

# **DOCUMENTATION and RECORDATION REPORT**



**439 South Division Street  
(Known locally as the Arthur Miller House)  
Ann Arbor, Michigan**

**Prepared by:  
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Ann Arbor Preservation Alliance**

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## **Project Summary and Description of Existing Conditions**

Upon hearing that the house at 439 South Division Street was threatened with demolition, members of the Ann Arbor Preservation Alliance volunteered to prepare a report documenting existing conditions, along with a statement of historical significance of the property. This document was prepared by preservation architect Ilene R. Tyler, and by historian Susan Wineberg. Present on site during the building inspection was Sue Gott, representing the building's owner, the University of Michigan.

The inspection took place on Tuesday, August 25, 2015 from 3 to 5:00 pm. During this time, the first floor, second floor, and attic were observed, photographed, and conditions noted. For undisclosed reasons, basement access was not permitted. The exterior is not enclosed, so the exterior and site could be viewed from the public right-of-way.

Overall, the building was in very good condition. The roof and drainage are good, the exterior paint is in good condition, and no damage at the foundation was observed. Windows are original, with the addition of aluminum storms, but some openings have been closed up to accommodate interior changes. Doors are original, except for changed openings at the east/rear entrance. The porches are original and in good condition, except for the front steps. Chimneys are in fair condition.

The interior has suffered much change due to conversion from its original single-family use to multiple-tenant apartments. No evidence remains of the original kitchen or bathrooms, and those in place are of poor quality, outfitted for student rental. Key features include the original front staircase, two pocket doorframes, and a decoratively painted steel fireplace in what must have been an original parlor or dining room. Much of the rest of the first and second floor has been radically altered to maximize the number of bedrooms. The attic is mostly a single open space with exposed framing and two brick chimneys.

After a quick walk-through of all levels, I took time for a more methodical inspection beginning at the first floor, working up the stairs, and then around the exterior. Sketch floor plans in the appendix capture the general layout and identify key interior features and photo locations. Separately, a photo log identifies where the photos were taken and describes their content. Representative photos are included for reference.

## Architectural Description and Statement of Significance

This Queen Anne house with wrap around porch probably started life as a smaller house in the rear in the late 1860s when its address was #47. The 1868 City Directory lists a Mrs. Crawford, Mrs. Smith, and Miss Read, a teacher at the Union School (the high school where North Quad is today). The 1878 City Directory lists a Mrs. Robinson and by 1883 we have Samuel Smalley living here. Most of the residents up to this point seem to have been teachers and/or widows renting rooms to students and teachers a like.

I believe the house was expanded to its current configuration probably in the late 1880s when an elaborate and unusual staircase was built, the front door moved to the side from the center, the wrap around porch added, the front and side projections with bay windows were added. Several elaborate and highly carved metal fireplaces, accented to resemble marble, were placed in the parlors (each with pocket doors) at this time as well. It is probably also when an unusual system of pipes for heat were mounted on the walls in a snake pattern along an entire wall found in several rooms upstairs.

By 1894, we have Mr. Albert M. Clark, President of the Board of Public Works (who 'removed to Dallas' in 1900). Clark's residency in Ann Arbor can be traced back to 1865 when he was enlisted as a Notary Public. He was active in the Democratic State Convention in 1876. He also seems to have been a farmer in Saline where he owned 200 acres. He 1891 he is listed as renting unfurnished rooms at Division and Jefferson which is part of this original plot. Smith was something of an inventor and received a patent for a windmill attachment in 1891. He also invented a hydrocarbon vaporizer and burner in 1896. Perhaps he had something to do with the unusual heating system.

The legal description for this address states it includes part of lots 7, 8, 9, and 10 in Block 4 South, Range 7 East. These lots are the two southernmost lots on Division and the two southernmost on Thompson between Jefferson and William. On the 1853 map, there is a large building shown at the NE corner of Division and Jefferson and it may have been some sort of school or rooming house. Connections thus might exist between our property in question and others nearby on Jefferson and Thompson.

From 1900-1909 Austin F. Smith, a teacher in the AA Public Schools, is living here with his wife and later a nurse. By the 1930s it has been converted to a rooming house and in 1935, Arthur Miller, the future playwright and author of "Death of a Salesman" is listed as a tenant. This was Miller's first apartment in Ann Arbor and has led many to call this the "Arthur Miller house."

This year the University is celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Miller's birth, as noted in the Michigan Alumnus of early Fall 2015. It would be a great achievement if, in this year of his centennial, we could honor him by preserving the sites where his early talents began to be encouraged.

I L E N E R T Y L E R, L L C

PHOTO LOG

Project Name: 439 S. DIVISION ST.

