

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name **Flat Iron Building**

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number **1441 - 1449 Emerald Avenue** Not for publication

city or town **Chicago Heights** vicinity

state **Illinois** code **IL** county **Cook** code **031** zip code **60411**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William L. Fisher / S.H.P.
Signature of certifying official

7-22-03
Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

American Indian Tribe

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4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

entered in the National Register

Edgar H. Beall

9/13/03

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the
National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the
National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

private

public-local

public-State

public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

building(s)

district

site

structure

object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

0 buildings

0

0 sites

0

0 structures

0

0 objects

1

0 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register **0**

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
**LATE 19th and 20th CENTURY REVIVALS:
Spanish Baroque**

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation **CONCRETE**

Roof **ASPHALT**

Walls **BRICK**

other **TERRA COTTA**

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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Continuation Sheet**

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Flat Iron Building

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY:

Located at the north end of the former central business district of Chicago Heights, the Flat Iron Building is one of very few remaining commercial buildings that have survived in that area. The former Chicago Heights National Bank building, built in 1926 still stands at 1651 Halsted Street, formerly West End Avenue. It is an outstanding example of monumental, classical architecture. The building is trimmed with terra cotta but designed to have a substantial appearance. The Flat Iron Building located at 1441-1449 Emerald Avenue is located one block south of Lincoln Highway at the junction of Emerald Avenue, Fifteenth Street and Halsted Street, formerly West End Avenue. It was built in 1925 to serve as an automobile showroom and repair shop.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

The Flat Iron Building can be described as a two part commercial flatiron building. Flatiron buildings are designed to occupy all of the space created by angled street junctures, giving them their distinctive triangular shape. Perhaps the most famous example of these building types is the Flatiron Building in New York, designed by Daniel F. Burnham in 1902.

The first floor primary street elevation features segmental arched openings separated from second story apartments with punctuated windows by a decorative terra cotta stringcourse. The two story portion of the building, the lower level of which housed the automobile showroom, joined in with the neighboring buildings to define one of the city's commercial corridors. Approximately forty feet beyond this streetscape defining edge, the building steps down to a single story. The single story portion of the building to the rear originally housed the automobile repair area.

The Flat Iron Building encompasses its entire commercial corner lot. The exterior dimensions are 125' on the west façade, 129'10" on the north, 86'3" on the east, 128'1" on the south and 12' on the southwest façade. The primary entrance to the former

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showroom faces southwest. This façade excluding the parapet cap is 27'5" tall. The two apartments on the second floor above the showroom occupy a space 53'10" deep on the north façade, the entire 125' length of the west façade but only 37' on the south façade. The height of the walls where the building is two stories is 27'5". The east elevation of the two story portion of the building is brick. There are four arched windows that are boarded up. The north elevation of the single story garage and repair section of the building extends 67'10" to the east of the two story portion. There is no evidence of windows on this elevation. The east brick wall is 86'3" and has three oblong windows that are boarded up plus a garage door. The south end of the single story garage and repair section of the building extends 67'10" to the east of the two story portion. This south elevation of the one story garage section currently has a mansard roof and brick walls that are covered with wood. These alterations probably occurred in the 1970s. An overhead garage door can be seen from the exterior.

The exterior walls of the two story portion of the Flat Iron Building are composed of brick with architectural terra cotta embellishments. However, the two story main entrance facing southwest is entirely articulated with terra cotta ornamentation. It is entirely flanked by pilasters of terra cotta featuring stylized urns, fruits and flowers and capped with composite capitals. The main entrance is surrounded by a round arch with a cable and bead archivolt. A low relief of swag and leaf motifs grace the tympanum above what was originally a double door entrance. A stylized entablature separates the first story from the second. Griffins rendered in profile guard the entry from their location in the frieze above the door. Decorative brackets, each incorporating a pair of owls, support a cornice-like stringcourse with simple convex molding upon which the second story windows rest. A second pair of pilasters also flanks the second story of the entrance, but in this instance, their capitals become engaged with the top cornice. Also featured at this area are diamond tile panes supporting a pair of three blind arched panels which create a frame about the double-hung window. The entire bay is crowned with a terra cotta parapet with urn finials at each end. Similar urn finials appear to engage the wall at other areas of the building.

The storefront on the first level of the west façade features five segmental arched openings. The south façade features one arch. The showroom display windows which open up the brick wall at the first floor are framed with terra cotta ornamentation. Cable molding defines the complex segmental arches which spring from the ogee curved impost. The original divided plate glass windows with four light transoms have been

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obscured/boarded up. The window glass is gone but the frames and openings are visible from the interior. In their original position, with their frames set back within the depth of the thick masonry wall, a strong rhythm was created. This arched rhythm, enhanced by the play of light and shadow, created a setting reminiscent of the loggias that formed the renaissance marketplace.

There are three additional entrances to the building on the west side and one on the south side. The doors are deteriorated but the openings retain the terra cotta jambs. Tympana above the doors are framed with terra cotta detailed similarly to the showroom windows' cable molding and filled in with pressed brick featuring a zigzag design. This area is further ornamented with large terra cotta cartouches. Decorative pilasters 5'4" tall and 1'0" wide flank each door and showroom window extending from a course of terra cotta 9'4" above the ground to the underside of the terra cotta 'architrave' which begins to define the line of the second floor.

At the second floor, the west and south brick facades are punctuated by window openings. All of the second floor windows are topped with label moldings which turn down and surround the windows. There are 12 double-hung 3/1 windows on the second level of the west façade plus two "Chicago Style" windows – a double-hung 3/1 window flanking each side of a large fixed window with a six light transom. The south façade has four double-hung 3/1 windows on the second level. Both the south and west elevations of the two story portion of the building are capped with a terra cotta cornice similar to that found on the southwest elevation.

The first floor of the Flat Iron Building consists of a concrete slab on grade with the exception of a small basement which originally housed the mechanical plant of the building. The interior structural framing system is composed of steel columns and beams with wood joists. The second floor deck is constructed of wood, as is the roof.

The automobile showroom portion of the first floor is approximately 72' in length, measured from the canted entrance, and 35' wide measured from the west wall to the edge of the mosaic tile floor. It has a decorative metal ceiling 13 ½' high and mosaic tile floor with Greek Key design borders. Evidence of four of the five showroom windows can be seen. They are 12' high, measured from the top of the arch to the sill, and 18 ½' wide. The ornate ceiling and mosaic tile floor contribute to the opulence of the showroom.

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The stairway to the basement is located at the north end of the showroom. A staircase to the second floor is located behind the north wall. There is a large 53'x53' area located to the north of this staircase. It has a mosaic tile floor and half of the ceiling is still covered with decorative tin. Evidence of the fifth showroom window can be seen on the west wall. Temporary partitions currently cut up the space. Another stairway to the second floor is located in the north end of this space.

The second floor has been divided into five apartments. Two can be reached from the northernmost staircase. One, a single bedroom L-shaped apartment is on the east side of the building. The second, a two bedroom apartment is located on the west side of the building. The west bedroom has a 3/1 double-hung window 3 1/2' wide and 6' tall on the west wall. The parlor has a "Chicago Style" window – a double-hung 3/1 window flanks each side of a large fixed window with a six light transom on the west wall. This window configuration is 9 1/2' wide and 6' tall.

The most centrally located staircase has a landing near the top at which point five stairs rise to the north and south giving access to two more apartments. The apartment to the north has two bedrooms. The west bedroom has a 3/1 double-hung window 3 1/2' wide and 6' tall. The parlor which also faces west has a "Chicago Style" window 9 1/2' wide and 6' tall. The apartment on the south of this stairway features one bedroom with two large rooms facing west both of which have 2 double-hung 3/1 windows 3 1/2' wide and 6' tall. The opening between these rooms appears to have been widened.

The staircase, which is located on the south side of the building, leads to a two bedroom apartment with three large rooms on the west and southwest side of the second floor. Two of the rooms feature 2 3/1 double-hung windows 3 1/2' wide and 6' tall. The room located on the southwest corner has two double-hung 3/1 windows on the west wall and one on the southwest wall. All of these windows are 3 1/2' wide and 6' tall. It appears that the opening between the southwest room and the room to the north of it has been widened.

On the street level, to the east of the showroom, there is a transition area with a concrete floor. Auto parts were probably stored in this area. There is a stairway to the second floor which is accessible from a door on the south exterior wall. The large auto repair garage is east of this transition area. It extends approximately 67' to the east and is 86'3" wide

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at the east wall. The east exterior wall is 12 ½' tall, has three oblong windows which are boarded up and a garage door. The north wall of the garage butts up against the building to the north and there is no evidence of windows on this elevation. The south wall of the garage is 15' high. Evidence of five oblong windows, one vertical window and an entry door can be seen from the interior. There is also a garage door. The floor is concrete.

STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY:

The Flat Iron Building retains sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register. It is currently vacant and awaiting complete renovation. The two story portion of the building is in sound condition. During the summer of 2000 the west, south and southwest elevations of the two story portion of the structure were tuckpointed and the terra cotta was repaired. Some of the pieces of the parapet cap had been badly damaged in a storm and had to be reproduced. They were reproduced based on photographic and physical evidence. A Firestone roofing system was installed over the two story portion of the building in the fall/winter of 1999. The roofing material is Firestone APP modified bitumen. The apartments on the second floor and isolated areas of the first floor decorative metal ceiling suffered water damage prior to the installation of the roof.

There are twelve double-hung 3/1 windows on the second level of the west façade plus two three part windows. The south facade has four double-hung, 3/1 windows on the second level. All of the windows on the second level of the south and west façade have been restored and are currently being reinstalled. The showroom windows on the first floor are covered with wood and feature paintings of vintage automobiles and potential customers in period dress.

The Flat Iron Building has suffered few alterations over the years. The mansard roof and wood siding that was applied to the south elevation of the garage and repair section is reversible. The roof over the garage and repair section of the building is collapsing but the steel support beams, which could support a new roof, retain their integrity. The changes that have occurred over the years have not impacted the architectural significance of the building.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance **1925 - 1951**

Significant Dates **N/A**

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY:

The Flat Iron Building is locally significant for commerce and meets Criterion A for Commerce for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as an automobile showroom and repair shop. It also meets Criterion C for Architecture as a good example of Spanish Baroque Revival Style. It is a textbook illustration of the type of upscale automobile "sales palaces" built during the prosperous 1920s. Architecturally it is a fine example of late 19th and 20th Century revival styles with ornamentation featuring Spanish Baroque Revival elements. It is also an outstanding example of a two part commercial flatiron building featuring segmental arched openings on the street level. The period of significance for this structure is from 1925 to 1951. During these years, the building housed automobile dealerships. The automobile revolutionized the way people lived. It not only provided transportation to work but also to places of recreation and to friends and family located beyond the confines of public transportation. The Flat Iron Building was completed in 1925 at the peak of the real estate and building boom that swept Chicago Heights and the nation. It was a time of growth, wealth, prosperity and stylistic eclecticism. The Flat Iron Building weathered the Depression by diversifying the uses of the building. One of two surviving classical revival styled commercial buildings in the city's former thriving business district, it is a quintessential visual reminder of Chicago Heights' role as the commercial and industrial center that served surrounding villages and towns in northern Will and southern Cook counties.

CHICAGO HEIGHTS: THE HISTORIC CONTEXT:

Pioneer settlers of Chicago Heights came in the 1830s to settle along the banks of Thorn Creek, near the crossing of Sauk Trail and the Chicago Vincennes Trace. The early settlement was known as Thorn Grove. The name was changed to Bloom about the same time the township form of government was adopted in Illinois in 1850. It was not until

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the first railroad, a branch of the Joliet and Northern Indiana (later the Michigan Central) came through town that the community began to grow. In 1869 the Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad connected the town to Chicago by rail, but it was the building of the Chicago Outer Belt Line (the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railroad) which transformed the sleepy farming village into an ideal site for industrial development. The Belt Line, built on a broad arc about 35 miles from the center of Chicago, tied together the railroads entering the city like spokes on a wheel. Rail lines provided the necessary facilities for handling large quantities of raw materials shipped in and manufactured goods being shipped out. As a result, and in order to accommodate the intensive growth of the city of Chicago's manufacturing sector at this time, a whole set of "satellite cities" grew up along the Belt Line.¹ Among these were Waukegan, Elgin, Aurora, Joliet and Chicago Heights.

The movement to locate industry in satellite cities was a reaction against both urbanization and the type of suburbanization that had occurred to date. In the latter half of the 19th century, many city planning theorists had come to recognize that increasing the number of bedroom suburbs at the city's edge could not cure urban congestion.² Instead, they started promoting a new pattern of growth. They recommended that new communities be built outside the urban core, which would contain all the essential urban functions. This decentralization appealed to the city's business and industrial leaders who lived in fear of labor agitators from the 1870s through the 1890s. By the 1890s a series of industrial depressions, a rising level of labor militancy, an influx of immigrant laborers, and the proliferation of corrupt political machines had made urban industrialization the central problem facing the Republic.³ It was believed that if industry was decentralized it would be difficult for unions to organize. Fort Sheridan was built in 1888 specifically so General Sheridan and his U.S. Cavalry troops could be close at hand to quell labor unrest.

Between 1881 and 1900, eleven new communities were founded and incorporated in Cook County.⁴ Most of them were commuter suburbs established along railroad lines. They were designed as residential enclaves where residents could escape the ills of the city and its busy workplaces. Two of the eleven communities grew almost at once from rural hamlets to industrial centers. Each developed through the efforts of its own development association. Both were located in Chicago's south suburbs. Chicago Heights was promoted by the Chicago Heights Land Association in 1891. Harvey was promoted by the Harvey Land Association at about the same time. Both were developed

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by investors on cheap, unimproved land near railroad facilities and close enough to Chicago to draw upon its labor force and markets. Both were planned as mixed-use communities, deliberately located on transportation routes and promoted as industrial developments, which also offered attractive residences in quiet neighborhoods.

The Chicago Heights Land Association's efforts showed results before the turn of the century. In 1892, what originally was the rural town of Bloom with a population of 1,514 in 1890 was transformed into the Village of Chicago Heights, which would soon be one of Illinois' strongest industrial centers. In September 1897 the Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad published a pamphlet entitled *The Pioneer*, which featured the village of Chicago Heights.

The pamphlet touted Chicago Heights schools, residences, businesses and industries noting that Chicago Heights "has already attained a population of thirty-five hundred. It contains about twenty factories, some of which cover many acres of ground and give employment to hundreds of skilled mechanics. In shipping goods manufacturers have the combined advantages of thirty-eight railroads with shipping facilities unexcelled in America."⁵

At the turn of the century there were 67 manufacturing establishments employing 1,529 workers with a population of 5,100. By 1910 the population had grown to 14,535. Chicago Heights became the commercial, banking and industrial center for the people of southern Cook County and northern Will County. It attracted immigrant laborers from around the world. It remained a commercial, banking and industrial center through the 1950s.

During the 1910s the residential Edgewood Addition was developed to attract businessmen and industrialists who worked in the city to reside in Chicago Heights. It was designed by the American Park Builder and located away from railroad tracks, the smoke and the noise of the factories and from the encroachment of commerce. It was also located several blocks from the interurban so the automobile became the primary mode of transportation for families who built their homes there. The people who lived in this exclusive subdivision were instrumental in insuring that the Lincoln Highway route included Chicago Heights.

In 1916 the Arche fountain, a gift of the Arche Club of Chicago, was erected in Chicago Heights marking the intersection of the Lincoln Highway and the Dixie Highway, the

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first two transcontinental highways in the United States. For many years thereafter the city was known as the "Crossroads of the Nation".

Throughout the 1920s Chicago Heights experienced a period of great prosperity and a substantial growth in population. The 1920 census reported that Chicago Heights had a population of 19,653. By early 1924 the result of a special survey based on telephone books, city directories, vital statistics and reports of public utilities suggested that the population had increased to 24,566. By August of 1924 the City Clerk's office had registered more than 2,000 motor cars.

Chicago Heights experienced a building boom throughout the 1920s. The buildings being built reflected the perceived importance of the city as the industrial and commercial center of southern Cook and northern Will counties. The ornate Lincoln-Dixie Theatre with a seating capacity of 1800 opened in 1921. The Rau Department Store moved to its spacious new quarters in 1923. The Thomas Hotel, which boasted 85 guest rooms opened in 1924. The Schoonover and Wehrmann automobile showroom opened in 1925 in the Flat Iron Building. The First National Bank moved into its new quarters in 1926 and Elks Lodge 1066 moved into its new home in 1927. The Star Newspaper, which served Chicago Heights and the surrounding communities, occupied its new building in 1928 and Montgomery Ward built and occupied a new building which served as its retail store in 1929. The First State Bank occupied its edifice in June of 1930. Only the Elks building, the Star building, the First National Bank building and the Flat Iron Building have survived.

CRITERION A: COMMERCE

THE AUTOMOBILE IN CHICAGO HEIGHTS

By the 1920s the automobile had become a standard feature of American life. In 1921 the first automobile show took place in Chicago Heights. By 1924 the auto show featured "over half a hundred motor cars of every color and description."⁶ The automobile had become a part of everyday life in Chicago Heights. City officials adopted the first ordinance regulating the parking and operation of vehicles and the use of streets in March of 1924. Penalties would be imposed for violators of the ordinance.

