

Magrue House
1413 Western Avenue
Cincinnati
Hamilton County
Ohio

HABS No. OH-2216

MAEC.
OHIO,
31-CINT,
30 -

PHOTOGRAPHS
HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JOSEPH MAGRUE HOUSE

HABS No. OH-2216

Location: 1413 Western Avenue, Cincinnati, Hamilton County, Ohio.
Note: The address was 1413 Freeman Avenue until Freeman Avenue was obliterated by the Northwest Expressway during 1959-1962.

USGS Covington (KY-OH) Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 16.713370.4331780

Present Owner: The United States Government owns the site.

Present Occupant and Use: The house was demolished in December of 1981.

Significance: The Joseph Magrue House was an excellent example of an Italianate town house of the third quarter of the nineteenth century. It was particularly noteworthy for its elaborate cast-iron front porch and fine interior trim.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Not ascertained. Stylistic evidence suggests a date circa 1865-1875.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Records prior to 1884 were destroyed in the Hamilton County Courthouse riot and fire of that year. The legal description of the property is recorded in Plat Book 2, page 156, City of Cincinnati, County of Hamilton, State of Ohio.

The following incomplete chain of title is recorded in Hamilton County Auditor's Plat Books:

1884 Deed, August 1, 1884, recorded September 25, 1884, in Book 574, page 251. Rachel L. Graff, Grantor
To
Sisters of Mercy, Cincinnati, Ohio, Grantee.

1970 Deed, March 31, 1970, recorded April 1, 1970, in Book 3725, page 220. Sisters of Mercy, Cincinnati, Ohio, Grantor
To
United States of America, Grantee.

4. Alterations and additions: Subsequent to the completion of the Sisters of Mercy Academy to the south in 1885, a large brick rear dormitory addition and an adjoining northwest laundry structure were built onto the house, which served as a convent. The

rear addition was connected with the academy chapel by an enclosed wooden bridge at the first-floor level. Interiors were altered by subdivision during Job Corps occupancy after 1970. The house later stood vacant for several years and was severely vandalized before it was demolished in 1981.

B. Historical Context:

The property is in the block bounded by Western Avenue (formerly Freeman Avenue) on the east, Kenner Street on the south, Flint Street on the north, and Denman Street on the west. The block lies just north of Lincoln Park. Enoch Carson, Collector of the Port of Cincinnati, at one time had a farm extending north and west from the corner of Freeman Avenue and Kenner Street. His house, which had inside plumbing, was considered to be one of Cincinnati's showplaces.

Little is known of Joseph Magrue, who had his house built in the block during the third quarter of the last century. His name does not appear in Cincinnati Directories. The Sanborn Atlas of 1883-1884 shows him to have still been the owner of the house at 1413 Freeman Avenue. In 1884 the property was conveyed by Rachel L. Graff (presumably Magrue's heir, probably his daughter) to the Sisters of Mercy, a Roman Catholic religious order. The sisters acquired the corner lots south of the former Magrue property at the same time.

A three-story brick school building and chapel were completed in 1885 on the corner lots south of the house for the Sisters of Mercy Academy, a girl's school founded in 1858 on another site. In 1928 the academy became Our Lady of Mercy High School, a Roman Catholic diocesan high school for girls accommodating about 330 students.

In 1889 the fortresslike Ohio National Guard Armory was built for the First Regiment on the lots adjoining the sister's convent (Magrue House) on the north. The armory continued in use through World War II. The First Regiment was reorganized into the 147th Infantry Regiment before the armory was relinquished.

The building of the Northwest Expressway in 1959-1962 cut a swath through the neighborhood and eliminated most of Freeman Avenue. In 1970 the former Magrue House was bought by the United States Government for use as a Job Corps Screening Unit by the Department of Labor.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Magrue House was a freestanding five-bayed, three-storied, flat-roofed brick Italianate town

house with an ornamental cast-iron front porch and a central hall plan.

