



John Graham, Sr.

A Seattle Landmark *(And Consummate Yachtsman)*

SYC Men's Lunch Program

8 September 2022

Naomi Medley, Candidate Emcee



ca. 1902

The Early Years ...

- Born John Corkhill, Jr. in 1873, either on the Isle of Mann or Liverpool, England.
- Was the son and grandson of builders.
- Had no formal architectural education, but apprenticed to architects and/or builders in Liverpool.
- He was a life long world traveler, and first visited Seattle in 1896, and then emigrated to the United States in 1900 where he assumed his mother's surname of Graham. (No immigrations records where ever found.)
- Came to Seattle in 1901, and was naturalized in 1904.
- Married Hallie Jackson on New Years Day, 1907, and had one son John (Jack) Jr, one daughter Catherine Elizabeth (Betty), and one step daughter Helen Jackson.

The Architect.

Early Partnerships & Associations

- Posted a classified ad in the Seattle Times for “John Graham, Architect” in 1901.
- Formed brief partnerships with Alfred Bodely (1904-05), and David Meyers (1905-1910) where he designed several buildings for the 1909 Alaska-Yukon Exposition with Meyers, including the Agriculture Building.
- Was an active member of the Arctic Club.
- Developed a close relationship with Henry Ford during the Model T’s development.
- Served as the Secretary of the Washington State Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1906, and president in 1908-1909.



*“Secretary’s Report,
Architect’s Association of
Washington”*

c. 1906 Cartoon by
Edwin F. Brontze

The Yachtsman:

- As an avid sailor he was a member of the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club and Royal Victoria Yacht Clubs, and also the Elliot Bay Yacht Club.
- Developed a life long friendship with Ted Geary who designed his first large yacht the Ortona, a 40 foot gaff-rigged yawl, which was completed in 1913.



The Yachtsman Architect:

But before that he designed the first SYC clubhouse in West Seattle, which was completed in 1909 ... the year that EBYC and SYC consolidated.



The Architect (a product of his time):

- In 1889 the Great Seattle Fire destroyed much of downtown and the waterfront.
- The Great Northern Railway extended its western terminus to Seattle in 1893.
- And the Yukon Gold Rush of 1896-1899 saw a great deal of traffic through the Seattle seaport, with a resulting economic boost.
- Between 1890 and 1900 the population of Seattle doubled to 81K. And between 1900 and 1910 it grew exponentially to a quarter million!

The result ... Seattle's first great development boom!

By 1910 John Graham was well positioned leave his former partnership and become the founding principal of John Graham and Company.

The Architect:

His close association with Henry Ford got him named “supervising architect” for over 30 new assembly line plants, including those in Seattle, Long Island NY, Chicago, St. Paul, Dallas, Toronto, Montreal, and Windsor, ON.



Ford Assembly Plant at Fairview & Valley, 1913

The Architect

The Joshua Green Building, located on 4th and Pike, was completed in 1913. This is a prime example of his use of classical terra cotta decoration.



