

Mills Hall
Mills College
5000 MacArthur Boulevard
Oakland
Alameda County
California

HABS No. CA-2401

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94107

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MILLS HALL

HABS No. CA-2401

Location: Mills College Campus
5000 MacArthur Boulevard
Oakland (Alameda County), California 94613
USGS: Oakland East Quadrangle (7.5')
UTM Coordinates: Zone 3, 572160 Easting, 4181490 Northing

Significance: Mills College began in 1852, though under another name, when a Young Ladies Protestant Seminary was founded in the city of Benicia. Its significance rose in 1853-54 when Benicia became the capitol of the State, and grew rapidly following its acquisition by Miss Mary Atkins, who became its owner in 1855. Because of ill health, she sold the property in 1865 to Dr. and Mrs. C.T. Mills, who continued to operate the school in Benicia until 1871. In 1870, Dr. Mills purchased 55 acres in what is now East Oakland, a site formerly occupied by an Indian rancheria. In June of 1870 construction began on Mills Hall, and in 1871 the Seminary left Benicia to take up permanent campus residence in Oakland. Originally the building consisted of classrooms, quarters for the College president, teachers and students, recitation rooms, a music room, lecture halls and a hospital ward.

In 1877, the College was deeded to a Board of Trustees. The first baccalaureate degrees were granted in 1885, and the College became fully accredited in 1918, opening a graduate school in 1920. From 1916 till 1943, Aurelia Henry Reinhardt was president of the College, during which time 136 acres were incorporated within its boundaries. During this period Mills Hall was used almost exclusively as a dormitory and social activity hall, little changes having been made in its construction. Mills College compares with the most exclusive women's colleges in the nation, including Wellesley, Mt. Holyoke and Vassar. Its history in the field of education is equal to the highest standards exemplified in America. Mills Hall is on both the State and National Registers (California Registered Landmark No. 849; National Register of Historic Places No. PH0047236).

Description: Mills Hall is an L-shaped Second Empire building measuring 212 feet in the east-west direction and 135 feet in the north-south direction. It is three stories high, with a four-story central bay, and is wood-framed with a brick foundation. The siding is V-groove rustic redwood boards. Windows are double-hung wood sash with wood casings in various styles. During the rehabilitation of Mills Hall in 1993-94, the asphalt-shingled mansard roof was reshingled with wood (the original shingles were also wood).

The North Wing Rear Addition, which was removed in 1993 prior to the rehabilitation, projected from the north wing at the rear of the building. Because it served utilitarian rather than official or ceremonial purposes, it had fewer decorative features and was detailed differently and more simply than the rest of the building. It had three stories with a hipped overhanging

roof supported on brackets. The first and second stories dated from circa 1900. Evidence suggests the third story was a later addition, as indicated by the encapsulated skylight at the second story and the lack of vertical circulation between the second and third stories. Doors and windows were irregularly placed. Third story windows were paired three-lite wood casements. First and second story windows were two-over-two double-hung wood sash with bracketed top sash corners. Doors were wood panelled. The brass hardware had an art nouveau-inspired design. The two lower floors were characterized by tongue-and-groove wainscot on the walls with a chair rail at 5'-3" above the floor. Wood trim was more planar and more geometrical than the original trim elsewhere in the building. The most notable feature of the first and second stories was the hardware with decorated florel doorknobs.

The first floor was comprised of three rooms and was actually on two levels. The lower level connected to the ground floor of the main building through a transomed doorway from the stairhall. Another transomed door from the stairhall opened to the exterior on the east side through a one-story porch. The nearly square stairhall had an L-shaped staircase with square newel posts and turned balusters at 4-1/2" on center. The ceiling height was 14'-6". The remainder of the first story was five risers above the stair hall. This story was originally built to provide restrooms. At the time of demolition, most of the plumbing fixtures had been removed from this area, but paint scars and capped plumbing shafts indicated former locations.

The second story was also constructed as a large, dormitory-style restroom. In addition to stalls for toilets, showers and bathtubs, there was a cubicle containing a janitor sink. On the west side, two large trash chutes extended to the first floor, where they were accessed from two exterior doors. The covered skylight at the southern end of the space provided evidence that the wing was originally two stories.

The third floor, also called the sleeping porch, consisted of five rooms with closets off an L-shaped corridor with two late 20th century sinks in the corridor.

The Addition, like the original building, was wood-framed and wood-sided. At the time of its demolition, its roofing was composition shingles. It was heated by the same steam system serving the remainder of the building.

