

**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 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 any 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 MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 1023-1025 North State Street not for publication N/A
city or town Bellingham vicinity N/A
state Washington code WA county Whatcom code 073
zip code 98225

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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

Date

12/16/04

WASHINGTON 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 for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this 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 Keeper:

Date of Action:

Edson H. Beall 2/2/04

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
<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

Commercial Buildings of the
 Central Business District of
 Bellingham, Washington, 1882-
 1915

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National RegisterNone**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Commerce/TradeSub: Specialty Store**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Work in Progress

Sub:

7. Description**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revival**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Sandstone
 roof Asphalt
 walls Brick

other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)See Continuation Sheets

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.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a 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.)

See Continuation Sheets

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce
Architecture

Period of Significance

1902-1920 Function as Morse Hardware Company

Significant Dates

1902 date of construction
1920 death of founder, Robert I. Morse
1902-1920 rise to local and regional prominence of the hardware company within the building and prior to expansion into adjacent buildings

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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):

- 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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

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

Name of repository:

Whatcom Museum of History & Art**10. Geographical Data****Acreege of Property Less than one acre (0.16 acres)****UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 10 538138 5399340
 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.)

Lot 12 Blk 51, Town Of New Whatcom Plat, Bellingham, Whatcom County, Washington

Boundary Justification

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

The nominated property encompasses the urban tax lot occupied by the Morse Hardware Company Building.

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Michael Sullivan, Principal/Spencer Howard, Associateorganization Artifacts Consulting, Inc. date 28 May 2004street & number 201 North Yakima Avenue telephone 253.572.4599city or town Tacoma state WA zip code 98403

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name State Street Equity LLC/Robert Hall, Kane C. Hall, and David Johnston

street & number 115 Unity Street, Suite B telephone 360.734.6600

city or town Bellingham state WA zip code 98225

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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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**MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Narrative Description:

Built in 1902 in downtown Bellingham, Washington, along North State (formerly Elk) Street, the Morse Hardware Company Building (1023-1025 North State Street) stands in the southern portion of the city's Central Business District. The building remains as one of the few, intact multiple-story commercial buildings on an important city block along North State Street. The period of significance for the Morse Hardware Building, 1902 to 1920, encompasses the building's date of construction (1902) and period of use and rise to regional prominence as commercial retail space, offices, storage, and distribution space for the Morse Hardware Company.

The Morse Hardware Company Building draws its architectural significance from its overall well-proportioned, Classically- influenced front facade composition and its intact rear utilitarian facade. The substantial, rectangular, two-story Chuckanut sandstone and dark red brick masonry building nearly fills a 55' by 125' lot for a total footprint dimension of 115' with 55' of frontage. The back 10' of the site adjacent to the alley is open. Employing thick, un-reinforced Chuckanut sandstone and brick masonry walls, a broad two-bay storefront, upper story window openings, and a flat roof having a modest corbelled cornice and low parapet, the Morse Hardware Company Building presents an intact, character-defining example of a multiple-storied commercial building within Bellingham's Central Business District.

Substantial alterations to the building occurred in:

- **ca 1920s to 1930s:** Addition of Mezzanine level and elevator.
- **1960:** Remodel of the second floor office spaces and building interior.
- **1983:** Remodel of exterior and interior second floor.
- **1996:** Addition of seismic ties to the exterior.

Today, the Morse Hardware Company Building retains a substantial proportion of original structural, exterior building envelope fabric, interior volumes and spatial divisions, upper story windows and basic storefront bays.

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Site

The 1883 plat of the *Town of New Whatcom* orients the street grid (and consequently the buildings in this area) to Bellingham Bay. This places north/south streets approximately parallel to the bay and the Morse Hardware Company Building's facades approximately 22 degrees east of North. Industrial buildings and rail lines associated with Bellingham Bay bound the west side. The building stands on the side of a gentle slope terraced by north/south-running streets. The slope leaves the basement exposed on the northwest facade along the alley and below-grade on the front, southeast side. A sidewalk bounds the primary front, southeast facade with an alley to the building's rear, a vacant lot to the northeast and an un-reinforced single-story masonry building to the southwest. Multiple-story commercial buildings stand across North State Street. The condition of the site in 2004 is fair to good and the sidewalk is in good repair. The site retains its overall topography. In 1937, the space beneath the sidewalk was excavated to permit expansion of the basement space. The adjacent site to the northeast is vacant and enclosed with a chain-link fence.

Foundation

The foundation is not visible for inspection. To date no original or previous remodel drawings have been located to indicate below-grade footing and foundation assembly and composition type. Based on the building type and above-grade portions, spread footings likely carry the foundation walls and interior columns. Above-grade basement walls exposed on the northeast side consist of rubble sandstone. Soon after construction of the building was completed, settlement began in the west corner of the building.¹ Internal metal rod ties between the front and rear facade were employed to stabilize the building. The condition of the foundation in 2004 is fair. Demolition of the former adjacent building exposes the northeast foundation to storm water runoff and potential erosion.

Exterior Walls

Exterior walls consist of load bearing, brick masonry. Two prominent bays surmounted by a corbelled brick cornice define the front facade composition. The cornice steps out from the wall face in a series of narrow bands. The recessed upper portions of the bays contain the second story windows. The lower portion of each bay contains a matching storefront. Chuckanut sandstone clads the lower portion of the front facade. Contemporary paint covers the exterior face of the brick. Bricks are set in a soft, lime containing mortar. Morse Hardware Company signage remains on the rear facade just below the roofline. The condition of the exterior walls in 2004 is fair to poor. The exterior walls retain substantial character-defining materials and form. The sandstone blocks on the front facade exhibit severe separation from the brick backing. Mortar between the stone is extensively eroded. The rear facade exhibits extensive paint loss from the brick on either end adjacent to the downspouts. Paint finish across the front facade exhibits similar detachment from the brick. In 1928, repairs were also undertaken to the cornice.² A vertical sign was added on the front facade in the fall of 1938 and removed in October of 1979. In 1960, following the 1953 purchase of the adjacent Sweet & Company Building at 1021, the front facade was remodeled, adding the existing pressed metal cornice cap covering the original brick corbelling.³ In 1996, seismic ties were added, the masonry re-

¹ Conversation with Robert Hall and Bob Morse, 20 April, 2004.

² Building permit No. 2326.

³ *Sell 'em Low—Send and Get More: A Centennial History of the Morse Hardware Company, 1894-1984, 1st ed.* Ramon Heller, Bellingham. (1984). P. 70

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pointed and the brick re-painted.

Windows

Windows punctuate both the front and rear facades. Front facade windows consist of the original 1:1 double hung, wood sash windows. Rails on the upper sash extend beyond the bottom rail, ending in lugs (referred to as a Lamb Tongue detail). One of the window openings in the front facade's northeast bay contains a contemporary single-hung window in the lower sash. All window openings retain their original wood frames and trim. Jack arches define the openings with corbelled brick keystones above each window. A continuous rowlock brick sill runs beneath the windows in each bay.

Rear facade windows consist of two main types. All windows are set within tall, shallow arched openings. The first type consists of the original tall, twelve-pane, metal sash windows. These feature wire glass. Two of the basement level windows also retain their original metal shutters. The second type of rear facade window consists of contemporary 1:1 windows set in the openings formerly occupied by the original windows. The basement and first story levels of these windows feature horizontal metal security bars. Exterior metal straps and hinge attachments for affixing the exterior shutters and the shutters themselves remain on the rear facade. The condition of the windows in 2004 is fair. The windows retain a remarkable amount of character-defining fabric through the sash and exterior trim. Paint on the windows exhibits moderate deterioration. Insulation panels cover the windows from the interior.

Roof & Drainage

A sloped roof with built up bituminous roofing covers the building. The roof drains to the rear. Low, contemporary stepped parapets bound the southwest and southeast sides. The original stepped parapet bounds the northeast side. A sheet metal cap covers the upper portion of the parapet. A contemporary metal gutter extends along the northwest side of the roof. Contemporary metal downspouts attached to this gutter discharge to the alley. The condition of the roof and drainage in 2004 is fair to poor. The downspouts are not connected to the city storm water system. The roof maintains the basic original profile.

Entrances

In 1983, the front facade storefronts underwent substantial modifications, designed in the spirit of the original storefronts, to commemorate the centennial of the Morse Hardware Company. Each bay features a recessed, double door, wood frame entry with transom, and is flanked by large multiple masonite panels with a similar transom spanning the bay. Service entrances at the rear consist of an overhead, contemporary garage door and a contemporary personnel door. Wood casings trim both doors. The condition of the entrances in 2004 is fair. Alterations to the storefront were ongoing prior to the 1983 remodel. In 1941, the Morse Hardware Company remodeled the storefronts.⁴ Emil Selene was the contractor. A marquee was added to the front facade ca 1950s. This marquee also extended across the storefronts of the adjacent Sweet & Company (1021) and Sanitary Meat

⁴Building permit, No. 147.

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Market (1017-1019) Buildings.

Interior

The interior of the Morse Hardware Building encompasses a remarkable volume. Internal volumes separate into a full basement, first floor, first floor mezzanine, second floor and second floor mezzanine. Massive wood columns carry the floor framing for each floor. These columns continue uninterrupted from the first floor to the roof. Shorter basement level columns support the upper first through second story columns. Metal U-shaped brackets between the basement and upper columns tie the ends together. The extended ends of these brackets are bolted to the floor beams carrying the first floor framing. Substantial floor joists span the outer walls and inner beams carrying the various floors. Original joists span northeast to southwest. Later joist additions, particularly in the front portion of the first floor mezzanine, run northwest to southeast.

The main floor functioned originally as the general retail department and display area for stock. Elevated ceilings with a suspended mezzanine level at the rear and along the sides characterized this space. The company sales and bookkeeping offices were originally concentrated at the northeast end of the first floor mezzanine. The tin department occupied the front end of the mezzanine balcony. Today, the company's offices occupy the first floor mezzanine level. The first floor functions as storage. The upper levels of the building originally functioned as storage and warehouse levels. Today, these levels are vacant. The shipping department originally occupied the basement, known as the "catacombs." The basement continues to function as storage space today. The front portion beneath the sidewalk, excavated in 1937, was later partially in-filled with contemporary concrete walls. The condition of the interior spaces in 2004 is fair to good. The different flooring types and framing clearly identify the subsequent non-original in-fills. Metal collars wrap some of the columns.

Vertical Transportation

Vertical transportation within the building consists of a main, contemporary stairway off the front entrance. This half-turn stairway provides access between the first floor and first floor mezzanine. A second, narrow stairway in the north corner provides secondary access between the basement and upper levels of the building. An Otis freight elevator located on the northeast end of the building provides service between all floors. The condition of the vertical transportation elements in 2004 is fair to poor. The freight elevator was added between 1915 and 1930. The elevator was powered by 2,300 Volt direct current line that was located in the basement and that supplied electricity for the municipal street car system.

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Narrative Statement of Significance:

Built in 1902 during Bellingham's building boom (1900-1915), the Morse Hardware Company Building is located at 1023-1025 North State Street. The Morse Hardware Company Building is significant as one of Bellingham's well-preserved examples of the Multi-Storied Commercial Building property type as set forth in the requirements of the *Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882-1915, Multiple Property Listing* (MPD). The Morse Hardware Company Building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, as the headquarters of one of the oldest, continually operating, mercantile businesses in Bellingham and Whatcom County and as a representative property from a period of vigorous commercial development in Bellingham's Central Business District (CBD) at the beginning of the 20th Century. The Morse Hardware Company Building is also eligible under Criterion C, for its distinctive architectural character as an intact, turn-of-the-century multi-storied commercial building. The Morse Hardware Company Building retains substantial intact, original exterior fabric and character-defining location, setting, site, orientation, exterior design elements, interior spatial divisions, layout and relationships, structural framing, function and materials.

