

NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORIC PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION
PHILIP LEPAGE HOUSE
NH STATE NO. 686

- Location:** 763 First Avenue, Berlin, Coos County, New Hampshire
- USGS Berlin Quadrangle
UTM Coordinates: Z19 4946360N 326080E
- Present Owner:** State of New Hampshire
- Present Occupant:** Vacant
- Present Use:** Vacant
- Construction/
Renovation Date:** by 1901; converted to two-family dwelling c.1925 including the addition of an exterior staircase. Later renovations include the installation of asbestos siding, construction of a rear addition c.1950.
- Significance:** The Lepage House contributes to the Berlin Heights Addition Historic District under Criterion A. Like many houses in the neighborhood, it has been owned by a series of French Canadian families for nearly all of its history. About 1925 it was converted to two-family use by the widow of the original owner, apparently for extra income. The house is divided upstairs and down and it displays glassed-in side porches with entrances which are also typical of the local pattern of accommodating multi-family use. Although modified, the house illustrates the common tenement form as utilized in the 1920s and 1930s including an adjacent-room plan where all the other rooms radiate off from the kitchen. The use of this plan is indicative of a French-Canadian influence.
- 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 Rt.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 photographs were taken in October & December 2010 and January 2011 and the report was finalized in August 2015. The building was demolished in Winter 2011/Spring 2012.

Description:

The building at 763 First Avenue is located on the west side of First Avenue and is set on a 0.19 acre parcel of land that is rectangular in shape and fairly level with seventy-five feet of frontage along First Avenue. The dwelling is oriented with its 2 ½-story gable-front facing east, set back slightly from the street. Originally clapboarded, the structure is now sheathed in asbestos shingles and is set on a mortared rubble foundation. The gable roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles with the projecting eaves and cornice returns covered in vinyl. The brick chimney rises just off the ridge with a hip roof dormer on both the north and south slopes of the main house block.

Extending behind the 2 x 4-bay main house block is a 2 ½-story cross gable ell which projects to the south. Behind the ell is a two-story attached shed on a concrete foundation. There is a two-story enclosed porch on the south side elevation, to the east of (in front of) the gable wing. (Sanborn maps indicate that the house has had a two-story porch since at least 1909.) A paved driveway extends along the south side of the house, terminating at a detached, two-car garage to the southwest of the house.

The sidehall entry on the north side of the façade is fronted by a modest 20th century porch consisting of a gable roof supported by two square posts which rest on a concrete stoop. The entrance contains a modern six-panel door. Adjacent to the entry is a modern, five-sided picture window. (According to Sanborn insurance maps, the original entrance porch was slightly larger with a three-sided bay window to the south.) Centered above each first floor bay is a modern 1/1 window with a slightly smaller window of the same configuration lighting the attic above.

The south elevation is dominated by the large two-story porch which is sheathed in vertical metal siding with continuous 1/1 windows on both levels and a storm door on the front face, above a set of wooden stairs with a modern stick balustrade. The entry to the second floor unit is through this porch.

The cross gable on the south side is also set on a stone foundation as is the two-story, flat-roofed section on the west side of the projection. Originally this was a two-story porch but it was enclosed and covered in asbestos shingles many years ago. To the west of the former porch is a later two-story shed set on a concrete foundation, fronted on the south side by a partially enclosed wooden staircase set on a concrete pad and leading up to the second story unit. The second floor of this section, if not the entire section, was constructed after 1950.

The north elevation of the house displays a mixture of double-hung 1/1 sash and horizontal hopper windows. At the east end of the north elevation, beside the front entry, there is a small shed projection set on a poured concrete foundation. A four-panel door on the west wall provides access to the basement.

At the southwest corner of the lot is a detached, wood-frame garage. The shed-roofed building is sheathed in novelty siding and is set on a concrete block foundation. The east wall has two garage bays containing replacement metal overhead, roll-type doors and a single regular entrance with a wooden door glazed with a large upper square light. A lilac hedge separates the driveway of this house from 747-749 First Avenue next door. The north side of the property is bordered by the narrow, paved driveway of 767 First Avenue.

Interior:

The building at 763 First Avenue was constructed before 1901 as a single-family dwelling. The 2 ½-story structure originally had a sidehall entry and living rooms on the first floor and sleeping areas upstairs. Shortly before 1930 it was converted to a two-family residence with a single-family apartment on the first floor and a second comprised of the second floor and attic areas. In addition to the 1930 renovations, the interior of the building has been heavily remodeled in recent years. A detailed description of the interior of the house follows.

The first floor apartment is now accessed by two entries but not the original sidehall façade entry which has been closed off by a new partition and serves only the second floor unit. The primary entrance to the first floor apartment is now located up the front stairs leading to the enclosed porch on the south side of the house. The other entrance is recessed on the south elevation, just west of the rear ell. Both entrances now contain modern metal doors with panels; the porch entrance has an inset fanlight.

