

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION**  
**APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**  
**FEBRUARY 28, 2022**  
**CASE NUMBER C14H-1977-0015**  
**REVEREND JACOB FONTAINE GOLD DOLLAR BUILDING**  
**2402 SAN GABRIEL STREET**

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**PROPOSAL**

Remove ca. 1942 enclosure and return the second-floor balcony to its ca. 1923 appearance.

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**PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS**

- 1) Remove horizontal and vertical wood siding and wood windows from the second-floor balcony enclosure.
- 2) Retain and repair wood framing from previous open balcony configuration, including chamfered columns and roof structure.
- 3) Install a wood railing.

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**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Rev. Jacob Fontaine Gold Dollar Building is highly significant as the sole remaining building of Wheatville. This community was a freedom colony otherwise erased through redlining and implementation of the 1928 City Plan, which established a “negro district” in East Austin by denying basic services elsewhere in the city. In 2018, the building was renamed from the Franzetti Store to the Reverend Jacob Fontaine *Gold Dollar* Building to recognize its earlier significance in African American history.

Rev. Fontaine established several Baptist churches, was an educator, was politically active, and published the *Gold Dollar*, an early Black newspaper. His home at 2400 San Gabriel St. was destroyed by arson and rebuilt. Family history indicates that this building, 2402 San Gabriel, was the location of the *Gold Dollar* and the founding of New Hope Baptist Church. Fontaine died in 1898.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Italian immigrant families, the Perrones and Franzettis, operated a neighborhood grocery store in the building. It remained in the Franzetti family through the time of landmark designation in 1977. During their ownership, the Franzettis made multiple additions and modifications to the building.<sup>1</sup>

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**ARCHITECTURE**

Two-story limestone building with paired doors and a storefront window with transoms on the ground floor of the façade and segmental-arched window openings with 6:6-light wood windows on the side elevations at the second floor. On the front of the building, three stuccoed columns support a second-floor balcony with a shed roof, enclosed with horizontal and vertical wood siding and square single-hung wood windows. There is a two-story shed-roofed addition on the rear (west) elevation. Extending north from the façade is a one-story stone wall, behind which a one-story shed-roofed addition is no longer extant. The façade of the building at the first floor, the one-story wall, and the first-floor porch columns are stuccoed.

The building was originally constructed around 1869 as a one-story stone building, expanded to its two-story form around 1875.<sup>2</sup> An undated artist’s rendering in the historic zoning file suggests what the building may have looked like at that time (Figure 4). The building first appears on Sanborn Fire Insurance maps in 1922 as a two-story stone building with a one-story porch and one-story frame additions to the north and west. By 1935, the building is shown with a two-story porch, two-story veneered addition to the west, and one-story frame addition with a veneered front to the north.

The second-floor porch is thought to have been added in 1923, though no source is cited in either the 1977 landmark designation materials or the staff report supporting renaming the building in 2018. By 1942, the upper level had been enclosed, as shown in a lithograph that is the earliest identified depiction of the building (Figure 1). While it includes some

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<sup>1</sup> Sources: “Franzetti Store Building of Wheatville,” City of Austin Historic Landmark file, C14H-1977-0015, 1977; Steve Sadowsky, staff report supporting renaming 2402 San Gabriel St. to the Reverend Jacob Fontaine *Gold Dollar* Building, Oct. 2018, <https://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=309912>; Resolution 20181115-024, Austin City Council, Nov. 15, 2018, <https://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=311135>; and Tara Dudley, Charles Amos Horn, Edmund T. Gordon, Anna-Lisa Plant, “Preserve the Jacob Fontaine Gold Dollar Building,” Retelling Central Texas History, Feb. 2022, <https://ctxretold.org/preserve-the-jacob-fontaine-gold-dollar-building/>.

<sup>2</sup> Dudley et al., “Preserve the Jacob Fontaine Gold Dollar Building.”

inaccuracies, such as the omission of the north addition shown on earlier Sanborn maps and four rather than three porch columns, it is sufficient to help date the balcony enclosure. It is unknown when stucco was applied to the first floor of the façade and columns. This appears in the earliest identified photograph of the building, dated 1964 (Figure 2).

