

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

2237 EDMONDSON AVENUE (COMMERCIAL BUILDING) (Midtown Edmondson Historic District)

HABS No. MD-1439

Location: 2237 Edmondson Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland

2237 Edmondson Avenue is located at latitude: 39.294702, longitude: -76.652868. The coordinates represent the front entry doorway of 2237 Edmondson Avenue and were obtained in 2025 using Google Earth (WGS84). There is no restriction on their release to the public.

Significance: Constructed in 1915, the commercial building at 2237 Edmondson Avenue housed a variety of uses over its history. These include Terrace Garage and other automobile dealerships in the first half of the twentieth century, a Building Trade School from 1948 to 1951, the Edmondson Avenue Armory from 1953 to 1958, the Pressman Brothers Grocery in the 1960s, other commercial enterprises in the late twentieth century, and Wonder Enterprises from 2005-2021. Located on a major commercial street in West Baltimore, the building is significant as a contributing element of the National Register-eligible Midtown Edmondson Historic District.

Description: The two-story, three-bay masonry commercial building at 2237 Edmondson Avenue features brick walls in the front (north) section and a mix of brick and stone walls in the rear (south) section. The building is rectangular in plan and measures approximately 50' x 170'. Although the north façade has been altered, it still reflects its original symmetrical design with two large first-story window openings (now partially infilled with brick and concrete block) flanking the central wide entrance (partially infilled with concrete block) and three symmetrically placed second-story window openings that have been filled in with modern corrugated fiberglass panels (see Figure 1). The façade has a concrete water table, brick sills and brick jack arches with concrete keystones on the second-story windows, and a decorative brick belt course located between the jack arches and the large rectangular recessed panel in the center of the stepped parapet. The brick is laid in the Flemish bond pattern, with all of the brick having a worn coat of paint. The façade has two entrances: in the central bay are a set of modern aluminum-framed glass double swing doors protected by an outer roll-up security door, and near the east end of the façade is a solid single door accessed by two steps that leads directly to an interior staircase. In addition, two signs project from the façade: a modern non-illuminated tenant sign above the main entrance that reads "WONDER ENTERPRISES, INC.," and a perpendicular metal sign frame that is mounted in the center of the parapet wall. The building has a mono-slope roof that drains into gutters and leaders located on the west elevation.

The property grade descends from Edmondson Avenue southward to the rear of the building. On both side elevations, the primary north facade treatment wraps around the corners and continues along the side elevations for approximately 2', after which the brick changes to unpainted common bond. The elevation parapets then step down from north to south. The northern portions of the side elevations, which are approximately two-thirds of the length of the building, are two-story brick, but the remaining one-third portion of the walls (where the grade is lower, and the basement level is visible) is composed of two stories of fieldstone on the exposed basement and first floor and brick on the second floor. On the east elevation are a total of twenty-two former window openings and a centrally placed wide loading dock doorway with a metal roll-up door. A vertical seam in the brick is noticeable on the wall south of the loading dock, where it meets the stone section. All former window openings have been completely infilled with concrete block and brick, but they retain their original brick sills and row-lock arches. In the first bay of the stone section, one window opening has had stone removed below the sill to create a door opening which has now been blocked over. On the west elevation, the wall plane changes at the two-thirds point (where the fieldstone covers the first floor), projecting approximately 8" westward beyond the plane of the northern section. This projection, combined with the change in masonry, suggests that the north and south portions of the building were constructed at different times. A total of twenty-seven former window openings with brick sills and row-lock arches are on the west elevation with three of them housing HVAC equipment and the others infilled with concrete block and brick. The basement-level openings on the southern brick end of the west elevation are also infilled.

The south (rear) elevation wall is fieldstone on the basement and first story, and red brick on the second story. It has central first- and second-story doorways that are accessed by an exterior metal fire escape, a single grade-level swing-type doorway toward the west end, and a wide grade-level center vehicular doorway with a metal roll-up door. The single swing-type doorway has a non-original rusty steel swing door and frame set within an original wider opening that has been partially infilled with masonry and stucco. The door bears a faded painted sign that reads 2237 Tabors Garage, indicating a former tenant.

The basement can be entered from the exterior through doors located in the south wall or from the interior of the first floor via wooden stairs. The basement consists of two large open spaces and several smaller rooms including one bathroom with a sink, toilet and shower, and five rooms that may have been used for offices or storage. A wall-mounted utility sink is installed in the southern open space. Two sets of wooden stairs leading to the first floor are located against the west wall in the northern and southern portions of the basement. The basement floors and ceilings are concrete. The northern portion of the basement has rectangular brick support piers, and the southern portion has steel support columns. A few feet north of the fieldstone section there is a single, large cone-shaped brick pier along the east wall near the building's furnace. Artificial

basement lighting is provided by incandescent pendant or surface mounted luminaires. All interior basement doors are paneled single-leaf swing type except for a metal-clad, sliding fire door that accesses one of the smaller rooms.

