

NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORIC PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION
789 FIRST AVENUE

NH STATE NO. 673

- LOCATION:** 789 First Avenue, Berlin, Coos County, New Hampshire
- USGS: Berlin, New Hampshire, Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 19.326132.4926622
- PRESENT OWNER:** New Hampshire Department of Transportation
- DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:** ca. 1898
- PRESENT USE:** vacant
ORIGINAL USE: residential
- SIGNIFICANCE:** 789 First Avenue, built ca. 1898, is significant as the best preserved of a trio of houses built as single-family investment properties by Gershon P. Bickford, an important early Berlin developer and builder. 789 First Avenue and the other two houses represent comparatively rare examples of speculative housing in the Berlin Heights Addition Neighborhood. Initially a rental property, by 1914 the house became owner occupied. For much of the next seventy years, Russian immigrant families owned and occupied the house. Their association contributes to an understanding of the ethnic mix of immigrants who built and/or lived in many of the houses in the neighborhood. The small, side-gable house retains much of its original footprint and massing, notably the façade gable. Later additions, such as the front porch, and enclosed space on the east elevation do not significantly alter the original massing of the house or obscure its original form. The interior retains its original framing, visible in the full cellar and in the attic, and much of its original plan. The interior finishes, however, are all replacement, dating to ca. 2000. 789 First Avenue represents the most complete representation of its vernacular property type, one of eight types encountered among the twenty-six dwellings being documented for this project.
- PROJECT INFORMATION:** Project personnel included Principal Lynne Emerson Monroe, Specialist Frank Whittemore, and Architectural Historians Laura B. Driemeyer and Kari Laprey. Charley Freiberg, Elkins, New Hampshire, was the photographer. Existing Conditions Survey Inc., Boston, Massachusetts, prepared the measured drawings. This documentation is mitigation for the relocation of N.H. Route 110 through the Berlin Heights Neighborhood Addition.

Architectural Description

Location/Setting/Landscaping

789 First Avenue is located at the north end of First Avenue, adjacent to the terminus of the street at the railroad tracks. The house sits on a small triangular lot on the west side of the street and faces the railroad tracks to the northeast. 789 First Avenue is the northernmost of a row of three originally identical houses. The house extends the full depth of the lot, abutting the lots to the rear (west), 820 and 826 Second Avenue. A wood plank fence runs along the west lot line. To the north of the house is a large, noncontributing, modern two-bay garage sited at an angle to the house and facing southeast, spanning nearly the full depth of the lot. Paved driveways flank the south and north sides of the house, separating it respectively from 785 First Avenue and the property's garage. The property includes no plantings, other than some volunteer plants around the foundation along the south side of the house.

Character-Defining Elements

789 First Avenue, one of a trio of houses built in the late 1890s as single-family investment properties by Berlin developer Gershon P. Bickford, is the best preserved of the three houses. The one-and-a-half story, side-gable, single-pile house retains much of its original footprint and massing, notably the façade gable. Later additions, such as the front porch, and enclosed space on the east elevation do not significantly alter the original massing of the house or obscure its original form. The interior maintains its original framing, visible in the full cellar and in the attic, and much of its original plan. The interior finishes, however, are all replacements dating to ca. 2000.

Exterior

789 First Avenue is a one-and-a-half-story, side-gable house augmented by a now-full-width, one-story rear ell and a one-story, one-room rear addition. An enclosed porch, added after 1950, spans the full width of the façade of the single-pile main block (Sanborn 1950). Centered above the porch is a façade gable. This defining feature is present on all three of the speculative houses built by Bickford and is comparatively rare on Berlin houses. An added entry porch on the north elevation provides access to the secondary entry into the kitchen in the rear ell. The added six-bay, hip-roofed front porch rests on a high stud and plywood foundation, screened with synthetic siding. Concrete stairs with metal railings rise to the front entry on the south side of the porch. A low door is nearly centered on the north end of the front porch underpinning, providing exterior access to the area under the porch and the original exterior entry to the basement. The north side porch, also set on wood footings, is accessed by open wood stairs that rise along the north side of the house. The shed-roofed porch has a closed balustrade sheathed with synthetic siding.

The mostly regular fenestration is all replacement. All the windows are vinyl 1/1 sash, except on the gable ends at the first story. Those windows are sliding windows.

The house has synthetic siding, high mortared rubble foundations (except under the rear addition) and an asphalt shingle roof. The rear addition sits on high footings screened with vertical board skirting.

An added flue chimney rises along the north gable end of the main block. The bottom portion is brick, with the remainder rebuilt in concrete block; a closed thimble is present on the interior north wall. A brick flue chimney rises above the roof of the ell, adjacent to the main block.

Foundation and Framing

The foundation and framing are the most intact portions of the house, aside from much of the plan. The high mortared stone foundation is characteristic of many residential buildings in Berlin. The granite foundation consists of random-sized, rough-cut, irregularly coursed stones with wide mortar joints and is continuous under the main block and rear ell. Above grade, the wide mortar joints on the south elevation are finished with grapevine joints to suggest cut ashlar blocks.

The south foundation elevation has a pair of window openings, each with a fixed sash. An additional window is present on the north elevation, screened by the rear entry porch, also with a fixed sash. Each 2'-7" x 1'-4" fixed sash has three 9" x 12" lights. A door opening on the east elevation is the original exterior entry to the basement. It now leads to the area under the front porch, most recently used to store wood.

The first-floor framing is visible in the basement. The framing consists of east-west running 2" x 6" vertically sawn joists, set 2' on center and let into the three north-south 6" x 6" carrying beams. The sills also measure 6" x 6". In various locations some replacement joists have been added (same size), along with added 2" x 6" braces between the joists. In addition, the easterly end of the center joist has been strengthened with 2" x 6" joists sistered on either side and joined to the carrying beam with angle braces and further supported by a lally column. Additional lally columns are present at various points under the other carrying beams.

No interior demolition was done to identify the wall framing though all the walls are now replacement sheetrock, presumably applied over characteristic late nineteenth-century stud-frame construction.

The roof framing consists of roughly 2" x 6" vertically sawn rafters, set roughly 2' on center. The random-width square sheathing boards range in size from roughly 8" to 12". The ridge board measures roughly 1" x 6". Roughly centered in the floor, roughly above the second-floor hall closet, was scar evidence of a removed chimney; additional evidence was present in the roof sheathing, to either side of the ridge. No evidence of its location in the cellar could be located, however.

Interior

The inside of the house retains only a large portion of its original plan and its original framing in the cellar and attic. All other finishes, however, are recent replacements, including the walls, door and window trim, doors, kitchen cabinetry, bathroom fixtures, floor coverings, and light

fixtures. The walls and ceilings are sheetrock, the floors are covered with either wall-to-wall carpeting (southeast and northeast rooms, stairs and stair hall) or vinyl sheeting (all other rooms), and the window, door, and baseboard trim is mahogany stained 2½" "Colonial" molding. The doors are hollow-core doors, also with mahogany staining. The central ceiling light fixtures are modern, some with fans. Baseboard heaters are present in all the rooms.

Floor Plan

The floor plan is asymmetrical on each story. On the first floor, two differently-sized rooms occupy the main block, with an enclosed stair rising along the rear (west) wall. The two rooms are separated by a wide doorway. The front doorway from the now-enclosed front porch leads directly into the larger rectangular southeast room. A large, L-shaped kitchen, accessible through a wide doorway from the southeast room, and a small bathroom occupy the first floor of the rear ell. An added asymmetrical room extends from the rear ell, most recently used as a bedroom. On the second floor, two differently-sized bedrooms are accessible from the stair hall that occupies the northwest corner of the main block. An additional bedroom in the rear ell is only accessible from the large southeast bedroom. None of the bedrooms have closets; the only closet is located in the second floor stair hall.

Basement

The full basement under the house measures 16'-6" x 28'-3". In contrast with many other cellars in the area, there are no stone outcroppings present. The exposed first-floor framing consists of three roughly evenly spaced 6" x 6" carrying beams running north-south. The 2" x 6" joists, set 2'-0" on center, are reinforced intermittently with added bracing at various locations. The below-grade foundation walls are constructed of random-sized, granite rubble stones with large concrete mortar joints. The floor is rough finish concrete.

The cellar is accessible from the kitchen and from an exterior entry under the front porch. A doorway on the east wall in the kitchen leads to an open stair that descends perpendicularly to the north wall towards the center of the basement. The stairway runs under the stairway to the second floor. The rebuilt open wooden stair consists of nine runs and ten risers. The stairwell walls and ceiling are sheathed with faux paneling. On the east wall a 3'-0"-wide exterior doorway now leads to the enclosed space under the front porch. The low doorway is just 4'-4" high and has a door hung with strap hinges. The door is constructed of roughly 5" boards and battens on the exterior face and 1" x 10" tongue-and-groove boards on the interior face.

The unfinished porch area is constructed of 2" x 4" studs and plywood supporting the enclosed porch floor above. The porch floor framing consists of 2" x 6" circular sawn joists. The roughly constructed south wall consists of rubble stone and board-form poured concrete. The north wall appears to be a full-width doorway with a vertical board awning door. The space appears to have been used for firewood storage in recent years.

The basement houses all the utilities for the house. Heat is provided by an oil-fired forced hot-water system. The boiler in the basement is vented into the brick flue chimney; a thimble for the hot water heater is present but it had been removed by the previous owner. Electrical service is 100 amps with new circuit breakers and recent Romex wiring is visible in the cellar. The panel

is located along the east foundation wall, just north of the exterior entry. The plumbing is a mix of cast-iron and PVC pipes.

Just west of the stair way is a 1'-5" x 1'-9" brick flue chimney, likely built after original construction. The stack rises from the basement through the first story of the building, adjacent to the rear (west) elevation of the main block, exiting at the intersection of the shed and gable roof intersection on the north side of the rear ell. The base has a 6" x 8" ash clean out on the west elevation, two-and-a-half bricks up from the base. The boiler vents into the chimney; unlined thimbles are present on the south and east faces. The former recently vented a wood stove (Printy 2010:13). Evidence in the attic framing suggests a flue chimney once rose through the roof of the main block at the ridge. No evidence could be found, however, that it extended down to the basement.

Enclosed Front Porch

The 18'-0" x 5'-3" enclosed front porch has all replacement finishes and materials. Continuous storm-track sashes line the north and east walls. A doorway with a modern door on the south elevation provides exterior access. Unfinished, circular-sawn, vertical pine boards cover the walls. Indoor/outdoor carpeting covers the floor. The drop ceiling has acoustic tiles.

