

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

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

For HCPS use only
received **DEC 14 1982**
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Ashlar Hall

and/or common same

2. Location

street & number 1397 Central Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Memphis N/A vicinity of ~~Congressional District~~

state Tennessee code 047 county Shelby code 157

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Kemmons Wilson Company

street & number 1629 Winchester Road

city, town Memphis N/A vicinity of state Tennessee 38118

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Shelby County Register's Office

street & number 160 N. Mid-America Mall

city, town Memphis state Tennessee 38103

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date N/A N/A federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

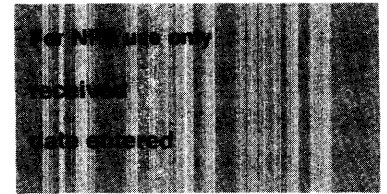
original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located in the midtown residential area of Memphis, Tennessee, just outside the Central Gardens Historic District, Ashlar Hall is a two-and-a-half-story castle-like stone building constructed in 1896. Although the front of the house faces west, the main entrance has long been the north porte cochere which is on Central. Apartment towers are to the west, east, and southeast of the house. Parking presently covers the north lawn and is also to the south, though at a lower grade elevation and, therefore not visible from much of the building. A restaurant presently occupies the basement and first floor with the second floor unused except for storage. Despite some interior and exterior changes, Ashlar Hall substantially retains its essential architectural and historical integrity.

The stone fortress-like structure presents a picturesque silhouette. The complex massing and irregularity of form, the boldness of composition and multiple projections, bays and towers form a complicated outline. A major tower on the southwest corner and smaller towers to the northwest, northeast and east are all crowned with stone battlements. Merlons and crenelles also cap the carriage porch and small balconies over bays and galleries. Tall chimneys also echo the battlements with the tallest resembling a sentry post rising above the dominant southwest tower. The hipped roof is somewhat subordinant to the strong tower shapes. Deep set windows occur either singly or in triplicate. Most include transom panels with cut stone transom bars and mullions. The rock faced limestone is articulated by tooled margins at building corners, sloped weatherings, and around openings. Trim is smooth cut with enrichments only on gargoyle scuppers and column capitals. Stone porch railings are simple with circular cut-outs. Most of the rich texture of the composition relies on the bold forms rather than on carved decoration. The only major departure from the stone facing is on the south facade where the breakfast room/sleeping porch wing is clad in copper panels over wood. This area features quatrefoil embellishments on the spandrel panels between the first and second floor. Curvilinear forms dominate the western facade. The parlor bay (one story), dining room/master bedroom bay (2 stories) and entry porch are all semi-circular. The porte cochere and northeast gallery both repeat the slate covered hipped roof forms from above. Round columns (12" diameter on porches and 24" diameter at outer end of porte cochere) carry stone lintels, with "Ashlar Hall" carved in the frieze facing Central. The porte cochere columns are enriched with foliated capitals; two contain faces - one male (frowning) and one female (smiling). Cut stone steps lead up to porches floored in marble. The main west porch uses hexagonal gray marble tiles with a marble mosaic border of green and white. The north porch has a marble aggregate (green, pink, grey and white) field surrounded by a Greek key border of green with a white background edged in gold and beige. The northeast gallery has a wood floor and a panelled soffit painted the dark black-green trim color used elsewhere (which repeats the weathered copper color). Gargoyles leap from cornices and walls randomly, ejecting water from roof and parapets. Festooned wreaths are carved on the pedestal faces.

The only addition to the structure is on the east side where wood-clad storage and additional kitchen space were added to accomodate the needs of the restaurant that the building is currently being used for. Other exterior modifications of recent vintage include air conditioning units and ductwork on the main west porch, numerous pipes and some reworking of basement doors and windows on the south walls. None of these modifications have compromised the basic integrity of the structure and can be easily restored to original condition. The complex exterior shape of the house allows for an innovative floor plan with convenience in layout and multiple exposures for a majority of the rooms. The house has two floors plus a full basement and a large attic with servants' quarters.

