

FINCH HOTEL (Franklin Hotel)
185 East Main Street
Spartanburg
Spartanburg County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-870

HABS
SC-870

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Southeast Region
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FINCH HOTEL (Franklin Hotel)

HABS No. SC-870

Location: 185 East Main Street
Spartanburg
Spartanburg County
South Carolina

U.S.G.S. Spartanburg Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates
17.415200.3867680

Present Owner: City of Spartanburg
Post Office Box 1749
Spartanburg
South Carolina 29304

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: None. Demolition is scheduled for September 1988.

Statement of Significance: The Franklin Hotel, located on East Main Street in downtown Spartanburg, South Carolina, is significant both in local history and architecture. It was one of the leading hotels of the city during the early and mid-twentieth century and its architectural design and details are excellent representations of the period after World War I. Constructed between 1918 and 1921 for W.T. Finch, the hotel was built during a period of expansion and prosperity for Spartanburg. The luxuriousness of the hotel was well-known and it was the center for community social occasions.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: The construction dates are clearly outlined in court testimony given by the building's Architect, Staten Peyton Tinsley. The Architect, Contractor, Subcontractors and Mortgage Holder had to sue the Owner on November 15, 1921. The following is the Architect's "Itemized Statement":

"1st. 1916-1918 - To drawing, preparing and furnishing the plans and specifications by S.P. Tinsley, Architect, for the construction of the New Hotel Finch on East Main Street, and for repairs to and connecting the old Hotel Finch on South Liberty Street therewith.

2nd. From May 1st, 1918, to February 7th, 1921. - To supervising the work done by Willard-Boggs and Company, Contractors, in building the New Hotel Finch on East Main Street, and in repairing and connecting therewith the old Hotel Finch on South Liberty Street.

3rd. From May 24th, 1919, to October 25th, 1920. - To supervising the work and installation of the heating plant by E.L. Stallings Contractor.

4th. From June 21, 1920, to November 14, 1920. - To supervising the work of John S. Forrest, Plasterer.

5th. From February 17, 1921, to May 15, 1921. - To supervising the inside trim work as done by C. V. Tinsley et.al.

6th. From May, 1918, to February 17, 1921. - To supervising the work of Whit Houston, Superintendent of Construction.

7th. From the first of the year, 1920, up until the year, 1921. - To supervising the work of construction of the elevators by the Otis Elevator Company.

8th. From June 1, 1918, to April 8, 1921. - To supervising the installation of the conduits and electric wiring by the Brill Electric Company.

9th. To preparing the plans and supervising the tile work by the Campbell Tile and Mantel Company during the years, 1920 and 1921.

10th. To preparing plans and specifications and for supervising the work as done by the R.O. Pickens Roofing Company from March 12, 1920, to August 24, 1921.

FINCH HOTEL (Franklin Hotel)
HABS No. SC-870 (page 3)

11th. To supervising the painting as done by J.V. Haynes, Painter, from September 1, 1921, to October 29, 1921.

The above work was done by me as Architect and as General Supervisor in charge of the erection and construction of the New Hotel Finch Building on East Main Street and in the repairs to and connecting up with the old Finch Hotel Building on South Liberty Street, under a contract, and for which the said W.T. Finch is due me, the said S.P. Tinsley, the sum of-----\$10,000.00."⁽¹⁾

Contemporary newspaper account tells us:

a. By March 1919 "The cement frame of the new building is complete and work on the brick walls will start within a short time. ... it is likely the new part of the Hotel will be completed by early fall."⁽²⁾

b. On August 20, 1919 "Work on Finch Annex still held up." This article states that the Hotel is up to the third floor and if a brick masons' strike had not stopped the work, the Hotel would be complete in January of 1920, but that it will be the summer before completion."⁽³⁾