Relation to Thematic Nomination

The following broad discussion of contextual and stylistic development associated with Bellingham's Central Business District, of which the Morse Hardware Company Building plays an integral, contributing role, is provided from the following:

"Consolidation and Growth, 1900-1915," and "[Central Business District] CBD Commercial Architecture, 1900-1915," within the *Multiple Property Listing of Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882-1915*, prepared by Kathryn Franks, Development/Historic Preservation Specialist, Planning and Community Development Department, City of Bellingham.

Historic Context: Consolidation and Growth, 1900 - 1915

By 1900, the nation-wide Depression had ended, East Coast capital was once more invested in local industries, and resources from the region were in demand throughout the United States.¹ As a result, during the first decade of the 20th century, the bay shore towns of New Whatcom and Fairhaven experienced a period of unprecedented growth.

¹ "Bellingham," n.p.

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The county population in 1900 was recorded at 25,000, according to the Polk City Directory, which also boasted that Fairhaven had the world's largest shingle mill, the Puget Sound Saw Mill and Shingle Company, and the world's largest salmon cannery, the Pacific American Fisheries. New Whatcom was home to the Bellingham Bay Improvement Company's expansive sawmill operations. Industries in the Whatcom County area were also prospering—in 1900 there were 55 shingle mills, 17 saw mills, 10 salmon canneries, three fertilizer and fish oil factories and the only sheet metal or can factory in Washington. Fairhaven and New Whatcom were connected by miles of trolley system, and the State Normal School on Sehome Hill was experiencing the largest enrollment of any normal school in the state.

Duplication of basic services and competition over limited capital finally moved citizens of New Whatcom and Fairhaven to vote for consolidation in 1903. To satisfy both parties of the new "City of the First Class"—the fourth largest city in the state at the time—the neutral name of "Bellingham," after the bay, was chosen. By 1904, when consolidated Bellingham's new charter was adopted, its population had reached 22,632, providing for substantially increased investment in the [Central Business District] CBD.²

The city of Bellingham continued to experience astronomical growth over the next few years. According to the 1906 Bellingham City Directory, the 1890 census had recorded the population of the four bay shore towns at 8,135; by 1900 population had grown to 11,062 (a 36% increase from 1890); in 1904 growth had surged to 22,632 (a 104% increase within four years); and by 1906 the population was 31,000, a 37% increase since 1904 and a total increase of 180% since 1900.³

During the first part of the 20th century, the commercial activity in the city's CBD revolved around the waterfront activity based in the original town of Sehome - Dock Street (renamed Cornwall Avenue) area, and the railroad-related passenger and freight movement along Railroad Avenue. Industrial and commercial development along the waterfront had been hastened by the completion of the Bellingham Bay & British Columbia (BB&BC) in 1891, and railroad expansion had continued since this time, with lines completed through town and connecting to outlying areas. The Fairhaven and Southern, later absorbed into the Great Northern, had run its track on a long trestle across the tide flats between Squalicum Creek and Sehome Wharf. In 1902, the Great Northern built its present line on a trestle (paralleling the earlier one) along Roeder Avenue, across Whatcom Creek, and along the shore to Fairhaven. The Bellingham Bay & Eastern (BB&E) was purchased by Northern Pacific in 1902, thereby completing its line through the town. The third line, the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul, picked up the BB&BC, and joined the other two to create a major rail corridor along the shoreline from the southernmost end of the city all the way to the northern end and beyond.⁴

² *At Home on the Hill*, p. 9.

³ Carhart, Edith Beebe. *A Historic of Bellingham, Washington*. (1926, 1968). Compiled from Newspaper Articles City Directories and Books of local History by The Bellingham Public Libraries. Bellingham: Argonaut Press, p. 6.

⁴ Woodbridge, Sally B. and Roger Montgomery. *A Guide to Architecture in Washington State: An Environmental Perspective*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, p. 322.

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The consolidation of the Bellingham streetcar lines during the 1893 depression had also contributed to the commercial growth of the area, and acquisition of the Fairhaven and New Whatcom Railway in 1902 by a Boston-based firm greatly facilitated their expansion. The newly renamed Whatcom County Railway & Light Company (WCR&L) -- the direct ancestor of today's Puget Power Company -- expanded Bellingham's street railway system to its maximum length of almost 14 miles by 1913.⁵

The construction of infrastructure, services, and transportation systems facilitated the growth of businesses in the CBD area. In 1906, the WCR&L invested in major expansions to its existing lines and constructed new ones all over town. The Main Line, which had connected Fairhaven with New Whatcom between Harris and Eldridge Avenues, passed along Elk Street. For sheer accessibility, proximity to a streetcar line created a prime business location and commercial development followed.⁶ Major investment was made along the streetcar arterials of Holly Street, Elk Street, and Cornwall Avenue. Other streets within the heart of Bellingham's commercial center also profited and grew through their proximity to the public transportation lines.

By 1906, Whatcom County had 162 miles of rail and a good road system within its borders, and major investment was being made in the CBD as theaters, hotels, restaurants, specialty shops, and the like were constructed -- many in the height of style and sparing no expense.⁷ According to the *Whatcom County Souvenir* circa 1906, Bellingham was home to people of culture and refinement and had in its midst "thirty-eight churches, two public libraries, 52 secret society lodges, two men's social clubs owning the finest specially constructed club houses in the state, two public hospitals, a fair grounds, a race track and a baseball park, a \$30,000 Y.M.C.A. building, a yacht club and club house, a \$50,000 city hall, a \$200,000 sewer system, a well-equipped fire department, a \$300,000 city water system, and numerous associations, splendid public and office buildings and residences."⁸

⁵ Scott and Turbeville, III. *Whatcom County in Maps: 1832-1937*, p. 46.

⁶ Jewell, Jeffrey. "Early Trolley Service Right on Track." *The Bellingham Business Journal*. (December 1998), pp. 64-65.

⁷ *Whatcom County Souvenir: the Land of Opportunity, Bellingham, Washington*. (ca 1906). Bellingham: Parker Printing Company, p. 10.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 1.

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Downtown businesses listed in the 1906 *Whatcom Souvenir* spanned a broad range of specialized services reflecting the affluent life styles and related accoutrements available to Bellingham citizens and visitors. Those commercial enterprises listed included business offices housing banks, brokerage firms, real estate brokers, investment counselors, insurance companies and other professionals such as dentists, doctors and lawyers; recreation related enterprises such as theaters, cafes, bars, liquor stores, saloons, restaurants, and hotels; meat and produce businesses, groceries, city markets, bakeries, candy companies, and catering businesses; men's and women's clothing stores, tailors, jewelry stores, shoemakers, emporiums and department stores; furniture, home furnishings, paint and wall paper companies; plumbing, hardware, and implement supply companies; artist's studios; laundries; pharmacies; and transportation-related businesses such as harness companies, livery and feed stables, hay and feed stores, blacksmiths and horseshoeing, as well as auto garages.⁹ Many of the buildings housing these businesses were multi-storied, with upper floors rented as professional offices, as housing in the form of high-end or single room occupancy hotels and rooming houses, as well as meeting and/or dance halls. Although some businesses were still housed in early frame buildings, many existed in increasingly specialized, distinctive buildings of style and substance.

By 1909, rail activity had become so congested in the CBD that Magnolia Street was double-tracked between Dock and Elk Streets to reroute some of the streetcar traffic off Holly Street. During this same year the WCR&L made another major investment and constructed over 50 blocks of new trolley lines to reach the city's outlying areas, providing access to the central business core from the new "streetcar suburbs" that grew along their lines. During that same year, tracks were laid south down the long pier to Sehome Wharf and the enormous Bellingham Bay Lumber Company mill. Although it was the shortest streetcar route, the "Dock Line" was a vital link between the waterfront and downtown, as it allowed trolleys to meet the "mosquito fleet" of Puget Sound passenger steamers, and to deliver mill employees to and from work.¹⁰

Bellingham's importance as a major railroad center for northwestern Washington prompted many wholesale firms to locate there early in the 20th century. Because of its direct proximity to the rail, Railroad Avenue became an ideal location for retail and wholesale businesses. For example, in 1909, the Northern Grocery Company, one of the largest of its kind in the area, constructed a two-story reinforced concrete building as the company headquarters on Railroad Avenue near the corner of Chestnut Street. This was a prime location as the BB&BC tracks ran past the front of the building and the Northern Pacific spur ran behind the building down the alley.¹¹

⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 10-15.

¹⁰ Jewell, Jeffrey. "Early Trolley Service Right on Track," pp. 64-65.

¹¹ Turbeville, Daniel E. III. (November 1977). *An Illustrated Inventory of Historic Bellingham Buildings, 1852-1915*. Bellingham: Bellingham Municipal Arts Commission, p. 222.

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The considerable growth that occurred between 1900 and 1915 in Bellingham's CBD is evidenced by the substantial commercial and public buildings that still exist today. By the time World War I began in 1914, several physical elements endorsed the arrival of Bellingham's downtown as an urban center, including a major railroad terminal, federal building, and streetcar system. Prior to August 1914, the local economy had been rapidly expanding in anticipation of the opening of the long-awaited Panama Canal, which would drastically decrease shipping time to markets on the East and Gulf Coasts. This expansion continued until around 1915, when the first signs of World War I became evident in Whatcom County and resulted in the overnight disappearance of investment capital and the subsequent collapse of many projected railroad, shipping, industrial and building schemes. By 1915, ocean shipping was becoming scarce, as was railroad rolling stock. It was not until the United States finally entered the war in April of 1917 that the sudden increase in demand for Northwest raw materials, together with a number of major government construction contracts, led to a turn-around in Whatcom County's economy.¹²

[Central Business District] CBD Commercial Architecture, 1900-1915

With transportation systems connecting the new city with outlying and national commerce, Bellingham's development grew in the familiar pattern of many late-19th and early 20th century American cities, where commerce, social interaction, government, and capital investment gravitated to a central downtown. Fortified by the forces of the railroad and streetcar, during the first years of the 20th century Bellingham's economy was strong and its main streets had become a densely packed intermingling of buildings, buggies, trolleys and people.

The character of the main streets in the CBD evolved and solidified during this period. The landscape of Bellingham's CBD, which had originally consisted of a mass of sandstone hills (some over one and one-half stories high) was being leveled at an increasing rate to make way for new construction. Existing one and two-story frame buildings were being demolished and replaced by substantial, multi-storied high-style buildings designed to house increasingly specific commercial enterprises.

A transformation in commercial architecture in the United States was occurring by the end of the 19th century. Design was moving away from the ornate, agitated Victorian styles as a result of the influence of the French academic practice fostered by the École des Beaux Arts in Paris and newly created American architecture schools. This tendency emerged during the 1880s and early 1890s, and became dominant from the turn of the century until the late 1920s.¹³

¹² Scott and Turbeville, III. *Whatcom County in Maps: 1832-1937*, p. 61.

¹³ Longstreth, p. 35.

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While Victorian buildings were characterized by additive compositions, the new academic work tended to emphasize unity, order and balance. These qualities reflected the basis for principles of design which applied not only to individual buildings but also to groups of buildings. Based on this premise, it was thought that commercial buildings should contribute to a coherent urban landscape, and that while each facade might possess its own identity and perhaps stand out as a landmark, most building design should be restrained and relatively unobtrusive. These basic changes did not occur all at once -- a number of buildings constructed between the late 1880s and the early 1900s were transitional and possessed some of the qualities of High Victorian design. Generally, however, ornament was more restrained and elements were more closely related to one another.¹⁴

A preponderance of buildings dating to the 1900-1915 boom period of Bellingham's history remains in the CBD. Multistoried commercial buildings were increasingly being constructed in sandstone, brick, and reinforced concrete. Single-story masonry buildings were also being built, although most were multi-storied, constructed to take advantage of the rising cost of land in the CBD.