Staff visited the site on January 17 and 31, 2022. Between the site visits, the applicant removed a later bead board finish from the interior of the balcony enclosure to help identify eras of construction. There are three distinct periods. Blue-gray paint appears on window frames at the masonry wall and the porch columns, beam, rafters, purlins, and decking, delineating the elements of the open balcony. The windows of the enclosure slide into wall pockets created by the horizontal siding, and there are no drain holes at the base of the vertical siding. Together, these details suggest the balcony was fully enclosed at once, not partially enclosed by siding first with the windows added later. Finally, newer lumber served as nailers for the bead board finish.

Due to the presence of a backer board behind the vertical siding, it was not possible to observe the sides of the columns for ghosting or other physical evidence of the balcony railing.

## DESIGN STANDARDS

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The City of Austin's [Historic Design Standards](#) (March 2021) are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and are used to evaluate projects at historic landmarks. The Historic Design Standards indicate that if any aspect of a proposed project is not covered by the design standards, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties shall be used. In certain circumstances, use of the treatments other than rehabilitation may be proposed.

### Standards for Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is the most commonly applied treatment for historic properties. Standard 4 of the Standards for Rehabilitation states:

*Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*

The balcony enclosure has been present since at least 1942, if not earlier. Arguably, it has acquired significance given its longevity; the current appearance is what Austinites alive today associate with the building. However, it also dates to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while the building is most significant for its 19<sup>th</sup> century association with Reverend Fontaine and the freedom colony of Wheatville. Removal of the enclosure would allow more of the historic masonry to be visible from the front of the building.

### Standards for Restoration

Given the proposed approach to take the building back to an earlier appearance, the Standards for Restoration are an appropriate lens for evaluation. The most critical to consider is Standard 7:

*Replacement of missing features from the restoration period will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence. A false sense of history will not be created by adding conjectural features, features from other properties, or by combining features that never existed together historically.*

The applicant's original submission proposed removing the balcony enclosure, structure, and roof and installing a new railing. This approach would not meet the Standards for Restoration as it would juxtapose elements that did not exist at the same time. Full restoration of the building to its 19<sup>th</sup>-century appearance was contemplated in the materials included with the 1977 landmark designation, as shown in Figure 4 and written materials in the file. This approach would be incredibly dramatic, require removal of multiple areas of the building beyond the balcony, and cannot be accurately substantiated by documentary or physical evidence. It also would not meet the Standards for Restoration.

The applicant's current proposal may meet the Standards. Changes to the balcony are clear based on documentary and physical evidence. The balcony was added to a one-story porch between 1922 and 1935. It originally consisted of an open-air balcony with chamfered columns and an exposed roof structure. These elements survive and are demarcated by their paint color, which remained under later finishes. The siding and windows were added by 1942.

It is also important to consider the balcony relative to other architectural elements of the building and their evolution. Comparison of the 1922 and 1935 Sanborn maps shows the following changes: addition of the second floor at the porch coincided with addition of the two-story stone and frame addition to the west and the masonry front wall at the frame addition to the north. These elements survive, with the exception of the frame walls at the north addition, and will remain. Based on the evidence collected to date, however, it has not been possible to determine when stucco was applied at the first

floor and whether it may have existed at the same time as the open-air balcony.

Additional selective demolition is needed to inform the design of the railing. It likely was a simple wood railing as shown.

#### **PRIOR COMMISSION ACTION**

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The Historic Landmark Commission previously approved similar proposals on two occasions. A 2005 letter indicates Commission approval to “reconstruct the front porch in accordance with its ca. 1923 appearance.” No drawings are available from that review. In 2010, the Commission approved work that involved removing the windows to open the balcony. These reviews are provided as backup.

Staff currently notes that the siding and windows appear to be from the same era of construction, and it would not be appropriate to remove only the windows in a restoration effort.

#### **COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

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The Architectural Review Committee provided feedback on the proposed project at their January 10 and February 14, 2022 meetings. Individual committee members also visited the site with staff on January 17 and following selective interior demolition on January 31, 2022.

