

HERMANN'S BAKERY BUILDING

317 S. MAIN STREET

Preliminary Report

February 17, 2011

By ordinance dated December 19, 1994 the Royal Oak City Commission established the Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee in accordance with Michigan's Local Historic District's Act, Public Act 169 (1970), as amended.

Boundaries

Property Description:

T1N, R11E, Sec 22, Assessor's Plat No. 20, Lot 9, Block 14

Tax Item No.:

72-25-22-105-005, 317 S. Main Street

Percentage of Historic and Non-historic Resources

The percentage for historic resource is 100 %. There are no other historic or non-historic resources in this proposed historic district.

Charge of the Study Committee

The Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee is charged with the mission of identifying, researching, and studying potential historic site and districts within the city of Royal Oak. The research results are reported to the City and State in compliance with Michigan's Local Historic Districts Act PO 169 of 1970, as amended in 1992.

Members of the Study Committee

Ruth G. Cleaveland

Chair, Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

Chair, Royal Oak Historic District Commission

Member, Roundtable of Royal Oak Historical Organizations

Tammis Donaldson

Registered Architect

Member, Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

Robert R. Duchene

Vice-Chair, Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

Teacher, United States History

Robert Guymer

Member, Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

Dr. Jim Keillor

Psychologist

Member, Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

Rob Moore

Secretary, Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

Tim Constant

Assistant Principal / Teacher

Member, Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

Historical Significance

Hermann's Bakery on Main Street is a mainstay of downtown Royal Oak that is housed in the oldest commercial building in Royal Oak. Built around 1902 by the Dondero family, it represents decades of the labor of two immigrant families.

The Dondero name would have been a very familiar one in Royal Oak in the early 1900's. Donderos were active members of the Royal Oak community. Donderos dealt in real estate, law and insurance. Gustavus Dondero operated a hotel at Fourth and Center, a saloon and "Dondero's Confectioners, Baked Goods and Complete Soda Fountain", later

known as "Dondero's Bakery" and ultimately as "Hermann's Bakery". Gus became a City Commissioner shortly after Royal Oak moved from village to city status in 1921. His younger brother, George, had worked at his hotel for him in exchange for room and board. George later became the first boy to graduate from Royal Oak's Union School in 1903. George went on to become Royal Oak's first mayor and later was elected to the U.S. Congress in 1932. He served in Congress for 24 years. Dondero High School was named after George Anthony Dondero in 1927.

The Dondero Family's immigrant roots lay in two separate nations. Louis Dondero (originally "Dondare") was born in 1842 in Italy. He married Caroline Truthorne (originally "Truthan") who was born in 1841 in Germany. Their marriage took place in Hartford, Connecticut in 1862.

Louis worked in the Colt gun factory, making cartridges for the Union Army. They moved to Wayne County in 1870, when Gustavus was born. Shortly after, the Dondero family moved to a farm in Royal Oak Township at West Nine Mile and Scotia (which was first called Dondero Road). The family moved to Royal Oak to give their four children an opportunity to attend Royal Oak schools.

Gus took Ida Granger for his bride in 1891. Gus and Ida had two sons and a daughter. The two sons, Edward and Donald, reportedly were not interested in working at the bakery. But Gus had an employee named George Hermann who turned out to be very interested in the bakery business.

In 1891, an 18-year-old Andreas Hermann, son of Andreas Hermann and Barbara Schmidt, left his native Bavaria, Germany for Philadelphia. He left Europe from Antwerp, Belgium on the S.S. Burgenland carrying two bags. By 1894, he had filed a Declaration of Interest to become a U.S. citizen in Chicago. By 1898 he had arrived in Detroit (reportedly by hopping a freight train) to practice the ancient craft of stonemasonry. In Detroit, he married Wilhelmina Sprenger at St. Joseph's Church in Detroit. Andreas, by now known as "Andrew" and Wilhelmina, more commonly known as "Minnie", moved to Royal Oak around 1906. Together they had five sons and two daughters.

After arriving in Royal Oak, Andrew established the Royal Oak Monument Works (**Exhibit 1**). At the Monument Works, Andrew created many monuments for the Royal Oak, Oakview

and St. Mary's Cemeteries. He also created the original cornerstone for St. Mary's Catholic Church in Royal Oak. As a stonemason, Andrew would often transport uncut stone from Detroit to Royal Oak on the back of a streetcar. Family lore reports that Andrew would light a roll of newspaper to flag down the Interurban after dark.

By 1920, Andrew was no longer cutting stone for the Monument Works Company but was a shipping clerk for an auto factory. Family members report that Andrew had an opportunity to go into business with the local undertaker, William Sullivan, but didn't and subsequently lost the stonemasonry business due to uncollected bills.

In Royal Oak, Andrew and Minnie lived on Farnum Street, in a home that had a chicken coop and a garden in front. They would pick mushrooms in the wooded area across the street and sell them to neighbors. Later they lived on Fifth and West Streets, where Andrew would die of tuberculosis in 1928. Minnie would succumb to the same sickness in 1930. Due to the displacement caused by these illnesses, two daughters were sent to the St. Vincent's Home in Detroit and two sons were sent to St. Francis' Home in Detroit. Interestingly, the boys ran away from that home and walked back to Royal Oak. When their father returned them to the home, they ran away again. Andrew then let the boys live with their older brothers.

Andrew and Minnie's second son, George Andrew, was born in 1903 while the family was still in Detroit. Around 1922, George Hermann was hired by Gustavus Dondero in 1922 as a clean-up boy at "Dondero's Confectioners, Baked Goods and Complete Soda Fountain" (telephone number - 80). George had been warming himself in a pool hall when he got word that a job was available at Dondero's Bakery. He hurried over there before anyone else could get that job.

George Hermann became a baker in 1924 and became a partner with Gus Dondero in "Dondero's Bakery" in 1929. Then in 1937, a 25-year-old woman named Kathryn Hessell was fired from a candy shop on Main Street. She walked across the street to Gus Dondero's bakery and was hired at 25 cents per hour. She ultimately married George Hermann in 1939 in Centerline, Michigan.

In 1942 George and Kathryn Hermann bought the bakery outright from Gus Dondero. In April of 1943, the bakery officially became "Hermann's Bakery", featuring pies for 30 cents

and an eight-inch cake for 55 cents. In 1954, their oldest son, Richard, started work at the bakery. The 14 year old worked for \$25 a week. His father, George, died in 1984 and on the death of his mother in 1999, Richard Hermann assumed ownership of "Hermann's Bakery". The bakery has weathered many ebbs and flows in the local and regional economy but remains to this day a mainstay for discerning Royal Oak shoppers.