The area where the two original towns of Whatcom and Sehome met was undergoing development during this time. To the east of the iron bolt marker, Holly Street intersected the core of Sehome's commercial activity, crossing Champion, Bay, and Prospect Streets, up to Canoe (Commercial), Dock (Cornwall), Railroad Avenue and Elk Streets, all of which were being developed with single- and multi-storied masonry buildings constructed in period fashion. A few of the many remaining buildings in this area that retain high integrity include the two-story brick Holly-Bay-Prospect Building, built in 1912 at 1302-1304 Bay Street/2-8 Prospect Street; the two-story brick Red Front Building, built in 1900 at 200 W. Holly Street; the two-story brick Clover Block, built in 1902 at 201 W. Holly Street; the single-story brick "Leader" Building, constructed in 1901 at 204 W. Holly Street; and the two-story Spokane Block, built in 1902 at 1322 - 1334 Railroad Avenue.

On Elk Street (currently [North] State Street) at the eastern edge of the CBD, businesses were expanding and frame structures were being replaced with high-style masonry buildings that housed commercial services such as groceries, liverys, professional offices, and general merchandisers. Typically, buildings along Elk Street were multi-storied and offered residential rooms, dance and meeting halls, and professional offices on their upper floors. Multi-storied examples that retain good integrity include (but are not limited to) the Morse Hardware Building, built in 1902 at 1025 North State Street; the three-story Laube Hotel, built in 1903 at 1226 North State Street; the three-story Windsor Hotel, built in 1904 at 1222 North State Street; the two-story Daylight Building, built in 1904 at 1201 - 1213 North State Street; and the three-story Dahlquist Building, built in 1906. Other extant examples on State Street that retain high integrity include the two-story brick Maple Block built in 1903 at 1051-1055 N. State Street and the three-story Exchange Building (currently the YMCA) built in 1906-1907 at 1256 North State Street.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

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Development in the area west of the iron bolt—the original business district of Whatcom—had been somewhat thwarted due to land claim disputes. By the 1900s, Whatcom had acquired the sobriquet of "Old Town," and over the next two decades would continue to support commercial development of a nature different than that of the Sehome district. Examination of the Polk City Directories for the first decade of the century suggests that this area was relatively prosperous and economically viable. For example, in 1907, roughly 20% of the restaurants in the Bellingham area, 20% of the saloons, 25% of the clothing stores, 30% of the barbers, and 30% of the cigar stores existed along W. Holly Street near the creek. However, the area had practically none of the professional offices of lawyers, insurance agents, physicians, or notaries.¹⁵ Several buildings built between 1900 and 1915 in this area remain and hold varying degrees of integrity. The two-story brick U.S. Hotel built c. 1911 at 700 W. Holly Street is a good masonry example. Other examples with varying degrees of integrity include the two-story frame building (formerly Wilson College) built in 1905 at 401 Holly Street and the one-story frame "Waterfront Tavern" built on piers in 1904 at 521 Holly Street. Although this building's original facade has been somewhat compromised by the addition of modern materials, its general commercial street level configuration remains legible, as do the parapet articulation and small-scale features.

Morse Hardware Company Building (1023-1025 North State Street)

The history of the Morse Hardware Company parallels the history of settlement in Puget Sound and Alaska. In the firm's records is a detailed checklist of the manufactured goods used to build the towns and cities of the Pacific Northwest. From a very modest beginning as a frontier hardware store, the Morse Hardware Company grew at an astonishing pace and by 1889, had grown into the largest regional wholesale supplier of hardware, selling everything from nails and glass to firearms and dynamite.

Company founder Robert I. Morse began his hardware business in the spring of 1884 with a shipload of tools, paint, oils, wallpaper, and stationery shipped from San Francisco. Morse located and ran his pioneer enterprise out of a 27' by 65' two-story frame building on Elk (changed to State in 1926) Street in the town of Whatcom.

Over the next few years, the firm built or purchased three additional buildings along Elk Street, and by 1896, ran a dock and chandlery on the waterfront. Robert I. Morse's Queen Anne Style residence was built in 1895 at 1014 North Garden Street, just up Sehome Hill from the Morse Hardware Company with a commanding view of the company's operations. The following years brought still greater expansion as the Morse Hardware Company became a major supplier of coastal native trade goods, a primary provisioner of the Klondike Gold Rush, and the single largest hardware dealer for the Puget Sound and Alaska salmon canning industry. The business was incorporated in 1897, and by 1902, its major headquarters building at 1023-1025 North State Street was completed immediately south of the company's other structures.

¹⁵ Vandermeer, p. 109.

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The new building had been planned several years prior, and plans were put on hold until economic conditions improved. The 1902 building provided a substantial, more permanent masonry building that centralized retail, offices, storage and shipping under one roof. That same year, the Morse Hardware Company also added a warehouse directly behind the new building, thus further reinforcing the building's role as headquarters for their entire operation.¹⁶ The company operated from this location and adjacent additions for the next century.

In 1903, the towns of Whatcom and Fairhaven were consolidated into Bellingham, and the Morse Hardware Company found itself in the unusual situation of having done business in four different towns (Whatcom, Sehome, New Whatcom, and Bellingham) without ever moving from its original location. Such were the vicissitudes of municipal jurisdictions during that period.

By 1907, the Morse Hardware Company was doing \$400,000 in annual business. The company held one of the largest stocks of wholesale and retail goods in the Pacific Northwest. Each year of business profits exceeded the previous year's.¹⁷ The store soon became a center for supplies for miners, canneries, the local Portland Cement factory, loggers and lumbermen throughout the northwest.

By the time of Robert I. Morse's death in 1920, the company's Alaska business made up a considerable portion of its trade and the operation adapted to the specialized problems of supplying remote canneries and bush retailers. Their experience with supplying frontier hardware necessities served them well in the Alaskan markets where hand tools such as axes, basic building materials, rifles, traps, and simple machinery stayed in demand well after becoming obsolete or unprofitable in Pacific Northwest outlets. During the growth and development of Bellingham in the 1920s, the company supplied and installed the glass for the prominent Montague-McHugh Department Store.

After the Depression, with the company still headed by Robert's son, Cecil, the Morse Hardware Company developed a new market in the wartime shipbuilding industry on Puget Sound. The company provided high priority service for wartime shipbuilding and outfitting industries. Throughout this period, the company also strove to maintain fair treatment for local retailers whose needs were typically viewed by both the government and suppliers such as Morse Hardware as of secondary priority relative to wartime needs. This often meant orders for local retailers would not be filled, placing a hardship on local retailers who would then have nothing to sell to earn a living. The Morse Hardware Company worked hard to supply not only the wartime industries but also the local retailers.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Sell 'em Low—Send and Get More: A Centennial History of Morse Hardware Company, 1894-1984, 1st ed.* Ramon Heller, Bellingham. (1984). p. 49.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 44.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 61.

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During the post World War II construction boom, the company acquired the adjacent Sweet & Company Building at 1021 North State Street, as well as the Maple Block at the north end of the block. The company expanded their operations into these two buildings and later purchased the Sanitary Meat Market Building at 1015-1019 North State Street. The company supplied voluminous quantities of bronze and stainless steel fasteners as well as hardware for forty non-magnetic mine sweepers built in the Bellingham shipyards during the Korean War. Joyce Morse was honored by being named as a sponsor of Minesweeper No. MSC272 launched on April 5, 1958. During this period, the company also began their lucrative work supplying parts and equipment for construction and operation of the Mobile Refinery, leading to subsequent high volume contracts with other refineries in the region.

By the 1960's, the retail business slipped away, but the firm, now in the hands of younger son David Morse, continued to build its wholesale trade in Washington and Alaska while developing as a supplier of steel for construction and industry. In its continuing operation in Alaska, Morse Hardware's wholesale business became deeply involved in the pipeline construction during the 1970's and emerged as the largest hardware wholesaler in Western Washington.

The Morse Hardware Company today is operated from the same building which Robert I. Morse established on Elk (now State) Street in 1902, although the firm is now run by his grandson and third generation president, Robert I. "Bob" Morse. The Morse Hardware Company Building maintains an important contiguous relationship with the adjacent Sweet & Company Building (1021 North State Street) and the Sanitary Meat Market Building (1015-1019 North State Street). Fires and demolition to further development and parking exacted a heavy toll on commercial building fabric along North State Street.

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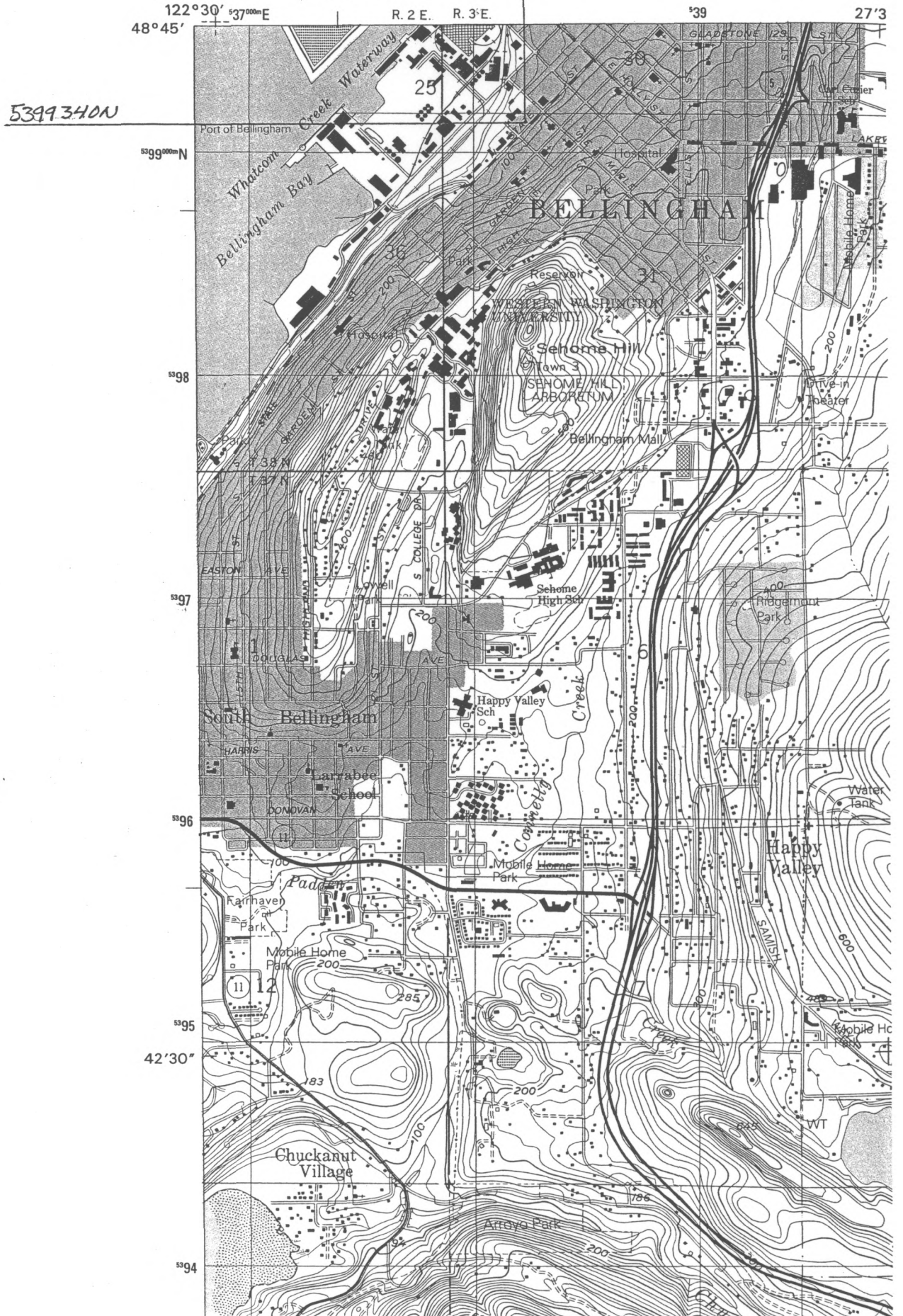
MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING, 1023-1025 NORTH STATE STREET

