

The City of Seattle

## Landmarks Preservation Board

400 Yesler Building Seattle, Washington 98104 • (206) 625-4501

November 15, 1979

LPB-288/79

### Report on Designation

Name of Property: East Republican Street Stairway

Legal Description: East Republican Street Right-of-Way (between Melrose Avenue East centerline and Bellevue Avenue East centerline). Portion of Pontius Addition and Portion of 1890 Supplemental Plot of Pontius 2nd Addition.

Owner: City of Seattle, Department of Engineering

On November 7, 1979 the Landmark Preservation Board conducted a Public Hearing to consider the designation of the East Republican Street Stairway as a Seattle Landmark. After receiving evidence and hearing testimony, the Board voted to approve the designation of the stairway and its Right-of-Way as a Seattle Landmark; those significant features of the structure noted in the approval of designation include:

- the concrete stairway structure in its entirety;
- the major planting elements on both sides of the stairway within the Right-of-Way.

The Board finds that the Stairway merits designation on the basis of satisfaction of the following criteria of Ordinance 106348, Section 3.01.

- 3.01 (3) It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political or economic heritage of the community, city, state or nation:

The East Republican Street staircase is a historical expression of the emphasis municipalities were placing on urban amenities as a result of the "City Beautiful Movement" during the first decade of the twentieth century. Its construction closely follows other manifestations of this attitude in Seattle, particularly the planning of parks and boulevards by the Olmsted Brothers, and the very popular Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition of 1909.

3.01 (5) It is an outstanding work of a designer or builder:

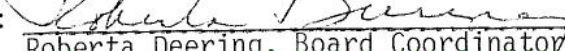
The staircase is one of the finest designs of its type produced by the City Engineering Design Staff, during the first two decades of the twentieth century. While solving the problem of vertical pedestrian circulation, equal emphasis was directed to the aesthetic opportunities of the site. The landings and belvederes provided rest stops and vantage points from which to experience vistas to the west while ascending the hillside. The recessed panels and coursing grooves render a sense of scale and refinement going beyond the functional requirements of the staircase.

3.01 (6) Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the city, and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhoods or the city:

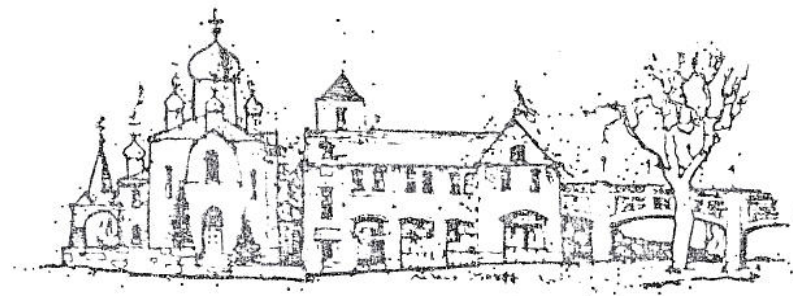
The staircase and its associated plantings create an important open space amenity for the immediate neighborhood in addition to providing a functional pedestrian linkage. The surrounding landscape elements within the Right-of-Way are essential to the character of the site and are extremely effective in contributing to the quality of the surrounding high-density residential environment. The total site represents a park-like environment strongly identified with the neighborhood and very human in scale.

Issued,

November 15, 1979  
Earl Layman,  
City Historic Preservation Officer

By:   
Roberta Deering, Board Coordinator

RD:rc



City of Seattle  
Department of Community Development/Office of Urban Conservation

# Landmark Nomination Form

LPB-242/79

Name East Republican Street Stairway Year Built\* 1910  
(Common, present or historic)

- Landmark
- Landmark Site
- Both

Street and Number E. Republican Street between Melrose Ave. E. and Bellevue Ave. E. Alley.

Assessor's File No. \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Description Plat Name \_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_ Lot \_\_\_\_\_

Portion of Pontius Add. and portion of 1890 Suppl. Plat of Pontius 2nd Add.

Present Owner City of Seattle, Engineering Dept. Present Use Stairway

Address Municipal Building, 600 - 4th Ave. Seattle, Wa. 98104

Original Owner Same Original Use Same

Architect unknown (Staff- Engineering Dept.?) Builder Barber Asphalt Paving Co.