Inside, the original first floor plan is no longer apparent. A wall has been added adjacent to the staircase, closing off the original entry hall. When the building was renovated about 1930, a French-Canadian adjacent-room plan was introduced with the primary entry into the kitchen and all of the other rooms radiating out from the kitchen.¹ A north-south partition has been partially removed opening up the front room but leaving a half

¹ See Preservation Company, *Berlin – The City That Trees Built: Turning Land and Lumber Into Neighborhoods* (Kensington, NH, 2015), 60, 112.

wall and exposed chimney in the center of the room. Behind the front room, the north part of the

Philip Lepage House
763 First Avenue
NH State No. 686 (Page 4)

first floor is divided into two bedrooms with a now-empty kitchen space laid out to the south as well as a bathroom. There are few original finishes other than the front stairway with turned balusters and knobbed newel posts. The rooms display simple, modern, wood trim including baseboards and door and window surrounds and the walls in the front room and one of the bedrooms are sheathed in modern faux wood paneling. The front room and one of the bedrooms have wood floors; the other floors are covered in carpeting and/or tile. All of the ceilings are covered in fiberboard tiles.

On the second floor, there are a few more original finishes present, largely in proximity to the front staircase. Surviving historic features include the staircase, wooden doors with four vertical panels and five horizontal panels and some wider wood trim including baseboards and door and windows surrounds. The remainder of the space displays simple, modern wood trim and hollow core doors. The apartment has two bedrooms on the second floor. The front bedroom is sheathed in modern “wood” paneling. In the back bedroom the paneling has been painted and there is a sliding closet door. The kitchen displays simple modern cabinets and like downstairs, there is a single modern bathroom. Just outside the back entrance to the upstairs apartment (which contains a modern six-panel door) is an unfinished, unheated storage room accessed by an original glass-and-panel door.

The footprint of the third floor (attic) level is limited to the front section only and is one of the least changed areas in the house. At some point (c.1930?) the balustrade on the third floor of the stairwell was removed and replaced by a partition. The attic retains a painted wood floor, exposed chimney, dormer window and several historic wooden doors including four-panel and single-panel units. A closet at the west end of the attic appears to retain the surround of an earlier door or window, later filled in.

History:

This property occupies the northeast half of lot 10 and all of lot 11 in Block 29 of the Berlin Heights Addition, Plan D as laid out in 1892 (Coos County Registry of Deeds Book 59, Page 210). This house was constructed prior to 1901 (Sanborn map) as a single-family dwelling. The original owner appears to have been Philip Lepage. Deeds indicate that in February 1908 Mary Lepage (wife of Philip Lepage) purchased the northeast half of lot 10 from the Berlin Heights Addition (Book 137, Page 247).

The 1909 Sanborn map indicates that at that time the address of the house was 8 First Avenue. Philip Lepage was born about 1871 in Quebec and came to this country about 1885. The 1910 Census lists his occupation as hotel hack driver; in 1920 he is listed as a

truck driver. Philip and his wife Mary, who was also born in Quebec, had five daughters and two sons born between 1894 and 1908. In order to feed his large family, Lepage

Philip Lepage House
763 First Avenue
NH State No. 686 (Page 5)

appears to have taken on a variety of jobs. The 1902 Berlin Annual Report indicates that he was paid by the Berlin Police Department for burying dogs, teaming, removing dead dogs from the river and distributing ballots. In 1910 the Lepage family also had a boarder.

Philip Lepage died prior to 1930 and the single-family house was apparently converted to two-family use at that time. The 1930 Census lists the occupants of 763 First Avenue as Philip's widow Mary, age 55, daughters Mildred (29), Flora (26) and Juliet (21), and the Bushway family consisting of Ernest, age 30, who worked in the tube mill, his wife Alice, young daughter, and Stanley Major, a 13 year old boarder. The Bushways paid \$18/month rent.

In 1947 the house was sold by Josie Doucet, conservatrix of Mary Lepage, to Rose-Marie V. Lettre (Book 405, Page 93). Lawrence (Laurent) Lettre (1909-1981) and his wife Rose occupied the house into the early 1950s. They previously occupied a rental at 17 Hinchey Street. Lettre was the proprietor of Lawrence's Cut Rate Store on Third Avenue. Their tenants included Victor Laforce (Directory 1950).

In 1954 the Lettres sold the house to Gerard and Fernande (Routhier) Payeur (Book 405, Page 93) who lived here for over forty years, raising three sons and a daughter. Both Mr. and Mrs. Payeur were born in Berlin and lived here their whole lives. A lifelong resident of Berlin, Gerry Payeur (1929-1997) was a member of St. Joseph Parish, served as a Water Commissioner for the City of Berlin and was employed full-time (for more than 35 years) with the U.S. National Guard at the Berlin Armory, having attained the rank of Master Sergeant. Following his military career, he worked as a sales clerk for J.G. Blais Wholesale and Caron Building Supply. Fernande Payeur (1930-2006) was also born in Berlin and was employed as a clerk for the Globe Department Store for many years. The Payeurs rented the other apartment to a number of tenants; Robert Lessard was the tenant in 1974. Mrs. Payeur sold the property in 2000 (Book 950, Page 002) and it had a series of owners over the next ten years. The property was sold by Kevin Spencer to the State of New Hampshire in October 2010 (Book 1314, Page 197).