The following items were salvaged prior to demolition of the Addition and are archived at Mills College:

- Two complete sets of representative hardware
- All radiators
- Newel posts and runs of stair balustrade

History: The original Mills Hall was built in 1871; the architect was S.C. Bugbee & Sons. The original building housed many of the College's functions, including classrooms, President's quarters, student rooms, parlors, music rooms and a hospital ward. The lower two floors of the North Wing Rear Addition were added to the original Mills Hall building circa 1900 and contained restrooms. The third story was added circa 1925 for use as a sleeping porch. The architect(s) for the Addition is (are) unknown.

At the time of the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, Mills Hall was being used as the College's administration building. The 1993-94 rehabilitation maintains this occupancy, in addition to restoring three classrooms in their original locations. The rehabilitation also restores the fourth floor, unoccupied at the time of the earthquake, to residential occupancy, this time as three apartments for visiting faculty rather than the original student rooms.

The rehabilitation came about due to the damage suffered by Mills Hall in the earthquake, which rendered it unoccupiable. During the rehabilitation design process, it was determined to be more cost effective to demolish the non-original North Wing Rear Addition than repair it. Demolishing it also presented an opportunity to restore the building to its original historic configuration.

Sources: Mills Hall Historic Structures Report, Carey & Co. Architecture, October 18, 1991. (For further information see the Bibliography from this Report, attached. Most of the documents listed therein are located in Olin Library at Mills College.)

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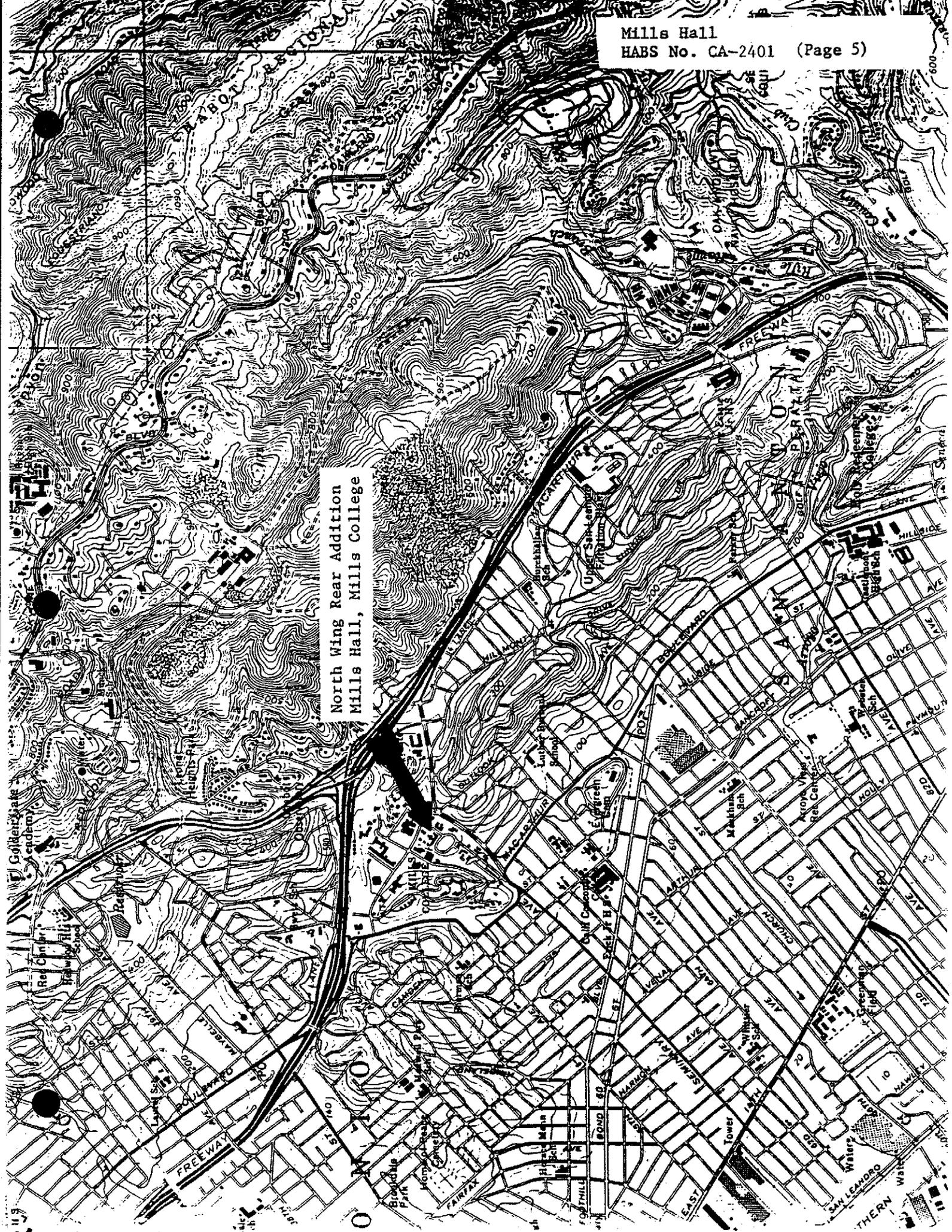
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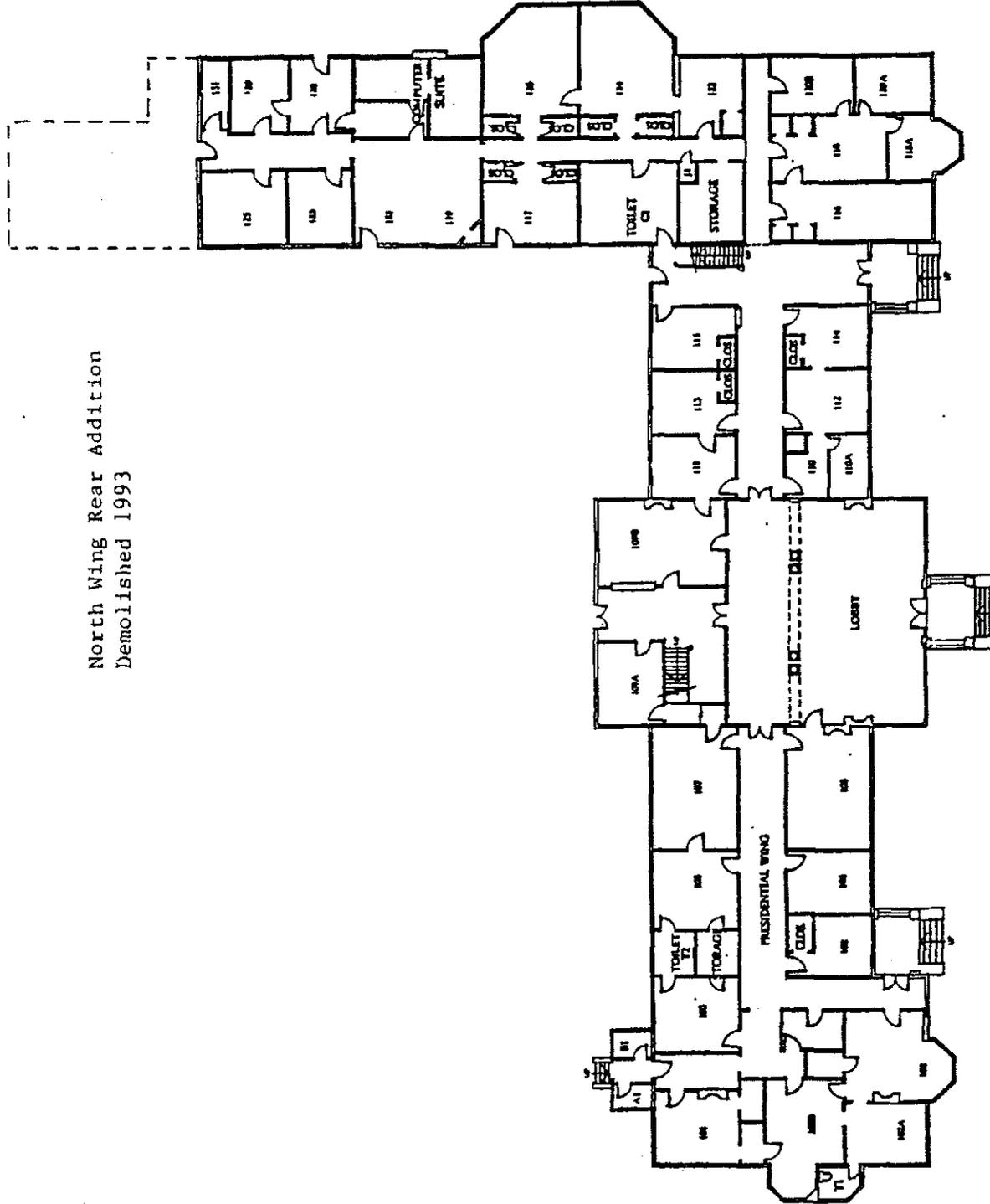
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Wong, Wayne, Rutherford and Chekene (Structural Engineers), telephone interview, July 25, 1991.

North Wing Rear Addition
Mills Hall, Mills College

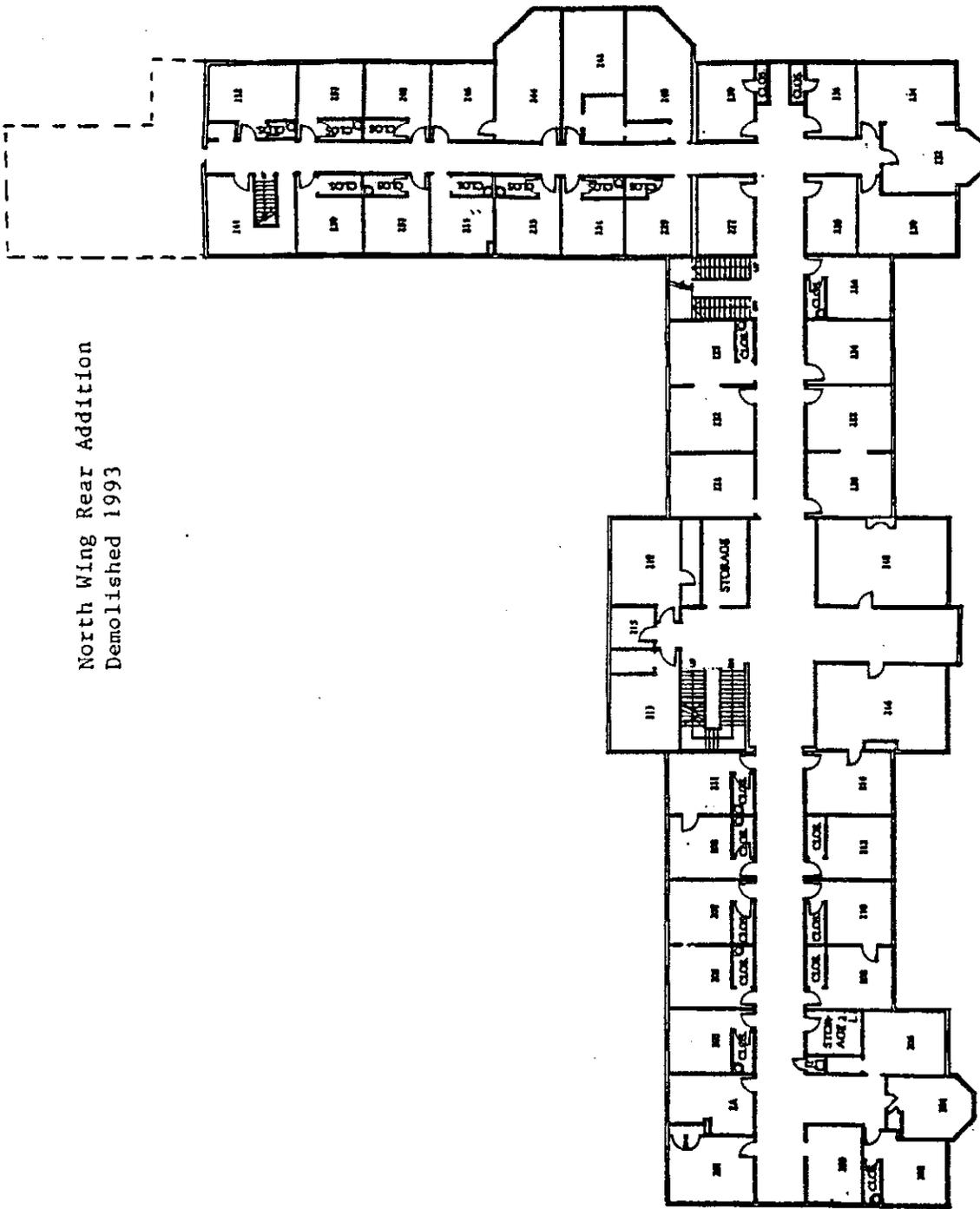


North Wing Rear Addition
Demolished 1993



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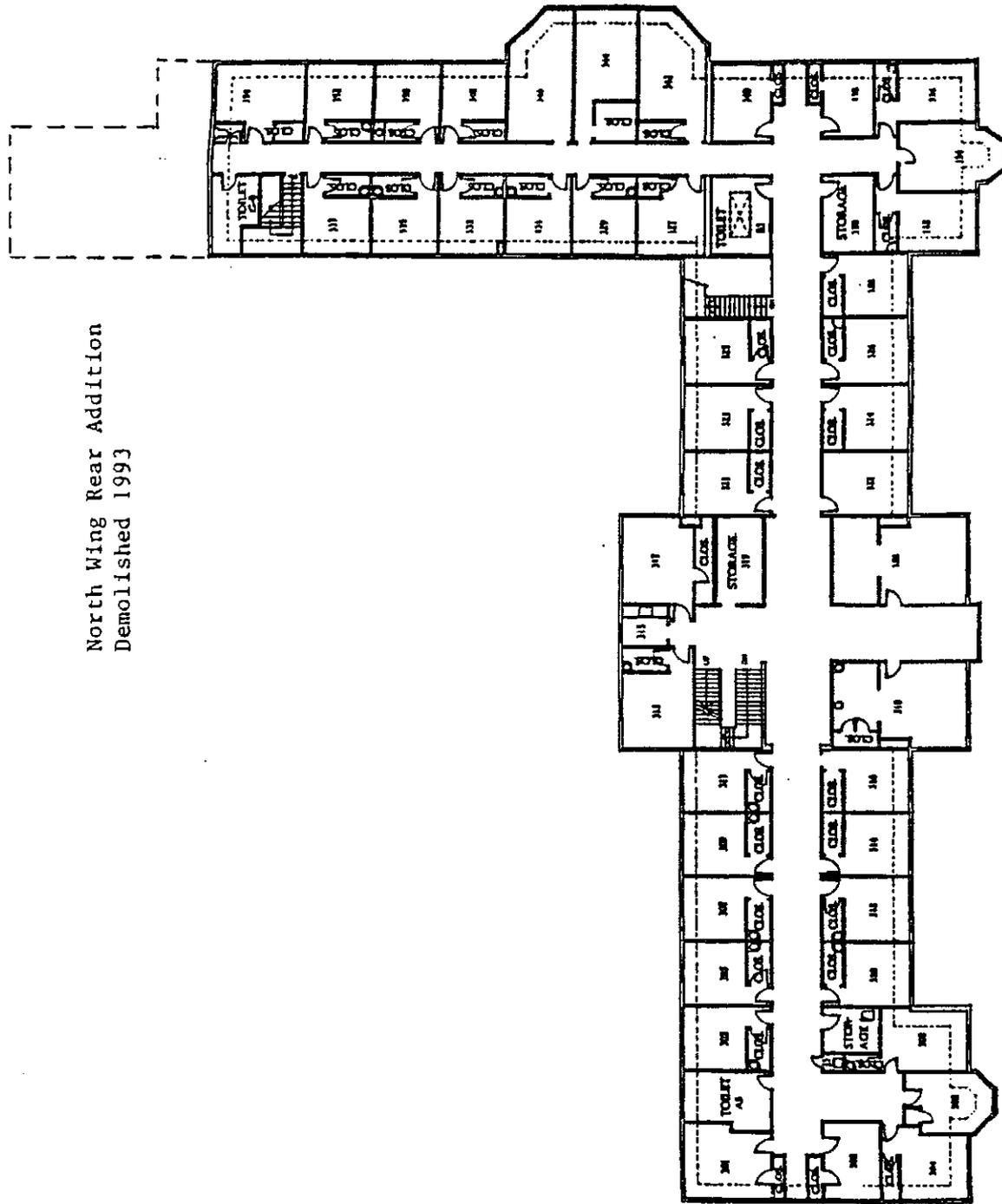
EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN



North Wing Rear Addition
Demolished 1993

EXISTING SECOND FLOOR PLAN

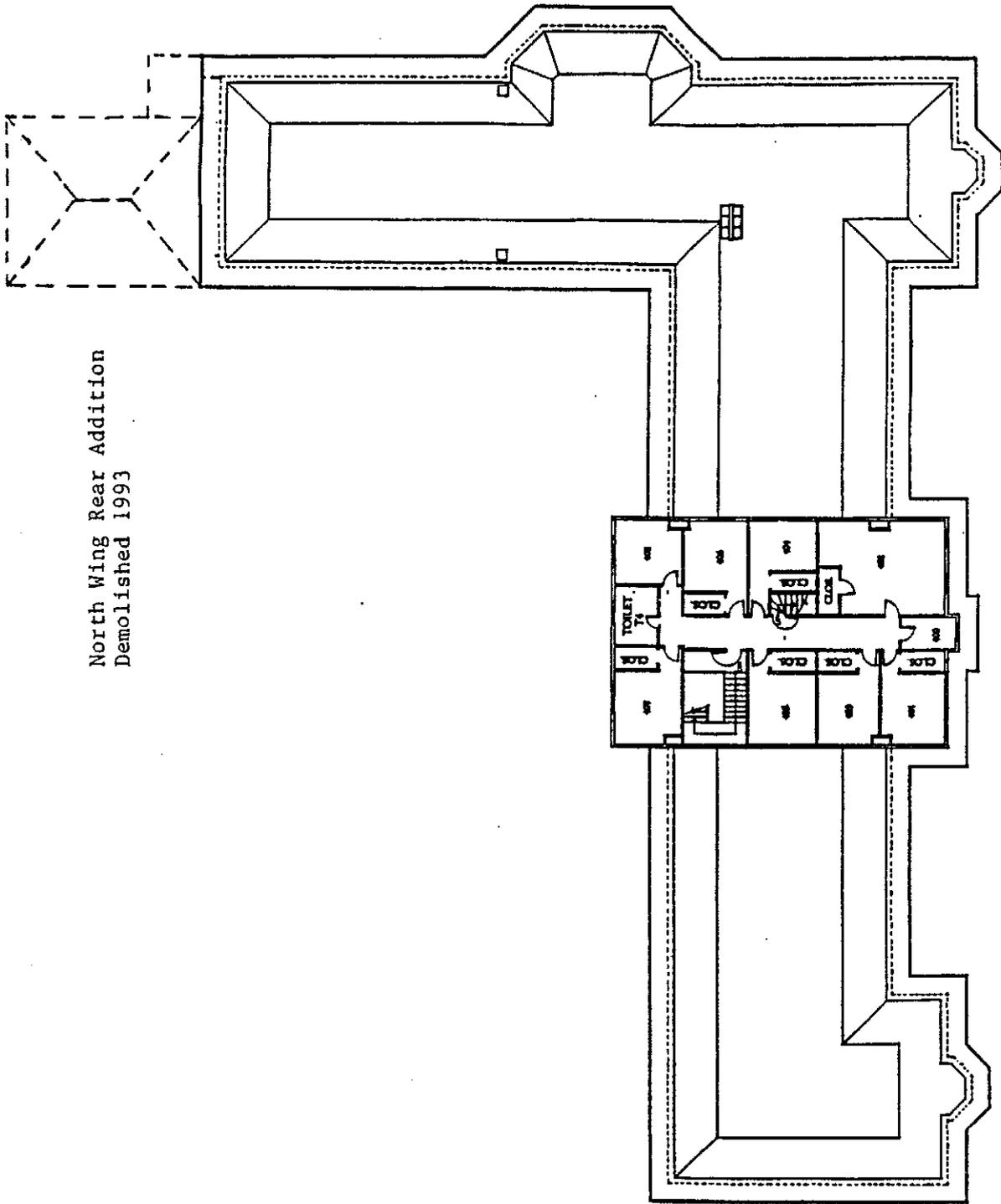
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North Wing Rear Addition
Demolished 1993