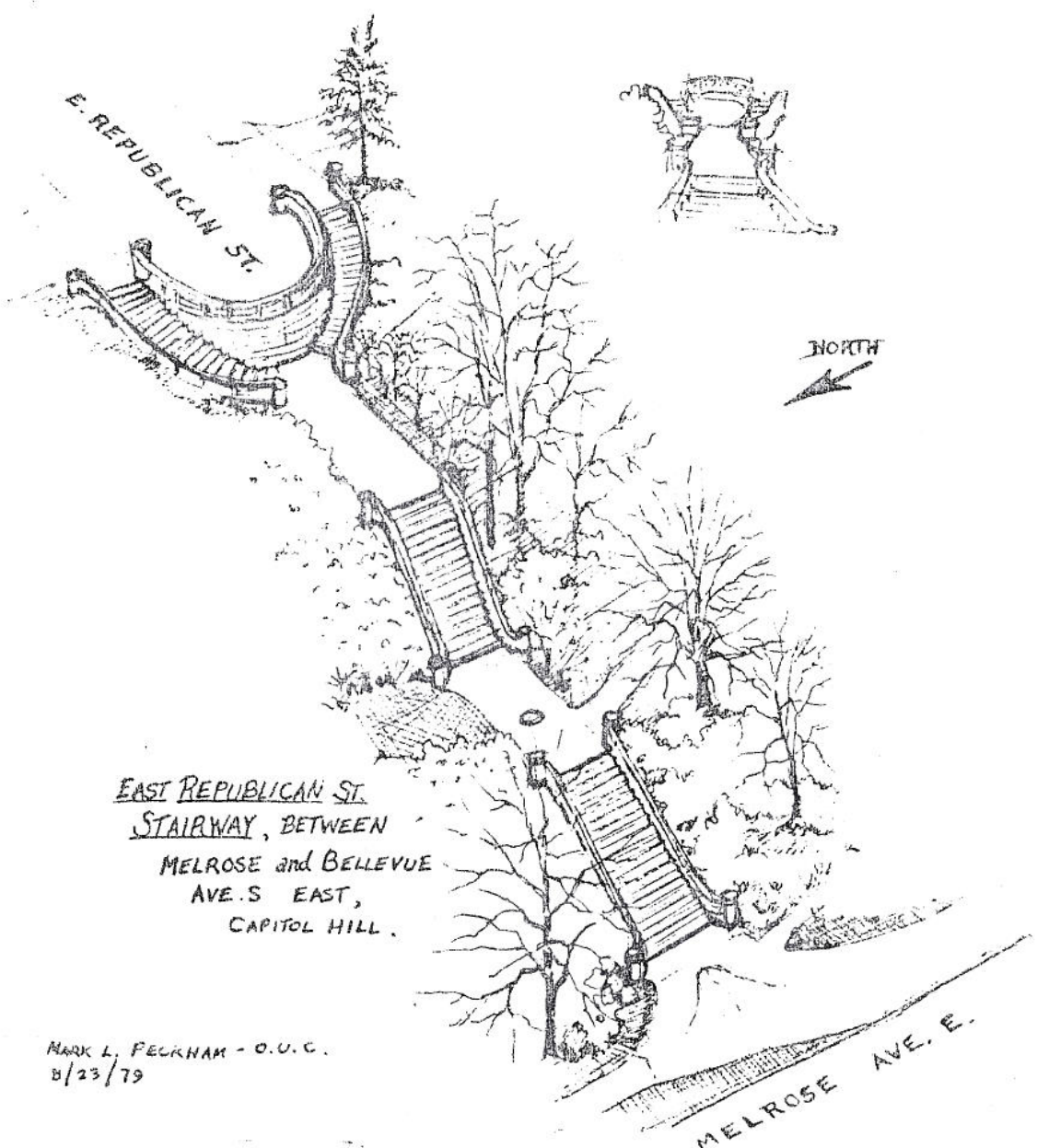
Description/Narrative:

