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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Larson, Peter and Maria, House
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 611 31st Street N/A not for publication
city, town Astoria N/A vicinity
state Oregon code OR county Clatsop code 007 zip code 97103

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

[Signature] January 29, 1990
Date
Signature of certifying official
Oregon State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Mark J. Baker Entered in the National Register 9 March 1990
 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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling
Domestic: multiple dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)Gothic Revival: Vernacular

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation wood: post and pier enclosed by
walls wood: weatherboards waterskirt
and shingles
roof asphalt: composition shingles
other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Ethnic Heritage

Period of Significance

1884-1887
1884-1918

Significant Dates

c. 1884-1887
1893-1918

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Peter Larson, builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property 0.13 acres Astoria, Oregon 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	0	4	3	7	6	1	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

5	1	1	5	3	6	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting Northing

B

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated area is legally described as the North 115 feet of Lot 1, Block 2, in J. M. Shively's Plat of Astoria, Clatsop County, Oregon. It is otherwise identified as Tax Lot 12900, Clatsop County Assessor's Map Ref. No. 8N 9W 9CA.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated area, measuring 50 x 115 feet, is the entire urban tax lot presently associated with the house built by Peter Larson beginning c. 1884. The two-story house is the sole contributing feature of the nominated property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Roger T. Tetlow

organization _____ date August 6, 1989

street & number Box 223 telephone (206) 642-3860

city or town Seaview state Washington zip code 98644

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The large, two-story house, built by Swedish immigrant Peter Larson beginning about 1884 is T-shaped in plan, and its perpendicular volumes were erected in two episodes. The earliest, the longitudinal north wing, is of box construction. The south wing, at right angles to the original section, is of frame construction and is believed to have been built in 1887. The building exterior is characterized by a gable roof with boxed cornice, shiplap siding and tall, regularly-spaced window openings with architrave moldings which are fitted with double-hung windows having four-over-four lights. Second story windows on the north end wall have pedimented architrave moldings.

A porch with railing and turned posts fills the angle of the northeast corner. The main entrance is on the south front, which is divided into four bays. The entrance bay is the innermost of the two west bays, and is sheltered by a small hip-roofed porch with turned posts which are replacements for the original slatted posts with scroll-sawn brackets. Chimneys rising from the roof ridge of the south volume indicate the position of the central entry hall and have been reconfigured as straight, stuccoed shafts. Originally, the brick chimneys had corbeled neckings. The entire west elevation has been covered with shingles, a typical early 20th Century weatherization measure in Astoria, a northern coastal port buffeted by strong west winds. A minor addition was made at the northwest corner of the major, south volume. The house is in need of foundation and roof repairs.

The parlor in the southeast corner of the main block displays a painted black wainscot characteristic of Scandinavian folk interiors.

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The Peter Larson House is one of the oldest remaining houses in Astoria, the north wing having been constructed in the 1880's. The house sat on the riverbank adjacent to Hemlock street which was planked and built on pilings. The south wing was added prior to 1888 as it appears on the earliest Sanborn maps of that area. It is unique in that it exemplifies two methods of construction; box construction in the north wing and balloon frame construction in the south wing.

The Larson House is best described as Vernacular Gothic, often called Western Farmhouse. Like many houses of the period other influences can also be noted.

The Vernacular Gothic influence is evident by the simple placement of the two rectangular boxes, the north and south wings, at right angles to each other to form a "T". This maintains the appearance of separate wings. Also apparent are slightly differing versions of 1 x 8 shiplap siding, simple construction techniques and ornamentation, and a gable roof, resulting in an economical, comfortable, and utilitarian residence.

Other influences include the 4 over 4 double hung sash windows on the south wing, a characteristic of the Gothic Revival period. The same style is represented in the front porch of the north wing with its lightly detailed columns.

The architrave moldings for window framements are more typical of the Italianate style.

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The interior walls of the north wing are characterized by the vertical planks of the box construction method, nailed at the sill and top plates, and covered with wallpaper. The southeast parlour reveals original decoration of tongue and groove boards with a painted wainscot of black and gold lines along the top. This is a rare example of authentic Scandinavian interior decoration.

