

Minneapolis Warehouse District, Foster House
110 North First Street
Minneapolis
Hennepin County
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-110-AG

HABS
MINN
27-MINAP,
18AG-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MINNEAPOLIS WAREHOUSE DISTRICT, FOSTER HOUSE

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18AG-

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Location: 100 North First Street, Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota

UTM Quad: Minneapolis, South, Minn.

UTM Coordinates: 15/4981100/478925

Present Owner: Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: Built in three phases in the 1880s, the Foster House is a contributing element in two National Register districts: the St. Anthony Falls Historic District and the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District. Built by early Minneapolitan Stephen E. Foster to house his carriage works, the building was soon expanded to accommodate a hotel. Twentieth-century occupants have included a baking powder manufacturer, a sheet-metal works, and a variety of other small businesses. The history of the Foster House reflects the evolution of North First Street, once bustling with downtown commerce and wholesale activity, as the downtown core moved to the southeast and other businesses left the city or became obsolete.

Project Information: This documentation for the Historic American Buildings Survey has been prepared at the request of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission as mitigation for the demolition of the rear one-third of the Foster House. Renovation of the building is expected to begin in spring 1996.

Historians: Charlene K. Roise and Cynthia de Miranda
Hess, Roise and Company, Minneapolis, Minnesota
December 1995

Description¹

The bearing brick walls of the Foster House rise three stories over a full basement and limestone foundation. A parapet wall encircles the building's flat roof, which holds several low brick chimneys. A gable-roofed housing for the elevator's mechanical equipment rises near the eastern corner of the roof. The building's mottled brick walls exhibit a range of red and brown hues. A section on the southeast side has been cleaned, revealing the bricks' original buff color. The front (southwest) wall of the building, which is 28'-8" in length, is separated from North First Street by a wide sidewalk. The southeast side extends for 157'-8" along First Avenue North. To the rear (northeast), a new facility for the Federal Reserve Bank is under construction. A parking lot to the northwest occupies the site of a demolished building with which the Foster House once shared a party wall.

The Foster House displays the Commercial Italianate style popular in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The asymmetrical first-floor front holds the building's principal entrances. In the center, a wood-frame door with two large glass lites provides access to the first floor. The hinges on the right side of this door are attached to a glazed, wood-frame fixed panel that mirrors the appearance of the door. A transom of two fixed lites tops this bay. The inside corners of the transom's wood frame feature a quarter-round curve. Concrete coping covers the original limestone stoop. The doorway is flanked by brick piers and large window openings. A pilaster at the building's southern corner edges one of these window openings. The other is separated by a wood post from a doorway providing access to the building's upper stories. The original door has been replaced. The door, which is surmounted by a fixed transom lite, is bordered to the west by a pilaster trimming the end of the northwest wall. Because the building is vacant, the first-floor window and door openings have been covered with sheets of plywood. Immediately above these openings, a molded metal cornice runs the entire width of the building.

The fenestration pattern is identical on the second and third floors. It consists of five windows linked by a continuous stone lintel. The center three windows are grouped together with a single sill; the middle window, which has a flat lintel, is separated by narrow brick piers from semi-circular-arched windows crowned by keystones. This trio is flanked by segmental-arched windows. Below each window, a pair of small stone blocks supports the sills. The third-floor windows retain the original 1/1 wood sash. On the second floor, four of the windows have 1/1 replacement sash set in the lower two-thirds of the opening; a wood panel fills the remainder. While the western window on the second-floor front has avoided this alteration, the lower lite is missing and a plywood sheet covers the space.

¹ This description is based on a site visit by Charlene K. Roise on 17 October 1995.

Slightly projecting brick pilasters delineate the corners of the building. The inside edge of the pilasters makes a quarter-round turn at the cornice to align with two corbelled courses of sawtooth brick. The plain brick parapet above has recessed vertical slots which once helped anchor a metal cornice.

On the southeast side, corbelled brick brackets along the cornice line have been partly obscured by a coat of concrete or a similar material. Below, two corbelled courses of sawtooth brick copy the motif from the front cornice line. Projecting pilasters with curved tops, also echoing the front's design, rise to the height of the second and third stories on the southern two-thirds of the wall, which includes the building's original section and an addition identical in style. Below each of the pilasters, a similar pilaster articulates the plane of the first floor. The first and second floors are divided by a horizontal band consisting of six courses of brick on the same plane as the pilasters.

