

NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORIC PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION
ABRAMSON TENEMENT
NH STATE NO. 671

Location: 148 Green Street, Berlin, Coos County, New Hampshire

USGS Berlin Quadrangle
UTM Coordinates: Z19 4926200N 326071E

Present Owner: State of New Hampshire

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Vacant

**Construction/
Renovation Date:** c.1897; renovated c.1970

Significance: This building contributes to the Berlin Heights Addition Historic District under Criterion A. It was owned by the same Russian Jewish family from the turn-of-the-20th century into the 1960s, illustrating the mix of ethnicities which historically lived in the neighborhood. The construction of the multi-family dwelling a few years after the family's arrival in this country and the combination of income-producing units and occupancy by family members illustrates a common pattern of development and occupancy. Despite its diminished integrity, the building conveys a sense of its historic multi-family use and is unusual in its size and number of units.

Project Info.: Project personnel included Lisa Mausolf, Historian, and Charley Freiberg, Photographer. Existing Conditions Surveys, Inc. prepared the plans. This documentation is mitigation for the relocation of NH Route 110 through the Berlin Heights Neighborhood Addition Historic District. It draws extensively from earlier documentation prepared by Preservation Company including The Avenues/Berlin Heights Addition Historic District Area Form 2004 and the 2008 addendum. The large format photographs were taken in October 2010 and December 2011 and the report was finalized in August 2015. The building was demolished in Fall 2012.

Description:

Located at the northeast corner of Green Street and First Avenue, 148 Green Street is a large multi-family building which presents two bays to Green Street and extends seven bays to the north along First Avenue. There are two sections to the building – the main, 2 ½-story 24' x 30' section to the south and a two-story, flat-roofed section to the north measuring approximately 18' x 20' and aligned with the west wall. The two-story section appears to be an early, if not original, part of the building. The building is set on a mortared rough rubble stone foundation, much of which is covered with a top coat of mortar. Visible on the east elevation under the porch are foundation walls that have not been covered, incorporating rubble and large granite slabs with plug-and-feather quarry marks. The walls of the building are sheathed in asbestos shingles which are in a deteriorated condition. In various places asphalt shingles and/or wood clapboards are visible underneath. In recent years a new water table has been inserted along the main elevations. Nearly all of the window openings, until recently, contained replacement double-hung 1/1 sash. All of these windows were removed by the previous owner and the openings are now covered with plywood. A few remaining original wooden 2/2 windows survive, including four behind exterior plywood in the attic dormers and one other toward the rear of the east facade. The deck hip roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles and is punctuated by four flat-roofed dormers, two on the west side facing First Avenue, one facing Green Street and one on the east wall. All of the dormers have been sheathed with T1-11 siding. Historically the building had a two-story porch which wrapped around the south elevation and most of the east elevation, terminating at the two-story rear section (Sanborn, 1914-1955).

Entrances to the apartments are located on the east elevation (four units) and on the north elevation (one unit). A two-story enclosed porch (c.1970) sheltering a staircase is located approximately midway on the east elevation. A shed roof on simple braces projects to shelter the bottom of the staircase; the walls are sheets of T1-11 plywood punctuated by 1/1 storm windows. At the north end of the east elevation (and north of this porch) there is an additional smaller modern (c.1970) porch a single-story high. It is set on metal columns and is also partially enclosed by T1-11 with a modern railing. The narrow north end of the building features another modern open porch sheltered by a shed roof supported by square posts with simple braces at the top and stick balusters that are nailed. A section of T1-11 plywood in the northernmost section of the west elevation suggests alterations to the fenestration in this location including possibly a former entrance. The long First Avenue (west) elevation is presently entryless and has variably spaced windows at the first and second story level. On both the Green Street (south) elevation and the front portion of the east wall there are two symmetrically placed windows. A single historic 2/2 window punctuates the upper level of the east wall of the rear wing. There is only one small modern window on the north wall (in addition to the entrance).

The building is set on a 0.11 acre level lot of land and abuts the sidewalk on the south and west sides. There is a small margin of lawn/paved driveway on the north and east sides respectively.

Interior Description:

In recent years the building consisted of five residential units – two three-bedroom, two two-bedroom and one one-bedroom. A sixth unit, located in the attic, was abandoned at an unknown date (prior to 1970) and the staircase which extended upstairs was removed. Today, a hatch in the ceiling of a second floor bathroom provides the only access to this space which shows remarkably few alterations or modernization. Still visible are 2 x 2-light windows, four-panel doors, painted wood floors and peeling plaster walls.

The apartments on the first and second floors retain virtually no historic features and were largely renovated c.1970. Whether the current layout represents the historic floorplan is not clear. The apartments are currently in a deteriorated condition due to water seepage through the roof and boarded former window openings. Finishes include ceiling tiles, plasterboard walls, vinyl flooring, carpeting, hollow core doors and modern trim. Kitchens and bathrooms have painted wood cabinets, laminate counters and older and low quality fixtures. In addition many features have been removed and salvaged over the past several years.