2. Condition of fabric: The house had been extensively vandalized before it was demolished in 1981.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The house, exclusive of later additions and the front porch, measured approximately 38'6" (five-bay front) by 74'6" over-all. The porch was about six feet deep and was seven steps high. The house was three stories high above a basement. The first floor appears to have been at least twelve feet high.
2. Foundations: Rubble stone, stuccoed on the exterior.
3. Walls: Red brick laid up in common bond and painted. The front corners had stone quoins.
4. Structural system, framing: Brick bearing walls supported wooden joists.
5. Porches, balconies: The finest exterior feature, the entrance porch, spanned the front wall. It had a stone base and was approached by seven stone steps between heavy stone splayed plinths terminating in massive panel-carved newel elements. The flat porch roof was supported by cast iron work composed of very slender colonettes whose molded and banded bases supported the lace-like-patterned porch railing, and whose extremely attenuated shafts supported arches with trellis-patterned spandrels above which was a frieze of adjoined open circles. The central circle over each arch contained a lion head, and the others contained paterae. The flat roof was guarded by a delicately patterned cast iron railing supported by elaborately molded posts with complex finials.
6. Chimneys: There were five comparatively low rectangular brick chimneys, three within the south wall, and two within the north wall. All had simple projecting cornices that appear to have been made of stone.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The front entrance was framed by a molded round-arched architrave with a carved foliated keystone. The entranceway was slightly recessed, with paneled reveals and intrados. The original richly carved front door was concealed by later paired wooden doors hung below a large glazed arched transom.

b. Windows and shutters: The first and second-floor front windows were round-arched, and the third-floor windows had segmental heads. The first-floor front windows were floor-length. Their architraves matched that of the front entrance, but the windows were narrower and lower than the entrance. The upper front windows had bracket-supported sills and ornamental stone hood moldings. All front windows had wooden double-hung one-over-one-light sash. On the south wall there was a brick two-story bay window with narrow round-arched windows, the arches springing from a string course. The other first-floor south window of the main block, and the two west windows of the first-floor north room, were also round-arched. All other windows were rectangular, with stone lintels and sills. Those in the original house had wooden double-hung six-over-six-light sash. The addition had two-over-two-light sash. There were no exterior shutters left.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The low hip roof had a square flat center with a hatch. The roof was sheathed in soldered sheet metal over wooden planking.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The boldly projecting wooden cornice was supported by paired brackets springing from a paneled frieze and by sets of three modillions between each bracket pair. The front frieze was ornamented by paterae between the panels. The cornice terminated in a cyma recta molding concealing a gutter and was about eighteen inches high over-all.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: See supplement below.
2. Stairways: The front stairway was of the open-string wooden type and ascended west in straight runs to the second and third floors. It had turned balusters and a heavy handrail. The first run had a wooden dado of arched panels. The basement stairs were in the back hall. There were no other service stairs.
3. Flooring: Flooring was wooden. There was a parquet floor in the first-floor stair hall.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceiling throughout were plaster on wooden lath. The principal first-floor areas had elaborately molded plaster cornices and centerpieces. The first-floor hall had a wooden dado of arched panels, and the first-floor southwest room (probably originally the dining room) had a wooden dado of rectangular panels. The second and third-floor halls also had dados.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The first-floor doorways in the main block were round-arched and framed in ponderous molded hardwood (probably black walnut) architraves with carved keyblocks. They contained paneled hardwood sliding doors. The west wall of the middle room had an arcade motif of three round-arched doorways containing hinged rectangular doors below tympana formerly ornamented with applied carving. Each door had six heavily molded fielded panels. The tympanum ornaments had been pried off. The southwest room (in the original rear ell) had rectangular six-paneled hardwood doors hinge-hung in doorways with heavily molded architraves.
- b. Windows: Window trim matched that of the doorways, including carved keyblocks, most of which had been pried off. The interior trim of the first-floor bay window (in the middle room) formed an arcaded motif with extremely slender applied colonettes. On all three floors of the main block, the windows had paneled solid wooden shutters that folded into the reveals of the window embrasures. (The presence of pintles indicates that the rear ell once had exterior shutters.)

6. Decorative features and trim: In addition to the wooden trim and plaster ornaments mentioned above, it is reported that there had been decorative white marble mantelpieces and hearths at the fireplace openings. No trace of them remained.

