses and sheds. A few of the structures are larger; these are located either on Depot Street (later Denny Way), or on Lake Street (later Fairview Avenue). The oldest of the study properties (1206 Republican Street)<sup>8</sup> for this paper is a residence, and dates from this time period. Other than residential buildings, the neighborhood has a school and several



<sup>7</sup> *Chinese laborers dig second Montlake Cut between Union Bay and Portage Bay in 1883.* [www.historylink.org](http://www.historylink.org), file 3349

<sup>8</sup> This house dates from 1890, according to the King County Assessor’s card, on file at the Washington State Archive, King County division.

industrial buildings. The school occupied the central portion of the southern end of a full city block, and it was opened in 1894 with a student population of 200.<sup>9</sup> It was expanded in 1898 (ten rooms were added). School district notes recording street-regrading contracts indicate the general improvements to the neighborhood infrastructure.<sup>10</sup>

Industries, in addition to the mill and associated lakefront businesses, include the North Pacific Brewery on Howard Avenue, a poultry house on Grange Street (later Roy Street), and a few carpentry shops.

The 1893 map also indicates some topographic features that were filled or modified in subsequent years, notably a ravine running parallel to Brook Street (later Minor Ave. N.), and an unbuilt street right-of-way where Howard Street meets Mercer Street.

### Demographics

Tax roll research indicates that much of the land in the Cascade district was owned or controlled by the Pontius family. Margaret Pontius and her husband, Rezius, built a home on Depot Street between Lincoln and Howard Street in 1885. This is one of the larger residences shown on the map. Across Howard Street from the Pontius homestead was another larger home, which belonged to Trusten Dyer<sup>11</sup>, an attorney. It is unclear when Rezius Pontius died, but Margaret Pontius and a male relative named Albert paid the taxes on 12 of the 42 parcels in the study



Margaret Pontius on the porch of her Cascade home, ca. 1890  
University of Washington Special Collections

<sup>9</sup> Thompson, Nile, and Carolyn Marr. *Building for Learning: Seattle Public School Histories 1862-2000*

<sup>10</sup> Seattle School District minutes, Record 3, March 13, 1895

<sup>11</sup> Dyer also paid taxes on one of the parcels in

areas in 1893, and the Pontius family also donated the entire block where the Cascade School was built to the school district. Other taxpayers in the district were also probably investors. A.C. Anderson owned ten lots of the 42 studied, George Moran owned four. There were exceptions to this rule, however, especially in the block surrounding 1206 Republican. This block is Block 6 of the Fairview Homestead Association – the name itself implies a smaller-scale development pattern. On this block, five of twelve parcels are owned by a veterinarian<sup>12</sup>, three by Joseph L. Amor (for whom no occupational information was available), and the rest by individuals who not only paid the taxes, but lived at the listed address. This group included a widow, a teamster, a laborer, an electrician, and a sailor. On block 20 of the Anderson addition, only three of the eighteen lots were owned by residents of the block: Joseph Saar, at 516 Howard Avenue (lot 5)<sup>13</sup> had no occupation listed, Duncan McCrimmon (lot 9) was a sawyer, and Alonzo Jose (lot 11) was a plumber.

It is difficult to determine demographic makeup of the neighborhood at this phase of development, but area churches at the time give some indications. They included the first incarnation of St. Spiridon's Orthodox church, on Lakeview Avenue<sup>14</sup> just outside the Cascade district and a Methodist Episcopal church. St. Spiridon's congregation was "composed overwhelmingly of young men in their mid-twenties, many of whom were emigrants from Greece, Russia, Serbia, and the Near East, mostly loggers, fishermen, cooks, and waiters."<sup>15</sup> The Methodist Episcopal church is referred to on a slightly later Kroll map<sup>16</sup> as the "Norwegian O.L.E. Church", which may indicate a Norwegian presence in the neighborhood initially as well. This notion is supported by the presence of the Sons of Norway lodge just outside the Cascade district (at 2015 Boren Avenue). In any case, the population appears to have been largely

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12 It seems reasonable to presume that the veterinarian might be associated with the mill and other lakefront industry, since much of the hauling was performed by teamsters with wagons.

13 This property is the second of the "lucky ones" properties.

14 The first church was apparently built by enthusiastic but relatively unskilled parishioners on a steep site that fell dramatically to the west. Liturgical demands dictated a west entry to the building (as the altar was located at the east end of the building), which required a long, rickety stair up to the entry. The first church settled and was so precarious that the visiting bishop refused to consecrate it

15 <http://www.saintspiridon.org/history.html>

16 1914 Kroll Atlas

young and male, with a significant immigrant presence<sup>17</sup>.

