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Historical Data Section:
JADE PAGODA AND SOLOMON SITES
Lowell, Massachusetts

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Lowell National Historical Park
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Many of the findings in this report correspond with those found in the spring 1979 study, "Old City Hall, Lowell, Massachusetts, and Its Surrounding Properties." Additional information, especially concerning the relationship between the Jade Pagoda and Solomon properties and Old City Hall, is available in that study. Credit for this report is due to several members of the Lowell National Historical Park Staff: to John Debo, who saw the wisdom of and necessity for the study in the first place; to Paul Durand, who did the photography work; and to Pat Butler who did the typing.

Although the Jade Pagoda and Solomon Buildings occupy two distinct lots, their present state and their related histories make it proper for us to discuss them in the same Historical Data Section.

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Before the arrival of the Boston industrialists to the area, each of these lots was part of a thirty acre East Chelmsford farm. After the sale of the farm in November of 1821, ownership of the land passed to the Boston Associates.¹ This group, which bought practically all the land in what is presently downtown Lowell, maintained its ownership of the Jade Pagoda/Solomon lots through 1828. In 1826, significantly, the bulk of their land holdings were placed under the control of the Associates' newly re-organized company, the Proprietors of Locks and Canals.² Through that corporation, the Associates decided, first, which of their lands were suitable for manufacturing; second, where to locate company housing; and third, which sites to sell to private interests.³

The manufacturers who controlled the Locks and Canals Company were concerned with Lowell's image as the showplace of their manufacturing system: they were determined to prove that manufacturing need not be accompanied by the urban squalor of English mill cities like Manchester. Consequently—just as they were with their factory and boarding house districts—the Associates showed themselves protective of the integrity of the commercial areas of their town. They decided, for example, that they would regulate the quality of the buildings constructed on any lands that they might sell through a series of deed restrictions. All buildings higher than ten feet would have to be constructed of brick or stone with a slated roof.⁴

Among the first lots designated for private commercial use were properties along Merrimack Street. There, the manufacturers consciously

cultivated a particularly distinctive style.⁵ They had built St. Anne's Church in 1824-25 at the intersection of Merrimack Street and the Merrimack Canal; later, in 1829, they would make the choice land across the street from the church available to the newly incorporated town of Lowell in order to build their Town Hall. See illustrations 1 and 2.⁶ Just previous to that sale, though, the Locks and Canals Company sold the two lots to the east of the town hall lot to local businessmen.⁷

The lot to the east (the future Solomon lot) was sold to Thomas Billings, who then erected one of Merrimack Street's first brick buildings. Built on the northern half of the lot, it stood three and a half stories high and it had a gabled roof - a building typical of Lowell's earliest commercial brick structures (see illustration 3). Such a structure represented an investment of two thousand dollars, roughly four times the cost of a pair of boarding houses, indicating that the building was obviously built to last (there are structures of this type and vintage standing in Lowell even today).⁸ Construction had begun in late 1828-early 1829, and it was well under way by the time that town officials purchased the town hall land. Within four months of that purchase date, in fact, Billings announced the opening of his business at its new location.⁹ See illustrations 4 and 5.

Billings housed his printing business on the first floor of his building, and in it he published the Lowell Mercury, one of the town's first newspapers, and the first Lowell Directory (1832). He did not stay in business there for very long, however, having decided to leave Lowell in 1833.¹⁰ Nevertheless, he did maintain ownership of the building until 1850 when he sold it to dentist Silas F. Gladwin. Gladwin ran his own business there while renting space to other businessmen (most notably George K. Warren, a daguerrotypist).¹¹ During that time, he, among other things, built a sixteen-foot wide,

one story brick addition to the rear of his building; later, in 1859, he entered into a party wall agreement with his neighbors to the west.¹² As we will see, those neighbors were involved in a major construction project at the time.

Gladwin maintained his ownership until 1870 when the lot passed into the hands of the Mechanics Savings Bank. Soon after that purchase, the bank demolished the bulk of the original Billings structure; they retained parts of the western wall for the construction of their imposing four story Mechanics Savings Bank Building, which covered the entire lot.¹³ See illustrations 6 and 7. Besides the bank's own offices, this building housed the Railroad National Bank and a number of other offices when it was completed in 1873.¹⁴ It continued to serve as a bank and as office space until well into the twentieth century (1945) when the Solomon family purchased it. They converted it into a yard goods store and remained in business there until 1979 when their building was purchased by the National Park Service. Most significantly, however, the Solomons continued to operate their business even after a 1962 fire devastated their building (Illustration 6), forcing them to remove its upper three stories and to rebuild the ground level facade as it stands today.¹⁵

* * *

Like its neighboring lot, the future Jade Pagoda site passed into private hands in late 1828. It was sold to one of Lowell's better known and more eccentric citizens, Captain William Wyman. Wyman, among other things, served as the town's second postmaster and was active in local politics.¹⁶ He bought a number of lots beside the Jade Pagoda site and he built some of early Lowell's more prominent buildings, including the impressive Wyman's Exchange Building at the corner of Merrimack and Central Streets.¹⁷

The building constructed between the Billings structure and the future Town Hall, however, was neither prominent nor impressive. It was only one of

Lowell's many "ten footers": unornamented, one-story structures which appeared on Merrimack Street during a time of "great building activity, but of slight architectural achievement." The "ten-footer" was a practical response to the rapidly growing demand for commercial activity; this type of building allowed a quick financial return to both its owner and his tenant.¹⁸ Wyman's investment, in this case, was only five-hundred dollars; his profit, presumably, was considerably greater. No picture of his building is known to exist, and the only description to be found refers to it as a "cottage." We can assume, though, that the building was obviously ten-feet high, wooden, and that it apparently sprawled over much of its site. See illustration 5. Still, it did not seriously impede access to the adjacent Town Hall.¹⁹

It appears that the building was taken down (or at least greatly modified) when the firm of Carleton and Hovey "erected a one-story store" on the site in 1848; they ran their apothecary business there. Little is known of that building, however, even though we do know that Carleton and Hovey remained in it for only a short time. They moved next door to City Hall in 1854.²⁰ Five years later, Wyman, who had maintained his ownership of the property all along, sold it to the principles of the Carleton and Hovey firm and to William A. Burke, one of Lowell's leading manufacturers.