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Affordable automobiles were being manufactured at a staggering rate. During late June 1924, "The ten millionth car made at the Ford factory in Detroit stopped at Chicago Heights Saturday on its transcontinental highway to San Francisco." The cavalcade containing 300 cars stretched a mile.⁷

The Chicago Heights Street Railway and the interurbans continued to provide cost-effective transportation for several years but in September of 1924, the Chicago Heights Signal newspaper reported "Local Street Cars to Soon Quit Running." At the hearing where the application from the Chicago Heights Street Railway to discontinue service was considered, Charles Wacker, president of the street car line and also president of the Chicago Heights Land Association, spoke. He noted the street car line had been built in the nineties when there were no paved streets or sidewalks and the land slated for industrial development primarily consisted of hay fields, pastures and corn patches. The trolley was built to provide transportation for the workers to get to the factories. By 1924, Mr. Wacker explained conditions had changed. "The paving boom in Chicago Heights which was started in 1910, has made it one of the best paved cities in the country." Mr. Wacker declared, "Chicago Heights leads them all in paving compared with population." The writer of the article went on to explain that with paving came automobiles for pleasure and commercial purposes, which greatly reduced street car earnings so that in late years there has been a deficit. "Now many workmen at local factories drive to their factories in Fords, which visibly lessens street car revenues."⁸ By August of 1924 the City Clerk's office had registered more than 2,000 automobiles.

HISTORY OF THE FLAT IRON BUILDING:

LOCATION AND SETTING:

The city of Chicago Heights is located 28 miles south of Chicago. The central business district historically was located south of Lincoln Highway, Fourteenth Street in Chicago Heights, along Illinois Street, Chicago Road/Dixie Highway and Halsted Street formerly West End Avenue. The Flat Iron Building, located at 1441-1449 Emerald Avenue at the junction of Fifteenth Street, Emerald Avenue and Halsted Street, formerly West End Avenue, is situated at the northern gateway to the former central business district. The Flat Iron Building is also located one block south and three blocks east of the intersection

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of Lincoln Highway and Dixie Highway, the first two transcontinental highways in America. Chicago Heights was referred to as the "Crossroads of the Nation" for many years. It seems fitting that the Flat Iron Building, originally built as a car showroom, should have been built so near this historic intersection.

There is no evidence that any structures existed on this site before the Flat Iron was built. The building's south façade is on Fifteenth Street. The main entrance faces southwest at the intersection of Fifteenth Street and Emerald Avenue. It is a highly visible site for people traveling on Halsted Street, which also intersects Emerald Avenue. When the Flat Iron Building was built it was located approximately one block north of the post office and city hall or just north of the portion of Halsted Street which was an integral part of the central business district at the time.

The mottled coral terra cotta ornamentation was produced in Chicago Heights by Advance Terra Cotta Company. The Advance Terra Cotta Company was purchased by Northwestern Terra Cotta Company in the spring of 1928. Researchers have been unable to locate information on this building. An advertisement in the Star newspaper which included a photo of the Flat Iron Building proclaimed, "All of these Buildings in Chicago Heights are generously trimmed with NORTHWESTERN TERRA COTTIA manufactured in our Chicago Heights Plant."⁹

The April 9, 1925 issue of the Star newspaper reported that ground had been broken for the new \$50,000.00 DiCicco garage that would be occupied by Scoonover and Wehrmann distributors of Willys-Knight, Overland and Oakland automobiles. "The new building will be one of the finest in Southern Cook County. It will have a frontage of 134 feet on Halsted Street and will be 137 feet deep. Its capacity will be 100 cars with a show room 84 x 36 feet. Two apartments will be built above the show room. The front will be ornamented with pressed brick and terra cotta."¹⁰ An article on the first page of the September 25th issue of the Star noted that the Scoonover and Wehrmann garage would open on Saturday and an advertisement in the paper announced the formal opening of the new Scoonover and Wehrmann show room. The advertisement claimed "We have one of the finest showrooms in Illinois. It represents, together with stock, an investment of over \$100,000.00. It occupies a space of 139 x 125 feet, larger than any garage in this part of the State. We will show you the most complete line of fine motor cars ever offered to the buying public of Southern Cook County."¹¹

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On May 10, 1929 the Star issued its Progress Edition which consisted of the regular weekly edition of the paper plus several sections that highlighted the positive aspects of Chicago Heights commerce, industry, and society. The article on the H.C. Wehrmann Motor Company noted that the auto firm contributed to the prosperous condition of the City. The year of 1928 had been a record breaker. Mr. Wehrmann was quoted: "Business conditions were better than ever before and all records in the history of the automobile industry were broken." During June of 1928 the Chicago Heights office with the Goodenow branch sold over 200 cars. In the same article H.C. Wehrmann claimed the distinction of being the pioneer automobile dealer in this section of the country. He explained that in 1908 he added automobiles to his line at his grain and general store business. In 1929 the firm distributed automobiles in a territory stretching north to South Holland, Illinois, south as far as Momence, bounded on the east by the Indiana state line and reaching west as far as Matteson. Chicago Heights, Steger, Crete, Monee, Goodenow, Grant Park, Glenwood, Thornton, Matteson, Beecher, Flossmoor and Homewood were among the towns and cities served by the Wehrmann organization.

When the building was built there was fifty feet of storage or garage space north of the salesroom, but shortly before the May 10, 1929 article was written the interior of the front part of the building was remodeled and the space was converted into part of the larger salesroom. "At present the salesroom is one of the largest in Chicago Heights and it compares favorably both in size and architectural beauty with those on 'automobile row' on Michigan boulevard in Chicago. The interior is done in Spanish style architecture and the walls have a rough plaster finish of an attractive tan color. A dozen automobiles are generally kept on the floor for display purposes."¹²

When H.C. Wehrmann died in September 1946 it was front-page news. The editors of the Chicago Heights Star newspaper referred to him as the pioneer automobile dealer in the vicinity. It was noted in his obituary that he obtained the local agency for a high wheel tiller in 1907. The writer of the obituary went on to say "it was a risky enterprise, since most inhabitants of the vicinity still viewed the 'horseless carriage' with considerable alarm." Over the years Mr. Wehrmann became the agent for Overland and Willys-Knight and became associated with several other automobile manufacturers. In 1922, he took over the Grant Park Motor company and the Ford agency there. A year later he opened a branch in Steger. In 1925 he opened a branch in Chicago Heights, which, according to his obituary "soon became the main branch of his activities and one of the city's outstanding business concerns".¹³ At the time of his death his address was

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reported to be 1449 Halsted Street in Chicago Heights. It is presumed that he was living in one of the apartments in the Flat Iron Building.

Auto dealerships plus other commercial establishments occupied the Flat Iron Building until 1951 when Barwig's Pharmacy moved into the former main showroom of the building. During the 1980s the Flat Iron Building was known as the Vagabond Lounge. Vice raids were carried out by law enforcement officials, prostitution arrests were made and the establishment's liquor license was lifted by state and city officials in 1987. The building has been vacant since that time. Over the years three generations of Chicago Heights residents and those of surrounding communities bought cars, prescriptions, sodas and other services at the Flat Iron Building.

The Flat Iron Building is the last remaining structure built to house an automobile dealership and repair business that still stands in the city's former central business district. Few buildings remain, the majority having succumbed to the wrecking ball of urban renewal. A search of telephone books covering the period from 1924 to 1951 resulted in a list of twenty addresses for automobile dealers located in the former business district and many of these parcels of land are now vacant lots. No recognizable remnants of these buildings remain. The Flat Iron Building is the sole surviving structure in the city which serves as an example of the building boom in Chicago Heights in the 1920s and represents the city's importance as a commercial and industrial center. The Flat Iron Building is a quintessential example of the type of upscale automobile "sales palaces" built throughout the country in the 1920s.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 14

Flat Iron Building

CRITERION C: SPANISH BAROQUE REVIVAL

SUMMARY

Throughout the first half of the Twentieth Century Chicago Heights was the commercial and industrial center of southern Cook and northern Will County. The Flat Iron is the only remaining building in the city, designed as an automobile showroom that has sufficient integrity to visually reflect a time when the automobile was making a profound impact on the lives of Americans throughout the country and especially in the Chicago Heights area. It has a visually commanding presence reflecting the trend of the time to make automobile showrooms ornate auto palaces designed not only for selling automobiles but also an associated lavish lifestyle. The exterior retains its original massing as well as its outstanding terra cotta embellishments. The commanding two-story entrance located on the southwest corner of the building is clad entirely of terra cotta and features a parapet cap. The street level façade features showroom windows, five facing west and one facing north. The building was constructed right up to the property lines with no foot or side-yard setbacks, allowing shoppers to easily view the autos on display whether passing by on foot, in a trolley car or in an automobile. The interior of the showroom retains the majority of its original tin ceiling and moldings as well as a mosaic tile floor with Greek Key design border all of which contribute toward giving the showroom the feel of an elegant hotel lobby. Two apartments were built above the showroom. Over the years the second floor was reconfigured. There are currently five apartments. All of which have experienced water damage. The rear portion of the building is a single story and was designed to serve as a garage and repair area. The Flat Iron Building is a unique example of the Spanish Baroque style nestled in what was, at the time of its construction, the burgeoning commercial and industrial city of Chicago Heights.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 15

Flat Iron Building

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The Flat Iron Building can be described as late 19th and 20th Century Spanish Baroque Revival. This style was inspired by the buildings featured at the Panama-California Exposition of 1915 which took place in San Diego. Chief designer of the Exposition, Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue created a fairy tale city with a festive Mediterranean flavor. America was dazzled and Iberian fever spread as trendy architects adapted Spanish ideas to upscale homes and public buildings from 1915 to 1940. The resulting styles, based on Spanish influences, have been referred to as Spanish Revival. These styles feature arches especially above doors, entries and main windows, spiral columns and pilasters, cast ornaments and patterned floors. Those with flat roofs feature parapeted walls. The Flat Iron Building incorporates all these features typical of Spanish Revival.

