



# PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Land Use Planning 2120 Milvia Street, Berkeley, CA 94704

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## LANDMARK PRESERVATION COMMISSION Landmark, Structure of Merit or Historic District Designation Form

Street Address:		ZIP:	
Original owner's or business's name:		Present common name:	
Original owner:		Present owner's name & address:	
Original use:		Present use:	
Is property on any survey? National Register <input type="checkbox"/> California Register <input type="checkbox"/> State Historic Resources Inventory <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood: Urban Conservation Survey Plan <input type="checkbox"/> BAHA Tours, Neighborhood or Area Plan <input type="checkbox"/>			
Application for landmark includes: Building(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Garden(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Site <input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Parcel <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape or Open Space <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____			
Is the property endangered? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, please explain:			
Date of construction: Factual <input type="checkbox"/> Approximate <input type="checkbox"/> Source of information:			
Architect:		Style:	
Historic Value:	National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/>	County <input type="checkbox"/> City <input type="checkbox"/>	Neighborhood <input type="checkbox"/>
Architectural Value:	National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/>	County <input type="checkbox"/> City <input type="checkbox"/>	Neighborhood <input type="checkbox"/>
Present Condition of Property:			
Exterior:	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/>	
Interior:	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/>	
Grounds:	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/>	
Survey prepared by:		Signature:	Date:
Address:		Phone:	E-mail:

### For Staff Use Only

Date: / /	LPC Application #:	Intake Planner:	Receipt #:
Landmarks Preservation Commission Fees - Required for all Designation Proposals:		Fee Amount	Amount Due:
Landmark or Structure of Merit Initiation:		\$50.00	
Historic District		\$100.00	
Records Management Fee		\$50.00	
Total fees:			

If you have any questions, please contact the Land Use Planning Division at: 1947 Center Street, Berkeley CA 94704, (510) 981-7410, Fax (510) 981-7420, e-mail: [planning@cityofberkeley.info](mailto:planning@cityofberkeley.info)

**Please submit exterior photographs of all sides and of any significant features, a site plan and floor plans.**

**The application must include the following features, pursuant to BMC 3.24.100.A. Use the attached sample as a guide for completing the application.**

**Description:**

**History:**

**Significance:**

**Bibliography:**

# SAMPLE

PERMIT SERVICE CENTER

AUG 27 2007

RECEIVED BY

*Km*

City of Berkeley  
Ordinance #4694 N.S.

## LANDMARK APPLICATION

### THE CAMBRIDGE APARTMENTS

RECEIVED

AUG 27 2007

1. **Street Address:** 2500 Durant Avenue  
**County:** Alameda                      **City:** Berkeley                      **Zip Code:** 94704                      LAND USE PLANNING
2. **Assessor's Parcel Number:** 055 1876 01302  
**Dimensions:** 110' x 90'  
**Cross Street:** Telegraph Avenue
3. **Is property on any survey?** Yes, State Historic Resources Inventory and Berkeley Urban Conservation Survey.  
**CA State Register?** No                      **National Register?** No
4. **Application for Landmark includes:** Building on its parcel.
5. **Historic Name:** Cambridge Apartments
6. **Date of Construction:** 1914                      **Factual?** Yes; Permit #3540; 1/28/1914
7. **Builder:** Barrett & Hilp (w/ 15 subcontractors)                      **Architect:** Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr.
8. **Style:** Classical Downtown
9. **Original Owner:** John Arthur Elston and George Clark  
**Original Use:** Ground Floor Commercial and Upper Floors Residential
10. **Present Owner:** Berkeley Associates, L.L.C.  
**Address:** P.O. Box 680; Alamo, CA 94507
11. **Present Use:** Ground Floor Commercial and Upper Floors Residential  
**Current Zoning:** C-T, Telegraph Avenue Commercial  
**Adjacent Property Zoning:**  
C-T on Telegraph and Durant Avenue frontages;  
R-4, Multi-Family Residential, on Channing Way eastward.
12. **Present Condition of Property:** Good
13. **Historic Value:** City? Yes                      **Neighborhood?** Yes  
**Architectural Value:** City? Yes                      **Neighborhood?** Yes
14. **Is the property endangered?** Unknown.



## 15. Description:

The Cambridge Apartments building is situated on the southeast corner of Durant and Telegraph Avenues in an urban, commercial setting. The structure abuts the public sidewalk. The building is mixed use, with ground floor commercial and apartments on the upper floors (Photos 1 and 2).



**Photo 1. August 2007. The Cambridge Apartments, looking southeast.**

The five-story structure is box or block-like in shape and nearly square in plan (90' x 110') with a 22-foot wide light well, open at the south end, which transforms the square plan into an irregular U-shape. Passage to the light well is via a walkway on the east and southeast sides of the building.

The roof is flat, with a tar and gravel covering. A plain wide gray parapet remains at the roof level. (The building's original sheet metal cornice was removed in 1953.)

The main building's main facades are the north (Durant Avenue) and west (Telegraph Avenue) faces (Photos 1 and 2). Classical in feeling, the building is divided into three distinct sections by strong horizontal band-courses. The lower section is comprised of the first (ground) floor, including the commercial uses of the building. The middle



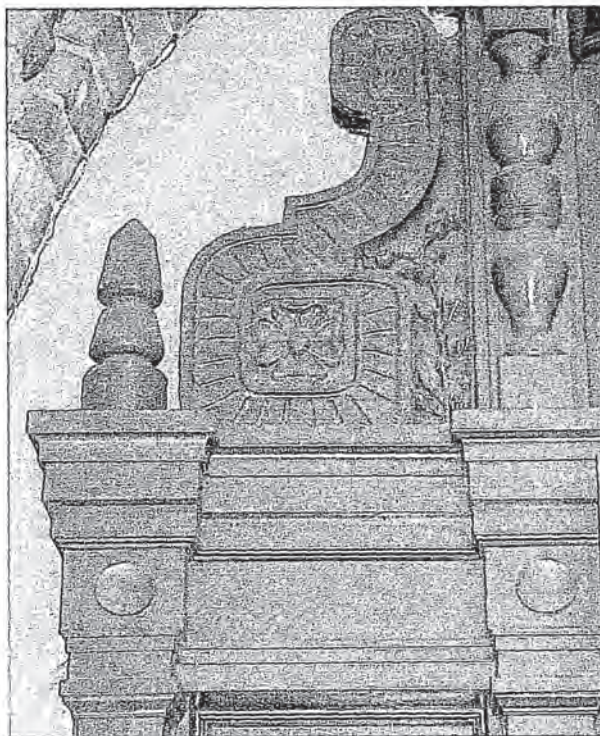
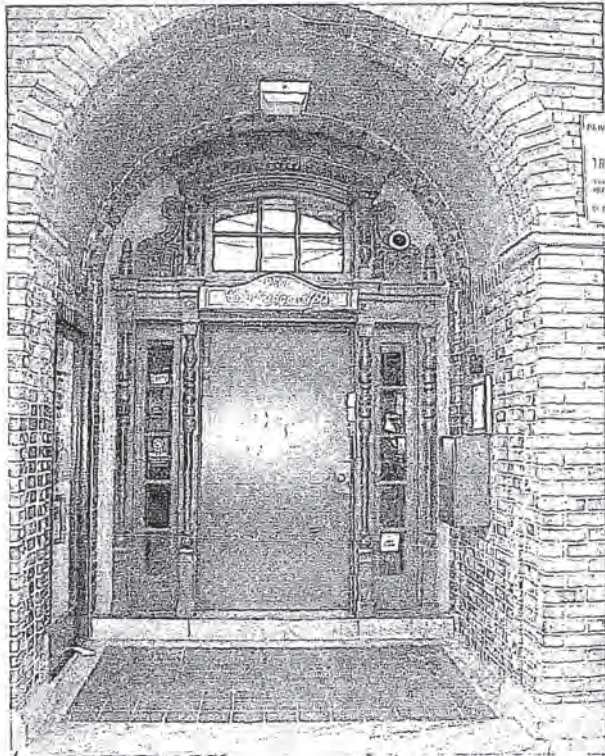
section is comprised of floors two, three, and four. The upper section is comprised of the fifth floor, once crowned by a heavy cornice. The ground floor has two horizontal bands that separate it from the middle section of the building, effectively creating an “entablature.”