This public stairway in the westerly end of the Republican Street right-of-way at the brink of Capitol Hill survives as one of the finer and more gracious examples of its type remaining within the City of Seattle, despite the loss to the I-5 freeway of more than half of the stairway as originally constructed in 1910. Construction took place during an era in Seattle when the City was placing an increasing emphasis (probably as an offshoot of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific effort) on urban amenities and public improvements. Some sort of vertical circulation was needed in this situation which was a not uncommon aspect of the city's hilly and often abrupt terrain. But, in an attempt to solve the functional problem, in this instance equal emphasis seems to have been directed to the aesthetic aspects of the design which in its total form included nine flights of stairs, three of them split into gracious and gradual pairs, a paved circle, and two semi-circular overlooks or belvederes. With the intrusion of the freeway, only the upper three flights and a single overlook remain.

The stairs and the retaining walls are entirely of unadorned, reinforced concrete, but handled in a sensitive manner through the use of grooving to render a sense of scale and refinement. Recessed panels cast into the balustrades are characteristic.

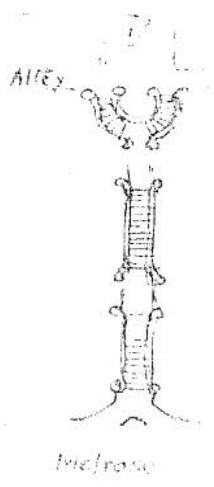
Traversing a park-like slope 35 feet in height and 146 feet in width, the existing Republican Street Stairway creates an important open space amenity for the surrounding neighborhood in addition to providing the functional pedestrian linkage. Landscape elements within the right-of-way are essential to the character of the site, including mature maple and ash with protective canopies to the south and laurel and ocean spray shrubbery effectively blanketing the north berm. These elements are extremely effective in contributing to the quality of the surrounding high-density residential environment.

Stairway constructed as part of L.I.D.#2100 authorized by City Council June 23, 1909, Ordinance #21194; Contract file #40078, April 11, 1910.

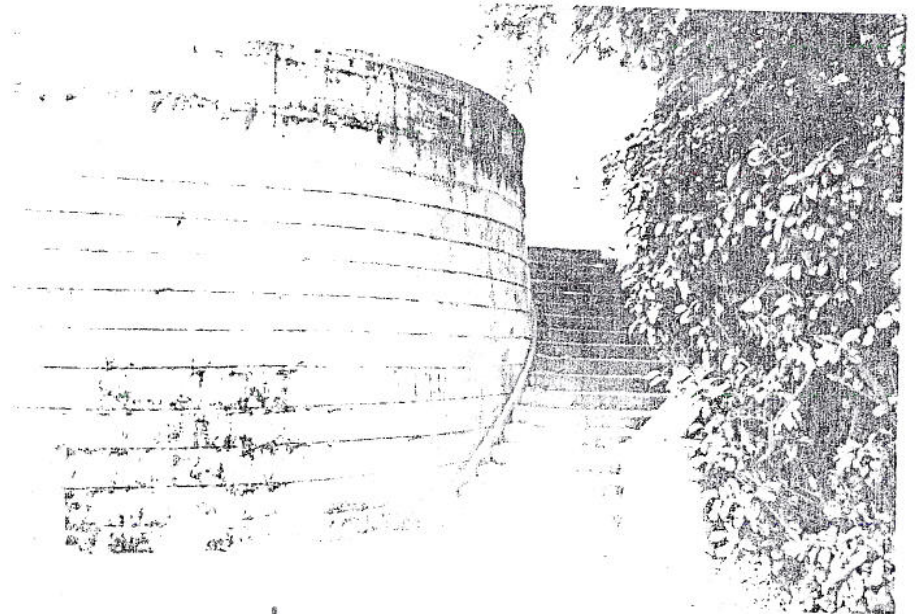


EAST REPUBLICAN ST.  
STAIRWAY, BETWEEN  
MELROSE and BELLEVUE  
AVE. S EAST,  
CAPITOL HILL.

MARK L. FELKHAM - O.U.C.  
8/23/79







Submitted by William Snyder & Helma Nelson, 308 E. Republican St. (8-2-79)

Research by: Mark Peckham, Office of Urban Conservation

Address 400 Yesler Building, Seattle, Wa.

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Date Sept. 12, 1979

Reviewed \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Preservation Officer

Date \_\_\_\_\_