The Carleton-Hovey-Burke group removed the one-story structure and built the four story Carleton Block in 1859. See illustrations 7 and 8. They agreed with their neighbor, Silas F. Gladwin, to maintain a common wall on their eastern property line. The Carleton Block served as home for the Railroad National Bank and the Mechanics Savings Bank until the early 1870's when, as we have seen, the Mechanics Savings Bank Building was built.²¹ The Carleton Block was, at that point, sold to the Odd Fellows, who renamed their building the Odd Fellows Block and who continued to use the lower two floors

for store and office space, while converting the upper floors into halls for their own use. When the Odd Fellows constructed a new building for themselves on Middlesex Street, they sold their old home to businessman Frederick Wier, who continued to make commercial use of the building, having chosen to rename it the Wier Block.

The building changed hands several times thereafter, too (see Deed Sequence), but its traditional commercial use did not vary. In addition to their own building, already discussed, the Solomon family even owned it for a time, from 1969 to 1978. They sold it to Bing Lam Chin and Yee Gam Chin, the proprietors of the Jade Pagoda Restaurant. Significantly, the building had been repaired after a major 1904 fire;²² unfortunately, a more damaging fire had destroyed the building's upper three floors in 1942. After their subsequent removal,²³ the first floor was repaired and remodeled and it remained in generally active use. The National Park Service purchased the building in 1979. As is the case with the Solomon Building next door, Park Service plans for the site are yet to be determined.

1. The Boston Associates included Kirk Boott, his brother John, Nathan Appleton, Patrick Tracy Jackson and Paul Moody. Thomas Clark of Newburyport served as their agent in the real estate transactions. See Nathan Appleton, Introduction of the Power Loan and Origin of Lowell, Lowell: B. H. Perhallow, 1858.
2. See the Deed Sequence for a full list of the transactions involved.
3. John Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, New York: Russell and Russell, 1942, pp. 28-44
4. Samuel Adams Drake, History of Middlesex County, II, Boston: Estes and Lauriat, Publishers, 1880, p. 64
5. Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, p. 51
6. Illustration 1 shows that St. Anne's was the only building on Merrimack Street east of the Merrimack Canal in 1825. Illustration 2 shows the relationship between the future Merrimack Street commercial sites, St. Anne's Church, and the Merrimack Corporation's employee housing. It was important to the manufacturers that the commercial district would be able to service its employees. Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, p. 50
7. This was the first time that the now traditional Jade Pagoda/Solomon property lines were drawn. They were each roughly 90' x 50'. There were actually three lots of equal size sold at this time. The easternmost lot, the one on which the Bascom Building now stands, was sold to Hazen Elliot. Each lot was sold for \$2,250. M.S.R.D., Book 284, p. 216, Hon. John A. Knowles, "Reminiscences of Forty Years in Lowell: Number Seven, "undated newspaper article from an 1894 scrapbook in possession of the Lowell Historical Society at the University of Lowell, Special Collections, entitled "Selections, Historical and General, Mostly concerning Lowell and Vicinity," I, p. 163, and Alfred Gilman, "The Newspaper Press of Lowell," Contributions of the Old Residents Historical Association (CORHA), II, Lowell: Morning Mail Print, 1883, p. 239
8. Billings took out a mortgage for that amount from the Locks and Canals Company and the assessed value of his property increased by that amount between 1829 and 1830. "Valuation Book, City of Lowell, 1826, 7, 8, 9, 30," Lowell City Tax Assessor's Office, Proprietors of Locks and Canals on Merrimack River, "Cash Book A, 1826 to 1831," pp. 165, 256, at Baker Library, Harvard Business School, and M.S.R.D., Book 284, p. 219. The Mansur Building, 101 Central Street, is the best surviving example of this type of building. Lowell National Historical Park and Preservation District Cultural Resources Inventory, II, Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott.
9. Knowles, "Reminiscence of Forty Years in Lowell: Number Seven," p. 164. The advertisement announcing the store opening appeared in the November 21, 1829, Lowell Mercury, p. 6
10. Gilman, "The Newspaper Press of Lowell," p. 239
11. Lowell Directories
12. N.M.R.D., Book 18, p. 252