7. Hardware: All hardware except door hinges had been removed by vandals.

8. Mechanical equipment: All mechanical equipment had been stolen by vandals.

D. Site: The house faced east across a lawn toward Western (formerly Freeman) Avenue and the Northwest Expressway. It was flanked on the south by Our Lady of Mercy High School and on the north by the 147th Infantry Regiment Ohio National Guard Armory. Originally, there had been a private stable at the western extremity of the property on Denman Street.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Interviews: Telephone interview with Stephen Gordon, Director, Miami Purchase Association, February 24, 1982.

B. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Hamilton County Auditor's Plat Book	2,	p. 156
" " " " "	574,	p. 251
" " " " "	3725,	p. 220

b. Secondary and published sources:

Cincinnati Directories, 1860-1900

Sanborn Map Company. Cincinnati, Ohio. New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1887.

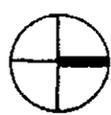
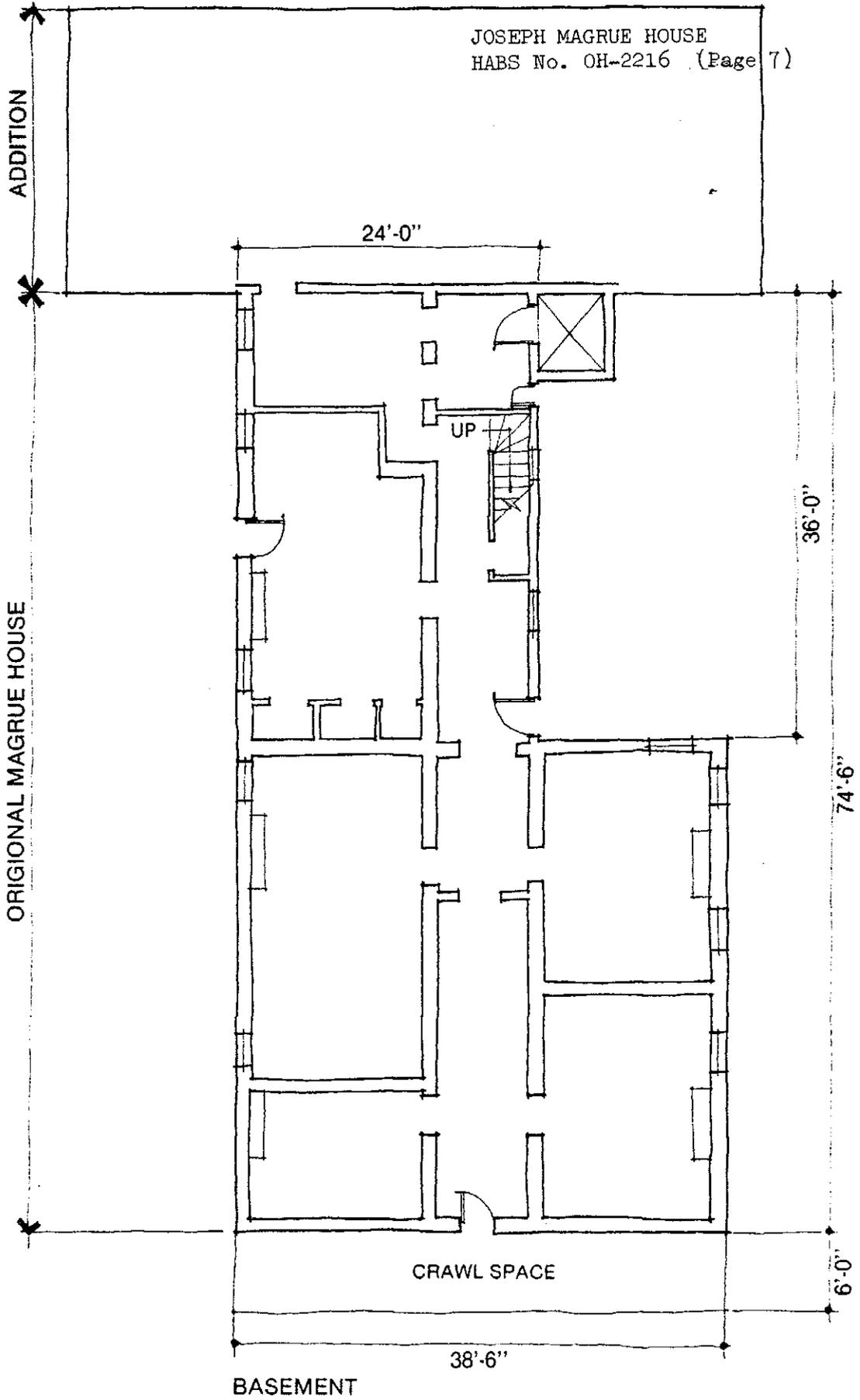
[Federal] Writers' Program of the Works Progress Administration in the State of Ohio. Cincinnati - A Guide to the Queen City and Its Neighbors. Cincinnati: Wiesen-Hart Press, [1943], p. 230.

