

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Radio Station KGY  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

street & number 1700 Marine Drive NE  not for publication  
city or town Olympia  vicinity  
state Washington code WA county Thurston code 67 zip code 98501

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria

X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
WASHINGTON STATE SHPO  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

\_\_\_ entered in the National Register \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	
1		buildings
		district
		site
1		structure
	1	object
2	1	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

None

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/Professional

COMMERCE/Professional

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

foundation: WOOD

walls: WOOD: Plywood

roof: ASPHALT

other: \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

### **Summary**

Radio Station KGY building is a two-story wooden structure set entirely on pilings located on tidelands at the northern end of Olympia's so called "port peninsula." Leading to the main entry on the south façade is a wide, low-pitched gable wood canopy that covers a wood-plank walkway leading from an informal parking area to the south side main entry. From the parking, the walkway or "bridge" is reached by a short flight of wooden steps. The studio's four-foot wide eaves overhang the building exterior and give ample shelter to the deck or walkway which encircles the second floor of the building and, originally, the first floor of the building. The entry has floor-to-ceiling glass windows flanking the entry on the west side of the front façade. Large, fixed-in-place glass windows are also above the double-leaf main entry. The left leaf is a fixed-in-place panel with the station's KGY call letters. The right leaf serves as the main entry. All of these windows are separated by narrow wood mullions. The building is clad with vertical wood board siding. On the south façade are two banks of small, horizontal sliding windows which are framed with plain boards. A newer window of the same design has been cut into this façade between the original windows. The north side roof is a shorter gable than the south side. A second-floor deck and railing wraps around the north side extending to the east and west sides. A wooden stairway connects the two levels on the east side. The first-floor deck was originally in the same configuration but was enclosed in 1976 in a design by Bennett, Johnson, Selenes and Smith (BJSS). A walkway with a low railing similar to the second level still extends around the building on the first level. The north façade has an expanse of large rectangular windows which are separated by wooden strips. There are entries on both the first and second floors from the deck. The railings are narrow wooden pieces with widely spaced support pieces and slightly canted outward.

### **Setting**

KGy Radio Station is located at the north tip of land known as the port peninsula that is owned and managed by the Port of Olympia. The site is flat and the main building sits on pilings above the water. Landscaping is limited to three of four surviving conifer trees located off the southeast corner of the building and just west of the generator shed. These cedars were planted in a row by the Olsen family at the building's opening in 1960. The trees are thought to commemorate the station's move to the Budd Inlet shore in 1960 from its original 1922 location on the wooded St. Martin's College campus in nearby Lacey. The shoreline itself is hardened with rocks.

### **Radio Studio – (1960, Contributing)**

Key character-defining features of the building include, but are not limited to, the following:

#### Exterior

- A broad, side-gabled, saltbox style roof with the ridgeline oriented on an east-west axis.
- Two floors contained within a rectangular wood frame structure of 50' x 32' in dimension. The building envelope was designed to house the offices of up to 20 KGY employees. In addition to

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managers and the disc jockeys, staff would have included a sales force of up to seven persons, "traffic" manager, engineers, and receptionist.

- A 4' to 7' wide wood-plank exterior walkway edges the first floor on the east and west elevations. On the west side, the exterior walkway turns the southwest corner of the building and continues along the south side of the building to the main entry and to the pedestrian bridge.
- A 4' wide exterior walkway spans the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor north elevation and extends to about one-half of the east and west facades.
- Exterior staircase on the east façade links the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor to the exterior walkway on the first level.
- On both levels, the exterior walkway is edged with a simple wooden railing, slightly canted outward and about 4' in height. Supporting posts are variably spaced about 6 to 8 feet apart.
- Affixed to the vertical board wood siding on the west façade are "KGY 1240AM 96.9FM" in large bold letters and numbers painted in orange to match the color of all the building entries.
- A 48' long and 7' wide wood plank walkway (labeled as "Bridge" in the architect's drawings) connects the parking lot (and historically the transmission tower compound) to the main entry. The walkway is entirely covered by a shallow sloped, gabled roof with extended, broad eaves. The gabled roof of the walkway intersects with the broad south-facing building roof slope resulting in a dramatic geometric juncture. The walkway (or bridge) is clearly intended as a convenience to visitors for protection from rain; but it also adds a fun and nautical touch to the building as if it were a gangway for boarding a ship.
- The main entry is a double leaf threshold painted orange although only the right leaf of the threshold actually functions as a door. The station's call letters "KGY" are vertically affixed on the stationary left leaf of the threshold; the letters are painted gray that matches the color of the body of the building's gray and white paint scheme.
- In the southwest corner of the building, the reception area receives south daylight from floor to ceiling windows.
- Siding on the east, south, and west facades is vertical wood (probably cedar) panels painted gray. On the first-floor south façade three windows are aluminum sliders; the left and right windows are set within white painted spandrels (perhaps plywood sheets). The center (slightly smaller sliding window is inserted in the vertical wood board siding (see discussion about integrity).
- On the second floor, north-facing windows in the sales office area are original wood framed, custom-made windows that are hinged on the left (from the interior) side and open inward for natural ventilation. Alternating window panes are fixed-in-place and are in a continuous band across the façade but terminate at the floor to ceiling windows in the manager's office. Note: originally the first-floor north elevation fenestration plan duplicated that of the existing second floor windows. However, the first-floor fenestration was replaced in a 1976 renovation. Also note that it is not known why the north façade fenestration differs from the aluminum slider windows on the south elevation; though speculation has it that the north façade projects a more aesthetic, image-making quality especially when reflected in Budd Inlet waters. In contrast, the foreground for the south façade of the studio is more utilitarian being fronted by the gable-roofed walkway, parking spaces, the north terminus of Marine Drive, landscaping, and a small fenced-in compound that was formerly the site of the radio transmission tower.

### Interior

- Key spaces and features include the reception area that occupies the southwest corner of the building. This area receives full natural light from six fixed-in-place single-pane floor-to-ceiling windows that reaches the full height of the space where it meets the south facing roof plane.

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These large windows bring in light that make the space warm and inviting. The broad overhang of the eaves that project out from all four facades gives some shade to the room and all facades from direct light.

- The main entry door opens into a small vestibule with a pony-wall that provides separation from the open staircase. A sharp turn to the left brings one into the reception and visitor waiting area. Above the entry door are two large fixed-in-place, single-pane clerestory windows.
- Behind the reception desk, original double-paned windows afford a view directly to the adjacent broadcast studio; they are also canted for better sound insulation.
- Located in the northwest corner of the building, the broadcast studio has floor to ceiling windows on the west wall. A door with window added during the 1976 renovation provides access to the exterior walkway on the west side of the building. A key feature of the broadcast room is the facing of the original RCA transmitter and control panel that line the east wall. A slightly lowered ceiling is covered with original acoustic tile.
- The broadcast studio is accessed through what was historically the office for KGY news staff. From the newsroom, one enters a small ante-room with a built-in desk. This small ante-room was historically the news broadcast room where the news director would report news stories on-air from a microphone and mixing panel. In addition to the doorway, a window provides visual access between the news director and the disc-jockey in the broadcast studio. The news broadcast room has another door to a small room that historically provided service access to the radio transmitter for repairs/maintenance. The transmitter has been removed and the room is now used for storage and maintenance.
- Another key interior feature is the modernistic and elegant open staircase from the reception area to second floor offices.
- At the top of the stairs and to the left is the station manager's office. The room is slightly cantilevered over the reception area. Inside the office, the volume is open to the roof plane above with an interior window looking toward the reception area below. On the north side of the room is a sliding glass door and a corner window opening onto the exterior walkway affording sweeping views of Budd Inlet and the Olympic Mountains.
- Other than windows, wall surfaces in the reception/open staircase area, the broadcast room, and manager's office are vertical wood panel siding painted gray and echoes the vertical wood siding on the exterior.
- An east-west double-loaded corridor on both floors access studio and production rooms, offices, a lunchroom, restrooms and storage areas. The north side of the first-floor corridor is lined with re-lights that bring natural light to the hall. These re-lights have been covered but the windows and sash remain intact. The square inset ceiling lights are thought to be original. The linoleum tile floor in what is now called the "rack" room (labelled as a "work room" on the architect's floor plan) is also considered original and what would have been used throughout the building except in the more public spaces. Most interior spaces are now carpeted. Exit doors are located on both floors at the east end of the building that open onto the exterior walkways.
- Beneath, and supporting the building volume and its attached exterior walkways on a platform, the building is supported by pilings consisting of four rows of six columns and stringers. The pilings were driven into Budd Inlet tidelands.
- The entire parcel including tidelands and upland areas are leased to KGY Media Group by the Port of Olympia.

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### **Generator Shed - (1960, Contributing)**

To the east of the main Radio Studio building (on the land), is a small shed that historically housed the back-up power generator for the studio building and transmission tower before it was removed from the site. The generator shed was also designed by Wohleb & Associates and mimics the studio building with its saltbox roof and vertical board siding. However, the saltbox roofline runs in a north-south direction in contrast to the east-west roofline of the studio building. The shed is painted in a color scheme matching the studio building and is in good condition.

### **Transmitter Tower Foundation/Enclosure - (1960, Non-Contributing)**

A few yards directly south of the entry to the studio building sits the concrete foundation of the original transmitter tower. The foundation is a concrete square approximately 2' x 2' in dimension and flush to the ground. According to correspondence, the base initially supported a 150' transmission tower that was completed by mid-January 1960, a few months before the studio building was completed later that summer. In late 1960, KGY received approval to extend the tower height by another 50' feet to 200'. The orange and white painted tower were declared completed by December 16, 1960.

Today the original foundation and the microwave antenna area are enclosed by a wood vertical board fence approximately 20' x 20' in dimension. Presently installed on the original tower support foundation is a recent dish microwave antenna, owned and operated by a different radio broadcasting company. In 2009 at the behest of the Port of Olympia, the KGY tower was moved approximately 700' to the southeast of the nominated site and is not included as part of the nominated property.

### **Integrity**

The KGY Radio Studio building retains high level of architectural integrity, conveying its historic appearance from 1960 as well as original function, family ownership, and architect's and client's design intent. This includes an intact first and second level interior floor plans. A few of the rooms have changed function or have had minor alterations that reflect changing needs of the business over the past 60 plus years. Significant interior spaces (the entry/reception area, broadcast room, and manager's office) are intact. Other support and office spaces have undergone updates over the past 63 years.

Alterations are limited to the 1976 expansion of the first-floor interior which incorporated the enclosure of the exterior wooden walkway that originally spanned the length of the building's north façade. This work was designed by Wohleb's successor firm of BJSS. The expansion was made to accommodate larger offices and equipment on the first floor including a new transmitter in the broadcast room. To accomplish the expansion, the north wall was pushed 7' out to the edge of the deck. Thus, the walkway along this part of the building no longer exists. From outside, this alteration has the appearance of curtain wall construction with a band of new aluminum windows in a similar configuration as in the original design. These tripartite or double slider windows continues the original design intent for staff to enjoy views as well as bring natural light and ventilation into the broadcast room and other first floor office spaces.