13. Parts of the western wall were regulated by restrictions from the 1859 party wall agreement. Illustration 6 shows the remains of the Mechanics Savings Bank Building in 1962. The sign on the western wall was put there by George K. Warren, the daguerrotypist who rented space in the old building in the 1850's just before the construction of the Carleton Block and certainly before the construction of the Mechanics Savings Bank Building.
14. Charles Hovey, "The Discount Banks of Lowell," CORHA, IV, Lowell: Morning Mail Print, 1885, p. 263, and Frank P. Hill, Lowell Illustrated, Lowell: Huse, Goodwin, and Company, 1884, p. 21
15. Verified by conversations with the Solomon family during the spring of 1979. The fire is documented in "Downtown Fire Loss \$250,000," Lowell Sun, April 10, 1962, p. 1.
16. Wyman was a religious ranter known to distrust "college-learned" ministers and a man possessed of "ideas of the future possibilities of Lowell" which "were nearly half a century ahead of those of his neighbors." He was one of Andrew Jackson's strongest local supporters and one of Kirk Boott's antagonists. Charles Hovey, "The Wyman Farm and Its Owner," CORHA, II, pp. 84-86, and C. C. Chase, "Lives of Postmasters," CORHA, IV, pp. 131-133
17. Illustration 4 shows numerous Wyman properties in the downtown area.
18. Coolidge, Mill and Mansion, pp. 45-53, and "In the Early Days: Recollections of Lowell 60 Years Ago," Lowell Daily Courier, February 13, 1897, p. 6
19. Like Billings and Hazen Elliot, Wyman financed his building through the Locks and Canals Company. "Valuation Book, City of Lowell, 1826, 7, 8, 9, 30, "Lowell City Tax Assessor's Office, Proprietors of Locks and Canals on Merrimack River, "Cash Book A, 1826 to 1831," p. 162, and M.S.R.D., Book 284, p. 217 Illustration 5 shows that the building sprawled over much of its site, but Z. E. Stone, "George Thompson, the English Philanthropist in Lowell," CORHA, II, pp. 121-122, describes the building as a "cottage" that presented no access problem to Town Hall during a violent 1834 protest of a abolitionist meeting held in the town building.
20. Charles Hovey, "History of an Old Firm," CORHA, I, Lowell: Stone, Huse, and Company, Book and Job Printers, 1873, p. 241
21. Hill, Lowell Illustrated, p. 21
22. "Second Alarm Was Rung In," Lowell Citizen, January 9, 1904, p. 1
23. "General Alarm Fire on Merrimack Street," Lowell Sun, March 4, 1942, p. 1. The upper floors, though burned out, were listed through 1946 in the Lowell Directories.

DEED SEQUENCES

The following pages contain the deed sequences for each of the properties in this report. The first page contains the sequence of Boston Associates' property prior to 1828, from farmland to Locks and Canals ownership. M.N.R.D. refers to Middlesex North District Registry of Deeds and M.S.R.D. refers to Middlesex South District Registry of Deeds. This Deed Sequence was taken from the "Archeological Resource Study, Lowell National Historical Park, Lowell, Massachusetts," by Kenneth C. Lacoste and Kathleen W. Fiero.

The Nathan Tyler Farm

November 2, 1821

Nathan Tyler to Thomas M. Clark, 30 acres,
(Locks and Canals, Book 1, Deed No. 13.)

Clark's Transfer of Property

December 13, 1821

Thomas Clark to Kirk Boott, John W. Boott,
Nathan Appleton, Patrick Jackson and Paul
Moody (all of those farms previously acquired),
(Locks and Canals, Book 1, Deed No. 12.)

Inter-Company Transfers

May 18, 1822

Boott et. al. to Merrimack Mfg. Co. (Boott et. al.),
(East Chelmsford land),
(Locks and Canals, Deed No. 21.)

May 3, 1826

Merrimack Mfg. Co. to the Proprietors of the Locks
and Canals (all land),
(M.N.R.D., Book 6, Page 230.)

May 3, 1826

Proprietors of the Locks and Canals to Merrimack
Mfg. Co. (land and mill privileges),
(M.N.R.D., Book 6, Page 230.)

NOTE:

Directors of the Merrimack Manufacturing Company
in 1826:

Nathan Appleton*
Patrick J. Jackson*
I. Thorndike, Jr.*
Kirk Boott*
John W. Boott*
William Appleton

* Also a director of the "new" Locks and Canals

SOLOMON BUILDING

TRACT 101-05

November 2, 1821 Nathan Tyler to Thomas M. Clark,
(Tyler Farm, 30 Acres), Locks and Canals, Deed No. 13
Deed Book 1, Page 3.

November 23, 1828 Proprietors of the Locks and Canals to Thomas
Billings, M.S.R.D., Book 284, Page 214.

January 1, 1850 Thomas Billings to Silas F. Gladwin, M.N.R.D.,
Book 562, Page 557.

May 31, 1870 Silas F. Gladwin to Mechanics Savings Bank,
Book 76, Page 160.

May 6, 1939 Mechanics Savings Bank to Merrimack Savings Bank,
Book 929, Page 48.

October 23, 1945 Merrimack River Savings Bank to Max J. and Rebecca
Solomon, Book 1031, Page 534.

JADE PAGODA

Tract 101-04

November 2, 1821 Nathan Tyler to Thomas Clark, Tyler Farm, 30 Acres, Locks and Canals, Deed No. 13, Book 1, Page 3.

November 23, 1828 Proprietors of Locks and Canals to William Wyman. M.N.R.D. Book 284, Page 213

January 1, 1859 William W. Wyman to Charles Hovey, Mary D. Carleton, George W. Carleton, Mary Howard Carleton, William A. Burke, M.N.R.D. Book 18, Page 149.

April 1, 1871 Hovey et. als. to Proprietor of Odd Fellows Hall, Book 78, Page 238.

October 1, 1897 Proprietors of Odd Fellows Hall to Frederick N. Wier and Harry E. Shaw, Book 321, Page 476 (Mtg.)

August 2, 1900 Proprietors of Odd Fellows Hall to Wier and Shaw, (Discharge of Mortgage.)

August 2, 1900 Harry E. Shaw to Frederick N. Wier, his "half" of property, Book 321, Page 477.

July 27, 1903 Frederick N. Wier to Solomon M. Goldberg of Lawrence.

April 10, 1942 Solomon M. Goldberg to Priscilla F. Flemings of Lowell, Deed 15275, Book 33, Page 113.

December 28, 1943 Priscilla F. Flemings to Francis F. O'Donnell of Lowell, Deed 16184, Book 34, Page 343.

December 1, 1944 Francis F. O'Donnell to Hadessa Podren Trustee of 314 Marlborough Trust, Deed 16779, Book 35, Page 391.

January 11, 1946 Trustees of 314 Marlborough Trust to Union-Blake Realty, Inc. of Boston.

