

104-106 Monroe Avenue (Commercial Building)
Detroit
Wayne County
Michigan

HABS No. MI-331

HABS
MICH
82-DETRO,
60-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

104-106 MONROE AVENUE (Commercial Building)

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Location: 104-106 Monroe Avenue
Detroit
Wayne County
Michigan

U.S.G.S. Detroit, Michigan Quadrangle
UTM: 17.331520.4688620

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 104-106 Monroe is an example
of an early twentieth century brick commercial
building in Detroit.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: circa 1900, alteration in 1923. The Monroe Avenue Historic District Nomination Form (1974) dated the building at the turn of the century.

2. Architect: Not known.

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.

1881 Warranty Deed, December 31, 1881, recorded in Liber 243, p. 128.
Jonathan K. Webster to Francis Palms.

1891 Warranty Deed, December 14, 1891, recorded in Liber 387, p. 77.
Rebecca M. White to Joseph M. McKin.

1906 Warranty Deed, July 3, 1906, recorded in Liber 679, p. 114.
Elmer L. White, Trustee to Jamea B. Book.

1983 Warranty Deed, February 14, 1983, recorded in Liber 21586, p. 342.
Beth Chernikov to the City of Detroit.

4. Builders, suppliers:

a. Builder: Not known.

5. Original plans and construction: No original plans have been found. A 1917 photograph of an adjoining building shows part of this structure as well (see HABS No. MI-330-4). At that time, the Monroe facade had three one-over-one windows on each story above the street level and was faced with red common brick.

6. Alterations and additions: The Monroe facade was completely reworked in 1923 when the fenestration was drastically altered and the building was refaced with white common brick (City of Detroit Building Permit, March 5, 1923). Double-hung individual windows with pediments and lintels were replaced by an open window pattern with continuous sills.

B. Historical Context

This building housed a variety of commercial tenants over its lifetime, reflecting the vitality of Monroe Avenue as a location for business. A saloon occupied the ground floor from 1901 until 1907, followed by King's Tea Store in 1908-1917. A pawnbroker and a kosher restaurant shared the first floor from 1918 through 1923. From the mid-1920s until the late 1970s, when the building was vacated, a restaurant or lunchroom occupied one of the retail spaces, while a clothing store or shoe outlet occupied the other space. The Detroit City Directories did not list the tenants occupying the upper floors, so they cannot be identified.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The structure at 104-106 Monroe is one of a number of early twentieth century commercial buildings in downtown Detroit. This building has been altered substantially since the early twentieth century when it modestly displayed some of the Italianate elements common to other commercial structures on Monroe Avenue. The alterations completed in 1923 drastically altered the building's appearance. The remodeled Monroe facade, particularly the large spaces for glass windows, reflects the influence of Chicago-school architectural concepts.
2. Condition of fabric: Internally, the building is in very poor condition due to major fire 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 60 feet deep.
2. Wall construction: The exterior wall on the Monroe elevation consists primarily of large window spaces on the second, third, and fourth stories, surrounded by white-colored common brick. Long concrete window sills stretch the width of the building.
3. Structural system, framing: Wooden floor joists and roof rafters are supported by masonry load-bearing exterior walls.

B. Description of Exterior:

4. Openings:

- a. Doorways: The building has two entrances on Monroe and two service entrances in the back.
- b. Windows: In the early twentieth century, the building had three double-hung one-over-one windows per story above the first floor. The individual window units have since been replaced by large window systems. Each window group consists of four small lights over three larger ones, including a large rectangular middle pane. Because none of the sash is extant, the operating system for these windows cannot be determined.

5. Roof:

- a. Shape: The building has a flat roof, moderately pitched to the rear, with a parapet.
- b. Cornice: The original modest cornice consisted of corbelled brick which has been removed from the building.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: See sketch plans.
2. Additional interior description: The building interior has been totally gutted by fire.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural drawings: None have been found.

B. Historic Views: No surviving historic views of this building have been located, although 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.

Farmer, Silas. History of Detroit and Wayne County and Early Michigan. Detroit: Silas Farmer & Co., 1890.

Monroe Avenue Historic District. Nomination Form, National Register of Historic Places, November 7, 1974. Prepared by A. Craig Morrison.

Palmer, Friend. Early Days in Detroit. Detroit: Hunt & June, 1906.

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

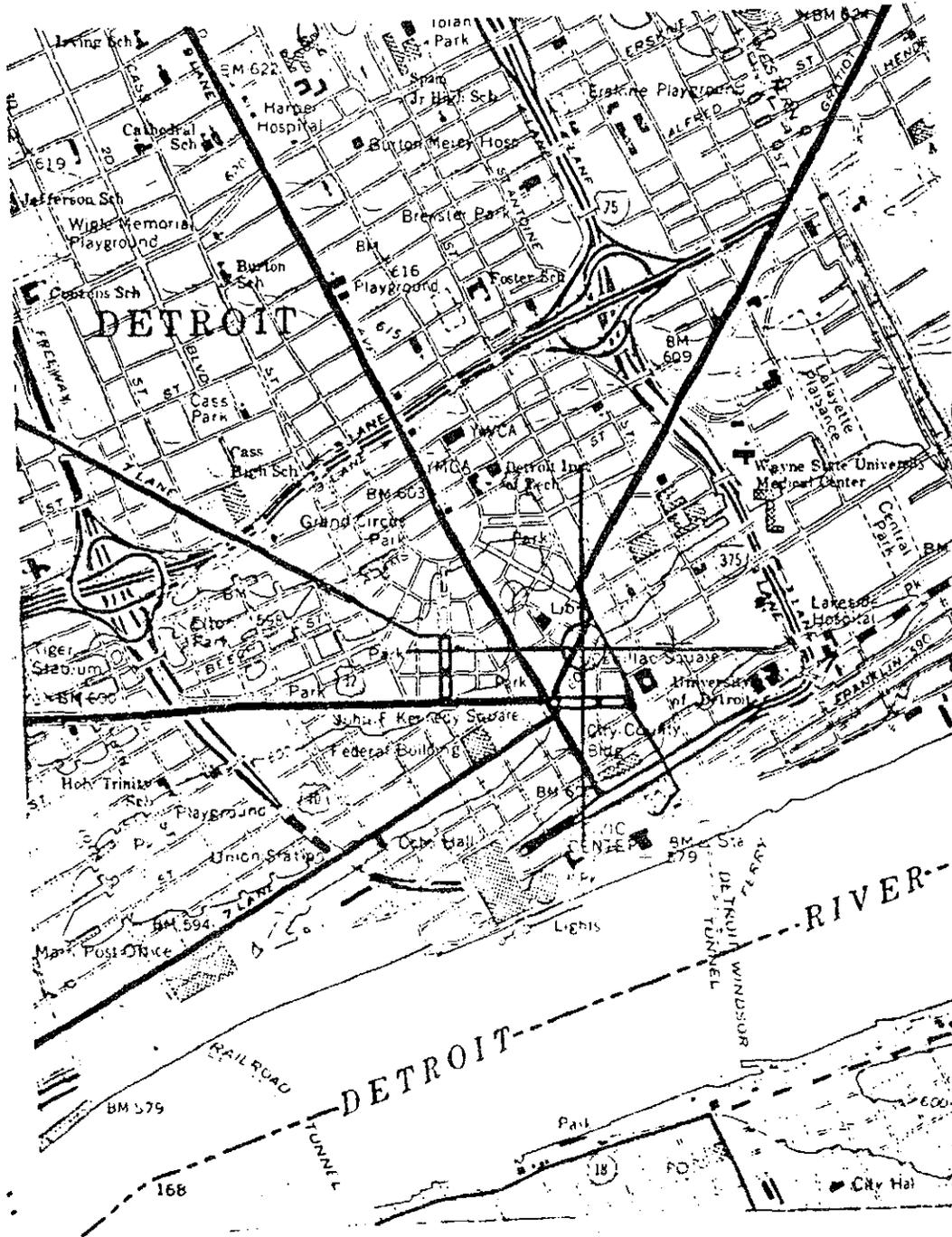
Sanborn Map and Publishing Company. Insurance Maps of Detroit, Michigan. New York: Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, 1884, 1897, 1897-1919, 1921, 1921-61, and 1979.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

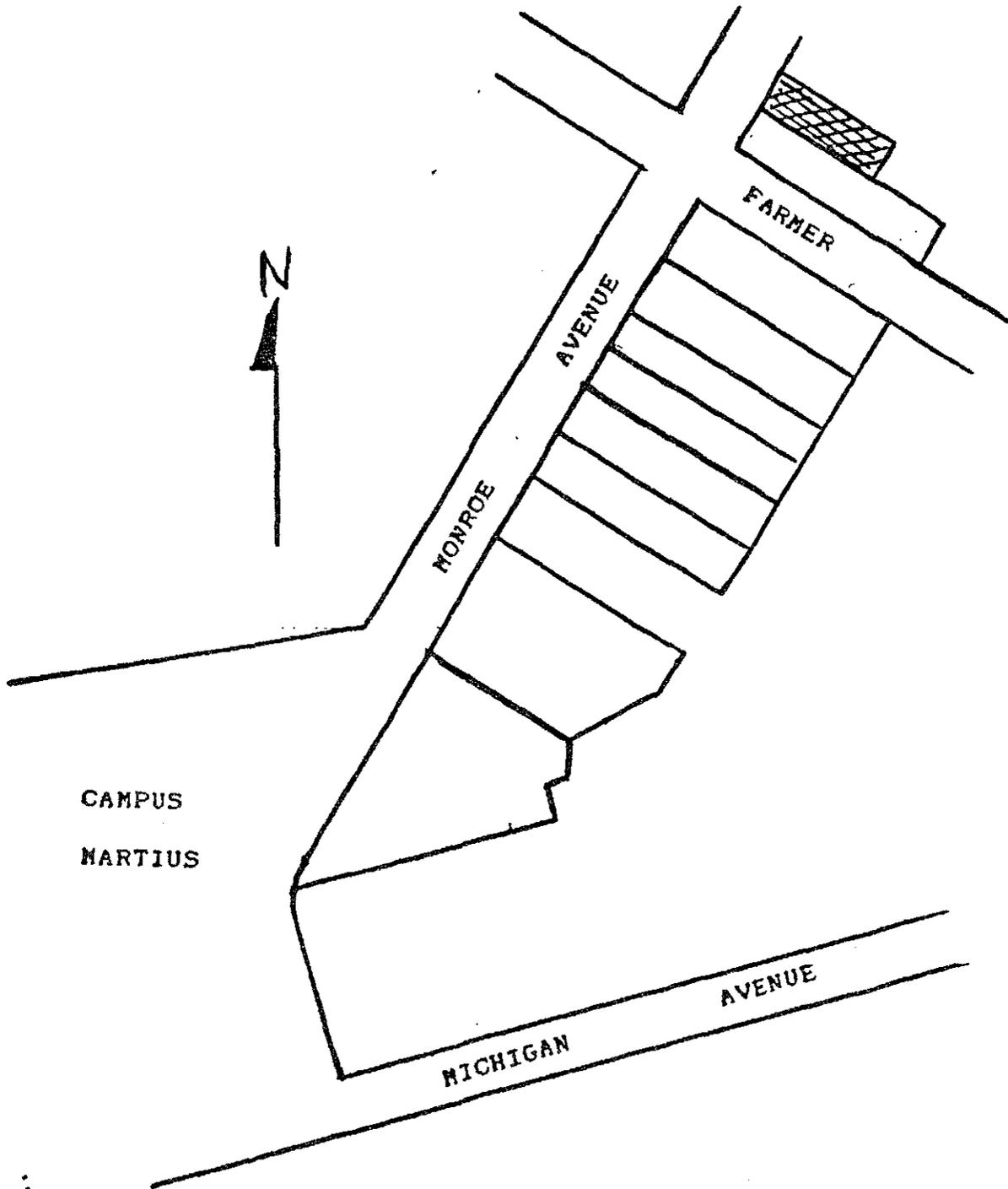
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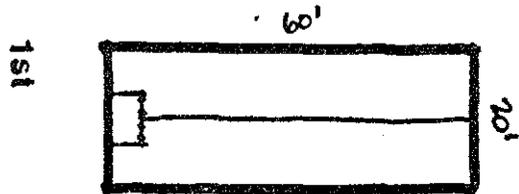
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DETROIT, MICHIGAN QUADRANGLE
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EXISTING FLOOR PLANS