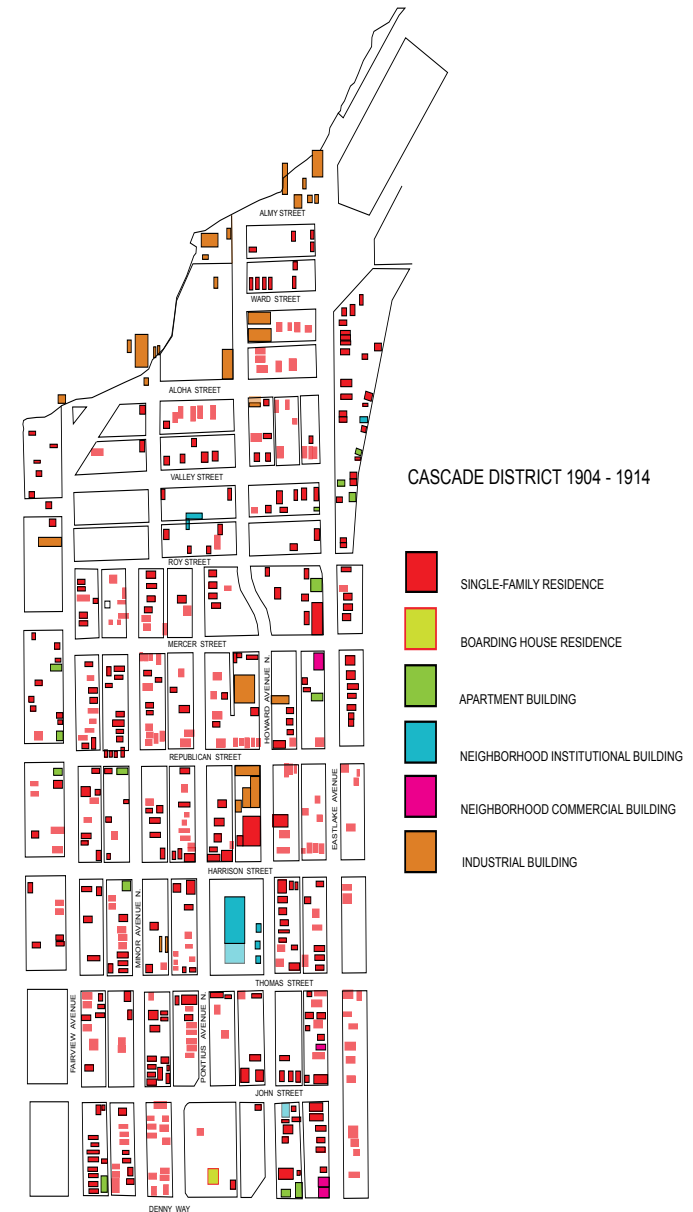
## 1904 – 1914: NEIGHBORHOOD ECONOMY

### Historic Context

After the turn of the century, Seattle's population boom escalated - almost tripling between 1900 and 1910 (from about 81,000 residents to nearly 240,000)<sup>18</sup>. Much of this population moved north of Lake Union, into newly platted or newly annexed suburban communities. According to Richard C. Berner, "...during this expansion, Seattle's population became differentiated along occupational lines in a manner similar to patterns in other American cities. The upper classes congregated on hilltops, beginning with First Hill (above downtown), then Queen Anne and Capitol Hills, Interlaken, the ridge above Lake Washington, and later, Magnolia. Proceeding down from these broad crests one encountered middle-class homes, then the residences of skilled blue-collar workers.... the upper stratum of organized labor and the lower middle class tended to congregate in the city's valleys and flatlands: Montlake, Wallingford, Rainier Valley, and Ballard are examples." The Cascade district definitely fit this pattern. Work in the neighborhood expanded, both at the lakefront, and in the interior of the district. In addition to the furniture factory on the lake (at Minor and Aloha), at least two laundries opened began operation in the neighborhood

<sup>17</sup> Seattle's foreign-born population was around 22,000 – more than 25% of the nearly 81,000 people in 1900.