Together these two immigrant families have made a lasting contribution to the Royal Oak community. Their experience illustrates the promise and the reward that our nation represented and continues to represent to the world today.

Architectural Description

Hermann's Bakery is located on Main Street, in the heart of downtown Royal Oak. The building faces west. Looking straight at this single-story storefront from Main Street, the building is symmetrically divided down the middle of the arched entry. At the top of the arched entry is a concrete block with the date 1902 set in, the year the building was constructed. On either side of the entry is a storefront display window. Originally there was a display window with a transom window above, the transom window may have been removed; there is a solid piece of wood in its place now. The display windows have a single-lite glass. (**Photos 1 - 4**)

The building is constructed of concrete block, a rusticated concrete block which looks like stone; it is painted and old photographs show that it has always been painted. The entrance is recessed, the side walls angle toward the entry door. Comparing the current photographs and the old photographs of the store, it looks as though there may have been decorative elements below the display windows and at the top of the building just below the cornice at the entablature. At the north and south ends of the building on each corner there was a decorative cap. The transom windows had a vertical single muntin. The display windows have been replaced but are the same size and shape as the original windows. The building has been maintained very well as the existing materials are in very good condition. The building also maintains the essence of the original look of the storefront, without much alteration.

Upon entering the store the first space is a retail area with glass-fronted bakery displays and a cash area. The ceiling is a lay-in acoustical ceiling but above that is a tin ceiling with

original ceiling fans. Beyond the retail area is the bakery. In the bakery there is a tin ceiling punctured with skylights. This is a working bakery with a cast iron oven from "Middleby Marshall" and well-worn maple countertops. Middleby Marshall was founded in 1888 by Joseph Middleby, who owned a bakery supply firm, and John Marshall, a licensed engineer. The business was created to produce custom designed movable ovens. The retail area is air-conditioned but the bakery area is not. The rear door of the bakery heads into an alley and parking lot to the east. (**Photos 5 – 13**)

Reading the Sanborn maps for the City of Royal Oak, the 1916 drawing shows the building noted C.B. (concrete block). The building is the 4th building up north from East Fourth Street and the address is 331, the building use noted as "Barber/Pool". The 1921 Sanborn map notes the C.B. again and a new use as a "confy" (confectionary), the address 331. The 1926 maps show a new use "Bakery and iron oven", a rear addition is added on the address is shown as a dual address 331/317. The 1931 map has the bakery with iron oven, the address is 317. The 1931 +1950 map shows no change to 317 Main Street.

Summary (Statement of Significance)

In review of the significance of the contribution which the Dondero and Hermann families have made to the growth and stability of Royal Oak for several generations, and to the maintenance of the original building, the Royal Oak Historical Study Committee recommends that the building known as Hermann's Bakery at 317 S. Main Street be designated as historic.

Bibliography

Royal Oak Images; Yesterdays' Charm Today's Treasures, by the Roundtable of Royal Oak Historical Organizations

Images of America Royal Oak by Maureen McDonald and John S. Schultz

Preservation Briefs #11; Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts, by H. Ward Jandl
Sanborn Maps

The Middleby Corporation company history; <http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/The-Middleby-Corporation-Company-History.html>

Royal Oak Historical Museum, Royal Oak, Michigan

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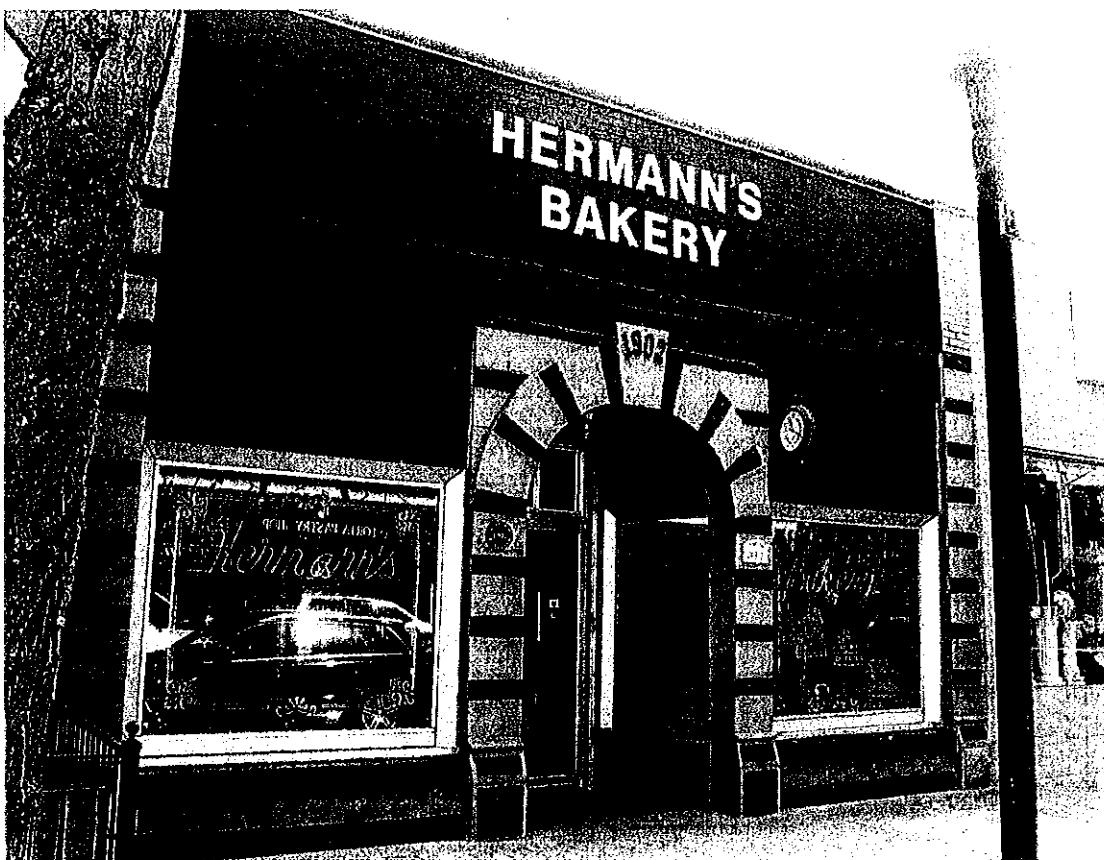
You always get fresh Bread, Pie,
Cakes, etc., baked by the Baker who
knows how, when you patronize the
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bread.