**Photo 2. August 2007. The Cambridge Apartments, looking northeast.**

The apartment entry is a deep, shallow barrel-vaulted recess on the north (Durant Avenue) façade (Photo 3). This entry is off-center. Small, narrow, deeply recessed windows with simple wrought iron grills are set on either side of the entry. These windows are casement with wood sash and 1 over 3 lights. The curved step up into the recessed entry and the step into the apartments are marble. A cast iron surround in a simplified Spanish plateresque design frames the apartment doorway, painted brown as if to appear as wood (Photo 4). This surround includes vertical (1 over 4) lights on either side of the door and a curved transom over the door (3 over 2 lights). The door is solid and does not appear to be original to the building. On the walls of the recessed entry to the right of the central apartment doorway is an entrance into a commercial space.

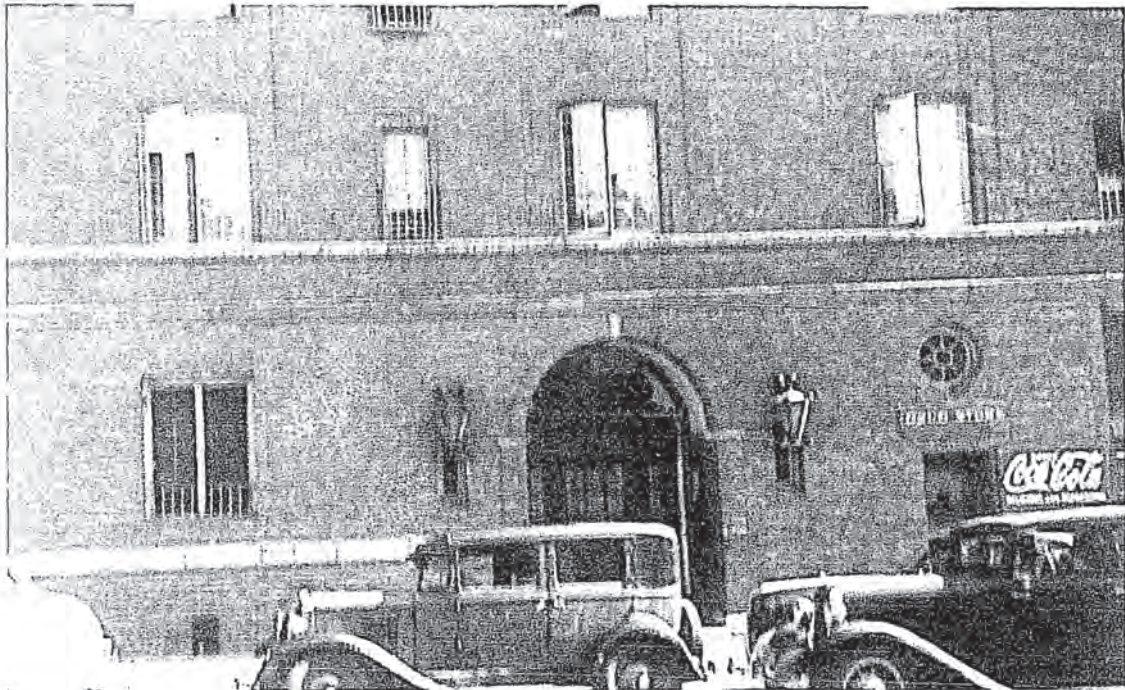




**Photos 3 and 4. August 2007, Cambridge Apartments Entry, North Façade.**



In addition to the apartment entry on the ground floor of the north façade, there are two large window openings to the east that follow the rhythm of the window openings on the floors above (Photo 1). However, examination of the historic photographs indicates that these openings have been enlarged and wrought iron curved railings have been removed (Photo 5).



**Photo 5. North façade, Cambridge Apartments, possibly late 1930's, from the Donogh files, Courtesy Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association.**

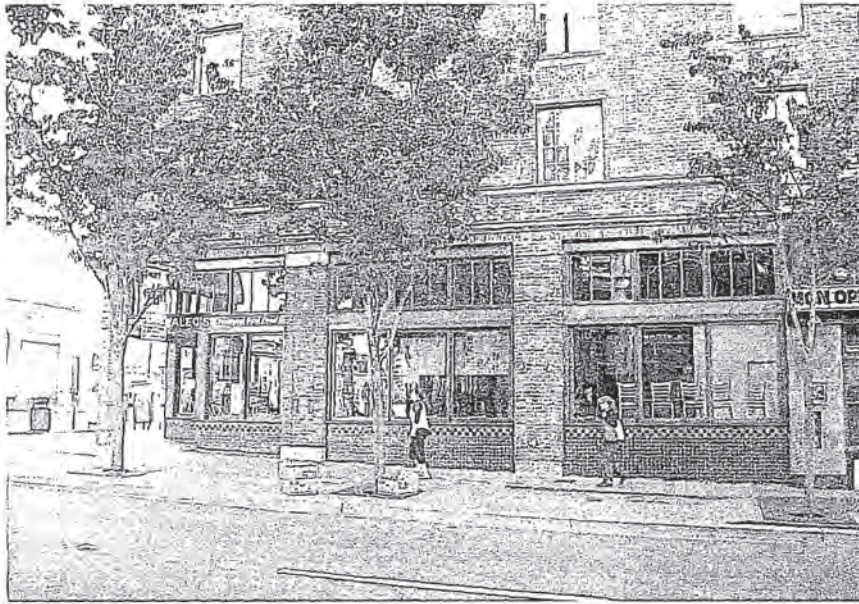
To the west of the apartment entry is a doorway that also follows the rhythm of the window openings above; a round, wood sash window with a “sun” pattern is located above (Photo 6). Examination of the brick work reveals that this doorway has been widened by removal of brick on the left side, making the round window appear off-center. The western third of the ground floor of the north façade is occupied by a more transparent commercial space, with plate glass windows and vertical multi-light transoms above a tiled bulkhead, and a chamfered corner entry (Photo 1).

Approximately three-fifths of the ground floor of the west (Telegraph Avenue) façade is occupied by the corner commercial space, with its plate glass windows and vertical multi-light transoms above a tiled bulkhead (Photo 7). A fanciful storefront that covers the remaining two-fifths of the west façade has copper clad pilasters and Tudor-inspired details, predominantly in the upper space where the transoms would have been (Photo 8). The original storefront is greatly altered and it is unknown if any of the original transom remains behind the new front. It is assumed that the brick would remain under the copper cladding.