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The floor plan is basically similar for the two main floors with load bearing walls starting at the basement level and rising vertically through the second floor. The plan revolves around a central hall - an elongated octagon, running north - south and measuring 22'6"x17'0". A central open well (12'6"x7'0") repeats the shape in the main floor ceiling and its gallery railing with heavily carved posts and caps defines the center of the second floor space. A large chandelier originally hung from the second floor ceiling through this open well. Major rooms are located on the diagonal axes of the center hall with the main entrance from the west side, and the grand staircase to the east - both on the long sides of the central space. The north end of the space accommodates the entrance from the porte cochere on the main floor and a bathroom on the second. A stair to the basement has been added where a powder room was formerly located.

On the main level, the only closed side of the space is to the south where a small fireplace topped by a carved, polychromed bas-relief is located. A diagram of the two main floors is attached.

The west entry hall features twin mirror panels on the north and south walls, heavily articulated beams and moldings and a decorated plaster ceiling. It measures 13'6"x12'3" and leads directly into the central hall with its coffered ceiling and ring of disengaged pilasters on pedestals. The fluted columns occur at each corner of the space, with composite caps carrying beams which radiate from the central open well. The beam junctions are articulated with large decorative pendants. Garlands and wreathes decorate pedestals and friezes and clusters of foliage adorn the ceiling. To the east is the grand staircase. The stair well is raised two steps above the central hall. The lower run of the stair follows the north wall until it reaches a large landing with triple majestic windows (formerly stained glass from Italy with built-in window seats that have hinged storage bins for silver). The upper run of stair follows the south wall leaving a large open well in the center. Railings are painted wood with heavily carved square newel posts with elaborate caps. Balusters are simple round posts with base and cap, supporting a heavy cap rail.

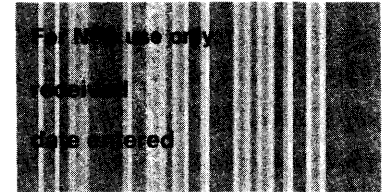
To the left of the entry hall is the main parlor (20'3"x17'0" + a large semi-circular bay). The heavily carved white marble mantle is not original to the house. All openings are trimmed with flat pilasters topped with scroll shaped console brackets supporting heavy cornices. All are embellished with garlands and wreathes. The deep semi-circular bay at the end of the room contains curved windows with transoms which flood the space with light.

An oak panelled library is located in the northeast corner of the main floor. The space measures 14'0"x15'0" with a 4'x8' bay at the north end. The oak wainscote (5'8" tall) is stained dark. Ceiling mouldings include crown moulds, dentils, and egg and dart designs. A fireplace is centered on the east wall opposite the entrance. To the left of the fireplace a door leads to the porch.

To the left of the entry hall is the dining room, which is the same size and shape as the parlor (20'3"x17'0") plus a 5' deep semicircular bay with triple windows. Square, fluted pilasters frame the opening, topped by Ionic capitals under a heavy frieze which encircles the room above the door heads. On the northwest wall is an arched recess which originally housed a built-in buffet cabinet. The fireplace is in the east corner. Double doors in the southeast corner lead to a conservatory with vaulted ceiling. This area, as well as the 15'4"x16'6" breakfast room, butler's pantry, and original kitchen are all used as kitchen area by the restaurant tenants.

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A back stair to the south of the main stair and reached through a service hall provides access to the basement and to the upper floors, including the attic. Adjacent to it is a large, low ceiling storage room under the landing of the main stair. To the east is additional storage in an addition to the original house.

On the second floor a northeast corner bedroom is on the right at the top of the main staircase. This room sits above the library and also measures 14'0"x15'0" with a square bay on the north wall 4'0"x8'0". Adjacent to it to the west is a two compartment bathroom which also has access to the central hall. Tile and fixtures are original and in good condition.

In the northwest corner above the parlor, is the "Ash Bedroom", so called for its ash woodwork with burl insets. This room measures 20'7"x17'0". The semi-circular bay of the parlor below becomes a small balcony for this bedroom. The northwest wall contains two windows flanking a door. The assembly appears to be a triple window with a movable apron panel in the center. All windows have transoms. The fireplace in the east corner has an ash mantle and framed mirror with burl insets, supported by burl ash columns. Doors in this room have burl panel inserts.

Over the entry hall is a small parlor, 13'6"x12'3". A triple window unit, similar to the one in the "Ash Bedroom" provides access to a balcony over the west entry porch. Doors in the corners of the room lead to the two adjacent bedrooms.

