

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



884  
1984

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

1. Name

historic Ficken's Warehouse

and/or common Bergen Station Post Office

2. Location

street & number 750-766 Grand Street N/A not for publication

city, town Jersey City vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state New Jersey code 034 county Hudson code 017

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> museum</span>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> park</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> private residence</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> religious</span>
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> scientific</span>
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/> transportation</span>
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Arlington Associates

street & number 295 Ninth Street

city, town Jersey City vicinity of state New Jersey 07302

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hudson County Records Bureau, Administration Building

street & number 595 Newark Avenue

city, town Jersey City state New Jersey

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Jersey City Historic Sites Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1981  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Office of New Jersey Heritage, CN 402,

city, town Trenton state New Jersey 08625

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input 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		

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

DESCRIPTION

The Ficken's Warehouse, located along Grand Street at the intersection of Harmon Street and Arlington Avenue, was erected c. 1910 in the Neo-Classical/Second Renaissance style. Prominently situated at the top of a small hill, the ornate structure is five-sided, or trapezoidal, in plan, with its principal, albeit smallest, elevation oriented toward the six-point intersection. Facing a small commercial center at the foot of the hill, the building occupies its entire lot and is the major neighborhood landmark, due to its location, style, architectural treatment, and scale. Other structures in the area are vernacular row houses or commercial buildings dating, for the most part, from the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries.

Rising three stories, plus basement, the Ficken's Warehouse is constructed of brick laid in a stretcher bond and is trimmed with light and dark limestone. Three elaborately designed elevations are found along Grand and Harmon Streets and at their intersection. These elevations are framed by brick quoins on the first floor. The rear elevation consists of two parts, both brick, laid stretcher bond and unadorned and without fenestration.

The main entry at the corner is massed with a central doorway enframed by a flat-arched portico with paired fluted Doric columns and frieze with metopes, triglyphs, and guttae. The raised entry is reached by a series of stone steps located on three sides. The door is double leaf and is topped by an ornate fanlight. Flanking the door are two narrow windows with flat arches and exaggerated limestone keystones. The bases of the keystones have projecting central sections with guttae. The first floor is crowned by a molded belt course. A large clock with decorative stone surround similar to that on the first floor keystones is found above the entry. Topping the clock and at each end above the belt course are brick piers with decorative stone bases and capitals. Between each pier are paired second and third floor 1/1 windows containing limestone lintels, scroll keystones, and sills. The facade is topped above the third floor by a heavy corbelled brick band.

The detailing of the Grand and Harmon Street elevations is similar to that of the main facade. Both seven bays long, the elevations have dark limestone bands marking a watertable, and paired first floor windows (1/1) with fanlights, scroll keystones, brick voussoir and stone sills. The second and third floor of both elevations have paired windows separated by brick piers with limestone bases and capitals with stylized guttae detail. As on the facade, the piers run between the first floor belt course and third floor brick corbelled band. The last three bays of the elevations have first floor doorways. Those on Harmon Street and two on the Grand Street elevation have simple double-leaf entrances with wood

## 8. Significance

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

**Specific dates** c. 1910      **Builder/Architect** Ernest E. Quaiff

### Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

#### SIGNIFICANCE

The visually prominent Ficken's Warehouse, also known as the Bergen Station Post Office, was designed by local architect Ernest E. Quaiff in 1910. It is important as a distinctive civic/industrial example of Second Renaissance or Neo-Classical architecture; as a United States Post Office from 1910 until 1960; as a prominent landmark in the Bergen and Lafayette neighborhoods of Jersey City; and because of its association with the warehouse/storage livery operations of John H. Ficken.

