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Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name **F. W. Woolworth Co. Store - Renton**

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 724 South 3rd Street ☐ not for publication

city or town Renton ☐ vicinity

state Washington code WA county King code 033 zip code 98057

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ **national** ___ **statewide** X **local**

Applicable National Register Criteria

X **A** ___ **B** X **C** ___ **D**

Allyn M 10-21-15

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

WASHINGTON SHPO

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

X entered in the National Register ___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register ___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:)

for Alexis Abernathy 12/8/15

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

F. W. Woolworth Co. Store - Renton
Name of Property

Pierce County, WA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- [X] private
- [ ] public - Local
- [ ] public - State
- [ ] public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

- [X] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
1	0	**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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE department store

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: International Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete - poured
walls: Concrete - poured
roof: Asphalt/composition- rolled
other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property)

Summary Paragraph

Located at 710 South 3rd Street in Renton, Washington, the Woolworth's building sits on the northwest corner at the intersection of South 3rd Street and Williams Avenue South in the downtown business district. An alley is located to the west of the building. The building faces south and abuts the sidewalk on the east and south, and the alley on the west. The north elevation has two main portions, the portion that is associated with the original footprint of the two-story Woolworth's and the one-story portion that originally was an adjoining building. The north wall of the two-story building is a party wall, while the north wall for the one-story building faces a driveway located off the alley.

The building is roughly L-shaped in massing and has a concrete foundation. Walls are a combination of poured concrete and concrete block. The south façade is primarily glazing, with stacked courses of Roman brick framing the fenestration divisions. A narrow coping runs along the edge of the flat roof. Significant features of the International Style building are the unusual second floor window treatment (raised framed boxes surrounding grouped windows), simple concrete construction, significant glazing on the main elevation, and the awning.

Exterior

Originally constructed as two buildings (the original two-story Woolworth's store to the east in 1954 and a one-story commercial building to the west in 1955) the two buildings were later joined in a remodel. The western part of the south elevation has one story while the eastern half has two stories. The lower portion of the building is a curtain wall clad with aluminum framed glass fenestration. From west to east the fenestration reads as: five plate glass windows, small brick pier, three plate glass window, large brick pier, two plate glass windows, recessed entry (angled plate glass window and a pair of double doors flanked by plate glass window), small brick pier, five plate glass window and small brick pier. A large flat awning runs most of the length of the building. It starts about halfway across the façade of the one story portion and continues to the Williams Avenue elevation, curving at the corner and wrapping to the other elevation. A large semicircular hole was cut in the awning to accommodate a streetlight (now missing). The awning edge cants slightly towards the building's foundation, giving a streamlined machine aesthetic to the unit. The wall for the upper portion of the façade is concrete and has been scored in a rectangular grid pattern. The second floor of the main building has a large ganged bank of casement windows. The windows are unified with a protruding flange that frames all the units. The fenestration pattern is window (a) small concrete panel (b) window (a) large concrete panel (c) and continues with an a, b, a, c, a, b, a pattern. The original casement style metal windows are all glazed with a textured pebble glass.

The east elevation is entirely two stories. To the far south ¼ of the elevation continues the design rhythm found on the front of the building, with large glass an aluminum windows on the ground floor framed by Roman bricks in stack bond pattern, the continuation of the front awning, and the same grid scored concrete finish on the second floor. The fenestration pattern on the second floor is a, c, a, and has the same flanged frame around the ganged windows. The Rear 3/4s of the elevation is poured concrete. The textured pattern of the wood boards used for the concrete forms is clearly visible on this section of the elevation. On the first floor of the elevation there are the visible remnants of three long horizontal windows, evenly spaced, that have been filled in with concrete block.

The west elevation facing the alley is constructed of concrete block laid in a running bond pattern. There is no fenestration on this elevation. The wall steps up one row of bricks towards the very north end of the elevation.

The rear of the building has two elevations: the north elevation and a portion of the west elevation. The north elevation is constructed of concrete block laid in a common bond. The wall is divided into three bays, separated by engaged

buttresses. The bay farthest to the east does not rise to the same height as the first two bays. The juncture between the north elevation and the west (back) elevation is accentuated with a boiler room. This section of the building is constructed from common bond concrete block and has a small door on the north elevation. The brick boiler chimney runs along the west elevation of the large two-story building. A contemporary wood fence overlaid with razor wire prevents access to the top of the boiler room. Only a small portion of the two story building's west elevation on the first floor is exposed. A pair of solid metal doors provides access to the back of the building.

Interior

The main floor of the building has been altered. This level, which includes both the original Woolworth's store and the building to the west that was originally used for the Anita store, has a slab concrete foundation. The wood joist ceiling is held up by steel "I" Beams supported by large square wood posts. Supports along a former party wall with the Anita building are masonry and are covered in flat plaster. The Anita Shop space (constructed in 1955) is supported round metal piers.

A contemporary staircase has been added to the east wall accesses the second floor. An original staircase is located on the north/rear wall in a small enclosed room which houses the original conveyor belt system that transported Woolworth's merchandise to the second floor. The staircase walls are clad with sheets of Formica that reach to the dado level. The once covered plaster walls and ceiling are exposed.

The second floor has a mix of storage and office space. The northern 60% of the space has original wood floors and has an open floor plan to accommodate a merchandise storage area. Walls are exposed concrete and the steel roof beams are left exposed. The roof decking has been covered with sheetrock. There are four doors on the southern end of the room. Three access an original interior hallway and one accesses a large conference room.

The hallway connects the large conference room, two offices, two bathrooms and a staff room, complete with kitchenette and its own small bathroom. The conference room is windowless and occupies the southwest quadrant of the second floor. It has two doors, one accessing the large warehouse space and a second accessing the interior hallway. A small bathroom with a single commode and sink is located along the west wall. The smaller of the two offices is windowless and is located in the southwest corner. It is abutted by the second office, which runs along the south wall. This office has a pair of windows on the south wall. Each office has a single entry door, and the common wall between the two has two fixed interior windows. To the east of the second office is small janitor's closet with a sink boasting original tiles and basin. A communal bathroom with three commodes and two sinks is located near the center of the south wall and has two windows that illuminate the interior. Tile flooring, toilet stall dividers and sinks are original. The final room on this floor is the large staff room which is accessed from a door the far east end of the hallway. A small kitchenette, with contemporary cabinetry, is located on the west wall of the room and the southwest corner provides space for a shower and hot water heater. Two windows are along the south wall, one in the shower room and one in the main staff room. Two windows are located on the east wall. The contemporary staircase that provides access to the main floor is located on the north end of the hallway, along the east wall. Finishes on the upstairs office and employee spaces are original sheetrock with original wooden door and window trim and acoustical tile ceilings.

Building Alterations

While the first floor of the interior of building has been altered, the store retains the characteristics and qualities of a mid-century Woolworth Store. Showroom and storefront alterations are typical commercial building transformations, which would have occurred on a continual basis as retail establishments sought to reinvent themselves with the latest merchandising trends of the day. No interior images of the store have been located to date, but images from other like

Woolworth stores show an open floor plate with flat plaster finishes, simple lighting, tile floors and little ornamentation. Instead low merchandise display areas floated freely throughout the space in tight rows allowing employees to see the showroom floor from the checkout areas near the front of the store. The interior of the Renton store remains a free-flowing space with flat plaster wrapped columns and smooth concrete floors. On the exterior, the store retains a high level of integrity. Such design details, both inside and out, convey a strong sense of a typical department store structure as found in a small downtown core during the post WWII era.

