

# Landmarks Preservation Commission

## Tacoma Community and Economic Development Department



747 Market Street ❖ Room 1036 ❖ Tacoma WA 98402-3793 ❖ 253.591.5220

### TACOMA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION FORM

This form is required to nominate properties to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places per Tacoma Municipal Code 13.07.050. Type all entries and complete all applicable sections. Contact the Historic Preservation Officer with any questions at 253-591-5220.

#### PART 1: PROPERTY INFORMATION (for 'HELP' press the F1 key)

<b>Property Name</b>			
Historic	<u>The Hosmer House</u>	Common	<u>The Exley Apartments</u>
<b>Location</b>			
Street Address <u>309 South 9<sup>th</sup> Street</u>		Zip <u>98402</u>	
Parcel No(s). <u>2008070041</u>	Legal Description and Plat or Addition: <u>A portion of the NW. 1/4, Sec 4, TWP. 20 N., RGE 3 E, W.M. City of Tacoma, WA. See full legal description on survey map in Appendix I, pg. 2</u>		
<b>Nominated Elements</b>			
Please indicate below significant elements of the property that are included in the nomination by checking the appropriate box(es) below. These elements should be described specifically in the narrative section of this form.			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Principal Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Site		
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic Additions	<input type="checkbox"/> Historic Landscaping, Fencing, Walkways, etc.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Ancillary Buildings/Outbuildings	<input type="checkbox"/> Interior Spaces/Other (inventory in narrative)		
<b>Owner of Property</b>			
Name <u>Pioneer Human Services</u>			
Address <u>7440 West Marginal Way S.</u>		City <u>Seattle</u>	State <u>WA</u> Zip <u>98108</u>
Is the owner the sponsor of this nomination?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Form Preparer</b>			
Name/Title <u>Marshall McClintock</u>		Company/Organization <u>Historic Tacoma</u>	
Address <u>701 North J Street</u>		City <u>Tacoma</u>	State <u>WA</u> Zip <u>98403</u>
Phone <u>253-627-4408</u>		Email <u>marshalm@q.com</u>	
<b>Nomination Checklist—Attachments</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Filing Fee (payable to City Treasurer)	<input type="checkbox"/> Continuation Sheets		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site Map (REQUIRED)	<input type="checkbox"/> Historical Plans		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photographs (REQUIRED): <i>please label or caption photographs and include a photography index</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please indicate): <u>Appendices</u>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Last Deed of Title (REQUIRED): <i>this document can usually be obtained for little or no cost from a titling company</i>			
			FOR OFFICE USE  Date Received _____  Fee Paid _____

11/2008

Nominations to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places are processed according to the procedures and standards described in TMC 1.42 and 13.07. Submittal of a nomination form does not obligate the City to place a property on the Register or to extend financial incentives to a property owner. Documents submitted become public record. Additional requirements may be imposed by other City, state or federal regulations.

**Narrative (continued)**

**PART 2: PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

**Extent of Changes**

Please summarize the changes to plan, original cladding, windows, interior and other significant elements by selecting the choices below. If the property has been previously documented, these may be indicated on the Washington State Historic Property Inventory Form. These changes should be described specifically in the narrative section of this form.

	Original Materials Intact			Original Materials Intact	
Plan (i.e.: no additions to footprint , relocation of walls, or roof plan)	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Interior (woodwork, finishes, flooring, fixtures)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Original cladding	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Other elements	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Windows (no replacement windows or replacement sashes)	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>			

**Physical Description Narrative**

Describe in detail the present and original (if known) physical appearance, condition and architectural characteristics (use continuation sheets if necessary).

See Appendix II: Part 2: Physical Description Narrative

### PART 3: HISTORICAL OR CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

#### Criteria for Designation

Tacoma Municipal Code recognizes six criteria of eligibility for inclusion on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places. Please select any that apply to this property, for which there is documentary evidence included in this nomination form.

- A Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D Has yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history; or
- E Is part of, adjacent to, or related to an existing or proposed historic district, square, park, or other distinctive area which should be redeveloped or preserved according to a plan based on a historic, cultural, or architectural motif; or
- F Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristics, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood or City.

#### Historical Data (if known)

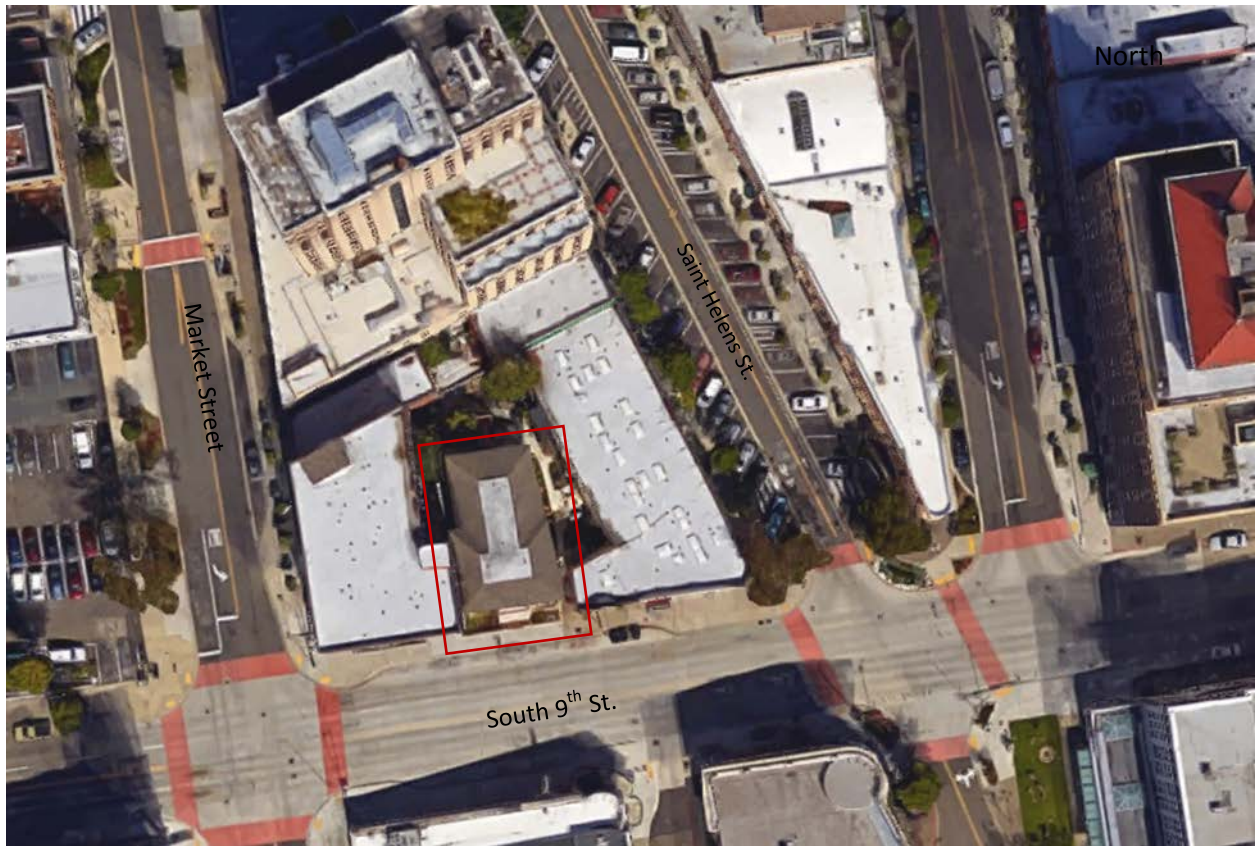
Date(s) of Construction 1875 Other Date(s) of Significance 1888, 1904, 1914, 1980  
Architect (s) Theodore Hosmer (supvr.) Builder P.D. Forbes Engineer \_\_\_\_\_

