

8-10 East State Street (Commercial Building)
Trenton
Mercer County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-962

HABS
NJ,
11-TRET,
20-

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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8-10 East State Street (Commercial Building)
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Location: 8-10 East State Street, Trenton, Mercer County, New Jersey.

Last Owner: Downtown Capitol City Corporation, a New Jersey corporation.

Last Occupant: Thom McAn shoe store (10 East State Street), Reading Shoes (8 East State Street). Apartments in upper floors vacant for many years.

Last Use: Commercial

The building at 8-10 East State Street was demolished in September 1987 to make way for new commercial construction.

Significance: Joseph McPherson, a highly respected 19th century businessman is reputed to have had 8 East State Street constructed about 1833. McPherson operated his own harness and saddle business there, and lived upstairs for 18 years. Later in the 19th century, the building was rented to tenants, both commercial and residential. The building known as 10 East State Street is identical to 8 East State. Historically the two units were considered separate buildings until they were joined in ownership in 1906. They are recorded here as one building because of their identical physical characteristics, common construction and single 20th century ownership.

Representative of the commercial vernacular architecture of the first half of the 19th century, 8-10 East State Street has the simple lines and planar surfaces of the Federal style. The few original interior details to survive also indicate the building was built as a vernacular expression of the Federal style. There have been changes to the structure over the years, the most notable being the storefront of 8 East State Street. It is a fine example of a storefront utilizing opaque glass panels and streamlined styling characteristic of American design in the 1930's.

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: ca. 1833.
2. Architect: Not Known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Chain of Title references from Mercer County Hall of Records unless otherwise noted:

8 East State Street

- 1833 - "Mr. McPherson, with the assistance of friends, purchased the lot occupied by his shop, and erected thereon the present structure..." From Woodward and Hageman, History of Burlington and Mercer Counties, New Jersey. (Philadelphia, Everts & Peck, 1883).
No deed was found for this transaction, which occurred when Trenton was still part of Hunterdon County.
- 1851 April 1 - Transfer from the estate of Welling Napton to Obadiah Howell. Deed Book V page 69.
- 1863 February 9 - Transfer from the estate of Obadiah Howell to Emma Kittinger. Deed book 54 page 443.
- 1864 October 31 - Transfer from Leonard and Emma Kittinger, husband and wife, to Abraham Lowenstein. Deed Book 60 page 14.
- 1868 May 1 - Transfer from Abraham and Carolina Lowenstein, husband and wife, to Alpheus Swayze. Deed Book 70 page 499.
- 1871 December 15 - Transfer from Alpheus and Mary Swayze, husband and wife, to Israel Swayze. Deed Book 86 page 504.
- 1873 January 16 - Transfer from Israel and Mary Ann Swayze, husband and wife to Robert I. Sloan. Deed Book 94 page 117.
- 1874 January 7 - Transfer from Robert I. Sloan to Samuel Prior. Deed Book 99 page 557.
- 1876 February 10 - Transfer from Samuel and Susannah Prior, husband and wife, to Thomas H. Prior. Deed Book 111 page 442.
- 1876 April 5 - Transfer from Thomas H. Prior and Amanda S. Prior, husband and wife, to Susannah Prior. Deed Book 113 page 77.
- 1878 October 10 - Transfer by sheriff's deed to Abraham Lowenstein. Deed Book 120 page 428.

10 East State Street

- 1849 January 4 - Transfer from William and Olive Narragon, husband and wife, to Henry B. Chumar. Deed Book 0 page 486. (Earliest Mercer County deed, earlier transactions unknown.)
- 1855 June 5 - Transfer from William A. West to Henry B. Chumar. Deed Book 32 page 269.
- 1906 February 1 - Transfer from the estate of Henry B. Chumar to Abraham Lowenstein. Deed Book 283 page 419.