The storefront features evenly spaced, segmental arched openings which extend across the west façade the southwest entrance and the south façade of the two story building. The showroom windows and entry doors are framed with terra cotta ornamentation. The two story southwest entrance is completely covered with terra cotta. The Flat Iron Building is a fine example of the use of glazed architectural decoration. The terra cotta ornament displays a profusion of motifs: owls, urns, armorial designs, leaves, flowers, griffins, decorated columns and pilasters. Such elaborate ornamentation is typical of Spanish Baroque Revival. This eclectic style features experimentation and fantasy drawing from other Mediterranean styles as well. The Flat Iron Building is a rich and well preserved example of the use of terra cotta to create a striking façade for a commercial building. It dramatically reflects the optimistic mood and eclectic style of the prosperity of the 1920s.

Like the movie palaces that blossomed in the 1920s and early 1930s, automobile showrooms of this era found romantic expression in Revival styles, often loosely interpreting and using classical details. Built in 1925 as an automobile showroom and repair shop, the elaborate decoration of the Flat Iron Building was fitting for the new commercial automobile palaces and the elite lifestyle their vehicles were meant to conjure.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 16

Flat Iron Building

CONCLUSION:

The Flat Iron Building is significant for commerce and meets Criterion A for listing in the National Register as an automobile showroom and repair shop. It is a stunning example of the type of upscale automobile "sales palaces" built throughout the country during the prosperous 1920s when the automobile was making a profound impact on the lives of Americans and the lives of Chicago Heights area residents as well. It is the only surviving building in the city's former business district that was designed to house an automobile showroom. It also meets Criterion C for architecture as an outstanding example of the Spanish Baroque Revival Style. This eclectic style features experimentation and fantasy. The exuberance of the façade is not wild and unrestrained. The two story portion of the building features evenly spaced segmental arched openings. The terra cotta ornament displays a profusion of motifs: owls, urns, leaves, flowers, griffins, columns and pilasters. Such details of Spanish Baroque Revival derive from various architectural periods ranging from the Classical to the late Baroque. These ornamental details, varied as they are, are used in strict repetition across the two story façade. The design elements, which contribute to this style structurally and ornamentally, are in unusually good condition. Almost every piece is in place. There is very little cracking or other damage testifying to the craftsmanship and skill of the manufacturer Advance Terra Cotta and the contractor DiCicco. This is the only Spanish Baroque Revival building that remains in Chicago Heights. The Flat Iron Building exhibits high integrity. The entire building has suffered few alterations since its period of significance, all of which can be easily reversed. The garage and repair portion of the building is greatly in need of repair, but even that portion of the building retains integrity. The Flat Iron Building is listed in the Illinois Structures Survey completed in the early 1970s. It was designated a Chicago Heights landmark July 10, 1997.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 17

Flat Iron Building

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Mayer, Harold M. and Richard C. Wade. *Chicago: Growth of a Metropolis*, 1969, 186.
- ² Mumford, Lewis. *The City in History*, 1961, 515
- ³ Fairfield, John D. *The Mysteries of the great City: The Politics of Urban Design 1877-1937*, 1993, 16.
- ⁴ Keating, Ann Durkin. *Building Chicago: Suburban Development and the Creation of a Divided Metropolis*, 1988, 30.
- ⁵ *The Pioneer: Chicago Heights, Ill. Souvenir Edition.*
- ⁵ *The Pioneer: Chicago Heights, Ill. Souvenir Edition, 1897.*
- ⁶ "Auto Show Ends with Many Sales and is a Success", *Chicago Heights Signal*, 26 February 1924, 1.
- ⁷ "Henry's Tenth Million Auto Goes Through", *Chicago Heights Signal*, 1 July 1924, 1.
- ⁸ "Local Streetcars to soon quit running", *Chicago Heights Signal*, 16 September 1924, 1.
- ⁹ Advertisement, *Chicago Heights Star* 10 May, 1929, 7.
- ¹⁰ "Scoonover and Wehrmann to Occupy New Garage Building", *Chicago Heights Star*, 9 April 1924, 1.
- ¹¹ "Scoonover and Wehrmann Open New Garage This Saturday", *Chicago Heights Star*, 24 September, 1925, 1, 14.
- ¹² "Local Auto Firm Tribute to Prosperous Condition of City", *Chicago Heights Star*, 10 May 1929, Business and Industry Section, 4.
- ¹³ "H.C. Wehrmann, Pioneer Auto Dealer is Dead at 65". *Chicago Heights Star*, 6 September 1945, 1.

Flat Iron Building
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository

Chicago Heights Public Library

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property **Less than 1 acre**

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	447029	4594733	3	_____
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 18

Flat Iron Building

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Chicago Heights Star. Miscellaneous dates 1925-1986.

Craven, Jackie. "How a Canal Inspired Architects".
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Fairfield, John D. *The Mysteries of the Great City: The Politics of Urban Design 1877-1937*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1993.

Keating, Ann Durkin. *Building Chicago: Suburban Developers and the Creation of a Divided Metropolis*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1988.

Longstreth, Richard. *The Buildings of Main Street*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989.

Mayer, Harold M. and Richard C. Wade. *Chicago: Growth of a Metropolis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969.

Mumford, Lewis. *The City in History*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1961.

The Pioneer: Chicago Heights, Ill. Souvenir Edition. Chicago: H. W. MacLachlan, September 1892.

San Diego Historical Society, "Panama-California Exposition, San Diego 1915".
<http://sandieghistory.org/pancal/sdexpo32htm.>, 1996.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 19

Flat Iron Building

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Flat Iron Building is located at the northeast intersection of Fifteenth Street and Emerald Avenue. On the west the property is bounded by Emerald Avenue, on the south by Fifteenth Street, on the east by an alley and on the north where it butts up to another building.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Lots 11 and 12, Block 17 in original town of Chicago Heights, in the west ½ of the southwest ¼ of Section 21, Township 35 North, Range 14, East of the Third Principal Meridian in Cook County, Illinois.

Permanent real estate index number: 32-21-300-011-0000
32-21-300-012-0000

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The boundary includes the property and the lot historically associated with the Flat Iron Building.

Flat Iron Building
Name of Property

Cook, IL
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title **Barbara Paul, Chair**

organization **Chicago Heights Historic Preservation Commission** date **3/20/2003**

street & number **c/o Chicago Hts. Library, 25 w. 15th St.** telephone **708/754-0323**

city or town **Chicago Heights** state **IL** zip code **60411**

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:
Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

- Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name **City of Chicago Heights**

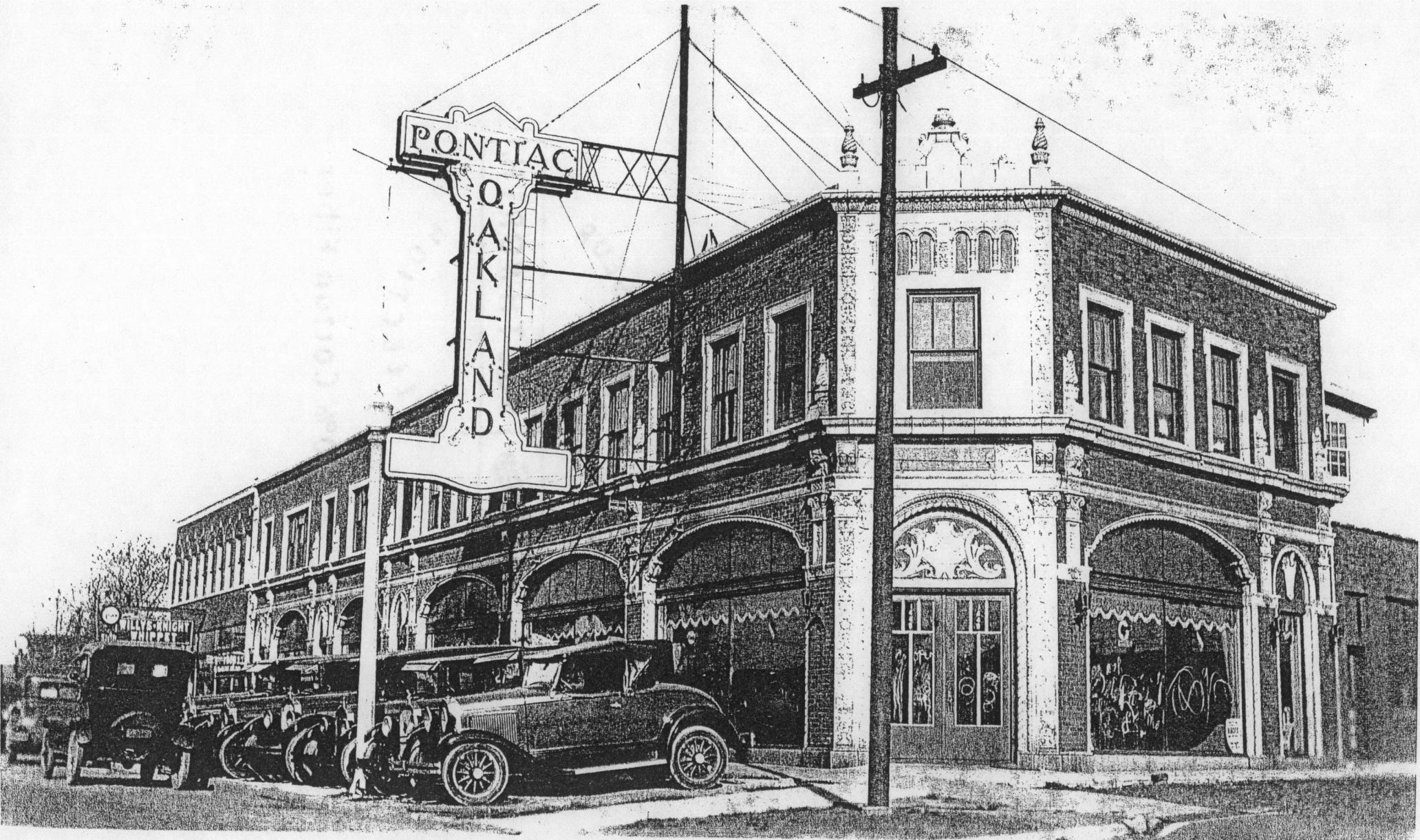
street & number **1601 Chicago Road** telephone **708/756-5320**