The second floor level of the rear wing is an unfinished storage area. In one area the original exterior clapboarded north wall is visible and there are several discarded two-panel and four-panel doors which may have been original to the structure. The basement under the main house block is accessed from a door on the east side of the building under the staircase. It has limited head room, stone walls and a dirt floor.

History:

The lot on which this multi-family dwelling stands (4-26D in the Berlin Heights Addition) was sold to Donald Lefebvre and Joseph E. King in March 1892 (Coos County Registry of Deeds Book 61, Page 190). The men were business partners with a shop downtown specializing in fresh and salt meats, smoked goods and eggs. Lefebvre and King lost the property in a court settlement in 1895 and Donald's wife, Bridget Lefebvre acquired the lot (still without buildings) soon after (Book 76, Page 167). The tenement building was constructed shortly thereafter. It was sold in February 1900 to Nathan Abramson for \$2,300, subject to a mortgage of \$925 (Book 99, Page 163). A few months later Nathan transferred an ownership share to his father, Abram Abramson, who assumed half of the mortgage (Book 103, Page 196).

Nathan (b. 1876) was the oldest son of Abram (1857-1930) and Stella Morris (1852-1939) Abramson who were Russian Jews from Vilna (now part of Lithuania). After settling briefly in New York about 1895 Nathan relocated to Berlin and was followed by his parents, three brothers and three sisters (David, Celia, Sarah, Hyman, Rachel and Morris). Nathan married another

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Russian immigrant, Flora Simonds, in 1900. He went on to become a successful merchant, was involved in real estate and was a founding member of the local synagogue, Temple Beth El, in 1918. Abram and Stella Abramson came to Berlin in 1898. According to his 1930 obituary, "For many years Mr. Abramson peddled and sold dry goods and furnishings. He also bought and sold real estate...He took great interest in the city of his adoption where he was universally liked by everyone. He was devoted to the Jewish faith and was prominently identified with the work of the Synagogue since it was built here. He was a good neighbor and friend." (*Berlin Reporter*, 21 August 1930).

In 1910 the building at the corner of Green Street and First Avenue was occupied by Abram Abramson, his wife and four children and the families of Thomas Sweeney, an Irish-Canadian house painter; Thomas Dyer, a French Canadian barber; Albert Boulay, a French Canadian farmer and three lodgers who were all recent emigrants from Russia. At the time Nathan and David Abramson were living on Exchange Street.

The City's 1917 Annual Report includes a brief mention of a fire in the building. It notes that on Feb. 11, 1916 there was a fire in the tenement on Green Street owned by A. Abramson, caused by straw in the basement. In 1920 Abram Abramson was living here with his wife and daughter Rachel. During the 1920s the building was divided into six units. Tenants included William Laramee, Harold Beroney, and Henry Mader (1927 Directory).

In 1930 the occupants included the families of Abram Abramson, Joshua Klatskin (husband of Abram's daughter, Sarah), Frank DeMasi, who worked for the Brown Company, and James Fontaine, woodsman. Sarah Abramson (1878-1973) had married Joshua Klatskin, a merchant, about 1909. Abram died in August 1930 and the Klatskins inherited the building and occupied one of the units into the 1960s. Typically one or more apartments in the building were vacant at any given time.

In 1967 the building was sold by the Klatskins to Oscar and Janet Bouchard (Book 510, Page 167). The Bouchards owned the building for ten years before selling it to Lucien and Jeanne Croteau (Book 597, Page 574). Robert and Lorraine Reed acquired the property in 2003 and sold it to the State of New Hampshire in December 2010.

Bibliography

Berlin Daily Sun, 29 June 2011 [article on Abramson family reunion].

Berlin Directories, various dates.

Berlin Reporter, 21 August 1930 [obituary of Abram Abramson].

City of Berlin. Annual Report, 1917.

Coos County Registry of Deeds, Lancaster, NH.

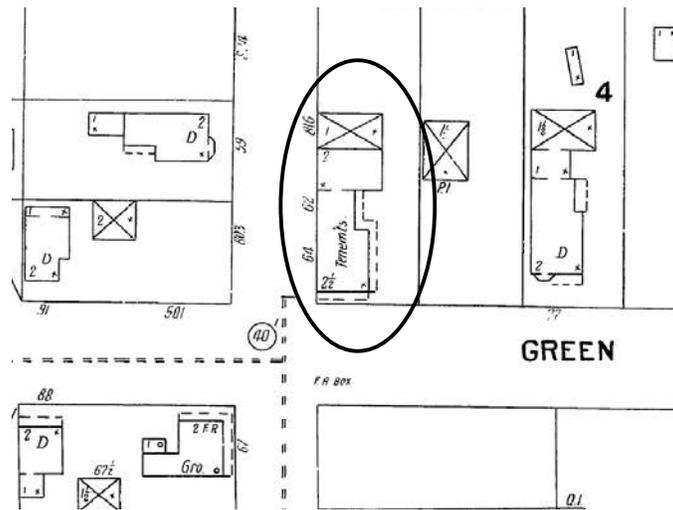
Preservation Company. Area Form for the Avenues/Berlin Heights Addition Historic District, 2008 Addendum. [On file at the NH Division of Historical Resources, Concord].