HISTORICAL PHOTO (1905) OF EAST SIDE OF MAIN STREET
HERMANN'S BAKERY IS NEXT TO THE FELLOW WITH THE WHITE APRON.



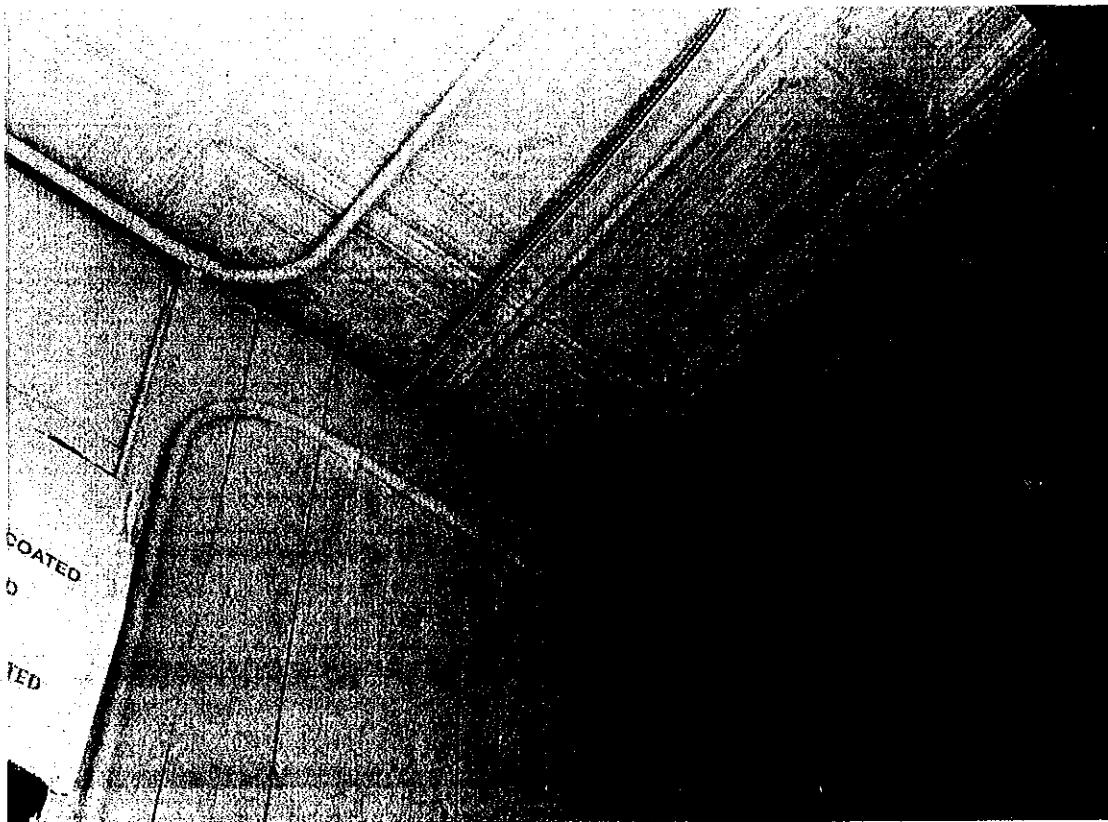
FRONT ELEVATION FACING WEST



ARCHED ENTRY WITH THE YEAR THE BUILDING WAS CONSTRUCTED