The site on which the Ficken Warehouse is located was originally part of the holdings of J.V.R. Vreeland, and was platted on Vreeland's map of the Sixteenth Ward in 1876. Although records do not show the disposition of the land after Vreeland sold it, the site remained undeveloped through 1906, when it was sold by executors of the estate of Abby G. Spring to John H. Ficken. The building Ficken erected was intended from the outset to be a mixed use, postal station - warehouse operation. A description of the premises, particularly the main floor and basement, is contained in a lease executed between John H. Ficken and the Postmaster General of the United States on September 6, 1911. No structure is shown, however, on the G.M. Hopkins Atlas of Jersey City - 1909. The size, sophistication of design, and complexity of construction seems to preclude its being erected, leased, and occupied within the nine calendar months of 1911 preceding the lease; hence, the supposition that the date of erection is 1910.

Ficken, born in Oldendorf, Germany, in 1840, came to the United States in 1856. He settled in Brooklyn, New York, but in 1862 he moved to Jersey City, where he secured a position at a Pullman ticket agency in the Erie Railroad Station. In 1874 he opened a livery business on Communipaw Avenue, in the old Bergen section of the city.

Even though there was major industrial development in Jersey City by the 1870s, most of it was related directly to the railroads and the port, and was thus concentrated in the lower lands along the Hudson River in the "Downtown" sector. The area where Ficken opened his business had been divided into large parcels in the early years of the nineteenth century for large "country" homes of local merchants and businessmen;

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 0.3

Quadrangle name Jersey City

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	8	5	7	8	5	6	0	4	5	0	7	3	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Jersey City Tax Block 1940, Lot R. Western corner of the intersection of Grand Street, Harmon Street, and Arlington Avenue.

### 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 Charles Wyatt

organization Charles Wyatt Associates

date February 1983

street & number 706-A Jersey Avenue

telephone (201) 659-1878

city or town Jersey City

state New Jersey 07302

# 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

date May 1, 1984

For NPS use only... National Register... date 6-14-84  
for   
Keeper of the National Register  
Attach: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
Chief of Registration

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

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Ficken's Warehouse, Jersey City,  
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DESCRIPTION

frames containing miniature dentil and egg and dart bands. The westernmost door on Grand Street is more ornate. Like the main entry, it has a small stone portico with flat floor, Doric columns, plain architrave and frieze with guttae, metops and triglyphs. The door has double leaves and is topped by a fanlight with decorative iron grillwork.

Crowning the main elevations is an ornate metal cornice with giant triglyphs and metopes and crown moldings.

Interior

The basement level is reached via a stairway along the inside of the Harmon Street elevation, near the rear of the building. It consists of a number of storage rooms with unadorned plaster walls, concrete floor, and exposed concrete beams and support columns.

The main floor of the building consists of one large room (originally the postal office) which reflects the trapezoidal shape of the exterior; the ceiling height is approximately fifteen feet. The principal entry to this floor is through the double leaf doors on the shortest wall - the truncated intersection of the Grand and Harmon Street elevations. These doors are enframed by simple hardwood surrounds. With the exception of the rear walls, i.e., the two walls not on street elevations, the room is lined with dark stained wainscoting. The room is lighted by the exterior paired 1/1 windows with fanlights. A major feature of the room is the ceiling skylight (now in poor repair and covered with debris from above); it lies in a trapezoidal pattern which reflects that of the exterior walls. Along the rear wall is an operable manual rope and pulley freight elevator, and the now filled-in shaft of a smaller passenger elevator. Natural light is provided by the second/third floor atrium and rooftop skylight. Concrete-encased support columns rise through this floor from the basement to support the upper floors and roof. Scant evidence remains of the postal station operation; there are several wooden frames which suggest functional partition of the room, but no counters, grilles, or other furnishings remain.

The two upper floors are reached by stairway and elevator, and consist of concrete balconies surrounding the central atrium which penetrates both floors. These balconies are divided into storage carrels by pine frames. The atrium is topped by an irregular peaked steel and glass skylight.

