

BRADEN'S BLOCK
127-131 South Illinois Street
Indianapolis
Marion County
Indiana

HABS No. IN-254

HABS
IND
49-IND,
46-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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Location:

127-131 South Illinois Street
Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana

USGS Indianapolis West, Indiana Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
16.571960.4401830

Significance:

Braden's Block is one of many small-scale, multi-use commercial structures built in downtown Indianapolis during the post-Civil War construction boom. Although the storefront level has been altered, the rich architectural details of the upper levels have remained virtually intact. While numerous commercial tenants and hotels have been operated in the building since its construction in 1874, St. Elmo's Steak House, which was established in 1914, still remains as a popular Indianapolis restaurant.

Description:

Braden's Block is a three-story, brick commercial building with architecturally detailed elevations to the west and north. The west facade is divided into a three-bay architectural division by piers and segmental arched window openings. The first floor storefront consists of modern, vertical banded plywood and is capped by a shingled pent roof. It is unknown if any of the original storefront remains behind the existing materials. Five courses of brick separate the top of the pent roof from the second story limestone stringcourse. Brick piers rise from the stringcourse at the second story and engage a similar stringcourse at the third story. Above the stone capitals, the piers form springing courses for the segmental arched third story window openings. The window openings on both floors have stone sills and brick arches and contain paired replacement 1/1 double hung sash windows separated by chamfered pilasters acting as vertical mullions. Solid wood panels, with inscribed floral designs, fill the arched areas above the flat topped window heads. The facade is capped by a heavily bracketed stone cornice. The northwestern bay of the facade is beveled, emphasizing the building's corner location and bears a limestone tablet below the cornice with the inscription "BRADEN." The seven-bay Chesapeake Street elevation continues the architectural division of bays by brick piers and segmental arched window openings. However, the bracketed cornice is limited to the three westernmost bays

and there are no pier capitals. Additionally, numerous original window openings have been infilled and downsized with brick and replacement windows.

History:

Braden's Block was constructed by William Braden, a prominent printer, in 1874-75. In the succeeding years, a variety of businesses leased space in the building. In 1875, Braden leased the 129 portion of the building to C.A. Greenleaf, a machinery manufacturer and dealer. The 131 portion was at that time leased by Edwin R. Phillips for the establishment of the European Hotel. In the early 1880's, 129 South Illinois was utilized as a Chinese laundry. During the 1890's, William H. Armstrong and Company manufactured and sold surgical instruments in the building. In 1906, Joseph Stahr opened a saloon at 127 South Illinois. By 1914, Stahr had expanded into the restaurant business. Established as the St. Elmo Buffet, the restaurant survives today as St. Elmo's Steak House. 1914 also marked the opening of the Hotel Braden which occupied the same space as the earlier European Hotel.

The building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on July 14, 1982 as part of the Indianapolis Union Station - Wholesale District. This project was undertaken by the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission (IHPC) in compliance with the Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative effort before partial demolition.

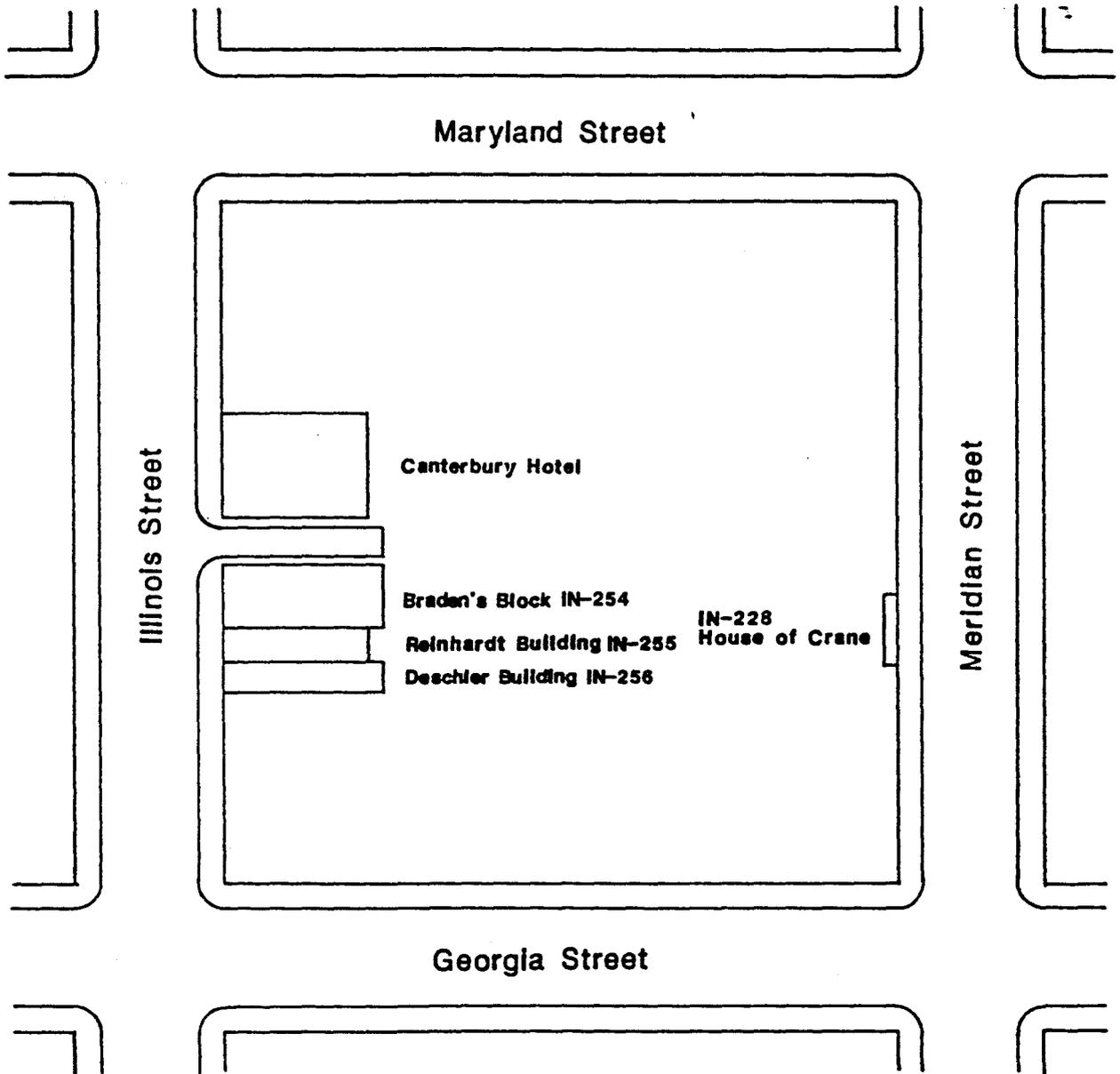
Sources:

Indianapolis Wholesale District. National Register of Historic Places nomination form, 1982.

"Wholesale District Historic Area Plan," Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission, 1990.

Historian:

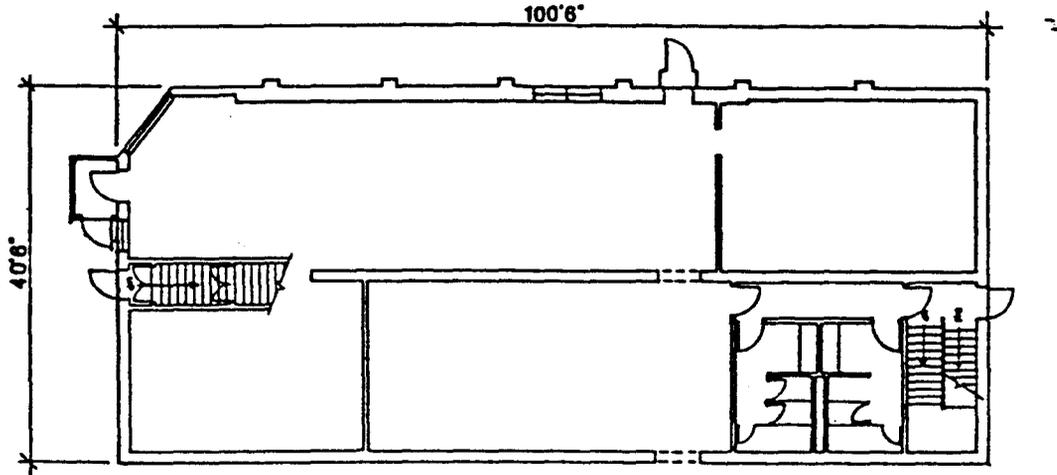
David A. Kroll
Ratio Architects, Inc.
36 South Pennsylvania Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
June, 1994



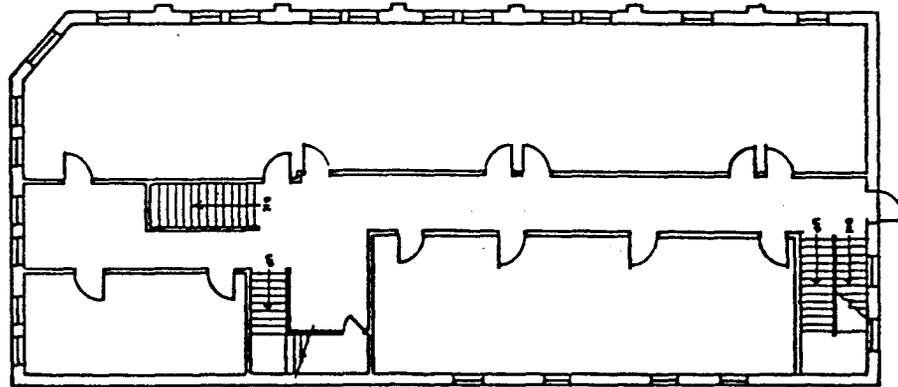
NORTH

CITY SQUARE 75

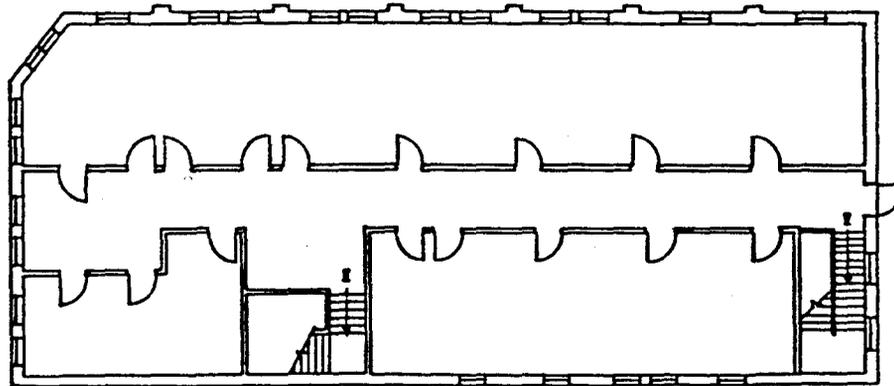
Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana



First Floor 
NORTH



Second Floor



Third Floor