

CITY CLUB BUILDING

~ SIGNIFICANCE ~

The original structure was one story and dated from 1897. It housed the Olympus Café, an elegant restaurant from 1897 to 1915. The top two floors were added in 1905 to accommodate a much larger Olympus Café, including the classically designed Venetian Room, the German Room, the Blue Room and the Lumberman's Club, which took up the whole of the top floor. The Seattle City Club occupied the building from 1908 to 1911. Subsequently, the City Club, described as a posh gentleman's club or gambling club, as well as the City Club Café, occupied the building from 1927 to 1933. The City Club Hotel occupied the upper floors from 1928 to 1965. The building facade stands out because of the combination of Beaux Arts and Art Nouveau architectural detailing. The ornate second and third stories were added in 1905 by Heins & La Farge, with Somervell and Cote as the local supervising architects. During the same period, Heins and La Farge, also with Somervell and Cote as supervising architects, were involved in the design of St. James Cathedral in Seattle's First Hill Neighborhood (St. James Cathedral was planned as early as 1903 and completed in 1907).

Heins & La Farge are perhaps best known for winning the competition for the design of St. John the Divine in New York City (still not considered "finished" as of this writing). In general, aside from St. James Cathedral, their work is not associated with Seattle. By 1891, when they won the St. John the Divine competition, Heins & La Farge were considered a relatively young firm and until that time, their only major commission had been the Roman Catholic Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Providence, Rhode Island. George Lewis Heins had studied at the University of Pennsylvania and MIT. Christopher La Farge, the son of the painter and stained glass artist John LaFarge, who had decorated H. H. Richardson's Trinity Church in Boston, studied at MIT and apprenticed in H. H. Richardson's office. Both Heins and LaFarge also worked for Cass Gilbert in St. Paul, Minnesota.

In the case of the City Club facade, a very small project in comparison to their big church projects and St. James, they brought a sensibility and sophistication, shaped by the Beaux Arts and other trends in the United States and Europe. For Seattle, the redesign of the City Club facade is unique, particularly for the time. The Lippy Building next door is much more in keeping with what was being built in the 1900's. Since this was a building meant for purposes other than a warehouse, the ornate redesign makes some sense. The restoration has kept the essential architectural elements of the storefront level and left the top levels intact. This is a unique and significant part of the historic Pioneer Square district.



Historic Name: Olympic Café

Name: City Club Building

Neighborhood: Pioneer Square

Year Built: 1897/1905

Style: Art Deco, Beaux Arts -
Neoclassical



Cartouche Inc.

CITY CLUB BUILDING

~ APPEARANCE ~

The City Club is a three-story masonry building above a basement level. Its only street facing First Avenue South elevation is clad in buff brick with an extensive metal ornamentation, all painted one color. The facade has dramatic Beaux Arts ornamental flourishes which also manage to have Art Nouveau tendencies. Other elevations are not visible from the street. The building is set between the plainer Lippy Building to the north and the Delmar / Terry-Kittinger Building to the south. On the First Avenue South facade, the ground level storefront is a tall space with piers of ornamented cast iron. The high storefront level is divided into two bays by a central pier, emphasized by a delicate engaged pilaster, which is topped by a fanciful cast iron floral capital, a representation of a bunch of grapes set between bulging floral shapes. The string course above the storefront is of metal. Above it is a single two level bay, striking in its use of elliptical and oval shapes, floral ornament and somewhat exaggerated Classical detailing.

The first level of this bay is a wide window divided by mullions into a series of thinner and wider shapes, mostly rectangles. At the center, is a casement window with a flat segmental arch and two thin rectangular lights on each side. Symmetrically placed to each side of this ensemble are a regular rectangle (close to a Golden section), and then a thin light to each side. The whole of this is then topped by an intricate elliptical lunette (or half ellipse) with a central light set in an oval frame. The elliptical nature of the design is further emphasized by a semi-elliptical mullion that ties in with the outer mullions of the fenestration below.

The second level of this bay is subdivided into three rectangular openings with casement windows topped by clerestories. These two levels are set in a frame that includes a continuous floral pattern. The middle of the horizontal band that makes up the frame is punctuated by a wild Beaux Arts ornamental confection, which includes an acanthus bracket, a scroll shape and a shell, with floating ribbons to each side. On each side of the entire floral frame are oval medallions, also festooned with hanging floral garlands. The whole is capped by a projecting cornice with exaggerated modillions. At each side of the façade, two modillions have additional vegetal hanging ornament. An egg-and-dart band runs the length of the façade between hanging vegetal modillion ornaments. What little is left to the eye of the exposed brick wall is buff brick.

