

# WASHINGTON HERITAGE REGISTER

## A) Identification

Historic Name: **Kempinsky Drug Store**  
Common Name: Buckley Drug Store; The Vanity & Co.  
Address: 691 Main Street  
City: Buckley County: Pierce

## B) Site Access (describe site access, restrictions, etc.)

The nominated building sits on the southwest corner of Main Street and S Cedar Street on the west side of downtown Buckley.

## C) Property owner(s), Address and Zip

Name: Bradley & Kelsey Kaelin  
Address: 691 Main Street  
City: Buckley State: WA Zip: 98321

## D) Legal boundary description and boundary justification

Tax No./Parcel: 2975000280  
Boundary Justification: The nominated property includes the entire parcel in which the Kempinsky Drug store is located.

## FORM PREPARED BY

Name: Bradley & Kelsey Kaelin  
Address: 691 Main Street  
City / State / Zip: Buckley, WA 98321  
Email: bradleykaelin@hotmail.com  
Phone: 253.334-3793  
Nomination Date: July 2024

# WASHINGTON HERITAGE REGISTER

## E) Category of Property (Choose One)

- building     structure (irrigation system, bridge, etc.)     district  
 object (statue, grave marker, vessel, etc.)     cemetery/burial site  
 historic site (site of an important event)     archaeological site  
 traditional cultural property (spiritual or creation site, etc.)  
 cultural landscape (habitation, agricultural, industrial, recreational, etc.)

## F) Area of Significance – Check as many as apply

- The property belongs to the early settlement, commercial development, or original native occupation of a community or region.*
- The property is directly connected to a movement, organization, institution, religion, or club which served as a focal point for a community or group.*
- The property is directly connected to specific activities or events which had a lasting impact on the community or region.*
- The property is associated with legends, spiritual or religious practices, or life ways which are uniquely related to a piece of land or to a natural feature.*
- The property displays strong patterns of land use or alterations of the environment which occurred during the historic period (cultivation, landscaping, industry, mining, irrigation, recreation).*
- The property is directly associated with an individual who made an important contribution to a community or to a group of people.*
- The property has strong artistic, architectural or engineering qualities, or displays unusual materials or craftwork belonging to a historic era.*
- The property was designed or built by an influential architect, or reflects the work of an important artisan.*
- Archaeological investigation of the property has or will increase our understanding of past cultures or life ways.*

# WASHINGTON HERITAGE REGISTER

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## G) Property Description

The Kempinsky Drug Store is located on the western edge of downtown Buckley on the southside of Main Street. The building is located on the northeast corner of Main Street and Cedar Street and faces north. The two-story building was designed as a mixed-use structure, and still serves that purpose today.

The building is tall and narrow, and has an angled recessed corner entry, highlighting a newer, compatible storefront system of wood and metal. Here a single cast iron post holds up the corner of the building. The transom windows are hidden by a metal awning that wraps partially around the east side of the building protecting the corner entry. The storefront has two large glass openings and wooden bulkheads separated by cast iron pilasters (void of any maker marks).

The second floor of the main façade boasts two pairs of one-over-one double hung vinyl windows which share stone sills. Each window has its own stretcher bond lintel of brick. Above is a decorative band of recessed brick which ties the grouping of four windows together. Hiding the shallow slopping roof is a parapet wall rendered with a decorative cornice of brick bracketry. Above is a short stem wall which is incised with recessed, plus-shaped motifs.

The west façade of the building, a former party wall to an adjacent building, is void of windows. Remnants of the second floor and roof plate of the missing adjacent building are visible via a banding of brick which projects from the otherwise flat façade. The west wall gradually steps down to the rear of the lot, hiding a later one-story extension of the rear façade.

The east façade rises two stories at the main volume of the building. Windows are tall and narrow, matching those on the main façade but are single units on the second floor. Towards the south of the rear façade a grouping of two windows share a common sill and header. To the south is a slightly larger single window. It terminates at the same height as the pair of windows but extends lower to the ground. The reason for this design differentiation is unknown, but it appears to be original. Adjacent to the taller window are two doors. Both have transom windows with flat brick headers. The doors are newer metal units.