The first floor can be entered directly either from the Edmondson Avenue sidewalk or from the rear of the property. Interior access from the first floor to other floors includes two wooden staircases adjacent to the west wall (located towards the rear of each large room); one leads down to the basement and the other located near the southeast corner of the first floor that leads up to the second floor. The first floor consists primarily of two large open spaces. The open space to the north was recently Wonder Enterprises' grocery store and the open space to the south was the grocery storage "back room." The two large spaces are separated by a wood-stud partition and are accessed via a centrally located archway with plastic strip curtains. Smaller rooms adjacent to the northern open grocery store space include an entry vestibule, two bathrooms (each with a sink and toilet), a stair enclosure, a freezer, and five additional rooms that may have been used for offices or storage. Floor finishes throughout are primarily vinyl tile with smaller areas of exposed concrete. Walls and soffits in the grocery area are sheathed with wood-grained paneling, and ceilings are acoustic lay-in tiles set within a suspended metal grid. Most artificial lighting in the former grocery store area is provided by commercial surface-mounted fluorescent strip luminaires. The perimeter walls of the south grocery store storage "back room" are concrete, and the ceiling consists of painted wood deck and joists supported by painted steel girders.

The second floor can be entered from an interior staircase accessed from the Edmondson Avenue sidewalk through a first-floor door on the east end of the north façade. The second floor can also be entered by ascending a first-floor wooden staircase through a hinged wooden hatch located near the southeast corner. The second floor consists mostly of two large open spaces divided by a partition with two archways. The eastern archway connects the north and south open areas directly, while the western archway connects the north area to the south via a corridor. There are two restrooms with sinks and toilets and two small rooms that may have been used for storage or offices. A large rectangular floor opening is present near the southeast corner of the south open area. It was likely used as a hoist opening to move goods or other large objects between the first and second floor. The floor finishes are plywood and vinyl tile. Perimeter walls are painted masonry or unpainted plywood paneling, and the ceiling is a combination of gypsum board panels and exposed wood rafters and decking. The wood ceiling/roof structure is supported by massive steel I-beams resting on brick pilasters that protrude from the perimeter walls.

Attached to the northwest corner of the façade is an approximately 7' high brick wall that matches a brick wall attached to the northeast corner of the neighboring fire station at 2249 Edmondson Avenue. These two walls frame a vehicular entryway to the alley between the 2237 and 2249 Edmondson

Avenue buildings. Originally freestanding, the wall immediately adjacent to 2239 Edmondson Avenue has been connected with brick infill.

The building was vacant at the time of the survey and was in fair condition. Other than portions of the perimeter walls, interior paneled swing doors, the roof/ceiling structure, fire door, cone-shaped brick pier and possibly the utility sink and pendant luminaires installed in the basement, very little original fabric remains.

History: As shown on the 1914 Sanborn map, the only building present on the southeast quadrant of the intersection of Edmondson Avenue and Bentalou Street was the Baltimore City Fire Department, Engine House No. 36 (Clarence R. Thomas Fire Station, HABS No. MD-1440). The current site at 2237 Edmondson was still vacant in 1914.¹ The following year, according to an April 1915 real estate listing in *The Sun*, Henry A. Munderloh and his wife purchased from John W. Hamilton a 45' x 157' parcel of property "on the south side of Edmondson Avenue, near Bentalou Street."² In that same year, Henry Munderloh formed Terrace Garage and constructed a garage on the site. It is possible that the original construction was limited to a portion of the existing building, most likely the rear section. In June 1915, Terrace Garage advertised in *The Sun* classified advertisements that they offered "expert instructions in Auto Driving and Repairing."³

During the 1930s, Munderloh expanded the Terrace Garage services in several capacities. As of June 1933, the Terrace Garage was advertising loans through the Edmondson Finance Co. Inc., which offered loans for auto and furniture purchases.⁴ In 1934, the garage was one of twenty Ford dealerships within the City of Baltimore (see Figure 2). In 1936, Terrace Garage was named an authorized dealer for Dodge and Plymouth vehicles.⁵ In March of that year a permit was filed with the city to erect a showroom window, most likely connected with the new role as a Dodge and Plymouth dealer.⁶

On September 22, 1943, Henry A. and Flora L. Munderloh sold the property to C. William Hicks and Jane Elizabeth Baker. William Hicks passed away on June 14,

¹ "Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Baltimore, Independent Cities, Maryland," Volume 2, 1914, Image 51 of 124, Map 147, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3844bm.g3844bm_g03573191402/?sp=51&st=image&r=-1.206,-0.149,3.412,1.589,0.