Southeast Room

Entry from the enclosed front porch is directly into the southeast room, used most recently as a living room. The door is a modern metal door with a light in the upper panel. The rectangular 9'-0" x 17'-5" southeast room has a wide open doorway on the north wall to the northeast room. An open doorway on the west wall leads to the kitchen. A replacement 1/1 vinyl sash window on the east wall and a sliding window on the south wall provide illumination to the room. In the northwest corner of the room the stairs to the second floor begin, rising between the west wall of the main block and the west wall of the northeast room. All the finishes are modern replacements and duplicate those found throughout the interior of the house.

Northeast Room

The slightly smaller northeast room, also used most recently as a living room, measures 9'-10" x 14'-0". The room is accessed through a wide doorway on the south wall. A sliding window is present on the north wall and a 1/1 vinyl sash window is present on the east wall. A thimble on the north wall, near the east wall, indicates the former location of a wood stove in this room, at some time. The finishes match those in the southeast room, including a central ceiling light-and-fan fixture.

Kitchen

The L-shaped kitchen, the largest first-floor room, is the central circulation space, providing access to several rooms, the basement, and the exterior. A wide doorway on the east wall leads to the southeast room. A door on the west wall leads to the bedroom in the one-story addition. The bathroom is in the northwest corner of the space, accessed by a door on the north wall of the kitchen. Along the east wall is the door to the cellar. The replacement brick flue chimney is also

on the east wall and projects into the room, though it is finished with sheetrock. The exterior doorway is centered on the north wall of the stem section of the space.

All the finishes in the room are modern, matching those found throughout the interior. Modern wall cabinets line much of the south wall to either side of the replacement 1/1 vinyl sash window and partially along the west wall. Below the counter are additional cabinets and one tier of drawers. A single metal sink is centered under the window. On the east wall is additional wall cabinetry, above where the laundry and dryer were located. A full height cabinet is to the south of the wall cabinets.

The walls and ceiling are sheetrock, vinyl sheeting covers the floor, and a modern rectangular fluorescent ceiling light illuminates the room.

Bathroom

The 7'-4" x 4'-11" bathroom has all new finishes and fixtures. The vinyl sheet flooring matches that in the kitchen.

Rear (West) bedroom

The asymmetrical rear (west) bedroom is located in the one-story rear addition, likely original as all three of the houses had them as early as 1901 (Sanborn 1901). The space may have been a utilitarian space originally as it does not sit on a masonry foundation and only later was converted to a bedroom. The room is accessible only from the kitchen. The modern replacement finishes and trim and hollow-core door match those found elsewhere in the house. The window openings on the north and south walls have 1/1 modern wood sash windows. The pattern of the vinyl sheeting differs from that in the kitchen and bathroom.

Enclosed Stair

The narrow, 3'-0" enclosed stair rises along the west wall of the main block, between the kitchen and northeast rooms. The walls and ceiling are sheetrock. Wall-to-wall carpeting covers the fourteen runs and fifteen risers.

Upper Stairhall

The enclosed stair rises to the second-floor rectangular stairhall. A modern, mahogany, "Colonial" railing with turned balusters runs from the top of the stair to the south wall. The hall has doorways to the northeast bedroom, a closet, and the southeast bedroom. The modern finishes include sheetrock walls and ceiling, wall-to-wall carpeting, and mahogany stained doors and trim as present on the first floor. The space is illuminated only by a modern ceiling fixture.

Northeast Bedroom

The 7'-2" x 10'-6" northeast bedroom, accessible from the stairhall, is the smallest of the three second-floor bedrooms. As with all the second-floor bedrooms, the room has a knee wall. The space is illuminated by a modern replacement, wood 1/1 sash window on the north wall. The finishes match those found throughout the house, including modern replacement sheetrock walls

and ceiling, 2½" mahogany stained "Colonial" window and door trim, hollow-core door, and modern globe ceiling light. Vinyl sheeting covers the floor.

Southeast Bedroom

Of the three second-floor bedrooms, the L-shaped southeast bedroom is the largest and provides access to the southwest bedroom in the rear ell. The room measures 11'-8" at its widest part and 17'-3" at its deepest part. A doorway on the west wall leads to the southwest bedroom. Each of the two window openings, one on the south gable end, the other in the façade gable, have modern replacement wood 1/1 sash windows. All the finishes match those in the northeast bedroom, though the pattern of the vinyl flooring is different. A small scuttle near the north wall provides access to the attic crawl space.

Rear (West) Bedroom

The rear (west) bedroom is accessed only from the southeast bedroom, via a step down. The 11'-3" x 13'-0" room has knee walls on each of the long elevations and a single modern replacement wood 1/1 sash window, smaller than in the other two bedrooms, on the west wall. All the finishes match those in the southeast bedroom.

Attic Crawlspace

The attic crawlspace is accessible only from a scuttle in the southeast bedroom. The unfinished space is open above the main block. Small vents are present on the north and south gable ends. Insulation covers the ceiling joists. Evidence in the flooring and ceiling suggests a brick flue chimney once rose through the center of the house, roughly in the location of the hall closet.

Outbuilding

To the north of the house is a large, noncontributing, modern, two-bay, gable-roof garage that replaced an earlier garage built in the 1920s in the same general location (Sanborn 1928). Angled to the house and sited to face slightly southeast, the high-posted, one-story, gable-front building rests on a three-block-high concrete-block foundation. On the south elevation is a pedestrian entry with a modern metal door with lights in the upper panel and a modern 1/1 wood sash window. The high overhead garage doors have two paneled rows above and below the center glazed row. The gabled roof is clad with asphalt shingles and synthetic siding covers the walls. The large, open unfinished interior features plywood walls, a concrete floor, and truss roof framing.

Building Comparison

789 First Avenue is one of three originally identical houses built by Gershon P. Bickford, a well-known Berlin developer and builder active in the 1890s and 1900s. The three houses, now all altered, originally were examples of one-and-a-half-story, side-gable houses with façade gables. 789 First Avenue is the most intact of the three in terms of footprint and plan. While considerably less common than gable-front or end houses or to a lesser extent bungalows, singular examples of side-gable types with façade gables or dormers are present in scattered

instances in most other Berlin neighborhoods.¹ If they are present they tend to be single examples rather than in a group as with the First Avenue trio. Like 789 First Avenue, they tend to have replacement siding and windows, enclosed front porches, and expanded rear ell or wings. One additional example in the Berlin Heights Addition area is 881 Fifth Avenue which retains its original or historic windows. Like 789 First Avenue, the porch has been enclosed. Other examples with alterations comparable to 789 First Avenue include 913 Sixth Avenue which has replacement siding, windows, and a metal roof, but the porch is not enclosed and 39 Abenaki Lane, which has an altered fenestration pattern and replacement windows. Several examples are also present on the east side with a similar extent of alterations as on 789 First Avenue.

Historical Information

General Background of Locale

European settlement of Berlin (initially called Maynesborough) dates to the early nineteenth century. Initial settlement began in 1821 on the east side of the river with incorporation in 1829, at which time there were approximately seventy-three inhabitants (Merrill 1888, 789).² The location was attractive for two main reasons. The powerful Androscoggin River at the confluence with the Dead River, a small waterway with little volume, provided significant water power for small saw and grist mills. Plentiful timber resources covered the hills on either side of the river valley and nearby mountains (Gove 1986, 82). In addition, there was sufficient arable land for farming for the original settlers. Only with the arrival of the railroad in 1851, however, and an economical means of transport for lumber and wood products did the town's development begin to flourish. The railroad provided access beyond a local market and attracted outside investors to the town to build large-scale operations.

Wood Pulp And Paper Manufacturing

The second most significant and transformative event in Berlin's long-term development was the introduction of the wood pulp industry, beginning in the late 1870s. Wood pulp and paper mills began to replace saw mills as the dominant industry, reaching their zenith in the early twentieth century with multiple mills constructed along both sides of the river. Innovations in the manufacture of paper, notably the supplanting of rags by wood pulp for its production, was the genesis of this transformation, along with refinements of the wood pulp manufacturing process (Watterson 1997; Smith 1970, 121-187). By 1896 the Burgess Sulfite Fiber Company was the largest in the United States, manufacturing 75-80 tons of pulp per day (Watterson 1997). During the peak decades of production, multiple mills operated along the Androscoggin, manufacturing

¹ End house is a nineteenth-century term used in some building contracts to describe side-hall houses. Jack Larkin, *The Reshaping of Everyday Life, 1790-1840* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 119.

² The following is only a brief overview. For a more thorough overview history of the area see the context document (forthcoming) being prepared in conjunction with this HABS documentation. See also the bibliography, especially Preservation Company 2002 and Preservation Company 2008. The above and sections of the context document draw extensively from those two earlier documents by Preservation Company, at times verbatim.

a wide range of wood products. Many of the mills were under the aegis of the Brown family, the town's predominant employer, and its corporate entities from the 1890s to the 1940s. By the late 1910s, the company manufactured a range of wood, wood pulp, and paper products including clapboards, fibre tubes, druo wrappers, sheathing paper, general merchandise, pulp screenings, house plumbing, kream krisp (later Crisco), shingles, lumber, book paper, kraft paper, bond paper, blinds, kraft pulp, sash, chloroform, doors, bleach liquor, lignine, and bleached sulphite pulp (Brown Bulletin 1919, 1). The second major corporate entity, the International Paper Company (established 1898), which had purchased the Glen Manufacturing Company in 1898, became the largest producer of newsprint in the world with multiple plants nationally, including several in Berlin.

Population

This flourishing industrial development created a growing demand for an ever larger work force. Large numbers of immigrants and migrants, many with lumber skills, flocked to Berlin to work in the mills, which often had high-paying jobs. The recruitment of skilled labor and individuals in specific trades was likely done through a variety of means, none specifically identified to date. Word of mouth likely played a key role in recruitment but other more active means may have been employed though the specific means remain unexamined.³ In addition to attracting large number of migrants, primarily from New England, Berlin became home to large numbers of immigrants, predominantly from French Canada and Europe. The flourishing local economy also attracted large numbers of tradesmen, merchants, craftsmen, professionals, and laborers, to name a few, to provide the goods and services essential to a thriving metropolis. Over the forty-year period from 1880 to 1930 the population of the city swelled from just over 1,100 to over 20,000 (Bureau of the Census 1890-1930). The Depression, however, significantly curtailed the paper-making industry, and in turn the economy of the City of Berlin, from which it never fully recovered. While the paper industry remained in Berlin into the 1970s, the numbers of mills and individuals employed steadily decreased over the decades.

Platting And Residential Development

Residential neighborhoods arose on both sides of the Androscoggin River in the wake of the establishment and flourishing of the paper mills, along with the extensive subdivision of land in grid patterns laid over steeply rising hillsides. Berlin was largely developed out of separate large parcels platted predominantly between 1890 and 1910. The Berlin Heights Addition was one of a number of areas in Berlin first platted in the early 1890s and generally developed over the next thirty years. The area, referred to as “The Avenues” for its north-south running numbered avenues, was named Berlin Heights Addition during the platting process to differentiate it from an earlier neighborhood, called Berlin Heights located to the northeast, east of the Grand Trunk Railway tracks. The platting and development of the area occurred in several phases over the course of the 1890s. By 1930 the blocks within The Avenues/Berlin Heights Addition Historic

³ More recent sources have suggested that recruitment occurred at Ellis Island but this has not been substantiated with primary sources. In nineteenth-century Lowell, Massachusetts, recruitment of French Canadians was done by French-Canadians hired by the textile mills (Early 1979, 130).