Preservation Company. *Berlin – The City That Trees Built: Turning Land and Lumber Into Neighborhoods*. Kensington, NH: 2015. [Prepared for the NH Department of Transportation and on file at the NH Division of Historical Resources, Concord].

Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1909, 1914, 1920, 1928, 1950, 1955.

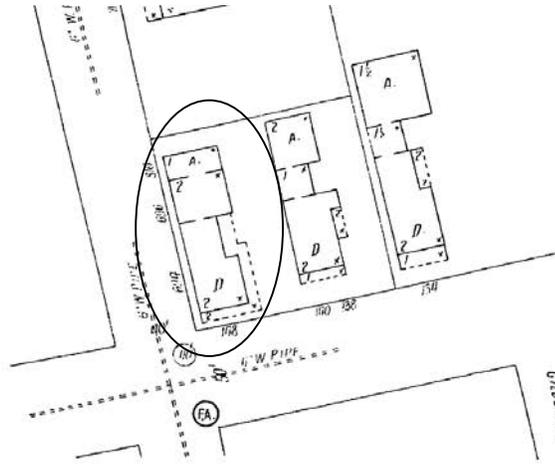
U.S. Census, 1900-1930.

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Sanborn Map, Jan. 1901

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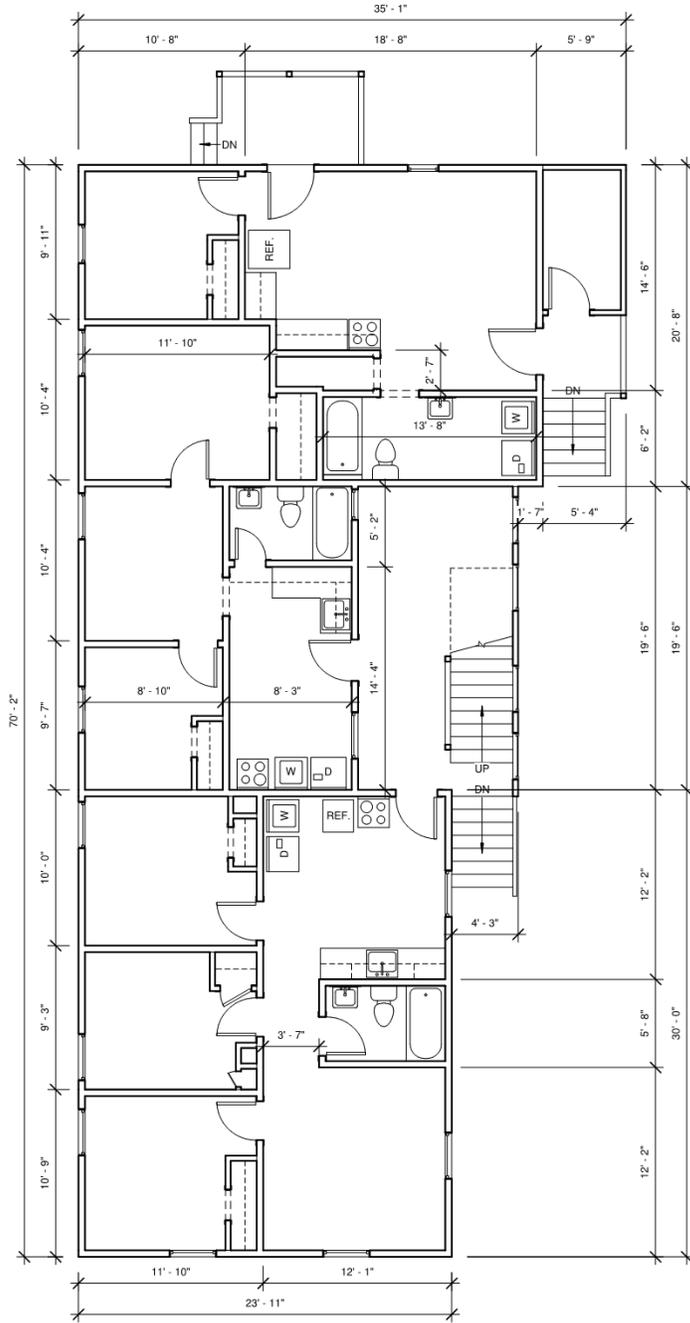
Sanborn Map, 1928

Note: No further changes in depiction of property through 1955 Sanborn map.