The master bedroom is located above the dining room, measuring 20'3" (25' to center of semi-circular bay) x 17'0". To the east of this bedroom is the master bath with its grey marble wainscote (5' tall) and door and window facings. The floor is white hexagonal tile. The grey marble shower stall contains multiple spray jets. An oval tub and sitz bath are also original equipment and in good condition. The lavatory is mounted on a marble vanity supported by curvilinear iron brackets and includes a built-in mirror with marble trim.

To the east of the bathroom is a closet-lined hallway leading to a 15'4"x16'6" sleeping porch/solarium above the breakfast room.

This area connects back to the rear service hall which leads to a large, cedar-lined linen closet with built-in storage drawers. Past it is another small bedroom, 11'10"x16'0". The back stair opens to this service hall also.

In the attic are three bedrooms and a bath for the servants. There also is a large unfinished attic storage area with a skylight. Some of the heavy timber framing is visible in this area.

The basement was used primarily as a wine cellar, and to house service functions. Present tenants use it for dining rooms and bar with restrooms installed also. Access to the pool is from this area.

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The site of Ashlar Hall slopes gently off to the north and more steeply to the south. Paved parking presently covers most of the north and south lawns. An irregularly shaped swimming pool is located to the southwest of the house. There is a low, masonry retaining wall at the rear southern edge of the property. Close to the house are a few mature trees and shrubs.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1896

Builder/Architect Robert Brinkley Snowden (1869-1942)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Ashlar Hall is nominated under National Register criteria B and C for its association with the builder of the house, Robert Brinkley Snowden, and for its locally unique castle-like architectural features. As the principal real estate developer in Memphis during the early twentieth century, Snowden had a tremendous influence on the growth of the city, being responsible for many of its most important residential areas and downtown buildings. Educated as an architect, Snowden designed and built Ashlar Hall in 1896 and lived there until his death in 1942. The building is a unique example in Memphis of a castle-like stone residence from the Eclectic architectural movement at the turn-of-the-century.

Robert Brinkley Snowden was born in Memphis on March 9, 1869, just six weeks before his father, Colonel Robert Bogardus Snowden, acquired Annesdale (NR 11-25-80). His mother was a daughter of Colonel Robert C. Brinkley, one of the largest property owners in early Memphis, and a granddaughter of Judge John Overton who, with General Andrew Jackson and James Winchester, laid out the town of Memphis in 1816. Snowden received his early education at private schools in Memphis and was graduated from the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee, in 1888 and from Princeton in 1890 where he studied architecture. During his early real estate days, Snowden read law at night with the prominent Memphis attorney, Eldridge Wright, and was admitted to the bar, but never practiced law. He had studied it because he considered it valuable background for his business ventures.

Snowden and his various business partners developed three of the earliest subdivisions in Memphis; Annesdale Park (1903, NR 12-22-78), Annesdale-Snowden (1906, NR 1-25-79), and Stonewall Place (1909, NR 3-25-82). Snowden and his associates were the first developers in Memphis to pay for the streets, sidewalks, and other improvements in their subdivisions and then deed them to the city. These residential areas for the middle and upper classes of the city set the precedent for the landscaping character of countless trees and uniform setbacks that distinguishes the midtown neighborhoods of Memphis.

Snowden's business ventures also had a significant impact in other areas of the city's development. Along with family members and business associates, Snowden was responsible for construction of the Chisca Hotel (1913), Commerce Title Building (1904, 1914, NR 11-25-80), Lowenstein Building (1924), Peabody Hotel (1925, NR 9-14-77), and National Bank of Commerce (1929, NR 5-7-80), which have all been Memphis landmarks for many years. Foreseeing the growth of aviation, he was also instrumental in the establishment of the Memphis Municipal Airport in 1929 and helped select its site.