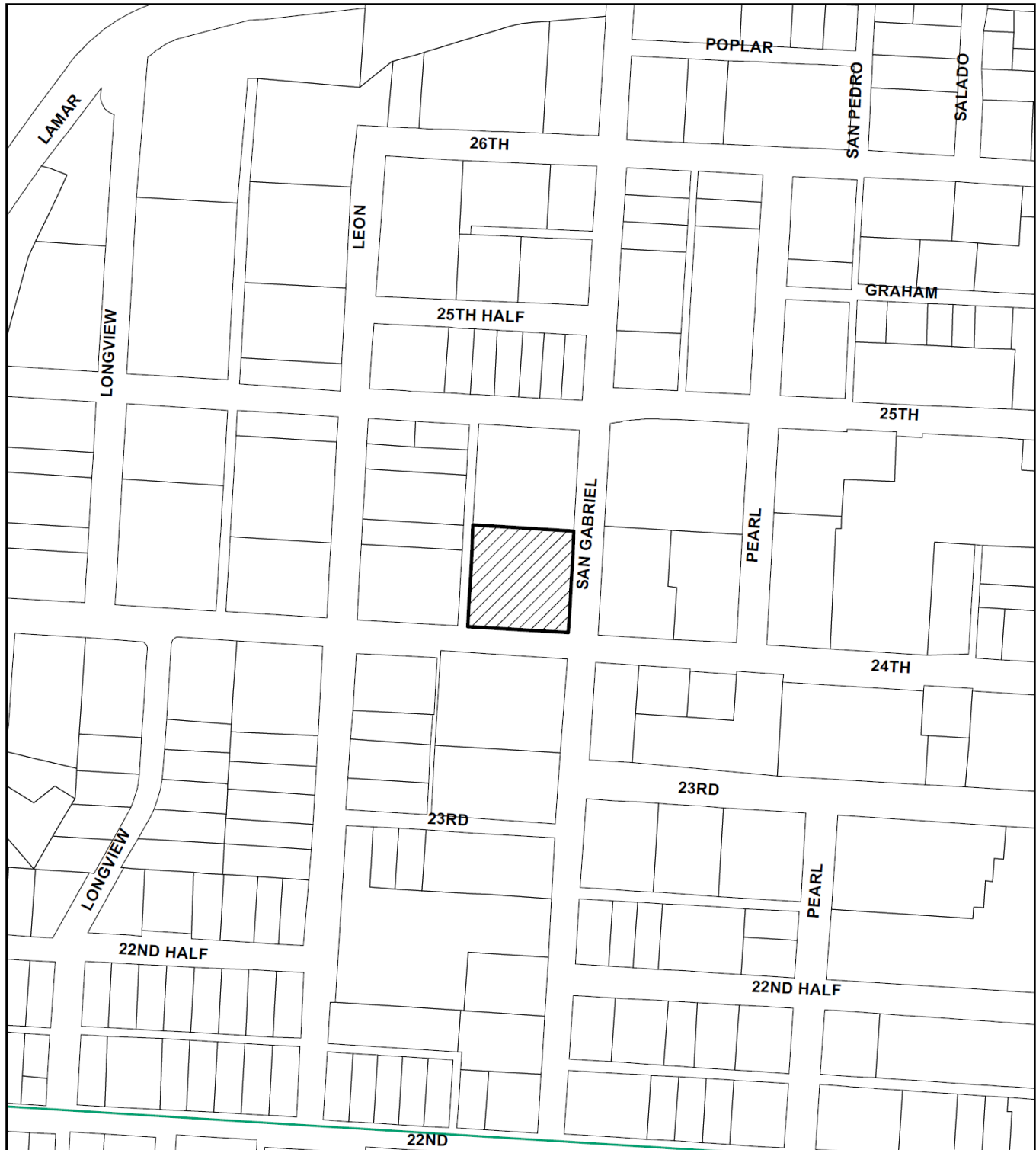
The applicant’s initial proposal was to remove the second-floor balcony in its entirety and install a new metal railing to create an outdoor seating area. Committee members indicated the need to restore the building to a particular point in time based on documentary and physical evidence or keep it as is. At the second meeting, the applicant indicated willingness to revise his plans to retain the columns and roof of the earlier open balcony, though the revised drawings had not been developed by that time. Committee members provided input on design details, such as examining for a fascia board at the roof and looking for physical evidence to inform the railing design.




