

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
DOCUMENTATION OF
23 WEST SECOND AVENUE
(OH HABS No. _____)**

**COLUMBUS,
FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO**

June 2021

23 West Second Avenue
Columbus
Franklin County
Ohio

OH HABS No. _____

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service

Ohio State Historic Preservation Office
800 East 17th Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43211

June 7, 2021

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GLENN L. MYERS FUNERAL HOME INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS #683

HABS NO. OH-_____

Location: 23 West Second Avenue, Columbus, Franklin County, Ohio.

Significance: The Glenn L. Myers Funeral Home, built in 1925, is of interest for its eclectic classical revival exterior and Craftsman interior architectural details as well as its history as a “complete” funeral home with chapel and parlors in the post-World War I era and later as the long-time home of the electrical workers union. The brick building features leaded glass arch top windows and half round arched brick details at the pediment. The building has similar details to the funeral home located at 229 E. State Street, which was built for the Schoedinger Funeral Home in the 1930s.

Description: The Glenn L. Myers Funeral Home consists of three distinct sections. The main building has a low-slope roof, sits on the west half of the site, and contains two levels and a basement. The main building measures approximately 46’-0” x 106’-0” on the first floor, with the second floor being shorter at 89’-6” with a rooftop terrace in the rear. The plaster on brick perimeter walls rest on a poured concrete foundation. Each floor consists of a central corridor with load-bearing walls that also sit on poured concrete walls in the basement. The basement floor is an exposed concrete slab. The first floor is concrete slab with a terrazzo finish. The second floor has a wood structure with wooden floor finish, now covered with carpet or tile. The main entry is centered on the north elevation with a set of steps with brick cheek walls. The door is protected by a gable-roofed canopy with an arched underside supported by solid brackets. The wooden paneled entry door has a round top and a half light of clear glass. The interior of the main building originally contained meeting rooms for the bereaved in the front with offices and preparation rooms in the rear. These rooms contained wooden 12-over-12 double-hung windows with arched tops and leaded glass.

The second floor was divided into residential apartments that could house paying tenants, funeral home workers, or lodging for friends and family who had to travel long distances to attend the funeral. The front rooms also feature wooden 12-over-12 double-hung windows with arched tops and leaded glass as well as leaded glass casement windows. The front rooms on both floors also features interior wooden doors with leaded glass lites as well as fireplaces with tile surrounds. The rooms in the rear feature double-hung windows with multi-lite top sashes and single-lite bottom sashes. Modifications include infilling some window openings with brick in the rear and replacing windows with glass block in the restrooms. The basement level consisted of utility rooms and probably the embalming rooms. All basement windows have been infilled with plywood on both the interior and exterior.

Immediate adjacent to the main building on the east is the one-and-one-half story funeral chapel, whose front elevation sits back from the main building by about 34’-6”. The chapel measures approximately 30’-6” x 47’-0” and originally consisted of a single open room with

exposed timber trusses supporting a sloped roof. The altar, which projects from the south wall of the chapel by about 9'-0", has been walled off with no access. The original wooden windows have been replaced with aluminum units on the east elevation. The south wall of the altar is two stories high with a bricked-in window on both levels. The chapel itself has also been subdivided into offices on the west side and a meeting room on the east, with a corridor down the middle. A suspended grid ceiling hides the timber trusses. The chapel is connected to the main building by a one-story low-slope roof vestibule structure with a gable-roofed porch with an arched ceiling over the entry. The wooden entry door has three panels and sidelights, topped with a half round transom with a five-spoke muntin pattern. The sidelights have been painted/paneled over. A porte cochere protects double doors on the east elevation of the chapel, which originally allowed a hearse to load and unload the coffin to/from the chapel.

At the rear of the site is a large one-story brick building with a low-slope roof that measures approximately 75'-6" x 41'6". This building originally housed six garage bays for hearses and ambulances but was converted into a large banquet hall by the electrical union. The rear structure is connected to the rear of the main building by a one-story section that contains a lobby for the banquet hall along with office and utility space. The space between the rear building and the chapel houses a former contemplative garden, with an arched brick fountain/water feature built into the north wall of the garage. The brick used on the garage is of a different color (probably less expensive) than the main building and chapel, and is most noticeable where the brick on the rear (south) walls are toothed into the side (west) walls.

History: The Glenn L. Myers Funeral Home was built in 1925, at a time when funeral homes were flourishing across the nation. Since the early twentieth century, people were living longer and dying in hospitals, rather than at home. The American death ritual consisted of displaying the body after death so friends and family could say farewell before it was buried/cremated at the cemetery. Embalming to preserve the body became popular during the Civil War to allow bodies to be delivered back to their families without putrifying. Families of those killed in World War I often insisted that the government ship their loved ones back for a funeral, resulting in an increased need for embalmers. Since so many people died outside of the home in the 20th century, people lost their connection to and their ability to deal with death directly. With the trend to smaller houses in the 1920s, families often did not have the space in which to display the body or accommodate visiting friends and family. The funeral home created a service where families did not have to worry about the details of death during their time of bereavement. The funeral home handled the body when it was received, prepared it (embalming and cosmetic work) for viewing, provided a home-like space or a chapel for the viewing, and handled the body for final disposition at the cemetery. They could also provide flowers, food, music, transportation, and lodging.

Glenn L. Myers Sr. was born in Mt. Sterling, Ohio in 1888, the oldest of 8 children, where his mother worked as a washerwoman to support the family. He moved to Columbus and started working as a Funeral Director for Pletcher-Brown in Columbus in 1911. Pletcher-Brown was founded in 1888 by Hiram A. Pletcher, who started as an undertaker and eventually

established an ambulance service, becoming The Pletcher-Brown Company in 1904. A full-page ad in the 1910 directory states that the company has the oldest ambulance service in the city with a drawing of carriage with two horses. Glenn L. Myers must have been quite an entrepreneur since in 1913 he was listed as Assistant Manager of the Brown-Myers Company, having convinced Sherman Brown to leave Hiram Pletcher and start a competing business with him where Brown's name came first. Myers also managed to place the sole ad under the new heading of "Funeral Directors' Department" in the city directory rather than next to their alphabetized directory listing, as was traditional. During this time, Myers also found time to marry Doris E. Johnson, who gave birth to a son, Glenn L. Myers Jr. in 1912.