2. Architect: Staten Peyton Tinsley⁽⁴⁾ was a local Spartanburg Architect (born October 20, 1867, died October 23, 1923, buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Spartanburg). Mr. Tinsley is listed in the Spartanburg City Directory as an Architect from 1908 until 1924. His wife, Sue B. Tinsley, is listed in the 1925 City Directory as the widow of S.P. Tinsley. In his testimony during a law suit, in Spartanburg County Court of Common Pleas on February 15, 1922, Mr. Tinsley⁽⁵⁾ stated he was the Architect of the building and began plans in 1916. He also stated he was owed \$10,000.00 and had not been paid any money for his services. His last day on the job was the 29th of October 1921 when he said the building was 80% to 90% finished."⁽⁶⁾

3. Original and Subsequent Owners: In 1916, W.T. Finch purchased a tract of land on East Main Street⁽⁷⁾ in order to enlarge the Hotel he operated on an adjacent tract. The original Finch Hotel was located at 123 South Liberty Street and began operation in 1910.⁽⁸⁾ Finch mortgaged himself heavily to Frank Hodges, a local businessman and continued to try to finish the Hotel project. The unfinished Hotel was sold at Public Auction to Frank Hodges for \$201,000.00⁽⁹⁾ Hodges later named the building "The Franklin Hotel" and operated the Hotel for over forty years. The Hotel was sold to the R.M. Caine Company of Greenville, S.C., in the 1970's and became a boarding house with eighty of its two hundred rooms occupied in 1983.⁽¹⁰⁾ In August 1988 the City of Spartanburg purchased the Hotel and the structure is slated for demolition in September 1988 to make room for a high rise office complex.

FINCH HOTEL (Franklin Hotel)
HABS No. SC-870 (page 4)

4. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers: See Section 1 (Date of Erection) for a list of persons supervised during construction.

5. Alterations and Additions: The building contains only one major architectural alteration. Originally the central ceiling bay of the first floor Lobby opened into the second floor sitting rooms. A handrail between the four central columns formed a balcony. This feature seems to have been removed at an early date as the floor tile used to infill matches the original closely. Walls were placed between the two western columns and the southern columns to form two separate sitting rooms.

B. Historical Context

The Finch Hotel (Franklin), located on East Main Street in downtown Spartanburg, South Carolina, was one of the leading hotels of the City during the early and mid-twentieth century. Constructed between 1918 and 1922,⁽¹¹⁾ the hotel was erected during a period of rapid commercial and industrial growth. The luxuriousness of the hotel was well known and it became the center of social occasions. The hotel was so costly to build that the owner, W.T. Finch (born September 9, 1865, died May 20, 1959),⁽¹²⁾ was forced to sell the hotel in order to pay off construction costs. Finch, a native of Spartanburg, built a hotel in 1910 on South Liberty Street. A 1912 description of this hotel can be found in a folder marked "Hotels" in the Spartanburg County Library. Mr. Finch is described thus: "He has by his noteworthy energy and enterprise made and gained an excellent reputation in all circles for his kind, courteous and genial attention to his guests."

Between 1922 and the early 1960's, under the ownership of Frank Hodge, the Franklin Hotel was a leading social center for the community. The first floor contains a commodious dining room and on the sixth floor a ballroom was located. These spaces were the scene for many civic and school dances as well as other celebrations.⁽¹³⁾ Nearby Converse College had a leading school of music in the Southeast, and noted symphony and opera companies who played at the college would stay at the Franklin. National, state and local political leaders also were guests at the Franklin during these years.

After 1960 the fortunes of the hotel declined with the lessening of railroad traffic and decreasing business activity on Main Street. The Franklin was sold to a Greenville Company and it became used as a home for the elderly. In 1985 the hotel closed its doors to guests. Deterioration of windows and doors later provided accommodations to flocks of pigeons and an occasional barn owl.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This structure is a prime example of creative eclectic architecture married to functional commercial architecture. The front facade exhibits Greek doric columns of colossal size surmounted by a metoped and triglyphed entablature three times smaller than would be proper if classically proportioned. The fourth through sixth floor front facade is a mixture of Renaissance and Venetian architectural details with a heroic scaled bracketed denticulated cornice above. The other three facades are purely functional commercial in style.

2. Condition of fabric: The building is in a bad state of disrepair. The original sixth floor cornice has been removed because it threatened life safety. Windows and interior wall finishes are badly deteriorated.