² "Real Estate Transfers, Baltimore City," *The Sun*, 2 April 1915, 13, www.newspapers.com, accessed 15 July 2021.

³ "Automobile Colleges," *The Sun*, 26 June 1915, 9, www.newspapers.com, accessed 8 January 2025.

⁴ Advertisement, *The Sun*, 2 June 1933, 22, www.newspapers.com, accessed 8 July 2021.

⁵ "New Dealer Named for Dodge and Plymouth," *The Sun*, 29 March 1936, 26, www.newspapers.com, accessed 15 July 2021.

⁶ "2237 Edmondson Avenue, Division 20, Section 2, Block 117, Lot 34-A," Master Index Cards, Building Permits, Baltimore City Archives, <https://guide.msa.maryland.gov/pages/series.aspx?ID=BRG48-53>, accessed 21 January 2025.

1944, bequeathing his share of the property to his wife, Hilda I. Hicks, and his children, Marlene D. Hicks and Charles William Hicks.⁷

Up until the mid-twentieth century, the site served primarily as an automobile facility, including businesses under the names of Rea Keech Pontiac, Inc., purveyors of Dodge, Plymouth, and Pontiac cars ca. 1940-1943; State Motor Company ca. 1944-1945; and West End Motors ca. 1945-1948 (see Figure 1 & 3).⁸ Newspaper advertisements and Sanborn maps indicate that there were several buildings located behind 2237 Edmondson Avenue that were likely integrated into the automotive businesses, including the largest outbuilding, a rectangular structure that later became known as 501 N. Bentalou Street and is labeled “Auto Rep.” on the 1950 Sanborn map.⁹ A 1942 advertisement in *The Sun* listed a used car for sale, stating that interested buyers should “Apply Terrace Garage Repair Shop, Bentalou St. and Laurretta avenue.”¹⁰ A 1952 newspaper advertisement listing the building for rent described the building as containing an “auto ramp to second floor.”¹¹

Sanborn maps show two addresses in front of the site, 2237 and 2245 Edmondson Avenue, although it is unclear if the two addresses distinguished between the front and rear sections of the building, or if they distinguished between the main building and the rear ancillary buildings.

According to the 1950 Sanborn map and a March 8, 1950 telephone directory, 2237 Edmondson Avenue housed the Building Trade School, a facility that provided training in the building trades, advertising that the government would pay veterans’ tuition and provide them with a “subsistence” payment while they were students and supply them with a “complete set of tools” upon completion of their training course.¹² It is unclear how long the school operated, although it appears to have been short-lived in that the advertisements in *The Sun* only ran from approximately 1948 through mid-1951. On October 25, 1948, a permit was

⁷ Fidelity National Title Insurance Company. *60 Year Title Search, Property Title File No. BP210030, 2237 Edmondson Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21223*, 16, 2021.

⁸ Rea Keech Pontiac, Inc. “Help Wanted” Classified Advertisement, *The Evening Sun*, 7 July 1942, www.newspapers.com, accessed 12 July 2021; Rea Keech Pontiac, Inc. Advertisement, *The Sun*, 29 September 1940, 27, www.newspapers.com, accessed 9 July 2021; State Motor Company, “Help Wanted” Advertisement, 27 March 1944, 21, www.newspapers.com, accessed 12 July 2021; “West End Motors” Advertisement, *The Sun*, 5 February 1946, 22, www.newspapers.com, accessed 9 July 2021.

⁹ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Baltimore, Independent Cities, Maryland. Sanborn Map Company, Vol. 2, 1950, Sheet 147, https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3844bm.g3844bm_g03573195002/?sp=53&r=-0.587,0.486,1.244,0.58,0.

¹⁰ Advertisement, *The Sun*, 12 April 1942, 41, www.newspapers.com, accessed 8 January 2025.

¹¹ “For Rent” Advertisement, *The Sun*, 27 March 1952, 39, www.newspapers.com, accessed 8 January 2025.