The Brown-Myers company was located on High Street near Buttles and promoted themselves as modern funeral directors, equipped with both motor vehicles as well as horse drawn carriages. In 1915 Myers had moved up to be General Manager of the Brown-Myers Company. By 1917, he had left the Brown-Myers Company to form a new funeral business under the name of The Myers-Owen Company with Harold Owens, where the Myers name came first. Sherman Brown, meanwhile, renamed his company the Brown-Ferguson Company. True to form, Myers placed an ad under the heading of Undertaker in the 1917 directory, with the H.A. Pletcher Company being the only other ad. The Myers-Owens Company had two locations (one on W. Goodale and the other on W. Broad) with a private morgue and funeral parlors and cremations arranged with modern methods.

There are three ads in the Undertaker section of the 1919 directory, each one having previously been associated with Glenn L. Myers: Brown-Ferguson, Myers-Owens, and H.A. Pletcher (Hiram Pletcher had passed away in 1917). By 1920, there are two pages of ads for Funeral Directors featuring nine companies. Myers managed the location at 2305 N. High Street and Harold Owens ran the location at 23 W. Goodale. By 1922 Owens had left the company and Myers was managing both locations on his own. However, he worked to consolidate his business and purchased the rear lot of a house with a High Street address. The house and garage were demolished and in 1925 a new free-standing building dedicated to the funeral business, complete with a chapel and a pipe organ, opened with a Second Avenue address. The State Board of Embalming Examiners (founded in 1903), where Glenn L. Myers Sr. was secretary-treasurer, maintained offices in the building until 1933. Theodore Spathe, an embalmer and employee of the Myers company, also rented rooms on the second floor.

Glenn L. Myers Sr. passed away in 1937, and his son, Glenn L. Myers Jr. took over the business. Glenn L. Myers Jr. married and fathered a son, Glenn L. Myers III, served in the air force during World War II, and continued to run the business until he retired in 1954. Prior to his retirement, building department records indicate that a renovation occurred in 1953, possibly to the second-floor apartments. Glenn L. Myers III, however, did not choose to continue the family business, opting to move to Florida instead. The Glenn L. Myers Funeral Home sat directly across the street from the Shaw Davis Funeral Home, which was founded in 1908 but had moved into and opened the 20-room Victorian mansion in 1924, just one year before the Myers building opened. The Shaw Davis Funeral Home acquired the Glenn L. Myer Funeral Home business in March of 1958, and the building at 23 West Second Avenue was sold to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers #683 (IBEW).

The Electrical Workers Union #12 first appears in the 1902 city directory, meeting on the second and fourth Wednesdays on E. Town Street. This union changed names, split up, and disappeared between 1902 and 1929, only to officially emerge as the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers #683 in 1930, with offices at 8 E. Chestnut Street. The union later moved to 233 S. High Street before purchasing the former Glenn L. Myers funeral home on 23 W. Second Avenue in 1958. The building was apparently larger than the IBEW needed as the 1959 directory indicates that Faith Baptist Church was using the chapel and two tenants were leasing the upper floor apartments. One of IBEW's first projects was to convert the garage into a large banquet room in 1959, which included adding an interior wall to create an entry lobby on the west side. In 1970-1971 a commercial kitchen was installed at the east end of the banquet room. In 1994, the chapel was subdivided into office and meeting space. The IBEW remained in the building from 1958 until 2016, when they sold the building to a developer and relocated to their current location on Goodale Boulevard.

Sources:

- Columbus City Directories, 1880 - 1959
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1891 - 1951
- Federal Census Records for 1900, 1920, 1930, and 1940
- Columbus building permit research provided by Jessica Schueren of Kaufman Development
- *Rest in Peace, A Cultural History of Death and the Funeral Home in Twentieth- Century America* by Gary Laderman, Oxford University Press, 2003

Architectural Historian:

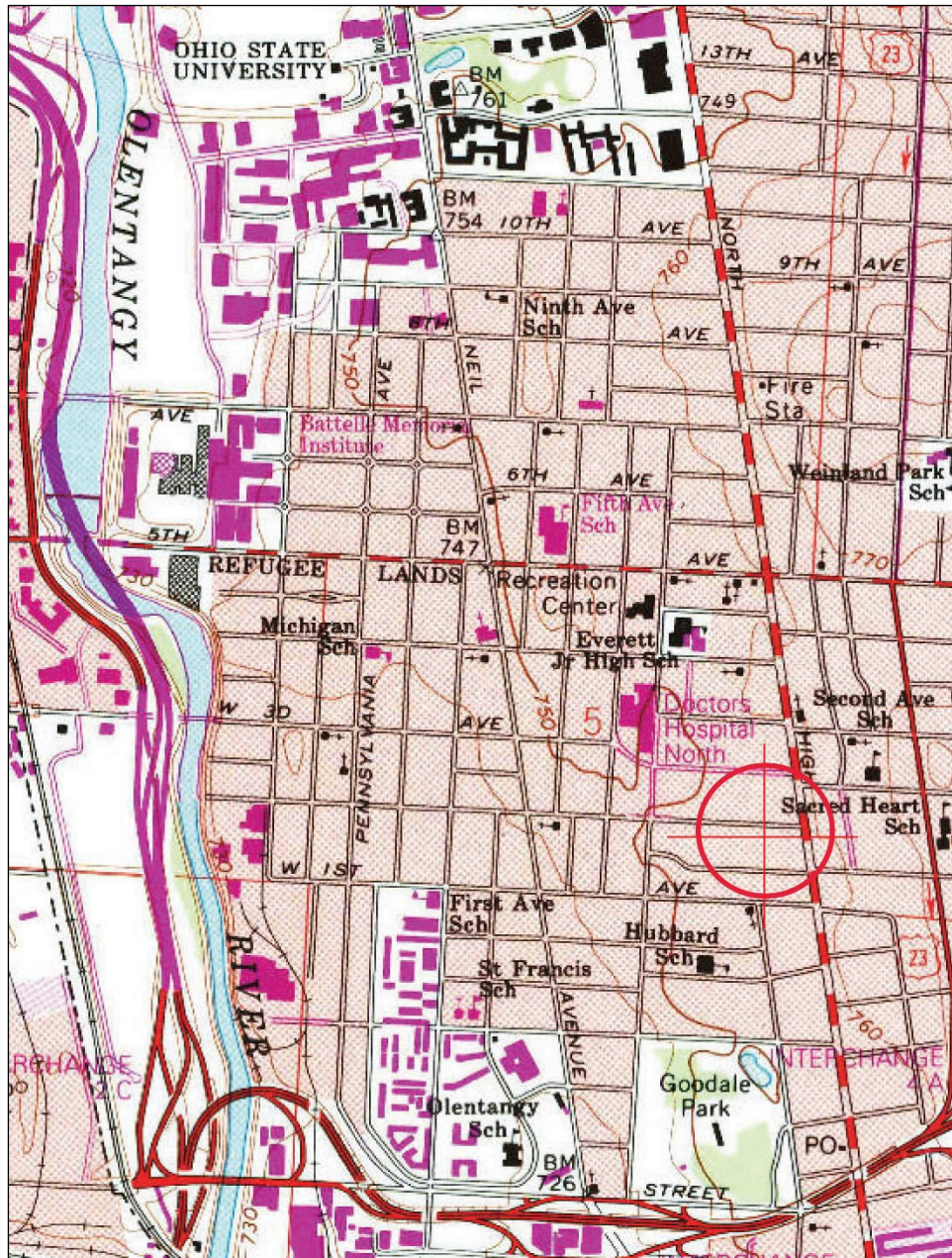
Charissa W. Durst, Hardlines Design Company, 2021

Project Information:

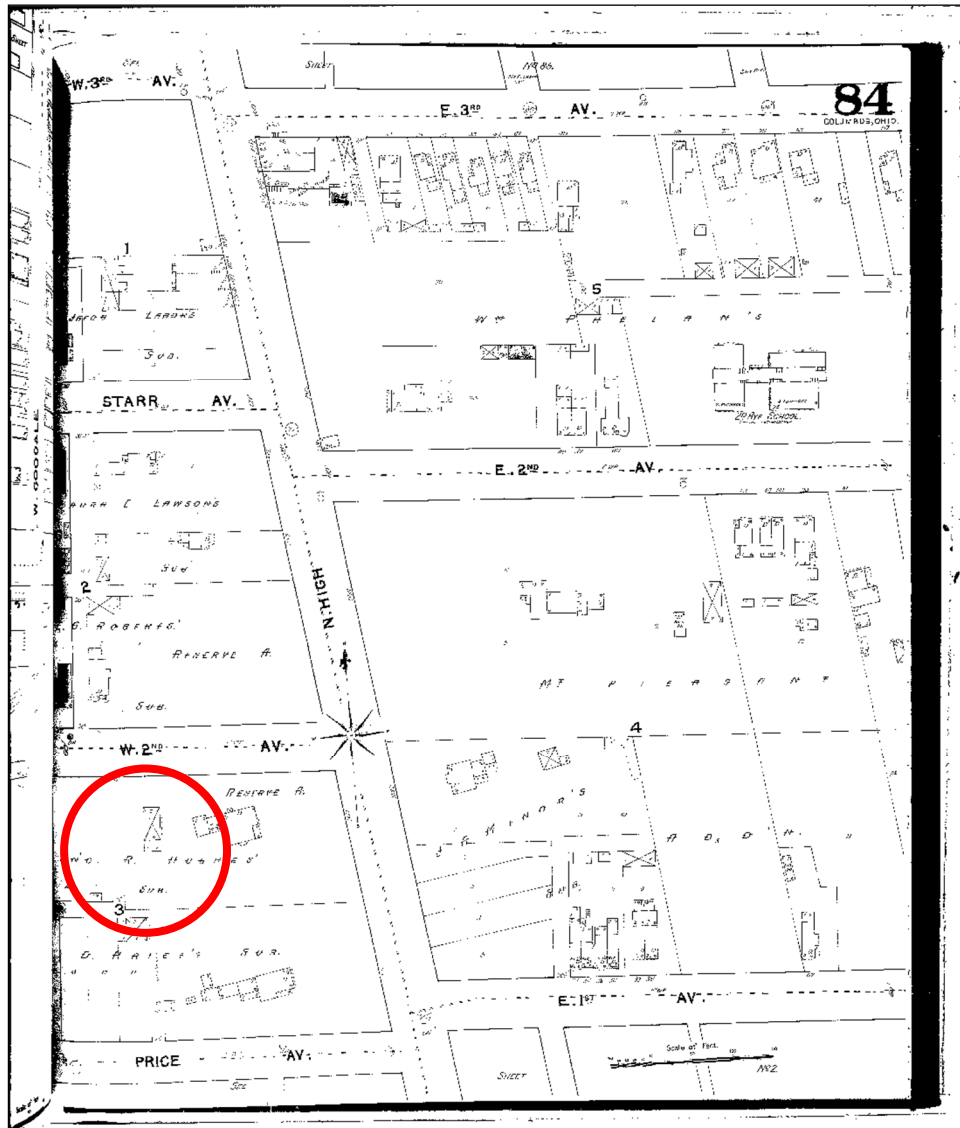
This project to document the history and significance of 23 West Second Avenue in Columbus, Ohio, was initiated because of plans to rehabilitate the building for new tenants, including demolition of portions of the building. The city historic preservation office requested the building be documented prior to demolition, with the information submitted to the City Historic Preservation Office for inclusion in its archives in perpetuity.