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SIGNIFICANCE

many of the residents were descendants of the original Dutch settlers of the former village of Bergen. Communipaw Avenue, then known as the Newark Plank Road, lead from Downtown and the former waterfront community of Communipaw up the hill to the ridge running north-south through Hudson County, and down the other side to the Hackensack River, thence to Newark. By the 1870s, these large estates on the uplands overlooking downtown had been platted into small building lots, and at the intersection of Grand Street, Communipaw and Arlington Avenues, a small business center developed, known colloquially as the "Junction". The site of the present Ficken warehouse appears as 14 separate lots on Vreelands's plat map of 1876.

By 1874, Ficken had expanded the scope of his business to include storage facilities, and in that year he erected his first warehouse, at the corner of Arlington Avenue and Harmon Street, on land that had also been part of the Vreeland holdings. That building was enlarged several times, and eventually included his own residential quarters.\*

In 1906 Ficken purchased a vacant site at the intersection of Harmon Street, Grand Street, and Arlington Avenue, directly opposite, across Harmon Street, his existing business complex, for the erection of the present Ficken Warehouse. By 1911 the structure was completed, and a lease for postal station facilities of the first and basement levels was negotiated with the Postmaster General. The Bergen Station Post Office then vacated the storefront facilities it had occupied for a year a block closer to the "Junction".

John Ficken died in February 1917. Records show, however, that the lease for postal facilities was renewed between Lena Ficken, his widow, and the Postmaster General in July 1921. According to the current Jersey City Postmaster, the Bergen Station Post Office was closed at the location in January 1960, by which time the building was in the ownership of Edwin Geils, son-in-law of John and Lena Ficken. At that point the entire structure reverted to storage and warehouse use. That use ceased about 1975, when listing in local directories was discontinued, and

\*Although part of this original building is extant, it has been altered through removal of detail and facing with false brick. (The Keeper of the National Register ruled in a letter of 2-24-81, that it was not eligible for inclusion in the Register.)

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SIGNIFICANCE

through abandonment and subsequent foreclosure, the structure passed into the ownership of the City of Jersey City. The City, in turn, deeded it to the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency, which was charged with trying to find a new use for it. The present owners, Arlington Associated, wish to convert the building into housing.

The Ficken's Warehouse is a locally important example of Second Renaissance/Neo-Classical architecture, and it is unusually elaborate among the large number of warehouses in Jersey City. Its distinctive architecture is enhanced by its siting in a neighborhood largely composed of small scale brick or framed rowhouses, by its positioning on an irregular, trapezoidal shaped lot which fronts on a six-point intersection, and by its location on an upland site, supplementing the already commanding presence of its architecture. Further, it fulfills the functions of visibility and design commonly associated with civic architecture rather than industrial warehouses.

Despite recent deterioration, the Ficken's Warehouse retains its qualities of fine design and workmanship. The building is an unusually elaborate warehouse, the ornateness surely prompted by the United States Department of Treasury's agreement in 1909 to lease the building as a post office. The Ficken's warehouse was erected during the tenure of James Knox Taylor, Supervising Architect of the Treasury (1897-1917), who promoted the concept that government buildings should be monumental and beautiful, representing a high standard of architectural sophistication. It is clear that the Ficken's Warehouse was designed - with a dual purpose in mind - as a functional storage area and a noteworthy public building.

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PUBLIC DOCUMENTS

Hudson County Clerk: Hudson County Plat Map #376, Vreeland, 1876.

Hudson County Registry of Deeds, Book 941, p. 441

Book 1098, p. 509

Book 1402, p. 621

MAPS

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1887 Atlas of Jersey City. Jersey City: L.D. Fowler, 1887.