At the rear of the building, filling in the end of the triangular lot is a one-story brick and

wood structure. This building has a flat roof and is attached to the main building. It has a single, modern metal six-panel door, and a six-panel fixed wood window. The rear of the main building is mostly covered by the one-story addition, however, a modern glass and metal door has been cut into the east side. The opening is above the existing grade and is accessed by a poured concrete stoop with a simple pipe railing. The second floor boasts two, single, double-hung vinyl windows which have an arched header and stone sills. The party wall of the former building on the adjacent lot rises above the one-story rear addition.

Inside, the first floor of the building has been modernized with new finishes, floors, doors, and walls. The ceilings have been dropped and vestiges of where original walls may have been, are hidden. Some exposed brick can be seen in the rare bathroom of the main part of the building. The one-story rear addition is open and has exposed brick walls with a modern sheetrock ceiling and updated lighting fixtures.

Access to the second floor is via stairs only. Finishes here have been upgraded. However, the second floor landing space is open and allows the visitor to see original wooden ½ lite doors with transom windows, and some original wood fir floors. Other interior doors are five-panel. High ceilings provide a sense of what the original spaces may have looked like. The original lath and plaster walls have been replaced with sheetrock.

## **H) Significance**

The Kempinsky Drug Store is historically significant for its direct connection to the growth and development of the city of Buckley, Washington. Built in 1892, the building housed a drug store under the family name for 37 years. Once known as the oldest drug store in Pierce County, the building has been integral to the physical health and social well-being of Buckley pioneers and the surrounding Carbon River Corridor communities.

The city of Buckley, located in east Pierce County, began to develop soon after the discovery of coal in nearby Wilkeson in 1875. Shortly thereafter, in 1877 the Northern Pacific Railroad built a spur track from Cascade Junction to “Perkins’ Prairie” or “Perkins’ Landing,” the future site of the community of Buckley. The area was renamed “White River Siding” in 1884 once the Northern Pacific pushed through the settlement for logging purposes. Located in the center of a small prairie, the town provided open space for a central business district to begin. With large tracts of cedar and spruce along the eastern slope of the Cascade Mountain range, shingle mills were built in the late 1880s. Drawing from the largest untouched timber belts east of the Olympic Mountains, the town was initially built to support the lumber industry. The timber gave way to rich agricultural land and dairy country, along with reasonable real estate costs. This encouraged many workmen to secure lots in and around the town. Buckley grew naturally and spontaneously. The city rippled out in grids of shingle mills, commercial

dairies, hops fields, residential neighborhoods, and other farmlands as the region was logged further.

The city was platted in 1888 by Alexander and Mary Wickersham and given the final name of "Buckley," after the Northern Pacific Railroad district superintendent, James M. Buckley, who pounded in the last spike of the NPR line to Tacoma. At the time, the businesses along Main Street were constructed of timber, an easy material to come by in a town raised largely by the logging industry. Among the early pioneers who built structures was William Oscar Kempinsky. He built the first drug store (in the same location as the building is today) in 1888.

The town incorporated in 1890. However, a tragic fire on May 5, 1892, left the business section flattened on East Main Street in only two hours. While hundreds of men moved goods from the businesses, and the efforts were viewed as heroic, many citizens wore scorched faces. Kempinsky suffered \$5K in losses, with insurance covering \$2K.

Like many other communities which suffered similar losses, following the fire, Buckley became a brick city. A brickyard on the edge of town produced most of the brick that went into all the business blocks. The Kempinsky family were one of the first to rebuild after the fire. Their new two-story, modern building was built of fire-retardant brick. The architect and builder are unknown. Others followed and the city quickly became a busy hub of building activity. In fact, another two-story building with slightly different brick design details was erected next door. The two buildings shared a party wall (the building to the west has been demolished). Around this time, Kempinsky also sold the lot across the street that he owned to the International Order of Odd Fellows. In 1892, they also built a two-story brick building.

Reportedly for years Kempinsky had suffered poor health, and in 1892 he attempted to sell his business. With no buyers, he and his wife continued operating the business even through extended periods of severe illness. The community valued the Kempinsky's as important leaders of the town and often local newspapers recorded the family's well-being. As time went on, they became increasingly involved in the civic development of early Buckley.