Assessor's Map

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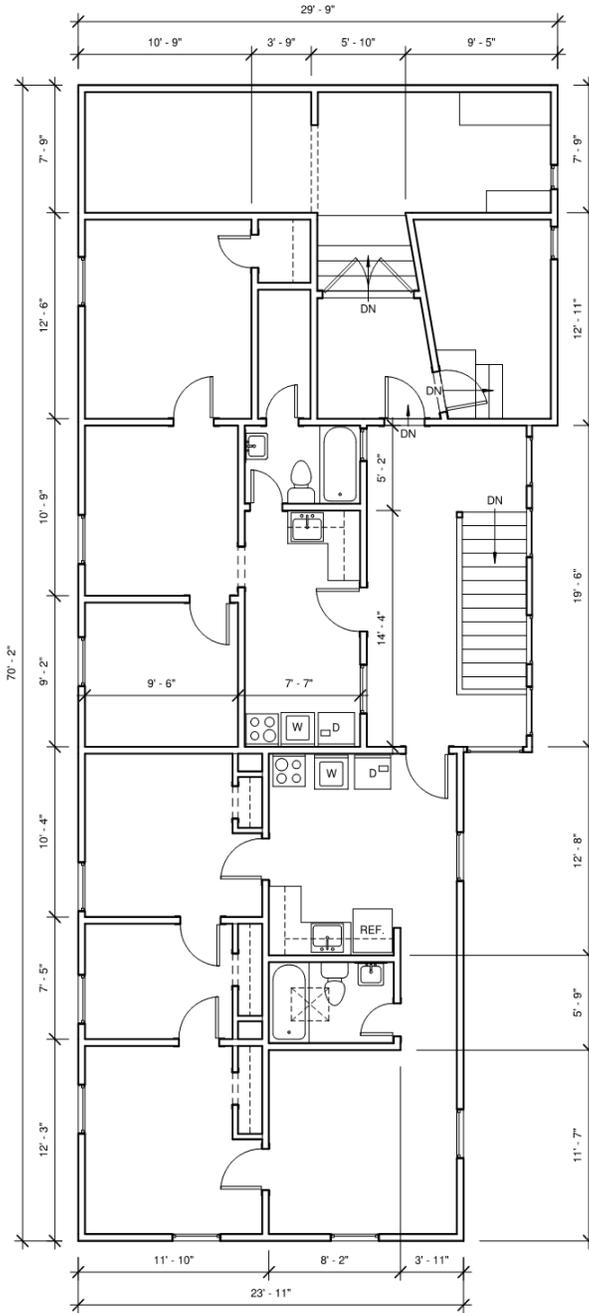


