

1401 LAURENS STREET (Commercial Building)
Baltimore
Baltimore ~~County~~ City
Maryland

HABS No. MD-1009

HABS
MD
4-BAL
199-

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, PA 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

1401 LAURENS STREET (COMMERCIAL BUILDING)

HABS No. MD-1009

Location: 1401 Laurens Street (southwest corner of
Laurens and North Calhoun Streets), Baltimore
(City), Maryland

USGS Baltimore West, Maryland Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
18.358520.4351480

Last Owner: Mayor and City Council of Baltimore
100 Holliday Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Last Occupant: Vacant

Significance: The building at 1401 Laurens Street is
representative of the early 20th century com-
mercialization of Baltimore's late 19th century
neighborhoods and of the concurrent racial change
from white to black as the inner city black popu-
lation moved outward, following the move of white
residents to new suburbs. The building was built
about 1912 and first occupied by the Chenoweth
Butter Company, a butter, cheese, and egg store,
with a public hall, Chenoweth Hall, on the second
floor.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 1912. Land records show that Leo M. Chenoweth, a butter, cheese and egg dealer, purchased the lot in 1911; the Baltimore city directories list the Chenoweth Butter Company at 1401 Laurens beginning in 1913, and the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1914 shows the building and a frame outbuilding (now missing) on the lot. These were the first structures on the site.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following chain of title to the land upon which the building stands refers to the Land Records of the Baltimore City Superior Court, Clarence Mitchell City Courthouse, Calvert and Fayette Streets, Baltimore, Maryland.

Legal Description: Beginning for the same at the southwest corner of Laurens Street (formerly Patterson Avenue) and Calhoun Street and running thence westerly binding on the south side of Laurens Street 20 feet, thence south parallel to Calhoun Street 100 feet to the north side of an alley 10 feet wide, thence easterly binding on the north side of said alley and parallel to Laurens Street 20 feet to Calhoun Street, thence northerly binding on the west side of Calhoun Street 100 feet to the beginning. The improvements thereon being known as 1401 Laurens Street.

- 1911 Deed, November 15, 1911, recorded in Volume SCL 2700, p. 492. Laura Patterson, Sidney Turner Dyer (formerly Sidney Smith Turner), and Elisha Dyer, her husband, to Leo M. Chenoweth. (Laura Patterson and Sidney Dyer were surviving heirs of estate of Edward Patterson, died September 24, 1865.)
- 1919 Deed, July 26, 1919, recorded in Volume SCL 3414, p. 233. Leo M. Chenoweth to Hyman and Minnie Lovett.
- 1952 Deed June 13, 1952, recorded in Volume MLP 8826, p. 340. Hyman and Minnie Lovett to Peter and Dorothy Vaselaros.
- 1963 Deed, January 10, 1963, recorded in Volume JFC 1419, p. 210. Peter and Dorothy Vaselaros to

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Dorothy Vaselaros.

- 1969 Deed, May 16, 1969, recorded in Volume RHB 2515, p. 249. Dorothy Vaselaros to Cearney A. and Hannah V. Smith.
- 1980 Deed, July 22, 1980, recorded in Volume WA 3931, p. 757. Cearney A. and Hannah V. Smith to Mayor and City Council.
- 1982 Deed, December 13, 1982, recorded in Volume CWM 4263, p. 529. Mayor and City Council to Sterling A. Paige.
- 1989 Department of Law Letter, December 29, 1989, recorded in Property Location Section, Department of Public Works, Room 7, Abel Wolman Municipal Building, 200 Holliday Street, Baltimore, Maryland. Sterling A. Paige to Mayor and City Council.