Bibliography

Berlin Directories, various dates.

Berlin Reporter, August 18, 1997 [obituary of Gerard Payeur]; May 3, 2006, p. A6 [obituary of Fernande Payeur.

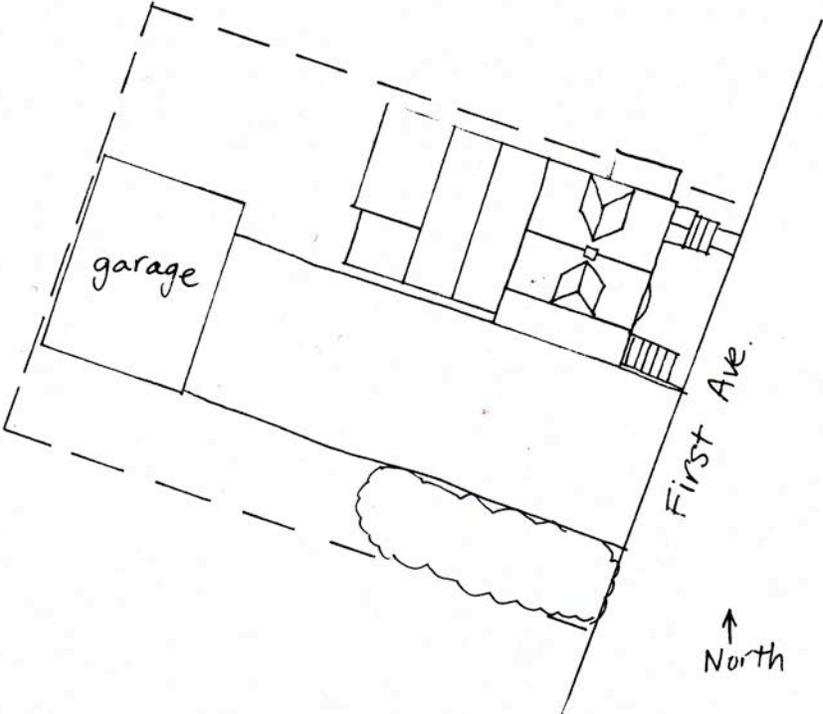
Coos County Registry of Deeds, Lancaster, NH.

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

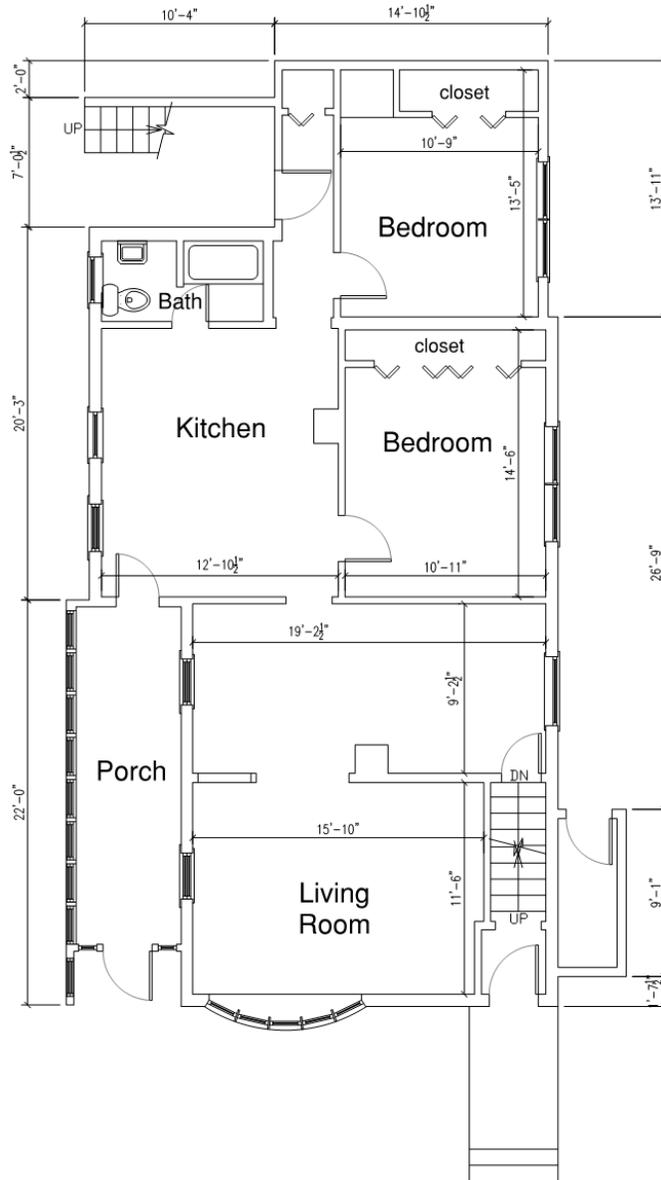
Preservation Company. *Berlin – The City That Trees Built: Turning Land and Lumber Into Neighborhoods*. Kensington, NH: 2015. [Prepared for the NH Department of Transportation and on file at the NH Division of Historical Resources, Concord].