<sup>18</sup> Berner., p. 60



during this time. The first, the Majestic Steam Laundry, appears on the 1904 Sanborn at the edge of the lake and Howard Avenue. This laundry was powered by a municipal “refuse destructor”, which burned garbage collected locally (including at least one dead horse a day)<sup>19</sup> the other, the Supply Laundry, was built in 1905<sup>20</sup> at Howard Avenue and Republican Street. The North Pacific Brewery was acquired by the Hemrich Brothers Brewing company, which expanded the building and bought the property across the street (516 Howard Ave. N.). The map indicates a shed at the street and a 1 ½ story structure behind.<sup>21</sup>

During this period, Seattle was being dramatically reshaped by engineers. Denny Hill, which risen just west of the Cascade district, was sluiced away in a massive regrading project, and construction had begun on a canal to connect Salmon Bay to Lake Washington. New industrial land was created by filling the tidelands south of Pioneer square with soil washed from smaller regrades of Jackson and Dearborn hills. Shipbuilding (and the associated metal and woodworking trades and suppliers) joined timber processing as a staple local industry.

## **Spatial Development**

The 1904 Sanborn map indicates an increased density of residential development. Houses from this period tend to be larger than the cottages on the 1893 map, and many appear to be duplexes (a single footprint split by a dashed line, with a “D” [dwelling] designation on either side. Use designations also indicate that some of the larger homes from the earlier period (including the Pontius property) were converted to flats or to boarding houses. Another residential type making an appearance at this time is the apartment house. Several of these appear along Eastlake Avenue, on Denny Way, and on Minor Avenue. Fragments of this development pattern still exist in various Lake Union neighborhoods – a particularly intact example exists just across

19 *Seattle’s first refuse destructor plant begins operation in April 1908.* HistoryLink.org Essay 3155

20 City of Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board, Report on Designation LPB 380/05, pg. 4

21 The current building, which can be traced back at least to a 1920s photo, incorporates a single-story garage-type front with a two-story, gable-roofed rear section. Department of Neighborhoods indicates a possibility that something may have been moved onto the site in 1903, possibly replacing the structures indicated on the map.



Fairview Street on Republican Street. Small commercial enterprises, including a butcher, grocery, and more carpentry shops catering to the neighborhood also appear on the map. It appears that the topographic features that had prevented development on the 1893 map had been overcome (the Cascade residents were not immune to the charms of free fill dirt). Howard Avenue was connected between Mercer and Roy Streets. In 1904, the Cascade School was again remodeled, to a total of 24 rooms. Its tripling in size in slightly less than a decade is a testament to both Seattle and the Cascade district's booming population.

Although it was a distinct neighborhood, Cascade was linked to its neighbors. At this point in time, a formal "hill climb" staircase was built on Republican Street, providing access between Cascade and Capitol Hill (and probably formalizing a muddy track up the hill at that point).

## Demographics

Comparing the 1900 and 1915 tax rolls to the 1893 documents confirms some of the patterns established in the earlier phase. The two blocks that had been paid for by investors (Block 16 of the Pontius 3rd Addition, and block 20 of Anderson's Addition) continued to be owned, mainly, by the investors that had platted or initially purchased the land. A.C. Anderson owned thirteen of the eighteen lots on his block, three others continued to be paid for by George or Margaret Moran, and one (516 Howard Ave. N.) was sold by Joseph Saar to the Hemrich Brothers Brewing Company. The final lot was paid for by S.M. McCrimmon, a relative



Intact grouping of early residential buildings on Republican and Fairview.  
*Photo by Author*



