

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

WH 917

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name City Hall - Bellingham

Other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

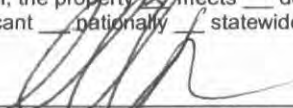
street & number 210 Lottie Street \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city or town Bellingham \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity

State Washington code WA county Whatcom code 073 zip code 98225

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Signature of certifying official/Title

11/4/11  
Date

Washington State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the  
National Register.  
 See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the  
National Register.

removed from the  
National Register.

other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not incl. previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Non-Contributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Functions or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: City Hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: City Hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls STONE: Sandstone, Granite

roof SYNTHETICS: Rubber

other GLASS, METAL: Bronze

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
x C Property 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 lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1939-1950

Significant Dates

1939

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Bindon, Leonard (Architect)

Mullen, S.S. (Builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property.) SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.) SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
#
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record#

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 1.9 Acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM References on a continuation sheet.)

UTM grid with 4 rows and 3 columns of boxes for Zone, Easting, and Northing. Row 1: Zone 10, Easting 5 38 403, Northing 54 00 181. Rows 2-4 are empty.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.) See continuation sheet.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.) See continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

Form fields for name/title (Lynette Felber), organization, date (11-02-10), street & number (507 14th Street), telephone ((360) 738-2346), city or town (Bellingham), state (WA), zip code (98225), and email (lfelber@comcast.net).

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

Form fields for name (City of Bellingham - Finance Dept./ Asset Division), street & number (210 Lottie Street), telephone ((360) 778-8000), city or town (Bellingham), state (WA), and zip code (98225).

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### Narrative Description

Bellingham City Hall (1939) is located at the north end of downtown Bellingham at 210 Lottie Street between Commercial Street and Grand Avenue. A large rectangular two-story building with distinct horizontal massing, it was constructed under the federal programs of the Great Depression. It is an example of the substyle of Art Deco that has come to be known as PWA Moderne, characterized by Classical composition, piers without capitals or bases, vertical fenestration, smooth surfaces and Non-Classical decoration.<sup>1</sup> Its façade is symmetrical, with a centered recessed entrance beneath three vertical strips of glass block. The entrance, opening into the public lobby, is approached through a brick courtyard and a short flight of broad but shallow stairs intersected with two bronze hand rails. Above the entrance are three sculpted figures.

### Setting

The City Hall and its parking occupy an entire block. The building, centered on the lot, is set back from the street, generously surrounded by open space, and flanked by lawn and trees on both east and west sides. To the rear of the building is a parking lot and, below a steep embankment, Whatcom Creek, which forms the northernmost boundary of the site.

### Exterior

The composition of the City Hall building is horizontal and Neo-Classical, but punctuated by distinct vertical elements. The building, with a T-shaped footprint, is comprised of central block and two wings. The building sits above a full basement and was constructed on concrete pilings. The exterior is faced in grayish-tan Wilkeson sandstone laid in a common bond with alternating bands of large and small blocks. The sandstone cladding terminates in a base course of reddish marbled granite. To each side of the entrance in the extruded sides, a set of four windows, separated by narrow pilasters to create two-story vertical recesses, forms a major design element of the façade. The window openings have a vertical orientation and are filled with multipane sash divided into a wider center section and narrower side sections by bronze muntins. The bottom center unit of the sash opens as an

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<sup>1</sup> Style defined in Sally B. Woodbridge and Roger Montgomery, *A Guide to Architecture in Washington State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980), 448.

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awning. The first and second-story windows are separated by decorative bronze spandrels with a fleur-de-lis emblem at the center, forming a strong tonal contrast to the light sandstone cladding. A narrow vertical set of similar windows and spandrels marks the corners of the building. The horizontality of the design is also weighted down by thick pilasters that approximate the form of pylons at the corners of the building. The roof is flat and covered in rubber membrane. A simple parapet rises over the entrance.

### Main Entry

The most distinctive characteristic of the building is its dramatic entrance, comprised of three recessed vertical bands of glass block, framed by the slight extrusion of the two sides. The entrance is a double-leaf door of dark bronze embellished with vertical metal door pulls in an Art-Deco style (historic photos reveal that originally the building had three front entry doors, one beneath each recessed vertical band). The lower recesses for the two side doors have been filled in with glass block and below it are wide sills clad in the same reddish marbled granite used in the base course. Above the centered door and the infilled side doors is a course of black granite.

Metal letters in a Moderne san-serif style over the entry identify the building simply as "City Hall." Three Egyptian-inflected figures, designed by French-born Seattle sculptor Dudley Pratt (1897-1975), are installed over the vertical panels. The exterior of the façade features other Art-Deco elements, including the vertical panels of glass block and a pair of large copper-framed lanterns with etched glass on the sides of the entrance stairs. Each lantern is displayed on a pedestal comprised of a lower block of the same polished red-grey granite used for the building's base course and an upper block of fluted concrete.

On the identical side elevations (east and west), the corners of the building are marked with wide extruded pilasters, giving the building weight and symmetry. Six evenly-spaced recessed vertical bands of windows suggest classical piers through a planar effect. The side elevations also feature the same narrow vertical windows with spandrels used in the corners of the façade. On the east rear of the buildings, copper-framed lanterns on decorative concrete pedestals are displayed on either side of the driveway leading down to the basement-level garage, originally used by the police department.

### Rear Wing

The rear wing is part of the original construction. It was built to house the jail and police department, but has now been converted into office space. On each side (east and west), an open rear porch is reached by a flight of stairs. The west entrance also includes a gently sloping concrete walkway that functions as a heated wheelchair ramp, well integrated into the exterior design. The rear interior of each wing is entered through double-leaf oak doors. The open porch area has rounded columns supporting the roof overhang, and the floor of the porch is tiled with red 4" square ceramic tiles. The windows on the first story of

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the rear projection are fixed metal multipanes; they are replacements but seem to have been fabricated to emulate the original windows. The second-story windows are also replacements. A circa 1940s-50s photograph shows the police department and barred second-story windows: the original basement jail had been relocated upstairs, and the second story of the projection housed six jail cells and a day room for prisoners. Originally, the back projection was partially clad in sandstone, but now it appears to be covered with Dryvit or EIFS (Exterior Insulation and Finishing System).<sup>2</sup> A driveway to the basement level is entered on the east rear of the building; it is used to access garages as well as a loading and service area.

### First Floor Interior

The City Hall today contains a variety of city governmental offices including the mayor's office, city attorney, permit center, city engineering, planning and public works, and parks and recreation, among others. It also contains council chambers and a large public lobby. The lobby is entered directly thorough the double-leaf doors of the front entrance: it is two stories high and awash with the natural light streaming through the glass block at its entrance. The most significant public places, the lobby and council chambers, are at the center of the building; the offices are located to the sides. The office areas have been reconfigured from the original open plan with the loss of most of the historic fabric and finishes. The wide open square entrances at the east and west ends of the lobby mark the transition between the two-story lobby and the one-story office space. Above each side entry hangs a relief panel in a contemporary Northwest design: one panel depicts a deer amid foliage, the other features a puma (mountain lion). This relief dates to the late 1970s. On the staircase wall are two dedication plaques: the first identifies the building as a FWA and PWA project under President Roosevelt in 1939; the second names the mayor, city council, and architect involved in the rehabilitation and rededication completed in 1979.

The walls above and surrounding the glass block inside the lobby are clad in black granite. At the center of the lobby is a dramatic double staircase with bronze rails above etched glass. The stair rails terminate in a decorative swirl and sit atop round cylinder-

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<sup>2</sup> Myron Carlson, Facilities Manager, interview and tour, February 2, 2010.

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shaped pedestals made of Minnesota marble. Below the landing, the wide center stairs of staggered width have rounded treads; they are made of a buff-colored terrazzo. A checkerboard mosaic of squares in quarter-sawn oak and gum wood forms a decorative backdrop to the staircase. The terrazzo floor has an intricate geometric design: squares with intersecting strips of green and gold are interspersed with solid buff squares. The lobby's bronze radiator grills on the front inner wall contribute to the characteristic Art-Deco motifs used elsewhere.

### Second Floor Interior

The second floor contains a mezzanine hallway west of the staircase, behind the wood paneled backdrop. The council chambers are entered through a double door on this mezzanine. The wall with the door to the chambers is paneled with wood squares similar to the mosaic used on the lower level. On the paneled wall are four brass sconces in an Art-Deco design that project their light upward. The chamber doors each have three inset wood panels and heavy brass knobs. The ceiling lights, visible from the lobby below, continue the Art-Deco motif with round pendent fixtures covered with decorative brass grills; a second set of round recessed lights have an Asian-inflected wood decoration.