B. Description of Exterior

1. The building is tee-shaped and measures 182' long. The first quarter of the building is 50' wide and then narrows symmetrically to 35'-8" in width.

2. Foundation: Unknown.

3. Walls: The walls are reddish brown brick. The north elevation is three bays in width and contains many terra cotta decorative elements. This facade is dominated by a large two-story portico supported by Doric columns and features an entablature with triglyphs and metopes and a stepped parapet. The columns are fluted and sheathed with glazed terra-cotta tiles. The first floor has an original rounded arch entryway with double doors, sidelights and a fanlight. The arched entryway is composed of terra-cotta tiles with a keystone. The fanlight contains multi-colored stained glass with the letter "F" placed in the center of the glass arrangement. On either side of the entryway is a tri-part window also set within a rounded arch of terra-cotta tiles. These windows have a central one-over-one sash frame flanked by single pane frames. Above these windows are fanlights with stained glass similar in design to that at the entryway. The second story features a central doorway which opens onto an exterior balcony with an iron railing. This entryway has a central doorway with sidelights and a tri-part transom. The flanking two bays each contain rectangular one-over-one sash windows with small terra-cotta lintels. The upper four stories are symmetrical in their fenestration and decorative elements. The upper facade is also three bays in width with two windows on the central bay separated from three flanking windows by terra-cotta piers. On the third and fifth stories the central windows share a pedimented

window head with windows on the adjacent bays containing window heads with alternating pediments and flat lintels of terra-cotta. The fourth and sixth stories have central windows with rounded arch molding and keystones. Flanking windows on these stories have matching arched window heads with keystones; many of these have become deteriorated. All windows on the upper facade are one-over-one sash with sills supported by paired brackets.

4. Structural framing system: The Hotel is constructed of steel columns, fire-proofed with terra cotta tile and plaster surrounds supporting composite concrete and steel beams. The beams support a concrete and terra cotta tile floor system. The structural system is similar to those developed in Chicago in the 1890's by William LeBaron Jenney (1832-1907).

5. Porches: The doric porch on the north elevation has elaborate ceramic mosaic tile floors on both levels. The handrail on the first floor is made of brass tubing and the second floor handrail is made of vertically spaced square iron pickets capped by a brass tube.

6. Openings and Doors: See Item #3 above.

7. Roof: The structure has an almost flat roof. The cornice and roof work was applied by Pickens Roofing of Spartanburg. The statement of their work is preserved in court records and reads thus:

"April 29 "Contract on roof, as follows:

Barrett Specification roof

63 squares

Flashing to complete roof

Counterflashing " "

Main cornice, front & side returns

Tin covering, main cornice

Lower cornice & tin cover

Down spout

Labor on same from

March, 1920, to Aug. 24,
1921

Contract Price 1850.00" (14)

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: See attached plans (pages 10 thru 15)

2. Flooring: The floor of the first floor and the second floor sitting rooms are finished in hexagonal ceramic mosaic tile. Each guest room and all corridors have a wide border of hexagonal ceramic tile and the infill area of these spaces is concrete covered

with floral area carpets. The ball room on the sixth floor is finished in 3" wide maple flooring with a medium brown finish.

3. Walls and ceiling finish: The Lobby, Dining Room and one guest room on the northeast corner of the sixth floor have elaborate plaster cornices. They were applied in approximately 5'-0" sections. The walls and ceilings in all other areas are smooth plaster. The Lobby and second floor sitting rooms have tan marble wainscot up to about 5'-0" with a dark greenish black marble base.

4. Doors: The guest room doors are two panelled with simple molded transomed frames. The doors from the Lobby to the dining room are mahogany doors with halfpanels of clear beveled glass.

5. Mechanical equipment: Heating. The building had steam heating with a boiler in the basement and radiators in the rooms. Elevator: An Otis elevator was installed in the original construction. A Greek key motif ran over the doors which were composed of 3 panels of mirrors.

D. Site

1. The Franklin Hotel sits on a large lot between Main and Broad Streets. There are no outbuildings and the rear of the building is surrounded by a metal fence.