William Oscar Kempinsky served a three-year term as mayor beginning February 1896. Over the years he continued his druggist's education, never ceasing to provide the community with the most knowledgeable aid he could offer. His wife, Katherine "Kate," was a founding member of the Woman's Musical & Literary Club, the oldest continuous charter women's organization in Washington, formed in 1897. Often, the Club would choose a specific cultural subject to study for the year. As an example, in 1903 the focus would be the "ten great religions of the world" and at times Kate would be selected to read a paper for the Woman's Club.

William also dabbled in real estate development. In August 1906, he platted the Kempinsky Subdivision in Buckley. His notary, lawyer James McNeely, had an office in Kempinsky's building and was a personal friend of the family. He acted as the attorney

for the Woman's Musical & Literary Club and lived in a large mansion in the city.

William was an early adopter of automobile technology, having purchased his first automobile in 1911. Post retirement, newspaper accounts note that he brought the first six-cylinder Willy-Knight automobile to be delivered to Tacoma on April 12, 1925.

Around 1920, the family business was turned over to Harold Aubry Kempinsky, one of William's two sons. Harold, a University of Washington graduate, also upheld a family passion for civic duty, and served as vice president of the Buckley Commercial Club, where he voiced community concerns over newer technology franchises such as the telephone line. He also had a deep appreciation for automobiles and was noted for purchasing a new Essex Coach sedan in 1923.

In 1926, it was finally time for the family to sell the business. Harold sold the store and building to Otto W. Anderson, who had been in the pharmacy business in Montana. Reportedly, Anderson continued to operate the drug store until 1945 when he sold out and moved to Seattle. However, he repurchased the store in 1947 and continued operating it until his death on December 31, 1949.

During Anderson's ownership he rented the upstairs space to Michael Andrew Twardoski, a Polish immigrant. Twardoski had moved to Buckley in 1920 and married Mary Agnes Gustoski in 1922. He and his wife ran a tailoring business in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor space formerly occupied by James McNeely. The business maintained the clothing and footwear of local miners who worked at the Wilkeson Coal & Coke Company and railroad.

Family history notes that the Twardowski's actually bought the building in 1939 and lived in an apartment above the drug store with their children Leo, Helen, and Richard (Dick). For several years they leased the downstairs space back to Anderson who continued operating the drug store until at least 1949.

After Michael Twardoski's death in 1956, Mary Twardoski remarried and she took on the surname of Walter Irons. She remained a Buckley-area resident for more than 50 years. She was a charter member of the Veteran of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, a 50-year member of the Eagles Lodge, a member of the Women's Benefit Association, and a member of the Rainier School Foster Grandparents Association.

After the Twardoski's son Richard "Dick" had married Janice Kennedy from Enumclaw in 1949, the family moved out of the apartment in the nominated building to a house in Buckley on A Street. They lived there for two years until Michael contracted tuberculosis. The family struggled to afford the A Street home and moved to another residence on Cottage Street. When Michael passed away, Mary moved back into the Kempinsky building's upper apartment once again.

Reportedly during the years when the Twardoski's were not living in the building, Helen Venzke, daughter of W.O. and Kate Kempinsky, rented the upper story apartment. She

worked as a clerk at the Rainier State Custodial School. Helen attended the Annie Wright Seminary in Tacoma and later became a member of the Mt. Rainier Chapter, Order of Eastern Star, in Buckley, and remained in the community for over 50 years. Her husband, Edward James Venzke, was also a druggist.

Mary Twardoski eventually deeded the Kempinsky Building to her children in the 1960s. By then her son, Richard, had been using a majority of the main floor of the building as a cleaning and pressing business.

In the late 1990s, the Twardoski children sold the building to Diane Stegal, who ran it as a liquor store. She had been the agency manager of the Buckley State Liquor Store since 1982. With special permits for organizations such as I.O.O.F., Stegall would sell beer off-premises. She supported keeping Buckley's small-town identity and being able to say hello to people she knew on the street not as strangers, but friends.

At an unknown date, the building was sold again, this time to Steve Jones. Jones, a building manager, sold the building to the current owners, Bradley and Kelsey Kaelin (Hahto) in June of 2019. The Kaelin's moved their saloon, *The Vanity*, from Enumclaw into the main floor of the Kempinsky Building. As of March 2024, there are 3.5 suites rented out to small local merchants which include a therapist, a masseuse, and an esthetician. After the Kaelin's had purchased the Kempinsky Building, Bradley learned he was related to former owners of the building, the Twardoski's.

