

NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORIC PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION
HOUSE, 738 FIRST AVENUE
NH STATE NO. 683

- Location:** 738 First Avenue, Berlin, Coos County, New Hampshire
- USGS Berlin Quadrangle
UTM Coordinates: Z19 4926284N 326110E
- Present Owner:** State of New Hampshire
- Present Occupant:** Vacant
- Present Use:** Vacant
- Construction/
Renovation Date:** Constructed c.1900
Rear one-story shed between 1901 and 1905
Second story added to shed between 1914 and 1920
Converted to single-family dwelling c.1950; updated c.2000
- Significance:** The house at 738 First Avenue contributes to The Avenues/Berlin Heights Addition Historic District under Criterion A as an example of the varied housing constructed in the neighborhood. Built in the early 20th century as a two-family rental house, it later served as a single-family dwelling for many years. It is illustrative of how houses in the neighborhood were frequently altered to accommodate shifting demographic patterns and family needs. The French Canadian owners and residents also contribute to an understanding of the ethnic mix of immigrants who built the district. Under Criterion C, the house is also an example of the locally-popular American Foursquare hip-roofed, two-family form.
- Project Info.:** Project personnel included Lisa Mausolf, Historian, and Charley Freiberg, Photographer. Existing Conditions Surveys, Inc. prepared the sketch plans. This documentation is mitigation for the relocation of NH Route 110 through the Berlin Heights Neighborhood Addition Historic District. This document 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 & December 2010 and June 2011 and the report was finalized in August 2015. The building was demolished in Fall 2012.

Description:

The house at 738 First Avenue is located on the east side of First Avenue, three houses north of Roderick Street. It was originally built as a two-family house but has served as a single-family dwelling for much of its existence. The two-story, hip-roofed house has a two-story hipped wing to the southeast, giving it an L-shaped plan. Its form was originally similar to 739-741 First Avenue across the street which was later altered by a two-story, enclosed porch (see page 7).

The house is now clad in vinyl siding but interior inspection reveals that the house was originally clapboarded with a cornice of paired brackets. The foundation is stone although most of it has been covered with concrete. The truncated hip roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles. The front elevation is three bays wide on the first floor with two windows on the second story. The sidehall entry at the south end of the facade contains a modern multi-light door. The entrance and the adjacent window to the north are sheltered by a modern porch supported by wooden posts above a wooden deck with an open metal rail. Maps indicate that historically the building had a single-story porch which spanned the entire façade of the main block and extended along the south side before terminating midway across the façade of the wing (Sanborn, 1901-1950).

Most of the windows on the building contain 1/1 vinyl replacement windows. The only surviving original window appears to be a double-hung 2/2 sash on the front of the wing. Other windows include two small modern sliders on the south wall of the main block. All of the double-hung units are flanked by vinyl shutters.

Attached to the rear of the south wing is a shallow, two-story, windowless storage shed accessed by a modern, exterior wooden staircase on the east side. The original single-story shed was added between 1901 and 1905 (Sanborn 1901, 1905). Between 1914 and 1920, a second story was added to the shed (Sanborn 1914, 1920).

The house is set close to the street with a small lawn in front and a paved driveway extending along the south side of the house. The long narrow parcel contains 0.9 acre and is bounded on the east by the railroad right-of-way. Immediately behind the house is a large rock outcropping. A small, shed-roofed, two-car garage dating to the 1920s was formerly located at the southeast corner of the property but was demolished several years ago as a result of arson.

Interior:

The building at 738 First Avenue was constructed c.1900 as a two-family dwelling. It was used by a single family in the 1920s, returned to two-family use in the 1940s and was finally converted back to a single-family dwelling for the last time c.1950. It is not clear whether there were originally separate entrances although there is a door frame at the top of the main flight of stairs that suggests that at one time there was a door here to formally separate the upstairs unit.

