



# Trolley Times

North Slope Historic District Inc. Nov. 2022  
501(c)(3) Organization Volume 104

## HOLIDAY SOCIAL HEADLINES NOV. 17TH PROGRAM

Holidays are right around the corner, bringing up festive parties and celebrations. So, the Board of NSHD, Inc. wants to start the holidays off right with an evening of food, friends and conversation about holiday activities and what's happening in NSHD. The Board will co-host with the sponsors of the "Trolley Times," those invaluable supporters who make printing the newsletter possible.

Join us for a relaxing time among neighbors and friends, both old and new. Bring a neighbor, chat with Board Members and sponsors, and catch up on what's going on in our City and neighborhood.

Questions? Call Judy Martin, 253-572-3059. Note that the Social starts at 6:30.

**November 17th, Immanuel Presbyterian Church, 901 N. J. St.  
Enter on N. 9th St. Party starts at 7:00 pm**

### FROM THE EDITOR

In February, 2023, the NSHD, Inc. will be selecting aspiring *new Board Members* from our community of residents. If you are thinking you can help our Board of Directors with managing the activities of the organization, please think about standing for election at next February's meeting. We have a fluid number of Board Members, since our Articles of Incorporation call for no specific number, or even a maximum or minimum number.

The Board meets each quarter, before the community meetings, and discusses the issues and activities that need managing for the next quarter. Our committees are often in need of new members, too, so keep them in mind as you ponder whether you will stand for election; you can also join a committee without being a Board member. What is required is a yen to commit a few hours each month to neighborhood work.

Here are the Committees of the Board: Beautification Committee, Communication Committee, responsible for the newsletter, Neighborhood Outreach, distributes material about NSHD to new owners, Programs, Zoning, members represent NSHD's Board with the City Planning Dept., and Historic Preservation, dealing with teaching/monitoring how we all take care of our historic properties.

So, dust off your hands and get ready to help keep NSHD as historic as we can!

Julie Turner, Editor

# ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION DEFINE NSHD PURPOSE

By Julie Turner

The North Slope Historic District, Inc. was incorporated in December of 2003 as a tax-exempt corporation in the State of Washington, with a main purpose to preserve the history of the neighborhood. Prior to this time, the group had operated as a loosely-organized neighborhood organization.

The Steering Committee of the then-North Slope Historic District decided on the purposes or goals of the organization.

*"Section 1. Purposes. The purposes for which this corporation is formed are exclusively charitable, scientific, or educational and consist of the following:*

- ◆ Preserve the District's history
- ◆ Promote community welfare and neighborhood interaction
- ◆ Engage in community development, maintenance, and beautification

A big part of accomplishing this is encouraging preservation of the historic architecture of our homes by following the Guidelines of our Historic District. The guidelines are based on National Park Service's rehabilitation standards for historic structures.

The NSHD Board is dedicated to spreading the word to check with Landmarks before doing exterior work so you can be sure the work meets the rehabilitation standards.

**Call 253-591-5220 before you hammer!**

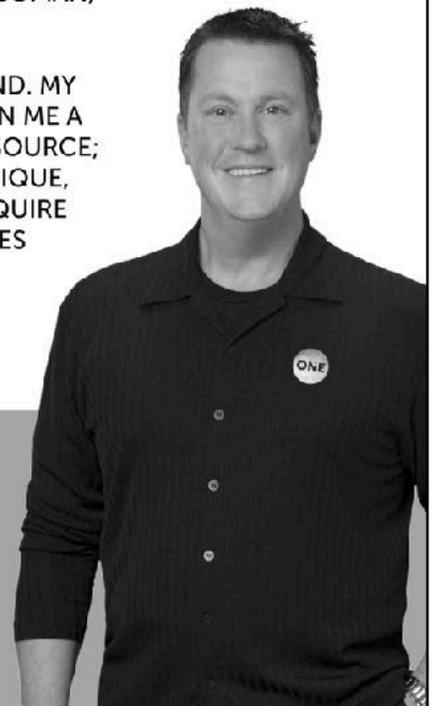
It takes each owner of an historic home complying with this mandate to ensure the architectural integrity of the District remains intact. Keeping the exterior architecture of our houses as original as possible preserves our investments in them - and preserves the history of a piece of Tacoma.