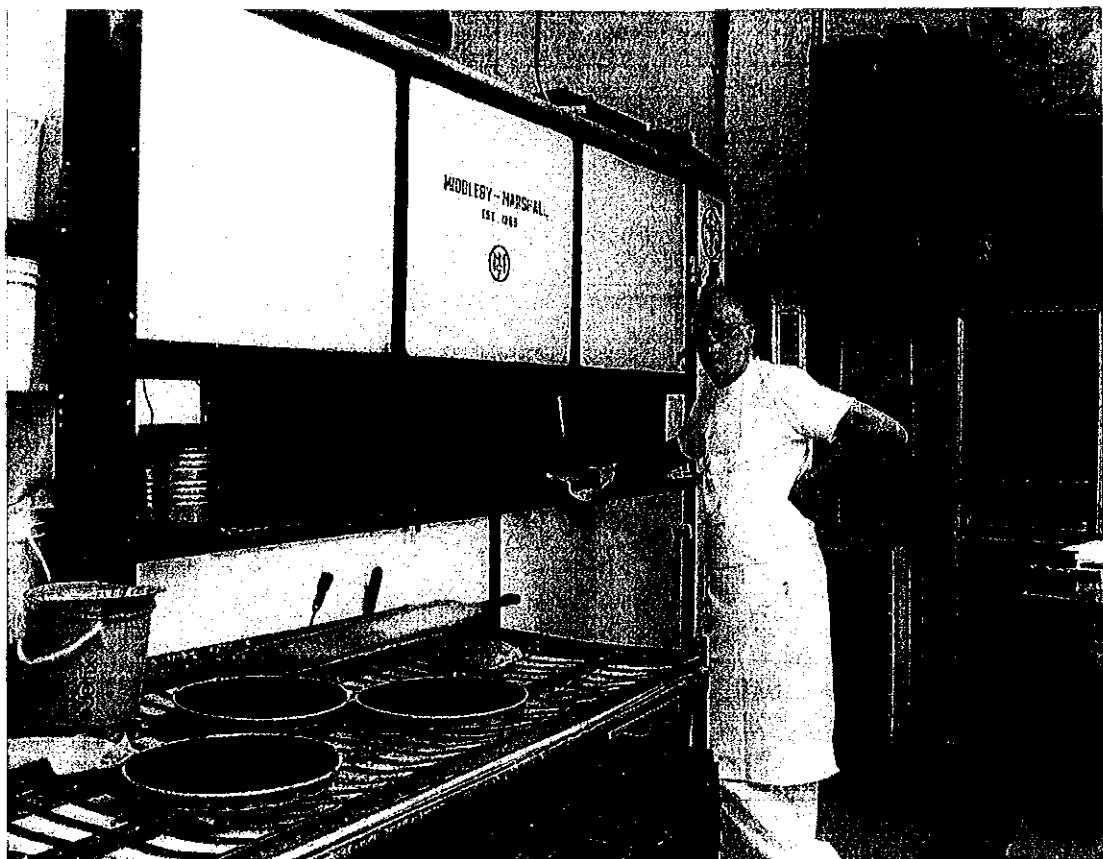
ORIGINAL TIN CEILING



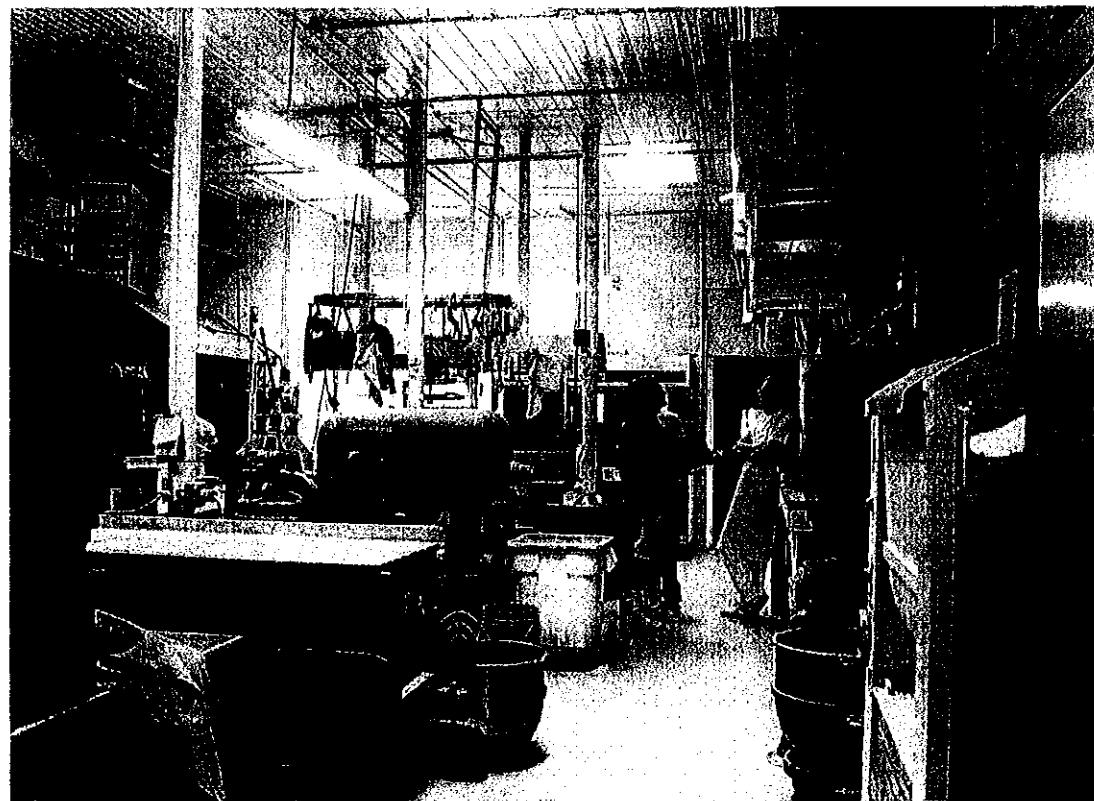
CEILING IN KITCHEN AREA OF BAKERY



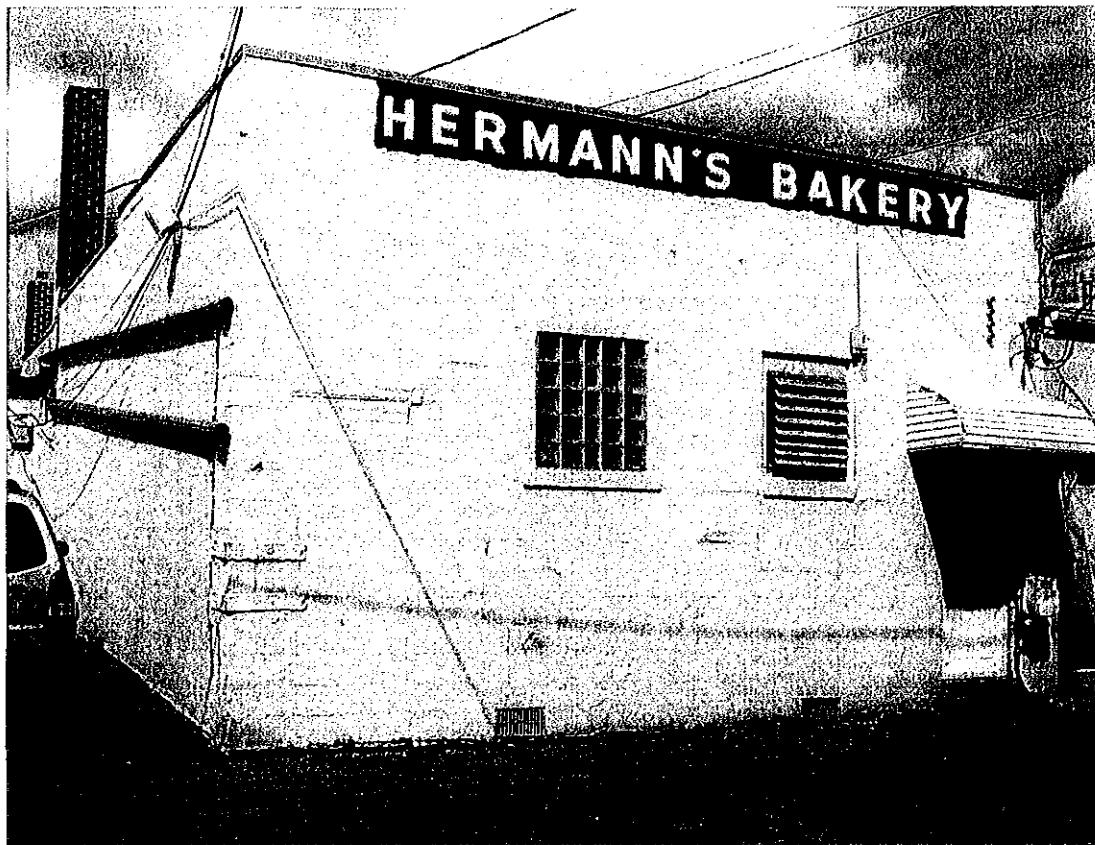
INTERIOR OF BAKERY IN OPERATION, SHOWING ORIGINAL OVENS