C. Supplemental Material: See below, pp. 7-10.

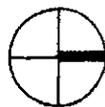
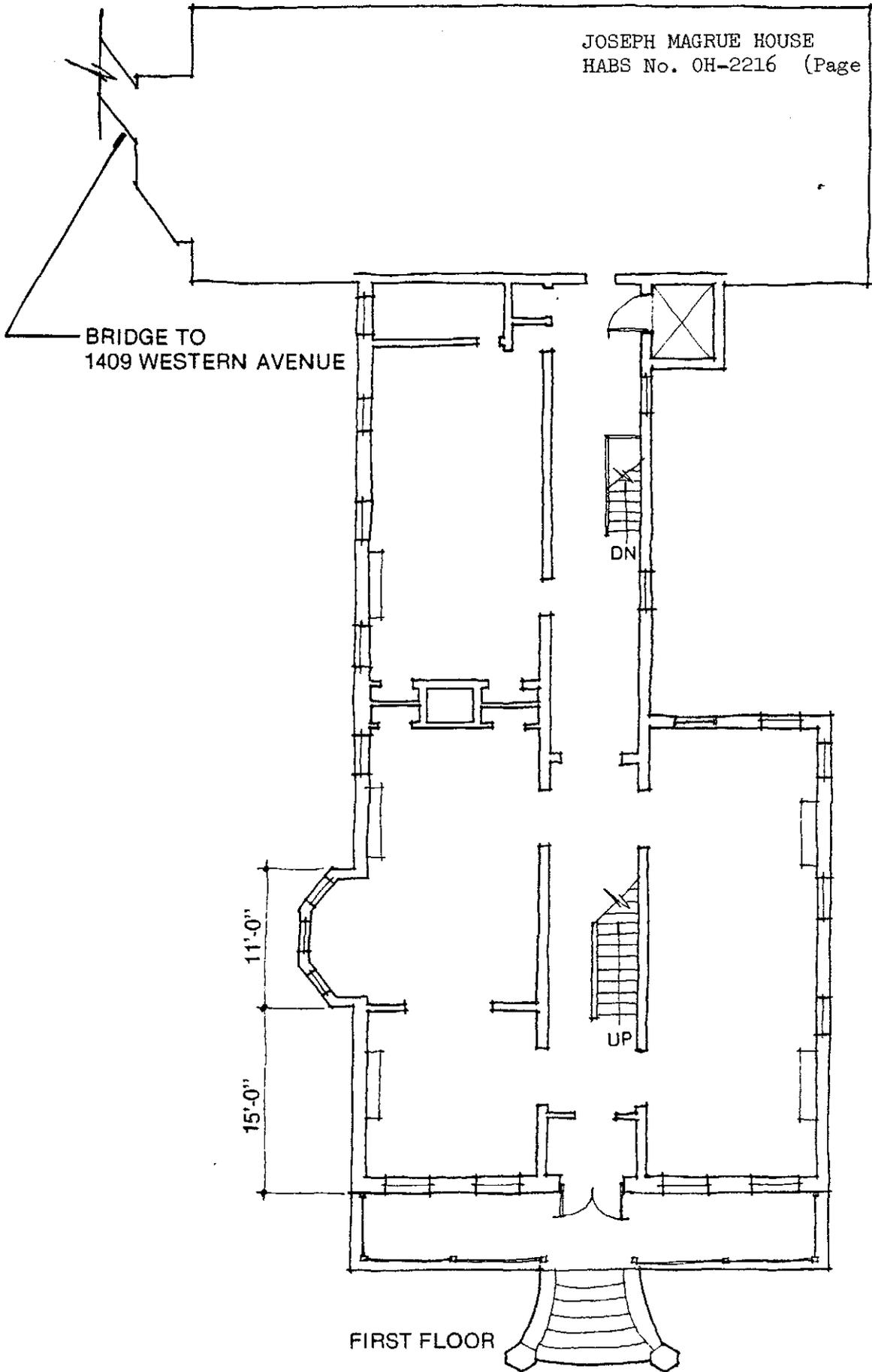
Prepared by: Denys Peter Myers
Architectural Historian
Historic American Buildings Survey
March 1, 1982