The second and third floors of the pilastered section of the southeast wall display segmental-arched windows with stone lintels. Similar lintels appear on doors that open onto a metal fire escape. Stone window sills are trimmed by a pair of square stone blocks below. About half of the original 2/2 wood-frame sash have survived, but the other windows contain a variety of modern sash and infill panels. The southern bay is barely as wide as the window it holds. On the second floor, the window's lintel is inscribed "S.E. Foster 1882." The rest of the bays are several times broader, and most exhibit one window per floor, centered between the pilasters. The northern pilaster, however, is interrupted by windows on both the second and third floors, and the windows in the bay immediately to the south are near the bay's southern pilaster.

On the first floor, the metal storefront cornice rounds the corner and continues across the first bay of the southeast side. Sheets of plywood cover the first-floor openings, making it impossible to view window and door details. A tall, rectangular window beneath the cornice has a brick sill. Since stone was typically used for sills, the configuration of this opening is probably not original. The two bays to the north each hold a doorway with segmental-arch lintels made of two courses of flush header bricks. A window with a stone sill is centered in the next bay. It is capped by a broad arch of flush brick, which might once have been a lintel for a broader opening. A tall, narrow, rectangular window with a brick sill is to the left of the center window. Above-grade loading dock doors have been cut into the next two bays to the north. Metal beams serve as lintels. A stone sill of an original window, as well as sections of brick sills perhaps added when the loading docks were first installed, are visible beneath the newer concrete door sills. The northern first-floor bay of the building's original section holds a window and door with brick segmental-arch lintels. The doorway interrupts a projecting brick arch which once provided exterior access to the basement, but is now mostly covered by the concrete sidewalk edging the building.

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An exterior metal downspout marks the division between the original building and the rear addition. The addition's second- and third-floor windows have brick segmental-arch lintels and plain stone sills. The original windows were 2/2 wood sash, but most of the openings now hold modern 1/1 aluminum sash with arched wood panels above. The first floor is punctuated by a cantilevered polygonal bay window and an assortment of segmental-arched doors and freight doors. Concrete blocks partially fill some of the openings.

The plain brick rear (northeast) wall is interrupted by only one window per floor. The windows are aligned vertically near the building's western corner. Two rows of header brick outline segmental-arch lintels over the second- and third-floor windows, which have stone sills. The first-floor opening is covered by a board, leaving only the header-brick sill visible. The cornice matches the northeast wall, with corbelled brick brackets underlined by two courses of sawtooth brick. Like the northeast wall, the area around the brackets has been coated with concrete or another material.

The northwest exterior reflects its earlier role as the interior party wall of a two-story building erected prior to the Foster House. The limestone wall of the older building, which was demolished in 1966, serves as a base for the brick third story of the Foster House's northwest wall. The roughly dressed, rectangular stone blocks are laid in irregular courses. Graffiti and crude concrete patches cover some of the first-floor wall. The brick columns of several former chimneys with exposed stove pipe holes divide the limestone wall vertically. Traces of two chimneys continue to the roof. The impression of a chimney near the side's southern end is recessed slightly into the third-floor wall, while a chimney to the north projects out a few inches. Two rows of narrow rectangular slots mark the location of the demolished building's floor and ceiling joists. The row over the second floor descends from front to back, revealing the slope of the building's roof. Fragments of singed wood give evidence of a fire. The limestone structure did not fill the entire length of the lot; the brick wall of the Foster House extends to the ground at the rear of the building. Changes in the tone of the third-floor brick reveal the phases of the Foster House's construction. An 8/8 sash window with a segmental-arch lintel remains near the front of the building. The shadows of two segmental-arch windows are visible in the building's first addition, although the openings have been filled with brick.

Almost nothing remains of the building's original interior. The stairway leading to the second and third floors from the door on the west side of the storefront may retain some nineteenth-century wood wainscot panelling and molding of a very plain design. Each story has been divided into an irregular collection of rooms with a variety of mid- to late twentieth-century wall and floor treatments. The as-is floor plans are appended to this narrative.