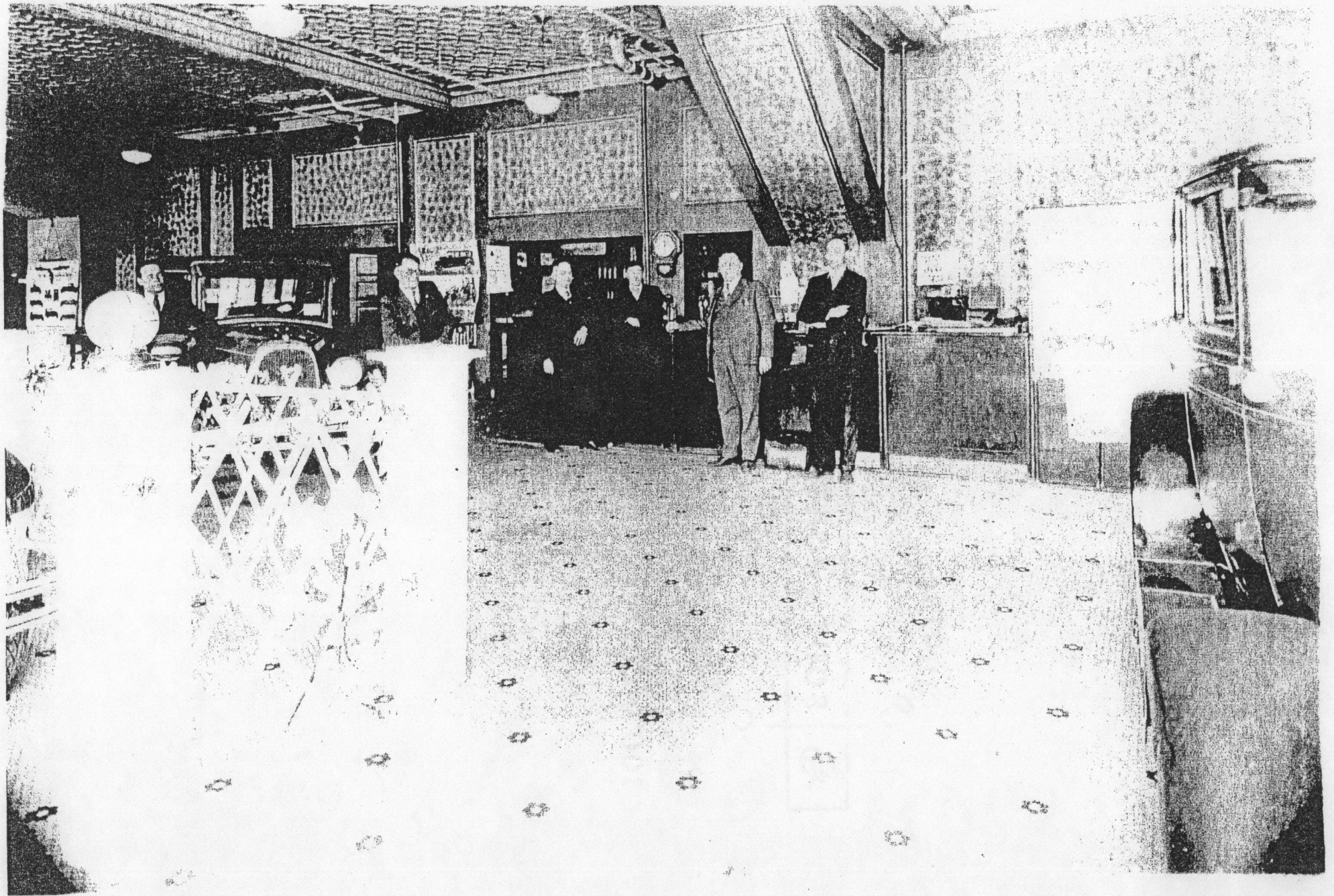
city or town **Chicago Heights** state **IL** zip code **60411**

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

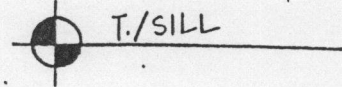
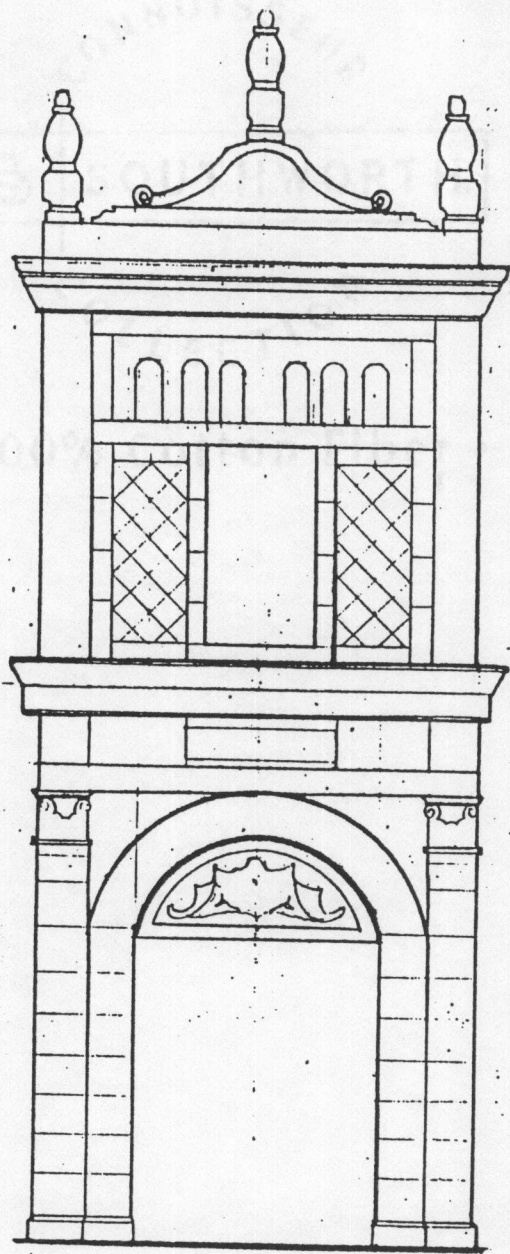
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Historic Photograph
Flat Iron Building
Chicago Heights, Illinois

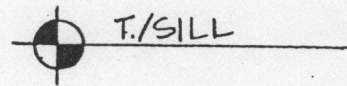




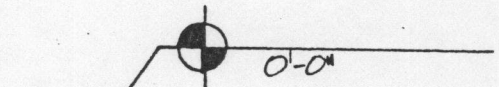
Historic Photograph
Flat Iron Building
Chicago Heights, Illinois



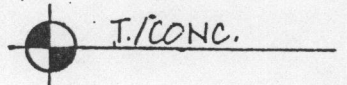
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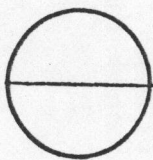
T./SILL



0'-0"



T./CONC.

