

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



1572

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name J. Harper Smith Mansion

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 228 Altamont Place N/A not for publication

city or town Somerville Borough vicinity

state New Jersey code NJ county Somerset code 035 zip code 08876

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall

12/31/98

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		sites
		structures
1		objects
3	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

Domestic: secondary structure (carriage house)

Landscape: garden (fountain & fish pond)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

single dwelling

residence

fountain & fish pond

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian : Queen Anne

Stick/Eastlake

Romanesque

French Renaissance (library)

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation rock-faced stone

walls brick and wood shingle

rock-faced tower

slate & imitation slate (carriage house)

wood gable trusses, porches

limestone lintels and sills

terra-cotta panels; stained glass windows

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

J. Harper Smith Mansion
Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

N/A

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1880 - 1911

Significant Dates

1880, 1885, 1891, 1898, 1907

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Original architect unknown

Bodine Frank - additions

Trumbauer, Horace - library

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Mr. & Mrs. Thompson H. Mitchell - owners

J. Harper Smith Mansion
Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

Bound Brook Quad

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	8	5	3	2	0	8	0	4	4	9	1	4	0	0
Zone		Easting					Northing							

2

Zone		Easting					Northing							

3

Zone		Easting					Northing							

4

Zone		Easting					Northing							

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ursula C. Brecknell
organization Historic House Surveys date July 15, 1998
street & number 36 Ellis Drive telephone (908) 359-3498
city or town Belle Mead state NJ zip code 08502

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Mr. & Mrs. Thompson H. Mitchell
street & number 228 Altamont Place telephone (908) 722-6342
city or town Somerville state NJ zip code 08876

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NJ Somerset County

J. Harper Smith Mansion, Somerville Borough

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The mansion of J. Harper Smith is located at 228 Altamont Place in Somerville, the seat of government for Somerset County. Smith, longtime superintendent and owner of the Raritan Woolen Mills in the next village west and later the Somerville mills in the last quarter of the 19th century, had become a wealthy man and was well known about town. Deciding to leave Raritan, he began buying property in Somerville to build himself a mansion. Begun shortly before 1882 and enlarged and altered over the next several years by Smith, it is a striking example of the Queen Anne Style in brick with overlay of Eastlake details, regarded in its time as one of the finest mansions in town. 1 The interior has a richness of dark woods, elaborate columns and architraves, beamed ceilings with gilt ornament, coffered ceilings with carved panels and ceilings delicately bordered with applied plaster ornament. Mellow colored light filters through many stained glass windows of different styles, including a triptych from the Tiffany Studios. Its library was designed by notable architect Horace Trumbauer of Philadelphia.

The mansion was built at the westerly end of Somerville in a section not yet developed, with but one major house present, the Greek Revival temple house erected in 1838 by Samuel Miller on what was then a river plantation. The street at the time was named West Cliff but Smith had in mind to see it developed with fashionable Victorian houses--buying additional building lots for himself and his company executives--and he succeeded in getting the road renamed Altamont Place, which had a "higher tone" to it. Smith's mansion and matching stable/carriage house occupy the one double lot in a block of four lots running through to the next street north which were offered for sale in 1877. He acquired the additional lot to set off his house, and in time installed a fountain and fish pond, erected two greenhouses and a gardener's cottage, and planted a great number of shade trees, some imported, and a variety of shrubs.

THE EXTERIOR

The Smith mansion is three stories tall, of great width and depth, with multiple gables of different heights, and irregular composition with two prominent towers, square in front and of smooth brick, round and of rock-faced stone at rear corner, and three bay windows, each distinctive. In a sense its facade could be described as having three bays, but that is not apparent. A two-story kitchen wing extends from part of the rear wall. (Photo # 9) Planes advance and recede, and a wrap-around porch leading to a porte cochere adds to the picturesque. (Photo # 1) A contrast of fabric is created with patterned wood shingles in gables and as skin for the upper story of the wing. The brick fabric is tightly laid in common bond, with occasional course inset in chevron pattern to give emphasis to the fenestration and create a string course. The elevations most on view, the brick tower at the corner of the principal facade and the east wall, are given additional interest through insets of sculptured terra-cotta panels, a border of swirling pinwheels, arabesques in tympanum of an arch. (Photo #s 4,5,7) Shutterless fenestration with heavy limestone slabs for lintels and sills and a rough-cut stone tower recall Richardsonian Romanesque. Most windows are double-hung with 1/1 sash, but those in the front tower in full view are

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round-headed. All the rooms on the ground level have stained glass inserted as panels, placed in transoms, or used as upper sash.

The roof is of slate with bracketed overhang. Widely extended eaves of gables are trimmed with bargeboard, trussed at apex in Eastlake Style with king post, and carried on prominent curved brackets with hole cutouts. Deeply projecting window hoods for many gable windows further incorporate Eastlake motifs. The raised foundation is of coursed rock-faced stone. The chimneys are tall of necessity, but conventional in style with drip courses and molded caps. There is an Eastlake-fashioned full-front porch, with plump, paired turned posts and balusters and exposed roof joists, reminiscent of Stick Style. (Photo # 1) The porch wraps around to left (west) to meet up with a porte cochere. The main entrance is off-center (Photo # 2).

The principal facade is composed of three distinct divisions. The porch roof underscores this with shifts from shed roof to hip and back again in one continuing flow. At the left, the facade thrusts forward, gable-fronted and curved to incorporate a shallow semi-hexagonal bay window for its two stories. The center window of the second-story bay has a wood awning supported by prominent braces that curve outward to awning edge. The gable above is filled with a hooded pair of small windows and a pendant semicircular truss in knobby Eastlake Style extending from bargeboarded eaves. Similar dramatic braces support the ends of the bargeboard trim. These elements of decor are echoed again in a porch pediment that was centered in front of the unit though there is no opening for a staircase. (Photo # 1)

The central segment of the facade is one bay wide, in which is a double-leaved interior entrance behind a projecting vestibule. On the shed-roofed porch above sits a miniscule shed-roofed balustraded porch in front of a second-story window. On its roof in turn is seated a third-floor window which has an extended bargeboarded hood similar to the one previously described. (Photo # 2)

To the right and creating the final segment of this facade is a square brick tower three stories high. One bay at front, two bays at side, it displays round-headed windows on the topmost level. The window facing the street is given emphasis by a corbelled umbrella hood and insertion of courses in chevron brickwork and a terra-cotta panel. The tower terminates with vertically arranged short wood strips set off by moldings and is topped by a pyramidal roof with bracketed eaves and this is decked out with iron cresting. (Photo #s 2, 3)

An elaborate deep three-sided bay window extends beyond the side wall of the tower containing three stained-glass scenic panels from the Tiffany Studios. Below the central window is a terra-cotta carved foliated panel with playful putti; and beneath this is another panel of geometric grid. (Photo # 5) Terra-cotta panels composed of three courses of patterned square blocks balance out the side walls. A wide run-on border of pinwheels provides the final eye-compelling touch. (Photo # 4) A segmental metal roof curves above the window giving additional interest. (Photo # 2) On the second story is a more shallow bay window, the whole shielded by a gabled bargeboarded hood, trussed in the

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same fashion at the apex and also resting on broad curved supports as seen elsewhere. Evidence has indicated that the lower bay window was originally of this size before seized upon as a place to make a strong architectural statement.

Beyond the tower the east elevation advances a few feet and is marked by a one-bay segment of two-story height. At second story level appears an oval window protected by a diminutive shed-roofed hood with Eastlake-Style hole-punctuated braces. The wall then achieves three-story height under another extended bargeboard-trimmed and trussed gable. (Photo # 6) On both first and second story levels a band of three large single-sash windows distinguishes this facade, especially by the treatment at ground story, where the grouping is pulled together under a great segmental arch, the tympanum of which is filled with griffin-like grotesques and interwoven foliage. Additionally, a pair of spiraled colonettes in free classical form flank the larger central window (Photo # 7). This elevation terminates with the round brownstone three-story tower, the windows of which are curved. It is topped by a conical cap with pinnacle. (Photo # 8)

The rear elevation extends for one blank bay past the tower to a fire escape. The two-story kitchen unit projects from this point, with the fire escape filling the angle. The first floor of the wing is marked by a shed-roofed extension on two sides, the rear portion having an exterior entrance to the cellar and a porch, which was originally open but later glazed, including as transom a border of small red panes. The original Eastlake posts and railing remain as well as roof brackets with circular cutouts and rafter tails. (Photo # 9) The second story is two bays wide. The gable above in which are third story windows wears a variant play in bargeboard trim similar to that on a central gable on the rear roof of the main block. A chimney rises through the roof and exits in the apex of this gable. A window borders the chimney. An enclosed balcony had been built against the exterior walls of the rooms at the third story level to give access to the fire escape when the building was a school, and it still remains in place.

The west elevation displays decorative features on the three-bay-wide wing with a string course on the shingled upper floor and chevron molding at roofline, this detail also decorated with tiny holes. Two gables rise from this wall, in one of which is a window at the very apex. Beyond the wing, the dining room of the main block and bedroom above it advance several feet from the wall plane and are accentuated by an additional projection of a 6-windowed round bay window at rear corner. (Photo #s 9, 10) An interior chimney separates the bay from a sashed window at the other corner and then the wall retreats by about four feet to line up with the plane of the initial front unit of the house. A small shed roof projects from the second story level without seeming purpose except to add to the pleasure of the picturesque from a rippling sea of rooflines viewed from the street. The location marks the lesser width of the front units of the house, as also detected on the opposite elevation. Just beyond it, the facade reflects the main three-story interior staircase with landings marked by stained-glass panels and an outside gable--tallest of all--intersecting the roofline. A double semicircular arch outlined in bricks springs upward from the

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stone lintel. Above it the gable is bargeboard-trimmed in the same fashion as elsewhere. (Photo # 1) The side wall of the front room has windows flanking a chimney.

The wrap-around porch runs along this wall terminating with a porte cochere. A comparison with the original building in 1882 shows that the origin of this side porch was a shed-roofed area. (See Addenda Sheet # 1) An entrance to the formal reception hall along a passageway paralleling the stairs once opened for Victorian visitors after they alighted from their carriage but has been carefully filled in with matching brick. The porte cochere's roof rests on Eastlake-turned posts, matching those of the porch, rising from square rusticated stone bases. The porch deck is of wood.

THE INTERIOR

The Vestibule and Reception Hall

Double-leaved entry doors lead into a small wainscotted vestibule. The outer doors are not original, but were created as replacements in Victorian fashion of Brazilian mahogany with leaded glass upper panels by the combined efforts of a skillful cabinetmaker and a specialist in stained glass. The floor is marble and granite, with designs at edge and center in contrasting color. The side walls are wainscotted. An interior pair of doors is original and contains beveled clear glass for upper panels including three rows of small size at top. A brass mail slot is in a lower wood panel. The hardware--hinges, knob and escutcheon--is also original. Above the opening in the transom is an Art Nouveau enframed panel of stained glass, displaying a languorous lady reclining by a stone wall and resting on an elbow. At each end of the picture are two conspicuously square geometric panels, the first filled with a spoked ornament with object in deep red color at center, the second with a diamond.

The vestibule leads into the entrance hall. It offers a spacious area giving access to library, parlor, dining room, broad staircase and former passageway to porte cochere. Its boundaries are defined by two of several prominent archways made from boxed beams and elaborately decorated cherrywood columns, displaying turning, necking, fluting, reeding, and a molding in particular used boldly, which appears to be egg bedded in half wreath. These major columns have a prominent urn-shaped stage above the pedestal. One archway originates at these columns at the vestibule doors, and beams carry it across the hall area to another archway at the parlor door. Additional connections are made with openwork grilles bringing the enframing of the entrance area back again via columns and door architraves to the vestibule. (Photo #s 11, 12) The complexity of the interior design can be seen in the doorway to the parlor, with first, a major column, then a tall architrave, with pilasters, half fluted, sharing space on a shaped pedestal heavily trimmed with large bead molding with a round column which enters into a spiral at halfway point and supports an Eastlake-spoiled fan in a round-headed doorway, with open woodwork scrolls in spandrels.