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation/rehab/stand.htm>

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## HELLO NORTH END NEIGHBORS!

I'M CRAIG TUTTLE, MANAGING REAL ESTATE BROKER OF TEAM TUTTLE AT REALTY ONE GROUP TURN KEY. I'M A BORN AND RAISED TACOMAN, PASSIONATE ABOUT ALL THINGS LOCAL. FOR OVER 20 YEARS, TEAM TUTTLE, HAS HELPED BUYERS AND SELLERS ACROSS THE TACOMA, SPECIALIZING IN HISTORIC HOMES IN THE NORTH END. MY DECADES OF SUCCESS SERVING THE NORTH SLOPE HAVE GIVEN ME A PERSPECTIVE THAT IS UNBEATABLE. I'M YOUR REAL ESTATE RESOURCE; I KNOW THIS NEIGHBORHOOD AS ONLY A LOCAL CAN. THE UNIQUE, CHARMING AND DIVERSE PROPERTIES OF THE NORTH END REQUIRE AN IN-DEPTH UNDERSTANDING OF THE HISTORY OF THE HOMES & OF THE CITY. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR HOME, OR ARE BEEN CONSIDERING LISTING YOUR PROPERTY, TEAM TUTTLE IS HERE TO HELP! REACH OUT ANYTIME, FOR ALL YOUR REAL ESTATE NEEDS.



## CRAIG TUTTLE : TEAM TUTTLE

OWNER/PRESIDENT OF REALTY ONE GROUP TURN KEY

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1302 N. I ST, TACOMA, WA 98403

# Early Tacoma Black Community Leaders Were North Slope Residents

by Marshall McClintock

Black families have lived in the North Slope Historic District (NSHD) since the 1880s and contributed to the diversity of our neighborhood and to Tacoma's development. The Arnettes, who lived at 914 N. Cushman Ave. were one such family. In 1937, however, the Federal government labeled them a "hazard" for merely living here.

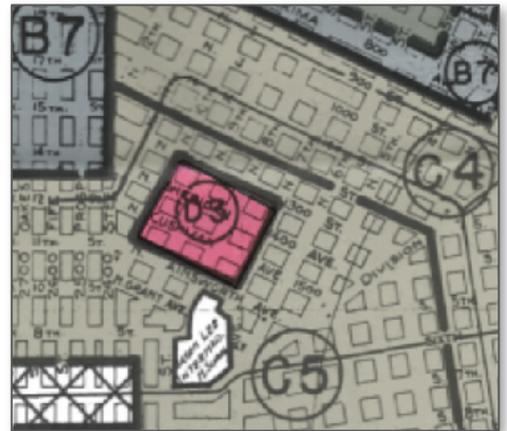
In 1933 Congress created the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) to provide emergency relief to homeowners in danger of losing their houses due to mortgage default during the Great Depression. In 1935 after most of these loans were issued, HOLC began creating color-coded maps to study local mortgage markets in major U.S. cities, summarizing the judgments of local real estate professionals about the perceived risk of making loans in various neighborhoods. The maps graded neighborhoods into four categories based largely on age and condition of the housing stock, but also included denigrating racial, ethnic and class considerations. The HOLC maps are now often associated with the practice of "redlining" or denying loans based on race or ethnicity.

Recent research, however, shows a more complex story. All banking at the time was local with local lenders knowing their neighborhoods far better than any Federal agency, and the HOLC maps weren't available outside the Federal government.<sup>1</sup> In fact, most HOLC loans went to homeowners, including Black homeowners, in areas designated "C" (yellow) "Definitely Declining," or "D" (red) "Hazardous" since these homeowners were least likely to get private sector loans.<sup>2</sup>

While racial discrimination in lending undoubtedly occurred over decades, HOLC maps are not the best evidence of that discrimination. Still, they do provide a snapshot of what local lenders and realtors believed about neighborhoods from quality of housing to racial makeup.

