

52-54 MONROE AVENUE (COMMERCIAL)
Detroit
Wayne County
Michigan

HABS No. MI-324

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MICH
82-DETRO
53-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Mid-Atlantic Regional Office
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

52-54 MONROE AVENUE (Commercial Building)

HABS No. MI-324

Location: 52-54 Monroe, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan
USGS Detroit, Michigan Quadrangle
UTM: 17.331445.4688530

Significance: This building contributes to the last intact pre-Civil War commercial block in Detroit.

Description: The structure is a four-story (plus basement) commercial building constructed in brick masonry in 1852. It measures 20' in width and 100' deep on the first three stories, but is only 75 feet deep on the fourth floor. The rear 25' of the third story was added in 1915. Its design is identical to the structure at 58 Monroe. Although most of the front facade has been covered by a metal sign, the remnants of cornice-level decoration survive, notably a line of dentils over a course of diagonally-laid brick. Evidence of the cast-iron lintels with urn and scroll motifs that originally appeared over the windows is visible in the upper right-hand corner of the building.

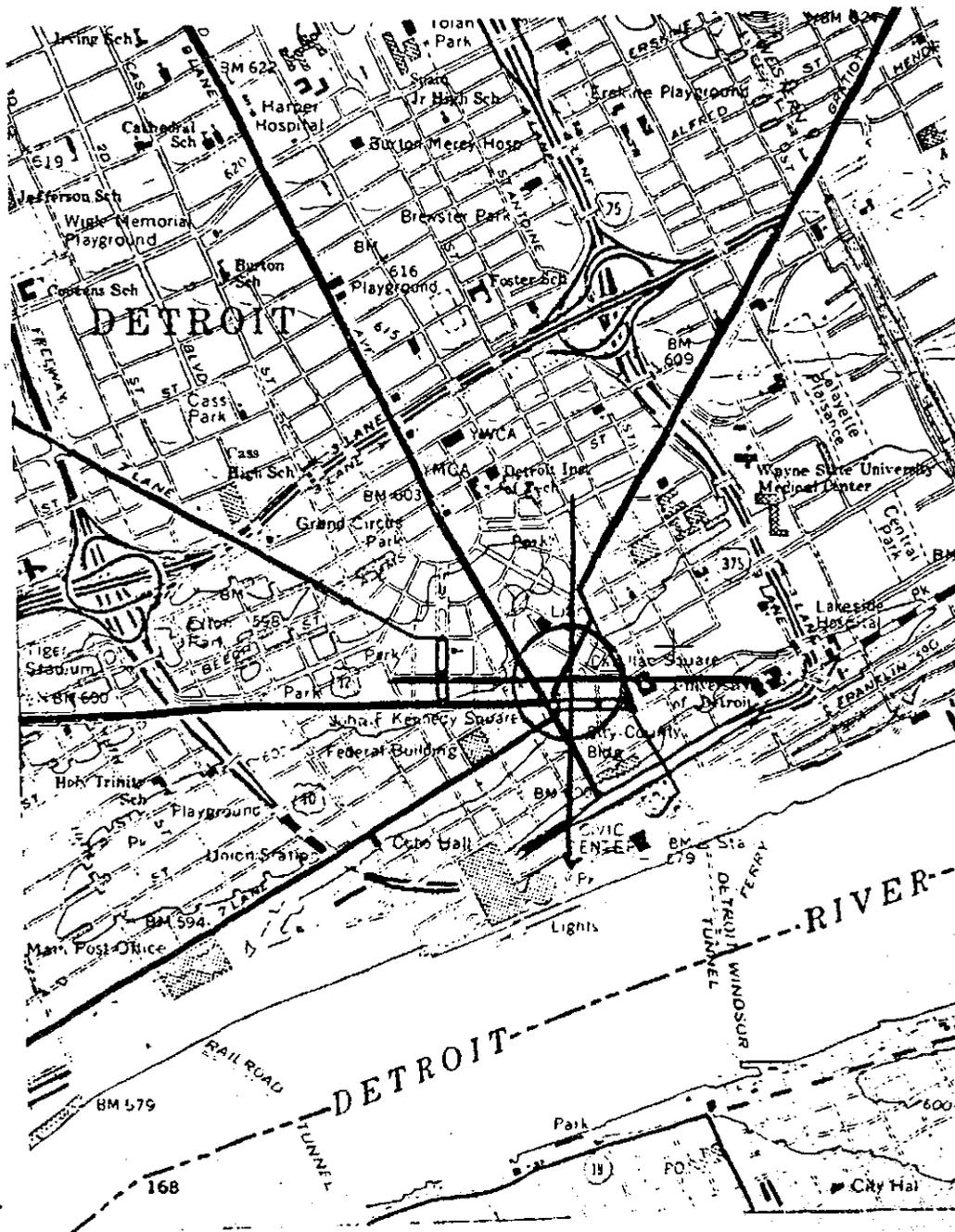
History: Hiram R. Johnson (1825-1894), a prominent Detroit businessman, bought the real estate where this building stands in 1852 and erected a series of commercial buildings known as the Johnson Block. The architect is unknown. Tenants in the two first floor spaces have included a series of saloons from 1888 until 1912, followed by a soft drink shop and restaurant in 1913-1928. Several clothing stores and shoe shops occupied the building from the mid-1930s until the late 1970s, when the building was vacated. The tenants on the upper floors cannot be identified.

Sources: Fred Carlisle, Chronology of Notable Events in the History of the Northwest Territory and Wayne County (Detroit, 1890); Silas Farmer, History of Detroit and Wayne County and Early Michigan (Detroit, 1890); and Monroe Avenue Historic District Nomination Form, National Register of Historic Places, November 7, 1974. For an historic photograph, see HABS No. MI-325-4.

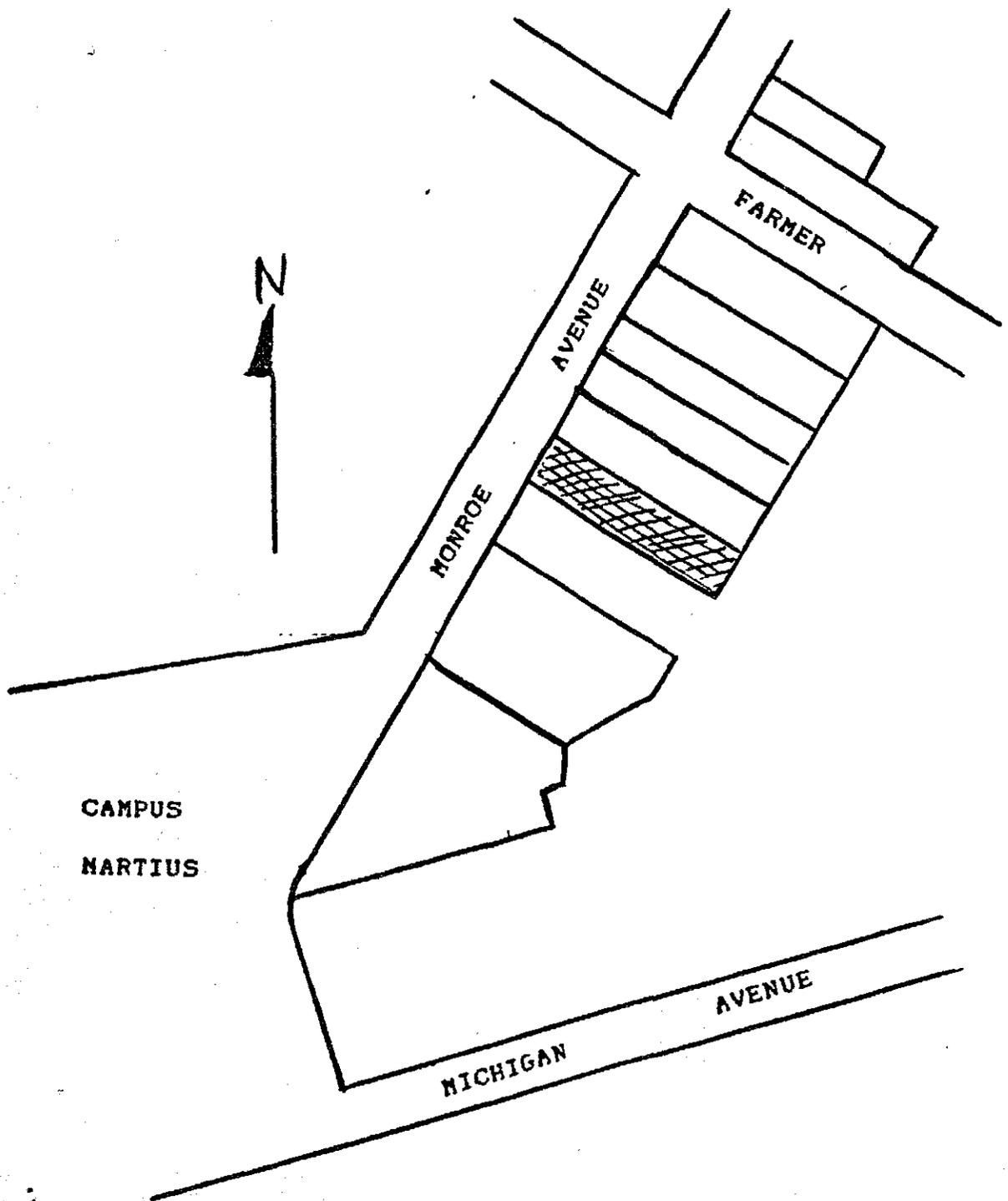
Historian: Charles K. Hyde, Department of History, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan

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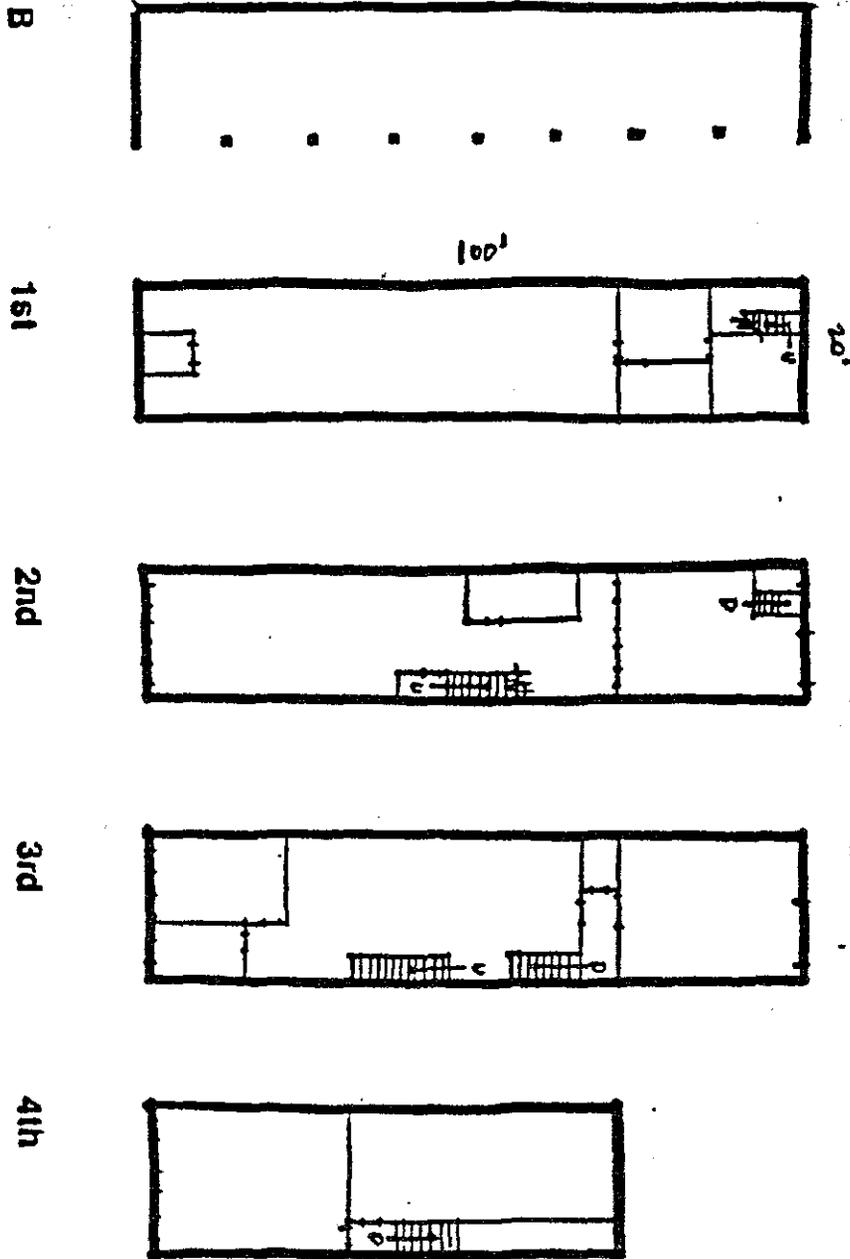
DETROIT, MICHIGAN QUADRANGLE
UTM: 17.331445.4688530



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EXISTING FLOOR PLANS