As part of this documentation, Kaufman Development contracted with Hardlines Design Company to complete HABS historic and photographic documentation of the building. Charissa W. Durst, historic architect and architectural historian, served as project manager for the project, as well as researcher and prepared this document. Jeff Bates was the project photographer. The level of documentation includes:

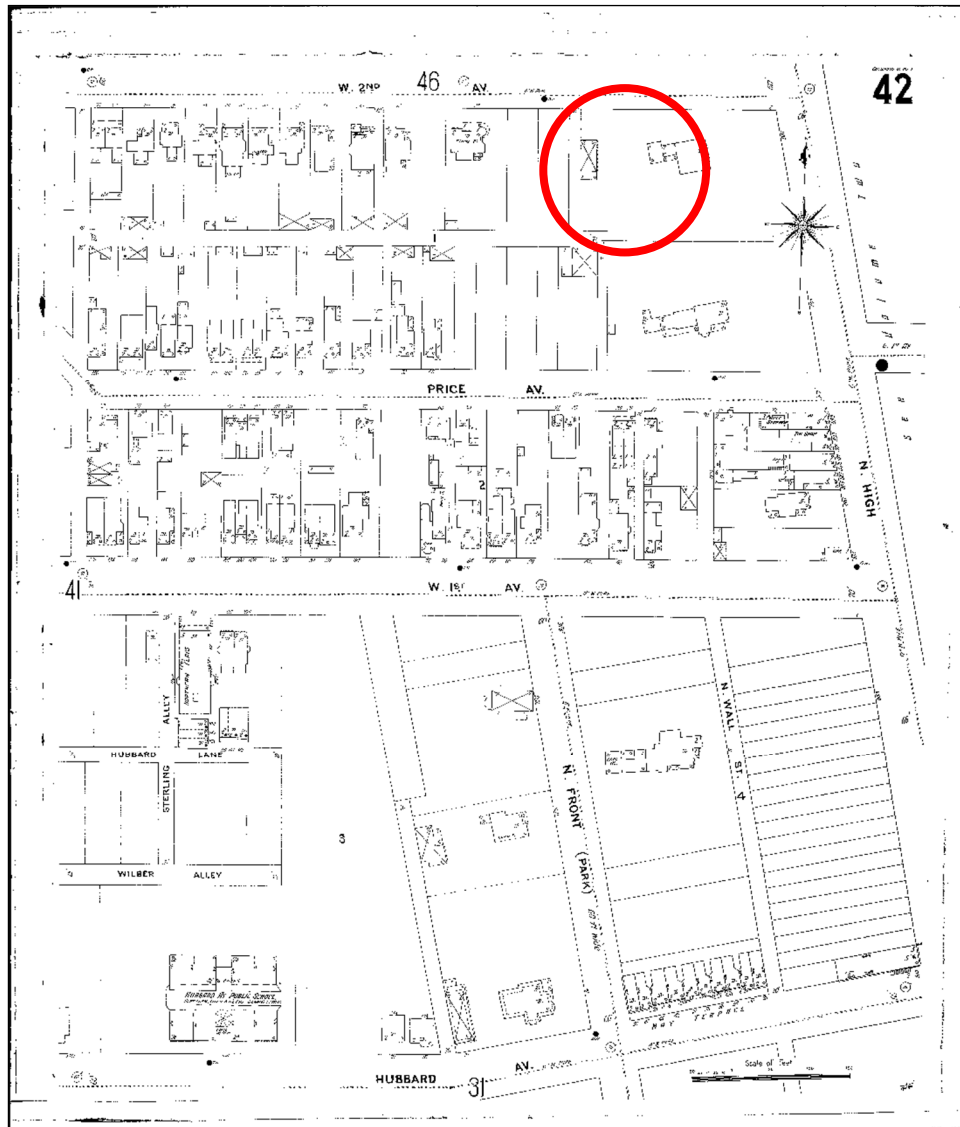
- Fifteen (15) large-format black and white digital photographs of the building
- A HABS short form written report that describes the structure and documents its history and significance
- CAD drawings of the building were prepared by Humphries & Partners Architects under a separate contract and field checked and revised by Hardlines Design Company for inclusion in this report.