538138E

WHATCOM COUNTY
BELLINGHAM
WASHINGTON



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



Ord. # 5519 and file # 1238120 11/23-76 Beginning Wabby Corner lot 8 Bl 87 - thence S. 45° E 145 ft. to NW corner lot 9 Bl 87 thence S 45° W 80° to corner lot 1 Bl 86, thence N 45° E 80 ft. to pt. of beginning

Ordinance

C/BP Lb 1411 BK 48 920206071 V.234 P.636
 C/BP Lb 14 BK 78 920302017 V.238 P.476
 C/BP Lb 14 BK 74, Lb 14 B 16 920310022 V.240 P.1900
 C/BP Lb 2-7 BK 18 + 920602030 V.251 P.1053

MAP OF THE TOWN OF NEW WHATCOM

WHATCOM CO. WASH. TERR. 1883

Variation 22 deg. 45 min East.
 SCALE 400 FEET TO ONE INCH.

E.C. Prather Engrs. J.A. Lefevre Des.

No location of the location of Main Avenue from the intersection of the east line of Main with the N city block of Main Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad northward to central ave. at an angle of 37° of block.

For location of N² of Alley in Block Bounded by High, Oak, Garden + Pine see ordinance file #1011354 filed 5/4/66

For location of 25' on each side of Laurel St. between Garden + High St. see Ordinance file #1015567 Oct. 14, 1866

For location of 4' on E. Pine between High + Garden Sts. see file #1015771- 10/19/66

For Vacat. on Repealing Ordinance 281 see Ord # 8154 AF 4/170827 9/6/74

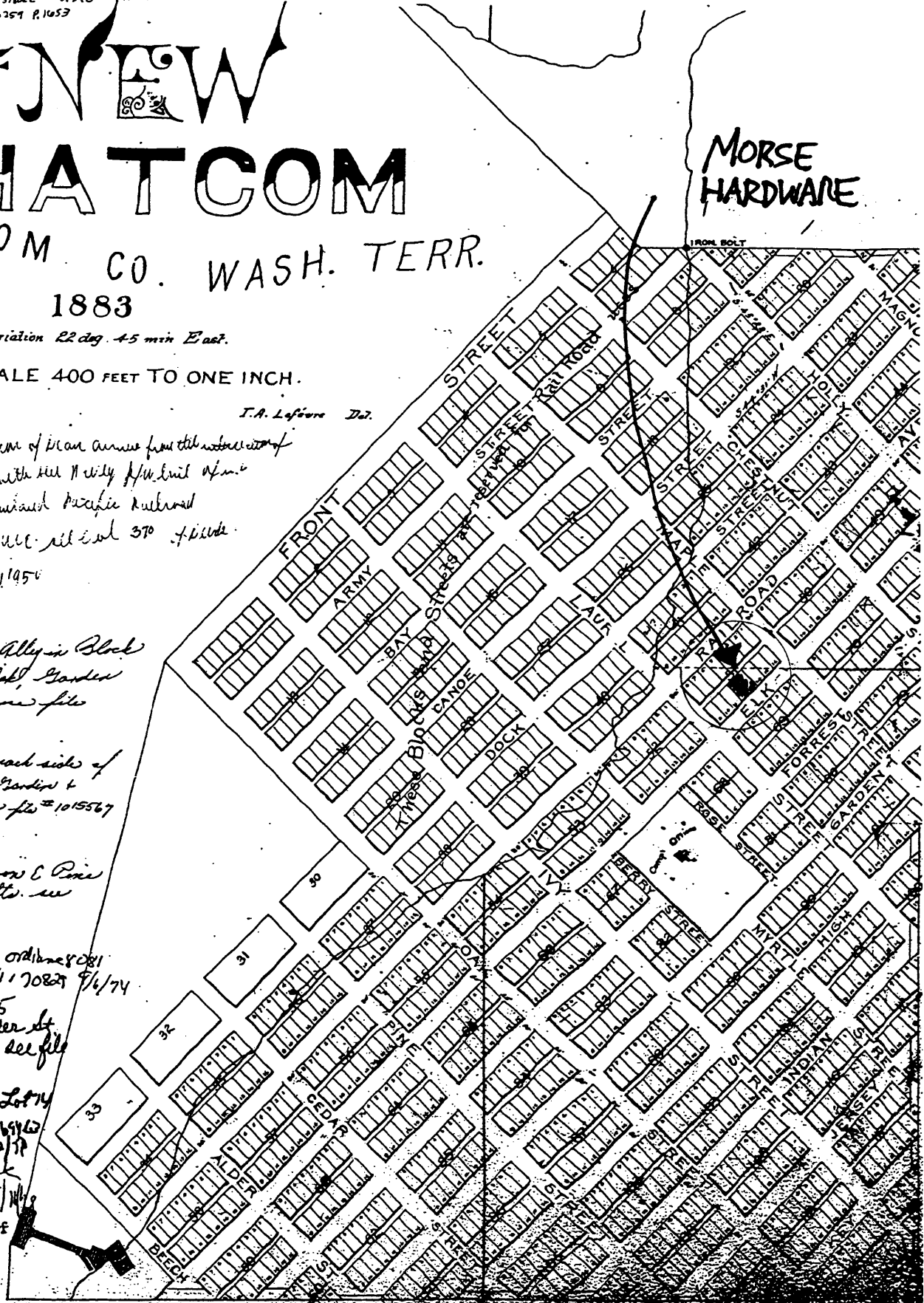
Ordinance # 8448 Filed 11-24-75 vacating portion of Alder St. front to lot 8 block 57 see file #1202581

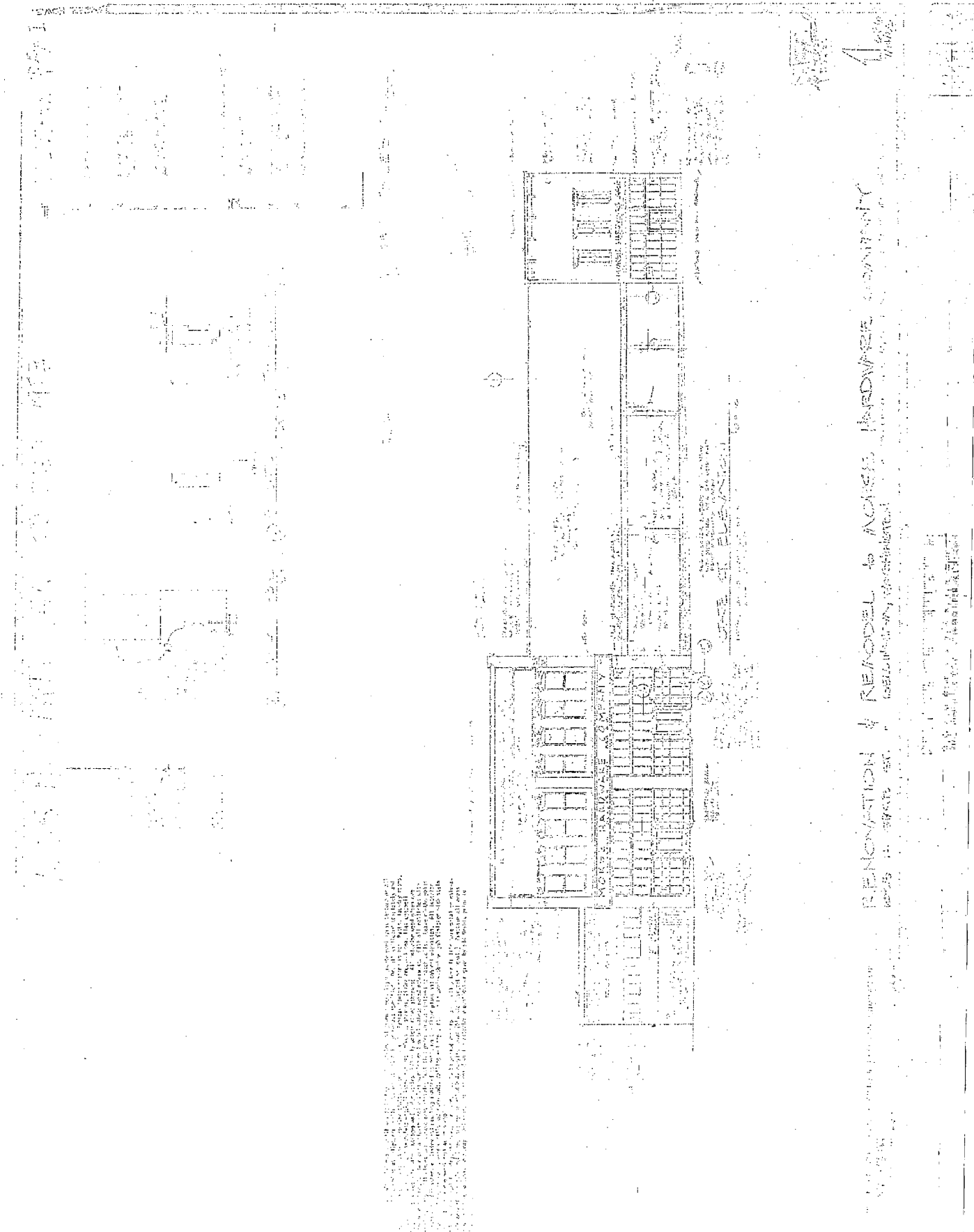
Vacat. of Alley on Block 138 Lot 14 see Ord # 8604 file # 1204960 11/21/77

Ordinance 7510 Vacating E Oak T Lot 16 Block 63 see Vol 421 Page 271 8/11/77

Coal Wharf Lb 14-16 BK 58 #911221023 V. 228 P. 1011
 Lb 9-10 Bl 297 20 21177 V. 228 P. 1011
 Vol 222 P. 1499