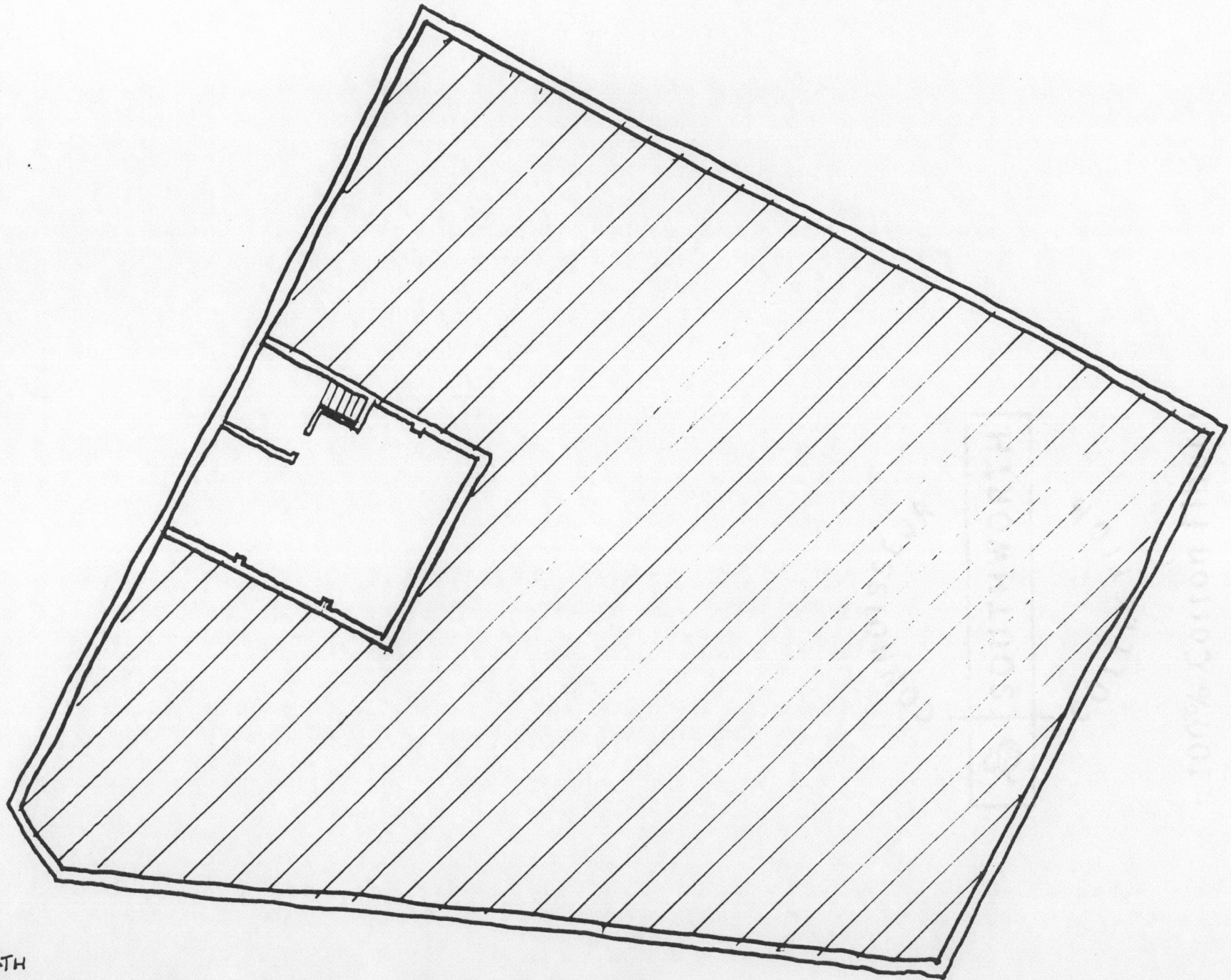


MAIN ENTRANCE ELEVATION

SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"