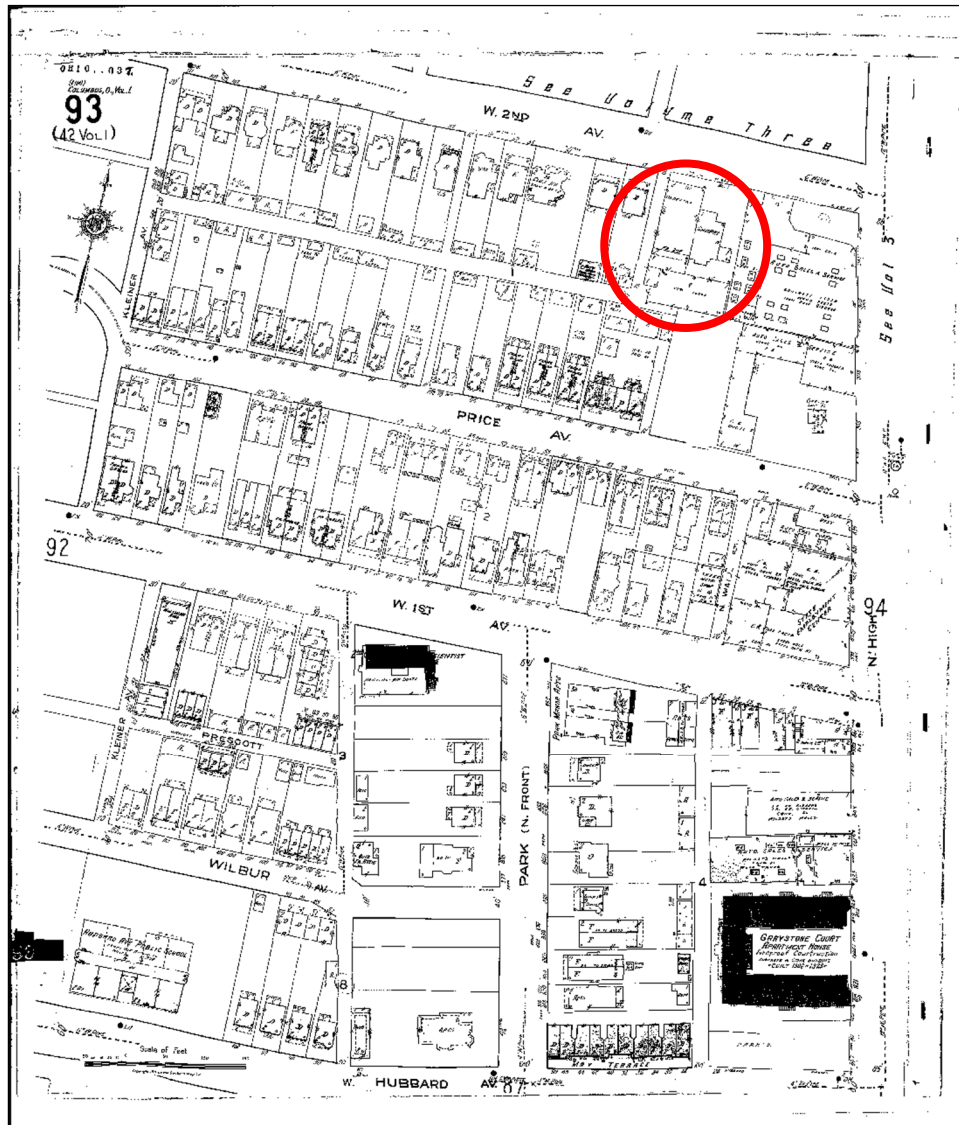
7.5 Minute Southwest Columbus, Ohio, USGS Quad Map,
with location of 23 West Second Avenue.
(Circle and cross hairs added by HDC)



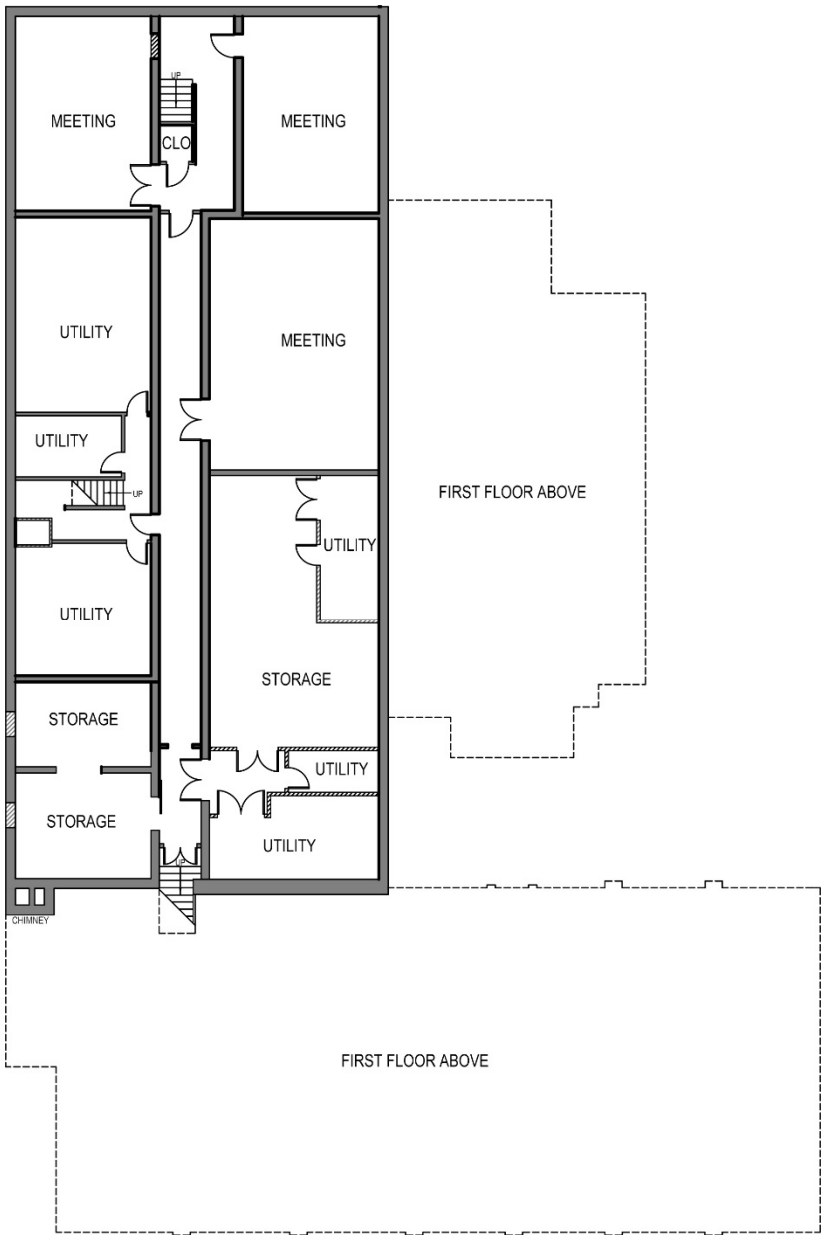
Portion of 1891 Sanborn Map, with circle indicating location of property in question
(Circle added by HDC)