September 4, 1947 Union-Blake Realty, Inc. to Howard S. Cosgrove of Boston, Book 39, Page 397.

September 4, 1947 Howard S. Cosgrove to Union-Blake Realty Trust, Inc., Deed 18887, Book 39, Page 401.

February 11, 1948 Union-Blake Realty Trust, Inc. to Gladys Farrell of Boston, Book 40, Page 259.

Gladys Farrell to Klein-Abuza Realty Inc. of Boston, Book 40, Page 263.

November 14, 1969 Klein-Abuza (trust?) to Sidney Solomon et. al., Book 88, Page 205, (Registeres Hand Book.)

April 30, 1978 Sidney Solomon, Leo Solomon, & Allen Solomon to Bing Lam Chin and Yee Gam Chin, Book 109, Page 267.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations 1 and 2 show sections of a map in the possession of the Proprietors of Locks and Canals entitled "A Plan of the Land and Buildings belonging to the Merrimack Manufacturing Company with the neighboring Farms, Roads & C. at Patucket in the Town of Chelmsford, MDCCCXXV," by George R. Baldwin. Illustration 1 was taken at a strange angle.

Illustration 3 (Boston Atheneum) shows the south side of Merrimack Street around 1870. From right to left the buildings are City Hall, the Carleton Block, the Thomas Billings structure, and the nearly identical Hazen Elliot building.

Illustrations 4 and 5 show sections of a map in the possession of the Proprietors of Locks and Canals entitled "A Plan of a Part of the City of Lowell, From a Survey made in 1833-34, by U. A. Boyden. With Additions by James B. Francis. Map 1837.

Illustration 6 (Solomon family collection) shows the Solomon Building—the former Mechanics Savings Bank Building—after its 1962 fire.

Illustration 7 is a section taken from the Atlas of the City of Lowell, 1896, L. J. Richards & Company, Springfield, Massachusetts.

Illustration 8 (Special Collections, University of Lowell) is the Odd Fellows Block—the former Carleton Block.