Some of the exterior shiplap siding has been sided over by wood shingles. Perhaps they can be removed.

The roof, originally wood shingles on skip sheathing, has been covered over by composition shingles. Both have substantially deteriorated.

Slight modifications were made to the south wing at its northwest and southwest corners, leaving both wings substantially intact. However, structural deterioration has been considerable especially at the east porch on the north wing and at various parts of the foundation, where both wood rot and foundation movement will severely impact the structure if not corrected.

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SUMMARY

The house built by Peter Larson on 31st Street in the Uppertown section of Astoria, Oregon beginning about 1884, is a locally significant, intact example of vernacular Gothic architecture. As such, it meets National Register Criterion C. It is significant also under Criterion A in the context of Scandinavian-American culture as a prominent and exceptionally well preserved example of a traditional institution in Astoria, the Scandinavian boarding house.

The large, two-story house is T-shaped in plan, and its perpendicular volumes were erected in two episodes. The earliest, the longitudinal north wing, is of box construction. The south wing, at right angles to the original section, is of frame construction and is believed to have been built in 1887. The building exterior is characterized by a gable roof with boxed cornice, shiplap siding and tall, regularly-spaced window openings with architrave moldings which are fitted with double-hung windows having four-over-four lights. Second story windows on the north end wall have pedimented architrave moldings.

A porch with railing and turned posts fills the angle of the northeast corner. The main entrance is on the south front, which is divided into four bays. The entrance bay is the innermost of the two west bays, and is sheltered by a small hip-roofed porch with turned posts which are replacements for the original slatted posts with scroll-sawn brackets. Chimneys rising from the roof ridge of the south volume indicate the position of the central entry hall and have been reconfigured as straight, stuccoed shafts. Originally, the brick chimneys had corbeled neckings. The entire west elevation has been covered with shingles, a typical early 20th Century weatherization measure in Astoria, a northern coastal port buffeted by strong west winds. A minor addition was made at the northwest corner of the major, south volume. The house is in need of foundation and roof repairs.

The parlor in the southeast corner of the main block displays a painted black wainscot characteristic of Scandinavian folk interiors.

Peter Larson, a native of Sweden, arrived in Astoria in 1876 and practiced his trade in the Scandinavian settlement area of Uppertown when he was not engaged as a gillnetter on the Columbia River. Uppertown, arrayed along the riverfront, was the location of canneries, docks and mills which supplied the immigrants their livelihood. The house which Larson built for his family represents the attainment of an industrious and frugal immigrant. After Larson's life was cut short by a mishap on the river in 1893, his widow, Maria, also of Swedish

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descent, converted the place to a boarding house catering to the large Scandinavian work force attracted to the lower Columbia by the thriving fishing and lumber industries. Maria Larson operated the boarding house until her death in 1918.

From the 1870s, Astoria was populated heavily by Finns and Scandinavians. The Finns congregated in Uniontown at the west end of the central business district; the Norwegians and Swedes in Uppertown, on the east. Mrs. Larson's role as proprietress of a boarding house for young single men building their earnings was paralleled elsewhere in the community. However, the Larson's house was the most prominent institution of its kind in Uppertown and it remains evocative of its historic period around the turn of the Century when the work force was at its height. The house also illustrates the limited options open to widowed women of the period who, when forced to rely on their own resources, frequently took in boarders to support their families.

(continued)

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The Peter Larson House, built in two segments between 1884 and 1887 by Larson, a carpenter and part-time gillnetter, is significant under Criterion A as an exceptionally well-preserved example of a traditional institution in Astoria, the Scandinavian boarding house, once a dominant factor in the assimilation of young single male Scandinavian immigrants who came to the Lower Columbia area from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland to make a new home and life in the United States. It is also significant under Criterion C as a leading example locally of the vernacular Gothic style.

Peter Larson was born in Sweden in 1861 and came to the Astoria area in 1876 where he settled in Uppertown, the Scandinavian section of the city at that time. He practiced his carpentry and, although there is no concrete record of his work, he probably helped build many of the wooden buildings erected in that section of town. As so many other Astorians did at that time, he soon took up salmon fishing as a part-time occupation and during the salmon season went out in a gillnet boat to fish the McGowan area on the Washington side of the Columbia River. He married Maria Charlotte Johnson in 1884.