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The reception hall is actually within the brick tower. It is also demarcated by another archway and change of ceiling intended to set off the deep semi-hexagonal bay window. In the front wall is a window with upper sash filled with a stained glass portrait of a woman with handkerchief informally dressed in loose-sleeved blouse, recalling the Pre-Raphaelite Style. A pair of original louvered shutters with button knobs fold into the frame. (Photo # 12)

The dominant feature of the hall is the fireplace. It is of a style then current, composed of thin attenuated red bricks. A broad semicircular arch of great span encloses the firebox. A foot-wide border of nine terra-cotta segments each filled with a rose and leaf give drama to the arch through their projection from it. Now white, they were originally the same color as the bricks. The shelf is bowed as is a wide banding and triangular apron beneath it. These last features also have projecting terra-cotta carving. The cherrywood overmantel features paired partly fluted pilasters incorporating a round-headed mirror in a projecting scalloped frame with scrollwork at corners. (Photo # 13)

The floor is of squared marble tiles, with reddish brown diamonds at intersecting corners. The 11-foot-high ceiling is organized into two divisions, entrance and reception area, each with its own period chandelier, one a replacement, and delicately ornamented with plasterwork in foliated pattern as border and as centerpiece with an oval outlined with scallops.

The showpiece of the hall is clearly the bay window. In a semi-dark setting created by the dark-toned wood finishes, the Tiffany triptych glows. (Photo # 14) The landscape scenes portray a sun-streaked lake on a waning day, a wooded lane over arched stone bridge and an edge of forest near the water sharing the theme. (Photo #s 15, 16, 17) The realism of the pictures results from Tiffany's plating with multiple layers of glass to create the illusion of depth. 2 Beneath the center window is a built-in bookcase with beveled glass doors, railings on top and drawers at bottom. Recessed paneling leads from adjoining windows to built-in seats. The archway which sets off this section is treated differently in style of columns and moldings on its inner face. The ceiling, too, changes to handsome mahogany coffering, each filled individually with distinctively molded wood panels. (Photo # 14)

The Library

Of special note is the bay-windowed room to left of the entrance since it was given over to the Philadelphia architect Horace Trumbauer in 1898 to design as a library at a cost of \$2200. 3 His choice has been described as Renaissance-inspired. 4 The appearance of the fleur-de-lys motif places the decor in the period of the Late Renaissance French monarch Henri IV, who initiated its use. The style was originally inspired by demands for splendor among the nobility of Western Europe, and Trumbauer attempted to create the same feelings with an overall richness. The theme is executed in a formal stylized stenciled canvas frieze placed above the bookcases on one wall and above the shoulder-high wood paneling on the interior wall. The frieze has a repeat pattern

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in green and gold showing a monarch's crown flanked by a tall slender candlestick with refined handles, at the apex of which is the fleur-de-lys. (Some of the frieze had to be stenciled over because of water stains from leaking plumbing above.) The Renaissance motif was advanced also in the enriched mantelpiece and tapestry above it, and in the close-set narrow ceiling beams ornamented their full length with gilt devices.

Bookshelves line one wall up to about two-thirds height and are divided by pilasters into five sections, each with a pair of glazed doors wearing original brass knobs. Below each section is a large drawer. Deep rich paneling rises above the bookcase to the frieze, and a cornice outlined with a bold course of seeming egg-and-dart profile runs at ceiling intersection. The same paneling of mahogany burl veneer lines the interior wall at right angles to the bookcase and appears again on the overmantel incorporating a diamond motif.

A mahogany mantelpiece of great depth and solidity projects from the exterior wall. (Photo # 23) Its deep sides as well as shelf are rounded, a Renaissance feature, and the frieze which exhibits fleur-de-lys at its corners continues to the wall. The frieze is supported by engaged compound columns that turn the corners. Their composition is complex and includes capitals with downward-curling elements. Diminutive white tiles make up the surround and hearth. The surround has a center ornament of a wreath encircling a shield with ribbon streamers to each side. The hearth has a central motif of a shield with fleur-de-lys. A maroon-toned strip at the border displays a diamond motif.

A tapestry fills almost the entire space above the mantelpiece. Continuing the reference to historical times, it tells the story of armored knights on horseback leaving the stone castle through its portcullised gate, in jovial mood with prancing dog at their feet.

The three-sided bay window that commands the front wall has simple stained-glass windows as transom, featuring birds and plants on a pale plain background in roundels which are triple-framed in brighter colors. (Photo # 20) These have been described as examples of High Victorian design. 5 The remaining windows have similar colored panels.

A built-in window seat with storage below fits in the window bay and louvered shutters are tucked into it. At seat ends multi-ringed columns spring upward to raise a tapered rounded segment to a florid capital. A weighty beam highly ornamented with wood carving and a bold molding rests on the columns making an arch to set off the window area. (Photo # 20) The underface of the beam of a lighter-toned wood and is decorated with gold diamonds.

Narrow close-set beams span the ceiling from here on. These are delicate and rich at once, with a gilt design that repeats at intervals, with colorful coats of arms appearing at beam ends, a nice finishing touch. A decorated cloth between the beams is held against the ceiling by the same bold molding that appears in so many rooms. A possible source for decorated beams was 16th-

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century Europe, examples of which can be seen in England at King Henry VIII's Hampton Court and in Scotland, which received the Italian Renaissance via France. Elaborately detailed and gilt-rich ceilings are also at Fontainebleau, one of Francis I's castles.

Fastened into every other beam at its end is a rosette which serves as a light. There is also a central chandelier which has gas jets for its upturned cups on its main branches and electricity for its alternating branches with down-turned morning glories.

The parquet floor has a wide border of fret design. Although the heating system was modernized in the 1920s, a surviving ventilating heat grille remains at the entrance to the room. The walnut paneled door at this location slides into a wall pocket.

The Stair Hall

The grand staircase, a Victorian's requirement, in walnut, is to one side of the entrance hall in an alcove. Attention is called to it by an openwork wood frieze above it at ceiling level extending between two wall columns. The staircase ascends in a single run to a midpoint landing and resumes to second story and repeats again to the third floor with another landing. (Photo # 18)

The landings are flooded with daylight and color from stained-glass windows. A series of four small matching panels in sepia color at the first landing display figures in roundels, one of a knight in full armor, others of a girl with flower and young children. They are enframed in round-headed windows, filled with stylized designs, creating the effect of church windows. (Photo # 30) These windows have hand-cut and polished jewels that sparkle and refract the light onto the staircase. The upper landing displays a single panel of about 4' length containing sun, moon, and clouds in artificial arrangement in an oval. It sparkles against a plain white paved-stone-like background, and is in a rectangular frame of pale blue border accentuated with pearl-like circular insets. Jewelstones as part of the composition cast soft lights on the stairs. The window is made of hand-blown cylinder glass. 6 (Photo # 31)

The stair balustrade has a typical late-19th-century stout squared newelpost, with reeding as well as bead-filled fluting among its many details, and a vasselike softly rounded cap. However, its balustrade is unusual, being composed in a geometric manner with open boxes--square-framed and hole-punched--supported at mid-point between each spindle composed of turned upper section and square base. This balustrade nicely descends the flight in a rhythmic fashion. (Photo # 18) Quite possibly it is Eastlake Style, yet it may have been Japanese-influenced, as architects drew on Far Eastern motifs after the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. A wainscot of Lincrusta, suggesting leather, with raised hammered pattern, is a replacement in the spirit of the original, which had deteriorated.

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A passageway to the west exterior wall flanks the staircase. Formerly an outside door gave access to the porte cochere. After making the door into a window, additional space was gained to enlarge a small area under the stairs, which already contained a lavatory, into a powder room. The original bowl with brass faucets has been left in its corner--diagonally angled--with high marble splashboard. (Photo # 19) The commode installed is of period style. At one time this space had a second door which led into the dining room on the far side of the staircase. This has been closed, but the door remains in the dining room, opening upon shallow shelves.

The Parlor

The parlor has an air of grandeur because of its great proportions and elegant treatment. Its doorway is set diagonally under another openwork wood grille, this one fan-shaped and filled with spindle spokes laced together in Eastlake Style. Matching grilles appear as a motif in front of a canted fireplace set in a niche, in the mirrored niche diagonally opposite, and in the opening leading into the tower room. (Photo #s 11, 26) The niche diagonally opposite the fireplace is filled with a full-length mirror, but it is believed to have contained a fireplace at first because of a three-story chimney flue discovered behind it. The existing fireplace provides a focus for the room; its fireplace surround is white onyx, the hearth marble. The overmantel features a ceiling-height mirror enframed by compound columns and fluted pilasters that rise from fielded-panel bases. A heavy molded cornice rides above the enframing. A fireback featuring a knight has been permanently installed in place.

The triple window on the east wall, which was treated architecturally on the exterior, provides light and lightness to this formal room. Stained glass panels of stylized foliage in pale green and lavender with jeweled flowers enrich the windows as transoms. Three sets of louvered wood shutters with original brass button knobs are concealed within the frame, each with its own track covering a third of the windows. The shutters can be raised and locked into any position desired. The windows operate on cord and pulley and have their original hardware. Rising to half height from the sill are attached square posts with capitals and raised ornaments; these support colonettes, which terminate in spiraling elements.

The circular tower room has each of its three original curved sash windows of plate glass framed by impressively scaled paneled architraves, below which are rectangular panels. Louvered shutters are in side pockets.

Applied plaster ornament (some replaced using a mold of the original) encircles the parlor and tower room ceilings. A garland pattern runs round the edges with periodic cartouches holding a pair of horns and sheets of music, birds with bow, and other devices. Additional ornament surrounds the central crystal chandelier, which itself is seated on a gilt star in outline. The tower also has a chandelier thus mounted and plaster border patterned as double

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roping. The chandeliers are replacements, but two small metal sconces on the wall near the entrance are original to the house.

The floor had to be replaced, but the new floor is based on those in the library and dining room and has a wide border of different woods in the Eastlake spirit which largely prevails in Smith's mansion.

Dining Room

The dining room is of the scale and height (11') and dark wood finishes that appealed to High Victorians. Quarter-sawn oak was used for wall paneling. Well-scaled boxed beams enclose a coffered ceiling, and tall heavy doors (8'10") with bold moldings present an almost majestic touch. Architraves divide into two at wainscot height from plain pilasters to paired colonettes. (Photo #s 27, 29) On the back wall stands a large built-in mahogany china cupboard of Eastlake provenance which wears a label from a Paris manufacturer. A plate rail runs along the walls. The hardware and the gold-washed chandelier are original. (Photo # 27)

The fireplace is of the same form as the one in the reception hall, with tile facing and double segmental arches, one recessed, and an inset shelf. An overmantel has a pair of engaged swirling colonettes flanking a mirror. In the rear corner, projecting outward, is the circular, 6-bay window with curved glass that Smith installed in 1885, according to newspaper report. 7 (Photo # 28) Each narrow window is topped with a stained glass panel displaying vine tendrils on white background behind a geometric grille of bamboo, perhaps inspired by Oriental art. A window seat runs round the bay's walls and also serves to conceal pipes of a hot-water system along with the window shutters. Two windows at the opposite corner of room have matching panels of stained glass.

Butler's Pantry and Kitchen

A wainscotted corridor leads from the dining room to the spacious kitchen at rear. Along its route are the back stairs on one wall and the butler's pantry on the other, which contains original cupboards and counter space provided on each facing wall. The butler's sink is gone. Pocket doors enclose this space making passage easier.

