



# Landmarks Preservation Commission

Tacoma Community and Economic Development Department



747 Market Street ❖ Room 345 ❖ Tacoma WA 98402-3793 ❖ 253.591.5254

- Photographs (REQUIRED): *please label or caption photographs and include a photography index*
- Other (please indicate): \_\_\_\_\_
- Last Deed of Title (REQUIRED): *this document can usually be obtained for little or no cost from a titling company*

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Fee Paid \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative (continued)**

**PART 2: PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

**Extent of Changes**

Please summarize the changes that have been made to the original plan, exterior, materials, cladding, windows, interior, and other significant elements by selecting the choices below. If the property has been previously documented, these may be indicated on the Washington State Historic Property Inventory Form. These changes should be described specifically in the narrative section of this form.

	Original Materials Intact			Original Materials Intact	
Plan (i.e.: no additions to footprint , relocation of walls, or roof plan)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No X	Interior (woodwork, finishes, flooring, fixtures)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No X
Original cladding/exterior materials	Yes X	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Other elements	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Windows (no replacement windows or replacement sashes)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No X			

**Physical Description Narrative**

Describe in detail the original (if known) and present physical appearance, condition and architectural characteristics of the site (context, location), exterior (all four walls), and interior. Please include a list of known alterations and their dates (use additional sheets if necessary).

Dedicated in 1916, the White Shield Home is a two and a half-story, hollow clay tile brick-clad building in the Colonial Revival Style. The concrete board-formed foundation encloses a full subterranean basement. The building sits proudly on the crest of a prominence located at the corner of 52<sup>nd</sup> and State streets in the South Tacoma neighborhood of Tacoma, Washington. The building grounds were expertly landscaped with park-like plantings and comfort amenities such as an outdoor fireplace, barbeque and quiet seating areas. The 31,875 square foot structure is located on 3/4 acre of land. Until recently, the structure sat on a parcel that was more than double the current size.

The form of the building features a central block with smaller north and south side wings. The roof, which may have originally been tile, is clad with an asphalt/composition material. The hipped roof line caps the central mass; the north and south wings each have a gable roof with an open gable. The roof line is interrupted by nine dormers, five on the eastern and four on the western elevations. A set of three gables are centrally located on the eastern façade above the main entry. Directly opposite, on the western façade are a pair of dormers and matched sets can be found one each (also facing east and west) on the wings.

While the majority of the building is brick-clad, the central block of the structure has clapboard siding and features a prominent entryway porch on its eastern facade. The entry porch supports a grand, protruding, sunroom located on the second floor. The sunroom sported gangs of windows to provide ample light for maternity patients; even in dull winter months. The fenestration on the remainder of the building is comprised mostly of simple one-over-one sash windows accentuated with brick lintels. Some casement windows can be found primarily on the north, west and south facades.

The interiors, although the subject of two major renovations, still retains certain aspects and character defining features. Room portioning is mostly intact as well as the building’s circulation plan. The most noteworthy character losses include the widow’s walk balcony on the third floor, the sunroom on the second floor and the grand main entryway.

The building originally faced east to greet the morning sun. The orientation of the building was changed to the north in 1957 when it was rehabilitated into a nursing and convalescent center. A less formal, protected entry was added to the north driveway entrance at the time. A set of stairs with an enclosed landing was added to the north elevation for second floor access and egress when the main entry was enclosed in 1957. A fire escape accommodating the second and third floors was installed on the southern elevation.

A one-story brick-clad addition with a flat torch-down roof occupies the park-like grounds on the eastern exposure

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thus blocking access to the primary east facade and the original main entry. Wheelchair access was provided with the construction of this new addition. The most interesting feature of the single-story addition are the awning style windows. One window was provided for each convalescent's room. Despite the awkwardness of the addition, the building's overall plan is largely unaltered, and the addition is barely visible from the street. The addition was championed by Dr. Charles Arnold to provide space for an influx of geriatric patients. Dr. Arnold was responsible for the construction of at least three other Pierce County nursing home facilities: one at Browns Point, and one each in the McKinley and Westgate neighborhoods.