Today, the main entrance opens into a large living room with a staircase on the south wall leading upstairs. The staircase features a ball-topped, turned newel post and turned balusters. This is basically the only original feature in the room which displays false beams applied to a ceiling covered with fiberboard tiles, a linoleum floor and paneling on the south wall. The remainder of the first floor in the main block is divided into two rooms – the kitchen is located in the southeast corner and the room in the northeast corner was most recently used as a dining room. Both rooms have plaster walls, vinyl floors, and applied ceiling tiles. The kitchen has modern, painted wood cabinets. There is also a makeshift bathroom (toilet only without door) under the stairs. The wing to the south contains a room which was most recently used as bedroom. A door on the east wall of this room accesses the unfinished storage room.

The second floor of the main block is also divided into three rooms – one front and two to the rear with front and rear separated by a north-south space containing closets (accessible from the northeast room and the hallway). The front room has a built-in cabinet with upper shelves and lower drawers in the southwest corner. This room also has wood floors, a wide baseboard and plaster walls which are covered in wallpaper. The northeast room also has a wood floor and four-panel wooden doors. The southeast room has a vinyl floor and fiberboard tiles on the ceiling. The closet at the top of the stairs also contains an attic hatch. There are traces of beadboard wainscoting in the hall. A full bath is located in the northwest corner of the wing. This room has vertical beadboard wainscoting on all four walls while the remainder of the wing consists of a room entirely sheathed in beadboard. Markings on the north wall of the room indicate the prior existence of an additional doorway. Visible in the second level of the unfinished storage room to the east is the original clapboarded wall and cornice.

The basement is accessed by a bulkhead located at the rear of the building and extends under the main house block. The height of the basement area is generally less than five feet due to the existence of ledge. The basement has stone walls and a concrete floor.

History:

This house occupies lot 5 in block number 25 of the Berlin Heights Addition subdivision (Plan D) of 1892. William Perkins purchased the land from the Berlin Heights Addition on February 2, 1894 and sold it the same day to Mildred Pitkin of Somerville, Massachusetts (Coos County Registry of Deeds Book 72, Page 281). Mildred Pitkin, a divorced woman, subsequently married Charles Sutton in June 1900. The building appears to have been constructed as a two-family investment property. Sutton was a dentist who came from Canada to Colebrook in 1900. The present building had been constructed by the time of the Jan. 1901 Sanborn map. It does not appear that the couple ever occupied the house. In 1903 Charles and Mildred Sutton of Colebrook sold the land with buildings to Elmore Dechamps (Elmer Deschamps) for \$1,100 (Book 114, Page 105). Deschamps' occupation has not been determined.

Subsequent owners of the rental property included Samuel Evans (1881-1946), Russian Jewish storekeeper, who was married to Celia Abramson, daughter of a Berlin real estate dealer. The property was sold by Peter Seams to Miner Carpenter and Robert Snodgrass in 1920 (Book 203, Page 281). Carpenter was a real estate dealer and Snodgrass was a general contractor; the pair sold the house a few months later (Book 205, Page 403).

During its first twenty years the house at 738 First Avenue had a number of working class tenants. In 1905 Henry Harris, a papermaker at the newly opened Cascades Mill, was living here. In the early 1900s one of the units was rented by Thomas Beauchemin, a meat cutter who drove the meat wagon. He and his wife Eva were French Canadians who had married in 1898, shortly after arriving in the U.S. Four children had been born by 1910. According to the 1910 Census, Mrs. Beauchemin spoke only French. In 1910 the other tenant was Anthony Smith, a 70 year old paper mill laborer who lived here with his wife Mary and grandson, Clarence. The Smiths had emigrated from Canada in 1860. By 1920 one apartment was occupied by mill laborer Peter St. Cyr who was born in Vermont to French Canadian parents. He lived here with his wife and three children. The other unit was rented to Canadian paper mill laborer William F. Cooper who had come to this country in 1903. His family included wife Elizabeth and seven children ranging from an infant son to a 14 year old daughter, all of whom were born in Berlin.