The kitchen has been altered. The large fireplace and a 6" thick insulated walk-in refrigerator have been removed. The space had been divided into two rooms by later owners. It is the one room on the ground level that has been modernized, but executed in such a way with warm cherry wood that it fits in. The internal cellar door of fir wood is original. The flight runs below the back stairs. Interior door casings have bull's eye corner blocks. Trim and wainscotting are copies of components that had to be replaced.

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The Second Story

There are four bedrooms in the main block and one room at back over the kitchen besides three bathrooms, one original.

The Master Bedroom, which includes a space in the round tower, has a corner fireplace with another elaborate mantelpiece. Its overmantel is suggestive of Eastlake details with railings atop shelves that are part of side extensions of the center octagonal-shaped mirror, and also contain mirrors. The side pieces project into the room, having a paneled base and pairs of spiraled columns. A hood projects from above the main mirror and is also ornamented with railings flanking a segmental section set off with knobby balls. (Photo # 33)

A deep and wide clothes closet is just in front of the entrance. Backed against it with oval window is a bathroom that has been modernized, but was perhaps added by an Meyers in the late 1920s. 8

Bedroom over Dining Room is the next most important room, having in it the second stage of the 6-bay round window and a mantelpiece faced with persian granite and cherrywood. A series of large brackets curve upward to the shelf. The walnut entrance door with transom and its hardware are original. Rooms on this floor all have circular motifs in corner blocks and clear-paned transoms over doorways.

Linen Closet is built into the wall as one turns right at the top of the stairs. Shelves above are enclosed by a pair of doors with a distinctive diagonally patterned treatment in narrow stripes placed close together; the three drawers below have the same treatment but stripes run vertically. Hardware is original.

Guest Room over Library has its own lavatory in a round niche in a party wall shared with an original bathroom. The basin is grey marble; small, round, and deep, with original separate water taps of brass it is seated in its own cabinet. The mantelpiece is of conventional Early Victorian form in marbleized slate with center cartouche. The walnut door, transom, and hardware are original.

Guest Bathroom has an original tiled floor and walls of porcelain and glass composition. The floor was repaired in one corner with like tiles when it was necessary to reposition the plumbing. The pedestaled basin, but not its faucets, is original, as also the tub with raised nickel pipes outside the rim for the running water. The owners have replaced a modern toilet with an historic lowboy model and installed a marble panel under the window

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where rot had occurred. The door, window shutters, and hardware are also original. Both floor and wall are white-tiled, the latter having a broad band of raised pale blue flowers and swirling leaves at midpoint and another somewhat formal band of flower-filled ovals with ribboned drop ornament at ceiling. (Photo # 32)

Front Bedroom with shallow semi-hexagonal bay window over the reception hall may have been considered a sitting room or additional guest room. It has a parquet floor and Eastlake mantelpiece. Its pocket door and hardware are original.

Family or Servants' Bathroom is located over the butler's pantry. It has been entirely modernized and enlarged by three feet taken from back room.

Back Room has been converted into recreation room. Once the removal of moldy plaster was begun, it was discovered that the space had originally been divided into two small rooms. Since it is known that the Smiths had servants, this area probably related to household functions.

Back Stairs had to be replaced because of their poor condition. A custom oak stair flight was installed.

Third Story and Attic

There are four rooms of good size on this level, one over the wing. One room includes the stone tower, which has 6 small windows at this topmost height. Another occupies the topmost level of the square brick tower, above which there is still an attic 12 feet high within the pyramidal roof. The walls of the back rooms had been removed when the house was used as a school, but have been put up again guided by evidence on the floor. The two rooms across a central hall make a suite, one with a step-down into the wing. A walk-in cedar closet is built into one room. A bathroom at the front end of the hall has been completely modernized. An attic spreads above these rooms.

The Cellar

This space under the whole of the house can be entered from the outside by a double-leaved door in the rear wing at ground level that opens upon a flight of stairs. An internal flight has earlier been mentioned. The cellar is compartmentalized, reflecting the spatial divisions above, with round-arched openings from one area to another, some fitted with wood doors.

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Carriage House

The 1882 Bird's Eye View of Somerville shows the carriage house with a cupola confirming that it was constructed by that date. (See Addenda Sheet # 1) On the Sanborn Insurance Map of 1910 (see Addenda sheet # 4) this building is identified as the stables. Because there are two entrances, one at the side for the stable, the front-facing entrance was probably for a carriage.

The 1734-square-foot building is of red brick, matching the main dwelling house, and follows a complex floor plan as indicated by the rooflines. It is based on two independent units each under a hipped roof connected by a lower unit, which is recessed by a few feet on the east elevation facing the woods and former greenhouses and advanced on the opposite elevation for about the same distance. (Photo # 35)

Large matching dormers facing east extend from the apices of the roofs and end with greatly extended pitched roofs. The lower unifying section has its smaller version of this dormer and has both a door and a window, both added. At front, another gable-roof projection shelters a pair of French doors at roof edge just above the front entrance, a change related to later use. Simple stickwork is used as truss ornament. The street-facing extended brick walls under a shallow gable roof were added by Temple Beth El when they acquired the property in 1959 to provide a wide double-leaf entrance for their use. They were constructed of cinderblock but have been brick-faced by the present owners. (Photo # 36) A bell-shaped roof with its original weathervane surmounts a restored cupola at the crest of the front unit. A brick chimney rises on this unit's west wall. Lillian [Meyer] Hansen recalls that there had been a walled-in chicken yard against the rear elevation. Part of that wall remains at the west side of the building.

There have been a considerable number of changes in the fenestration. On the rear elevation, small windows placed high remain, which probably related to horse stalls. Under the dormer on the roof is a pair of granary doors. A door on this wall has been blocked in. Windows on the east elevation have been changed in size and number. Stone slabs for lintels and sills tell of their original placement. These changes were made when the building was readied for human occupancy.

Still surviving in part is the planked ceiling; missing areas have been replaced in kind. (Photo # 37) The presence of such a ceiling for a stable reflects the custom of the day, at least for well-to-do men. It has been recalled that the Duke Estate stable

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also had a similar ceiling along with a handsome wood interior.

The original construction left the walls as exposed brick. As much as it has been possible, these walls, and interior brick space dividers as well, have been left as they were. (Photo # 37)

Temple Beth El converted the carriage house into a synagogue (Photo # 38) and used the house itself for a school. The next owners converted the building to an apartment where they lived, leaving the mansion unoccupied. They sold to another couple who used both buildings as a boarding house. The present owners have brought the physical structure back to excellent condition and have replaced its deteriorating slate roof and have replaced its slate roof with Grand Manor regular and carriage house fiberglass shingles, which imitate slate and makes a good substitute. Though part of the mansion property, the carriage house has recently been given a separate street number (230) at the request of 911 record-keeping.

The carriage house serves once again as a residence after the false ceiling concealing the board ceiling was removed, and other necessary repairs and improvements were made.

Greenhouses and Landscaping

A pair of greenhouses, one behind the other in parallel arrangement, is shown on the 1910 Sanborn Insurance Map. (See Addenda Sheets # 5 and 6) Today only a ruin remains in the wooded area. Plantings that date back to Smith's time include ginko, maple, oak, and pine trees, and shrubs such as lilac, forsythia, and mock orange. Large ornamental iron urns stood on the lawn. One survives and occupies approximately the same location. (Photo # 39) The fish pond was restored by the present owners, and a fountain found that would create a spray such as seen in a c. 1929 photograph. (Photo # 40; Addenda Sheet # 6)

The drive once followed the eastern side of the house but was changed to run alongside the porte cochere. The Bird's Eye View of Somerville 1900 shows the origin of a circular drive at that time. The drive is now paved because of the loss of gravel and mud to the street during heavy rains. It no longer is circular because vehicles were damaging the lawn.

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Restoration in Summary

All the windows on the two upper floors are replacements. A baseboard heating system supplements some remaining radiators in the house. Most light fixtures are new. When wall plaster could be repaired it was saved. The owners have a complete record of every repair, restoration, or replacement they have made. The replacements were always in kind. Professional craftspeople were engaged. This has been an ongoing project for sixteen years to which the Mitchells gave complete devotion and commitment. Before their ownership, the Motts apparently also appreciated the fine features of the house. In their deed of sale, they included an unusual condition that no stained glass window, woodwork and paneling, lighting fixtures, or built-in bookcases of foyer and library, tile of second floor bath, marble sink in room adjacent and any curved window could be removed within the next five years or these items would revert to the seller.

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The J. Harper Smith Mansion stands as an excellent example of the taste of a self-made man who became wealthy through his talents and his industry. Architecture was his status symbol, and he chose a lavish style. Smith's High Victorian house represents one of the finest mansions of its day, as judged by the contemporary press. 9 His house remains unique for its fabric, size, eclectic architecture, richness of interior details, and porte cochere; also for the matching stables and Victorian landscape planned to be visible from the street. (See Addenda Sheet #s 4, 5)

Smith was regarded as a local celebrity by the time, the 1890s, that James B. Duke was establishing his estate opposite Somerville on the far side of the Raritan River in Hillsborough Township. Doubtless they knew each other. Smith had an interest in civic affairs and was a man about town. At the same time he was also personally involved in developing his new street at the edge of town in complementary style to his own residence and obtained lots on the south side for his executives to follow suit.

Smith's Late Victorian three-story house reflects the prevailing fashions in their eclectic mix, built on a large scale, in brick, on double lot that allowed for easy visibility from the street and provided land for his fountain and fish pond, double greenhouse, street furniture, and landscaping design. His plan also included a brick stable 10 for his gentleman's interest in horses. The house has an exceptional degree of integrity, and what inroads of time and severe neglect did to damage it have been reversed; the entire residence has been brought back to pristine condition by the present owners. Had they not been captivated by it in its entirety, thus undertaking their 16-year-long and costly project, there seems little doubt that the house would eventually have been demolished. The Smith mansion meets Criterion C for architecture and to a degree Criterion B for an industrial leader and man of prominence within Late Victorian Somerville.

