

# Staff Report and Findings of Fact Nomination to the Spokane Register of Historic Places Marcus & Augusta Elias House – 925 S Cedar

## 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 1909; the Marcus & Augusta Elias 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 Elias House meets Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places under both **Category A & C**, as a house that is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our local history and a property that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and period of construction.
  - Under Category A, the Elias House was the epicenter of women's gatherings: clubs, card parties, and other social events at a time when women's activities were mostly confined to residences. Mother Augusta and daughters Elsa and Marguerite were frequent hosts in the Elias House, where they shared their love of entertaining alongside their business activities. The Elias family opened one of the first women's and children's "ready-to-wear" clothing stores - the Spokane Sample Store Co. when they relocated to Spokane in 1905. After that closed in late 1911, it reopened as the Ladies Specialty Shop a few months later, still an off-the-rack store for women. Both Elsa and Marguerite were employed in the family business as soon as they graduated high school, starting as bookkeepers and working their way up to clerks and managers. They ran the Ladies' Specialty Shop until it closed in 1944.
  - Architecturally significant, the Elias House is eligible for listing on the Spokane Register of Historic Places under Category C as a property that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and period of construction, combining two styles of architecture and exemplifying a transitional time in Spokane's vernacular architecture when Queen Anne Free Classic was fading from popularity and Craftsman was on the rise.
  - The Elias House, constructed in 1909, is most closely aligned with the Queen Anne Free Classic style, but includes some characteristics of the early Craftsman style in Spokane with its sleeping porches and simplified ornamentation. The Elias House mainly exhibits qualities of the Queen Anne Free Classic with its Classical columns, pedimented entryways, and large wrap-around porch. Other Queen Anne Free Classic characteristics shown in the Elias House are the front gable roof with wide, overhanging enclosed eaves; asymmetrical façade with a full-width wrap around front porch; console brackets exposed in the gable of the primary façade; multiple roof planes and gabled dormers; and bay windows to avoid smooth wall surfaces.
  - The Marcus and Augusta Elias House exemplifies the transitional approach to architecture that occurred regularly in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even so, it is a largely intact example of a later Queen Anne Free Classic with many typical features of the style. The house contains outstanding integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association and is in excellent condition.
  
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 Elias House is well-preserved and is architecturally significant as an excellent example of the Queen Anne Free Classic style as it transitioned into the emerging Craftsman aesthetic.

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

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

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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The **Marcus & Augusta Elias House** is eligible for listing on the Spokane Register under **Category A – Broad Patterns of Spokane History and C - Architecture**.

Preservation Officer Review: Megan Duvall  
Nominations Committee: Bradley, Nunemaker, Rast  
Landmarks Commission Review: Pending

Report: 11/9/2022  
Site Visit: 11/2/2022  
Hearing: 11/16/2022