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- 1938 February 23 - Transfer from the estate of Abraham Lowenstein to Hortense Klein (2/10 interest); Norman Serphos, Sol N. Serphos, executors of the Last Will and Testament of Henriette Serphos, deceased and Norman Serphos (2/10 interest); Benjamin S. Wilson, Executor of the Last will and Testament of Ella L. Wilson, deceased (2/10 interest); S. Albert Lowenstein (3/10 interest) and Carol Lowenstein Davis (1/10 interest). Deed Book 775 page 1.
- 1938 February 28 - Transfer from Hortense Klein and Milton B. Klein her husband; Norman Serphos and Sol N. Serphos, executors and Erma M. and Norman Serphos husband and wife and Sol N. Serphos; Benjamin S. Wilson, executor of the Last Will and Testament of Ella L. Wilson and Benjamin S. Wilson to S. Albert Lowenstein and Sarah S. Lowenstein husband and wife. Deed Book 775 pages 5, 10, and 22.
- 1938 March 15 - Transfer from S. Albert Lowenstein and Sarah Lowenstein husband and wife to Clarence Stein. Deed Book 773, page 446.
- 1938 March 16 - Transfer from Clarence Stein to S. Albert Lowenstein and Sarah S. Lowenstein husband and wife. Deed book 773, page 451.
- 1941 April 10 - Transfer from Sarah S. Lowenstein to Carol L. Davis. Deed Book 817 page 316.
- 1970 November 12 - Transfer from the estate of Carol L. Davis to Harold L. Davis, trustee and Harold L. Davis widower. Deed Book 1869 page 484.
- 1976 April 27 - Transfer from Richard A. Davis to Harold L. Davis Jr., Richard A. Davis, and Nancy D. Sachner, as tenants in common. Deed Book 2014 page 700.
- 1978 May 26 - Transfer from Richard A. Davis, trustee under the Last Will and Testament of Carol L. Davis to Harold L. Davis Jr., Richard A. Davis and Nancy D. Sachner as tenants in common. Deed Book 2074 page 21.

- 1979 August 22 - Transfer from Richard A. Davis, executor of the estate of Harold L. Davis to Harold L. Davis, Jr. and Richard A. Davis as tenants in common. Deed Book 2113 page 546.
- 1979 September 12 - Transfer from Richard A. Davis, Katherine K. Davis, Harold L. Davis Jr. and Nancy D. and Stephen P. Sachner husband and wife to Mervyn Platt, Wallace R. Plapinger and Allan R. Plapinger, partners trading as Plapinger-Platt Down Town Properties. Deed Book 2114 page 526.
- 1982 June 17 - Transfer from Plapinger-Platt Down Town Properties to Ho Jip Kim, Byung K. Lee, M.K. Lee and Insok Yoo. Deed 2190 page 64.
- 1986 June 9 - Transfer from Ho Jip Kim, Byung K. Lee, M.K. Lee and Insok Yoo to Downtown Capitol City Corporation, a New Jersey corporation. Deed Book 2351 page 482.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Not known.
5. Original plans and construction: Original plans or drawings are not known to exist.
6. Alterations and additions: Physical evidence on the building itself indicates that the first floor storefronts and the interior of the first two floors have been repeatedly altered for commercial use over a century and a half. The third and fourth floor apartments have been less altered, although important details such as fireplace mantles and interior doors are missing.

The most interesting change to the property has been the rise in the street level since the mid-19th century. Doorways, walkways, and windows in the current basement indicate that this was originally an on-grade level, at least toward the rear of the building. Infill building on adjacent lots has blocked the exterior access and transformed original window openings on the rear of the upper floors to unlighted interior openings.

- B. Historical Context: The pair of buildings at 8-10 East State Street were almost certainly built as part of a larger group of commercial buildings. There is evidence in the brickwork to suggest that the original group included 6 East State Street; it may also have extended to include the entire corner block of 2-4 East State Street and 2-6 North Warren Street [See HABS No. NJ-961]. The coincidence of identical

construction dates as well as the uniformity of size, scale, rhythm of window openings, and brick patterning strongly suggests a single building campaign. After construction, however, the buildings were purchased and used as independent entities for the rest of the 19th century.

For much of the 19th century, 8 East State Street was identified in the mind of Trenton's citizens as the business and residence of Joseph McPherson. McPherson, born in Hunterdon County in 1810, came to Trenton in May 1821 to apprentice to local harnessmaker John C. Bellerjeau. About 1831, he started a shop of his own on East State Street. Two year later, "with the assistance of friends", he purchased the lot occupied by his shop, and "erected the present structure". This information is supplied by the writers of a popular history of Mercer County published in 1883 (Woodward & Hageman, p. 743). At that time, Joseph McPherson occupied his large and successful saddlery shop at 6 and 8 East State, with additional space at 8 North Warren. He had been in business at 8 East State since at least 1849, when Trenton's first city directory was first published.