- 4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Not known.
- 5. Original plans and construction: No drawings, plans or documents relative to construction have been located. Building permits for the probable years of construction are not available.
- 6. Alterations and additions: A rear extension(s) to 1401 Laurens existed, but it had collapsed and the debris was removed prior to documentation. The 1914 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows a frame, hipped roof outbuilding at the south end of the lot, but no visible trace of this structure remains. At a date not yet determined, a two-story brick building replaced the frame outbuilding. From the mid-1950's into the 1970's, it was apparently used as a welding shop, but it is unknown whether it was originally part of the auto repair shop at 1403-1411 Laurens or a separate business.

B. Historical Context:

The west Baltimore neighborhood surrounding the Northwest (later Lafayette) Market was developed from estate lands beginning about 1870, with the street grid plan adopted in 1822 being extended into new sections. Laurens Street, originally Cooke Street and later Patterson Avenue, was one of the east-west main streets and led directly to the market vicinity from the undeveloped outskirts. Residential row-houses were built in small groups with commercial buildings or combined commercial-residential storefront buildings lo-

cated at strategic intersections. By the early 20th century, most of the area around the Lafayette Market was fully developed except three city blocks between Fremont Avenue, Whatcoat Street, Laurens Street, and Winchester Street, which included the future site of 1401 Laurens. The reasons for this lag in development are unclear, but may be partially due to the presence of a railroad tunnel under Winchester Street. The first building erected on the northeast quadrant of the block between Laurens, Calhoun, Winchester, and Whatcoat Streets was 1401 Laurens, a commercial storefront built about 1912 for Leo M. Chenoweth, a butter, cheese, and egg dealer whose previous location was a block west at the southeast corner of Laurens and Stricker Streets. The Chenoweth Butter Company also maintained a stall in the Lexington Market at Eutaw and Lexington Streets. The second floor of the building was a public hall, called Chenoweth Hall. Chenoweth's store and hall remained the only building on the east end of the block until about 1921, when Reverend James G. Martin, a black minister, leased the rest of the undeveloped section of the 1400 block and erected the commercial block at 1403-1411 Laurens. This was apparently an investment venture, with an auto repair garage fronted by small shops. It was indicative of the changing racial character of the area, where blacks had historically been the minority but had begun increasing in number at a rapid rate, especially after 1918. The Chenoweth Butter Company closed at 1401 Laurens in 1918. The public hall continued in operation until 1926, when Gustave Polis opened a restaurant, which remained in business until the mid-1960's under various owners and names, the last being Lincoln Lunch. The building has been vacant since that time.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building at 1401 Laurens Street is a typical commercial building of the late period of development in the Sandtown-Winchester area (1914-1930). The storefront building has many of the features of the 19th century commercial building in its projecting plate glass display windows, pressed metal cornices, and arched second story windows.
2. Condition of fabric: The brick exterior walls of the building are in generally good condition, although artificial stone covers the upper facade. The rear extension is missing, having collapsed prior to documentation. The interior is extremely deteriorated

and filled with trash. The upper stories have been fire-damaged. The window frames are missing and the openings are boarded. The interior floors are intact, but possibly unsafe due to damage. The general aspect of the building is one of neglect.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building is generally rectangular in shape and measures 20 feet wide on the facade. The lot is 100 feet deep and the building occupies roughly the northern half of it. It has 3 bays, two stories, and is 21 feet high. A rear extension of unknown dimensions collapsed due to neglect and the debris was removed prior to this survey.
2. Foundations: The foundation material and thickness are unknown. The basement, if extant, was inaccessible due to deterioration of the building.
3. Walls: The building is constructed in running bond brick. The upper facade is iron spot brick covered with variegated gray artificial stone.
4. Structural system: The structure is load-bearing brick.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: None.
6. Chimneys: A single square brick chimney is located near the southeast corner of the building. It is covered with artificial stone.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: 1401 Laurens has a single center entrance in the facade which is boarded; the door behind the boarding was wood with a central glazed panel, but the glass is now missing. A side entrance on the east elevation has a segmental arch, but is boarded and the door is missing.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The storefront windows project under the lower cornice; the glass and frames are missing and the openings are boarded. The upper story window openings have segmental arches and are boarded. No shutters or hardware are visible. Trim is covered by artificial stone.
8. Roof: The building has a flat roof sloping toward the rear and a pressed metal cornice embellished by