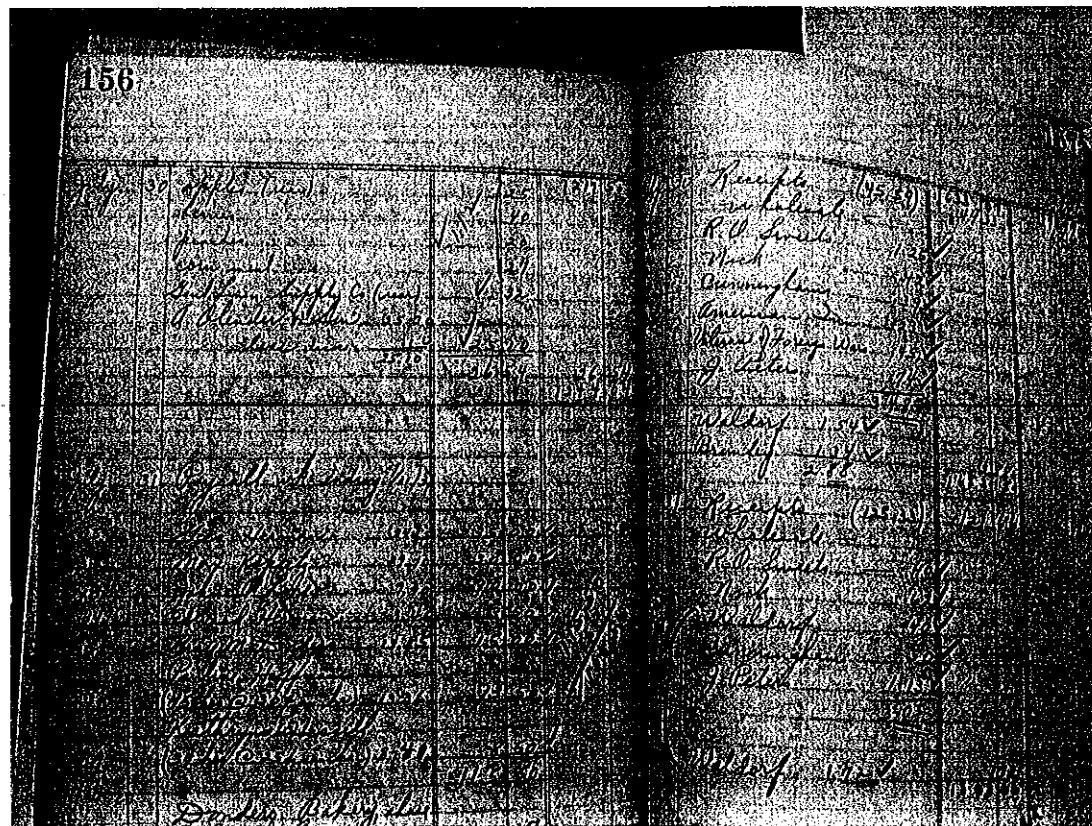
INTERIOR OF BAKERY IN OPERATION

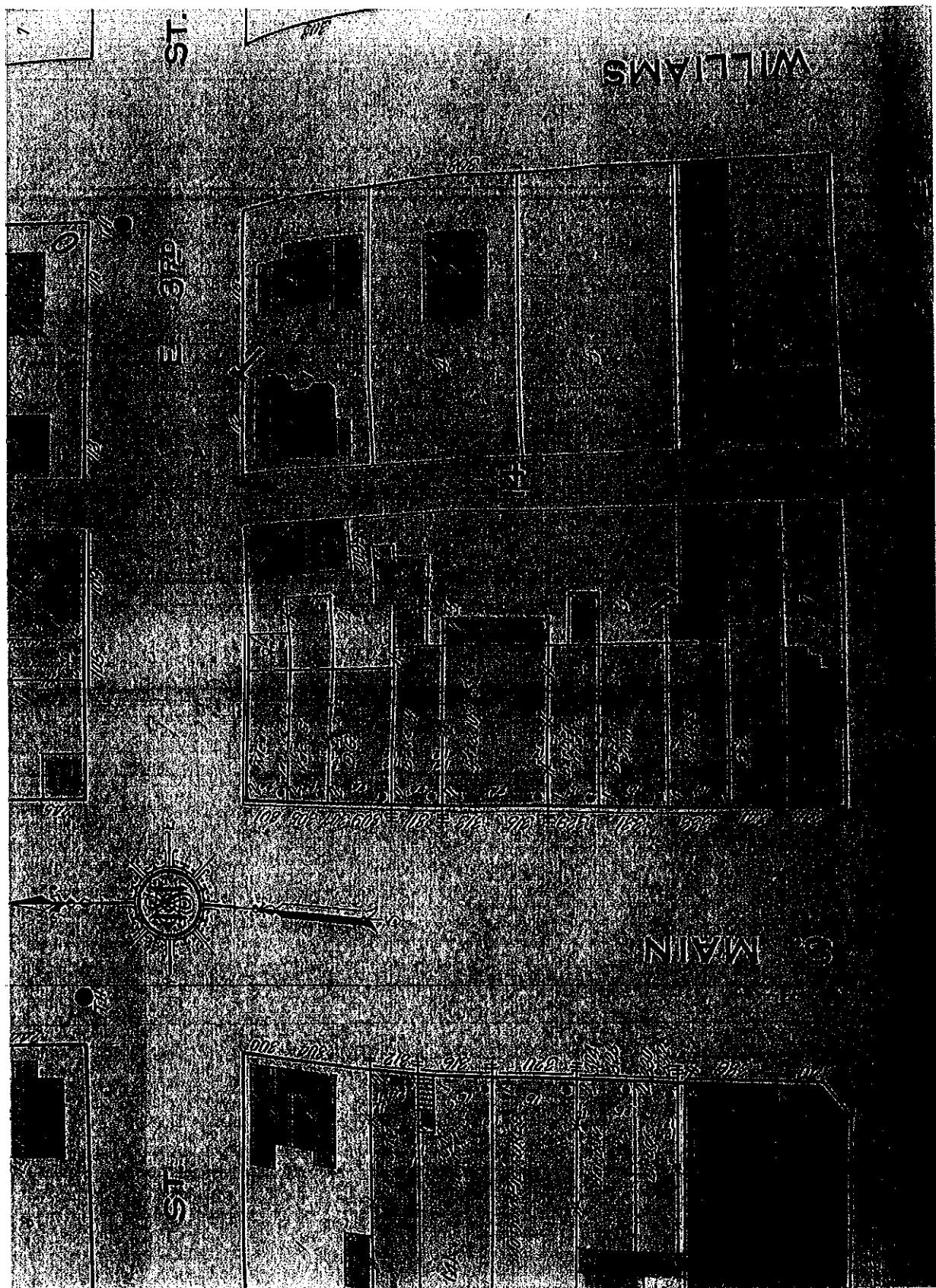