Sanborn Insurance Maps, Berlin, 1901, 1905, 1909, 1914, 1928, 1950.

U.S. Census, 1900-1930.



Existing Site Map

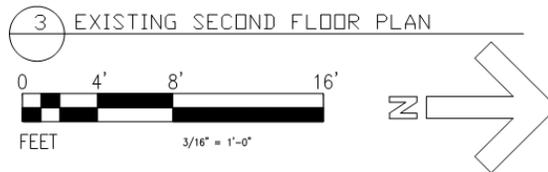
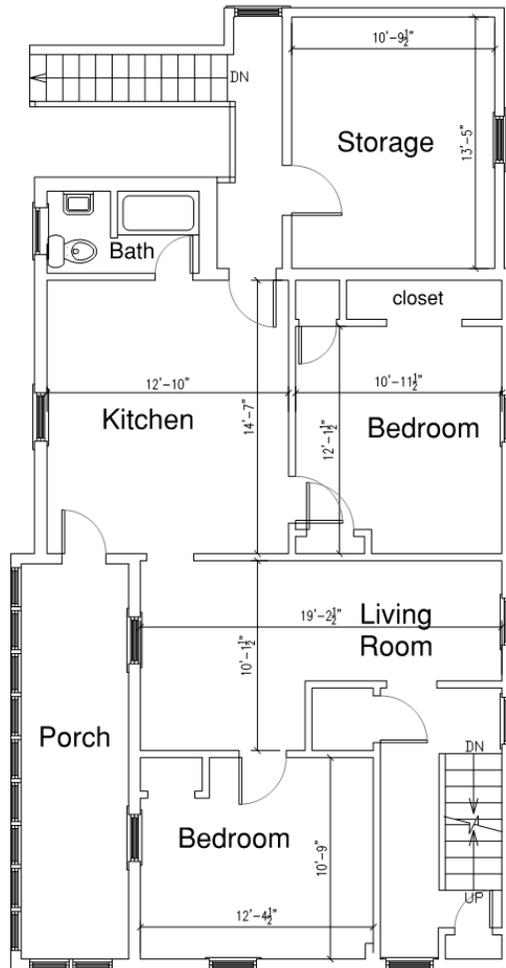


2 EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN

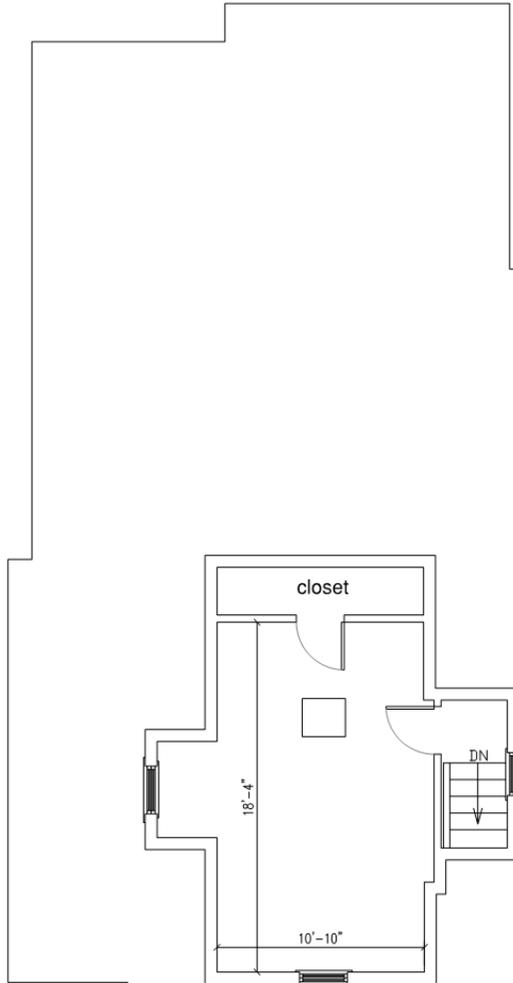
0 4' 8' 16'
 FEET 3/16" = 1'-0"

Existing First Floor Plan

Philip Lepage House
763 First Avenue
NH State No. 686 (Page 9)