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INTERVIEWS

Geils, E.M. (Grandson of John H. Ficken): 2-8-83

Grundy, J. Owen (City Historian, Jersey City): 2-2-83

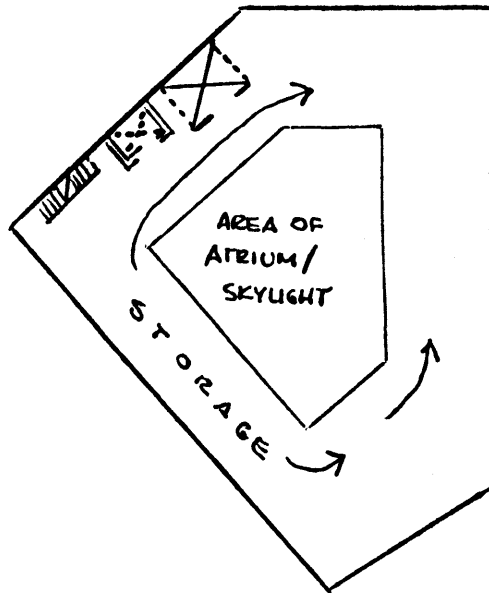
Postmaster's Office, Jersey City: 2-8-83.

Real Estate Record & Builders Guide. Volume 84. December 29, 1909, p. 1169

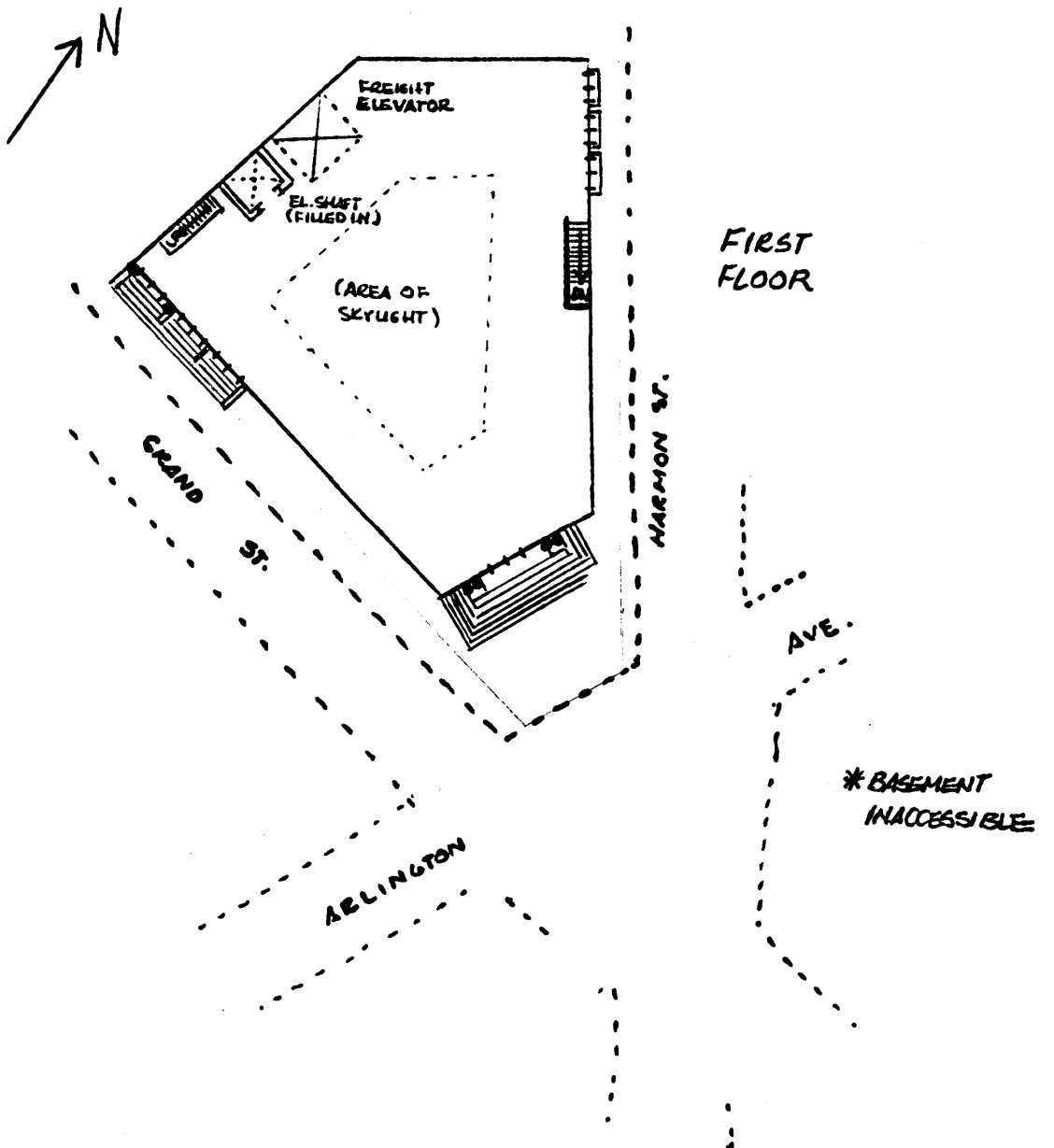


FICKEN'S WAREHOUSE  
JERSEY CITY  
HUDSON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

(NOT TO SCALE)