What does the 1937 Tacoma HOLC map say about the area where the NSHD is today? Most of the district, along with 63% of all Tacoma, was designated "C" (yellow) or "Definitely Declining" with "large, outmoded houses." But nine blocks between N. 7<sup>th</sup> and N 9<sup>th</sup> St. and between N. M St. and N. Ainsworth Ave. were labeled "D" (red) or "Hazardous." A map note says that this area of about 100 houses is "identical" to the surrounding "C" area

except that "...several Negro families (three known)" own property here. A search of the 1940



census, however, only identified two Black families, the Arnettes (914 N. Cushman) and the Simons (716 N. M) living there, and inexplicably, didn't include other Black families in the district, like the Webers at 1213 N. 7<sup>th</sup> St.

Intrigued, I set out to find out more about these supposedly "hazardous" Black families like the Arnettes. Oscar and Edna (Tennie) Arnette married in 1899 in St. Joseph, Missouri. Oscar was originally from Kentucky. Tennie's father, Harry Robinson, was a prominent businessman and politician in St. Joseph. Oscar and Tennie arrived in Tacoma about 1908. The family included three of their five children: May, Hughey (later Hugh), and Mina-Belle. Oscar worked as a chef at the Tacoma Hotel and later at the Commercial Club.

In 1918 Tennie and Oscar bought the house at 914 N. Cushman, where the family would live until 1959.

Continued on page 4

<sup>1</sup> For more on the recent research concerning the HOLC maps, see "Redlining Didn't Happen Quite the Way We Thought It Did." (*Governing Magazine*, 21 Sept 2021, at <https://www.governing.com/context/redlining-didnt-happen-quite-the-way-we-thought-it-did>)

<sup>2</sup> Price Fishback, Jonathan Rose, Ken Snowden, Thomas Storrs, "New Evidence on Redlining by Federal Housing Programs in the 1930s," *Journal of Urban Economics*, May, 2022.

In 1918 a 1 1/2 story house sat at the rear of the lot. In 1926, Oscar either moved the older house forward and added a full second story or removed it and built the house we see there today.

Both Oscar and Tennie were active in Tacoma's Black community. Oscar served as secretary for the newly formed NAACP chapter and became its president in 1922. He also served on the Tacoma Community Chest Campaign and was a member of the Order of Odd Fellows. Tennie was an active member of the Mothers Progressive Club, eventually serving as its president. She also served as vice-president of the Clover Leaf Club, which Nettie Asberry had founded in 1908 and is the forerunner of today's Tacoma City Association of Colored Women's Clubs. The family attended the First Church of Christ, Scientist at the corner of South I St. and Division Ave.

The children attended Grant Elementary and later Stadium High. They were accomplished musicians, giving several public recitals: May and Mina-Belle on piano and Hugh on violin. May and Hugh

attended the University of Puget Sound, while Mina-Belle attended the University of Southern California. While Hugh attended college, he also served as secretary for the local NAACP chapter, as had his father.

Tennie died rather suddenly in 1947. Daughter May and her husband William Lewis continued to live at 914 N. Cushman for another 12 years. Mina-Belle moved to Los Angeles, and later married. Oscar moved to Sacramento, where his eldest son lived and where he would own and operate two well-known taverns. He died in 1962.

In 1931 Hugh received a scholarship to attend Columbia University in New York City where he earned his Ph.D. Later, he taught at the North Carolina Agricultural & Technical University, a historically Black land grant university, and where he became the Chair of its Psychology and Teaching Department. He died in 1985 and is buried in Tacoma with his mother. For more information about Hugh, see [www.facebook.com/HistoricTacoma/posts/10160058570882292](http://www.facebook.com/HistoricTacoma/posts/10160058570882292).

In the racist language of the HOLC maps the Arnettes were supposedly "hazardous" to the neighborhood simply for the color of their skin. Their lives, however, tell a very different story. Like many other early NSHD residents, they worked, participated in the civic life of the city and sought good educations for their children. Despite the racism they surely faced, the Arnettes clearly contributed to our diverse neighborhood and to our city.

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Contact us at [news.TacomaNorthSlope@gmail.com](mailto:news.TacomaNorthSlope@gmail.com)

# Historic Design and Timeless Ways

by Roger Johnson, Past NSHD Representative,  
Landmarks Preservation Commission

I love this place! It feels so comfortable!