Historical Overview of the Minneapolis Warehouse District

Bridge Square secured its role as the commercial and political heart of early Minneapolis with the completion of the Hennepin Avenue bridge over the Mississippi River in 1855. Located on the west bank of the Mississippi at the intersection of Hennepin and Nicollet avenues, the square soon claimed the burgeoning community's first City Hall (built in 1873), the Pence Opera House (1867), the City Market House (1876), the Union Railroad Station (1885), and other major commercial structures.² Trains reached the area northwest of Bridge Square in 1867, with the opening of a bridge for the St. Paul and Pacific Railway over the Mississippi near Third Avenue North. As a gateway to America's rapidly developing western frontier, Minneapolis became a major jobbing center for farm machinery. The concentration of warehouses for this trade along upper North First Street earned it the title "Implement Row." Closer to Bridge Square, First Street developed into a hotel district serving the throngs of salesmen involved with the implement industry, farmers bringing their goods to market, and other businessmen and transients deposited by the nearby train station. During the 1880s, the first generation of small frame structures in the vicinity were replaced by more substantial brick and stone edifices.³

As Minneapolis grew in the late nineteenth century, the core of downtown commercial and retail activity moved to the south and east. While many of the First Street hotels remained in operation, they increasingly served a poorer clientele. Other hotels were converted for small business and light industrial use. Following World War II, even this activity was largely abandoned as businesses moved to suburban locations. Many buildings stood under-utilized or vacant until the 1960s and 1970s, when artists and entrepreneurs began occupying the raw loft spaces. Developers have subsequently renovated most of the warehouses for housing, offices, stores, restaurants, and theaters. The architectural and historical significance of the area is acknowledged by two National Register districts, which overlap in the vicinity of the Foster House: the St. Anthony Falls Historic District, established in 1971, and the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District, which followed in 1987.⁴

² All of these buildings have been demolished. See Larry Millet, *Lost Twin Cities* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1992), 57-58, 90-91, 129.

³ *Saint Anthony Falls Rediscovered* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Riverfront Development Coordination Board, 1980), 16.

⁴ Donn Coddington, "St. Anthony Falls Historic District," 1971, and Rolf T. Anderson, "The Minneapolis Warehouse District," 1987, nominations to the National Register of Historic Places, available from the State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

A History of the Foster House

An 1857 map by O. Talcott, "engineer, surveyor and land agent," shows a small rectangular building near the southeast corner of Lot 6, Block 11, in the original plat of the Town of Minneapolis. In 1867, Stephen E. Foster purchased from Samuel Ferguson the southeast quarter of this lot fronting on North First Street, a parcel measuring 27'-6" x 77'-6", which held the building. In the following year, Foster acquired the northeast quarter of the lot, which stretched 77'-6" along Utah Street, now First Avenue North. The property was about half a mile from his residence at 608 Utah.⁵

Foster apparently used the building to launch a carriage manufacturing company. In about 1850, he had arrived in the fledgling community which was soon to be incorporated as the Town of Minneapolis. He established himself as "the first blacksmith who located at the falls of St. Anthony." Within five years of founding the carriage business, he employed twelve to fifteen workers and was producing about 200 farm wagons each year, plus a variety of spring wagons. His wagons, according to a profile published in 1873, "are known throughout this and our neighboring States, and wherever used, their superiority is admitted." The business was "located on First Avenue North, between River and First Streets."⁶

In May 1880, Foster signed a party-wall agreement with Sarah and Thomas Oxborough, owners of the northwest half of Lot 6. The Oxboroughs had apparently already built a two-story livery stable at 102 North First Street, which had limestone side walls and a red brick front. Foster took advantage of the agreement in 1882, when he erected a three-story brick structure on the south end of his land. The neighbor's southeast wall served as the first two stories of Foster's northwest wall. Because Minneapolis had not yet begun to require building permits and there is no other known documentation of the construction, the dimensions of the structure are uncertain, but later maps and permits suggest that the building measured about 27'-6" x 55'-0". Foster moved his carriage works into the new building with the help of his clerk, D.G. Hedderly. At some point, Hedderly married Foster's daughter, Lillie.⁷

In October 1884, Foster obtained a building permit to convert the brick structure into a 35-room hotel at a cost of \$3,500. He also planned to erect a 25'-0" x 45'-0" brick addition to the rear

⁵ Orlando Talcott, Building Map of Minneapolis, 1857, at Special Collections Department, Minneapolis Collection, Minneapolis Public Library; Book of Deeds 16 (1867) p. 536, and Book of Deeds 19 (1868), p. 228, at Recorder's Office, Hennepin County Courthouse, Minneapolis.

⁶ *Tribune's Minneapolis City Directory for 1873-74* (Minneapolis: Tribune Printing Company, 1873), 66.

⁷ *Minneapolis City Directory for 1882-1883* (Minneapolis: C. Wright Davison, 1882), 211, 253; Book of Miscellaneous 10 (1880), pp. 113-114, Recorder's Office, Hennepin County Courthouse, Minneapolis.