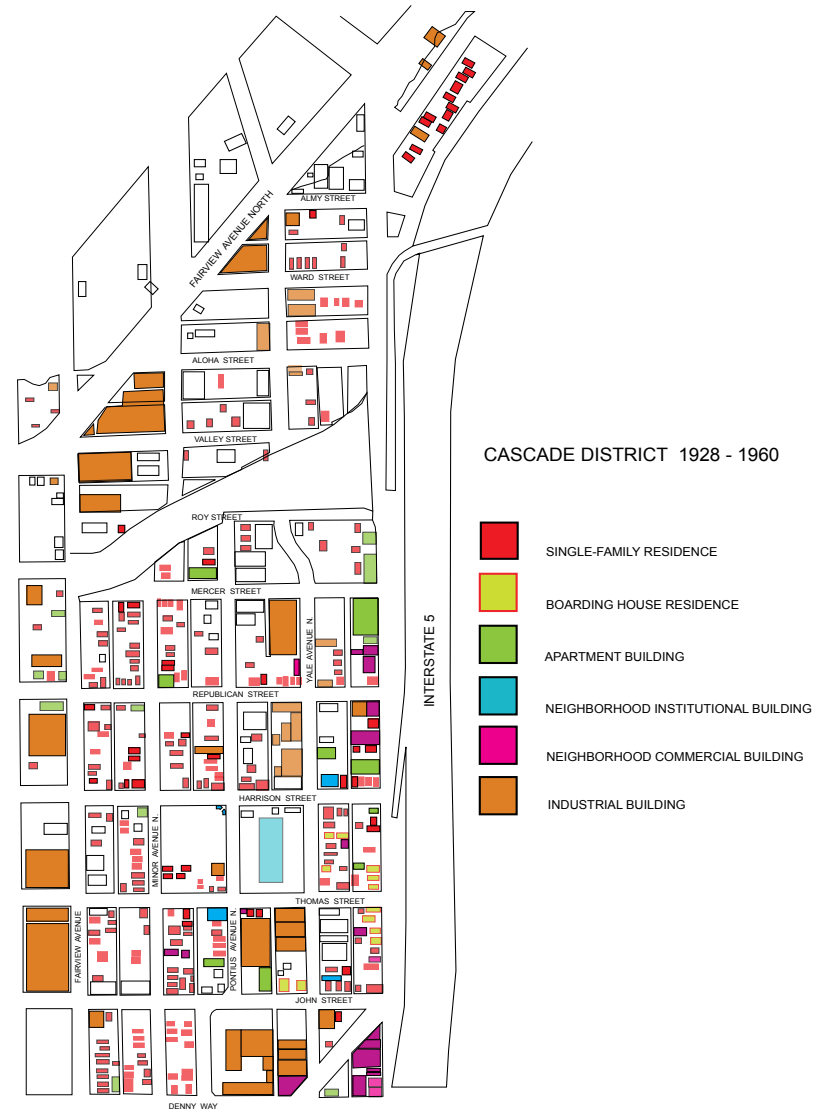
Contemporary view of Republican Street (site of former hill climb stair to Capitol Hill).  
*Photo by Author*

(presumably a son or wife) of Duncan McCrimmon, the sawyer from the 1893 tax rolls. Other McCrimmons listed at the address included Alfred (driver), Albert (student), William (mariner), and John (no occupation listed).

Similarly, the Supply Laundry block continued to be controlled in fairly large pieces. In 1900, the Pontius family (Margaret or Alfred) owned nine of the twelve lots. The other three were purchased by smaller-scale investors. Of the three, only one (Abraham Whittaker, an engineer at Moran Brothers shipyard) lived on the property. By 1915, the Pontius family had sold the properties – three lots to the Supply Laundry Company, two to the Stokes Ice Cream and Candy Company, and one to a plumbing contractor. Abraham Whittaker remained the only resident owner.

The other block (Fairview Homestead Association, Block 6) continued to be more resident-owned. The veterinarian sold his lots to a superior court judge who lived on First Hill (a “dog hospital” appears on the map a block north, on Roy Street, indicating a possible move), but the other lots either retained their owners from 1893 tax rolls, or were paid for by subsequent residents.<sup>22</sup> Occupational information from this block indicates a slight shift from blue-collar work - the electrician had stayed in

<sup>22</sup> I checked each name in the tax roll in the Polk directory, so it was clear whether an owner lived at the Cascade address or elsewhere.



his house but listed his occupation as “salesman”, and the laborer had sold his home to a realtor and his wife. A few buildings, including a grocery and apartment building at the corner of Minor Ave N. and Republican Street, were built during this time period, and a few of the homes changed hands again by 1915.

## **1914 – 1928: INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY (ascent)**

### **Historic Context**

Seattle’s population continued to boom, and the industry to expand during this period. Several significant developments brought industry to the Cascade district with more intensity than in prior decades, and prevailing social issues of the day were played out there as well.

Seattle’s engineering blitz persisted in this period; the completion of the Ship Canal tied Lake Union to Puget Sound, and sealed its industrial identity. Transport of goods and ships through the locks allowed shipbuilding and associated trades to flourish on the Lake. The “refuse destructor” on the lake was converted and expanded into a coal-fired steam power plant, which made it possible to build power-intensive manufacturing and laundry facilities close by. The Steam Plant opened in 1914, and the Ford Motor Company opened its assembly plant at Fairview and Valley Streets the same year. The steam plant also allowed several other laundries to open in the district at this time.