EXISTING THIRD FLOOR PLAN

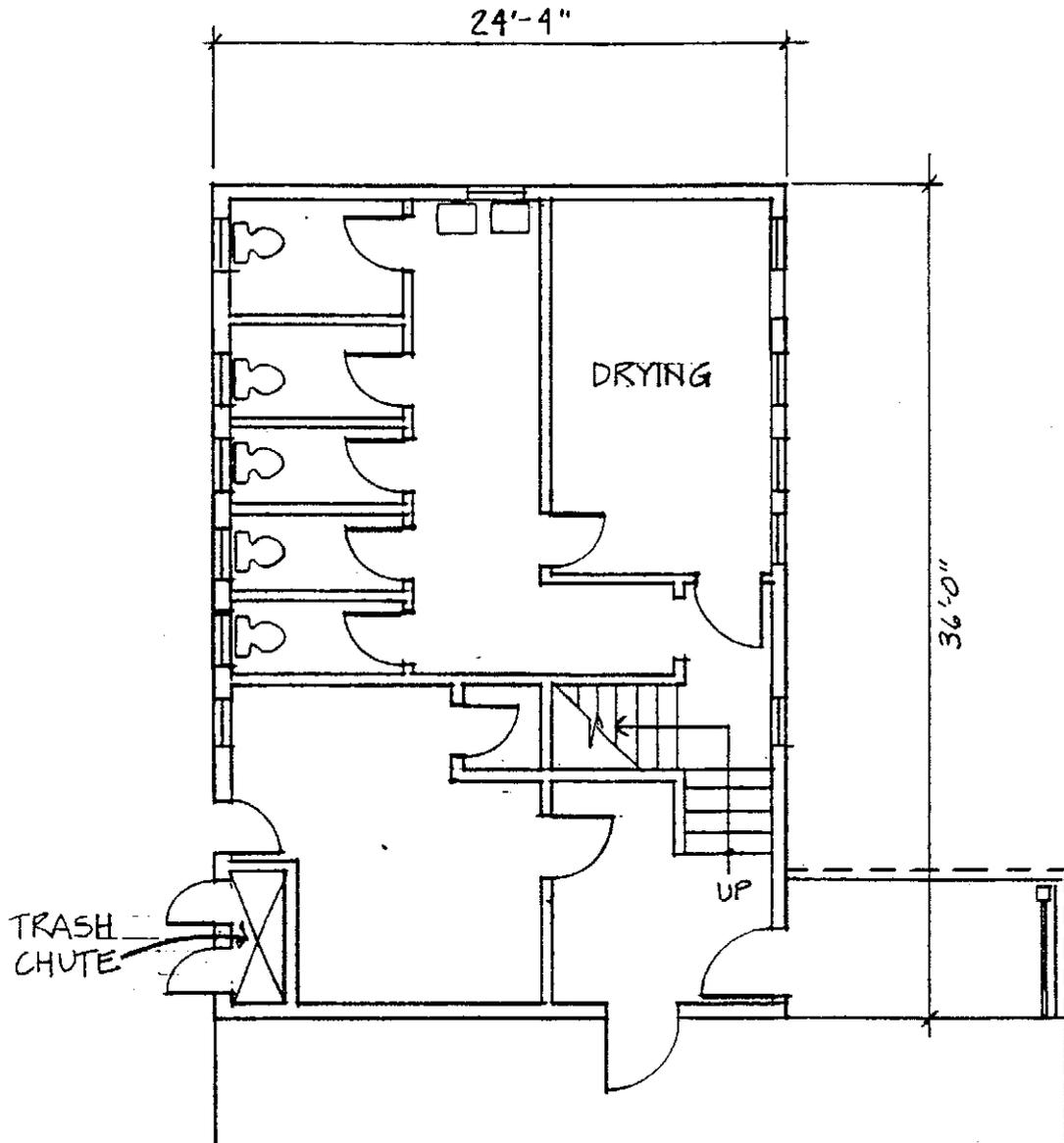
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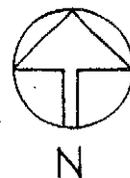
North Wing Rear Addition
Demolished 1993

