

Laurel Homes Historic District, Building B
549-553 W. Liberty Street
Cincinnati
Hamilton County
Ohio

HABS No. OH-2468-A

HABS
OHIO
31-CINT,
82A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATE

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Great Lakes System Support Office
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68102

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
LAUREL HOMES HISTORIC DISTRICT, BUILDING B

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For more information about the Laurel Homes Historic District
see: HABS No. OH-2468 Laurel Homes Historic District

Location: 549-553 W. Liberty Street, Cincinnati,
Hamilton County, Ohio.
UTM Coordinates: 16/713800/4332020

Significance: This building contributes to the historic and architectural development of the Laurel Homes Historic District; a district listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. The building and district were constructed to provide decent and affordable housing to low income residents of the city of Cincinnati. It was the first federally funded low income housing project in Cincinnati and the state of Ohio.

Description: Building B contains a total of thirty-six apartment units with nine units at each of its four residential floors. It is constructed of concrete with common bond brick wall material. It is functional in its overall design and is basically symmetrical in its form. Overall, the building is 139' long and 46'-4" at the side facades. The rear wing extends 17'-6" off the rear facade and is 27' wide. It extends to four floors resting atop a raised foundation with partially exposed concrete wall. No residential use was planned within the basement. The overall floor plan exhibits a center core with short end wings that extend off the north facade and a center wing off the rear south facade. Three main entry bays are on the north facade and exhibit plain limestone surrounds. Window bays are mainly 1/1 metal sash which replaced original metal 1/1 window sashes in 1985.

The interior apartment arrangement, when viewed in plan, is nearly symmetrical at each floor. Three separate stairwells provide access to the east, center, and west sections of the building. The stairwell provides entry into a small hall area at each floor. There is no central corridor extending the length of the building. The original interior stairs were replaced in 1993. Each floor exhibits five separate apartment plans. The plan, with the exception of the rear unit is flipped to accommodate the same, but reversed floor plan at the east and west sections. All apartment units contain four rooms; combination living and dining room, kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom. Throughout the years, various remodeling and general upgrading has diminished the original interior architectural integrity.

History: Building B is part of a twenty-five building project constructed from 1936 to 1938 to replace part of a Cincinnati neighborhood that had experienced extensive structural decay and blight. It was part of a national effort to remove slums from many American cities. Specifically, Laurel Homes established 1,303 apartments of decent and affordable housing. Building B contributed thirty-six of these apartment units. The project was funded by the federal government and was the second largest low income project to be constructed.

Its implementation was a cooperative effort between the federal government and the city of Cincinnati. To facilitate its implementation, the city established the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority to oversee its construction and administration. This organization still retains ownership of Building B and all other buildings within the project.

An architectural collaborative composed of various Cincinnati firms was established to design the buildings. Known as the Associated Architects for Cincinnati Housing, they produced the required drawings and designed the buildings. Utility of construction and standardized design was an essential part of their architectural plans. Apartment arrangements and design were such that they were repeated within numerous buildings and grouped together to allow for standardization of construction.

Today, Building B is vacant and will be demolished to make way for a new redevelopment plan that will incorporate its site as part of an expanded landscape design. Buildings in the immediate vicinity will be rehabilitated to continue to provide housing for low income families within Cincinnati.

Sources: The following source of information and resources have been consulted in the preparation of this documentation:

Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority. Extensive documentation can be found within the various files of this organization to document the buildings and historic district.

Davidson, Owen R. *A Measurement of the Degree to Which Certain Housing Objectives Have Been Fulfilled in the Laurel Homes Project, Cincinnati, Ohio*, Master's Thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1941.

Fairbanks, Robert B. *Better Housing Movements and the City: Definitions of and Responses to Cincinnati's Low Income Housing Problem, 1910-1954*, PhD Dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1981.

Fairbanks, Robert B. "Housing and City: The Better Housing League and Cincinnati, 1916-1939", *Ohio History*, Spring 1980, pp. 157-180.

Gibbs, Kenneth T. *Laurel Homes Historic District*, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, 1986.