In 1920 Edward Garneau (1872-1937) purchased the property and moved across the street from an apartment at 733 First Avenue (Book 203, Page 281). The building was apparently returned to single family use at this time. Garneau was born in 1872 in Norton Mills, Vermont (near the Canadian border) to French Canadian immigrants. His wife Mary Emma Lepage (1875-1965) was French Canadian by birth and came to this country in 1890. They married on July 31, 1893 at St. Anne's Church in Berlin (Ancestry.com). Edward worked as a City foreman. The couple had ten children born between 1895 and 1913. In 1930, the household included Ed and Emma and their five sons between the

ages of 17 and 35. Edward Garneau died in 1937 and Emma inherited the property. By 1941 the Garneau family was living elsewhere and rented out the house at 738 First Avenue. In 1941 the house appears to have been two units - Emery Paquette and Wendell Reisch lived here. Paquette (born 1904) moved from his mother's house at 749 First Avenue. He was a barber. Reisch (born 1913) graduated from Berlin High School in 1931.

In 1945 Emma Garneau sold the house to Alice DuBrule who sold it the next year to Henry Landry (Book 345, Page 199). One of the tenants around that time was James Galluzzo (1908-1975) (Directory 1948).

Henry Landry (1908-1983) and his wife Irene (LeBlanc) Landry (1915-2008) were the owners for many years. She was born in northern Vermont near the Quebec border; her parents had recently emigrated from Quebec. He was born in Dummer, New Hampshire to French Canadian immigrants and grew up in Berlin. The couple married in Troy, Vermont in 1937 and had six children. About 1950 they returned the house into a single-family home. Henry Landry was employed by the Brown Company as a turbine operator in the power and steam division until his retirement in 1974. Irene Landry sold the house in 2006.

Bibliography

Ancestry.com

Berlin Directories, various dates.

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].

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

U.S. Census, 1900-1930.

738 First Avenue
NH State No. 683 (Page 7)



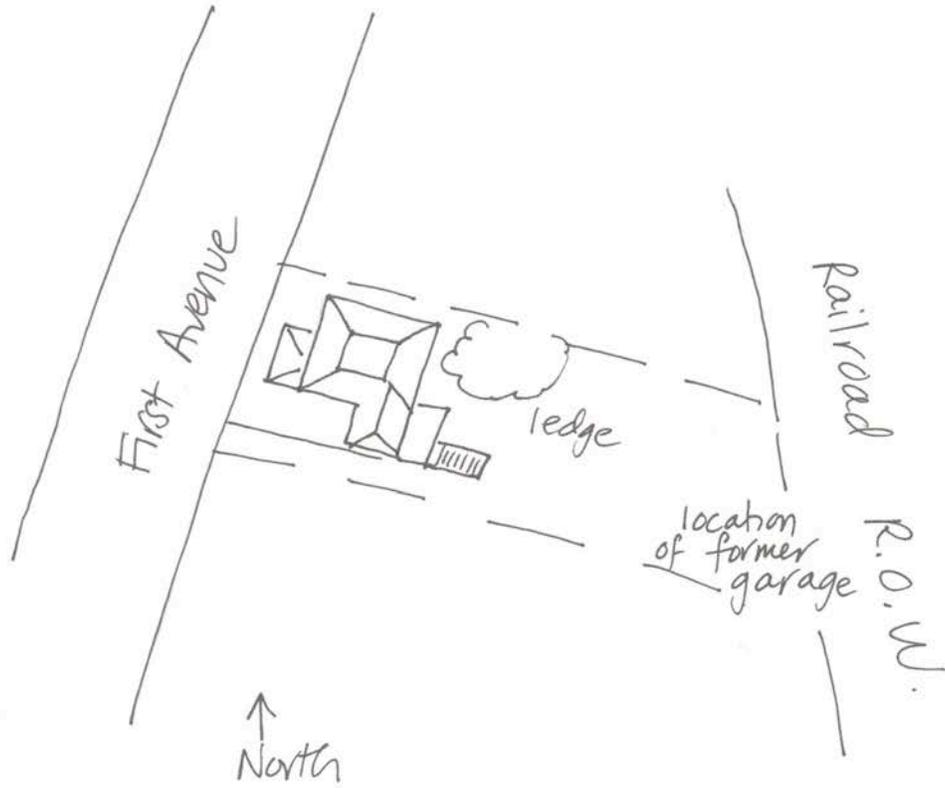
Similar hip-roofed house across the street at 739-741 First Avenue