Ashlar Hall was the home of Snowden during his significant years in Memphis history in the early twentieth century and remained his residence until his death in 1942. Built in 1896 according to his own plans, the house was constructed at the height of the Eclectic movement in the United States when picturesqueness and asymmetry were very much in vogue. This is clearly evidenced in the building's complex massing and irregularity of form, the boldness of composition, and the multiple projections, bays and towers. The Eclectic interest in the selection of elements from diverse architectural styles is shown in the free use of Norman, Gothic, and Renaissance motifs in the building. The ashlar stone, for which the house is named, was delivered to Memphis from Indiana on barges and set in place by

9. Major Bibliographical References

Commercial Appeal October 13, 1942, December 21, 1946, February 9, 1957, March 14, 1965.
Interview with Edith Snowden Dewey, granddaughter of R. Brinkley Snowden - August 25, 1982.
Memphis Press-Scimitar July 29, 1964, March 18, 1931, October 13, 1942.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .812 acres

Quadrangle name Northwest Memphis, TN-Ark

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	5	7	7	1	9	4	0	3	8	9	0	9	4	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

See continuation sheet

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Charles Shipp/Architect

organization N/A

date October 1982

street & number 1713 Lockett Place

telephone (901) 725-5213

city or town Memphis

state Tennessee 38104

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.

Deputy

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Herbert L. Hays

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

date 12/9/82

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 1/13/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The nominated property includes only the .812 acre site of the house, which is all that remains of the original seven-acre estate. The boundaries are described as follows:

Beginning at a point in the south line of Central Avenue 9.20 feet west of the northeast corner (crow's foot found) of Lot 1 in said University Tower Subdivision, said point being approximately 469.20 feet west of the west line of Melrose Street; thence, S 0° 30' 00" W a distance of 10.00 feet to a point of curvature; thence, along a curve to the right having a radius of 33.00 feet a distance of 39.27 feet to a point; thence, S 0° 30' 00" W a distance of 22.37 feet to a point in the south line of said Lot 1; thence, N 89° 30' 00" W along the line dividing Lots 1 and 2 and an extension thereof a distance of 31.07 feet to a point; thence, S 0° 30' 00" W a distance of 59.66 feet to a point; thence, N 89° 30' 00" W a distance of 4.00 feet to a point in the east face of an existing concrete retaining wall; thence, S 0° 30' 00" W along the east face of said retaining wall a distance of 41.27 feet to a point of curvature; thence, on a curve to the left along the east face of said retaining wall having a radius of 10.00 feet a distance of 10.33 feet to a point; thence, S 58° 39' 40" E along the north face of said retaining wall and an extension thereof a distance of 68.71 feet to a point of curvature in the north line of said Lot 1; thence, along a curve to the left having a radius of 44.00 feet a distance of 37.31 feet to a point of reverse curvature in the north line of said Lot 1; thence, along a curve to the right having a radius of 10.00 feet a distance of 8.77 feet to a point in the north line of said Lot 1; thence, S 56° 58' 52" E along the north line of said Lot 1 a distance of 38.32 feet to a point; thence, N 89° 02' 57" E a distance of 44.82 feet to a point in the east line of Lot 2 in said University Tower Subdivision; thence, N 0° 57' 03" W along the east line of said Lot 2 a distance of 45.17 feet to a point; thence, N 0° 47' 43" W along the east line of said Lot 2 a distance of 187.33 feet to a point (crow's foot found) in the south line of said Central Avenue, said point being the northeast corner of said Lot 2; thence, N 89° 30' 00" W along said south line of Central Avenue a distance of 124.20 feet to the point of beginning.

SUBDIVISION

MANSFI

COMMON AREA 1.0861 Ac.