The building underwent additional remodeling in 1959 at the cost of \$60,000 when the use of the structure reverted back to a maternity ward. Another \$21,000 was spent in 1970 to add additional classroom space. The classrooms were designed to accommodate both wheelchairs and baby strollers. It is not immediately apparent where these classrooms were located and may have been recently demolished because the grounds were subdivided away from the main portion of the house and developed into single family residences in the past five years.

Despite the subdivision, some landscape features still exist. A curvilinear driveway leading away from the White Shield Home to the south features a historic cobblestone retaining wall. The northern edge of the property includes a wing-shaped outdoor kitchen and fireplace, age unknown. Throughout the grounds were ornamental trees, and a profusion of roses bushes. Some remnants of these plantings have survived, and the current grounds are circled by a stand of tall conifers.

### PART 3: HISTORICAL OR CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

#### Criteria for Designation

Tacoma Municipal Code recognizes six criteria of eligibility for inclusion on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places. Please select any that apply to this property, for which there is documented evidence included in this nomination form.

- A Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C 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 may lack individual distinction; or
- D Has yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history; or
- E Abuts a property that is already listed on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places and was constructed within the period of significance of the adjacent structure; or
- F Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristics, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood or City.

#### Historical Data (if known)

Date(s) of Construction	1916	Other Date(s) of Significance	1957, 1959		
Architect(s)	George W. Bullard and Hill	Builder	C. L. Meeler	Engineer	_____
Architectural Style(s)	Colonial Revival	Material(s)	Brick, hollow clay tile		

#### Statement of Significance

Describe in detail the chronological history of the property and how it meets the criteria for the Register of Historic Places. Please provide a summary in the first paragraph that lists the relevant criteria (use additional sheets if necessary). This section should include a thorough narrative of the property's history, context, occupants, and uses. If using a Multiple Property Nomination that is already on record, or another historical context narrative, please reference it by name and source.

The White Shield Home is eligible for inclusion to the Tacoma Landmarks Register under Criterion A for its significant contributions to the development of Tacoma and also under Criterion B for its association with the work of two of Tacoma's pioneering women physicians -- doctors Ella J. Fifield and Eva St. Clair Osborn. Originally constructed as a maternity home for unwed mothers, the home was a refuge to women marginalized by social mores of the Victorian-era. Doctors Fifield and Osborn, although known for their strong stance on prohibition, played important roles in championing women's causes in Tacoma and the nation.

Tacoma's first White Shield maternity home for unwed mothers was founded in 1889 by Dr. Eva St. Clair Osborn after she recognized a cultural shortcoming in the shaming of, often physically injured, girls who bore children out of wedlock. She and her pioneering colleague, Dr. Ella J. Fifield, were two of the first five licensed women to practice medicine in the City of Tacoma. They were both active members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) of Tacoma. Together they began a maternity hospital to meet the needs of castoff girls who had been spurned for their condition and whose basic needs of food, shelter and physical care were no longer met at home, or denied care due to an inability to pay.

When it was first established in 1889, the first White Shield Home was Dr. Osborn's residence, located at 302 East 26<sup>th</sup> Street, adjacent to a historic Tacoma fire station. The first 'official' home was dedicated at a rented facility some eight blocks away at 34<sup>th</sup> and H Street. The home was located on the fringes of Tacoma in an area that would later become known as the McKinley Hill neighborhood. But the large house was no hospital and could only provide refuge for six girls comfortably at a time. After a generous donation by Allen C. Mason, the maternity home was relocated in 1892 to 4214 N. Huson St., where operations continued until the permanent home was constructed in 1916 at 52<sup>nd</sup> and State streets. As generous as the Mason donation was, the home on Huson was immediately

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inadequate, despite providing board for fifteen girls.