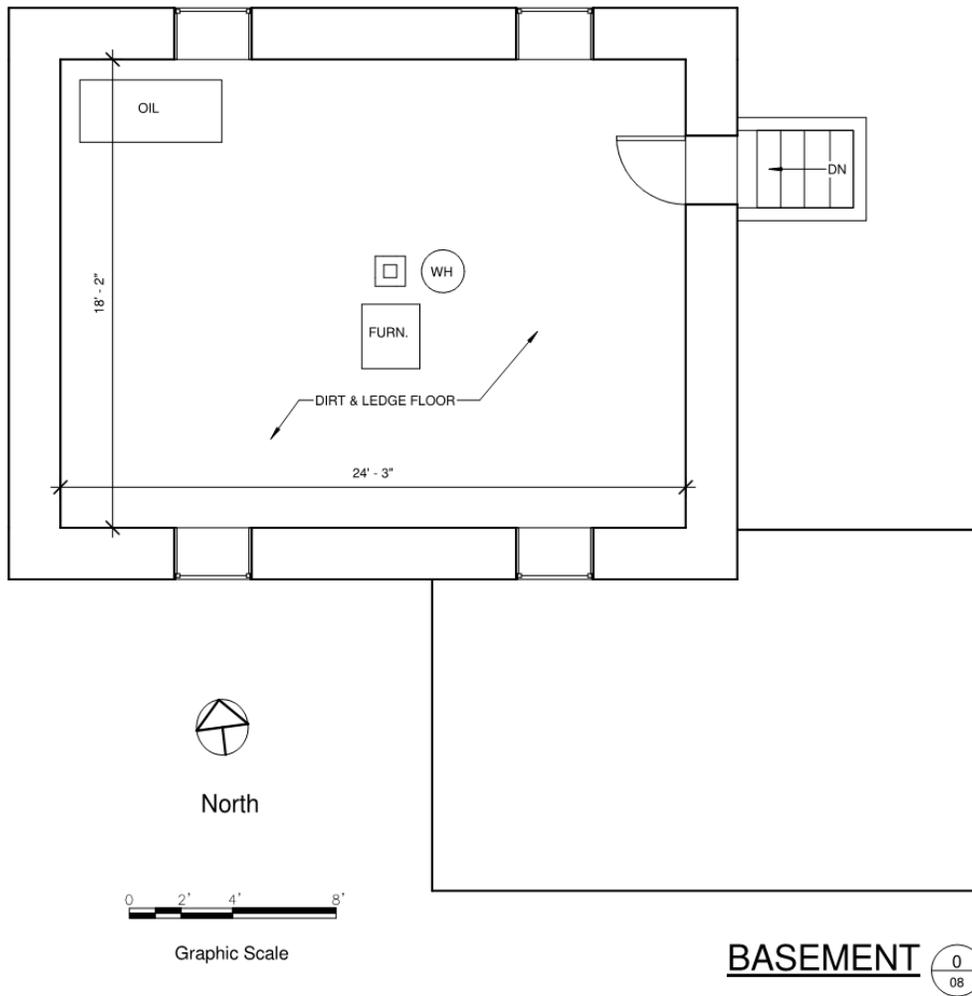
Source: Berlin Assessor's Office



Assessor's Map

Note: Detached garage shown at rear (east) of property removed by owner prior to documentation.