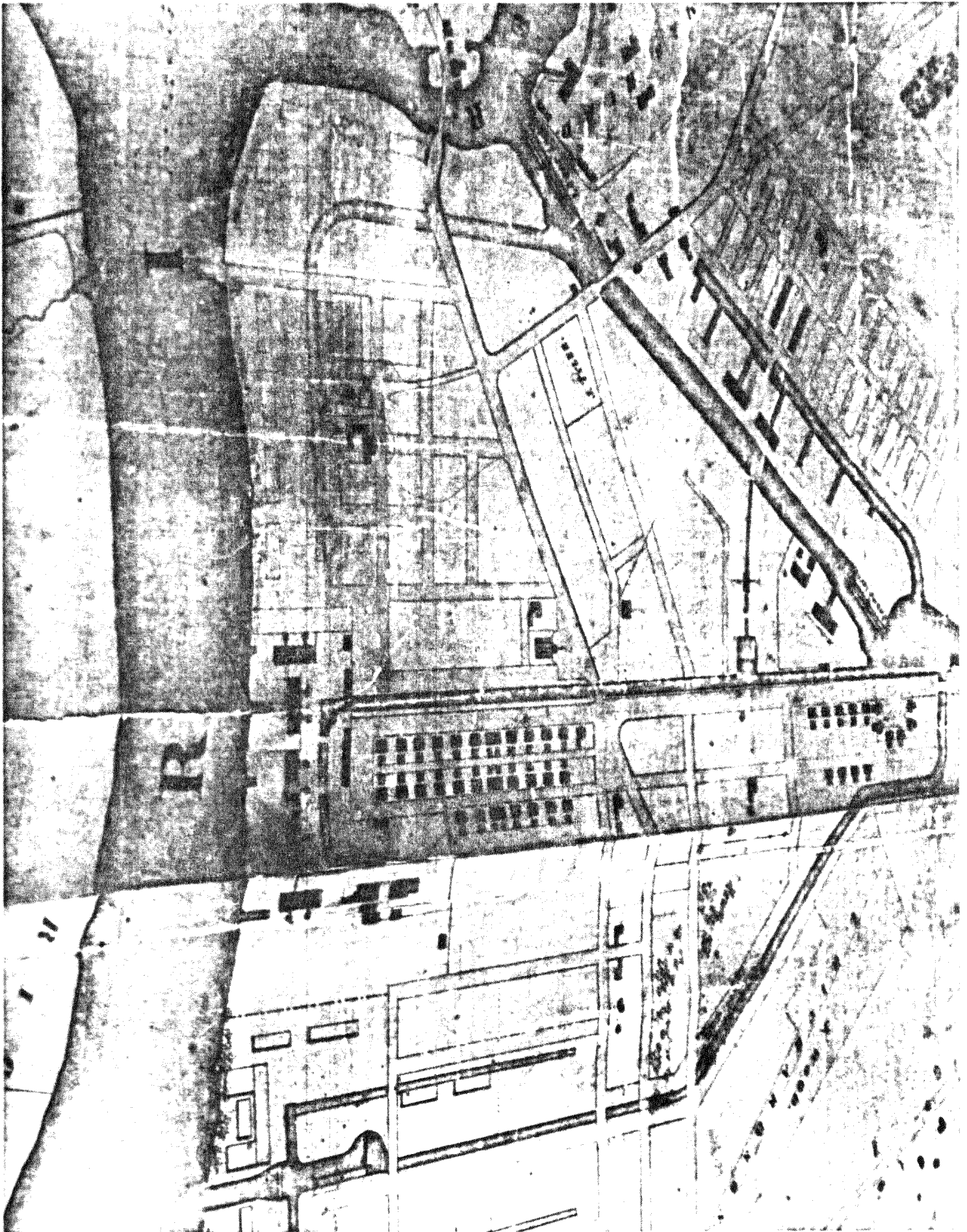


Illustration 2

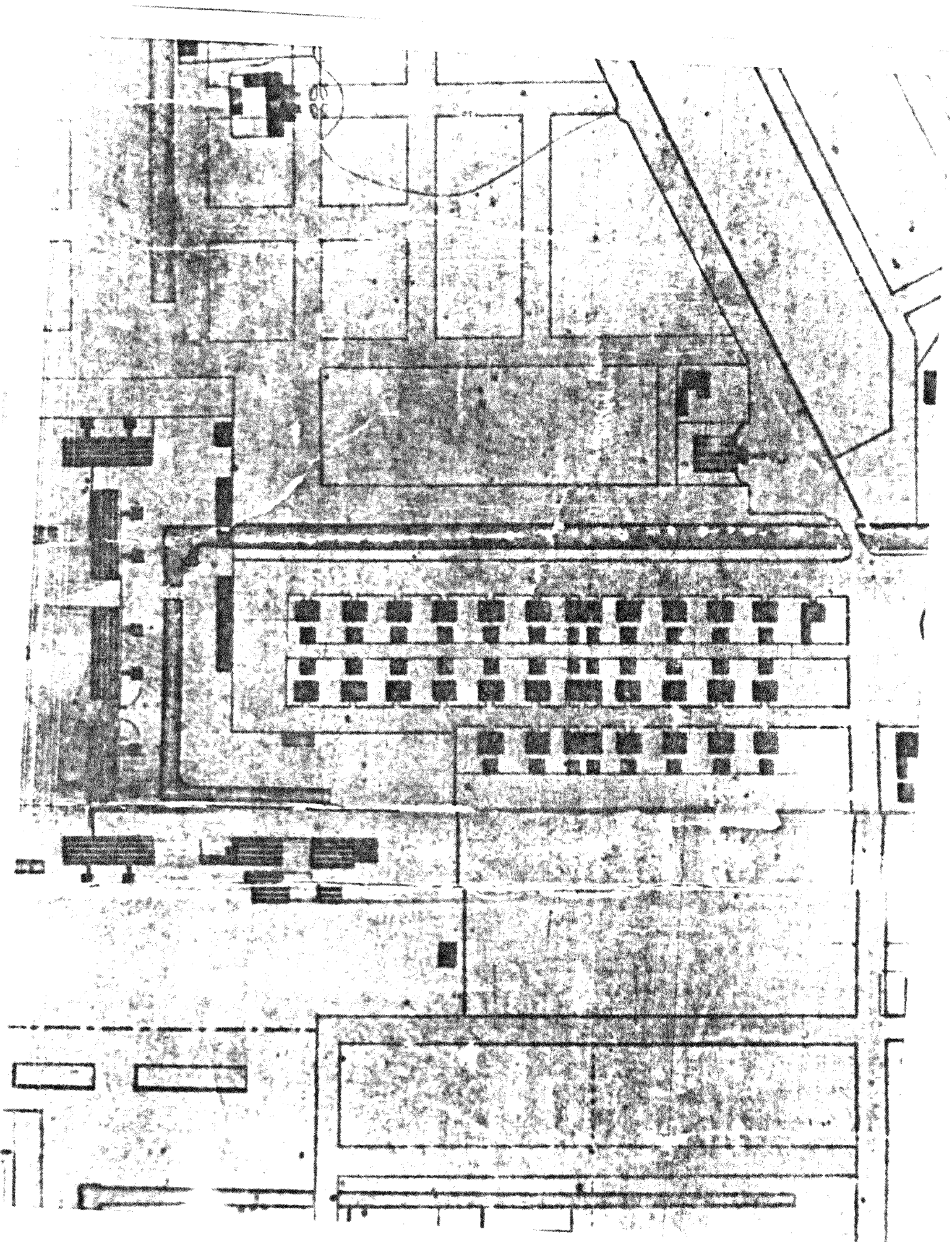