FIRST FLOOR 1
07



Graphic Scale

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North

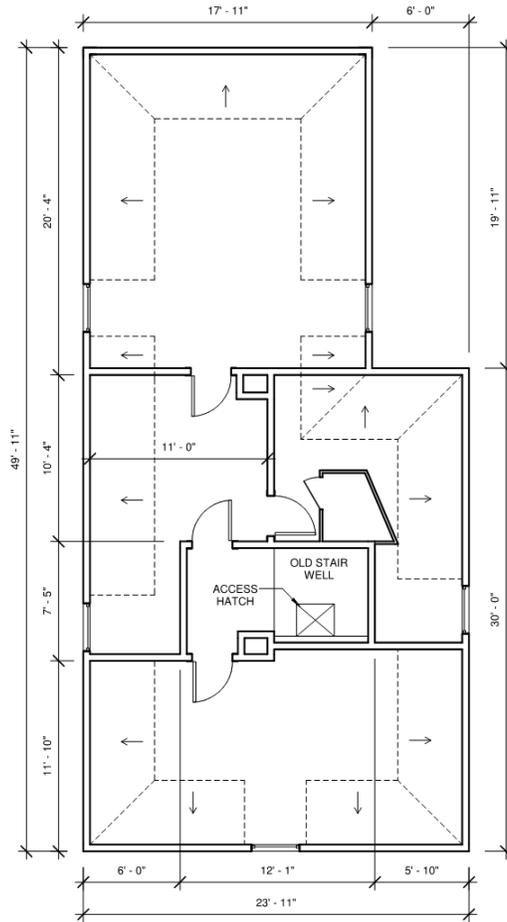
SECOND FLOOR

2
07



Graphic Scale

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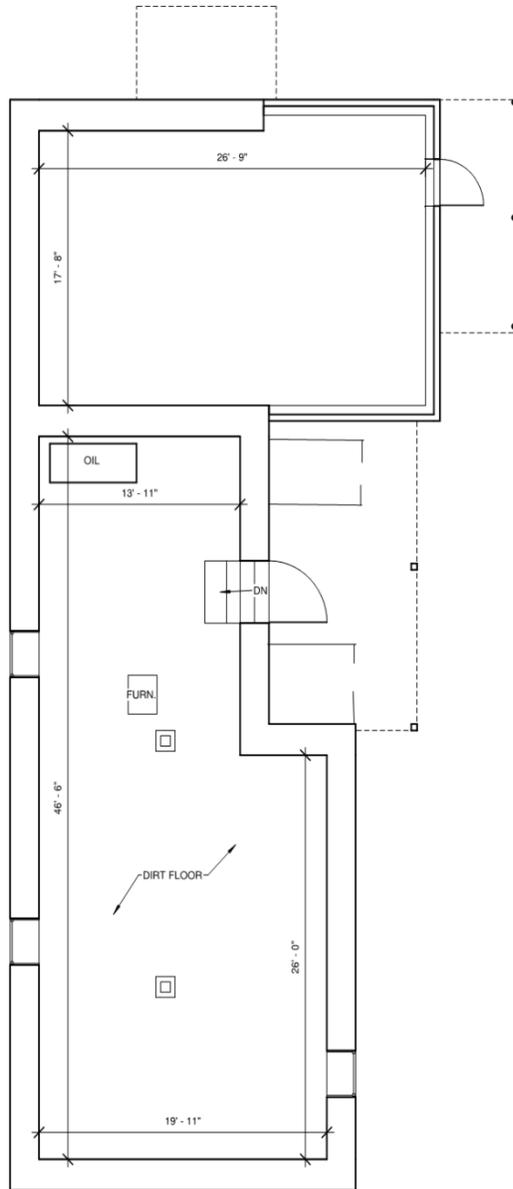
North

ATTIC 3
07



Graphic Scale

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North

BASEMENT 0
07



Graphic Scale

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Photographer: Charley Freiberg

- NH State No. 671-1 View looking NE at northeast intersection of First Avenue and Green Street showing west and south elevations of 148 Green Street. [October 2010]
- NH State No. 671-2 View looking north showing south and east elevations. [October 2010]
- NH State No. 671-3 View looking N-NE showing south elevation. [October 2010]
- NH State No. 671-4 View looking E-SE at west elevation. [October 2010]
- NH State No. 671-5 View looking SE at north and west elevations. [October 2010]
- NH State No. 671-6 View looking S-SW at north elevation. [October 2010]
- NH State No. 671-7 View looking SW at east and north elevations. [October 2010]
- NH State No. 671-8 View looking west under porch at unaltered section of foundation located within later storage room addition. [December 2011]
- NH State No. 671-9 Interior view, second floor, looking west in rear storage area. Original clapboard exterior wall at left. [December 2011]
- NH State No. 671-10 Interior view, third floor, looking south showing unaltered original finishes in attic including four-panel door. [December 2011]
- NH State No. 671-11 Interior view, third floor, looking north at original finishes in north end of attic. [December 2011]
- NH State No. 671-12 Interior view, third floor attic, looking south at front dormer [December 2011]