Industrial labor conditions and world politics (the Russian Revolution) prompted workers around the world to unite. The Northwest was hardly immune to this movement; in fact this region was the stage for several noted incidents in labor history, including the Seattle General Strike of 1919, and the Everett and Centralia Massacres, of 1916 and 1919 respectively. The impact of these events on the Cascade district must have been deep, not only because it was a working-class, industrial neighborhood by this time, but also because it hosted a large Orthodox community centered on St. Spiridon’s Church, which included many Russians prior to the Revolution, and may have

absorbed as many as 6000 more, mainly refugees (and anti-revolutionary) in 1923-24.<sup>23</sup> Also, the laundry trade, which probably accounted for more jobs than any other single industry in the neighborhood at the time, was pivotal in the labor movement prior to the general strike. The laundry industry was managed by men, and operated by women, or “laundry girls”, at wages far lower than those paid to male laborers. At this time in Seattle, the laundry industry was not unionized, and the owners of the various laundries were organized into the Laundry Owner’s Association. The Association used loopholes in the minimum wage law in order to keep from paying laundry workers a fair wage (even after mandatory minimum wage laws had been passed). Eventually, laundry workers organized and broke the monopoly.<sup>24</sup> This was one of several successful labor actions that emboldened workers leading up to the General Strike of 1919. This issue must have hotly contested, and deeply felt in the Cascade Neighborhood.

Another social movement that affected the neighborhood during this time was Prohibition, which was adopted in Seattle in 1916. This made it difficult for the Hemrich Brothers Brewery, which eventually closed its brewery in the neighborhood. The buildings were used by local mechanics and truck-builders. The business eventually became the Kenworth Truck Company (although 516 Yale Avenue continued to be owned by the Seattle Brewing & Malting Company – successor to the Hemrich Brothers at least through 1930).

### **Spatial Development**

The industrial nature of the work in the neighborhood is clear on the analysis map from this time period. Waterfront industry, associated with the processing of timber, has given way to assembly and service industries, which are located in larger buildings, and farther from the water. An industrial zone, composed of laundries, food and beverage related plants, and manufacturing buildings extends between Howard and Pontius Avenues, from Denny Way to Mercer Street. Bisecting this zone is the school and playfield. To the west of this zone (roughly tracing the Fairview Homestead Association) is a zone of small residences, with a few apartments, boarding houses, and small neighborhood commercial buildings. To the east, along Eastlake Avenue and the east side of Howard Avenue,

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.saintspiridon.org/history.html>

<sup>24</sup> Berner, p. 236, and Kimberly Reimer “Laundry Workers Struggle for Recognition 1916-1917” <http://faculty.washington.edu/gregoryj/strike/reimer.htm>

is a diverse mix of homes converted to boarding houses, apartment buildings (some quite large), and a variety of neighborhood commercial businesses, some fairly large. Settlement of any kind is still relatively sparse between Mercer Street and the lake. Other than the Ford plant to the west and the Jensen Block apartments on Eastlake and Mercer, this section still only has small, wood-framed houses. Five of them are new to this map, but the rest date from the turn of the century or before.

Another significant presence that arrives in the neighborhood at this time is the Seattle Times complex. Located across Fairview Avenue from the Cascade district, this full-block building is a dominant presence. This would have been the case politically, also; the publisher, “Colonel” Alden Blethen, who was vehemently anti-union (and anti-worker).<sup>25</sup>

The lakefront itself has been formalized; Fairview Avenue North and a series of fill sections were built from (what else?) fill as part of the steam plant development.

### Demographics

In 1915, the Cascade school had the second-highest enrollment in the entire Seattle School District – over 900 students<sup>26</sup>. School district documents also tracked the ethnicity of students in the district during this period. In 1915, the school educated 10 “colored”, 0 Japanese, and 0 Chinese students; in 1920 the ratio was 0 “colored”, 5 Japanese, and 0 Chinese. It is difficult to determine the ethnic makeup of the remaining school population, although it is likely that there were significant Russian

<sup>25</sup> Berner, p.6, 81

<sup>26</sup> Seattle School District #1, Annual Report, 1915



1929 view of Cascade District, looking toward lake from Mercer and Yale. *Museum of History and Industry*



Schoolchildren posing on the steps of Cascade School, n.d.

*Seattle School District Archive*



and Greek populations. After 1916, St. Spiridon's church, which had accommodated Orthodox parishioners of many nationalities, split into two congregations. The Russians continued to worship at St. Spiridon's, and the Greek Orthodox community founded St. Demetrios' church, first in the old Norwegian church at Yale Avenue and John Street, before they moved into their own building at Yale Avenue and Thomas Street in 1918.<sup>27</sup>

Tax roll analysis also shows the increased activity in the neighborhood. The Supply Laundry controlled five of the twelve lots on its block, and new buildings at 407 and 409 Yale housed food-related businesses, including the Stokes Ice Cream and Candy Company. (Other food service businesses in the neighborhood included a commercial bakery and a chocolate factory). On the southeastern corner of the block a new building housed several apartments as well as a grocery. The southwestern corner had another grocery, with the grocer living in an adjacent house. On Pontius Street, Hazel Whittaker (widow of Abraham, the shipyard engineer?) continued to live.

