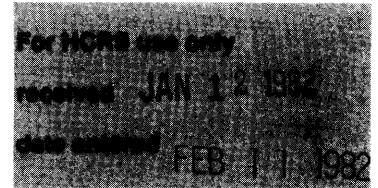


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Dillon Building

and/or common Singer Building

2. Location

street & number 69-71 Pratt Street ___ not for publication

city, town Hartford ___ vicinity of congressional district 1st

state Connecticut code 09 county Hartford code 003

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Dwight Owen Schweitzer

street & number Suite 200, 190 Trumbull Street

city, town Hartford ___ vicinity of state CT 06103

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Municipal Building

street & number 555 Main Street

city, town Hartford state CT 06103

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town Hartford state CT 06106

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

General Description and Setting

The Dillon Building is a five-story, four-bay, late 19th-century commercial/residential building located on the south side of Pratt Street in the heart of downtown Hartford. The building's chief architectural feature is its Beaux-Arts facade with elaborate terra cotta embellishment, still in original condition except at the street level. The first two floors of the Dillon Building are occupied by shops, and the upper three floors by apartments that have been vacant for several decades. Most of the neighboring buildings on the block are contemporary or later in time of construction and sympathetic in size and scale, but without the decorative features that distinguish the Dillon Building.

Pratt Street, only one block long, runs in the east-west direction between downtown's two principal north-south arteries, Main Street and Trumbull Street. At about the turn of the century, Pratt Street gave up its identity as a residential neighborhood to become a block of low-rise structures with fine shops in their first floors. The Dillon Building was constructed as part of this development.

Today, Pratt Street continues to be lined with shops, although they are not as active and prestigious as in the past. Street-level store fronts including that of the Dillon Building, have been altered over the years, but the street, sidewalks, and upper floors of the Dillon Building and of the block generally, retain the appearance and the relationship to one another that they assumed early in the century.

Exterior

The Dillon Building is a five-story, four-bay, 25 x 96-foot structure with exterior brick bearing walls and interior wood frame construction. It abuts the neighboring buildings on either side and has a tier of open porches on the back. Its chief architectural feature is its facade consisting of a modern store front at the first floor, panelled pilasters under a simple limestone cornice at the second floor, and then three floors of intricate classical motifs executed in terra cotta leading up to a projecting, molded cornice supported by heavy consoles (Photograph 1.)

The original appearance of the store front is not known. It is now a modern(1938) composition of simple design, dominated by a large sign over the plate glass shop window. Entrance to the upper floors is at the left (east).

The facade above the first floor is in its original condition, including the windows which are one-over-one double hung sash. The second floor level is framed in limestone. At the bottom the molded cornice over dentil course of the original street level facade is visible. At left and right, pilasters support a broad frieze that is plain except for a large rosette

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over each pilaster. The pilasters have vertical, recessed panels with a border of a foliate chain motif and have capitals with a pattern of vertical and diagonal lines. The frieze is over a cavetto molding with rosettes and under an egg and dart ovolo molding that is surmounted by a crown molding of vertical lines and spaced rosettes. The windows are separated by cast-iron pilasters that repeat the recessed panels of the stone pilasters at the ends, but have foliate capitals. The cast-iron pilasters are coated with a sand paint, to give an appearance resembling stone.

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Five buff brick pilasters rise above the second floor to the roof cornice, the two on the outside being thicker than the three central pilasters. The tan-colored terra cotta ornamentation of this part of the building is unusually elaborate. (Photograph 2). The rectangular spandrels between the windows of the third and fourth floors and between the windows of the fourth and fifth floors are filled with a central roundel surrounded by a raised foliate composition. The flanking pilasters have a cartouche with Rosette under a sculpted head at the level of the middle of the fourth-floor windows, displaying the numerals 18 on the east and 99 on the west, and a cartouche with pendant at the level of the lower sash of the fifth-floor windows. The spirals of the volutes in the pilaster capitals are coiled in the direction reverse from normal. Shells and fruit occupy the space between the volutes.

The ornamentation attains maximum density in the area above the mid-point of the fifth-floor windows. The foliate capitals of the pilasters are surmounted by heavy elaborate vertical consoles that support the molded, sheet metal cornice. The fifth-floor windows between the consoles have granite, three-pointed-arched lintels with central foliate bosses. Between the lintels and the cornice there are four oval, oculus windows flanked by a raised vine pattern and capped by shells. The composition of the ornament of the building, developed in strong round, oval and curved shapes surrounded by classically inspired foliate motifs in relief, reaches fullest expression at the band of oculus windows under the cornice. Immediately under the cornice a dentil course runs between the consoles and breaks out to form capitals of the consoles and, simultaneously forms the bases for five sculpted heads in the cornice. The three central heads, identical, suggest a Viking heritage while the two flanking heads, with headdresses, appear quite definitely to be in that tradition.