Project No.: P 1110 756 thru ~~888~~

Photographed by: Ilene R. Tyler

Date: Aug. 25, 2015 788

Image #	Digital #	Location - INTERIOR	Description
1	756	entry W	stairhall, colored glass
2	757	" E	balustrade
3	758	BR 1 E	old pocket doors
4	759	" W	beveled sides of w/dw, colored
5	760	DR N	fireplace glass
6	761	" N	fireplace - ornamental paint
7	762	" N	dtl. on ferris metal
8	763	" S	colored glass transom, door
9	764	" W	pocket doors
10	765	Hall E	built-in cupboards
11	766	" W	"
12	767	Kit. S	new/modern; exit door
13	768	stair looking down	orig balustrade
14	769	" upper run	" "
15	770	BR 2 E	closet (looks original)
16	771	BR 1 N	radiator piping
17	772	BR 1 S dtl.	" " dtl.
18	773	Hall E	door at end to attic
19	774	Kit S	pantry beyond; modern
20	775	BR 4	built-in
21	776	BR 6 E	rad. piping
22	777	" 6 W	built-in cupboards, door opp.
23	778	Attic	stair up
24	779	Attic	overall w/
25	780	Attic W	<del>overall</del> low made of doors
26	781	west end	angled wall
27	782	west room	walls
28	783	" "	colorful ptg.
29	784	" "	wallpaper
30	785	E	overall E
31	786	roof	ridge offset
32	787	west roof	ceiling w/ chimney
33	788	W	" w/ chimney

FIRST FLOOR

SECOND FLOOR

ATTIC

PHOTO LOG

Project Name: 439 S. DIVISION ST.