Also of note is a change in fenestration on the south façade with insertion of a third aluminum slider-window on the first floor. This window was cut into the exterior vertical board siding and in-between the two original (and remaining) aluminum windows. It is assumed the window was added to bring natural light and ventilation to the music library when desk space was added to the room's use. The

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date of the window addition is unknown but could have been part of the 1976 renovation to provide office space for the station's expanding staff.

These changes convey the story of how the KGY company evolved due to changing staff needs and radio technology. The *water* side of the building alterations are only visible only to boaters or from a distance by waterfront property owners.

## Radio Station KGY Resource Table

<b>Resource Name</b>	<b>Status</b>
Radio Studio Building	Contributing
Generator Shed	Contributing
Transmission Tower Foundation/Enclosure	Non-Contributing

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### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

#### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMUNICATION

ARCHITECT

#### Period of Significance

1960-1976

#### Significant Dates

1960

#### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

#### Cultural Affiliation

#### Architect/Builder

Robert H. Wohleb & Associates (Architect)

A.J. Philips Construction Co. (Builder)

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### **Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Radio Station KGY in Olympia, Washington is historically significant at the local level under criteria "A" for its broad contributions to the history of communication in the south Puget Sound Region. The station began the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as an outgrowth of the work of Father Sebastian Ruth, a St. Martin's College Benedictine monk who pioneered radio broadcasting in Washington state's South Puget Sound region. At the time he started transmitting, his radio station (initially under the call signal of 7YS) was one of less than a half-a-dozen public radio stations broadcasting across the United States. Such transmission of radio waves over large geographic areas would bring massive change to the population of the world by allowing live and immediate communication to anyone with a receiver. As such, mass communication of news, entertainment, public service, and advertising followed.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century unfolded, KGY expanded to dominate the electronic media market in the region, particularly after it was purchased by Tom Olsen in 1939. He and his wife, Teresa, would contribute directly to the evolving radio station format and they understood the benefit of a station's public involvement, and listener engagement, all while keeping a high profile in their listening area. The nominated building is a direct outgrowth of the Olsen's oversight.

The nominated Radio Station, built in 1960, is also historically significant under criteria "C" as a resource that embodies the distinctive characteristics of its period of construction, mid-20<sup>th</sup> century modern design. Additionally, it represents the work of a local master architect, Robert Wohleb and his associate G. Stacey Bennett. At the time of its completion, the Wohleb firm was reaching the height of its impact. Their associate, G. Stacey Bennett, had just joined the firm a few years prior, and would bring a new energy, and new ideas to the company. Unfortunately, Robert Wohleb would die in a tragic boating accident just four years after the completion of the nominated building. However, his associates, with Bennett taking the lead, began a new era of architectural refinement in the community.

The period of significance begins in 1960, the year the building was completed and ends in 1976, the year the station was modified to take on additional staff and equipment needs. It was during these years that KGY solidified and sustained its status as a "virtual" community public space. These years also saw KGY enjoying healthy balance sheets and increased revenues from advertising and promotions. The number of employees also peaked in this time frame and the station increased its broadcasting power to 1000 watts, which expanded its listening area.

As of today, the station still operates from this location, providing the community with the latest news, weather, sporting events, and a variety of music (both on the 1240AM dial and 96.9FM dial). In 2022 KGY celebrated its centennial year of commercial licensed operations and is managed by the 4<sup>th</sup> generation of Olsen family descendants.

### **Seeds of KGY Planted by Father Sebastian Ruth**

The story of KGY begins in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on the wooded campus of St. Martin's College (now University) in what is now the city of Lacey. It was here that Benedictine monk Father Sebastian Ruth (known locally as "Father Sabastian") indulged his interest in radio technology.

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Reportedly in 1914 he received his broadcaster license after taking a qualifying test in Seattle. By summer of 1915, Sebastian began experimenting with voice transmission broadcasting “from his tiny but mighty transmitter of five watts...”<sup>i</sup> In September his first program aired from his 8’ by 10’ “wireless shack”<sup>ii</sup> which was located on the college campus. “The station (under the call signal 7YS, with a wavelength of 300, 450 & 600mhz) almost unbelievably was heard in 23 states, Canada, Alaska and Hawaii with its only six amperes. This was possible because of the dearth of stations and lack of electrical interference.” By 1916 it was one of just seven stations operating across the United States. Reportedly in 1921 the university added additional equipment for Sebastian and in April of 1921 he used the equipment to broadcast a live musical concert which was being given at Fort Lewis via a telephone line.<sup>iii</sup> “By January 1922, the number of stations had grown to 32 across the U.S. and listeners could look forward to regular programs from Sebastian on Sunday, Tuesday and Friday evenings from 8:30 to 9:30. It was a schedule that Rev. Sebastian kept during the 11 years at St. Martin’s.”<sup>iv</sup>

Apparently, the fledgling station’s popularity and expanded programming drew the attention of the Federal Radio Inspector in Seattle “who instructed Sebastian to quit broadcasting until the proper license could be procured.”<sup>v</sup> Given that mandate, he received the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) license with the official call signal of KGY on April 4, 1922, the date to which the company attributes its formal launch. Officially Rev. Sabastian’s license was the 110<sup>th</sup> license issued in the nation and was issued 18 months after the first such commercial licensed broadcast was heard in November 1920 by station KDKA in Pittsburgh.<sup>vi</sup>

In 1925 Rev. Sebastian moved his transmitter from the wireless shack to a log cabin nestled in the St. Martin’s campus woods. It was this unlikely lair that inspired the music and programming that branded the station as “KGY, Where the Cedars meet the Sea.”<sup>vii</sup> Early programing varied from a wide selection of music (Opera, Waltz, Jazz, etc.), college news notes, and announcements of general interest; all of which were tightly scheduled and were often featured on the front page of the local newspaper. Due to its affiliation, the station often featured special religious programing.<sup>viii</sup>

The station remained under Sabastian’s direction until May 1932 when, because of “pressure to increase its hours of broadcasting and demand,”<sup>ix</sup> the station was sold. The new owner Archie Taft, who also owned radio station KOL in Seattle, moved the studio to the Capital Park Building (demolished in 2015) near the State Capitol Campus. Then in 1939, KGY was purchased by Olympia native Tom Olsen, who had business experience in newspapers, movie theaters, and radio broadcasting. Seeking to improve his working space, in 1941 Olsen moved the studio from the Capital Park Building to the newly constructed Rockway-Leland Building.<sup>x</sup> With its new and expanded studio space and 150’ transmitter tower on the roof, KGY began broadcasting from the soon to be familiar 1240 frequency on the AM dial. By then it had a full broadcast schedule and 11 full and part-time employees.

<sup>i</sup> Stevenson, 1982.

<sup>ii</sup> Stevenson, 1982.

<sup>iii</sup> “Saint Martin’s College Enjoys Musical Concert” *The Washington Standard*, April 8, 1921.

<sup>iv</sup> Stevenson, 1982.

<sup>v</sup> Stevenson, 1982.

<sup>vi</sup> Stevenson, 1982.

<sup>vii</sup> Stevenson, 1982.

<sup>viii</sup> “Special Programing by College Radio” *The Olympian*, March 25, 1923.

<sup>ix</sup> Stevenson, 1982.

<sup>x</sup> Stevenson, 1982.

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Tom Olsen is also credited with instigating the station's move from the Rockway-Leland Building to its new "ultra-modern"<sup>xi</sup> studio (the nominated building) at the north end of the Port of Olympia peninsula in 1960. Olsen, assisted by his wife Theresa, managed the station until his death in 1976, at which time he was succeeded in the business by daughter Barbara Kerry.

In his essay *Historical Background and Cultural Impact of Radio Broadcasting*, Father John C. Scott, O.S.B. writes:

*Radio has had a leading voice in shaping our tastes, in training our ears, and in pricking our imaginations. It has informed and entertained us, pushed and accompanied us, through good times and bad, and brought together—daily or weekly, at home, at work, or on the way—to share a laugh, a song, a ballgame, the news.*<sup>xii</sup>

Father John's commentary well sums up the impact that KGY has had on Washington state's capital city of Olympia and its South Puget Sound listening area. By prioritizing community emphasis on local news, weather, and sports, and broad market appeal, KGY has played a long and significant role in Olympia history by serving its listeners as a virtual civic space.

Having been in continuous operation since 1922, KGY Radio Station is well ingrained in Olympia's and the region's commercial and social history. From the station's first programming by "Father Sebastian", a defining characteristic has been its commitment of service to the community. KGY's longtime owner and manager Tom Olsen personified the value of the station's engagement with its listeners, advertisers, and civic involvement. Olsen also understood the financial benefit to the company. During his ownership his emphasis on community involvement resulted in a KGY presence at countless events, sales promotions, grand openings, fund raisers, games, parades, civic luncheons, and celebrity appearances. These events were reported on during KGY news, sports, and weather broadcasts.<sup>xiii</sup>

With this high community profile, KGY radio personalities became household names. While the disc jockeys had their followings for their on-air personalities, promotions, and music selections, several KGY staff also became respected members of the community's commercial, social, and political life. Stand out examples include news broadcasters and commentators Bob McLeod, Dick Nichols, Ken Balsley, and Sam Crawford. Dick Pust, who started with the station just out of high school in 1959, is a long-respected community member. He left KGY in 2011 after rising to the level of station manager.<sup>xiv</sup>

At KGY, station employees were a close-knit family comprised of the owner, manager, disc jockeys, news reporters, engineers, and marketers. Not to be overlooked is that the studio itself, whether at the Rockway-Leland Building or on the port peninsula, were like community "third places". In addition to staffers, listeners, and advertisers, there was a steady flow of entertainers, celebrities, sports figures, and elected officials who came to the studio for interviews, photo-ops, and/or promotions. In his memoir about working at KGY as staff, reporter, and announcer, author Pust writes:

*I don't know Mr. Olsen's true motives in spending all that money on such an impressive and unusual building, but Mr. Olsen was known as a savvy businessman...Moving to KGY's new*

<sup>xi</sup> Stevenson, 1982.

<sup>xii</sup> Scott, Father John C., *Historical Background and Cultural Impact of Radio Broadcasting*.

<sup>xiii</sup> Stevenson, 1982.

<sup>xiv</sup> Pust, Dick, *AM 1240: Life at a Small Town Radio* (Independently Published: 2021), pg. 342.

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*studios was like moving into a new house...even the furniture and the drapes were new and so were the transmitter and other technical equipment.<sup>xv</sup>*

While documentation has not been found that would tell us what inspired Olsen to move his radio station from the heart of town to the tip of the industrialized port peninsula, it is clear from the many references he made during his lifetime that he was proud of the building's modern design and its alluring waterfront location. Perhaps Tom and Teresa Olsen's had long admired the site from their residence on the west side Budd Inlet on Little Tykle Cove. The property had direct views to the southeast and the future site of their radio studio.

