

15. WILLERTON'S DIAMOND PHOTO PLAY THEATER

Address	3019 E. Diamond Avenue (pre-annexation: 110 Diamond Avenue)
Built date	1911
Legal address	Hillyard Add, East ½ of Lot 10, Block 8
Parcel number	36343.1111
Style	Commercial Block
Architect/Builder	Unknown / W.L. Boyes
Classification	Historic Contributing

The tall one-story brick building at 3019 East Diamond has a south facing façade that stretches twenty-six feet wide and 100 feet deep. The building features a distinct dentiled cornice; large transom windows above the storefront windows; and a recessed front doorway. The storefront has been altered multiple times throughout its history and two partial windows are filled in. Nonetheless, the current storefront system is compatible and the historic steel storefront supports remain visible inside the building.

The building was constructed for William Willerton, a Hillyard booster and conductor for the Great Northern Railroad, by contractor W.L. Boyes in 1911 at as cost of \$4,000. Willerton lived with his wife in a house that was situated between the new theater building and another commercial building he had constructed earlier in 1911 at 3009 East Diamond (116 Diamond Avenue before annexation by the City of Spokane). The first theater operation to open in the building was the Diamond Photo Play, an early motion picture theater from the first decade of movie theater proliferation. The theater changed names to the Hillyard Class A Theater and then to the Hillyard Liberty Theater. It remained in use as a theater until the early 1920s when Willerton constructed a much larger theater to the west adjoining the 1911 theater. The new theater at 3115 E. Diamond was operated by the Rialto Theater Company and has since been demolished, leaving only this building to tell of Willerton's theater exploits.

In 1922, the Hillyard Rochdale Store moved into the old theater building. The store was a cooperative store that was collectively owned by railroad workers. Willerton hired contractor W.C. Corbett to complete tenant improvements to convert the theater into a store. The store did not last long though, and in 1923 Standard Oil took over the location as a distribution point for their automobile maintenance products. In 1927, the building was remodeled again this time for an automobile showroom for the Day-Majer Company Ford dealers.

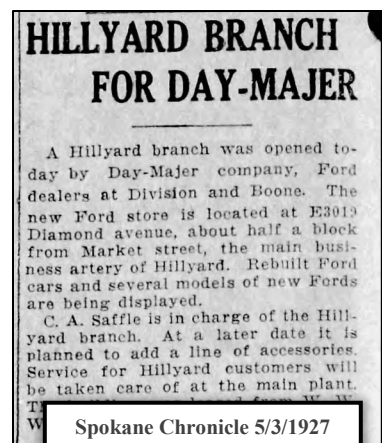
The building's auto related uses were short-lived and by the mid-1930s the building was converted to a Landry's Ice Cream Shop and Soda Fountain. In the 1940s it was Timm's Cafe operated by H.F. "Tiny" Timm, and in the 1950s it became the Freezer Café. In the 1960s it transitioned back into a retail space, this time as a second-hand store for St. Vincent De Paul. It has remained a retail second-hand or antique store since the 1960s.



Spokesman-Review 8/5/1911



Spokane Chronicle 5/31/1922



Spokane Chronicle 5/3/1927

16. WILLERTON BLOCK

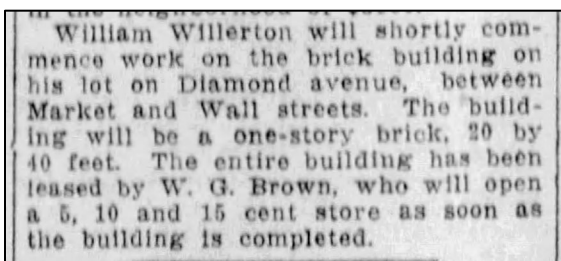
Address	3011 E. Diamond Avenue (pre-annexation: 116 Diamond Avenue)
Built date	1911
Legal address	Hillyard Add, West ½ of Lot 9, Block 8
Parcel number	36343.1117
Style	Commercial Block
Architect/Builder	Unknown
Classification	Historic Contributing

The short one-story Willerton Block has a south facing façade that stretches approximately twenty-five feet wide. The building is constructed of brick with a stepped brick cornice. The bulkhead is constructed of modern siding material and the storefront is a replacement system. The door is recessed in a vestibule and an illuminated sign projects from above the vestibule with the business name “Red Dragon” on the sign. The building is painted red. On the east end of the façade is a portion of the wall that remains from the demolished Rialto Theater which was located directly to the east.