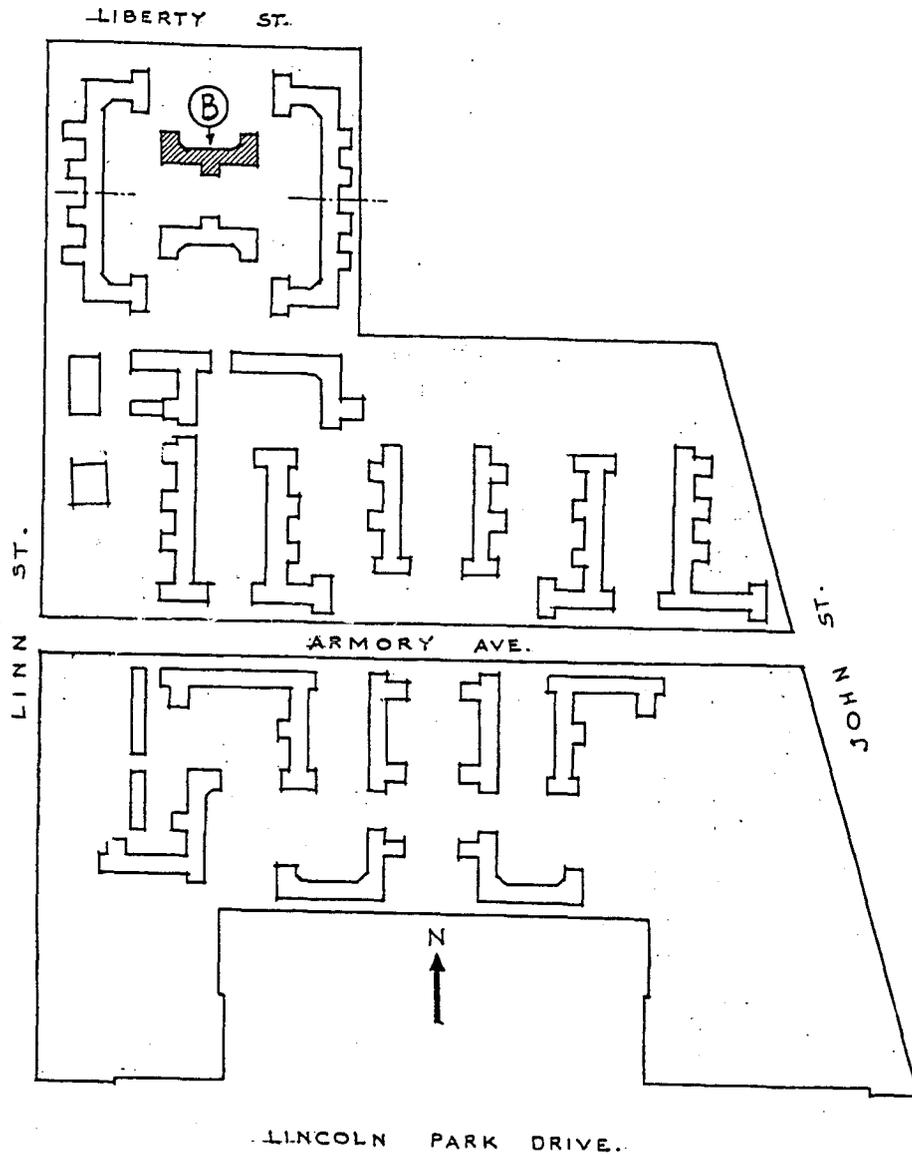
"Housing Projects, Laurel Homes", Scrapbook of clippings from the *Cincinnati Enquirer* and *Cincinnati Times-Star*, Cincinnati Historical Society.

Urban League of Cincinnati, Manuscript Collection No. 580, Cincinnati Historical Society, no date.

Writers Program of the Works Program Administration.
Cincinnati: A Guide to the Queen City and its Neighbors, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1943.

Note: A complete set of original construction drawings for Building B and all other buildings within the Laurel Homes project is maintained by the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority.