In his memoir, Pust describes the new building's open house in 1960:

*Then came the big day---Thursday August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1960---the day of the public open house. This was the day our listeners were waiting for. By nine-o'clock in the morning there was a long line of cars traveling along North Washington Street. It was bumper to bumper. People flocked into the building. There was standing room only...People swarmed up the stairs to view Tom Olsen's executive office, the coffee room, and the huge sales area. They even peeked into the attic. Many others walked along the outside decks on both upper and lower floors to take in the awesome view of the Olympics and watch the tug boat towing logs in front of the station. They marveled at the occasional seal peeking its head above the water and the squawk of the seagulls. My diary says between 800 and 900 people went through the building that day.<sup>xvi</sup>*

This and other narratives in Pust's book speak not only to the station's high public profile but also to the sense of place the building brought to the cityscape and its welcoming, home-like presence. The building is comfortable, informal, light, and airy, as if it were a family vacation home, providing a relaxed work environment for both staff and visitors alike. As Pust writes elsewhere:

*I may have been out in the community a lot, but the place I enjoyed the most was 1240 North Washington Street. The station's waterfront studio was my home. I never got tired of being there---the sound of the water lapping on the shore, the seagulls, the Olympic Mountains, and so much more.<sup>xvii</sup>*

Whether it was intentional by Olsen or the architect, the design and setting of KGY Radio Station speaks to the Olsen's family-oriented management style. They were proud of their deep Olympia roots and made it their business to be respectful to employees, listeners, advertisers, and had a deep commitment to community service. In a 2007 interview with then recent KGY hire Stephen George, the Business Examiner.com asked:

*Family-owned KGY has been in Olympia since 1914[sic]. Did the station's rich history play any part in your decision to relocate?*

[George replied:]

*Yes...The history and the standing that KGY has in the community were big factors in my decision. My experience with family-owned radio stations is that the staff tends to be like a big family and that is certainly true here at KGY.<sup>xviii</sup>*

<sup>xv</sup> Pust, pages 87-88.

<sup>xvi</sup> Pust, page 90.

<sup>xvii</sup> Pust, page 333.

<sup>xviii</sup> South Sound Business Examiner

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## Constructing KGY Radio Station

As radio station owner and manager, Tom Olsen foresaw the importance of image, visibility, and staying abreast of emerging trends to grow his business. Planning for a new station began in 1959. By then the downtown station was reaching 20 years old. The equipment was out of date and the staff had physically outgrown the space.

The first task was to find a location which equaled the aspirations of Olsen. After settling on a site, he sought approval from Port of Olympia Commission to construct a radio station at the north end of the Port property, at the very northern tip of the community. The Port executed a long-term lease with Tom Olsen on October 21, 1959.<sup>xxix</sup> The port would retain ownership of the land, while the radio station would fund and build their own building on the leased land. Reportedly the site Olsen selected was already under contract with Olympia Marina and had a building on site. Known as the Skutt Building, the building at the time was vacant. It had formally served as home to the father and son team of Ralph and Neil Skutt who manufactured and sold ceramic kilns at the site.<sup>xxx</sup> In November 1959, the Marina agreed to the exchange, and as part of the deal, the Port razed the Skutt Building.<sup>xxxi</sup> The contract between Olsen and the Port officially went into effect January 1, 1960.<sup>xxii</sup>

Construction of the KGY Station began in February 1960.<sup>xxiii</sup> The Kimbel Company in Shelton drove the pilings on which the KGY Studio sits, and the Cascade Treating Company in Olympia supplied the pilings themselves.<sup>xxiv</sup> Carl J. Arney served as the painting contractor, Selden's provided the floor coverings, J.K. Gill's Lowman & Hanford supplied the office furniture, and Capitol Business Machines supplied all the typewriters. Electrical work was done by the Kammeyer Company. Olsen held a public grand opening for his new building on Thursday, August 11, 1960. He advertised it as the "most unusual building in the radio industry" and the moniker brought over 800 people to tour the building.<sup>xxv</sup> Many stayed for a live concert in the parking lot. Two bands provided music. While many other radio stations had windowless broadcast booths, KGY's announcers (and staff) had a magnificent view of Budd Inlet and the Olympic Mountains. The deejays could talk about ships going by, seals popping their heads out of the water, and even an occasional whale passing by.

## Architect – Robert H. Wohleb & Associates

To design the building, Olsen hired the architectural firm of Robert H. Wohleb & Associates. Robert's dad, Joseph Wohleb, had designed the Rockway-Leland Building in downtown Olympia in 1941 which housed the KGY studio for several decades.

Born and raised in Olympia, Robert H. Wohleb had graduated from the University of Washington with a Bachelor's degree in Architecture in 1939. After gaining practical experience in a variety of firms, in 1946, he joined his father's architectural firm in Olympia. Joseph Wohleb had established a firm in Olympia around the turn-of-the-century, and was the communities go-to architectural firm. Wohleb had many high-profile commissions in the city including several buildings on the Capitol campus. As time progressed, the young Wohleb began taking on an increasing role in the firm, and in 1949, the

<sup>xxix</sup> Port of Olympia, "Minutes of Regular Meeting," October 21, 1959, <https://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/DigitalObject/Download/6f94fefcd-a9c4-4311-bc09-b33cd4a8a4ba> (accessed February 18, 2024).

<sup>xx</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxi</sup> "Port to Raze Old Building" *The Olympia*, November 19, 1959.

<sup>xxii</sup> Port of Olympia, "Minutes of Regular Meeting," December 16, 1959,

<https://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/DigitalObject/Download/19b81cba-b7c7-4119-9cfc-110bc5de9564> (accessed February 18, 2024).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Stevenson, 2003.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Advertisement, 2 – 3.

<sup>xxv</sup> Advertisement, 2 – 3.

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firm's name was changed to Wohleb & Wohleb. After his father passed away in 1958, the firm's name was changed to Robert H. Wohleb & Associates.

Struggling to rise above the shadows of his more famous father, Robert Wohleb found his niche by specializing in the design of breweries. His brewery projects, numbering in the dozens, can be found scattered throughout the United States. Among his Pacific Northwest designs are Columbia Brewery/Heidelberg Brewing Co. in Tacoma (1954) and several buildings at Olympia Brewery in Tumwater. Other notable projects include a variety of federal buildings and schools; the State Theater (1949); Memorial Hospital (1948); St. Michael's Catholic Church (1966); and several homes in the Stratford Place Addition in Olympia. His most noteworthy design came after his father death. Completed in 1966, the round donut shaped Olympia City Hall received wide publicity at the time of construction. Its central core, the round council chambers, was originally surrounded by a fish-filled moat.

Robert Wohleb was an active member of the Olympia Port Commission and served on a variety of other civic groups. He was also chairman of the Washington State Board of Architectural Examiners (1954-1955). At the height of his career, Wohleb died suddenly in 1966 at age 50, the result of a tragic boating accident. Upon his death, the firm was bought out by his associates, Irving Flotree and Ronald Sogge. They maintained the Wohleb records for many years, eventually donating the Wohleb & Wohleb firm archives to the University of Washington.

While Radio Station KGY is formally attributed to the Wohleb firm, his lead designer Gordon Stacey Bennett is most likely the individual most closely associated with its design. Bennett would leave the firm within a year after KGY opened, and its design is reflective of several of Bennett's projects after he opened his own independent firm.

## Architect – Gordon Stacey Bennett

Gordon Stacey Bennett (aka G. Stacey Bennett) was born in Manchester, New Hampshire on May 26, 1916.<sup>xxvi</sup> His initial training in architecture began in 1938 at the Wentworth Institute in Boston and in 1939 came west to study at the University of Oregon. With the onset of World War II, Bennett's service in the armed forces interrupted his education. He eventually attained his degree and his Washington State architectural license, both in 1946. Post-graduation, Bennett worked for Spokane architect Victor Louis Wulff along with summer stints at Wohleb & Wohleb in Olympia. In 1958 joined the Wohleb firm on a permanent basis and quickly rose to associate status.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Stories persist that Bennett was frustrated by Robert Wohleb's unwillingness to make him a partner and in 1961, Bennett decided to form his own independent firm. After one year in his own practice, he entered a partnership with Steve Johnson. Operating as Bennett & Johnson, the firm had a profound impact on the built environment in Olympia in the second half of the 20th century<sup>xxviii</sup> and in the 1960s and 70s they set the architectural standard for the community.<sup>xxix</sup> The firm thrived with several prestigious commissions, all designed in a modernist idiom. Notable examples include the John Berschauer House (1961); the Medical Arts Building (1962); the Lewis Pontiac-Cadillac Dealership (1964); L.P. Brown Elementary School (1965); and Capitol Center Building (1966); Olympia Federal

<sup>xxvi</sup> United States World War II Draft Registration Cards for Oregon, "Gordon Stacey Bennett," On file, National Archives at St. Louis, MO, 1943.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Houser, Michael, "Gordon S. Bennett," *Docomomo-WeWa* <https://www.docomomo-wewa.org/architect/bennett-gordon-s/> (accessed February 18, 2024).

<sup>xxviii</sup> Houser.

<sup>xxix</sup> Houser.

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Savings & Loan Building (1967/78); Washington Mutual Savings Bank (1968); and the Washington State Employees Credit Union (1968).

Bennett success as the lead designer in his own firm resulted in an expanded practice and a steady stream of commissions, becoming one of the largest and most prominent firms in the South Puget Sound region. In 1971, the partnership expanded again taking on additional partners and became known as Bennett, Johnson, Selenes & Smith. In 1977 the firm became BJSS Architects and in 1995 BJSS - Duarte Bryant after a merger with a notable Seattle architectural firm. Bennett retired from his practice in 1994 and died in 1998 at age 82.<sup>xxx</sup> Th firm continued and in 2005, the combined companies were rebranded as Ambia.

The KGY Studio project marked a transition in Bennett's career. As lead project designer and in his last year with Wohleb & Associates, Bennett's design for KGY can be seen as a harbinger of his architectural oeuvre starting with his independent practice and soon thereafter with first partner Steve Johnson.

In fact, the design vocabulary of KGY conveys what would become the signature hallmarks of Bennett's early independent projects. In his designs, he frequently incorporated vertical wood siding; dramatic roof slopes and forms; soaring floor-to-ceiling windows; and prominent, glazed entry treatments. One source also mentions Bennett's "...signature four-foot or more eave overhang."<sup>xxxii</sup> All of these characteristics are seen at KGY.

Many of Bennett's designs also took advantage of site characteristics with lush landscapes, breezeways, exterior lighting, and settings that give the impression that his buildings hover above the landscape. This is literally the case at KGY where it was built on pilings over Budd Inlet tidelands, thus seeming to float like a ship, especially when viewed at high tide.