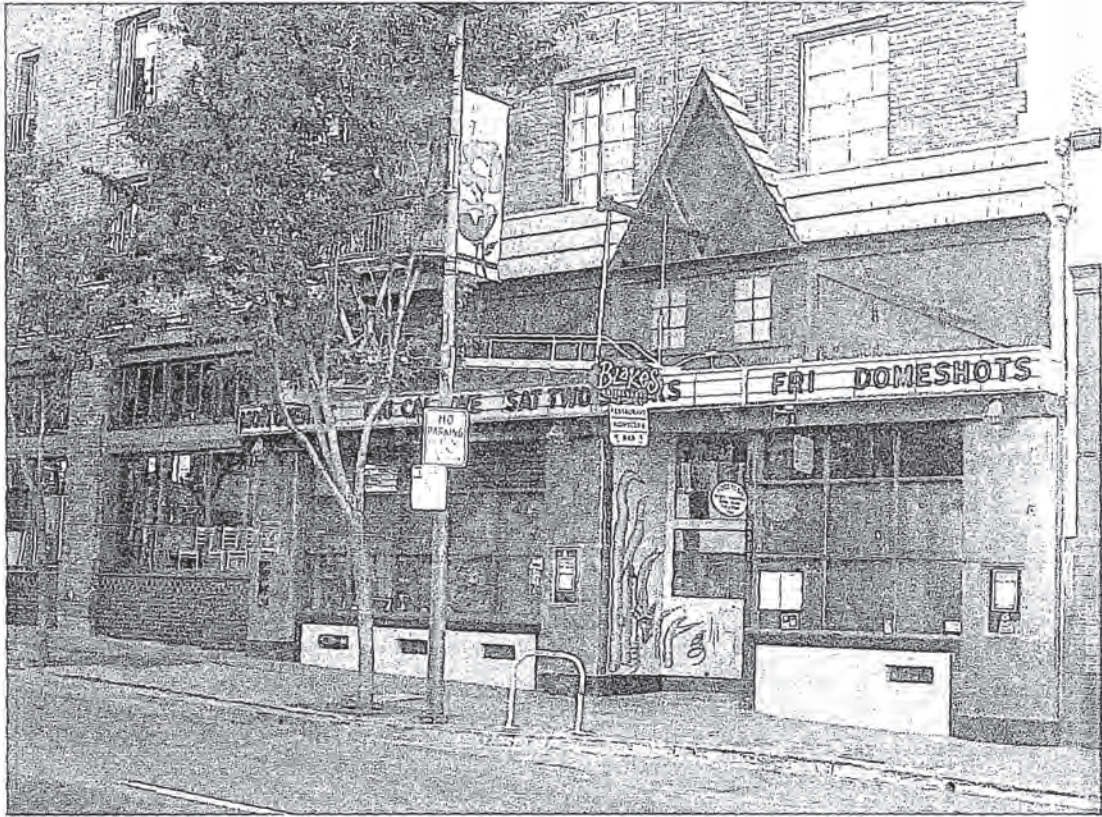


**Photo 6. August 2007. Cambridge Apartments, Commercial Entry, North Façade.**



**Photo 7. August 2007. Cambridge Apartments, West Façade, Northern Storefront.**





**Photo 8. August 2007. Cambridge Apartments. West Façade, Southern Storefront.**

The middle section of the north façade is symmetrical with respect to the placement of the window openings. Window openings are vertically aligned. All windows are casement, wood sash, multi-light. Paired casement windows (2 over 4 lights) alternate with narrow single casement windows (1 over 2 lights) in the following rhythm: 2:1:2:1:2. The narrow windows have a wood louvered vent below them and a rounded wrought iron false balcony. Window openings on the middle section of the west façade are asymmetrically placed. The same paired casement windows (2 x 4 lights) alternate with the narrow single casement windows in the following rhythm: 1:2:2:1:2 (Photo 1).

The upper most (fifth) floor is most ornate (Photo 9). The window openings are all vertically aligned with those of the middle section. However, the paired casement windows on this floor are door-size (3 over 5 lights), are separated by a heavy mullion, and are flanked by pilasters. The capitals on these pilasters have a Greek key design. Each window pair has a rounded wrought iron false balcony. Each window pair is surmounted by a half-round spandrel panel. The panels are slightly recessed and have several relief elements: two vertical members divide the panels into three sections and in the central section is a coat of arms, painted so as to emphasize the relief. Simple, plain, light colored round medallions are located just under the upper cornice between each pair of casement windows.



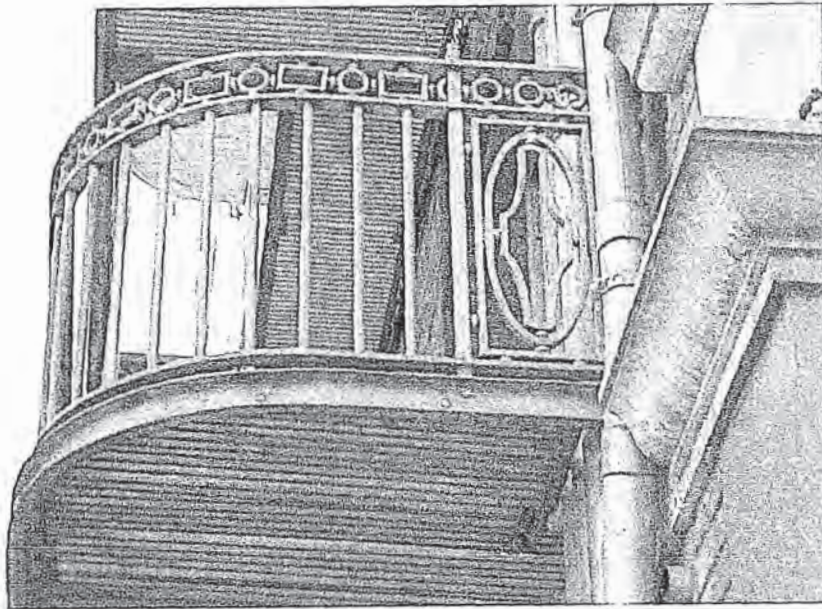


**Photo 9. August 2007. Cambridge Apartments.**

The building is faced overall in clinker brick. The brick is laid in Dearne's bond with rows of header-on-face alternating with stretcher-on-face (Curl, 1999). Deviations from the Dearne's bond are used to create both articulation and detailing such as pilasters, swags under the third and fourth story windows, tall vertical "framing" around the groupings of paired windows in the middle section, as well as framing around the individual window and door openings. The brick is affected by efflorescence, particularly under the upper cornice of the middle section; it is much more pronounced on the north façade. The brick on the northwest area of the ground floor is discolored.

The corners of the building are quoined from the upper to the lower band-course. The quoins are highlighted by their light color. However, the corners themselves are rounded, including the band-courses. At the top of each corner is a vertically exaggerated shield.





**Photo 10. August 2007. Cambridge Apartments, Fire escape landing detail.**

The rounded corners are repeated in the railings on the fire escape landings (Photo 10). The outline of the vertically exaggerated corner shields are also repeated in outline between the balusters of the fire escape railings. A simple repeating pattern of rectangles and circles tops the railings on the fire escape landings.

Examination of the historic photos shows that the now missing cornice also had rounded corners (Photo 11). Two large lanterns, since removed, were placed on either side of the apartment entry above the two narrow windows (Photo 5).

## **16. History:**

### ***The Building***

The general public had their first inkling of the large development to come to the southeast corner of Durant and Telegraph Avenues when, on December 10, 1913, the Berkeley Daily Gazette carried a short two-paragraph, three sentence article indicating that J. Arthur Elston and George Clark were to erect a five-story stone business block. They had engaged architect Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr. to design and manage construction of the building, then anticipated to cost \$100,000 (value of around \$7 million in today's dollars).

Although by 1913, Ratcliff had already designed the *Glen Garry Apartments* (1912, 1800 LeRoy Avenue, demolished), the *Channing Apartments* (1913, 2409 College Avenue), and the *Waste and Clark Apartments* (1913, 2126 Bancroft Way), these were three-story structures, relatively uncomplex in comparison to the 5-story Cambridge Apartment building he was to design the following year. (Bruce, 2006)



