

100-102 Monroe Avenue (Commercial Building)
Detroit
Wayne County
Michigan

HABS No. MI-330

HABS
MICH
88-DETRO,
59-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HABS
MICH
82-DETRO,
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

100-102 MONROE AVENUE (Commercial Building)

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Location: 100-102 Monroe Avenue
Detroit
Wayne County
Michigan

U.S.G.S. Detroit, Michigan Quadrangle
UTM: 17.331500.4688600

Present
Owner: Community and Economic
Development Department
City of Detroit
150 Michigan Avenue
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Present
Occupant: None

Present Use: None

Significance: The building at 100-102 Monroe is a turn of the century brick commercial building and an example of the early work of the Detroit architects Frank G. Baxter and Henry A. O'Dell. Originally built as the Star Theater in 1907, it served as the home of the Theatre Royale and the Royal Theater between 1908 and 1922. This was one of first theaters to open in Detroit's Monroe Avenue theater district and enjoyed the benefits of a prominent corner location in one of Detroit's busiest commercial districts.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1907
2. Architects: Frank G. Baxter and Henry A. O'Dell. Henry A. O'Dell was born in Detroit in 1875, began working as an architect in 1902, and shortly thereafter formed a partnership with Frank G. Baxter. In addition to the Star Theater (1907) at 100-102 Monroe, Baxter & O'Dell designed the Mirth Theater (1906) on East Jefferson Avenue in Detroit. This architectural firm also designed numerous residences and commercial buildings. In 1915, as the firm of Baxter, O'Dell, and Halpin, they designed the 8-story red terra cotta, Sullivan-esque-style, T.B. Rayl Company Building at Woodward and Grand River Avenues in Detroit, their best-known local work.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the structure stands. Reference is to the Clerk's Office of the County of Wayne, Michigan.

1893	Warranty Deed, May 23, 1893, recorded in Liber 305, p. 121. Peoples' Savings Bank to Samuel B. Coyl.
1922	Lease, May 31, 1922, recorded in Liber 1599, p. 27. Merchants' Realty Company to United Cigar Store.
1982	Quit Claim Deed, November 25, 1982, recorded in Liber 21510, p. 257. Bejkush Miftaraj to the City of Detroit.
4. Builders, suppliers:
 - a. Builder: Not known

A. Physical History

5. Original plans and construction: No plans have been found, but photographic evidence from 1917 shows the original appearance of the building. The Monroe elevation once had a plain widely-overhanging cornice supported by two scrolled brackets, as well as a decorative arch adorned with garland festoons and shields above the theater entrance on Monroe. The Farmer elevation once had window crowns consisting of semi-circular hoods decorated with scroll motifs, and toward the rear of the building, with small triangular pediments on the roof above the windows. A steel-framed canopy with glass skylights covered the entire sidewalk along on the Farmer elevation. This served as a waiting area for patrons of the Liberty Theater, located in the next block east on Farmer.
6. Alterations and additions: The existing yellow-colored brick veneer applied over common red brick walls was in place by 1917 and was probably part of the original construction of 1907, since the only building permit issued for this structure between 1907 and 1921 related to lobby alterations made in 1914. There have been no additions to the original building, but major alterations were made in 1922, when the Royal Theater, which had occupied the first two stories, was converted into retail stores with entrances from both the Monroe and Farmer frontages. The second floor, which originally existed only in the rear third of the building to accommodate the theater space, was extended the full length of the building. A series of windows on the second story facing Farmer was added at that time as well. Since then, the storefronts on Monroe and Farmer have undergone dozens of minor changes. The canopy along Farmer was removed sometime after 1922.