MORSE HARDWARE



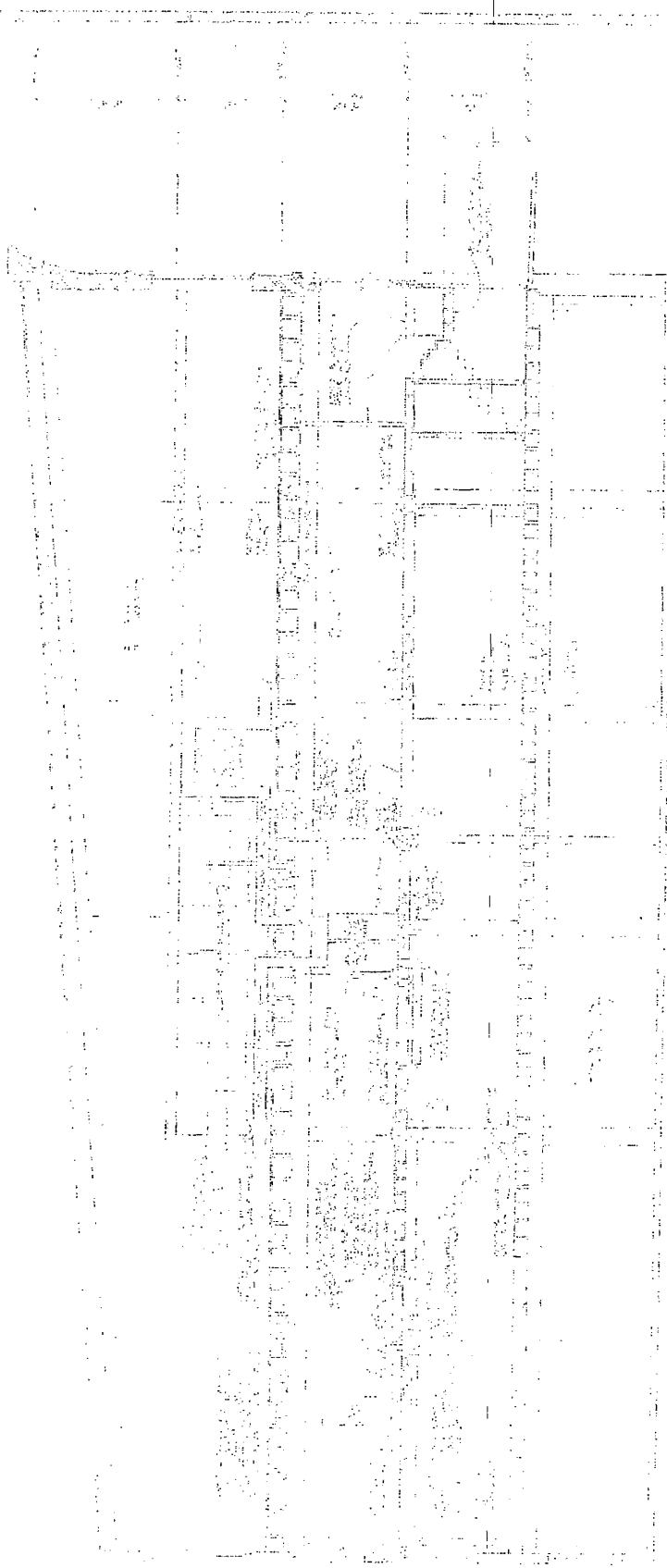


DRAWING No. 1—1983 STREET FRONT ELEVATION DRAWING OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING AND ADJACENT BUILDINGS. SOURCE: BUILDING SERVICES DEPARTMENT, CITY OF BELLINGHAM.

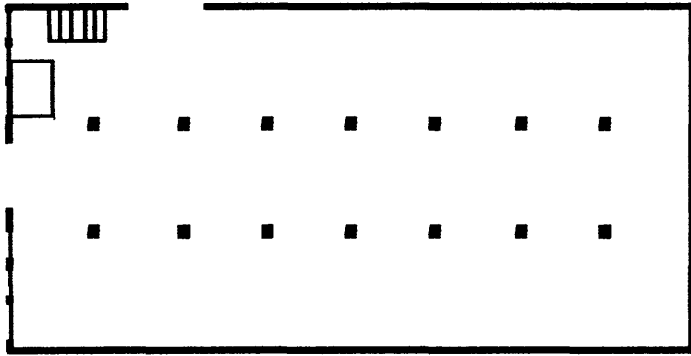
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MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING, 1023-1025 NORTH STATE STREET, BELLINGHAM, WA 98225

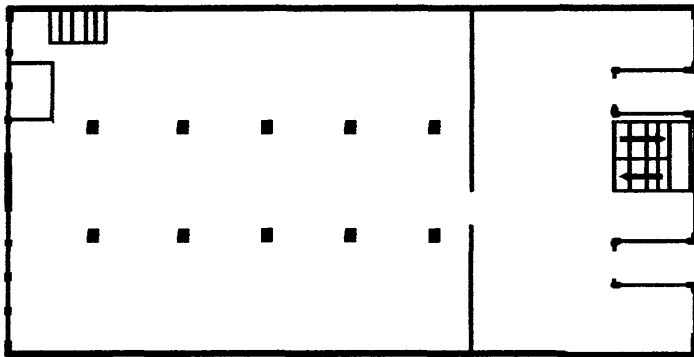
DRAWINGS



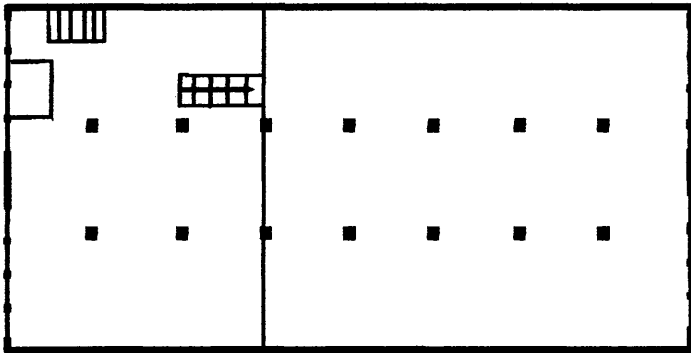
DRAWING NO. 2—1983 SECTION DRAWING OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING. SOURCE: BUILDING SERVICES DEPARTMENT, CITY OF BELLINGHAM.



BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN SKETCH NOT TO SCALE

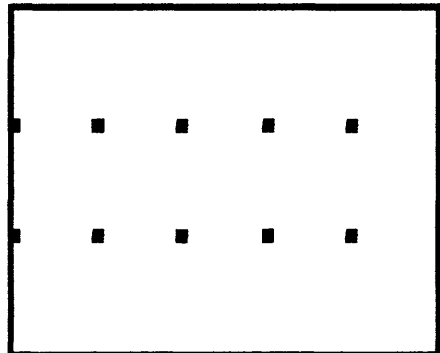


FIRST FLOOR PLAN SKETCH NOT TO SCALE



SECOND FLOOR PLAN SKETCH NOT TO SCALE

MEZZANINE LEVEL
SKETCH
NOT TO SCALE



ALLEY

NORTH
STATE
STREET



NORTH

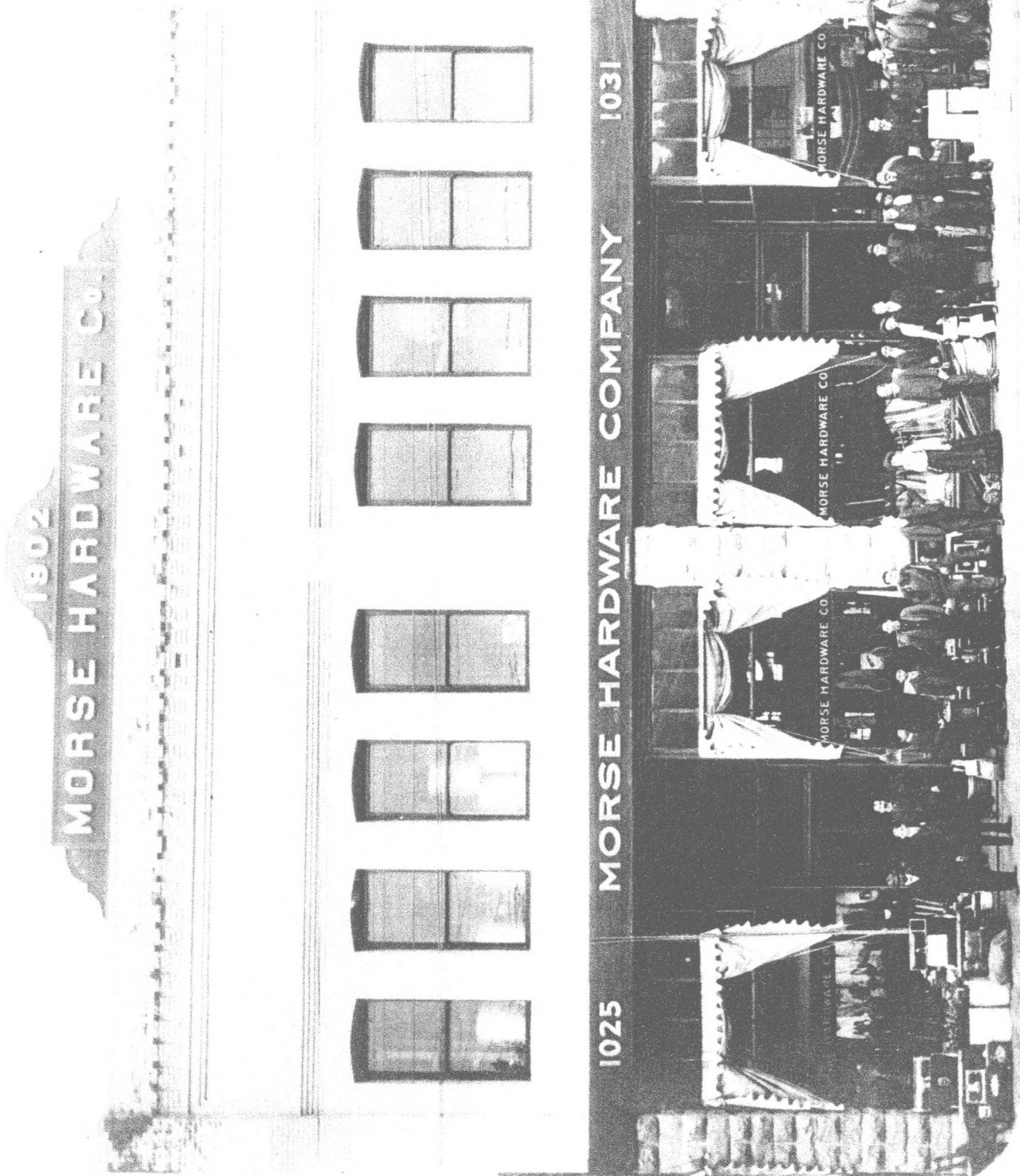


PHOTO No. 1—Ca 1905 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING'S FRONT FACADE ALONG NORTH STATE STREET. SOURCE: WHATCOM MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND ART, BELLINGHAM, WA, No. 7266.



PHOTO No. 2—CA 1909 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING'S SOUTHWEST SIDE FACADE ABOVE THE ADJACENT SINGLE STORY BUILDINGS. SOURCE: GALEN BIERY COLLECTION, WHATCOM MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND ART, BELLINGHAM, WA, No. 1996.10.274.

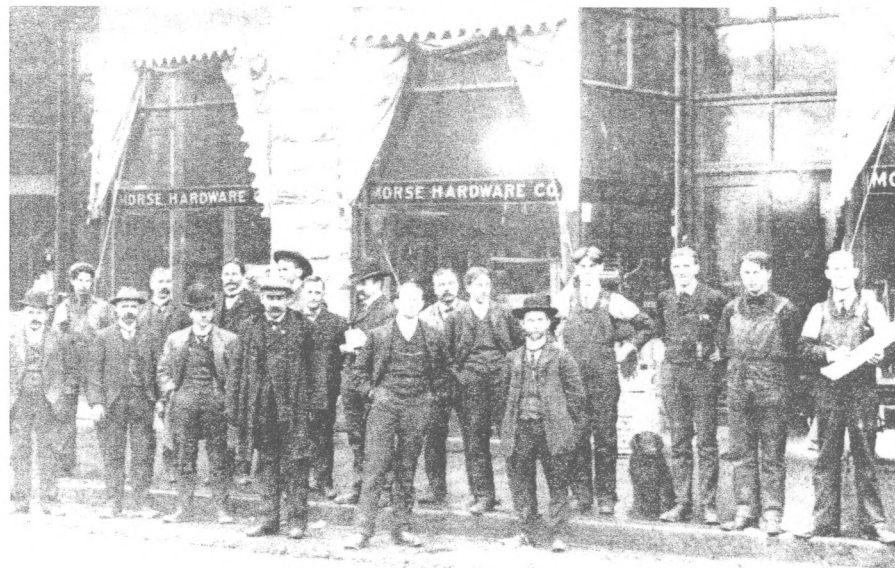


PHOTO No. 3—CA 1905 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING'S SOUTHEAST SIDE FACADE. SOURCE: WHATCOM MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND ART, BELLINGHAM, WA, No. 7266.