On the Anderson's addition block, Claude Ramsay built the Carolina Court Apartments<sup>28</sup> (although A.C. Anderson continued to pay the tax on the parcels). This building has approximately 60 units, and is a substantial, elegant masonry structure. Taxes for the other lots continued to be paid by the same owners, except for lots 13 and 14 (south of the Carolina Court Apartments), which were sold by A.C. Anderson to George F. Moore.<sup>29</sup>

The Fairview Homestead Association block also changed somewhat during this period. While the spatial pattern of small homes continued almost unchanged, the ownership pattern shifted. Occupations in the small houses on this block ranged from local (Andrew Lind, 1206 Republican, was an auto painter – almost certainly at the new Ford plant – in 1915) to downtown (Violet S. Page, a self-employed stenographer with an office in the Metropolitan tract [the new center of business] and her own ad in the Polk directory), or H. Hoffmyer, elevator operator at a downtown

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.saintspiridon.org/history.html>. One wonders whether the split was not driven by the Greek Orthodox community's desire to distance itself from the Russian community during the Revolution. Another curious tale from this congregation involves the founding priest, Father Alexandrov, who had left Seattle early in the century, returning to claim the congregation as an "archbishop" after the revolution. He was aligned by then with the Bolsheviks, and the congregation was primarily royalist. Since the Russian government (then tsarist) had supported the congregation until the revolution, he was able to sue on the government's behalf and claim the church. The congregation left and formed their own church, eventually building the onion-domed cathedral at Yale and Republican.

<sup>28</sup> Seattle Department of Neighborhoods Historical Site Inventory, Parcel # 0209000075

<sup>29</sup> No occupation or address was listed for George F. Moore

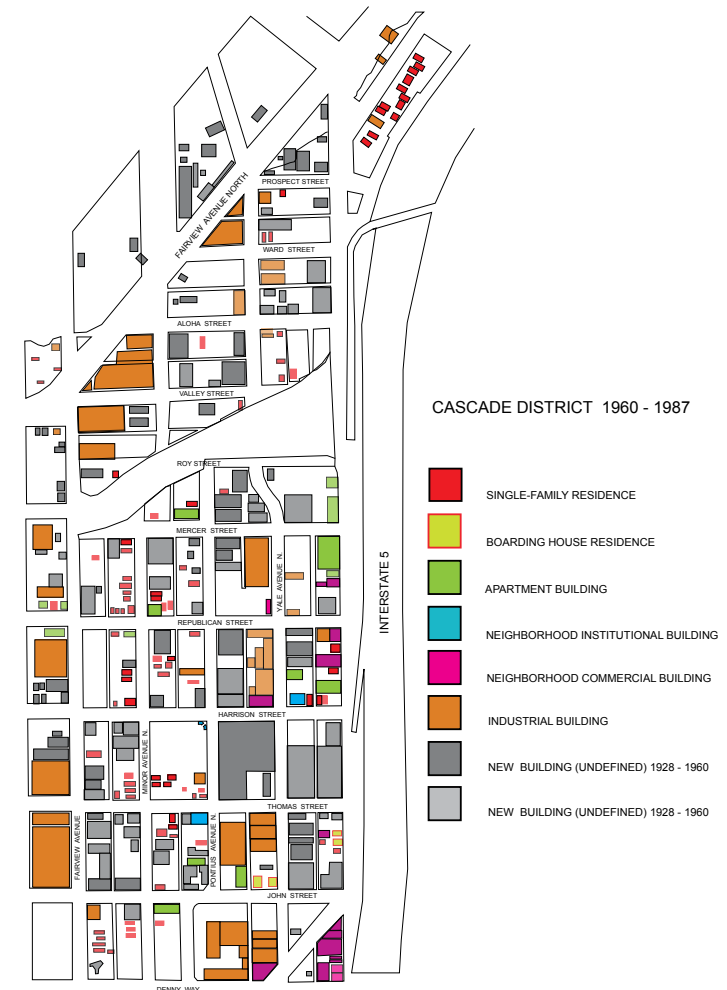
hotel (1930). Most of the lots were still owner-occupied, but a few of them had become rental units. For instance, Charley and Christine Peterson resided at lot 3 in 1915; by 1930, Christine continued to pay the tax on the property, but was listed as a widow and lived in lower Wallingford. Similarly, Elizabeth Hewitt, probably the daughter of W.H. Hewitt (the millwright who paid taxes on 503 Pontius Ave. N in 1893 and 1900) paid the tax in 1915, but lived in Fremont

### 1928-1960: INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY (decline)

#### Historic Context

In the previous period, the district's mix of residential and industrial working uses combined to create what must have been a lively place at most times of day. In the subsequent period, several national economic shifts conspired to dampen both the residential and industrial components of the neighborhood; local politics and an act of God also contributed to their decline.

The first great change was the onset of the Depression, which slowed the national economy and put thousands out of work. Pictures of Seattle's Hoovertown on the new reclaimed land south of Pioneer Square attest to the desperate situation faced by low-income workers at the time. World War II boosted the economy again, and Lake union businesses were played their part in the war effort. The Ford and Kenworth plants were put to work building aircraft and other machines for the war effort.



The laundries continued to operate, shifting from private to institutional accounts.

After the war, the neighborhood was rezoned (in 1947) as an industrial zone, and new residential construction was prohibited. Two years later, an earthquake damaged Cascade School. It was closed and its students were sent to Lowell School on Capitol Hill. In the early 1960s, much of the neighborhood was destroyed to make way for Interstate 5. Postwar prosperity, the freeway, and a desire to look forward after a long war led to suburban development. Cascade was never a typical East-coast or Midwestern “inner city” neighborhood, but it shared some characteristics: it was working class, and it was run-down. Like those neighborhoods, it was an easy target for freeway construction; it lost over twelve blocks and numerous homes to the freeway; it was cut off from Capitol Hill by the multiple lanes of traffic, and cut in half and cut off from the lake by the Mercer Street freeway access.

### Spatial Development

The map shows the continued development of the industrial core. New buildings on this map are marked grey, as the data are collected from Kroll maps, which do not define use like the Sanborn maps do. In general, though, there is an increase in size in the new buildings, which probably indicates a commercial, industrial, storage, or manufacturing facility. There are numerous mid-sized commercial buildings in the north end of the district, and only a few of the original homes. Similarly, the east side of Yale Street begins to lose more of its residential component.



Kenworth workers enjoying a break, 1944.

*University of Washington Special Collections*



Kenworth workers pose with their creation, 1944.

*University of Washington Special Collections*

The Fairview Homestead Addition, which has been the domain of the small, single-property owner throughout the development of the district, is still relatively intact. Some new buildings along Fairview Avenue – utility company offices and union halls – displace a few of the homes, but the core blocks are relatively unchanged.

The major spatial change is the construction of the freeway, which turns Eastlake into a one-sided business street looking out at a concrete wall. The hill climb at Republican Street is gone, along with the many houses that surrounded it. The surviving side of Eastlake remains intact.

Inside the district, the major spatial change is the removal of the school. The tall, gabled brick structure had been surrounded by yards and by trees that the students planted each Arbor Day. It was replaced by a low concrete building with blank, precast concrete walls and an elegant vaulted roof.

## Demographics

The demographic data from the Polk directories after 1938 targets the actual occupant or tenant of the building parcel, rather than the owner. Starting with the 1941 volume, I was able to look up addresses and match them with names and occupations of the tenants. 1941 is sufficiently distant from the freeway construction, and close enough to the industrial heyday of the neighborhood that I feel confident in extending the data back in time. The main thing that the reverse directory demonstrates is



1931 photograph of Nicholas Oecanomacos, clarinetist and neighborhood personality.

*University of Washington Special Collections*



1961 photograph of Lakeview overpass under construction.

*University of Washington Special Collections*

the density of the residential occupation within the small houses of the Cascade neighborhood. For instance, Lot 3 of the Supply Laundry block (bought by Abraham Whittaker, shipyard engineer in or before 1900) has three structures on it. Tax rolls only demonstrate that Hazel Whittaker has been paying taxes on the property, as she does again in 1941. The reverse directory, though, shows that the three buildings on the single lot house six or seven adults. The first house, 422 Pontius, was rented by Louis Mantos, a cook. The second house is where Hazel Davies (I am guessing that Hazel Whittaker remarried and was rewidowed between 1930 and 1941) and Emilia Whittaker (her daughter, or sister-in-law?) lived, with two other women listed as widows. In the third house, Alex Warner, a millworker, lived with his wife, Rose. Lot 7 shows 5 separate addresses, with 1 vacancy. The occupants include a butcher, a fireman and his wife, a laundry worker, and a grocer, whose store is in the adjacent building. On the Yale Avenue side of the block, the Stokes Ice Cream company has been replaced by Howard S. Wright (a general contractor), and by the Fuller Brush Company. The Supply Laundry has the rest of the block (lots 1,2, and 10-12). By 1955, the Whittaker houses are gone, along with the buildings on lots 4,5, and 6. The grocery has changed proprietors, Howard S. Wright has moved, but the Fuller Brush and Supply Laundry Companies still hold the block.

The reverse directory data fleshes out the picture of the Anderson's Addition block as well. Prior to this point, most of the lots were owned in multiples of at least three, and taxpayer information revealed little about daily life on the block. The reverse directory information reveals an interesting mix - the building at 516 Yale is still a warehouse, but for the Kenworth Truck company rather than the brewery. By 1955, warehouse is occupied by the Day & Nite Refrigeration Sales and Servicing Company. The other small lot (which had been paid for by Duncan McCrimmon, the sawyer, in 1893) had a restaurant in the Yale avenue building in 1941; in 1955 it held the Monroe and Akins photography studio. The other small lots on Yale Avenue were commonly owned (by the Moran family), but held separate residences. In 1944, Dealton Read (no occupation listed) lived at 514 Yale, Jennie Holman, a presser (in the laundry trade, probably) lived at 510 Yale Avenue, and Richard Potts (no occupation listed) lived at 506 Yale Avenue with his wife Gladys. By 1955, the Potts couple had moved next door to 510 Yale, Gertrude Portsman (no occupation listed) lived at 506 Yale, and Peter Browning (a laborer at Todd Shipyards) lived at 514 Yale.

On the Eastlake side of the block, the lots were still owned in multiples of two or more; the majority ownership



had transferred from A.C. Anderson to Osner & Melhorn, Inc. some time between 1930 and 1941. The directory information disclosed the working life of the tenants in the apartments and storefronts on that side of the street. The building on the corner of Eastlake and Republican held a cabinet shop in 1944, and a cleaner and a shoe repair shop in 1955. Next to that building, at 509 Eastlake was a building (vacant in 1944), which housed a grocer and a meat market in 1955. At 515 and 515 ½ Eastlake, a small apartment building with four units was occupied by a barber, a janitor, and two tenants with undisclosed occupations (one man and one woman with separate addresses). Next to the Carolina Court Apartments, at 519 Eastlake was the Eastlake barber and beauty shop, with one residential unit rented to an occupant with no listed occupation. Finally, the Carolina Court apartment listings showed a range of occupations, from labor to clerical, and a mixture of single names and couples. In 1941, 54 units were listed, with 3 vacancies. In 1955, the vacancy rate was slightly up (to 5).

Finally, the directory shed some light on the nature of the buildings and occupants of the Fairview Homestead Addition block. Many of the buildings were rental properties. Lot 1 (which had been owned by the veterinarian in 1893) had three houses on it. In 1944, no occupations were listed for the residents, but there were no vacancies. In 1955, the houses held a serviceman and his wife, a janitor at the Firlands Sanitarium, and a married couple (no listed occupation). In 1941, three of the 12 lots were owner-occupied; four others were rental properties but were “legacy” properties (the landlord or landlord’s family had originally lived at the property. One of the lots was occupied by Lizzie (Elizabeth) Hewitt (who had moved to Fremont in or before 1930) and her husband. Lot 5 had two houses listed, with a total of seven households (indicating that the houses had each been divided into flats). Lot 8 was similar, with one house and three addresses.

The directory also revealed a little bit about ethnicity on this block. In 1941, the grocer at 500 Minor was Japanese (Minoru Komatsu), and one of the buildings on lot 4 was a bakery owned by E. Koutsoyiannis (probably a Greek name).

## CONCLUSIONS

I began this research in an attempt to uncover the “identity” of a disappearing neighborhood. I had hoped to

get a closer picture of the neighborhood as it developed spatially and socially over time. I do feel that I have a closer understanding of the place now (although I also feel that I have only begun to clear away the fog surrounding this district's history). It was a place where work - frequently hard, exhausting, and underpaid - coexisted with a social, religious, and domestic life. The main lesson that I take from this research is that history is incomplete, but endless; there are ways, though, to reveal some of the past that is considered too mundane to become common lore, and that has been very rewarding. The other insight that I gained from the combination of spatial and economic analysis is that early patterns are very persistent. In the case of the Cascade district, early platting decisions had ramifications that lasted at least seventy years: the plots that began as aggregated units tended to stay that way, and were easy to convert to larger buildings. The lots that were developed on a one-by-one basis, like the Fairview Homestead Association lots, were more difficult to aggregate, and the residential pattern in that addition outlasted its neighbors by thirty years. Even now, it is just visible in the figure-ground maps of the district. Finally, I feel hopeful that some of the past life of this neighborhood could be used to found a more authentic and interesting Cascade District of the future. Current plans are proposing a new live-work neighborhood, which is really not a new idea at all.



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