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## I) Documentation

Xerox and attach any information or evidence that supports the property's significance.

### *Written Sources (books, articles, newspapers):*

"W.O. Kempinsky et ux to A. Zeigler Lot 7..." The Tacoma News Tribune September 10, 1890.

"W.O. Kempinsky to Mark J. Chamberlain, Lot 5, Block 2..." Tacoma Daily Ledger – October 9, 1890.

"Soda Fountain" Tacoma Daily Ledger - March 29, 1899.

"The many friends of Edward Venzke are pleased..." Tacoma Daily Ledger - July 30, 1905, Pg 34.

"Ten new citizens were made in the United States district court here Monday...." The Tacoma News Tribune · February 2, 1921 · Page 7

"Marriage Licenses" The Tacoma News Tribune · November 23, 1922.

"H.A. Kempinsky, Buckley Drug Store, received his new Essex coach..." Tacoma Daily Ledger June 24, 1923.

"Mr. Harold Kempinsky, Proprietor of the Buckley Drug Store..." Tacoma Daily Ledger April 6, 1925.

"Buckley Store Changes Hands" The Tacoma News Tribune · August 20, 1926.

Obituary – "Michael A. Twardoski" The Tacoma News Tribune – August 11, 1956.

"21 End Arms Safety Course" The Tacoma News Tribune - March 12, 1961, Pg 56.

Obituary – "Helen Venzke" The Tacoma News Tribune · May 30, 1974, Pg 25.

Obituary – "Mary Irons" The Tacoma News Tribune - December 1, 1978, Pg 21.

"Buckley: continued..." The Tacoma News Tribune - October 27, 1999, Pg 24.