James Harper Smith, who often signed himself without a first name, was known in his later years as "Super" Smith, a play on his career as superintendent of the Raritan Mills over many years. He was born in Vernon, Connecticut, in 1834 of old American stock. When he was nine, he went to Ellington Centre, Connecticut, to live, and after three years there became a farm laborer, but after one year decided to work instead in the woolen mills at Rockville. Later, he worked at the Warehouse Point mill, where he continually received promotions, rising from the beginning level to superintendent. He was very apt in the field and developed several

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improvements in mill operation, for which he obtained patents. From many offers made to him, he chose during the Civil War years to take charge of two mills at Newark, New Jersey, owned by Henry Gardner. He departed from there to join the Raritan Woolen Mills, a small operation located in the next village west of Somerville. As manager he so increased its business that from 33 employees it grew to 1300 in twelve years. Deciding to retire at that time, he acquired a financial interest in a new mill in Somerville owned by the Somerset Manufacturing Company and placed his only son and child in charge. The son's death at an early age ended Super Smith's connections with active mill operations. 11

In retirement, Smith watched his investments, showed off his bay horses, took to automobile driving, and traveled yearly. For a number of years he served on the Board of Managers of the State Village for Epileptics, begun 1899, now the North Princeton Developmental Center, just closed down. He represented New Jersey as a Commissioner at the Jamestown Exposition, and filled other public offices. He was also a member of the Masonic Order and local lodge. 12

Smith died on Christmas morning, 1911, from Bright's Disease, as he was seated at his desk writing Christmas checks for his servants. 13

The Architecture of the Smith Mansion

J. Harper Smith, Raritan Village resident, bought his first lot in Somerville in 1877 on what was then West Cliff Street from the Davenport lumber company family, who owned all of the north side of future Altamont Place excepting the Greek Revival mansion at one end. Next year he bought an equal amount of land back of it, as shown on a map of the Davenport property drafted in 1888. 14 By 1880, according to secondary sources, 15 he began the erection of his mansion. To date, the name of the architect or the source of the plan have not been learned. The mansion appears in its initial form on the 1882 Bird's Eye View of Somerville, along with the carriage house. (See Addenda Sheet # 1) A newspaper item of 1885 reports that Super Smith is "building a very elaborate bay window to his handsome residence, which when finished will add still more to its beauty." 16 This would have been the circular one extended from the dining room wall. In 1891, additional items in the two newspapers in town reported that Mr. Smith was planning additions, one paper mentioning but one addition of 50 feet, presumably squared, and one further describes a "fish dinner party of 20 covers" given by the Smiths in 1892, after which the guests danced on the new waxed floor of the addition. 17 A 50-square-foot area would correspond with the size of the reception hall's

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Tiffany-glass-filled bay window, which an examination of construction by the owners discovered was an addition at some time, but this seems somehow unlikely for an area to dance in. That leads the matter open to speculation. Though the dimensions do not fit at all, a possible enlargement might have been made to the parlor, including the corner stone tower. In fact, the other paper in town referred to "additions" in the plural. If the word was correctly used, both of the above could have been undertaken. In one news item, the architect is identified as Frank Bodine of Asbury Park, newly arrived in town and responsible for the Richardsonian Romanesque Railroad Station. There is a resemblance between the station's conical-capped rock-faced tower and the Smith's round stone tower, though the stone in the latter is more carefully laid. Bodine went on to design the Senator Thompson (Gaston) building on Somerville's main street, also executed in the same style with corner tower and panels with grotesques interwoven in arabesques, which recalls details on the exterior dining room wall.

In 1898, Smith engaged Horace Trumbauer to design his front room as a library, a room very much part of any good Victorian home. 18 But previous to that time, in 1894, Smith asked Trumbauer to design a "country house" for him, which was built on the opposite side of Altamont Place for one of his executives at a modest cost of \$ 3800. 19 The next year Trumbauer returned to Somerville to design a new stone building for St. John's Episcopal Church at \$13,689, doubtless on Smith's recommendation for he had anonymously contributed \$5,000 to the building fund. 20

Trumbauer, a young Philadelphian, became successful among the wealthy by receiving a handsome commission from William Welsh Harrison of Glenside, Pa., in 1891, and after that showplace was destroyed by fire in 1893, he prepared for him a grandiose design for "Gray Towers," which later became Beaver College. It is not known how Smith had learned of Trumbauer. One surmise is that he heard of him from James B. Duke, who years later--from 1909 on--engaged the architect to design a mansion and cottages for his Hillsborough estate. Duke's social circle of wealthy industrialists and entrepreneurs, some of whom gave Trumbauer commissions, may have been his source. Duke was known to wander about the county seat, where he conducted legal business and hired men there to work for him. Smith may well have conversed with Duke and thus learned of Trumbauer.

In discovering the features Trumbauer espoused for his work among rich clients, it is easy to understand why Smith's library was designed in French Renaissance style. In actuality, a direct connection could be made with his earlier work at Gray Towers, now a National Historic Landmark. Trumbauer had a taste for the castles

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of Western Europe. Sources he drew upon were the castles of the Loire Valley and the royal palace at Fontainebleau.

At Gray Towers, the fleur de lys appears as one motif, the use of shields or crests another. Its library has a plaster frieze with garlands and cupids; a coffered ceiling has moldings and painted decoration. In the dining room classical Renaissance architectural elements frame the wooden paneling on the walls and the mantelpiece. Elsewhere, tapestry showing scenes of the hunt is used as a band along a hallway. Painted canvas panels fill spaces between ceiling beams. Marble mosaicwork appears on fireplaces. 21 Several of these features are found in Smith's library.

Trumbauer was to leave his mark on buildings close to Smith's heart: the new St. John's Episcopal church building where the family worshipped and later the \$20,000 rectory paid for by Smith as a memorial to his son Harry who died in 1907. Smith had also purchased building lots across Altamont Place from his residence with the intent of having mill executives live in a neighborhood he planned to make fashionable. On two of these lots, the houses built were from Trumbauer's plans. 22

The J. Harper Smith Mansion was from its inception intended to be the most distinctive and most lavishly decorated house in town. He chose to establish a new neighborhood, putting up the first house in brick rather than frame and following the dictates of the popular styles. He made use of several woods--walnut, cherry, oak, ash, mahogany--in the interior, a high-class feature, as indicated in a description of a house plan by Trumbauer appearing in an 1898 issue of the Scientific American. 23 This same piece described the inclusion of several mantelpieces with tile facing of the kind given prominence in Smith's reception hall and dining room. Remaining mantelpieces also have special interest for their styles and richness of detail. The article also recommended having a handsome newelpost and balustrade, features that Smith, too, ordered for his house. While stained glass windows were making their appearance in Somerville in this decade, one mansion (now Borough Hall) adding several with music motif for a special room, it cannot be imagined that anyone had installed more than Smith did, and his ranged from early limited motifs on plain backgrounds set in roundels with large borders to those of richest color, sometimes bejeweled, sometimes bringing to mind the Pre-Raphaelite and Arts and Crafts movements, and finally to Tiffany's naturalistic scenes.

The finely detailed plaster moldings for ceilings, restored to original beauty by a craftsman, have not been seen elsewhere in town. The parlor's design is especially notable for its motifs.

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The network of handsomely carved and ornamented mahogany columns rising to ceiling beams and joining openwork grilles to create an almost monumental entrance passageway must set this house apart from others in the Somerville community.

Somerville as county seat with a railroad station and many visitors was not unaware of architectural fashions. There are many streets with modest or middle class representations of Victorian styles. A few other houses were considered mansions in their time. 24 Smith's mansion became the ultimate example of the degree of interest in architecture that was felt in a still semi-rural town at the turn of the century. "Super" Smith, the self-made man, left his mark, as he set out to do, and to this day his residence stands out among its well-designed Victorian neighbors, admired once again, thanks to its rescue and restoration by the Mitchells; and Altamont Place retains its special aura with two Trumbauer-designed houses, and others of strong Eastlake influence, thanks to J. Harper Smith.

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References

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2. Richard Bockmann, "The Art Glass Windows of the J. Harper Smith House"
3. Horace Trumbauer Papers, Athenaeum of Philadelphia:
4. Frederick Platt, correspondence with Helena Mitchell and Ursula Brecknell
5. Bockmann, op. cit.
6. Ibid.
7. Messenger-Unionist, June 25, 1885
8. Lillian Larsen, phone interview
9. Unionist-Gazette, April 10, 1891
10. Sanborn Insurance Map, 1910
11. Obituary, Somerset Democrat, December 29, 1911;
12. Obituary, Unionist-Gazette, December 28, 1911
13. Ibid.
14. Survey Map No. 1 of property of Davenport Brothers by Calvin Corle, court-assigned receiver, 1888
15. Attractive Homes of New Jersey
16. Messenger-Unionist, June 25, 1885
17. Unionist-Gazette, February 18, 1892
18. Horace Trumbauer Papers, Athenaeum of Philadelphia
19. Ibid.
20. David Stowe, A History of St. John's Episcopal Church, Somerville (pamphlet)
21. Information given on internet re Horace Trumbauer career (architect of Duke University)
22. Frederick Platt, correspondence with Ursula Brecknell
23. Scientific American, Building Edition, April 1898
24. Unionist-Gazette, July 11, 1907, reprinted as Illustrated Somerville 1977; Attractive Homes of New Jersey

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Deeds

All deeds for the holdings of J. Harper Smith were searched from the first for this property in 1877 from Thomas Davenport, Trustee, encompassing just the home lot, to the last sale to the current owners, Thompson and Helena Mitchell, indicating the acquisition of adjacent lots of land by Smith and the selling off of some land fronting on Summit Street at the north end of Smith's property by later owners. Chain of Title is given below.

Newspapers

Messenger-Unionist (Somerville) June 25, 1885

Somerset Democrat, April 10, 1891

Somerset Democrat, December 29, 1911

Unionist-Gazette, April 10, 1891

Unionist-Gazette, June 18, 1891

Unionist-Gazette, Feb. 18, 1892

Unionist-Gazette, July 11, 1907, reprinted in 1977 as Illustrated Somerville 1907

Unionist-Gazette, December 28, 1911

Maps

Bird's Eye View of Somerville 1882

Bird's Eye View of Somerville 1900

Survey Map No. 1 made of the property of the Davenport Brothers by Calvin Corle, court-assigned receiver, 1888, and filed with county clerk.

Sanborn Insurance Map, Somerville, 1910. This is the earliest to show all of Altamont Place. In 1902, the map went as far as the first lot west of Mountain Avenue on the north side of Altamont Place. It also shows a footprint that is the same as now.

Publications

Attractive Homes of New Jersey. F. Heath Coggins & Company, Art Publishers, Baltimore, Md. n.d. [1929]

Maher, James T. The Twilight of Splendor: Chronicles of the Age of American Palaces. Little Brown & Company, Boston: n.d. [1975]

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Magazines

Scientific American, Building Edition, April 1898

Victorian Homes, Spring 1987

19th C., Winter 1927; Spring 1928

Correspondence

Frederick Platt to Helena Mitchell, April 25, 1988,
re Horace Trumbauer

Frederick Platt to Ursula Brecknell, June 9, 1998
re Horace Trumbauer

Mr. Platt is writing an in-depth study of the architecture of
Horace Trumbauer

Additional information on Trumbauer was found on the internet,
seemingly related as part of history of Duke University

Athenaeum of Philadelphia. Horace Trumbauer account sheets

Reports

Richard Bockmann, "The Art Glass Windows of the J. Harper Smith
House"

Pamphlets

David Stowe, A History of St. John's Episcopal Church, Somerville

Interviews

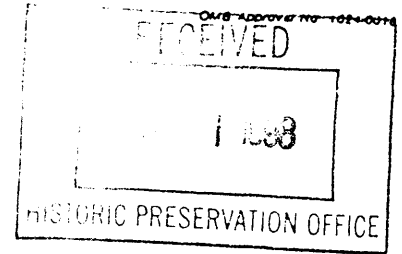
Phone interview with George Thomson and wife Henrietta Case
Thomson, longtime residents in the Samuel Miller Greek Revival
mansion at the far corner of West Cliff Street (Altamont Place)

Phone interview with Lillian Larsen, nee Meyer, granddaughter of
Adelena Meyer, owner of house between 1926 and 1959, of White
House, N.J.

Helena Mitchell, co-owner of the Smith mansion, was very well
informed about all its original features, having learned much from
her 60 or more professionals in various crafts and day-to-day
providers of house services, with whom she often worked side by
side. She also conducted research on her own.

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Bibliography

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J. Harper Smith Mansion
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CHAIN OF TITLE

- 1877 Thomas Davenport, Trustee, to Smith
- 1879 Thomas Davenport, Trustee, to Smith
- 1883 Thomas Davenport and wife, James Davenport and wife to Smith
- 1888 Calvin Corle, Receiver of Davenport holdings to Smith
- 1889 Gilbert S. Cook, two small lots in separate deeds to Smith
- 1922 Executors of estate of James Harper Smith (wife deceased)
to Louis V. Ludlow and Fred Sisser
- 1923 Ludlow and Sisser to Christopher A. Spear
- 1926 Spear to Adelana Meyer
- 1959 Meyer to Temple Beth El
- 1969 Temple to Abraham S. Mott, Jr., and wife
- 1973 Mott and wife to Mario Doukas and Katherine, his wife
- 1978 Mario Doukas to Katherine Doukas, now single
- 1979 Katherine Doukas to David G. Hartman and Marianna, his wife
- 1983 Hartman and wife to Thompson H. Mitchell and Helena, his
wife, and Helen K. Urban, Helena's mother
- 1992 Helen K. Urban to Thompson H. and Helena Mitchell

During period of ownership by Temple Beth El, the congregation worshipped in the carriage house and used the mansion for a children's school and offices.