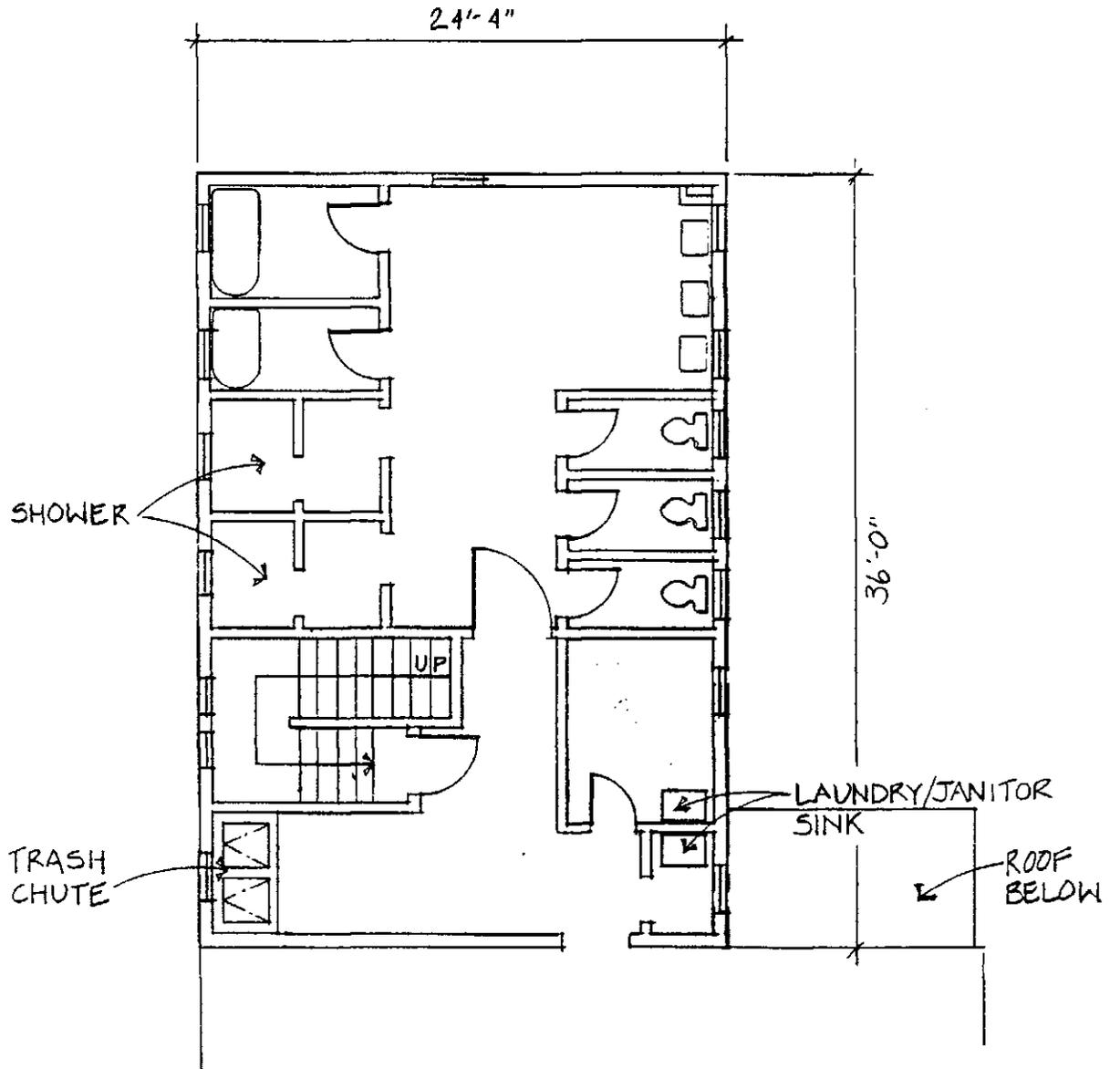
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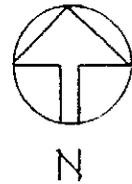