modillions.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The plan is a single front space and a rear space. See floor plan. The upper floor was inaccessible and its plan is unknown.
2. Stairways: The stairway is located in the back room and could not be examined because of deterioration.
3. Flooring: The floor in the first story was only partially visible due to debris and appeared to be linoleum.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The ceiling in the first story is tongue and groove wood. The walls of the former restaurant are in varied states, partially covered with wallboard or plastered.
5. Openings: The doorways and windows are so incomplete as to be impossible to describe a typical composition.
6. Decorative features and trim: No decorative interior features were observed.
7. Hardware: None notable.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: No mechanical systems were observed.
 - b. Lighting: No lighting fixtures were present.
 - c. Plumbing: No plumbing fixtures were observed.
9. Original furnishings: No original furnishings were observed.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The facade of 1401 Laurens is oriented toward the north. The opposite or north side of Laurens Street contains a row of one- and two-story brick commercial buildings erected generally during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They display various states of alteration and those nearest the corner of Laurens and Calhoun are extremely deteriorated, with evidence of collapsed roofs

and fire damage on the upper stories of the corner building. Adjoining the building on the west is 1403-1411 Laurens Street (HABS No. MD-1019), a row of two-story brick shops fronting a garage with its entrance in the center of the Laurens Street facade. Open land west of this group was the site of brick rowhouses, now demolished. South of the site across the ten-foot wide alley mentioned in the legal description is a fenced area which once contained an ice and coal building. No structure remains on the site, but the ice and coal supply business is still in operation on or near the corner. Directly east of the site across Calhoun Street are the buildings of the Schmidt Baking Company, the largest industrial complex in the neighborhood, now vacant. Surrounding streets are generally occupied by residential rowhouses, with some gaps caused by demolition. The topography of the area is generally flat with a slight northern rise.

2. Landscape design: None.
3. Outbuildings: None.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural drawings: None located.
- B. Historic views: None located.
- C. Interviews: None.
- D. Bibliography:

Baltimore City Directories, 1911 - 1964. Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Room, Baltimore, Maryland.

Bromley's Atlas of Baltimore City, 1896. Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation, Baltimore, Maryland.

Land Records of Baltimore City, Clarence Mitchell Courthouse, Baltimore, Maryland.

Sanborn's Fire Insurance Map of Baltimore, 1914. Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation, Baltimore, Maryland.

Topographical Survey Commission Map of Baltimore, 1914. Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation,

Baltimore, Maryland.

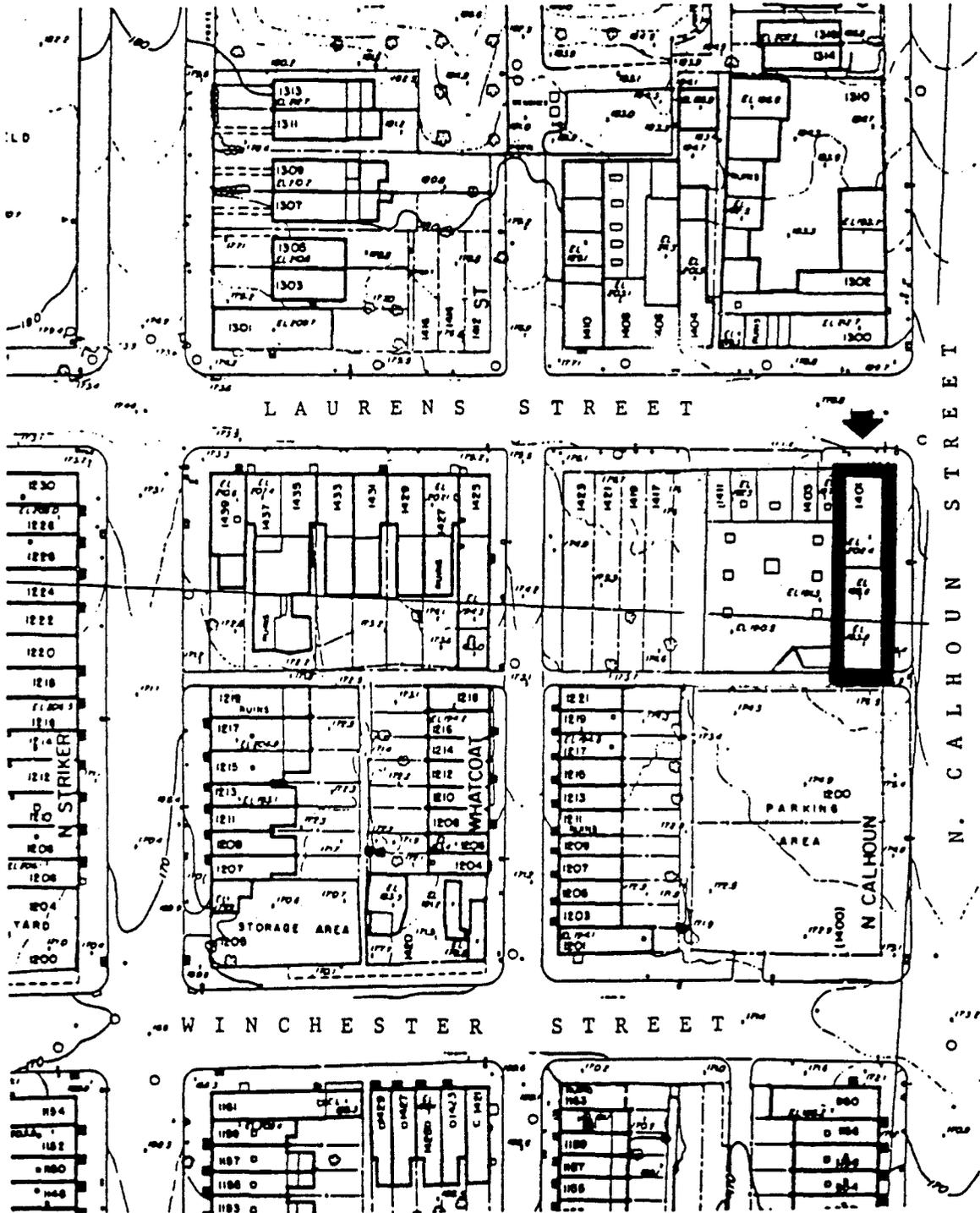
- E. Sources not yet investigated: Baltimore Sun, Baltimore Daily Record, Baltimore News, and Baltimore American are contemporary newspapers which might list building information such as building permits, architects, land transfers, etc. Oral histories of neighborhood residents may reveal more about the businesses which occupied the building.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Nehemiah Housing Opportunity Program is sponsored by Enterprise Nehemiah, Inc., a joint venture of the Enterprise Foundation and BUILD (Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development), a coalition of 46 church and community organizations. The purpose is to construct affordable housing for low-income families using a combination of state, city, federal, and community resources. Named after a biblical prophet who rebuilt Jerusalem's walls in the 5th century B.C., the project is aimed at rebuilding the most blighted areas in American cities. The first Nehemiah project was in Brooklyn, New York in the Brownsville section. The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development is providing \$4.2 million in grant funds, while the state and city are contributing \$11 million each. BUILD funds total \$2.2 million. The Baltimore city element is providing the properties involved, site clearance, and public service improvements. The project area in Sandtown-Winchester covers approximately 5 city blocks, some of which is already vacant land. The demolition of three groups of buildings, including 1401 Laurens Street, is scheduled for June 1990.

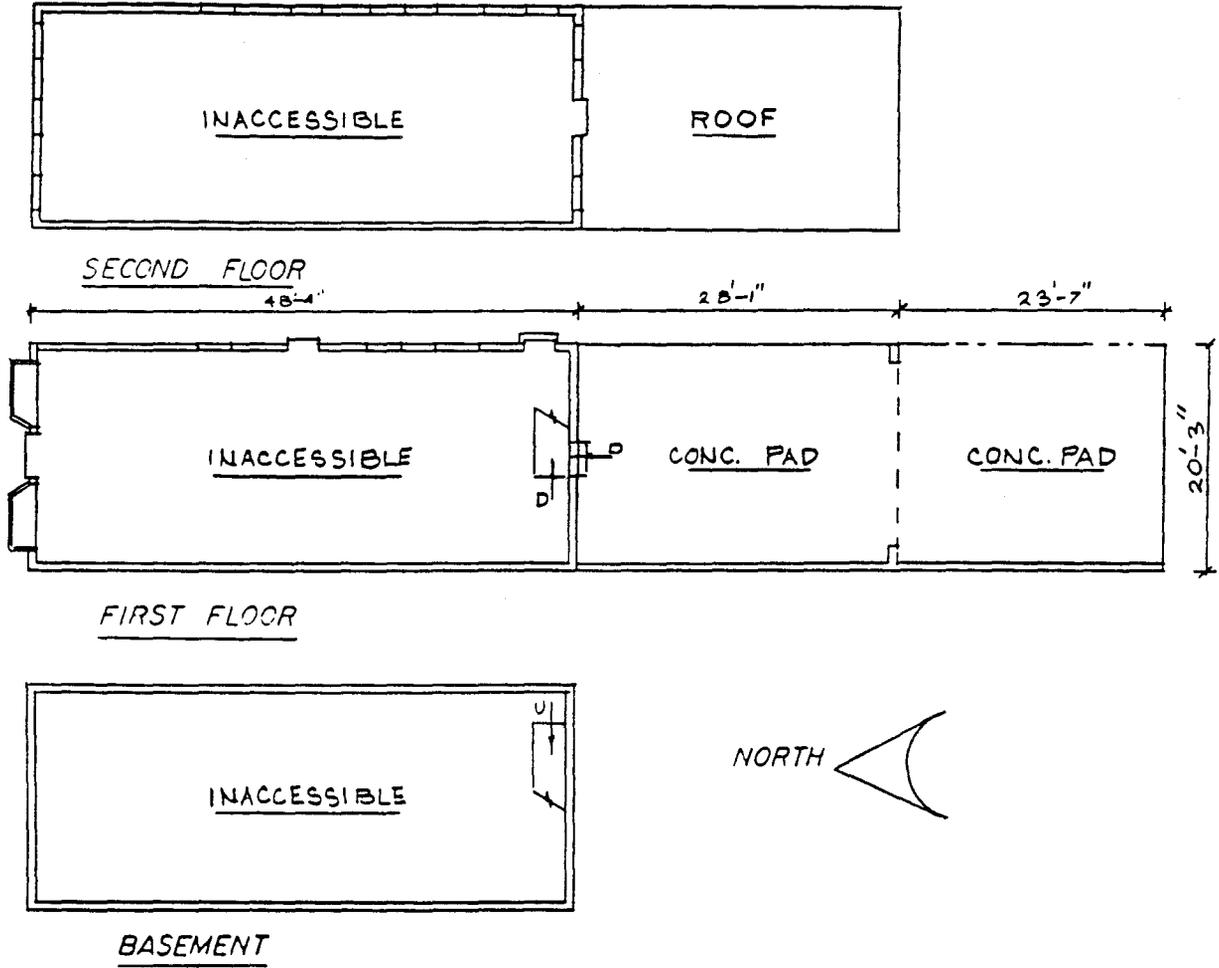
Prepared by: Janet L. Davis
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