Direct examples of Bennett's work give evidence of how KGY influenced his later projects include the Olympia Yacht Club (1961), the Medical Arts Building (1962-66), and Ralph's Thriftway (1963). The Olympia Yacht Club is most similar to KGY and bears several similarities. These include its construction on pilings on Budd Inlet tidelands, a side gable roof plan with broad, overhanging eaves, wood vertical board siding (painted in a gray tone), a band of windows across the north façade, and floor to ceiling window on the east/west gable ends; as well as a "bridge" or walkway leads from the parking lot to the double leaf solid entry doors.

At the Medical Arts Building, Bennett explores repeated roof forms with its striking folded plate roof line, emphasized by floor to ceiling windows. At Medical Arts with its sloping site, Bennett utilized landscaping to give the feeling building a feeling of lightness and informality.<sup>xxxii</sup> Ralph's Thriftway, completed in 196 and located next to the Olympia Yacht Club, incorporated similar folded plat roof forms, broad window walls and a near water setting.

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<sup>xxx</sup> Houser.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, *Mid-Twentieth Century Olympia: A Context Statement on Local History and Modern Architecture, 1945-1975*, April 2008, page 89.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Houser, Michael, "Historic Property Report, Medical Arts Center," *Washington Inventory and Survey of Architectural and Archaeological Records Database* (2002) <https://wisaard.dahp.wa.gov/Resource/1307/PropertyInventory/22> (accessed February 18, 2024).

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### **Builder - A.J. Phillips Construction Company**

To construct the building, Olsen hired the A.J. Phillips Construction Company. Like Olsen, and the Wohleb architectural firm, Phillips had a long connection to the city. Andrew (Andy) Johan Phillips had come to Olympia in 1908 and immediately went to work in construction trades as a builder. After learning his craft, in 1925 he formed a partnership with fellow builder Roy E. Newell.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Operating as Phillips & Newell, the partnership quickly became the most prominent construction firm in the community.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Notable early projects included the Bushel Building (1927); the J.C. Penney Store (1927); Gottfeld's Men's Clothing Store remodel (1928); Avalon Theater & Store (1928); Safeway Building (1929); Olympia Supply Co. (1929); Weidner Auto Court (1929); Montgomery Ward & Co. (1929); Daily Olympian Building (1930). For reasons unknown, the two parted ways around 1934, with each opening independent practices. In addition to his general contracting business, Phillips decided to expand into retail side of the construction and opened Phillips Lumber Company at 402 W 5<sup>th</sup>.<sup>xxxv</sup> In 1949 he moved the business to a new location at 721 Legion Way.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

During the post WWII years, the A.J. Phillips Construction Company continued to play a significant role in building industry in Olympia. His son Richard had joined the company in 1939 and became increasingly more responsible for directing their projects. Later work included the B.P.O Elks Lodge (1950); the Bergstrom Building (1950); Olympia State Bank & Trust Co. (1957); the Dr. John J. O'Leary Medical Office (1953); McLane Fire Hall (1963); Olympia Marina (1964); and the nominated building - KGY Radio Studio (1960). As the most prominent construction firm in town, working with the most prominent local architectural firm was inevitable, and Phillips was often awarded the contacts to build designs by Joseph and Robert Wohleb. Together they became responsible for a large number of Olympia's most important buildings, many of which still stand today.

Andrew J. Phillips died at the age of 75 on June 24, 1961, just one year after the KGY Radio Studio was completed. At the time he was on a cruise ship returning from vacation in Europe.<sup>xxxvii</sup> He was survived by his second wife Grace Fiske Phillips and son Richard, who carried his father's construction business. In 1969, Richard sold the lumber business to Puget Sound Plywood Co. of Tacoma, while he continued the construction part of the company for another 25+ years.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

### **Comparative Analysis**

As noted previously, it is clear that KGY owner and manager Tom Olsen considered his "ultra-modern" waterfront radio studio building as an iconic, image-making tool that differentiated KGY in the minds of listeners, advertisers, and the community. Research National Register of Historic Places files and on-line queries indicates that if not unique, KGY is a rare example of an extant post World War II telecommunications facility.

### Radio Stations across the United States

Research reveals a limited number of examples of listed radio stations and/or related transmitting facilities. To date these resources are under-represented in the National Register of Historic Places. This is surprising given the timespan and impact of electronic communication on local, national, and

<sup>xxxiii</sup> "Phillips and Newell Erect Many New Buildings in Olympia," *The Olympian*, April 25, 1928, pg 4.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Obituary, "Andrew J. Phillips," *The Morning Olympian*, June 29, 1961, pg. 3.

<sup>xxxv</sup> "2 Contractors Have Part in City's Growth," *The Daily Olympian*, April 26, 1928, pg. 4.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> "Building Jobs for Last Week Total \$24,135," *The Morning Olympian*, April 3, 1949, pg. 11.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Obituary, 1961.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> "Business Bits," *The Morning Olympian*, August 31, 1969, pg. 28.

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global history. While other examples may have received local historic designations, few have been found that are comparable to KGY in time-period, architectural style, and setting.

Of those currently listed in the register, the KENI Radio Building in Anchorage, Alaska comes closest in comparison to KGY in terms of setting, time period, and scale. Listed in the National Register in 1988, the striking Art Moderne-styled KENI studio is testament to the popularity and importance of radio stations during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. It matches the KGY Studio in conveying the respective owners' clear investment in the future of radio, and the strong reflection of architectural styling that was popular at their times of construction. However, the KENI Radio Building reflects 1940s Art Moderne styling, while the KGY Studio in Olympia is reflective of post-World War II modernist architectural trends.<sup>xxxix</sup>

KPRK Radio in Livingston, Montana, is one of the more distinct architectural pieces found during research. The KPRK Radio building was constructed in 1947 in the Art Moderne style; it features a highly distinctive roof structure that is evocative of futuristic, "Jetsons"-like architecture with its circular, four-tiered, curved design. This studio shares a level of architectural distinction with KGY Studio, and its construction as a radio studio. It is also set close to the Yellowstone River, offering a setting somewhat similar to KGY Studio, yet different as KGY is directly on and over a maritime shoreline.<sup>xl</sup>

The WRUF Station in Gainesville, Florida was constructed in 1928 in the Tudor Revival style. It is similar to KGY only with its clear reflection of an architectural style that was popular at its time of construction and as a building constructed specifically for a radio studio. Historically like KGY, WRUF also had ties to academia. The station was founded at the University of Florida, and dates to the 1920s and the early days of radio broadcasting.<sup>xli</sup>

Though no longer extant, one close comparison to KGY in terms of its setting was WLOX television and radio station in Biloxi, Mississippi. Originally housed within the city's famed Spanish Colonial style Buena Vista Hotel, after World War II, station and transmitter tower moved to a new site across the street, directly on the edge of gulf waters. Although the station survives elsewhere, the over the water station and tower were lost to Hurricane Camille in 1969.<sup>xlii</sup>

### Radio Stations in Washington State

The oldest radio station in Seattle, KKOL (formerly KDZE), first went on air in 1922 at the Rhodes Company department store at 1321 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. Just six years later in 1928, they moved to the Northern Life Tower. In 1938, the station's transmitter was relocated from the Rhodes department store to Harbor Island, where its 490-foot self-supporting tower was constructing, reported to be the tallest such tower of its time. The studios followed to this location in 1952.<sup>xliii</sup> While surrounded by water, Harbor Island was an artificial island in the mouth of the Duwamish River in Seattle. Its long

<sup>xxxix</sup> Dunham, Michael, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, KENI Radio Building," National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks Program Records <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/75325364> (accessed February 18, 2024).

<sup>xl</sup> "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, KPRK Radio," National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks Program Records <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/71975249> (accessed February 18, 2024).

<sup>xli</sup> Walton, R. Douglas and Murray D. Laurie, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Old WRUF Radio Station," National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks Program Records <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/77842024> (accessed February 18, 2024).

<sup>xlii</sup> Barnes, Tom, "Paved, Not Saved...Biloxi's Buena Vista Hotel," April 19, 2010, Preservation in Mississippi, <https://misspreservation.com/2010/04/19/paved-not-saved-biloxis-buena-vista-hotel/> (accessed March 1, 2024).

<sup>xliii</sup> "KKOL (AM)," *Wikipedia* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KKOL\\_\(AM\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KKOL_(AM)) (accessed February 18, 2024).

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use by industries gives the Island a vegetation-free, fully paved landscape, differing from the more natural landscaped site of KGY.

One of the oldest radio stations in the United States, KKDZ (formerly KTW) started in Seattle at the existing First Presbyterian Church of Seattle at 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Spring Street. The station eventually changed owners over time, and its operations were moved to the 15<sup>th</sup> floor of the Northern Life Tower (now known as Seattle Tower) at 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and University Street. The station now operates out of the First West building at 200 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue West.<sup>xliv</sup>

Lorenzo Wilson Milam started KRAB radio in Seattle in 1962, just two years after KGY's 1960 studio was completed. However, KGY's academic beginnings by Father Ruth pre-dated KRAB's start by at least 40 years. Milam's station settled into an abandoned standing donut shop in Seattle's Maple Leaf neighborhood. KRAB radio also used older existing transmitters from the 1940s to transmit its programming, whereas KGY was constructed with the latest radio equipment. KRAB Radio, the fourth commercial-free, listener-supported radio station in the United States, stopped broadcasting in 1984.<sup>xlv</sup>

KARI radio in Blaine, Washington has been on the air since 1960. Housed in a small brick building, exemplifying a modest mid-century commercial design, this building exhibits few architectural characteristics of note; some due to its original design, and some due to later modifications.<sup>xlvi</sup>

At a more local level, KAOS Radio at The Evergreen State College in Olympia has hosted many events significant to the local music scene since 1973.<sup>xlvii</sup> Local station KGTK Radio first went on the air in 1955, broadcasting from the Talcott Building at 610 Columbia Street SW in the heart of downtown Olympia. In 1967 the station KGTK moved to a high-rise building, the Capitol Center Building.<sup>xlviii</sup> That building has been converted to condominiums.

Looking at radio stations that have been in operation since at least 1960 in cities similar in size to Olympia, KGY Studio continues to stand out. KOZI Radio in Chelan has been on the air since the 1950s but operates out of a building constructed in 1984.<sup>xlix</sup> The Cascade Radio Group in Bellingham operates multiple radio stations with various histories stemming back to the early-twentieth century; however it operates out of a building constructed in 1978.<sup>l</sup> KXLE Radio in Ellensburg operates out of a 1946 commercial building that is a modest example of Art Moderne architecture. Alpha Media has been on the air since at least 1958, when its building in Aberdeen was constructed; however, since its original construction, the building has undergone significant alterations to its plan, siding, and windows resulting in a poor level of integrity.<sup>li</sup> Bicoastal Media has been on the air since at least 1963, when its studio was constructed in Longview; this building is a good example of its type, however it is not similar to KGY Studio: it is one story tall and constructed with concrete panels capped with a flat roof and exhibiting a band of aluminum windows on its façade.<sup>lii</sup>

<sup>xliv</sup> "KKDZ," *Wikipedia* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KKDZ> (accessed February 18, 2024).