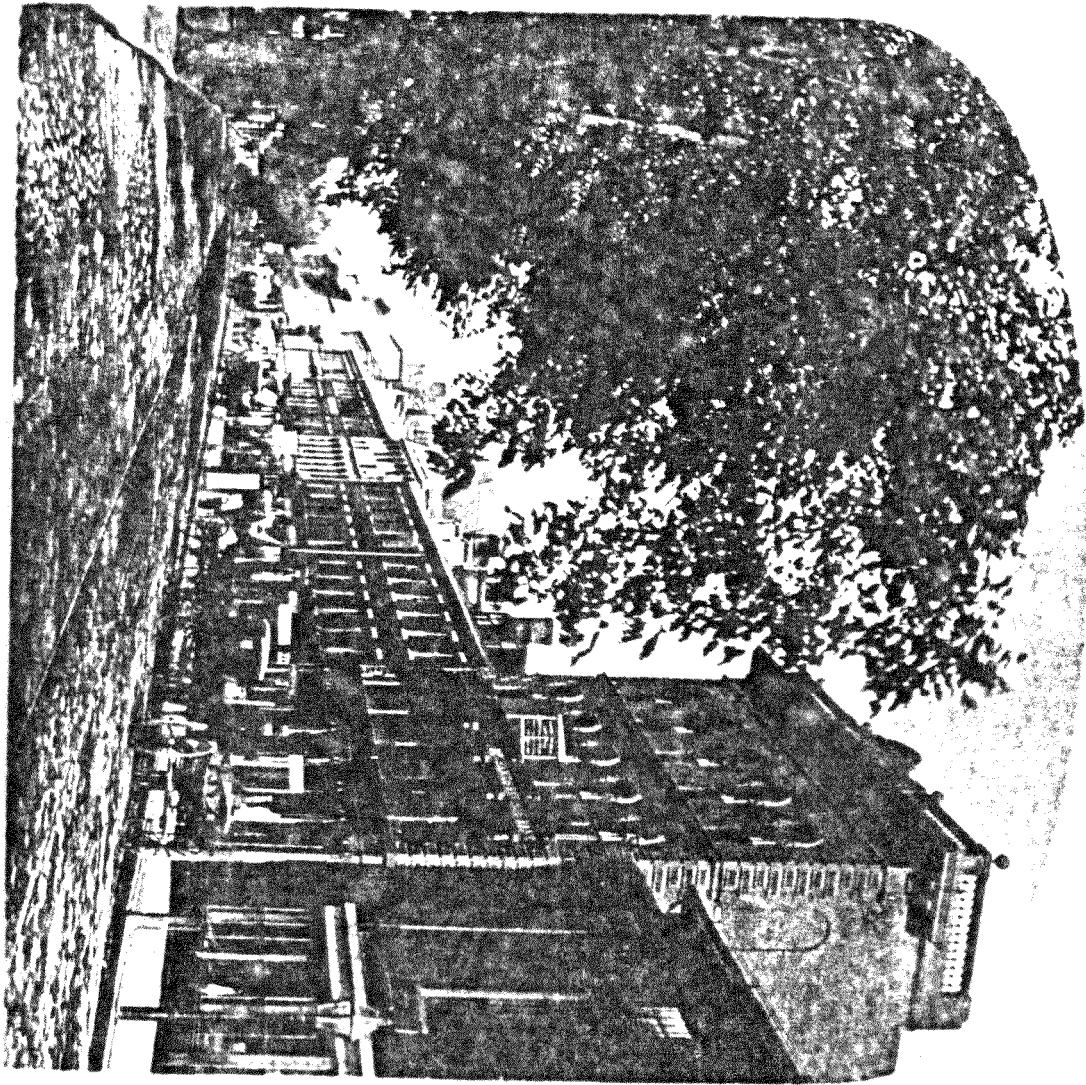
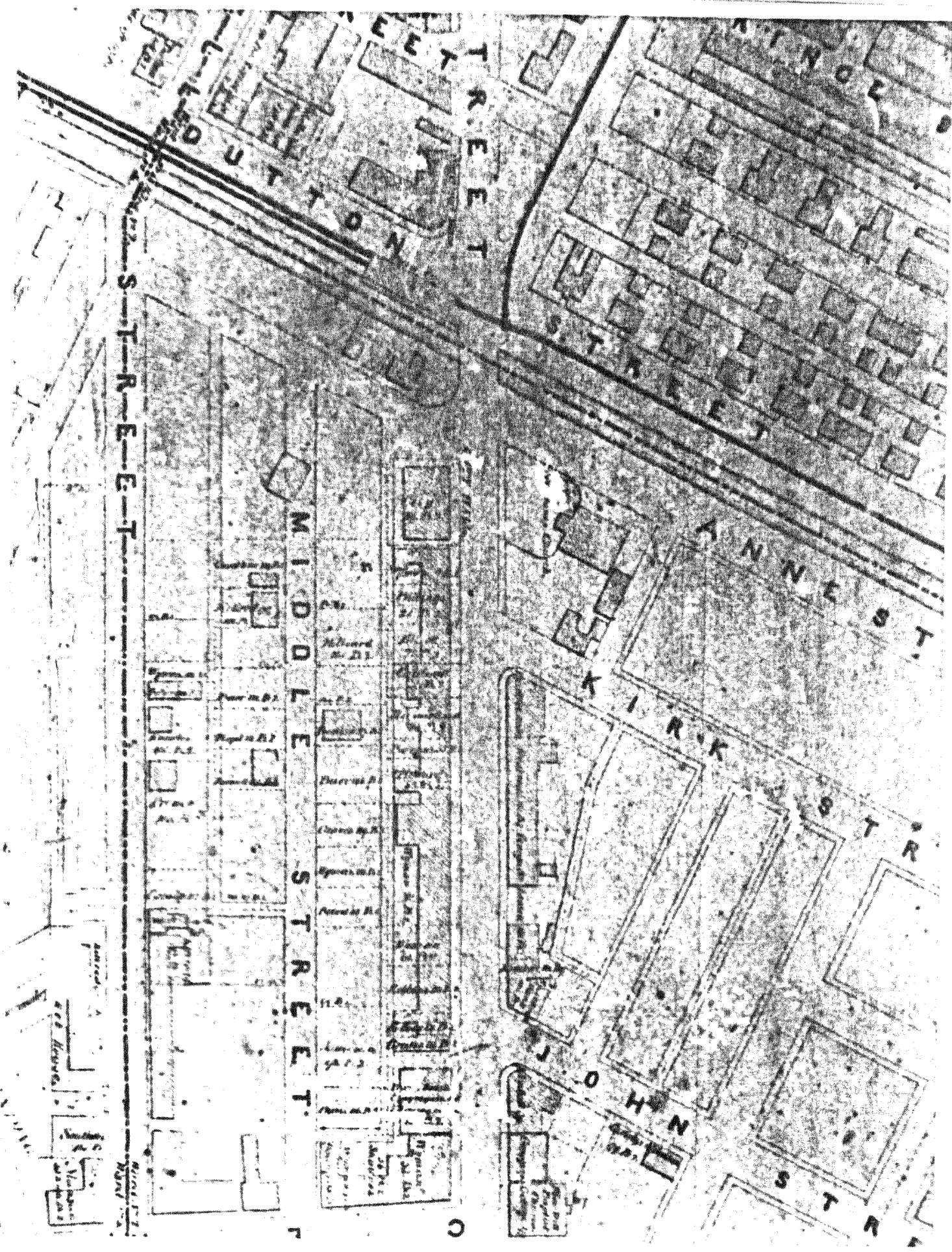