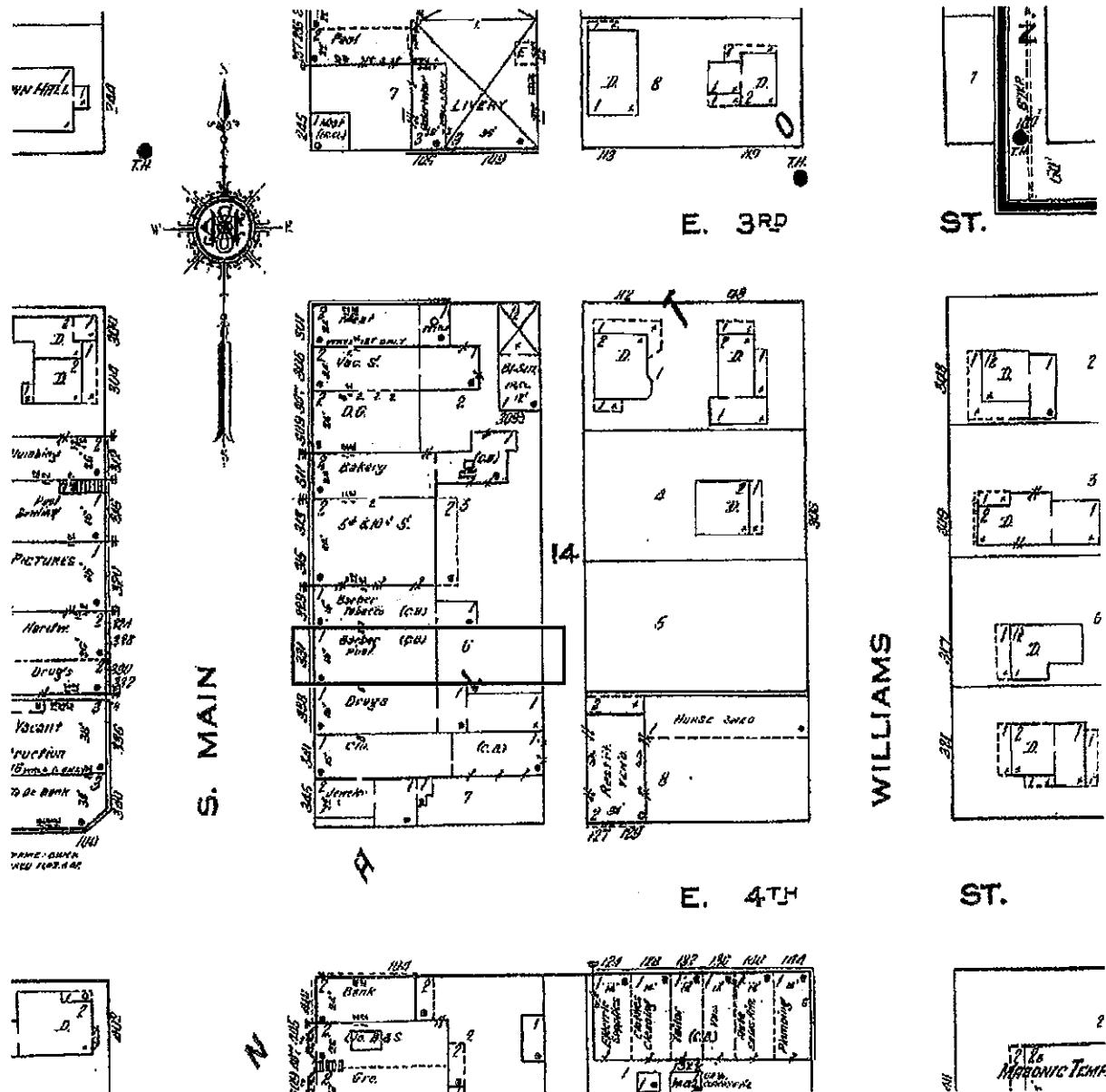
BACK ENTRY (EAST ELEVATION) ON ALLEY



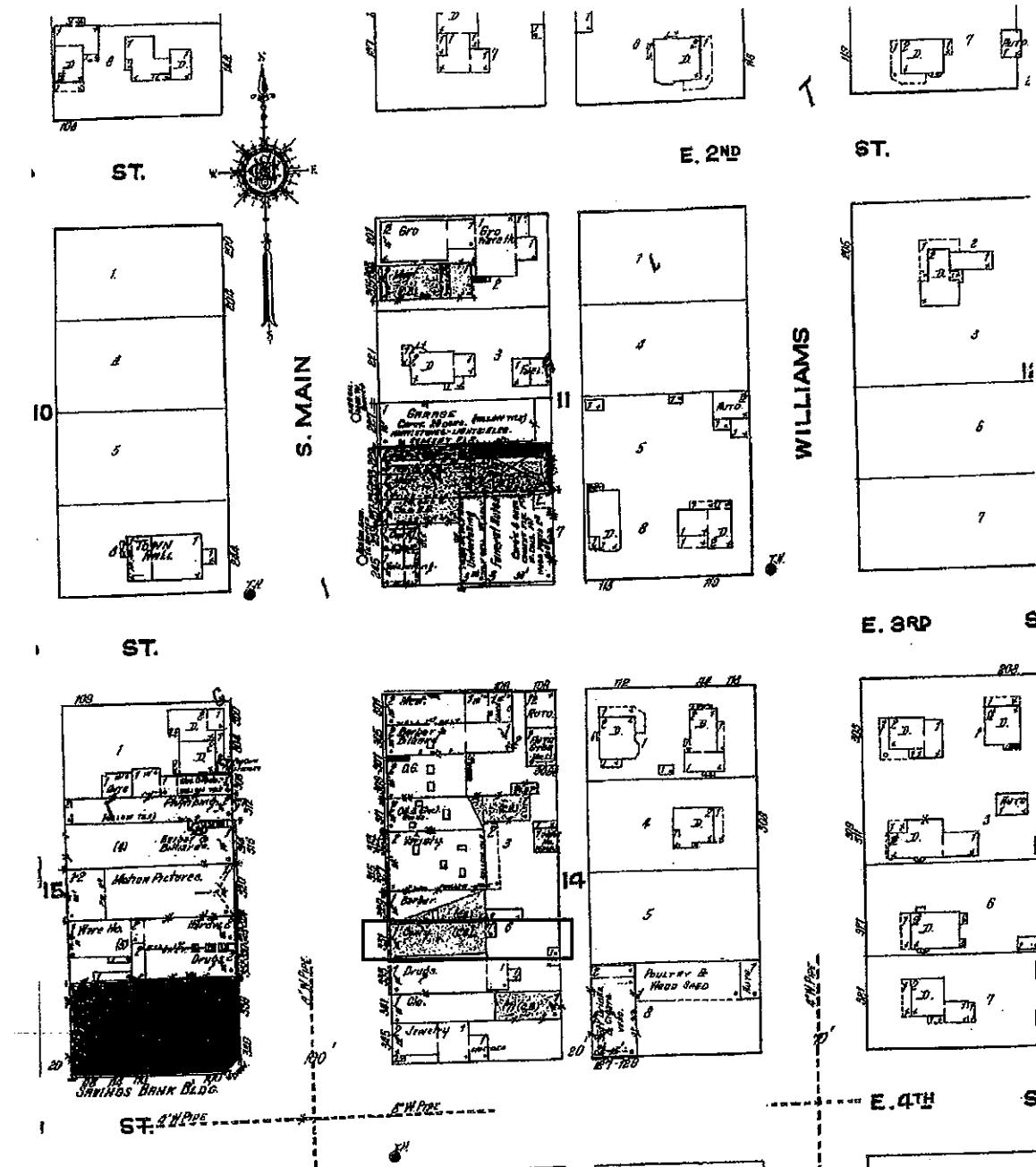
1937 PAYROLL LEDGER