¹² Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Baltimore, 1950, Sheet 147; Advertisement, *The Sun*, 2 January 1949, 36, www.newspapers.com, accessed 20 July 2021.

filed with the city in reference to “use as [a] plumbing and masonry trade school.”¹³

In February 1951, veterans in Baltimore protested when the Veterans Administration closed three trade schools, including the Building Trade School on Edmondson Avenue, the Baltimore Construction Institute, and one other school. According to the Veterans Administration’s Regional Director, William L. Limburg, the Baltimore Construction Institute not only had overcharged the federal government, but there were also “certain irregularities involving attendance, passes and tools.”¹⁴ Although the Baltimore Construction Institute was described as being controlled by “substantially the same corporation” that owned the Building Trade Corporation, it is unclear as to why the Building Trade Corporation at 2237 Edmondson Avenue was closed. Regional Director Limburg publicly acknowledged that: “No accusations of overcharging the Government have been placed against the Building Trade School... We don’t know why the Building Trade School was closed since that one wasn’t involved in the dispute.”¹⁵

It is not clear how long the Building Trade School remained closed, although newspaper notices mentioned the school for at least a few more months in 1951. A March 1951 classified advertisement indicated that the school was seeking instructors.¹⁶ In July 1951, an advertisement in *The Sun* referred to the school at 2237 Edmondson Avenue by the name of the Baltimore Construction Institute.¹⁷

In the mid- to late-twentieth century, the property changed ownership multiple times.¹⁸ When it was offered for sale in May 1985, an advertisement described 2237 Edmondson Avenue as a commercial warehouse with 23,218 square feet.¹⁹ In the last half of the twentieth century, the property was used for a variety of both automobile and non-automobile purposes. The Maryland National Guard used the building as the “Edmondson Avenue Armory 4 ED” to train the all-African American 231st Transfer Battalion from 1953-1958, before the guard was officially integrated.²⁰ It was then occupied by the Pressman Brothers Grocery

¹³ “2237 Edmondson Avenue, Division 20, Section 2, Block 117, Lot 34-A,” Master Index Cards, Building Permits, Baltimore City Archives, <https://guide.msa.maryland.gov/pages/series.aspx?ID=BRG48-53>, accessed 21 January 2025.

¹⁴ “Ex-GI Students Will Get Checks,” *The Sun*, 16 February 1951, 36, www.newspapers.com, accessed 8 July 2021.

¹⁵ “Ex-GI Students Will Get Checks,” *The Sun*, 16 February 1951, 25, www.newspapers.com, accessed 8 July 2021.

¹⁶ Classified Ad, “Carpenter Instructor,” *The Sun*, 28 March 1951, 22, www.newspapers.com, accessed 8 July 2021.

¹⁷ Advertisement, *The Sun*, 8 July 1951, 36, www.newspapers.com, accessed 8 July 2021.

¹⁸ Fidelity National Title Insurance Company, *60 Year Title Search, Property Title File No. BP210030, 2237 Edmondson Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21223*, 8.

¹⁹ Advertisement, *The Sun*, 26 May 1985, 172, www.newspapers.com, accessed 20 July 2021.

²⁰ Louis Diggs, “Melvin Cade Armory,” Landmark Designation Report (Baltimore: The Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation), 13 November 2007, 5,

from 1959-65, which applied for a liquor license in November 1961 and was sold at auction with goods and materials in 1965 (see Figure 4).²¹ Other tenants included: Hamels Auto Parts, Hampton Enterprises, Tabors Garage, Ultratone Social Club, and Williams Hampton in 1975; Eastern Distributors in 1980-1984; Eastern Coin Machine, Ltd. and Select O Malton, Inc. in 1984; and Wonder Enterprises, Inc. in 2005-2021, which owned 2237 Edmondson Avenue at the time of the survey.²²

Sources: Advertisement. *The Sun*, 2 June 1933, 22. www.newspapers.com, accessed 8 July 2021.

Advertisement. *The Sun*, 12 April 1942, 41. www.newspapers.com, accessed 8 January 2025.

Advertisement. *The Sun*, 2 January 1949, 36. www.newspapers.com, accessed 20 July 2021.

Advertisement. *The Sun*, 8 July 1951, 36. www.newspapers.com, accessed 8 July 2021.

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Classified Ad. “Carpenter Instructor.” *The Sun*, 28 March 1951, 22. www.newspapers.com, accessed 8 July 2021.

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²¹ Pressman Brothers, Inc. Auction Classified Advertisement, 1 August 1965, *The Sun*, 76, www.newspapers.com, accessed 20 July 2021.

²² Environmental Data Resources, Inc. *The EDR-City Directory Abstract*, 2140 Edmondson Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21217, 20 May 2019.

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Rea Keech Pontiac, Inc. “Help Wanted” Classified Advertisement. *The Evening Sun*, 7 July 1942. www.newspapers.com, accessed 12 July 2021.