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

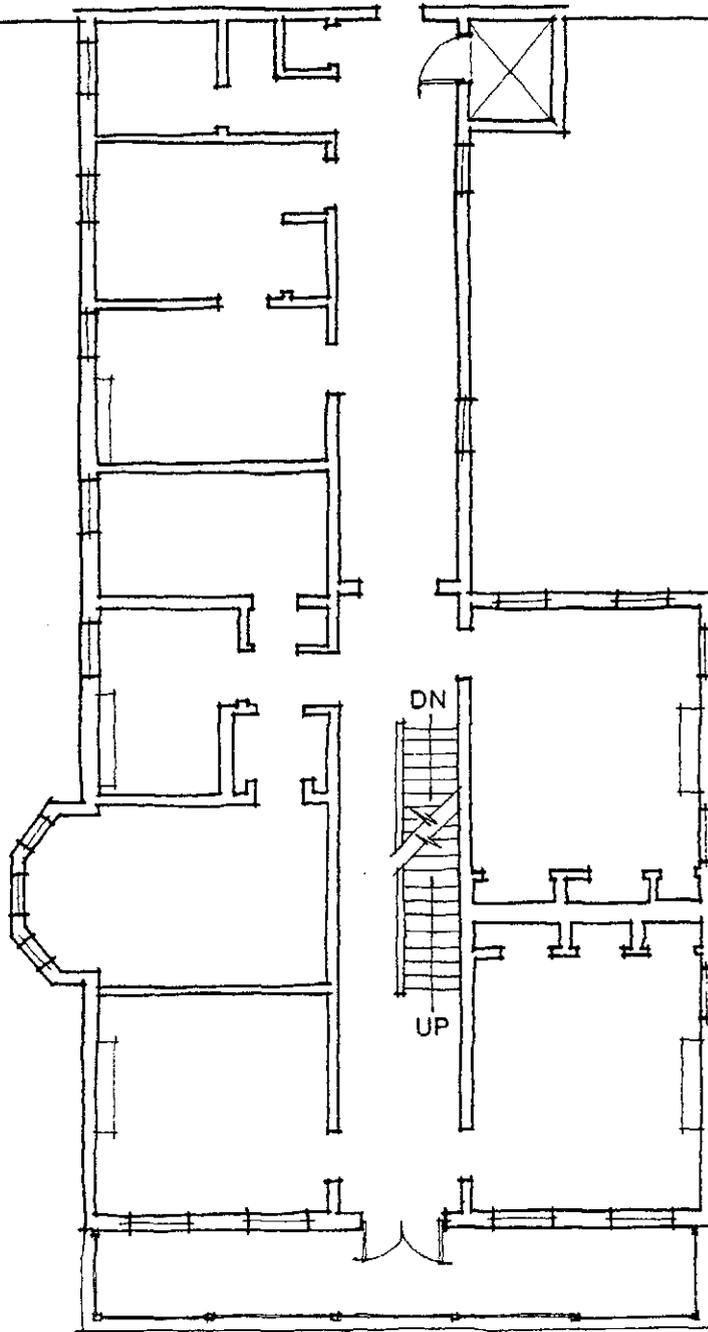
This project was undertaken by the Department of Labor in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative effort in the proposed construction of a new Job Corps facility. John A. Burns, AIA, was the Historic American Buildings Survey coordinator. Photographs were taken by K.L.T. Studios, Cincinnati. The records were researched and written by Denys Peter Myers, HABS architectural historian.