<sup>xlv</sup> Caldbick, John, "KRAB-FM 107.7 (Seattle)," *Historylink.org*, June 9, 2014 <https://www.historylink.org/file/10784> (accessed February 18, 2024).

<sup>xlvi</sup> Whatcom County Tax Assessor, Property Information for 4840 Lincoln Rd, Blaine, WA.

<sup>xlvii</sup> Kormondy, Edward J., "A Brief History: 1967 – 1973," The Evergreen State College Archives [https://archives.evergreen.edu/1971/1971-01/kormondy\\_acadaffshist1974.pdf](https://archives.evergreen.edu/1971/1971-01/kormondy_acadaffshist1974.pdf) (accessed February 18, 2024).

<sup>xlviii</sup> "KGTK," *Wikipedia* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KGTK> (accessed February 18, 2024).

<sup>xlix</sup> Chelan County Tax Assessor, Property Information for 123 E Johnson Ave I, Chelan, WA 98816.

<sup>l</sup> Whatcom County Tax Assessor, Property Information for 2219 Yew Street Rd, Bellingham, WA.

<sup>li</sup> Kittitas County Tax Assessor, Property Information for 1311 Vantage Highway, Ellensburg.

<sup>lii</sup> Cowlitz County Tax Assessor, Property Information for 1130 14<sup>th</sup> Ave, Longview, WA 98632.

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While slightly different in function from KGY's broadcast studio building, it is worth noting Seattle radio entrepreneur Saul Haas' impressive KIRO radio transmitter facility on King County's Maury Island. Completed in 1941, "...KIRO was the first maximum-power station in the Northwest and only the fourth west of the Mississippi."<sup>iii</sup> The two transmitter towers, ground system, and buildings cost \$182,500 (nearly \$4 million in 2024 dollars) and reportedly received an "architectural award" in 1941.<sup>iv</sup> In terms of location and architecture, KIRO's rural Maury Island compound is a marked departure from the downtown studios and rooftop transmitters often installed in pre-World War II decades. The KIRO transmitter complex is influenced by International Style design trends with flat roofs, cubic building volumes, and smooth-surfaced, white solid walls punctuated with large windows. Nineteen years later, Bennett's KGY was inspired by these same mid-century modern design cues but with an informal, transparent Northwest Style interpretation with wood wall surfaces and complex, geometric roof planes.

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<sup>iii</sup> Schneider, John F., *Images of America Seattle Radio*, 2013, pages 80-81.

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.* page 80.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: WA State Archives, UW Special Collections, KGY Studio, Lacey Historical Museum

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**      NAD 1927 or      NAD 1983

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1                 
Zone Easting Northing

3                 
Zone Easting Northing

2                 
Zone Easting Northing

4                 
Zone Easting Northing

**Or Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 47.058790° -122.903781°  
Latitude Longitude

3            
Latitude Longitude

2            
Latitude Longitude

4            
Latitude Longitude

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated resources are located in Section 42 of Township 18, Range 02, west of the Willamette Meridian, in Thurston County, Washington. It is legally described as the beginning at the northwest corner of Tract 2 (as revised, November 1959) leased to the Olympia Marina, thence N 5 52'27" W 192.99 feet, thence N 84 07'33" E 121.61 feet, thence S 5 52'27" E 192.99 feet, thence S 84 07'33" W 121.61 feet to the point of beginning, containing approximately 0.53 of an acre. It is other known as a part of Thurston County parcel # 99002014500

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property encompasses a portion of Thurston County parcel and consists of the land and shorelands upon which the nominated resources sit. The nominated buildings and structures rest on land is leased from the Port of Olympia. See map for specific nomination boundaries.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Greg Griffith (Edited by DAHP Staff)  
organization      date May 2024  
street & number 2334 Fir Street SE telephone (360) 791-1493  
city or town Olympia state      zip code 98501  
e-mail griffithgrega@gmail.com

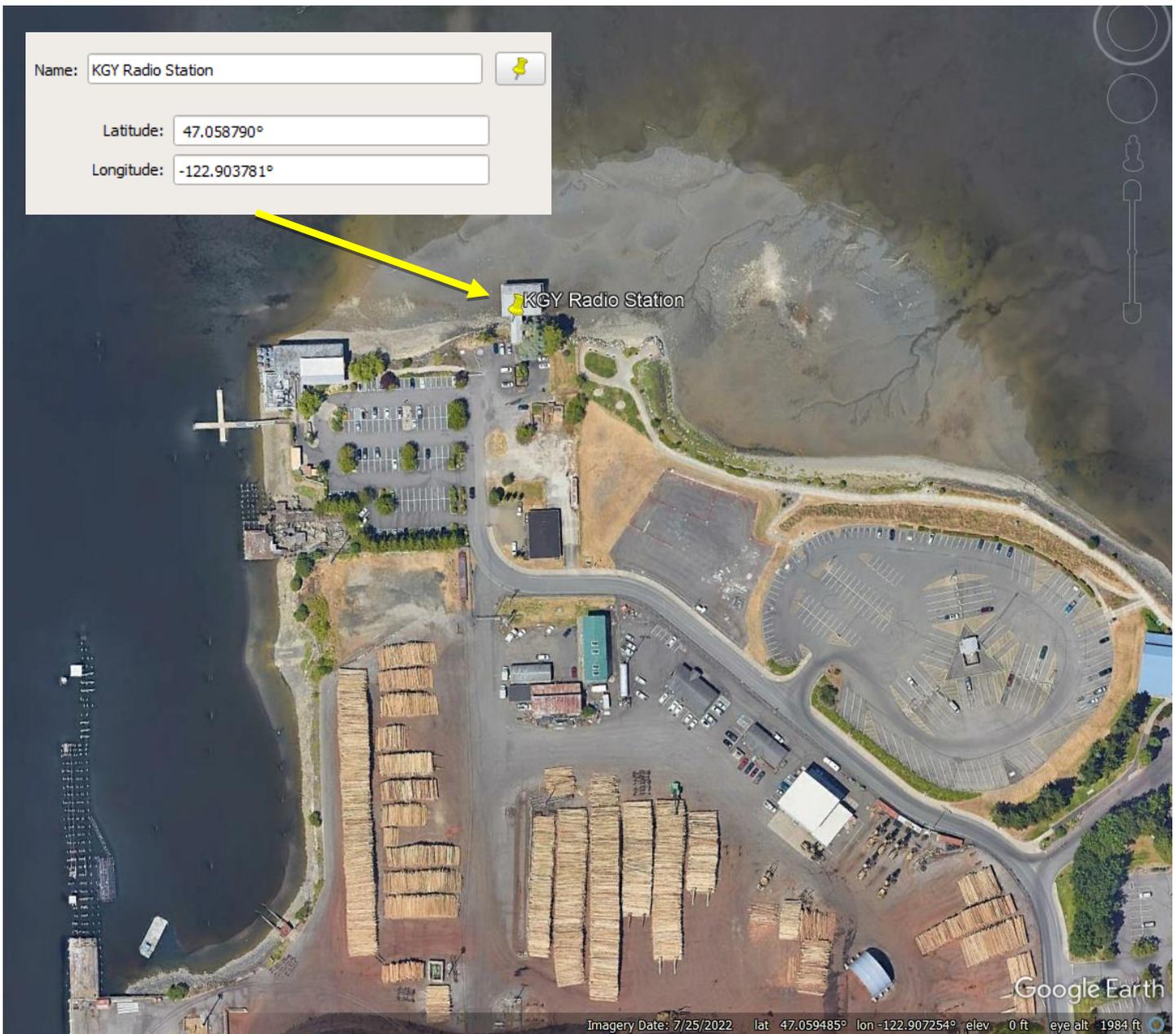
RADIO STATION KGY  
Name of Property

THURSTON CO., WA  
County and State

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)



Radio Station KGY  
**Google Earth Map**

RADIO STATION KGY  
Name of Property

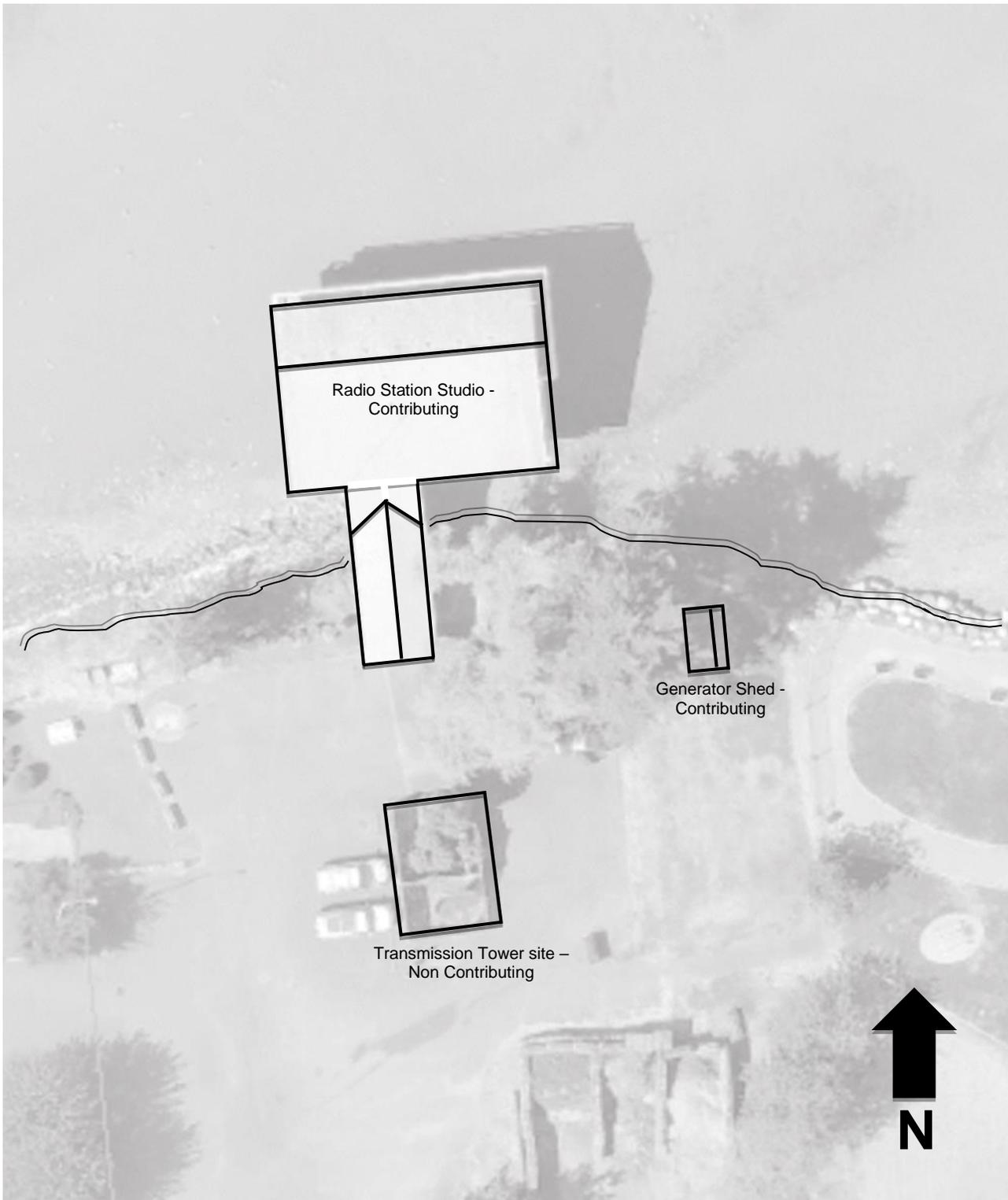
THURSTON CO., WA  
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Thurston County Tax Assessor aerial map showing the location of KGY Studio, the Generator Shed, and surroundings. Nomination Boundaries show in Red.