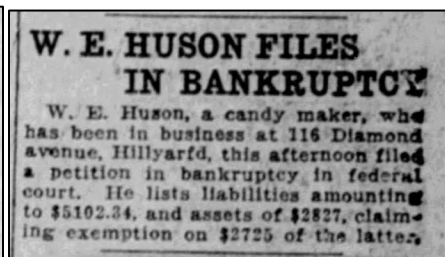
The Willerton Block, constructed in 1911, was the first of three commercial buildings constructed for William and Emma Willerton on Diamond Avenue in Hillyard. The Willertons lived in a house at 112 Diamond (pre-annexation address, demolished) that was situated at the back of the lots in which both the Willerton Block and the Photo Play Theater were constructed. The house sat between the two commercial building once they were constructed. William Willerton was a railroad conductor for the Great Northern Railroad and he, along with his wife, developed much of the commercial blockfront on the north side of Diamond between Haven and Market.

The first business to fill the space appears to have been a 5-10-15 cent store, followed by a confectionary and lunch counter. The confectionary and lunch counter had multiple different operators until 1922 when the business filed for bankruptcy. Then the building transitioned into a variety store.

By 1935, less than two years after the end of Prohibition, the building became home to a beer parlor and it has remained in food and beverage service since. One of the longest running establishments was Gene’s Tavern, opened by Italian immigrant Eugene S. Bafaro around 1940. Gene operated the business up until 1949, but the business retained the Gene moniker until the late 1980s. Subsequently it was Ray and Sam’s Bar and then Chubbie’s Bar. The current tenants, Red Dragon Restaurant, moved into the space around 2010 and continue to operate there in 2024.



Spokesman-Review 6/18/1911



Spokane Chronicle 12/1/1922



Spokesman-Review 6/8/1946

17. YUKON BLOCK

Address	5006 N. Market Street (pre-annexation: 535 Market Street)
Built date	1907
Legal address	Hillyard Add, part of Lots 5-6, Block 13
Parcel number	36343.1809
Style	Commercial Block
Architect/Builder	Unknown
Classification	Historic Contributing

The Yukon Block is a two-story formed concrete block building with a cast concrete cornice. This building utilizes the same construction methods and materials as the Hillyard Laundry Building, the Nebraska Building, and the Bell/Victor Block. Builders used manufactured cement blocks to create a veneer of simulated cut stone and brick construction. All those buildings share the same type of decorative molded rooflines and cornices. Letters that spell the building's name, "YUKON," are located at the top center of the facade. The street level façade has been altered on the Yukon Block and it is currently clad with diagonal wood siding that is reminiscent of Buckaroo Revival styling that was popular in the 1970s and 80s. The building has replacement window units on the second floor. The entrance is recessed in a deep vestibule.

The Yukon Block was developed by Mr. Eames (Frank or H.E. Eames) who appears to have also developed the Nebraska Block directly adjacent to the Yukon Block to the north. Construction on the building was completed in 1907 at a cost of approximately \$10,000 and Mr. Eames moved his family into the upper floor residential unit upon completion.

The Yukon Block's upstairs living space was converted to single occupancy apartment rooms that were rented on a short- and long-term basis. The first-floor storefront was occupied by a variety of tenants including the Bon Ton Restaurant (1920s), U-Need-It Grocery and Meats (1930s), Singer Sewing Machine Shop (1940s), Royce Photo Studio operated by Lena M. Royce (1940s), Burchett Photo Studio Hillyard Location (1950s), H.H. Trowbridge Jewelers (1960s), and the Carat Shoppe (1970s).



HILLYARD, July 24.—(Special Correspondence.)—Mr. Eames has moved his family into the rooms on the second floor of his new block, just completed on Market street.

Spokane Chronicle 7/24/1907

R. O. Parak Purchases Yukon Building in Hillyard for \$7500—

Spokesman-Review 1/3/1909

Tripps Grocery—N. 4601 Nevada.
U-Need-It Grocery—N. 5006 Market.
A. H. Urbahn—2909 N. Maple.

Spokane Chronicle 5/28/1931

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Spokane Chronicle 4/17/1948