During period of ownership by the Doukases, both buildings were made into rooming houses.

During period of ownership by the Hartmans, it became single-family again, but their chief interest was in having an in-ground pool and not in value of house. The carriage house was rented to tenants.

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The Boundary encompasses the entirety of Block 139, Lot 13 of the tax map of Somerville Borough, N.J.

Justification of this boundary is based on the fact that this is a town lot under an acre and has always been the property on which the buildings stand.

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Photographs

Taken by Helena Mitchell

During period 1996-1998

Negatives in owners' possession

1. Exterior. View pointing camera northeast.
2. Exterior. View pointing camera northwest.
3. East elevation, camera pointing west, showing treatment of fenestration in brick tower.
4. Detail of terra-cotta ornament which appears on both side windows of in the bay.
5. Terra-cotta ornamental carved panel and honeycomb panel, featuring the open hole theme of Eastlake Style again.
6. East elevation, camera pointing northerly, slightly westerly.
7. Detail on east elevation.
8. Tower at end of east elevation, showing the careful patterning of rock-faced stones; also showing some of the gable treatment and a hooded window. Camera pointing southwesterly.
9. View of rear wing and round bay window of two stories; also variety of gables, rear porch, and porte cochere. Camera pointing southeasterly.
10. Detail of round bay window, in which stained glass panels and shingles can be seen. Also decorative details on exterior. Camera pointing easterly.
11. Interior. Entrance passageway seen from entrance to parlor. Camera pointing south.
12. Parlor looking west from entrance way to reception hall, showing entrance doors with stained glass transom, and stained glass in front window and Tiffany triptych in bay. Also shows the elegant woodwork and trim. Camera pointing easterly.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

NJ Somerset County

J. Harper Smith Mansion, Somerville Borough

Section number _____ Page 26/27

13. Reception hall, showing mantelpiece and overmantel, original chandelier at center, marble floor, plasterwork on ceiling. Camera pointing easterly.

14. Bay window close-up, showing Tiffany panels and coffered ceiling, also large bead moldings.

15. Detail: Tiffany window in right bay.

16. Detail: Tiffany window in left bay.

17. Detail: Tiffany window in center bay, showing reflection of setting sun on lake.

18. Staircase and alcove, showing balustrade, open woodwork screens, extravagant use of columns, and passage to former side door to porte cochere. Camera pointing westerly.

19. Original corner lavatory behind staircase. Camera pointing west.

20. Bay window in front of house, in library, showing the elaborate carved work on beam and columns turned in unique fashion. Stained glass windows just visible. Paneled wall and detail of canvas frieze. Camera pointing southward.

21. Bookcase wall of library with patterned frieze above, curved mantelpiece end, center gas/electrified chandelier, and rosette lights on beams. Camera pointing north.

22. The decorative beams and spaces, and close-up of lights in library. Camera pointing upward.

23. Mantelpiece and tapestry above in library. Camera pointing west.

24. Parlor, viewing triple window on east elevation of looking into stone tower room, showing the important architectural treatment of its entrance. Partial view of fireplace at left corner with same rich treatment. Camera pointing northeasterly.

25. Parlor, reverse view, showing same window with more detail, including stained glass panes and colonettes separating the fenestration. Diagonally angled niche, mirrored, with Eastlake-type fan as part of its full entablature.

26. Close-up view into tower room, also showing floor border of main room and flooring in tower. Panel at center is under center window. Camera pointing northwesterly.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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27. Dining Room, showing paneled and beamed ceiling, wainscoting, built-in china cabinet, fireplace and overmantel and bay window. Camera pointing west.

28. Six-sided circular bay window with window seat in dining room. Stained glass in transoms and rich wood ceiling visible. Camera pointing west.

29. Detail of one door, like others, to room, showing its impressive height and its feeling of great solidity, each panel outlined by the same bold molding used elsewhere. Also showing treatment of architrave. Camera pointing south to door that once led into lavatory under the stairs.

30. Stained glass grouping on first landing of staircase. Camera pointing west.

31. Oversize stained glass panel on second landing of staircase. Camera pointing west.

32. Guest bathroom on second story, showing original pedestal sink, tub with faucets above rim, and tiled wall. Camera facing south.

33. Master bedroom, showing extremely elaborate mantelpiece and mirror cater-cornered at north wall. Camera pointing north.

34. Kitchen, modern but with woodwork that complements house and includes replacement wainscot for original in poor condition. Camera pointing easterly. Back door at left.

35. Carriage House. Exterior view, camera pointing northwesterly. Ladder at right to swimming pool earlier owner installed behind house.

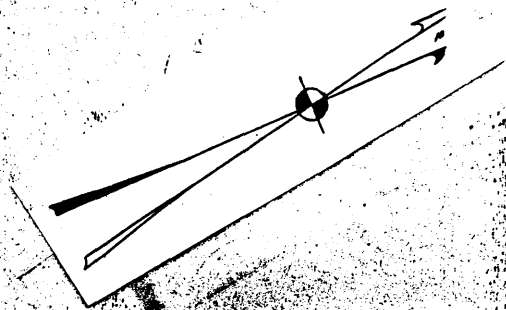
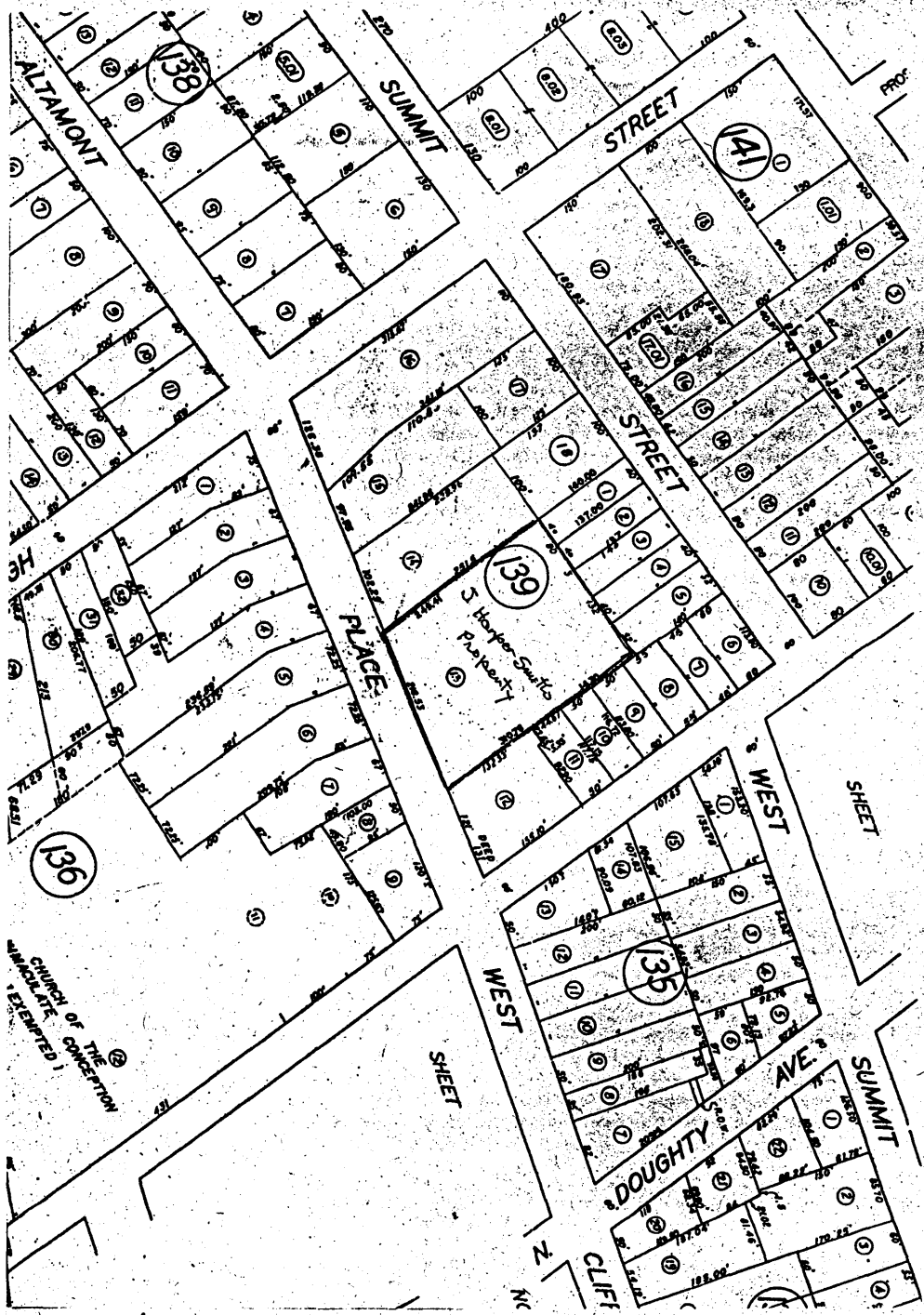
36. Front view of carriage house, which has been extensively repaired and given new roof. Camera facing north.

37. Interior of carriage house, showing how conversion to living space incorporated brick walls and original board ceiling, after it was cleaned and repaired. Camera facing southerly.

38. Another room in carriage house, showing platform installed by Temple Beth El for use in worship services. Rear room looking easterly. Window was changed by Temple from two large windows.