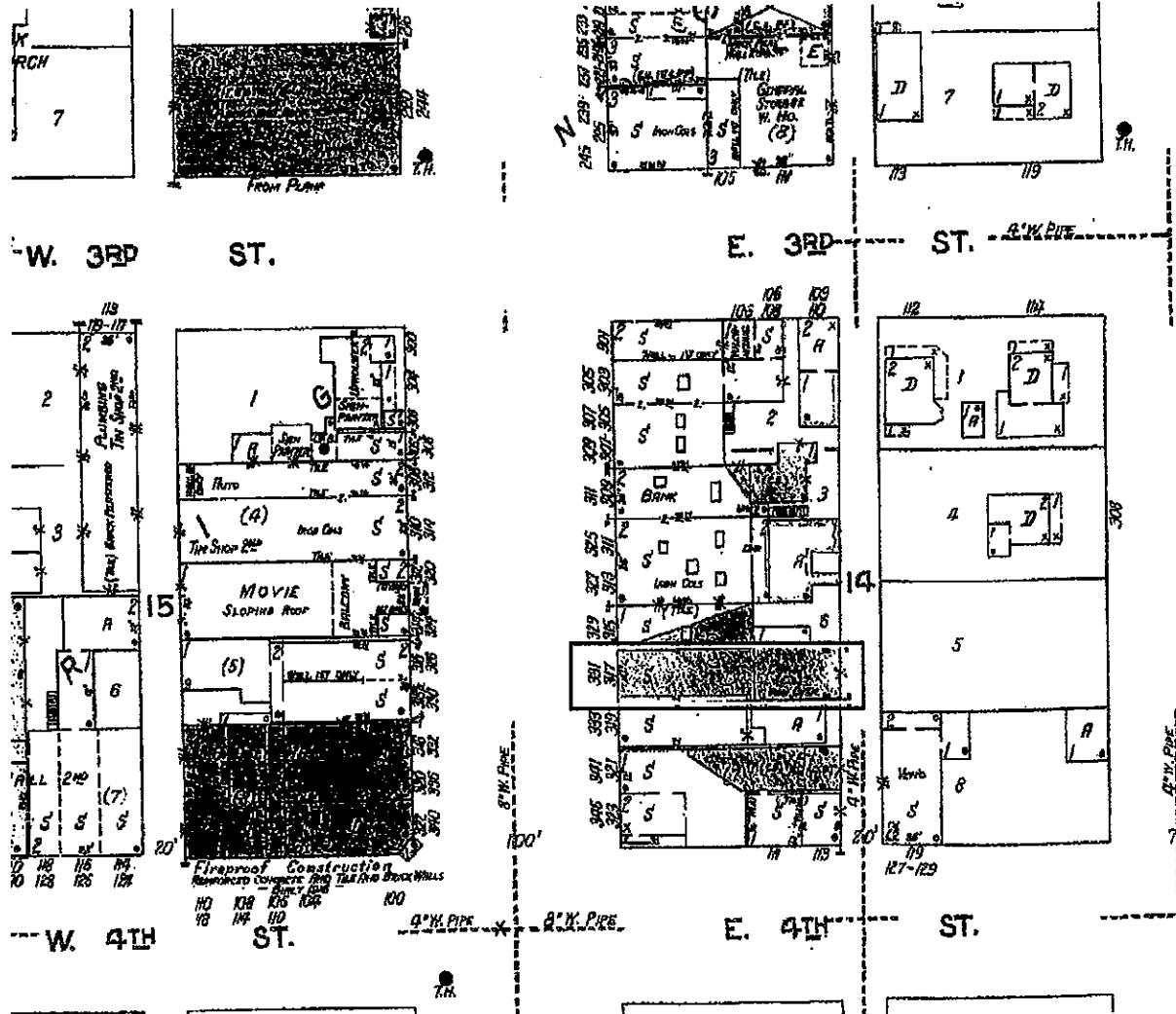




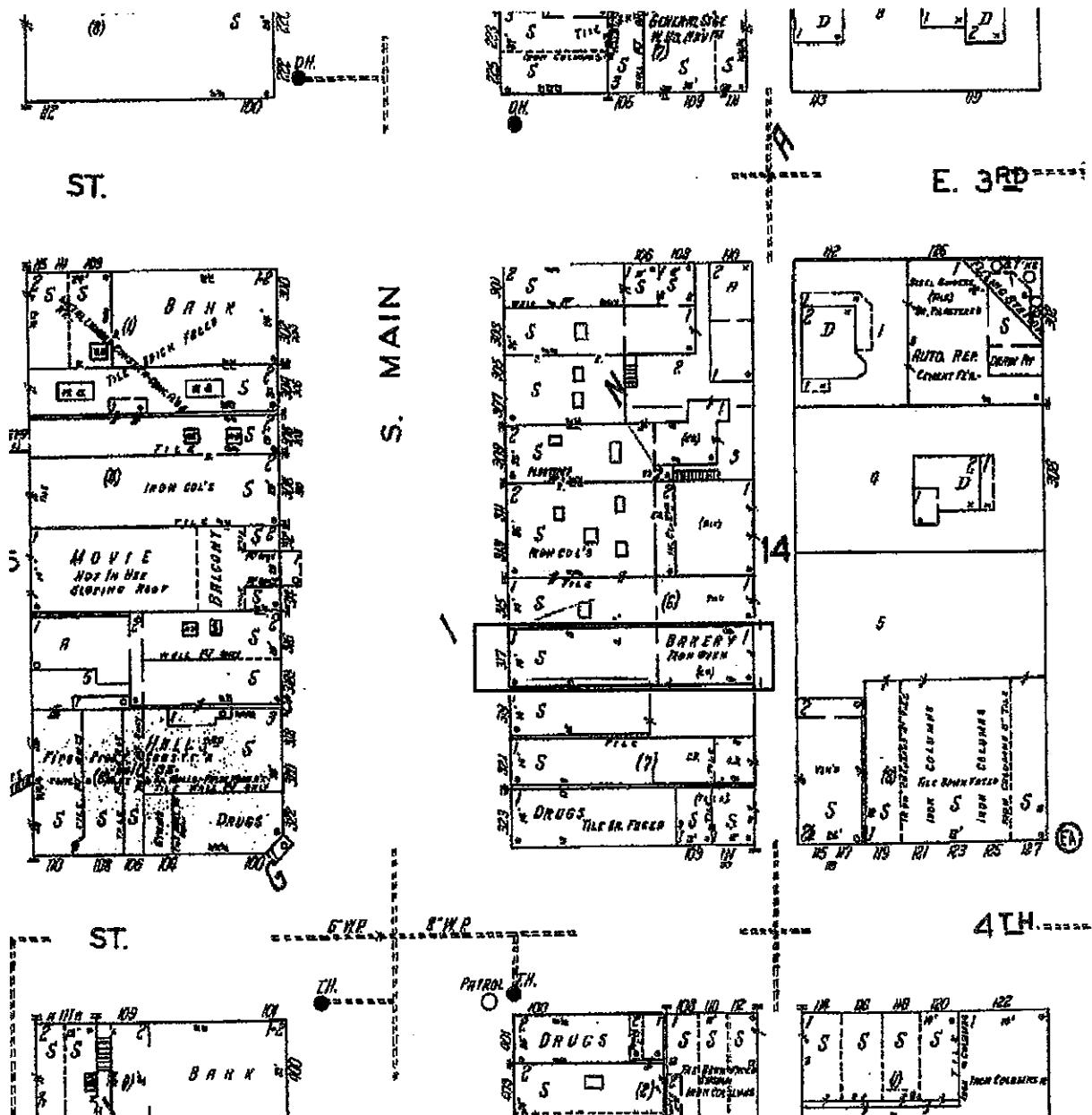
SANBORN MAP - 1916