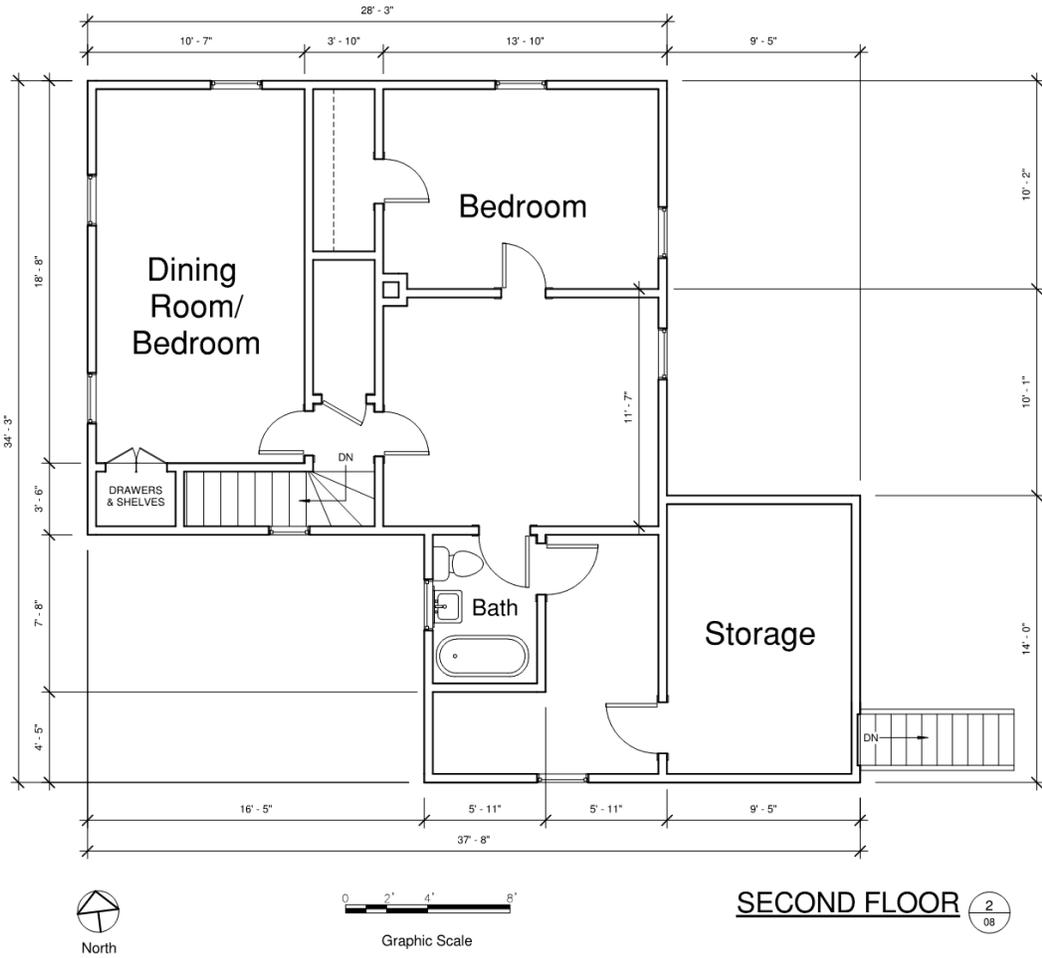




Basement Plan



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan

NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORIC PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION

INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS

House
738 First Avenue
Berlin, Coos County
New Hampshire

NH State No. 683

Photographer: Charley Freiberg

NH State No. 683-1 Streetscape view looking northeast showing west (façade) and south elevations. [October 2010]

NH State No. 683-2 View looking east showing west (façade) elevation. [December 2010]

NH State No. 683-3 View looking southeast showing north and west (facade) elevations. [October 2010]

NH State No. 683-4 View looking west at east (rear) elevation. [December 2010]

NH State No. 683-5 View looking northwest at south and east (rear) elevations of rear shed. [December 2010]

NH State No. 683-6 Interior view, first floor, looking south from living room toward front staircase with front door to right. [June 2011]

NH State No. 683-7 Interior view, second floor, looking south in front bedroom toward built-in cabinet. [June 2011]

NH State No. 683-8 Interior view, second floor, looking southwest in bedroom showing location of chimney, typical four-panel door and moldings. [June 2011]

NH State No. 683-9 Interior view, second floor, looking north at markings on board show former location of doorway. [June 2011]

NH State No. 683-10 Interior view, second floor, looking southwest at detail of original clapboards and trim, later obscured by shed addition. [June 2011]