Project No.: P1110 789-809

Photographed by: Ilene R. Tyler

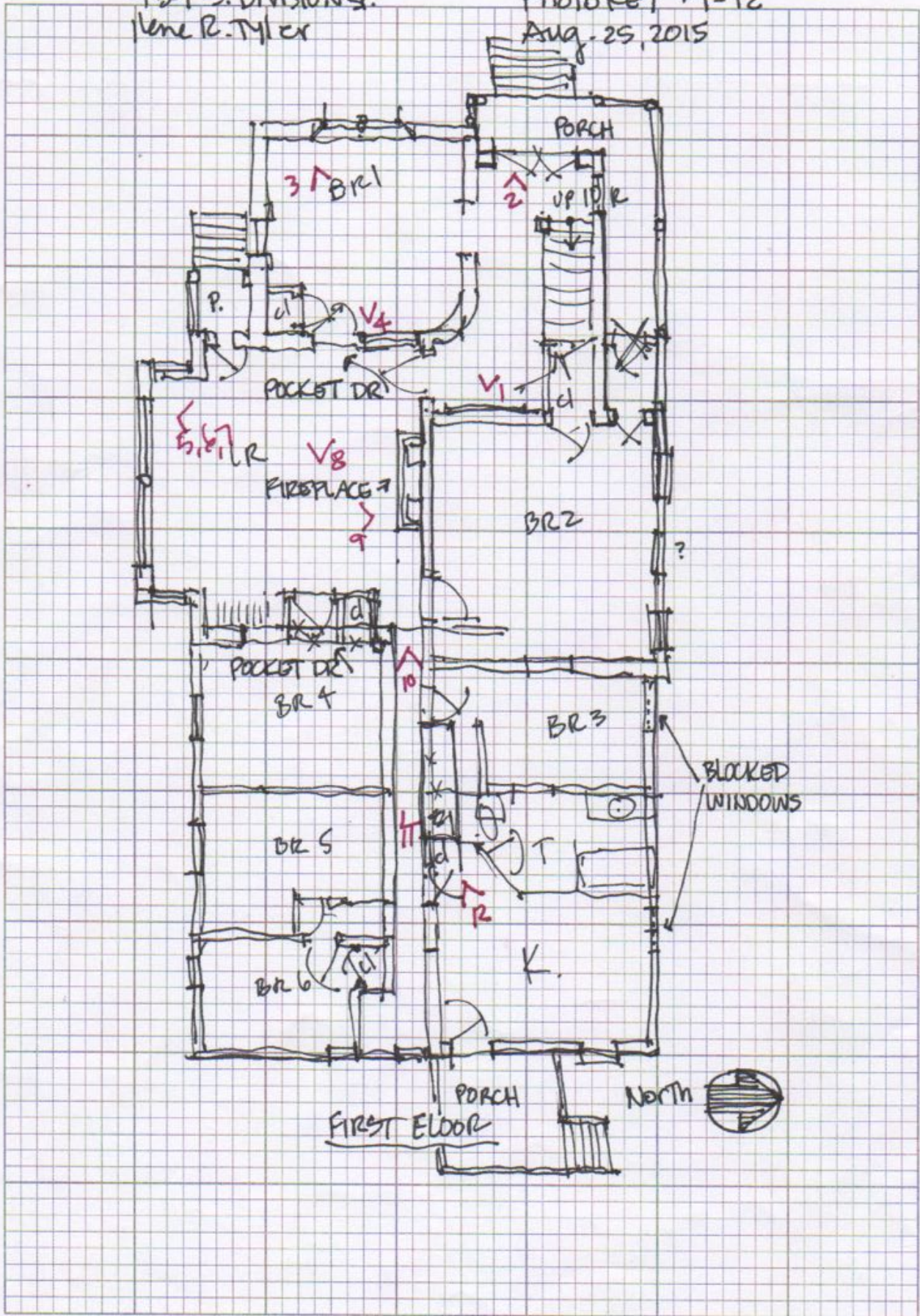
Date: Aug. 25, 2015

Image #	Digital #	Location - EXTERIOR	Description
34	789	West Elev.	
35	790	West Elev.	
36	791	West - dtl.	chimneys
37	792	West	porch
38	793	Northwest	porch
39	794	North Elev. - front half	3 wdw 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup>
40	795	" " - rear "	1 wdw 2 <sup>nd</sup> , blocked wdw
41	796	East Elev.	
42	797	East "	
43	798	East - dtl.	
44	798	East/South corner	ext. lsmit. access
45	800	East	
46	801	South Elev.	
47	802	" " dtl.	bray/porch
48	803	" " dtl.	" "
49	804	" " dtl.	" "
50	805	" " dtl.	double brackets at wdw.
51	806	West - dtl.	bray window
52	807	West - dtl.	porch
53	808	West - vertical	windows
54	809	West/South corner	