Illustration 3





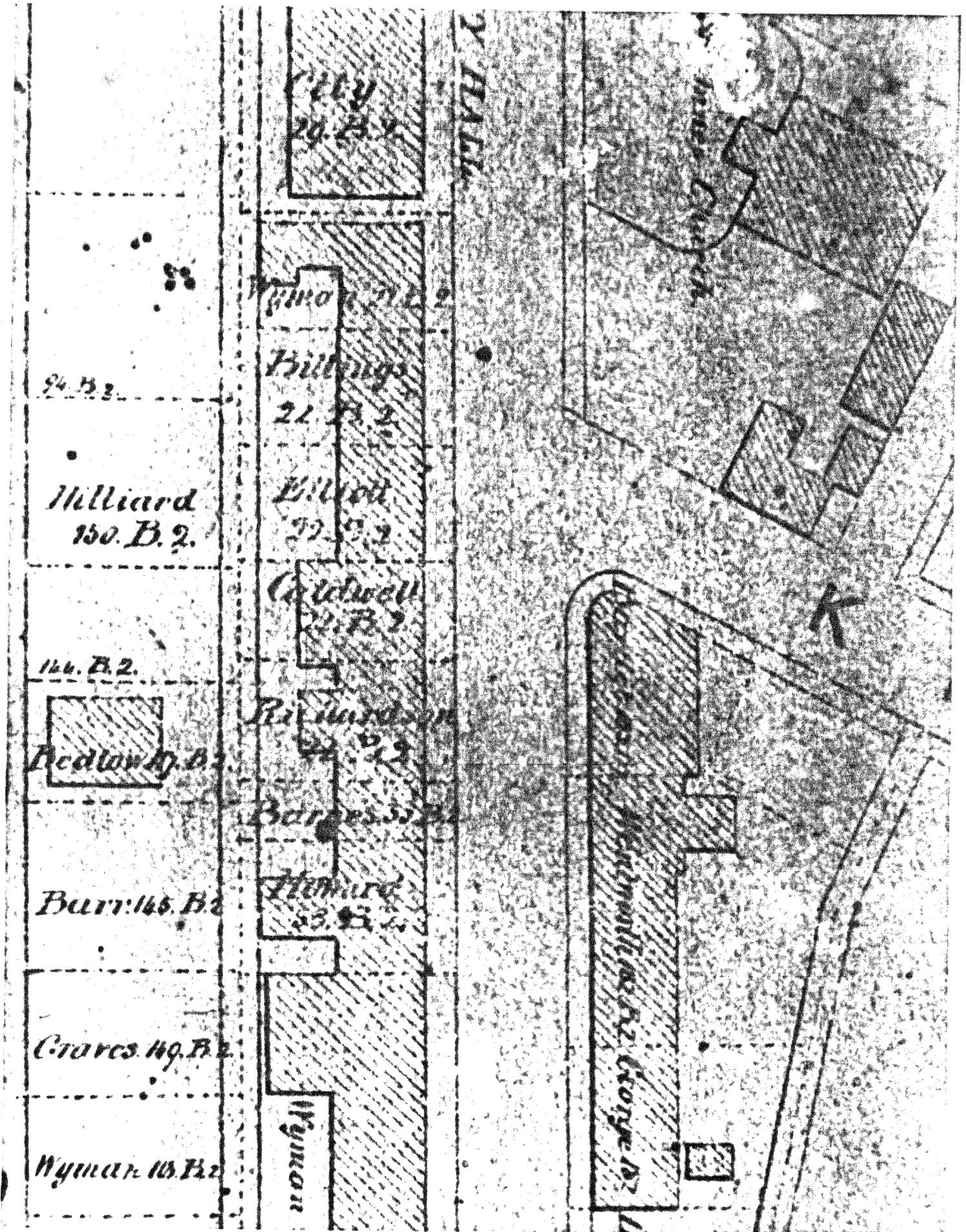
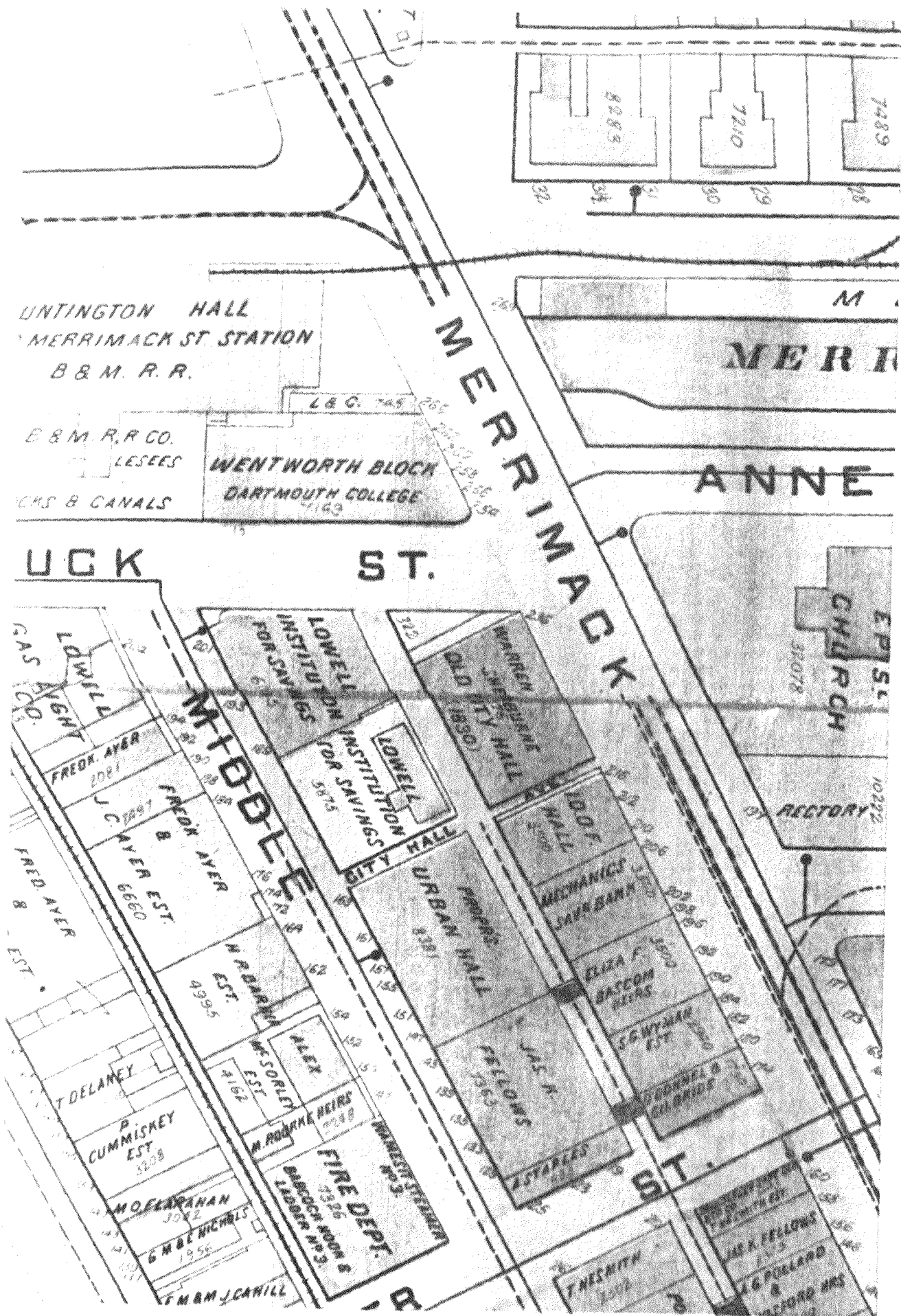