39. Original black urn, once part of a pair, that remains in place on lawn. Camera pointing north.

40. Stone-bordered fish pond and fountain, restored, on lawn and view of old trees and shrubs. Camera facing north.

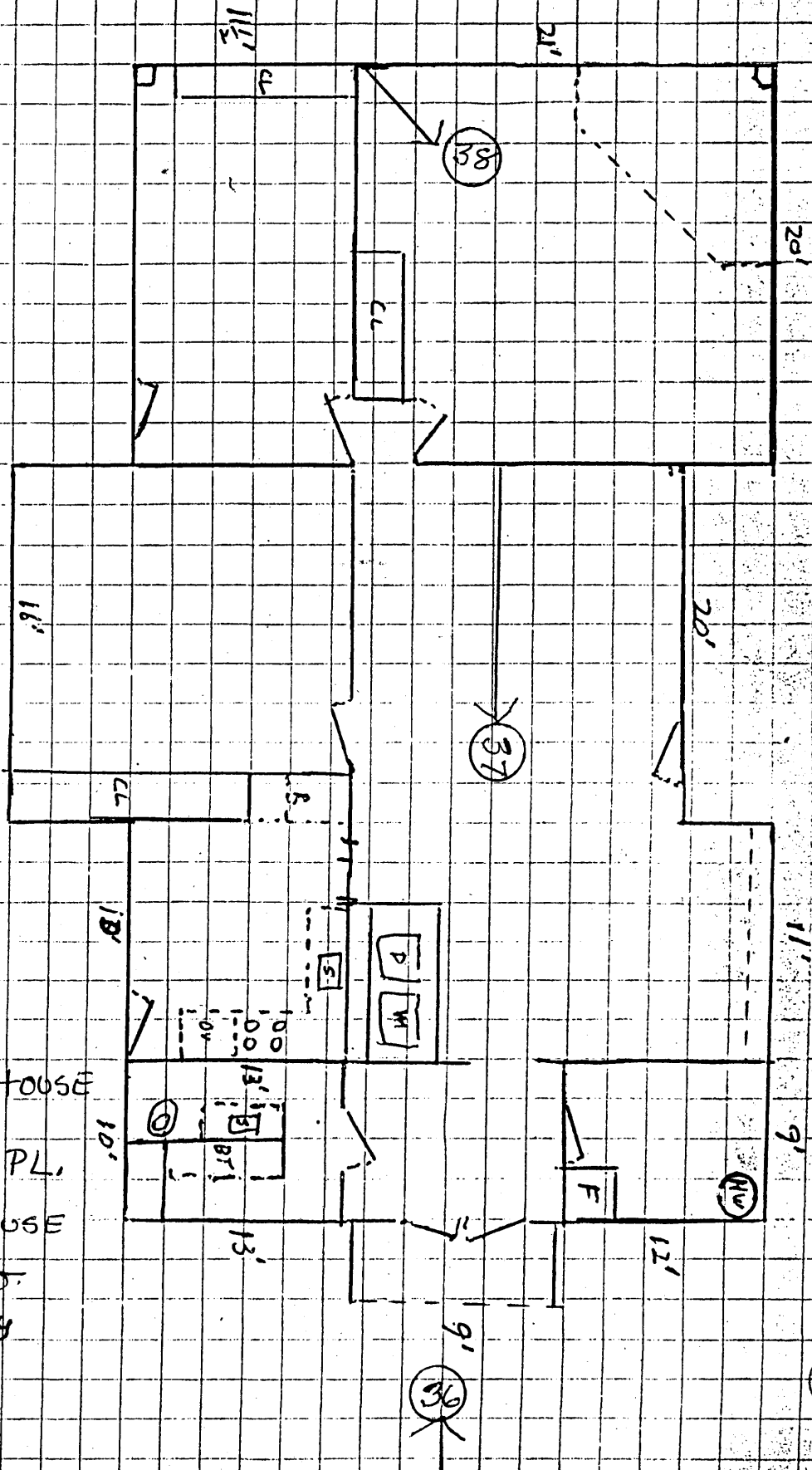


J. Harper Smith Mansion

TAX MAP
Borough of Somerville
SOMERSET
 PLANNED 2/27/79
 SCALE 1"=100'



J. HARPER SMITH HOUSE
228/ ALTAMONT PL.
230
CARRIAGE HOUSE
SOMERVILLE, N.J.
SOMERSET COUNTY

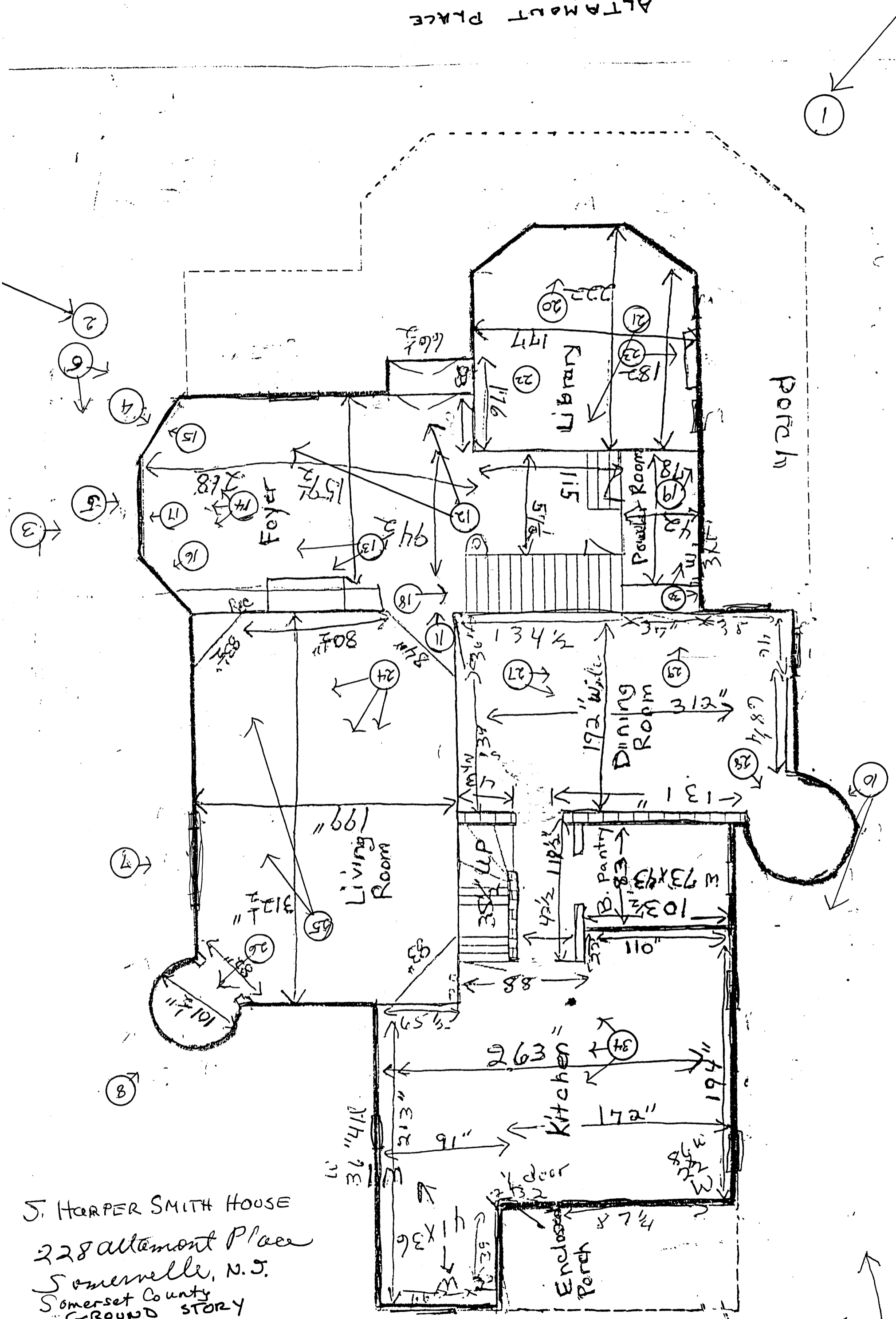


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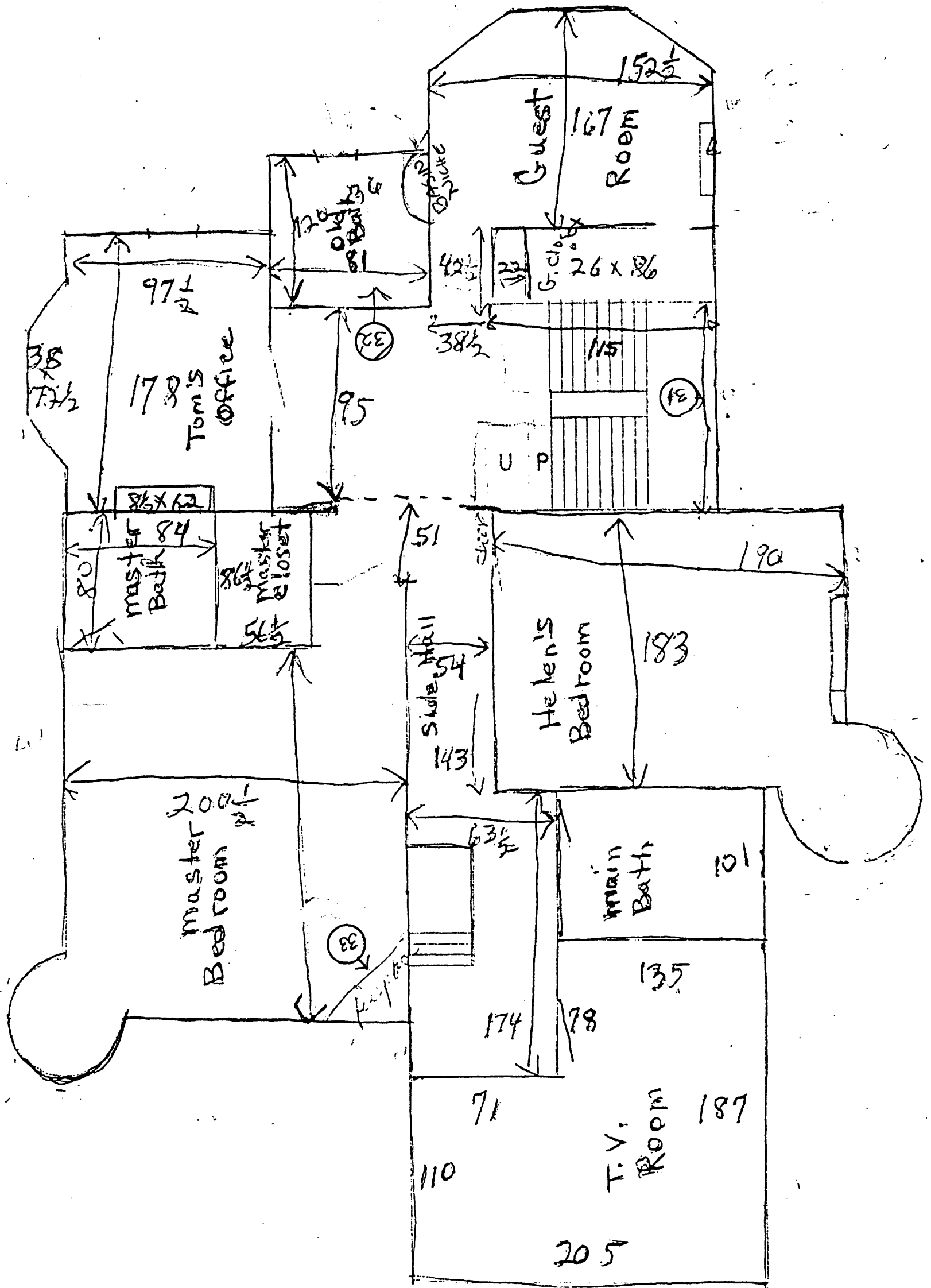
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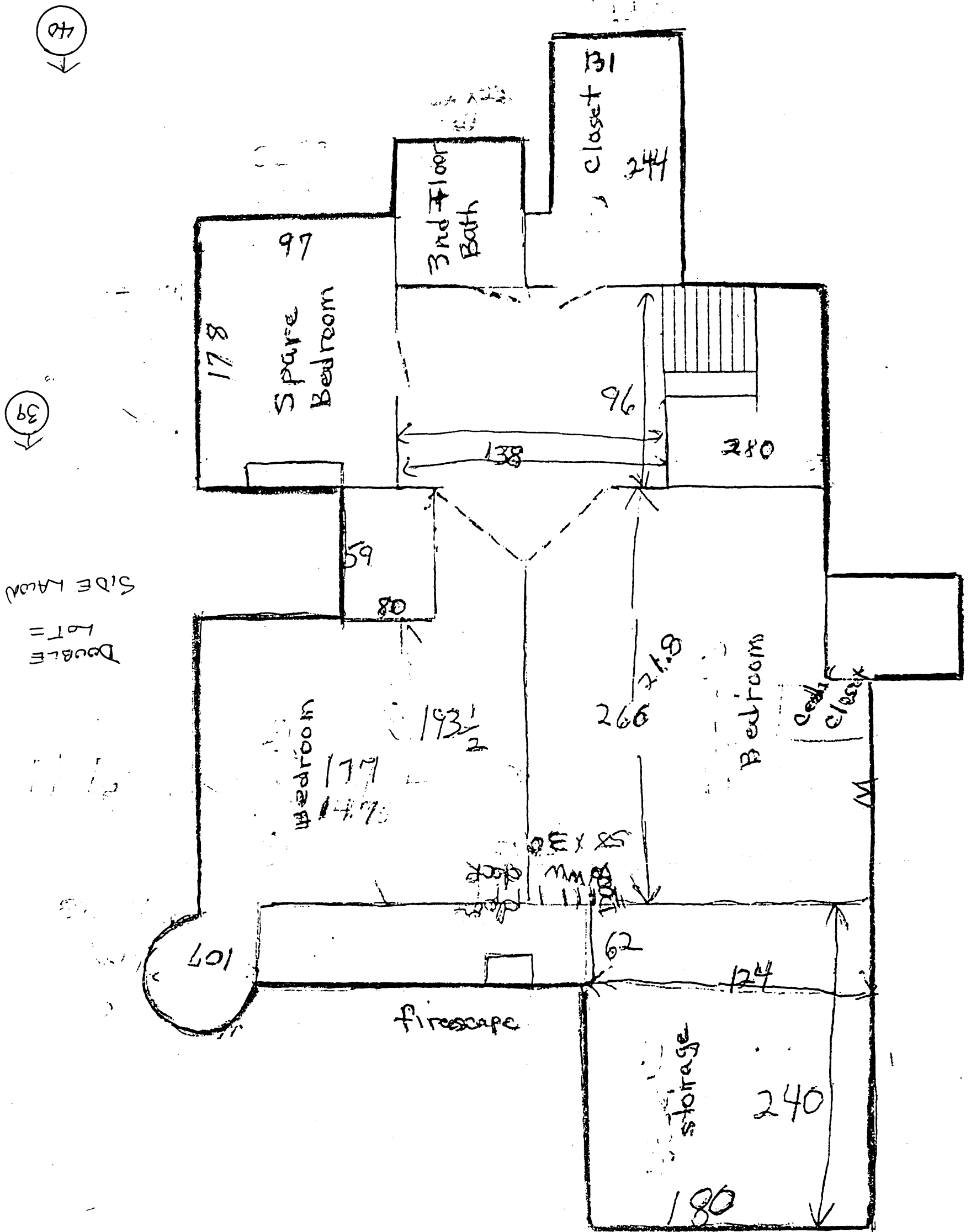