The WCTU is often perceived in negative connotations for its national effort to prohibit alcohol consumption in America. However, prohibition was just one of its many platforms. The WCTU were firm advocates for the rights of widows and orphans, and they were instrumental in bringing other women's causes to light before the State Legislature and Congress. Their efforts are evidenced and embodied in the construction of the White Shield maternity home. In 1915, the WCTU launched a statewide fundraising campaign by utilizing their local chapter organization that had been setup since the WCTU charter in 1889. Donations rolled in by dimes and dollars from every county in the state until proceeds had been raised to finish construction.

The mothers-to-be were often admitted to the White Shield Home in their second trimester of their pregnancy and they (and their babies) were typically discharged approximately four weeks after delivery. Girls arrived from as far away as Alaska for the care they needed in Tacoma. Girls attending the home were accepted regardless of their age, race, religious affiliations, or ability to pay. The grounds upon which they would not be accepted was if they had a criminal record (such as prostitution) or an established pattern of behavioral issues. While under the care of the home, the girls were given room, board, and medical attention. Each girl had her own room and slept in her own bed. Sadly, for many cases, this was their first taste of personal privacy—a door that shut—a single bed. School-aged girls continued their public-school education at the facility and given an opportunity to learn a vocation, along with homemaking skills, to better prepare them for a new life of independence. The unwed mothers were expected to participate in routine household chores. And they were encouraged to participate in patient-led chapel and worship services daily. Upon delivery the White Shield Home staff members urged the girls to become independent of society while keeping their babies. When a responsible father expressed an interest in both the mother and the child, marriages were arranged. If marriage was not an option, the home sought to give babies up to close family members before considering the final alternative of adoption by strangers.

The State refused to re-issue a license for the maternity hospital in July of 1956. The State cited two compelling reasons for their actions:

- insufficient staffing of certified professionals, and
- a confusing and disorganized management scheme.

Management had come by way of two oppressive boards of directors—one was responsible for the day-to-day home operations and the other was the WCTU board who were the owners and fundraising arm. Dr. Charles Arnold, a geriatric physician, bought out the WCTU and immediately began making alterations to the White Shield Home, which he renamed Laurelhurst Nursing and Convalescent Center. Approximately twenty new rooms were added in 1957 under Dr. Arnold's direction.

Former members of the White Shield Home board of directors, working with the Olympia Diocese of the Episcopal Church, founded a new organization for the benefit of unwed mothers known as Faith House. The new organization purchased back from Dr. Arnold the maternity hospital that their sisters had constructed so many years earlier. Faith House continued operations until 1987 as public funds and annual charitable contributions from organizations like the United Way were systematically channeled away from faith-based organizations.

The White Shield Home, and later Faith House, maintained an impeccable record when it came to maternity care for unwed mothers and their babies. An estimated 4,000 girls were helped by the two organizations between 1889

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and 1987. During that interval, the infant mortality rate of the White Shield Home was an astonishingly low 0.002%. For comparison, nearly 100 years later, the national average of infant mortality in 2014 had reached a low of 0.006%. According to the newspaper accounts at the time, the youngest girl accepted in the home was a mere 11-years of age. The eldest unwed mother admitted was 36, however, the average age of patients was 17.

White Shield Home attending physician Dr. Ella J. Fifield became the first woman elected to the Tacoma School Board in 1890. She founded the Tacoma Parent Teachers Association. She participated in the negotiations with the Northern Pacific Railway for the purchase of the Tacoma Tourist Hotel which the school district later converted into Stadium High School. In 1894 she chartered the local chapter of the Women's Benefit Association, a group dedicated to providing women with affordable life insurance policies. Later in life, she became an insurance auditor who doggedly defended women's and orphans' insurance claims when companies were reluctant to pay.

The White Shield Home represents a bold step in the change of the social climate from the draconian Victorian-era view of teen pregnancy to the evolving attitudes of the neo-modernist professional women of the Roaring 20s and beyond. Women like Drs. Osborn and Fifield stand in the breach of history between the Suffragette and the recent women's movements. The success rate of the White Shield Home is a testament to the effectiveness of their mission of long-term holistic care of their patient's mental, emotional, physical and spiritual wellness. It was a time-tested formula for the development of scared girls into self-actualized young women, despite the social marginalization and physical difficulties they faced.

### Works Referred

City of Tacoma Planning Department, Cultural Resource Division, Historic Preservation Office  
Inventory files

Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

WISSARD Database <http://www.dahp.wa.gov/WISAARDp3> Prop ID# 50015

Eysaman & Co.

Reconnaissance Level Survey Update for South Tacoma and the South End. Tacoma, WA, 2005

Heritage League of Pierce County, [A History of Pierce County 1992](#) Vol. III,

Dallas, Taylor Publishing Co., 1992. "White Shield Home." P107.

Olympia Daily Recorder

*Miss Page Tells of the Dollar Campaign Opening Here for New White Shield Home.* May 22, 1915. P1.

Pierce County Assessor Data

Address: 5210 S State St. Parcel: 2320001380

Tacoma Daily Ledger

*White Shield Home Bids Being Taken.* March 22, 1914. P.22

*Pretty Site Sold for White Shield.* May 31, 1914. P.21

*New Home Dedicated to Rescuing Women.* August 12, 1916. P.5

*White Shield Home Work of 10 Years.* August 13, 1916. P.28

**Narrative Continuation**

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This page may be edited or copied as needed.

Continued from page \_\_\_\_\_.

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Tacoma Daily News

*White Shield Home Dedicated.* August 11, 1916

Tacoma News Tribune

*Tacoma Agency Helps Unfortunate Girls.* October 13, 1916.

*She Helped Tacoma Grow Up.* May 8, 1932. P.C3

*Dr. Ella Fifield Called by Death.* October 1, 1933.

*Girls Home Hospitable.* August 19, 1951. P.A12

*White Shield Home Put Up For Sale.* December 14, 1956. P.D2

*Nursing Home Permit OKed.* September 4, 1957. P.C9

*New Nursing Home Opens.* December 1, 1957. P.C12

*Opening of the Ultra-modern Wing.* October 18, 1959. P.D4

*Church to Back Home for Unwed Mothers Here.* August 13, 1959. P.D1

*Organization for Unwed Mothers' Home Set Up.* October 28, 1959. P.D6

*\$50,000 is Pledged for Faith Home.* February 3, 1961

*Will Open Next Week.* November 10, 1961. P.D2

*Faith Home Opening Set.* December 3, 1961. P.D8

*Unwed Mothers in Human Tragedy Find 'Magic Potions' to Ease Remorse.* Nov. 25, 1962. P.A4

*Fire Damages Faith Home.* December 22, 1962. P.2

*Chapel To Be Dedicated.* November 30, 1963. P.8

*Observing Arbor Day.* April 9, 1964. P.B6

*Faith Home to Celebrate Debt Payoff.* October 9, 1966. P.A23

*Classroom Dedicated.* April 5, 1970.

Tacoma Public Library

Northwest Room Clippings File

Washington State Historical Society Archives

Waymarking.com

[http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMW7R\\_Womens\\_Benefit\\_Association](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMW7R_Womens_Benefit_Association)

Woman's Life Insurance Society

<https://www.womanslife.org/>



White Shield Building  
*Property Name (Historic)*

5210 South State Street  
Tacoma, WA 98409  
*Property Address*

## Image Index

### Historic images:

- Conceptual drawing by Bullard and Hill used for Women's Christian Temperance Union capital campaign. This 1914 illustration is found on a postcard used to solicit funding for the construction of the White Shield Home in Tacoma. Source: Washington State Historical Society.
- 1922 image showing the northeast corner of the building. Source: Boland Collection, Tacoma Public Library, Negative B-5278.
- 1916 image of the building from a local newspaper. Shows east (front) and south (end) facades. Source: Tacoma Daily Ledger, August 13, 1916, page 28.
- Undated historic image of building, looking west at the front (east) facade. Steps lead up from State Street. Source: Source: Tacoma Public Library, Negative BU12213.
- 1947 image of building, looking west at the front (east) facade. Steps lead up from State Street. Source: Source: Tacoma Public Library, Negative D-2878912.
- 1977 image of building and site, looking NW from State Street. Source: Source: Tacoma Public Library, Negative BU2465.
- Detail of 1912-1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Tacoma, showing the nominated building.

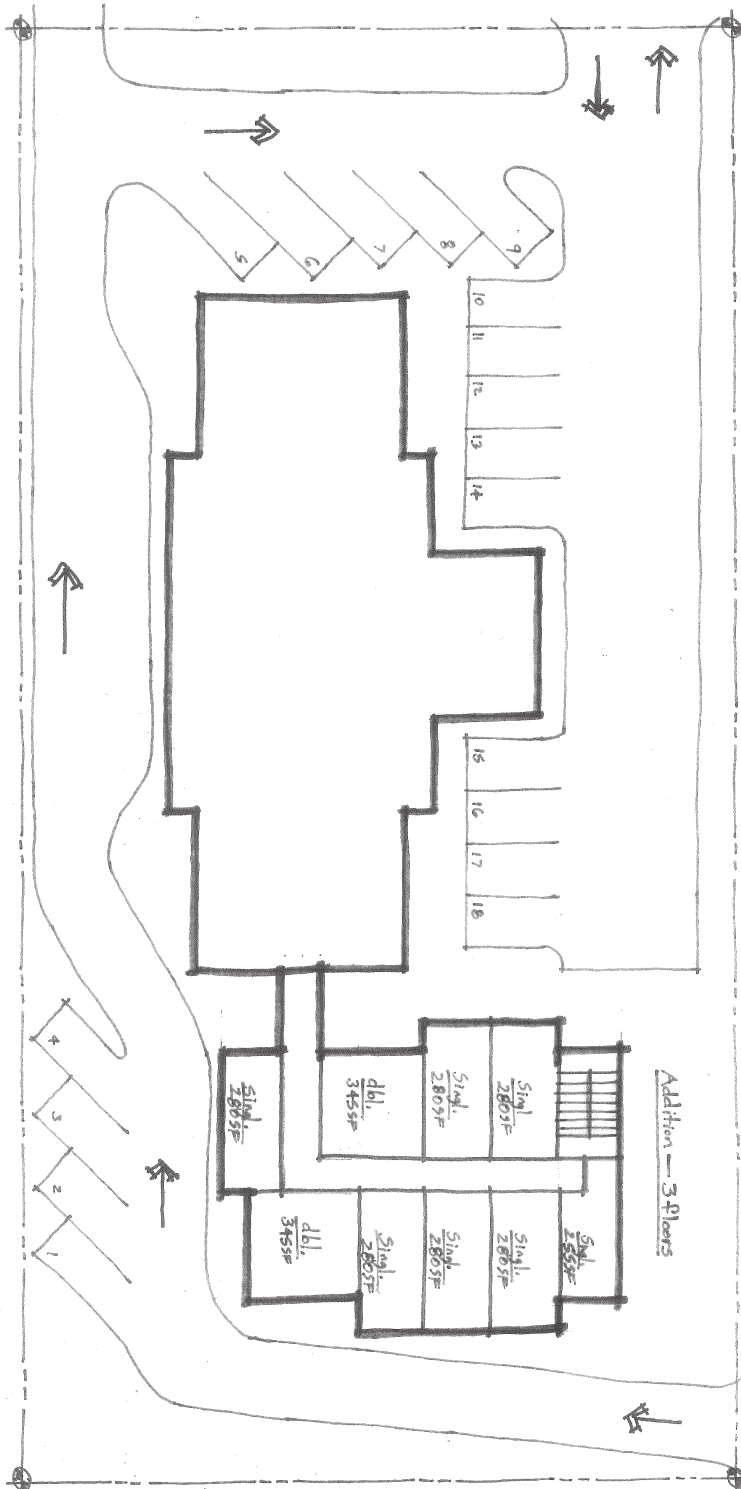
### Current images:

- Front (E) facade, from S. State St.
- Northeast corner. Low brick addition at left.
- North side.
- NW corner.
- West (rear) facade detail.
- Southwest corner.
- Southeast corner. Low brick addition at right.
- Looking north along east side of property.
- River rock retaining wall, paved driveway along south south side of property. Looking NW.
- First floor corridor, looking south from north entrance.
- First floor, typical room. East side of main corridor. Looking NW.
- First floor, looking west from main corridor into multi-stall restroom.
- Detail of original west exterior and window; now housed within small 1-story addition, NW corner of building.
- First floor, stairwell, west side of main corridor.
- Top of stairwell, at second floor.
- Second floor, typical room.
- Second floor, example of a room with private bathroom.
- Second floor, looking north inside altered space over front (east) porch.
- Second floor, looking at stairs up to attic.
- Top of stairs to attic.
- Attic, looking north.
- Attic, looking south.
- Basement, main building.
- Basement (Annex), typical room.

White Shield Building  
 Property Name (Historic)

5210 South State Street  
 Tacoma, WA 98409  
 Property Address

# SITE PLAN



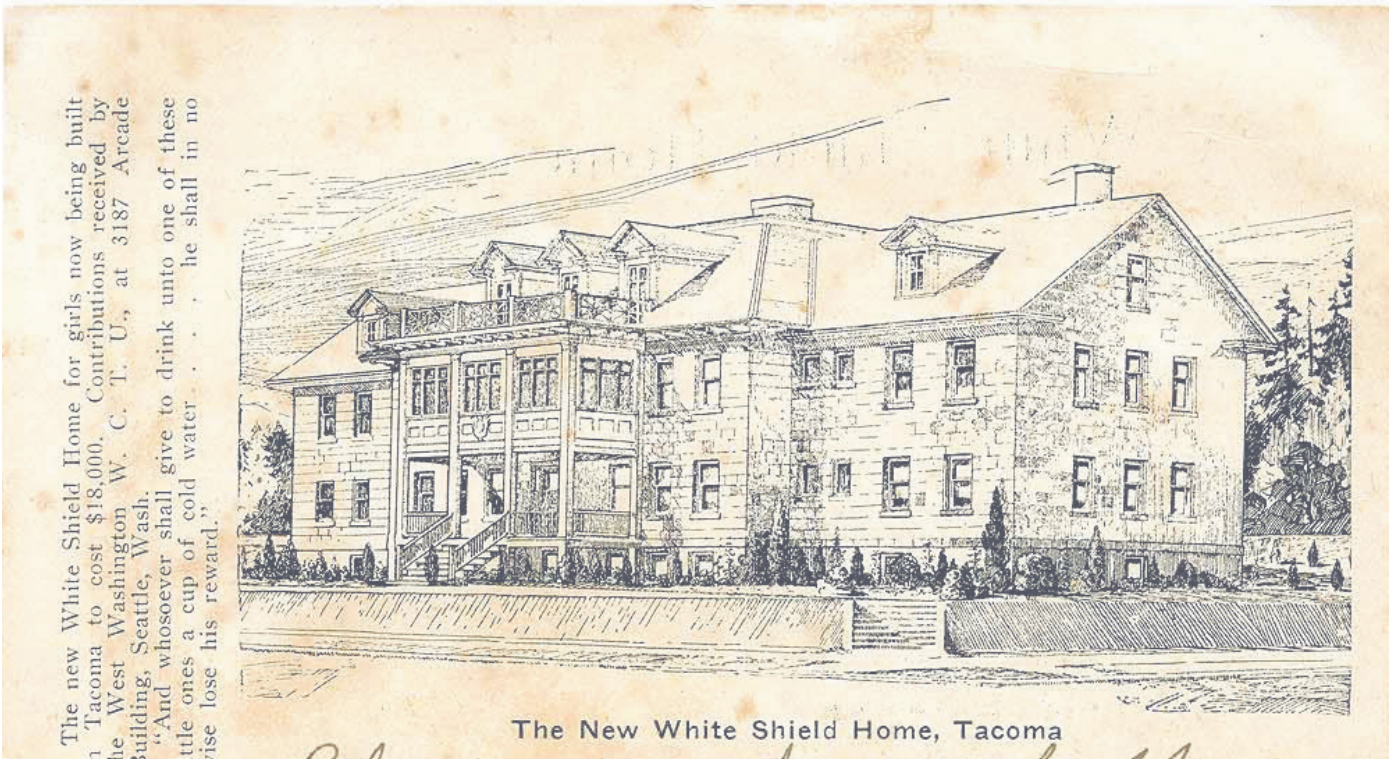
Existing Building	
Single Rooms (shared bath with one other room):	22
Double Rooms (each with a bath):	2
<b>Addition</b>	
Single Rooms (shared bath with one other room):	21
Double Rooms (each with a bath):	6
<b>Total Rooms</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Total Beds</b>	<b>59 Beds</b>