While the part of the facade upwards from the fifth-floor window lintels is above the level of the fifth-floor ceiling, and therefore, perhaps can be termed a false cornice, it is not treated as a parapet. Instead, the roof slopes down gradually toward the rear from the top of the cornice. The space behind the oculus windows is a crawl space, decreasing in height as the roof slopes down. The penthouse, a simple rectangular structure, is about one-third of the way back, on the east side. The top of an air shaft forms the back part of the penthouse superstructure. At the very top of the stairs, in the penthouse (Photograph 3), there is a door onto the roof. The thinking behind this commodious access to the roof is not clear; perhaps the roof was used for drying the wash, or for other activities. (Photograph 3). The rear elevation of the building has a tier of metal-framed decks with metal railings and wood floors (Photograph 4).

Interior

The first floor has been a shop since the building was constructed. The second floor is also a shop; whether this has been its function from the beginning is not clear, but if not originally a shop, it became one

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within a few years of construction. These spaces were modernized for commercial purposes in the 1938 alterations which included construction of the present stairway to the third floor.

The third, fourth and fifth floors are in original condition, laid out for one apartment per floor (see floor plans). The stairs rise to the upper floors in front of the air shaft, with wainscoting of vertical boards. The square newel posts have capitals of incised foliate pattern. (Photograph 5). The stairway continues in full width and with full detail up to the penthouse. There are windows with simple gothic tracery in front of the air shaft at the landings (Photograph 6). All of this woodwork, stained a dark brown color, proved to be golden oak when refinished.

The apartments are arranged with two rooms on the front and two rooms on the back that are connected by a long hallway. Three bedrooms and one and a half baths open from the hallway (see sketch). The two front rooms are connected by sliding doors and lighted by the four, large, facade, one-over-one windows. There is a fireplace on the east wall. One of the fireplace mantels is left (Photograph 7). It consists of flanking, tall, spiral columns, a bracketed mantel shelf under an oblong mirror and a cast-iron firebox of classical pattern surrounded by glazed tile (now painted). The hearth is made of the same tile.

The two back rooms are the kitchen and the dining room, each with a door to the rear deck. The dining room has a built-in corner cupboard. The bedroom immediately behind the front room on the west, the baths and the remaining two bedrooms have windows to an areaway formed by a recess in the building's west wall. The fact that this areaway starts above the first floor suggests that the second floor may originally have been planned as an apartment.

Summary

The Dillon Building presents an appearance of elegance consistent with the image of the exclusive Pratt Street shops of which it was a part. The apartments on the upper three floors demonstrate turn-of-the-century practice, in this case unchanged since the time they were built.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400-1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500-1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/ humanitarian
___ 1700-1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
___ 1900-	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates 1899

Builder/Architect Attributed to I. A. Allen, Jr.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion

The Dillon Building is an outstanding example in Hartford of Beaux-Arts commercial architecture embellished by classically-inspired decorative elements such as roundels, rosettes, cartouches, consoles and oculus windows in unusual density. Added interest is contributed by the portrayal of turn-of-the-century living arrangements preserved in the three upper-floor apartments, that are unchanged since the time they were built. (Criterion C.)

Charles Dillon (1851-1923)

As the 19th century drew to a close, retail activity in downtown Hartford was increasing. The need for more stores caused an expansion of the retail district, formerly centered primarily on Main Street, to side streets that had been residential in function up until that time. One such residential side street was Pratt Street. The investment opportunity to buy a house on Pratt Street, demolish it, and build a commercial building in its place was recognized by Charles Dillon, who was a Main Street merchant, and could see the trend developing.

Dillon began his business career in 1864 as a boy barely into his teens when he went to work for L. Ballerstein, the milliner,¹ with hours of 6:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. and wages of \$1.50 per week. In time Dillon rose into management, and after the turn of the century acquired full ownership of the business and of the building in which it was housed, known as the Ballerstein Block (demolished), which had been constructed at the southeast corner of Main and Temple Streets in 1893. Dillon carried on as an importer, manufacturer, and wholesaler of millinery as well as a retailer. He travelled to Europe on buying trips, resided at 664 Farmington Avenue, a fashionable address, and at the time of his death was chairman of the Hartford Retail Merchants Association, a director of the First National Bank, and a member of the Knights of Columbus, Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Hartford Club. When Dillon died, unexpectedly, while on a visit to Atlantic City, the Hartford Times carried his obituary on page 1, column 1. The circumstances suggest that Dillon made an early evaluation of the emergence of the retailing potential of the Pratt Street location, and constructed his building to participate in the investment opportunity.

When he acquired the premises on September 13, 1898,² what he bought was the western half of a double house known as 25-27 Pratt Street. The 1896 city atlas shows the outline of the house, a conventional structure with a large block in the front and a wing to the rear, divided down the center by a party wall. The double structure was narrower than the double

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

DATA NOT VERIFIED
ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Hartford North

Quadrangle scale 1 : 24000

UMT References

A 1 8 6 9 3 2 6 0 4 6 2 6 3 4 0
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is described in the Hartford Land Records, volume 1442, page 209.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David F. Ransom

organization Architectural Historian date February 29, 1980

street & number 33 Sunrise Hill Drive telephone (203) 521-2518


city or town West Hartford state CT 06107

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:


national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date January 4, 1982

For HCRS use only
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register


 Keeper of the National Register date 2/11/82

Attest: _____ date _____
 Chief of Registration

for
acting

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lot; there was land on the sides (east and west) of the building, as well as in the back yard (south). The age of 25-27 Pratt Street is unknown, but an 1848 agreement in the land records relating to drainage rights³ for the structure refers to "a large brick dwelling house with two tenements." As it would be logical to settle drainage rights at time of construction, the house may have been built about 1848. This date, plus the brick building material, plus the outline of the plan (shown in the atlas) all suggest an Italianate double house such as abounded in Hartford at that time.

Dillon's scheme to demolish his half of the structure and replace it with a larger, taller building made for complications with respect to the party wall. The matter was resolved February 24, 1899: "Whereas George L. Parmelee and Charles Dillon own adjoining land with buildings thereon on the south side of Pratt Street, said buildings separated by a brick partition wall, and whereas Dillon is about to remove his building to erect a new building, and it is for the mutual interests of both parties that the new foundations of the partition wall be stronger than that of the one now existing..." it was agreed that Dillon could excavate below the existing partition wall, but not disturb any part of it higher than the floor timbers of the first floor of Parmelee's premises. These premises were referred to as a dwelling.⁴ The resulting combination of half of a double house enjoying a common wall with a new five-story building was symbolic of the transition of Pratt Street from a residential neighborhood to a commercial street.

Isaac A. Allen, Jr. (1859-1953)

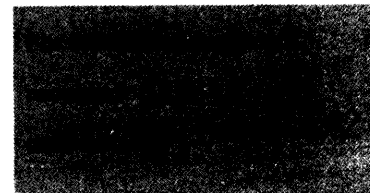
The architect for the Ballerstein Block in 1893 had been Isaac A. Allen, Jr. While there is no documentation that Allen designed the Dillon Building, it would have been natural for Dillon to turn to the architect he had known while working for Ballerstein when he needed plans for his own building. The attribution is also based on stylistic grounds, as Allen designed several similar buildings in Hartford.

Allen's practice was growing rapidly in Hartford at the turn of the century and he became probably the most prolific architect in the city's history. Born in Enfield, Connecticut, Allen spent several years in the office of David R. Brown in New Haven before in 1890 he joined Frederick S. Newman of Springfield, Massachusetts. In 1891 Newman sent him to Philadelphia to supervise construction of a large building, and in 1893 Newman brought Allen to Hartford to design the Ballerstein Block.⁵ Dillon presumably became acquainted with Allen while the Ballerstein Block was under construction.

In 1891, while Allen was in Philadelphia, his employer, Newman, had designed the Linden, 419-435 Main Street, Hartford, at the time the largest apartment building in Connecticut. One section of the Linden, fronting on Linden Place, resembles a row of bow-front town houses, although each floor is a separate apartment. The floor plan of the apartments in this section of the Linden is approximately the same as the floor plan of the apartments

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in the Dillon Building. It is likely that Allen knew what Newman had done, and followed in his footsteps. The long hall paralleling the semi-railroad flat sequence of rooms from front to back is the same in both buildings.

Allen designed a large number of commercial, residential and school buildings in a variety of styles throughout the greater Hartford area during his long career. He did several buildings downtown, two of which, the Sage-Allen and Shoor buildings, resemble the Dillon Building. The Sage-Allen Building (1898) (Photograph 8) is located on the east side of Main Street, at the end of Pratt Street, forming the end of the Pratt Street vista. In the Sage-Allen facade, three groups of tripartite windows are capped by half-round arches at a cornice two stories below the roof line. In the top floors there are two windows over each tripartite grouping, in the Richardson Romanesque manner, and then a projecting cornice with brackets. The applied decoration between the stories of the lower levels is somewhat similar to that on the Dillon Building. The Shoor Building (1908), 140-150 Trumbull Street, has a similar scheme of tripartite windows grouped under half-round arches at a cornice below the roof line.

The common interest of Dillon and Allen in the Ballerstein Block, the similarity of the floor plan of the Dillon Building apartments to work done by Allen's former employer, and the similarity of basic elements in the facades of the Dillon, Sage-Allen and Shoor buildings are the basis of the attribution of the Dillon Building to Isaac A. Allen, Jr.

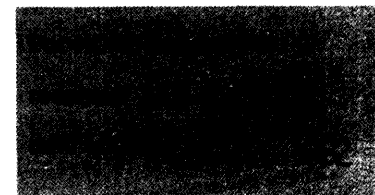
Only in the Dillon Building, however, did Allen extend the thrust of the pilasters uninterruptedly to the roof line, and only in the Dillon Building did he use the oculus windows combined with great density of elaboration as Louis Sullivan did the same year (1895) in the Guaranty (Prudential) Building in Buffalo, New York. While the purpose and placement of the decoration on the Guaranty and Dillon Buildings are quite similar, the decorative motifs themselves are quite different. Sullivan developed his own, distinctive geometric floral motifs, based on the work of James K. Colling and Ruprich-Robert⁶ while Allen stayed with less innovative classical foliate patterns with roundels and cartouches which he embellished to a Baroque level.

The Style

The Dillon Building in style is transitional between the end of the Romanesque Revival and the full development of the Beaux-Arts modes in Hartford. The Sage-Allen Building, designed by Allen, has the Romanesque Revival round-headed windows, while the Trinity Building, across Pratt Street from the Dillon Building, has brick walls with quarry-faced brownstone lintels and sills and the round-headed windows plus a bracketed cornice associated with the style. The Dillon Building uses a fenestration pattern that is similar but with rectangular windows and an upward thrust of the type found in the commercial style developed in Chicago, but with extensive classically-inspired decoration. Full development of the classical revival influence as

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articulated in the Beaux-Arts style came later in Hartford, notably with the 1915 Municipal Building by Davis and Brooks.

Occupants of the Building

There is no readily available information on who lived in the Dillon Building until 1914. In that year the city directories started listing residents by address, but residents only -- not first-floor commercial occupants. In 1914, residents of the Dillon Building included a housekeeper, a tailor (who also had his shop there) and two widows. The tailor continued for a number of years, but other names changed. A "driver", an "elevatorer" and a dealer in typewriters were among the new names, joined in later years by a real estate broker and the vice president of an ice company. In 1929 a ladies apparel shop and a photographer were in the building, presumably on the second floor, while by 1946, when the directories ceased listing residents by address, one householder was offering "furnished rooms," not surprising in consideration of the number of rooms in each apartment. In general, the residents appear to have been people of modest means. A 1958 building permit for electrical work refers to the "3 top unoccupied floors," indicating that sometime between 1946 and 1958 the apartments became vacant, and they have continued so.

Street floor occupants are unknown until the Singer Sewing Machine Co. bought the building, and moved in, in 1937. The store front had been altered in 1927, and Singer carried out further remodelling when they took possession. The Singer store has now been there for more than 40 years.

Summary

The Dillon Building is unique in Hartford for its dense, classical revival, terra cotta decoration of the upper three floors and roof cornice, an elaborate example of Beaux-Arts influence. The exterior, unaltered above the first floor, and the three apartments are an expression of turn-of-the-century conversion of Pratt Street from a neighborhood of residential character to a block of quality shops and commercial/residential buildings.

1. Dillon's obituary commented that he entered the millinery trade at a time when "Bonnets were the prevailing headgear for women past middle life, and a feature of the styles for several years was the 'jaw string,' a wide ribbon running down from the bonnet and tying to a large bow under the chin." Hartford Times, April 24, 1923.