District boundary had reached its greatest density, comprised of a mix of single- and multi-family wood residences with modest set backs on urban lots, most typically measuring 50' x 100'. Over the course of those peak forty years Berlin grew from a small town to a thriving, bustling metropolis, the largest city in the northern part of the state.

In contrast with earlier nineteenth-century New England textile communities comparatively little company housing was constructed in Berlin. Two early companies, Forest Fibre Company and Glen Manufacturing Company did build a small number of houses and duplexes in the 1880s, outside of the Avenues, but the majority of housing was built by individuals. A cross section of individuals and entities, including Berlin businessmen, small-scale businesses, and individual property owners implemented the processes of platting, laying out roads, and financing and constructing housing. Speculative development was less common than individual development, either for owner-occupied or tenanted buildings.

Concurrent with the land development was considerable infrastructure development, including a sewer and water system, and electrification. The surveyor and engineer W.C. Perkins, president of the Berlin Heights Addition Corporation, was responsible for the layout of the town's water and sewer system which was first completed by 1893 (Bacon 1890:86; Annual Report 1893, 27-30). In the early 1890s the town Board of Health urged that all dwellings and businesses be connected to the sewers as sufficient water was now available for flushing them (Annual Report 1893, 27). As new areas were platted and developed, the systems were extended into those sections. The Berlin Electric Light Company had been established in 1887 and so lights were being placed along the streets. For instance, in 1894, a warrant included an addition of an electric light near the corner of Green Street and First Avenue and one near the school house west of the Grand Trunk Railway, both in the Avenues (Annual Report 1895, 5). In 1897 the city incorporated and the first city annual report includes a lengthy ordinance relating to sewers, including the requirement that plumbers get licensed "to do business as a plumber in connection with the Sanitary Sewer System" in Berlin (Annual Report 1898, 33).

From its inception the Berlin Heights Addition area, like many developments in Berlin, took on an urban character, with a grid street pattern in blocks of narrow acreage lots. The pace, character, and concentration of development in the neighborhood was influenced by geography and population pressures. First through Third Avenues and the lower cross streets were the earliest and most heavily developed, most likely because of their closer proximity to the downtown area and relative flat topography. The lots on First and Second Avenue were completely developed by ca. 1909 while Third Avenue and those above it were filled in more slowly (Sanborn 1901-1950).

Housing Stock

The housing stock in Berlin overwhelmingly is comprised of single, freestanding, wood-frame buildings on each lot, with air, light, and a small amount of land on all sides. The dwellings include a variety of single-family and multi-family residences with individual characteristics and distinguishable from their neighbors, though drawing upon certain common massing and spatial characteristics typical of the period of construction. They employ an assortment of forms and

styles popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on residential buildings. Many lots include outbuildings or garages, some of which post-date the construction of the original residence as evidenced by the large number of building permits filed for one-story buildings in the 1910s and 1920s (Annual Reports 1912-1928). The Avenues is made up of primarily residential buildings of three units or less, typically one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half stories in height, with no building in the neighborhood rising above three stories. Some other neighborhoods do have four-story multi-family examples. The multi-family houses in Berlin as a whole have significantly larger porch structures than commonly seen in other urban environments, and tend to have porches on two or more elevations. Many of these porches provide exterior access to each living unit. Builders also used local materials in housing construction. Most dwellings have native stone foundations and are of wood construction. In much of the housing erected in the early twentieth century there is considerable similarity of interior finish materials, including window and door trim, doors, and edge-and-center bead wainscoting and cabinetry. Many of the wood building and finish materials would have been readily available locally from the Brown Company's Retail Lumber division which manufactured "All kinds of Building Material." An advertisement in the 1920 Directory listed Kyanized lumber, shingles, calno board, doors, windows, brick sheathing paper, "all kinds of moulding," and a "full line of interior finish" in hard pine, cypress and spruce, and soft pine (Directory 1920).

Ownership And Occupancy

The extent of rapid construction of housing in those decades along with the high percentage of rental properties can be gleaned from the census records. As of 1890 Berlin contained 364 dwellings housing a total of 702 families (Bureau of the Census 1890). Ten years later the number had more than tripled to 1,181 dwellings containing 1,672 homes.⁴ Of those total homes, 574 were owned, 1,077 were rented, with an additional twenty-one of unknown tenancy (Bureau of the Census 1900). By 1910 the dwelling number had increased by nearly one-half to 1,476, comprised of 2,302 homes, of which 892 were owned, 1,390 were rentals, and twenty were unknown (Bureau of the Census 1910). Those numbers had increased further by 1920. In that year Berlin had 3,115 homes (number of dwellings is not noted), of which 1,407 were owned, 1,656 were rented, and 52 were of unknown tenure (Bureau of the Census 1920).⁵ Of particular note is the increase in the number of owned homes. By 1930 the numbers had increased further, with a total of 2,959 dwellings. Of that total, 2,138 were single-family dwellings, 539 were two-family dwellings, and 282 were three-or-more-family dwellings (Bureau of the Census 1930).⁶ As of 1940 the number of dwelling units in Berlin had increased further, totaling 4,557. Of that total, 1,580 were detached one-family dwellings, twelve were attached one-family dwellings, 102 were side-by-side two families, 1,066 were other two-family dwellings, 765 were three-family dwellings, and the remainder 1,032 other types of dwellings

⁴ Home refers to living space, not a building, so if a dwelling is occupied by more than one family or household, it is the home for each of those families.

⁵ The summary reports do not include totals for number of dwellings.

⁶ The summary reports do not provide a breakdown of owned vs. rental properties.

including four-families (280), one- to four-family with business (133), five- to nine-family (531), ten- to nineteen-family (69), and other dwelling place (19).

Many of the residents who initially settled in the Berlin Heights Addition neighborhood comprised a class of moderately skilled workers, including shoemakers, mill engineers, papermakers, carpenters, contractors, and others. The relatively high wages paid by the wood and paper mills in Berlin allowed many families to purchase their own homes. Between 1900 and 1920 renters initially outnumbered homeowners in the neighborhood but after that date the ratio was nearly equal (Bureau of the Census 1900-1930). Households varied in size and often included several generations or extended family members. In addition, or alternatively, household size was increased through the taking in of boarders or lodgers to provide extra income (Bureau of the Census 1900-1930). In the Avenues multiple generations of a family frequently resided in the same general area, often acquiring several lots in close proximity to each other if not directly abutting each other.

Ethnicity

The ethnic diversity of the mill's workforce is apparent by the number of neighborhoods initially identified by the nativity of their residents. Berlin's immigrants included Scandinavians, French Canadians, Germans, Irish, Russians, Russian Jews, and Italians. Areas were known as 'Irish Acres,' 'Little Canada,' 'Norwegian Village,' and 'German Town.' A small cluster of Russians settled on the west side of the railroad tracks at the base of Mt. Forist. By the late 1930s the city had thirteen different churches where services were conducted in five different languages (WPA 1938, 124). The areas were never entirely segregated by ethnicity and by the 1930s they were becoming more diverse (WPA 1938, 124).

Though the Berlin Heights Addition/The Avenues area was dominated by French Canadians, who often established close-knit neighborhoods with family and parochial ties, it was a mixed ethnic neighborhood. The French Canadian church, St. Anne's, predated the development of the Avenues and so was located elsewhere in the City. The Russians, initially mostly single men, arrived around the turn of the twentieth century. By 1915, there were 300 Russian men in Berlin, but only a few families. A Russian Orthodox congregation was formed for moral and spiritual guidance and the Holy Resurrection Church was constructed (Berlin Heritage Trail Partnership 1997:11).

History 1940 To Present

The Depression had a profound impact on the economy of Berlin, with the Brown Company suffering a series of setbacks such that by the 1940s it was close to bankruptcy. Though the industry recovered to some extent during the war and in the several decades afterwards, its numbers and innovations never matched those of the early twentieth century. The company was no longer locally owned and ultimately was acquired by a succession of corporate entities (Rule n.d.). The other large paper manufacturer, the International Paper Company, closed their Berlin mill in 1931. The decline in the local paper industry contributed to a decline in population, which decreased from its high of over 20,000 in 1930 to just over 15,000 by 1970. The decline

has continued up to the present, though the numbers increased slightly in the 2000s, resulting in a population of just over 10,000 as of 2011 (www.city-data.com). The remaining mills were demolished in 2007 though one remains just south of the town line in Gorham.

History of Property, with ownership as important to building

789 First Avenue, built ca. 1898, is one of three nearly identical single-family houses built on adjoining lots in the late 1890s by Gershon P. Bickford (1873-1962), one of Berlin's early real estate developers (Deeds 1897 85:58; 1906 129:198). The three houses are comparatively rare examples of speculative development in the Berlin Heights Addition Neighborhood. In characteristic fashion, Bickford mortgaged each of the lots to help finance construction of the houses. He sold 779 First Avenue soon after its completion but continued to own 785 and 789 First Avenue for some years after their construction (Preservation Company 2008, A-97-98). 789 First Avenue was a rental property for much of the first fifteen or so years after its construction (with the exception of the years 1906-1909), owned by Bickford and later several local businessmen in quick succession. Beginning in 1914, the house became owner-occupied, remaining so for much of the rest of its history. From that time forward, the ownership and occupancy patterns of the house are representative of the ethnic diversity of the Berlin Heights Addition Neighborhood. A common theme of the neighborhood is the ethnic heritage of the owners and occupants, in this case predominantly Russian, who developed and lived in the area. In addition, most of the owners and lodgers were employed in the paper mills in some capacity.

