

# Staff Report and Findings of Fact Nomination to the Spokane Register of Historic Places Cook-Abele House – 1032 North A Street

## FINDINGS OF FACT

- 1. SMC 17D.100.090: "Generally a building, structure, object, site, or district which is more than fifty years old may be designated an historic landmark or historic district if it has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the city, county, state, or nation."**
  - Originally built in 1905; the Cook-Abele House meets the age criteria for listing on the Spokane Register of Historic Places.
- 2. SMC 17D.100.090: The property must qualify under one or more categories for the Spokane Register (A, B, C, D, E).**
  - The Cook-Abele House is significant under three categories as established in Spokane Municipal Code. The house is significant under **Category C** due to its association with architect Julian Abele. It is significant under **Category B** due to its association with Elizabeth Cook and her husband John Cook III. The house is also significant under **Category A** due to its association with home front housing initiatives during the WWII period.
  - The Cook-Abele House is exceptionally significant under **Category C** in the area of architecture as the work of master architect Julian Francis Abele. Abele has over 200 attributions nationwide including the Widener Memorial Library at Harvard University (1912–15) and Philadelphia's Central Library (1917–27). He was also the primary designer of the west campus of Duke University (1924–54). At least twenty-five of Abele's attributions have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, ranking him among the most represented architects on the National Register. The Cook-Abele House, designed for his sister, was among his earliest designs and it is likely the only example of his work in Washington State (or anywhere west of the Mississippi River). Additionally, the Cook-Abele House is among Abele's few attributions that was not commercial or institutional in nature.
  - The house is also significant under **Category B** due to its association with Elizabeth Cook, Julian's sister, and with Abele's brother-in-law, John F. Cook III. Elizabeth Cook was an accomplished artist who exhibited her hand-crafted windows and innovative ropework at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. John F. Cook III also rises to the level of significance for a Category B nomination. Cook was from a prominent and wealthy Black family with roots in the nation's capital. Cook moved out west to northern Idaho in the 1890s where he was elected mayor of the town of Bonner's Ferry (previously known as Bonnersport) as the town's only Black resident. A graduate of Howard University, he was the town's pharmacist and postmaster.
  - Additionally, and unrelated to Abele, the Cook-Abele House is eligible under **Category A** in the areas of military and social/humanitarian due to its association with home front initiatives during the World War II period. Spokane's population ballooned during the early 1940s as war workers flooded to Spokane to work in wartime factories and related industries. Demand for housing skyrocketed for the first time since the first decade of the 20th century. The federal government developed and initiated the innovative out-migration housing program which encouraged folks to move out of their houses in the city's core and to then convert their vacated house into multi-family units for war workers. The work was paid for by the government and special zoning exceptions were allowed for these units to be placed in single family zones. As part of that program, the Cook-Abele House was converted to multi-family in 1943.
- 3. SMC17D.100.090: "The property must also possess integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association." From NPS Bulletin 15: "Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance...it is not necessary for a property to retain all its historic physical features...the property must retain, however, the essential physical features that enable it to convey its historic identity."**
  - The Cook-Abele House has experienced changes to the exterior, many of which occurred during the mid-century period when it was converted to multi-family as part of a war housing program. Some of those mid-

century changes have developed significance of their own. Furthermore, a more flexible interpretation of integrity is appropriate in this case since the house is exceptionally significant due to its association with architect Julian Abele and first resident Elizabeth Cook and her husband John Cook III. The house retains sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship to convey its historic character from the period of significance.

**4. Once listed, this property will be eligible to apply for incentives, including:**

Special Valuation (property tax abatement), Façade Improvement Grants, Spokane Register historic property plaque, and special code considerations.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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The **Cook-Abele House** is eligible for listing on the Spokane Register under **Categories C – Architecture, B – Significant Individuals, and A – Broad Patterns of Spokane History.**

Preservation Officer Review: Megan Duvall  
Nominations Committee: Pending  
Landmarks Commission Review: Pending

Report: 5/3/2024  
Site Visit: 5/1/2024  
Hearing: 5/15/2024