RADIO STATION KGY  
Name of Property

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Radio Station KGY  
**Site Map**

RADIO STATION KGY  
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**4**

**RADIO SERVICE BULLETIN.**

**SPECIAL LAND STATIONS, ALPHABETICALLY BY NAMES OF STATIONS.**

[Additions to the List of Radio Stations of the United States, edition of July 1, 1915, only.]

Station.	Call signal.	Wave lengths.	Service.	Hours.	Station controlled by—
Bozeman, Mont.....	7ZD	200, 425.....	P	X	R. Earl Dawes.
Indianapolis, Ind.....	9YK	200, 450.....	P	X	James E. Weyant.
Lacey, Wash.....	7YS	300, 450, 600.	P	X	St. Martin's College.
Little Rock, Ark. (5XF).....	5XF	Variable.....	P	X	Arthur R. McCreey.
Media, Pa.....	3X	300, 400, 600.	P	X	Simon Delbert, jr.
Cxford, Ohio.....	8YR	200, 425.....	P	X	Miami University.
Philadelphia, Pa. (3XP).....	3XP	300, 400, 600.	P	X	Simon Delbert, jr.

Radio Station Bulletin – No.17 – May 1916

26

**PACIFIC RADIO NEWS**

**R**ADIO station 7YS holds the distinction of being one of the most efficient stations in the state of Washington. The station is owned and operated by Rev. Sebastian Ruth, of St. Martin's College, Lacey, Washington. Amateurs in California report good signals from 7YS. The best distance covered is Phoenix, Ariz. Rev. Ruth has often heard 6GQ, 6CC, 6BQ, 6BR, 6AT, 6CO, 6CS, 6FE, 6OH and others. A total number of 216 relay messages have been handled by 7YS since January 1, 1920. Weather reports are broadcasted every evening at nine o'clock on 375 meters.

The receiving equipment consists of a short and long wave regenerative receiver, equipped with honey-comb coils. A Murdock one kilowatt transformer is used for transmitting as well as a special type rotary gap, oil immersed condenser

7 Y S

The well known  
 amateur radio  
 station of  
 Rev. S. Ruth,  
 St. Martins College  
 Lacey,  
 Washington

and a large oscillation transformer. The aerial is of the "T" type, 100 feet high and 300 feet long. Stranded phosphor bronze wire is used throughout.

For long wave reception a single wire aerial, one-half mile long, is used. The radiation of the transmitter is six amperes on 375 meters.

Pacific Radio News – Vol 2, No2 – September 1920

RADIO STATION KGY

Name of Property

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Figure 1. KGY Studio looking south southeast towards the north elevation from Budd Inlet. Note transmission tower in background (right)– c. 1960



Figure 2. KGY Studio looking southeast towards its north and west elevations from Budd Inlet. – c. 1960

RADIO STATION KGY

Name of Property

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Figure 3. KGY Studio from Budd Inlet, looking southeast towards its original north elevation (before being enclosed) with two-level balconies. – c.1960



Figure 4. Image of KGY Studio from Budd Inlet, looking west showing east and north elevations.

RADIO STATION KGY

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Figure 5. Historic image of KGY Studio looking east southeast showing west and north elevations. Note that the tide levels and lack of additional port fill that came later offered the Studio's entrance a more mystical feeling of floating on the water.



Figure 6. KGY Studio looking north towards its south facade. – c. 1960

RADIO STATION KGY

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Figure 7. Postcard KGY Radio Station – c. 1965



Figure 8. Color image showing KGY Studio's south facade. – c.1975

**RADIO STATION KGY**

Name of Property

**THURSTON CO., WA**

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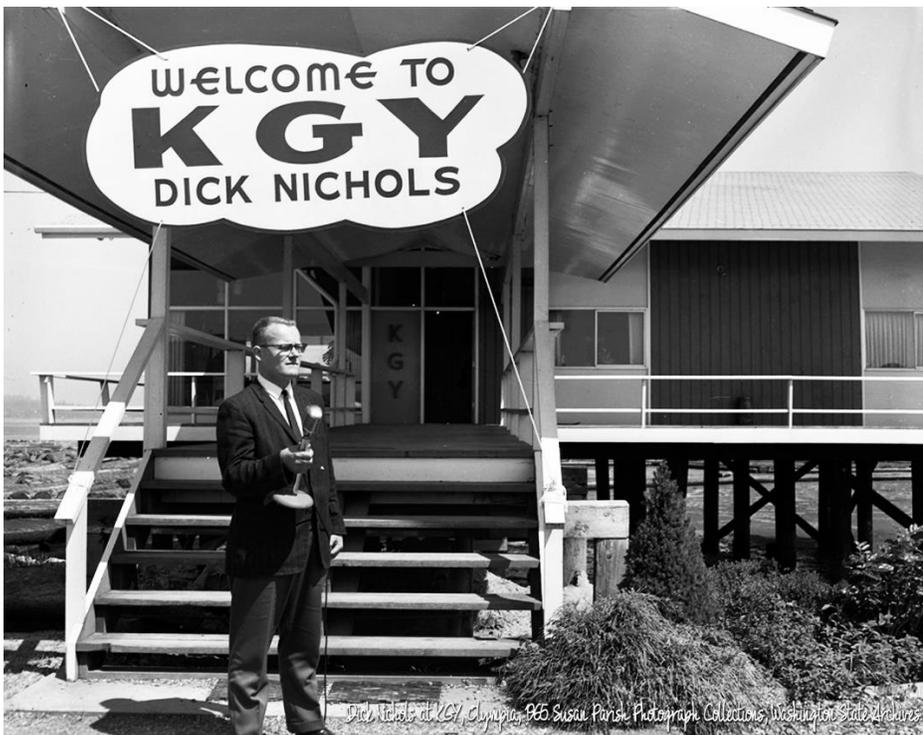


Figure 9. KGY News Director and Sportscaster Dick Nichols' in front of KGY Studio's south façade. c. 1962

**K... Rolling out**  
**THE RED CARPET**

**OPEN HOUSE!**  
**THURSDAY, AUG. 11th**  
**3 PM to 5 PM and 7 PM to 9 PM**

You are invited to join the staff and Mr. and Mrs. Tom Olsen at the Grand Opening Party. The Station is now broadcasting with a new power of 1,000 watts, from the most unusual building in the radio industry. See this beautiful Radio Station, 1240 North Washington Street.

**CARL J. ARNEY**  
218 North Capital Way  
 Olympia  
**"Painting Contractor"**  
Extends Ben Wilkes

THE SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON CHAPTER INC. OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS  
 CONGRATULATES  
**Robert H. Wohleb**  
And  
 Associates in the construction of the  
 New Radio Station Facility K.G.Y. in  
 Olympia.




Tom Olsen Extends a Personal Invitation To All To Attend The Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies at 3 P.M. Thursday.

**A. J. PHILLIPS CONSTRUCTION CO.**  
721 Legion Way East  
 Olympia  
**GENERAL CONTRACTOR**

---

**SELDEN'S**  
**"FIRST IN FLOOR COVERINGS"**  
308 Fourth Avenue East  
 Olympia  
*Tile and Carpet Furnished and installed by Our Craftsmen.*



**J. K. GILL'S LOWMAN & HANFORD**  
Fifth and Capital Way  
 Olympia  
*We are Happy with Your Choice of Our Modern Office Furniture*  
Custom Designs were Made and Installed by Mary J. Mass

---

**KAMMEYER**  
**ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR**  
211 1/2 Avenue West  
 Olympia  
**Congratulations KGY**

---

**CAPITOL BUSINESS MACHINES**  
406 Columbia Street  
 Olympia  
*We are Proud to Supply the New KGY Building with all new 1960 Royal Typewriters*  
"With The New Look in Type Writers"



**CASCADE TREATING COMPANY**  
W. 3-4502  
 Olympia  
*Our Congratulations on your unique building. It is our pleasure to have supplied the piling and crossmate treated materials.*

---

**KIMBEL COMPANY**  
WA 6-6203  
 Shelton  
*Pile Driving is our Business...and it is our pleasure to have played a part in the construction of your unique modern building.*

Figure 10. KGY Radio Studio Open House – The Olympian, August 10, 1960.

RADIO STATION KGY

Name of Property

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**LISTEN**  
REPORT FROM THE  
**LEGISLATURE**

Produced By  
**BOB ACKERLEY**  
RADIO-TV  
BUREAU

**MONDAY - FRIDAY**  
**5:35 P.M.**  
**KGY RADIO**

Sponsored By  
**OLYMPIA AREA**  
**LOCAL 443 AFL-CIO**  
**FEDERATION OF**  
**STATE EMPLOYEES**

Figure 11. Advertisement for KGY  
Radio show – The Olympian, February 11, 1963

**LISTEN**  
**“PUGET SOUND PROFILE”**  
**Monday Through Friday**  
**8:15 A.M.**

Hear this interesting narration of our great Puget Sound Country; its HISTORY, the people, and its future. Presented by the Puget Sound Power and Light company and broadcast by one of the Northwest’s best known literary figures . . .

**NARD JONES**  
**KGY**

*1240 on Your Dial*  
**1000 WATTS IN OLYMPIA**

Figure 12. Advertisement for KGY  
Radio show – The Olympian, January 13, 1961

**TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
(Missouri Synod)

Sunday Worship  
Services 8:30 & 11:00 a.m.  
Sunday School and  
Bible Class 9:45 a.m.