FOOT NOTES

- (1) Judgement Rolls #18275, p.4967, 4968, 4969, Willard Boggs & Co. Vs. W.T. Finch et.al. Feb. 1922, Spartanburg County Records of Clerk of Court, Spartanburg Courthouse, Spartanburg, S.C.
- (2) Spartanburg Herald, March 8, 1919, p. 3.
- (3) Spartanburg Herald, August 22, 1919, p. 1.
- (4) Judgement Rolls #18275, p. 4932.
- (5) Ibid. p. 4932.
- (6) Ibid. p. 4932, 4933, 4934.
- (7) Deed Book 5-0, p. 267, Spartanburg County Records of Mesne Conveyance, Spartanburg County Courthouse, Spartanburg, S.C.
- (8) Spartanburg, S.C., City & Suburban Directory, 1910, Spartanburg County Library, Kennedy Room.
- (9) Deed Book 22-L, p. 376, Spartanburg County Records of Mesne Conveyance.
- (10) National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form, Date Entered 28 July 1983, Finch Hotel, Franklin Hotel.
- (11) Judgement Rolls #18275, p. 4967, 4968, 4969.
- (12) Ibid. p. 4929-4972.
- (13) Spartanburg Herald Journal, 2 September 1981, p. A-9.
- (14) Judgement Rolls #18275, p. 4927.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Spartanburg Herald. 8 March 1919, p. 3.

Spartanburg Herald. 22 August 1919, p. 1.

Spartanburg Herald. 24 October 1923, p. 3

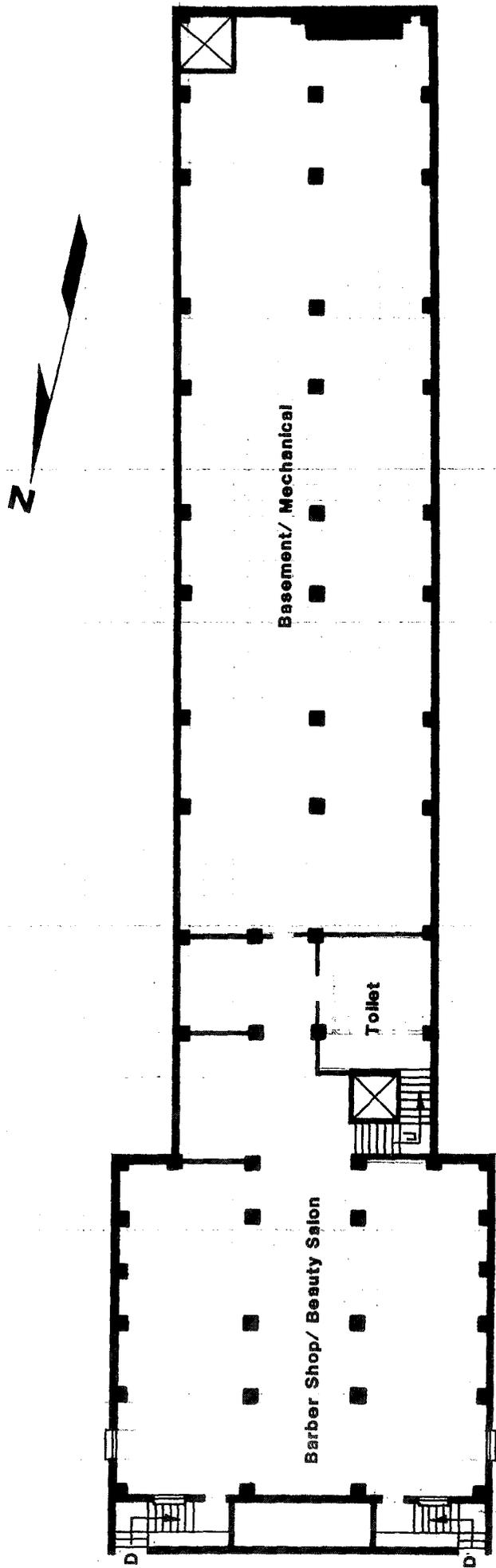
Spartanburg Herald Journal. 2 September 1981, p. A-9.