The council chambers themselves are paneled with a highly-grained wood wainscoting that resembles that used on the mezzanine and the backdrop to the staircase. The chambers are lighted with six bronze-grilled light ceiling fixtures, variants of the Art-Deco fixtures in the lobby. The chambers were extensively reconfigured during the 1970s, and little of the original fabric remains except for some of the paneling and light fixtures.

### Alterations

The two major rehabilitations of the Bellingham City Hall in the 1970s were necessitated because of major settling of the building due to its siting over a high water table and landfill. The work in 1973 focused on the foundation and drainage. To even out the sinking portions of the foundation, a thick layer of gravel slurry was used beneath the southwestern section of the building. The rehabilitation between 1977 and 1979 was financed by the Local Public Works Capital Investment Program passed by Congress in August 1977. At this time, exterior work treated the fragile Wilkeson sandstone, which had begun flaking; it was sanded and sealed for waterproofing. On the interior, work space was reconfigured, entailing the loss of the original layout and fabric for the secondary spaces of the building. The lobby was left intact, but the side wings on both floors were converted from a relatively open floor plan into smaller offices. The council chambers were also altered: walls were removed -- as well as one of the original side balconies -- in order to provide better visual contact between the public audience and the city council. An elevator was relocated to the northwest portion of the building. Other changes included a new ventilation system including air conditioning was installed; the electrical and plumbing systems were updated. Insulation was added to the roof and energy saving lighting was

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installed. At this time the ADA ramp was added to the west of the rear wing; it was heated to avoid the necessity of snow and ice removal.<sup>3</sup>

As part of the 1978-79 rehabilitation, 1% of the grant was set aside for civic improvement and the front courtyard and walkway were reconfigured to display bronze in-ground plaques created by sculptor Robert Westcott. The new plaques and six flag poles paid tribute the armed services and those serving the country in peace work.<sup>4</sup> A path down to Whatcom Creek at the rear of the parking lot was also installed and is shown in the plans from this rehabilitation. In 1993, the police department was relocated to its own building to the west, and the City Hall's jail cells were removed. The remnants of an insulated police shooting gallery, however, still remain in the basement today. The most recent work on the building was a seismic upgrade completed in 2008, replacing the glass block in the entrance with shatterproof glass block, and the installation of insulation beneath the synthetic rubber roof (which was reused), in 2010.

### Integrity

Despite these changes the exterior of the main volume and the façade of the City Hall have retained a high level of integrity. The rear wing has a lower level of integrity resulting from alterations made during the rehabilitations in the 1970s, and again when the jail cells were removed and the police department vacated the building in 1993. The interior's public spaces – the lobby, staircase, and mezzanine – retain a high level of integrity. The council chambers retain a medium level of integrity with some original fabric intact. To the sides of the lobby, the office space reveals the most significant loss of integrity.

While the secondary spaces of building have been altered to accommodate the modern needs of employees, the building still conveys a strong sense of stateliness and its original function. Although the sparse original landscaping was altered by the planting of deciduous trees to the sides of the building during the 1979 rehabilitation, the setting and location retain the feeling and association of the original city beautiful concept due to the generous setting of the building on a large city block.

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<sup>3</sup> "After 35 Years, City Hall Crumbling," *Bellingham Herald*, November 30, 1973; "City Hall May be Slowly Sinking," *Bellingham Herald*, June 20, 1986; and "History of City Hall," *Open House and Veterans Memorial Dedication*, Program, June 14, 1979.

<sup>4</sup> "Open House Showcases City Artwork," *Bellingham Herald*, June 11, 1979.

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### **Narrative Statement of Significance:**

The Bellingham City Hall, constructed in 1939, is historically significant under Criterion "A" for its direct association with New Deal Federal relief programs and as an example of the types of programs undertaken in local communities as part of these relief efforts. The city hall building is also important for its direct connection to the beginning of a planned Civic Center, directly influenced by the City Beautiful movement. The building also meets National Register Criterion "C" as a building that embodies the distinctive characteristics of its type and period of construction, and as a work of noted architect Leonard Bindon. The building serves as a significant example of the Classical Moderne style of civic construction built during the Great Depression and developed under the Public Works Administration (PWA).

The period of significance begins with the construction of the Bellingham City Hall in 1939; it encompasses the remaining duration of the Great Depression's federal relief programs under which it was built; and ends in 1950 with the construction of two additional buildings (the library and county courthouse) which contributed to a new civic center adjacent to the City Hall and a change in the interior programming of the nominated building. The City Hall was the inaugural building for a new Bellingham Civic Center envisioned by city leaders back in the 1920s. With the completion of this Civic Center, public services were assigned to more specialized buildings, and the jail was moved from the City Hall to its current location in the Courthouse.

### **Community History: The City of Bellingham**

The City of Bellingham is located in Whatcom County on the northern portion of Washington's Puget Sound. The area was settled under the Oregon Land Bill, signed by President Fillmore in 1850, and individual land claims formed the basis for later settlements, plats, and additions.

The early history of Bellingham is one of shifting names and boundaries. Four original settlement towns -- Whatcom, Sehome, Bellingham, and Fairhaven -- were located in close proximity within a two and one-half mile expanse surrounding the bay (water was the primary source of transportation before the forests were logged and the roads were built). The towns shared utilities and wanted to consolidate to avoid the expense of duplicating services and governments. Although consolidation was discussed as early as 1858, the rivalries among the four towns and the property interests of the various claimholders impeded the process. The expectation that one of the four boom towns would become the location for the terminus of the Portland-Puget Sound Railway fuelled land speculation and led each town to promote itself to attract residents and investors. This speculation ended when Tacoma (120 miles south) was selected as the RR terminus, and its line was completed in 1883.

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The nominated building is sited on land that was part of the first settlement, named "Whatcom" by pioneers Henry Roeder and Russell Peabody in 1852, and within the boundaries of Peabody's land grant. Whatcom merged with the community of Sehome in 1891, and the two subsequently became "Whatcom" through an act by the State Legislature in 1901. The two other settlement cities finally consolidated into one large city, named "Bellingham", in 1903. When a new city charter was adopted in January of 1904, a census found the total population of the new consolidated city was 22,632.<sup>1</sup> The population increased only gradually until the 1970s.

The 1939 City Hall building was the first city hall constructed for the post-consolidated City of Bellingham. Previously, the city hall was housed in the Whatcom City Hall building, a grand three-story brick edifice constructed in 1893. However, by the mid-to-late 1920s the building had become overcrowded and began to be viewed as outmoded.<sup>2</sup>

Occupying a full block of 1.91 acres between Grand Avenue and Commercial Street south of Whatcom Creek, the nominated building was under construction for a little over a one year. Ground was broken for the project in October 1938, and the dedication was held on January 4, 1940. The construction and furnishing of the building were completed through seven contracts including S.S. Mullen, general contractor; Frank M. Haskell, mechanical; Howard Mills, electrical, lighting fixtures, and radio (three contracts); and the Union Printing Company and Anstett Printing Company, equipment (two contracts).<sup>3</sup>

When the City held the groundbreaking ceremony for the project in October of 1938, speakers hailed the beginning of a "new era in city progress" and a new architecture replacing the 1882-83 building, "an old landmark . . . from the city center of pioneer days." The New Whatcom City Hall (currently a museum) was nearly razed because the city did not want the expense of maintaining it; city leaders even discussed razing it as a potential WPA project.

The City Hall was planned as the original building in Bellingham's newly proposed Civic Center, which exemplified the late influence of the City Beautiful movement. The chairman

<sup>1</sup> Edson, *The Fourth Corner*, 245-47 and 276; Lottie Roeder Roth, ed., *History of Whatcom County*, 2 vols. (Chicago, Seattle: Pioneer Historical Publication Co., 1926): 1: 599.

<sup>2</sup> Roth, *History of Whatcom County*, 1: 333 and 495; "New Whatcom City Council Minutes," January 15, 1892, quoted in William L. Lebovich, *America's City Halls* (Washington, D.C. : Preservation Press, c.1984), 95; and Dorothy Koert and Galen Biery, *Looking Back: Memories of Whatcom County/Bellingham* (republished, updated and revised by Grandpa's Attic, 2003), 119-21.

<sup>3</sup> "New City Hall to Be Dedicated," *Bellingham Herald*, January 4, 1940.