Photographic records and ghost marks on the floor indicate that the Anita Shop (710 South 3rd Street) once had a deeply recessed entryway. Historical images show that the Woolworth's store had two sets of entry doors on the south elevation. In 1975, the Woolworth's space and the one-story Anita Shop space were unified by the removal of the party wall. At this time the building had been purchased by Renton Western Wear and was used as a clothing store. It was likely that the storefronts were reconfigured during this time to have one set of doors. The bricks used during the storefront remodel appear identical from the outside, and the front elevation of the building reads seamlessly as one unified façade.

The extent of changes in the second floor of the building are unknown - original plans have not been located. The warehouse section of the floor is clearly intact, but how many offices, if any, were originally located on that level is a unknown. Some finishes for portions of the office and staff rooms are contemporary. The bathrooms are a mix of contemporary and vintage materials – vintage sinks, bathroom stalls, and floor tiles, while toilets are contemporary.

To support the conversion of the interior into a clothing store, storage and dressing rooms were added to the store's perimeter on the north, east, and west walls. An additional staircase to the second floor (east wall) was also added. During this time the office portion of the upstairs was remodeled, since the majority of the finishes in the office and conference room portions of the second floor date from the 1980s.

During the summer of 2015 all of the late 1970s/early 1980s additions to the main floor (with the exception of the second staircase) were removed to support rehabilitation.

Other minor alterations were made at unknown dates. The three small horizontal windows along the first floor of the east elevation were filled in at different times. A photo from 1963 shows the center window filled in, while the windows on either side are still visible. The date the last two windows were filled in is unknown. The casement windows on the second floor may have had their glazing replaced. The current glazing material is a textured glass. However, photos from 1954 show very clearly individual delineations on interior window blinds. This would have only been possible with clear window glass.

F. W. Woolworth Co. Store - Renton
Name of Property

Pierce County, WA
County and State

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.)

COMMERCE
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
1954-1955

Significant Dates
1954, 1955

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Riley Pleas Inc. (Builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The F.W. Woolworth Co. Store in Renton, Washington, is historically significant under National Register Criteria A for its direct association with growth and development of downtown Renton, and for its connection to the national five-and-dime chain store, F.W. Woolworth Company. The store represents a last gasp effort of Woolworth's to change the retail face of downtowns in rural America before the shift occurred to suburban shopping centers. The building is also significant under Criterion C as representative example of its type and as an example of a small commercial building designed in the waning years of the International Style. The period of significance for the building begins in 1954 the date the store opened and ends in 1955, the date when an addition to the west side of the building was incorporated into the Woolworth space.

Criteria A:

Renton

The city of Renton, located 15 miles southeast of Seattle along the southern shores of Lake Washington, developed as a major manufacturing and transportation center for the Pacific Northwest during the early part of the 20th century. It grew around the holdings of Henry Tobin and Dr. R.H. Bigelow, who had discovered a seam coal on their adjacent homestead claims in 1853. Bigelow moved away and Tobin died. His widow, who inherited his land and the coal mine married Erasmus Smithers. Smithers filed the first plat for the Town of Renton in 1875.

The town was named for Captain William Renton, who had formed the Renton Coal Company a few years earlier. Captain Renton, a lumberman better known for his successes with the famous Port Blakely Mill on Puget Sound, had purchased the mine from Smithers and had the financial backing to expand the business further.

Other coal mines soon dotted the hills and mountains east of Renton, but access to the lake and the rivers allowed Renton to become the hub of local coal industry. This beehive of activity created a need for better transportation routes, and Renton was one of the first outlying communities to be connected by a road to Seattle. By the end of the 19th century, Renton was also a railway hub. The productive agricultural land in the river valleys also made Renton a commercial center. Other industries followed including a brick and tile plant, a cigar factory, a glass-making facility, and several lumber mills. By 1910, Renton was a booming prosperous town with a population of 2,740.

The town was incorporated on September 3, 1901. Earlier, the town had been known as a rough-and-tumble community, due to the heavy industry. In 1885 there were nine saloons and no churches. Incorporation led to a more organized and civilized community, and by 1910 the town had churches, schools, newspapers, and a bank. A bottle factory, icehouse, and more lumber companies had been built, leading the Chamber of Commerce to refer to Renton as the "Town of Payrolls."

By 1915 the coal mining business began to taper off, but Renton's future was still bright. Not only were other businesses in town, such as the Pacific Car & Foundry, but the Interurban train also allowed Renton to become a bedroom community for Seattle workers and their families. Roads were constantly being improved. And even throughout the Great Depression, Renton still experienced moderate growth.

However the most significant growth occurred in 1941 when the federal government and Boeing elected to build a manufacturing plant just to the north of town. The plant was initially developed to produce the XPB-1 Sea Ranger for the United States Navy, but was quickly re-engineered to produce the B-29 Superfortress. This was the most technologically advanced airplane of its day and at the height of production, the Renton plant was building 5 airplanes per day and 160 per month. By the time production ceased in May 1946, Boeing had built an incredible 1,119 B-29s over a two and a half year period at the Renton Plant. During the war years, the Pacific Car & Foundry also turned out 1,500 Sherman Tanks.

The Federal government provided Renton with millions of dollars toward housing, street repairs, and infrastructure to accommodate the influx of workers. After the war, the military contracts tapered off but the slowdown was only temporary. Boeing re-opened the B-29 plant in 1948 to build the C-97 Stratofreighter, which became the basis for the famous Boeing 377 Stratocruiser airliner. Then in May 1954 Boeing rolled out the 367-80 at Renton. This Dash 80 was the prototype for the KC-135 Stratotanker which set the stage for the first commercially successful jet airliner, the legendary Boeing 707. The first production Boeing 707 was rolled out at Renton on October 28, 1957 and the jet age began. Production continued until in 1978 with a total of 1,010 707s built at Renton.

Such development at the Boeing plant resulted in a large population boom. The city grew from 4,488 people in 1940 to 16,039 by 1950. While residential construction took place on the edges of the community in the ever-expanding suburbs, many services were provided in a re-made and expanded downtown core. During the early to mid-1950s numerous turn-of the century structures were demolished in favor of new sleek modern buildings which reflected the aesthetic of the "jet age". Nineteen fifty-four was a banner year for construction in the community. A record $2.65 million in total construction valuation occurred with a variety of new downtown business such as Bartell's, Tradewell Market, Wiesfield Jewelers, Western Auto Supply, Block's Shoe Store and J.C. Penney's. The U.S. Department of Commerce business census indicated that retail sales in Renton grew 49.1% between 1948 and 1954. In 1954 more than $31 million was spent in Renton's retail stores and Renton's total payroll was $60 million dollars annually.

Capitalizing on the retail boom was the F.W. Woolworth Co. who worked with the Priebe family (a Renton pioneer family) to build a new modern store in the heart of the downtown in 1954. Such construction in a downtown core was a last gasp for Woolworth's that had previously changed the face of many main streets across the United States. However by the mid-1950s the shift to retail shopping areas on the outskirts of many communities had begun.

