

NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORIC PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION
BRASSARD'S STORE
NH STATE NO. 692

- Location:** 836 Second Avenue, Berlin, Coos County, New Hampshire
- USGS Berlin Quadrangle
UTM Coordinates: Z19 4926346N 326047E
- Present Owner:** State of New Hampshire
- Present Occupant:** Vacant
- Present Use:** Vacant
- Construction/
Renovation Date:** c.1920
- Significance:** Brassard's Store contributes to The Avenues/Berlin Heights Addition Historic District under Criterion A for its significance to community planning. It reflects a historic pattern of owner-occupied shop buildings in the neighborhood and was one of many small groceries in the area. Its original construction as a bakery is also of interest. Under Criterion C the building contributes to the overall pattern of the district and is an example of an early twentieth century commercial building displaying a storefront, parapet wall on the façade, and second story open porch on the side elevation.
- 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. 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 2010 and July 2011 and the report was finalized in August 2015. The building was demolished in Fall 2012.

Description:

Brassard's Store is a two-story, wood-frame building originally constructed with commercial use on the first floor and residential space upstairs. The plan of the building is an irregular polygon with the walls forming right angles at the southwest and southeast corners; the north elevation is longer than the south elevation and the narrow rear elevation is about twelve feet shorter than the facade. Projecting from much of the north wall is a two-story section which is wedge-like in plan and includes an enclosed stair case and second-story open porch. This is one of the few buildings in the area that has not seen the addition of replacement siding. The exterior walls are sheathed in wood clapboards with flat corner boards and eaves that project slightly. The storefront on the first floor of the façade has been covered with vertical boards. The foundation of most of the main block and porch consists of mortared rubble stone with a thick mortar on the face of the stones with a projecting grapevine joint that is highlighted to simulate a formal ashlar pattern. The foundation has been rebuilt with poured concrete on the south side of the building and on the north side east of the exterior concrete block chimney. The roof is flat and covered in tar-and-gravel with a parapet wall on the façade, topped by a projecting molded wooden cornice.

The main, recessed entrance is centered on the west façade, fronted by two concrete steps. The large upper glass in the wooden door is covered with plywood and the flanking angled storefront windows have been replaced by vertical boards. A secondary entrance accessing the stairs leading to the upstairs unit is located on the west wall of the north section. This entrance is also boarded. The first floor level of this entrance contains the staircase and is enclosed with clapboard walls. The open porch above is four bays wide with square posts with caps and bases set on a clapboarded wall, the lower edge of which is punctuated by scuppers.

Windows on the first floor of the building include a mix of small elevated fixed units and 2/2 and 1/1 double-hung units, the latter added after the building ceased being used for commercial use. On the upper level the predominant window is a wooden double-hung sash with four vertical lights over a single lower light. The original windows are all capped by simple entablature lintels. There is a small square beadboard door on the north wall near the staircase entrance provided access to the basement, perhaps for coal.

Markings on the clapboards at the rear of the first floor suggest that there may have originally been a recessed porch at the first floor level which was later enclosed.

The building fills the small 0.04 acre lot. There is a ten foot buffer around the building which is a right-of-way access easement in common with adjacent properties. A narrow paved driveway extends along the north side of the building and serves the dwelling behind (838 Second Avenue) which is historically linked to this property and was built prior to the store.

Interior Description:

As seen today, the interior of the building has been nearly totally gutted to the framing and siding. There is a full basement under the main portion of the building, with a concrete floor. The northern section containing the staircase has only a crawl space with dirt floor. The first floor consists of a large open space with three new wooden posts running in an east-west, off-center line. The north wall of the main volume of the building retains some clapboarding but sections of the wall have been removed. There are also remnants of beadboard on some wall and ceiling surfaces.

The second floor of the building, which was historically living space for the family, has been reduced to exposed stud walls. The entry to the apartment is near the center of the north wall and opens onto a small room which would have been a living room. There are two rooms in the front which were probably bedrooms. It appears that the kitchen was located near the center of the south wall with another bedroom or perhaps dining room to the east. The bathroom was located east of the living room. At the east end of the building is a small room with three windows, which may have functioned as a sort of enclosed, sleeping porch.