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of the Planning Commission, S.C. Roland, had "visualized a beautiful civic center with a public library and shaded benches and lawns where the weary may rest."<sup>4</sup> The City Beautiful ideal emphasized planning for improvement and the common good. The 1939 City Hall was the first of a series of civic buildings envisioned in the area just north of Bellingham's downtown. Over a decade later, in 1950 the emerging civic center gained a new public library and, that same year, a new County Courthouse was built one block southwest of the City Hall. Contemporary news accounts suggest that City Beautiful ideas about aesthetic improvement and the good of the community were behind the development of the new Civic Center in Bellingham.<sup>5</sup> In accordance with the aesthetic objectives of the City Beautiful movement, the City Hall's original landscaping included a rose garden to the rear of the building. Each of the three civic buildings constructed between 1939 and 1950 is sited upon an entire city block, creating a light and open feeling in the area. The buildings erected however were not arranged around a central plaza as promoted by the original City Beautiful ethos, but because they were adjacent, they achieved a pragmatic centralization of essential public services.

### PWA and FWA

The Bellingham City Hall was also built as part of the New Deal public works program; specifically the Public Works Administration (PWA) and Federal Works Agency (FWA) programs. The impetus for federal aid was generated locally by cities unable to employ their citizens through the private sector during the Great Depression. To meet this need, the PWA was created in 1933 as part of the National Recovery Act, Title II, "Public Works and Construction Projects." Its major goal was to create jobs for those in the building trades, almost 30% of the nation's jobless.<sup>6</sup>

The better-known WPA was created two years later, in 1935 (the Works Progress Administration was renamed Work *Projects* Administration in 1939). Mayors asked the federal government to create jobs, and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt responded by asking Congress early in 1935 to establish a program, a triumph for the nations' mayors,

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<sup>4</sup>"City Hall May Be Razed When It Is Vacated," *Bellingham Herald*, November 17, 1938; "City Progress Praised by Speakers," *Bellingham Herald*, October 28, 1938.

<sup>5</sup> *Bellingham Herald*, January 4, 1940; Joshua R. Vogel, *Report on the City of Bellingham* (City of Bellingham, WA: 1945), 21. Also see William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 1989.

<sup>6</sup> See Richard Guy Wilson, "Introduction to the DaCapo Edition," *Public Buildings: Architecture under the Public Works Administration, 1933-39*, vol. 1, by C.W. Short and R. Stanley Brown (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1939), vii; Lois Craig and the Staff of the Federal Architecture Project, *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in United States Government Building* (MIT Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1972), 343; and U.S. Federal Works Agency, *Final Report on the WPA, 1935-1943* (1947; repr., Westport, CT: The Greenwood Press, 1964), 52.

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who had been unable to procure state funds for their cities. In 1939 the PWA was merged with other programs into the FWA. The FWA was then charged with construction of federal buildings and with the distribution of federal grants to states for highways and community projects. The war efforts definitively ended the federal relief programs, and the FWA was given responsibility to liquidate the WPA in 1943.

The funds provided by the WPA and PWA had a major impact on America's cities. Ultimately, these programs not only put the unemployed to work, but also helped rejuvenate city centers. Federal funding supported new public buildings, transportation, dams, and water treatment facilities.<sup>7</sup> Reportedly 65% of United States' current courthouses and city halls were funded by the PWA & FWA.<sup>8</sup>

In total, Washington State received \$2.2 billion in federal relief during the Great Depression. In 1933 approximately one-third of the state's workers were unemployed. As a result of the federal funding, the 1930s became a significant decade in the building and modernization of the state. Some of the funds were granted to large public works projects essential to today's state infrastructure such as Grand Coulee Dam and the Lake Washington Floating Bridge. Because of the New Deal projects, Washington was transformed from a state relying on depleted natural resources (lumber, fishing, and coal) to a new industrial economy.<sup>9</sup>

During the Great Depression, Washington's few large cities fared better than the many small cities and rural areas. Bellingham, with a population of approximately 25,000 in the early 1930s, a little more than at the time of the consolidation in 1903, had a particularly difficult time because of its geographical isolation. Contributing to the dire local unemployment, the area had been largely reliant on resource exploitation, an economy based on natural resources such as lumber, coal mining, and fishing. These resources had been taken for quick gain, and by the time of the Great Depression they had been significantly depleted.<sup>10</sup>

The City's sources of income at this time were primarily limited to licenses, fees, and franchises for public utilities and the railroad. The cost of living in this part of Washington

<sup>7</sup> Mark Gelfand, *A Nation of Cities: The Federal Government and Urban America, 1933-1965* (New York: Oxford University Press), 43-44 and 149; and U.S. Federal Works Agency, *Final Report*, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Wilson, "Introduction," viii, and Craig, *The Federal Presence*, 346.

<sup>9</sup> Kahn, "Great Depression's Stimulus Money"; James Gregory, Professor, University of Washington, quoted in "UW Project Examines State during Depression," *The Seattle Times*, February 20, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Washington Writers' Project, *Washington, A Guide to the Evergreen State* (Portland, Oregon: Binford and Mort, 1941), 181.

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had been reduced by 30%, diminishing revenues to the city. In 1932 the Bellingham City Council reduced all employee salaries. To ensure that any jobs coming in would go to local workers, the City Council, Mayor, and Chamber of Commerce "formed a delegation and approached contractors" to hire Bellingham's unemployed.<sup>11</sup>

The City Hall was one of several local projects funded by the various New Deal agencies in Bellingham. Between 1935 and 1942, Bellingham benefited from approximately forty such projects, including street improvements; water shed work; new and improved fish hatcheries; park, playground, and school grounds work; airport runway improvements; and school construction and repairs. Projects included converting the Fairhaven Hotel into a community center/welfare agency, the installation of tennis and shuffle board courts at Whatcom Falls Park, the construction of sidewalks for West Holly Street, extending the city water system along U.S. Highway 99 and State Highway 1, and constructed a breakwater at Squalicum Creek.<sup>12</sup>

A majority of the Federally-sponsored construction, improvement and repair projects centred around projects for the Bellingham School district. These included the construction of Bellingham High School (1936-38), and alterations to Fairhaven Junior High School, Whatcom Junior High School (1903, 1916), Roeder School, and Columbia School. In total, all these school projects combined for an expenditure of \$1,376,251.44. Approximately half of the overall costs were from Federal funds. To match the grants, the Bellingham School District sold construction bonds.

Although the 1939 City Hall was one of several local projects to receive federal funding, the City Hall was the only *government* building constructed in Bellingham under these programs. Under the FWA, localities could be granted up to 45% of the cost of projects. For the Bellingham project the Federal Public Works Administration provided a grant of \$188,308 to be matched by the city share (55%) which was funded through a local bond measure (with local payment to begin in 1941).<sup>13</sup> An article from the September 1939 issue of *Architect & Builder* magazine noted that Bellingham was particularly benefited from financial aid from the Public Works Administration and that the new City Hall would be a worthy civic monument.

<sup>11</sup> Steve Price, "Response of City Agencies," 69-70, in *The Great Depression and its Fifty-Year Shadow*, ed. Phyllis Bultmann (Bellingham, WA: Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, Western Washington University, c.1982), 66-70.

<sup>12</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps (Sanborn Maps), Bellingham, 1904, 1913, 1931; Jeff Jewell, Photo Archivist and Historian, Whatcom Museum of History and Art, e-mail of January 20, 2010; *Bellingham Herald*, January 4, 1940; and Dean Kahn, "Great Depression's Stimulus Money Brought Great Structures to Bellingham," *Bellingham Herald*, May 2, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> "History of City Hall," *Open House and Veterans Memorial Dedication*, Program, June 14, 1979, and "New City Hall to Be Dedicated," *Bellingham Herald*, January 4, 1940.

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The site for the new City Hall site was on low ground, a tidal plain almost entirely covered by the overflow from Whatcom Creek. In anticipation of a new building, in 1936-37, the site was completely filled in as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project, using pavement scraps and building debris. The city, in consultation with the WPA, hired local architect Leonard Bindon to design the new building. Construction was supervised by a succession of four resident engineer inspectors from the PWA: J.C. Stanley, Harry Miller, R.H. Reische, and William H. Wick.

### Architect: Leonard William S. Bindon

Architect Leonard William Somerville Bindon (1899-1980) was born in the United Kingdom. Bindon immigrated to the United States with his family and became a naturalized citizen in 1925 at the age of 26.<sup>14</sup> He attended the University of Washington (1920-24), enrolling first as an English major before changing his major to architecture. Some biographies note that he holds a bachelors degree from Columbia University (1927), but this has not been proven. According to his State Architectural Licensing application (1930), he never formally received a degree from any University. Instead, Bindon gained practical on-the-job experience by working with a variety of architects. From 1925 to 1928 he worked with architect James Gable Rogers and with the firm of Vorhees, Walker, & Smith, both in New York. Then in the late 1920s he returned to the Pacific Northwest working with Seattle architect Robert C. Reamer (1925-26).<sup>15</sup>

For reasons unknown, Bindon left Seattle and in 1934 established his own private practice in Bellingham. Quickly he became one of the most notable architects in the city. His work in Bellingham during this time includes the nominated building, and several large Art Deco/Streamline Moderne/Regency style homes in the Edgemoor neighborhood at the southern end of the city where he lived for a short time.