“Real Estate Transfers, Baltimore City.” *The Sun*, 2 April 1915, 13.
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Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Baltimore, Independent Cities, Maryland.
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https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3844bm.g3844bm_g03573195002/?sp=53&r=-0.587,0.486,1.244,0.58,0.

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“231st Transportation Battalion.” Unit History, U.S. Army Transportation Corps. https://transportation.army.mil/history/unit_history/231tb.html, accessed 12 February 2025.

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accessed 21 January 2025.

“West End Motors” Advertisement. *The Sun*, 5 February 1946, 22.
www.newspapers.com, accessed 9 July 2021.

Historians: Nancy L. Zerbe; Steven Patrick, ARCH², Inc., 2025

Project

Information: Documentation of the commercial building at 2237 Edmondson Avenue was undertaken in 2021-2025 as mitigation in accordance with the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement for the Baltimore & Potomac (B&P) Tunnel Replacement Program. The commercial building at 2237 Edmondson Avenue will be demolished to make way for realignment of the Northeast Corridor associated with a new 1.9-mile-long tunnel north of the existing tunnel alignment. The United States Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) sponsored the documentation project, in coordination with the Maryland Historical Trust. Renee Bieretz prepared large-format photography. Christopher H. Marston, HAER Architect, advised the project.

Supplemental Materials:

**LOOK AROUND...THEN
COME TO WEST END!**



1942 Oldsmobile Sedan
priced only **\$1295**

Now we tell you to look around... because we know that if you wait the time you can get your money... you'll want up at West End.

Take the 1942 Oldsmobile 75 4-Door Sedan, for instance. It has a motor, built-in, hydraulic drive, an engine and exhaust that look like new... and a motor that is top mechanical condition. Yet you pay only \$1295 (a \$300 saving)... payable in easy monthly installments.

If you want the best used car... or the best Plymouth and DeSoto Service in town... come out to West End Motors.

AND DON'T MISS THESE GOOD BUYS!

- 1942 Plymouth 2-Door Sedan
- 1941 Chrysler Convertible Coupe
- 1941 Chrysler 2-Door Sedan
- 1942 Plymouth Four Sedan
- 1941 DeSoto 4-Door Sedan
- 1942 Buick Sedanette

and low payment... easy monthly payments... with or without trade-in

**WEST END
MOTORS**

Plymouth and DeSoto—Sales and Service
2237 Edmondson Avenue
OPEN EVERY NIGHT UNTIL 9

Figure 1. 1947 advertisement for West End Motors showing an Oldsmobile in front of the large showroom windows at 2237 Edmondson Avenue. Source: *The Sun*, 14 September 1947, 27.

Figure 2. 1934 advertisement listing the Terrace Garage at 2237 Edmondson Avenue (no. 6) as one of twenty Ford dealerships within Baltimore. Source: *The Sun*, 5 July 1934, 20.

Buy a New 1942 Pontiac*

built to order for those who are looking ahead!



THE NEW CAR you buy today may have to last you for a long, long time. That's why automobile buyers who are planning for the future are buying Pontiacs.

The new 1942 Pontiacs, now available, are the finest in a long line of fine cars produced by Pontiac. They were engineered for a long life of trouble-free performance. They were built to

deliver a maximum of gasoline and oil economy. They were planned, through exclusive Triple-Cushioned Ride and proper weight distribution, to assure unusual riding comfort and *maximum tire conservation*.

Pontiac gives you all these extras at a price just above the lowest—and you can buy on convenient monthly terms.

AVAILABLE AS A SIX OR EIGHT IN ANY MODEL

**Produced late in 1941. At present Pontiac is building nothing but arms for victory.*



YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE TO BUY A NEW CAR

For the specific purpose of maintaining essential public functions and assuring the successful prosecution of the war effort, the government is permitting many to purchase new automobiles.

Those eligible include not only physicians, nurses, ministers and persons engaged in certain civic services, but all persons directly or indirectly employed in the prosecution of the war. In this latter group are included many types of activity ranging from factory work to farming, lumbering and mining.

Due largely to misunderstanding, only a small part of those entitled to buy a new car are taking advantage of the government's regulation—which had behind it the patriotic purpose of enabling such people to replace worn and inefficient cars with modern, economical transportation.

If you are in any way—*directly or indirectly*—connected with a war activity—or if your present car should be replaced—come in and we will help you determine whether you are eligible, and then help you get a "certificate of purchase" on a new Pontiac.

THE FINE CAR WITH THE LOW PRICE

Oriole Pontiac Co.
200 W. North Ave.