Woolworth – Renton Store

Reportedly the Priebe family invested more than $200,000 to build the nominated building which they leased to the Woolworth Company. Brothers Jack, Oscar, and Lloyd retained ownership of the land. The site was previously home to the Priebe Building, which originally housed the Hotel Tourist and a barbershop. Various family members ran the businesses.

Construction of the Renton Woolworth's started in 1953. While exact construction costs are unknown, newspaper accounts report numbers ranging from $100,000 to $200,000 for the building. The store officially opened on March 18, 1954 at 9:30 am. The opening was highly publicized with a full two-page spread in the local paper. The first 1,000 customers through the store received free 2 ½ inch potted Philodendron plants and the kids free balloons. Several advertisements congratulating Renton for their new retail option were featured including ads from the Pleas Construction Co., All Electric Service (Seattle), Renton Plumbing & Heating, Gordon Brown Plasterers (Seattle), George Abraham & Son Cement Contractors (Bellevue, Seattle, and Renton) and the Downs-Ritter law firm (Seattle).

The opening of the Renton store coincided with the F.W. Woolworth Company's diamond jubilee and featured a new business model. The store was designed to be 100% self-service and was the first store in the Northwest to employ this service model. Newspaper coverage noted that the 6,000 square foot store which had a wide open floor plate, provided a broader assortment of goods than other stores of the same size due to new display equipment in self-service units designed to make shopping quicker and easier for the customer. The second floor of the store held an employee lounge and recreation room, offices and a stockroom as well as restrooms. At the time of the Renton store's opening there were 20 other Woolworth stores in Washington State, with an additional 15 in Oregon and 5 in Idaho. All of these stores, along with those in California and Arizona, were under the jurisdiction of Woolworth's San Francisco regional office.

In April 17th of 1955 plans were announced to expand the store to the west. The new one story wing was leased to Anita's, a women's fashion store. The expansion also included the addition of a 25-seat fountain lunch counter within the Woolworth's store.

The first manager of the Renton Woolworth's store was D. B. Long. A native of the Winston-Salem/Greensboro, N.C. area, Long had started working for Woolworth's during high school. After a brief hiatus to serve in the Pacific during World War II, Long returned to Woolworth's, working initially for their Seattle store. He then transferred to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and later worked in the company's Yakima, Tacoma, and Wenatchee stores.

F.W. Woolworth Co.

The F.W. Woolworth Company was begun by Frank Winfield Woolworth, who opened his first store in Utica, New York in 1879. While the store initially failed due to a poor location, a subsequent store located in Lancaster, Pennsylvania that same year was successful and became the foundation for one of the largest retail chains in the world. By 1904, there were six chains of affiliated stores operating in the United States and Canada. Between 1905 and 1908, members of the Woolworth Syndicate followed Frank's lead to incorporate their businesses. In 1912 the syndicate agreed to a scheme crafted by Frank Woolworth: to join forces and incorporate as one corporate entity under the name "F. W. Woolworth Company" in a merger of all 596 stores. The stock flotation raised over $30 million for the five founders of the merged chains. They all swallowed their pride and accepted Frank's name above the door, with Frank as President of the new Corporation.

The discount chain store became so successful that by 1913 the company built the first modern skyscraper, the Woolworth's building, in New York, NY. The company expanded rapidly and stores sold a variety of high demand items such as inexpensive dishes, silverware, bathroom products, kitchenware, garden supplies, hardware, home decoration supplies, school supplies, toys, Christmas decorations, jewelry, beauty items, and sewing supplies. For many years the company did a strictly "five-and-ten cent" business, but in the spring of 1932 a 20-cent line of merchandise was added. On November 13, 1935 the company's directors decided to discontinue setting price limits altogether. Woolworth served as president of the firm until his death in 1919. At the time, the company had already expanded to every state in the union and Canada (1,081 stores) and had annual sales of $119 million. Woolworth's was one of the first companies in the United States to have merchandise on display for the public to handle instead of being located behind the counter.

The Woolworth's concept was widely copied, and five-and-ten-cent stores (also known as five-and-dime stores or dimestores) became a 20th-century fixture in American downtowns. Later they would serve as anchors for suburban shopping plazas and shopping malls in the late 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. In the 1960s, the five-and-dime concept evolved into the larger discount department store format. In fact, in 1962, F.W. Woolworth Co. founded a chain of large, single-floor discount stores called Woolco. Some of these stores were also branded as Winfields, after the founder's middle name. Nineteen sixty-two was the same year that Woolworth's competitors opened similar retail chains that sold merchandise at a discount: the S.S. Kresge Company opened Kmart; Dayton's opened Target; and Sam Walton opened his first Wal-Mart store. By Woolworth's 100th anniversary in 1979, it had become the largest department store chain in the world, according to the Guinness Book of World Records.

The post-World War II era was a period of unprecedented growth for many American companies, and 1950 was a record-breaking year for sales within the Woolworth chain, more than $61 million in profits were earned. However, troubling signs were on the horizon. It was clear that the development of large shopping centers was causing challenges with the company's long-standing policy of locating on main streets. Although the trend to move retail development to shopping malls was fairly new, Woolworth directors were paying attention. By 1954 the company had started constructing stores in suburban shopping centers. The company began to move away from its five-and-dime roots and placed less emphasis on its department store chain as it focused on its specialty stores. These stores operated under the Woolco banner. In Washington State these included stores at the Villa Plaza Shopping Center in Lakewood (1957) and Aurora Village in Seattle (1960).

The company was also battling the National Labor Relations Board regarding Woolworth's treatment of unionized employees. In an effort to save costs Woolworth's embraced self-service stores, which significantly reduced the number

of employees needed per a retail location. In 1952 the first self-service store for the chain was opened. All checkouts were located at the front of the store and customers would bring merchandise there for payment and wrapping. By 1953 the company spent $26,000,000 to build forty-four new stores, many of which were self-service, including the Renton store. In 1953 the total number of stores owned by the chain in the United States was close to 2,000.

Although sales hit a record $713,870,367 in 1954, earnings began to decline and by the 1970s the lagging economy, increasing prices, and increasing employment all took their toll on the iconic company. The Renton Woolworth's was one of a number of stores closed by the company between 1973 and 1974 and the building was purchased by another business for use as a discount retail store at that time.

While it was a success in Canada, the Woolco chain closed in the United States in 1983. On October 15, 1993, Woolworth's embarked on a restructuring plan that included closing half of its 800-plus general merchandise stores in the United States and converting its Canadian stores to a closeout division named The Bargain! Shop. Woolco and Woolworth's survived in Canada until 1994, when the majority of the Woolco stores there were sold to Wal-Mart. The Woolco stores that were not purchased by Wal-Mart were either converted to The Bargain! Shop, sold to Zellers or shut down. Approximately 100 Woolworth stores in Canada were rebranded as The Bargain! Shop, and the rest were closed. On July 17, 1997, Woolworth's closed its remaining department stores in the U.S. and changed its corporate name to Venator.

Criteria C:

Riley Pleas Construction Co.