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for \$1,500. Dinsmore and Son was the contractor for the project, which was to be completed by February 1885. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Sanborn insurance maps indicate that the roof of the expanded structure was covered with composition material or gravel, and was trimmed on the front (southwest) and southeast sides by a metal cornice. According to the 1885 Sanborn insurance map, a vertical pipe and iron ladder extended to the roof near the location of the present fire escape. By 1906, an iron fire escape had been installed.⁸

The 1885 Sanborn map shows a single-story wood-frame structure appended to the rear (northeast side) of the building, filling the remainder of the property. It is possible that this is Foster's first shop, moved to the rear of the lot in 1882 to make way for the new brick building. While there is no evidence to support this conjecture, buildings were often relocated during this period since building materials and useable space were in high demand. The rear and northwest sides of both the brick and wood-frame sections of the Foster House appear in a bird's-eye view of Minneapolis dating from 1885. The livery stable on the neighboring lot extends along the Foster House's northwest wall, which supports several chimneys. The ground level drops off sharply to the northeast, exposing the rear wall of the basement below the wood-frame appendage. The grade of First Avenue appears level in the bird's-eye view, but basement-level openings in a later rear addition to the Foster House suggest that the basement was at least partly exposed for some years thereafter. First Avenue North by the Foster House was not paved until the twentieth century. Having access to the rear section on two levels was presumably handy for the carriage works, which housed blacksmith and wood shops in the basement. The first floor held a "repository," apparently a showroom for the finished product. The business name is not provided by the map. The 1885 city directory, however, places Hedderly and McCracken as carriage manufacturers at the rear of 100 North First Street. Although the 1885 city directory still lists Foster as a carriage manufacturer, no business address is given, and it appears that he transferred his interest in the business to Hedderly around this time. Little is known about the partnership between Hedderly and A.E. McCracken, who had been identified by a previous city directory as operating a grocery with his brothers.⁹

The final step of the structure's expansion occurred in 1886, when the wood-frame structure was replaced by a 27'-6" x 57'-6" brick addition. The \$3,000 addition, known as 18-20 First Avenue North, took the address of the side street it faced. The handwriting on the building

⁸ Building Permit No. A174, Minneapolis Building Inspections Department, Public Health Building, Minneapolis; *Minneapolis, Minnesota*, vol. 2 (New York: Sanborn Map Publishing Company, 1885), plates 27, 39; *Minneapolis, Minnesota*, vol. 2 (New York: Sanborn Map Publishing Company, 1885, updated to ca. 1890), plates 37, 39; *Atlas of Minneapolis*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Rascher Insurance Map Publishing Company, 1892, updated to ca. 1906), plates 136-137; *Insurance Maps of Minneapolis, Minnesota*, vol. 2 (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1912; updated to ca. 1927), plates 123-124.

⁹ The 1885 Sanborn map (see note 8) labels the business as "Hedderley and McCrackety."

permit is difficult to decipher, particularly the part identifying the architect. The building might have been the work of W.B. Dunnell, a partner in the firm Dunnell and Elliot, or it might owe its design to William H. Dennis, a prominent and prolific architect in late nineteenth-century Minneapolis. A lease was recorded in June 1886 between Foster and Hedderly and McCracken, who expanded the carriage works into the larger space. The blacksmith and wood shops remained in the basement, with the repository and office on the first floor. The second floor held more woodworking operations, as well as "trimming." The third floor was dedicated to painting and varnishing. A freight elevator to move raw and finished materials was installed in the east corner.¹⁰

In the meantime, the Foster House hotel was up and running by 1885, when it first appeared in the city directory under the management of Henry Downing. An advertisement a few years later gave its daily rate as \$1 and boasted: "Modern conveniences, Electric lights, etc. A Home Like place, Polite Attention. . . . We guarantee you satisfaction." It added that there was a "sample room in connection," apparently for the use of itinerant salesmen. The address of the Foster House was initially given as 100 North First Street. In 1886, it is listed at 28 North First Avenue. The addresses allocated to the southeast side of the building ranged from 10 at the north end to 28 at the south, putting 28 near the south corner, where a stairway descends from street level to the basement. The change in the Foster House's address could indicate that the lobby was moved to the basement, freeing up more desirable rental space on the first floor. It is also possible that the entry was moved to the first-floor bay on the southeast side, which is trimmed by the same metal cornice that appears on the storefront.¹¹