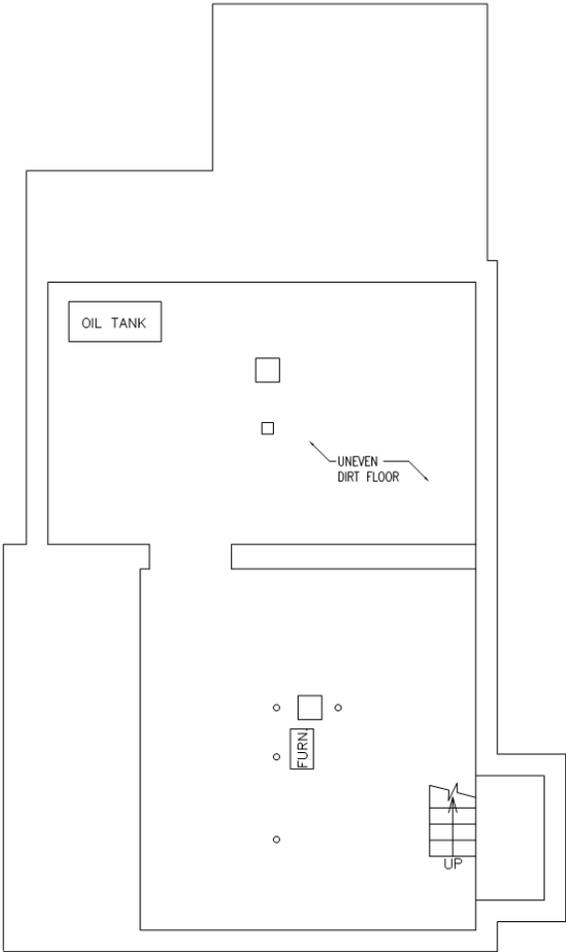


Existing Second Floor Plan

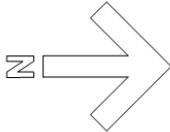
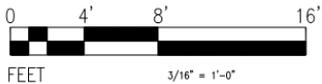


4 EXISTING THIRD FLOOR PLAN

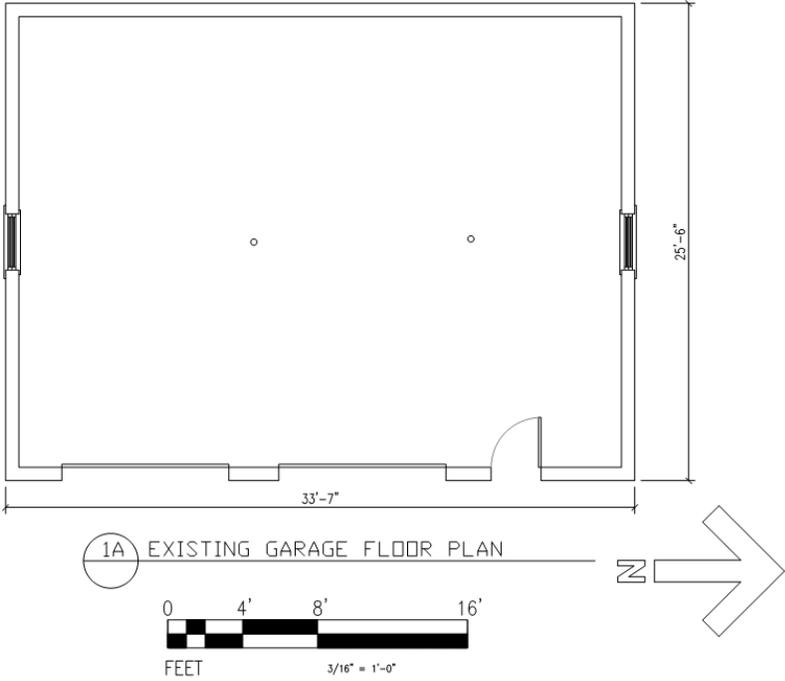
Existing Third Floor Plan



1 EXISTING BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN



Existing Basement Plan



Existing Garage Plan

NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORIC PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION

INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS

Philip Lepage House
763 First Avenue
Berlin, Coos County
New Hampshire

NH State No. 686

Photographer:

Charley Freiberg

NH State No. 686-1

View looking northwest showing east (façade) elevation.
[October 2010]

NH State No. 686-2

View looking southwest showing east (façade) and north
elevations. [October 2010]

NH State No. 686-3

View looking northeast showing west and south elevations.
[October 2010]

NH State No. 686-4

View looking southeast showing north and west elevations.
[October 2010]

NH State No. 686-5

North and east elevations of detached garage. [October
2010]

NH State No. 686-6

Interior, first floor porch, looking east. [January 2011]

NH State No. 686-7

Interior, first floor, looking north at alterations to front
room. At right is former entrance hall, now enclosed by
paneled wall. Chimney, exposed as part of rehabilitation,
is visible at center. [January 2011]

NH State No. 686-8

Interior, second floor porch, looking east. [December
2010]

NH State No. 686-9

Interior, second floor, looking west towards rear entrance,
at modern kitchen and bathroom. [December 2010]

NH State No. 686-10

Interior, second floor, looking east at staircase leading
down to former front entrance hall and up to third floor.
[December 2010]