Ever hear something like this? Chances are you have and you were probably in an older building. Human affinity for some places and dislike for others is complex, but some basic reasons have been discovered. These elements can be applied to all matters of human habitat. What makes a house a structure that invites people to stay and feel good?

The North Slope Historic District is comprised of many older homes that have many of the elements that make them “user friendly.” The first element that is obvious is a welcoming entry. An obvious entrance that leads people to the home’s front door. A welcoming entrance also usually has a porch that is elevated so that

people can sit and observe the neighborhood: a connection to the community. It is elevated to provide a small sense of distance and privacy, thus a personal space. It is your space, but is part of the neighborhood.

Once inside, the same is true: small spaces which are part of the whole, large rooms that have smaller “cozy” areas, breakfast tables tucked into a nook, an inglenook in the parlor, window seats, bay windows, groups of comfortable seating, ceilings of different height. All these places are smaller, more personal nooks in a larger space. They invite you to stay, be a part of something more personal and still be a part of the big picture.

Another element that makes a space comfortable is “sameness.” Older homes have architectural features that repeat throughout the home but are slightly different place to place, visual and physical comfort and peace without boredom, comfort in the known.



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# Design Review in the North Slope Historic District

The North Slope Historic District encompasses more than 950 properties and is one of the largest residential historic districts in the nation. It represents the early history of homes of Tacoma's citizens from the 1880s to the 1940s.

The North Slope Historic District was created by its residents. It was designated as a Tacoma Historic District in 1995 and expanded in 1997 and 1999. It was placed on the Washington Heritage Register and the National Register in 2003.

## What Projects Require Design Review?

If your house is located within the boundaries of the city historic district and is a **contributing structure**, then changes to the exterior of your house *may* require design review. Review by the Historic Preservation Office and/or the Landmarks Preservation Commission is required if permits are required by the city. (see TMC 13.07.360) This includes changes to windows, siding, additions, chimneys, porches and decks.

(See the website at [TacomaNorthslope.org](http://TacomaNorthslope.org), Chap. 2 for a list of contributing structures.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission uses the North Slope Design Guidelines, and the US "Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties" to evaluate the appropriateness of proposed alterations.

## Your project will require Landmarks Preservation Commission review if:

- ...it is a new construction project or demolition, or
- ...it involves a contributing historic structure, AND
- ... it involves exterior work, AND
- ... it requires a building permit.

## A project is exempt from review if:

- ...it involves a non-contributing structure, but does not involve demolition, or
- ...the City does not require a permit, or
- ... the project does not involve any exterior work, or involves plumbing, sewer, electrical or landscaping work.

# PROUDLY INTRODUCING

**Merrill Gardens at Wright Park** is conveniently located in the charming Stadium District neighborhood. Our new senior living community will provide residents with sweeping views of Mount Rainier and Commencement Bay. With spacious apartments, stunning common areas, and a variety of amenities to serve you, Merrill Gardens will offer a wonderful place to call home.



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## Eye on a Sponsor

We are proud to announce that Merrill Gardens at Wright Park will be opening soon. Our senior living community is conveniently located in the heart of the historic and charming Stadium District neighborhood in Tacoma. Located next to Wright Park, our location offers easy access to a wide variety of amenities, parks, museums and more!

Our new senior living community will provide residents with sweeping views of Mount Rainier, The Cascades, The Olympics, and Commencement Bay. With spacious apartments, stunning common areas, and a variety of amenities to serve you, Merrill Gardens at Wright Park will offer a wonderful place to call home.

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Our apartment reservations are going quickly! To learn more about what we have to offer, please call us at (253) 258-3565 or visit us online at [merrillgardenswrightpark.com](http://merrillgardenswrightpark.com).

# Tacoma's Original Condo?

By Ruth Tweeten

Long before the term “condominium” crept into our modern American Lexicon, the proud brick building at 915 North M Street may have been Tacoma’s original condo. Or maybe not. Several current owners, including this writer, were told prior to purchase that the six large units were sold separately when first available for occupancy 100 years ago. Those same current owners have been happy to claim status as the first condo of Tacoma’s folk history, secure in the knowledge that this honor might not be easy to disprove. (Never mind it made a fine selling point for their realtors.) But in the name of truth in journalism, and *The Trolley Times* in particular, a visit to the Northwest Room of the Tacoma Public Library was warranted . . .