General Pontiac Corp.
2000 Reisterstown Road

Rea Keech Pontiac, Inc.
2237-45 Edmondson Ave.

Kelly Auto Sales
5603-5 Belair Road

McKenna Pontiac Co.
2023 Eastern Ave.

Figure 3. 1942 advertisement listing Rea Keech Pontiac at 2237-45 Edmondson Avenue as one of five Pontiac dealerships within Baltimore. Source: *The Sun*, 7 July 1942, 8.



Figure 4. Interior view of the Pressman Brothers Grocery Store, 24 March 1959. Courtesy of the Baltimore Museum of Industry, catalog no. BGE.33895.

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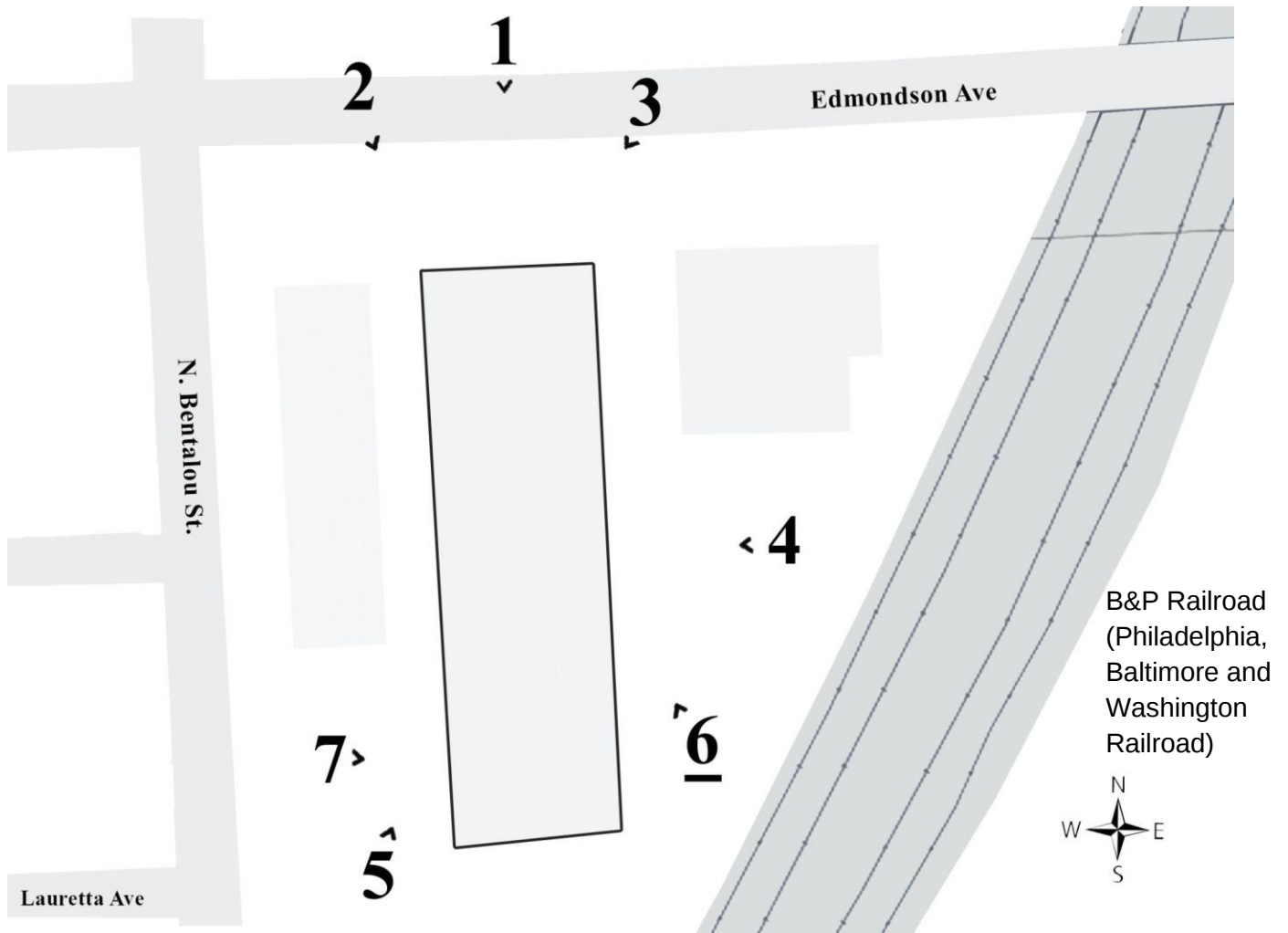
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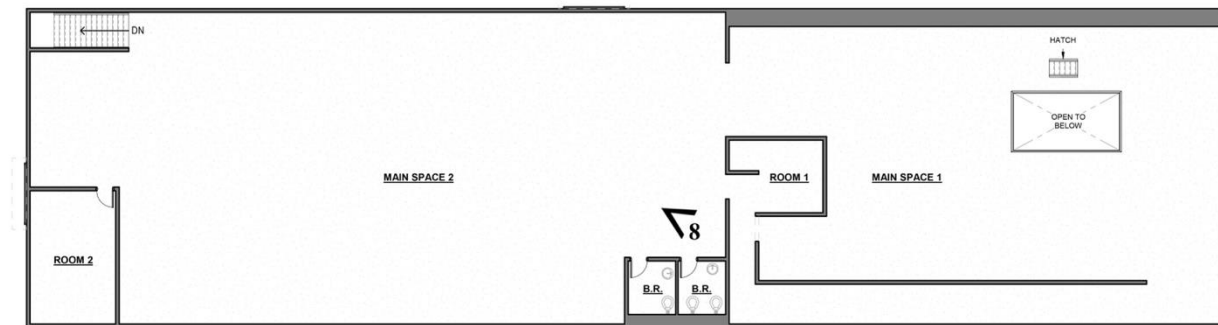
Renee Bieretz, photographer, September 2021 (views 1-7); May 2024 (views 8-9)