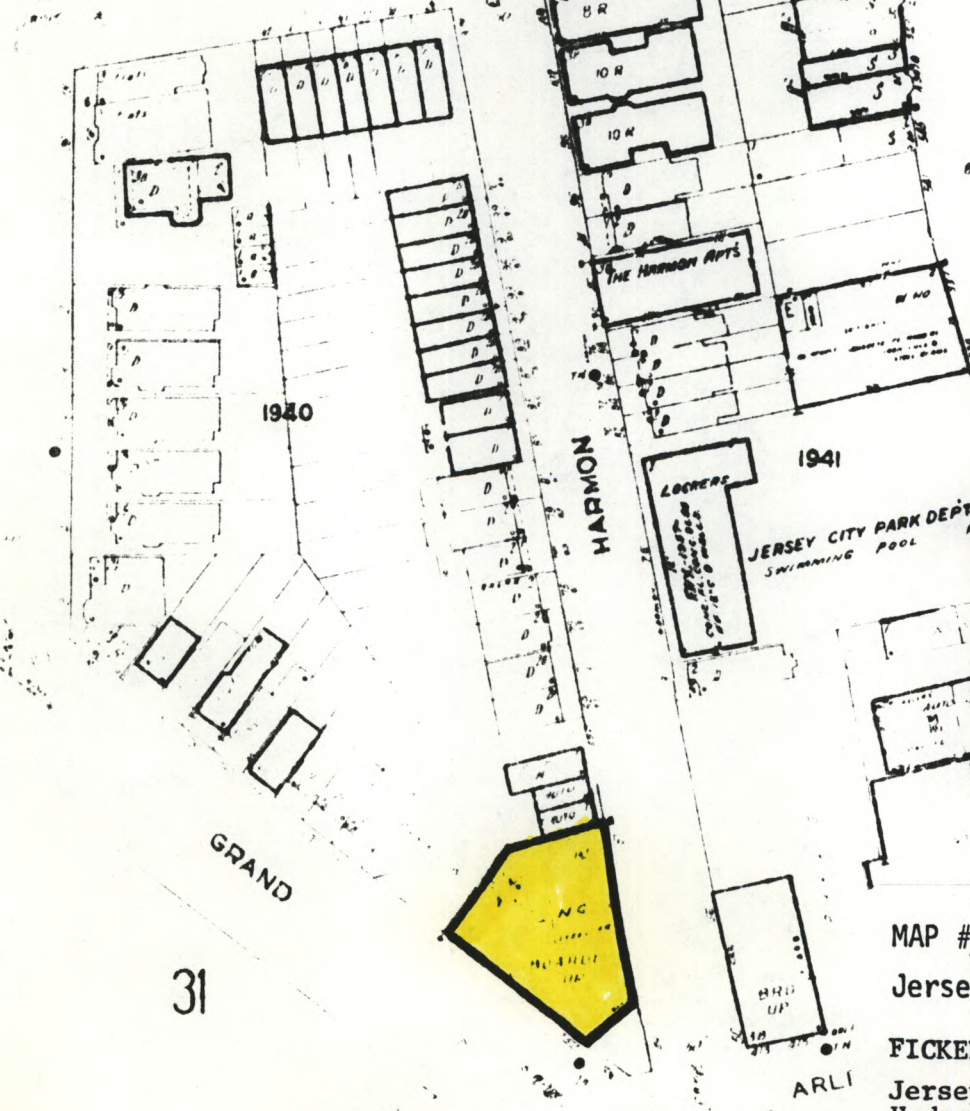
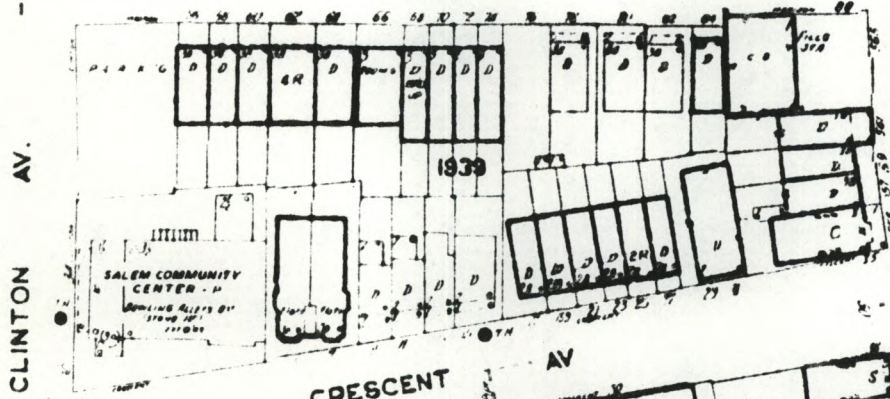