Ownership, Development, and Occupancy, 1897-1914

Gershon P. Bickford purchased three adjoining, asymmetrical lots at the northeast end of First Avenue in August 1897. The lots, nos. 13, 14, and 15 in Block 29 of Plan D of the Berlin Heights Addition were redrawn in June of that year according to a new plan and re-numbered as lots 1, 2, and 3 the lots. This was necessary as First Avenue had been extended, reducing the depths of lots 13 and 14 (Plan 1892 59:21, Plan 1897 90:403). It is assumed Bickford developed the three parcels soon after acquiring them.⁷

The several houses Bickford is known to have built are in forms and styles common to the period. In addition to the trio on First Avenue, those dating to the late 1890s include a transitional two-story end house-four square with a polygonal corner tower (739 Second Avenue) and two-and-a-half story end house (745 Second Avenue), both in the Queen Anne style (Preservation Company 2008, A-97-98). Bickford's numerous entries in the Coos County Registry of Deeds grantor and grantee indexes for the period 1893-1900 include warranty deeds and mortgages, the latter not only for properties he purchased and developed but also to

⁷ Bickford (1873-1962) had been raised in Washington, D.C., but had settled in Berlin in 1890 when just 17 years old and soon began a real estate and insurance business. His advertisement in the 1903 City Directory states "I Can Sell Your Real Estate" (Directory 1903). Bickford was very active in local real estate development until 1909 when he returned to the Mid-Atlantic area, where he continued to be active in real estate development. By 1903 Bickford lived in the Berlin Heights Addition Neighborhood (61 Second Avenue [now 739 Second Avenue]) (Directory 1903, 1905-06). See forthcoming Context Document for additional information on Bickford and his real estate activities in Berlin.

individuals who acquired undeveloped parcels from him. He took out mortgages of \$600 on each of the First Avenue lots to fund their development (Deed 1909 146:86, 1914 169:96).

In 1906 Bickford sold 789 First Avenue to Isaie (later spelled Isaac) Aubin, Sr., a widower who was renting the house before he acquired it (Directory 1905-06).⁸ A native of Quebec, Aubin (born 1859) had immigrated as a young man ca. 1882 (Census 1900). By the time he lived on First Avenue he was a truant officer for the City (Directory 1905-06). Over the five or so years the family occupied the house, the household included, at different times: sons Isaie Jr., a clerk at Malloy Brothers, a meat market on Main Street; Henry, a clerk at Halle & Son in the Gerrish Block; and Joseph and likely his younger daughter Minna (Directory 1905-06, 1909-1910; Census 1900; Deed 1914 169:96).⁹ After selling the house in 1909 Aubin moved to a multi-family on Mechanic Street where he lived with his adult daughter and youngest son Joseph (Census 1910).

With the sale, the house again became a tenanted property. Aubin sold the property to Charles E. James (ca.1858-1930) and Oliver H. Toothaker (1877-1961) in November 1909 (Deed 1909 146:86). Toothaker, the owner and editor of the *Berlin Reporter*, lived on Second Avenue, just north of Mount Forist Street.¹⁰ James, a real estate agent, developed a number of properties in Berlin Heights Addition, including adjoining property on Second Avenue.¹¹ The occupants of the house during their brief ownership are unidentified.

In June 1910 George F. Lapointe of Berlin acquired the property from Toothaker (Deed 1910 148:363).¹² Lapointe owned other properties in Berlin, including the neighboring house 785 First Avenue that he had acquired at the same time (Deed 1914 169:96). Nothing is known about LaPointe and he seems to have resided in Berlin only briefly. During LaPointe's ownership the house appears to have been a rental property, occupied for some of the time by the Fred J. Davis family. Davis had moved to Berlin from Maine with his wife and children. By 1910 the Davises, Fred (born ca. 1874) and Lydia (born ca. 1879) rented the house, occupying it with their surviving children, Walter W. (age 13) and Gladys M. (age 5). The household also included a boarder, William G. White (born ca. 1872), a laborer in the paper mill, also from Maine (Census 1910). At that time Davis was unemployed.

Ownership and Occupancy, 1914-1943

Precop and Daria Eustik (also spelled Ustic/Eustok) acquired the house from Lapointe in April 1914 (Deed 1914 166:43). With the sale, the house became owner-occupied again, remaining so for much of the time until the present, through more than five different owners. The new owners were the first of several Russian families to own and occupy the house over the next seventy-plus years. Precop Eustik was a laborer at the Burgess Sulphite Fibre Co, manufacturers of high-

⁸ At that time the property address was 12 First Avenue (Sanborn 1905; Directory 1905-06).

⁹ Son Isaie Jr. later briefly owned the house next door, 785 First Avenue (see NH State No. 689).

¹⁰ For biographical information on Toothaker see A. Chester Clark, "The Legislature of 1907," *The Granite Monthly* 39 no. 4 (April 1907): 105-106.

¹¹ See 838 Second Avenue (New Hampshire State No. 674) for additional information on James.

¹² James had quitclaimed his title to the property to Toothaker in April 1910 (Deed 1910 148:44).

grade bleached pulp. The Eustiks family lived in the house until 1921 when they sold it to another Russian immigrant also employed in the paper mill.¹³

The new owner, Jacob Sheptor (spelled Chaptu in the directories), a paper mill laborer from Russia, purchased the house from Eustik in September 1921. Sheptor would live in the house with his family until his premature death in the early 1930s (Deed 1921 209:300). Sheptor had immigrated from Russia ca. 1911. His wife Evelyn (born ca. 1890) and young son later known as Sam (born ca. 1911) had emigrated to the United States around 1914 (Census 1930). Initially they resided in Massachusetts where their second son Constantin was born. By ca. 1917 the family had moved to New Hampshire and by 1920 they were in Berlin. The family had expanded further with the birth of a daughter ca. 1917 (Census 1920). In the 1920s the couple had four more children. By 1930, the house was occupied by Jacob and Evelyn Sheptor, their six children, and four male boarders, three of whom were also from Russia. The boarders all worked in the paper mills as laborers (Census 1930).

Jacob Sheptor's widow, Evelyn subsequently married Aleck Smithkowsky (known as Alec Smith) in July 1934 (New Hampshire Marriage Records 1934). The following year their son Freddie was born (Census 1940). The Russian-born Smith (born ca. 1889), who had formerly lived on Mechanic Street, was employed by the Brown Company as a wood chopper (Census 1930, 1940). In 1940 the household included the couple, their son, Evelyn's four youngest children from her first marriage (ages 11-19), and five Russian-born lodgers, all employed as wood choppers in lumber camps (Census 1940). The couple continued to live at 789 First Avenue until 1942 when Mrs. Smith sold the property. By the late 1940s, the couple had moved just down the street to 741 First Avenue, a two-family foursquare (Directory 1941, 1948).

The new owner, Eugene E. Brassard, acquired the property in August 1942 from Evelyn Sheptor Smith and Jacob's then minor children John, George, and Mildred (Deed 1942 324:128; Deed 1942 323:201). Brassard would own the house briefly, never occupying it, before selling it to another Russian immigrant family, one who had lived in the Berlin Heights Addition Neighborhood since the 1920s.¹⁴

Darchek Ownership, 1943-1974

In 1943, Kostic (Constantine) Darchek (also spelled Darchik and Darchick), who had been renting the house next door (785 First Avenue) since the mid-1920s, acquired 789 First Avenue from Eugene Brassard (Deed 1943 324:321). With the acquisition, Darchik would live in the house at the north end of First Avenue until his death in 1973 (Census 1930, Directory 1948, 1969). In 1952 Darchek acquired the small triangular piece of land at the northerly part of the lot that Brassard had originally reserved from the 1942 sale (Deed 1952 391:391).

¹³ The Eustiks could not be located in the 1920 Census although Precop Eustik is listed in the 1920 Directory.

¹⁴ For information on Brassard see 838 Second Avenue, NH State No. 674.

Darchek had emigrated from Russia with several relations around 1914 and settled in Berlin by 1917 when he married Helen Panish.¹⁵ By 1920 the Darcheks had two young sons and shared a house on Western Avenue with four boarders including two members of Constantine's family, possibly a brother and his father (Census 1920). Darchek worked as a laborer at the Burgess Sulphite Fibre Co. mill (later known as the Brown Company Sulphite Fibre Co.) where he remained until his retirement sometime in the 1960s (Directory 1920, 1961, 1969-70; Census 1920). In the 1920s the family moved several times, all within the Berlin Heights Addition Neighborhood, including 8 Wight Street (see NH State No. 676), 622 First Avenue, and then to 785 First Avenue (see NH State No. 689), just next door, by 1927 (Directory 1923, 1924, 1927). By 1930 the now-widowed Darchek was paying \$20.00 per month in rent. The household included his four children, the oldest just 12 years of age, and five boarders, all Russian born (Census 1930). It appears this pattern of housing Russian-born boarders continued after Darchek acquired 789 First Avenue (Van Den Berghe 2013).

Ownership, 1974-present

After Darchik's death, his oldest son and executor Nicholas sold the house to Harry M. Tupick, Jr., a second-generation Russian immigrant who had grown up in the Berlin Heights Addition Neighborhood (385 First Avenue), and his wife Geneva R. (Deed 1974 568:471; Census 1940; Directory 1953). The Tupicks owned the house until 1985.

Real R. (1930-2009) and Therese Pepin acquired the property the following year (Deed 1986 684:107). The Pepins redid the interior, adding all new finishes though largely maintaining the original plan. Theresa M. Pepin inherited the property from her husband's estate in March 2010. The State of New Hampshire acquired the property in 2011 (Deed 2011 1327:769).

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¹⁵ The Berlin History website includes a copy of the wedding photo of the Darchiks: <http://berlinhistory.weebly.com/russian.html> (accessed 13 January 2012). The website emphasizes the closeness of Russian families, which is clearly evident in the connections between the various occupants of 789 First Avenue for much of the twentieth century.