EXTERIOR

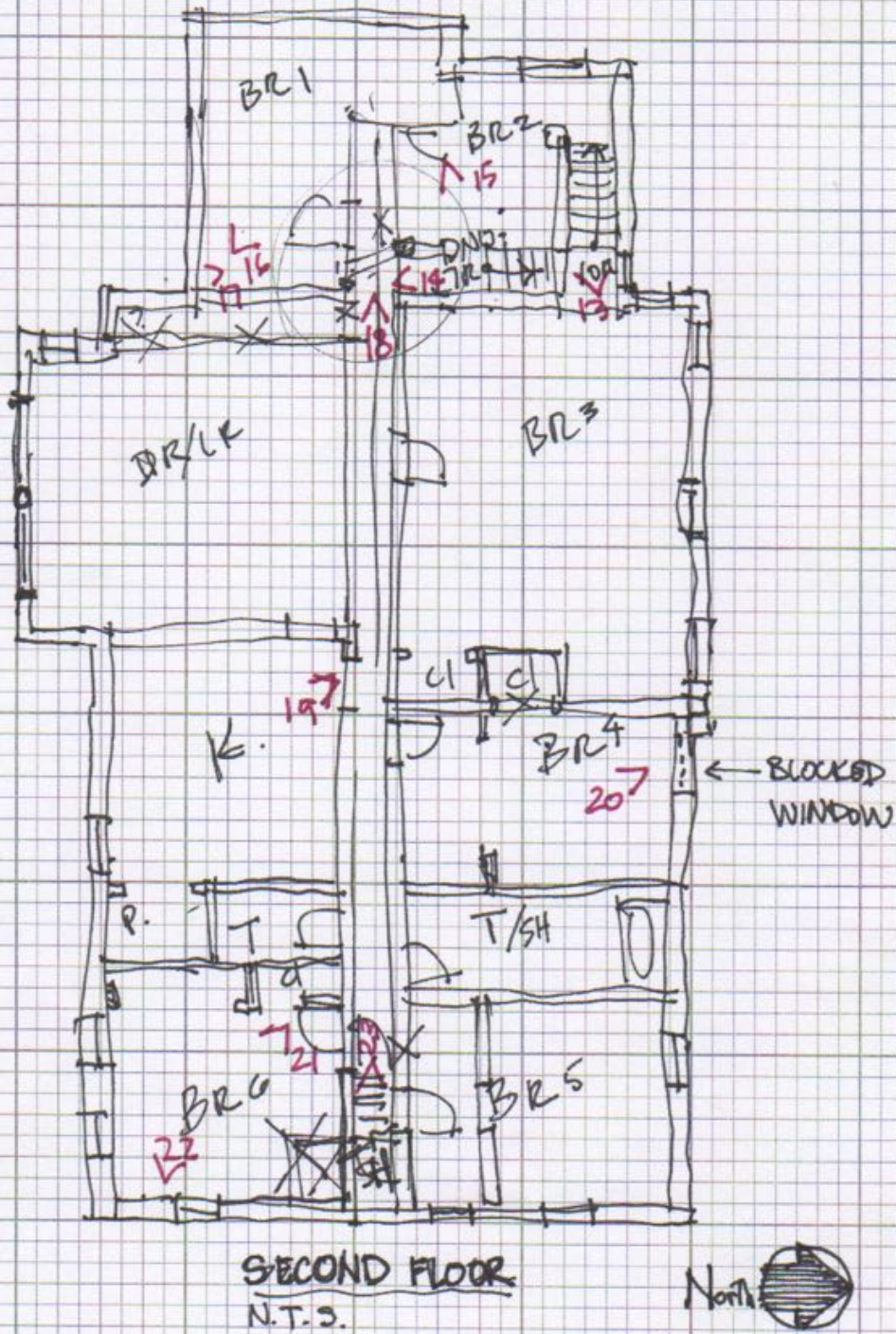
439 S. DIVISION ST.  
Gene R. Tyler

PHOTO KEY #1-12  
Aug. 25, 2015



439 S. DIVISION ST.  
Ilene R. Tyler

PHOTO KEY #13-22  
Aug. 25, 2015





439 S. DIVISION ST.

PHOTO KEY #23-33

Image/Sketch for Parcel: 09-09-29-425-023

City of Ann Arbor

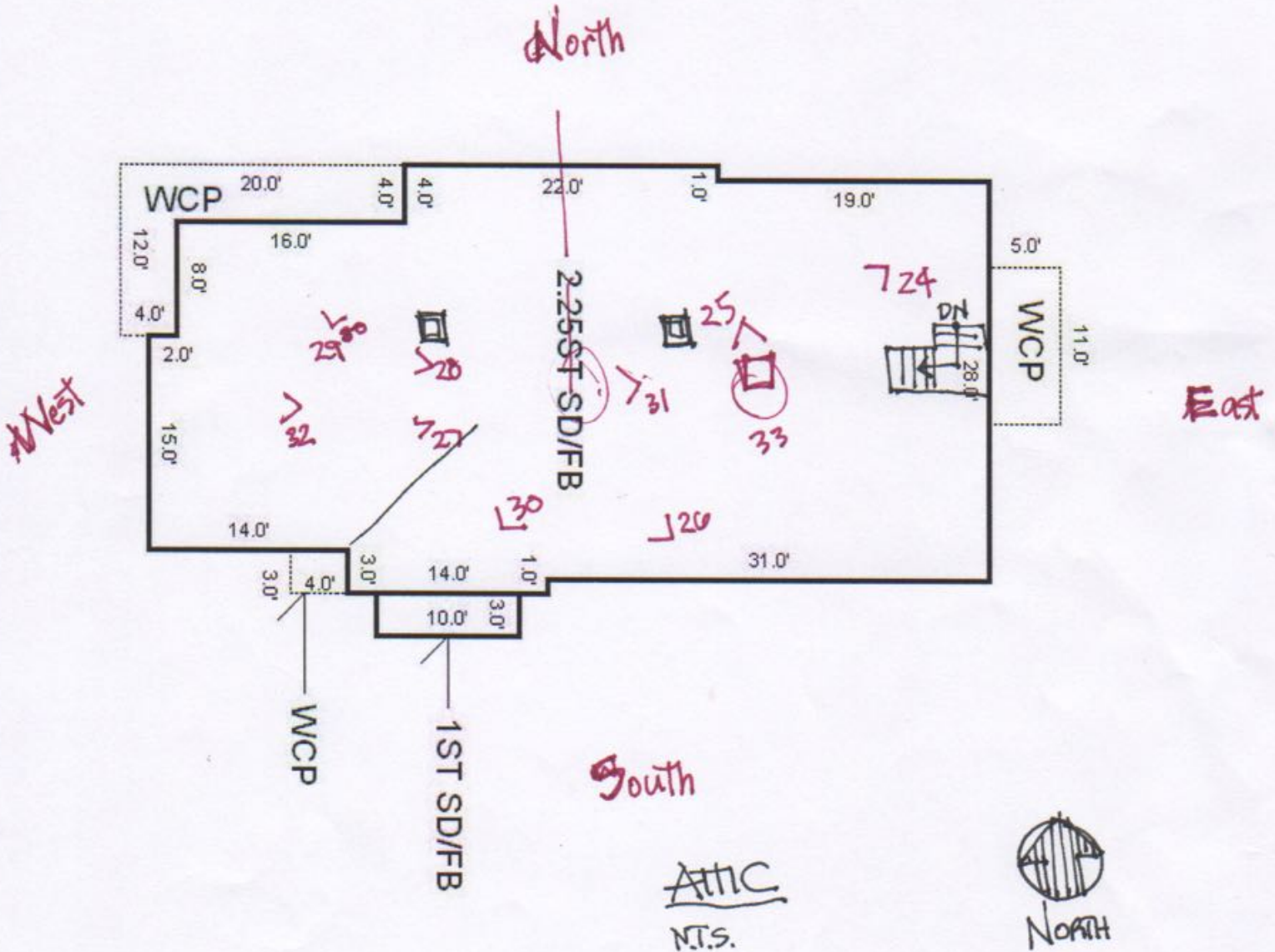
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Caption: No caption found