Spartanburg, S.C. Spartanburg County Courthouse. Records of Clerk of Court, Judgement Rool #18275, p. 4929-4972.

Spartanburg, S.C., Spartanburg County Courthouse Records of Mesne Conveyance. Deed Book 5-0, p. 267; Deed Book 22-L, p. 376.

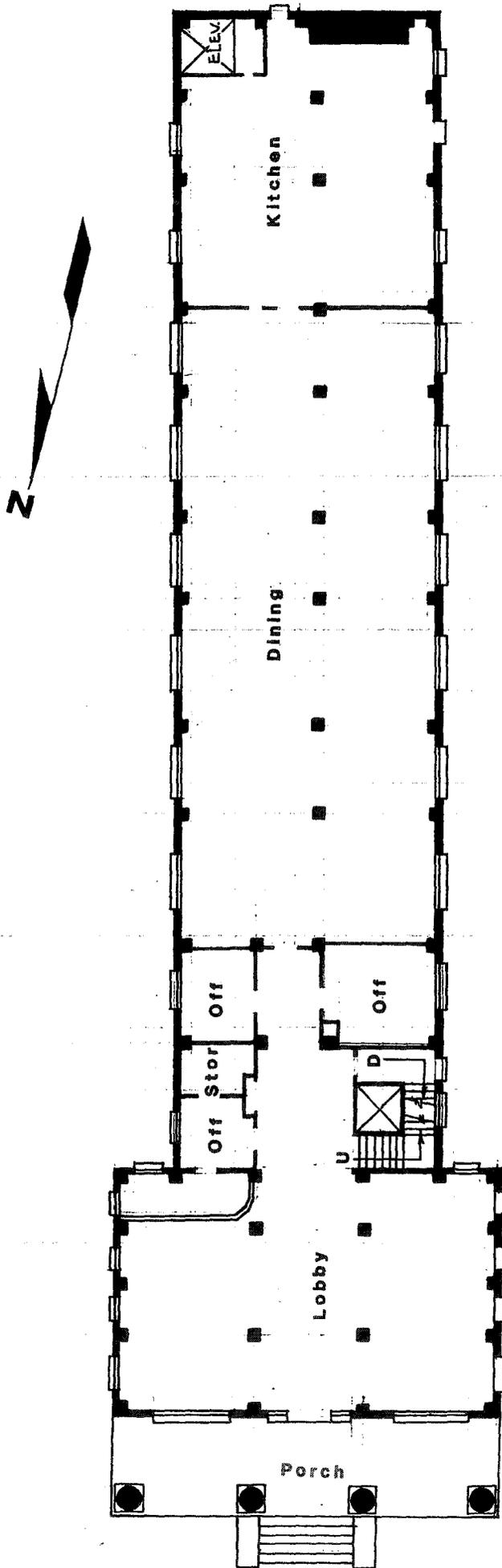
Spartanburg, S.C., Spartanburg County Library, Kennedy Room, City and Suburban Directories 1908-1935.

PREPARED BY: Martin E. Meek, AIA
TITLE: Architect
AFFILIATION: Thomas Campbell Pridgeon, Inc.
735 East Main Street
Spartanburg, S.C.
Tel: 803/583-1456
DATE: 31 August 1988