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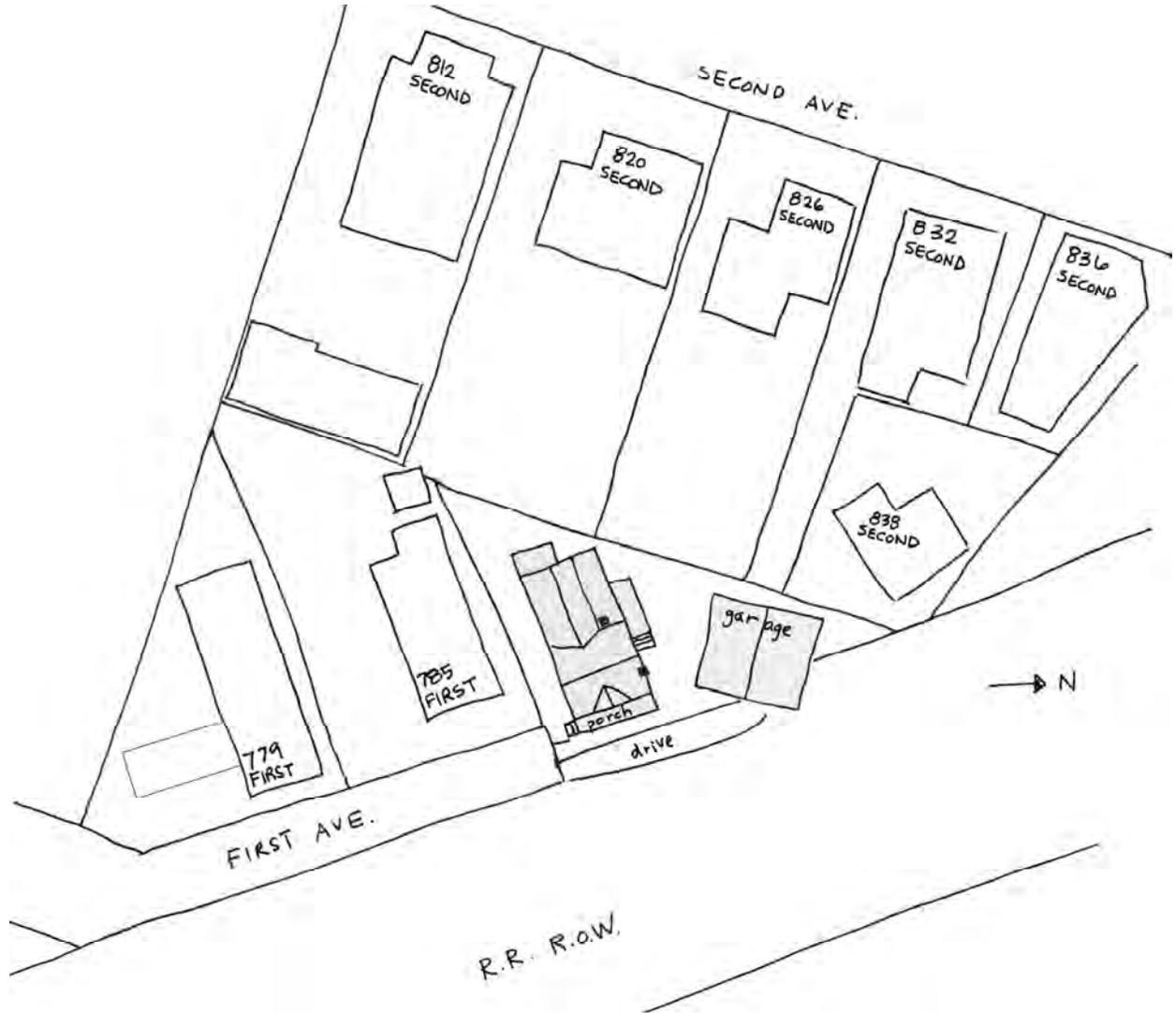
Deeds and plan numbers referenced in notes.

Websites

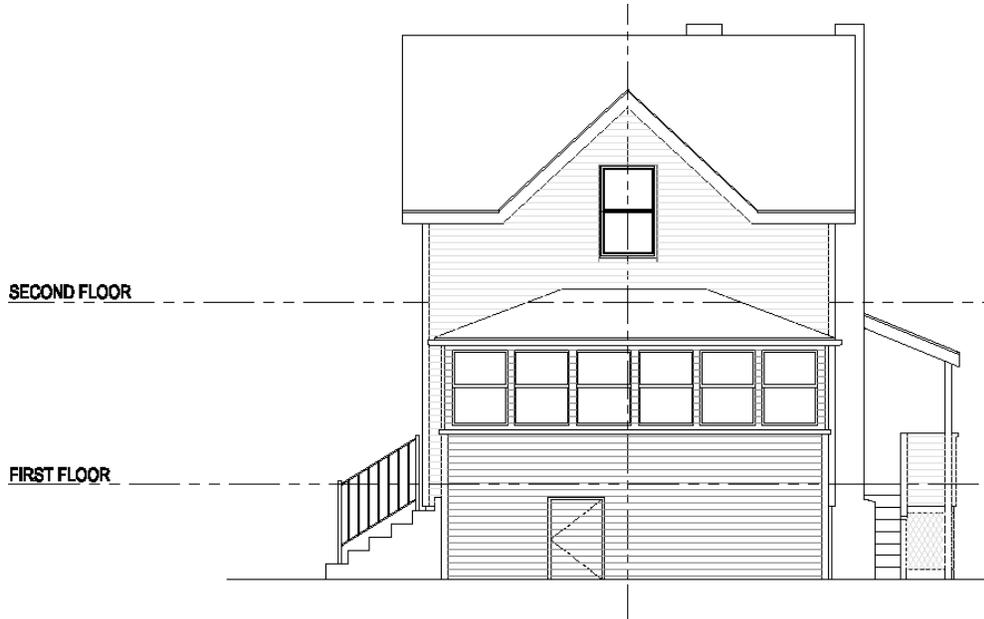
www.city-data.com/city/Berlin-New-Hampshire.html (accessed March 2013)

Drawings

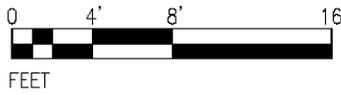
Sketch Map



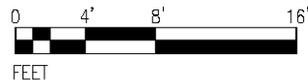
Exterior Elevations

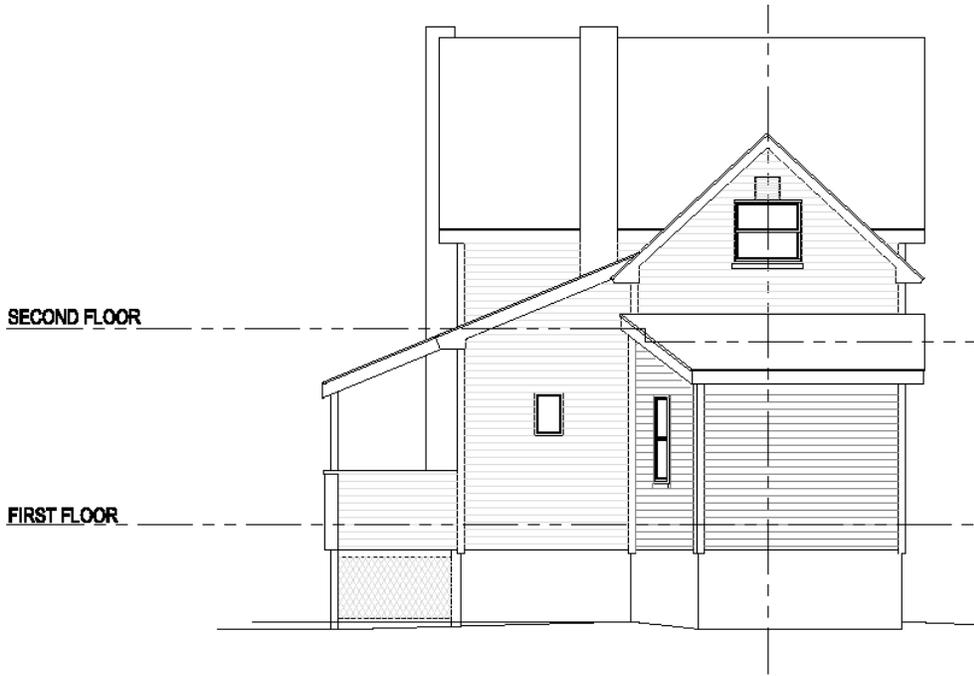


A
EX-2
EXISTING FRONT (EAST) EXTERIOR ELEVATION



D
EX-2
EXISTING NORTH EXTERIOR ELEVATION

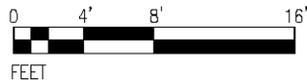


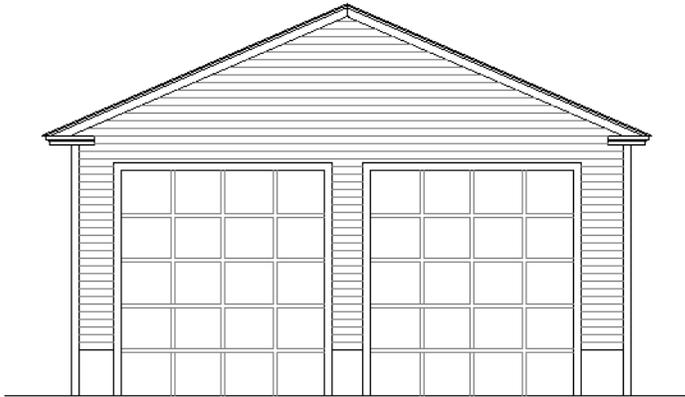


C EXISTING REAR (WEST) EXTERIOR ELEVATION
EX-2

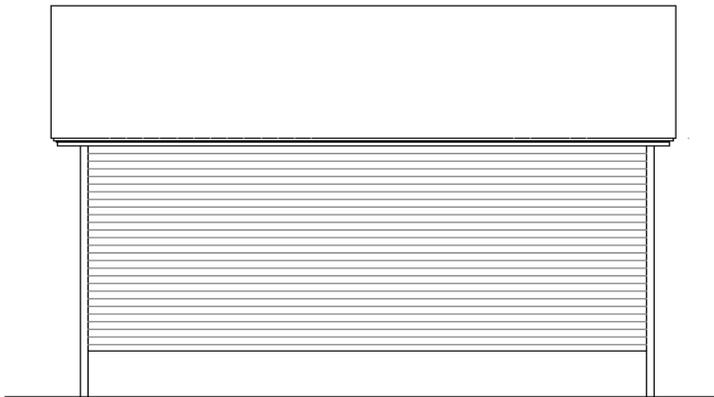
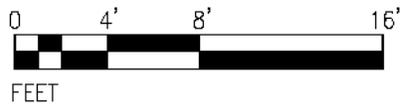


B EXISTING SOUTH EXTERIOR ELEVATION
EX-2

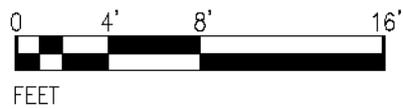


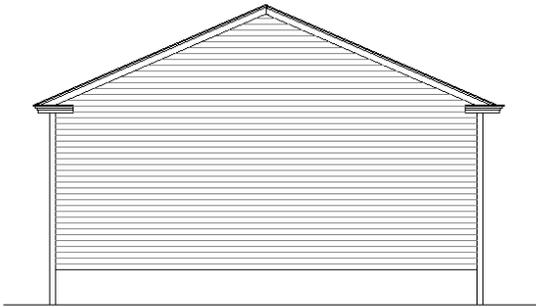


E
EX-3 EXISTING GARAGE FRONT (EAST) EXTERIOR ELEVATION

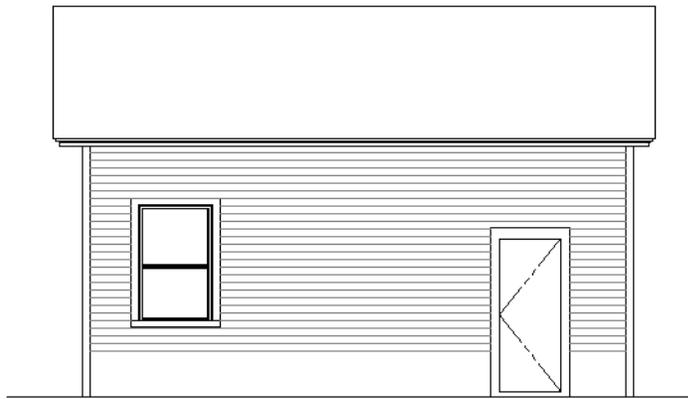


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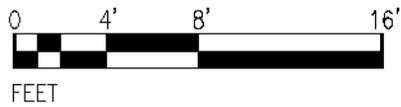




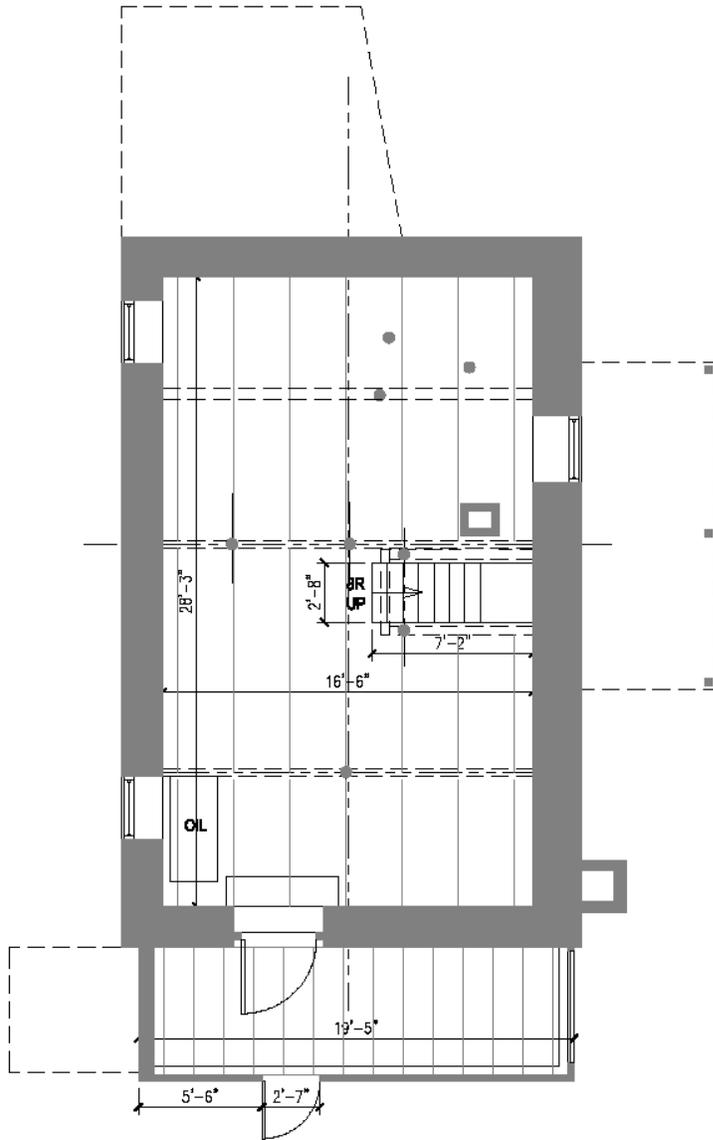
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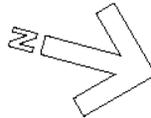
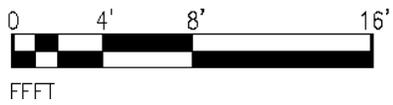
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EX-3 **EXISTING GARAGE SIDE (SOUTH) EXTERIOR ELEVATION**

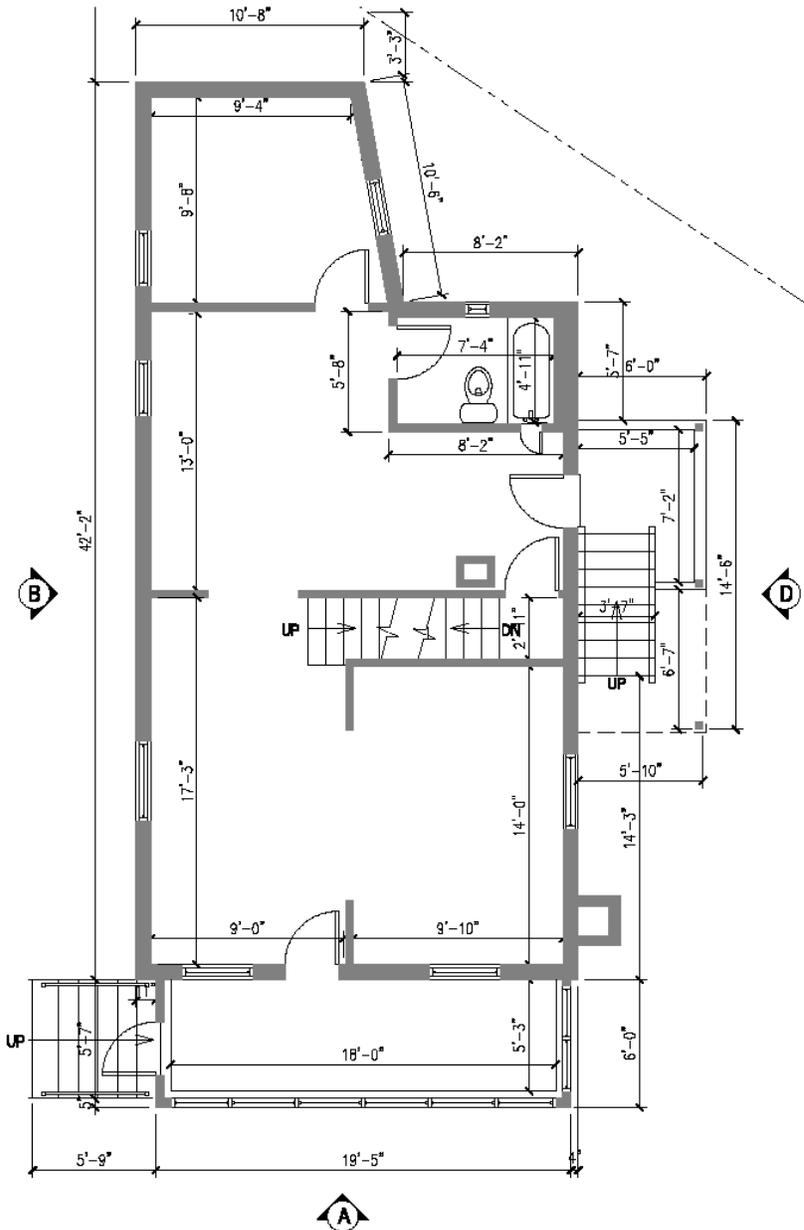


Interior Plans

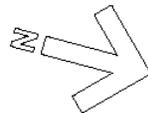
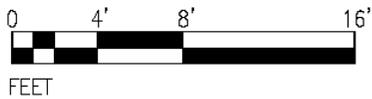


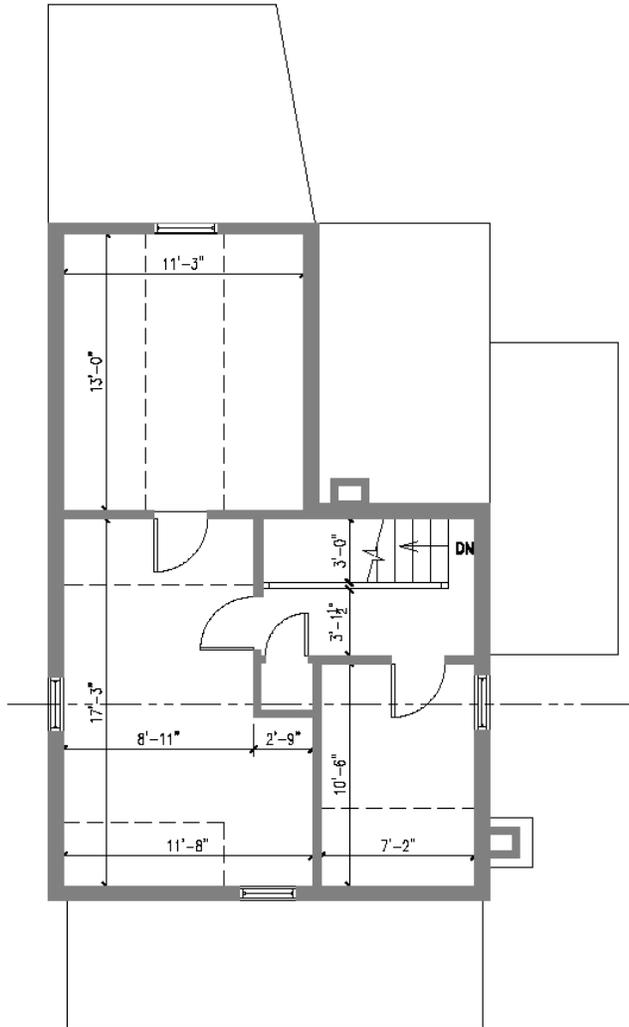
1 EX-1 EXISTING BASEMENT PLAN



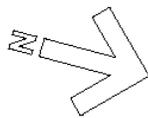
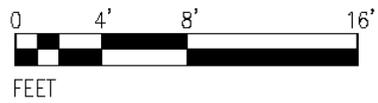


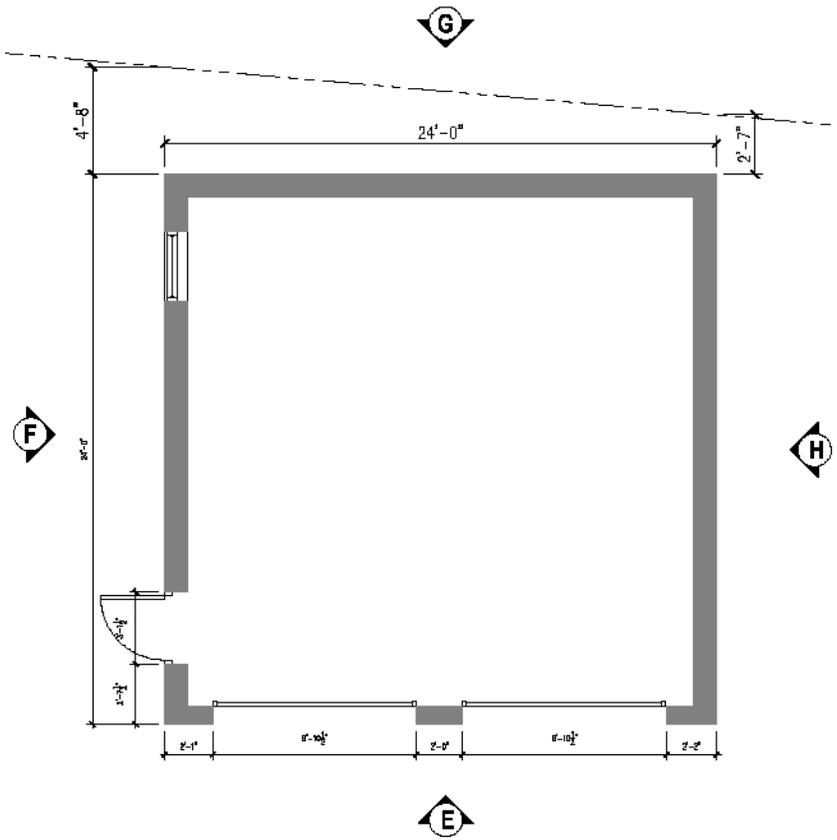
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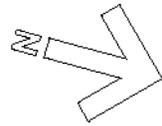
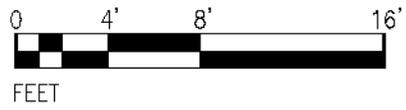