Home R. Tyler

Aug. 25, 2015

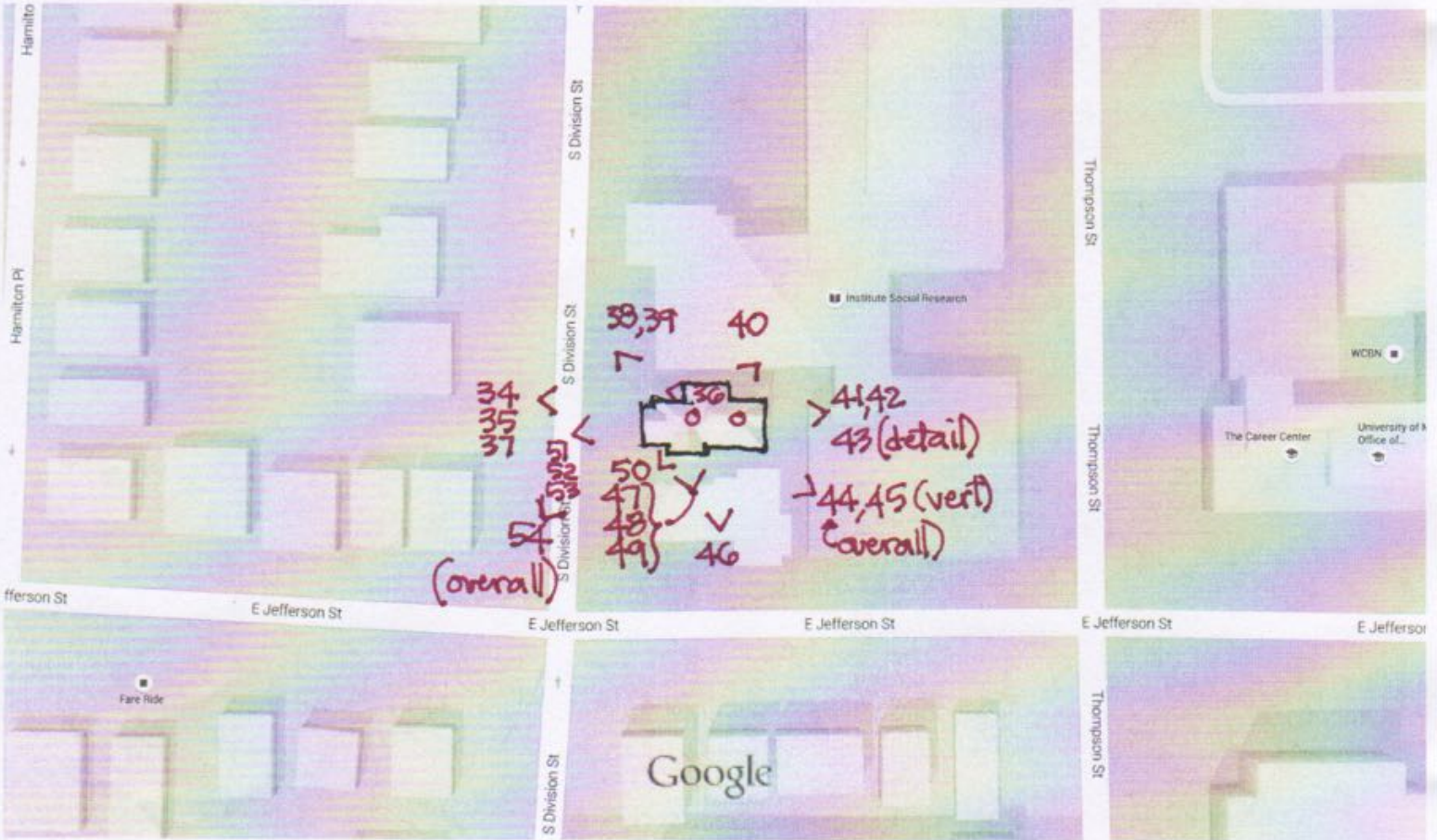
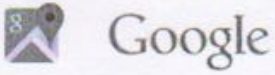
Sketch by Apex I/m



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439 S. DIVISION ST.  
Irene R. Tyler  
Google Maps