In 1888, Hedderly and McCracken moved their salesroom to 246 First Avenue North. They continued in business at 246-250 First Avenue North until at least 1904. Their manufacturing operations remained in the rear of the Foster House for at least a year. In 1889, though, Hedderly and McCracken are listed as agents for the Columbus Buggy Company, so they might have quit manufacturing carriages. In 1891, the Minneapolis Packing Company got a permit to build a "cold storage box" at 18-20 First Avenue North. William Simms was the contractor for the \$1,500 project. The Minneapolis Packing Company sold "meats, game and poultry" both

¹⁰ Building Permit No. A174, 31 March 1886, Minneapolis Building Inspections Department, Public Health Building, Minneapolis; Sanborn Map, 1885/1890 (see note 8); Book of Miscellaneous 26 (1886), pp. 386-388, at Recorder's Office, Hennepin County Courthouse, Minneapolis.

¹¹ *Minneapolis City Directory for 1885-1886* (Minneapolis: C. Wright Davison, 1885), 297; *Minneapolis City Directory for 1886-1887* (Minneapolis: Johnson, Smith and Harrison, 1886), 309; *Minneapolis City Directory for 1889-1890* (Minneapolis: Harrison and Smith, 1889), 296, 500.

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retail and wholesale from their shop at 211 Washington Avenue North, apparently using the First Avenue North facility to store inventory. The business is last listed in the 1899 city directory.¹²

Hotel operations at the Foster House went through several changes of management during this period. The establishment is mentioned only sporadically in city directories during the first half of the 1890s. "A.G. Linberg and Co." replaced Downing as the manager for a year or two beginning in 1889. Willard W. Severy is listed in 1894. From 1896 to 1901, and again in 1903, widow Ella Churchouse served as the proprietress, reclaiming the 100 North First Street address. In 1902, J.A. Parker was associated with the Foster House.¹³

In 1903 or 1904, The Hunt's Perfect Baking Powder Company moved into the building, transforming the second and third floors into a manufacturing facility. Formed in 1900 as the Philip B. Hunt Company, the firm reorganized and revised its name in January 1903. The 1912 Sanborn map notes a laboratory in the basement and an electric motor on the second floor, but no additional details about the company's facilities are known.¹⁴

Foster retained ownership of the property until his death in 1910, even though he had moved to Los Angeles in 1895. Title was then transferred to his wife, Rosette, and two daughters, Lillie Hedderly and Cynthia Barnard. Lillie was in sole possession of the property by 1923. Her son, D.G. Hedderly, Jr., gained title in 1937.¹⁵

In the meantime, a number of tenants occupied the building. Hunt's moved out in 1920, and was replaced during 1921 and 1922 by the Perrine Store Service, which distributed pneumatic tube systems and conveyor belts. From 1923 to 1935, the building was leased by Gopher

¹² *Minneapolis City Directory for 1888-1889* (Minneapolis: Harrison and Smith, 1888), 656; *Minneapolis City Directory for 1889-1890* (Minneapolis: Harrison and Smith, 1889), 613; *Minneapolis City Directory for 1893-1894* (Minneapolis: Harrison and Smith, 1893), 1010; *Davison's Minneapolis City Directory, 1899* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis City Directory Company, 1899), 896; Building Permit A2403, 13 May 1891, Minneapolis Building Inspections Department, Public Health Building, Minneapolis.

¹³ *Minneapolis City Directory for 1889-1890*, 500; *Minneapolis City Directory for 1890-1891* (Minneapolis: Harrison and Smith, 1890), 472; *Davison's Minneapolis City Directory for 1894-1895* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Directory Company, 1894), 352; *Davison's Minneapolis City Directory, 1896* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Directory Company, 1896), 410; *Davison's Minneapolis City Directory, 1902* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Directory Company, 1902), 551.

¹⁴ Information on The Hunt's Perfect Baking Powder Company is retained by the Minnesota Secretary of State, State Office Building, St. Paul. For Sanborn maps, see note 8.

¹⁵ Book of Deeds 920 (1910), p. 20; Book of Deeds 667 (1910), p. 363; Book of Deeds 922 (1923), p. 439; at Recorder's Office, Hennepin County Courthouse, Minneapolis.