B. Historical Context

The building housed the Star Theater in 1907, followed by the Theatre Royale in 1908-1911, and then the Royal Theater from 1912 until its closing in 1922. The rear third of the building housed a tailor shop and a bootblack during the 1910s, while a clothing factory occupied the third and fourth floors. From the 1920s through the late 1970s, a variety of retail businesses operated from the storefronts on Monroe and Farmer, including a cigar store, jewelers, shoe store, a tailor, and a barber shop. The tenants on the upper stories cannot be identified.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building at 100-102 Monroe Avenue was originally a good example of a brick commercial facade at the turn of the century. Italianate details include large segmental arches over the third and fourth floor window section on the Monroe facade, the triangular parapet, the rectangular windows, and the course of simulated roof-line brackets on the Farmer elevation. An historic photograph from 1917 shows original Italianate features which are no longer extant.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is in generally fair condition, although part of the exterior wall on the south elevation suffers from extensive water damage.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The structure is four stories tall, plus basement. It is rectangular in layout and measures 20 feet wide and 100 feet deep.
2. Foundations: Basement walls are made of brick masonry.
3. Wall construction: Exterior walls are masonry, load-bearing, and consist of common brick with a veneer of orange-colored bricks. The most prominent feature on the Monroe elevation is the grouping of large windows that fill the facade at the third and fourth stories and are topped by a segmental arch. In addition to a single stone sill, the windows are outlined by courses of raised brick. Seven rectangular windows per story appear above the first story on the Farmer facade, and three per story on the rear of the building. Six of the seven second story windows on the Farmer facade were added in 1922 when the second story was converted from theater use into commercial space. Some of the wide variety of windows on this building are slightly arched at the top, while most of them have slightly-projecting stone sills. Raised brick is used to create piers in the rear third of the building and corbelling immediately beneath the roofline on Farmer and at the rear of the structure. A wrought-iron fire escape extends from the first story to the roof on the Farmer elevation.

B. Description of Exterior

4. Structural systems, framing: Wooden floor joists and roof rafters bear on interior cast iron beams which, in turn, are supported by cast-iron columns and masonry load-bearing exterior walls.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways: The building has a total of six doorways: one on Monroe, four along Farmer, and a service door in the rear.

b. Windows: On both the third and fourth stories of the Monroe Avenue facade, a pair of six-over-six windows originally flanked a pair of eight-over-one windows. The fenestration on the third story now has large windows that flank four small panes. The date of the existing windows is unknown. The pattern of fenestration on the second story, with large panes of plate glass, has been drastically altered since 1917, but the date of these changes is unknown.

One-over-one double-hung sash appear on the third and fourth stories of the Farmer facade. The second story has casement windows consisting of two lights hinged on the outside of the frame. The second story window at the extreme rear of the Farmer facade, previously a double-hung window, has the same design, except that a transom section occupies the upper third of the window opening. The second story windows were installed in the course of the conversion of the second story from theater use into commercial space in 1922.

The rear facade has a mixture of double-hung four-over-four sash on the third and fourth stories, and on the far eastern corner of the rear facade, three narrow double-hung two-over-one sash. On the second story of the rear facade, the original windows were altered to produce a pair of double-hung one-over-one sash with a transom. The first story windows and original doorway on the rear facade are bricked up.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape: The building has a flat roof, with a parapet, which is moderately pitched to the rear.
- b. Cornice: The original cornices on the Monroe and Farmer facades have been removed. A plain cast iron cap tops the Farmer facade. The Monroe elevation culminates in a triangular brick parapet with stone copping.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: See sketch plans.
2. Additional interior description: Because of numerous remodelings and extensive water damage caused by a leaking roof over the past decade, virtually none of the original interior fabric remains, including floors, wall coverings, fixtures, and furnishings.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The structure faces northwest and stands at the southeast corner of the intersection of Monroe Avenue and Farmer, with storefronts on both streets, a highly visible location in one of Detroit's busiest commercial districts.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural drawings: None have been found.

B. Historic Views: The best views are found in the collections of Manning Brothers, Commercial Photographers, 26761 John R, Madison Heights, MI 48071. These include a view shot in 1917. The Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library has overall views of Monroe Avenue.

C. Bibliography

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Detroit, City of. Building Permits. Department of Building and Safety Engineering, City-County Building, Detroit, Michigan 48226.