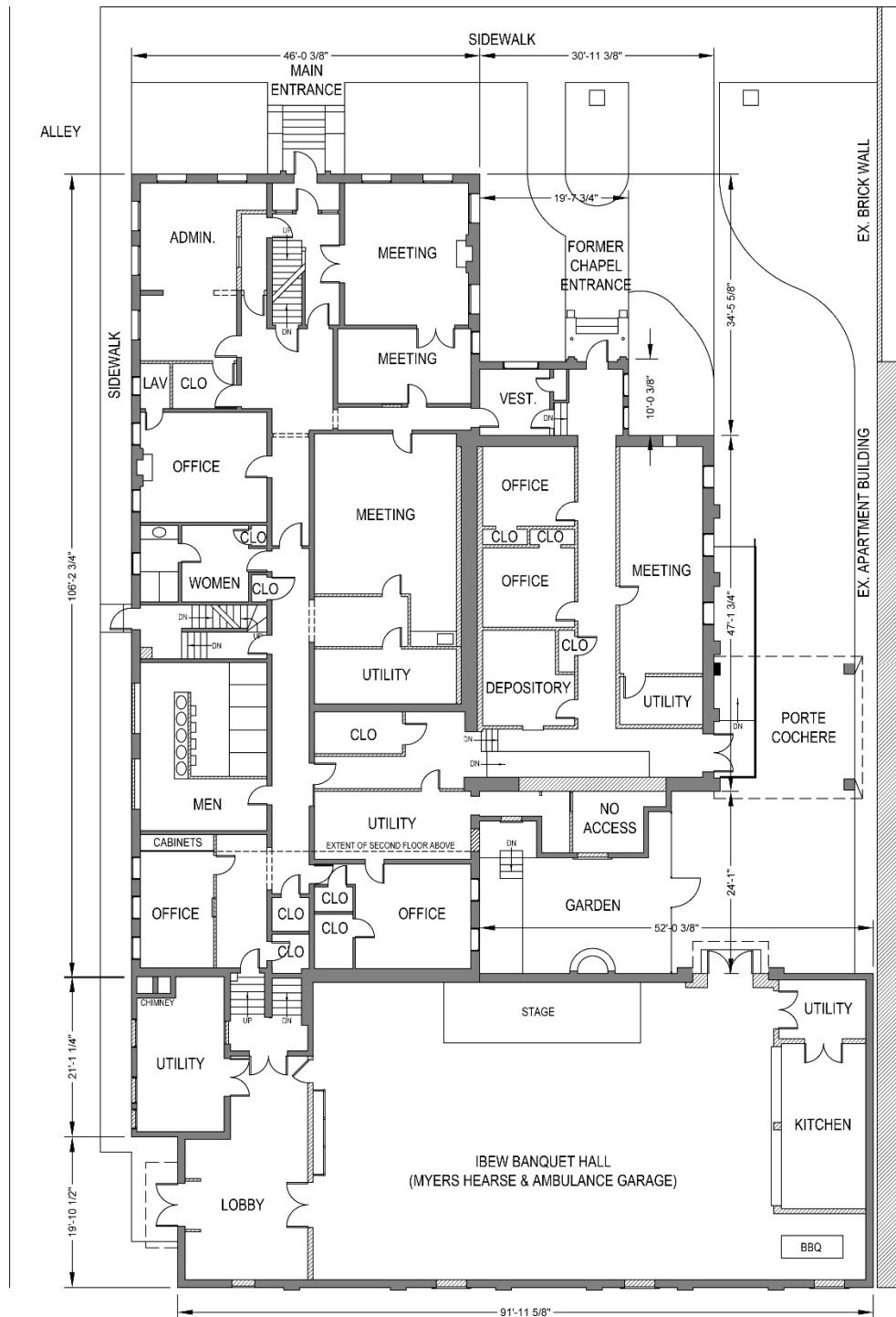
Portion of 1901 Sanborn Map, with circle indicating location of property in question
(Circle added by HDC)



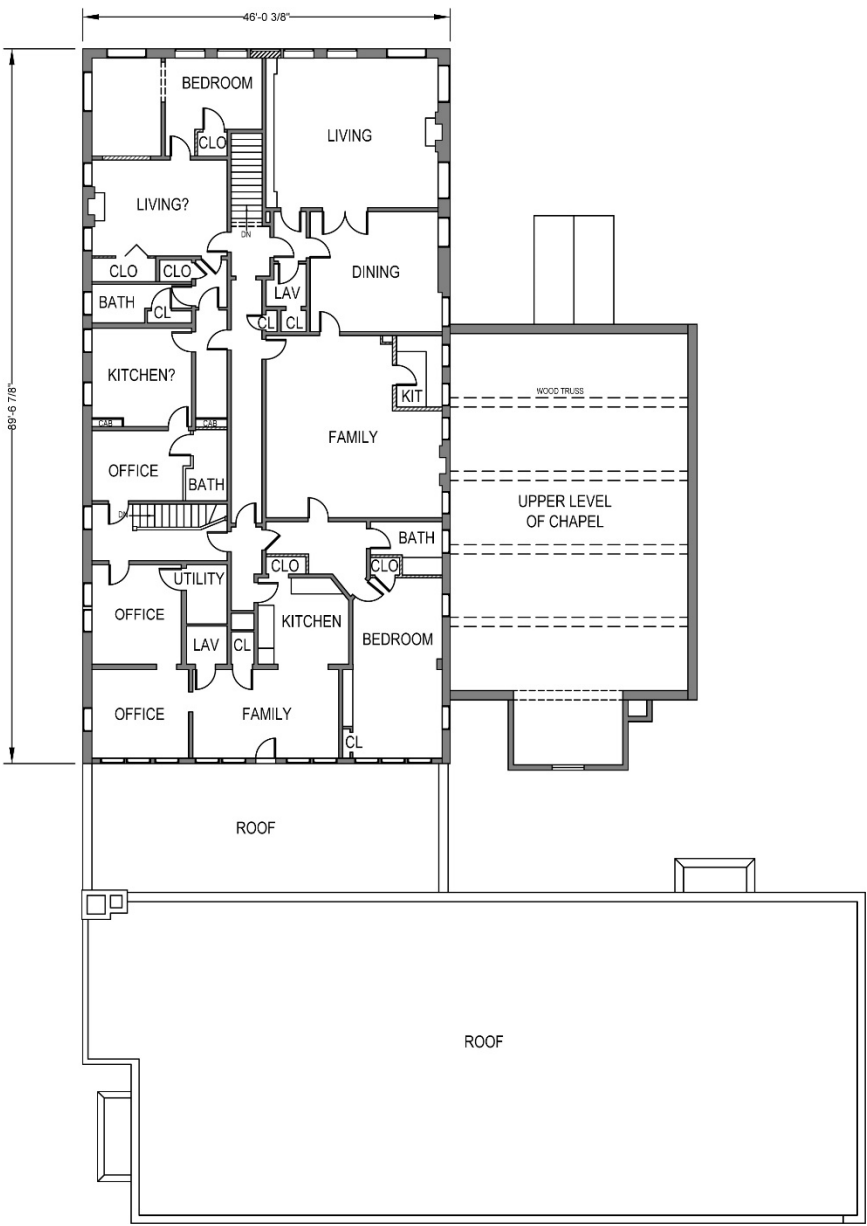
Portion of 1921-1951 Sanborn Map, with circle indicating location of building in question
(Circle added by HDC)