738 First Avenue
NH State No. 683
Key to Photographs (Page 2)

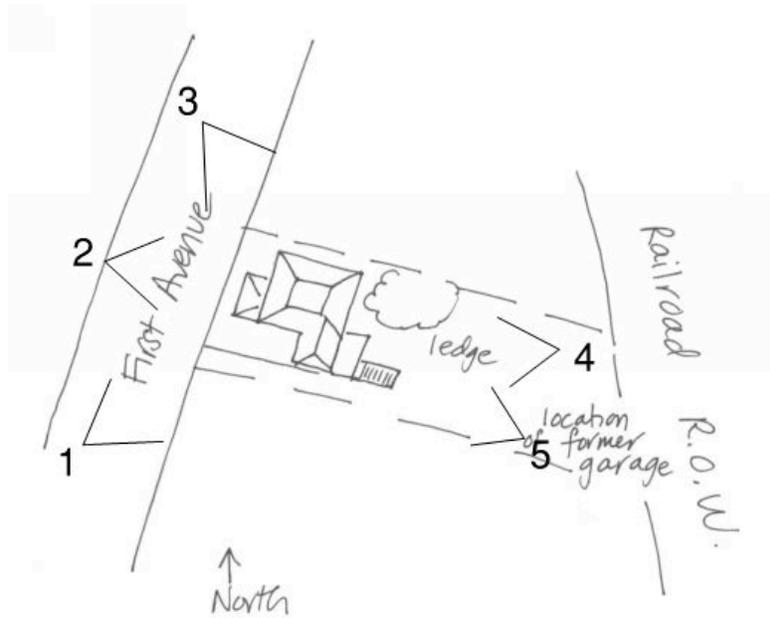


Photo Key – Exterior Photos

738 First Avenue
NH State No. 683
Key to Photographs (Page 3)

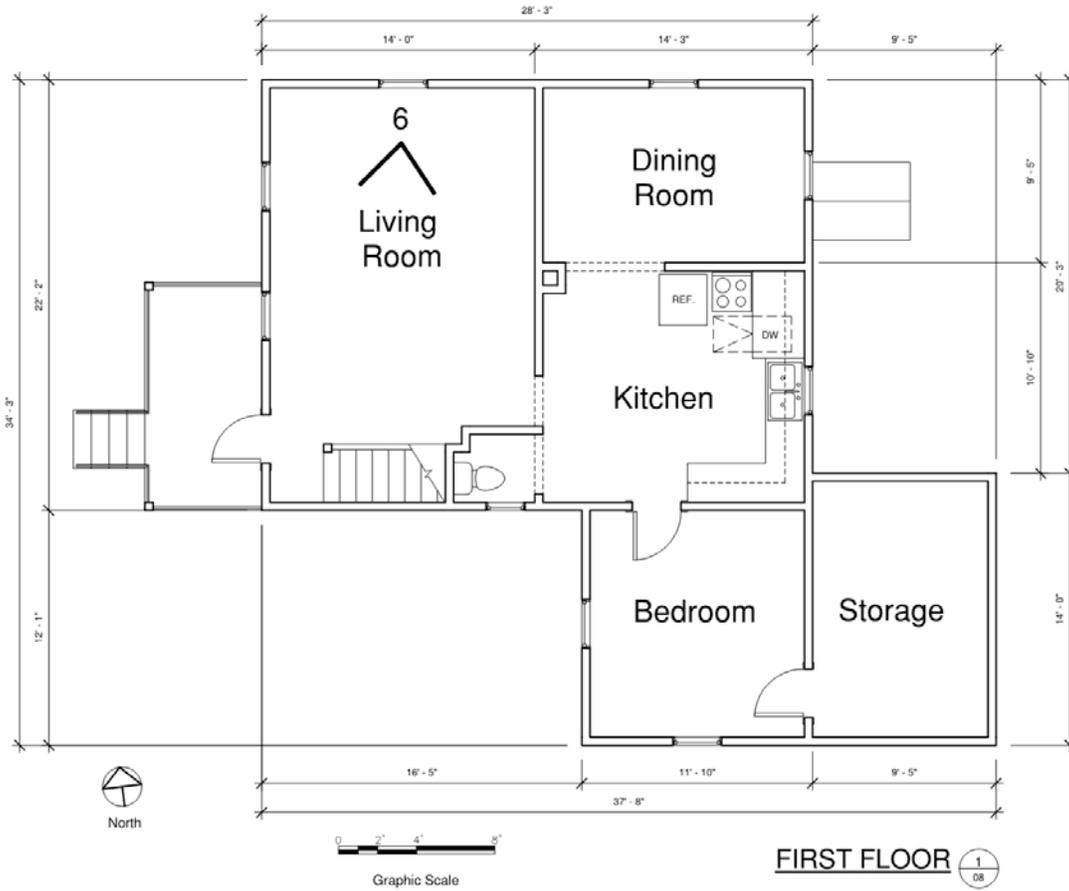


Photo Key – First Floor Photos

738 First Avenue