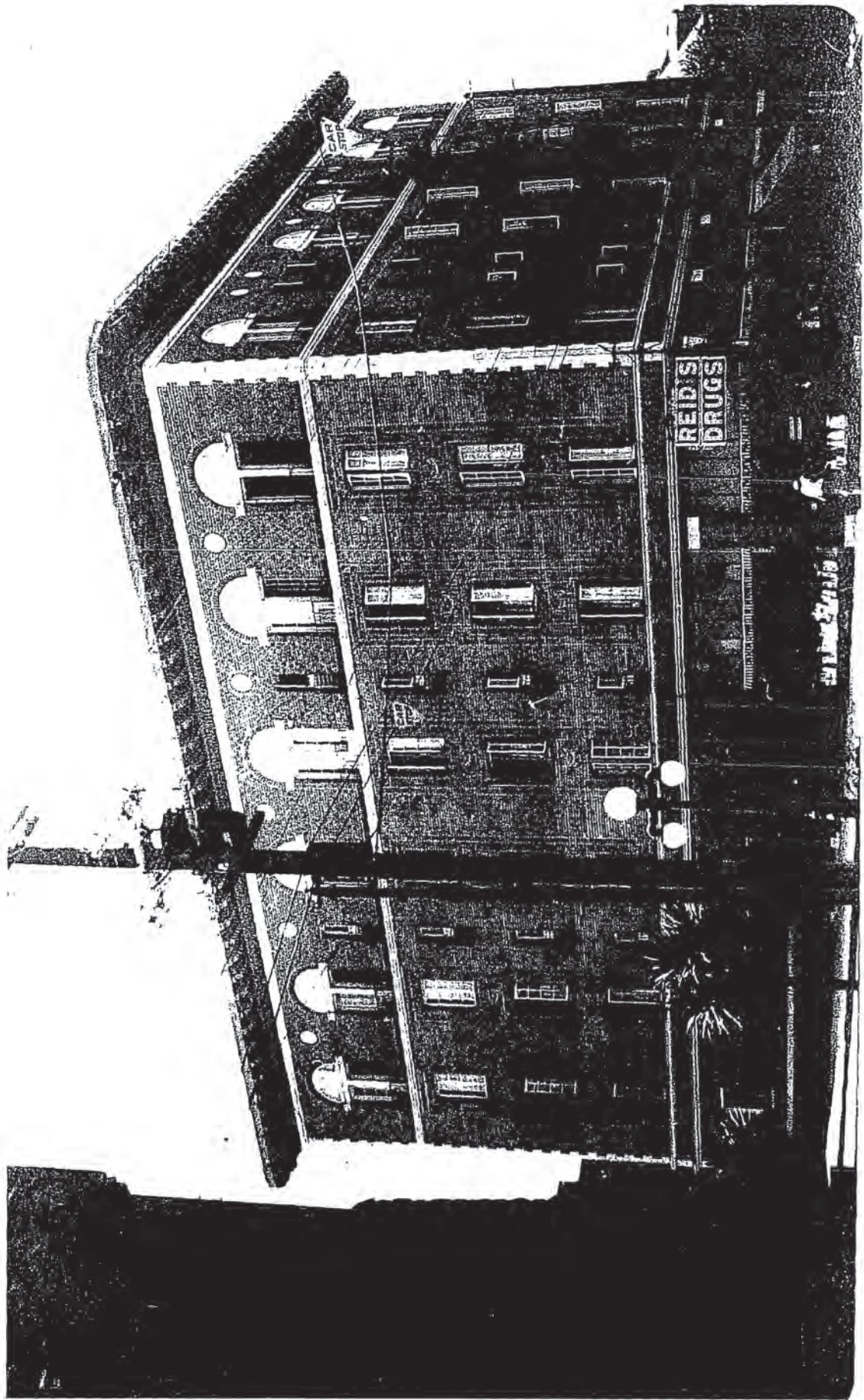


Photo 11. Cambridge Apartments Postcard, possibly circa 1920, Courtesy Berkeley Historical Society.



Built in 1914, the five story Cambridge Apartments building housed forty-eight apartments and four-ground floor storefronts. Its construction involved at least 15 subcontractors and required nearly a year to complete. The project was important to Ratcliff because the structural and mechanical complexities provided Ratcliff his first exposure to structural steel framing, brick curtain walls, and elevator systems. The \$80,000 project provided proof that Ratcliff was capable of more than the residential commissions that had been his “bread and butter” to date. (*Minor, 2006*)

The Daily Pacific Builder reported in its January 8, 1914 edition that the Cambridge Apartments was to be a Class “C” apartment house with considerable use of structural steel and a pressed brick exterior. Interior features were to include interior pine with elm panels, beam ceilings and hardwood floors. Amenities were to include steam heat, elevator service, hot water, and vacuum cleaning systems. The apartments would vary in size, from two to four room suites, all with wall beds and private tiled bathrooms.

Although the building has eventually come to be occupied largely by students, that was not the case initially. Review of the 1916 directory shows that the building’s tenants did include individuals identified as students, but also included a larger mix of people with a variety of occupations, including attorneys, merchants, mining engineers, stenographers, clerks, and teachers. The building had a resident manager and at least two clerks who lived off site. In its initial year, it had an onsite building engineer.

Its owners, attorney George Clark and attorney and U.S. Representative John Arthur Elston, both lived in the Cambridge Apartments. Clark lived in the Cambridge for ten years and Elston lived in the Cambridge for four years after its construction, moving out after his wife, Tallulah LeConte Elston, gave birth to their second daughter. The Cambridge Apartments project may have been Elston and Clark’s experiment with “modern” urban living, close to their law offices, a bakery, restaurants, other commercial enterprises, and the cultural opportunities on the UC campus.

Next door to the east at 2510 Durant Avenue, Elston and Clark engaged Ratcliff to design and construct another investment, the Campus Theatre (Photo 12). The permit for this building was taken out on September 11, 1914. (*Marvin, 1979*) Although no longer a theatre, this building still stands today (Photos 13 and 14).

The 1929 Sanborn map shows the ground floor commercial space of the Cambridge divided into four storefronts facing Telegraph Avenue; a drug store occupied the corner space and a bakery/restaurant occupied the southern most storefront.





**Photo 12. Campus Theatre at 2510 Durant Avenue, Date Unknown, from the Donogh Files, Courtesy Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association.**

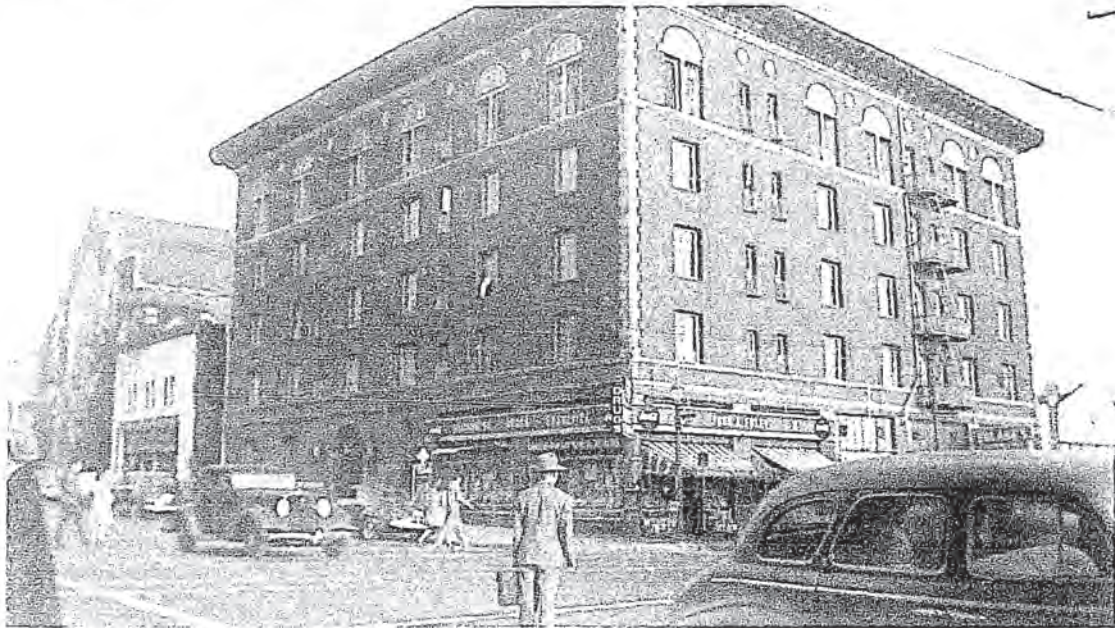


**Photos 13 and 14. August 2007. Campus Theatre at 2510 Durant Avenue.**

Reids Drug Store was the first occupant of the corner storefront. The storefront configuration underwent a radical change in 1957 when Layton's Shoes moved across the street from 2340 Telegraph. The storefront fenestration was removed, the entry was moved to the corner, and a six-foot wide arcade was created by constructing a new window configuration set back from the location of the original. The square columns and



the storefront were tiled in a material unrelated to the rest of the building (Photos 15 and 16). The storefront was rehabilitated to resemble the original when the current tenant, Smart Alec's Intelligent Fast Food, readied the space for its occupancy.



**Photo 15. Cambridge Apartments, looking southeast, approximately 1950, Courtesy Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association.**



**Photo 16. Cambridge Apartments, prior to ground floor façade rehabilitation.**

Blakes on Telegraph restaurant occupies the southern two-fifths of the Telegraph Avenue commercial store frontage. Larry Blake's Restaurant and Rathskeller opened at this location in 1940. Started by Larry Blake and four friends, he bought out his friends when he returned from service in World War II. The waiters initially wore "formal" attire: white shirts with starched collars and bow ties. This changed during what Larry Blake called the "tear gas years." When Larry Blake sold the business to an outside interest in the Fall of 1977, long-time employees protested their firing in what they viewed as a



violation of a standing union contract, which Blake claimed had expired during the summer. A strike defeated the new owner's attempt to operate the business successfully. Larry Blake then repurchased the business and sold it to a group of employees in 1979 after a year of negotiation (*Taylor, Rosenfeld*). The business continues to operate today behind the façade described in section 15 of this application.

The Cambridge Apartments is readily identifiable as a "classic downtown" or "classic commercial" building of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Typically box-like in shape, these multi-story, mixed use buildings included the use of plate glass and clerestory windows divided by heavy square columns in ground floor storefronts, and operable windows in upper story residences or offices. Brick cladding and the use of classically-derived design details, often in terra cotta or cast stone, are also characteristic of these buildings. Use of a three-part composition is also characteristic, often with rusticated treatment and a belt or band-course or entablature to emphasize the ground floor of the building; a middle level where fenestration and detailing are identical or nearly identical from floor to floor; and additional ornamentation at the top, including a prominent projecting cornice, to compositionally balance the strength of the ground floor treatment.