J. HARPER SMITH HOUSE
 228 Altmont Place
 Somerville, N.J.
 Somerset County
 GROUND STORY

b



J. HARPER SMITH HOUSE
 228 Altamont Place
 Somerville, Somerset County, NJ
 SECOND STORY



J. Harper Smith House
 THIRD STORY
 228 Allamont Place
 Somerville, Somerset County, NJ
 CARRIAGE HOUSE
 SIDE LAWN

LOCATION OF
 CARRIAGE HOUSE
 (See separate sheet)
 Photos 36, 37, 38

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

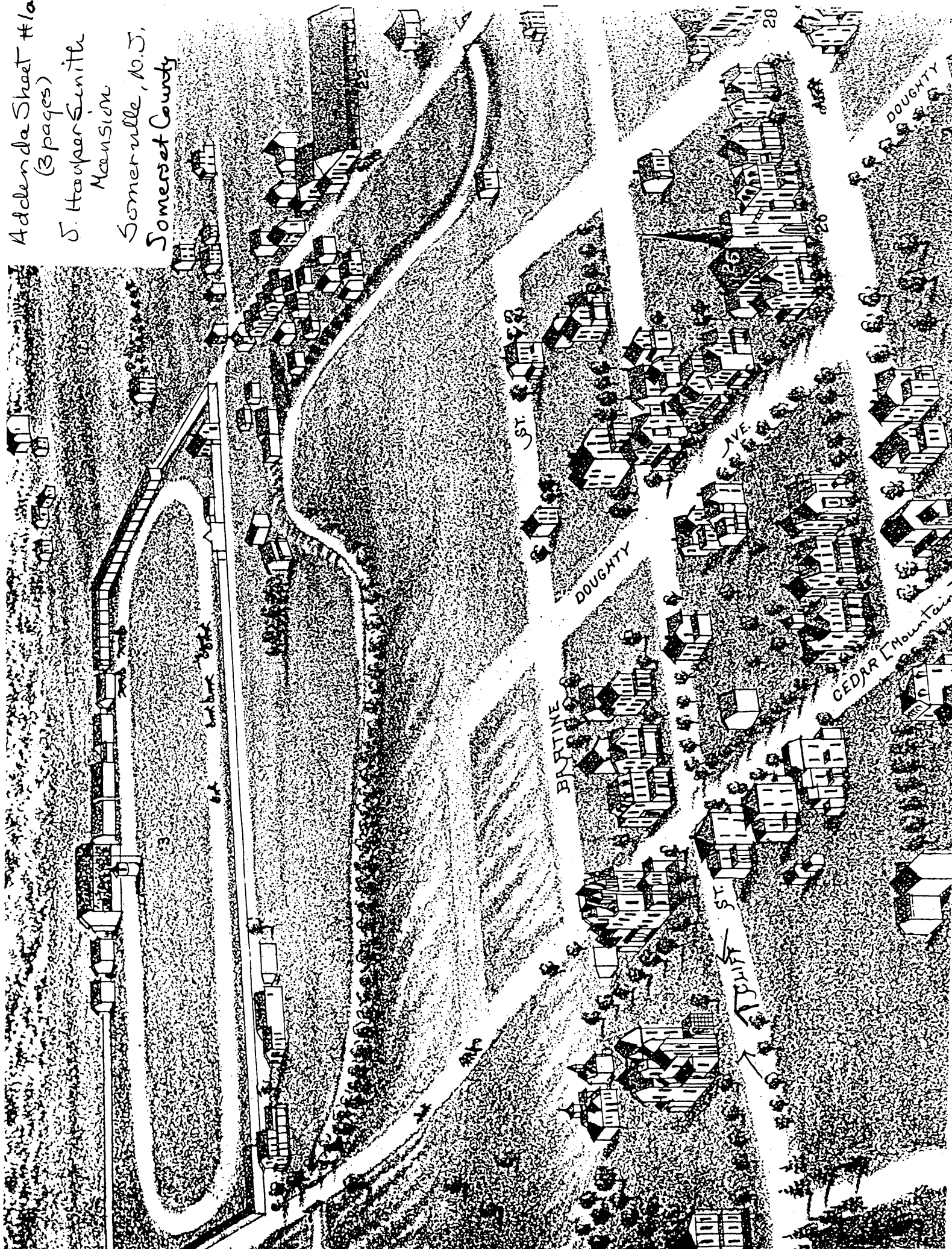
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

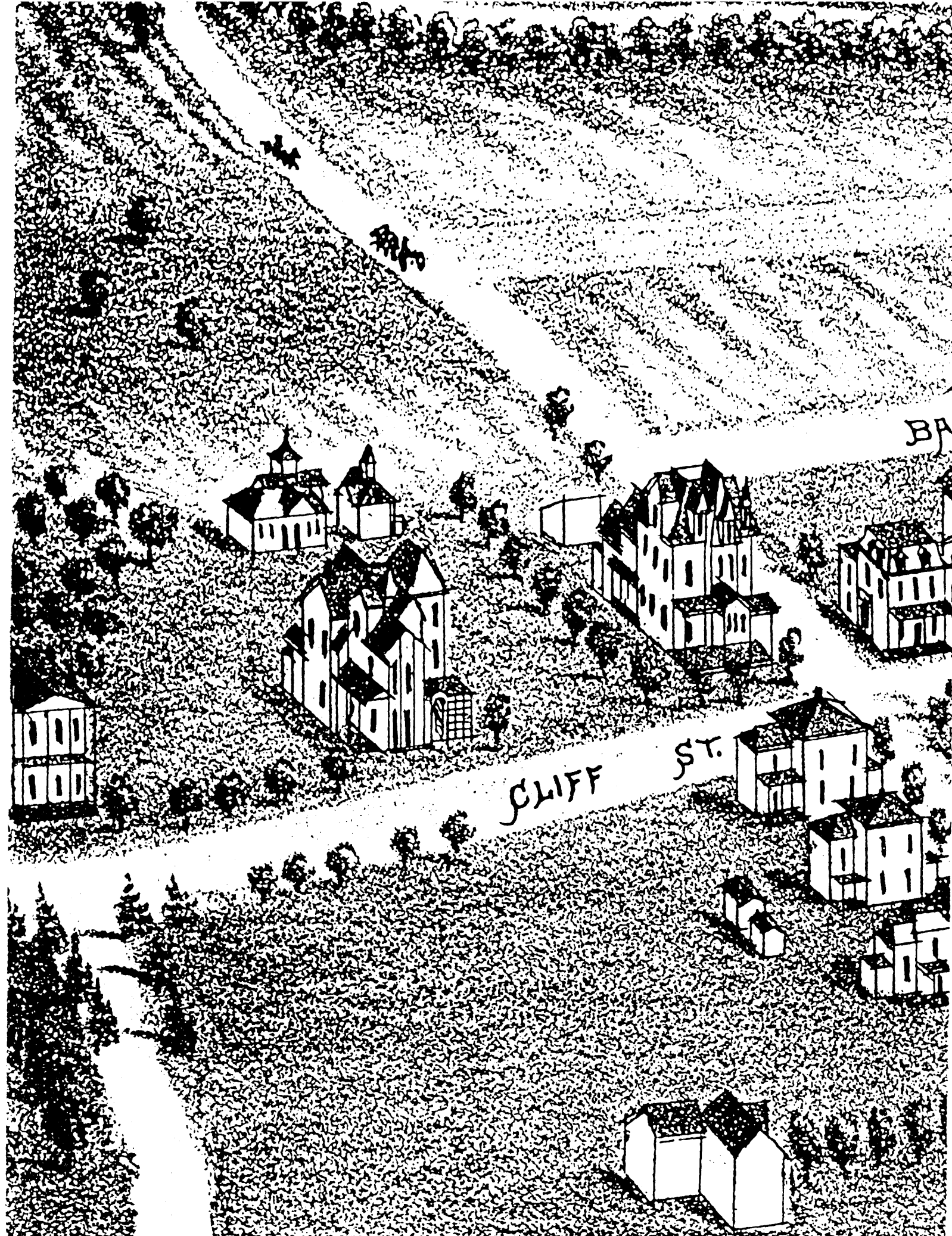
Section number _____ Page 24 NJ Somerset County
J. Harper Smith Mansion, Somerville Borough

ADDENDA

- Sheet # 1, a,b,c Detail from 1882 Bird's Eye View of Somerville, showing the original form of the Smith mansion in its setting and two enlargements of it.
- Sheet # 2 1888, Map # 1 filed by Calvin Corle, receiver of the property of the late firm of Davenport Brothers. At this time Smith bought Lot B, as shown here adjacent to his home lot.
- Sheet # 3 Detail from 1900 Bird's Eye View of Somerville. Buildings on this street are poorly sketched, lacking details, but what is noticeable for Smith's residence is a circular drive. At this date, the proposed Bartine Street north of Smith's property had been opened and named Summit Street, as an extension from one so named on east, formerly also named Bartine. The cross street named Cedar was later renamed Mountain Avenue.
- Sheet # 4 Sanborn Insurance Map of Somerville, 1910, the first to include all of Altamont Street west of Mountain Avenue. Smith's house, shown on its double lot, is depicted with the stables/carriage house, the two greenhouses (only ruins now), and two outbuildings. This footprint shows the floor plan in its completed form, as it is today. Smith died the next year.
- Sheet # 5 Ca. 1929, inclusion of mansion and property in book, Attractive Homes of New Jersey, when owned by Adelana Meyer and her husband Bernhard.
- Sheet # 6 Photograph from same book, giving good view of fountain and pond, greenhouses, and plantings.

Addenda Sheet #1a
(3 pages)
J. Harper Smith
Mansion
Somerville, N.J.,
Somerset County





CLIFF ST.