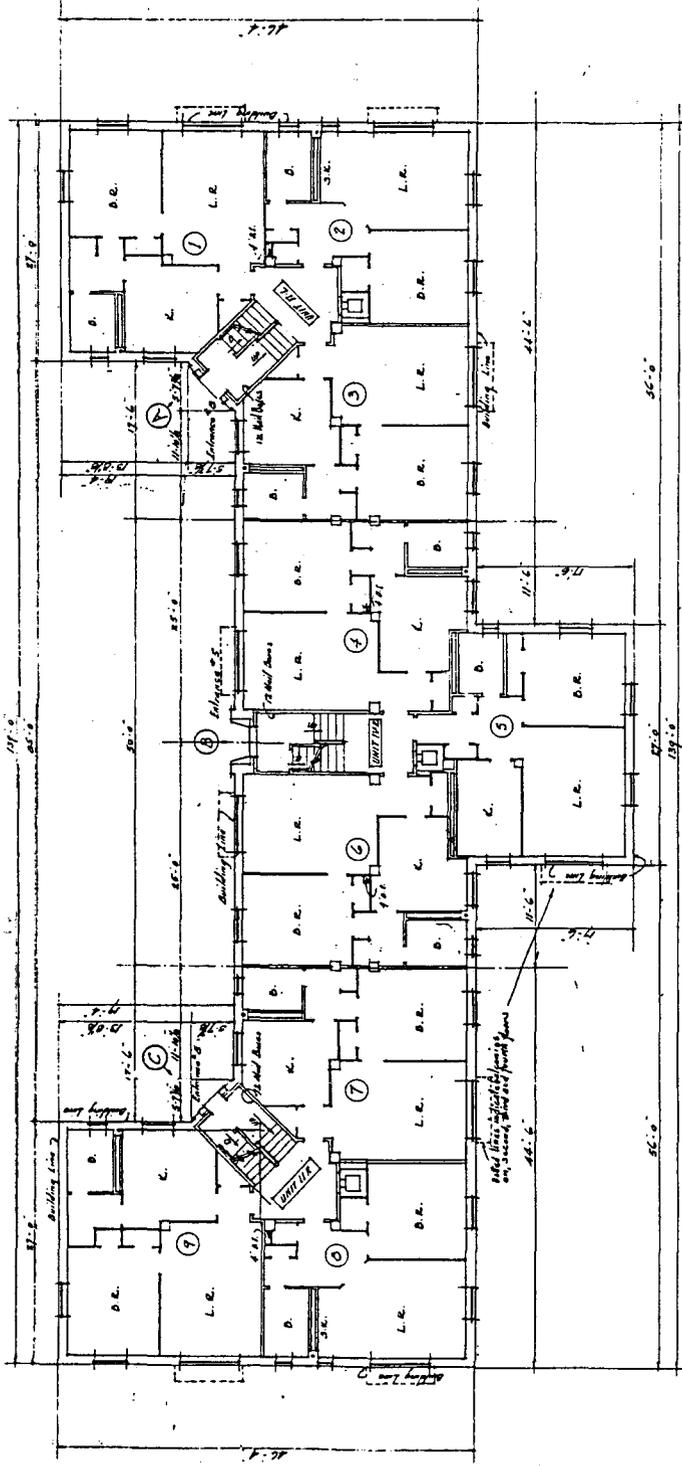
Historian: Fred Mitchell
Historic Preservation Associates
1026 Lenox Place
Cincinnati, Ohio 45229
August, 1997