Peter and Maria Larson had four children during the next few years. Ester, or Esther as she was later known, was born on August 3, 1887 and another daughter was born and died shortly thereafter. Two other children - Dora Maria and Gyor who later changed his name to Guy were born to the couple.

Although the exact date the Peter Larson House was built is not

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known, it was certainly built before 1888, according to the Sanborn maps. The first or north section of the house was probably built in 1884 at the time of Larson's marriage, and the southern part added to it in about 1887 to accommodate the growing Larson family.

In May of 1893, while gillnetting near the Washington shore, Larson's boat was caught by the tide and swept into a fish trap owned by the McGowan Packing Co. of Chinook. Although his boat puller was saved, Larson was caught in the trap and drowned. He was 32 years old at the time.

Two years later, Peter Larson's widow Maria received a \$3,000 judgement from McGowan and it is probable that she used part or all of this money to convert her house into a boarding house which she ran until her death in 1918. Certainly, the Polk Directories for the next few years list many different persons either boarding or rooming at that address. One of these, a bachelor carpenter named Axel Backlund, was living there in 1906 and married Dora Larson in 1909.

The location of the Peter Larson House was almost perfect for the successful operation of a boardinghouse and was typical of the many other Scandinavian boardinghouses which were operating in Astoria beginning in about 1880. It sat on a bluff above and close to the Columbia river which, at that time, was where the major industries such as fishing, canning, and lumbering were located. It was on the horse-drawn Astoria Street Railway which provided easy access to all parts of the city's waterfront, and it was large enough to provide both living and dining areas for a large number of guests. It's boxlike appearance was similar to the other boarding houses which were designed not for beauty but for ease of construction and low construction costs.

Astoria, Oregon attracted large numbers of young, single men from the Scandinavian countries during the years from 1880 to 1910 for several reasons. The two dominant industries in Clatsop county at that time were fishing and lumbering, both familiar ones to the immigrants from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland, who were able to get almost instant employment after arriving in the area.

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Both the weather patterns and the topographical features of Clatsop county are similar to those of many parts of Scandinavia making it easy for the young immigrants to assimilate to the physical aspects of their new land with ease.

However, most of these young men had difficulty in adjusting to other cultural aspects of Clatsop County, Very few of them could speak or write English, and only a small percentage of them had either relatives or friends here. The food, clothing, customs, and other aspects of the American culture were all unfamiliar and at times difficult to understand so the new immigrant faced many problems in his efforts to begin a new life in the new country.

At first, many of these men either lived at their place of employment or moved in with families who had extra living facilities for rent, but it was soon apparent to a few astute Astorians that a good living could be made by catering to the needs and wants of these new citizens. A few simply added extra rooms and additions to their homes, creating extra living space to rent out, but others built larger buildings designed to accommodate a larger number of roomers and boarders.

Uppertown, the easternmost portion of the city of Astoria was the destination for most of the first Scandinavian immigrants, simply because that end of town was where most of the first salmon canneries, lumber mills, and fishing docks were built. The Norwegians and Swedes settled there beginning in the 1870's. Uniontown, the westernmost section of Astoria, was first developed in the 1880's at a time when most of the immigrants were coming from Finland. so that area developed primarily as a Finnish settlement. By 1890, the town had three distinct sections each populated by a different segment of the population. The Norwegians and Swedes on the east were separated from the Finns on the west by the business section of the city, populated mostly by the descendants of those Americans who had moved west during the great migrations of the 1840's and 1850's.

Boarding houses sprang up in each of the two outlying sections of the city to serve the needs of the new Scandinavian arrivals. But in those houses in Uniontown, the Finnish language was spoken and

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Finnish food was served, while in the eastern section of town, the Nowegian and Swedish men used their own languages and ate their own kinds of food in the Uppertown boardinghouses. A business district developed in each area, each catering to its own part of the Scandinavian population. In short, while both ends of town were basically Scandinavian, each was a reflection of either Finland or Norway and Sweden.

The Astoria boardinghouses served a useful purpose by providing a familiar atmosphere for the newly arrived immigrant while he was gradually assimilated into the mainstream of American life.

Perhaps it was inevitable that Peter Larson's widow would turn her big house into a Scandinavian boardinghouse. The location was right and with her Swedish background, she was able to attract young Swedish workingmen by being able to speak their language and to cook the kind of food they were used to. She provided a home for the young Scandinavian men while they in turn provided her with an income adequate for her to raise her fatherless family. Maria Larson operated her boardinghouse for more than 20 years until her death in 1918.

Esther attended the local grammar school and was graduated from Astoria High School, then located in the McClure school at 8th and Franklin streets, in 1905 and was named valedictorian of her class. She attended the Normal School at Monmouth and received her teaching certificate in September of 1910. She immediately secured a teaching position at Taylor school in Astoria and was living at the Larson home during that same year.

Esther Larson then taught in the Clatsop county rural schools for the next few years including schools at Birkenfeld, Fishhawk, and Melville before returning to the Astoria schools in 1913 when she was hired to teach at Adair school. She was named principal of Adair school in 1918 but resigned to go back to teaching in 1919.

She continued to live in the Peter Larson House after her mother's death in 1918 and rented rooms to other Astorians although the boardinghouse part of it was apparently abandoned. Although she never married, she led an active social life. She was a member of

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the Gateway Rebekah Lodge and was elected Noble Grand in 1913. was on the YMCA board in 1923 and was a member of the Trinity Lutheran church. She also traveled to Scandinavia in 1923 to visit the homes of her ancestors.

In 1925, Esther Larson joined the faculty of Lewis and Clark Junior High School and continued teaching there until her retirement in 1952. During these years, she continued living in the Larson house although street names and addresses had been changed and the Peter Larson House was now at 611 31st street instead of at Hemlock and East 7th streets.

Because of the low rate of pay for teachers during those years and because it was more difficult to find suitable roomers, Esther Larson was unable to keep up the Peter Larson House and it gradually deteriorated from lack of repairs and from old age. She lived there until 1968 but then had to leave her home and entered the Seaside Convalescent Center. Esther Larson died on October 25, 1971.

Since that time, the Peter Larson House has had several different owners and is currently owned by Michael and Sheryl Reither.

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Daily Morning Astorian.....	August 3, 1884 Sept. 8, 1891 Feb. 24, 1895
Astoria Daily Budget.....	May 15, 1893 March 15, 1909 Sept. 22, 1910 Jan. 30, 1923 Oct. 2, 1923
Morning Astorian.....	Jan. 8, 1918 Jan. 25, 1918 Aug. 30, 1918 Feb. 6, 1919
Daily Astorian.....	Oct. 25, 1971
Polk Directories - 1890 through 1925	

899CA

Assessor's map showing location of Peter Larson House

MARINE

(HEMLOCK ST.)

DR.

See Map 8 9 9CB

6	5	4	3	2	1
13601	13300	13200	13100		12900
13600	13500				
13700					13000
13800	14000		14400	14600	14801
13900	14100	14200	14500	14700	14800
7	8	9	10	11	12

6	5	4	3	2	1
12300	12200			12000	
12400					
12500		12800	10		
12600	12700				
7	8				

(PINE ST.)

AVE.

(EAST 7th ST.) ST.

6	5	4	3	2	1
17100	17000	16900	16800	16600	16400
				16700	
17201					16500
17200		17202	17300		17400
7	8	9	10	11	12

SHIVELY'S

37

(EAST 6th ST.) ST.

(WING ST.)

AVE.

31 ST.

1	2	3	4
3401	3500		3700
6			
7	3800		
12	4100		
11	4000		
10			
9			

GRAND

PORT

3	2	1
18000	17900	17700U1, U2, U3
18100		17800
18200		

30 TH.

63

HARRISON

(AUGUR AVE.)

1	2	3
8600	8700	8800
34	33	32
6000	5900	5800
20	5300	
21		
15	5000	
16		
4300		
4200		
1	2	
4		
19		
5200		
5700		
28	27	26
5600		

1-01

UPPER

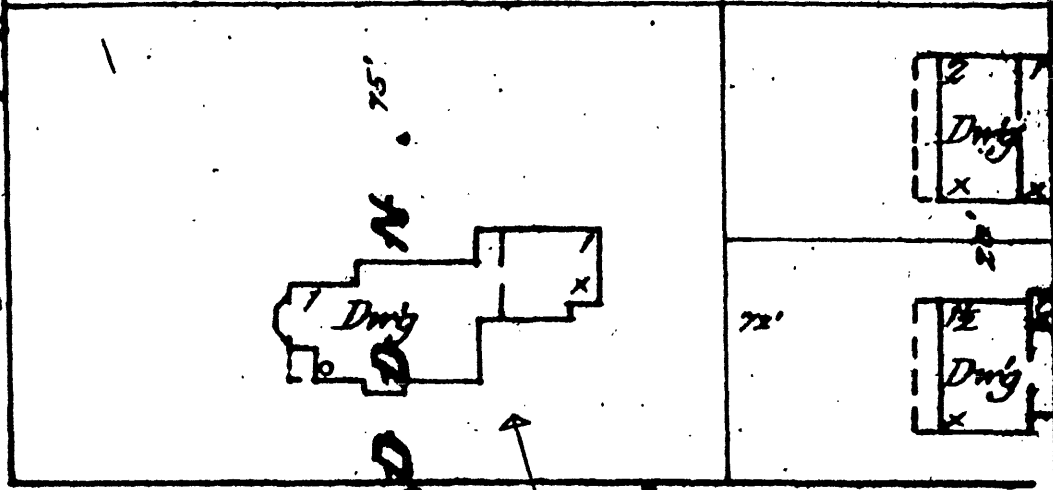
SUBD

STONE VTN.

FUEL WOOD CHIMNEY CAN
FOR FIRE POTS, 40 LIGHTS,
3 BRADCOCK FIRE EXTINGUISHERS
BOTTLES, NIGHT PORTLAND CEMENT
170' HYD. ON HY. 1 1/4" HYD. ROSE NO
200' HOSE. 4" 50' HYD.
12 BOTTLES ON HY.

PLATFORM.

1
91



E. 7TH

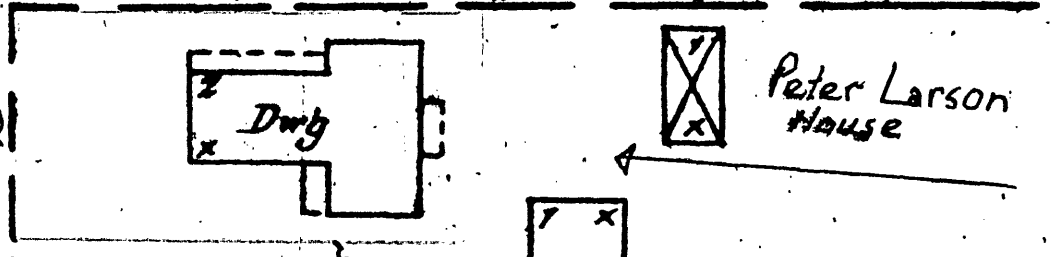
ST.

New Faces
644 31st

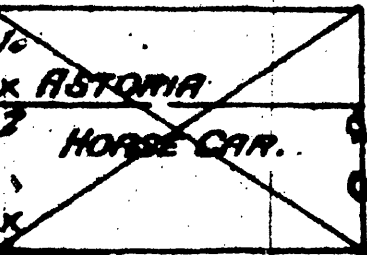
Peter Larson
House - 1888

Garage

611 31st

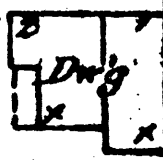
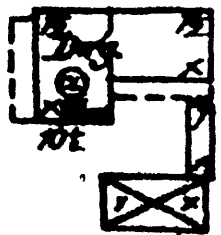
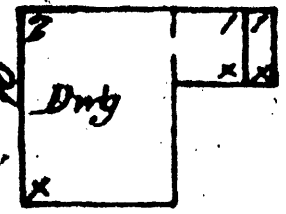


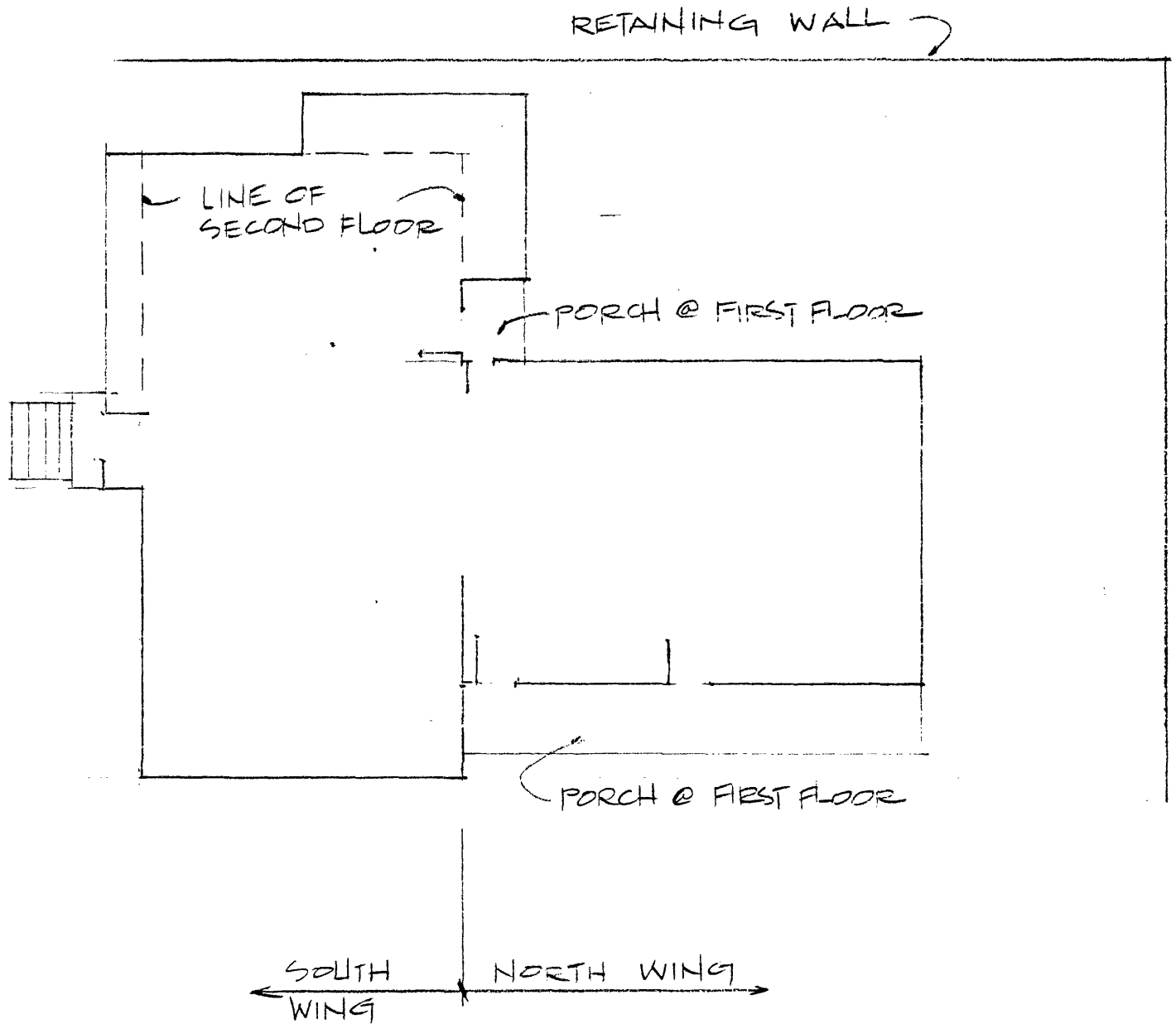
Marine Drive



1888
Sanborn
Atlas

2
92





LARSON HOUSE

1" = 10'