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HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS

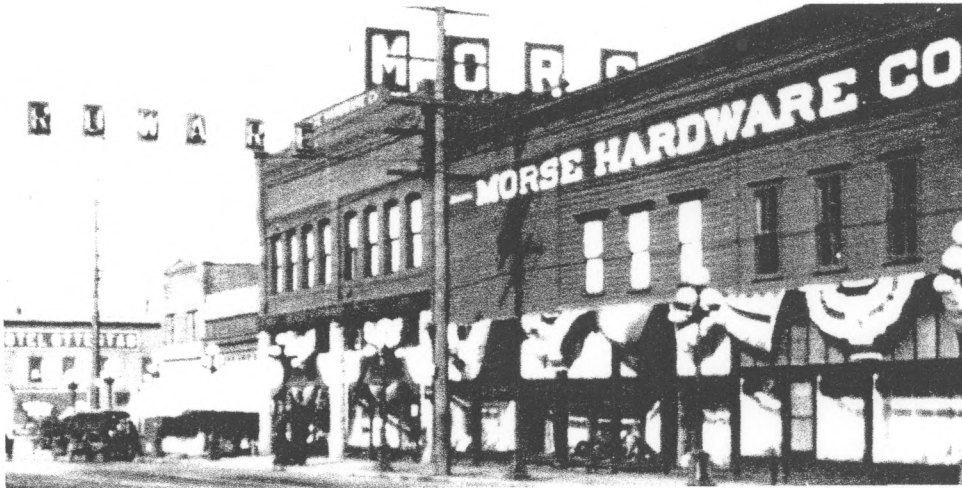


PHOTO No. 4—MAY 1924 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING DECORATED FOR THE TULIP FESTIVAL. SOURCE: SELL'EM LOW—SEND AND GET MORE: A CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY, 1884-1984: 53.



PHOTO No. 5—CA 1909 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING'S SOUTHEAST FRONT FACADE. SOURCE: SANDISON COLLECTION, WHATCOM MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND ART, BELLINGHAM, WA, No. 188.

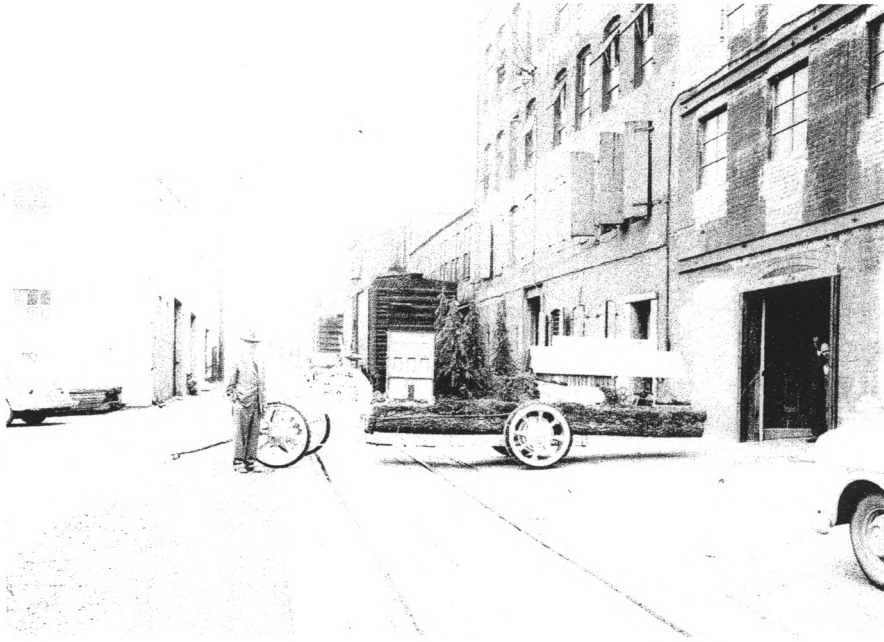


PHOTO No. 6—1953 PHOTOGRAPH OF CECIL MORSE STANDING NEXT TO A HARD RUBBER TIRE CART USED BY THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY FOR GLASS DELIVERY. THE CART IS DECORATED FOR THE BLOSSOMTIME FESTIVAL PARADE. SOURCE: SELL'EM LOW—SEND AND GET MORE: A CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY, 1884-1984: 62.

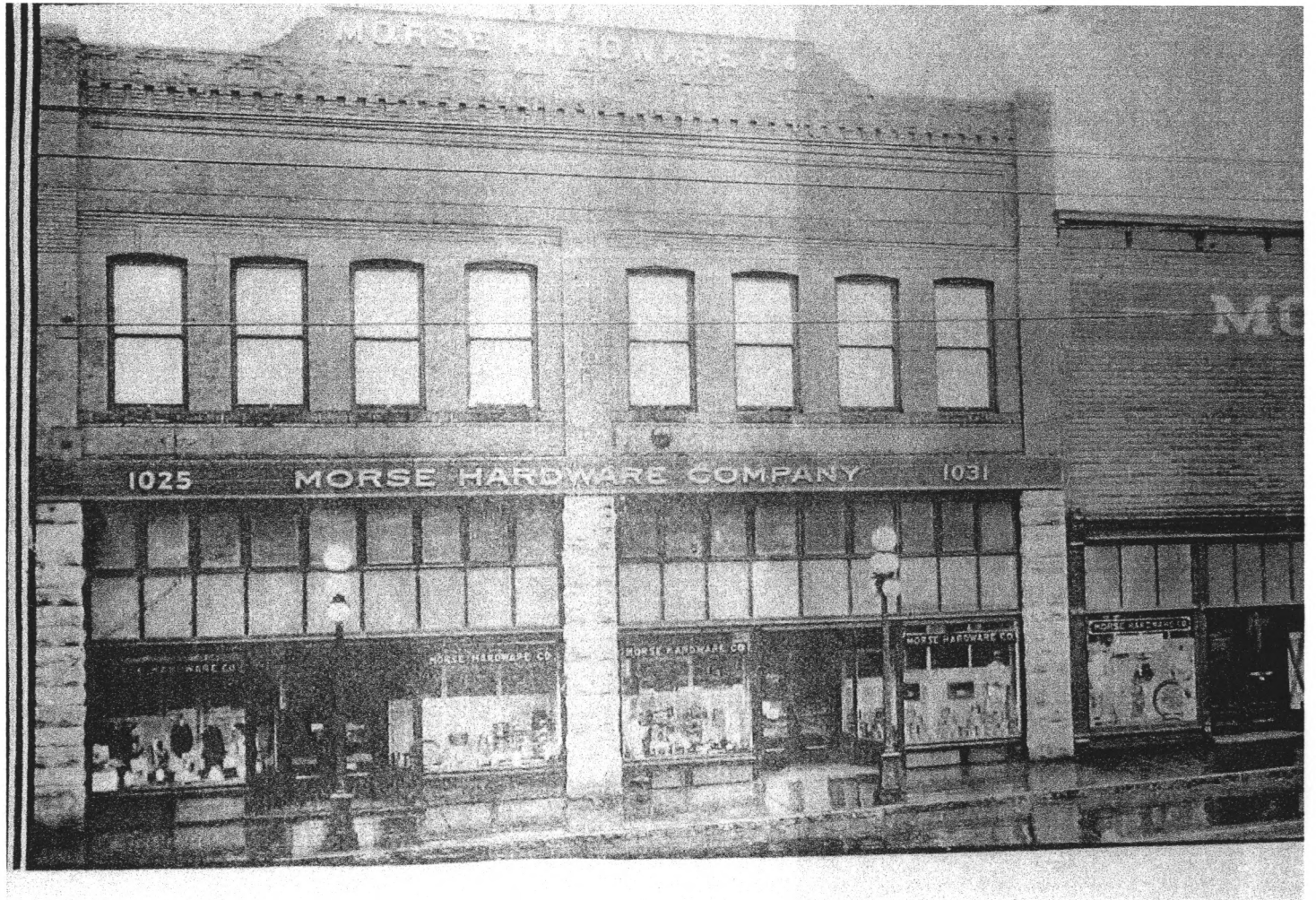


PHOTO No. 7—CA 1926 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING. SOURCE: GORDON TWEIT.



PHOTO No. 8—EARLY 1900S INTERIOR VIEW OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING'S FIRST FLOOR RETAIL AREA. SOURCE: SELL'EM LOW—SEND AND GET MORE: A CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY, 1884-1984: 42.



PHOTO No. 9—EARLY 1900S INTERIOR VIEW OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING'S FIRST FLOOR RETAIL AREA. SOURCE: SELL'EM LOW—SEND AND GET MORE: A CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY, 1884-1984: 43.



PHOTO No. 10—EARLY 1900S INTERIOR VIEW OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING'S BOOKKEEPING OFFICE. SOURCE: SELL'EM LOW—SEND AND GET MORE: A CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY, 1884-1984: 40.