KEY PLAN

Location of Building B within Laurel Homes Project

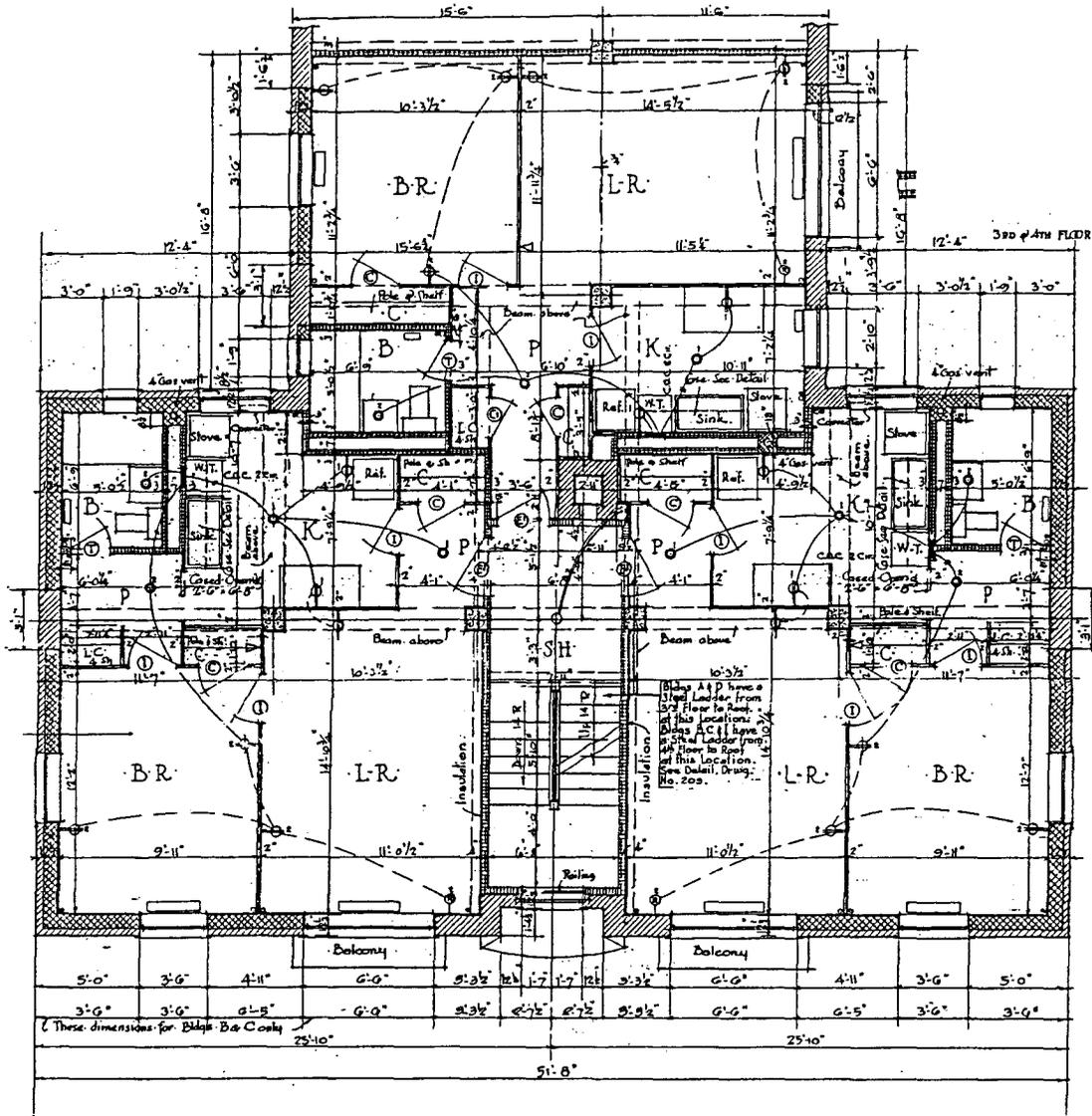
Source: Original Drawing for Laurel Homes Project



FIRST FLOOR PLAN
2nd, 3rd & 4th FLOORS IDENTICAL EXCEPT AS NOTED
Scale 1/8" = 1'-0"

View of Interior Floor Plan of Building B

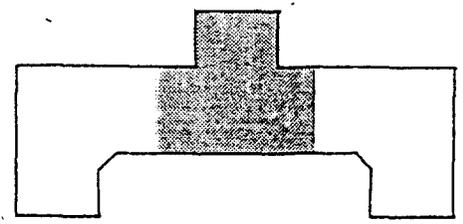
Source: Original Drawing for Laurel Homes Project