McPherson is not identified on any deeds as owner of property at 8 or 10 East State Street, but from 1833 to 1886, he did own some part or share of the building now known as 2-6 East State Street. This supports the physical evidence which suggests that 2 through 10 East State Street was constructed in 1833 as a uniform row of commercial buildings. Armitage Green was probably the "developer", and records show he owned at least all of 2-6 East State Street in that year. He immediately sold at least three shares or portions of the building, including one to Joseph McPherson. The other owners of the building were no doubt the "friends" who had "assisted" McPherson, at least in light of later retelling of the tale, as McPherson became perhaps the best known and most successful of the initial group of investors.

"Joseph McPherson & Co. dealers in harness, saddles, etc." was described at some length in an 1882 business directory, a description which bears repeating to help clarify the nature of the business and its real estate holdings. "Today the house is the largest in the city, and the leading one in its line of trade; annual business of \$50,000 includes hardware, gig saddles, collars, horse clothing, lap rugs, clusters, coach hdwe., enameled and dash leathers;... Two additional floors of an adjoining building, running through to Warren Street, each 25x80 are also in use as ware and salesrooms, while a large basement is used for storage purposes." (Industries of New Jersey, p. 178).

McPherson's interests lay beyond mere hardware. He was one of the incorporators in 1864 of the First National Bank of Trenton, and later of the People's Fire Insurance Company. He was an owner of the Trenton Terra Cotta Works. He served several years on Trenton's Common Council, and as City treasurer. For the first 18 years he owned the saddlery shop on East State Street, he lived above it in one of the modest apartments which have been so well preserved at 8-10 East State Street.

After 1884, McPherson moved his primary retail location around the corner to 8 North Warren Street. The East State Street building continued to house other retail businesses on the first floor and offices above. Directories from the turn-of-the-century indicate a succession of lawyers, real estate agents, and insurance agents on the upper floors, while the two first floor shops served a druggist, a package delivery service, a hat store, a bootblack, and eventually a shoe store. Curiously, both storefronts contained shoe stores from the 1920's through the 1970's, completely separate, and presumably rival, businesses.

The last documented residential use of the building occurred in 1915 when the Trenton directory noted that the bootblacks Peter Monopolus and John Roufus who had a shop at 8 East State Street also lived at that address. The two units of the building came under the same ownership in 1906, and physical evidence suggests the third floors of the buildings were interconnected to create one large apartment at about that time. The apartment was not occupied for much longer, however, as it never had plumbing or electricity installed.

Although constant minor alterations, particularly on the interior and at the shopfront are almost demanded of retailers, few changes were made at 8-10 East State Street since about 1940. The curved glass display windows and opaque glass bulkhead at 8 East State Street is a well-preserved example of small shop-front design from the 1930's. The simple metal storefront at 10 East State also dates from the mid-20th century. After the Second World War, downtown Trenton began a slow decline as businesses and consumers moved to the suburbs and malls became ascendant over downtown. In 1986 the City of Trenton condemned the building, and targeted it for demolition as part of a large scale redevelopment of the block.

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: A four story commercial building with the rectilinear, regularly spaced openings and brick walls characteristic of vernacular commercial architecture from the first third of the 19th century. Although not overtly designed in any architectural style, it has many qualities reminiscent of the Federal style, particularly in the planar wall surface, the wide chimneys, and delicate interior moldings and muntins.
2. Condition of Fabric: The building is in fair condition, with replacement windows and a well sealed roof preventing water damage through years of vacancy. Cracking in the brick wall of the facade suggests weakness in the bearing walls.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: The facade is 35.8' wide, incorporating the 17' wide facade of 10 East State Street and the 16.8' wide facade of 8 East State. The slightly irregular rectangular shape of the building is 44.8' deep; an extension to the rear of 10 East State Street extends it to 64' deep. The building occupies nearly all of Block 4B, Lots 2 & 3 in Trenton.
2. Foundations: The foundation is not visible from the exterior of the building. Each unit of the building has a separate foundation, composed of rough fieldstone and random bricks, laid in a lime mortar which has now largely disappeared from between the stones.
3. Walls: The facade is finished with a Flemish bond brick, covered with several layers of paint. The brickwork extends seamlessly across the facades of both units of the building and onto the facade of the adjoining building at 6 East State Street. Each of the two units at 8-10 East State Street is divided into two bays, evenly spaced. The first floor storefronts of both sections have been greatly altered. An Art Deco inspired storefront made of opaque black glass panels below the rounded-corner display windows highlights the storefront of 8 East State. The storefront at 10 East State Street features a plain metal panel between the top of the

recessed metal and glass storefront and the bottom of the second floor windows.