1911 Buckley High School Yearbook

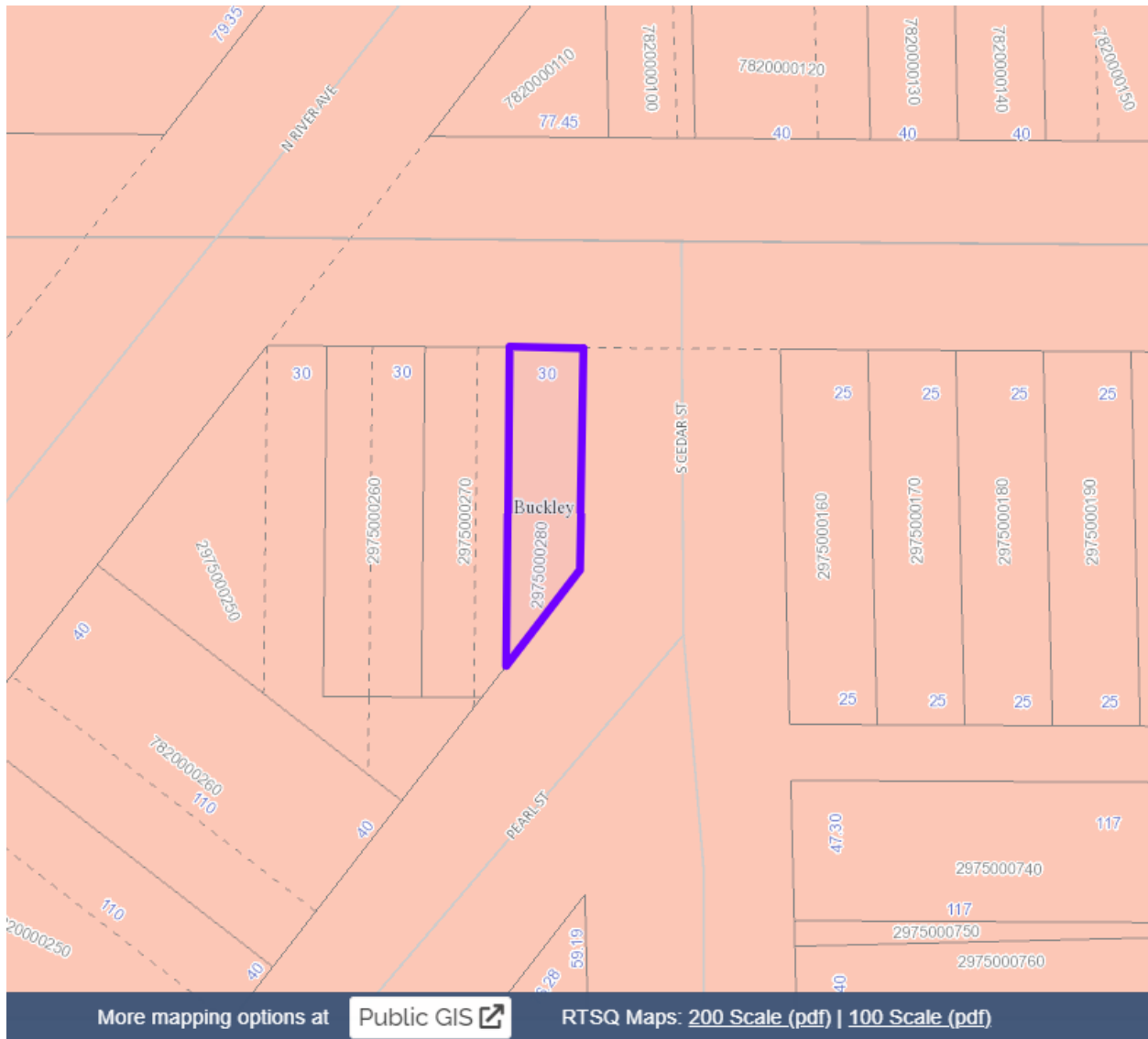
### *Oral History/Interviews:*

Interview: Video Conference Call with Brad and Kelsey Kaelin - February 1, 2024



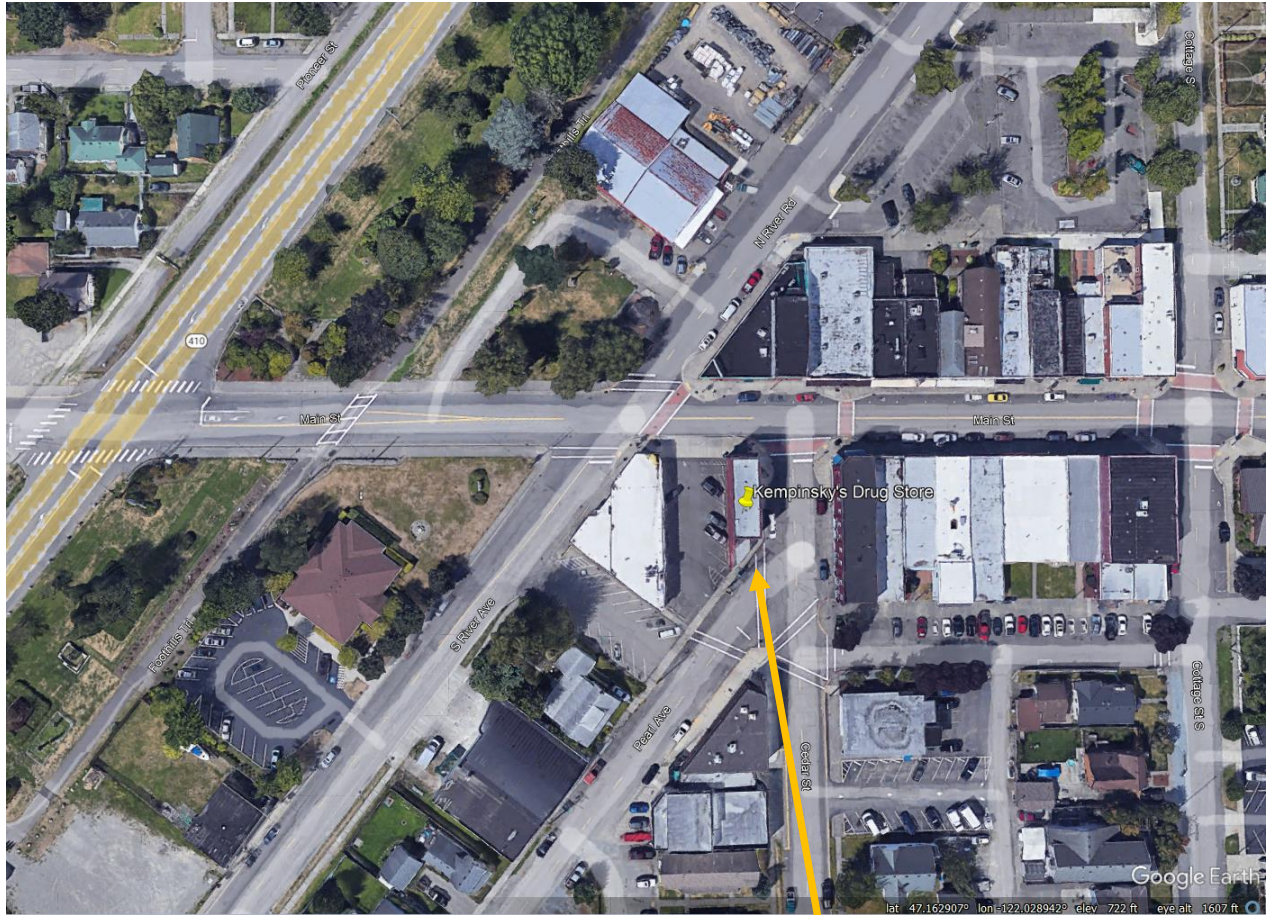
## J) Map and Photographs

Attach copies of historic maps or photos if available, and current photos (min 5 x 7 digital images, 300 DPI). Include a current map – appropriate Google Earth/U.S.G.S. map and parcel map – with the location of the property and its boundaries clearly marked. (see instructions)