3 EXISTING SECOND FLOOR PLAN
EX-1





1 EXISTING GARAGE FLOOR PLAN
EX-3

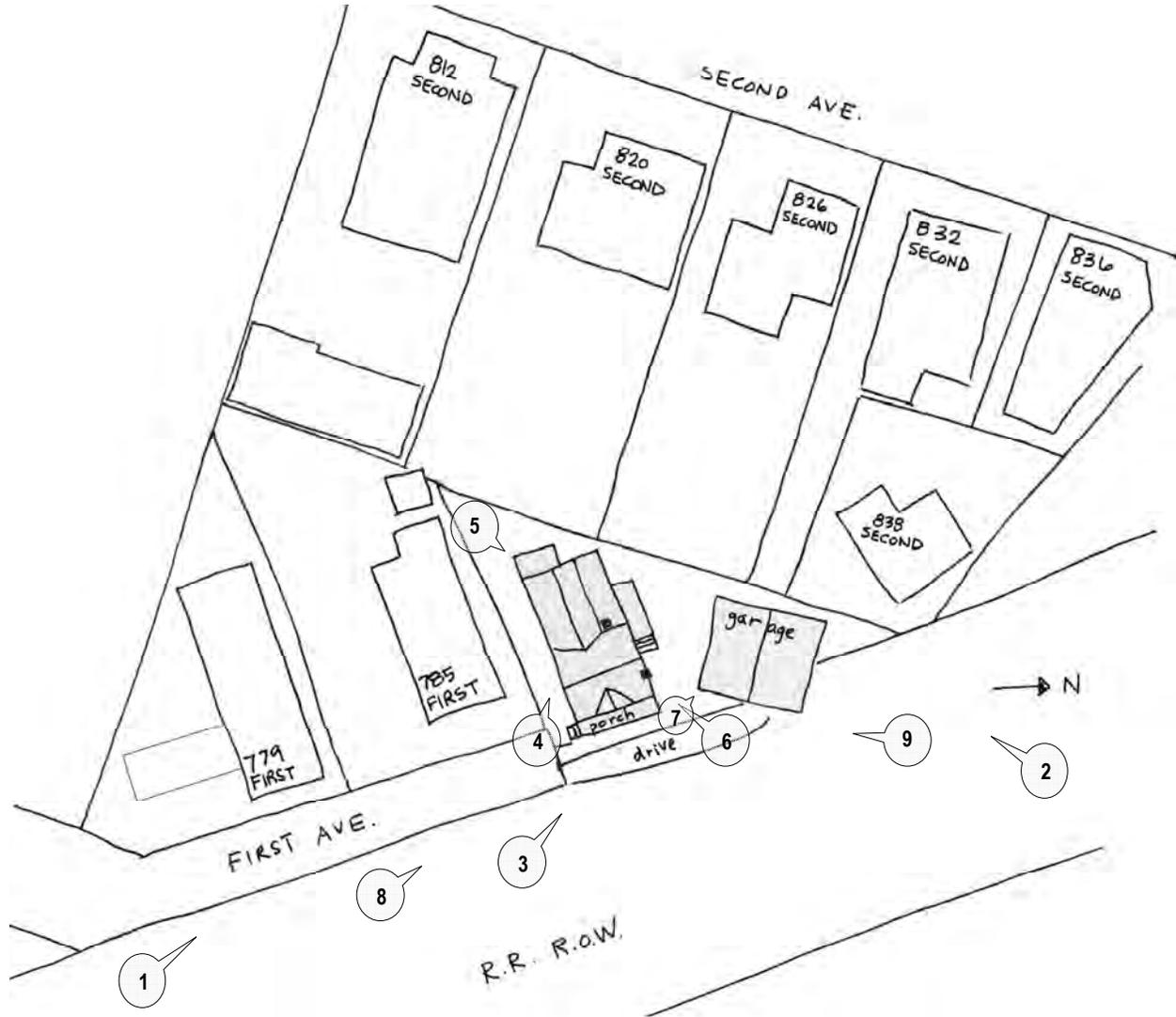


Index to Photographs

Photo Number	Description	Direction
	EXTERIOR	
1	View of all three First Avenue houses built by Gershon Beckford ca. 1898	NW
2	View of all three First Avenue houses, from east side of railroad tracks	SW
3	789 First Avenue, south and façade (east) elevations of house and garage	NW
4	South elevation detail, foundation	NW
5	West and south elevations	NE
6	Façade (west) and north elevations	SW
7	Garage	NW
8	785 and 789 First Avenue	NW
9	785 and 789 First Avenue	SSW
	INTERIOR	
10	Basement, , south and west walls	SW
11	Basement, exterior entry	NE
12	Basement, chimney, stairs, and framing	NNE
13	Basement, ceiling framing easterly half	up
14	First Floor, , view towards northerly living room and front (east) entry	NNE
15	First floor, view towards kitchen and stairs from southerly living room	W
16	First floor, bedroom, view towards kitchen and bathroom	NNE
17	Second floor, southerly bedroom, view towards back bedroom and stair hall	WNW
18	Attic, view towards south gable end	SSE
19	Garage	SE

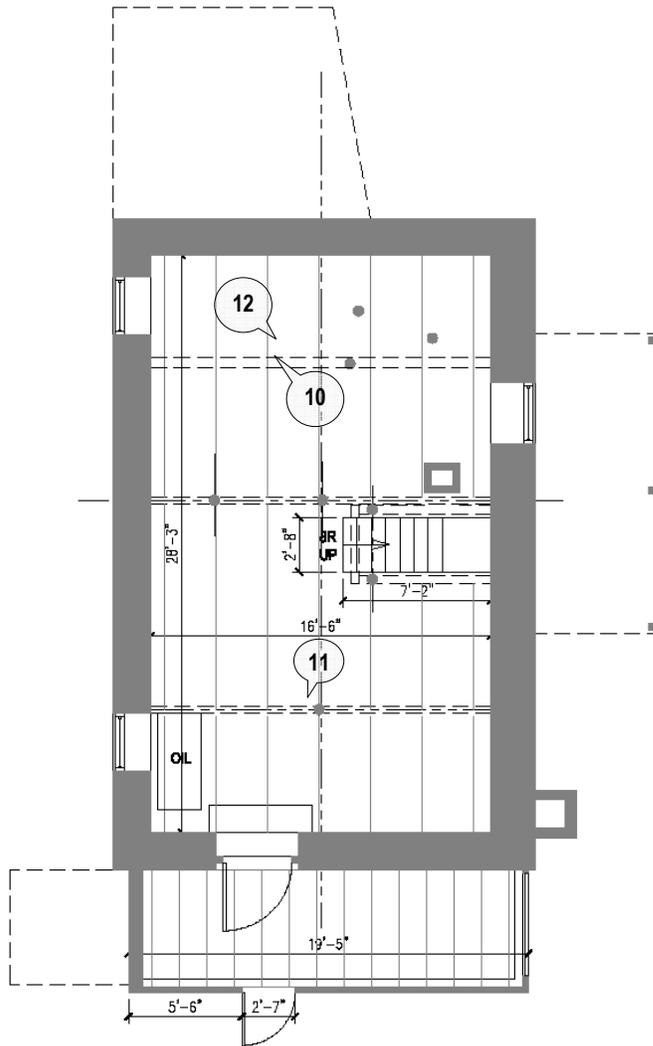
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Exterior



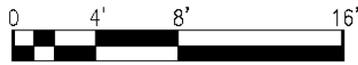
Photos 1-9

Interior



1
EX-1

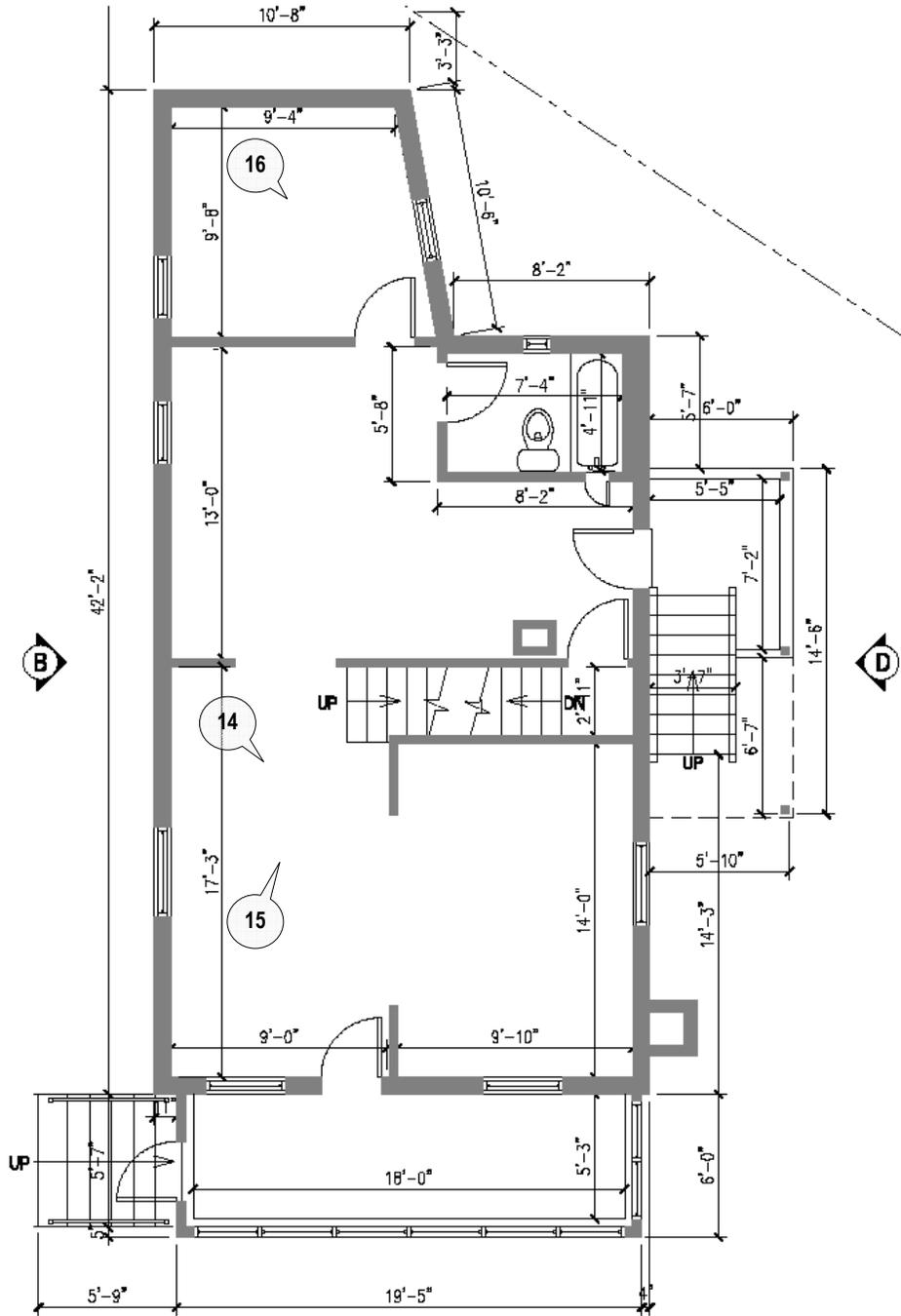
EXISTING BASEMENT PLAN



FFFT



Photos 10-12 (13 not shown)