Machine and Tool Works. Gopher apparently subleased part of the building to a sheepskin company in 1923, to the Sleep-rite Mattress Company from 1925 to 1930, and to the Wear Well Garment Company from 1930 to 1935. In 1936, the city directory lists the property as vacant. There was a new tenant by the following year, the Vent and Canopy Company, a sheet-metal works. By 1939, Vent and Canopy was joined by the Liquid Scale Gauge Company and the Minneapolis Wool Company.¹⁶

The Minneapolis Wool Company purchased the property from Hedderly in 1939 and retained ownership for over three decades. In 1975, the company sold the property to Oscar Thorbeck and Company, which conveyed it to John Linsmayer ten years later. In 1994, the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis obtained title to the property as part of the bank's development of a substantial new facility on an adjacent site. The following year, the bank leased the property to the NRG Energy Center, Inc., which intends to remove the 1886 addition and renovate the remaining exterior walls. Interior floors will be removed to accommodate mechanical equipment for the district cooling plant that will be installed within the structure.¹⁷

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¹⁶ *Davison's Minneapolis Directory, 1921* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Directory Company, 1921), 1671; *Minneapolis City Directory, 1930* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Directory Company, 1930), 1812; *Minneapolis City Directory, 1936* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Directory Company, 1936), 1764; *Minneapolis City Directory, 1939* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Directory Company, 1939), 1782; *Minneapolis City Directory, 1940* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Directory Company, 1940), 100.

¹⁷ Book of Deeds 1456 (1937), p. 56; Book of Deeds 1361 (1939), p. 223; Book of Deeds 1844 (1939), p. 188, at Recorder's Office, Hennepin County Courthouse, Minneapolis.

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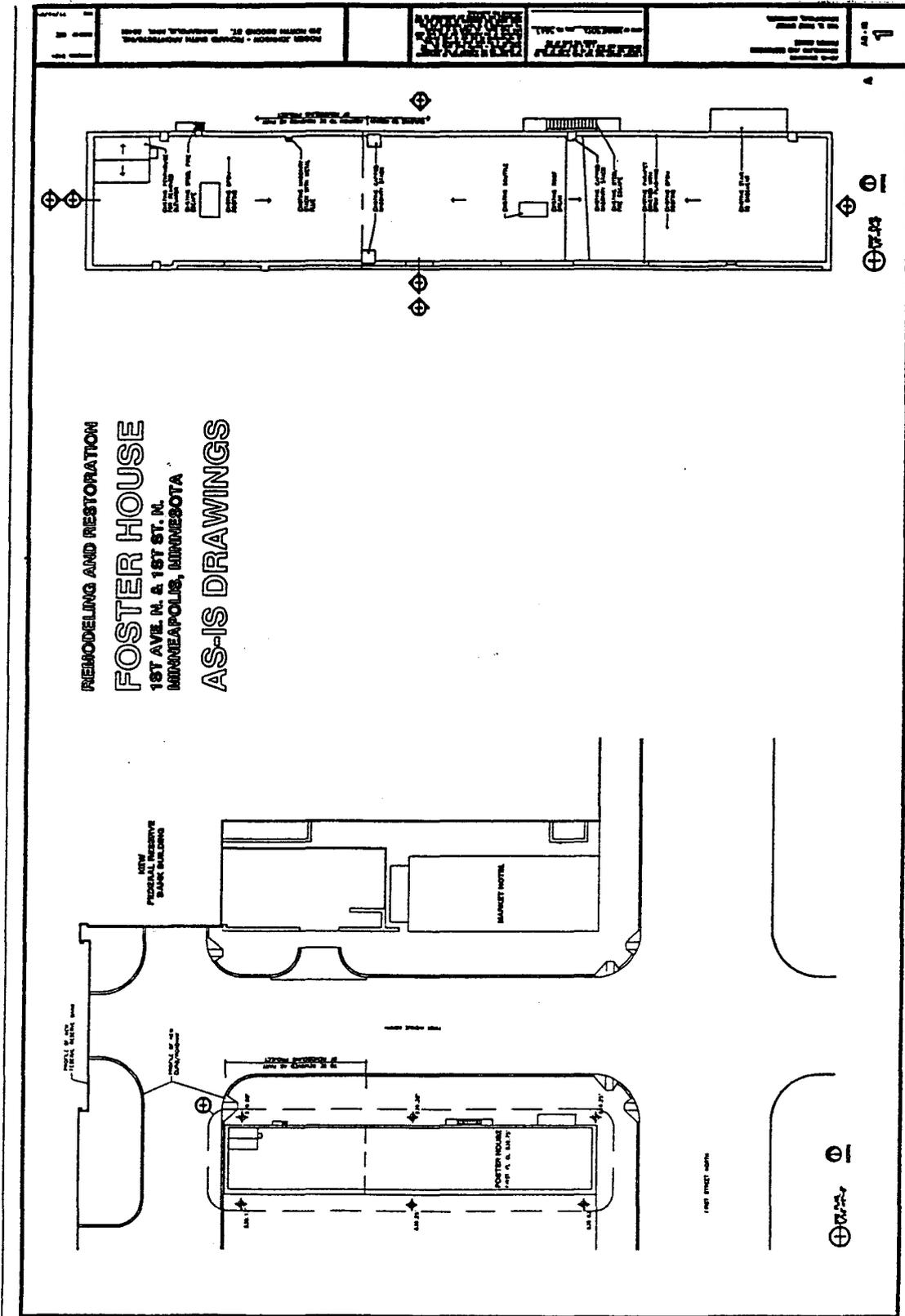
Building Permits. At Minneapolis Building Inspections Department, Public Health Building, Minneapolis.