Philip Lepage House

763 First Avenue
NH State No. 686
Key to Photographs (Page 2)

- NH State No. 686-11 Detail, second floor staircase, northeast corner of second floor, looking northeast at newel post and five-panel door. [December 2010]
- NH State No. 686-12 View looking east from third floor, down staircase to second floor. At right, markings of former balustrade are still visible although it was removed when a wall has been inserted. [December 2010]
- NH State No. 686-13 Third floor, looking west with chimney at center. Closet at rear shows indications there was originally a door or window on back wall. [January 2011]
- NH State No. 686-14 Third floor, looking south at window under eaves. [December 2010]
- NH State No. 686-15 Interior, garage, looking southwest. [December 2010]

Philip Lepage House
763 First Avenue
NH State No. 686
Key to Photographs (Page 3)

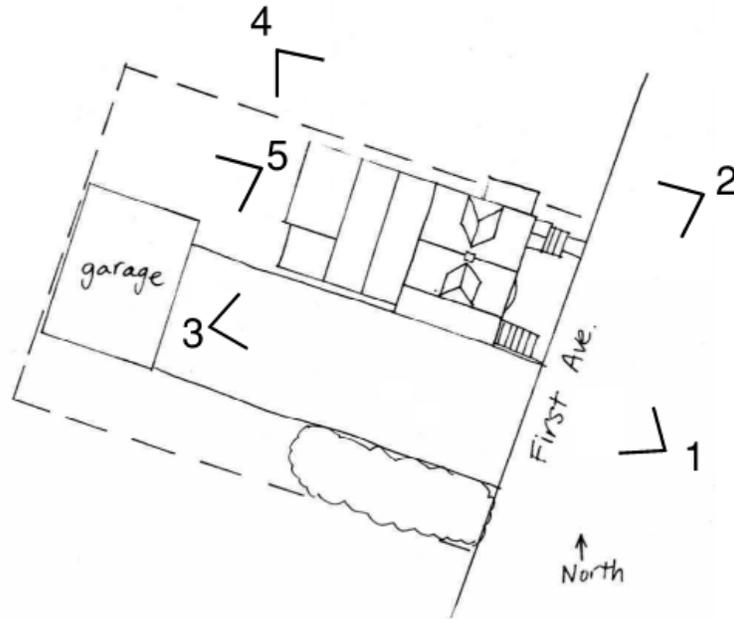


Photo Key – Exterior Photos

Philip Lepage House
 763 First Avenue
 NH State No. 686
 Key to Photographs (Page 4)

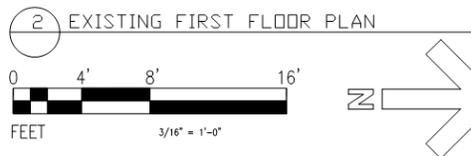
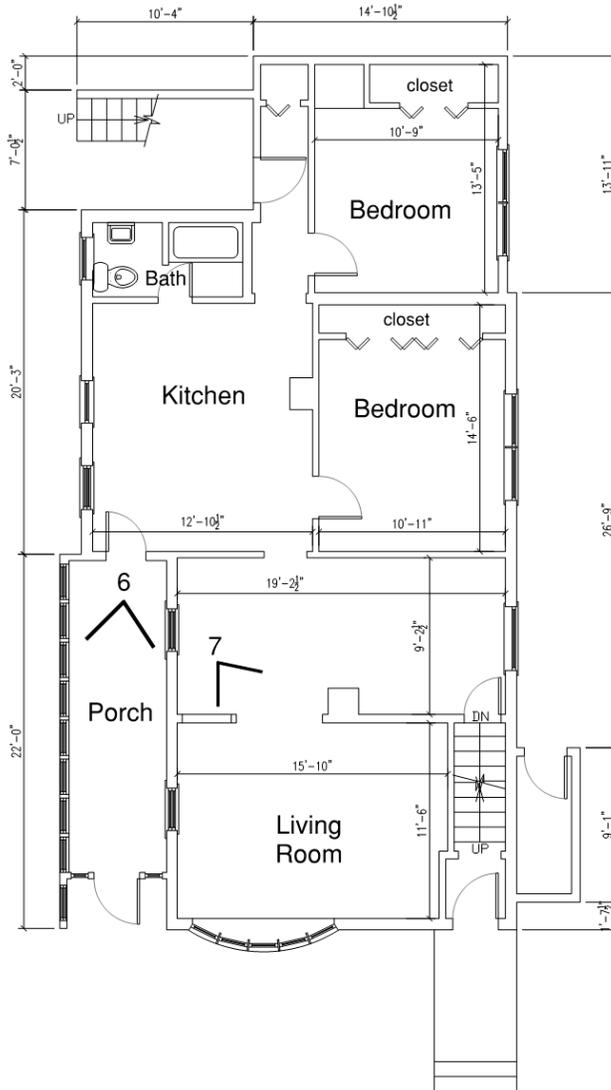