23 West Second Avenue Basement Floor Plan
↑North



23 West Second Avenue First Floor Plan
 North



23 West Second Avenue Second Floor Plan
↑North

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
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23 West Second Avenue
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Jeff Bates, Hardlines Design Company Photographer, February 26, 2021

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1. Northeast corner of the main building (right), chapel (center) and porte cochere (left)



2. North elevation of the main building with the chapel at left



3. Northwest corner of the main building



4. Southwest corner with the main building at left and banquet hall/former garage at right



5. North elevation of porte cochere with east elevation of the chapel at right
and entry to banquet hall/former garage beyond



6. North elevation of banquet hall/former garage,
with former contemplative garden at right



7. Entry corridor from vestibule, looking south at stair to second floor



8. Meeting room/viewing parlor at northeast corner of main building,
looking southeast with fireplace at left



9. Door to vestibule between the main building and former Chapel,
looking west from the former Chapel



10. Seal of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers #683
in the lobby floor outside the banquet hall



11. Banquet hall looking northeast with stage/podium at left
and kitchen and barbecue grill at right



12. Northeast room of second floor apartment, looking northeast



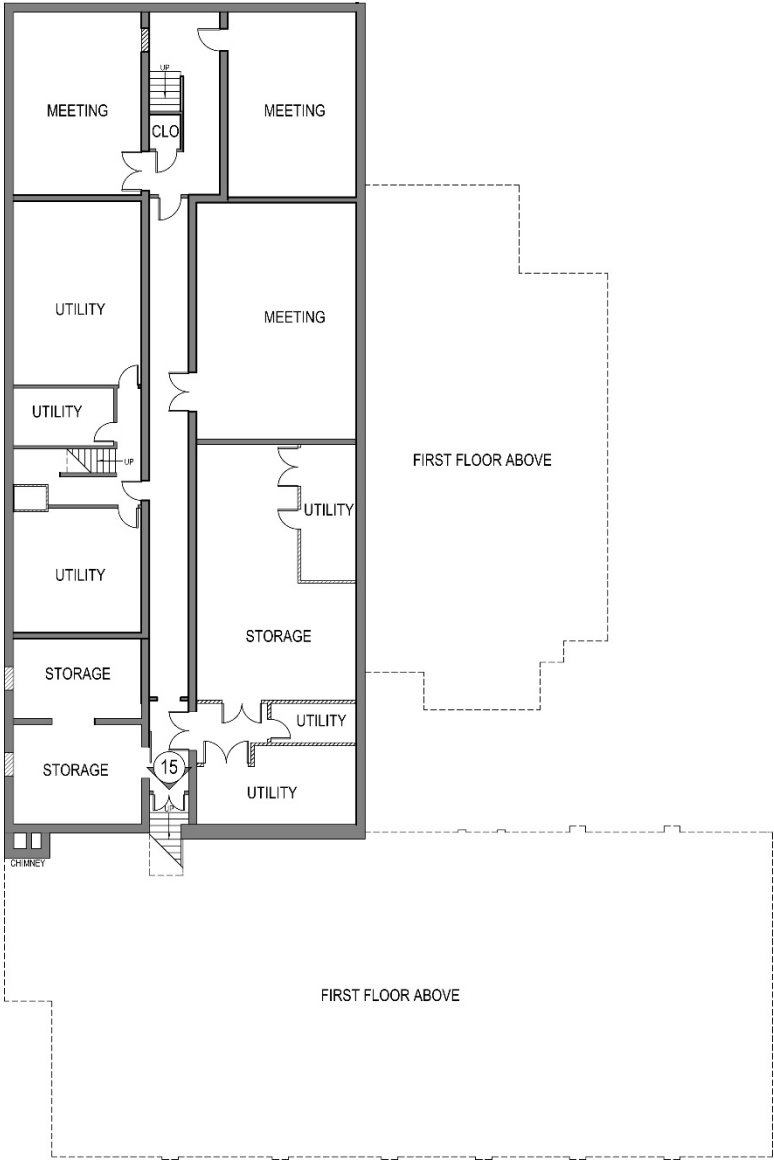
13. Middle room of second floor east side apartment, looking southeast