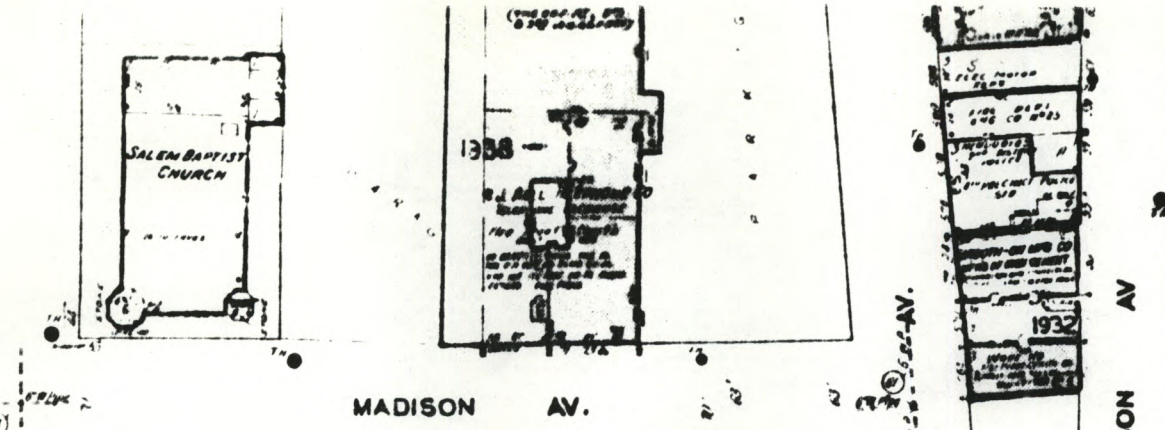