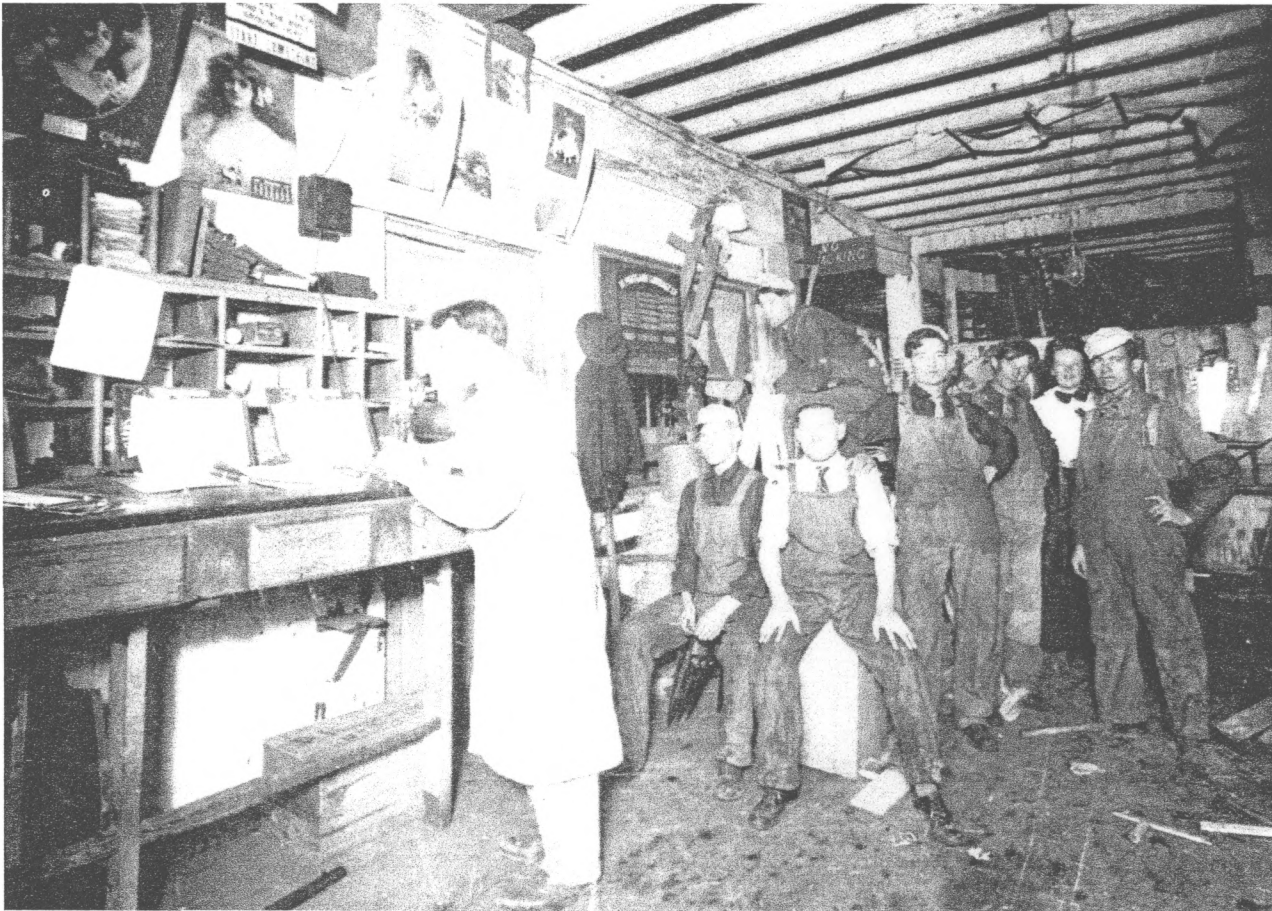


PHOTO No. 11—1912 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY'S SHIPPING DEPARTMENT LOCATED IN THE BASEMENT. SOURCE: SELL'EM LOW—SEND AND GET MORE: A CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY, 1884-1984: 51.



PHOTO No. 12—1920s PHOTOGRAPH OF PURCHASING AGENT ADOLPH L. RANK AND OTHER PURCHASING DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL IN THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING. SOURCE: SELL'EM LOW—SEND AND GET MORE: A CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY, 1884-1984: 57.

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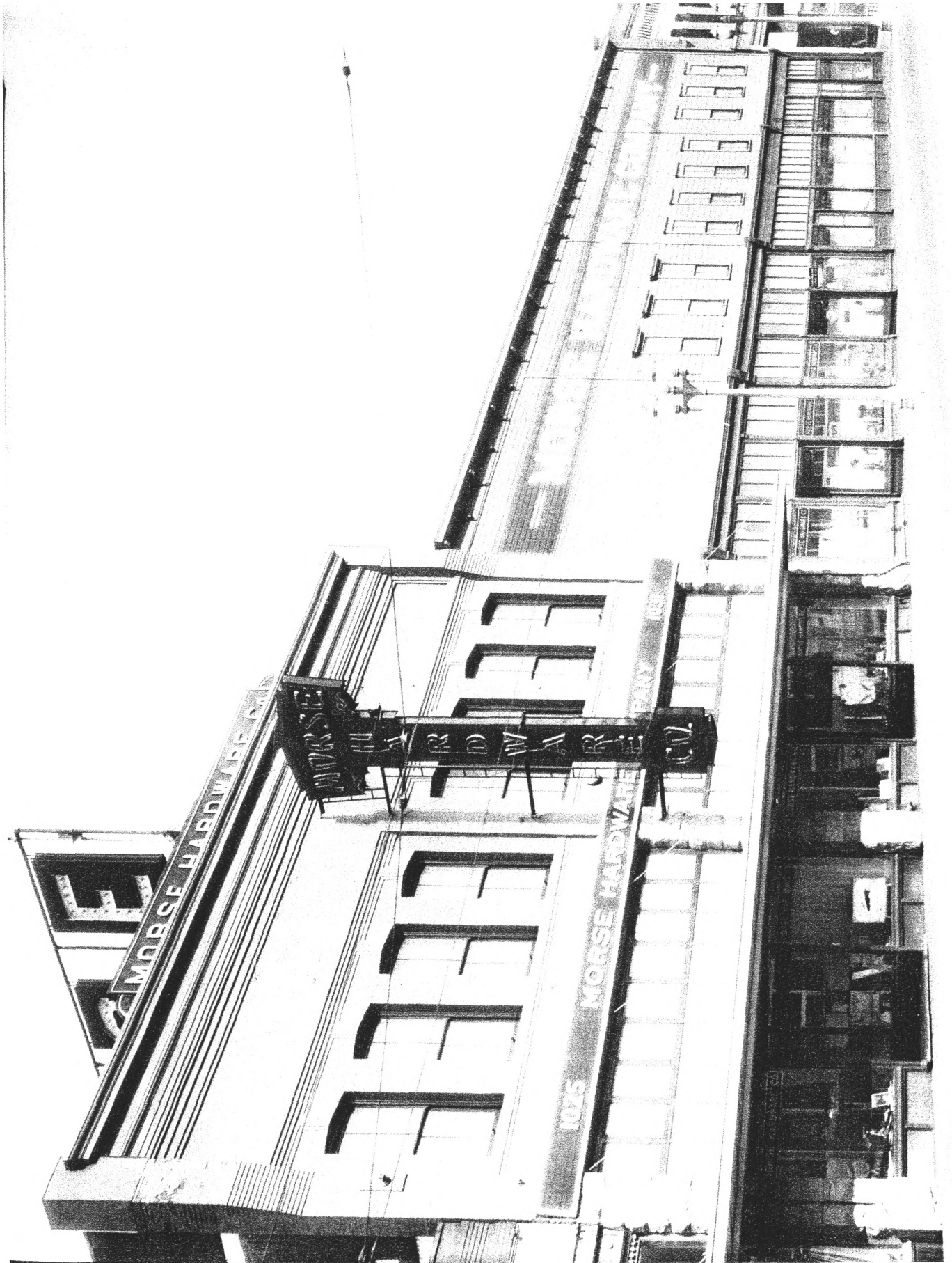


PHOTO No. 13—Ca 1960s VIEW OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING. SOURCE: J. W. SANDISON COLLECTION, WHATCOM MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND ART, BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON, No. 5756.

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PHOTO NO. 14—CA 1930S PHOTOGRAPH SHOWING THE CONTEXTUAL SETTING OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING. SOURCE: GORDON TWEIT.