Photo Key – First Floor Photos

Philip Lepage House
 763 First Avenue
 NH State No. 686
 Key to Photographs (Page 5)

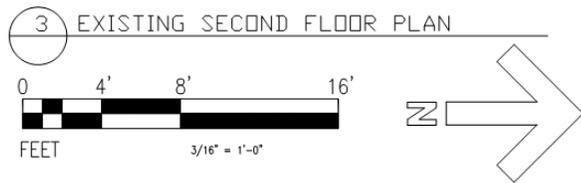
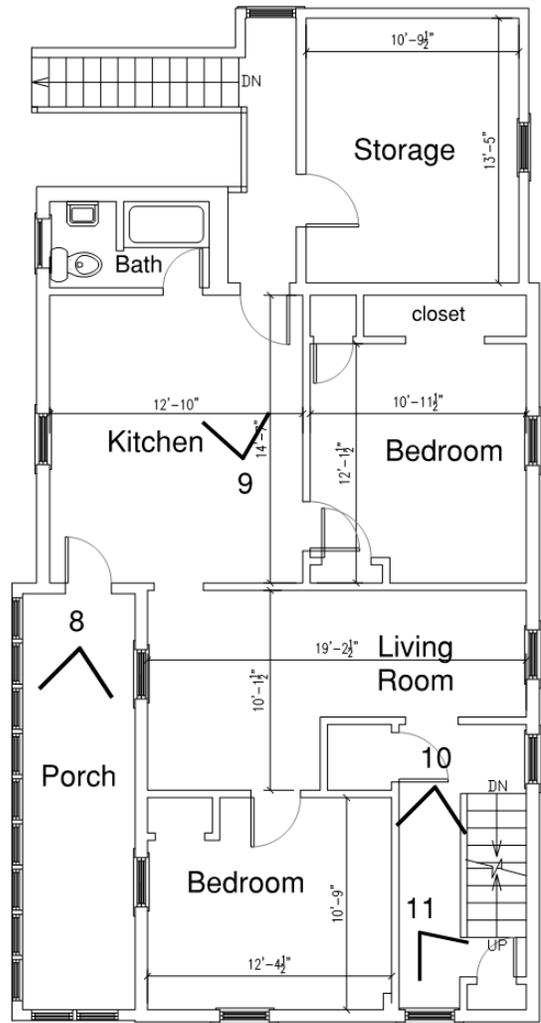


Photo Key – Second Floor Photos

Philip Lepage House
763 First Avenue
NH State No. 686
Key to Photographs (Page 6)

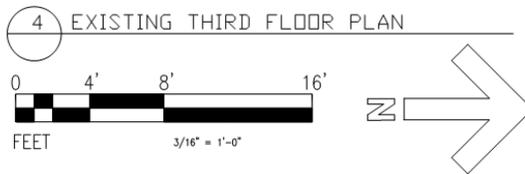
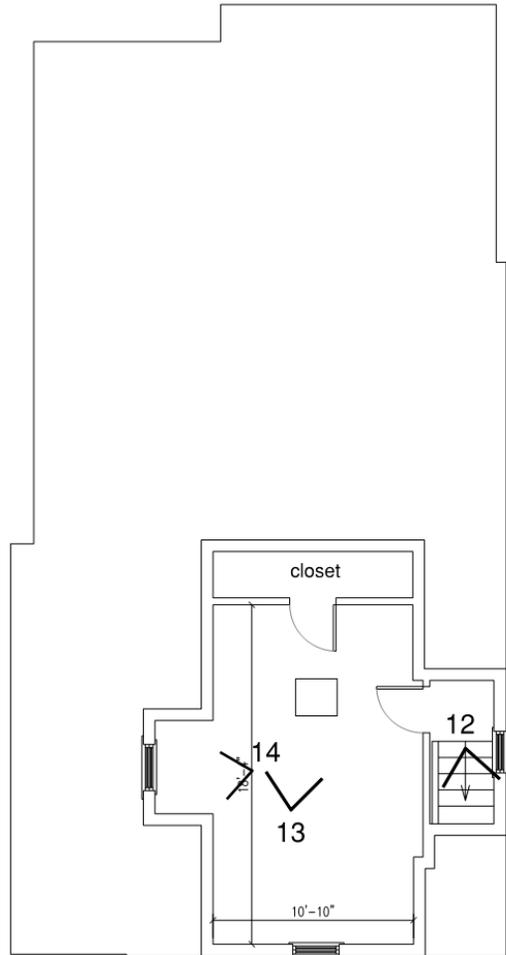


Photo Key – Third Floor Photos

Philip Lepage House
763 First Avenue
NH State No. 686
Key to Photographs (Page 7)