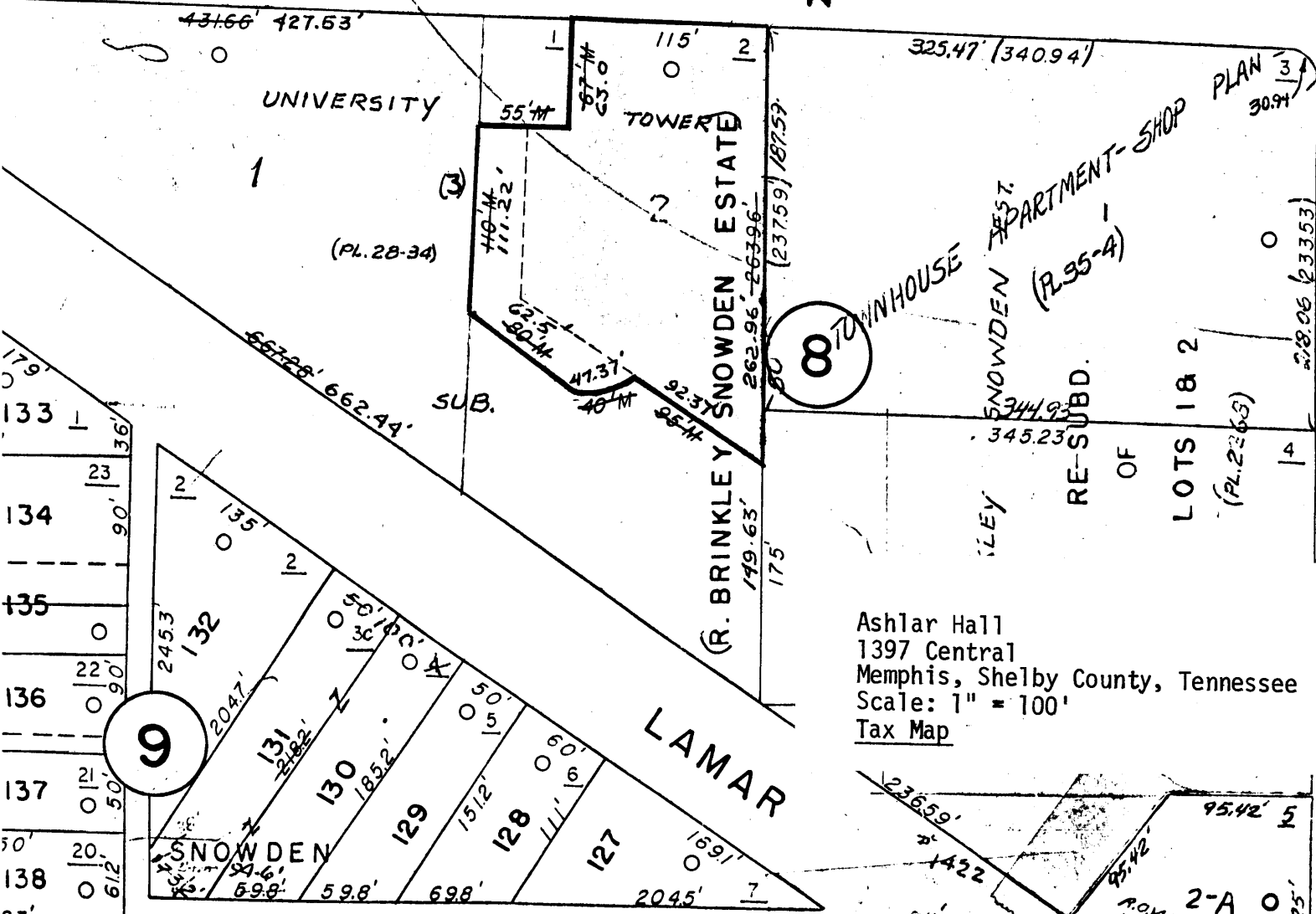
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Floor	301	302	303	
2nd	15	6	7	
Floor	201	202	203	304
1st	2	3	4	
Floor	101	102	103	
Ground	1			
Floor	01			

"A"

ST.