CV&A

Constantine Vasillos & Associates
1006 S. Michigan St. 702 Chicago, IL 60605



NORTH

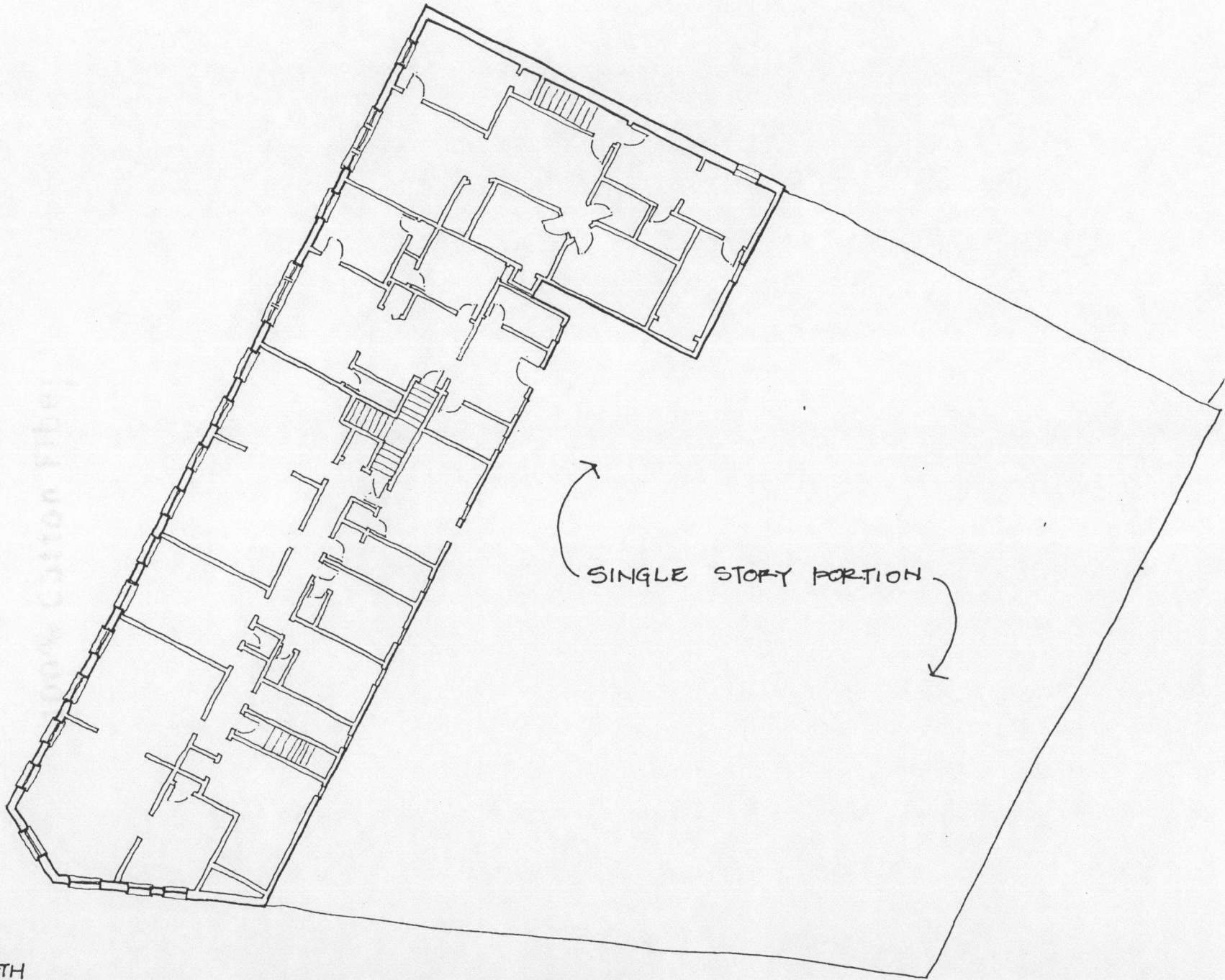


FLAT IRON BUILDING

BASEMENT

CHICAGO HEIGHTS, ILLINOIS · 1441 · 1449 EMERALD AVE

MARCH 2003
NOT TO SCALE



NORTH

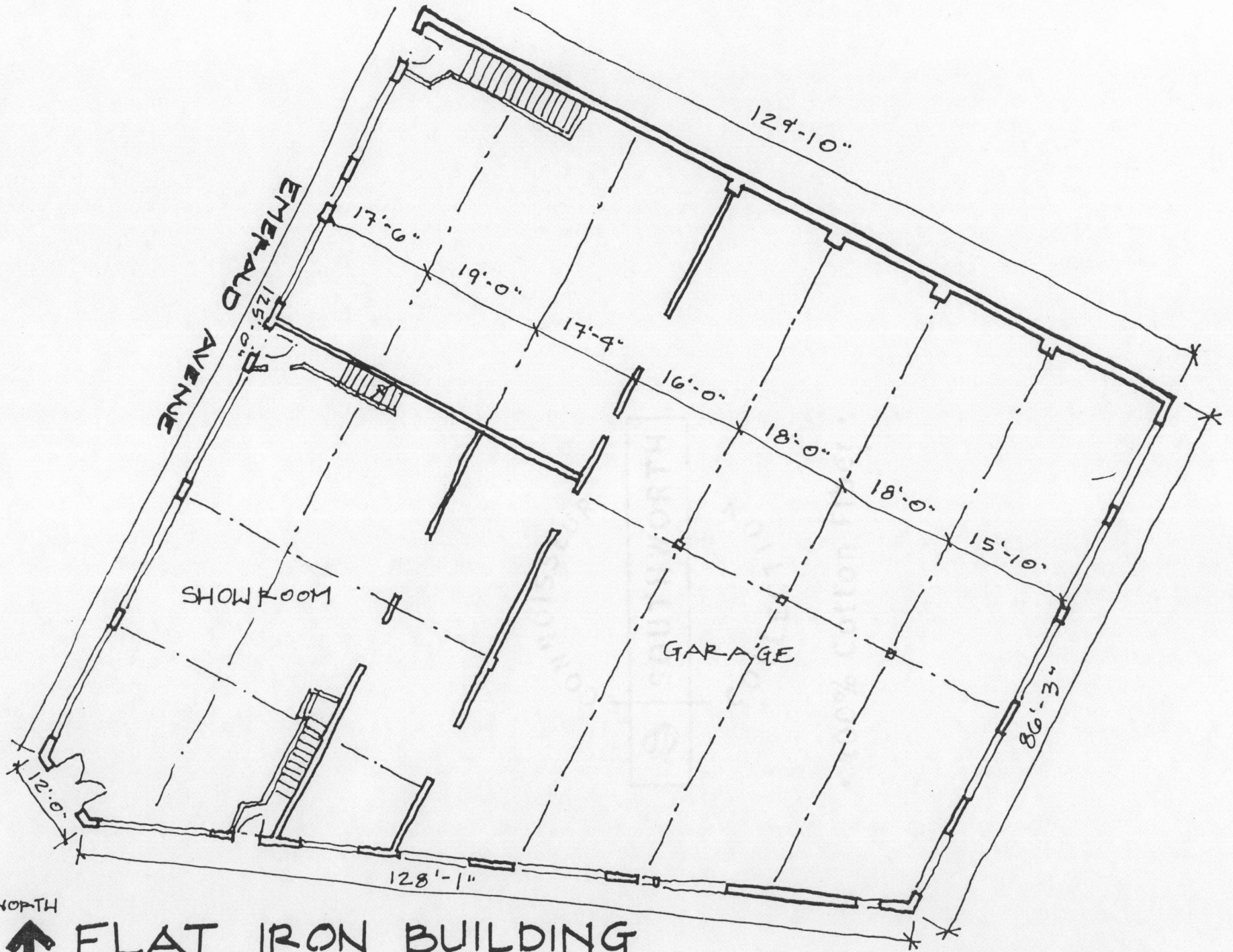


FLAT IRON BUILDING

2ND FLOOR

CHICAGO HEIGHTS · ILLINOIS · 1441-1449 EMERALD AVE.

MARCH 2003
NOT TO SCALE



NORTH



FLAT IRON BUILDING

1ST FLOOR

CHICAGO HEIGHTS, ILLINOIS · 1441-1449 EMERALD AVE

MARCH 2003
NOT TO SCALE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Flat Iron Building
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ILLINOIS, Cook

DATE RECEIVED: 7/31/03 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/28/03
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/13/03 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/14/03
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 03000917

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 9/13/03 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



FLAT IRON
BUILDING

ESTABLISHED 1890

FIAT IRON BUILDING

1441-1449 Emerald Avenue

Cook County, Illinois

Photographer: Barbara Paul

June 20, 2003

Original Negatives: Chicago Heights
Public Library

View - Looking North-East

(South-West Elevation and
Part of West Elevation)

1



FLAT IRON
BUILDING

Built July 1888-1897

PROPERTY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LIBRARY SYSTEM

FLAT IRON BUILDING

1441-1449 Emerald Avenue

Cook County, Illinois

Photographer: Barbara Paul

June 20, 2003

Original Negatives: Chicago Heights
Public Library

JUN. 2003 FRK

JUN. 2003 FRK

JUN. 2003 FRK

View: Looking North-East

(South-West Elevation and
South Elevation of Showroom)

#2



FLAT IRON
BUILDING

FLAT IRON BUILDING

1441-1449 Emerald Avenue
Cook County, Illinois

Photographer: Barbara Paul

June 20, 2003

Original Negatives: Chicago Heights
Public Library

View: Looking North-East

(Part of South-West Elevation
and entire West Elevation)

3



FIAT IRON BUILDING

1441-1449 Emerald Avenue

Cook County, Illinois

Photographer: Barbara Paul

June 20, 2003

Original Negatives: Chicago Heights
Public Library

View - Looking South-East
(West Elevation)

#4



FLAT IRON
BUILDING

Dedicated July 26th 1897

CERTIFIED BY THE
CHICAGO HEIGHTS HISTORIC
PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

FLAT IRON BUILDING

1441-1449 Emerald Ave

Cook County, Illinois

Photographer: Barbara Paul

June 20, 2003

Original Negatives: Chicago Heights
Public Library

View: Looking North-East

Detail of Terra Cotta Main
Entrance - South-West Elevation
(Lower Level)

#5



FLAT IRON BUILDING
1441-1449 Emerald Avenue
Cook County, Illinois

Photographer: Barbara Paul
June 20, 2003

Original Negatives: Chicago Heights
Public Library

View - Looking North-East
Detail of Terra Cotta Main
Entrance - South West Elevation
Cupper level

#6



FLAT IRON

FLAT IRON BUILDING

1441-1449 Emerald Avenue

Cook County, Illinois

Photographer: Barbara Paul

Original Negatives: Chicago Heights

Public Library

June 20, 2003

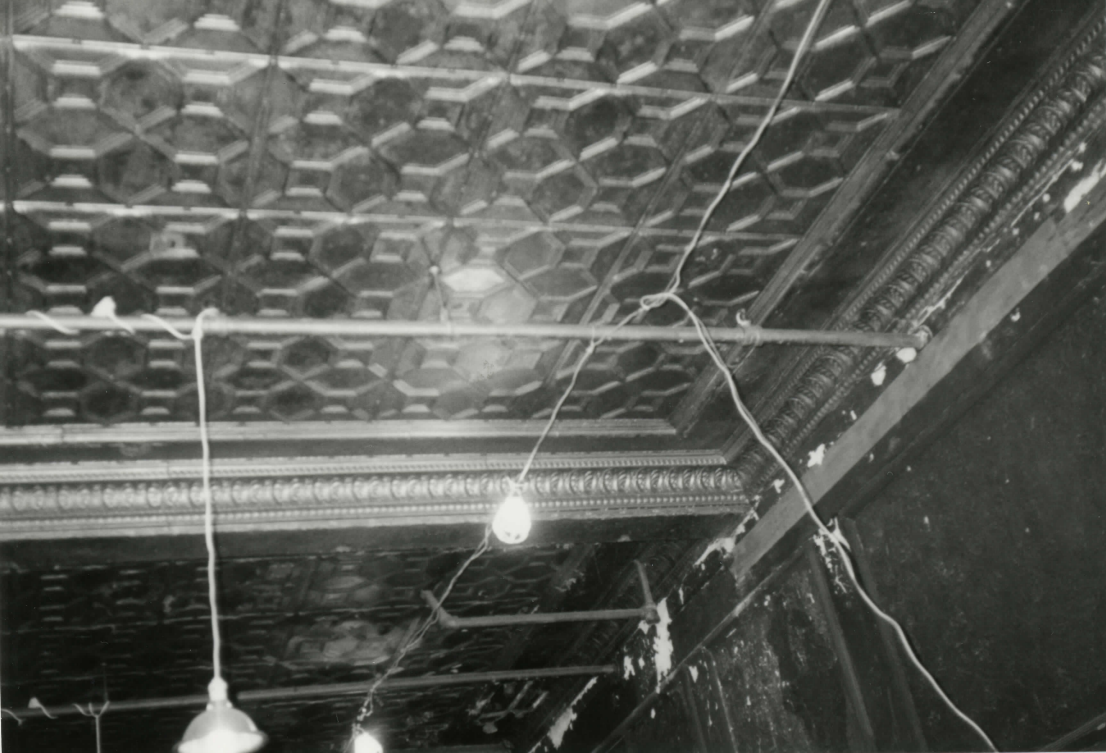
View - Looking North East

Detail of Terra Cotta Trim

Entrance - South West Elevation

(Mid level)

7



FLAT IRON BUILDING
1441-1449 Emerald Avenue
Cook County, ILLINOIS

Photographer: Barbara Paul

Original Negatives: Chicago Heights

Public Library

JUN. 2003 FRK
June 20, 2003

View: First Floor Showroom
Ceiling Detail

#8



FLAT IRON BUILDING

1441-1449 Emerald Avenue

Cook County, Illinois

Photographer: Barbara Paul

June 20, 2003

Original Negatives; Chicago Heights
Public Library

View: First Floor Showroom

Tile Floor Detail

#9



FLAT IRON BUILDING
1441-1449 Emerald Avenue
Cook County, Illinois

Photographer: Barbara Paul
June 20, 2003

Original Negatives: Chicago Heights
Public Library

View: Interior Looking West-West
Elevation First Floor - Right
Half of one of the Original
Showroom Window Openings

#10

(TOP)