4. **Structural system:** The building was constructed with load-bearing masonry walls and wooden interior framing. The later construction of large storefronts necessitated the insertion of steel beams to support the span.
5. **Bulkheads:** The opaque black glass bulkheads at 8 East State Street are part of the entire storefront composition (ca. 1930-40). They are pierced by metal grills in the center. The storefront at 10 East State Street has a very low bulkhead of concrete, recessed under the projecting plate glass display windows.
6. **Chimneys:** Both units of the building have a brick chimney along the western wall. It is a broad rectangle in section, containing multiple flues. Interior evidence for a chimney at the rear of the building is not reflected on the roof, suggesting that it was removed and capped in the past.
7. **Openings:**
 - a. **Doorways:** No original exterior doors survive. Entry to 8 East State Street is now gained through the storefront only. A centered wooden frame door with metal push bar across the large vertical glass window is slightly recessed between the shopfront's display windows. Number 10 East State Street is entered through a stock glass door with narrow metal frame. The door is deeply recessed within the storefront, allowing for a larger area of plate glass display windows. The doorway is nearly centered in the facade.
 - b. **Windows:** All windows on the upper floors of the facade are replacement 1/1 double hung metal sash, flanked by added screw-on plastic shutters. The rectangular window openings are marked by narrow stone lintels (painted to match the surrounding brick) and wider, projecting stone sills. At the rear of 10 East State Street, original 6/6 wooden sash windows survive, although they are only visible from the interior of the building; blocked from the exterior by larger structures built around it.

8. Roof: Low pitch gable roof covered with asphalt roofing. A molded wooden cornice is visible beneath the painted metal flashing covering the box gutter.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor Plans:

- a. Basement: Each of the two units of 8-10 East State Street has a separate basement, entered through the store above. The walls of the basements are partially finished with plaster, and both contain brick and stone supports for the fireplaces along the western wall. The presence of a wooden 6/6 double hung sash in a now-interior wall of the basement under 10 East State Street suggests that this was once an above-grade room which looked out on a narrow service alley paralleling the western property line. The floor of the basement is hard-packed dirt; however, the area of the service alley is paved with bricks laid in a common bond pattern.
- b. First floor: Each of the two units of the building contain a separate first floor store. These areas have been completely remodelled with modern materials. Sheetrock walls, dropped ceilings with acoustical tile, and linoleum floor tiles typify these spaces.
- c. Second floor: The second floors of the buildings are interconnected by a wide opening. The entire second floor is retail space with access from inside 8 East State Street. The second floor of 10 East State Street features sheetrock walls with built-in display areas on the walls. Built-in shelving in a small room toward the rear of the building stored the stock for a shoestore.
Number 8 East State Street contains the vestiges of a small office divided from the retail area by a partition of oak with large frosted glass panels in the top half; the exterior face has been covered with sheetrock. This office ran across the facade of the building, but only extended 8'. The larger portion of the second floor in this half of the building served as a circulation area, providing access to the office, stairs, bathroom, and selling area above 10 East State.