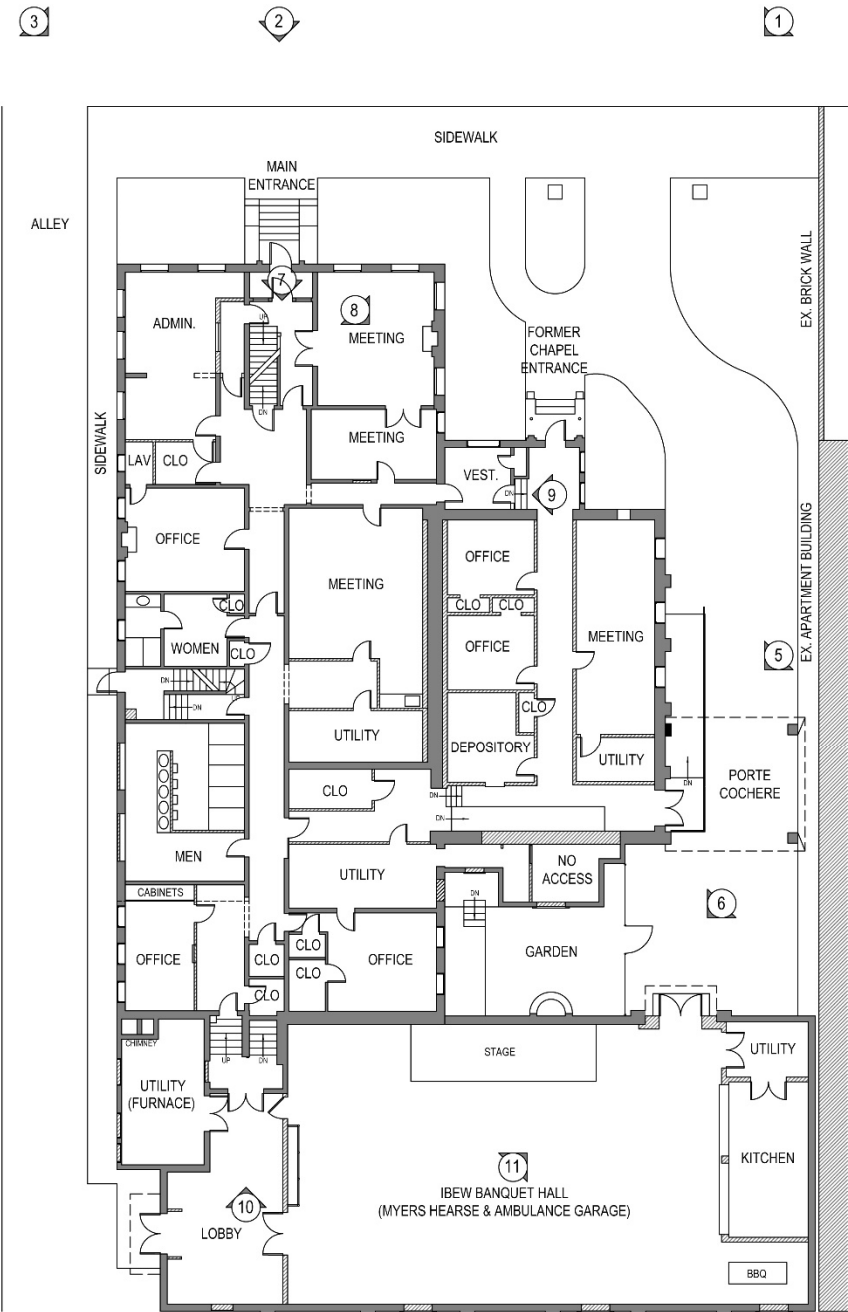
14. Back stair to first floor, looking east from second floor



15. Stairs from basement to lobby outside banquet hall,
with fire rated rolling door to former boiler room at right

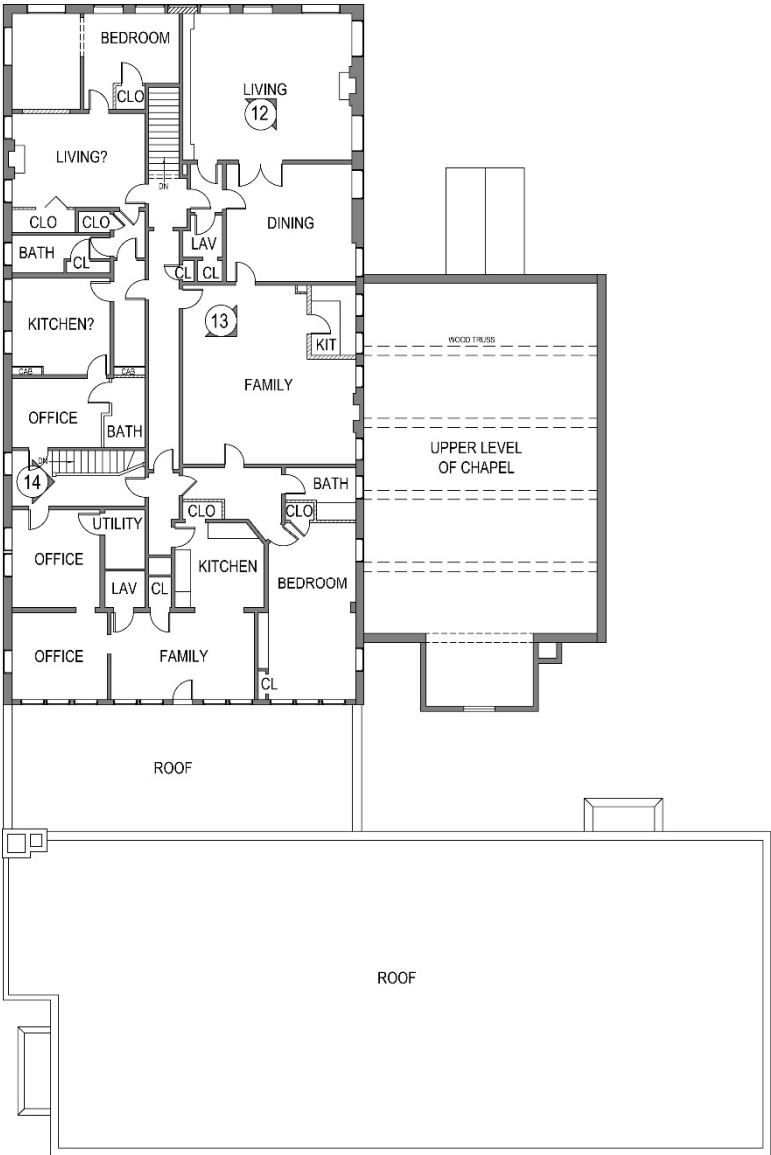


Key to photograph views, basement level
↑North



4

Key to photograph views, first floor
↑North



Key to photograph views, second floor
↑North