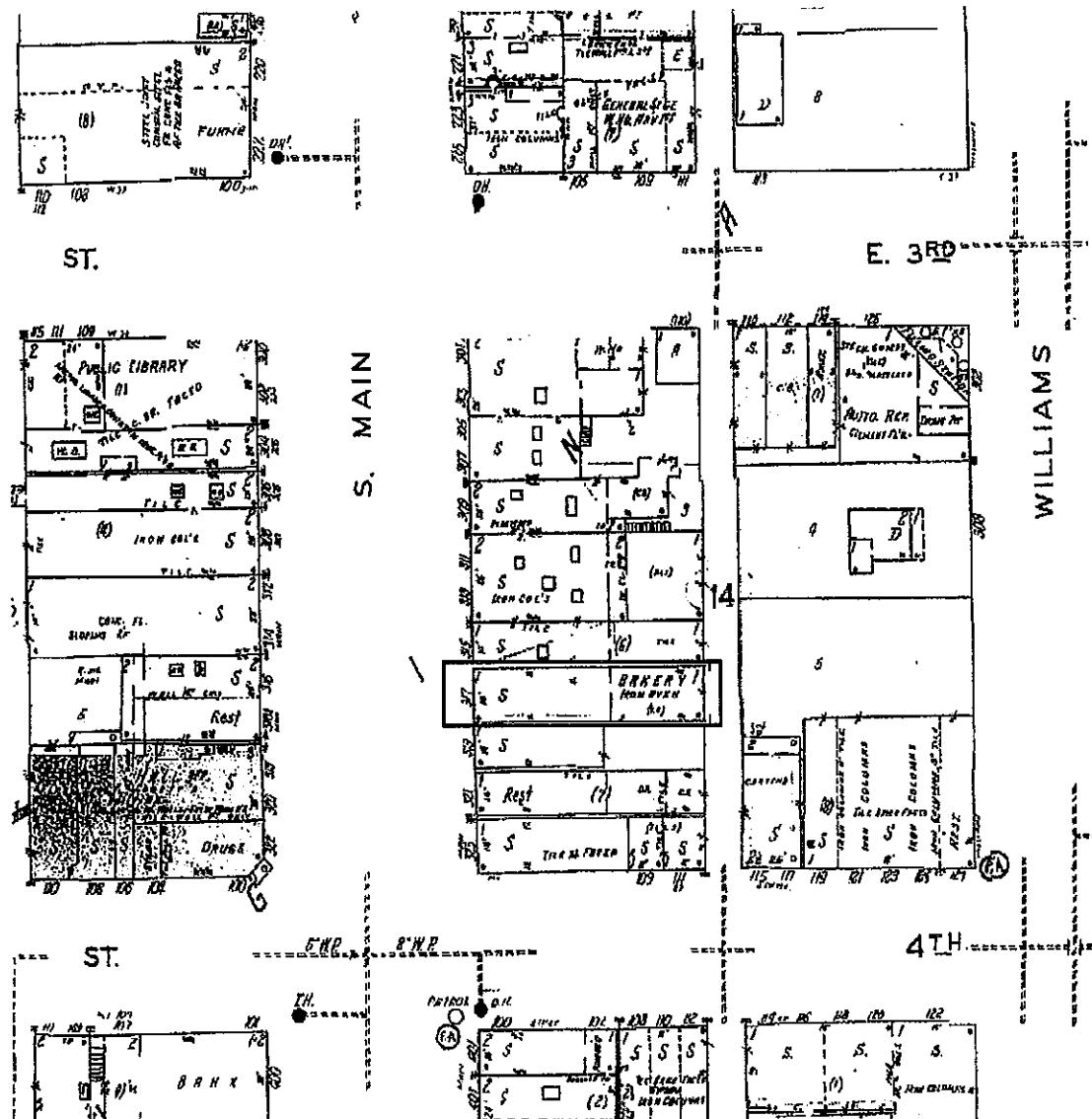
SANBORN MAP - 1921



SANBORN MAP - 1926



SANBORN MAP – 1931



SANBORN MAP – 1931 + 1950