PARK LANE

PARK SUBD



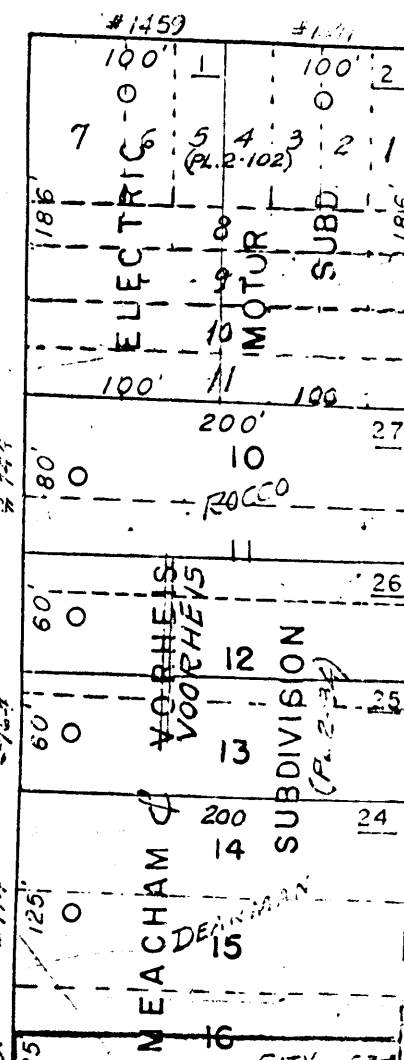
8

9

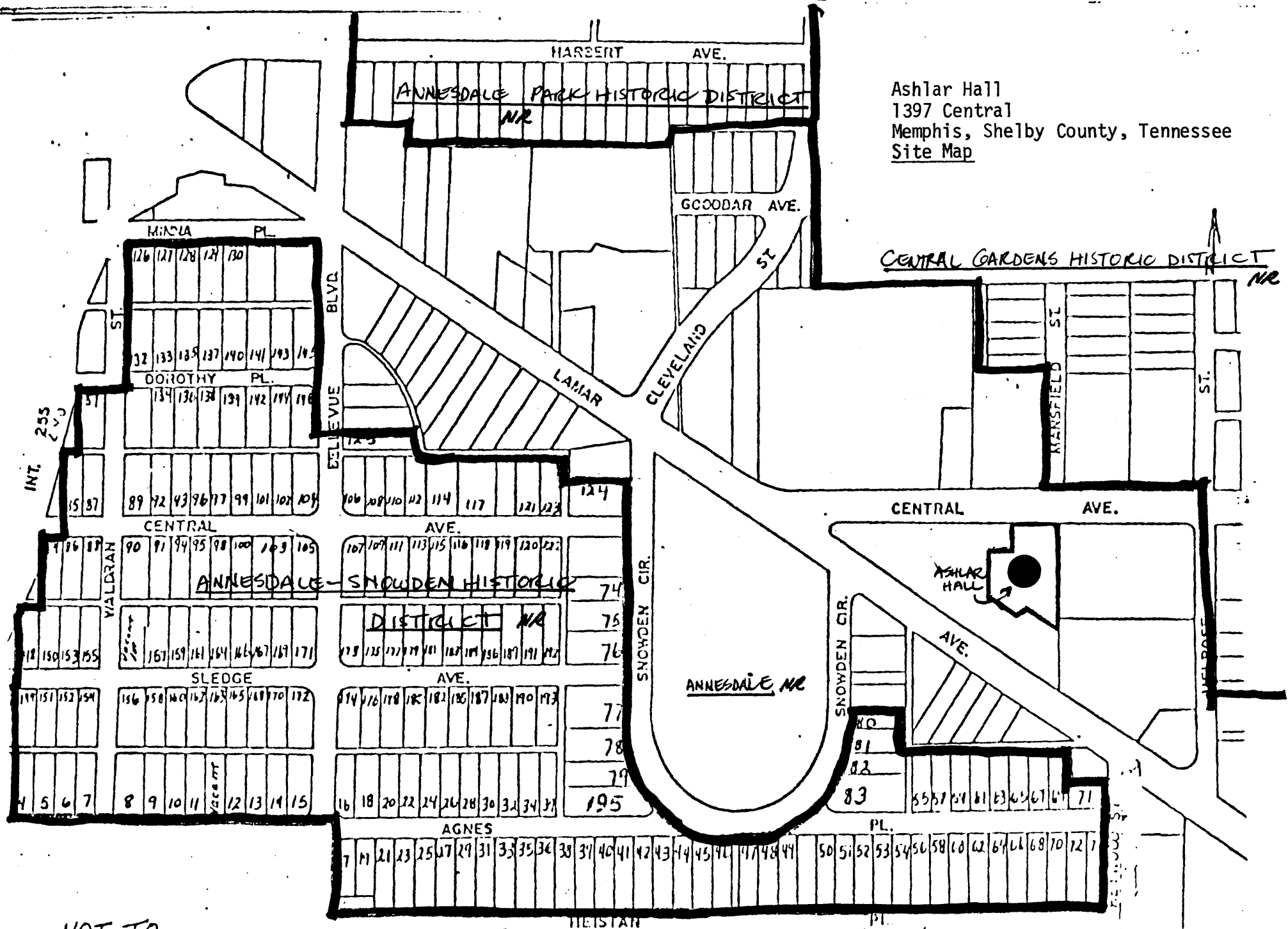
Ashlar Hall
 1397 Central
 Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee
 Scale: 1" = 100'
 Tax Map