As pictured in *The Tacoma Ledger* on September 10, 1922, “915” was the newest of three residential buildings in the 900 block of North M constructed by Albert Miller, prolific Tacoma builder/contractor in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Close by “915” are The McKellar Apts. (originally The Orchard, then re-named The Holly), built in 1917 on the corner on 9<sup>th</sup> and North M, and The Alberta (1911), named after the builder and where Albert Miller remained owner and where he lived at the time of his death in 1935.

But who owned “915”? While names of early residents are listed, no one is designated as an owner for fifteen years until in 1937 when units were perhaps beginning to be sold separately.

Current owners must be content with “915” being an early condo—even if not the original.

This does not mean, however, that early listed “915” occupants are not of interest. In particular, in 1928 the well-known Tacoma architect C.A. Darmer is listed as occupying one unit. This is especially curious since in 1925 and 1926 Darmer is listed as an occupant of The Kellogg, a building he designed at 502 North J. Is there a connection? Yes, but perhaps a loose one. Back in 1898 C.A. Darmer designed the “Supervisor’s Lodge” (Visitor Center) at Point Defiance. And the contractor for this beautiful historic structure? Albert Miller. Of interest, Miller was also the contractor for the Blue

Mouse Theater on Proctor which will be celebrating its centennial next year.

Unique to the construction of “915” a hundred years ago are original conduit wiring (rather than the more common knob and tube) and a perimeter



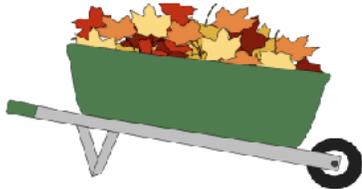
drain to relieve pressure to the concrete basement floor. Other significant features are dumb waiters from the basement to each unit on Floors 1-3 and original open sun porches, now enclosed. Also of interest, none of the two bedrooms per unit had heat sources. Prior to rectifying this situation, this owner/writer woke up to a frozen plant near the bed. Brr . . .

Happy 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday, “915,” early Tacoma condo!

# PUTTING YOUR YARD TO BED FOR THE WINTER

By Angie Clark, Master Gardener

November is a great time to plan your garden for the coming year. It is time to think about what was good or bad this year, and if you want to make any changes for next spring. Think about your choices - want more perennials or shrubs, add more annuals for color, note which veggies did well and which didn't. Perhaps you may decide to divide your garden into a color palette like Claude Monet did in Giverny!



Now is the time to think about your **winter garden**, too. To have color in the garden all winter a red twig dogwood is a great addition, as are ornamental kales and pansies, which can survive here through snow and frost. I am writing this in September and I still have pansies I planted last October.

This is also a great time to **plant bulbs**. Most need 10-16 weeks in the ground with below 45 degree weather, which is not a problem west of the Cascades. If a heavy freeze is expected protect the planted area with 3"-4" of compost, leaves shredded (with the mower), or mulch or pine straw.

November is a good time to gently **dig the dahlia tubers** up with a fork and divide them. Try to retain a part of the stem with the root as that is where you will find the 'growing eyes' for next year. Store in damp (not wet) peat moss or like material and store in a cool (not cold) basement or garage. They must not freeze.

As the lawn will not need watering at this time of the year, this is a good time to **check your watering devices**, including, sprinklers, timers

and hoses. W.S.U. suggests **fertilizing your lawn** (but not plants and bulbs) with a slow release 3-2-1 fertilizer, which provides nutrients slowly through the winter. Make sure to keep leaves raked off the lawn, and if a heavy frost occurs try not to walk on the lawn as your steps may damage it. After the last mowing **have your mower serviced** so it will be clean and sharp for spring.

**Clean flower beds** of leaves and other debris and mulch well. Roses can have large canes trimmed to prevent wind damage but major pruning should be done in the spring when new growth begins.

For gardening questions contact the Washington State Master Gardener Office at : [county.wsu.edu/pierce/mg](http://county.wsu.edu/pierce/mg) or call M-F between 10:00 am - 2:00 pm at 253-798-7170.

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