#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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Carefully consider whether removal of the ca. 1942 balcony enclosure is appropriate. If so, approve the revised drawings, and authorize staff to approve a final railing design after additional demolition has occurred.

# LOCATION MAP



-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

1" = 250'

## NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: C14H-1977-0015  
LOCATION: 2402 SAN GABRIEL STREET

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

This product has been produced by CTM for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.



## PROPERTY INFORMATION

*Photographs and artists' renderings*



Figure 1. William Lester, "A Store in Austin," lithograph edition of 20, 1942.

<https://www.vintagetexaspaintings.com/texas-art/1467-william-lester-a-store-in-austin-the-gold-dollar-lithograph-edition-of-20>.



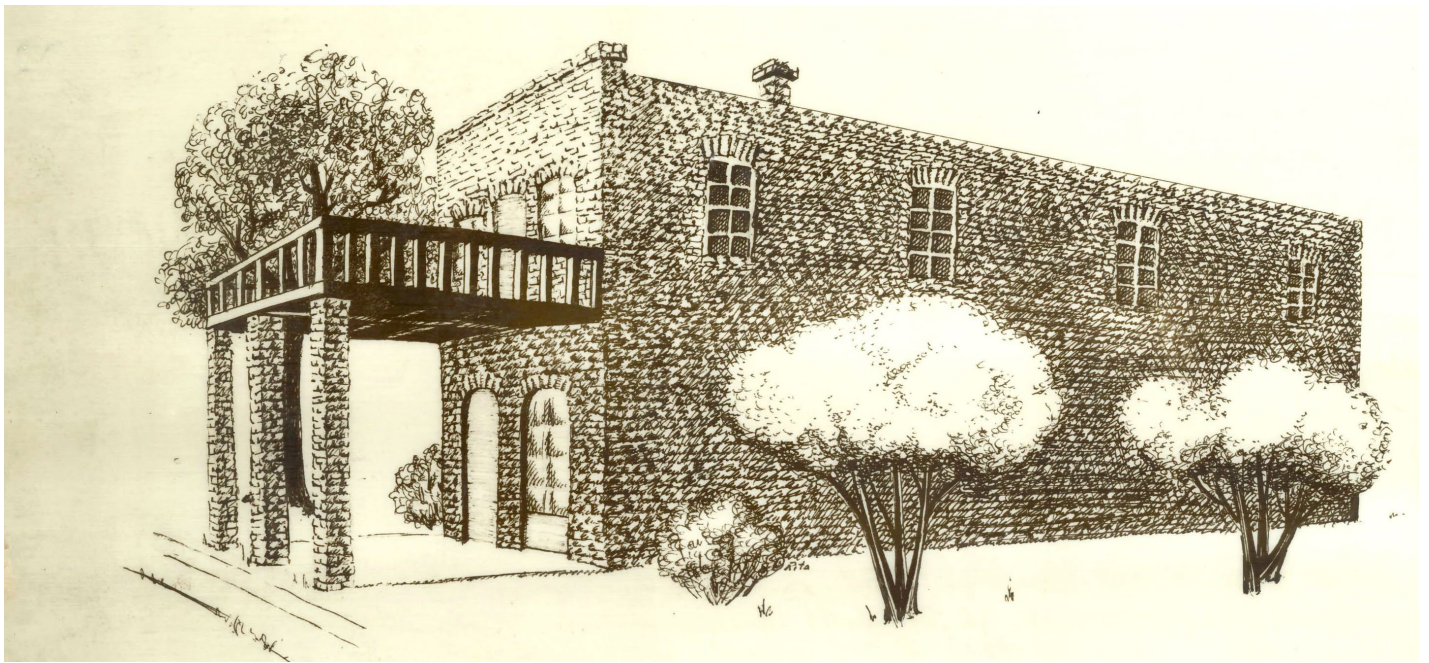


*Figure 2. Historic photograph dated Oct. 1964.  
House Building File: San Gabriel, 2402, PICH02749, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.*



Figure 3. Craig Kennedy, Franzetti Store and House, (Northwest oblique), photograph, April 23, 1974; University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, crediting Texas Historical Commission, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph673413/m1/1/?q=2402%20san%20gabriel>.