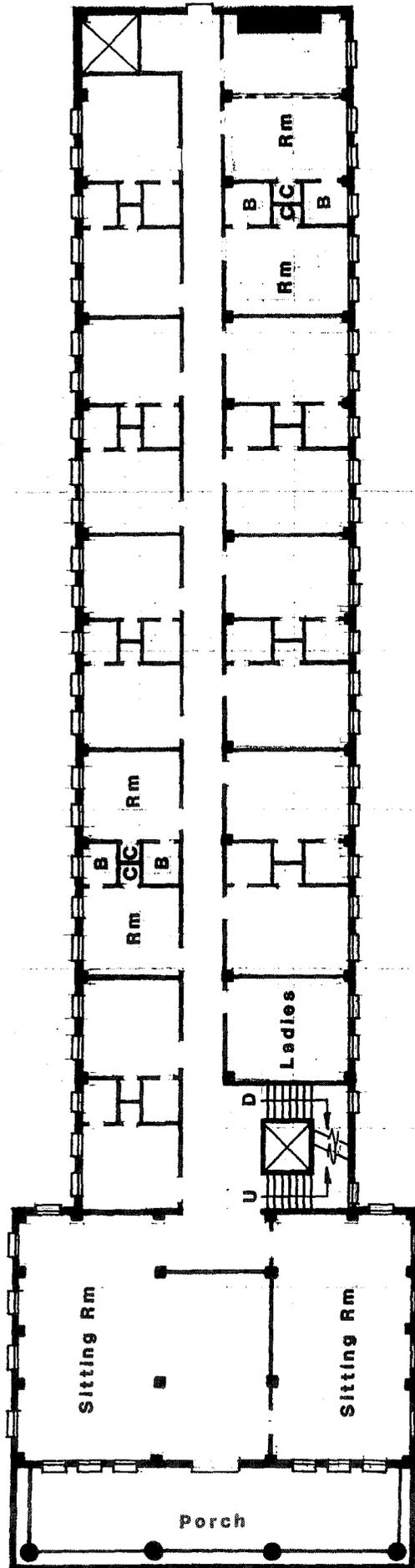


Basement

Scale: 1" = 20'

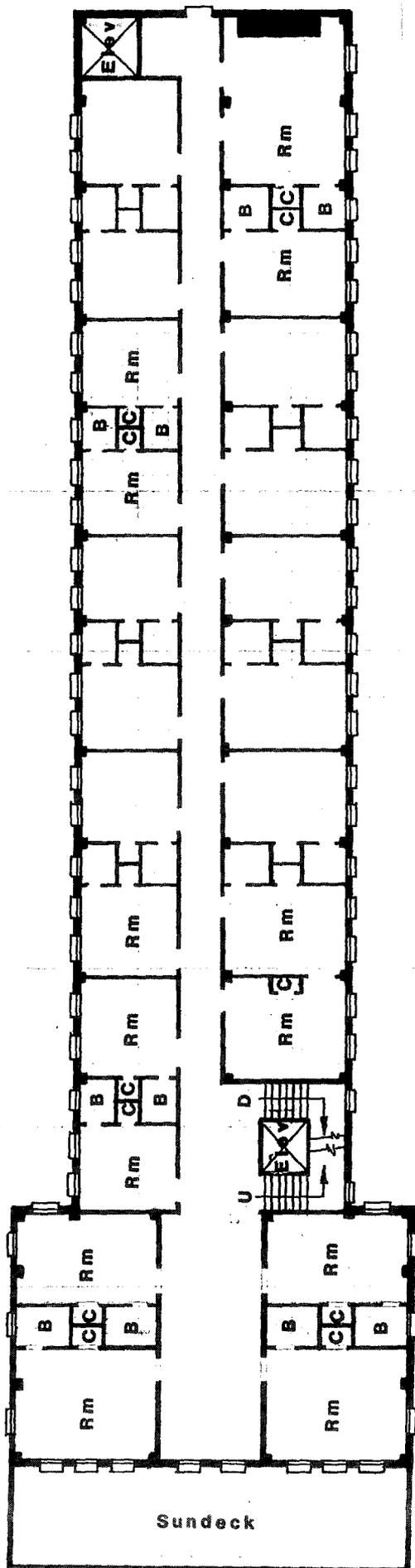


First Floor Plan
Scale 1" = 20'