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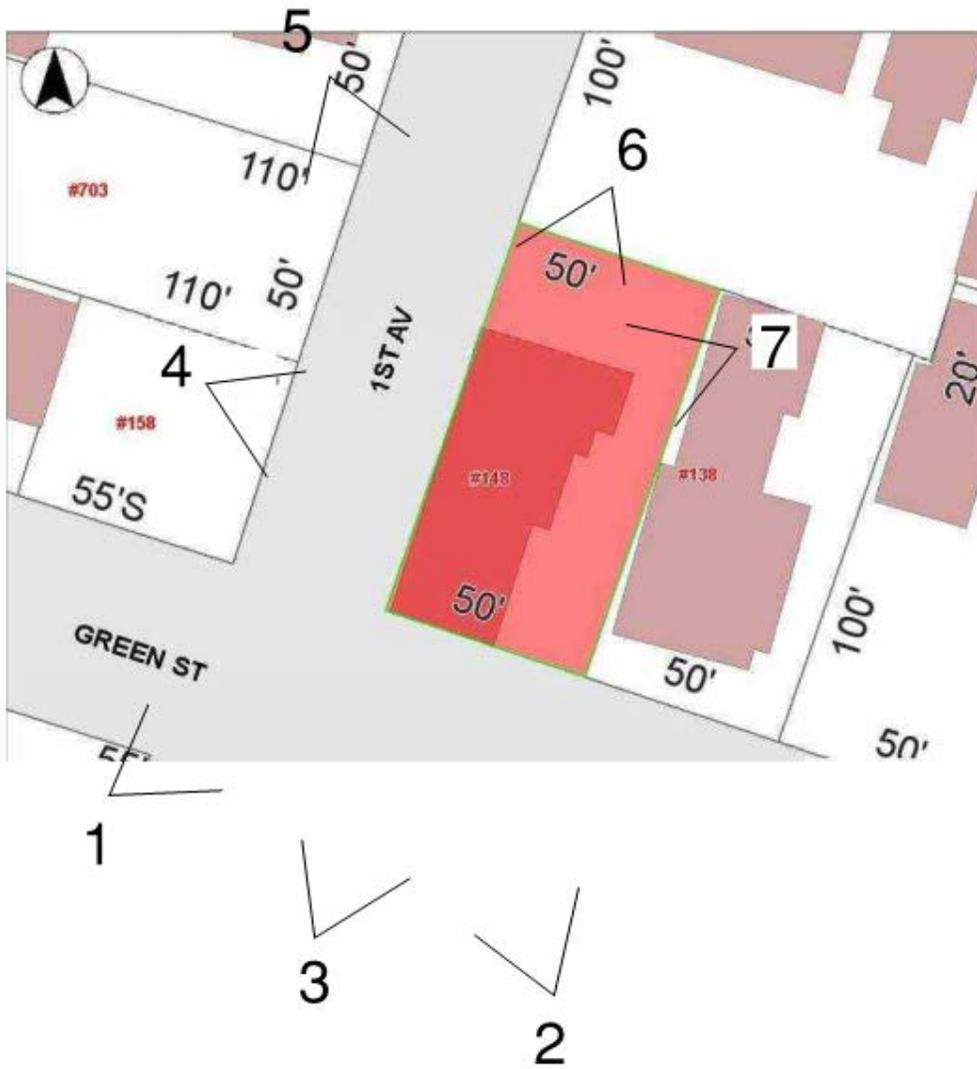


Photo Key – Exterior Photos