With the onset of World War II, Bindon left his private practice to serve in the Army (1940-45). While in the military, he attained the rank of Captain, and designed several buildings for the US Army. Among them were several warehouse buildings at the Auburn Army Depot. Upon being discharged, Bindon returned to Seattle to join the architectural firm of Bebb & Jones. When Charles Bebb left the firm in 1947, Bindon became a partner.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Michael Houser, "Bindon, Leonard W.," *WEEA Docomomo: Embracing Northwest Modernism*, [http://www.docomomo-wewa.org/architects\\_detail.php?id=43](http://www.docomomo-wewa.org/architects_detail.php?id=43).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

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During this period, Bindon and his partner, John Paul Jones, focused on educational projects. Known projects include the More Hall Structural Research Lab (1948), an addition to the Henry Suzzallo Library Building (1950) and the Student Union Building (1952) for the University of Washington; the Music Building (1951) and Women's Dormitory at the (1955) at Western Washington University; and Van Asselt School (1950), and Cromwell Park Elementary School (1955) in Seattle. Other projects included the University Congregational Church (1953) in Seattle; and the Pacific Telephone Co. Building (1955) in Tacoma.

Upon Jones' retirement in 1956, John LeBaron Wright joined with Bindon to form the architectural firm of Bindon & Wright. Together, the two partners began to receive many large commissions in which they would execute in the Modern style. Among their first commissions was the glass curtain wall Seattle City Light Building (1957). Their skill in using this new technology led them to partner with the San Francisco office of Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill to design the Norton Building in downtown Seattle. Completed in 1959, the 16-story building is recognized as the city's first modern office tower and won a Seattle Chapter AIA Honor Award in 1960.

Several large projects followed including the downtown branch of the Seattle Public Library (1960); another addition to the Suzzallo Library on the University of Washington Campus (1963); the library at Pacific Lutheran University (1966); and Seattle Fire Station No. 40 (1965).

Throughout the 1960s, several of Bindon & Wright's projects received awards and recognition. These included the Bethlehem Pacific Coast Steel Corporation Office Building (1960)—a Seattle Chapter AIA Honor Award winner, and the Parke-Davis Company Seattle Sales Office Building (1965) for which they received an award of merit from the Seattle Chapter of the AIA. Other notable projects include three buildings for NW Bell Telephone Management System that garnered awards from the Bell System Architectural Review in 1968.

Architect Elton C. Gildow joined the firm of Bindon & Wright as a new partner in the mid-to-late 1960s to form Bindon Wright & Partners. Other partners soon joined the firm, including George Hartman and Clark Teegarden. When Bindon retired early 1970s the firm changed its name to Wright, Gildow, Hartman, Teegarden Architects & Planners (WGHT). Bindon passed away in Seattle in 1980.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Architectural plans for the City Hall construction (1938-39) drawn by Leonard Bindon, and for the rehabilitations in 1973 and 1979, are available in the facilities and engineering offices of the City Hall. Also see "Bindon and Wright," in *Shaping Seattle Architecture: A Historical Guide to the Architects*, ed. Jeffrey Karl Ochsner (Seattle & London: University of Seattle Press, 1994), 338; "Bindon, Leonard," PCAD Database, <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/architect/architects/2384/>; and Wilson, viii and vii.

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### Federally Funded Artwork

Construction of buildings during the New Deal era often incorporated sculpture or murals. Bellingham's City Hall features exterior artwork. The three figures above the entrance were created by Dudley Pratt, a Paris-born Seattle sculptor who taught at the University of Washington. Dudley Pratt was the son of sculptor Bela Pratt. Dudley graduated from Yale University and won the Prix de Rome Award to study in Italy. He also studied in Paris with the sculptor Antoine Bourdelle. The Egyptian-inflected figures Pratt designed for the Bellingham City Hall reflect the exoticism associated with Art Deco ornamentation and the technique for incorporation sculpture into an Art Deco building developed by Bertram Goodhue, wherein "three-dimensional figures were made to spring forth in primeval fashion from the surface and mass of the structure."<sup>18</sup> Symbolically, the sculpture seems to embody the "condition of the cities," a common Depression-era theme. The two outer figures, although rather androgynous in form, are gendered by icons of their vocations (one holds a cross saw, the other a baby). The male figure represents the worker -- the lumberman was a Northwestern icon of the 1930s. The woman holding a baby designates the family. The Janus-like three-headed figure at the center symbolizes local government looking for alliances with the other two figures (industry and family) and forward to social progress.<sup>19</sup>

Pratt taught as an Associate Professor of art at the University of Washington from 1925-45. For the Seattle campus he designed reliefs for the School of Medicine and several grotesques featured on Smith and Miller Halls, as well as the Administration and Mechanical Engineering Buildings. In the 1960s Pratt moved to San Miguel de Allende, Mexico and he passed away there in 1975. The Seattle Art Museum holds some of Pratt's works as part of its permanent collection. It is likely that Pratt's sculptures for Bellingham City Hall received some federal funding along with the building. Art historian Martha Kingsbury notes that little sculpture was produced in the Northwest during the Depression, and most artworks were funded by the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), a Treasury Department effort to secure painting and sculpture for public buildings after 1934.<sup>20</sup>

### Architectural Significance

The 1939 Bellingham City Hall is an excellent example of the PWA Moderne style that emerged for civic construction during the Great Depression. The PWA Moderne style, a sub-

<sup>18</sup> David Gebhard, "The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America," (New York: J. Wiley, 1996), 7.

<sup>19</sup> Jeff Jewell, Historian and Photo Archivist, Whatcom Museum of History and Art, email to Jackie Lynch, Planning Department, City of Bellingham, May 2, 2005

<sup>20</sup> Martha Kingsbury, *Art of the Thirties: The Pacific Northwest* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1972), 19, 20, 22, 10, and 466. Also see Ellis Armstrong, ed., *History of Public Works in the United States, 1776-1976* (Chicago: American Public Works Association, 1976).

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style of the Art Deco style, was influenced by the need to develop an architectural style suitable for the unemployed Depression-era laborers. Buildings funded by the PWA became exemplars of the Art Deco-PWA Moderne style as public buildings replaced commercial construction during the era. The substyle of Art Deco that came to be called PWA Moderne is characterized by a severe style and straight lines enlivened by subtle decorative elements such as glass work, sculpture or wrought iron.<sup>21</sup> The civic style was the product of a variety of influences. In part, it was related to the International Style, adopting its machine age simplicity and severity. Further, it reflects the "new classicism" characterized by the work of post-World War I architects such as Paul Cret and Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue.

Derived from classical precedents, the City Hall in Bellingham draws its decorative elements -- glass block, bronze spandrels, copper-framed lanterns, and three-dimensional sculpture -- from the Art Deco repertoire. Characteristic of the PWA Moderne style, it juxtaposes classical forms with modern decoration.

The building's defining feature is its recessed entry with vertical bands of glass block. It is customary, of course, to embellish and dignify the single entrance to a civic building, but this specific treatment resembles and may have been influenced by the entrance in the main elevation of Cret and Bassette's entry for the 1926 Hartford County Building and Courthouse.<sup>22</sup> The tripartite entrance is also used in Goodhue's National Academy of Sciences Building (1919-24). Finally, the City Hall's entrance may be indebted to a more distant predecessor: churches often use a triple entry to symbolize the trinity. Its use in a government building, however, represents a secular adaptation. The vertical lines of the recessed windows in the Bellingham City Hall suggest the form of columns, paying tribute to the classical heritage, while its stark form, smooth surfaces, and minimal decoration point to the influence of modern architecture.

Bellingham's City Hall is the most intact of the PWA projects in the City. Bellingham High School, designed by Seattle architect Floyd Narramore, was the largest New Deal era project in the city. Completed in 1938 for a cost of over \$900,000 dollars, the poured concrete building structure featured horizontal rows of regularly-placed windows, and sculptural reliefs at the entry. The integrity of the building however has been severely compromised by a \$20 million renovation and rehabilitation in 1999.

Depression architecture for city halls falls into two types, one looking backward to the country's past architectural styles, the other to its modern future. Because its major goal

<sup>21</sup> David Gebhard, "The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America," (New York : J. Wiley, 1996), 4 & 7

<sup>22</sup> For photo and an analysis of Cret's new classicism see Elizabeth Greenwell Grossman, *The Civic Architecture of Paul Cret* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 142 & xvi.