Wayne County, Register of Deeds. Land Tract Index. International Center Building, Suite 400. 400 Monroe Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48226.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Burton, Clarence M. The City of Detroit, Michigan, 1701-1922. 5 Volumes. Detroit: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1922.

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Morrison, Andrew Craig. Opera House, Nickel Show, and Palace: An Illustrated Inventory of Theater Buildings in the Detroit Area. Dearborn, Michigan: Henry Ford Museum, 1974.

Polk, Ralph L. and Company. Detroit City Directory. Detroit: R.L. Polk & Company, 1886-1974.

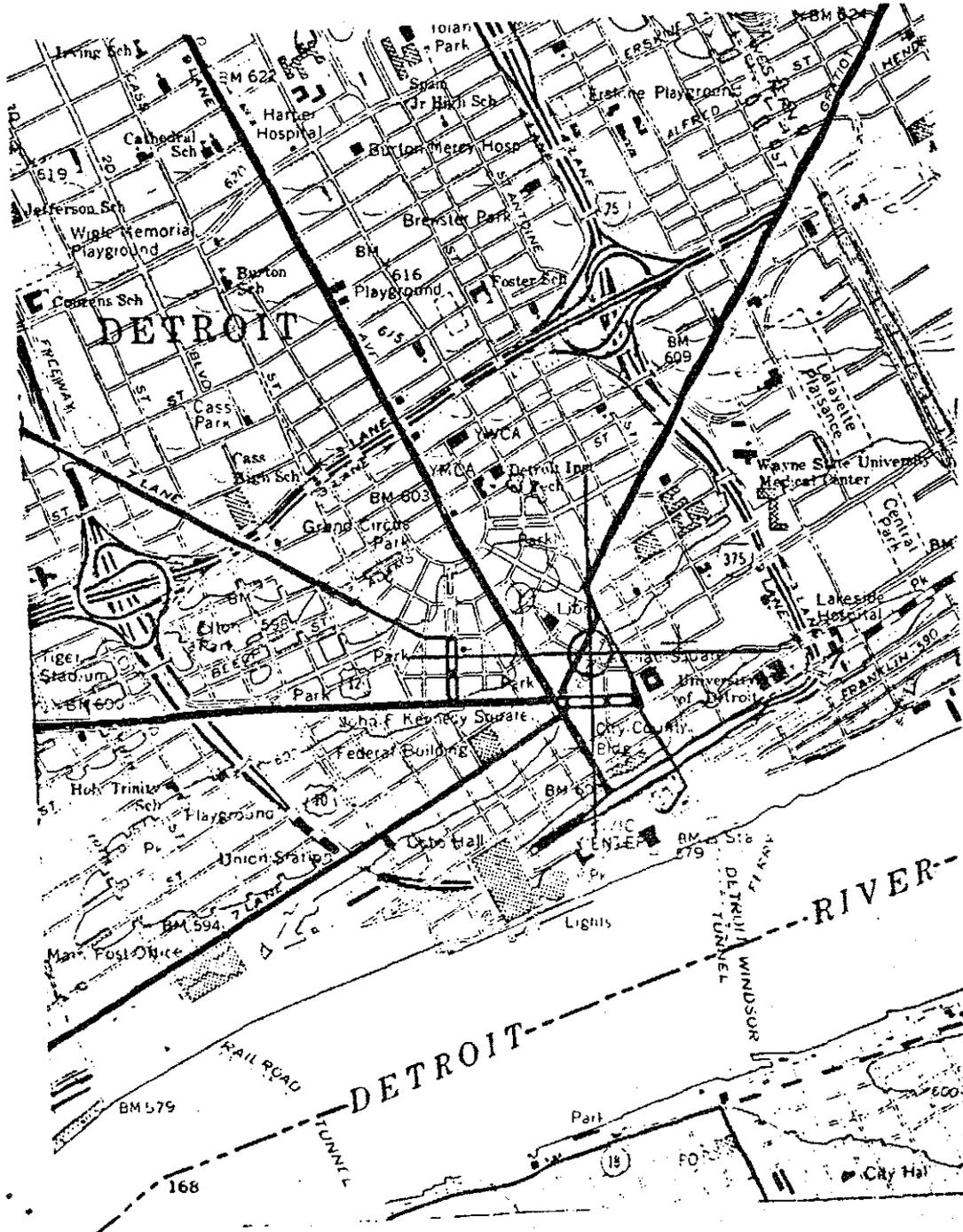
Sanborn Map and Publishing Company. Insurance Maps of Detroit, Michigan. New York: Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, 1884, 1897, 1897-1919, 1921, 1921-61, and 1979.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

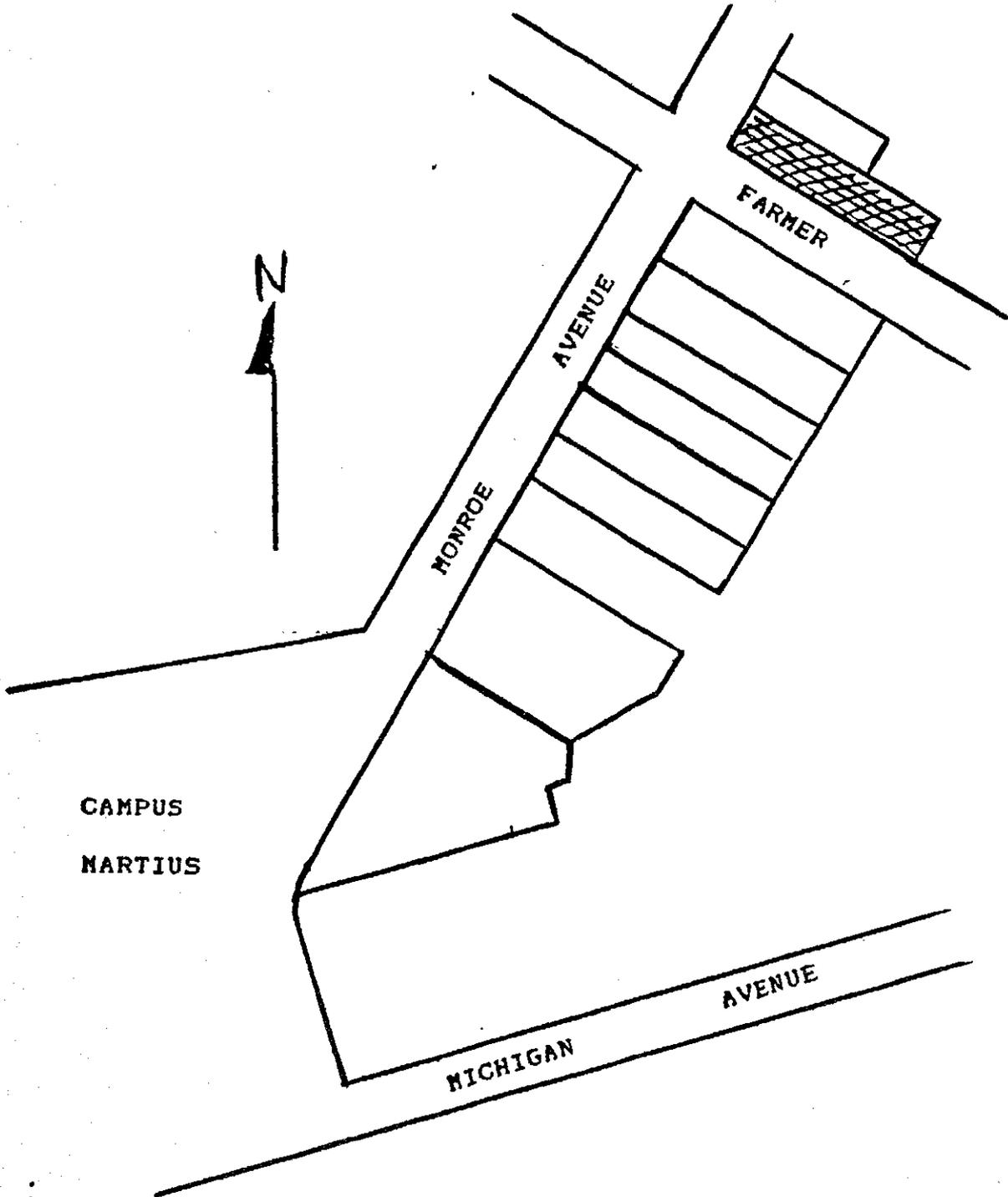
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Date: July-August 1989