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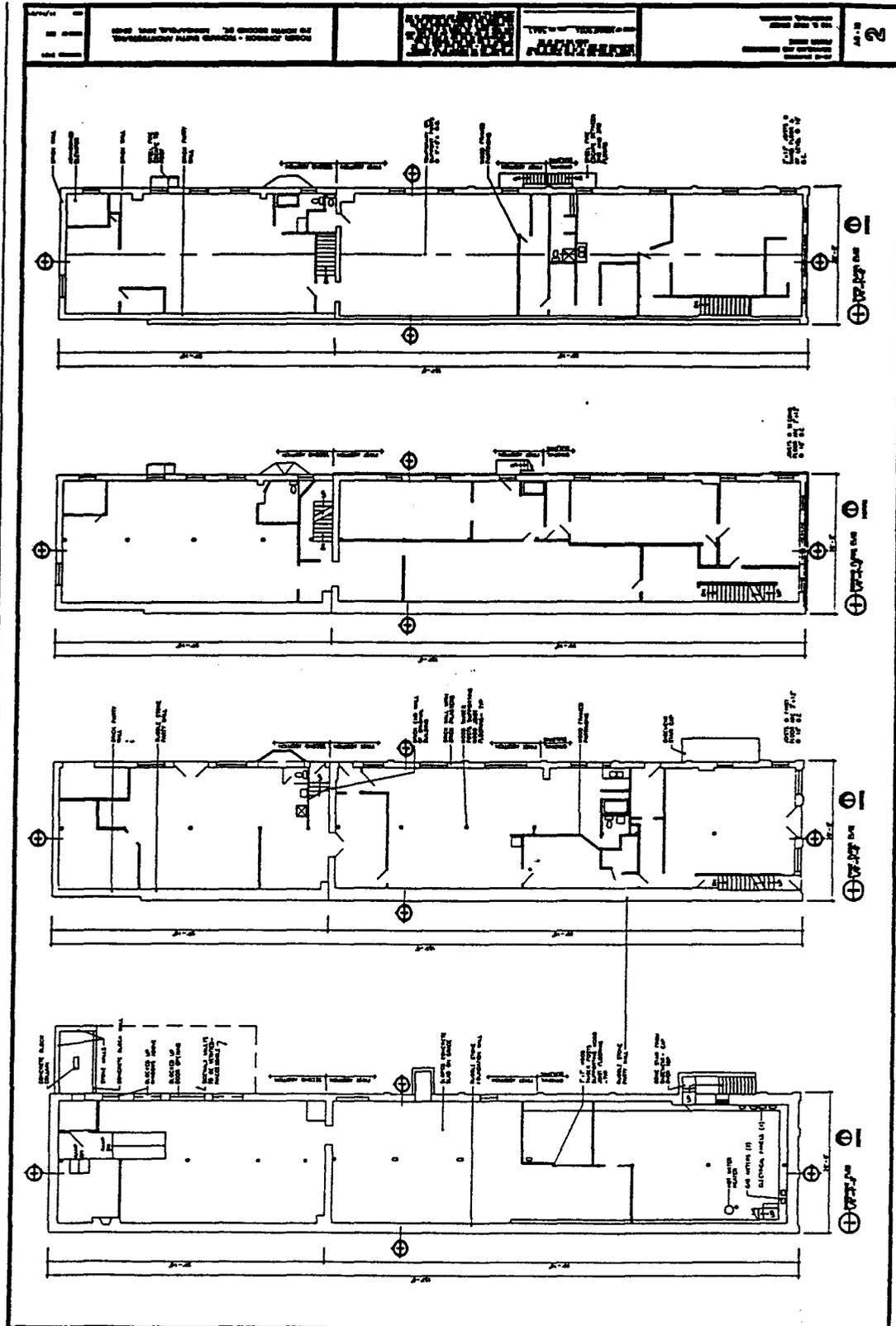
The following pages are "as-is" plans and elevations of the Foster House prepared by Roger Johnson-Richard Smith Architects, Minneapolis, November 1995.