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was to provide local employment, the WPA endorsed the modern trend to a simpler, sleeker architectural style that would be suited to the skills of the available workers.<sup>23</sup> The nominated building clearly falls into the modern category and suggests the strength of government during the 1930s through its solidity, weight, and austere beauty. The FWA also encouraged the use of local materials. The Bellingham City Hall met this objective since it was clad in sandstone from a quarry in Wilkeson, Washington, which supplied stone used in major buildings around the Pacific Northwest, including the state capitol at Olympia.

### Summary of Significance

Bellingham's City Hall is a distinctive, representative example of the PWA Moderne architecture from the New Deal era. The exterior and public spaces have retained excellent integrity, particularly the front and side façades, through sensitive rehabilitation. The building also is a significant and prominent example of the types of projects that were undertaken in local communities as part of Depression Era relief efforts. Today the building still houses the main functions of city government and serves as testament to those who planned and executed the building.

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<sup>23</sup> Lebovich, *America's City Hall*; U.S. Federal Works Agency, *Final Report*, 52; Donald J. Bush, *The Streamlined Decade* (New York: George Braziller, 1975), 133.

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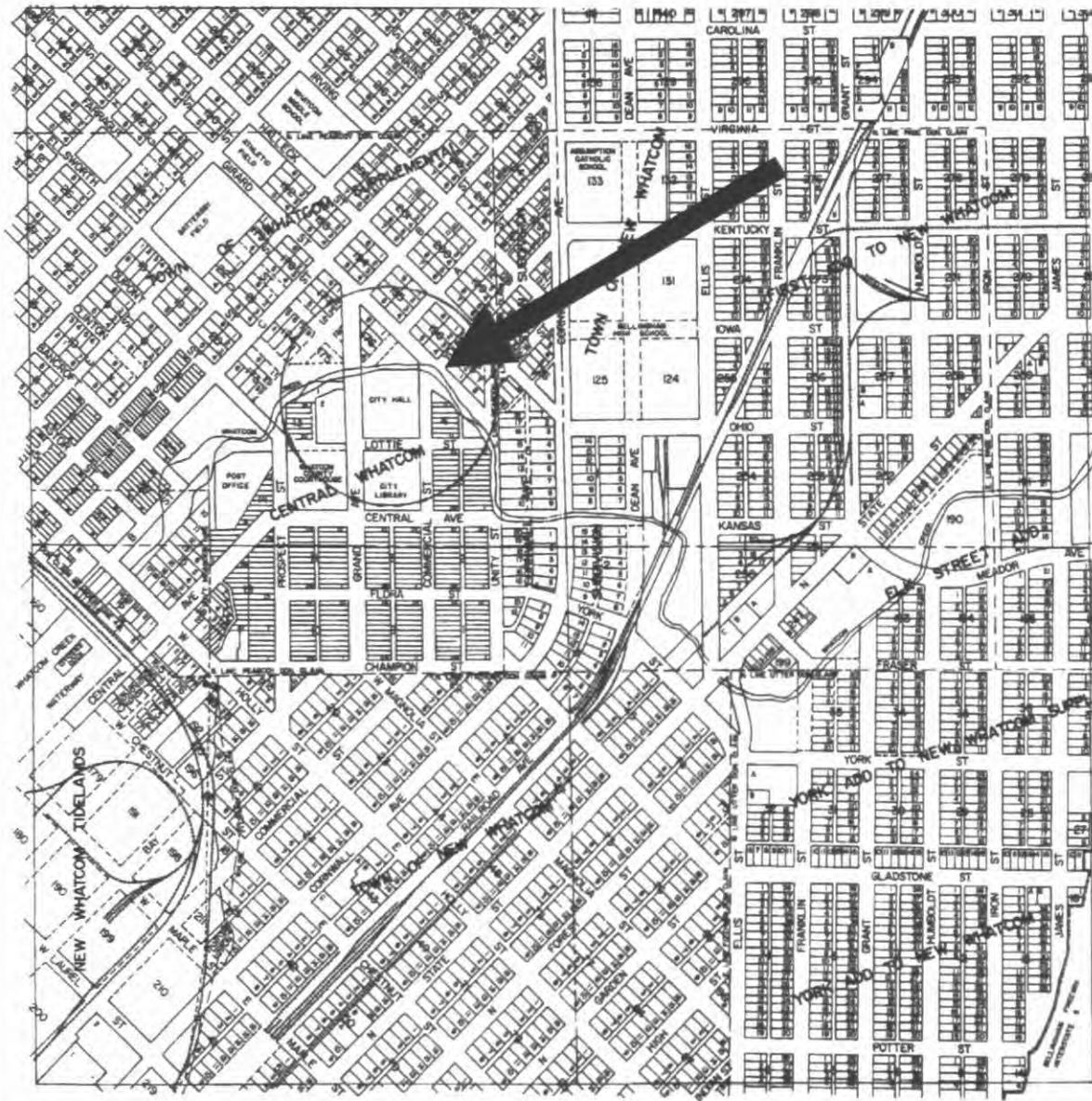
### **Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Bellingham City Hall occupies the entire block at 210 Lottie Street, bounded on the sides by Commercial Street and Grand Avenue. To the rear, the lot is curtailed by Whatcom Creek, steeply banked at the edge of the property. The legal description is Lot B Health Center Short Plat, Lots 7-8, Block 197. It is otherwise known as Parcel No. 74948

### **Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property encompasses the entire urban tax lot that is occupied by the Bellingham City Hall Building.





TOWNSHIP

38

RANGE

3E

SECTION

30

MAP NO.