- d. Third floor: Reached by stairs extending up through the interior of 8 East State Street, the third floor contains a single, seven-room apartment, although originally it was divided into two separate living units, one in each unit of the building. The large, light-filled front rooms of the apartment contain fireplaces; rear rooms are darker and smaller and appear to have been service areas.
 - e. Fourth floor: Roughly finished attic space. Each unit of the building has a separate attic with individual staircase access.
2. Stairways: The only interior access to the second floor is through the "L" shape staircase in 8 East State Street. The staircase has a modern railing and solid half-wall of sheetrock in place of a balustrade. The stair to the second floor is a steep, winding enclosed one, rising in the middle of the building behind the landing of the stair to the second floor. Two separate stairs, each a winding "U" in plan, ascend from 8 and 10 to their respective attics. The attic stair at 8 East State Street retains a short length of balustrade (the only remaining balustrade in the building) with square section balusters and paired, varnished newel posts at the stair turning. The newel design and varnish finish indicate that these are turn-of-the-century Colonial Revival elements rather than original to the building's construction.
 3. Flooring: Wooden flooring is typical throughout, with floorboards increasing in width with each successive story. The wooden floor is covered with linoleum tile on the first and second floors, except for a storage area to the rear of the second floor with has approximately 4" wide tongue and groove flooring. The third floor apartment has 8" wide floorboards, covered in places by narrow oak strip flooring. The attic is floored with wide (10-14") variable pine boards. The same wide boards are found in places in the basement, although in most areas, packed dirt is the only floor.
 4. Walls and ceilings: The walls and ceilings are generally finished with plaster over lath. On the third floor, the walls and ceilings of the apartment are covered with multiple layers of machine-made wallpaper, most with borders complementing the primary pattern. The attic walls are finished with lath and plaster; the ceiling is open to reveal the wooden rafters of the roof.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Most of the original interior doors have been removed or replaced. The common type remaining is a wooden door with four horizontal panels representative of the first half of the 20th century. The doorways are surrounded by simple molded frames.

b. Windows: Window frames in the front of the building are plain and consist of undecorated boards surrounding replacement sash. In the rear of the building where 6/6 sash survives, the window surround has a simple molding similar to the doorways. The knife-edged window muntins are in excellent condition, having been enclosed at an early date and protected from weathering and use. The windows in the rear wing also retain a single (original?) coat of very dark green paint.

6. Decorative features and trim: All mantles have been removed from the building. A plain baseboard with a single beaded edge at the top runs around the perimeter of most rooms on the third floor except the rear room, where a more decorative baseboard with double-beaded profile exists.

7. Hardware: The door pull on the entry to 8 and the metal window fasteners on that storefront's plate glass window are relics of early to mid-20th century commercial fixtures. The hinges and knobs on the interior office partition on the second floor, also dating to the second quarter of the 20th century, are of interest for their round-edged "streamlined" appearance. With the removal of interior doors throughout the building, most hardware was also removed.

8. Mechanical Equipment:

Lighting: Electricity was only extended to the first two floors of the building. The old (ca.1938) ceiling-hung fluorescent fixtures on the second floor of 8 East State Street are of interest for the decorative brackets which held the tube.

Plumbing: Although the upper floor was apparently an apartment, there are no toilet or bathroom facilities in evidence. A small washroom was installed on the second floor of 8 East State, with a functional, unremarkable sink and toilet of mid-20th century date.

D. Site

1. General siting and orientation: The building faces south on the south side of a block bounded by East Hanover Street, North Broad Street, East State Street, and North Warren Street in Trenton, New Jersey. This block was known for much of the 20th century as the "Dunham Block" for a large downtown department store which occupied much of the block.
This area has traditionally been the retail and commercial core of the city. State Street is one of the oldest and most trafficked streets in Trenton, linking City Hall and the Statehouse. In the early 1970's, this block of East State Street was transformed into a pedestrian mall called "Trenton Commons".
The building at 8-10 East State Street is immediately adjacent to the block of buildings at 2-6 East State Street to the west, and 12-14 East State Street to the east.
2. Historic landscape design: None.
3. Outbuildings: None.

Part III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original architectural drawings: Not known.
- B. Early Views:
 1. Postcard View: "East State Street, Trenton, N.J." ca. 1900-1910. Photograph looking east on East State Street, taken from the intersection of North Warren Street. In the private collection of Martin P. Winar.
 2. Postcard View: "Trenton N.J. State Street, West from Broad Street." ca. 1910-1920. In the private collection of Martin P. Winar.
- C. Interviews: Mr. Martin P. Winar, Director of the Mercer County Public Library, and collector of Trentoniana. September 1987.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

- a. Real Estate Transactions, Mercer County Hall of Records, Trenton, N.J.
- b. Real Estate Transactions, Hunterdon County Hall of Records, Flemington, N.J.

2. Secondary and published sources:

a. Books:

Directory of Trenton, New Jersey. Trenton, NJ
[title and publisher varies], 1854-1971.

Industries of New Jersey. Part I: Trenton, Princeton, Hightstown, Pennington, and Hopewell. New York, Newark N.J. and Philadelphia: Historical Publishing Co., 1882.

Kratzer, Wayne, comp. Kratzer's Directory of Business and Professional Men. Allentown, Pa.: Wayne Kratzer, n.d (ca. 1895).