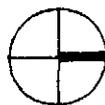
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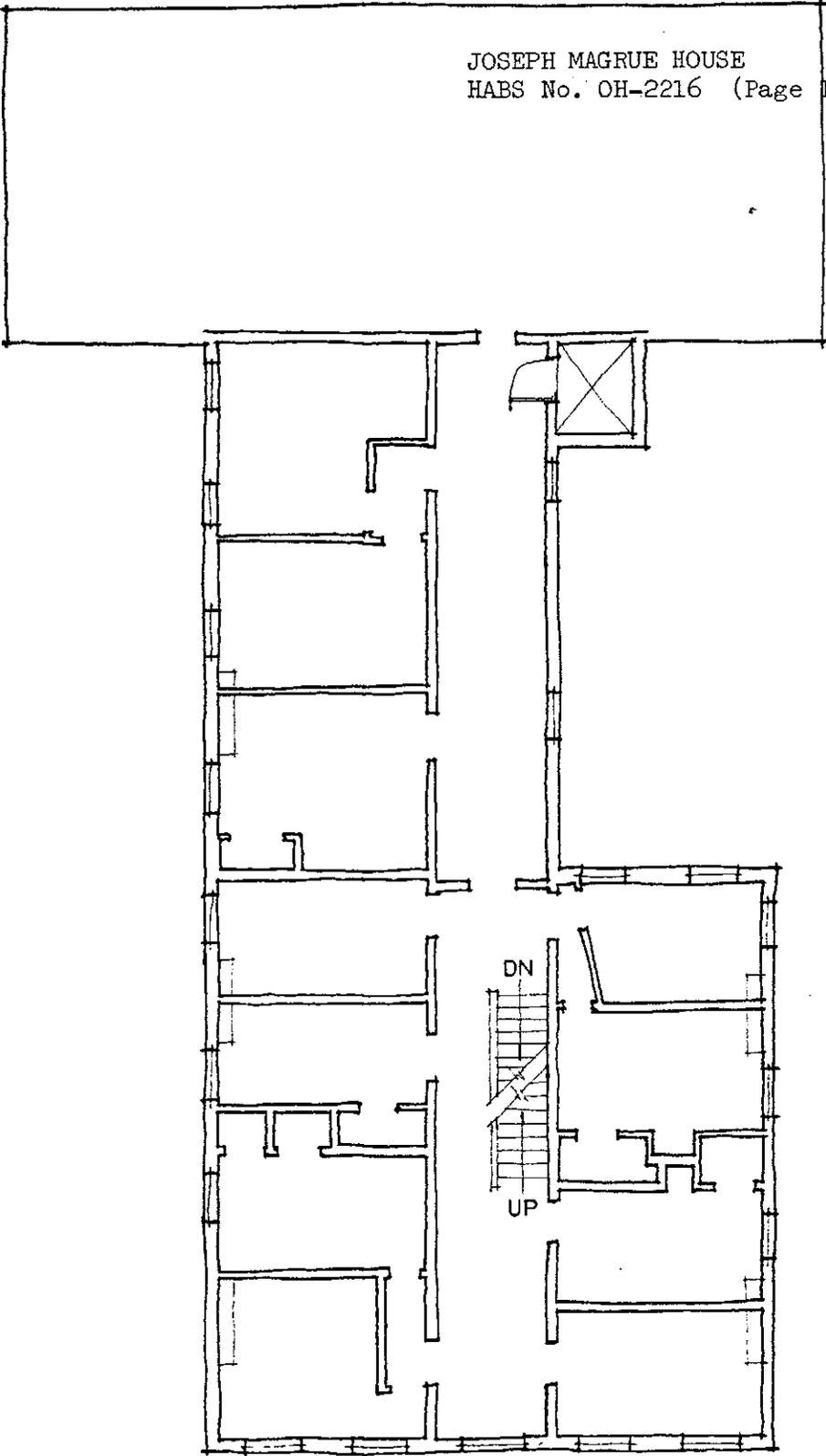
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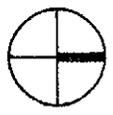
SECOND FLOOR



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THIRD FLOOR



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