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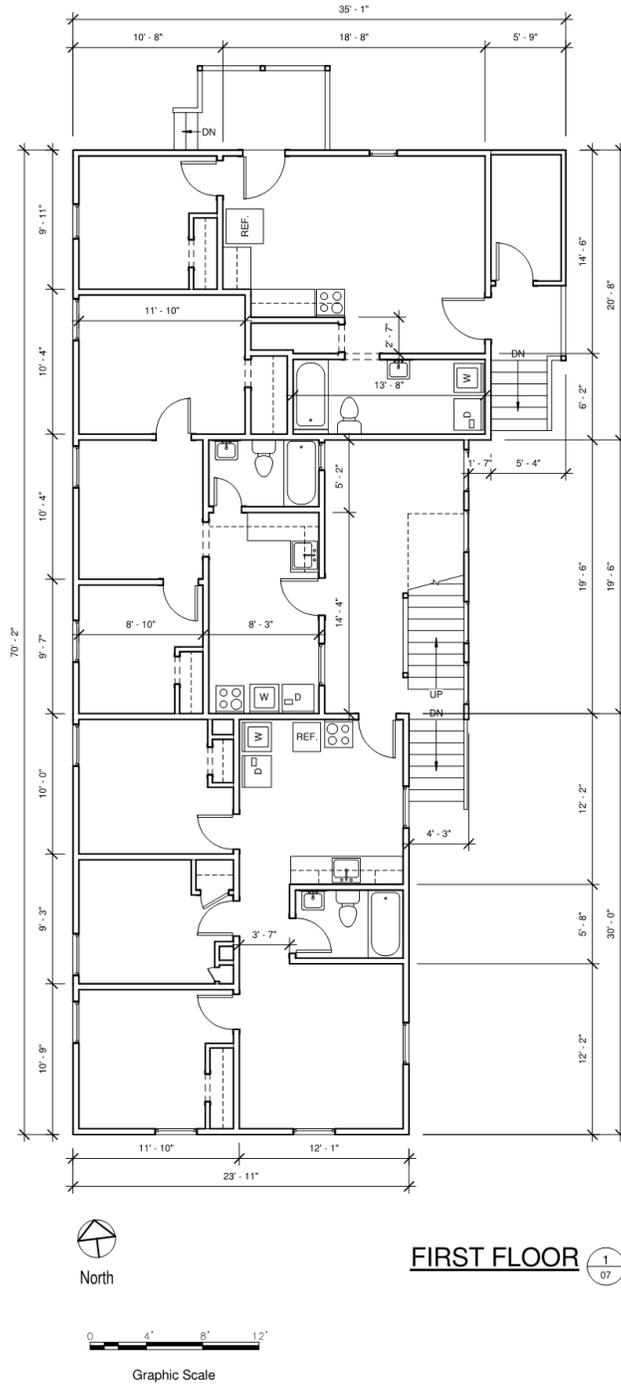
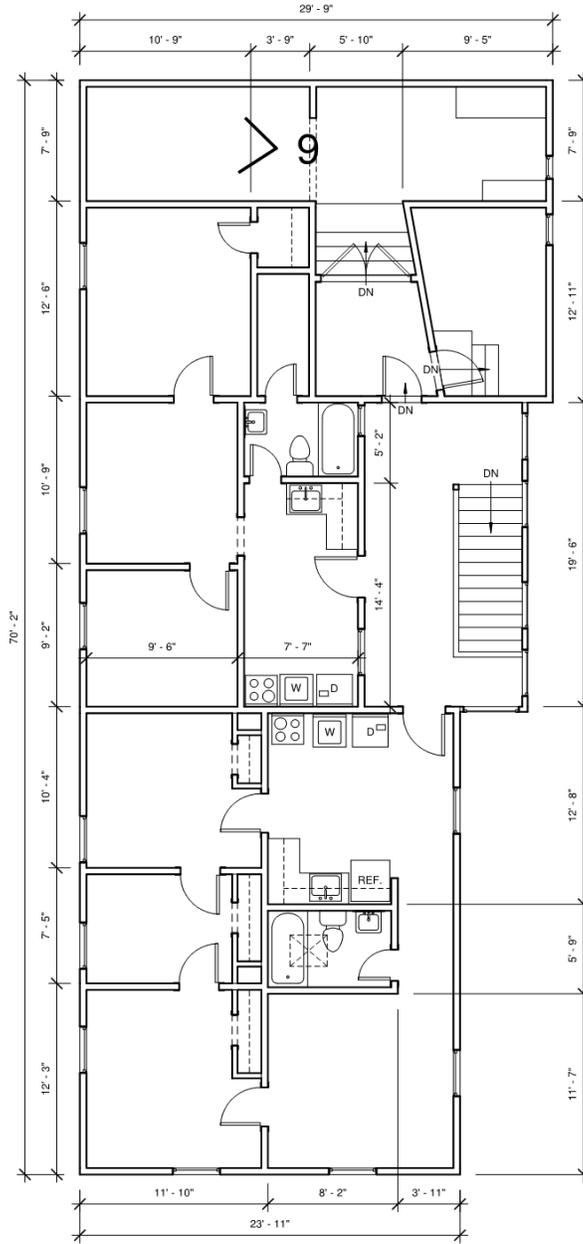


Photo Key – First Floor Photos (No photos included from this level)

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North

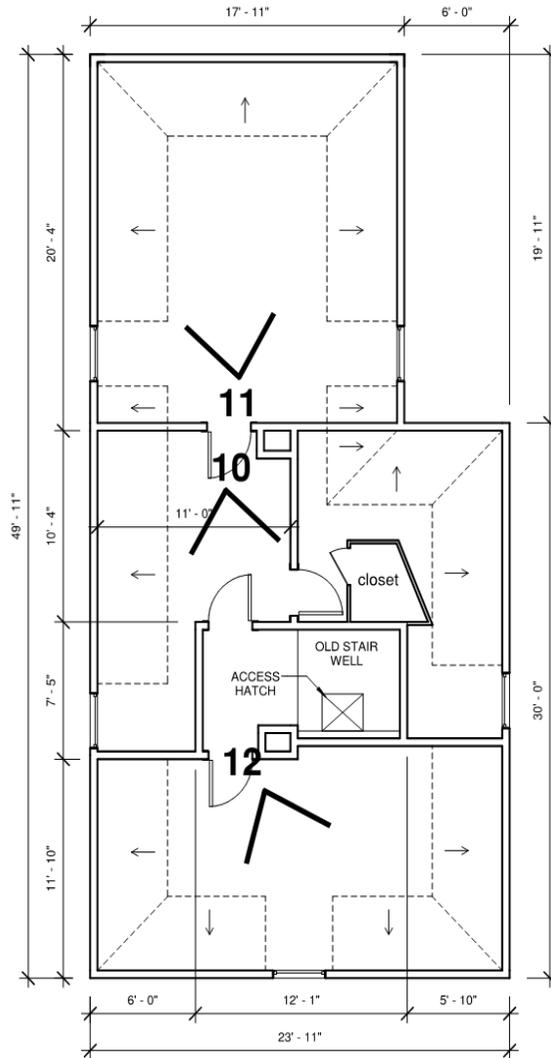
SECOND FLOOR 2
07



Graphic Scale

Photo Key – Second Floor Photos

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North

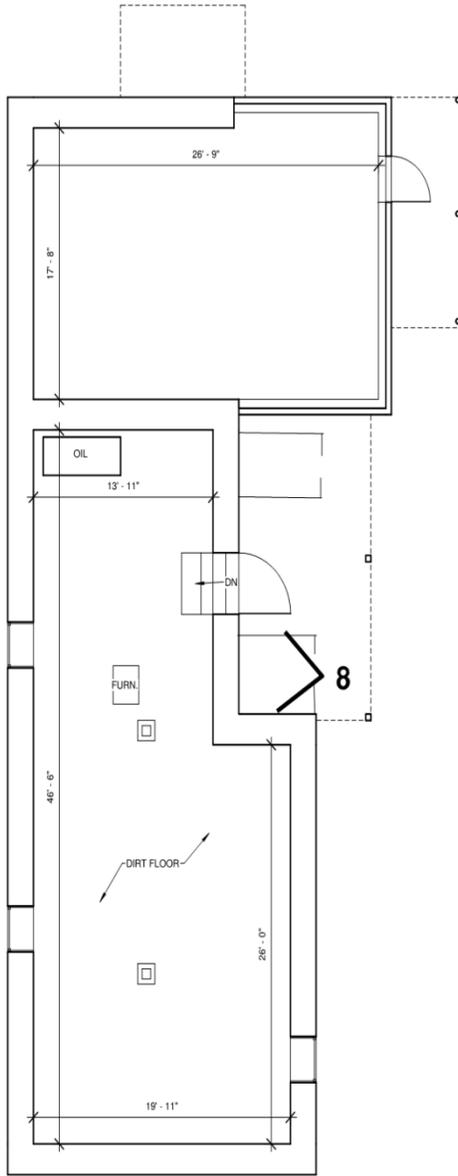
ATTIC 3
07



Graphic Scale

Photo Key – Attic Photos

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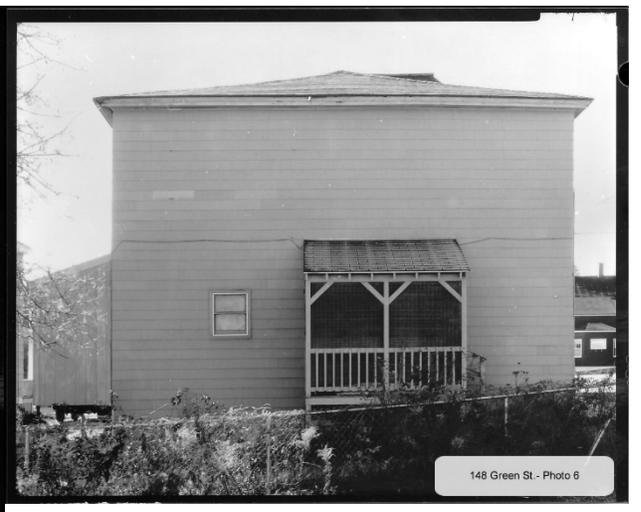
North

BASEMENT 



Graphic Scale

Photo Key – Basement Photos

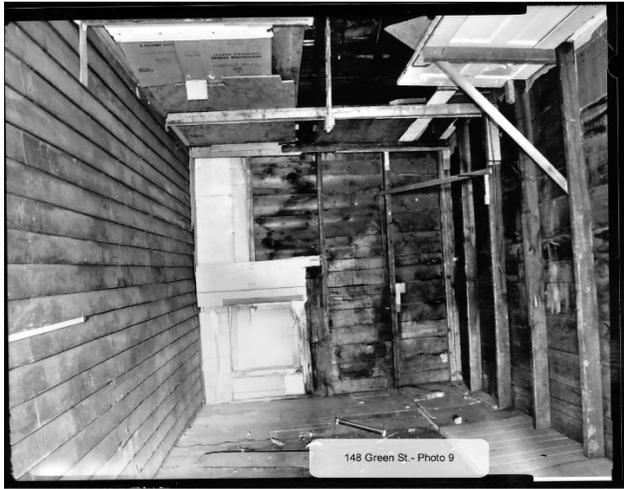




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148 Green St. - Photo 8



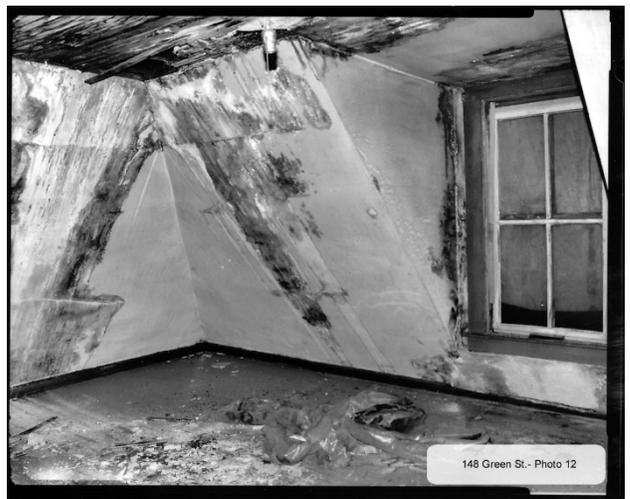
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