Trenton, City of. North Ward Historic Resource Survey. Vol 1. City of Trenton, 1980.

Trenton, N.J. Business Directory. Bridgeport, Ct.: American Directory and Publishing Co., 1959.

b. Maps

Combination Atlas Map of Mercer County, New Jersey. Philadelphia: Everts & Stewart, 1875.

Gordon, Thomas. Map of the City of Trenton and Its Vicinity. Philadelphia: J.F. and C.A. Watson, Lithographers, 1836.

Insurance Maps of Trenton, New Jersey. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1890.

Insurance Maps Trenton, New Jersey. Vol I. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1908 and 1927.

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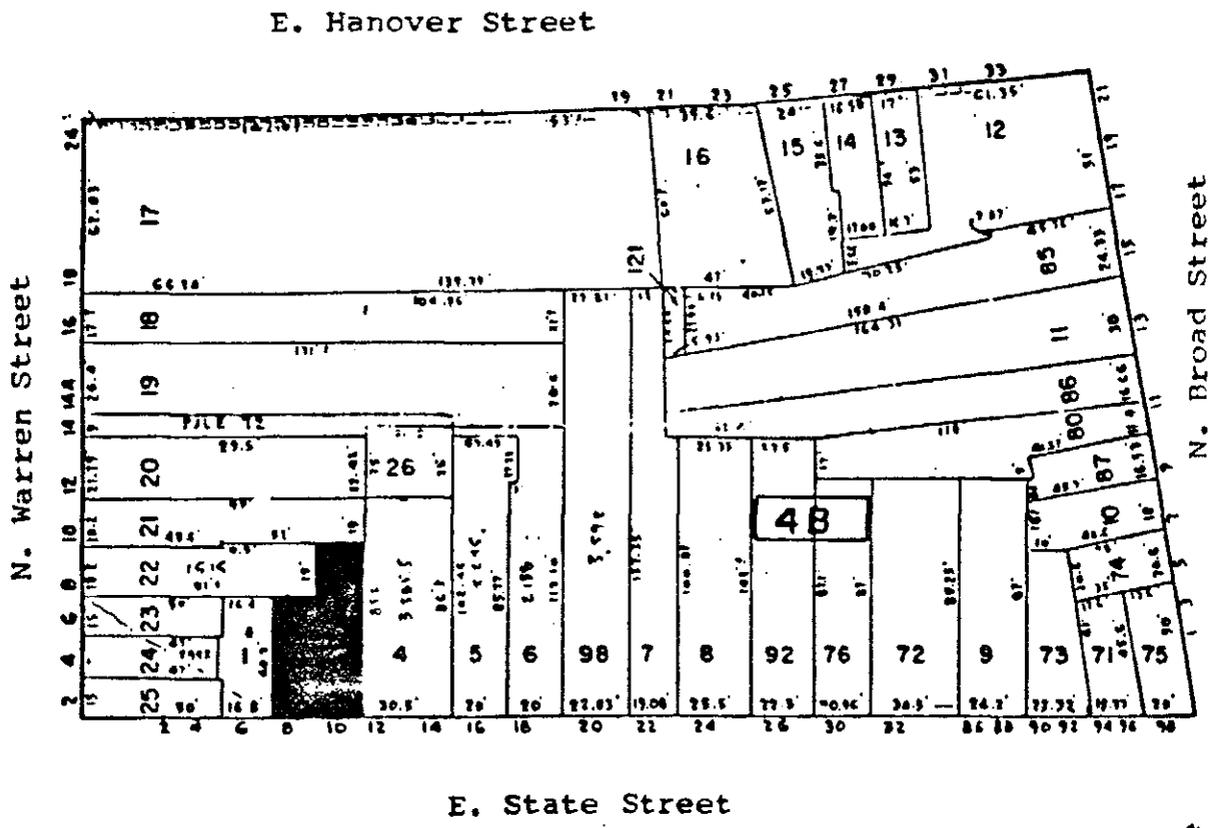
Sidney, J.C. comp. Map of the City of Trenton,
New Jersey From Actual Surveys. Philadelphia:
M. Dripps, 1849.