MD-1439-1	Main façade of 2237 Edmondson Avenue, view looking south.
MD-1439-2	Perspective view, looking southeast. Note brick wall capped with spherical masonry finial in foreground, framing side entrance to neighboring fire station.
MD-1439-3	Perspective view, looking southwest.
MD-1439-4	Central section of east elevation showing former window openings and roll-up door, view looking west.
MD-1439-5	Oblique view of west elevation showing two-story fieldstone wall at rear of building, looking north-northeast.
MD-1439-6	Oblique view of east elevation showing two-story fieldstone wall in foreground behind tree at rear of building, looking north-northwest.
MD-1439-7	Detail view of west elevation showing on two-story fieldstone wall and blocked-up window openings, looking east.
MD-1439-8	Interior view of second floor showing steel girder roof supports, looking northeast.
MD-1439-9	Interior view of basement, showing metal-clad, sliding fire door and cone-shaped brick column, looking east.

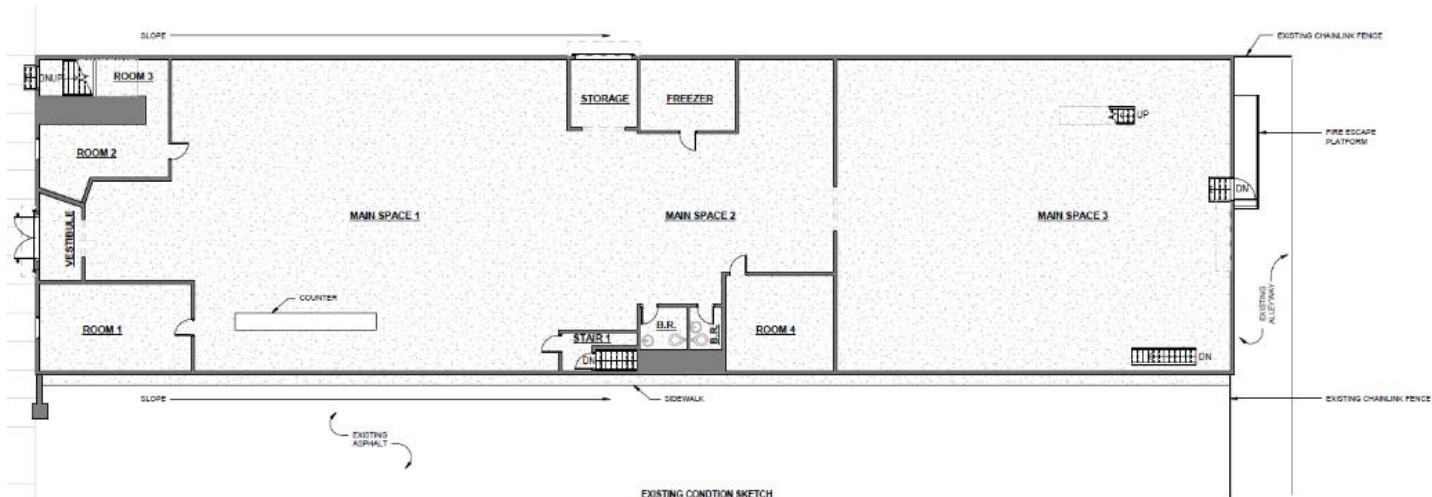
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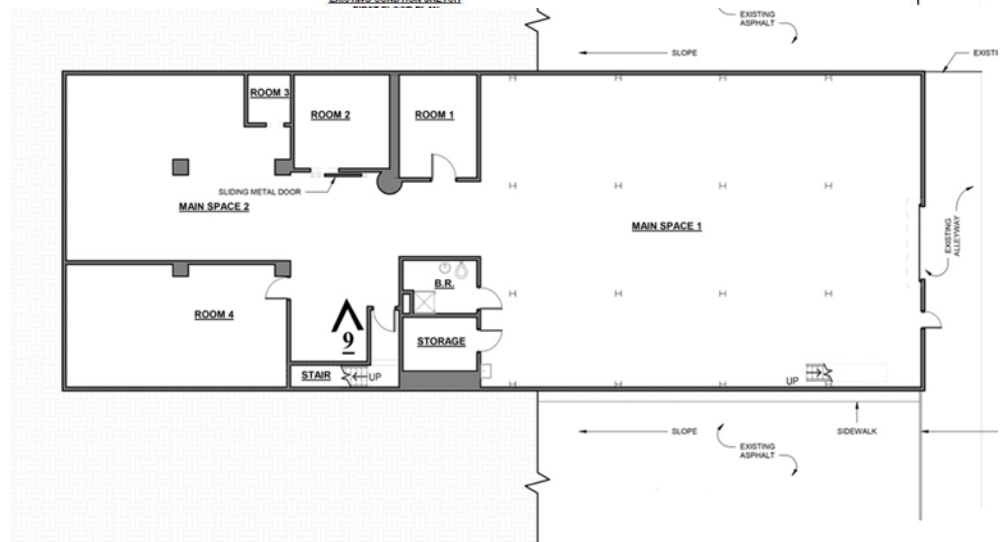
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EXISTING CONDITON SKETCH
SECOND FLOOR PLAN