2. Hartford Land Records (HLR), volume 261, page 483.

3. HLR 70/420

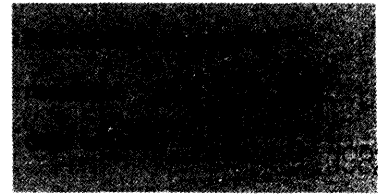
4. HLR 284/186

5. Hartford Times, April 3, 1953.

6. See Turak for a discussion of these influences.

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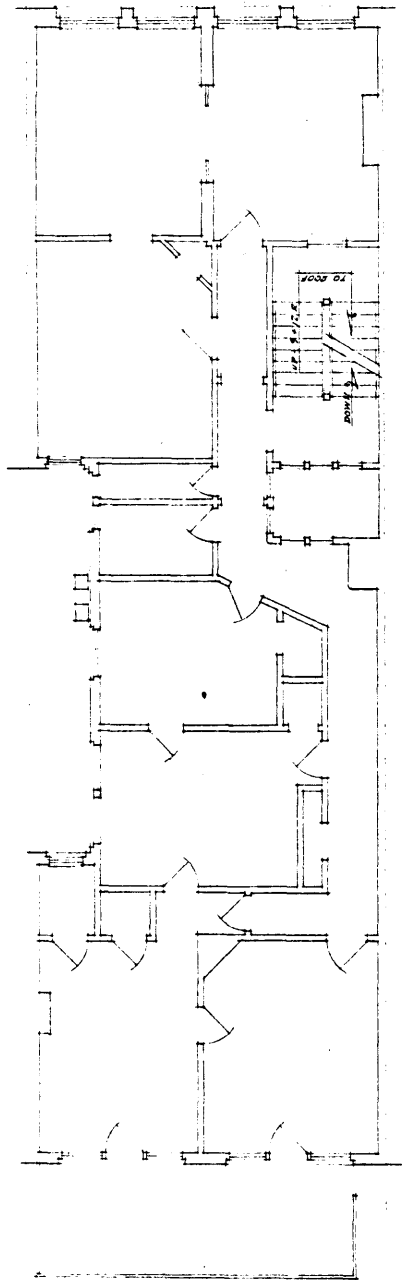
Hartford Times, April 3, 1953.

Theodore Turak, "French and English Sources of Sullivan's Ornament
and Doctrine," The Prairie School Review, v. 11 (1974) n. 4.

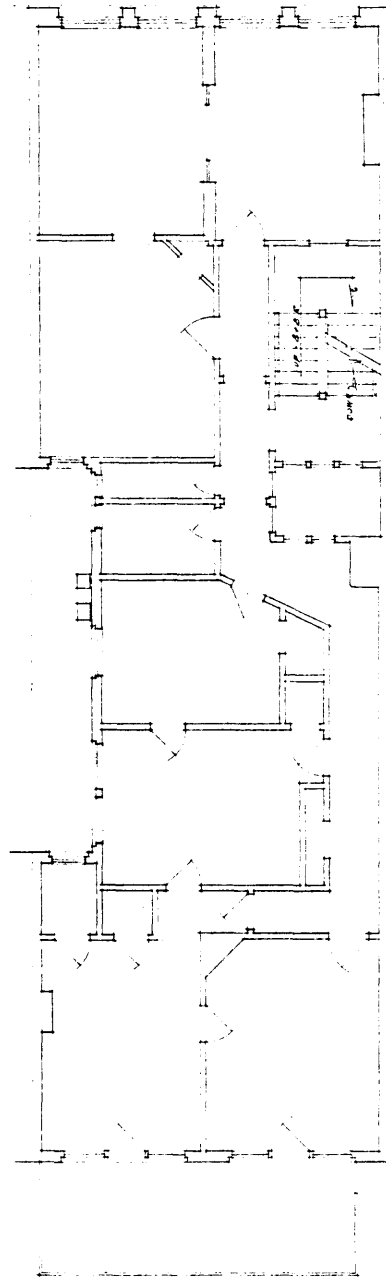
Dillon Building
69-71 Pratt Street
Hartford
Hartford, CT
Apartment floor plans

CONSULTING ARCHITECTS
69-71 PRATT ST.
HARTFORD, CT 06103
FIFTH FLOOR
L. J. SCHMIDT
L. J. SCHMIDT & ASSOCIATES
171 LAVALLE ROAD
WEST HARTFORD, CT 06117

DATE
1/28/74



FIFTH FLOOR



FOURTH FLOOR