Part IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation for 8-10 East State Street was prepared for DKM Properties Corp. under an agreement with the City of Trenton, the Office of New Jersey Heritage, and DKM Properties Corp. The site was recorded to HABS standards to mitigate the loss of historic buildings, impacted by a project utilizing funds from HUD through an Urban Development Action Grant. The site is under development by DKM Properties as the Capital Center project, a mixed retail and office building containing 331,000 square feet. It is scheduled for completion in 1989.

Prepared by: Janet W. Foster
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August-December 1987

Site Plan

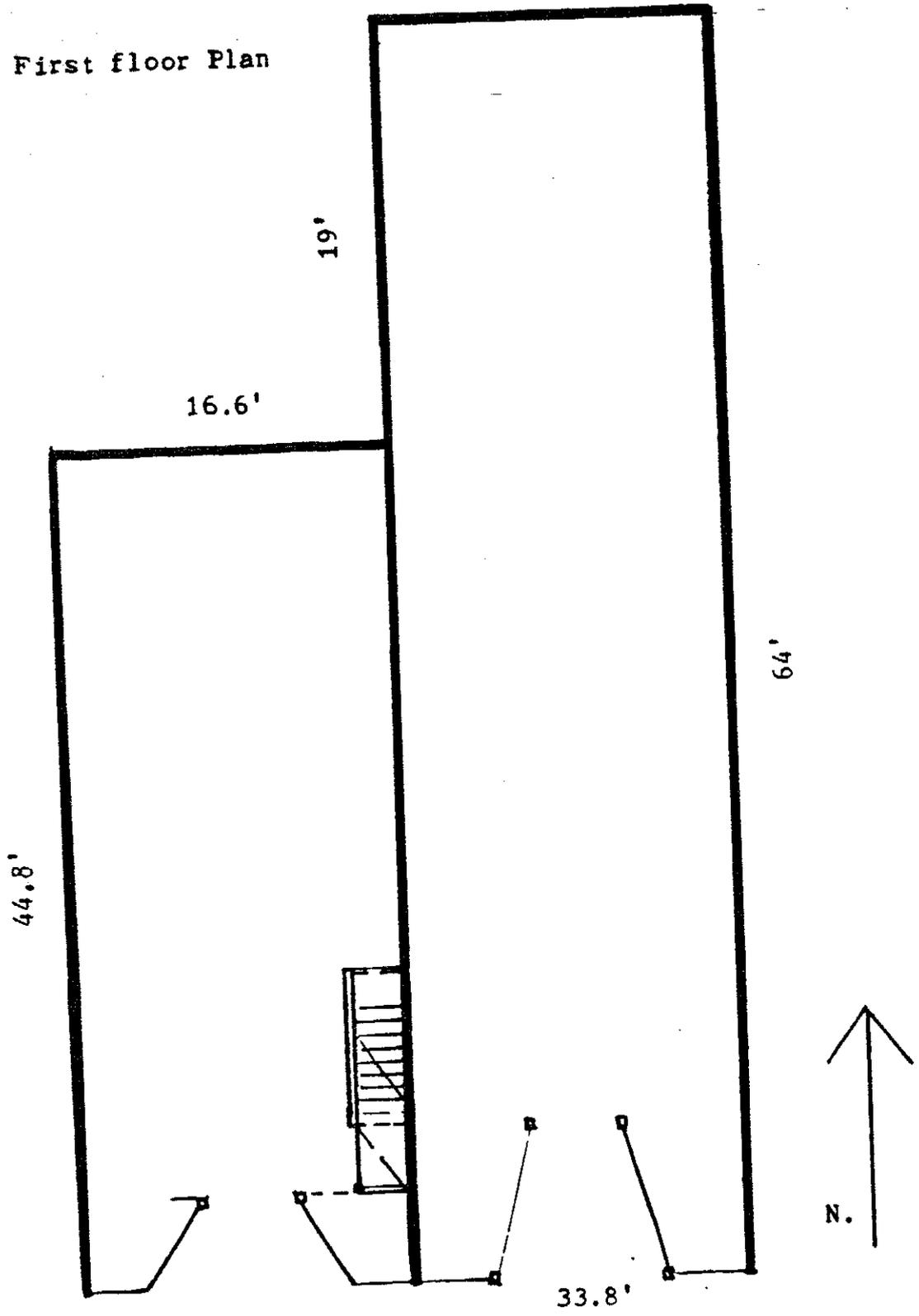


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18'

First floor Plan



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Third floor Plan