NH State No. 683
Key to Photographs (Page 4)

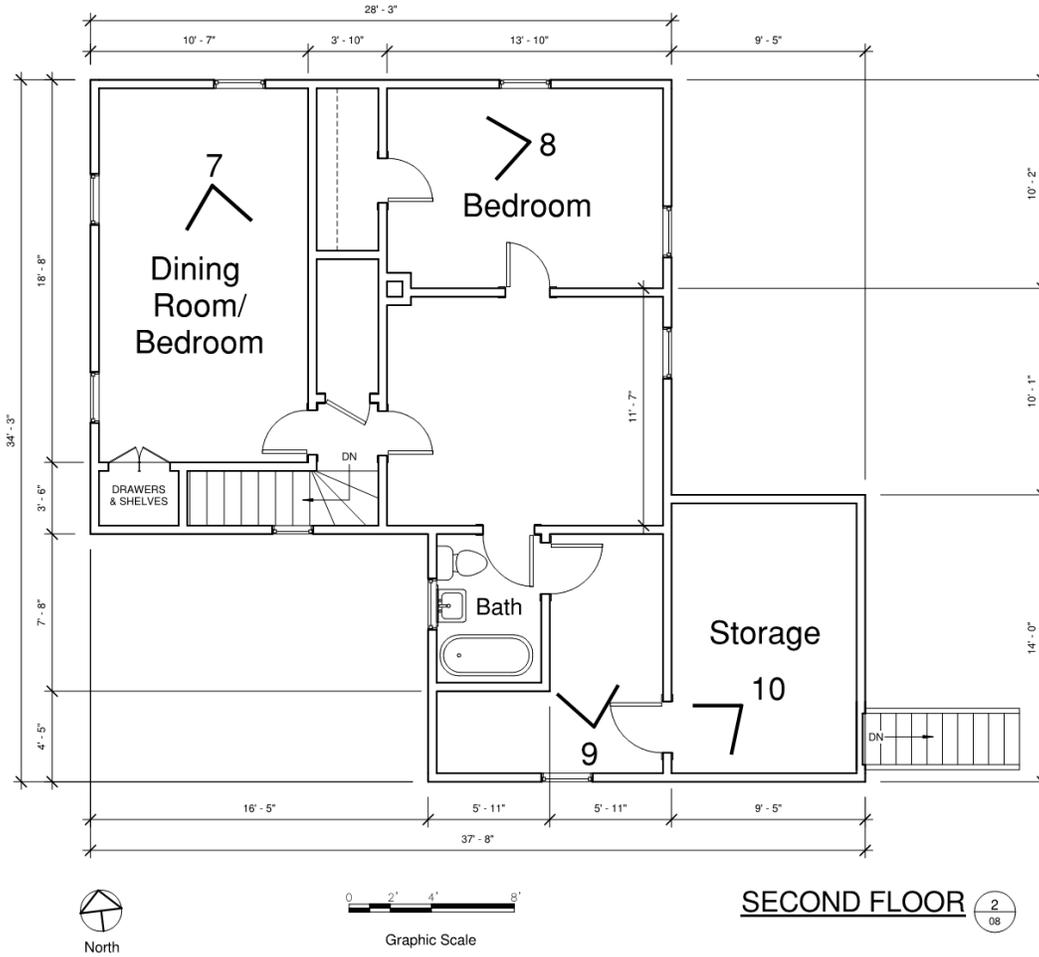


Photo Key – Second Floor Photos



738 First Ave - Photo 1



738 First Ave - Photo 2



738 First Ave - Photo 3



738 First Ave - Photo 4



738 First Ave - Photo 5



738 First Ave - Photo 6