History:

This two-story wood frame building stands on part of Lots 16 and 17, Block 29, of the Berlin Heights Addition (Coos County Registry of Deeds, Plan D, Book 59, Page 210). The building was constructed in the early 1920s. It is not shown on the December 1920 Sanborn insurance map. The 1923 directory includes a listing for the White Mountain Baking Company at this address. Albert S. Kier (b.1881) was a German immigrant who worked as a baker and lived in the separate house (838 Second) in the back. The 1922 City Annual Report shows that Kier received a permit for a single-story building on Second Avenue. It is not clear whether this was part of the present building, part of 838 Second Avenue or a garage.

The property was sold by Albert Kier to Emma Brassard in February 1925 (Book 228, Page 224). She was the widow of Philip Brassard, a paper mill worker who died in the 1910s. The 1927 City Annual Report indicates that in 1927 Mrs. Brassard received a permit for additions or alterations to a building on Second Avenue. This building became Brassard's Grocery Store with an apartment for the family.

Emma Brassard was born in Chicoutimi, Quebec in 1872 and immigrated to this country about 1896 shortly after her marriage. The Brassards had nine children between 1898 and 1911, five of whom survived. The family rented on Glen Avenue in 1910 and by 1920 were living in a duplex they owned at 56-58 Granite Street. According to the 1920 Census, Mrs. Brassard did not speak English. Various family members had connections to grocery stores even before Mrs. Brassard

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bought the Second Avenue property. Eldest daughter Emma Rose married Isaac Dionne who was a wholesale grocer. Eldest son Eugene worked as a grocery store clerk (1910, 1920 Census) and in 1924 was in partnership with Phillippe Samson, operating as Samson & Brassard with a grocery store at 36 Green Street (1924 directory). Younger sons George and Philip also worked as grocery clerks. The Brassard family grocery store operated here for about twenty-five years. Over the years it was known by various names including Brassard Brothers (1930; Eugene and George), Brassard's Grocery (1932, 1934; Eugene and Philip), and Brassard's Wholesale Market (1948; Eugene) (Directories). George Brassard also operated a grocery store downtown at 80-82 Main Street (Directory 1932, 1941, City Report 1946).

Emma Brassard's family lived above the store for some time and then lived in neighboring houses. In 1930 Emma Brassard was living above the store with her son Philip. That same year, Eugene Brassard owned and occupied 832 Second Avenue with his wife and George owned the house next door at 840 Second Avenue and lived in one of the two units. In the 1940s Mrs. Brassard moved to 840 Second Avenue. Patrick Mullen (1877-1963) who had previously lived at 840 Second appears to have moved above the store (Directory 1941, 1948, 1950). In May 1950 Emma Brassard sold the store to Eugene and Lucienne Brassard (Book 376, Page 249).

In 1953 Eugene and Lucienne Brassard (then living in Sherbrooke, Quebec) sold the grocery store building to Albert and Josephine Weston (Book 396, Page 236). It was operated by Albert Weston for a time as Superette Food Fair (Directory 1953, 1956). In the 1960s the building housed Morton's Speed Wash, operated by John D. Morton (Directory 1961, 1965, 1967). In 1968 the property was conveyed to New Hampshire Savings Bank by foreclosure deed (Book 519, Page 21). Frank Rano acquired the property in 1969 and continued to own it until 2004 when it was sold to Brian and Wayne Villeneuve (Book 1079, Page 675). The structure was last used as a two-family residence with one apartment on the first floor and a second upstairs. As seen today, the interior has been totally gutted to the exterior framing and siding. The property was purchased by the State of New Hampshire in 2011.

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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].

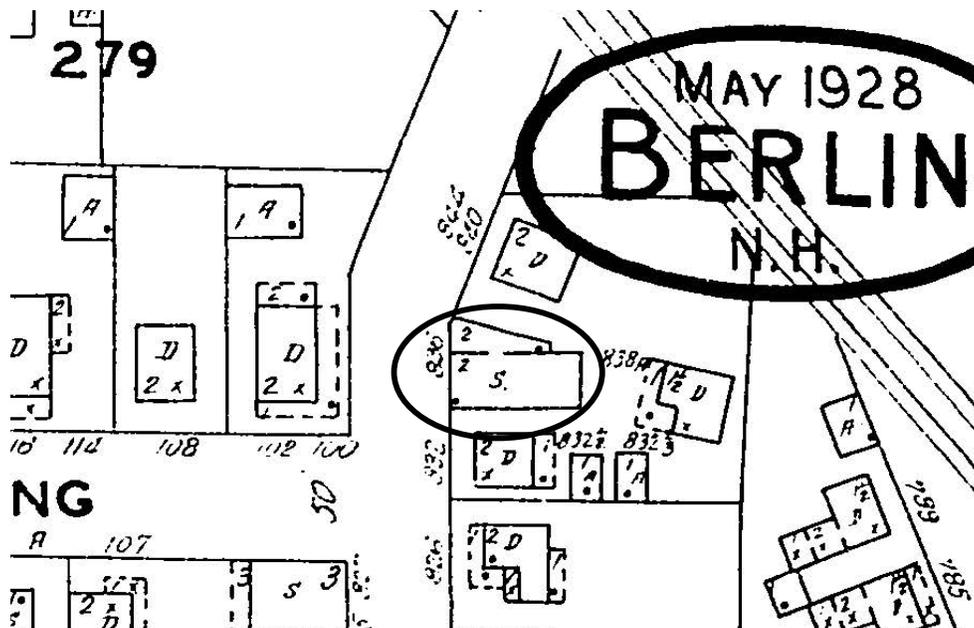
Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1909, 1914, 1920, 1928, 1950, 1955.

U.S. Census, 1900-1930.

BRASSARD BROS.
MEATS and PROVISIONS
Groceries, Fruits and Vegetables
"Leaders in Value and Service"
TWO STORES
80 MAIN STREET and 838 SECOND AVENUE
Phones 893—894 **BERLIN, N. H.**

Advertisement from 1930 Berlin Directory
(at the time the store was known as 838 Second Avenue)

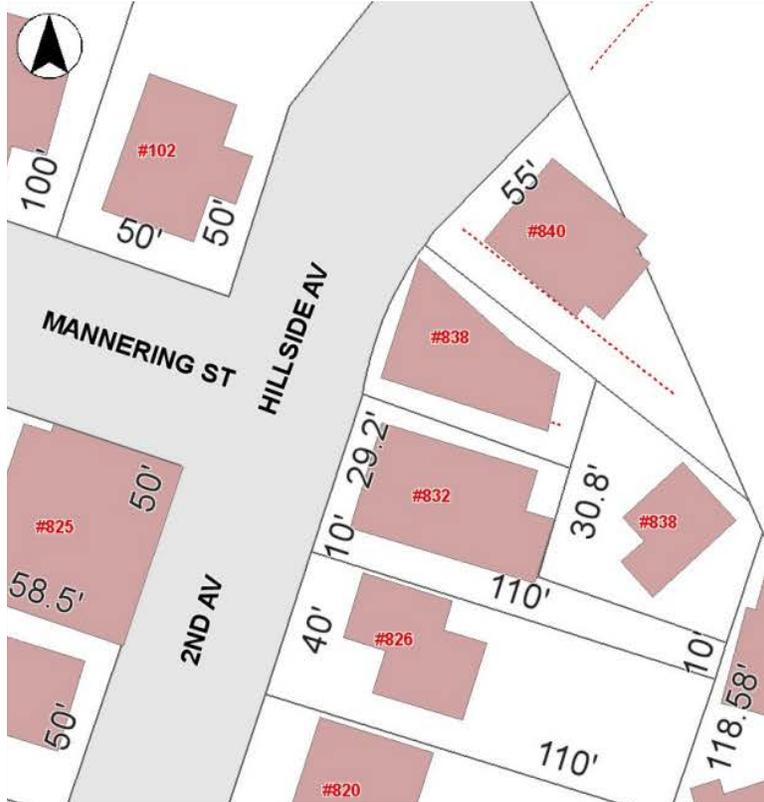
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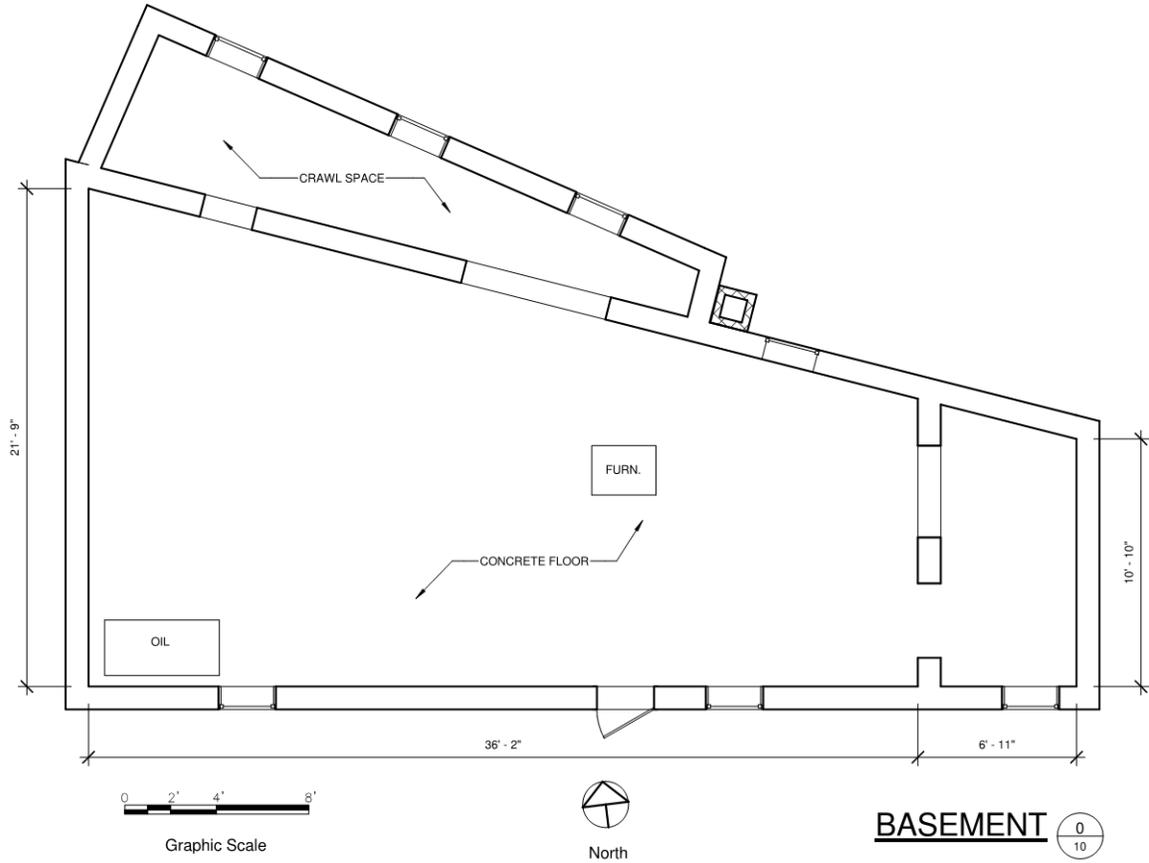
Sanborn map, 1928 (836 Second Avenue is circled)

Building is not depicted on the Dec. 1920 map and the 1950 map looks the same

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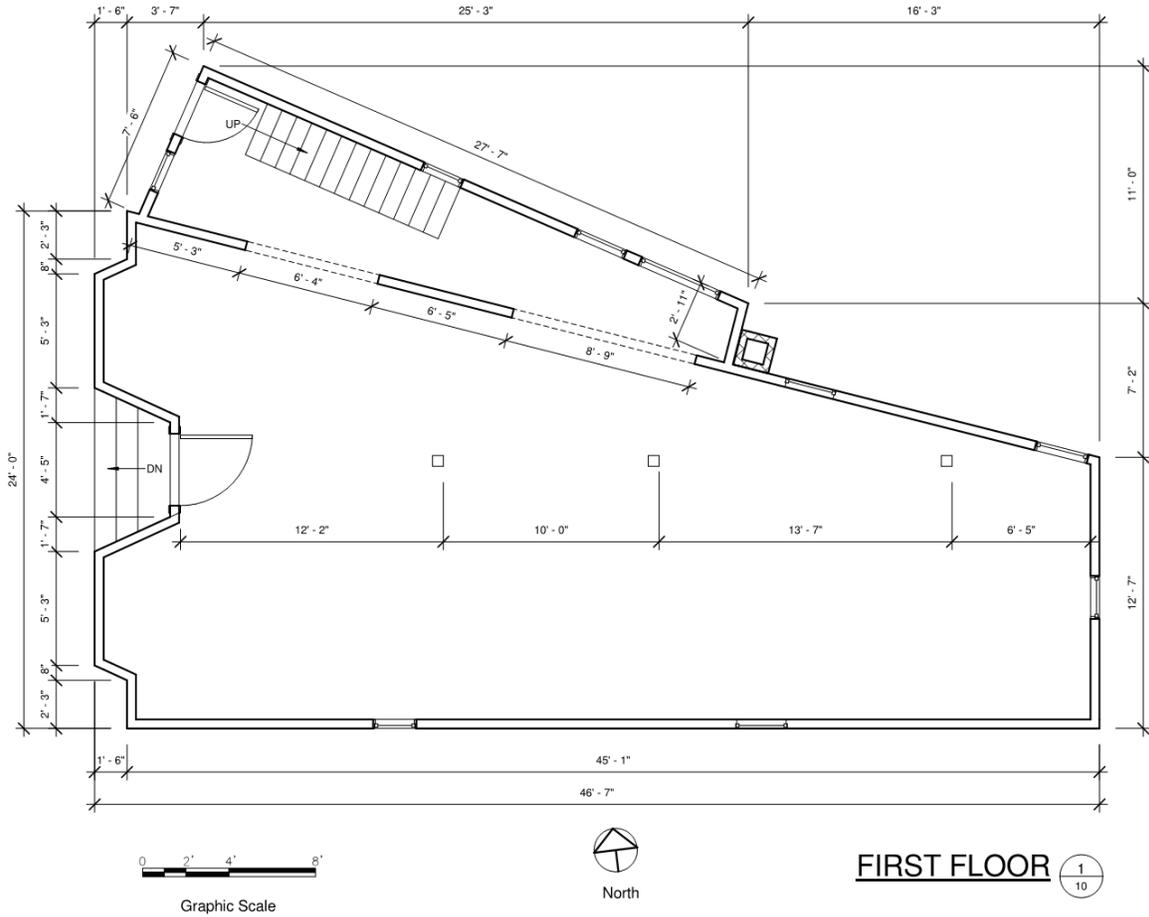


Assessor's Map

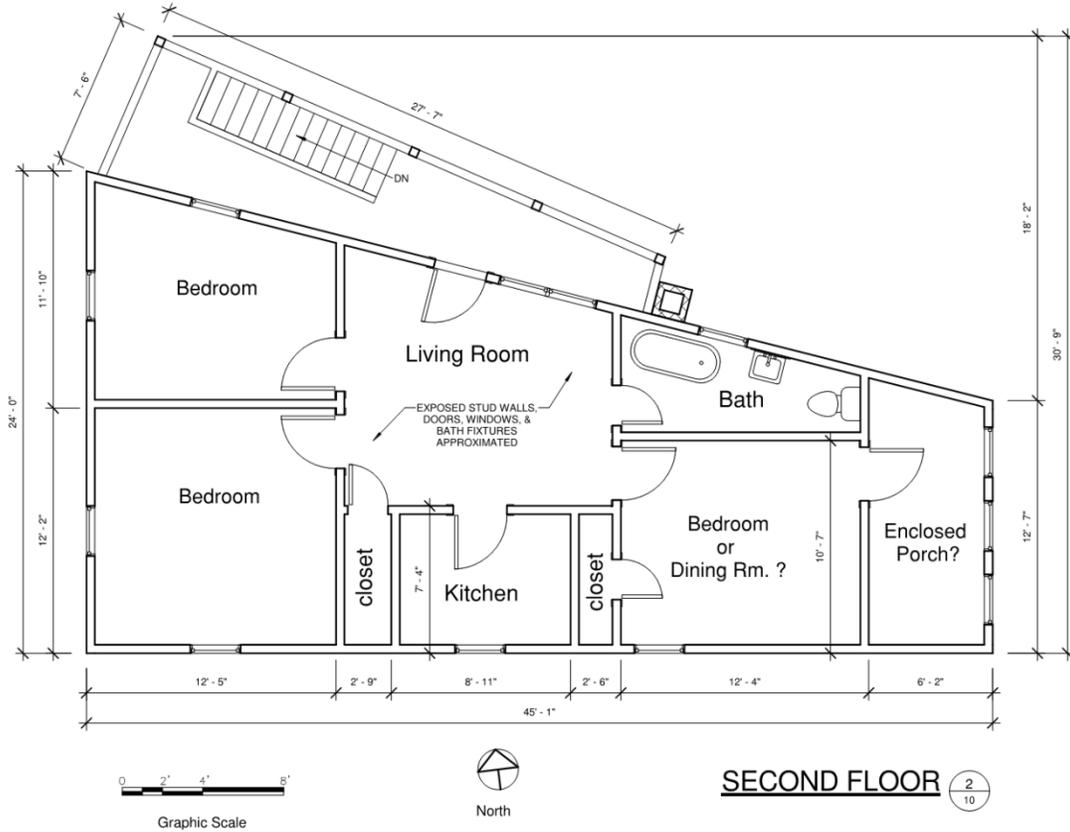


Existing Floor Plan - Basement

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Existing Floor Plan – First Floor



Existing Floor Plan – Second Floor

Note: As seen today (2011) all walls have been removed, exposing studs. This plan shows the former location of doors and bath fixtures as well as room labels based on physical evidence.

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Photographer: Charley Freiberg

NH State No. 692-1 View looking southeast from across the street at west (façade) elevation of 836 Second Avenue (with 832 Second Avenue visible at right). [October 2010]

NH State No. 692-2 View looking southeast showing north and west (façade) elevations. [October 2010]

NH State No. 692-3 View looking east showing west (façade) and south elevations. [October 2010]

NH State No. 692-4 View looking northwest showing south and east (rear) elevations. [October 2010]

NH State No. 692-5 View looking west at east (rear) and north elevations. [October 2010]

NH State No. 692-6 Detail of north wall showing foundation and door leading to coal bin. [October 2010]

NH State No. 692-7 Interior view of first floor looking east. [July 2011]

NH State No. 692-8 Interior view of first floor looking northwest showing blocked entrance at left and stairs to second story porch [July 2011]

NH State No. 692-9 Detail looking southeast at original wooden windows sheltered by second story porch. [July 2011]

NH State No. 692-10 Interior view of second story looking east. [July 2011]

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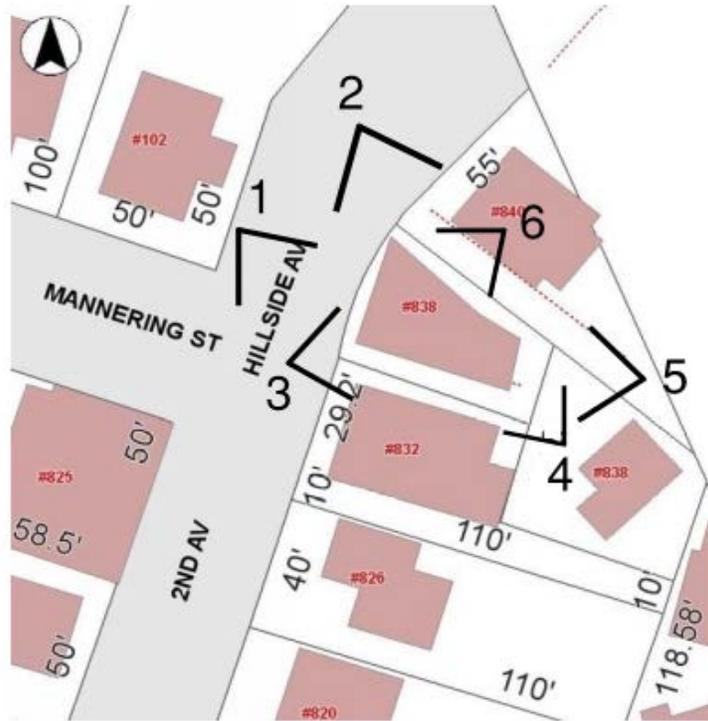


Photo Key – Exterior Photos

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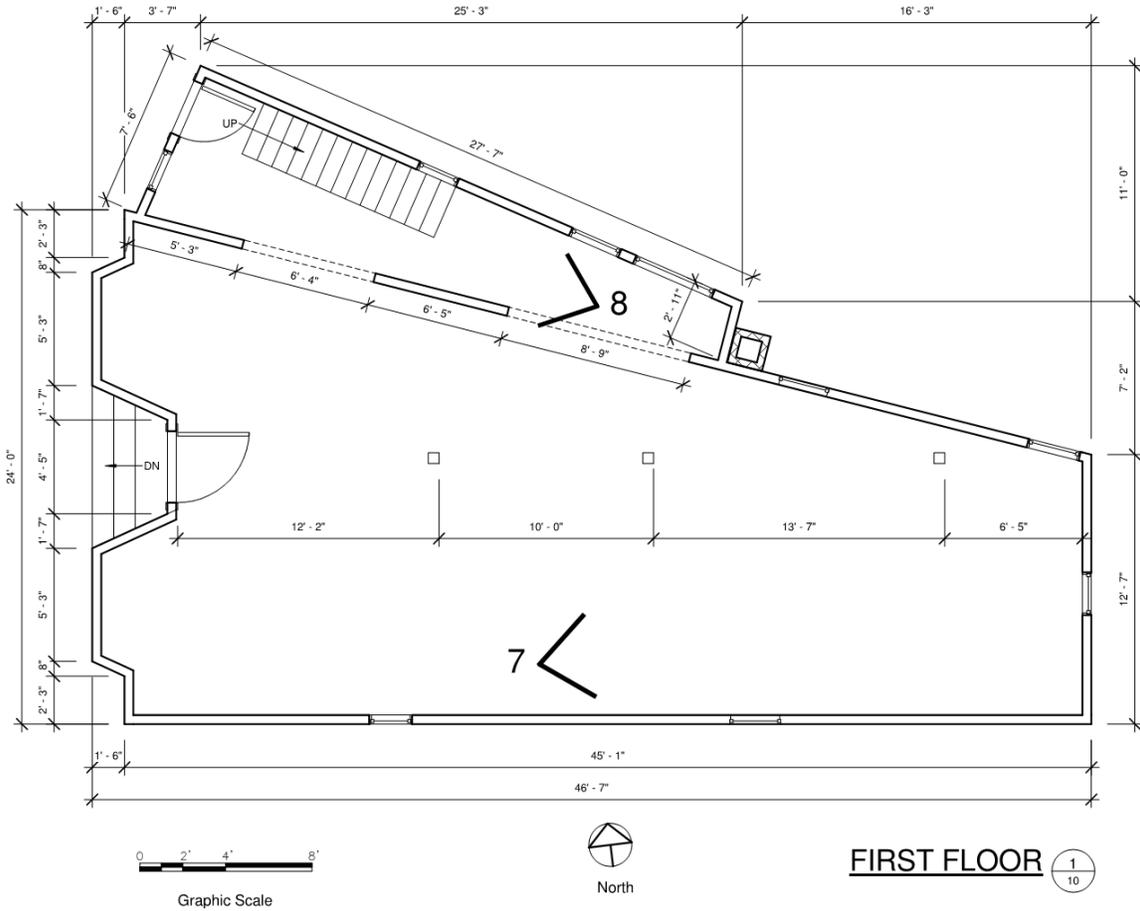