These plans and elevations include:

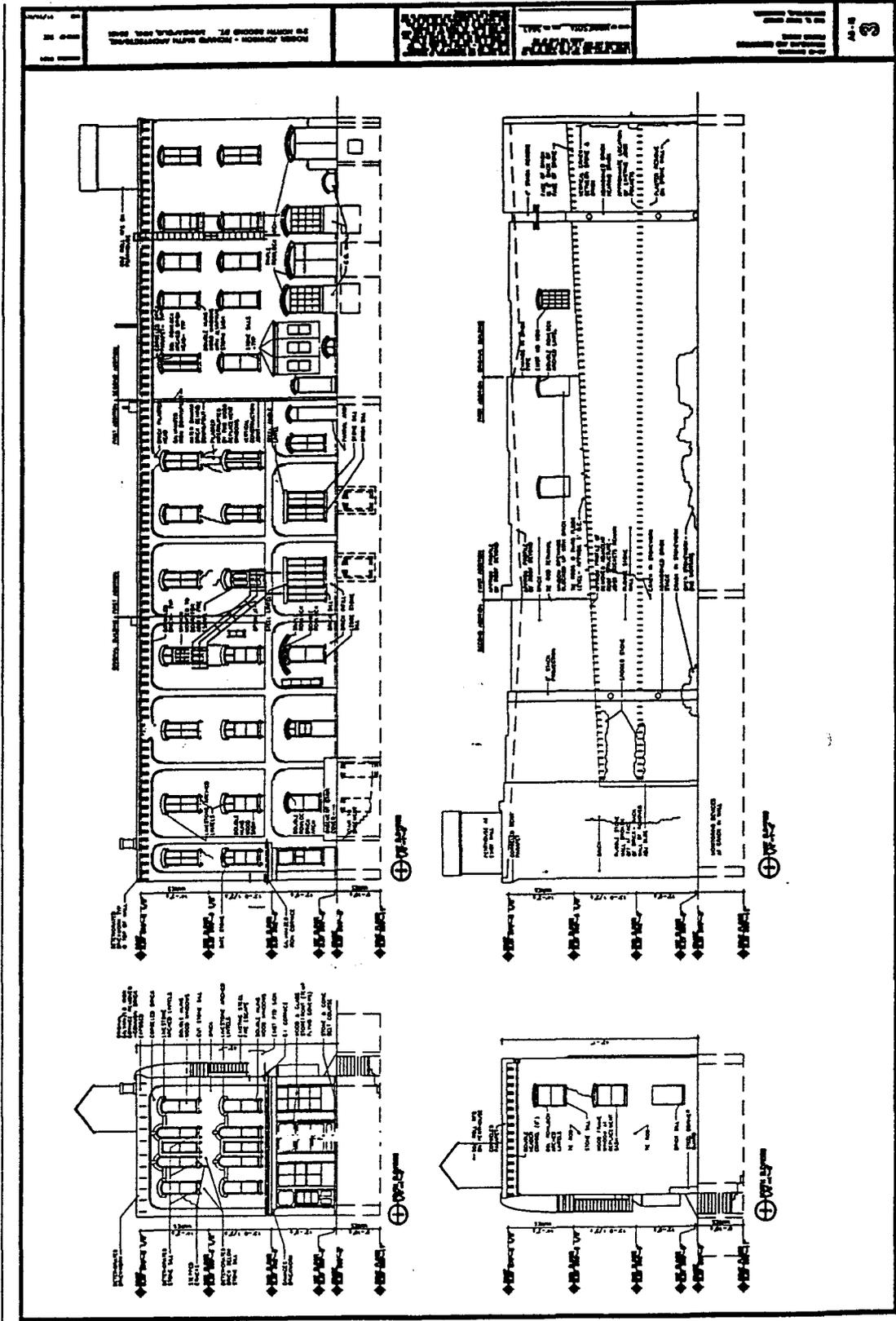
- Page 13: Site Plan and Roof Plan
- Page 14: Plans of the Basement, First Floor, Second Floor, Third Floor
- Page 15: South (front, southwest), East (southeast), North (rear, northeast), and West (northwest) Elevations
- Page 16: Building Sections looking North (northeast) and West (southwest)



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