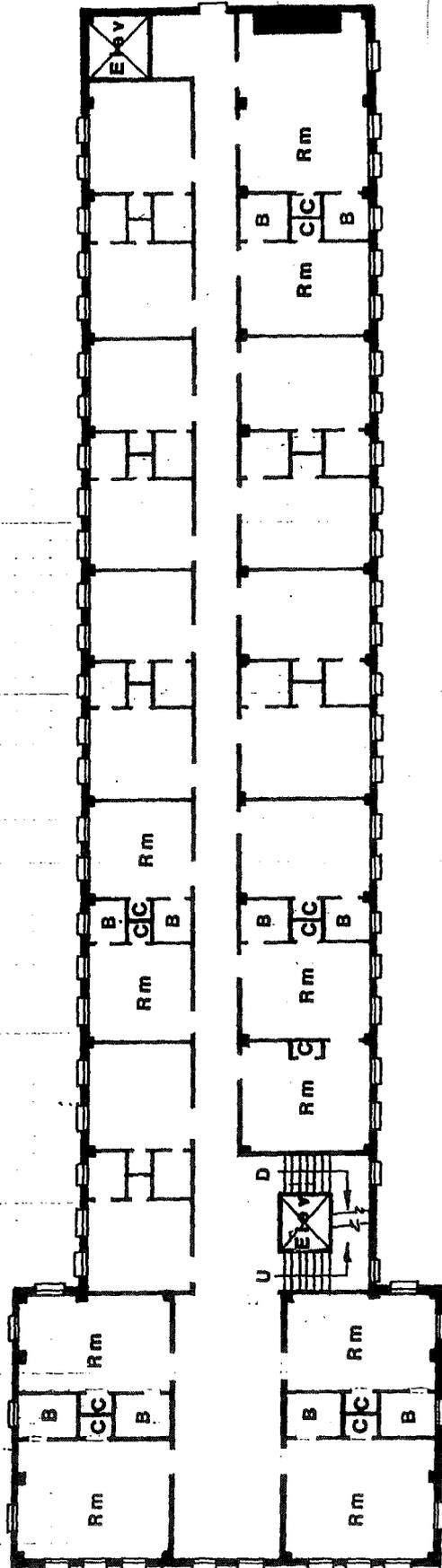
Second Floor

Scale: 1" = 20'



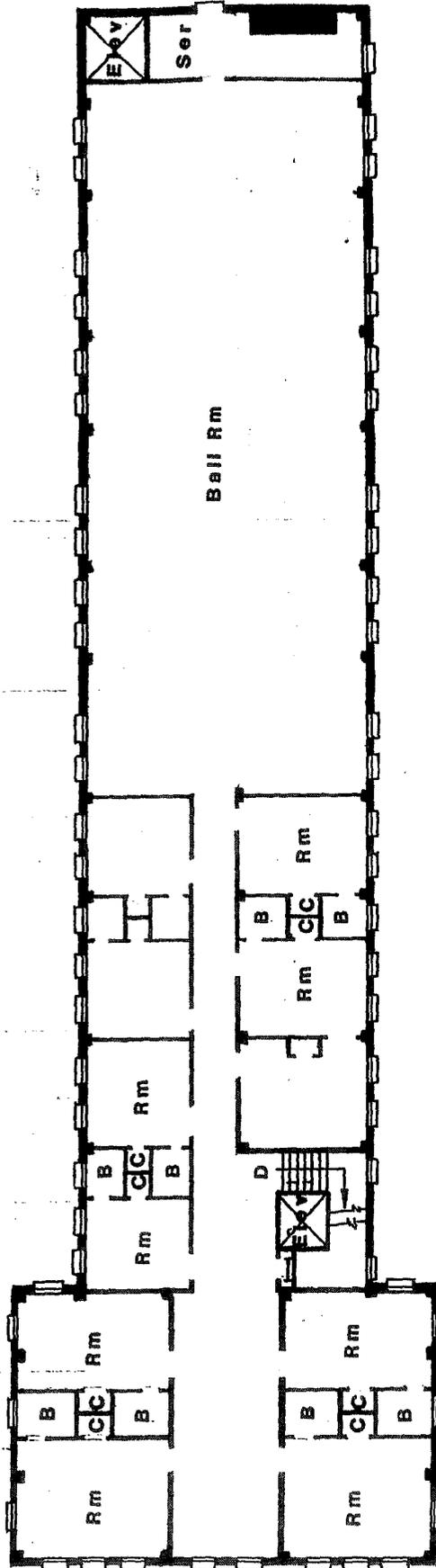
Third Floor

Scale: 1" = 20'



Fourth Floor & Fifth Floor

Scale: 1" = 20'



Sixth Floor

Scale: 1" = 20'