Twenty-first & Franklin  
Dial  
Church 357-6574  
Home 943-1647

Hear THE LUTHERAN HOUR Sundays, KGY 8:35 a.m., KMO 6:30 p.m.  
“INCLINE YOUR EAR, AND COME UNTO ME; HEAR, AND YOUR SOUL SHALL LIVE” (Isaiah 35:3)  
Rev. Norman W. Ott, Pastor

YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO BE OUR GUESTS NEXT SUNDAY

Figure 14. Advertisement for KGY  
Radio show – The Olympian, August 14, 1964

How Christian Science Heals  
Sunday, July 9  
**“Right Motives Insure a Rewarding Career”**  
KGY – Olympia  
1240 K.C. at  
10:15 A.M.

—●—  
**“How Prayer Heals the Effects of Accidents”**  
KTNT-TV, Channel 11,  
8:45 A.M.

Figure 13.  
Advertisement  
for KGY  
Radio show –  
The Olympian,  
July 7, 1961

RADIO STATION KGY

Name of Property

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County and State

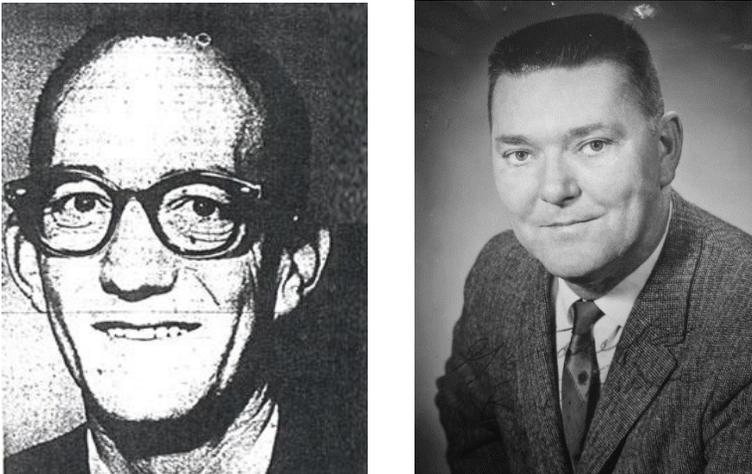


Figure 15. Portraits of Robert H. Wohleb (left) and Gordon Stacey Bennett (right), architects of KGY Radio Studio.



Figure 16. Olympia Yacht Club, Olympia. Built 1962.



Figure 17. Medical Arts Building, Olympia. Built 1966.



RADIO STATION KGY

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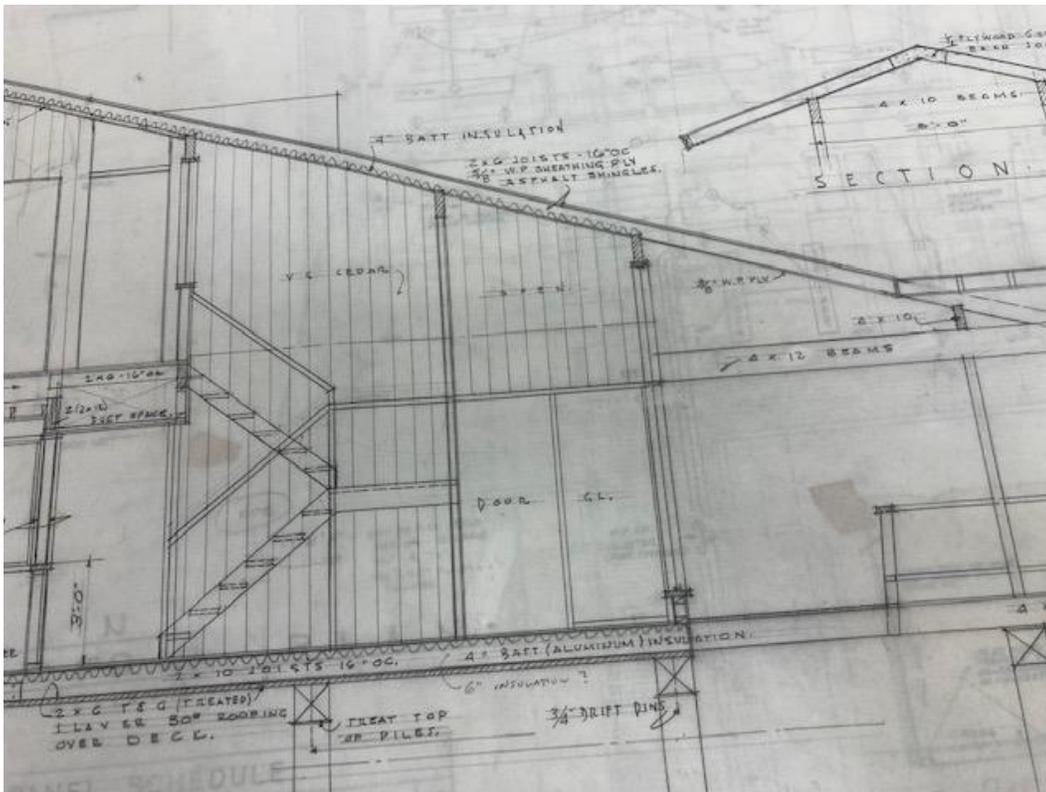


Figure 20. Photograph of the original 1960 architect's drawings for KGY Studio.

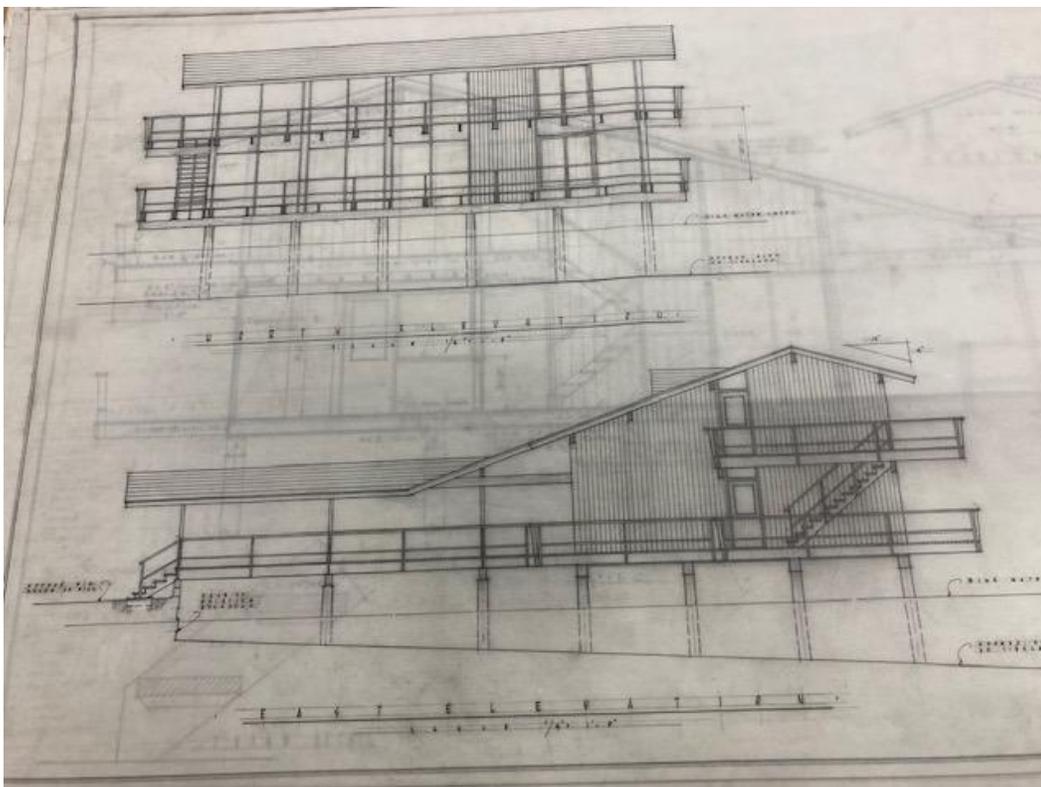


Figure 21. Photograph of the original 1960 architect's drawings for KGY Studio.

RADIO STATION KGY  
Name of Property

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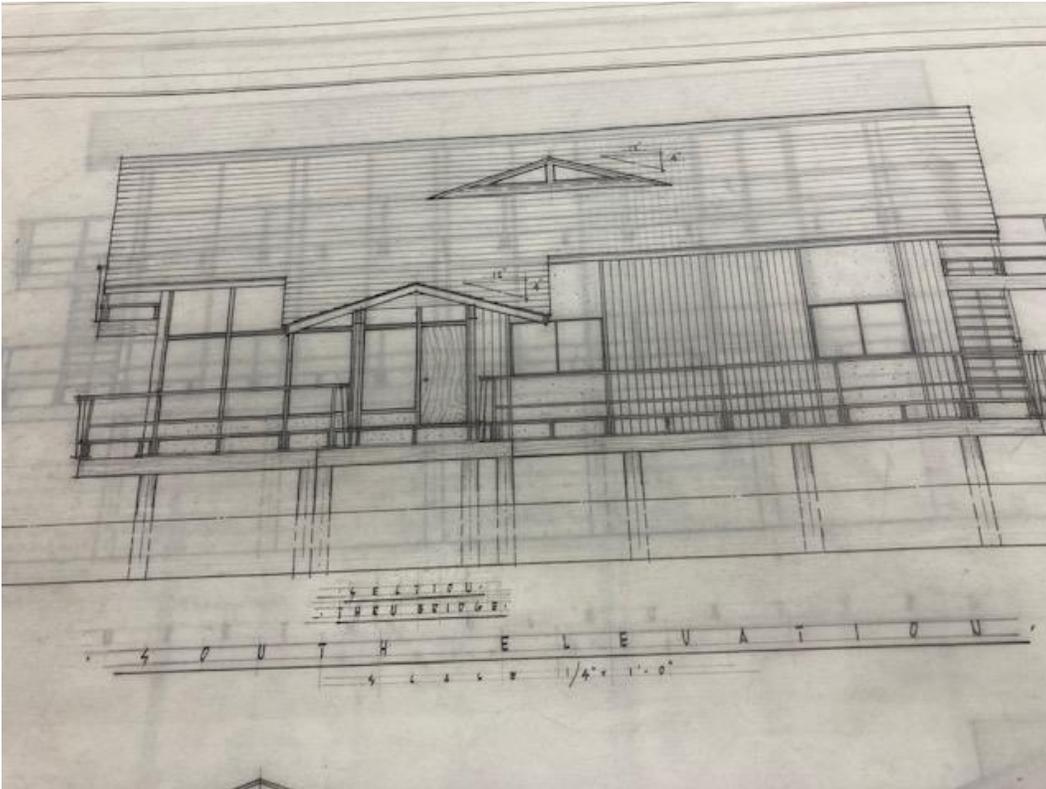


Figure 22. Photograph of the original 1960 architect's drawings for KGY Studio.

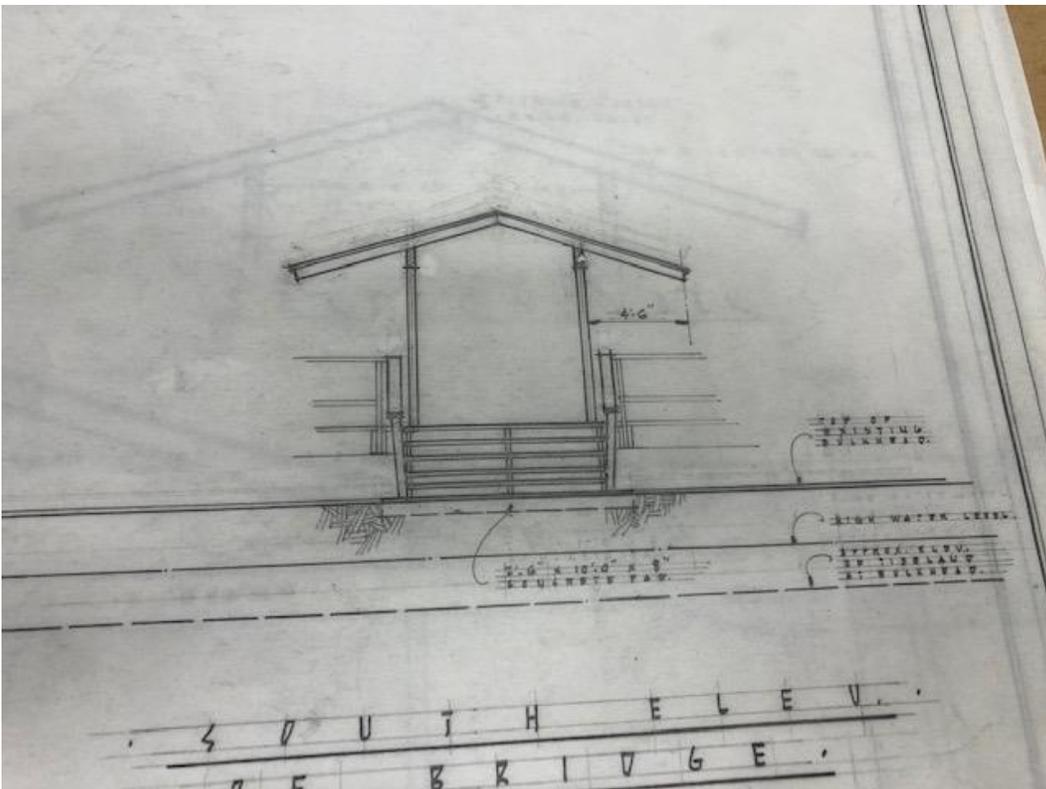


Figure 23. Photograph of the original 1960 architect's drawings for KGY Studio's entry bridge.

RADIO STATION KGY  
Name of Property

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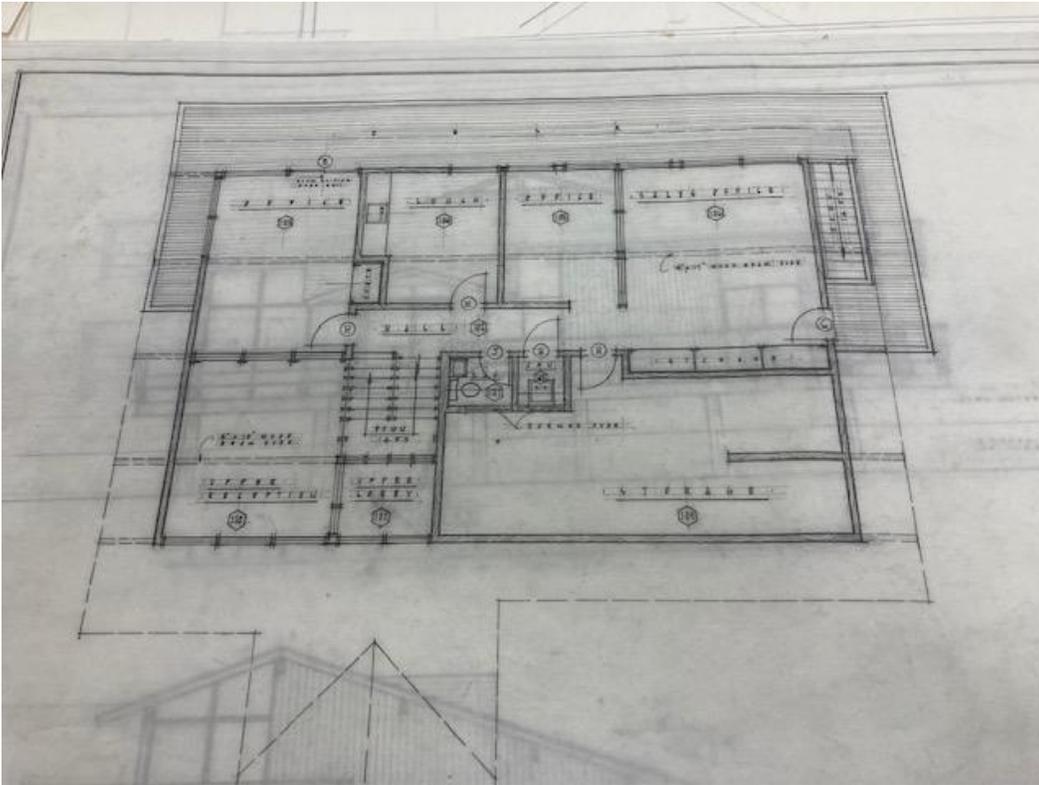


Figure 24. 1960 architect's drawings for KGY Studio's first floor plan.

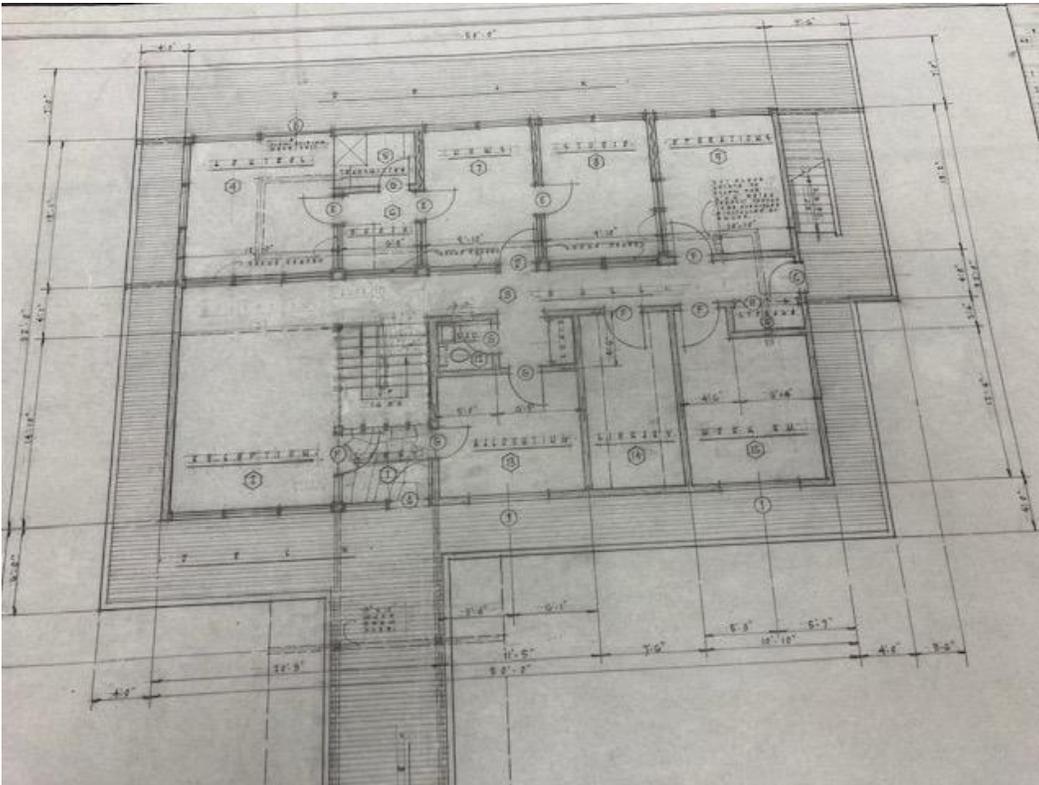


Figure 25. 1960 architect's drawings for KGY Studio's second floor plan.

RADIO STATION KGY  
Name of Property

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** KGY Studio  
**City or Vicinity:** Olympia  
**County:** Thurston **State:** Washington

**Photographer:** Greg Griffith (0001-0010), Michael Houser (0011-0012)  
**Date Photographed:** July 8, 2023 August 12, 2023, May 3, 2024

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**



1 of 12 (WA\_Thurston\_KGYStudio\_0001)  
View of KGY Studio facing southeast.

RADIO STATION KGY

Name of Property

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2 of 12 (WA\_Thurston\_KGYStudio\_0002)  
View of KGY Studio facing southwest.



3 of 12 (WA\_Thurston\_KGYStudio\_0003)  
View of KGY Studio facing south

RADIO STATION KGY

Name of Property

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4 of 12 (WA\_Thurston\_KGYStudio\_0004)  
View of KGY Studio's distinctly Modern-era front door entryway.



5 of 12 (WA\_Thurston\_KGYStudio\_0005)  
View of KGY Studio facing northeast.

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6 of 12 (WA\_Thurston\_KGYStudio\_0006)

View of KGY Studio's entry walkway and generator building beyond, facing southeast.



7 of 12 (WA\_Thurston\_KGYStudio\_0007)

Interior view of KGY Studio Manager's Office facing northwest.

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8 of 12 (WA\_Thurston\_KGYStudio\_0008)

Interior view of KGY Studio's news and broadcast booth room facing northwest.



9 of 12 (WA\_Thurston\_KGYStudio\_0009)

Interior view of KGY Studio's entryway and waiting room facing south

RADIO STATION KGY

Name of Property

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10 of 12 (WA\_Thurston\_KGYStudio\_0010)

Interior view of KGY Studio showing a general overview of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor interior office spaces and hallway facing west.



11 of 12 (WA\_Thurston\_KGYStudio\_0011)

KGY Studio Generator Shed facing northeast.

RADIO STATION KGY  
Name of Property

THURSTON CO., WA  
County and State



12 of 12 (WA\_Thurston\_KGYStudio\_0012)  
View of KGY Station site showing all features.

**Property Owner:** (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name KGY Media Group ATTN: Nick Kerry  
street & number 1700 Marine Drive NE telephone (360) 402-6955  
city or town Olympia state WA zip code 98501

name Port of Olympia CO: Alex Smith  
street & number 606 Columbia St NW, Suite 300 telephone (360) 528-8000  
city or town Olympia state WA zip code 98501

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.