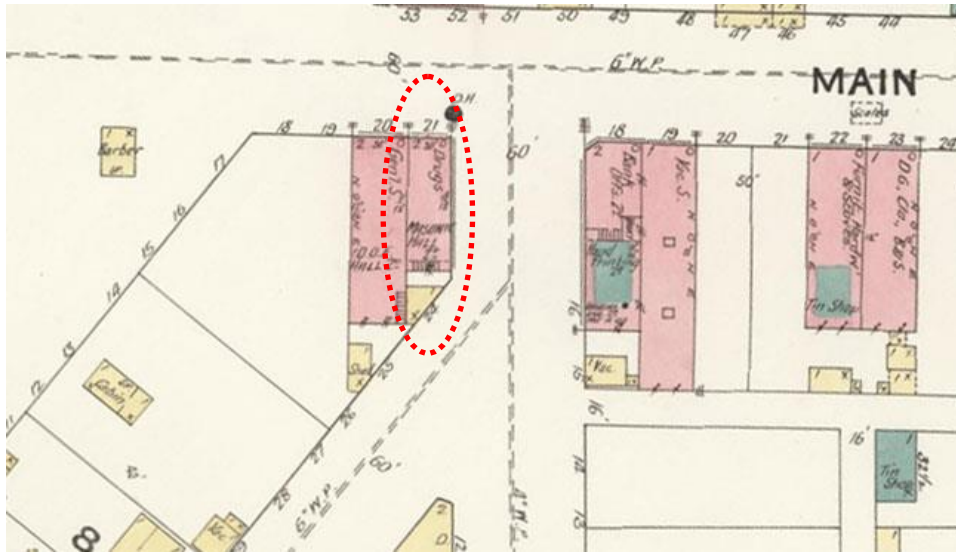
### Pierce County Assessor Map

Kempinsky Drug Store  
691 Main Street  
Buckley, WA

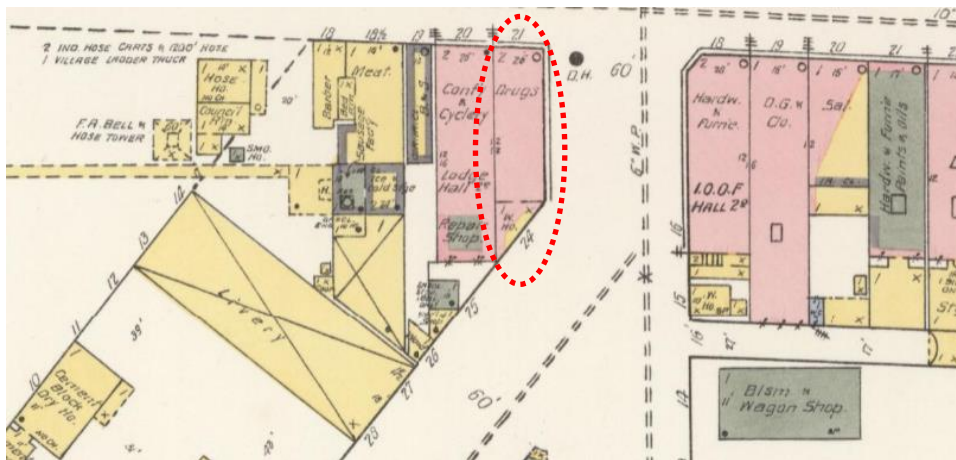


**Google Earth Map**  
Kempinsky Drug Store  
691 Main Street  
Buckley, WA

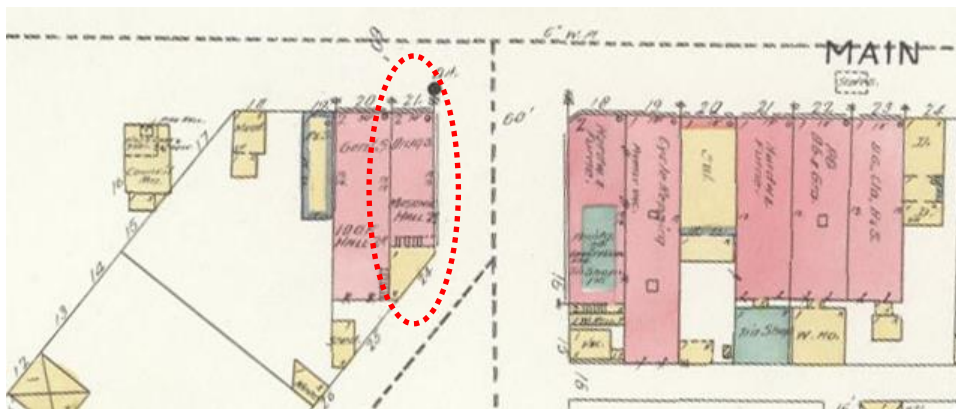
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Latitude:	<input type="text" value="47.162768°"/>	
Longitude:	<input type="text" value="-122.028530°"/>	



Sanborn Fire Map - Buckley, Pierce County, Washington – 1894



Sanborn Fire Map - Buckley, Pierce County, Washington – 1901



Sanborn Fire Map - Buckley, Pierce County, Washington – June 1910



Kempinsky Drug Store – Main Street looking southeast, 1900.



Kempinsky Drug Store – Main Street looking southeast, 1909.

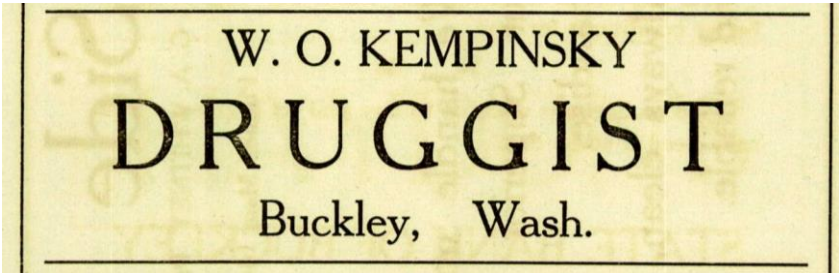
Image courtesy of Tacoma Public Library - Roger and Janet Hughey Collection TPL-5579



**Kempinsky Drug Store – Main Street looking east, c. 1940**  
Image courtesy of Tacoma Public Library - Richards Studio D9315-17



Kempinsky Drug Store – Main Street looking east, c. 1940



Advertisement – Buckley High School Yearbook "The Mountain Echo" 1911.

# CURRENT IMAGES



Main facade



Northeast corner



East facade





**Southeast corner**



**West Façade showing former party wall**



**Rear/North facade**



**Main entry detail**



**First floor interior looking south towards rear of building**



**First floor interior looking north towards front of building**



Rear room of first floor



First floor interior rear one-story addition



**Stairwell**



**Second floor landing area**



**Second floor office space**



**Second floor living room**