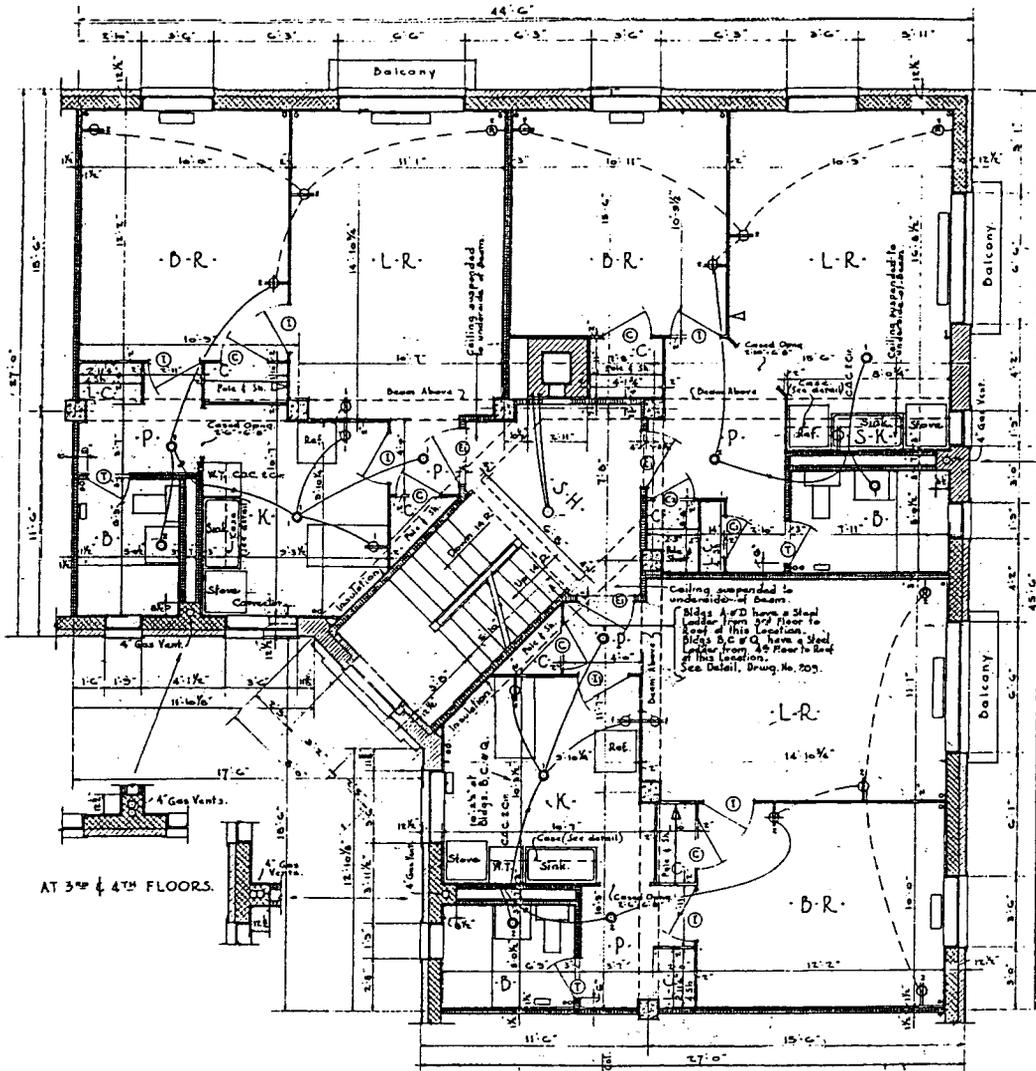
- SECOND FLOOR PLAN -
- THIRD FLOOR PLAN IDENTICAL EXCEPT AS NOTED -
- FOURTH FL. PLAN BLDG B & C IDENTICAL EXCEPT AS NOTED -

NOTES
This Unit occurs in buildings A-B-C-D-1
For Schedule of interior finishes see sheet # 200

Detail View of Center Section
Building B



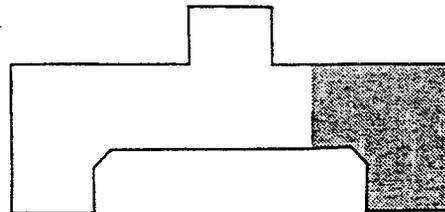
Source: Original Drawing for Laurel Homes Project



· SECOND FLOOR PLAN ·

THIRD FLOOR PLAN IDENTICAL EXCEPT AS NOTED.
FOURTH FLOOR PLAN, BLOGS. B, C, & Q IDENTICAL EXCEPT AS NOTED.

Detail View of West Section
Building B



Source: Original Drawing for Laurel Homes Project