To construct the store the Priebe Brothers and the F.W. Woolworth Co. hired the Riley Pleas Construction Co. from Seattle. While a fairly young company at the time, owner Riley Pleas was well versed in mid-century design and had worked as a draftsman for a prominent Seattle architectural firm. Born in Covina, California on June 16, 1926 Riley William Pleas and his brother Pat were raised in Olympia, Washington. After grammar school, both were selected for officer training in the US Navy V-12 program. Following service in the US Navy, Riley studied architecture at the University of Michigan. It was there that he met his future wife, nursing student Nancy Seay. Riley and Nancy married on September 14, 1946 in Ann Arbor. They moved to Seattle in 1947 to raise a family.

After moving to Seattle, Pleas continued his studies at the University of Washington while working for Strand Construction Company. It is unknown whether he received a formal degree from the University of Washington. In 1948 he took a job as a draftsman for Mallis & Dehart Architects (1948-1950). With valuable experience in hand, Pleas opened his own construction firm, Riley Pleas Inc., in Seattle in 1950. Over the course of the next 40 years his company built a variety of notable projects scattered across Washington, Oregon, Montana, California, and Alaska.

Pleas' projects range from schools to apartment complexes and large infrastructure works. Known projects include Pinehurst Elementary School (1958); Montlake Terrace Elementary School (1958); Lowell School remodel (1959); Pacific Architect & Builder Office (1959); Northgate Clinic of Group Heath (1958); the Villa Capri Apartments (1960); Four Season Apartments (1966); and Wells Dam (1966) in Bridgeport. Over the course of his career he worked with a variety of architects including Albert O. Bumgardner, Paul H. Kirk and the firms of Dudley & Ekness, and Cuykendall, Illes & Blean. In the late 1960s, Pleas expanded his business interest to serve as a developer as well as builder. Under HUD's Turnkey Program he developed several high rise projects for the King County and Seattle Housing Authority. These projects include Olive Ridge (1968), Cedarville House (1970), International Terrace (1971), Cedarville Village (1971) and Southridge House (1970). He also developed the Mutiny Sands (1960s) area of Whidbey Island. In Renton, in addition to the nominated building, the Pleas Construction firm also constructed the J. C. Penny Building (1955, located on the same block as the nominated building) and the Renton Village Shopping Center (1963).

After turning over the construction business to his three sons, Pleas acquired the Isaacson Steel Service Center (1983), which is still owned by members of family today and operates under the name Seaport Steel. He served on the Board of Seaport and other companies including Lynden Transport. Pleas passed away on June 15, 2008.

International Style

While the architect for the store is unknown, per historic images, the Renton store shares many similarities of other Woolworth's stores built across the country during the 1950s. The company had an in-house architectural department during the 1920s and 30s. While details of the department are unknown, it is believed that they continued to operate into the 1960s and provided standardized designs for the company.

The nominated building shares features with other Woolworth's stores from the same era. Similar Woolworth stores have been found in Clarksdale, Mississippi (NRHP); Oxnard, California; San Diego, California; Madison, WI; Lake Charles, LA and Tijuana, Mexico. All six of these buildings are two-stories and five of them occupy corners. All have storefront glazing almost exclusively on the main elevation and a horizontal band of windows on the second story. Five of the stores have the same framed window surrounds which group multiple sashes into one unifying element. The Oxnard store is most similar to the Renton store in terms of window configuration and spacing.

This design motif is reflective of the International Style, which was popular from the late 1920s through the early 1960s. The style was born in Western Europe in the 1920s from the precedent breaking work of noted architects Le Corbusier in France and Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe in Germany. Striving to create a new modern form and functional theory of architecture these architects abandoned tradition to create a pared down, unornamented style that emphasized geometric shapes, viewing it as architecture for the modern age. Buildings of the International style were starkly different than those of previous eras. Features included flat roofs, asymmetry and bands of windows set into a rectangular form. Many European architects came to the United States in the period preceding World War II bringing their new ideas about modern design with them. In the 1930s American architects began experimenting with the International style, building upon the early 20th century American architectural.

The style was named after an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in 1932 that showcased a variety of works by European architects such as Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Gropius. In the exhibition, curated by Henry-Russell-Hitchcock and Phillip Johnson, International Style buildings are said to be: 1) rectilinear forms; 2) light, taut plane surfaces that have been completely stripped of applied ornamentation and decoration; 3) open interior spaces; and 4) a visually weightless quality engendered by the use of cantilever construction.

Pure examples of architect designed International style buildings are somewhat rare, but many buildings of the era between 1930-1950 show its influence. While the International style was popular in Europe for residential design in the 1920s and 1930s, it was less commonly used for houses in the United States. Instead the style was utilized on a variety of educational, industrial and commercial buildings. By creating a new philosophy of architecture dedicated to the pure functionality of form, the International style had a lasting impact on modern design and elements of the style continued long beyond its period of popularity.

The Renton Woolworth's building epitomizes the International Style as it manifested in many small communities around the country. Its principles and design details include:

- a rejection of historical styles as a source of architectural form
- use of material and functional requirements to determine form (form follows function)
- a machine aesthetic
- rejection of ornament
- simplification of form and elimination of unnecessary detail

The Renton store features a poured concrete structure and a simple utilitarian form. Glass is only used when necessary, primarily to provide large display windows. Fenestration on the second floor is limited to small windows that provided light for interior office space. The large awning located primarily on the south elevation was utilitarian and provided shade for pedestrians and protected display goods from unnecessary fading. The awning also originally provided a platform for advertising signage with large letters spelling out the store's name. Another character defining feature is the emphasis on the building's horizontal form. The grid pattern scored into the concrete on the second floor on the south and part of the east elevations are purely decorative. This is articulated through the significant glazing, the awning, and most significantly with the windows treatment on the second level. Although the individual window units are vertical, they were band in groupings framed by raised concrete flanges that emphasize the length of the bays rather than the height of the individual windows.

Construction of the Renton Woolworth Store was an indicator "of the soundness of the [Renton] area as an industrial and retail center." The building, for many, was proof that Renton had "arrived" as a modern city after rapid growth during the 1940s. Additionally the store serves as a representative example of the Woolworth's chain which is tightly bound into American retail history.

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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 Buildings Survey #_____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

____State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
_X_Local government
____University
_X_Other
Name of repository: Renton Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References ____NAD 1927 or ____NAD 1983

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1				3			
2				4			

Or Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude
1	47°28'47.49"N	122°12'25.21"W	3		
2			4		

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

The nominated area is located at the intersection of South 3rd Street (South boundary) and Williams Avenue South (east boundary) in Renton, WA. West boundary is the alley between South 3rd Street and South Second Street. North boundary abuts the property at 229 Williams Avenue South.

It is legally described as Lots 11-12 of Block 25 in the original plat of Town of Renton. It is otherwise known as Parcel No. 7231502210

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property encompasses the entire urban tax parcel that is occupied by the F.W. Woolworth Co. Store.

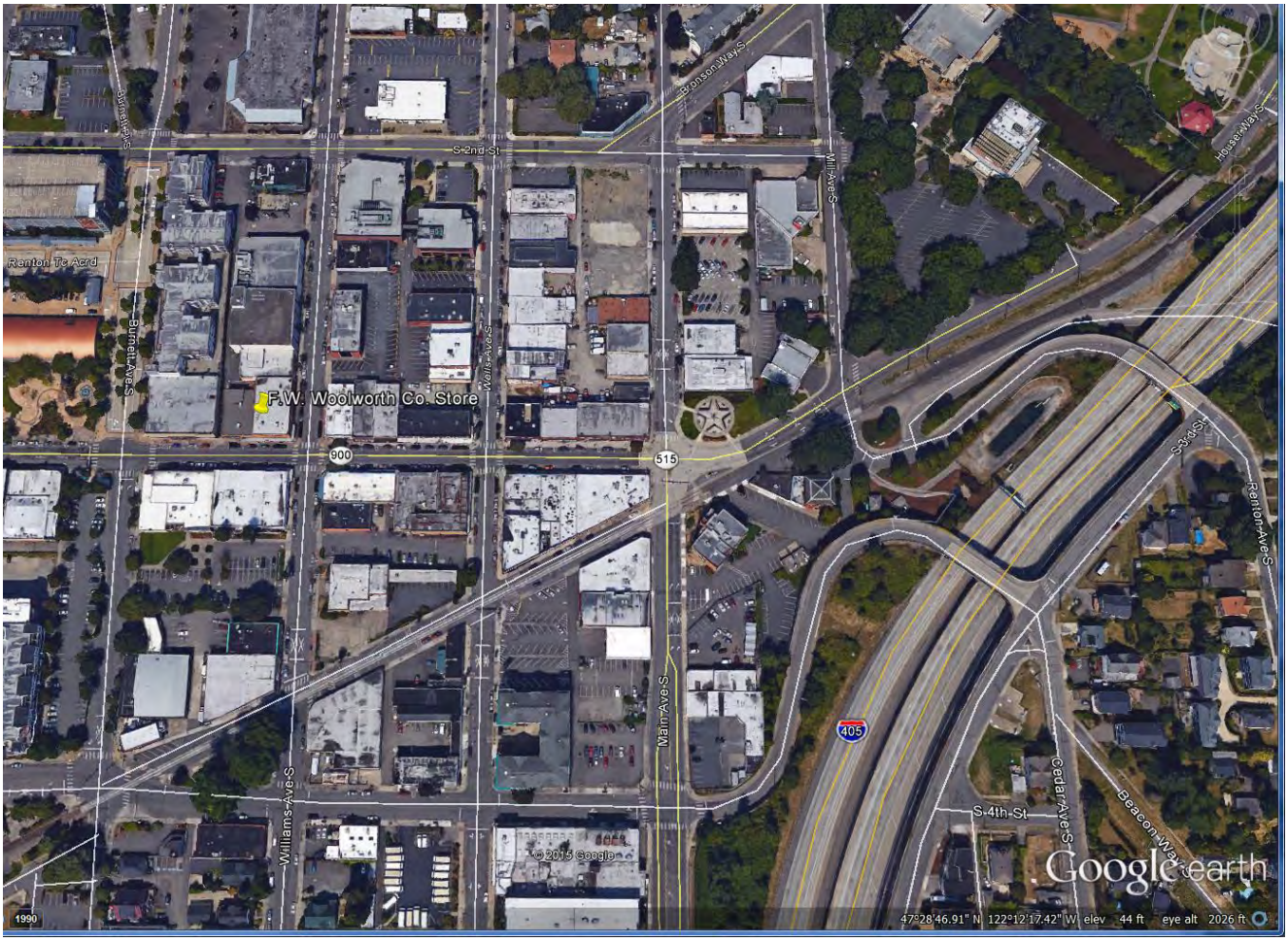
11. Form Prepared By

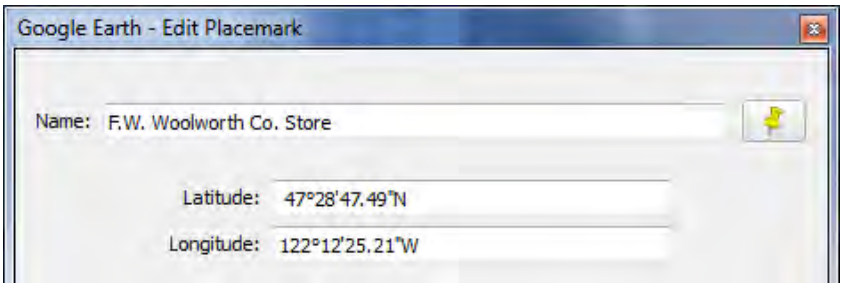
name/title Caroline T. Swope, M.S.H.P., Ph.D. (Edited by DAHP Staff)
organization Kingstree Studios date Oct 10, 2015
street & number 2902 North Cedar St telephone 253 370 6984
city or town Tacoma state WA zip code 98407
e-mail cts@u.washington.edu

F. W. Woolworth Co. Store - Renton
Name of Property

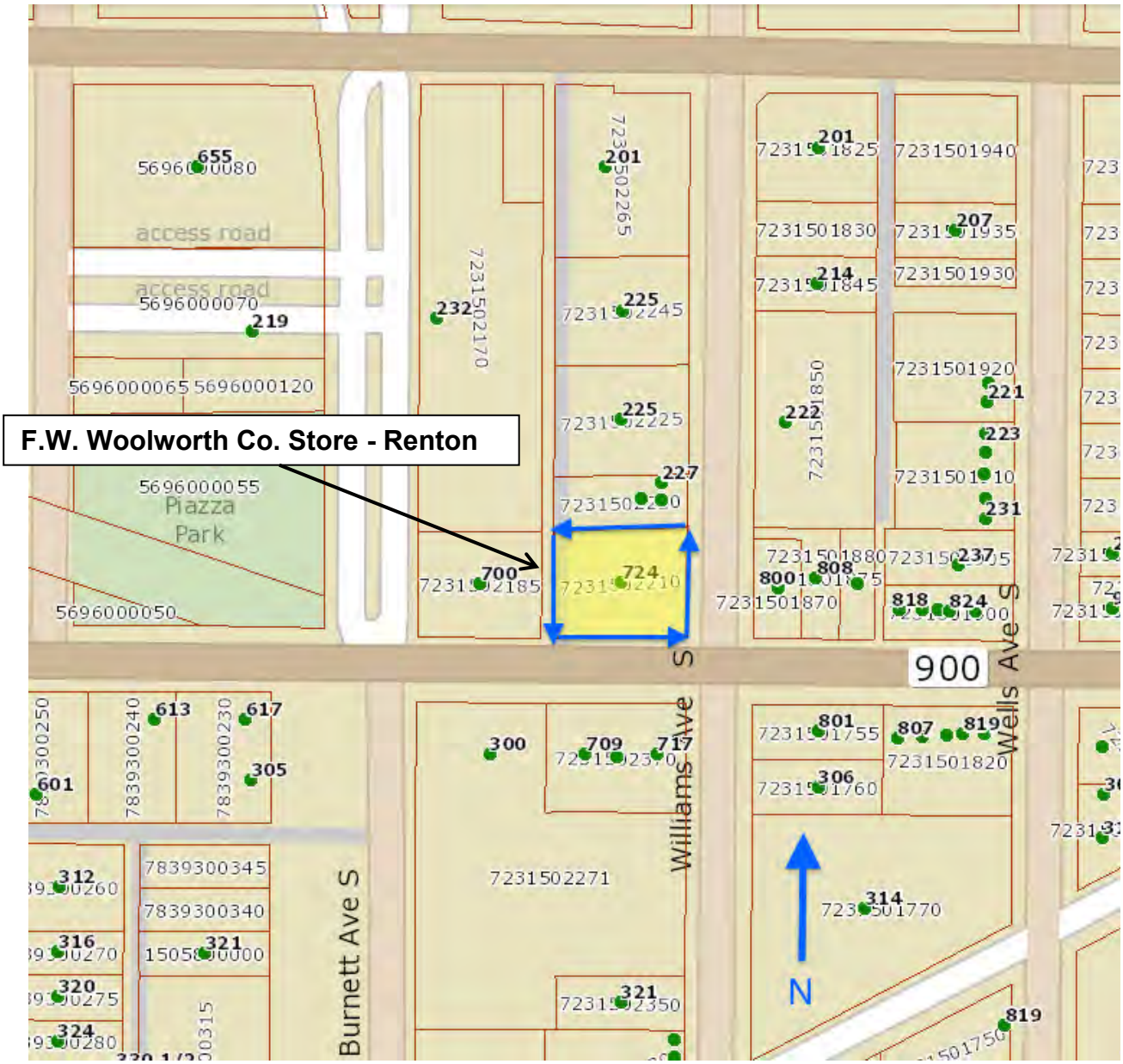
Pierce County, WA
County and State

Additional Documentation





Google Earth Map



Assessor Map: Tax Parcel # 7231502210

Renton Woolworth's c.1963 (source, King County Tax Assessor)

Renton Woolworth's, c.1957 (source, Renton Historical Society)

RENTON'S new Woolworth Store will be officially unveiled today when doors are opened to the public at 9:30 a.m. Here is an exterior view of the modernistic two-story structure at the corner of Third avenue and Williams street. The store embodies all the latest innovations in merchandising and will operate as a self-service unit with clerks on hand to assist those requiring personal service. Management of the firm is offering special bargains throughout the weekend to commemorate the opening and the diamond jubilee of the vast Woolworth organization.

—Marier Studio Photo

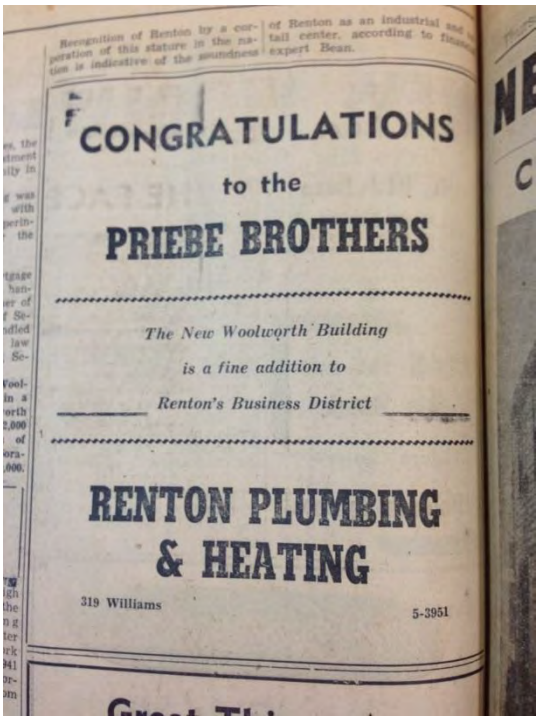
Renton Woolworth Grand Opening advertisement, March 18, 1954, *Renton News Record*
Note Store as stand-alone building without one story addition to the west (left side).

STARTS TODAY (March 18th)
WOOLWORTH'S GRAND OPENING SALE
SELF SERVICE
To Make Your Shopping Quicker and Easier
CONTINUES THROUGH FRIDAY & SATURDAY
FREE FREE FREE
1,000 Growing Philodendron Plants in 2½" Pots—Free while they last!
FREE balloons for the kiddies!
SEE THESE SUPER SPECIALS
Sheer Nylons 2/98¢
Ladies' Briefs 4 for 98¢
Pillow Cases 39¢
Bath Towel 67¢
DON'T MISS THESE BIG VALUES!
BATH MAT RUG—Size 20x30. Twisted Loop Pile. Non Skid Back. Big Value $1.77
TRAINING PANTY—Absorbent cotton knit. Assorted sizes. Slightly irregular. Sale Price 17¢
BLUE JEANS—Save 50¢ a pair on these sturdy boys' jeans. Sizes 1-8. Reg. price $1.69. Sale Price $1.19
BOYS' POLO SHIRTS—Cotton knit in colorful stripes. Outstanding value at the low price of 3 for $1
BOYS' BLAZER SOCKS—Elastic topped cottons in a low assortment of colors. 7½-10½. Very Special 5 pr. 89¢
MENS' HANDKERCHIEFS—White cotton. Size 16½x16½. Regular price 10c. ea. Sale price 6 for 49¢
COSTUME JEWELRY — Manufacturer's closeout. Necklaces, Brooches, Bracelets, Earrings. Values up to $1.98. Sale Price 59¢
PURE SILK SCARFS—Size 19x19. Attractive prints. Regular price 79c. Sale Price 2 for 98¢
SOFA CUSHION—Size 16½x16½. Big (1½") center button. Rich decorator colors. Reg. price $1.29. Sale price 77¢
PLASTIC DRAPES—Discontinued patterns. Heavy vinyl plastic. Values up to $1.98. Sale special 77¢
CANDY DEPT. SPECIALS!
WHIPPED CREAM FUDGE—Made with pure cream, butter, nuts and sugar. Regular price 59c. Sale price 39¢
CHOCOLATE CREAMS — Assorted flavors. Quality sell for 59c lb. Sale special 2 lbs 77¢
PEANUT CLUSTERS — Crunchy Spanish peanuts covered with pure milk chocolate. Reg. price 69c lb. Sale price 49¢
SHOP WOOLWORTH'S FIRST FOR EVERYTHING!
Store Hours—9:30 to 5:30. Open Fridays Until 9:00 P.M.
Celebrating WOOLWORTH'S FIRST 75 YEARS 1879-1954
F. W. WOOLWORTH CO.
D. B. Long, Mgr. Third Ave. & Williams

D.B. Long, Woolworth Manger
Grand opening advertisement,
March 18, 1954, *Renton News Record*

Charles C. Dawding, Skyway Taxi
STARTS TODAY, MARCH 18
GRAND OPENING SALE
WOOLWORTH'S NEW STORE
Third Ave. and Williams
See Page — for Opening Specials
at SAVINGS up to 40%
Sale Continues through Friday and Saturday

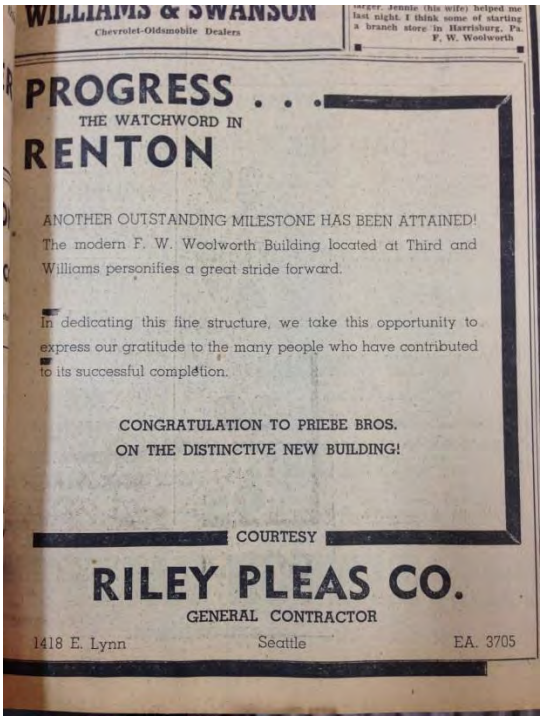
Renton Woolworth Grand Opening advertisement, March 18, 1954, *Renton News Record*


Recognition of Renton by a corporation of this stature in the nation is indicative of the soundness of Renton as an industrial and retail center, according to financial expert Bean.

CONGRATULATIONS
to the
PRIEBE BROTHERS

The New Woolworth Building
is a fine addition to
Renton's Business District

RENTON PLUMBING
& HEATING
319 Williams 5-3951


WILLIAMS & SWANSON
Chevrolet-Oldsmobile Dealers

Jennie (his wife) helped me last night. I think some of starting a branch store in Harrisburg, Pa.
F. W. Woolworth

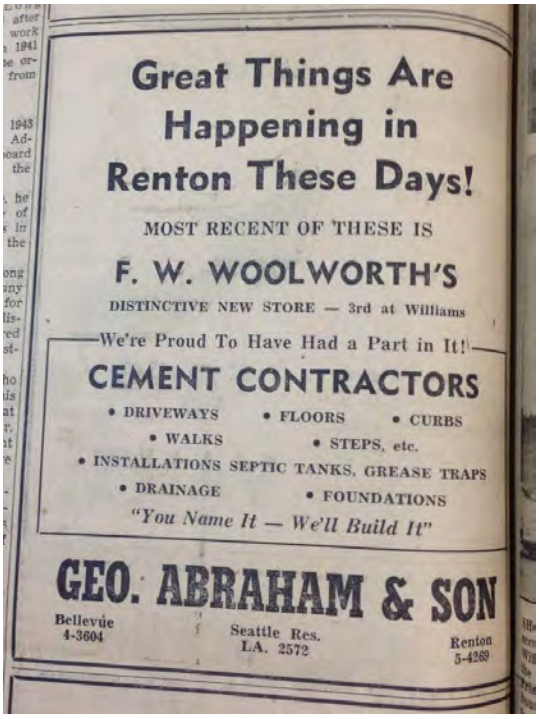
PROGRESS . . .
THE WATCHWORD IN
RENTON

ANOTHER OUTSTANDING MILESTONE HAS BEEN ATTAINED! The modern F. W. Woolworth Building located at Third and Williams personifies a great stride forward.

In dedicating this fine structure, we take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the many people who have contributed to its successful completion.

CONGRATULATION TO PRIEBE BROS.
ON THE DISTINCTIVE NEW BUILDING!

COURTESY
RILEY PLEAS CO.
GENERAL CONTRACTOR
1418 E. Lynn Seattle EA. 3705


Great Things Are
Happening in
Renton These Days!

MOST RECENT OF THESE IS
F. W. WOOLWORTH'S
DISTINCTIVE NEW STORE — 3rd at Williams
We're Proud To Have Had a Part in It!

CEMENT CONTRACTORS
• DRIVEWAYS • FLOORS • CURBS
• WALKS • STEPS, etc.
• INSTALLATIONS SEPTIC TANKS, GREASE TRAPS
• DRAINAGE • FOUNDATIONS
"You Name It — We'll Build It"

GEO. ABRAHAM & SON
Bellevue 4-3604 Seattle Res. LA. 2572 Renton 5-4269

Seattle

CONGRATULATIONS
TO
F. W. WOOLWORTH CO.
ON THE FINE MODERN STORE
We're Glad to Have Had a Part in the Structure

EXPERT
PLASTERING
PROMPT, DEPENDABLE
SERVICE
★
• COMMERCIAL • RESIDENTIAL

GORDON BROWN
PLASTERERS
7100 Rainier Ave.

Renton Woolworth Grand Opening advertisements, March 18, 1954, *Renton News Record*

Other Mid-Century F.W. Woolworth Co. Stores - Nationwide

San Diego, CA – Woolworth Co. Store (built 1949)

Oxnard, CA – Woolworth Co. Store (built c.1954)

Tijuana, Mexico - Woolworth Co. Store (c.1957)

Clarksdale, MS – Woolworth Co. Store (built 1955)

Madison, WI – Woolworth Co. Store (built 1954)

Lake Charles, LA – Woolworth Co. Store (c.1957)

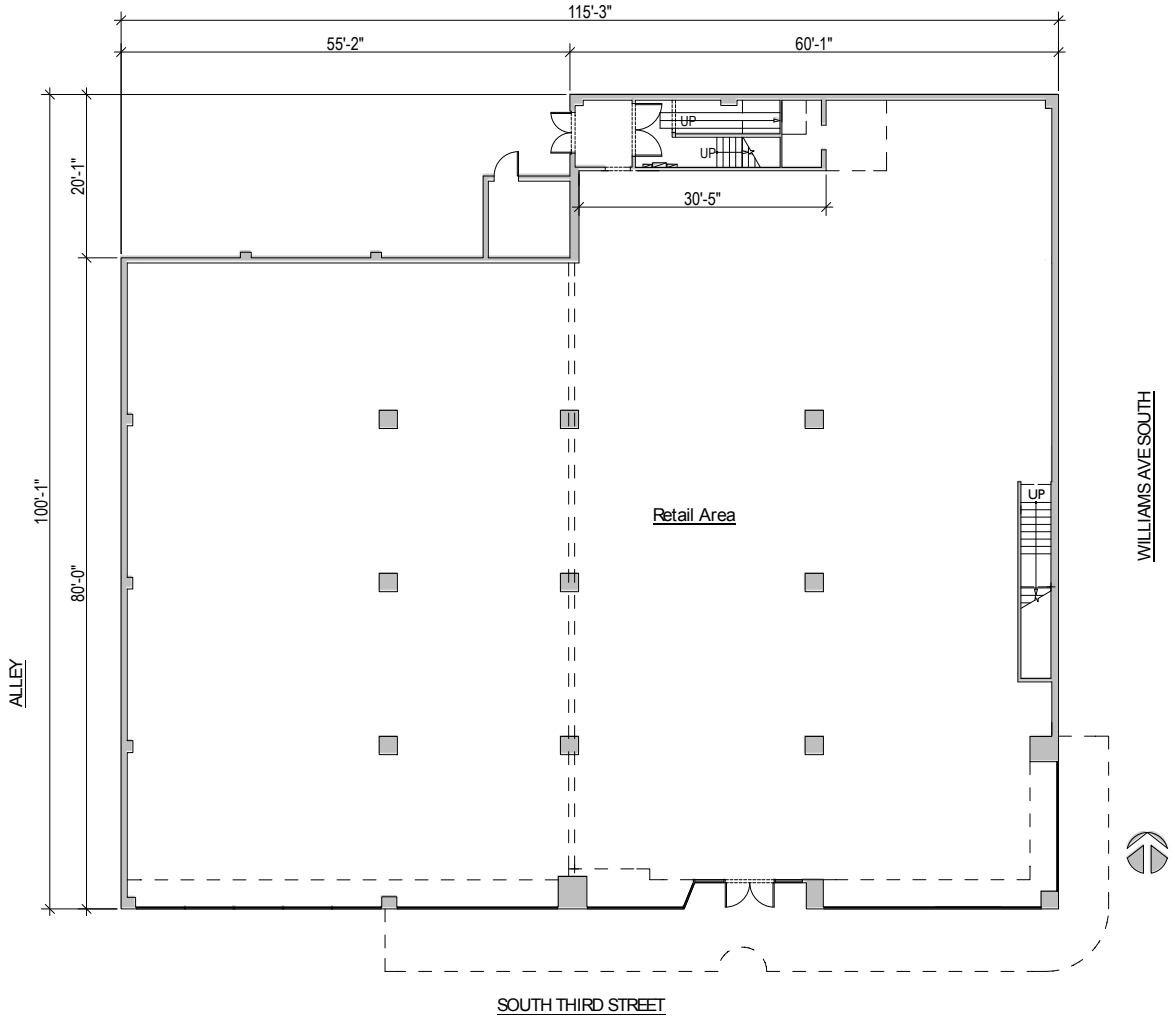
Other Mid-Century F.W. Woolworth Co. Stores – Washington State