PHOTO KEY # 34-54  
Aug. 25, 2015



Map data ©2015 Google 50 ft

SITE  
NTS



NORTH

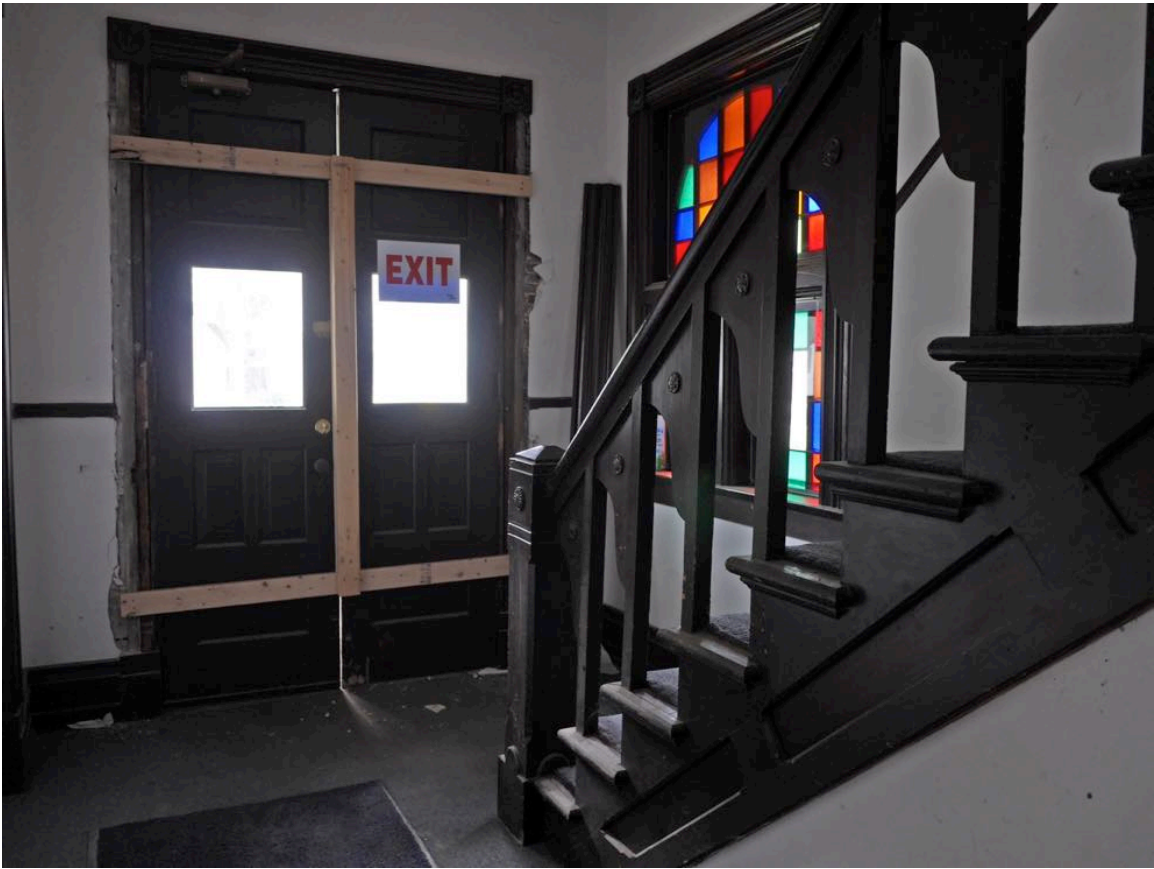


Photo No. 1 (image No. 1): Front entry hall including staircase and original double doors, now boarded up for security.



Photo No. 2 (image No. 5): View north in original dining room, showing decoratively painted metal fireplace, between original door openings.