Photo Key – First Floor Photos

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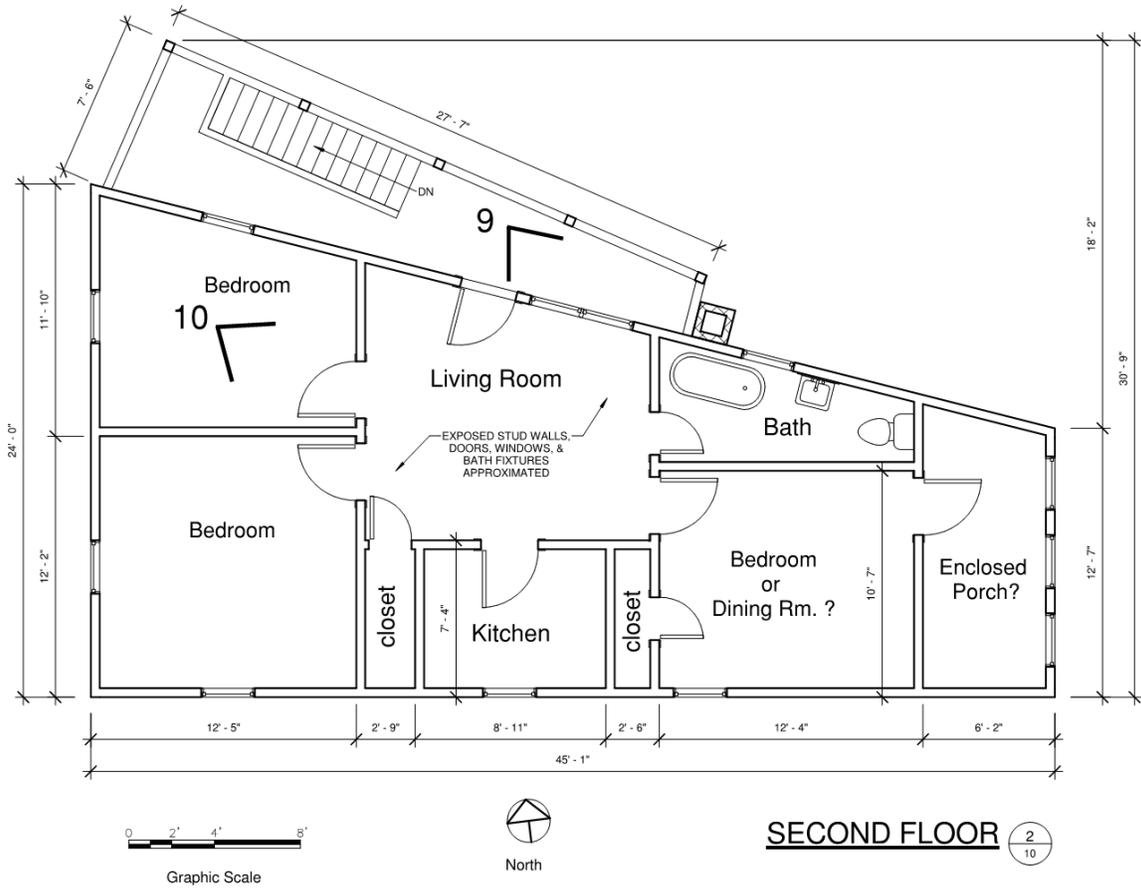
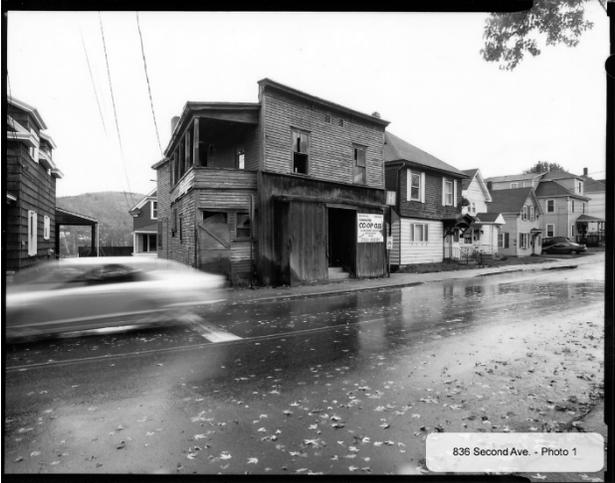


Photo Key – Second Floor Photos



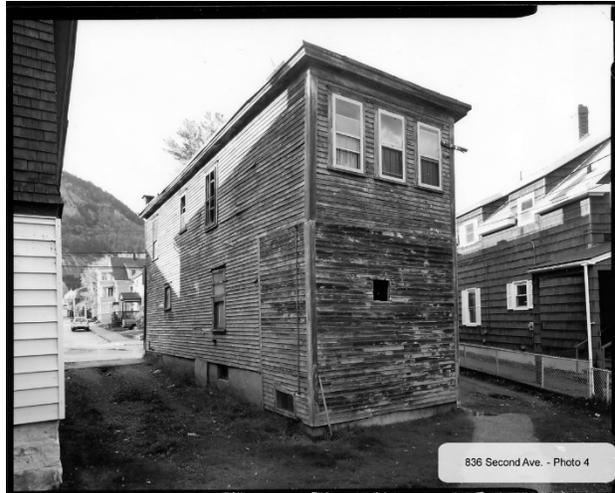
836 Second Ave. - Photo 1



836 Second Ave. - Photo 2



836 Second Ave. - Photo 3



836 Second Ave. - Photo 4



836 Second Ave. - Photo 5



836 Second Ave. - Photo 6



836 Second Ave. - Photo 7



836 Second Ave. - Photo 8



836 Second Ave. - Photo 9



836 Second Ave. - Photo 10