*Figure 4. Artist's rendering, undated, in historic zoning file, C14H-1977-0015, 1977.*





*Figure 5. Photograph by Historic Preservation Office staff, Jan. 17, 2022.*





*Figure 6. Photograph by Historic Preservation Office staff, Jan. 17, 2022.*





*Figure 7. Photograph by Historic Preservation Office staff, Jan. 17, 2022.*





*Figure 8. Photograph by Historic Preservation Office staff, Jan. 17, 2022.*





*Figure 9. Photograph by Historic Preservation Office staff, Jan. 17, 2022.*





*Figure 10. Photograph by Historic Preservation Office staff, Jan. 31, 2022.*





*Figure 11. Photograph by Historic Preservation Office staff, Jan. 31, 2022.*





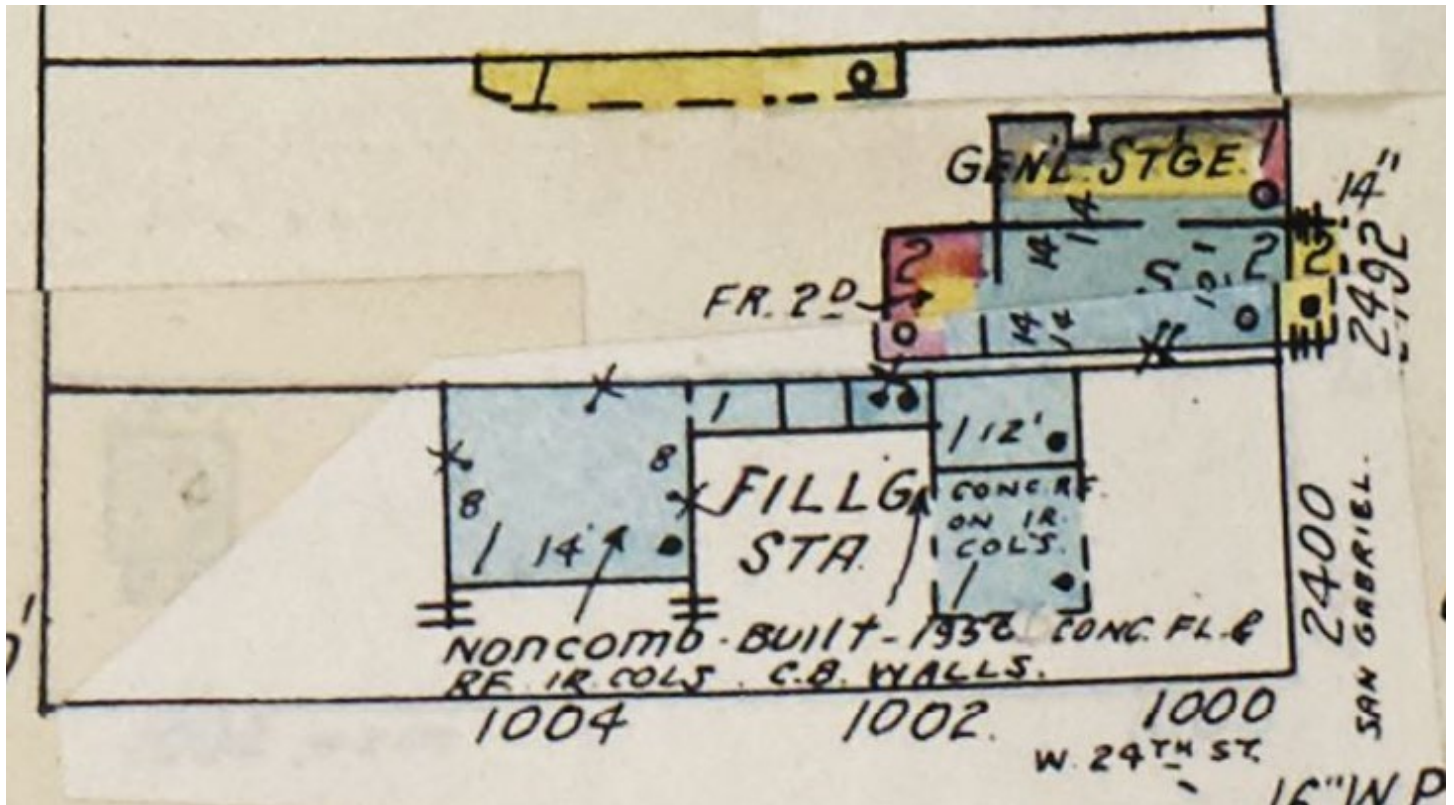
*Figure 12. Photograph by Historic Preservation Office staff, Jan. 31, 2022.*