BA

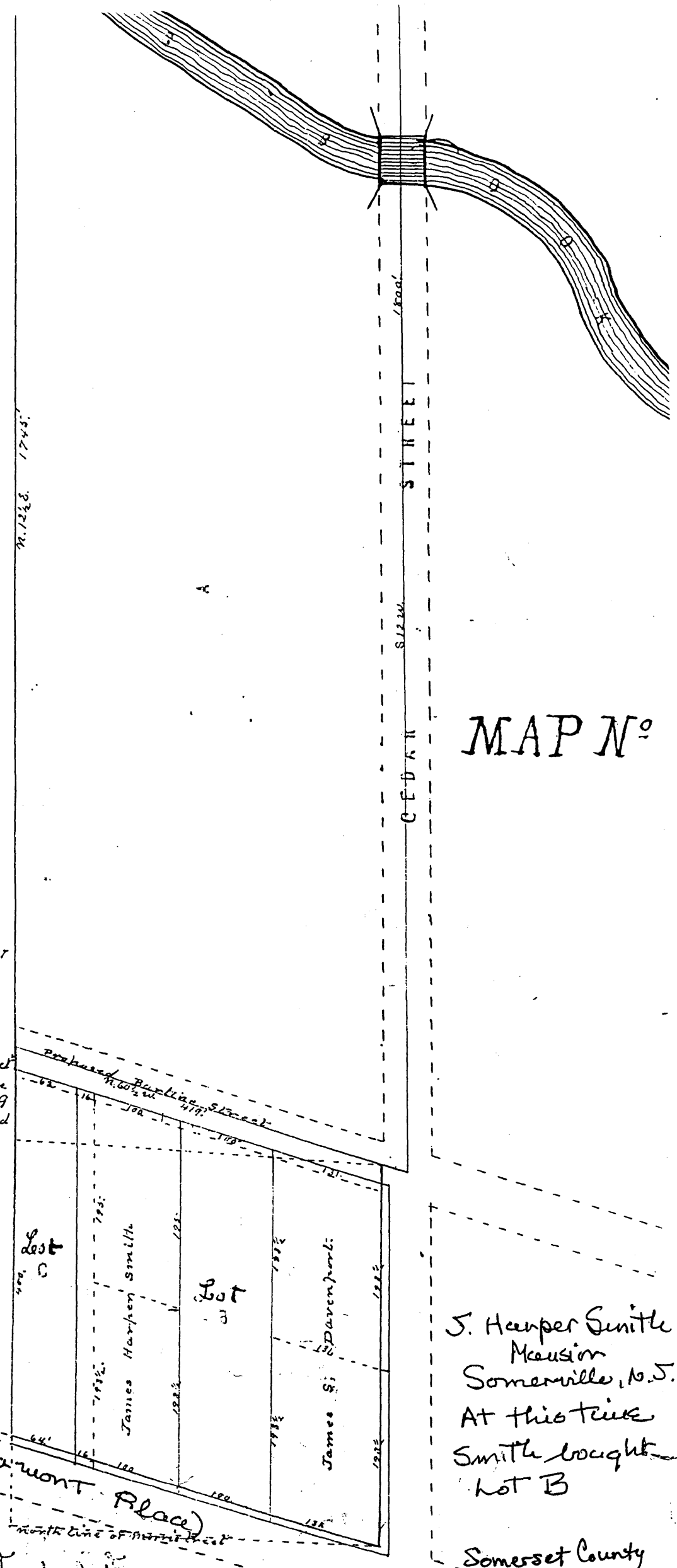


Map No 1. laid by me as Receiver of the
 Property of the late firm of Barnhart Bros.
William Cook
Receiver

Map of the
 Davenport property
 north of Cliff Street and west of
 Cedar Street in Somerville N. J.
 Surveyed by J. Doughty December 1887
 Scale of 100 feet to the inch

These are the premises described in
 par. 9 of the bill A being the tract
 described in said par. 9 as "the first tract"
 and B and C being the portions of the
 second tract described in said par. 9
 which had not been sold and conveyed
 at the time of filing the bill

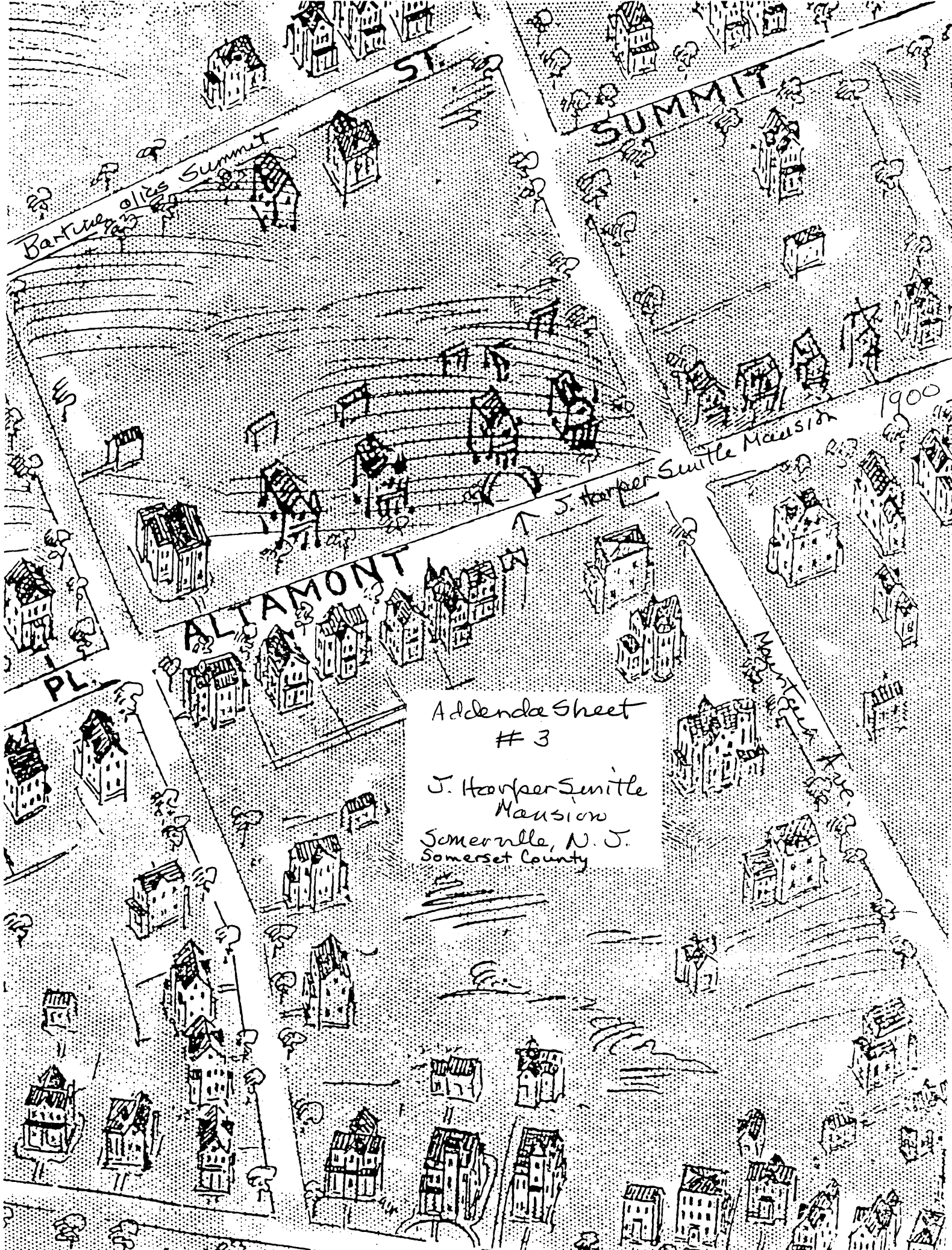
1888



MAP No

J. Harper Smith
 Mesion
 Somerville, N. J.
 At this time
 Smith bought
 Lot B
 Somerset County

1887 1888
 1887 1888
 1887 1888



Addenda Sheet
3
J. Harper Sumtite
Mausion
Somerville, N. J.
Somerset County

1900

Bartley's Summit

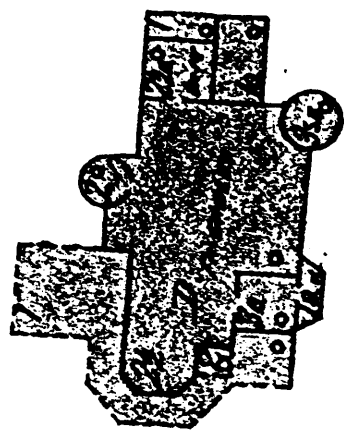
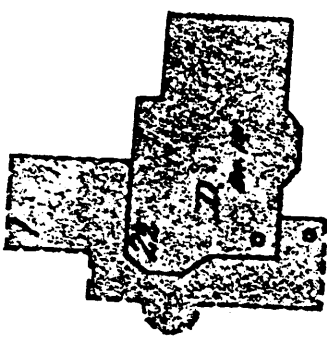
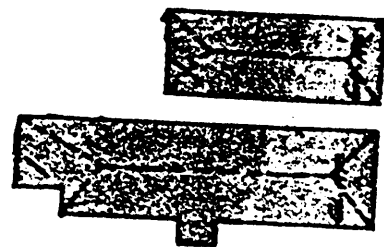
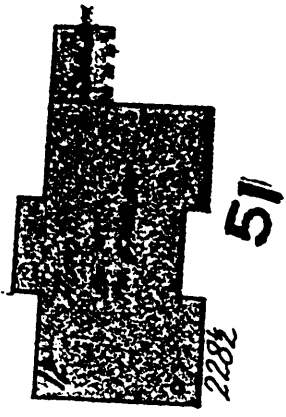
SUMMIT

ALTAMONT

PL.

J. Harper Sumtite Mausion

2
↑



J. Harper Smith
Mansin

in 1910

on double lot

Somerville
Somerset County
N. J.

228

ATTAMONT

Sanborn Insurance Map
for Somerville 1910

2

Addenda #5a

J. Harper Smith Mansion
Somerville Borough, Somerset County, NJ

1/2.



The Estate of

MR. BERNHARD MEYER C. 1929

228 ALTAMONT PLACE

SOMERVILLE, NEW JERSEY



MR. MEYER'S residence is a good example of the type of house belonging to the mid-Victorian period of America's architectural history. It is indicative of the stylistic maze into which this country plunged during the latter part of the past century, and from which it began slowly to emerge with the advent of our present era.

The house follows no distinct type of architecture, though the Gothic motif is indicated in the huge towers with their ancient castle-like effects, a style antedating the early English and German Renaissance, while the numerous gables with hardwood trim might be classed as the past-century American adaptation of the classic Tudor.

The residence occupies more than an acre of land in the best residential section of Somerville, and seems to frown down on that delightful little town with a mien at once commanding and aloof, as though recognizing the necessity of modern utility and compactness, but at the same time retaining the expansive dignity of former generations.

Addenda #53
J. Harper Smith Macer
Somerville, N. J.
Somerset County

puz/

The Estate of
MR. BERNHARD MEYER
228 ALTAMONT PLACE
SOMERVILLE, NEW JERSEY



The original dwelling, which is of brick construction with wood trim, was erected in 1880 by Harper Smith, and additions were completed in 1885. Mr. Meyer purchased the property about four years ago, at which time he had the interior thoroughly renovated, installing modern plumbing, heating and electric lighting. Like a majority of dwellings built during past centuries, it was erected in a substantial manner. Every partition in the house is of brick, all ceilings were filled with mineral wool, and the trim throughout the building is solid mahogany.

The magnificent shade trees that surround the house form one of the most attractive phases of the place. Many of these trees are imported, while others consist of the most beautiful and sturdy varieties indigenous to the State of New Jersey. The gardens, with their rich profusion of gay blooms, add a delightful touch of color to the scene, enhancing the charming effect produced by a playing fountain.



Arlenda Sheet # 6

J. Harper Smith Mansion, Somerville