Tacoma, WA – Woolworth Co. Store (built 1950)

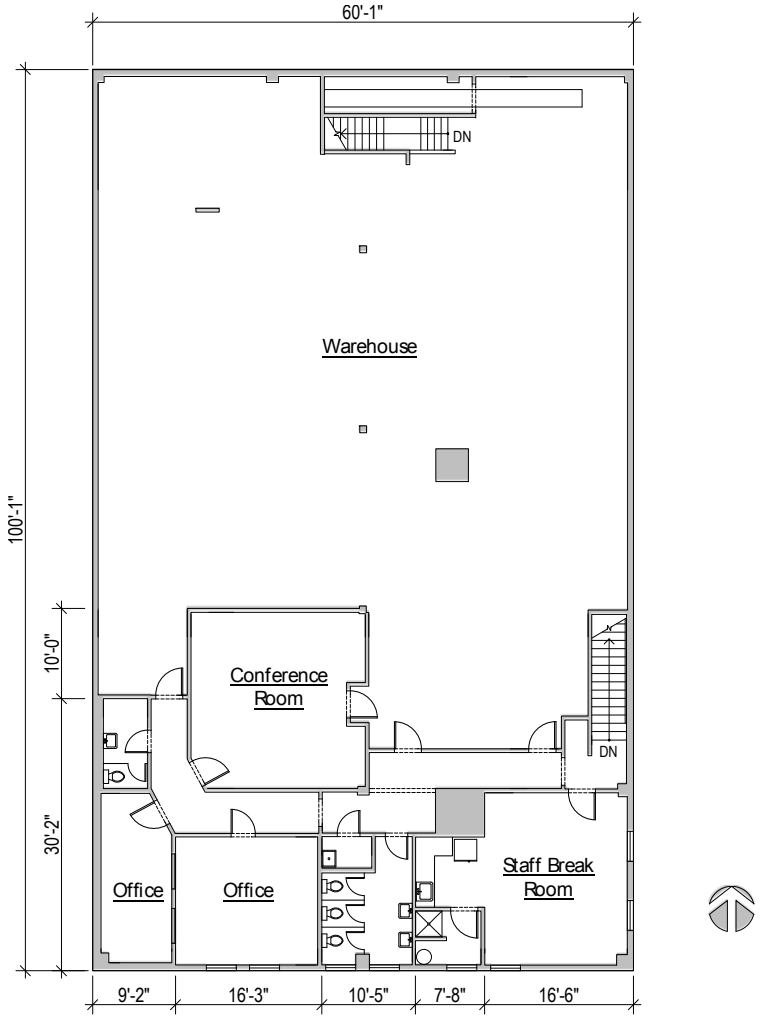
Longview, WA – Woolworth Co. Store (built 1949)

Lakewood, WA – Woolworth Co. Store (built 1957)

Bellingham, WA – Woolworth Co. Store (built 1959)



Renton Woolworth's Ground Floor Plan



Renton Woolworth's Second Floor Plan

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Woolworth's Store
City or Vicinity: Renton
County: King **State:** WA
Photographer: Caroline T. Swope
Date Photographed: May 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Photo #1 of 15 (WA_PierceCounty_RentonWoolworthBld_0001)
South façade (left) and east elevation (right), camera facing northwest

Photo #2 of 15 (WA_PierceCounty_RentonWoolworthBld_0002)
South façade, camera facing northwest

Photo #3 of 15 (WA_PierceCounty_RentonWoolworthBld_0003)
South façade detail I, camera facing northwest

Photo #4 of 15 (WA_PierceCounty_RentonWoolworthBld_0004)
South façade detail II, camera facing northwest

Photo #5 of 15 (WA_PierceCounty_RentonWoolworthBld_0005)
East elevation, camera facing northwest

Photo #6 of 15 (WA_PierceCounty_RentonWoolworthBld_0006)
East elevation detail, camera facing west

Photo #7 of 15 (WA_PierceCounty_RentonWoolworthBld_0007)
West elevation, camera facing northeast

Photo #8 of 15 (WA_PierceCounty_RentonWoolworthBld_0008)
North elevation, camera facing southeast

Photo #9 of 15 (WA_PierceCounty_RentonWoolworthBld_0009)
Main floor interior I, west (left) and north (right) elevations, camera facing northwest

Photo #10 of 15 (WA_PierceCounty_RentonWoolworthBld_0010)
Main floor interior II, north (left) and east (right) elevations, camera facing northeast

Photo #11 of 15 (WA_PierceCounty_RentonWoolworthBld_0011)
Main floor interior III, conveyor belt, camera facing northeast

Photo #12 of 15 (WA_PierceCounty_RentonWoolworthBld_0012)
Second floor interior I, conveyor belt, camera facing north

Photo #13 of 15 (WA_PierceCounty_RentonWoolworthBld_0013)
Second floor interior, storage room, south (left) and west (right) elevations, camera facing southwest

Photo #14 of 15 (WA_PierceCounty_RentonWoolworthBld_0014)
Second floor interior, office, west (left) and north (right) walls, camera facing north

Photo #15 of 15 (WA_PierceCounty_RentonWoolworthBld_0015)
Second floor interior, staff break room, east (left) and south (right) walls, camera facing southeast

F. W. Woolworth Co. Store - Renton
Name of Property

Pierce County, WA
County and State

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

name Cortona LLC

street & number 10232 63rd Avenue South telephone 206-419-9210

city or town Seattle state WA zip code 98178

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Renton
WESTERN WEAR
Renton
WESTERN
WEAR

Renton
WESTERN WEAR
AVAILABLE
425-255-9976

WESTERN WEAR

RENTON
DOWNTOWN
Renton
WESTERN
WEAR

ONE
WAY