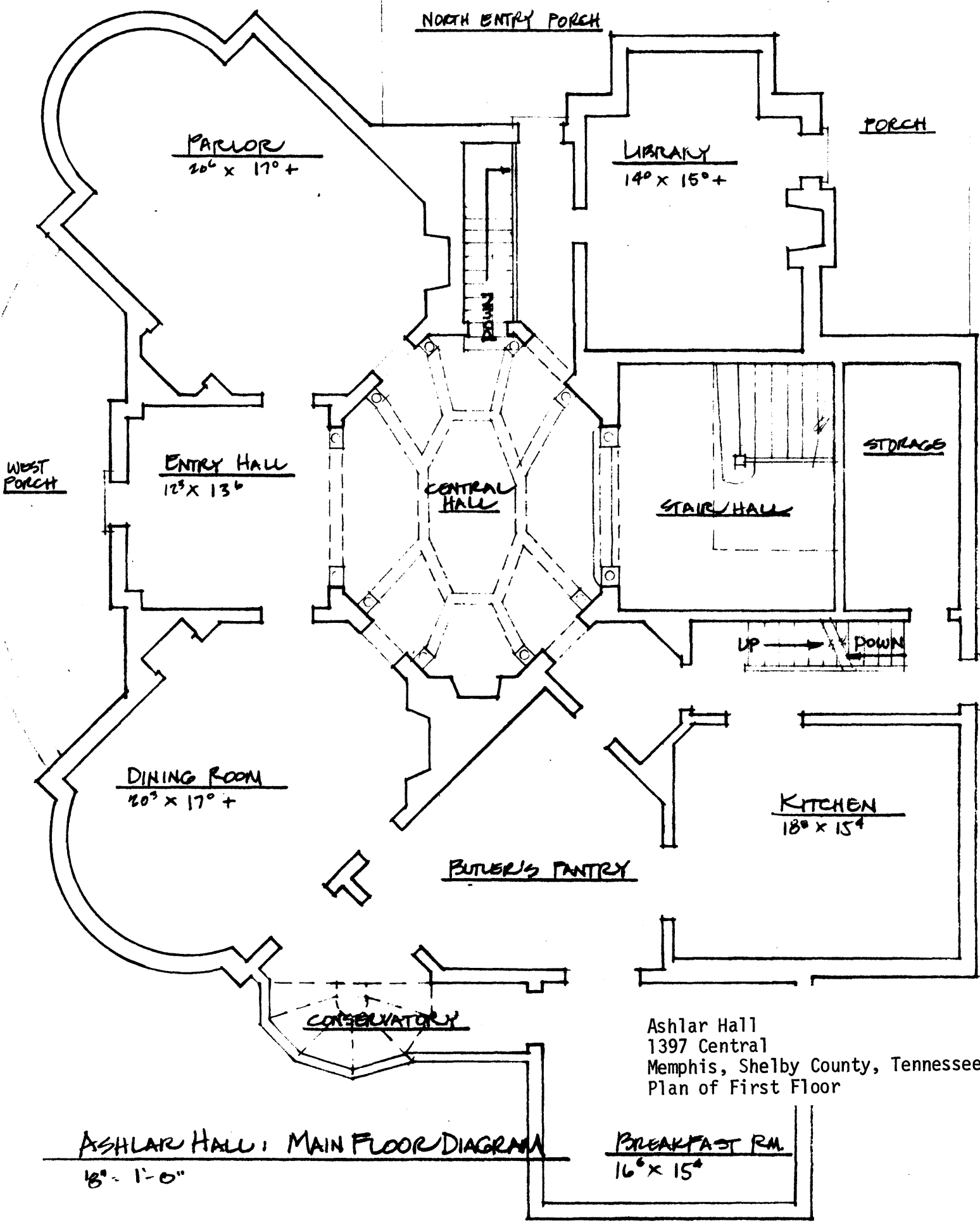
CENTRAL

MELROSE



Ashlar Hall
 1397 Central
 Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee
 Site Map





NORTH ENTRY PORCH

PARLOR
26' x 17'+

LIBRARY
14' x 15'+

PORCH

WEST PORCH

ENTRY HALL
12' x 13'

CENTRAL HALL

STAIR HALL

STORAGE

UP → DOWN

DINING ROOM
20' x 17'+

KITCHEN
18' x 15'