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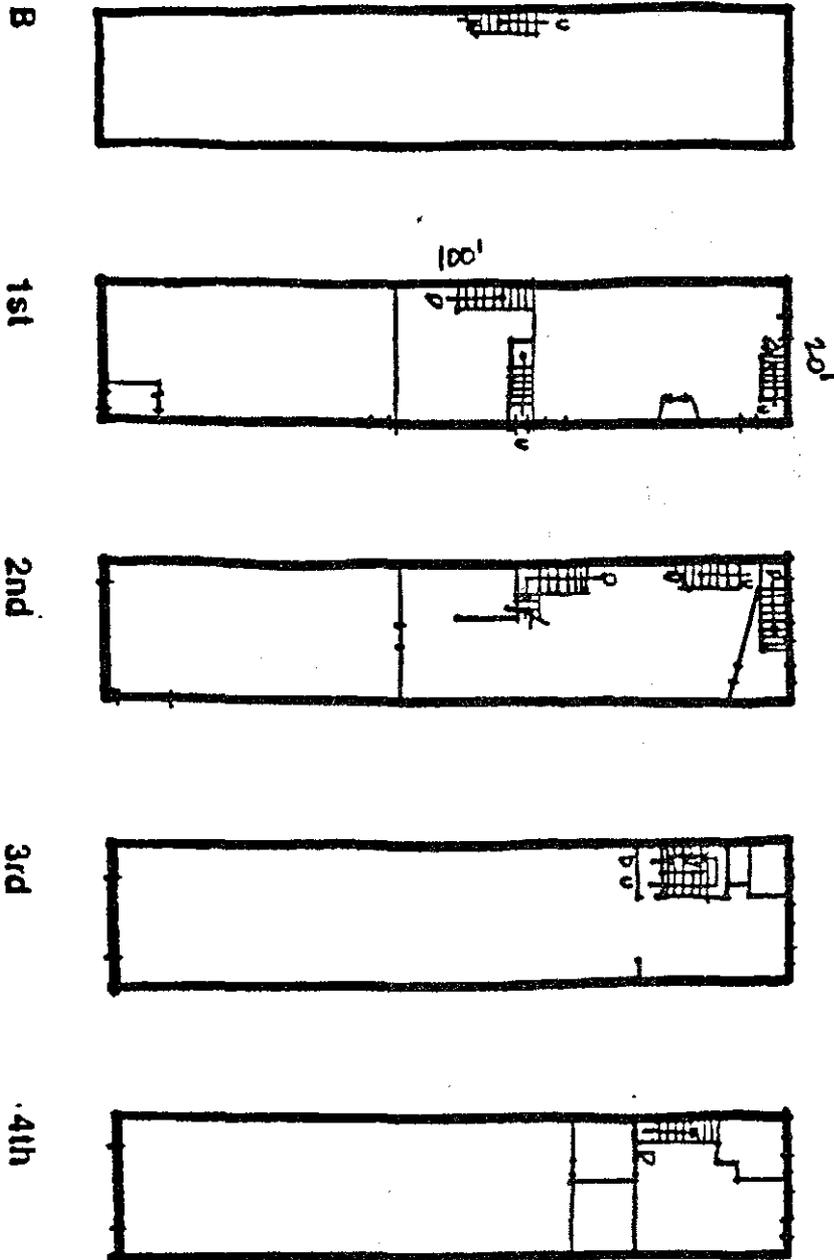
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EXISTING FLOOR PLANS