EXISTING CONDITION SKETCH



EXISTING CONDITION SKETCH
BASEMENT PLAN

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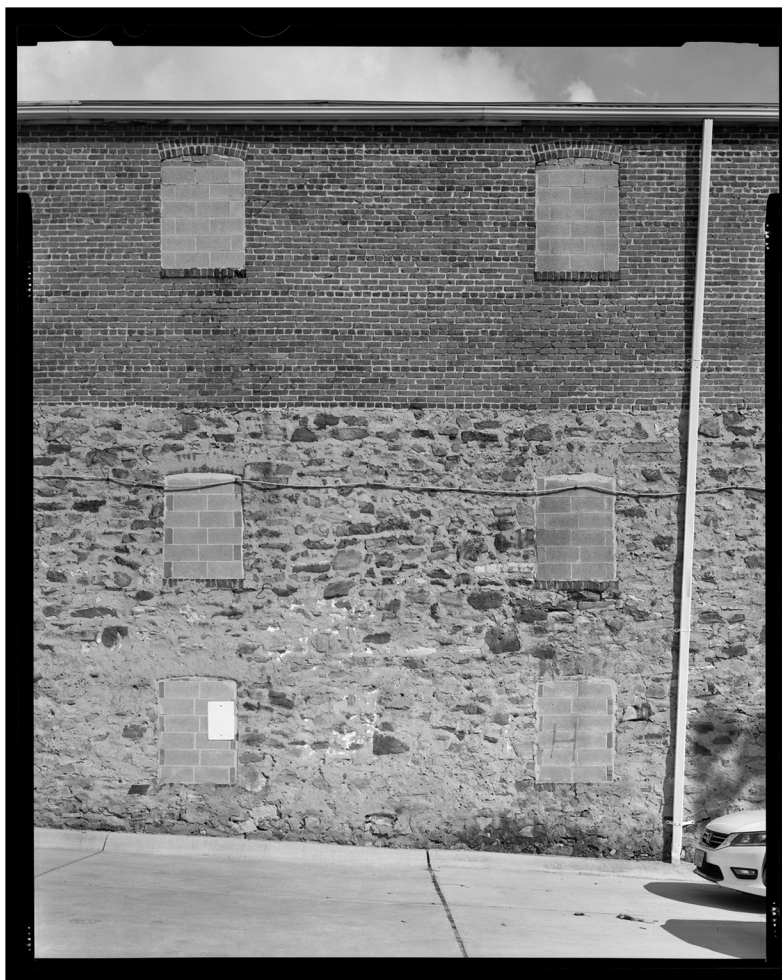
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