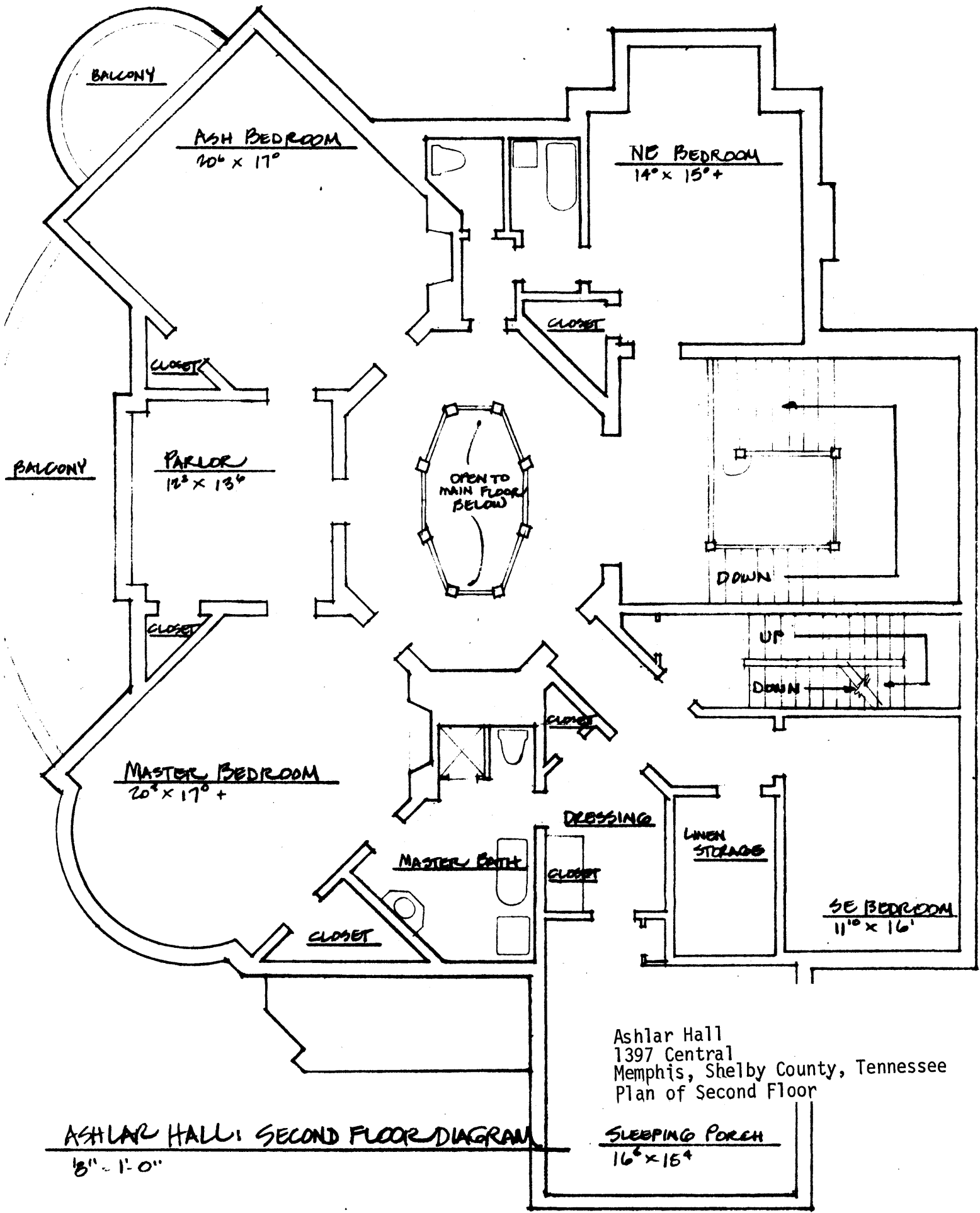
BUTLER'S PANTRY

CONSERVATORY

Ashlar Hall
1397 Central
Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee
Plan of First Floor

ASHLAR HALL: MAIN FLOOR DIAGRAM
1/8" = 1'-0"

BREAKFAST RM.
16' x 15'



Ashlar Hall
 1397 Central
 Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee
 Plan of Second Floor

ASHLAR HALL: SECOND FLOOR DIAGRAM
 1/8" = 1'-0"

SLEEPING PORCH
 16' x 15'