2 EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN
EX-1

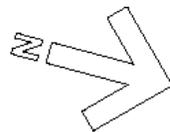
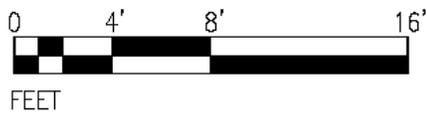
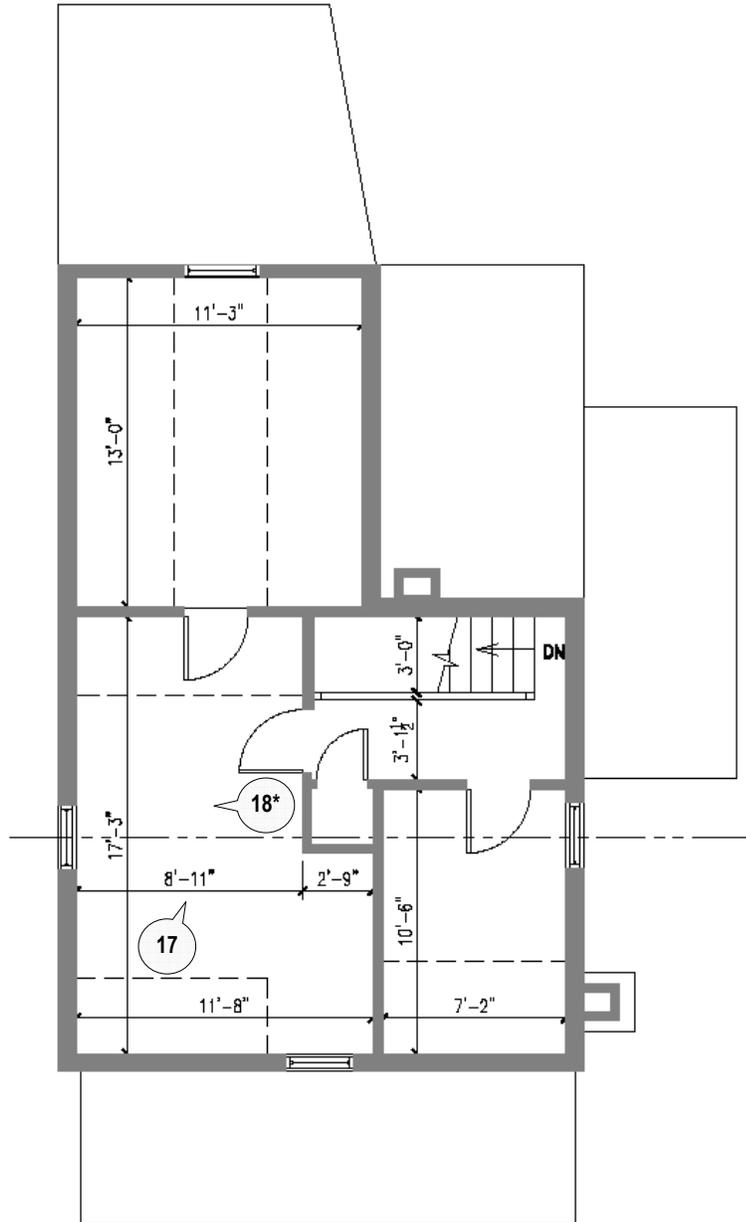
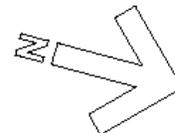
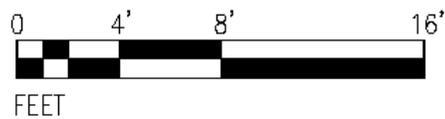


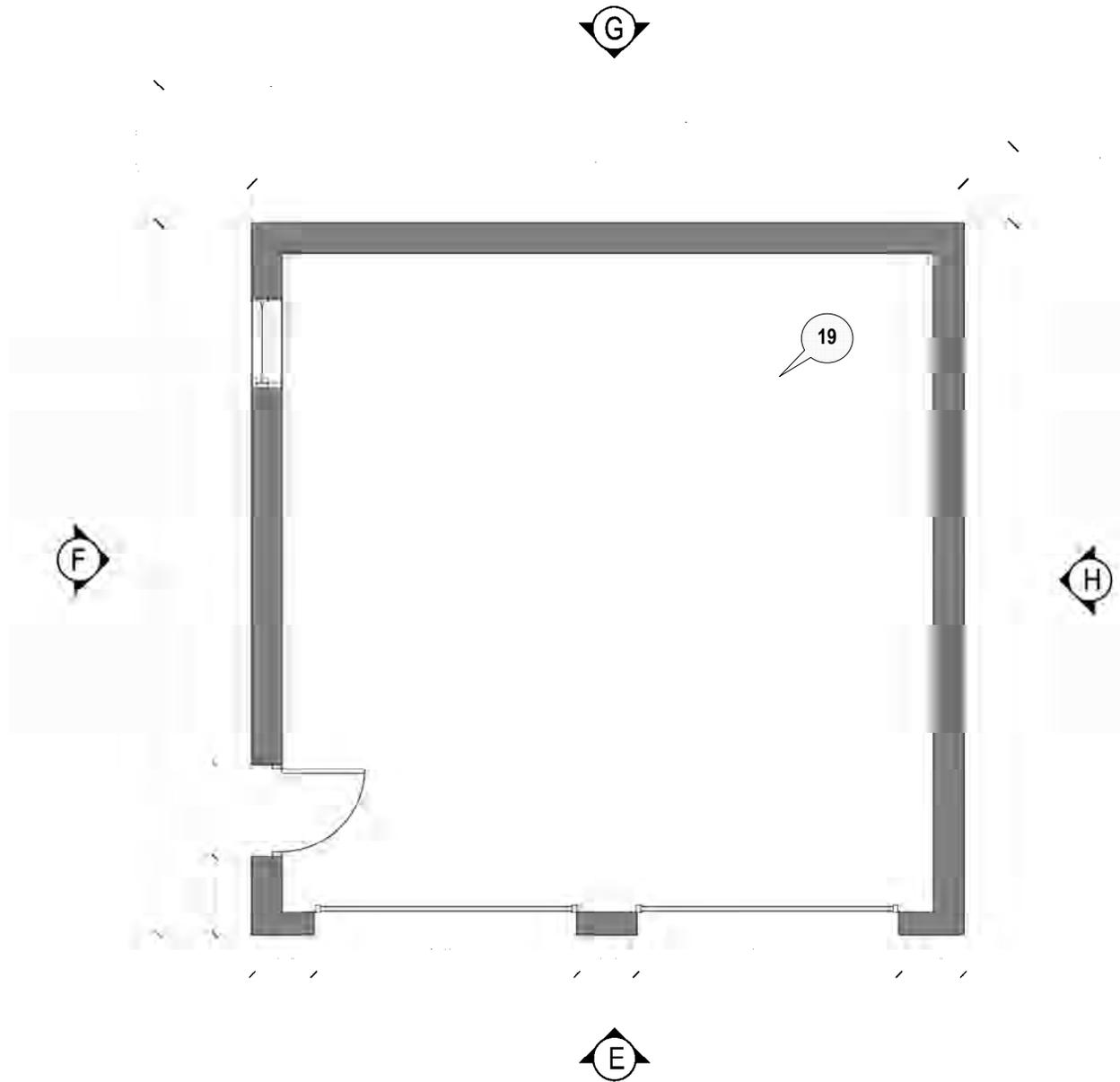
Photo 14-16



3 EXISTING SECOND FLOOR PLAN
EX-1



Photos 17 and 18* (in attic above)



1 EXISTING GARAGE FLOOR PLAN
EX-3

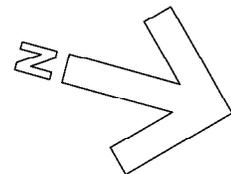
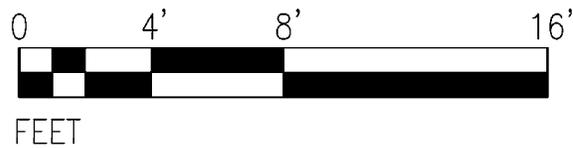


Photo 19

Reference Photographs

Exterior



Photo 1) View of all three First Avenue houses built by Gershon Beckford ca. 1898
Direction: NW



Photo 2) View of all three First Avenue houses, from east side of railroad tracks
Direction: SW



Photo 3) 789 First Avenue, south and façade (east) elevations of house and garage
Direction: NW



Photo 4) South elevation detail, foundation
Direction: NW



Photo 5) West and south elevations
Direction: NE



Photo 6) Façade (west) and north elevations
Direction: SW



Photo 7) Garage
Direction: NW



Photo 8) 785 and 789 First Avenue
Direction: NW



Photo 9) 785 and 789 First Avenue
Direction: SSW

Interior
Basement



Photo 10) Basement, south and west walls
Direction: SW



Photo 11) Basement, exterior entry
Direction: NE



Photo 12) Basement, chimney, stairs, and framing
Direction: NNE



Photo 13) Basement, ceiling framing easterly half
Direction: up

First Floor



Photo 14) First floor, view towards northerly living room and front (east) entry
Direction: NNE



Photo 15) First floor, view towards kitchen and stairs from southerly living room
Direction: W



Photo 16) First floor, bedroom, view towards kitchen and bathroom
Direction: NNE

Second Floor



Photo 17) Second floor, southerly bedroom, view towards back bedroom and stair hall
Direction: WNW

Attic



Photo 18) Attic, view towards south gable end
Direction: SSE

Garage



Photo 19) Garage
Direction: SE