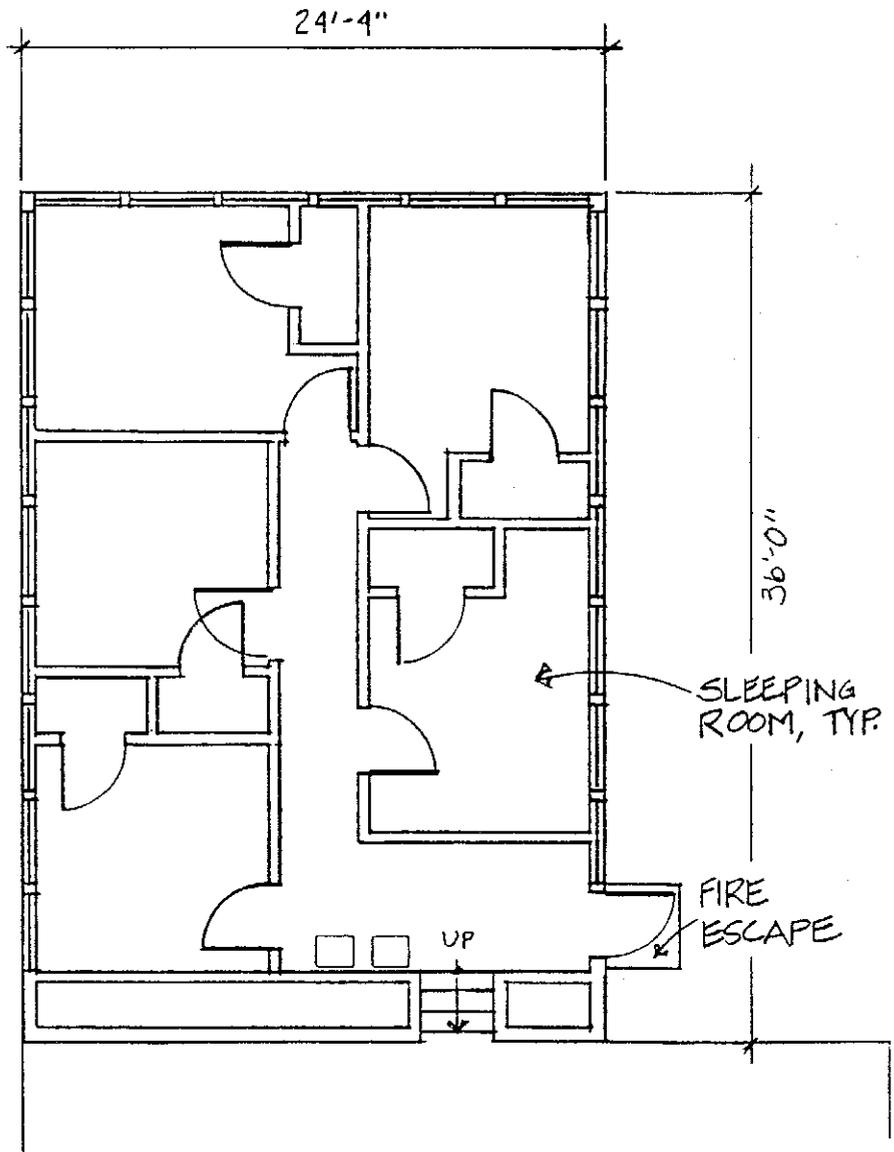
FIRST FLOOR
NORTH WING REAR ADDITION



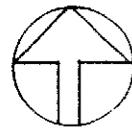


SECOND FLOOR
NORTH WING REAR ADDITION





THIRD FLOOR
NORTH WING REAR ADDITION



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