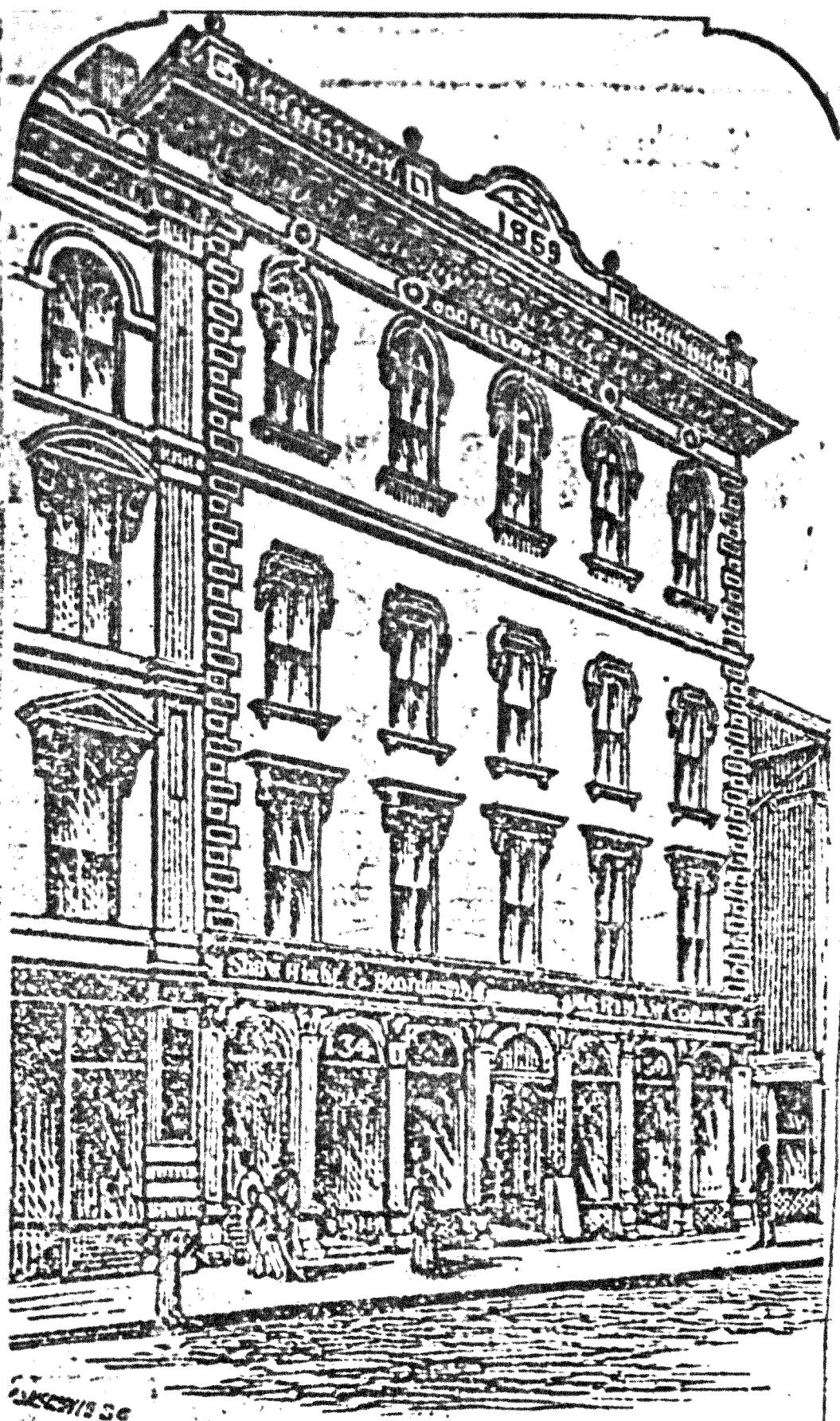


Illustration 6





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