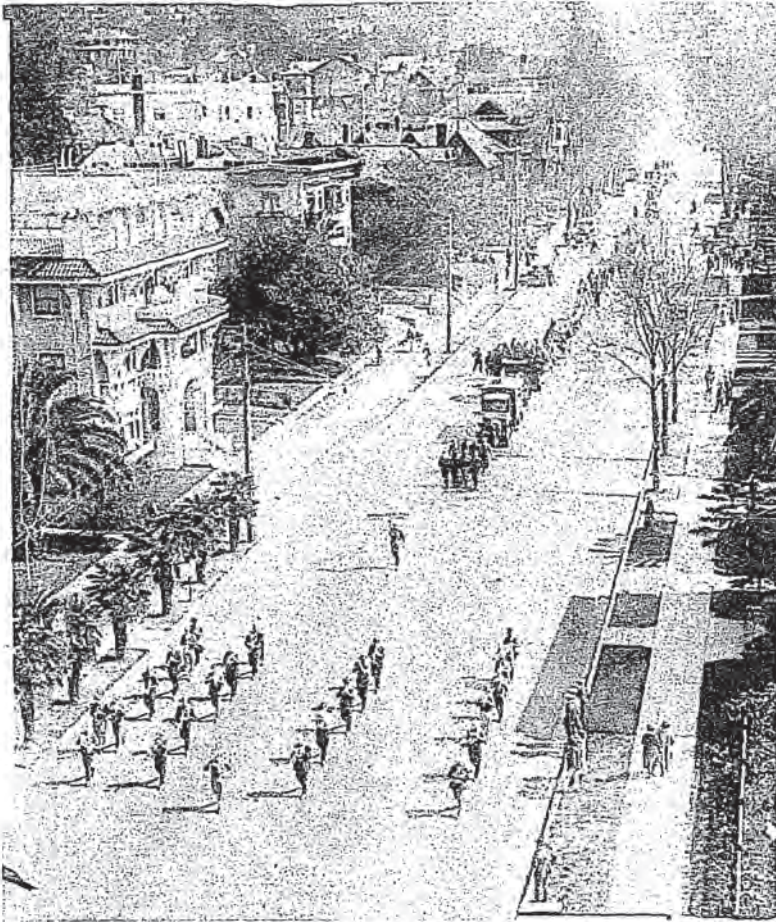
### ***The Neighborhood***

The Cambridge Apartments building is situated in the Southside Campus neighborhood at the southeast corner of Durant and Telegraph Avenues.

The parcel is located within the boundaries of the first officially recorded subdivision in Berkeley. The College Homestead Association Tract was subdivided and recorded in 1866 by the College of California and was bounded by Bancroft and Dwight on the north and south, and College Avenue and Fulton Street on the east and west, respectively. By 1910, the tract was nearly fully built out as a family oriented neighborhood, mainly with single-family residences, churches, schools, an occasional duplex or student boarding house, and some shops on Telegraph Avenue. Refugees fleeing the destruction from the great San Francisco earthquake would fuel rapid development in Berkeley and the east bay.

The 1911 Sanborn maps (see Appendix for sample) show the Telegraph Avenue frontage from Durant Avenue south to Dwight Way to be predominantly single family residential. Many homes on Durant were large and distinguished (Photo 17). The 1911 Sanborn maps show that most commercial structures on Telegraph were located north of Durant to the then southern boundary of the UC campus at Strawberry Creek at Allston Way. The heart of the Telegraph business district appeared to be in the block from Bancroft to Durant. The El Granada and Hotel Carleton, two early twentieth century structures by Henry H. Meyers and Clarence Ward, are located in this block. The west side of Telegraph in this block was lined with three-story structures with shops below and apartments above.





**Photo 17. Durant Avenue east of Telegraph, March 1922, annual Engineer's Day Parade.**

A second building boom from around 1910 and ending with the stock market crash of 1929, increased the density of the neighborhood and remaining empty lots were filled in. (*Cerny, 2000*) The large Cambridge Apartment building marked this wave of change. As new residential subdivisions were built further from the city center, development in the College Homestead Tract began to focus on the needs of the growing University and its student population.

The 1929 Sanborn map (see Appendix for sample) shows this shift happening. Telegraph Avenue from Durant Avenue south to Dwight Way is now predominantly commercial with the odd single-family residence still remaining. Numerous boarding houses and apartments are located in the blocks between Durant Avenue and Channing Way. The Berkeley Inn, since destroyed by fire, is shown at the northeast corner of Telegraph and Haste. The 14-year old Louis Titus residence was torn down to make way for the Cambridge Apartments. Just three years before, Walter H. Ratcliff had been hired to make alterations to the stately Titus home (Photo 18).





**Photo 18. The Louis Titus home (1900) was demolished to make way for the Cambridge Apartments. Postcard courtesy Sarah Wikander.**

### *The Owners*

The Cambridge Apartments were built for John Arthur Elston and George Clark. Elston and Clark were lawyers and business partners in the law firm of Elston, Clark, and Nichols. They maintained an office in Suite 224 of the prestigious John Galen Howard-designed First National Bank Building (demolished) on the southwest corner of Center and Shattuck. Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr. also had his architectural office in this building. Both men resided in the Cambridge Apartments.

More is known about John Arthur Elston because of his political and social stature and, unfortunately, his untimely death. Elston was born February 10, 1875, of modest means in rural Woodland, California to the Reverend Allen M. and Ada F. Elston. Elston received the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy in 1897 from the University of California Berkeley. Two years later he was admitted to the California Bar and began his law practice in Berkeley. In 1902 he was appointed Governor George C. Pardee's private secretary, a position he held until 1907.

In 1911, Elston married Tallulah LeConte, granddaughter of John LeConte, first president of the University of California. He and Tallulah had three daughters: Elizabeth LeConte, Jane LeConte, and Tallulah LeConte. Clearly, it was important to Mrs. Elston that her daughters retain the connection with her prominent family's name.

In 1916, Elston was elected to Congress as a Representative of the Sixth California District. At the time, the congressional Helm Committee was reviewing four potential Bay Area locations for a naval base: Alameda, Hunter's Point, Goat Island, and Richmond-Albany. Elston was adamant that the Helm Committee be left alone to judge the merits of each location and make a sound decision based on the facts. When the San



San Francisco Board of Supervisors sent a lobbying delegation to Washington in mid-February 1917, having heard “unofficially” that Hunter’s Point was to be the site of the new naval base, Elston publicly lashed out at San Francisco Mayor James Rolph, Jr., charging him with violating a “gentlemen’s agreement” that no particular Bay Area locality would be “boosted” against another as the preferred site.

Elston was a strong proponent for a Bay Bridge. He was also known for introducing in January 1919 what today would seem an improbable resolution, requesting that the President open negotiations with the republic of Mexico to negotiate purchase of the Peninsula of Lower California and other adjacent land to provide “ a neutral frontier and thereby promote harmonious relations by reducing to a minimum all international border difficulties and the expense and danger incident thereto.”

When little Tallulah LeConte Elston was just weeks old, her father, in the short dark days of December 1921, removed his hat and coat, left them in shrubbery, and jumped into the Potomac River. His body was found in the river near Long Bridge, not far from the Capitol, an apparent drowning suicide. A cryptic note in his coat pocket left few rational clues as to the reason. His financial and legal affairs were found to be in perfect order and his personal friends recalled his mood as good when he left Berkeley for the east coast just a few weeks prior. Some speculated that he was distraught over the perception that delays in winning the naval base for Alameda, by then the preferred site, were attributable to him. Others cited overwork and fatigue. Still others suggested that he was involved in dealings where he had personally compromised himself, and, upon his death, would just never come to light.

His body was transported back to Berkeley from Washington, D.C. by a Congressional delegation. A simple Episcopal service, attended by many, was said at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church (2300 Bancroft Way). Mrs. Elston, weakened by recent childbirth, was too distraught to attend her husband’s funeral. Elston, in a holographic will, left the bulk of his \$50,000 estate to his wife. In today’s dollars, the estate would be worth over three million dollars.

Little is known about George Clark. He was an attorney and a business partner of John Arthur Elston in the law firm Elston, Clark, and Nichols. After Elston’s death, Clark became the senior partner and the firm was renamed Clark, Nichols, and Elste. George Clark also held political office, as the San Francisco Chronicle reported in 1939 that Clark, then a California State Assemblyman, was barred from accepting an appointment as attorney for the 35<sup>th</sup> District Agricultural Association at Merced because, according to the state constitution, Assemblyman and Senators could not concurrently hold other state positions.

Partners in the law firm appear to have overall had political interests and power. Ralph R. Eltse, a Boalt Hall graduate of 1914 and another partner in the firm, served one year as Congressman from the 7<sup>th</sup> District of California and was President of the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce in 1925, during which time he was reported to be instrumental in helping institute the City Manager form of government in Berkeley.



*The Architect (largely drawn from Minor, 2006)*

Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr. was a prolific Berkeley-based architect, completing over 250 projects in Berkeley. He began his architectural career during the era of the City Beautiful Movement and left his imprint on the city of Berkeley, in our homes, schools, and other public buildings. (Bruce, 2006)

Born in England on February 2, 1881, in Blackheath, Kent, Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr. immigrated with his parents and two sisters to the United States in 1894 when he was 13 years old. Although their destination was California, their journey to Berkeley was long, beginning with the family's landing at Ellis Island in New York Harbour, punctuated by the cross-continental train trip and stays in San Diego and Pasadena before the family came to rest in Berkeley, then a small town with a population of under fifteen thousand.

The Ratcliff family was prominent in brass manufacturing in Birmingham, the industrial center of the English midlands. His father, Walter H. Ratcliff, Sr., was an Anglican minister who chose teaching over a pastoral ministry. The family business apparently provided him an annual income of six hundred pounds, freeing him from the necessity of finding regular paid work to support his family. An intellectual man also interested in the spiritual, Walter Ratcliff, Sr. would have found the diverse, University-centered community of Berkeley a stimulating environment. He was also concerned about education and brought his family to Berkeley so that his three children could go to University.

The trajectory of Walter H. Ratcliff Jr.'s career was remarkable. He enrolled at the University of California before there was a school of architecture. While studying for and obtaining a degree in Chemistry (1903), a field he would abandon due to the health problems it caused, Ratcliff taught himself to design houses as a speculative business venture. His architectural training was not formal, comprised of several years of apprenticeship/employment and a "grand tour" of Europe, during which he had just several months of schooling. His work quickly matured and he obtained licensure as an architect when that became mandatory.

In the summer of 1901, when he was 20 years old, Ratcliff built a speculative house for his mother, a property intended for resale or rental. The contract notice for this house is the earliest known record of a building designed by him. In 1902, he designed the Ratcliff family home on the Northside, again with his mother listed on the contract as the property owner. Ratcliff is listed as "architect" on both contracts. Also in 1901, Ratcliff designed a speculative house for Charles Louis McFarland, an investor and financier 10 years his senior, beginning a lifelong professional partnership.

Ratcliff went to work for John Galen Howard, UC Berkeley Campus Architect, in 1903, shortly after graduation in the chemistry curriculum. Ratcliff worked with architects of high caliber and dealt with great technical challenges in both design and construction. By the time Ratcliff left Howard's office in 1906, he was a California licensed architect,



readying himself for a year of further study in Europe. He secured, with his Uncle Howard's aid, a six-month course of study at the British School in Rome.

In the year following his departure for Europe, and the fifteen months since the April 1906 great San Francisco Earthquake, a wave of construction had engulfed the Bay Area. Almost immediately upon his return, Ratcliff entered into a partnership with Alfred Henry Jacobs, a fellow alumnus of the Class of 1903. The partnership, Ratcliff & Jacobs, was short on commissions and lasted just a little over a year. Ratcliff reportedly disliked the commute to San Francisco and consciously chose to work in the east bay. The one known work of Ratcliff's reported in 1979 to be surviving in downtown San Francisco (*Corbett, 1979*) at 150 California Street (1919) no longer exists, having been demolished a number of years ago to make way for a taller high rise.

Ratcliff opened his own architecture practice in Berkeley in 1909. Through World War I, most of Ratcliff's work remained in Berkeley and was predominantly residential in nature. Ratcliff worked with the developer Duncan McDuffie and his Berkeley homes were largely situated in the new upland tracts, such as Claremont and Northbrae. Ratcliff also designed as many as ten apartment buildings within walking distance of the UC Berkeley campus, including the Cambridge Apartments, the subject of this application.

In September 1913, Ratcliff was appointed Berkeley City Architect, a newly created position for the purpose of designing four neighborhood fire stations that would harmonize with their residential surroundings. Hose Company No. 7 Fire House, 2911 Claremont Avenue, now adapted for commercial use, is the only one for the four Ratcliff firehouses to survive. One firehouse was destroyed in the 1923 fire and the other two firehouses were demolished to make way for parking lots.

As City Architect, Ratcliff also served as superintending architect for design and construction of five Berkeley Schools in 1915: Edison Jr. High School, John Muir School, Frances E. Willard Jr. High School (demolished 1976), Garfield Jr. High School (Ernest Coxhead, 1915, 1414 Walnut Street, Landmark #37 & National Register), and Luther Burbank Jr. High School (demolished 1965). Using \$500,000 in bond money, Ratcliff developed the programme for each school and then brought in four other architectural firms to design four of them. Edison School (1720 Oregon Street) was Ratcliff's own design. Ratcliff's final substantial work for the City was the City's Corporation Yard (1916, 1326 Allston Way, Landmark #247).

During his tenure as City Architect, Ratcliff also served on the equivalent of Berkeley's first planning commission, one of the first in the state. In 1916, the commission produced one of the state's first zoning codes.

On January 11, 1921, the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* reported that Councilman Charles D. Heywood moved to abolish the office of city architect, asserting that since the firehouses, the schools, and the corporation yard had been completed four years prior, the current work could readily be done by the City's building and engineering departments. Four days later, Walter Ratcliff stood before the Council and explained that he had collected



\$586.50 for architect's services from the City over the previous four years. He listed the project plans and specifications and project oversight he had provided to the City, including two jobs at no charge. It was suggested that Ratcliff could continue to provide advice to the City from his place on the Planning Commission and the Council voted four to one to abolish the paid position of City Architect.

While serving in his capacity as City Architect, Ratcliff also maintained a thriving private practice. The year 1914, the year Ratcliff built the Cambridge Apartments, was a year that allowed Ratcliff to mature and prove himself as an able practitioner who could resolve a multitude of programmatic and technical issues. In addition to residential work, his firm would go on to produce designs for fraternities, churches, parish halls, apartment buildings, clubs, banks, fire stations, and schools.

Ratcliff was appointed campus architect of Mills College in 1921, when the college was operating under its new president, Aurelia Henry Reinhardt. The trustees requested a revision of the campus plan at this time. Ratcliff drew upon a Phoebe Apperson Hearst-commissioned plan by Bernard Maybeck that was adopted by the trustees in 1919. Ratcliff's plan retained Maybeck's most important features and provided an idealized axial ensemble for the site. The Ratcliff campus plan was never realized in its entirety. Completed buildings include the Gallery Museum (1925), the Music Building (1928), Ethel Moore (1926) and Mary Morse (1935) Residence Halls, the Norman Bridge Health Center (1930), Faculty Village (1930's – early 1940s), as well as the Wetmore Gate (1925) at Seminary Avenue and Richards Gate (1933) on the west side of the campus. Ratcliff's final campus project was an expansion of the Mary Morse Hall in 1944. In early 1922, prior to his work on these buildings, Ratcliff had traveled to the San Diego fair and Mexico to study Spanish colonial buildings. His work at Mills College allowed him to experiment and create in the Spanish revivalist style on a large and impressive scale.

Concurrently with his work at Mills College, Ratcliff designed a new campus for the Pacific School of Religion on a rise north of the UC campus that had been cleared by the 1923 fire. As the Mills College campus was a major expression in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, the Pacific School of Religion was an equally impressive display of architecture in the English idiom. Sited around a grassy common, each building in the group represents a different period in English architecture.

During the Depression years of the 1930s, Ratcliff took over management of Fidelity Guaranty Building and Loan Association. Richard McFarland, his partner in that venture, had a nervous breakdown believing that all had been lost, and never came back to work. Work was slow during these years, and architect and partner Scott Haymond took over major responsibility for architectural work in the Ratcliff firm during this time.

Ratcliff's son Robert joined the firm after completing his WWII military service. Walter Ratcliff's last work was the Berkeley Baptist Divinity School Chapel (1949, part of Baptist Divinity School, Landmarks #207 and 215, 2606 Dwight Way, Julia Morgan and Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr.). He began disengaging from work at the firm after a disagreement



related to his son Robert's (Kit) modernist leanings resulted in the dismissal of architect Scott Haymond, Ratcliff Sr.'s loyal business partner of over 30 years. Ratcliff formally left the firm in 1955 at age 74, ceding control to his son, Robert.

City of Berkeley Landmarks by Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr. include: the *Berkeley Tennis Club* (1908, 2624 Hillegass, Landmark # 123); *Elmer Buckman House* (1909, 920 Shattuck Avenue, Landmark # 186); *Albra Apartments* (1921, 2532 Durant Avenue, Structure of Merit Landmark # 221); the *Robcliff Apartment House* (1921, 2515 Channing Way, Structure of Merit Landmark # 222); the *Elks Club* (1913, 2018 Allston Way, Landmark #168); *Waste and Clark Apartments* (1913, 2126 Bancroft Way, Landmark #182); *City of Berkeley Corporation Yard* (1916, 1326 Allston Way, Landmark #247); *Armstrong College* (1923, 2222 Harold Way, Landmark #187); *Chamber of Commerce Building* (1925-1927, 2140-2144 Shattuck Avenue, Landmark #85); *Mercantile Trust Company* (1925, 2959 College Avenue, Landmark #53); *Hillside School* (1925, 1581 LeRoy Avenue, Landmark #61); *Fidelity Guaranty Building and Loan Association* (1926, 2323 Shattuck Avenue; Landmark #73); *Berkeley Day Nursery* (1927, 2031 Sixth Street, Landmark #18); *Mason-McDuffie Building* (1928, 2102 Shattuck Avenue, Landmark #86); *Richfield Oil Station* (1930, 1950 Oxford Street, Landmark #50); *West Berkeley YMCA* (1938, 2009 Tenth Street, Structure of Merit Landmark #172); and the *Farley House* (1922, 147 Tunnel Road, Structure of Merit Landmark #239).

The Chamber of Commerce Building, Berkeley Day Nursery, and the Hillside School are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

## **17. Significance:**

The structural and mechanical complexities of the Cambridge Apartments provided architect Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr. his first exposure to structural steel framing, brick curtain walls, and elevator systems. The \$80,000 project provided proof that Ratcliff was capable of more than the residential commissions and the less complicated non-residential structures he had completed to-date.

The Cambridge Apartments are a good example of a mixed use residential/commercial development located along an established public transit route. Its location provided a means of convenient urban living prior to widespread automobile ownership that would allow separation of commercial and living environments.

The Cambridge Apartments mark the second Berkeley building boom that occurred from around 1910 and ended with the stock market crash of 1929. The Cambridge housed a variety of individuals: students, professionals, and workers.

The Cambridge Apartments building has cultural value by virtue of its association with its owners, two prominent, politically connected members of the community: U.S. Representative John Arthur Elston and attorney George Clark, who chose to live in the evolving Telegraph Avenue urban environment.



The Cambridge Apartments building is important for the value it adds to the neighborhood streetscape. The Cambridge complements other important early 20<sup>th</sup> C structures on the streetscape, particularly the nearby Hotel Carleton and the El Granada, both by Henry H. Meyers and Clarence Ward.

### **18. Photographs:**

Photo 1. August 2007. The Cambridge Apartments, looking southeast.

Photo 2. August 2007. The Cambridge Apartments, looking northeast.

Photos 3 and 4. August 2007, Cambridge Apartments Entry, North Façade.

Photo 5. North façade, Cambridge Apartments, possibly late 1930's, from the Donogh files, Courtesy Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association.

Photo 6. August 2007. Cambridge Apartments, Commercial Entry, North Façade.

Photo 7. August 2007. Cambridge Apartments, West Façade, Northern Storefront.

Photo 8. August 2007. Cambridge Apartments. West Façade, Southern Storefront.

Photo 9. August 2007. Cambridge Apartments.

Photo 10. August 2007. Cambridge Apartments, Fire escape landing detail.

Photo 12. Campus Theatre at 2510 Durant Avenue, Date Unknown, from the Donogh Files, Courtesy Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association.

Photos 13 and 14. August 2007. Campus Theatre at 2510 Durant Avenue.

Photo 15. Cambridge Apartments, looking southeast, approximately 1950, Courtesy Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association.

Photo 16. Cambridge Apartments, prior to ground floor façade rehabilitation.

Photo 17. Durant Avenue east of Telegraph, March 1922, annual Engineer's Day Parade.

Photo 18. The Louis Titus home (1900) was demolished to make way for the Cambridge Apartments. Postcard courtesy Sarah Wikander.



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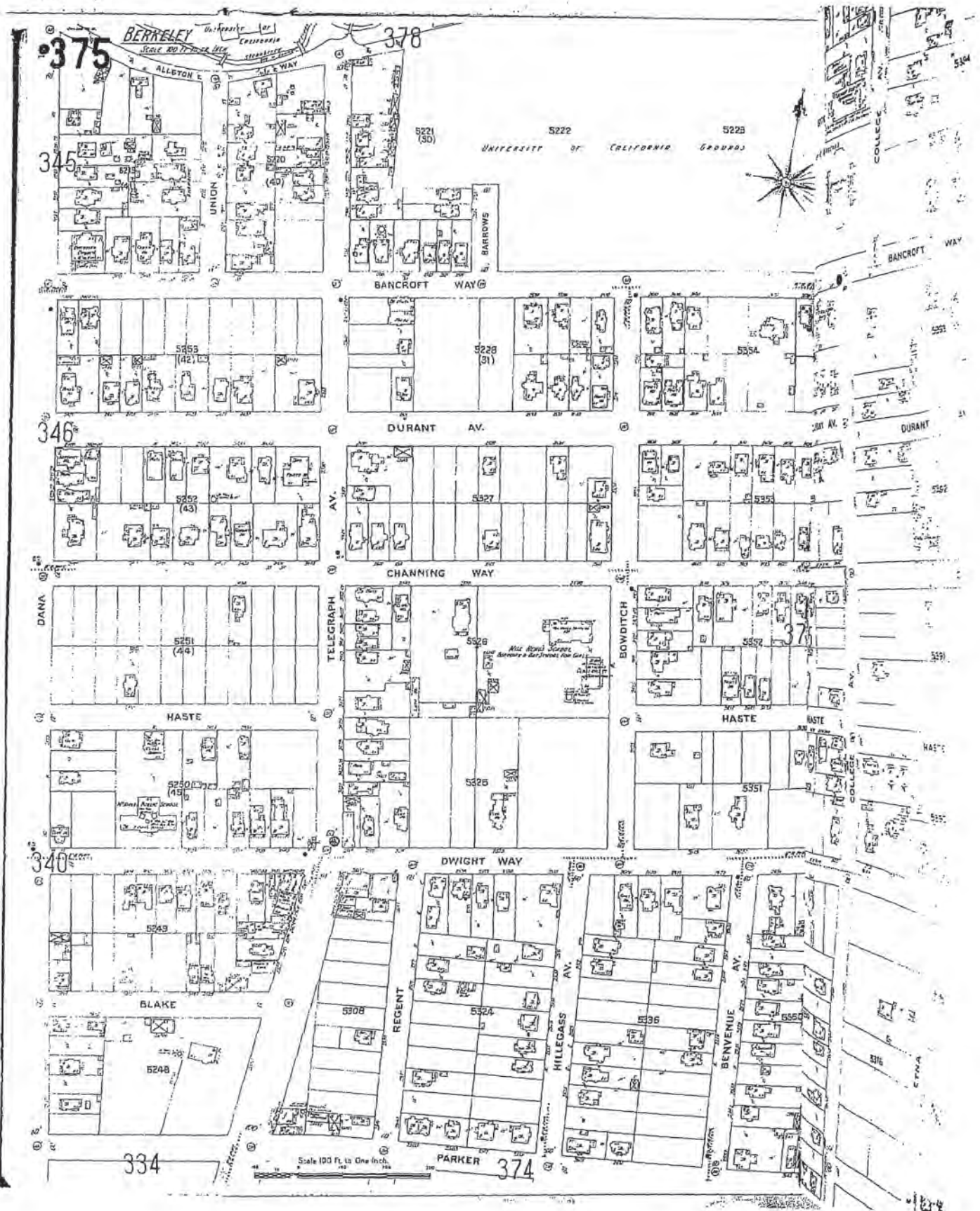
**20. Recordors:** Jill Korte, Berkeley Landmarks Preservation Commission