#### Statement of Significance

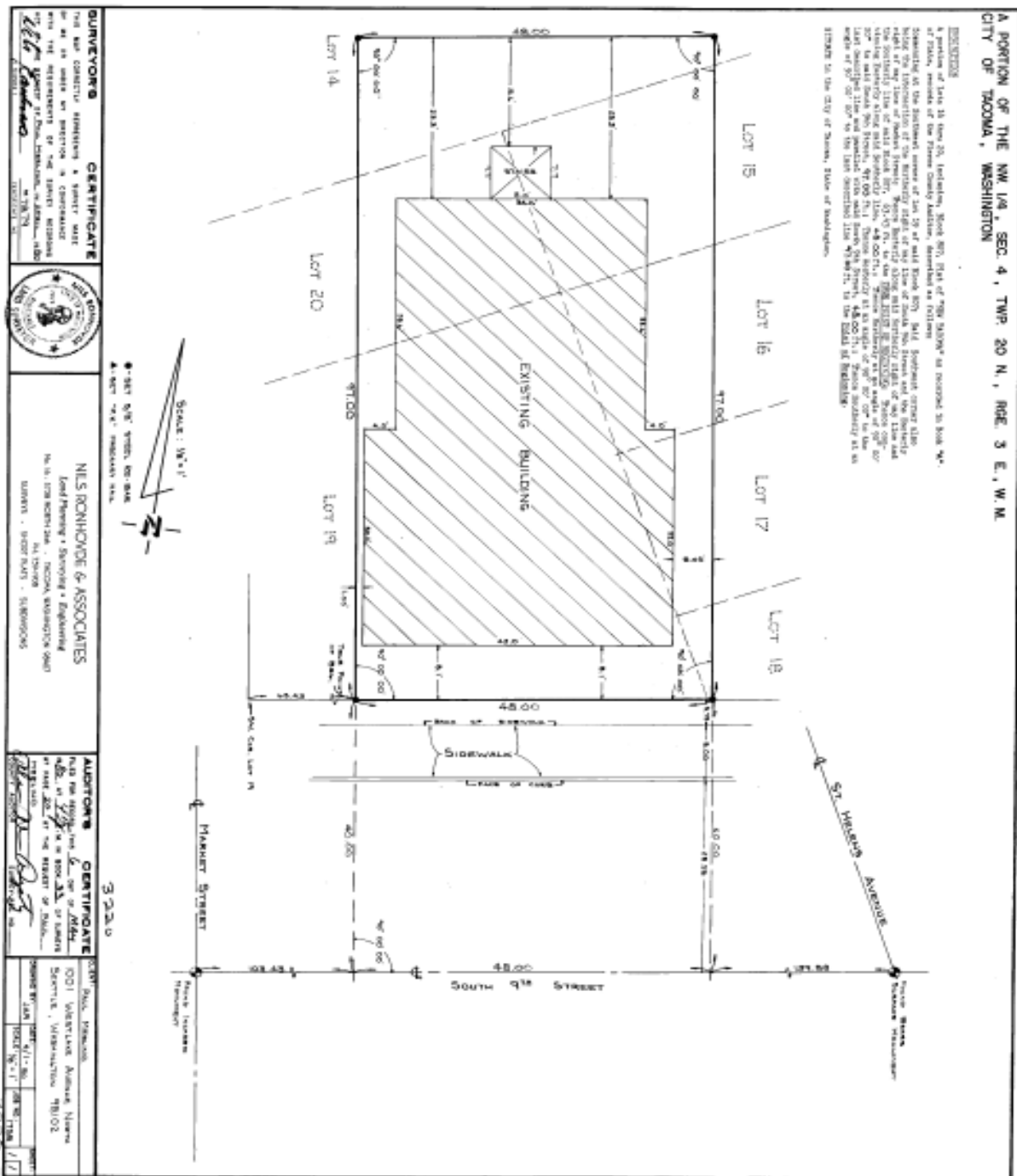
Describe in detail the chronological history of the property and how it meets the criteria for the Register of Historic Places. Please provide a summary in the first paragraph (use continuation sheets if necessary). If using a Multiple Property Nomination that is already on record, or another historical context narrative, please reference it by name and source.

See Appendix III: Part 3: Statement of Significance

## Appendix I: Site and survey map



Site map showing the location of the nominated property, outlined in red. Source: Google Maps.



Survey map and legal description of the nominated property. Source: Pierce County Auditor.

## **Last Deed of Title**

Since the last deed of title for 309 North 9<sup>th</sup> Street in 1999 also included the two other adjoining properties, we have included a separate survey and legal description of just the 309 North 9<sup>th</sup> property from 1980 both here and in the nomination itself.

WHEN RECORDED RETURN TO:

Name: Paul Merlino  
Address: P.O. Box 9424  
City, State-Zip: Seattle, WA 98109

③  
For reference only, not for re-sale.

**Deed of Trust**

(For Use in the State of Washington Only)

THIS DEED OF TRUST, made this 9th day of January, 1999

between  
PIONEER HUMAN SERVICES, a Washington non-profit corporation, GRANTOR,

whose address is 2200 Rainier Avenue South, Seattle, Washington 98144  
TRANSNATION TITLE INSURANCE COMPANY, a corporation, Trustee, whose address is 1200 Sixth Ave, Seattle, Washington 98101 and

PAUL L. MERLINO, a married man as his separate estate, BENEFICIARY,

whose address is P.O. Box 9424, Seattle, WA 98109  
WITNESSETH: Grantor hereby bargains, sells and conveys to Trustee in Trust, with power of sale, the following described real property in Pierce County, Washington:

**LOTS 13 THROUGH 20, INCLUSIVE, IN BLOCK 607 OF MAP OF NEW TACOMA, WASHINGTON TERRITORY, AS PER PLAT RECORDED FEBRUARY-3, 1875, RECORDS OF PIERCE COUNTY AUDITOR;**

**SITUATE IN THE CITY OF TACOMA, COUNTY OF PIERCE, STATE OF WASHINGTON.**

TRANS  
97-18727  
JAN 11 1999

Tax Account Number: 200907-004-1, 200907-004-3, and 200907-004-4

which real property is not used principally for agricultural or farming purposes; together with all the tenements, hereditaments, and appurtenances now or hereafter thereunto belonging or in any wise appertaining, and the rents, issues and profits thereof.

This deed is for the purpose of securing performance of each agreement of grantor herein contained, and payment of the sum of ( \$ 535,000.00 ) FIVE HUNDRED THIRTY FIVE THOUSAND AND NO/100 Dollars with interest, in accordance with the terms of a promissory note of even date herewith, payable to Beneficiary or order, and made by Grantor, and all renewals, modifications and extensions thereof, and also such further sums as may be advanced or loaned by Beneficiary to Grantor, or any of their successors or assigns, together with interest thereon at such rate as shall be agreed upon.

To protect the security of this Deed of Trust, Grantor covenants and agrees:

1. To keep the property in good condition and repair; to permit no waste thereon; to complete any building, structure or improvement being built or about to be built thereon; to restore promptly any building, structure or improvement thereon which may be damaged or destroyed; and to comply with all laws, ordinances, regulations, covenants, conditions and restrictions affecting the property.
2. To pay before delinquent all lawful taxes and assessments upon the property; to keep the property free and clear of all other charges, liens or encumbrances impairing the security of this Deed of Trust.
3. To keep all buildings now or hereafter erected on the property described herein continuously insured against loss by fire or other hazards in an amount not less than the total debt secured by this Deed of Trust. All policies shall be held by the Beneficiary, and be in such companies as the Beneficiary may approve and have loss payable first to the Beneficiary, as its interest may appear, and then to the Grantor. The amount collected under any insurance policy may be applied upon any indebtedness hereby secured in such order as the Beneficiary shall determine. Such application by the Beneficiary shall not cause discontinuance of any proceedings to foreclose this Deed of Trust. In the event of foreclosure, all rights of the Grantor in insurance policies then in force shall pass to the purchaser at the foreclosure sale.
4. To defend any action or proceeding purporting to affect the security hereof or the rights or powers of Beneficiary or Trustee, and to pay all costs and expenses, including cost of title search and attorney's fees in a reasonable amount, in any such action or proceeding, and in any suit brought by Beneficiary to foreclose this Deed of Trust.







**REQUEST FOR FULL RECONVEYANCE**

*Do not record. To be used only when note has been paid.*

TO: TRUSTEE,

The undersigned is the legal owner and holder of the note and all other indebtedness secured by the within Deed of Trust. Said note, together with all other indebtedness secured by said Deed of Trust, has been fully paid and satisfied, and you are hereby requested and directed, on payment to you of any sums owing to you under the terms of said Deed of Trust, to cancel said note above mentioned, and all other evidences of indebtedness secured by said Deed of Trust delivered to you herewith, together with the said Deed of Trust, and to reconvey, without warranty, to the parties designated by the terms of said Deed of Trust, all the estate now held by you thereunder.

Dated \_\_\_\_\_, 19 \_\_\_\_\_



**Transnation**

**TRANINATION TITLE INSURANCE COMPANY**

2008-8 req-Adv-10000

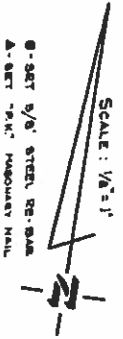
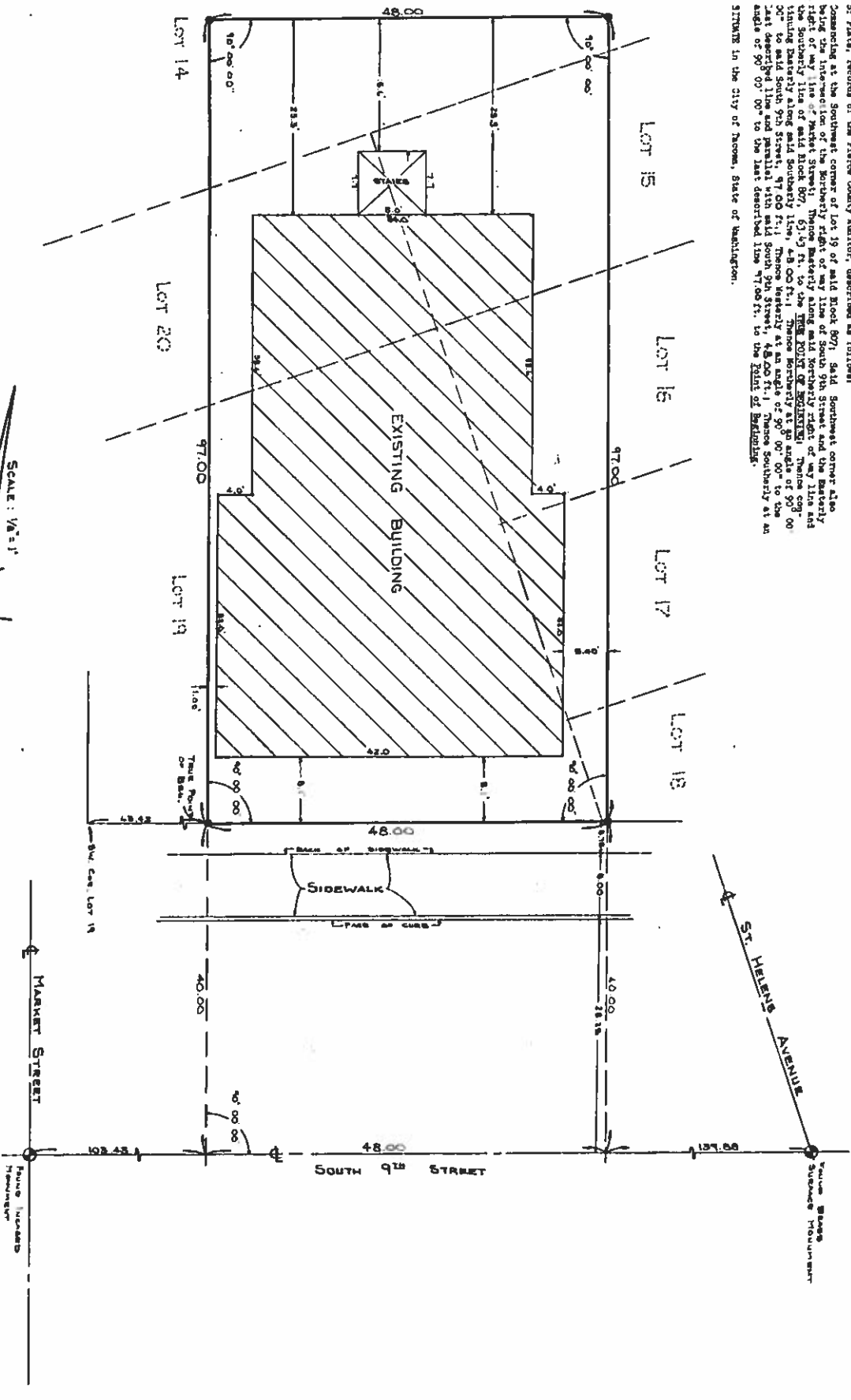
For reference only, not for re-sale.

9901110833

**A PORTION OF THE NW 1/4, SEC. 4, TWP. 20 N., RGE. 3 E., W. M. CITY OF TACOMA, WASHINGTON**

**DESCRIPTION**

A portion of lots 14 thru 20, Inclusive, Block 807, Plat of "NEW TACOMA" as recorded in Book "X" of Plats, records of the Pierce County Auditor, described as follows:  
 Commencing at the southwest corner of Lot 19 of said Block 807, said southwest corner also being the northwest corner of the southerly side of South 9th Street, and extending easterly along the southerly line of said Block 807, 63.45 ft. to the TRUE POINT OF BEGINNING, thence easterly and southerly along said southerly line, 48.00 ft.; thence westerly at an angle of 90° 00' 00" to said South 9th Street, 97.00 ft.; thence westerly at an angle of 90° 00' 00" to the east described line and parallel with said South 9th Street, 48.00 ft.; thence southerly at an angle of 90° 00' 00" to the last described line 17.00 ft. to the POINT OF BEGINNING.  
 SITING in the City of Tacoma, State of Washington.



9-SET 3/8" STEEL RE-BAR  
 4-SET 1/2" REINFORCING BARS

**SURVEYORS CERTIFICATE**

THIS MAP CORRECTLY REPRESENTS A SURVEY MADE BY ME OR UNDER MY DIRECTION IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SURVEY RECORDS ACT, THE SEVERAL ACTS RELATING TO THE SAME, AND THE SEVERAL ACTS RELATING TO THE SAME, IN ASSEMBLY, 1900.



**NILS RONHOVDE & ASSOCIATES**

Land Planning • Surveying • Engineering  
 No. 16-3738 NORTH 24th, TACOMA, WASHINGTON 98407  
 PH. 725-0000  
 SURVEYS • SHORT PLATS • SUBDIVISIONS

3220

**ADDITIONAL CERTIFICATE**

THIS MAP BEING THE DAY OF MAY 1982, AT 2:15 P.M. IN BOOK 33 OF PLATS AT PAGE 22 AT THE REQUEST OF DAVID HERRLIND

**RECORD**

Paul Herring  
 001 Westlake Avenue North  
 SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98102  
 ORDER BY: JAN  
 DATE: 1/1/80  
 SHEET: 16 OF 17  
 JOB NO. 1759  
 3220

## Appendix II: Part 2: Physical Description Narrative

### Site

Built in 1875 and relocated to this site (309 S. Ninth St.) by 1905, the apartment building at 309 South Ninth Street is located in downtown Tacoma, Washington. Situated within the block of the city's Municipal Building and in the city's Theater District as well as about two blocks from the Old City Hall Historic District, it is located in one of the busiest areas of downtown Tacoma. The two story building with daylight basement occupies a rectangular, 97' x 48' lot. Oriented south to north, the building faces south with the front façade about 8' from the sidewalk of South Ninth Street. At the rear is a small courtyard about 48' x 23' that provides a space for benches, swings, and picnic tables used by residents of the Rialto, Caswell, and Exley buildings as well as for emergency egress.

### Exterior

The building is roughly the shape of an inverted, fat letter T, consisting of a front rectangle of about 42' x 32' and a rear ell of about 34' x 34', inset about 4' on either side of the front rectangle (See Fig. 3). A brick basement provides a foundation for the wood-frame walls. Channel wood siding clads the exterior walls above the brick basement. Narrow corner boards add additional decoration. A wide frieze with decorative, single brackets sits below a wide ornamented cornice and low, hipped roof (See Fig. 2). Asphalt-composition shingles clad the roof except for the crown, which appears flat and metal covered. There are no chimneys.

The front (south) façade has a center portico reached by nine steps enclosed within three-step, brick box rails on either side (See Fig. 1). The portico features paneled sides inside, and a single, full-length glazed door with a transom above centered between sidelights. It has a decorative cornice with wide eaves and a shallow decorative bevel supported by two large corbels on either side of the entrance. The porch roof is topped with a small box rail about 2' high with a decorative panel in front. This panel replaces a small balustrade the width of the portico entry seen in pictures from 1980.

The front façade has two windows on either side of the entry porch and six across the second story. These striking 1-over-1, double-hung windows have full arch upper sashes and feature elaborate wood enframements with decorative moldings, keystone and incised scrollwork (See Fig. 3). A wider, 1-over-1, double-hung window is set in the masonry basement wall on either side of the entry stair. A water table courses around the building at the basement level.

The east façade is largely hidden by the Caswell Optical Company building (c. 1914) (See Fig. 3). A smaller window (aligned header but shorter sill) with a flat upper sash and simple crown is followed by two full length, windows with arched upper sashes and full trim towards the rear of the front section on each of the two stories. A similar pattern of wider windows is found at the basement level.

The windows of the ell all have flat upper sashes. The pattern has a full length window with full trim followed by a small window (aligned header but shorter sill) with simple crown, and then a full length window with full trim close to the rear on each of the two upper stories. A similar pattern of wider windows are set in masonry at the basement level. The west façade is only about 1' from the east façade of the Rialto Apartments (1918) and has a fenestration pattern reflecting that of the east façade. The rear, north façade overlooks a small courtyard and has a contemporary fire door on each story and a contemporary metal fire escape (See Fig. 4). On the first and second story, a 1-over-1 window with flat

upper sash and varying trim is arrayed on either side of the fire door. A slightly shorter window almost abuts the fire door on these stories. The basement level has a wider, 1-over-1 windows on either side of the fire door.

### **Alterations**

Drawings and photographs of the building show that it remarkably intact for its 141 years. An 1883 drawing (See Fig. 11) shows a flat-roofed porch running the length of the first floor supported by four bracketed posts. A one-story bay window was located on the then south façade. Also, a wreath-like trim, probably of cast iron, was located along the porch roof, the bay window roof and the roof crown. A photo from 1881 (See Fig. 10) shows the rear of the building with a centered, one-story ell, which was probably the kitchen(s).<sup>1</sup> In addition, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps of 1888 and 1892 show a center wall through the house, suggesting it was built as a double house (See Figs. 5 & 6).

### **1888**

In 1888, a newspaper notice reports that noted Tacoma architect C. A. Darmer received permits “for framed addition to residence at So. 9<sup>th</sup> & Saint Helens Ave.,” which is the larger ell we see today.<sup>2</sup> The Sanborn Fire Insurance map of 1892 (See Fig. 6) shows the house facing Saint Helens Street and with a rear ell that closely approximates the size of the ell seen in the 1912 fire insurance map (See Fig. 8) after the move to the current location. From 1887 until 1904, the building was operated as a boarding house.<sup>3</sup>

### **1904, 1914**

In 1904-05 the building’s owner moved the house from its original location at 750 Saint Helens Avenue to its current location on South Ninth Street.<sup>4</sup> The brick daylight basement was added, requiring new entry stairs and porch. The building was called the Mills House and continued as a boarding house.

By 1914, Henry Rhodes had purchased the property. He had the noted the Tacoma architectural firm of Heath & Gove remodel the building into individual apartments and renamed it The Exley after his father’s birthplace in England.<sup>5</sup> The entry porch we see today probably dates from this time. In 1918, Rhodes built the brick, six-story Rhodes (later Rialto) Apartments just to the west at 311 South Ninth Street. With only about a foot separating this building from the cornice of The Exley, the bay window, which the Hosmer house had originally sported on this façade, was certainly lost at this time if it had not been lost earlier.

### **1956, 1980, and 2011**

In 1956, the building was slated for demolition to make way for a parking lot (See Fig. 14).<sup>6</sup> However, the demolition did not occur for unknown reasons, and the building continued as an apartment house. It was likely at around this time that asbestos shingles were placed over the original siding.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, 07/01/1883, pg. 4, “Eight years ago.”

<sup>2</sup> *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, 05/20/1888, pg. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Based on Polk city directories, though no boarding house listing found for 1896-1898

<sup>4</sup> *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, 11/20/1904, pg. 19.

<sup>5</sup> *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, 03/01/1914, pg. 19, “Rhodes apartments nearly complete.”

<sup>6</sup> *Tacoma News Tribune*, 08/05/1956, pg. A12, “Time beclouds origin of doomed apartment.”

The building declined, and by 1975, it was condemned, boarded up and subject to much vandalism. In 1980, a major restoration of the building was undertaken by then owner Paul Merlino under the direction of Tacoma architect Gene Grulich (See Fig. 15).<sup>7</sup> At this time the asbestos siding was removed, the channel siding and trim repaired, and the metal fire escape in the rear added. Although new plumbing and wiring was required as well as a modern apartment configuration (kitchens and bathrooms), care was taken to maintain the existing fenestration with minimum change. The interior main staircase and balustrade were retained. It was returned to use as an apartment building, which continues to this day.

At some point after the 1980 restoration, the front section of decorative balustrade on the roof of the portico was replaced with box rail replicating that on either side.<sup>8</sup> In 2011, Bouwer Construction of Seattle repaired cladding and trim as well as painting the building for the current owner, Pioneer Human Services. In addition, they repaired the foundation and installed a waterproofing system.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Tacoma News Tribune*, 11/09/1980, pg. F13, "100-year-old Exley gets new lease on life."

<sup>8</sup> See pictures on pg. 77 in J. Olsen & P. Kipp, *Tacoma Rediviva: Tacoma's Downtown Rehabilitated Buildings*, City of Tacoma, 1985.

<sup>9</sup> Bouwer Construction. "Exley Apartments - Historic Downtown Tacoma". Retrieved January 7, 2016 from <http://bouwerconstruction.com/projects-completed.html>

## Appendix III: Part 3: Statement of Significance

Completed by 1875, the building at 309 South Ninth Street began its life at 750 Saint Helens as one of the earliest buildings on the town site of the western terminus of the Northern Pacific Railroad (NPRR). This site would become the city of New Tacoma in 1882. Built by the NPRR “...for the use of the officers of the railroad company...,” this double house was the residence for Mr. Theodore Hosmer, his wife Louise and his son Alexander.<sup>10, 11</sup> Hosmer was the Special Agent in charge of the new town site and later served as president of its first Board of Trustees and its first mayor. The building is the oldest residence in Tacoma and its second oldest building.<sup>12</sup>

The period of significance is 1875 – 1914 (original construction, addition, move to its current location, and conversion to apartments). It is eligible for the Tacoma Register of Historic Places under the following criteria:

- Criterion A as the only remaining building directly associated with the selection of Tacoma as the NPRR’s western terminus and the founding of the city of New Tacoma.
- Criterion B for its association with Theodore Hosmer, New Tacoma’s first mayor and a leading figure in the creation of the city.
- Criterion C as an excellent and one of the few remaining examples of residential Italianate architecture in the city.
- Criterion E for being two blocks from the Old City Hall Historic District that is associated with Tacoma’s early history and development.
- Criterion F as a noted, established and familiar building of the city.

It was listed in Tacoma’s cultural resource survey in 1978, again in 1985 when it was labeled “...a primary structure of historical importance...,” and in 2003.<sup>13, 14, 15</sup>

The Theodore Hosmer House maintains a high degree of integrity with regard to location, design, setting, workmanship, and association. Located very near its original site, the building continues a historic use within the historic footprint and massing with minor exterior changes. The original cladding, window openings and decoration, and other architectural features remain.

### Architectural style

This building is a fine example of the simple, hipped-roof variant of the American Italianate style, a residential and commercial style popular from 1840 until 1885. Typical of this style, it is a two-story house clad in channel siding with corner boards, a low-pitched, hipped roof, and a wide cornice above

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<sup>10</sup> Date of construction based on *Tacoma Daily Ledger* article (07/01/1883, pg. 4) that states it was erected in 1875.

<sup>11</sup> Sketch of house, *West Shore Magazine* (Jan., 1883), pg. 8, “Residence of Mr. Theodore Hosmer, Esq.”

<sup>12</sup> Tacoma-Pierce County Buildings Index, Northwest Room, Tacoma Public Library.

<sup>13</sup> Tacoma Office of Historic Preservation, Theodore Hosmer House, 31586, Community Cultural Resource Survey, 07/1978.

<sup>14</sup> J. Olsen & P. Kipp, *Tacoma Rediviva: Tacoma's Downtown Rehabilitated Buildings*, City of Tacoma, 1985, pg. 77.

<sup>15</sup> Tacoma Office of Historic Preservation, Theodore Hosmer House, Historic Property Inventory, 2003, Retrieved January 7, 2016 from <http://wspdsmap.ci.tacoma.wa.us/website/HistoricMap>.

decorative, single brackets on an ornamental entablature. The tall, narrow windows have 1-over-1 lights with round-top upper sashes. In addition, the front windows have elaborate window hoods featuring decorative keystone and incised scroll work as well as heavy trim moldings, typical of this style. Though now gone, an early sketch shows a full-width, flat-roofed porch supported by four, bracketed posts as well as a wreath-like trim, likely of wrought iron, along the cornices and the roof crown, both common elements of the Italianate style. Both the Hosmer house and the Tacoma Land Company building (902 Broadway) were built at the same time and in this style.

The Italianate style became more popular following the Civil War and reached its zenith between 1860 and 1880. While Tacoma retains several fine examples of commercial Italianate, such as the impressive Old City Hall, 1893 (625 Commerce St.), surviving examples of residential Italianate are rare. The emerging new Stick, Queen Anne, Shingle and Neo-Colonial house styles gained in popularity and largely supplanted Italianate by about 1890. More importantly, the earliest residential areas of Tacoma were located in what became its downtown commercial core, and hence the Italianate houses of this early period were largely demolished. However, some more transitional examples remain, such as the Beals House, 1887 (2804-06 N. McCarver St.), the Swalwell house, 1888 (1102 N. K St.), the MacDonald house, 1888 (1346 Fawcett Ave.), and the Heinemann house, c. 1890 (1414 S. G St.).<sup>16</sup>

## History

Once the NPRR commission selected Tacoma as its western terminus, Hosmer immediately became the company's "special agent" in charge of the new town site and set about clearing the site, laying out the town, getting property ready for sale, and constructing necessary buildings (See Fig. 9).<sup>17</sup> The Hosmer House and the somewhat larger building across South Ninth at 902 Broadway were two such buildings (See Figs. 7 & 10). The larger building (See Fig. 17) would serve as the NPRR headquarters and Tacoma Land Company building until the grander headquarters building (621 Pacific Ave.) was built in 1888. A newspaper article described the Hosmer house as "...for the use of the officers of the railroad company."<sup>18</sup>

Since he had served in the construction department of the Central Pacific Railroad, Mr. Hosmer himself may have designed the house. However, Peter Dewar Forbes (see biography section) was the contractor and builder for the Tacoma Land Company building just across South Ninth Street and may also have constructed the house for Mr. Hosmer. Both buildings, the first built west of Pacific Avenue in the new town, were likely started in the autumn of 1874 and completed in early 1875.<sup>19</sup> Both buildings are likely based on pattern book designs or designs already in use by the NPRR. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps of 1889 and 1892 show a center wall through the house suggesting it was built as a double house.

Hosmer and his wife Louise (See Fig. 18) lived in the house at 750 Saint Helens Avenue from 1875 until 1882 when Ms. Hosmer's ill health required the family return to Philadelphia for her care. However, her

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<sup>16</sup> Virginia S. McAlester, *A field guide to American houses*. New York, Knoff, 2015, pg. 282-286 & 334-336.

<sup>17</sup> Edward M. Fuller, "Biographical sketch of Theodore Hosmer," *The Washington Historian*. II (October, 1900), pg. 5-11.

<sup>18</sup> *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, 07/01/1883, pg. 4, "Eight years ago."

<sup>19</sup> *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, 09/19/1888, pg. 5, "An old landmark going."

health continued to decline, and she died in early 1885. Hosmer would return to Tacoma later that same year. It is unclear if Mr. Hosmer returned to the house when he returned to Tacoma.

From 1887 until 1895, city directories show Mrs. Maria White, a widow, operating a boarding house at 750 Saint Helens.<sup>20</sup> In 1887, Mr. Hosmer, along with other property owners on Saint Helens, request street improvements from the city, and he states that he is planning “improvements” to his property.<sup>21</sup> In 1888, noted Tacoma architect Carl A. Darmer gets six permits to build an addition to the building, that is, the two-story, much larger rear ell we see today.<sup>22</sup> That addition is clearly visible in the 1892 Sanborn Fire Insurance map (See Fig. 6).

The new Northern Pacific Headquarters Building (621 Pacific), which also housed the Tacoma Land Company, was completed in 1888. The old Tacoma Land Office building was then moved to 701 Saint Helens where it would be a boarding house until its demolition in 1930.<sup>23</sup> Hosmer began to build his grand Tacoma Theater at the 902 Broadway site.

By 1888, Hosmer is living at The Tacoma Hotel, and by 1890, he and his son Alexander have moved to his new house at 610 Broadway across the street from the Union Club (See Fig. 20). Mr. Hosmer would die in 1900 at this address following a stroke. He was buried with his wife in Sandusky, OH (See Fig. 21).

The city directories from 1896 until 1898 do not list 750 Saint Helens as a boarding house. However, from 1899 until some point in 1904, Ms. A. V. Raynor is operating a boarding house at that location.<sup>24</sup> In that year, William Bardsley now owns the Hosmer House and moves it somewhat up the hill, placing it on a brick daylight basement facing South Ninth (See Fig. 8), and calling it “Mills House.”<sup>25</sup>

By 1914, Henry Rhodes acquired the building as well as the properties to the west and east. He hired the noted Tacoma architectural firm of Heath & Gove to remodel the building, and they likely added the elegant entry porch and stairway we see today. Rhodes renamed the building “The Exley” after his father’s birthplace in England.<sup>26</sup> In 1918, he had Heath and Gove design and build the brick, six-story Rhodes (now Rialto) Apartments at the corner of South Ninth and Market where its eastern façade comes perilously close to the Hosmer House.<sup>27</sup> Sometime after completing the Winthrop Hotel in 1925, Rhodes began plans for a large medical arts building. Initially, he thought to build it at the corner of Saint Helens and South Ninth, requiring the demolition of The Exley (See Fig. 13). However, Rhodes’ Seattle partners suggested a site more north in the center of the block so that the building could have entrances on both Saint Helens and Market Streets. The Rhodes Medical Arts Building was completed in 1930 at 747 Market Street.<sup>28</sup>

In 1956, Rhodes’ real estate company planned to demolish The Exley to create a parking lot for the Rhodes Apartments. A newspaper article at the time (See Fig. 14) reports that only one Exley resident

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<sup>20</sup> Based on Polk city directories

<sup>21</sup> *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, 06/05/1887, pg. 1, “St. Helen’s Street.”

<sup>22</sup> *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, 05/20/1888, pg. 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, 10/06/1888, pg.4. “On the move”

<sup>24</sup> Based on Polk city directories

<sup>25</sup> *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, 11/20/1904, pg. 19.

<sup>26</sup> *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, 03/01/1914, pg. 19, “Rhodes apartments nearly completed.”

<sup>27</sup> *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, 06/23/1918, pg. B6, “50-suite flat to be erected on Market St.”

<sup>28</sup> Henry A. Rhodes, *Memoirs of a merchant*, Seattle, Metropolitan Press, 1952, pg. 129-131.



remains and that workers are beginning to dismantle the building. It also speculates on the building's history, which is very obscure.<sup>29</sup> For some reason, however, the demolition does not proceed, and the city directories for subsequent years show residents back in The Exley. By 1975, however, the building had declined to such a state it was boarded up and condemned.

In 1980, developer Paul L. Merlino bought the property and brought in Tacoma architect Gene Grulich to restore and rehabilitate the building (See Fig. 15). The city arranged \$300,000 low interest loans from federal Housing & Urban Development funds to assist the project.<sup>30</sup> Removing asbestos shingles from the 1950s revealed the original channel siding. Many of the decorative window frames, especially the round-top sashes, along with decorative moldings and brackets were restored or reconstructed (See Fig. 16). All new plumbing, wiring, cabinets, flooring, and partition walls were installed transforming its 18 rooms into 12 modern apartments with individual kitchens and full bathrooms. The original handrail and staircase in the front entry hall was preserved.

In 1999 Mr. Merlino sold the property to the current owners Pioneer Human Services, a private social service organization based in Seattle that focuses on chemical dependency issues.<sup>31</sup> Pioneer operates The Exley, the Rialto Apartments and the St. Helens Apartments as transitional, low-income housing.

## Biographies

### *Thomas Theodore Hosmer*<sup>32</sup>

Theodore Hosmer was born in Ohio in 1843. His father, an early Ohio settler was engaged in a successful wholesale grocery business. At eighteen Hosmer enlisted in the 145<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry in the last year of the Civil War. Following the war, he worked for two years in St. Louis. In 1869, he joined his brother-in-law at San Francisco in the construction department of the Central Pacific Railroad, the first U.S. transcontinental railroad, in its final years.

In 1870, he returned to his hometown, Sandusky, and married Louise E. Townsend. Earlier Ms. Townsend's sister, Susan, had married Charles B. Wright, who was then president of the NPRR. Because of his family connection and railroad experience, Hosmer soon found himself working for the NPRR, specifically serving as secretary to the commission appointed to select the western terminus of the line. By the summer of 1873, he and his wife were in Tacoma.

In July, 1873, the commission selected Tacoma for the terminus and the NPRR board confirmed that decision in September. Hosmer was designated the NPRR's "Special Agent" in charge of the proposed town site, New Tacoma. He immediately set about clearing the site, laying out streets, and getting property ready for sale. In 1877, he was appointed General Manager of the Tacoma Land Company.

In 1880, he founded and was first president of the board of trustees for the new city when it applied to the state for a city charter. In 1882, he was unanimously selected as New Tacoma's first mayor. Due to his wife's illness, he and his family returned to Philadelphia that same year. He would return briefly in

<sup>29</sup> *Tacoma News Tribune*, 08/05/1956, pg. A12, "Time beclouds origin of doomed apartment."

<sup>30</sup> *Tacoma News Tribune*, 11/09/1980, pg. F13, "100-year-old Exley gets new lease on life."

<sup>31</sup> Sale effected 01/01/1999 according to records of the Pierce County Assessor-Treasurer.

<sup>32</sup> Largely drawn from Edward M. Fuller, "Biographical sketch of Theodore Hosmer," *The Washington Historian*. II (October, 1900), pg. 5-11.

1883 to celebrate the completion of the railroad. Following his wife's death in 1885, Hosmer would return to Tacoma.

From 1873 until his death in 1900, Hosmer would play a central role in the creation of early Tacoma. He was selected as president of the Tacoma Light & Water (later Tacoma Gas & Electric Company) in 1886, a position he would hold until his death. He was director of the Pacific National Bank (Luzon bldg., demolished 2009) and president of the Wilkeson Coal & Coke Company. He was instrumental in getting the NRR to build The Tacoma Hotel (1884) and to donate land for a city hall. He was a vestryman of St. Luke's Episcopal Church (3601 Gove St.) and was instrumental in building the church. He was a trustee of Annie Wright School and for years was its treasurer. He was a founder of the Union Club (539 Broadway), one of the incorporators of Puget Sound University, charter member of the Washington State Historical Society, and a founder of the Tacoma Yacht Club. Finally, he was the founder and president of the Tacoma Opera House Company and built the magnificent Tacoma Theater (902 Broadway, demolished by fire 1963).

Hosmer died in 1900 following a stroke. He is buried with his wife in their hometown of Sandusky, OH.

### ***Peter Dewar Forbes***

Forbes had moved to Seattle in 1873 from Minneapolis, MN, where he had become a well-known architect and builder. In April of that year, he accepted the position of Superintendent of Depot and Bridge Construction for the NRR. In this capacity he was responsible for all depots, roundhouses, and other NRR buildings from Pend d'Oreille to Tacoma. He built the Tacoma Land Company building (902 Broadway) in 1874 and likely the Hosmer House (750 Saint Helens) across S. Ninth Street.<sup>33</sup> He would later own the steamer Isabel and have an interest in the New Tacoma Sawmill. In 1885 he returned to NRR as Superintendent of Depot and Bridge Construction from Hauser City to Coeur d'Alene. Later he was successful in real estate in Tacoma.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Carl Augustus Darmer***

Born in Prussia in 1858, he received traditional architectural training there as well as apprenticed in the building trades. He practiced his trade in Germany for several years and then worked in Britain, Africa and Australia before coming to San Francisco in 1882. He settled in Tacoma in 1884 and entered into a partnership with another noted early architect, William Farrell. Darmer was responsible for designing a number of prominent buildings and houses in the city, including several hotels, the first Chamber of Commerce Building, the German Lutheran Church on South I Street, First Presbyterian (when it was located at South G and 10th Streets), the Unitarian Church on South Tacoma Avenue, the 1893 Synagogue for Beth Israel, the Point Defiance Park Superintendent's House and several early school buildings. By the mid-twentieth century, newer construction had replaced much of Darmer's work.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Frederick Heath and George Gove***

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<sup>33</sup> Tacoma Daily Ledger, 09/19/1888, pg. 5, "An old landmark going."

<sup>34</sup> Dennis On. "Biography of Peter Dewar Forbes" 2013. Retrieved December 29, 2015 from <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/washington/biography-of-peter-dewar-forbes>.

<sup>35</sup> Dennis P. Anderson, "Carl August Darmer: Architect for the City of Destiny," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* Vol. 71, No. 1 (Jan., 1980), pp. 24-30.

Frederick Heath was born in La Crosse, WI, in 1861 and received most of his architectural training with the firm of Warren H. Hayes in Minneapolis, MI. Heath arrived in Tacoma in 1893 and a few years later joined the firm of Ambrose Russell and A. Spalding. By 1906, Heath had his own firm, and by 1908, architect George Gove had joined him. Born in 1870 in Minnesota, Gove was educated abroad, primarily in Paris. He followed his brother to Tacoma in 1908. The firm of Heath and Gove and later Heath, Gove & Bell would make a lasting contribution to Tacoma as well as the Northwest generally. They were responsible for many Tacoma landmarks including Lincoln High School, St. Patrick's Church, First Church of Christ Scientist, Pythian Temple, National Realty Building, Paradise Inn, First Lutheran, and many residences.<sup>36</sup>

### ***August Gene Grulich***

Gene Grulich earned his Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Texas, a Master of Architecture from the University of Oregon and completed Advanced Studies at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. Mr. Grulich has been a well-known architect in Washington for four decades, successfully managing the preservation of historic structures in the Puget Sound region including The Granary at Fort Nisqually in Tacoma; West Point Light Station in Seattle; and Alexander's Castle at Fort Worden in Port Townsend. His national accolades include numerous projects on The National Register of Historic Places including Fort Point U.S. Coast Guard Station, Presidio in San Francisco, California. His historic preservation work has featured iconic Tacoma landmarks including Lincoln High School, Pantages Theater, Annobee Apartments, Bowes Building, and the City of Tacoma's Municipal Complex.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Alex Van Putten, "Frederick H. Heath," 2013. Retrieved January 7, 2016 from <http://www.historictacoma.org/ht/frederick-h-heath>.

<sup>37</sup> Gene Grulich, personal communication, 01/15/2016.

## Appendix IV: Figures

- Fig. 1. Front south façade, view from South Ninth Street.
- Fig. 2. Front south façade. Cornice and window detail
- Fig. 3. East side façade. Aerial view.
- Fig. 4. North rear façade.
- Fig. 5. Hosmer House facing St. Helens, 1888 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
- Fig. 6. Hosmer House facing St. Helens, 1892 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
- Fig. 7. Tacoma Land Co. Bldg. and Hosmer House, 1884, Tacoma, WT.
- Fig. 8. Hosmer House facing South Ninth, 1912, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
- Fig. 9. Pacific Avenue, c. 1873.
- Fig. 10. 1881 view of Tacoma, Hosmer House facing St. Helens.
- Fig. 11. Sketch of Hosmer House, *West Coast Magazine*, Jan. 1883
- Fig. 12. Hosmer House, facing St. Helens. Photo taken c. 1890
- Fig. 13. Hosmer House, now the Exley Apartments, on S. 9<sup>th</sup> St., 1925
- Fig. 14. "Time beclouds origin of doomed apartment," *Tacoma News Tribune*, 08/05/1956
- Fig. 15. "100-year-old Exley gets new lease on life," *Tacoma News Tribune*, 11/09/1980
- Fig. 16. "309 Ninth Street South," in J. Kipp & P. Olson, *Tacoma Rediviva*, 1985
- Fig. 17. The NPRR/Tacoma Land Office, 902 Broadway, 1875
- Fig. 18. Louise & Theodore Hosmer
- Fig. 19. Judith Kipp, "A City Founding Father", *Tacoma News Tribune*
- Fig. 20. Hosmer's 1890 House, 610 Broadway
- Fig. 21. Hosmer family plot, Oakland Cemetery, Sandusky, OH.



Fig. 1. Front south façade, view from South Ninth Street. 2011. Source: Bouwer



Fig. 2. Front south façade. Cornice and window detail. 2016. Source: Erikson



Fig. 3. East side façade. Aerial view. 2015. Source: Google Maps.  
Note: The same fenestration is seen in 1925 picture (Fig. 13) below.



Fig. 4. North rear façade. 2015. Source: McKnight

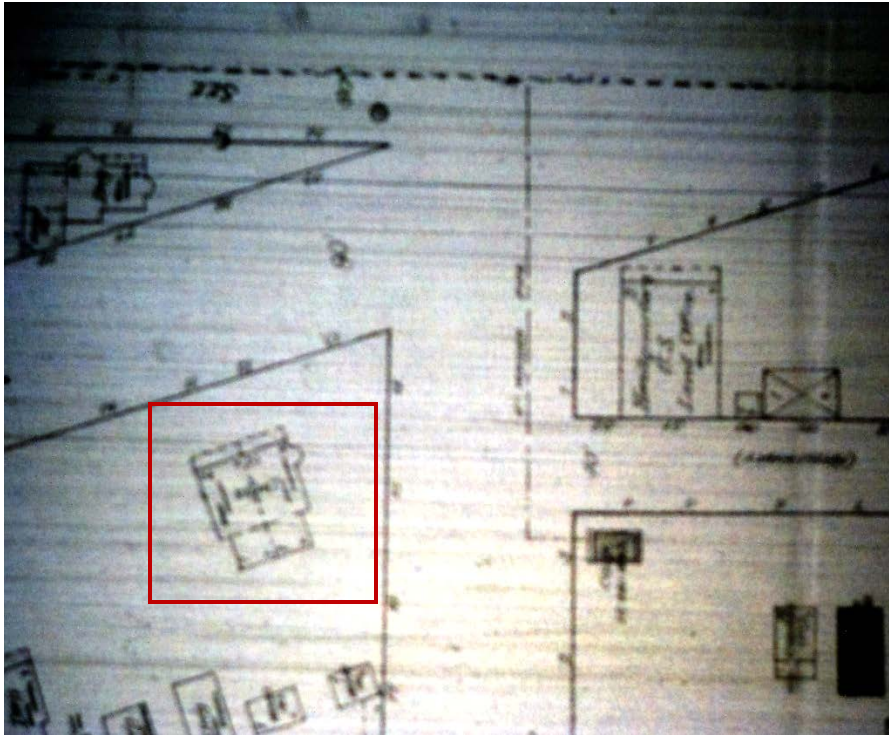


Fig. 5. Hosmer House (in red) facing St. Helens with Tacoma Land Co. office across S. 9<sup>th</sup>.  
1888 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Tacoma, Vol. 1, Sheet 4.

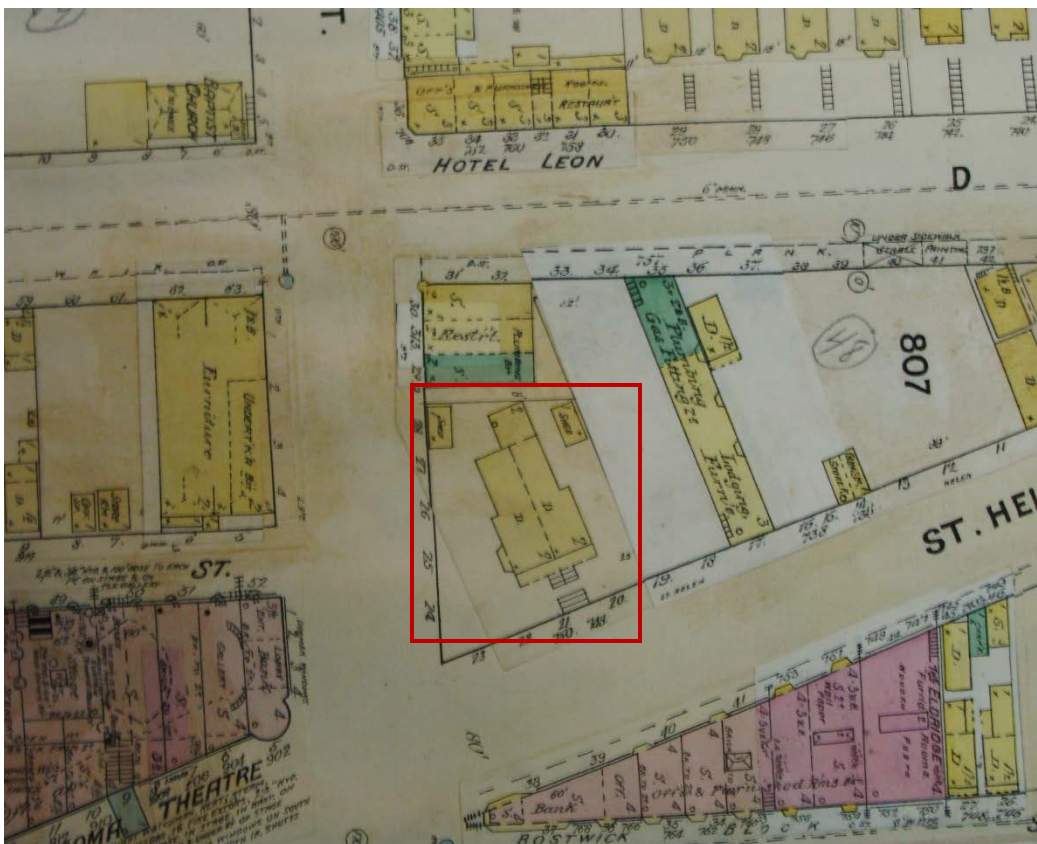


Fig. 6. Hosmer House (in red), facing St. Helens, 1892 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Vol. 1, Sheet 16

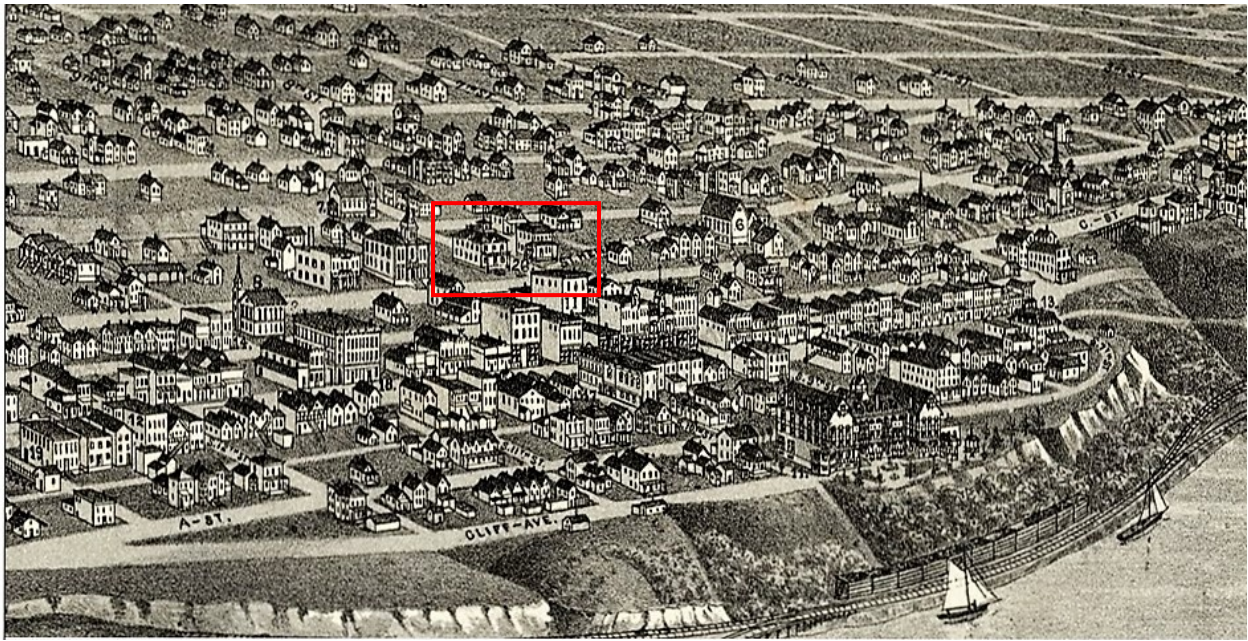


Fig. 7. Tacoma Land Co. Bldg. and Hosmer House (in red), 1884, Tacoma, WT, Beck & Paulie (litho.)

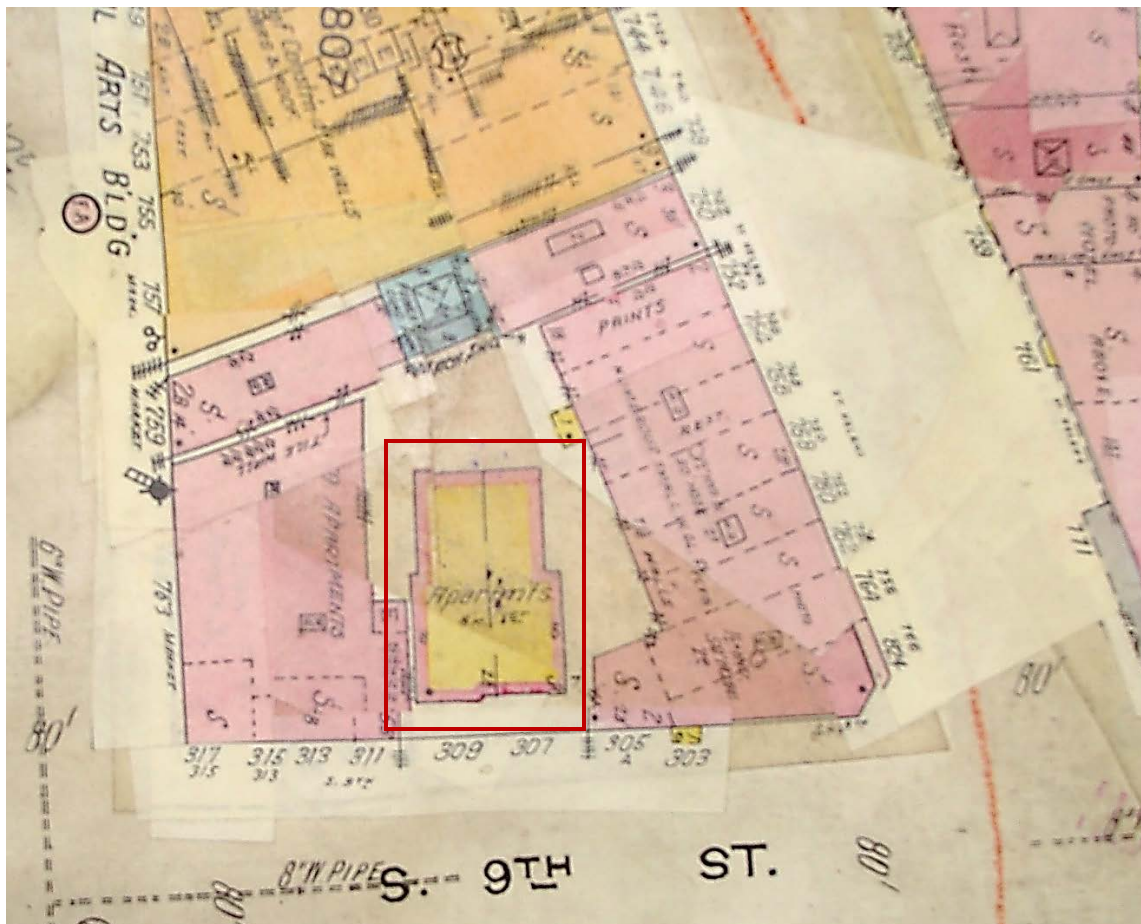


Fig. 8. Hosmer House (in red), facing South Ninth in its current location, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1912 (updated through 1945), Vol. 1, Sheet 103.

**Hosmer House, 309 South Ninth Street, Tacoma**



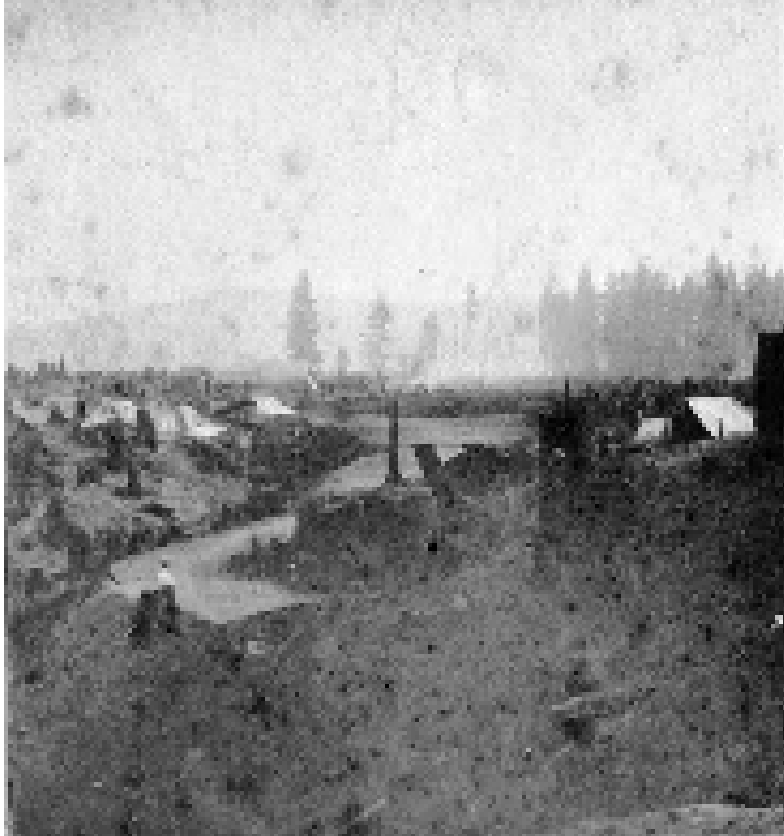


Fig. 9. Pacific Avenue, c. 1873. Man in the foreground is close to future site of the NPRR Building. Tacoma Public Library, Northwest Room Image Archives, Image 39199.

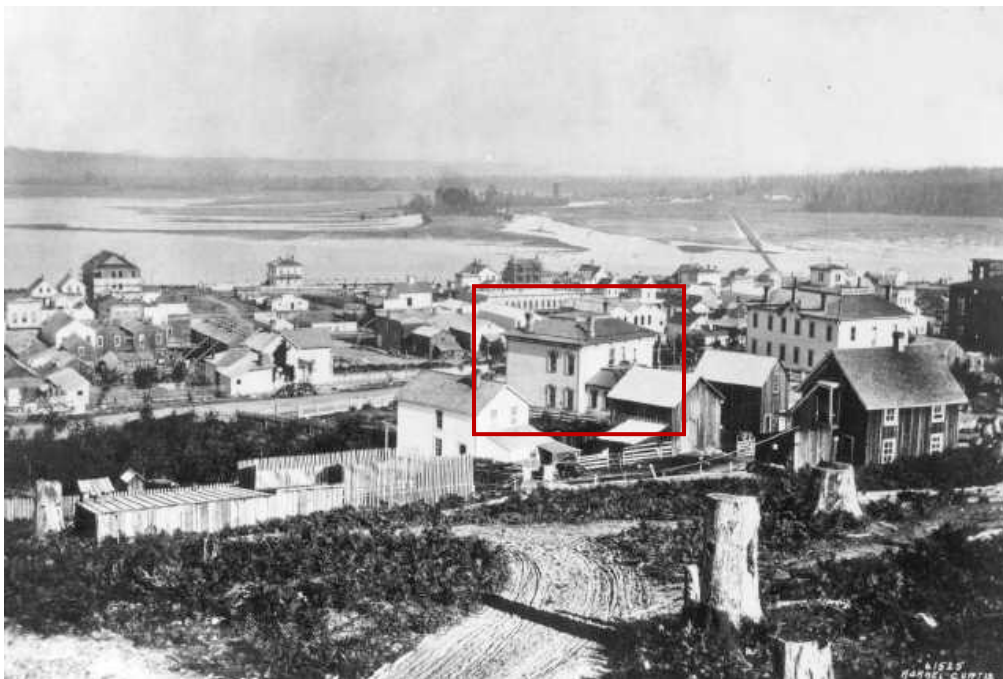


Fig. 10. 1881 view of Tacoma, Hosmer House (in red), facing St. Helens. The NPRR/Tacoma Land Office to right. Tacoma Public Library, Northwest Room Image Archives, Image 32484.

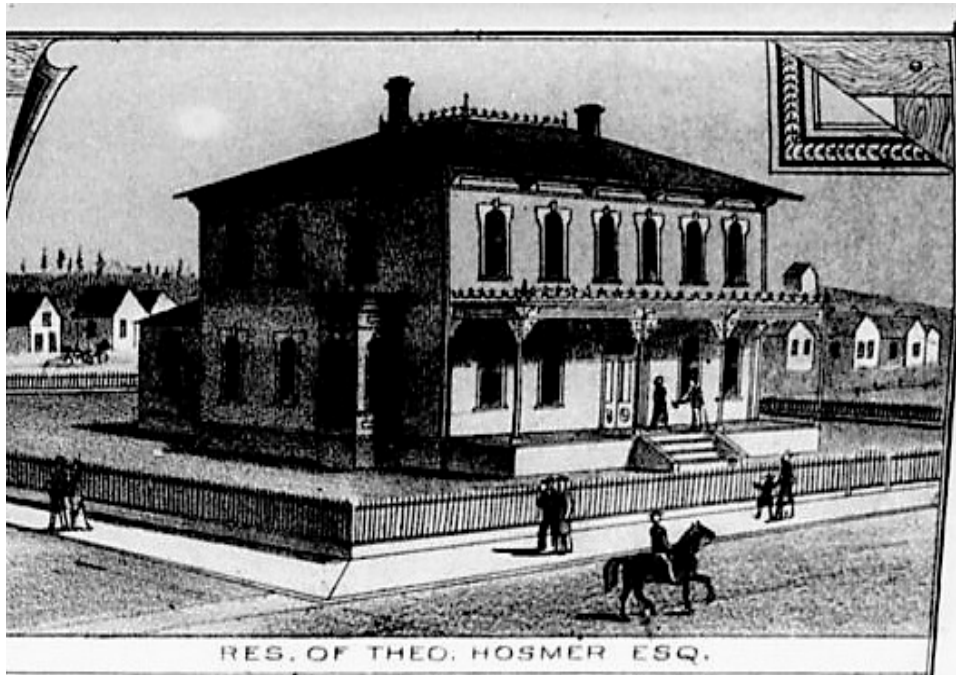


Fig. 11. Sketch of Hosmer House, *West Coast Magazine*, Jan. 1883, pg. 8.  
Note the full porch, double door entry, bay window at left, and trim on porch and main roof.

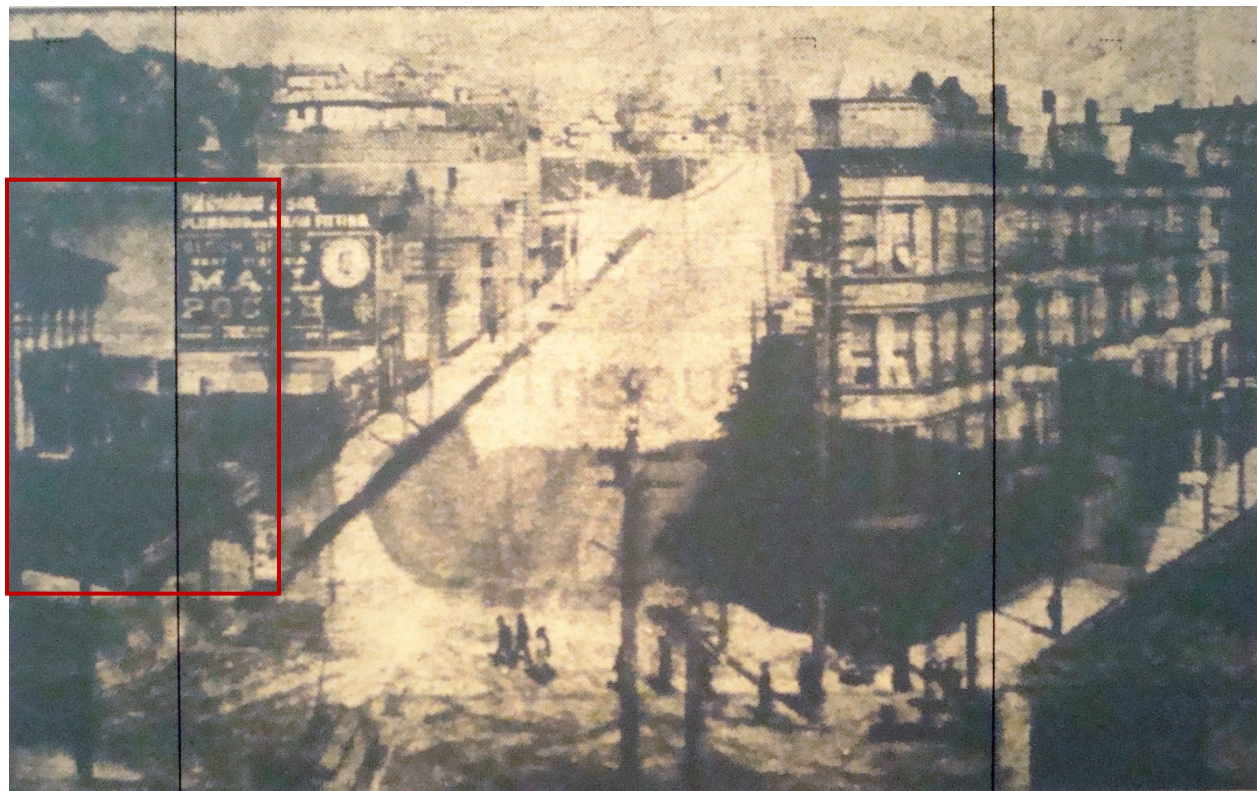


Fig. 12. Hosmer House (in red), facing St. Helens. Photo taken c. 1890,  
*Tacoma News Tribune*, 03/27/1966, pg. 26.



Fig. 13. Hosmer House, now the Exley Apartments, on S. 9<sup>th</sup> St., 1925  
Tacoma Public Library, Northwest Room Image Archives, Image 37318.



Fig. 14. "Time beclouds origin of doomed apartment," *Tacoma News Tribune*, 08/05/1956, pg. A12.



Fig. 15. "100-year-old Exley gets new lease on life," *Tacoma News Tribune*, 11/09/1980, pg. F13.



Fig. 16. "309 Ninth Street South," in J. Kipp & P. Olson, *Tacoma Rediviva*, 1985, pg. 77.  
Note the small balustrade on portico above the entrance, now removed.



Fig. 17. The NPRR/Tacoma Land Office, 902 Broadway, 1875, Paul D. Forbes, contr. Tacoma Public Library, Northwest Room Buildings Index, BU-10829.



Fig. 18. Louise & Theodore Hosmer. Herbert Hunt, *Tacoma; Its History and its Builders, a Half-Century of Activity*. Vol. 1, opp. Pg. 198.

**Yesteryear**

## A city founding father

Theodore Hosmer, a founding father of Tacoma, was a devoted parent and husband.

As special agent for the Northern Pacific Railroad, Hosmer came to Puget Sound in 1873. He was charged with clearing the land and laying out a town for the railroad's western terminus.

The Hosmers returned in 1877 when the Tacoma Land Co.'s headquarters shifted to Tacoma and he assumed the position of general manager.

The town developed into a city under Hosmer's wise management and distribution of property. As Charles B. Wright's brother-in-law and confidant, he laid the foundation for Wright's many contributions to Tacoma.

Hosmer was revered for his genial and generous nature. In 1882, he was unanimously elected New Tacoma's first mayor. (Later, New Tacoma merged with Old Tacoma to form Tacoma.) He soon relinquished this position to accompany his gravely ill wife, Louise, to Philadelphia.



Photograph courtesy of the Washington State Historical Society

Theodore Hosmer: "He never lost faith in the city that he rescued from the forest and fostered to maturity."

After his wife's death, Hosmer returned to Tacoma with his young son Alexander and labored relentlessly to bring industry and culture to the city. St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Annie Wright Seminary (now the school), Wilkeson Coal and Coke, Tacoma Light and Water, Tacoma Theater, Union Club, Puget Sound University (later College of Puget Sound and now University of Puget Sound), and Washington State Historical Society were products of his many endeavors.

He built two fine residences on Broadway; the first still stands today at 309 S. Ninth St. Hosmer Street is named for him.

Theodore Hosmer died in 1900 at the age of 36 and was buried in his family town of Sandusky, Ohio. Edward N. Fuller wrote of this man, "He never lost faith in the city that he rescued from the forest and fostered to maturity."

Historian Judith Kipp writes this weekly column for the *The News Tribune* in cooperation with the Washington State Historical Society.

Fig. 19. Judith Kipp, "A City Founding Father", *Tacoma News Tribune*



Fig. 20. Hosmer's 1890 House, 610 Broadway, Pickles & Sutton, arch.  
Tacoma Public Library, Northwest Room Buildings Index, Image BU-13177.



Fig. 21. Hosmer family plot, Oakland Cemetery, Sandusky, OH.