2ND/3RD  
FLOORS



CW 2/83

27



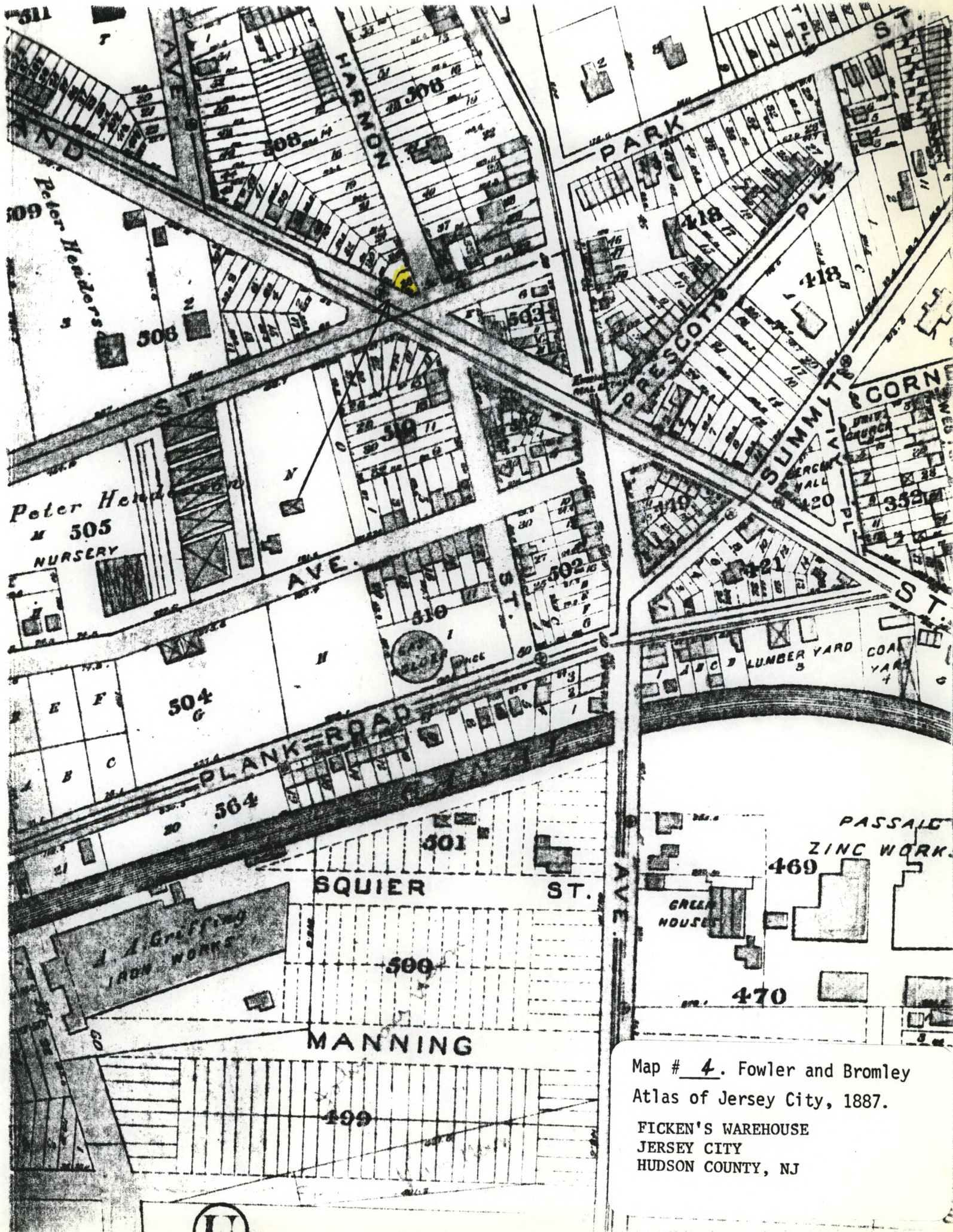
31

31

MAP # 2. Sanborn Map of  
 Jersey City, 1982.  
 FICKEN'S WAREHOUSE  
 Jersey City  
 Hudson County, NJ

S e e V o i u m e F i v





Map # 4. Fowler and Bromley  
Atlas of Jersey City, 1887.  
FICKEN'S WAREHOUSE  
JERSEY CITY  
HUDSON COUNTY, NJ