**21. Repositories:** Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, City of Berkeley Planning Department.

**22. Appendix – Sanborn Maps**



1903 Sanborn



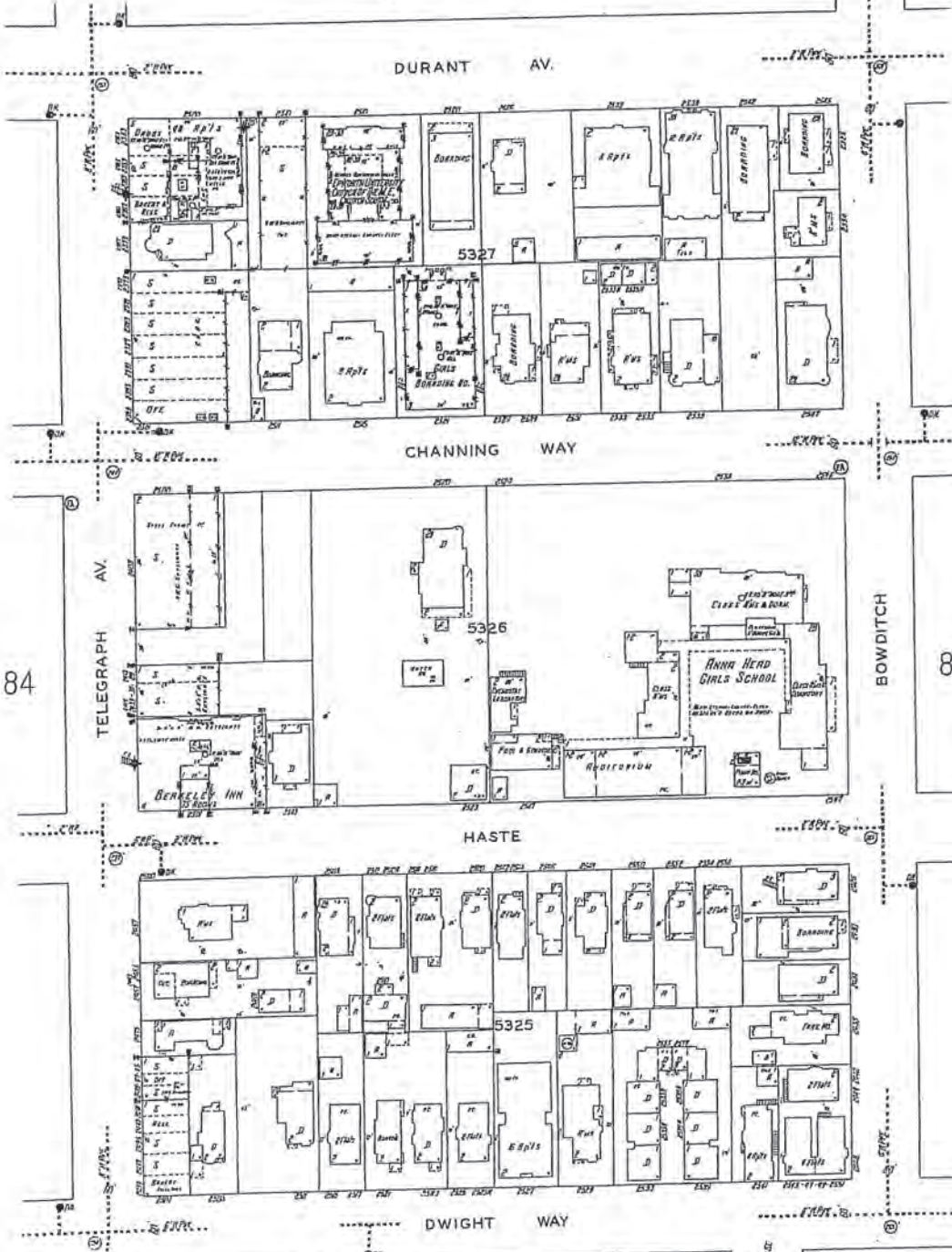






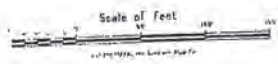
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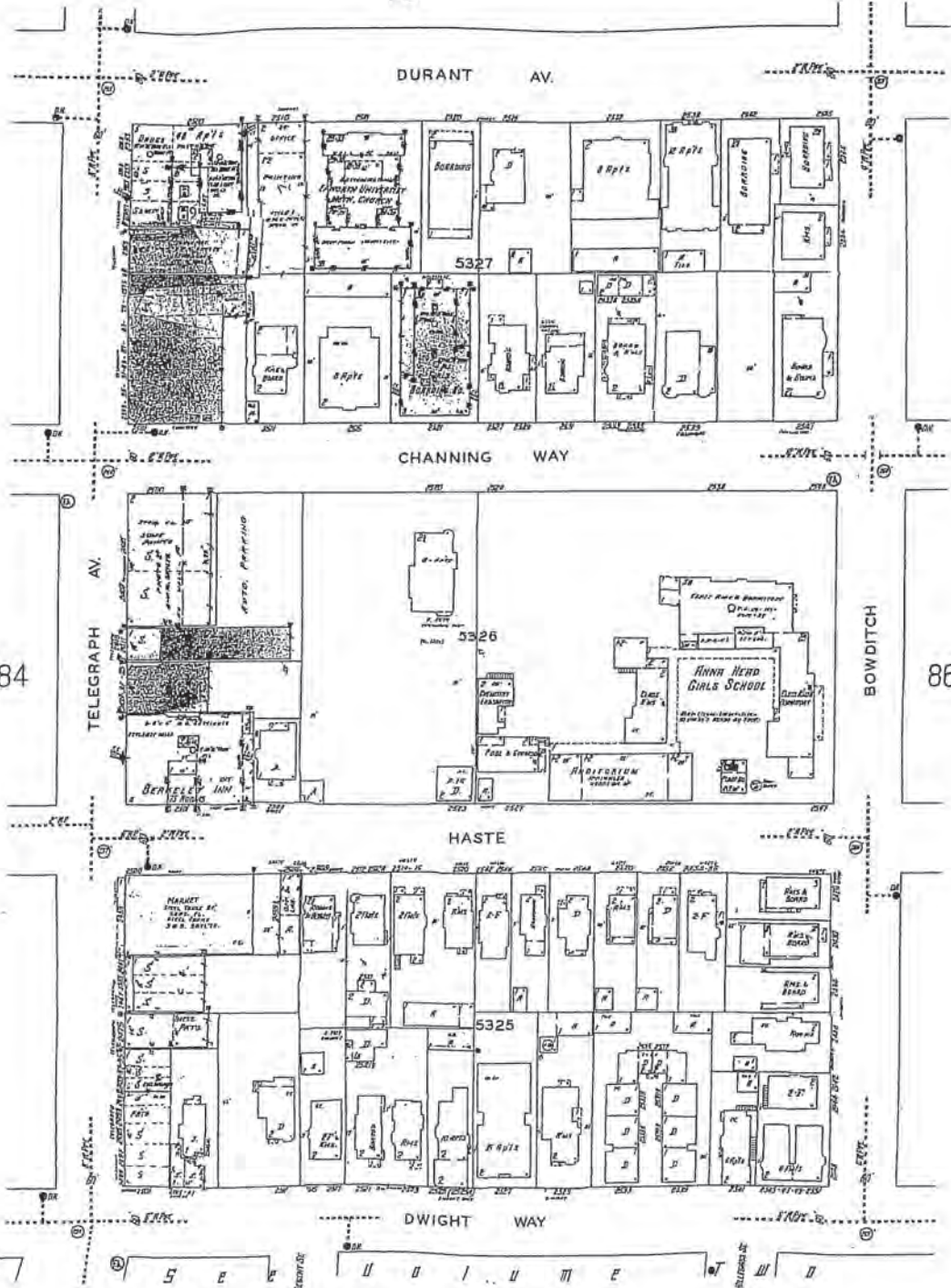




1950 Sanborn

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