01

SCALE

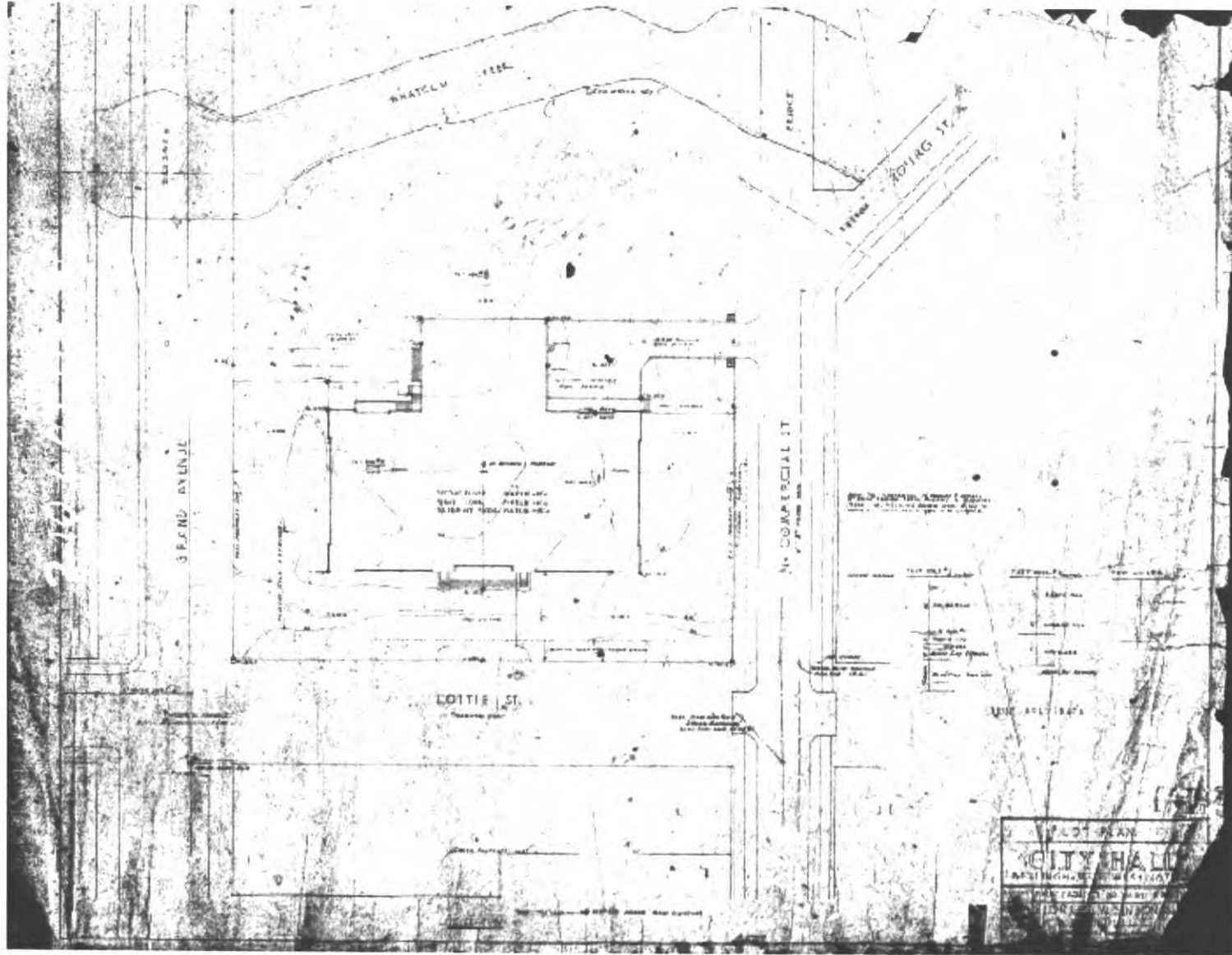
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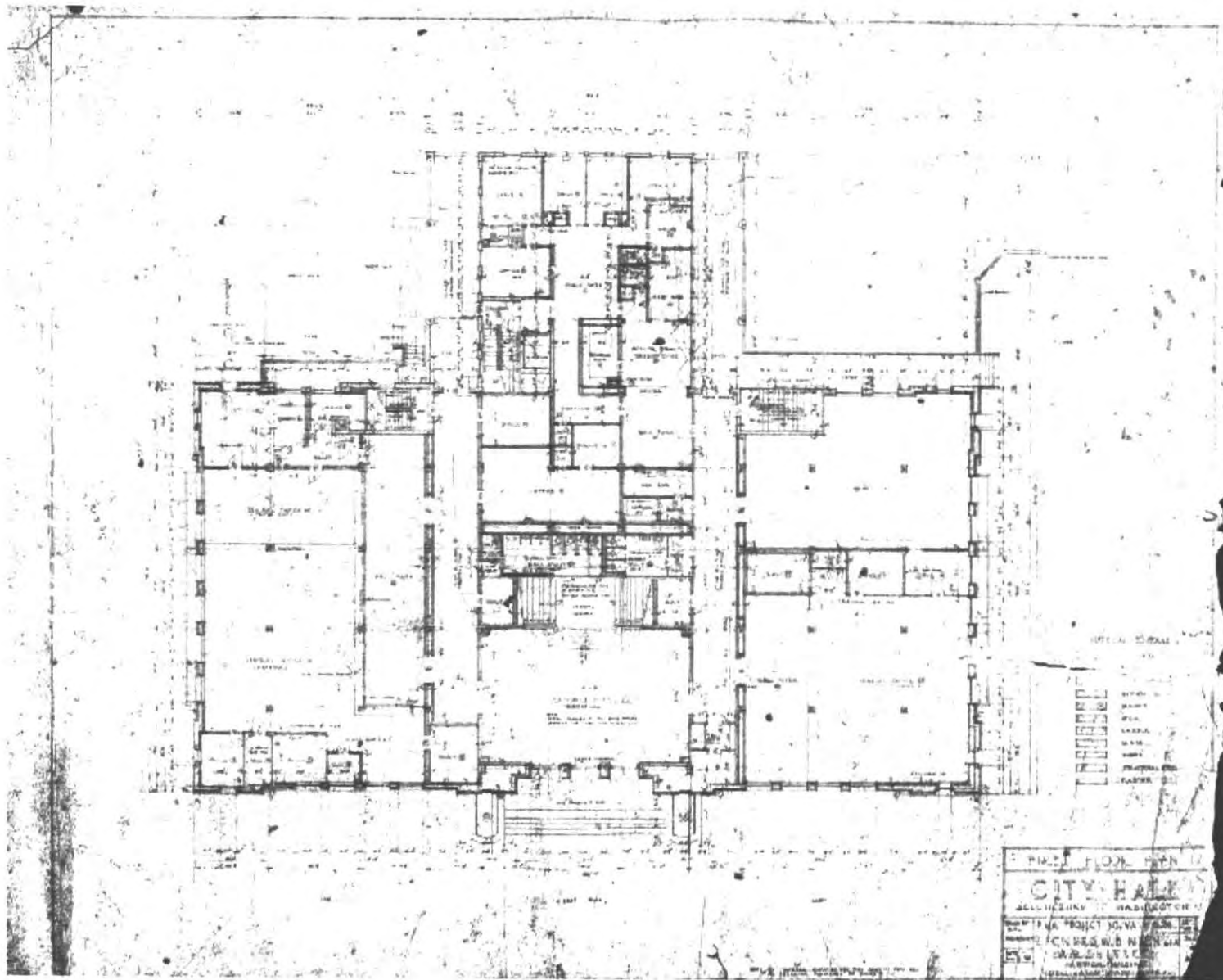
5/4/93

THE MAP IS FOR  
REFERENCE IN  
PROPERTY LOCATION  
AND NOT GUARANTEED  
FOR ACCURATE  
MEASUREMENTS

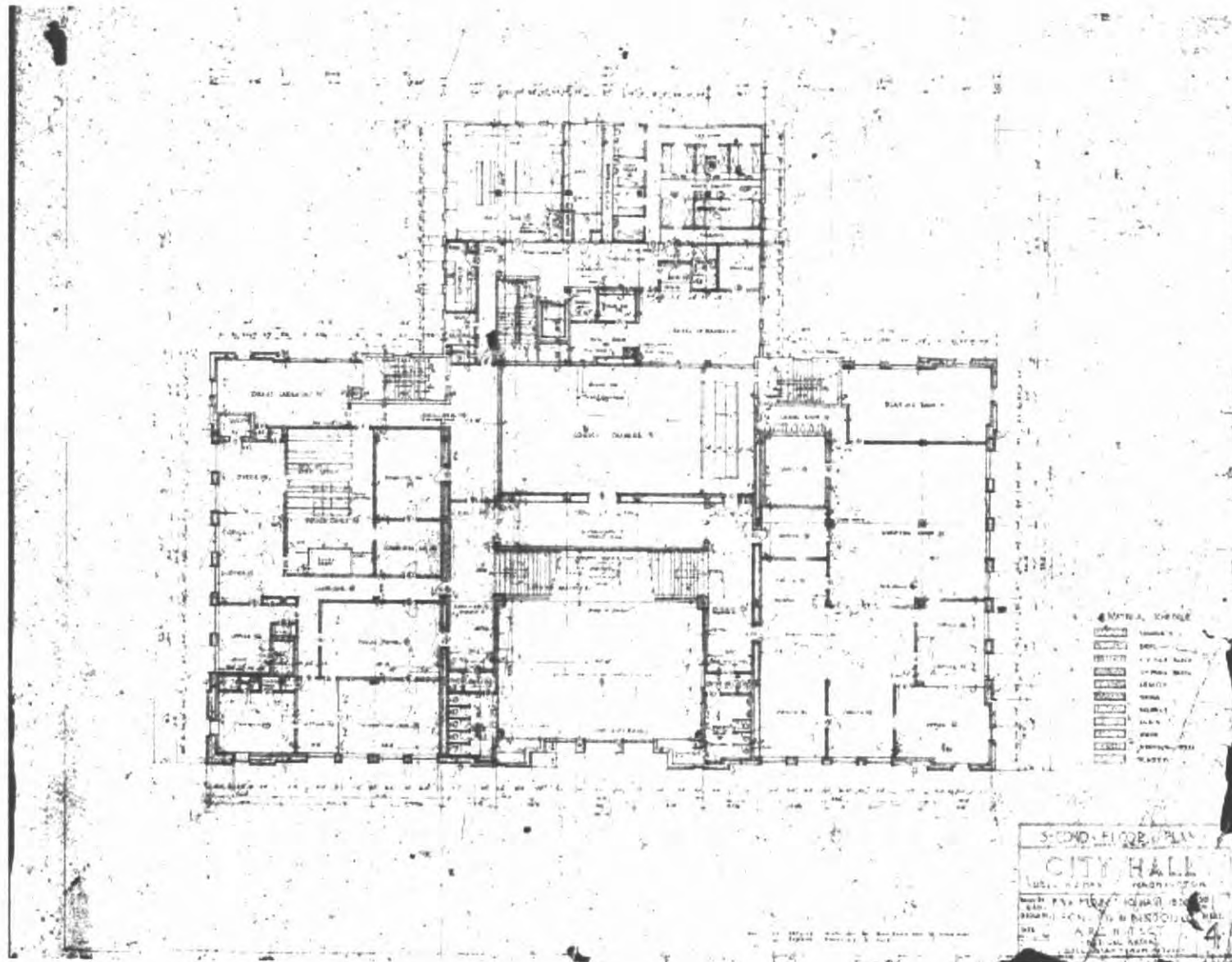
Map # 2: Map showing Bellingham City Hall. Source: Whatcom County Assessor's Office



Sketch floor plan #1: Site plan, Leonard Bindon, architect (1938). Source: City of Bellingham