FLAT IRON BUILDING

1441 - 1449 Emerald Avenue

Cook County, ILLINOIS

Photographer: Barbara Paul

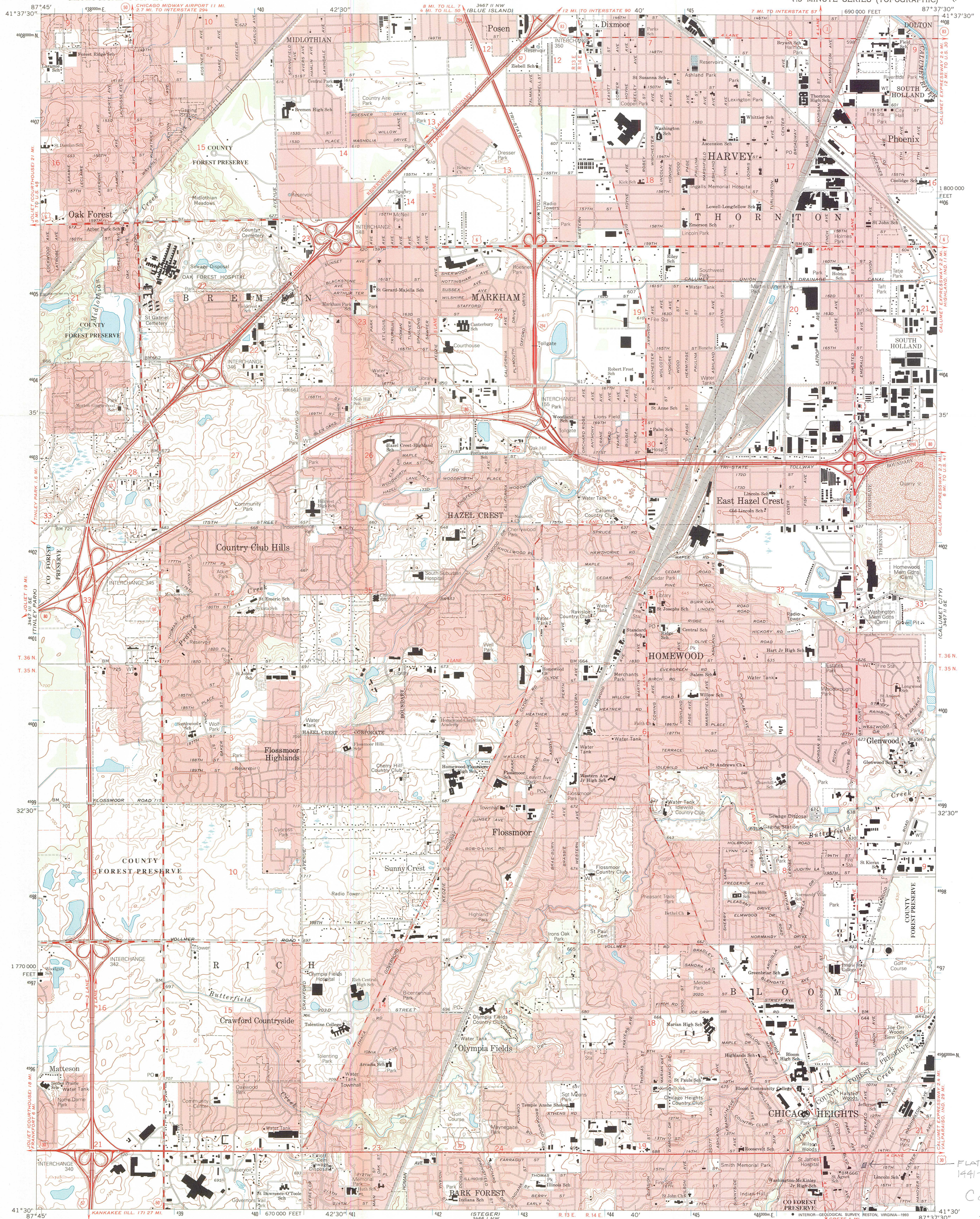
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Original Negatives: Chicago Heights
Public Library

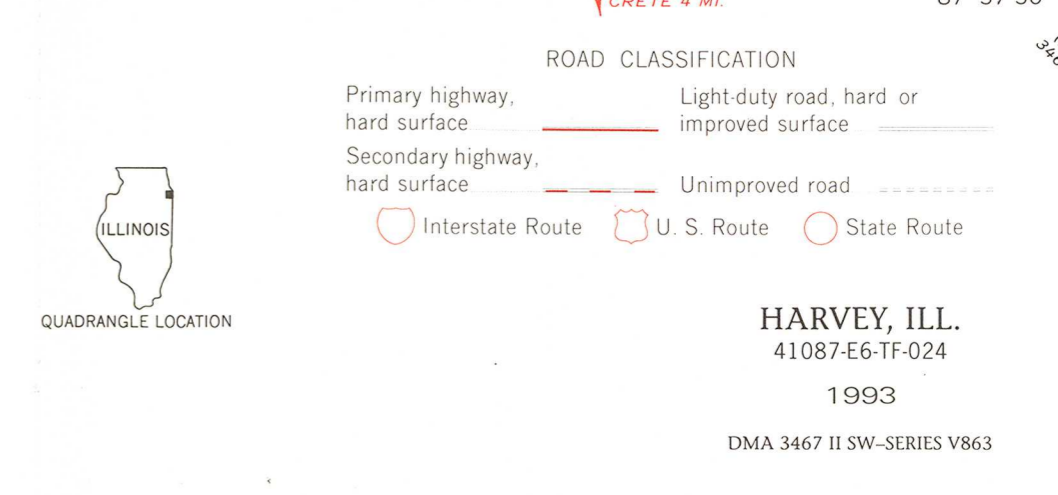
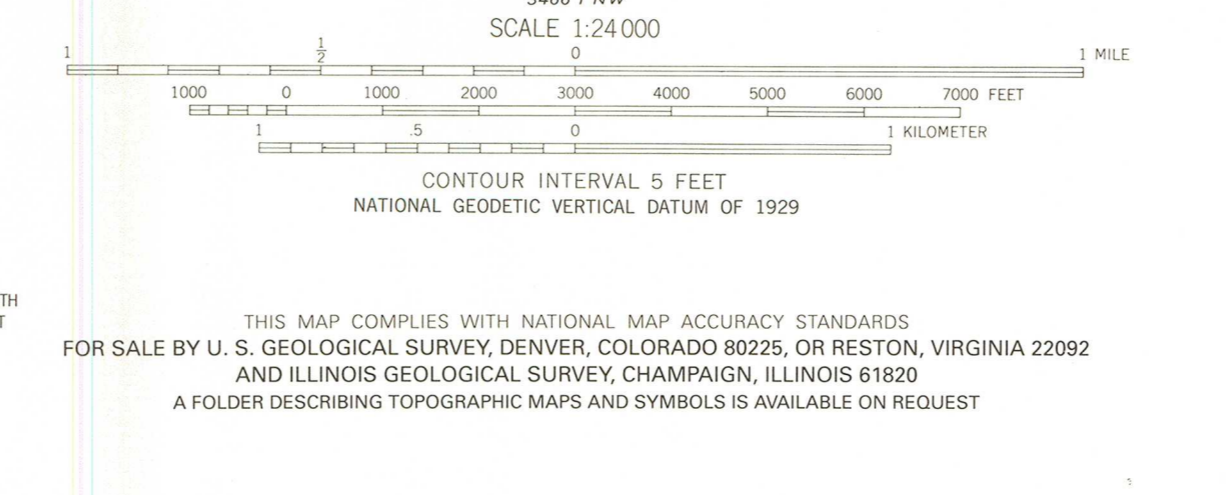
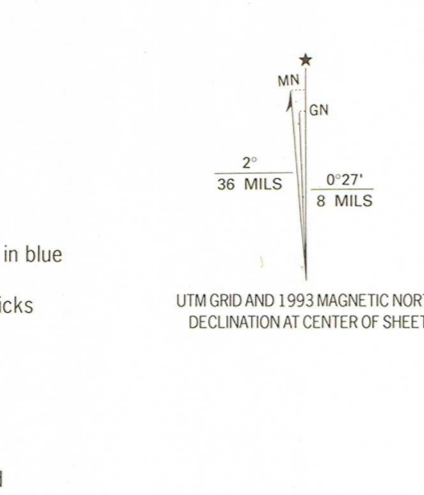
View: Looking West - West Elevation
Second Floor

Restored "Chicago Style"
Window

#11



Produced by the United States Geological Survey in cooperation with State of Illinois Geological Survey Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA and Cook County Highway Department
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1962-63. Topography by planetable surveys 1926. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1988. Field checked 1991. Map edited 1993
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Illinois coordinate system, east zone (transverse Mercator)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 16, shown in blue 1927 North American Datum (NAD 27)
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are given in USGS Bulletin 1875
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



HARVEY, ILL.
41087-E6-TF-024
1993
DMA 3467 II SW-SERIES V863

FLAT IRON BUILDING
1491-1499 Emerald Ave
Cook Co, IL
Zone 16
E447029
N 4594733