Required Parking	
1 stall for every 2 beds =	30 stalls
1 stall for every 2 employees on largest shift (estimate 12 employees) =	6 stalls
<b>Total stalls required =</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Provided Parking on site</b>	<b>18 stalls</b>



Site plan, showing current brick addition removed and proposed new addition to south. Source: Visionary Properties.

5210 South State Street  
Tacoma, WA 98409  
Property Address



Conceptual drawing by Bullard and Hill used for Women's Christian Temperance Union capital campaign. This 1914 illustration is found on a postcard used to solicit funding for the construction of the White Shield Home in Tacoma. Source: Washington State Historical Society.



1922 image showing the northeast corner of the building. Source: Boland Collection, Tacoma Public Library, Negative B-5278.



1916 image of the building from a local newspaper. Shows east (front) and south (end) facades. Source: Tacoma Daily Ledger, August 13, 1916, page 28. Photo caption: " This building was erected by the Women's Christian Temperance Union and other women of Washington who are interested in the welfare of girls. It is constructed of brick and cost \$15,000. In designing the home special attention was given to the uses for which it was intended, and it is commodiously arranged.



Undated historic image of building, looking west at the front (east) facade. Steps lead up from State Street. Source: Source: Tacoma Public Library, Negative BU12213.

White Shield Building  
*Property Name (Historic)*

*Historic Photographs and Maps*

5210 South State Street  
Tacoma, WA 98409  
*Property Address*



1947 image of building, looking west at the front (east) facade. Steps lead up from State Street. Source: Source: Tacoma Public Library, Negative D-2878912.