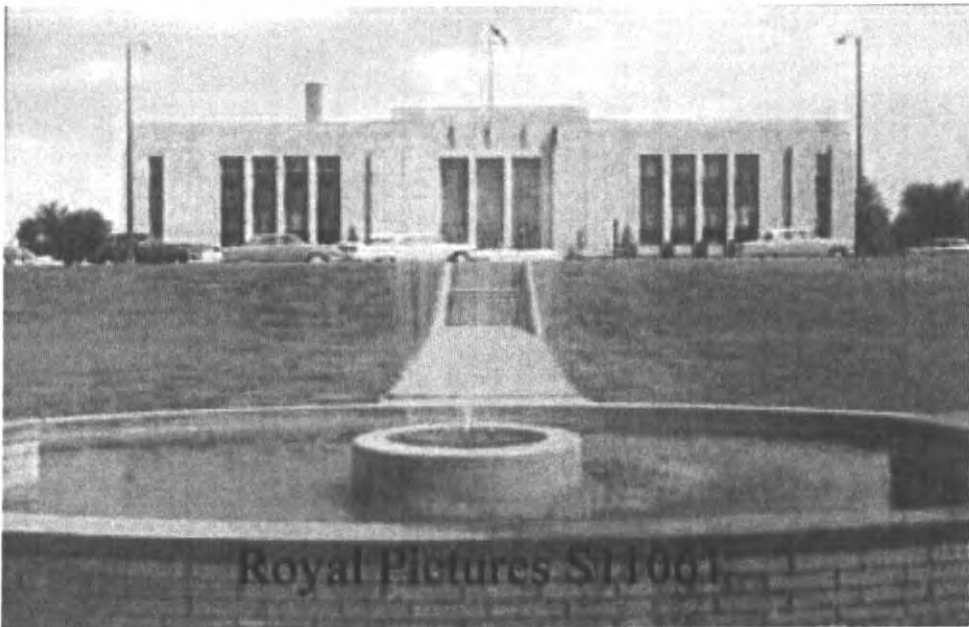
Sketch floor plan #2: First floor plan, Leonard Bindon, architect (1938). Source: City of Bellingham



Sketch floor plan #3: Second floor plan, Leonard Bindon, architect (1938). Source: City of Bellingham



Bellingham City Hall, southwest corner, circa 1940s  
Photo courtesy of the Whatcom Museum of History and Art in Bellingham, Washington.



Bellingham City Hall Postcard, circa 1958



Bellingham City Hall, preliminary construction, circa 1939  
Photo courtesy of the Whatcom Museum of History and Art in Bellingham, Washington.



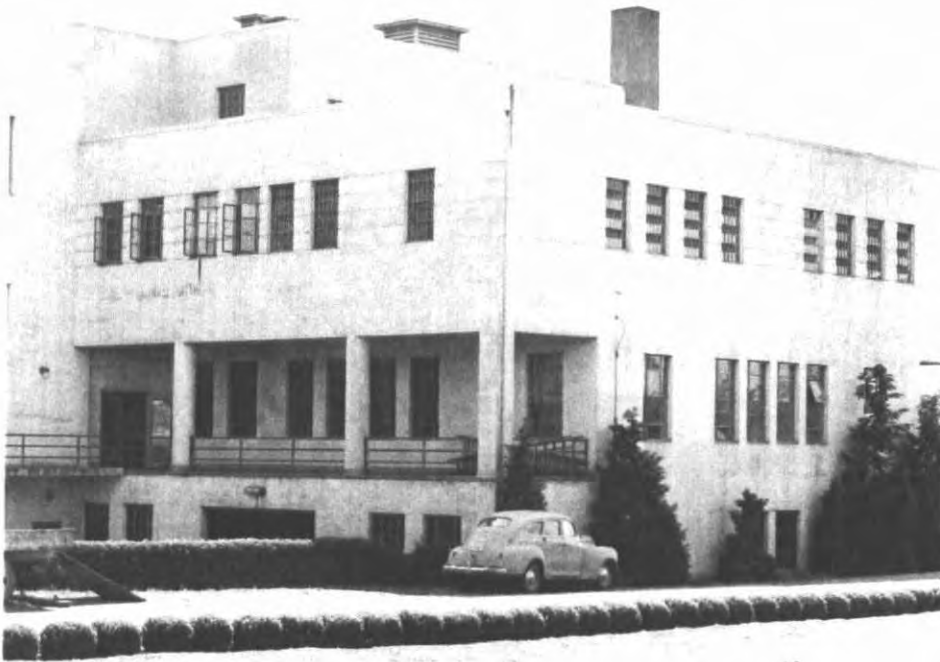
Bellingham City Hall, southwest corner, circa 1942  
Photo courtesy of the Whatcom Museum of History and Art in Bellingham, Washington.



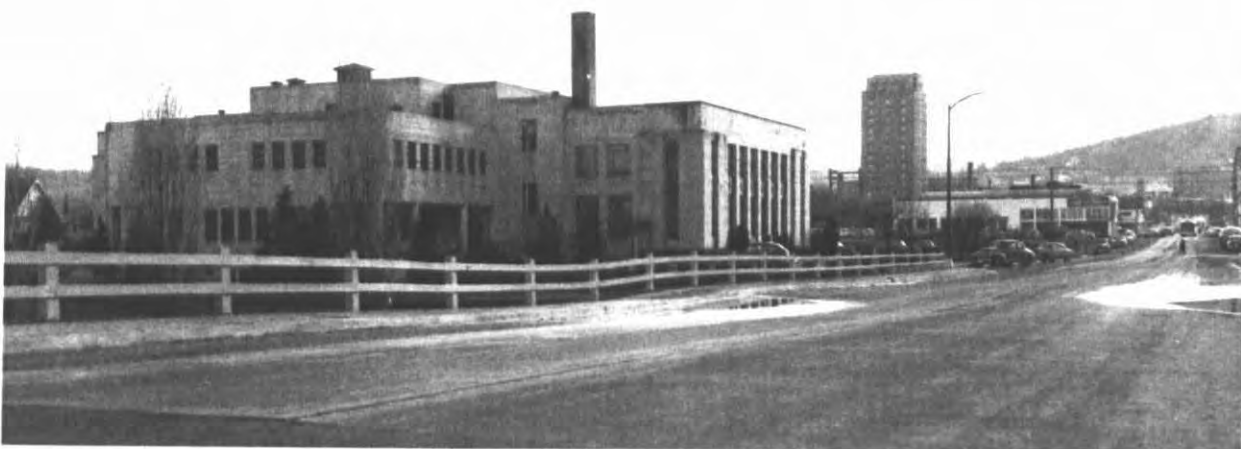
Bellingham City Hall, southeast corner, circa 1943  
Photo courtesy of the Whatcom Museum of History and Art in Bellingham, Washington.



Bellingham City Hall, Police Department entrance (northeast corner), circa 1943  
Photo courtesy of the Whatcom Museum of History and Art in Bellingham, Washington.



Bellingham City Hall, Police Department entrance close-up, circa 1943  
Photo courtesy of the Whatcom Museum of History and Art in Bellingham, Washington.



Bellingham City Hall, Rear wing (northwest corner), looking south down Grand Avenue towards downtown, circa 1945  
Photo courtesy of the Whatcom Museum of History and Art in Bellingham, Washington.



*Bellingham Herald* cartoon illustrating public attitude toward old and new city hall buildings  
Photo courtesy of the Whatcom Museum of History and Art in Bellingham, Washington.



Bellingham City Hall, second floor Council Chambers – speaker's podium (Mayor Reg Williams, 2<sup>nd</sup> from right), circa 1960  
Photo courtesy of the Whatcom Museum of History and Art in Bellingham, Washington.