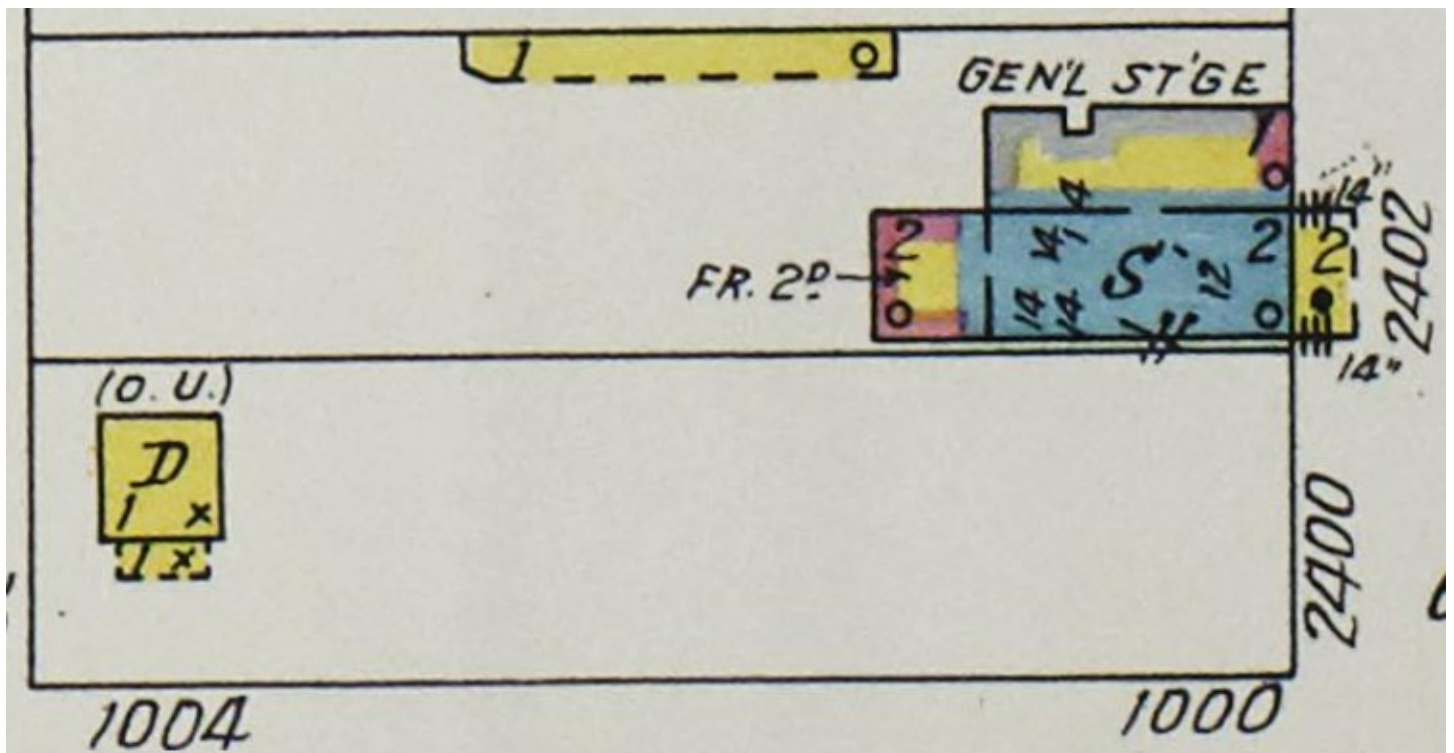


*Figure 13. Photograph by Historic Preservation Office staff, Jan. 31, 2022.*

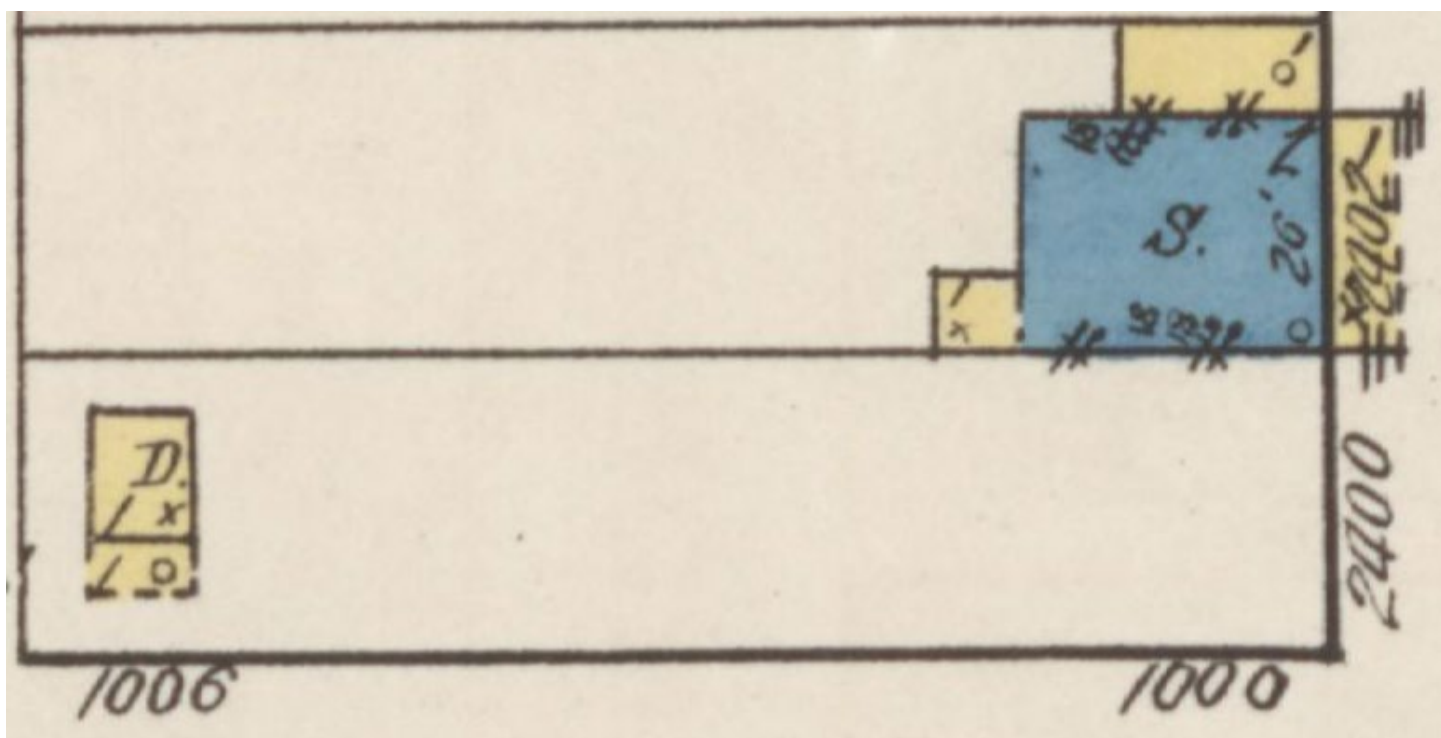




Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1935-1963, vol. 1, sheet 58. Source: Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/>.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1935, sheet 58.



*Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922, sheet 88.*