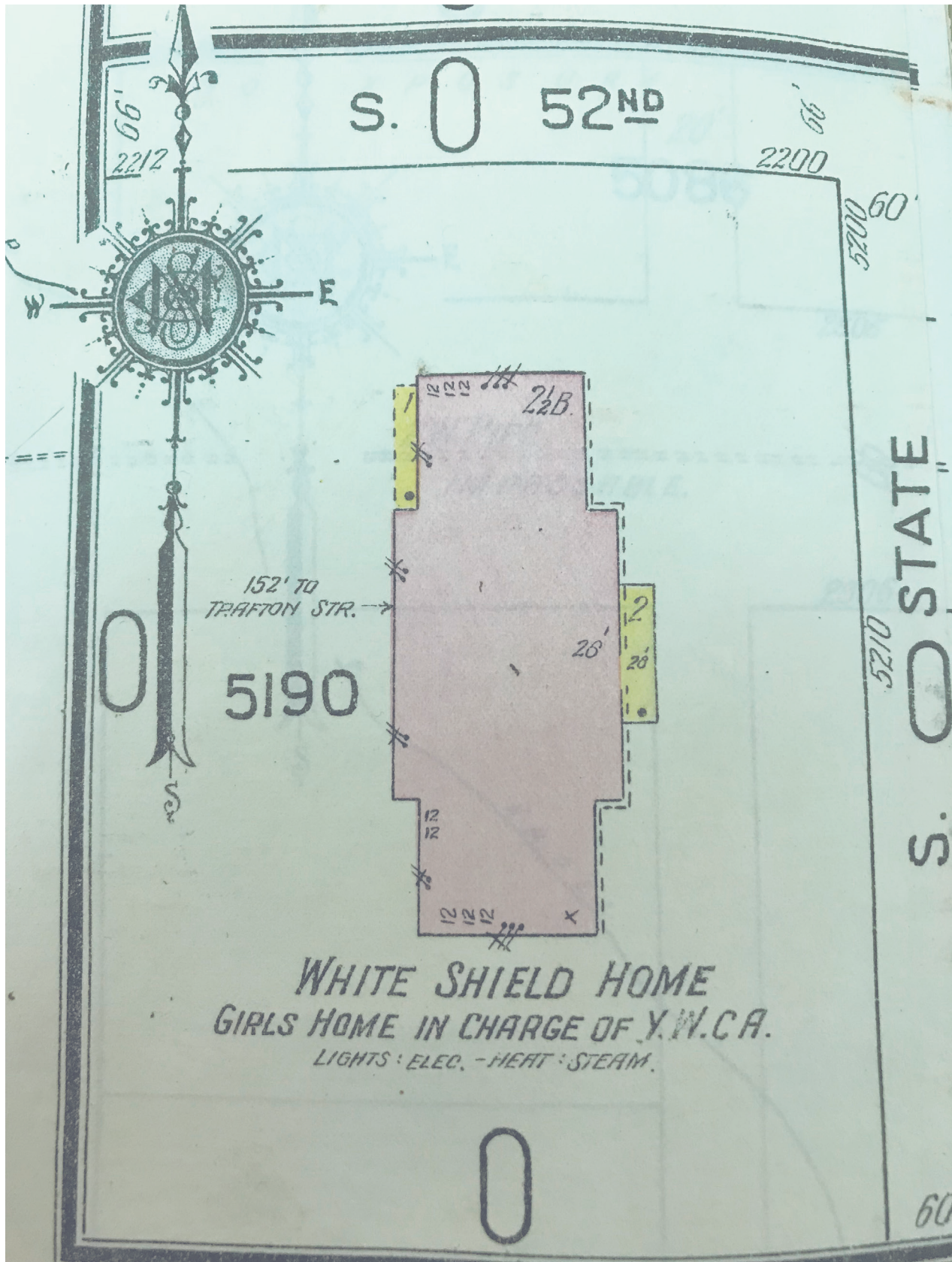


1977 image of building and site, looking NW from State Street. Source: Source: Tacoma Public Library, Negative BU2465.

White Shield Building  
Property Name (Historic)

Historic Photographs and Maps

5210 South State Street  
Tacoma, WA 98409  
Property Address



Detail of 1912-1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Tacoma, showing the nominated building. Source: Tacoma Public Library, Northwest Room. (Pink denotes masonry construction; yellow denotes wood construction.)



**CP1.** Front (E) facade, from S. State St.



**CP2.** Northeast corner. Low brick addition at left.



CP3. North side.



CP4. Northwest corner.





CP5. West (rear) facade detail.



CP6. Southwest corner.



CP7. Southeast corner. Low brick addition at right.



CP8. Looking north along east side of property.



**CP9.** River rock retaining wall, paved driveway along south south side of property. Looking northwest.



**CP10.** First floor corridor, looking south from north entrance.



**CP11.** First floor, typical room. East side of main corridor. Looking NW.



**CP12.** First floor, looking west from main corridor into multi-stall restroom.



**CP13.** Detail of original west exterior and window; now housed within small 1-story addition, NW corner of building.



**CP14.** First floor, stairwell, west side of main corridor.



**CP15.** Top of stairwell, at second floor.



**CP16.** Second floor, typical room.



CP17. Second floor, example of a room with private bathroom.



CP18. Second floor, looking north inside altered space over front (east) porch.



**CP19.** Second floor, looking at stairs up to attic.



**CP20.** Top of stairs to attic.





CP21. Attic, looking north.



CP22. Attic, looking south.



**CP23.** Basement, main building.



**CP24.** Basement (Annex), typical room.