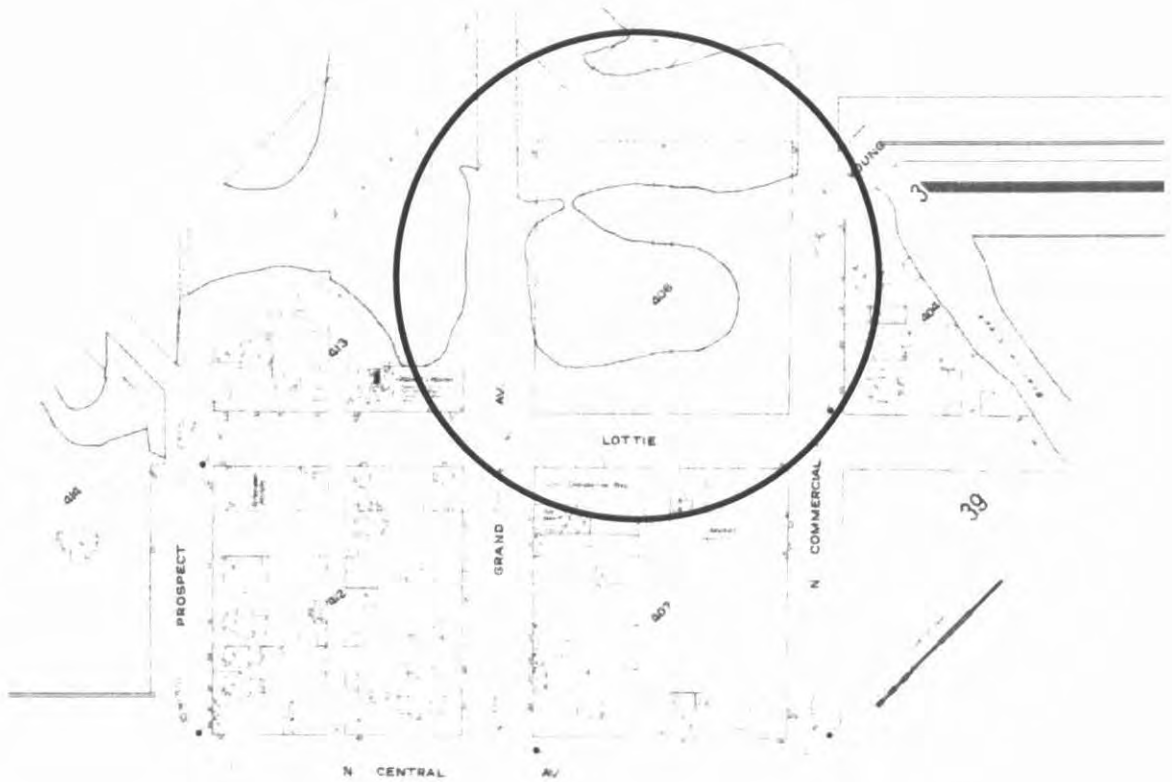
Bellingham City Hall, second floor Council Chambers – audience gallery and balcony (speaker, Attorney Sam Peach) – c.1960

Photo courtesy of the Whatcom Museum of History and Art in Bellingham, Washington.

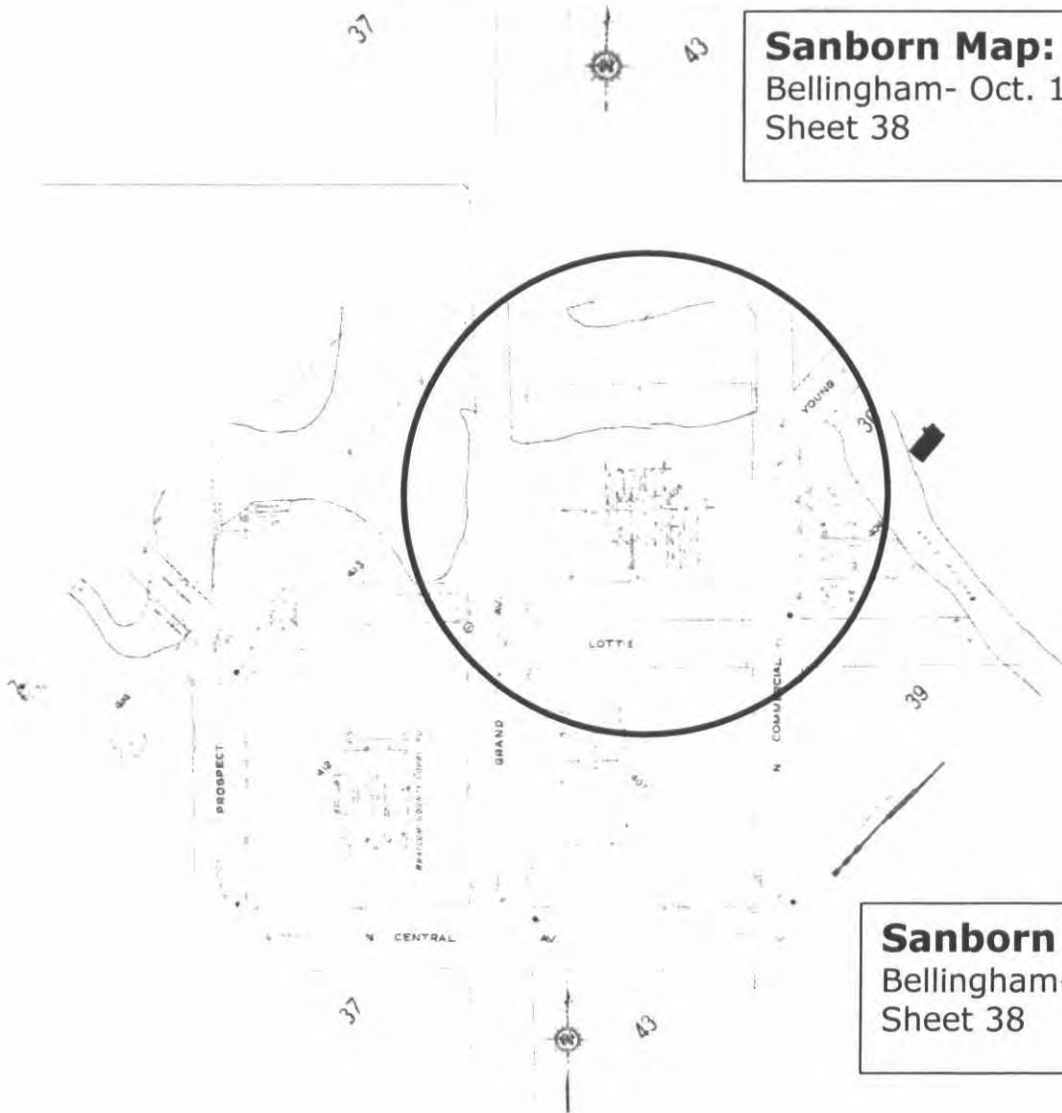


Bellingham City Hall, City Hall lobby and staircase – holiday display, December 23, 1959

Photo courtesy of the Whatcom Museum of History and Art in Bellingham, Washington.



**Sanborn Map:**  
Bellingham- Oct. 1913,  
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**Sanborn Map:**  
Bellingham- Oct. 1950,  
Sheet 38

## NR Nomination Photograph Log Page

**Name of Property:** City Hall – Bellingham  
**City or Vicinity:** Bellingham  
**County:** Whatcom  
**Photographer:** Lynette Felber  
**Date Photographed:** December 24, 2009 - October 1, 2010  
**Location of Original Digital Files:** 507 14<sup>th</sup> St. Bellingham, WA 98225

### Description of Photographs:

- 1 of 15:** (WA\_Whatcom County\_City Hall--Bellingham\_0001)  
Front façade, camera facing north (12/24/09)
- 2 of 15:** (WA\_Whatcom County\_City Hall--Bellingham\_0002)  
Front and east facades, camera facing northwest (12/24/09)
- 3 of 15:** (WA\_Whatcom County\_City Hall--Bellingham\_0003)  
West façade, camera facing east (9/22/10)
- 4 of 15:** (WA\_Whatcom County\_City Hall--Bellingham\_0004)  
Rear wing, camera facing southeast (9/21/10)
- 5 of 15:** (WA\_Whatcom County\_City Hall--Bellingham\_0005)  
Rear wing, camera facing south (1/2/2010)
- 6 of 15:** (WA\_Whatcom County\_City Hall--Bellingham\_0006)  
Rear wing, camera facing southeast (1/2/10)
- 7 of 15:** (WA\_Whatcom County\_City Hall--Bellingham\_0007)  
Entrance close up, camera facing north (9/21/10)
- 8 of 15:** (WA\_Whatcom County\_City Hall--Bellingham\_0008)  
Art Deco lantern, right (east) side of entrance (10/1/10)
- 9 of 15:** (WA\_Whatcom County\_City Hall--Bellingham\_0009)  
Art Deco lanterns, east side of driveway entrance (9/21/10)
- 10 of 15:** (WA\_Whatcom County\_City Hall--Bellingham\_00010)  
Interior: lobby and staircase (1/4/10)
- 11 of 15:** (WA\_Whatcom County\_City Hall--Bellingham\_00011)  
Interior: lobby and east staircase (1/19/10)
- 12 of 15:** (WA\_Whatcom County\_City Hall--Bellingham\_00012)  
Interior: lobby, viewed from mezzanine, camera facing southwest (1/19/10)
- 13 of 15:** (WA\_Whatcom County\_City Hall--Bellingham\_00013)  
Interior detail: mezzanine light fixture (1/4/10)
- 14 of 15:** (WA\_Whatcom County\_City Hall--Bellingham\_00014)  
Interior detail: lobby stair rail (10/1/2010)
- 15 of 15:** (WA\_Whatcom County\_City Hall--Bellingham\_00015)  
Interior detail: lobby radiator grill (10/1/2010)