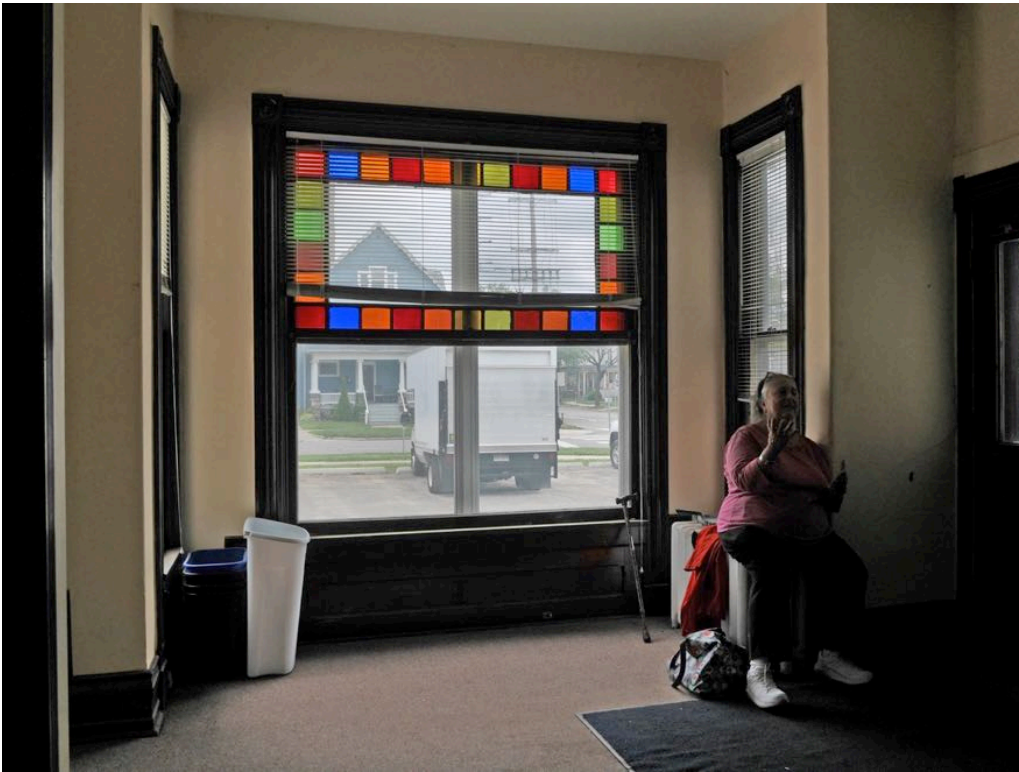


Photo No. 3 (image No. 8): View south in first floor dining room of projecting bay with colored glass border in upper sash.



Photo No. 4 (image No. 11): Close-up photo of built-in cabinets in the first floor corridor. Cabinets look like they would have been for the kitchen/dining room.

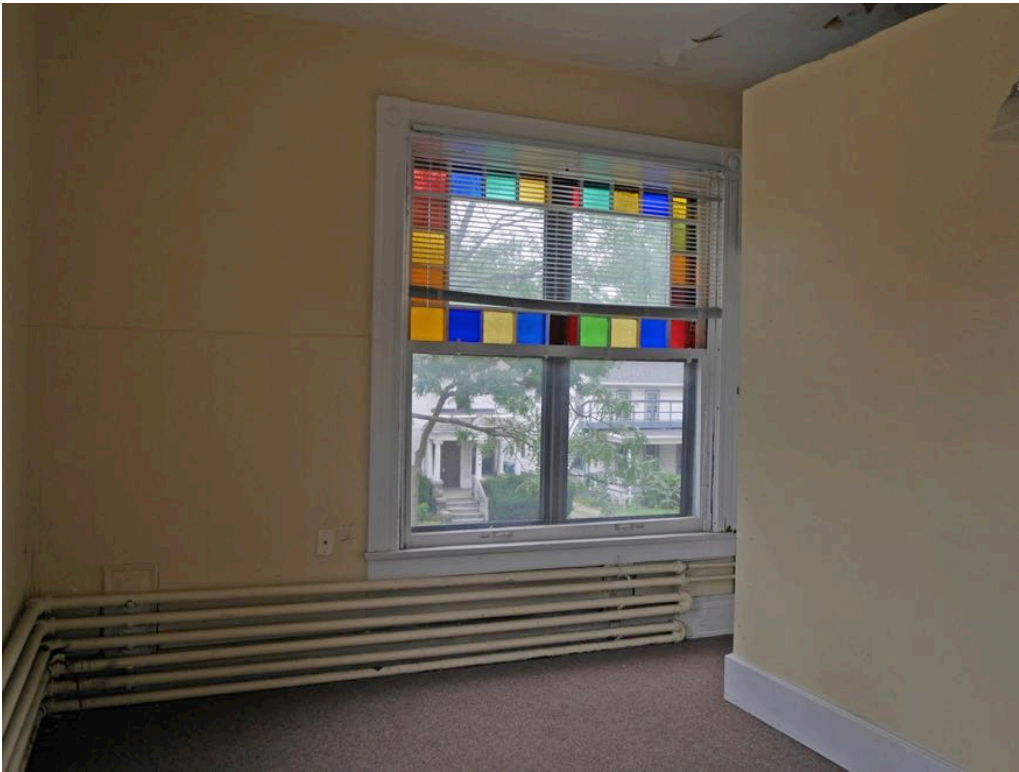


Photo No. 5 (image No. 16): Second floor front bedroom windows have the same colored panes as windows on the first floor. Note unusual radiant heating pipes.

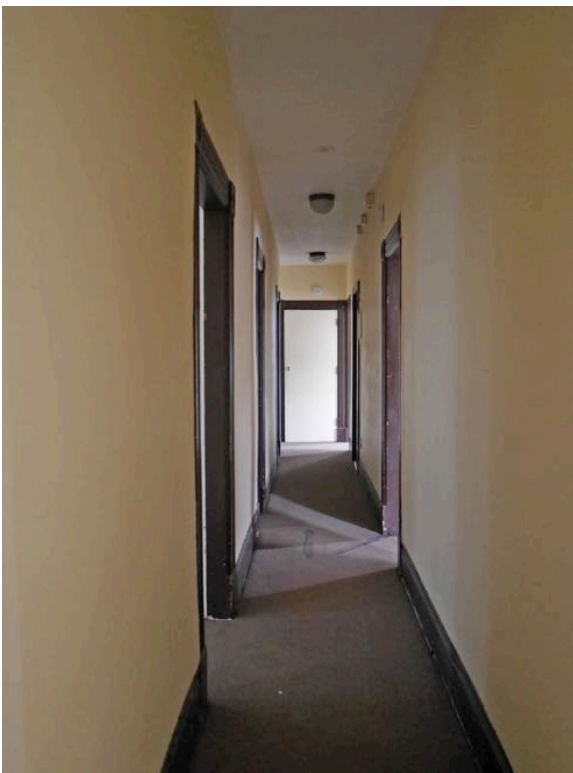


Photo No. 6 (image No. 18): View east down second floor corridor. Original doorframes suggest this is the original corridor width for single-family use.



Photo No. 7 (image No. 21): Southeast corner windows of back bedroom (BR #6 on second floor sketch plan) with unusual radiant heating pipes below them.



Photo No. 8 (image No. 22): Southeast corner bedroom (BR #6 on second floor sketch plan) with built-in closet and storage cupboards and original doors.



Photo No. 9 (image No. 24): Attic open space looking west. Angled wall follows roof gable.



Photo No. 10 (image No. 29): Detail of wallpaper that covered the boarded sloped ceiling in the front/west room of the attic.



Photo No. 11 (image No. 30): Attic open space looking east. Extra doors were used to create a makeshift bar for parties.

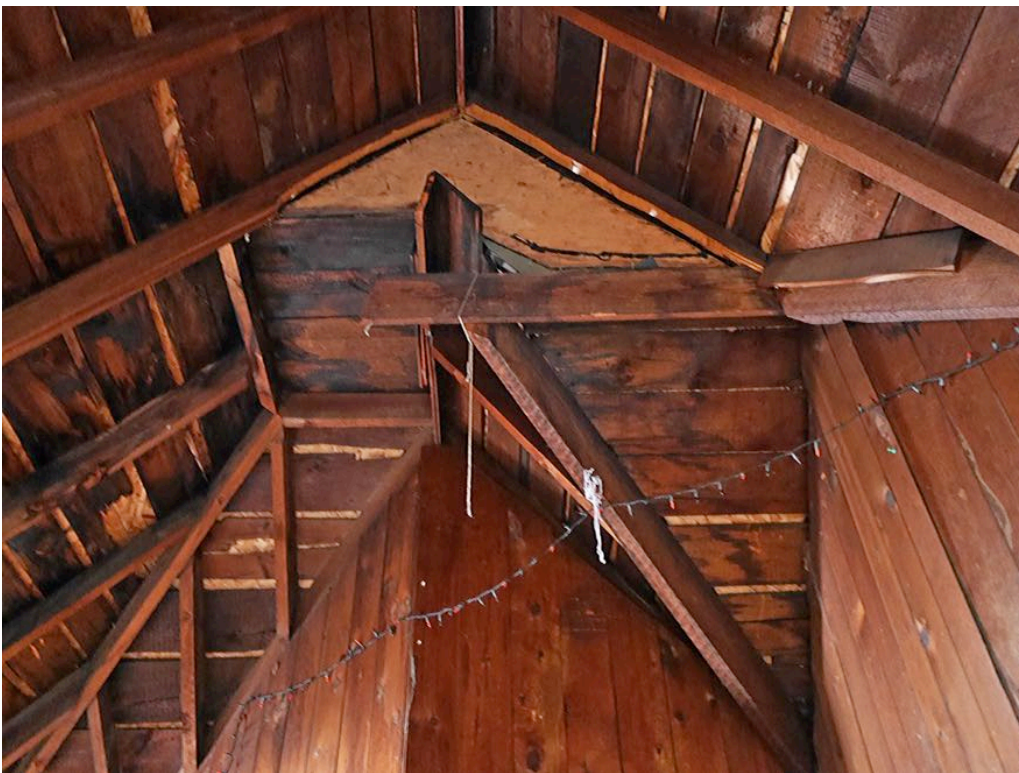


Photo No. 12 (image No. 31): View of roof framing at offset from front (west) roof to rear (east) portions of the roof. Cutout rafters and plywood gable filler suggest this has been altered, but also confirm that the entire house was built at one time.





Photo No. 13 (image No. 35): West façade fronts onto S. Division Street. It has a landscaped 15-foot setback from the S. Division sidewalk.



Photo No. 14 (image No. 38): View of front porch showing intact unique railing system, Italianate brackets, and lattice.



Photo No. 15 (image No. 40): North elevation retains its windows in the western half of the house, but those in the eastern half were blocked up and covered with siding. Mortar joints exhibit eroded and missing mortar.



Photo No. 16 (image No. 44): East elevation is where most change has occurred. The original "back" door has been changed to a small window, and a new door added that leads into the modern kitchen. Cellar door cover is missing.



Photo No. 17 (image No. 46): South elevation faces a vacant lot. Bay window and porch are in very good condition. From this view it is also easy to see that the asphalt roof shingles are new.



Photo No. 18 (image No. 48): View of side porch and bay window showing intact unique railing system, Italianate brackets, and lattice