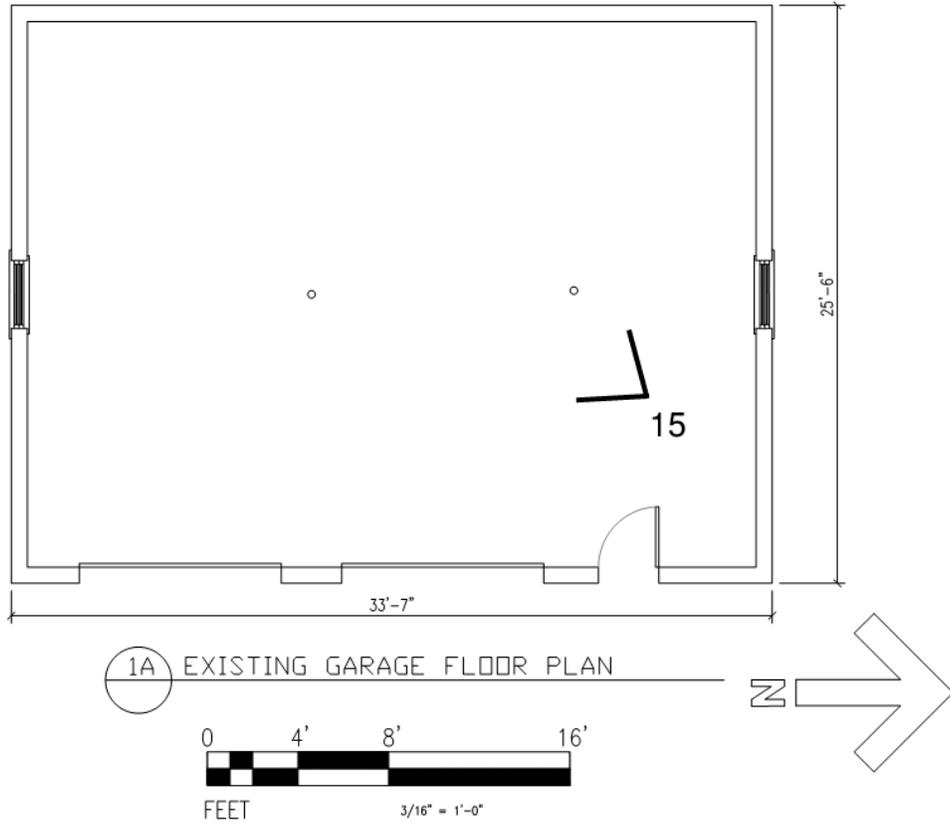


Photo Key – Garage



763 First Ave. - Photo 1



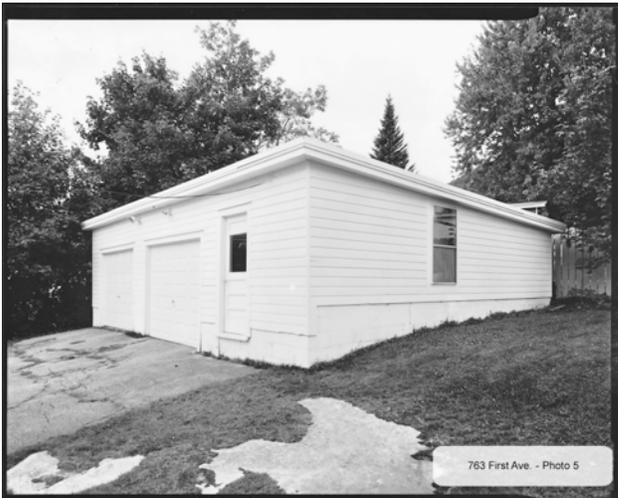
763 First Ave. - Photo 2



763 First Ave. - Photo 3



763 First Ave. - Photo 4



763 First Ave. - Photo 5



763 First Ave. - Photo 6



763 First Ave. - Photo 7



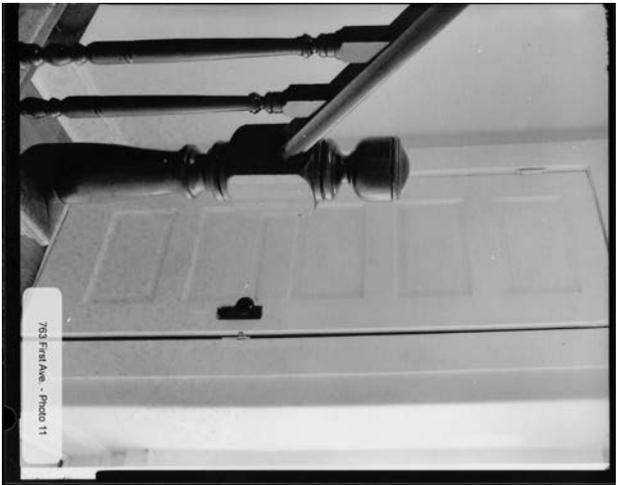
763 First Ave. - Photo 8



763 First Ave. - Photo 9



763 First Ave. - Photo 10



763 First Ave. - Photo 11



763 First Ave. - Photo 12