The Joshua Green Building as it Looks Today

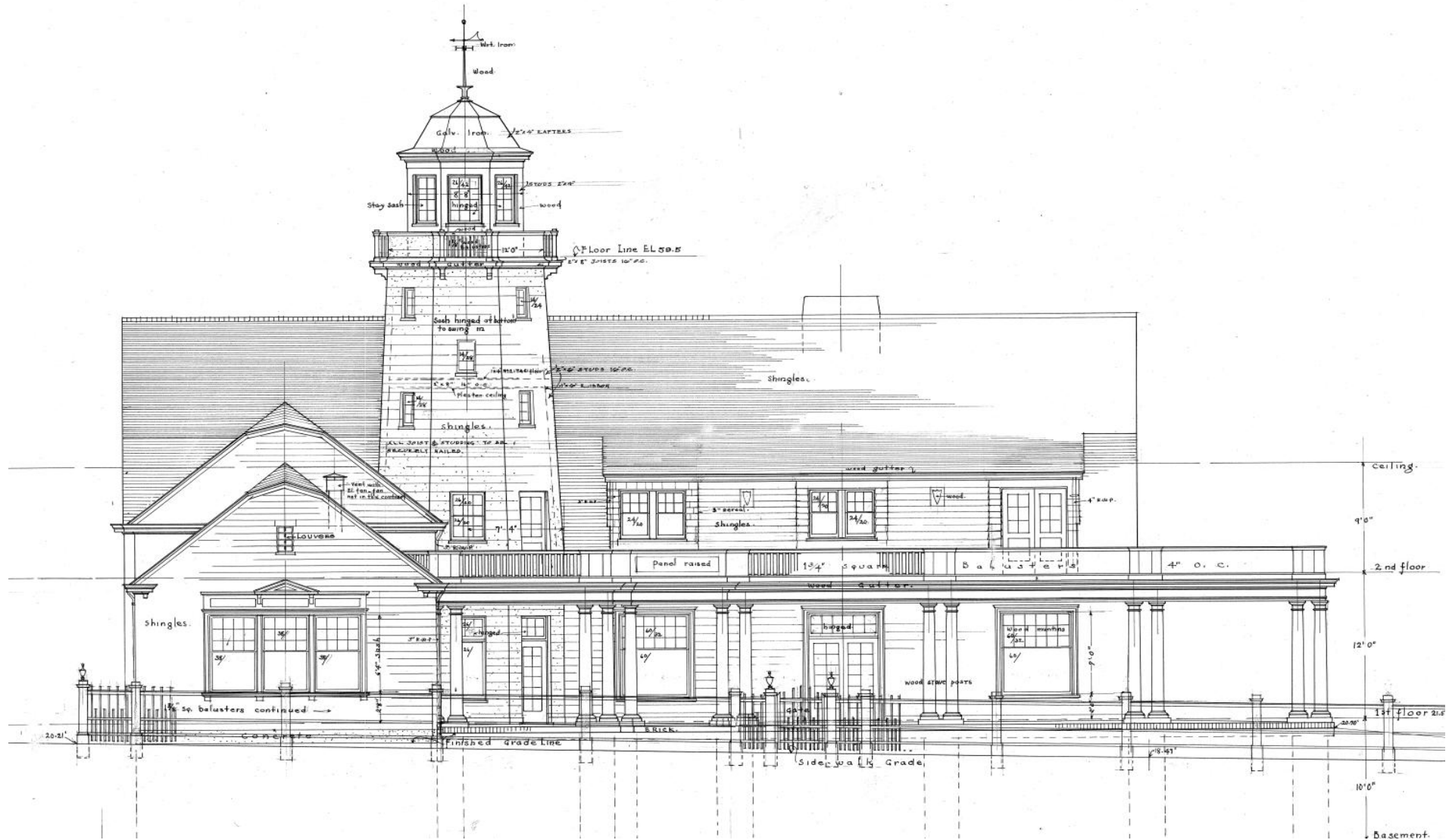
The Architect.

Donald Frederick and Nels Nelson began selling furniture after the Great Fire in 1889, and over time expanded their business to the point of hiring John Graham & Company to design their flagship store on 5th and Pine. Note the continued use of terra cotta as an exterior finish.



Seattle Flagship Store as it Looked upon Completion in 1919

The Yachtsman Architect, Part II:



c. 1919. Does this Building Need an Introduction?



Shortly Before Completion in 1920



Twenty Years After Completion - 1940



Today

The Architect :

The Roosevelt Hotel on 7th & Pine was completed in 1929 in the Art Deco style.



The Hotel Theodore Today.

The Architect :

The Exchange Building on First and Marion was completed in 1930, is another example of Graham's work in the Art Deco style popular in the 1920's and 30's.



The Exchange Building as it Appears Today.

The Yachtsman:

This prolific volume of work allowed him to afford the commissioning of a new yacht, once again designed by Ted Geary, built by Lake Union Drydock, and launched in 1928. The **Blue Peter** is 96 feet long and was originally fit with two 175 hp Hall-Scott gas engines that gave her a top speed of 12 knots.





Sketched from Photo by Grady

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The Architect:

- John Graham Sr. was still an avid world traveler, and in 1936 established a branch office in Shanghai. Over the years he also opened offices in Detroit, and New York.
- Management of the New York office was transferred to John (Jack) Graham, Jr. in 1937 where they were engaged in designing retail spaces until the start of WWII when they designed military and large FHA housing projects.
- Management of the Seattle Office was gradually transferred over to Jack until John Sr.'s retirement in 1945.

In 1953 he embarked on an around-the-world tour, during which he became ill in Hong Kong in 1955. He returned to New York where he died three weeks later.

His legacy

- The firm of John Graham & Company operated for 88 years until 1998 when it was folded into the DLR Group of Omaha, Nebraska.
- Much of the built environment of Downtown Seattle is attributed to him and the firm he built ... literally hundreds of buildings. Most notably the Space Needle.
- And the Seattle Yacht Club mainstation clubhouse has stood as the Club's landmark edifice and hub of social activity for 102 years.