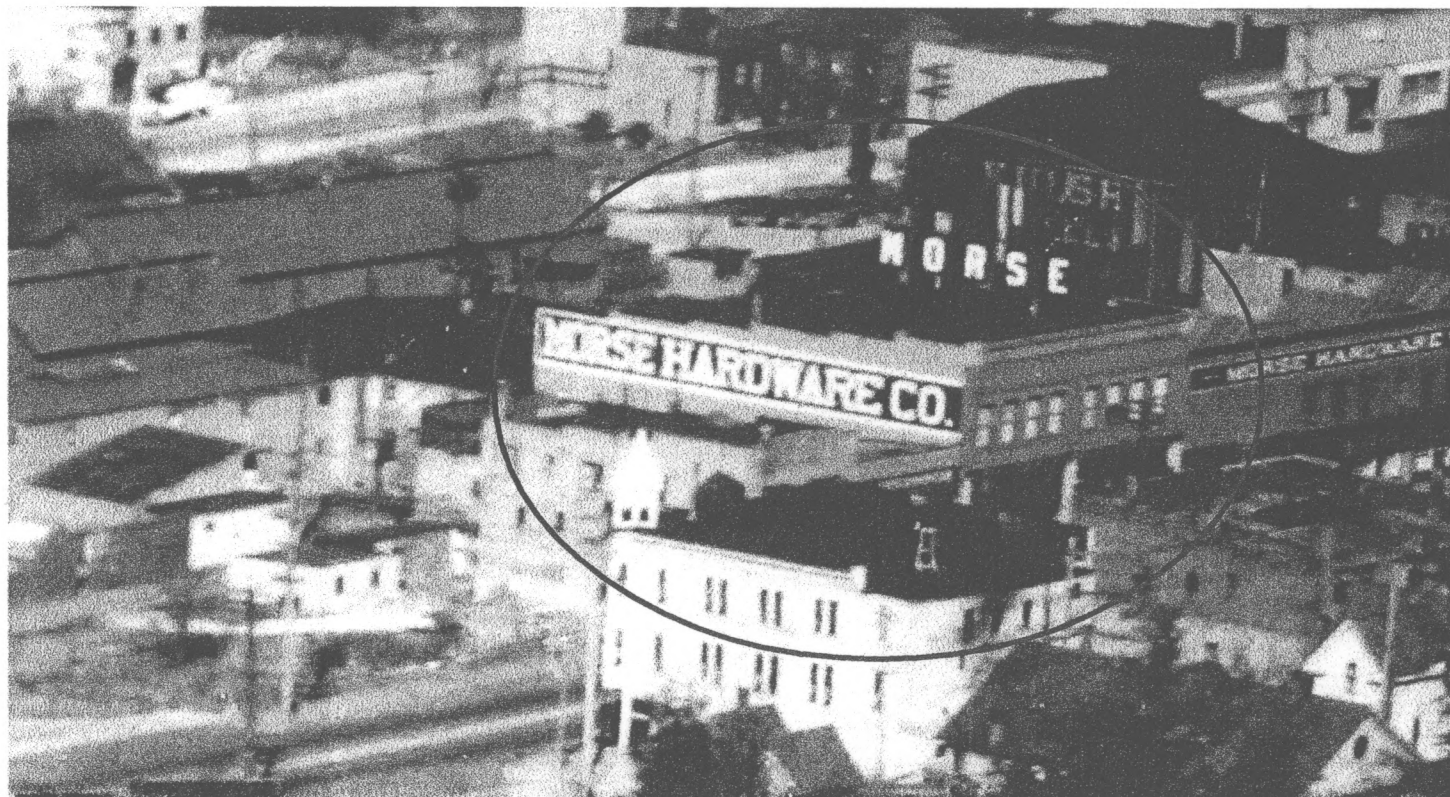


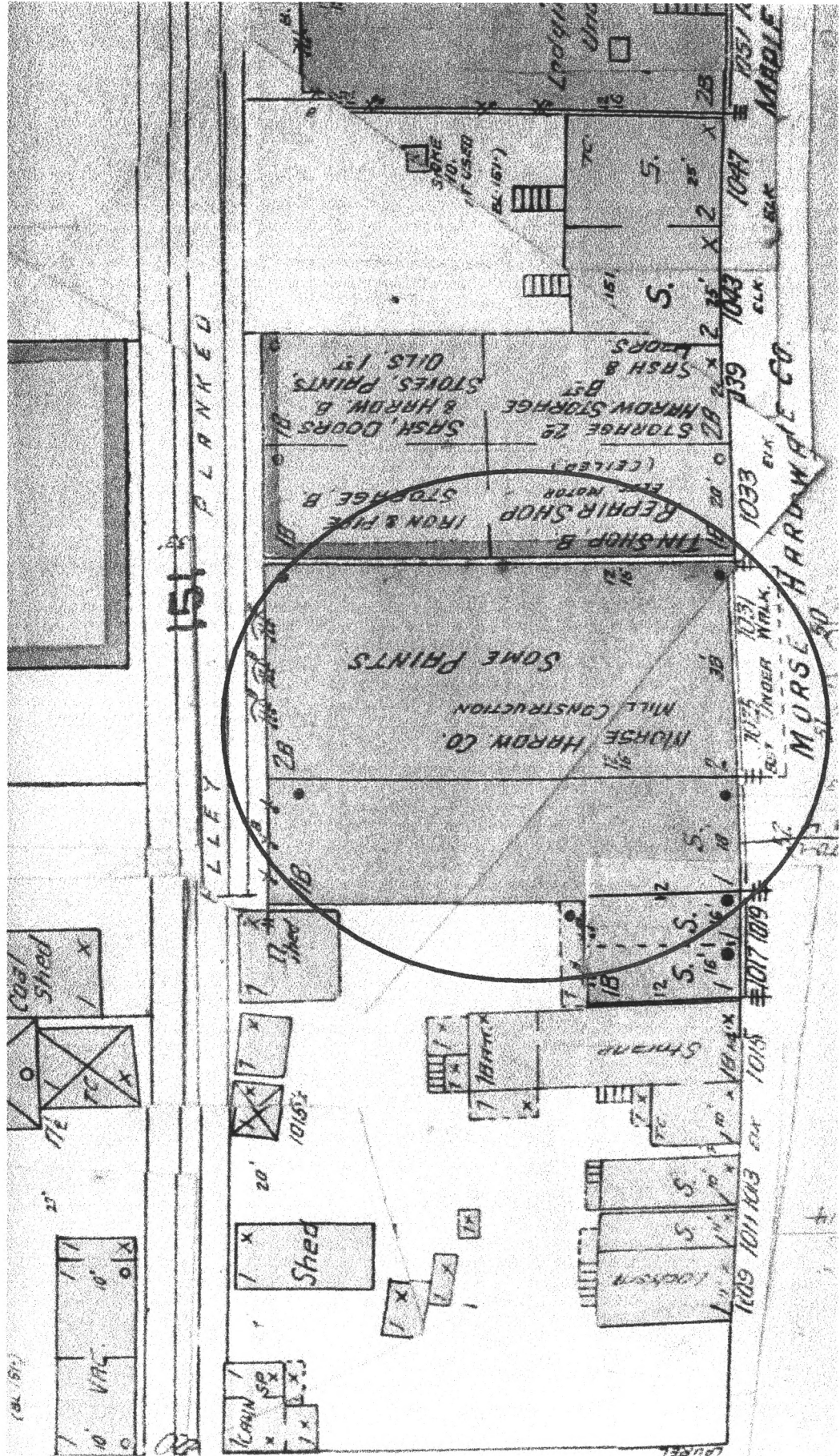
PHOTO NO. 15—DETAIL OF THE CA 1930S PHOTOGRAPH SHOWING THE CONTEXTUAL SETTING OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING. SOURCE: GORDON TWEIT.



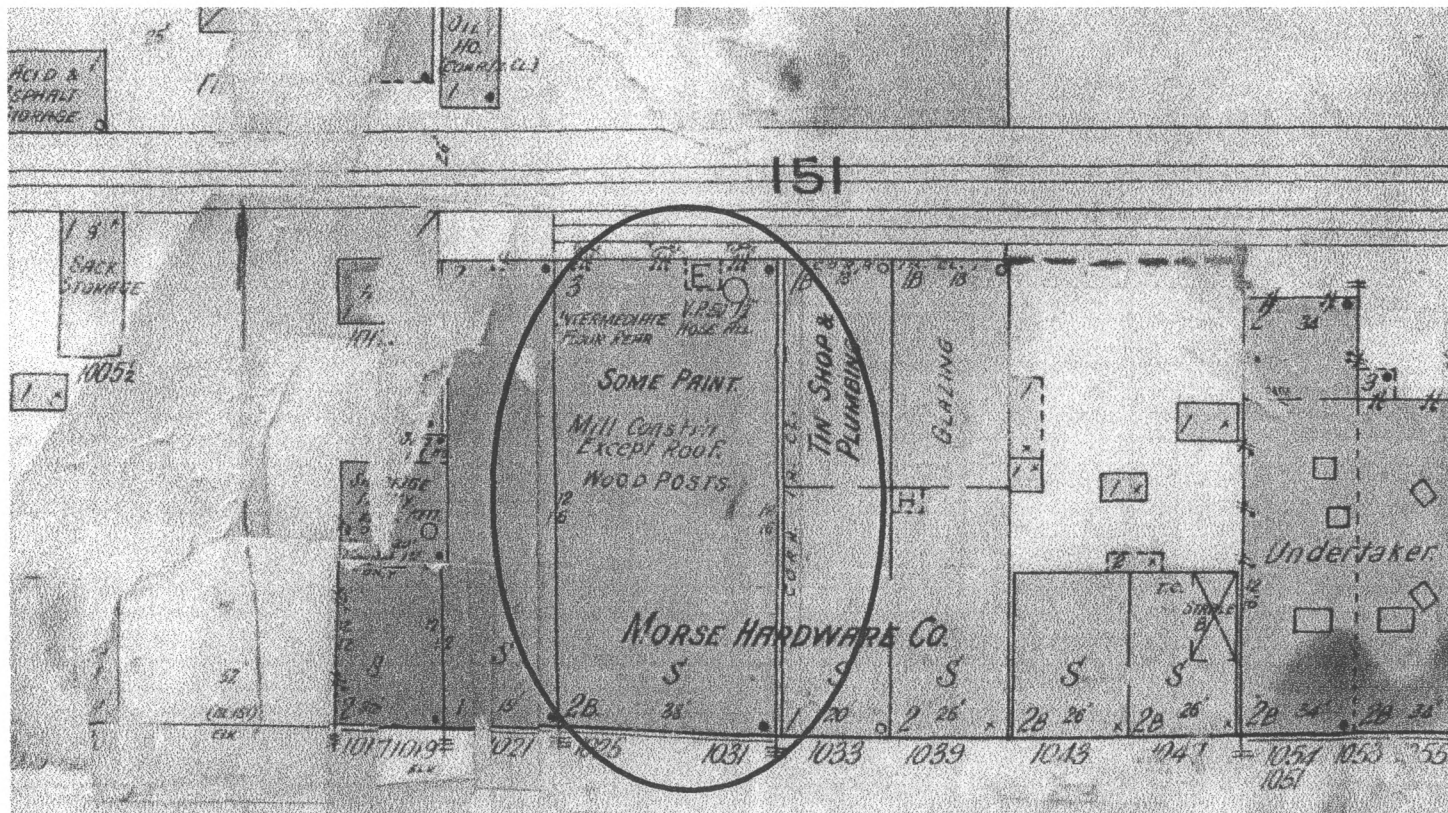
PHOTO No. 16—Spring 1938 view of the Morse Hardware Company Building. SOURCE: PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF GAYLORD LAUE. *SELL'EM LOW—SEND AND GET MORE: A CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY, 1884-1984: 61.*



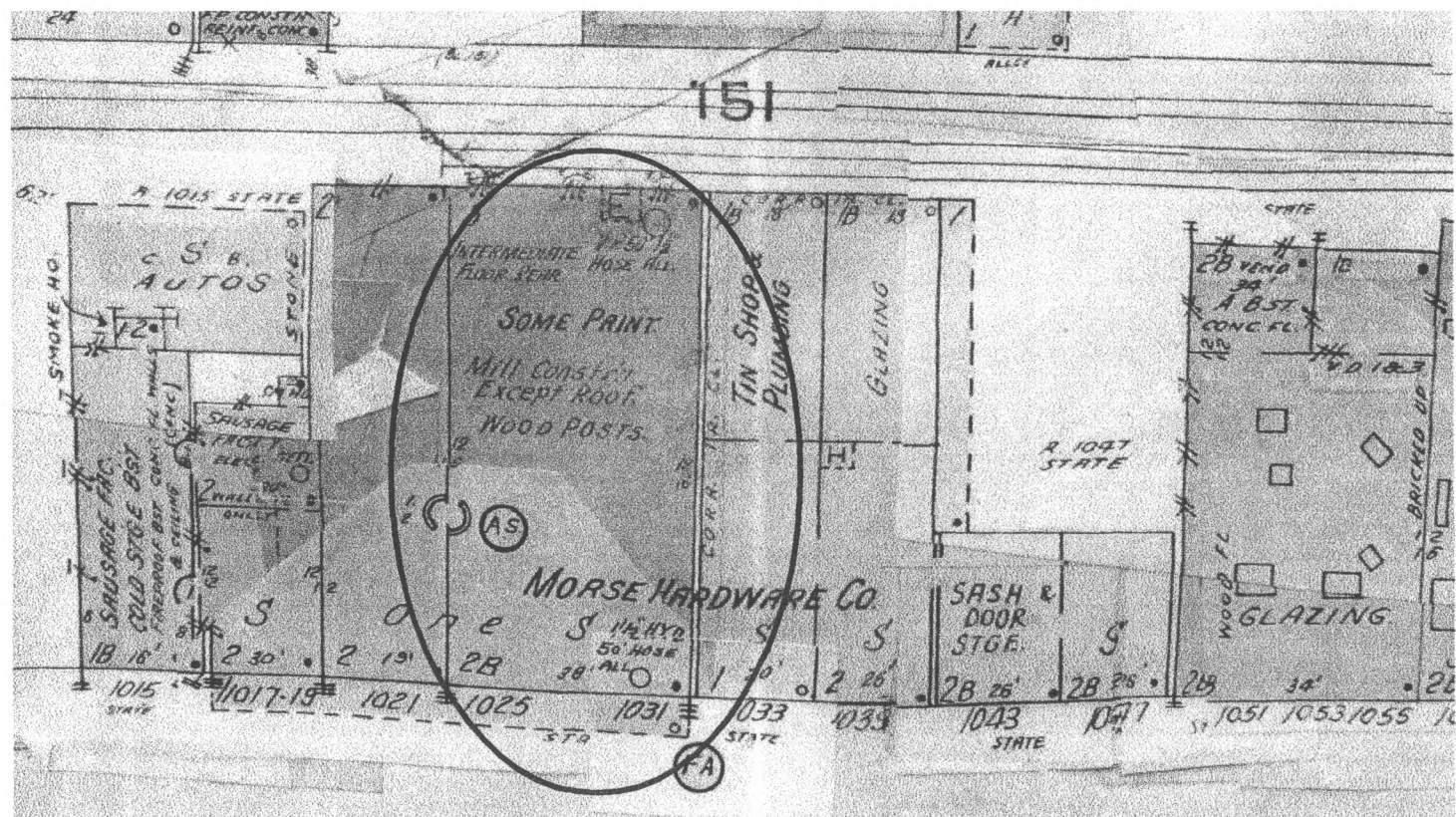
PHOTO No. 17—1937 PHOTOGRAPH OF EXCAVATION BELOW THE SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING TO EXTEND THE BASEMENT. SOURCE: *SELL'EM LOW—SEND AND GET MORE: A CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY, 1884-1984: 59.*



MAP No. 1—SANBORN MAP SHOWING THE LAYERS OF ALTERATIONS TO THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS FROM 1907 THROUGH 1913. SOURCE: WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, CENTER FOR PACIFIC NORTHWEST STUDIES.



MAP No. 2—SANBORN MAP SHOWING THE LAYERS OF ALTERATIONS TO THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS FROM 1915 THROUGH 1930. SOURCE: WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, CENTER FOR PACIFIC NORTHWEST STUDIES.



MAP No. 3—SANBORN MAP SHOWING THE LAYERS OF ALTERATIONS TO THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS FROM 1948 THROUGH 1963. SOURCE: WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, CENTER FOR PACIFIC NORTHWEST STUDIES.

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MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING, 1023-1025 NORTH STATE STREET, BELLINGHAM, WA 98225

MAPS



MAP No. 4—SITE VIEW SHOWING THE MORSE HARDWARE COMPANY BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS.

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MAPS



MAP No. 5—SITE VIEW SHOWING THE SWEET & COMPANY BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS.