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### Residential renovation: Architecture, history, and interior design

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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
the College of Fine and Applied Arts  
in Candidacy for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Residential Renovation:  
Architecture, History, and Interior Design

By

Nancy A. Chwiecko

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APPROVALS

Adviser: Charles Lewis

Date: Jan 15, 1988

Associate Adviser: Liz Fomin

Date: Jan 27, 1988

Associate Adviser: Houghton Wetherald

Date: FEB 12, 1988

Special Assistant to the  
Dean of Graduate Affairs: Philip Bornarth

Date: 3/11/88

Dean, College of Fine & Applied Arts: Robert H. Johnston Ph.D

Date: 3/20/88

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Nancy A. Chwiecko  
60 Main Street  
Holcomb, New York 14469

## Introduction

The Sloan house is a single family residence consisting of twenty-three rooms. It is located in an historical preservation district of similar homes. Because of this and the fact that it was designed by a famous Rochester architect, Claude Bragdon, the house has both historical and architectural significance.

Built in 1906 for William E. Sloan, owner of Sloan Metal Company, it remained in the Sloan family until very recently. The interior has remained entirely intact and no changes have been made since 1908, when a wing was added.

Architect Claude Bragdon led a diverse life, working at various times as an actor, author, architect and set designer. While he corresponded regularly with Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan, Bragdon's main architectural influence was Henry Hobson Richardson. He particularly admired Richardson's residential design. That influence is most evident in the great central hall of the Sloan home.

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My design takes into consideration the landmark qualities of the house and limitations on conversions as set forth by the New York State Fire Prevention and Building Code. Working within the code, I first divided the house into condominium spaces. I then made a detailed study of which areas within the house were most sensitive to change. I determined that some spaces could be totally altered while others were so sensitive that they should remain entirely intact. For instance, the third floor was a dark cluttered design lacking architectural detail. Therefore, the space could be virtually gutted

without any impact to the integrity of the structure. The entrance hall contained architecturally significant features which were deserving of preservation. Change there would be detrimental to the integrity of its architecture. Spaces most worthy of preserving were also most difficult to design.

This project has taught me the difficulties of renovation and the importance of preservation. In the future as we become more populated, more renovation will take place. It will become increasingly important to preserve our past for both historical and cultural reasons.

## Project Choices

In considering my thesis goals, I had to first establish what kind of renovation to use for the Sloan house. My choices were dictated by location, market need, and most importantly, Landmark Society priorities.

Location is important when considering any project. It can make a difference how close a site is to other services and amenities. The location of the Sloan house broadened the possibilities for renovation. Its proximity to downtown Rochester and location in a residential neighborhood allows some flexibility. Residential or commercial solutions were both viable.

Market need is always important when looking for a viable solution for renovation. What do people need? What do they want? Answers to these crucial questions help solve any design problem. One thing most people want and need is convenience. Whether it is living close to work or working close to doctors, stores, etc.. Convenience also includes proximity to major roads and bus lines. The Sloan house is less than one mile from I-490 and is on the Rochester bus line. It is very accessible.

Ability to expand in the future is often a need, whether commercial or residential. Although the Sloan house is situated on approximately two acres, Landmark Society restrictions would make expansion impossible.

When I spoke with Henry McCartney, Executive Director of the Landmark Society of Western New York, it did not really matter to him what kind of project I chose to do. He knew my participation was just an academic exercise and he was open to anything as long as



I understood that the Landmark Society had already established that the house would be used only as a single family residence. The house is in excellent condition and could be inhabited as is. Therefore, for the purposes of my thesis, I needed a project which would include space planning and alteration of function and style.

Based on the foregoing considerations, my initial options for renovation included the following:

1. Bed and Breakfast Inn
2. Office Space (i.e., dentist, doctor, etc.)
3. Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) Home
4. Corporate Headquarters
5. Research/Development, Think Tank
6. Condominiums
7. Museum

All of the above are possible solutions but the most viable were those which reflected the residential nature of the neighborhood. The main reason for this is that the house is in an historical preservation district which is based on the nature of the neighborhood. It reflects a part of our culture which no longer exists today; grand mansions, genteel wealthy society, and patrons of the arts. Because I wanted personally to work within Landmark guidelines, this became very important to me. Only two choices, out of the seven listed, would work in a residential area: condominiums and a home for the RPO.

The RPO solution appealed to me because Mrs. Sloan had been a patron of the arts, particularly the performing arts. Also, the Sloan family had expressed a wish to the Landmark Society that the house be used as a residence for the RPO conductor and small performances could be given there.



I began to pursue this avenue but soon realized, after speaking with the Marketing Manager at the RPO, that all they really wanted were new offices. I wanted to avoid the office as a solution so through the process of elimination I was left with one viable use - condominiums.

Unfortunately the word condominium has taken on a negative connotation for some in recent years, but hopefully the sensitivity to space with which I have approached this conversion will allay anyone's fears.

The next step was to establish program requirements based on an analysis of the house and its site. (See page 25-30). With this program in mind, I could start the design process which included reading and interpreting the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code and many trips to the University of Rochester Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. This archive proved invaluable as a resource containing all the documents drawn by Claude Bragdon pertaining to the Sloan house, a total of over eighty drawings.

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Nancy A. Chwiecko  
60 Main Street  
Holcomb, New York 14469

## The Design

In order to determine how the house would be divided and how many condominium units were possible, five important elements were taken into consideration. They were:

1. New York State Code Requirements
2. Economic Viability
3. Preservation Limitations
4. Functional requirements of each individual unit
5. Aesthetics

The New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code which I will refer to as NYS Code or the Code, was designed with the health and safety of the general public in mind. Included are provisions for the handicapped. The NYS Code is therefore necessary to the well-being of the public and future generations. Any new building or building conversion is effected by the NYS Code. Changing from a single family home to condominiums, as in the case of the Sloan house project, is considered a conversion. Any modifications or changes must adhere to the NYS Code. Old construction must be modified to conform to any new standards within the Code.

The Sloan house is classified (by the Code) as Type 4, Ordinary Construction, which is basically masonry exterior with interior members and walls of wood. A conversion would change its occupancy classification from A-1, One-Family Dwelling to B-1, Multiple Dwelling - Permanent Occupancy.<sup>1</sup>

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1. NYS, New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code, 1984, p. 36, Sec. 704.1d.

NYS Code requirements which most affected my conversion included those for habitable space, light and ventilation, stairs and means of egress.

Stairs and means of egress (exits) are the most difficult to incorporate and became my primary consideration during the initial stages of design. The front stairway is classified as an ornamental stair and met requirements for use as a means of egress.<sup>2</sup> Another stair had to be added which would be enclosed and link the attic to the exterior at grade. The enclosure would help prevent the spread of fire between floors. Its location was critical because it had to be within fifty feet of a dwelling unit entrance or one hundred feet of any room within that dwelling unit.<sup>3</sup>

Habitable space is defined as any space occupied by one or more persons for living, sleeping, eating, or cooking.<sup>4</sup> The NYS Code requires minimum ceiling heights and square footage for certain spaces. These requirements affected my design in the attic and basement spaces. Because the ceiling slopes in the attic I had to keep the minimum ceiling height in mind. If I wanted to use the basement for habitable space I had to check the Code for space location with respect to grade level. I found that in order to use the basement as habitable space I would have to excavate according to the depth requirements as set by the Code.<sup>5</sup>

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2. Ibid., pp. 81-82, Sec. 734.1a, 739.4d-3, 739.4d-4.

3. Ibid., p. 86, p. 90, Table 111-735.

4. Ibid., p. 11, Sec. 606.3.

5. Ibid., pp. 77-78, Sec. 732.2b, 732.2b-1, 732.2b-2.

The NYS Code has established basic requirements for natural light and natural ventilation for habitable spaces. They are based on a ratio of window opening to square footage of any habitable floor space. The Code required that "Each habitable space shall be provided with natural light, by means of openings described in this section, in an amount equivalent to that transmitted through clear glass in area to eight per cent of the floor area of the habitable space."<sup>6</sup> With regard to ventilation, "Each habitable space shall be provided with natural ventilation through openable parts of the opening described in this section which are equal in area to not less than four percent of the total floor area of each habitable space."<sup>7</sup>

Again the basement and attic were two areas potentially affected by these requirements. The basement problem could be solved by excavation and the attic might need additional dormers or skylights. But any changes to the exterior would have to be considered from a preservation point of view.

Financial considerations are important for any real design project. To make my project as realistic as possible I had to think about cost of alteration versus the benefits. I have to admit that economic constraints took a backseat to all other considerations and, therefore, I will present it briefly and simply. In order to calculate cost I had to know approximately how many condominiums I could construct based on square footage. The total square footage of the house is over 10,000 square feet. This includes areas such as the basement, central hall, and other corridors. The basement has

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6. Ibid., p. 80, Section 733.2, 733.2b.

7. Ibid., p. 81, Section 733.3b.



uninhabitable space of approximately 2,200 square feet. The central hall occupies nearly 700 square feet on the first floor and 500 square feet on the second. This brings the total of habitable space to about 7,600 square feet. Considering 1,100 square feet a fair size for a condominium, the number of units I could construct would be five or six. Square footage estimates are based on other local conversions and new construction.<sup>8</sup>

Determination of the final number of units was based on my analysis of potential profit. I knew that the asking price for the house was \$500,000.  $\$500,000 \div 5 = \$100,000$  per unit for land cost.  $\$500,000 \div 6 = \$83,000$  per unit is obviously more cost effective. Each unit could be sold after reconstruction for \$125,000 to \$175,000. These figures are based on consultation with local real estate authorities. The average price is approximately  $\$150,000 \times 6 = \$900,000$ . Six units would generate a total of \$400,000 for alterations, renovation, fees, and profit for a developer.

Preservation and aesthetic considerations were also part of the initial decision. I approached this by analyzing the integrity of the spaces. What this means is that some spaces are extremely sensitive to change while other areas could be completely altered. This study of sensitivity was based on my field observations of the house. (See Sloan House Site Survey, page 25) (See figures 1 - 4 for original plans)

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8. Based on my own study of condominium sales in Rochester and Canandaigua.

With the exception of the kitchen, the first floor and central hall would suffer the most from additional walls, plumbing, or removal of features. The front hall is, to me, the most magnificent part of the house. I decided not to change, enclose, or disrupt it. The Dining Room was another space which I felt should not be changed. Its ceiling is covered with a gilded fabric and has a floral design painted on it which I chose to preserve. The room, of handsome proportion and symmetrical organization, would suffer from any division. The Living Room has a plaster cast detail on the ceiling which is also deserving of preservation. I felt that because of the room's generous size, very long and low, that it could withstand some division as long as the ceiling remained untouched and integrity of the total space was unobstructed. In other words, a partial divider could be added, subdividing the space functionally but not visually. The Billiard's Room is by far the lightest and brightest room on the first floor, primarily because it has windows on three sides. I felt that it could withstand some change as long as the composition of the woodwork was not disturbed and that the openness of the space was not violated.

Most of the second floor could be altered without endangering the architecture of the house. The upper hallway is an integral part of the front hall on the first floor because it shares the same spatial position, symmetry, and columns. In addition, this space tangibly represents a bygone era. Therefore, I felt that this space must remain unaltered.

I also felt that all of the fireplaces on the second floor must remain. Paint could be removed from mantels and other woodwork.

The bathrooms, although quite large, (one is thirteen feet by thirteen feet) were not as elegant as they might be and were functionally obsolete. Economizing on their space would provide space for better uses.

The third floor is by far the least sensitive space. As long as the exterior was not drastically altered, the interior could be completely reorganized. As my Site Survey (page 29) shows, the space is a series of small, narrow rooms. Probably initially conceived as servants' quarters and a place to convalesce, Bragdon's original drawings included a "hospital room" on the third floor. It is apparent that not too much time was spent in planning the space. However, Bragdon did take time to design linen storage and cabinetry which could be reused in other areas of the house.

The attic has dormer windows and one small skylight. The skylight is on the flat section of the roof. This flat section is approximately eight feet wide and thirty-four feet long. A skylight could easily be incorporated into its entire length bringing light required by Code<sup>9</sup>, without being visible from the exterior, thus conforming to preservation guidelines.

I did not want to add any new dormers or skylights which would be visible from the road. In my final plan I did add one dormer. It was added to meet the Code for light and ventilation requirements.<sup>10</sup> I placed it exactly where Claude Bragdon had included one in his original drawings. For an unknown reason it was never built.

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9. NYS, New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code, p. 80, Section 733.2b.

10. Ibid., p. 80, Section 733.2b.



The last space considered was the basement. The only room which could be used for habitable space was the Playroom. It has a fireplace and wood floor. Two of its three windows are large enough to meet light and ventilation requirements. But because more than four feet of the walls are below grade, the ground would have to be excavated along the entire length of the wall to meet Code requirements.<sup>11</sup> This is a feasible solution and one which would actually enhance the condominium. Outside I could add a small terrace to create a private outdoor space.

The ceiling in the Playroom would have to be lowered at least six inches to cover many pipes and ducts. The floor has to be replaced since it is structurally unsound.

The remaining basement space could accommodate storage, laundry rooms, maintenance, utilities, and maybe a recreation room.

During the initial stages of this design I drew boundaries for potential condominiums. I created three different proposals (see Figures 5<sup>ABCD</sup>, 6<sup>ABCD</sup>, 7<sup>ABCD</sup>). All three proposals would have five of the units on two stories. All of the proposals would require additional stairs. This does not include the possibility of moving existing stairs, which in fact, did happen. The most important consideration became unit size. At least one unit had as much as 1,900 square feet while others barely had 1,100 square feet. To accommodate market need, I sought a more even distribution. The third proposal ranged from about 1,200 square feet to just over 1,600

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11. Ibid., pp. 77-78, Section 732.2b, 732.2b-1, 732.2b-2.

square feet. It was also a better plan for providing a required fire stair.

My third proposal, Figures 7 A-D, was adopted based on an even distribution of space. (See figures 8, 10, 11, 12, and site plan figures 13 & 14 for final design). It was also easier to incorporate a fire stair.

At this stage I could begin to develop each unit, but first I needed a general idea of what each unit would need. (See Program Requirements, page 30). I also began a cardboard model of the attic space. Working three dimensionally allowed me an accurate understanding of the angular space. Because the roof slopes, the actual amount of useable floor space can be deceptive if studied only two dimensionally.

Development of each unit was based on several resources and visits to local condominiums and apartments, both conversions and new construction. With this information I concluded what most people desired. After visiting one conversion at an Historic Landmark site in Canandaigua I became convinced that two bedroom units were more desirable than one bedroom units.<sup>12</sup> The reason is that a second bedroom can be used for children, guests, or as a study/work room. I also learned that units with one and one-half to two bathrooms sold better than those with only one bathroom. Units with many amenities such as fine woodwork, fireplaces, unusual windows and pleasing views sold faster and for more money than other units. Diversity of floor plans which maintain uniqueness can also be significant.

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12. Based on my own study of Brigham Hall Condominiums, Canandaigua.

Knowing that one's home is different from one's neighbor's home is important to many people.

I read Charles Moore's A Place of Houses, which describes the evolution of the home and the logical placement of rooms and utilities. In the back of the book is included a checklist of questions to ask when one designs a home. The questions are geared toward a specific occupant who wants a specific home. They were still interesting to me because they made me think about how one designs a home. I also realized that what I desired in a home may not fit everyone's needs. When designing a condominium, with no specific occupant in mind, a more general approach must be taken. I had a firm idea of the potential market type, but considered them as groups of people and not individuals. These groups included empty nesters (those whose children were grown) and young professional couples without children.

Based on the above information I came to the following conclusions. I elected to have one and one-half to two bedrooms in each unit. There would be one and one-half to two bathrooms wherever possible. Each unit in the final proposal includes at least one full bath and a powder room. One unit has two full baths and a powder room. Laundry facilities are especially important. Every unit would have space for a washer and dryer either near the kitchen, bathroom, storage closet, or in the basement. The laundry room would be accessible from within each unit. Kitchens are based on efficiency of space. Galley kitchens make a lot of sense because they do not waste space and are easy for one or two people to work in. Eat-in kitchens were not vital but if room allowed I tried to fit in a

table or counter for two. Three kitchens included room for tables or booths for more people. Kitchens were placed with existing plumbing in mind after considering the ease of adding new plumbing stacks.

Each unit was given a large combination living/dining room. Extra space was used for studies or television rooms. Two units were given enclosed porches with privacy for relaxing. One unit was provided with a private outdoor living space and two others have direct access to the outside. Storage was included for each unit. Basement storage of approximately 180 square feet per unit is either directly accessible through a unit or publicly accessible from a locked exterior entrance. Storage in the form of many closets was included in each space.

Each unit boasts some unique amenities. These amenities are inherent to the building's original design. They are those extra-special details which are rarely done today and would be difficult to duplicate. Craftsmen are hard to find and the cost would be prohibitive. These amenities include woodwork and trim, wainscot, bookmatched paneling, patterned wood floors, leaded windows, stained glass, curved windows, elegant fireplaces, wood carvings, plaster cast details, hand-painted patterned ceilings, built-in cabinets, pedestal sinks, marble sinks, pleasant views of the generous landscaped yard and charming nooks and crannies.

The fireplaces are distinct and varied. Five units have at least one fireplace. Three have two fireplaces. Only two fireplaces are similar in detail. Some have carved mahogany woodwork with marble hearths and reflect a colonial style. The first floor fireplace in Condominium C-2, former Billiard's Room, (refer to figures 8, 9, 10,



11) is Tudor style with distinctly carved medieval details. The four fireplaces on the second floor have wood trim which is painted. These could be stripped or left painted.

The woodwork detailing throughout the house is extensive and also varied. For instance, the living room in Condominium C-1 (refer to figure 9) has two feet high wainscot of mahogany with a wide baseboard and trim. The former Dining Room, now part of Condominium C-3 (figure 9) has six feet high mahogany wainscot. The living room area in C-2, former Billiard's Room, (figure 9) has bookmatched oak paneling on the walls and ceiling.

Windows also vary throughout the house. The main entrance hall, which would be a community space, has a magnificent two story bay window with stained glass medallions depicting signs of the Zodiac. Similarly, leaded windows with stained glass medallions of medieval chess players can be found in the living area of C-2. These medallions were all designed by Claude Bragdon. The curved walls and windows in the front of the house are enjoyed by four of the units.

The second floor is generally more uniform in detailing but it has qualities of airiness and brightness which are not found on any of the other floors. The materials on the second floor are of high quality. These materials include solid mahogany doors, wood floors, wood trim, and leaded windows.

The third floor's uniqueness is its overall sense of privacy and coziness; its informality and more contemporary ambiance. The rest of the house acts as a buffer to outside noises and intrusions.

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## Details

Once I had a workable floor plan of designated spaces the details became important. Some of these details had been conceived from the start while others were discovered during the design process. Special considerations went into designing two specific areas of the house. These went beyond the usual decisions of where to remove a wall or put a new one. Considerations included the following: a general decision of style, new or traditional; or blending new with old; taking a risk or playing it safe; the influence of Claude Bragdon and a brief study of European methods of renovation.

The two specific areas of the house were in Condominiums C-1 and C-2 (figure 9), the former Living Room and Billiard's Room. Each space would need to include a living room, dining area, and a kitchen. The first consideration was that the rooms remain untouched. For instance, I did not want to violate the ceiling in Condominium C-1 because of the plaster cast detail or the walls in either condominium. In order to do this I would have to build units within, and detached from, the outside enclosures of the space. It was suggested that I research European renovations.

Europeans have been dealing with lack of space and the renovation of historical sites for a long time. I found a variety of ideas ranging from contemporary offices in cathedrals to rooms in homes which were divided by moveable glass walls which permitted visual openness and physical privacy at the same time. I found contemporary stairs which were open, attractive and not as foreboding as the usual spiral staircases. The floating treads of spiral staircases can be unsettling to some people. Mario Botta, the

Italian architect, has designed stairs which economize space yet are used in more than just a spiral configuration. They also have risers which eliminate that unsettling feeling which open risers and floating treads can give.

I knew that my design would incorporate openness and not be physically attached to the walls. The more difficult decision was whether to use a traditional approach or a contemporary one. My first impulse was traditional, probably because I knew it would be most acceptable to more people, especially in conservative Rochester. I thought I would incorporate updated versions of the original details using the same materials or very similar ones. I was beginning to imagine the house furnished in traditional trappings. But did I want design which would blend into the background or one which would jump out at you? It all came down to a final matter of taking a risk or playing it safe. What would Claude Bragdon do?

My knowledge of Claude Bragdon is based upon his drawings that I worked with and his autobiography More Lives Than One. Before I read his book I made the assumption that I would discover an egotistical, self-important, opinionated architect. This really could not be further from the truth. I found him to be a humble, self-effacing man. His interests went far beyond architecture. Acting, writing, and the occult actually took up more of his life.

Claude Bragdon was an architect for a small portion of his life and he did not choose to enter the profession but rather fell into it. He had been a draftsman and worked his way into architectural design. He tended to be a follower rather than a leader and was



greatly influenced by the architects, Henry Hobson Richardson and McKim, Mead, and White.

He sums up his architectural career and his successes in this paragraph taken from his autobiography.

"Always a good draughtsman, I became in time, and with experience, a good architect, but I came late - too late - to the realization that eclecticism in architecture was a vicious circle leading nowhere. When I did realize it the theatre absorbed me - my career as an architect came to an end. Only a few things done in this field satisfy me: I like a little Italian Presbyterian Church I built in Rochester because of its being so cheap and so direct a solution of the given problem while breathing forth a faintly Italianate air. I like the Bevier Memorial Building of the Rochester Mechanic's Institute because, although 'a factory proposition,' it is handled in such a way as to give the effect of a work of architectural art. I take satisfaction also in the First Universalist Church of Rochester because of the way it piles up and the pleasing effect of its pattern-brickwork used in conjunction with coloured tile. I shall close with the consideration of the Peterborough Bridge and the New York Central Station at Rochester. Not that I think there is anything wonderful about either of these constructions, but in discussing them I can perhaps give an insight into the problems which confront and the difficulties which beset the practitioner in this most limited and exacting of the fine arts - the frustrations, the false starts, the failures which attend any kind of success in it."<sup>13</sup>

As a follower of eclecticism and other architects, Bragdon was definitely not a risk-taker. This becomes most evident in his residential design. These are always based on someone else's work or previous styles. Residential work for Bragdon was not done for intellectual, theoretical, or philosophical reasons but for practical ones. Generally designed for wealthier clientele, they were his bread and butter.

Bragdon had certainly been exposed to more modern thoughts and philosophies. The Frank Lloyd Wright house around the corner

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13. C. Bragdon. More Lives Than One, 1938, pp. 160-161.

from the Sloan house was living proof of that. It was built at the same time as the Sloan House, but the Sloan house fits into the surrounding neighborhood of stately traditional homes. The fact that most of the neighborhood looks like the Sloan house rather than the Wright house is certainly not due to any failure of Wright but rather the conservative nature of the Rochester population.

Bragdon admired Wright and Sullivan for their functionalist approach but was himself too caught up in the eclecticism of the time. At first I thought I did not want to offend Bragdon's design by adding anything contemporary. When I read his own account of his architecture, and I discovered that only a few things he did satisfied him and that none of them were homes, I felt it was time for Claude to take a risk. I decided I would take the risk for him.

Instead of incorporating similar details into the original design I wanted to create startling imagery within a staid setting. This feeling grew stronger after my last visit to the house. It was my longest visit and the house was completely empty. The living room and the billiard's room seemed so dark and oppressive that the last thing I wanted to do was add more of the same features to them.

## Condominiums C-1 and C-2: Final Details (Figures 8 - 14)

The kitchens in both Condominiums C-1 and C-2 and the stairs in C-2 became this startling imagery. I tried to incorporate them into the original house through use of materials but left the design of each feature crisp, clean, and stark. They provide a sharp contrast to the original space. (See renderings) (Figures 15 - 20)

In both kitchens I created partial walls five and one-half feet high. This allowed the ceilings to remain unobstructed and a complete view of the original rooms. Partial walls in contemporary kitchen design are quite common but usually they are only at three or four feet and allow a view of all the clutter on the counter. I chose five and one-half feet partly because of this and also because it would obscure the mechanics of the kitchen including the refrigerator.

An extra foot was added to the normal counter width of two feet. This allowed for some storage above the counter on the kitchen side and bookshelves or storage on the bottom of the opposite side. (See renderings)

The kitchen in Condominium C-1 has a divider of pinkish marble which matches the original fireplace hearth. I inlaid a warm grey pattern which reflects the ceiling design. Along with the marble itself, this helps to relate the divider to the original room. The divider creates a monolithic image of a solid marble block in the middle of the room. This becomes dramatic and acknowledges the alteration.

Both kitchens have contemporary, slick cabinetry colored in a lighter neutral tone. This would help brighten the space, define it

as a kitchen, and provide a clean look which I feel is particularly important for a kitchen.

The kitchen in Condominium C-2 has the added feature of pass-through doors above the kitchen counter. This would permit the occupant the choice of openness or privacy. The opposite side of this divider would be covered with a light oak veneer which would match the adjacent stairs. This type of kitchen is also used in Condominium C-4 but is probably not as startling because the original space has already been painted and there would be less contrast.

Condominium C-2 has added drama created by a stair. This stair is based on the style of Mario Botta which I have previously mentioned. The main difference is that I had to add a nosing on each tread which his stairs lack, but is necessary to meet NYS Code requirements.<sup>14</sup>

When designing this stair I carefully considered its position in the room. I chose the center for visual impact. In the center the stair does occupy a fair amount of space but I felt that its visual impact was worth it. The openness of its design permits perception of the original room. The fact that one can see over and under it gives a visual sense of space which an enclosed stair would have lost.

I needed a visual means to relate the stair to the surrounding space. My answer was the floor. The existing floors throughout the house are worn and in need of refinishing, so I decided to lighten the floor in Condominium C-2 by stripping and refinishing. The

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14. NYS, New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code, 1984, p. 58, Section 713.1b-1.

stairs would have a matching light oak finish on the risers and treads. There would be little distinction between the stairs and the floor.



## Conclusion

The rest of the alterations to the house are less startling by comparison. More conventional means were employed. The end results are generally pleasing spaces. I like to think that I would enjoy living in any one of them. The only one I would grow tired of is C-6 and that is because of all the stairs I would need to climb to get there.

I like to think that the risk I took was worth it. I know some people are too shocked by my combination of old and new. I understand their viewpoint. Normally I find a safe middle ground but this time I could not resist the risk. In general, I feel I have maintained the original integrity and dignity of the spaces. The floor plan works well. Saving the central entrance hall intact and using it for community space is one of my favorite achievements. I believe that I have created living spaces which work in a contemporary time but live up to the grand style of the original design.

## Sloan House Site Survey

December 19, 1986 at 10:00 a.m.

Built: 1906

### Construction:

Wood frame with brick masonry exterior

Steel roof structure

All windows are double hung, some are leaded

Total Square Feet: 10,000

### Kitchen:

The kitchen is situated in the rear of the house on its east side near the driveway. It consists of four rooms, a stairway, and entry off the rear porch. The four rooms in order from back to front are; (1) servants' dining room, (2) general kitchen, (3) pantry, (4) service room.

The servants' dining room is a medium-sized room and is empty. It has a butler's turntable between it and the general kitchen area.

The general kitchen contains two large sinks, one for mops and one for dishes. The room contains a stove, a refrigerator, and some cabinets. There is a chair rail six feet off the floor. This area includes three windows which are double hung. The two windows facing the terrace are leaded. The ceilings and walls are in serious disrepair. There are cracks, falling plaster, and the paint looks old.

The pantry has cupboards from floor to ceiling, bins for storage, and a built-in refrigerator between the pantry and service room.

The service room contains more floor to ceiling cupboards for good china and silver. It has two marble sinks which are a warm grey color. The faucets are tall and thin like those from surgical sinks. There is another butler's turntable between the pantry and service room. The service room is linked to the dining room with a swinging door.

The ceiling height in the kitchen area is nine feet two inches. The area feels very confined and chopped up. It would not be convenient for a contemporary family without hired help. It is generally in shabby condition. I would consider saving some cabinetry, the two marble sinks and possibly the built-in refrigerator.

### Dining Room:

The dining room is situated south of the kitchen area, on the east side of the house. It has a large fireplace which is both mahogany (carved and paneled) and marble. The hearth is marble. Wainscot to six feet in height is all bookmatched mahogany. The wood is in excellent condition. The Sloan's regularly maintained the wood. The floor is two inch wide oak. The ceiling is canvas over plaster and is gilded. A floral pattern is painted in the center. The south wall is bowed and contains two windows which are not curved.

The dining room should remain intact. The reason for this is the room's pleasing proportions and symmetry. Its gilded ceiling and painted floral motif are worthy of preservation.

#### Central Entrance Hall:

Situated in the center of the house, it is a very large, elegant space.

The room is entirely paneled with bookmatched mahogany and the wood is in excellent condition. The floors are oak. All of the columns and the balustrade are also mahogany. The front door has a grille covered with mitered glass. The vestibule has a terracotta floor. There is a bay window to the north which is two stories high. It features leaded glass and stained glass medallions of signs of the Zodiac which Claude Bragdon designed.

The space contains the main stairway to the second floor and a stairway to the basement. There is a powder room on one side of the vestibule and a large closet on the other side. These rooms are also trimmed with mahogany. The main stairway and the bay window visually link the first and second floors. All circulation is through this space.

#### Living Room:

Situated on the west side of the house, it is a very long room.

It has a wainscot of mahogany which ends two feet six inches above the floor. The top half is plaster and is painted white.

The fireplace is composed of mahogany trim with pink marble surrounding the opening. It has a pink marble hearth.

The floor is oak in a herringbone pattern. The ceiling has plaster cast details in an oval pattern. Bookcases on the north wall are built in and have leaded glass doors. The opening into the billiard's room provides a handsome view. It, however, makes the room appear even longer. There is a small door at the northeast corner of the room which exits to the basement stair and main hall.

This room should not be divided with full walls because of the plaster casting on the ceiling. This plaster casting represents a bygone era of a wealthy genteel society and craftsmanship of that time. It is also unique to this room.

#### Billiard's Room:

The billiard's room was added in 1908 and replaced a loggia. The addition was also designed by Claude Bragdon.

Situated directly behind the living room, it is a very spacious room which feels warmer and lighter than the living room.

There are windows on three sides. The fireplace of carved oak is located in the center of the north wall directly opposite the opening into the living room. The ceiling is higher because the floor is two steps lower than the living room. The walls are paneled from floor to ceiling. The ceiling is also paneled. The wood in this room is bookmatched oak. The windows are leaded and have stained glass panes of medieval scenes. There is a medieval feeling throughout this room. Carved heads on the fireplace represent this theme.

I determined that the rich ornamentation should remain intact and any additions should compliment this.



## Second Floor:

The second floor consists of seven rooms, four bathrooms, and one enclosed porch.

All of the bedrooms are painted or painted and papered. The woodwork is also painted including the woodwork around the fireplaces. One small room on the east side and at the rear of the house is paneled in wood and has a fireplace in it. It is arranged as a small study.

There are four fireplaces on the second floor. All have marble surrounding the openings and on the hearths except the rear fireplace mentioned above which has brick in place of marble.

The master bedroom suite includes two bedrooms, two bathrooms, and one room referred to as Mrs. Sloan's office. The larger bathroom has two large pedestal sinks and tiled floors and walls. All of the bathrooms have white tile.

Mrs. Sloan's office is a very pleasant room. The ceiling is lowered at its entrance. The bedrooms are much brighter and airier than the downstairs rooms because they lack the dark woodwork prevalent on the first floor.

The bay window in the main hall is still impressive from the second floor. There are two very faded tapestries which hang on either side of the bay window.

I determined that most of the second floor could be altered without endangering the architecture of the house with the exception that the hallway should remain intact and the fireplaces should remain as amenities.

## Third Floor:

The attic consists of a series of narrow rooms with dormers. It includes several bedrooms and three bathrooms. The floors throughout are fir. There is one skylight over the front stairs. There are many built-in cabinets and closets which Claude Bragdon designed. A back stair has plenty of headroom. The knee walls are at five feet two inches.

The attic area could probably be gutted and reworked. The reason for this is the small, narrow spaces and the general closed-in feeling the space has. The space has few architectural details and would not be harmed by an open design. I would like to keep or duplicate Claude Bragdon's cabinetry.

## Basement:

A playroom has a fireplace of wood and brick. The windows are covered with grilles and are above grade. The wooden floor in the playroom is deteriorated and needs to be replaced. There are many exposed pipes left in the ceiling, but a new ceiling could be placed beneath these and the space would still be usable.

The playroom appears to be the only potentially habitable space in the basement because most of it is already above grade and the remainder of it could be excavated. Fortunately the room is located on a side of the house where this is feasible because it is not exposed to views from the road.

The rest of the basement has low ceilings and is clean. It would be suitable for laundry, maintenance, and storage.

Summary:

My initial feeling about the Sloan house after this survey is that there are specific areas which should not be altered at all. These include the Central Hall and the Dining Room. The Living Room could withstand some change as long as the ceiling is unaffected. The Billiard's Room could withstand change as long as the woodwork remains intact and the openness of the space is not violated.

The Kitchen could be rearranged but certain elements could remain where they are or be reused in other areas. These elements might include the marble sinks, the built-in refrigerator, the turntables, cabinetry.

The Bedrooms could be altered but making them smaller would not be suitable. Windows and woodwork must be respected.

Bathrooms can be changed because they are obsolete and waste space. Reuse of some fixtures such as the pedestal sinks should be considered.

The east side of the second floor is a narrow confusion of small spaces and I think it could be opened up with no harm to the building's integrity.

The Attic could be completely altered.

The Basement is basically non-habitable except for the Playroom beneath the Living Room.

### Site Analysis:

My analysis is based on actual visits to the site and on records at the University of Rochester Rarebooks Archives. These records consisted of drawings by Claude Bragdon and a blueprint of an original site plan and landscape plan by the Olmsted Brothers of Brookline, Massachusetts.

The house is situated on approximately two acres of land. Most of the site is covered with large deciduous trees. Some of these might be considered specimen trees. The east side of the house is mostly an empty lawn. Formerly a house had existed on this part of the site but it was torn down around 1910 and the Sloans purchased the property. Little, if anything, has been done to the lot in the form of landscaping since.

The site also has a formal garden to the west side of the house. Included in its center is a small statue bird bath. This garden is rectangular in shape and is enclosed by a low hedge. A brick path runs lengthwise through it with brick posts at either end. Another garden is situated to the rear (north side) of the house; it has a small sundial located in its center.

Also included on the property are two outbuildings which are used for garage space. Each could house between three and four vehicles. No other use will be designated at this time, but future use might include recreational facilities or more housing. One of these garages features a large lazy susan on the floor designed for turning cars around for access.

The driveway is very narrow varying between eight and twelve feet. There is a large oblong loop next to the house whose radius does not permit a U-turn.

At the rear of the property (north) there is a brick wall approximately ten feet high. It borders an alley used for access to adjoining industrial and warehouse facilities.

(See figures 13 & 14 for proposed site changes.)



## Program Requirements:

Project: Condominium Conversion  
Sloan House  
1250 East Avenue  
Rochester, New York 14610  
Owner: Landmark Society of Western New York

Scope of the Project will include the following:

Alteration and renovation of the existing interior of the approximately 10,000 square feet single family home into five or six condominium units. Each unit shall have between 1,100 and 1,700 square feet. Each unit will include one and one-half to two bedrooms, living room, dining area, kitchen, laundry, one full bath and at least one-half bath or powder room. All units will have a basement storage room and indoor parking for two cars. Some units will include extra features such as two fireplaces, a study or guest room, dressing room, and storage within the unit. Units shall either be entered directly from outdoors or shall be accessible from both the front and the back of the building via a common hall.

Outdoor recreation in the form of a tennis court or swimming pool will be added. The driveway and parking will be expanded to accommodate deliveries, garbage pickup, and guest parking. The sidewalks will be expanded for the same reason. Lighting will be added for safety and security. Any other exterior changes will be made, if necessary, to meet NYS Code requirements as long as they adhere to or meet preservation requirements, i.e., excavation to meet light and ventilation requirements might be allowed if it does not interfere with the facade or plantings.

Any additions to the driveway and parking (including a parking garage) will occur on the east side of the house only where there are currently no plantings. The parking garage shall be obscured from the road either by fences, foliage, berming, or actually burying the garage.

Alterations to the interior will include space planning, construction of new walls, removal of some old walls, construction of stairs, provision of required exits, plumbing and electrical fixtures. Also included are additional baths and kitchens and refurbishing of interior finishes.

## ILLUSTRATION GUIDE

### Figure 1 - Figure 4

Original plans of Basement, First Floor, Second Floor and Attic as drawn by Claude Bragdon. Northwest wing with Billiards Room was added later. Separate drawings were done on tracing paper which was not permitted out of U of R Library for reproduction.

### Figures 5 A-D; 6A-D; and 7A-D

Preliminary proposals for design development. The colored lines indicate individual condominium spaces. The numbers correlate with these colors.

### Figures 8, 9, 10, 11

Final design for Basement, First Floor, Second Floor and Attic. Furniture and fixture placement used to indicate room use. Dotted lines represent removal of existing walls. Dotted lines in center of C6 Attic Floor Plan indicate skylights above. Colors indicate condominium spaces and divisions. Each condominium is number coded as well, i.e. C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6. Refer to figures 1-4 for comparison.

### Figure 12

Section of house. Refer to Figures 8 - 11, arrows indicate cut line.

### Figure 13

Site Plan. Refer to Figure 20 for color reproduction of same.

### Figure 14

Site Elevation. Viewed from East Avenue.

### Figure 15 - Figure 19

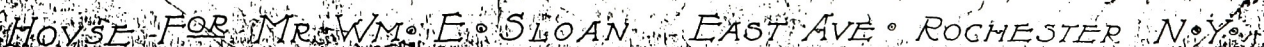
Perspective renderings of design. Refer to Figures 8 - 11 for specific location of renderings.

### Figure 20

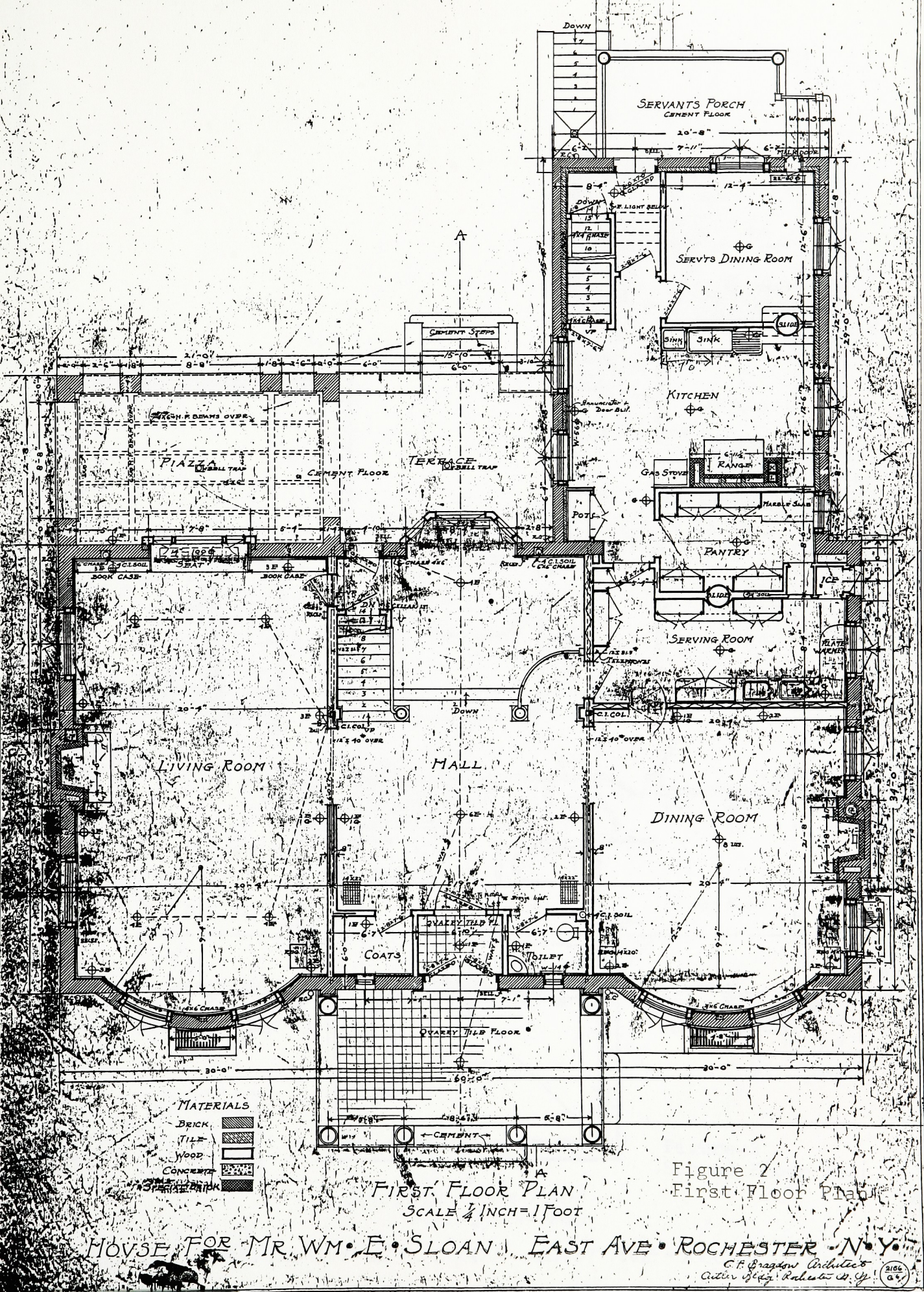
Site Plan. Indicates proposals for underground and surface parking, refuse containment, plantings, walls and a tennis court.

NOTE: All reproductions contained within the following figures are not to scale.

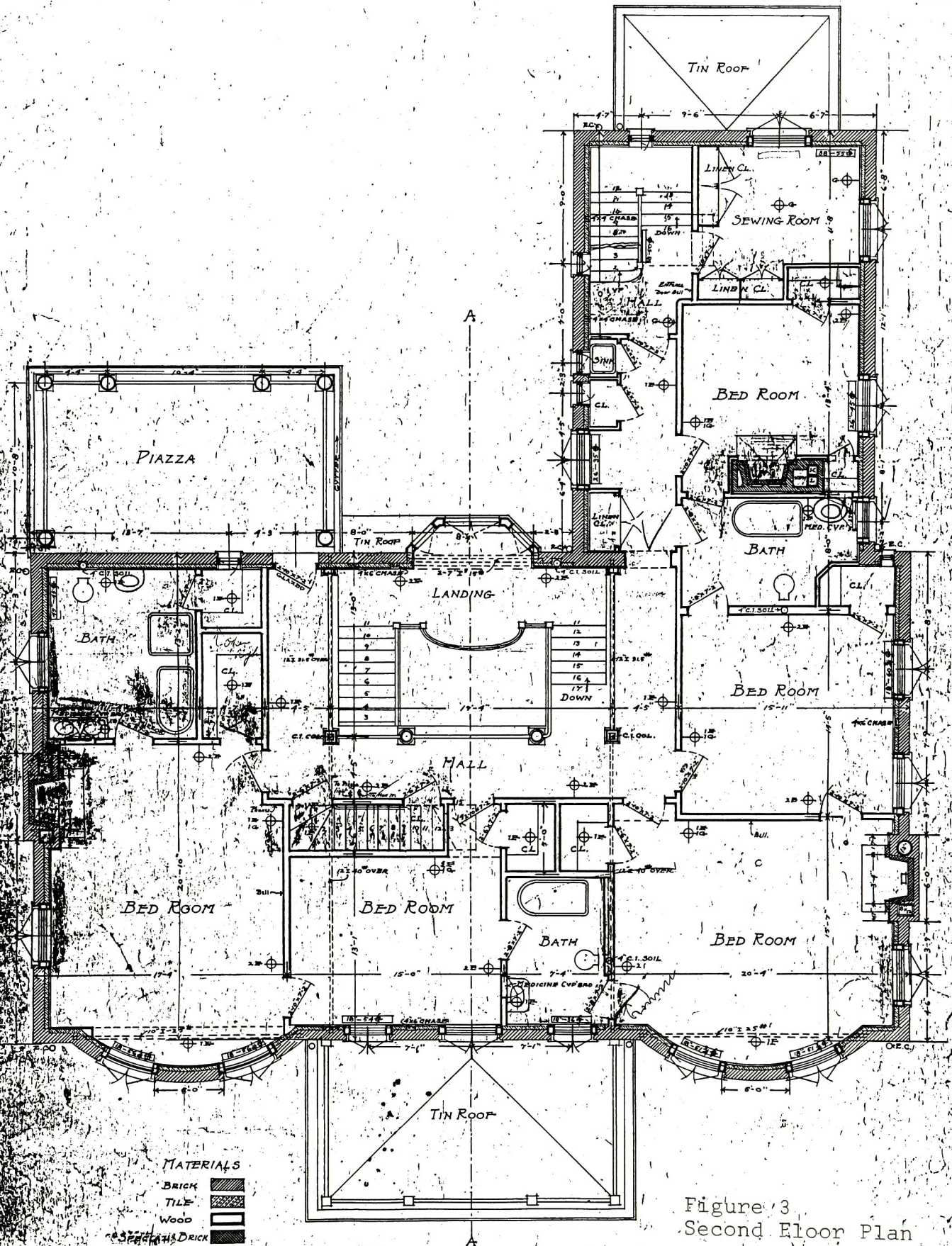










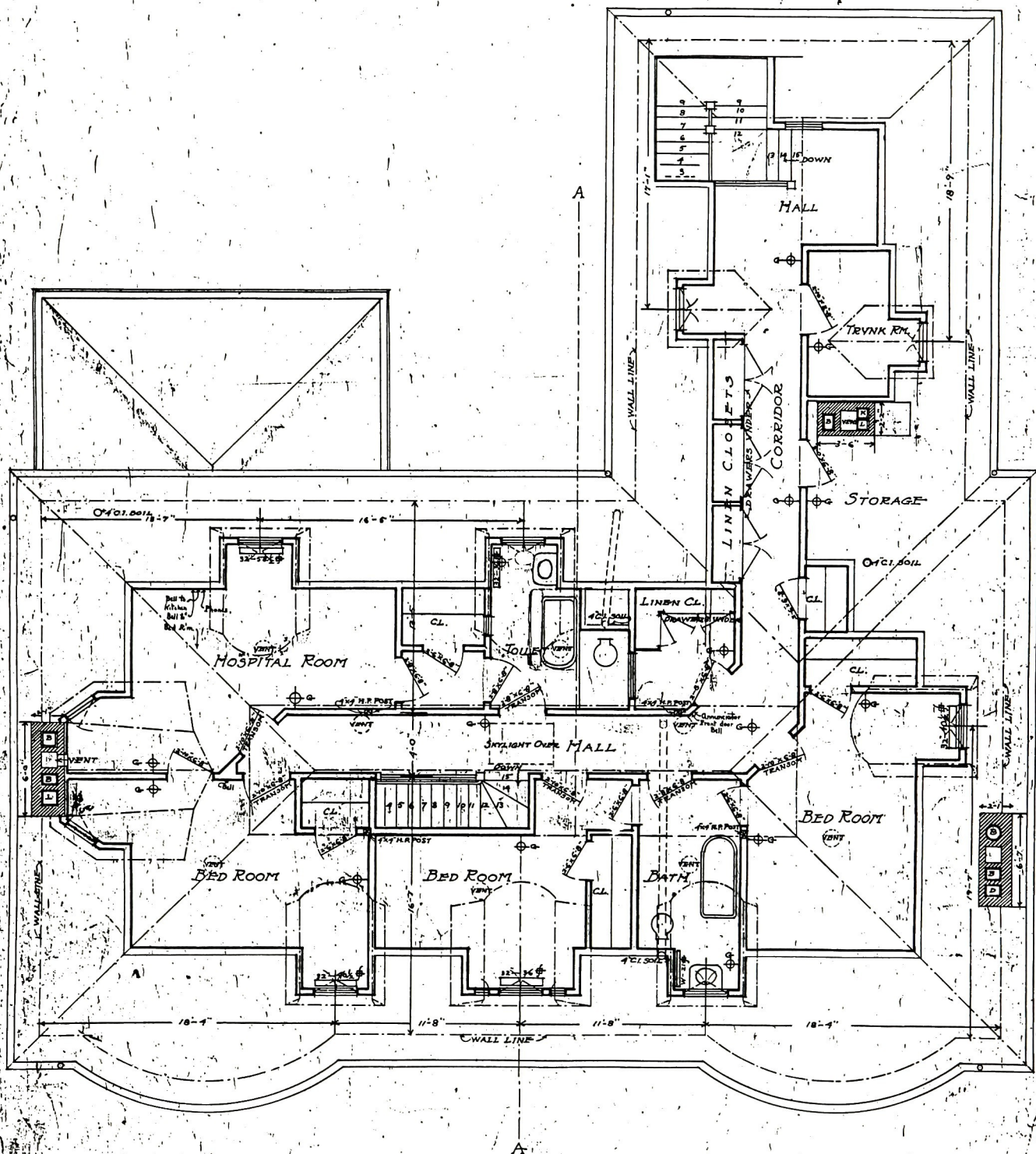


HOUSE FOR MR. WM. E. SLOAN EAST AVE. ROCHESTER, N. Y.

C. F. MAGNANI Architect  
Carter, Giesing, Rochester, N. Y.

2157  
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#### MATERIALS

BRICK  
TILE  
WOOD

Figure 4  
Attic Floor Plan

THIRD FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE  $\frac{1}{4}$  INCH = 1 FOOT

HOUSE FOR MR. WM. E. SLOAN EAST AVE. ROCHESTER N. Y.

C. F. Graham Architect  
Cuthbert G. G. Rochester N. Y.

21ST  
G.C.



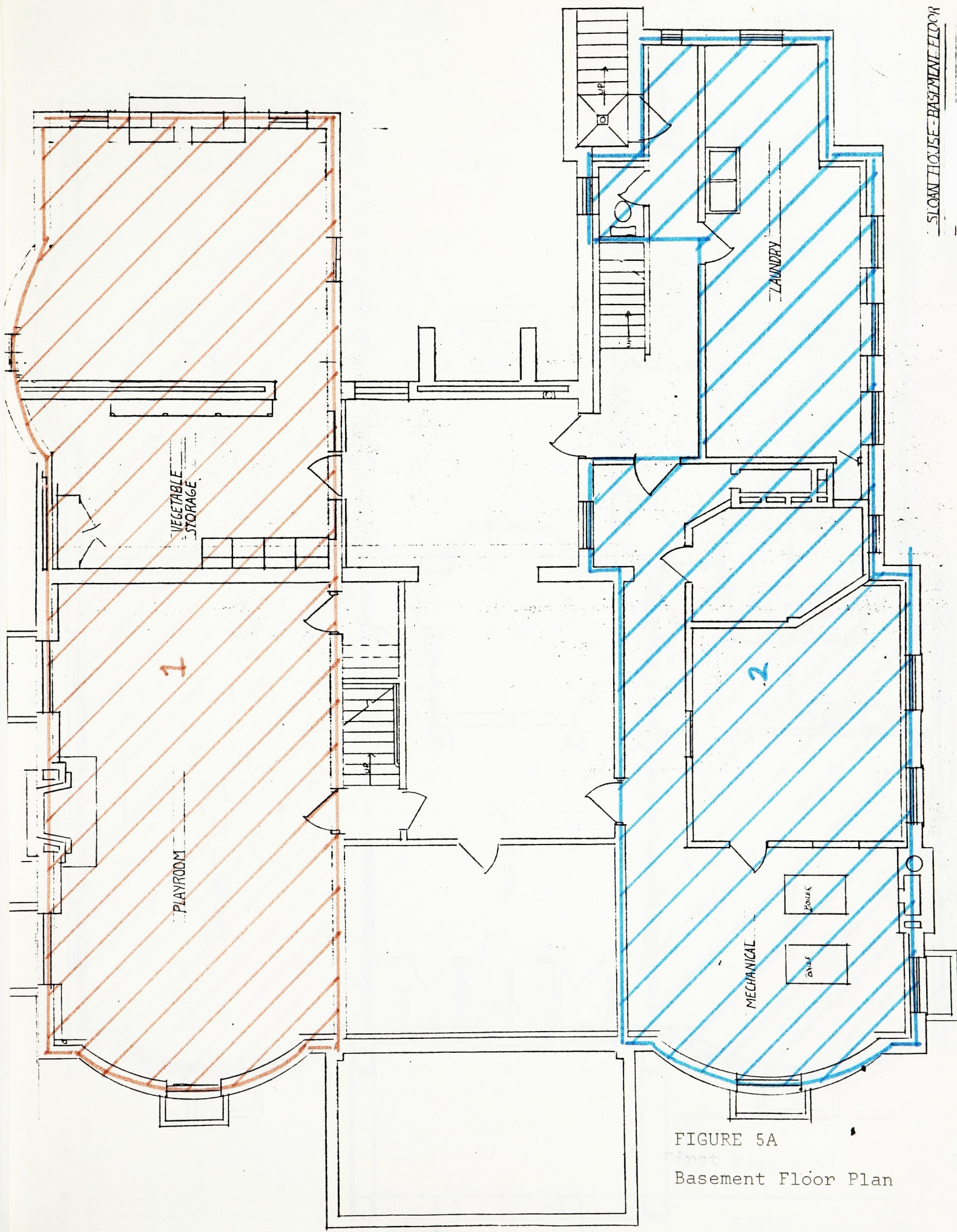


FIGURE 5A  
Basement Floor Plan



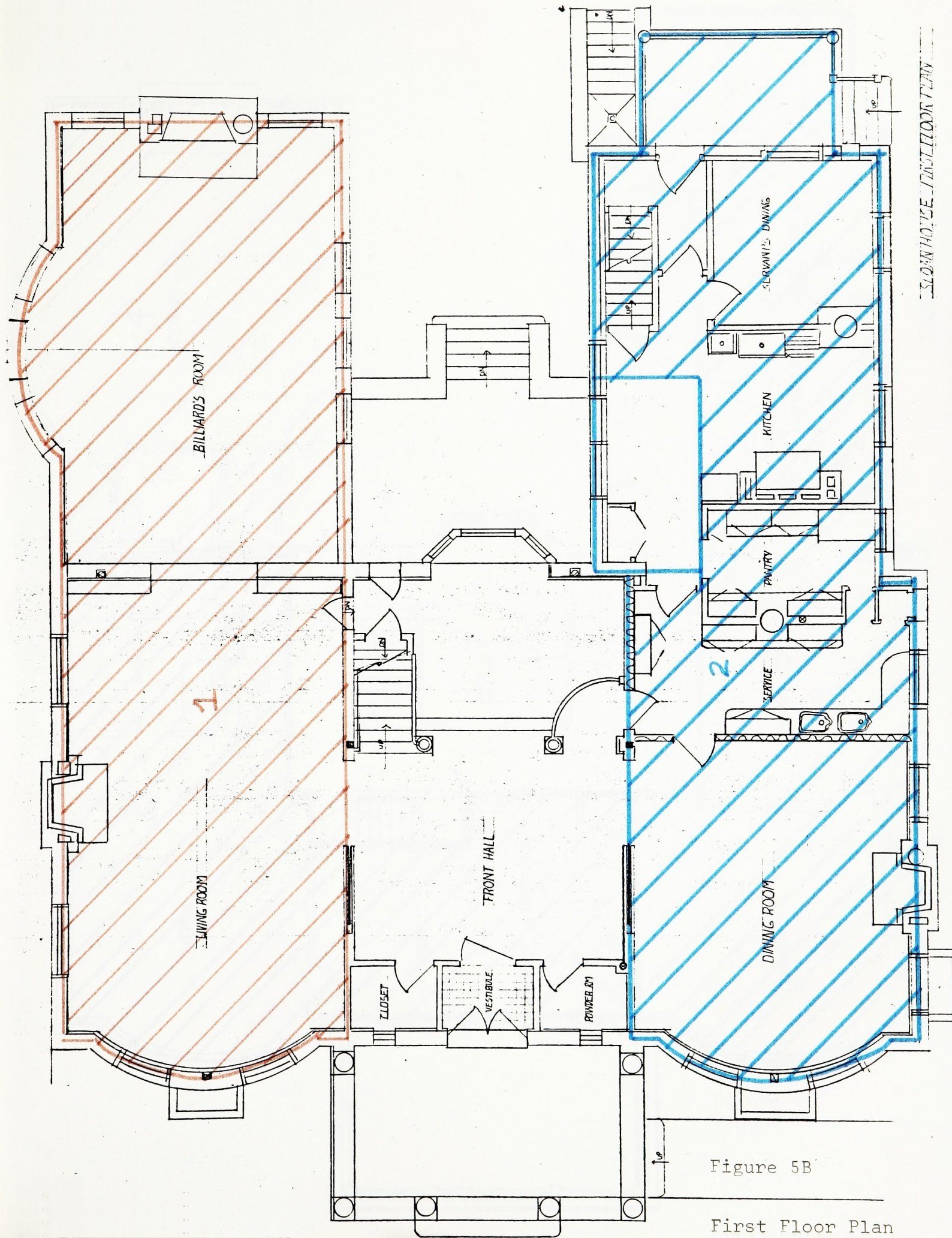


Figure 5B

First Floor Plan



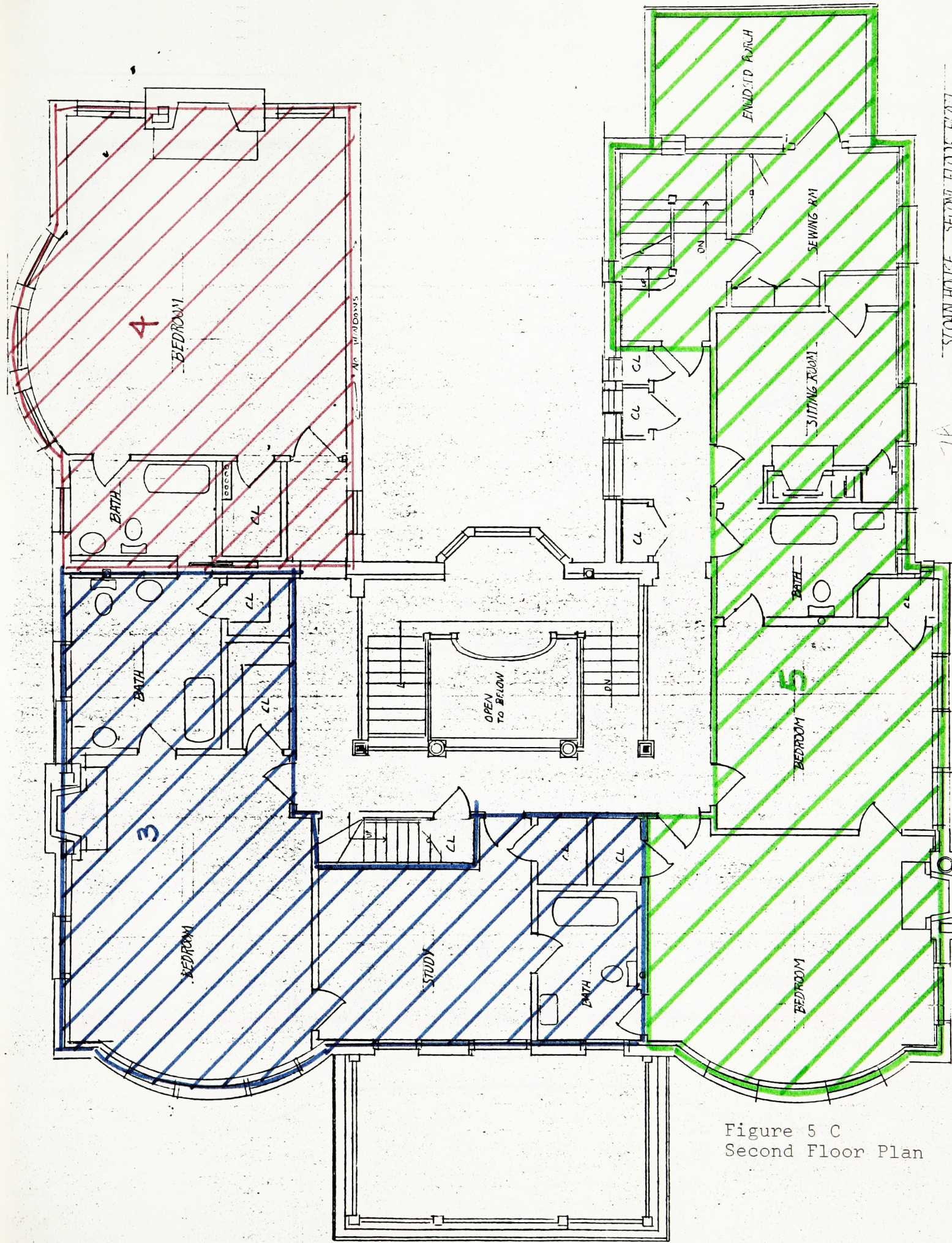


Figure 5 C  
Second Floor Plan



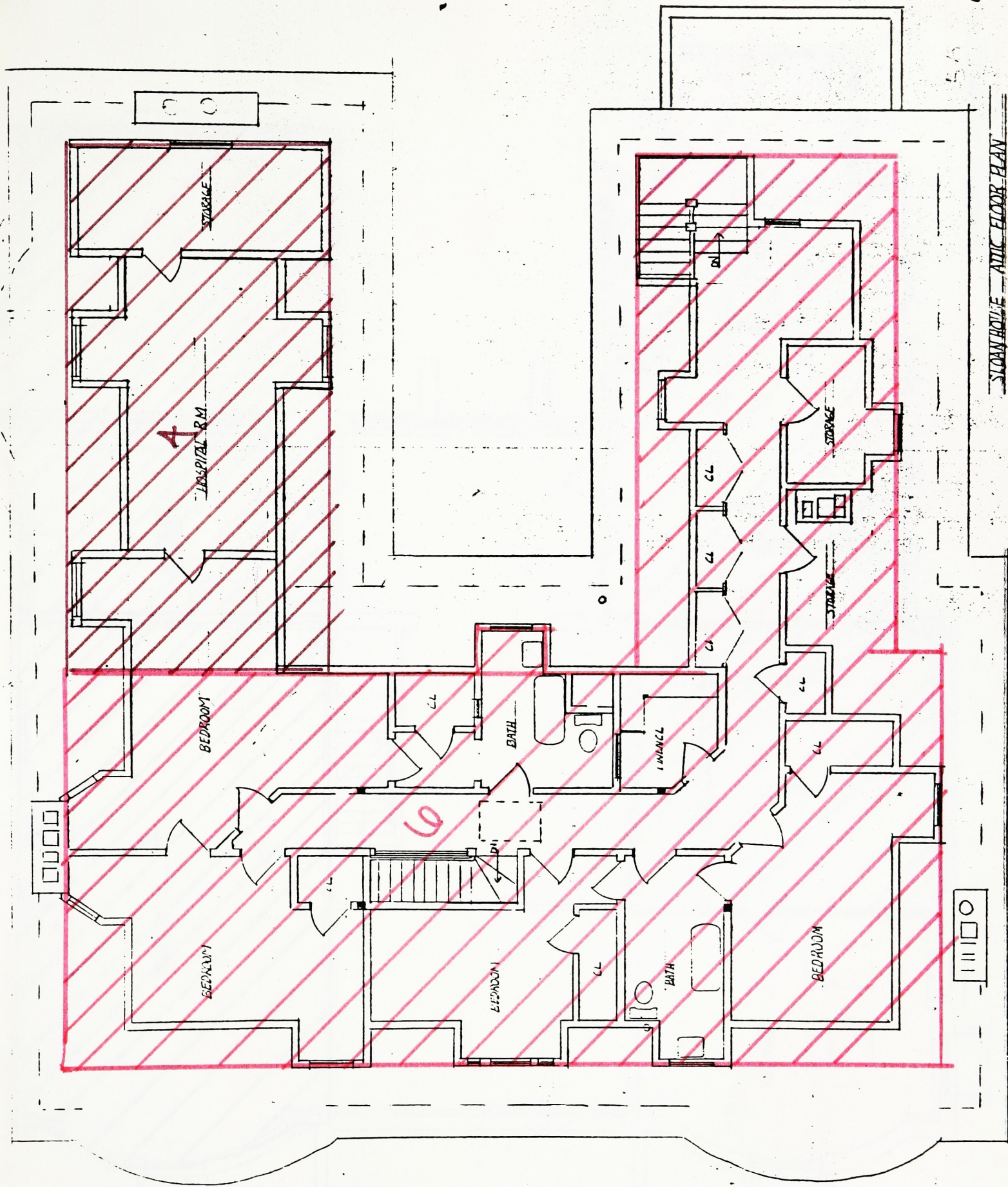


Figure 5D  
Attic Floor Plan



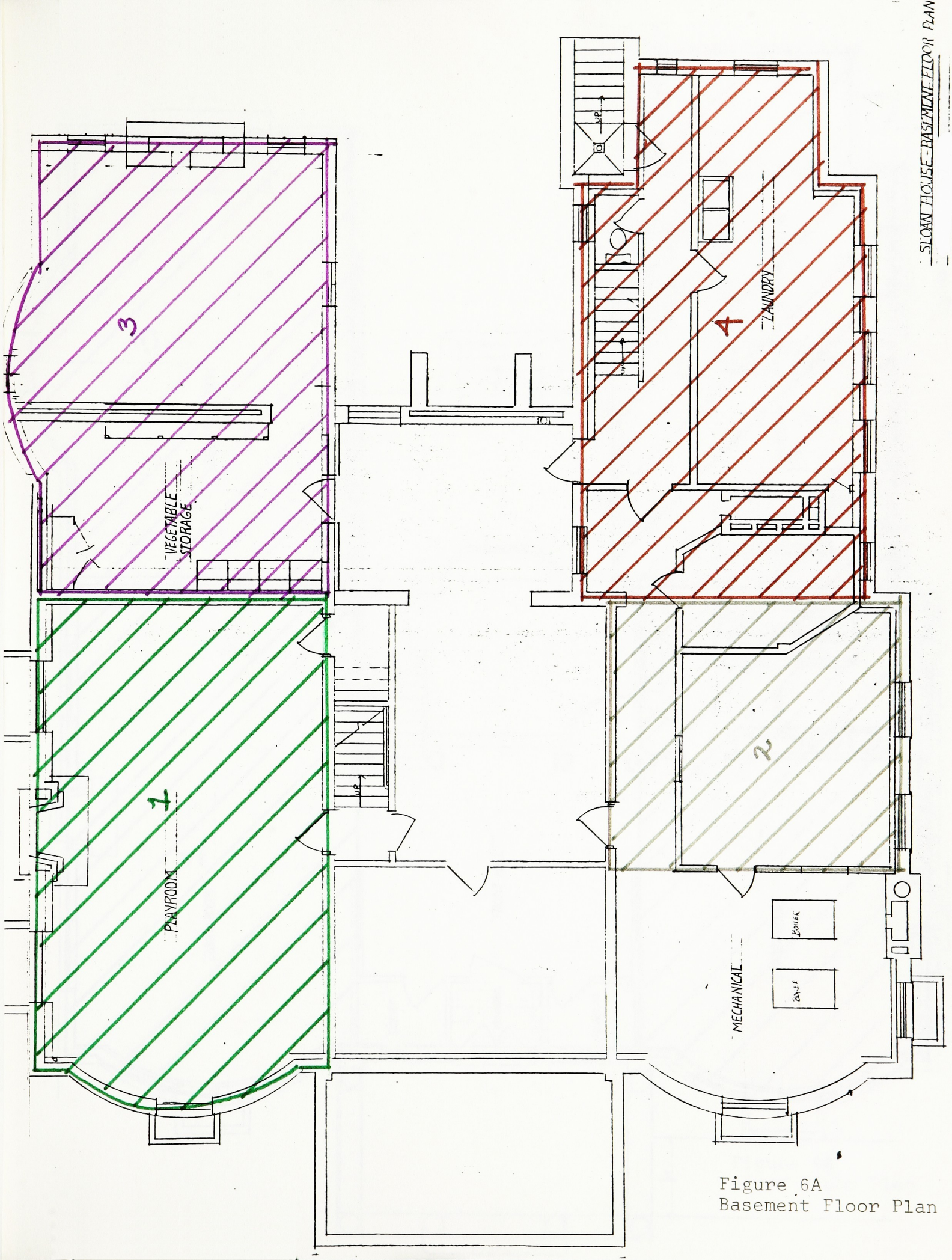


Figure 6A  
Basement Floor Plan



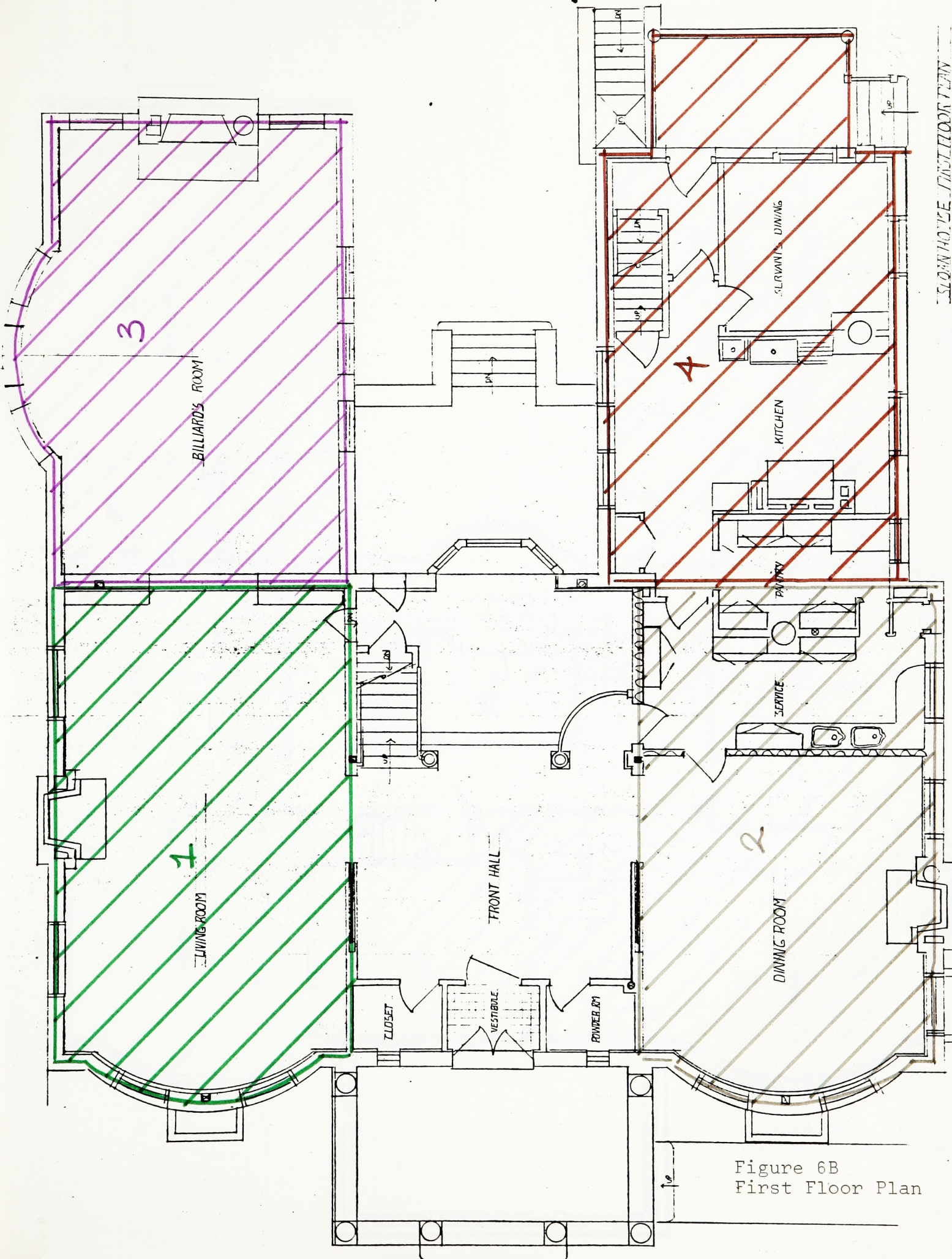
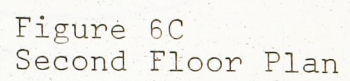


Figure 6B  
First Floor Plan







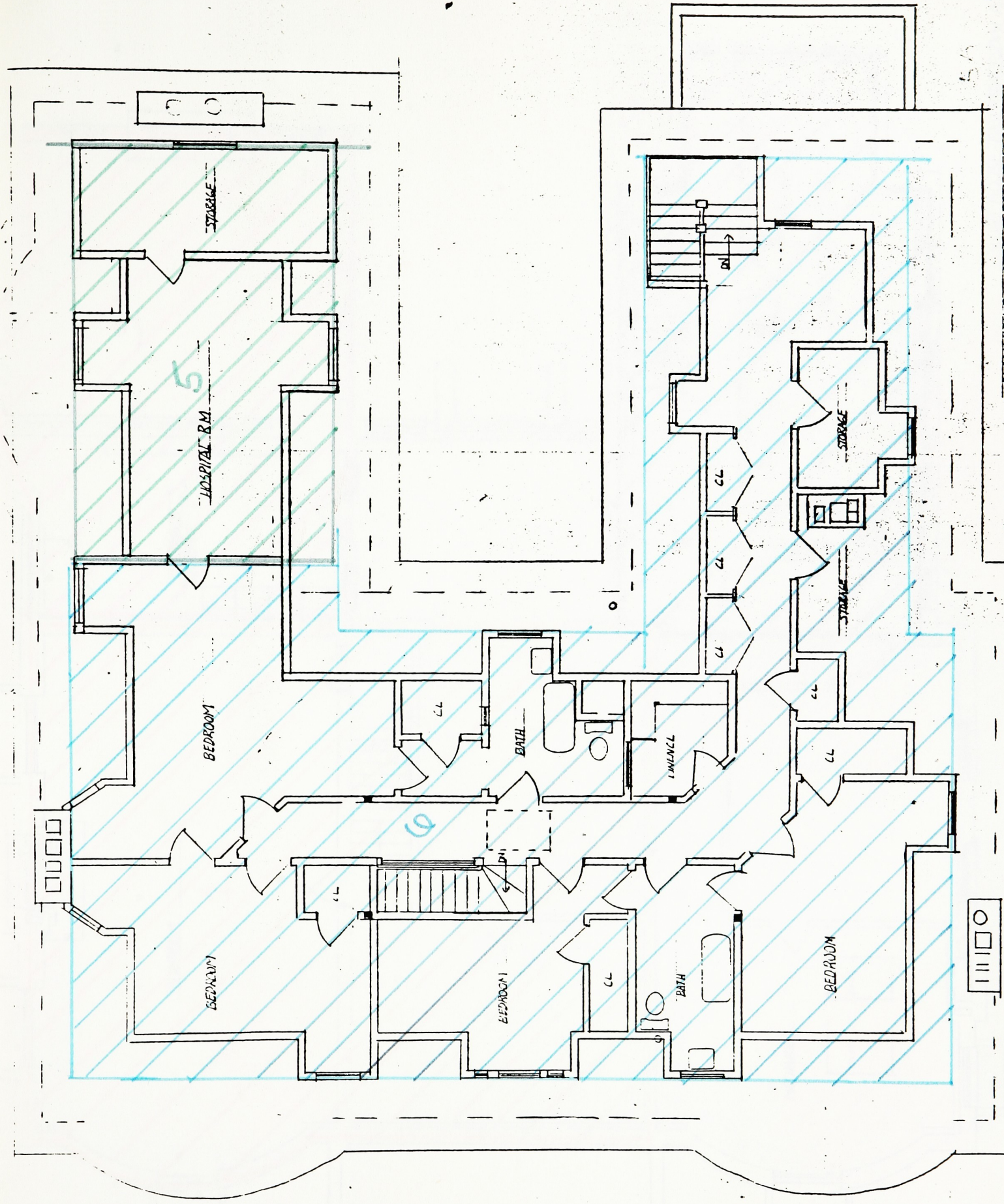


Figure 6D  
Third Floor Plan



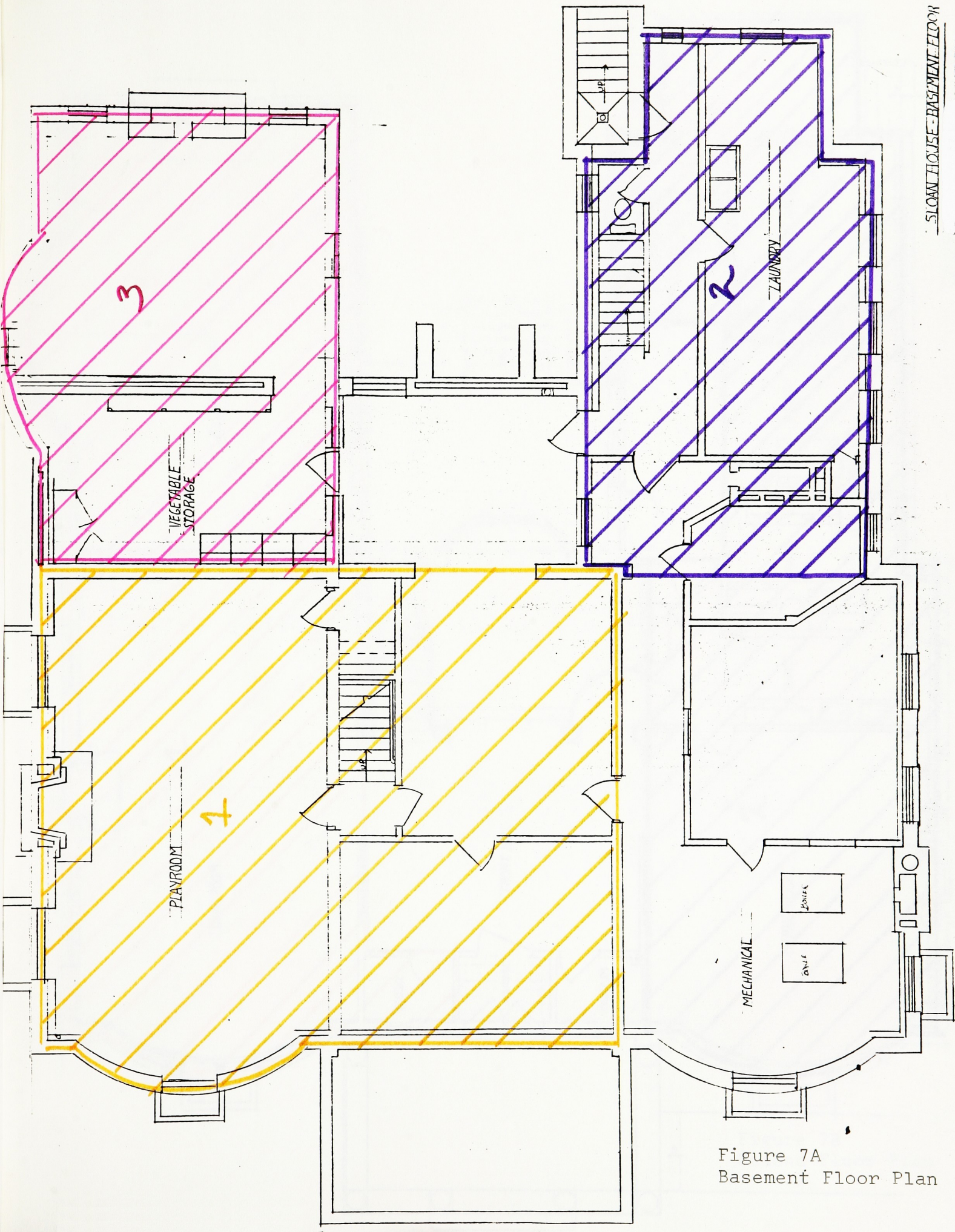


Figure 7A  
Basement Floor Plan



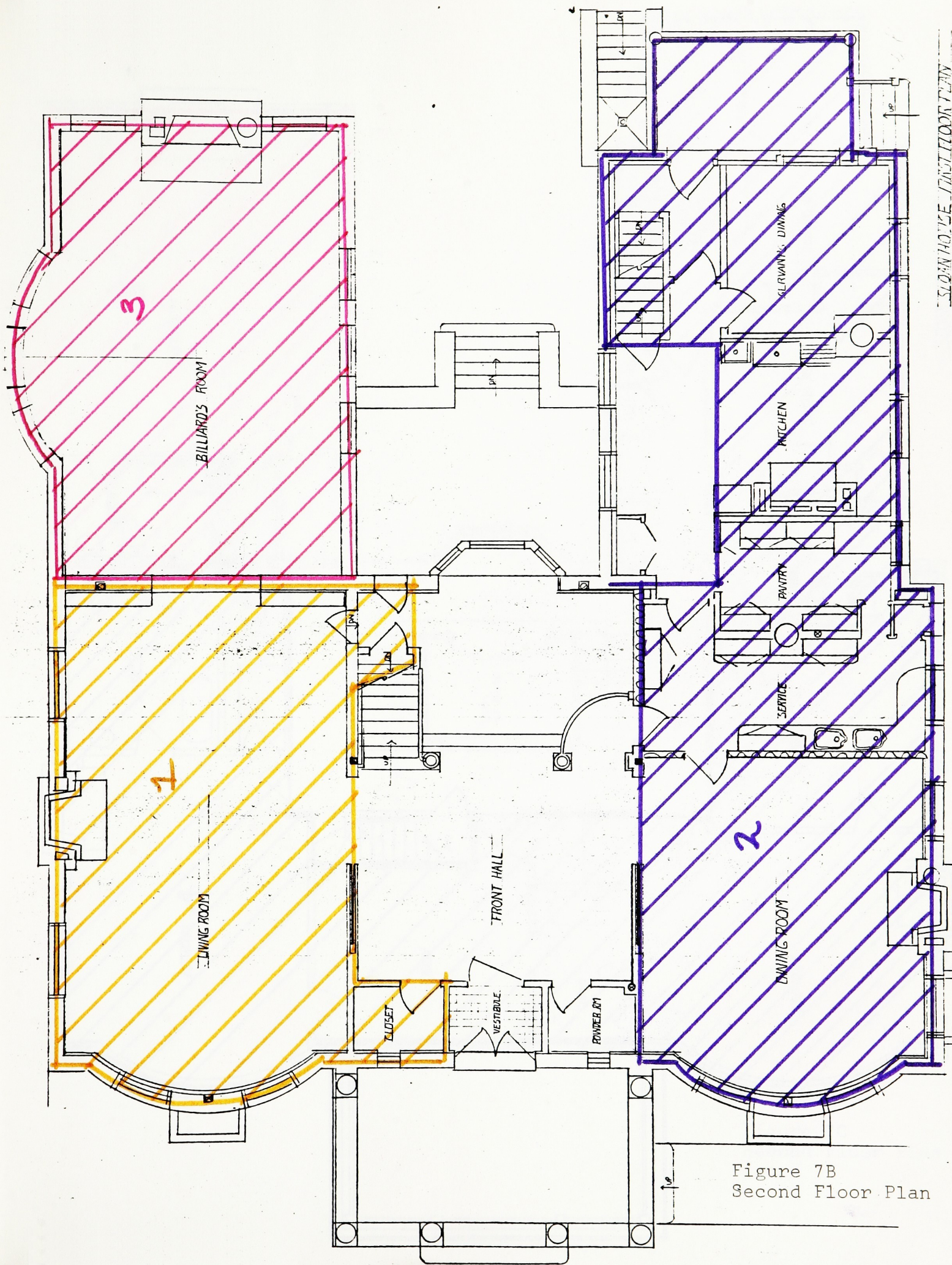


Figure 7B  
Second Floor Plan

SECOND FLOOR PLAN



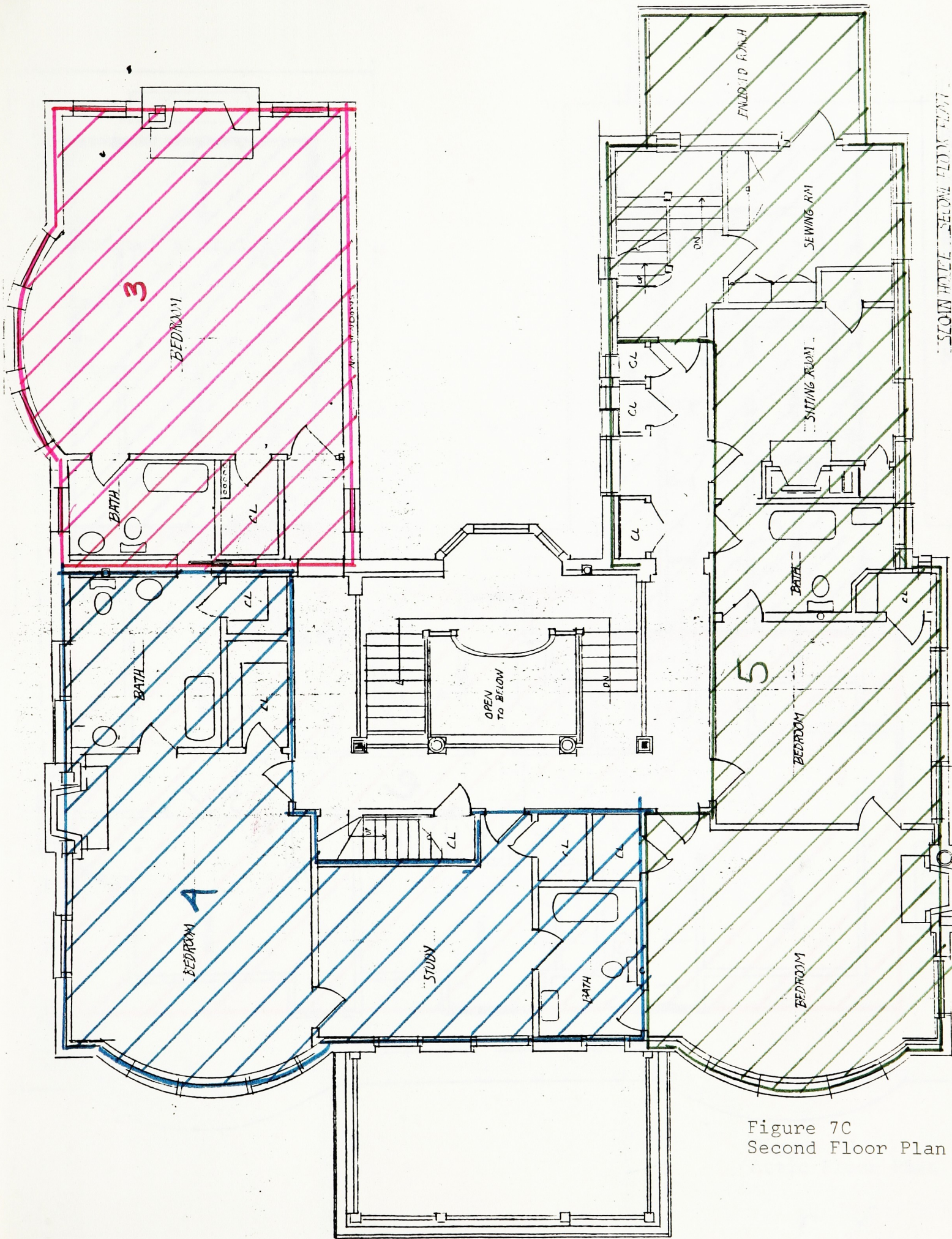


Figure 7C  
Second Floor Plan



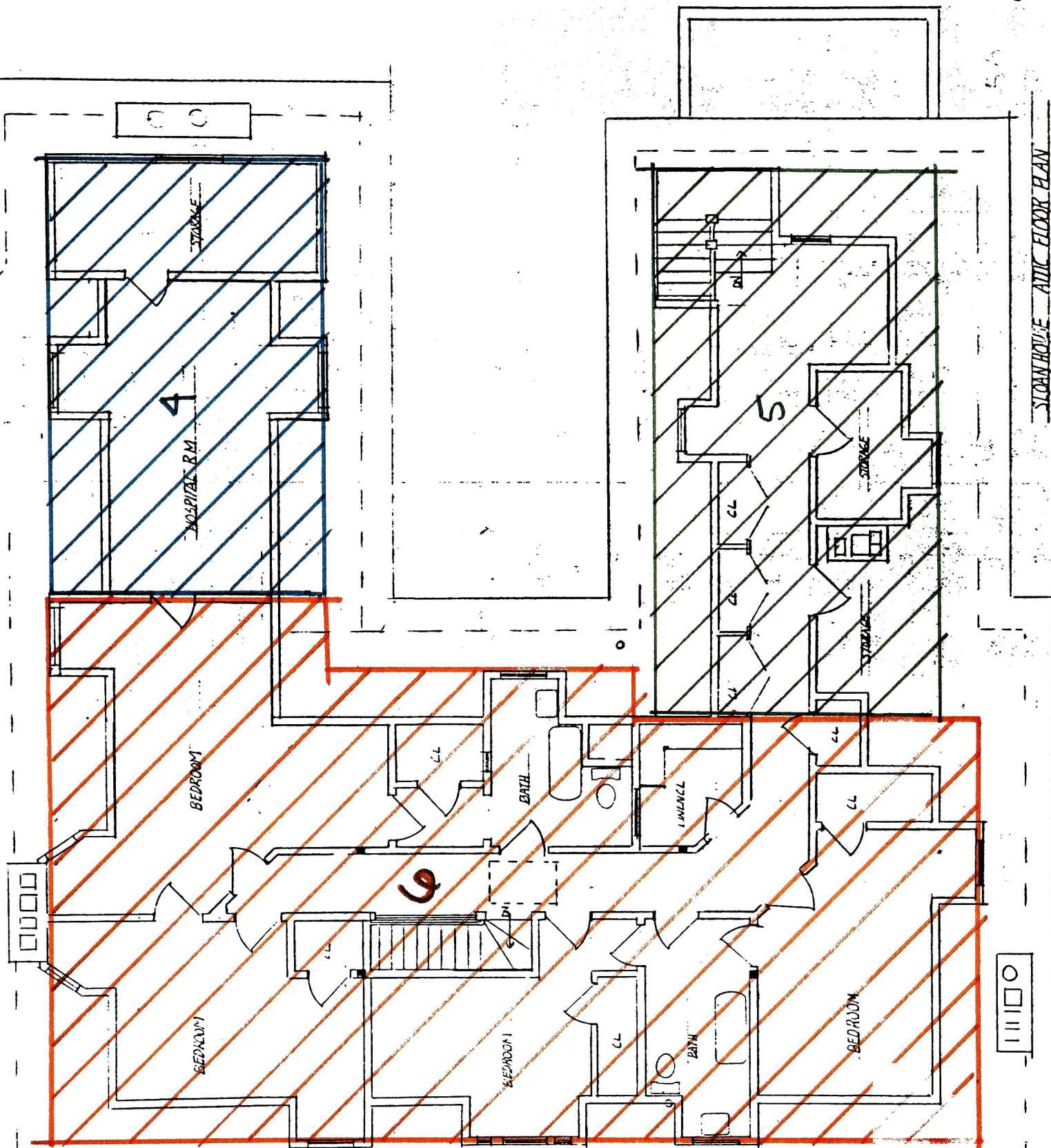


Figure 7D  
Attic Floor Plan





Figure 8  
Basement Floor Plan



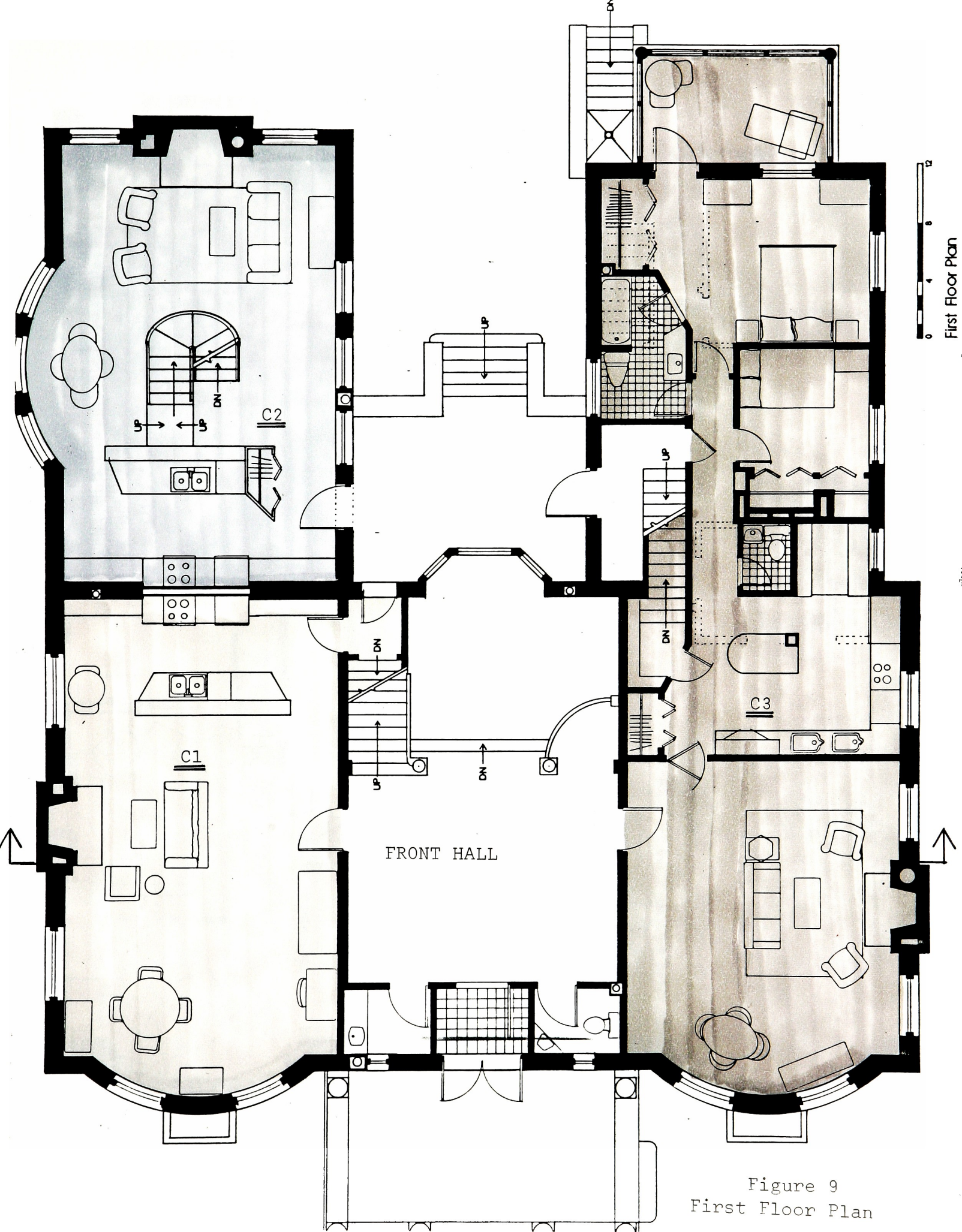


Figure 9  
First Floor Plan







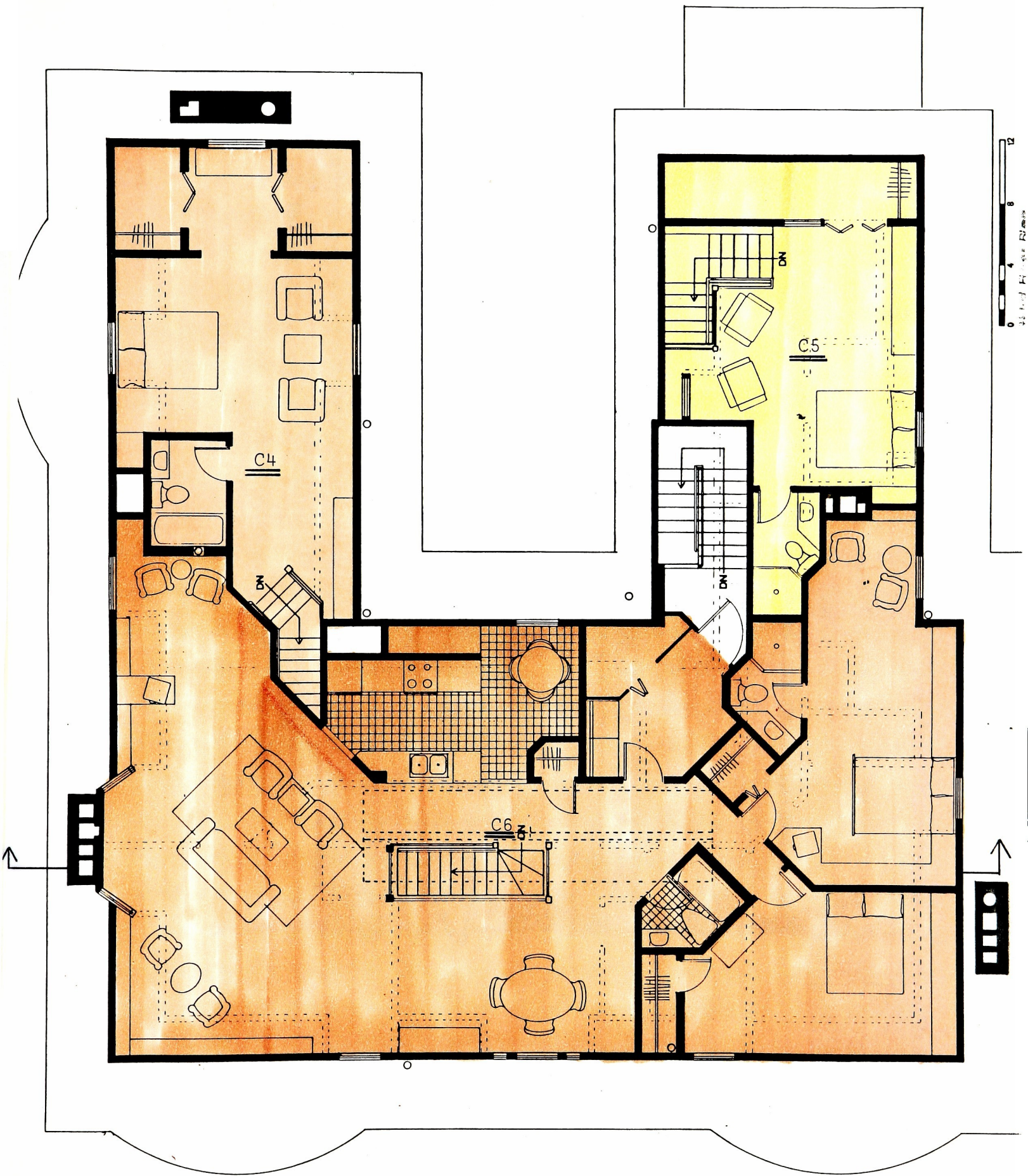


Figure 11  
Third Floor Plan



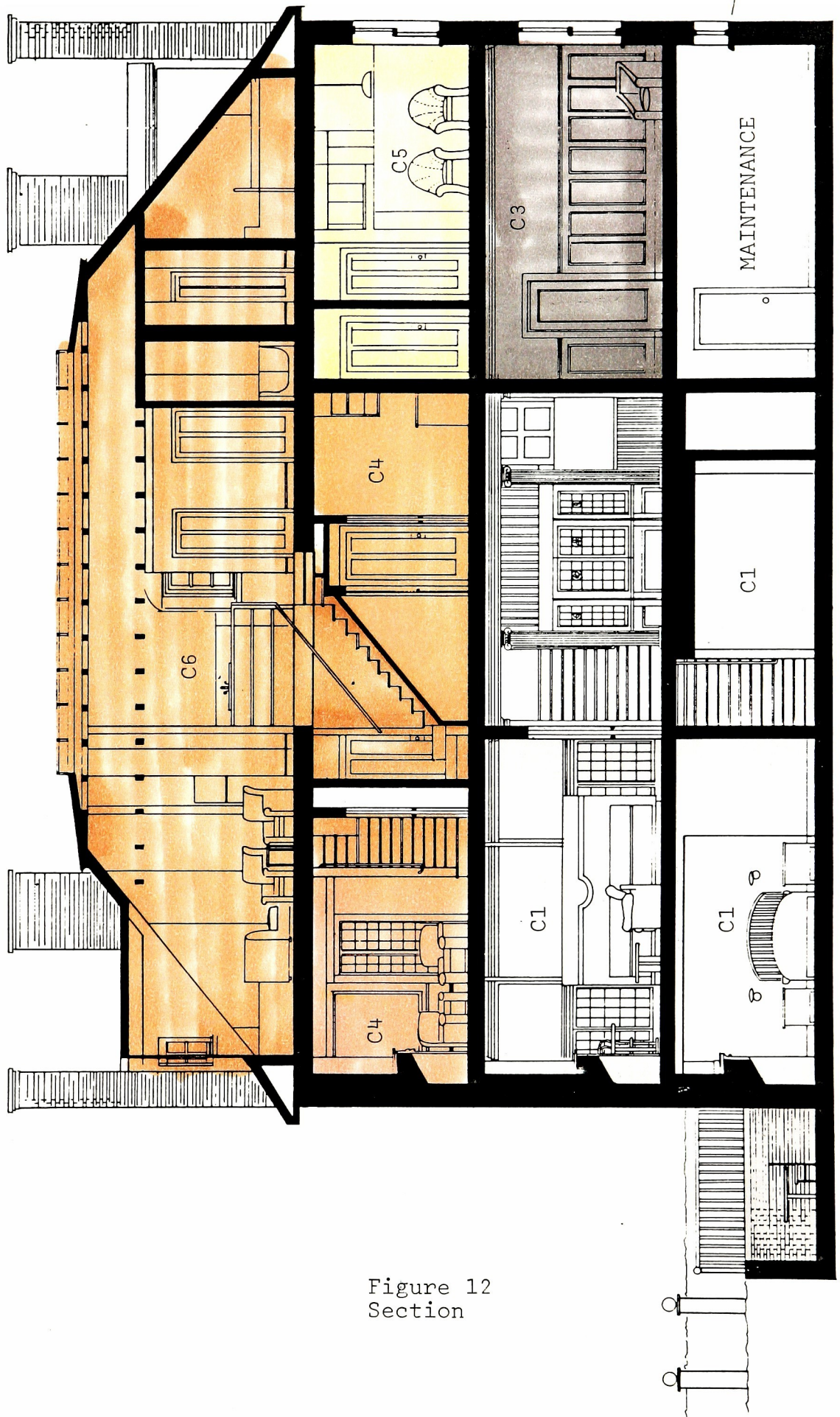
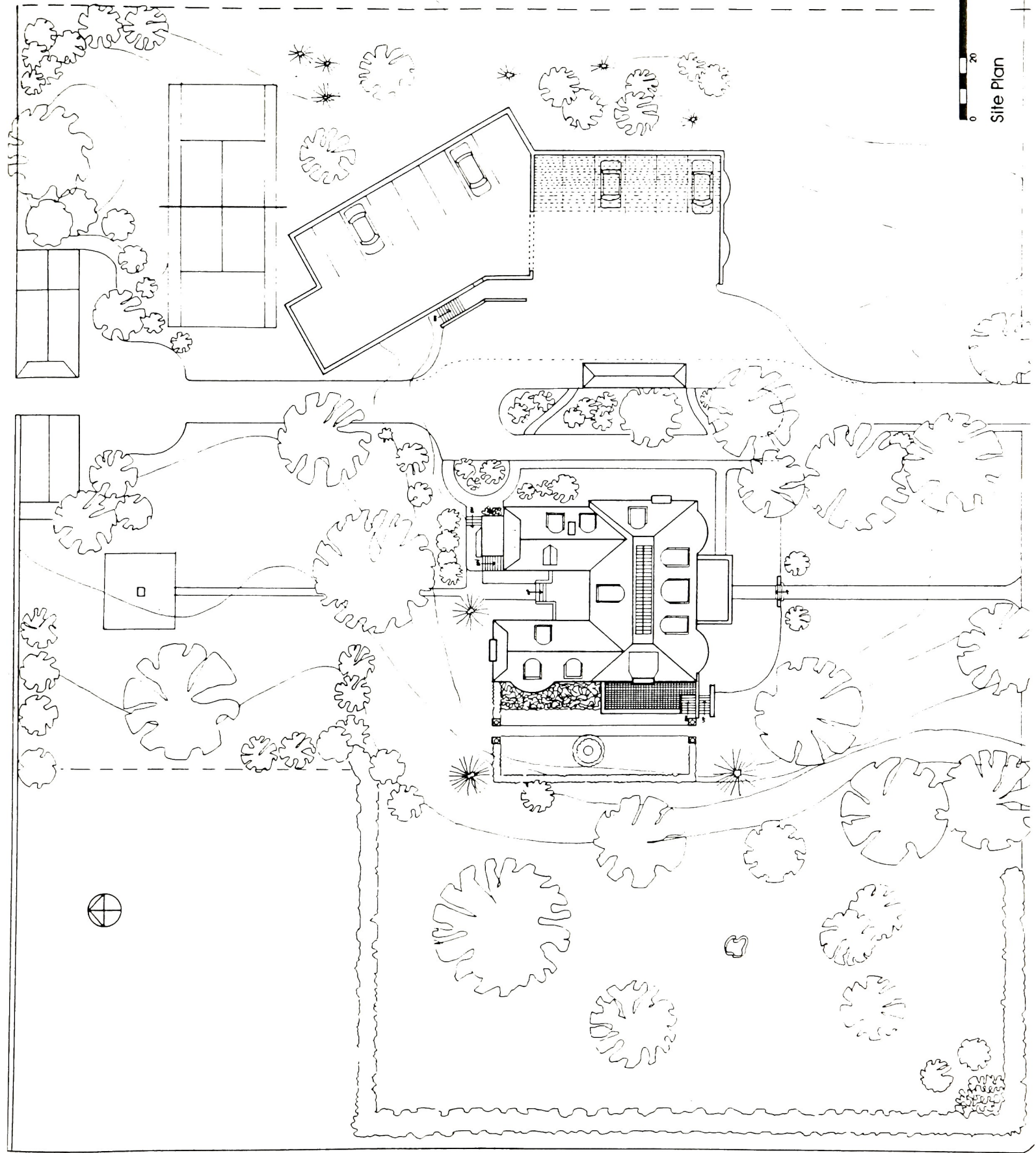


Figure 12  
Section





Note: Refer to Figure 20 for more information.

Figure 13  
Site Plan

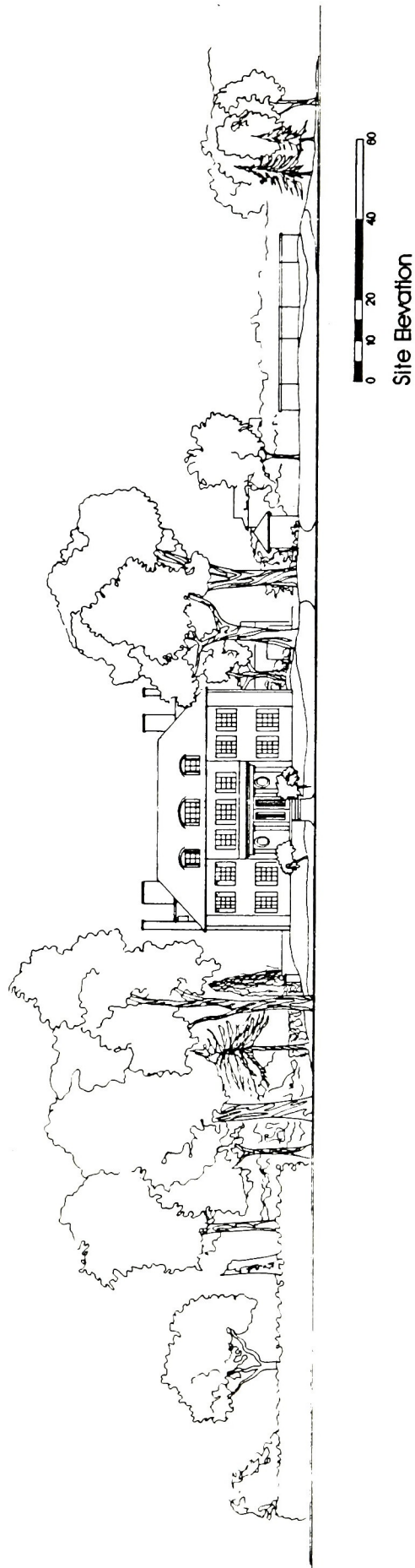


Figure 14  
Site Elevation





Figure 15 - Condominium C-1  
Living Room view towards  
Kitchen



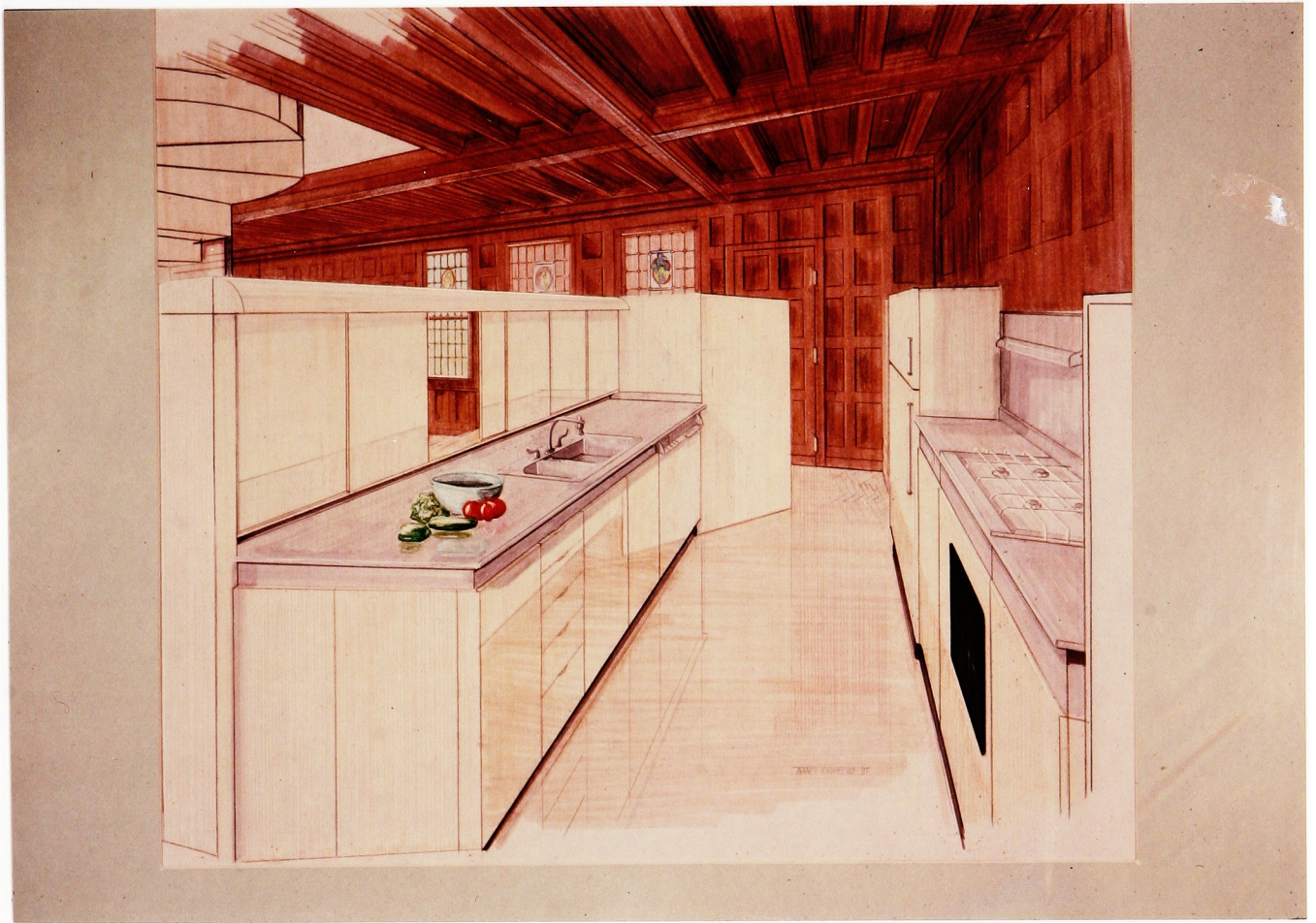


Figure 16 - Condominium C-2  
Kitchen



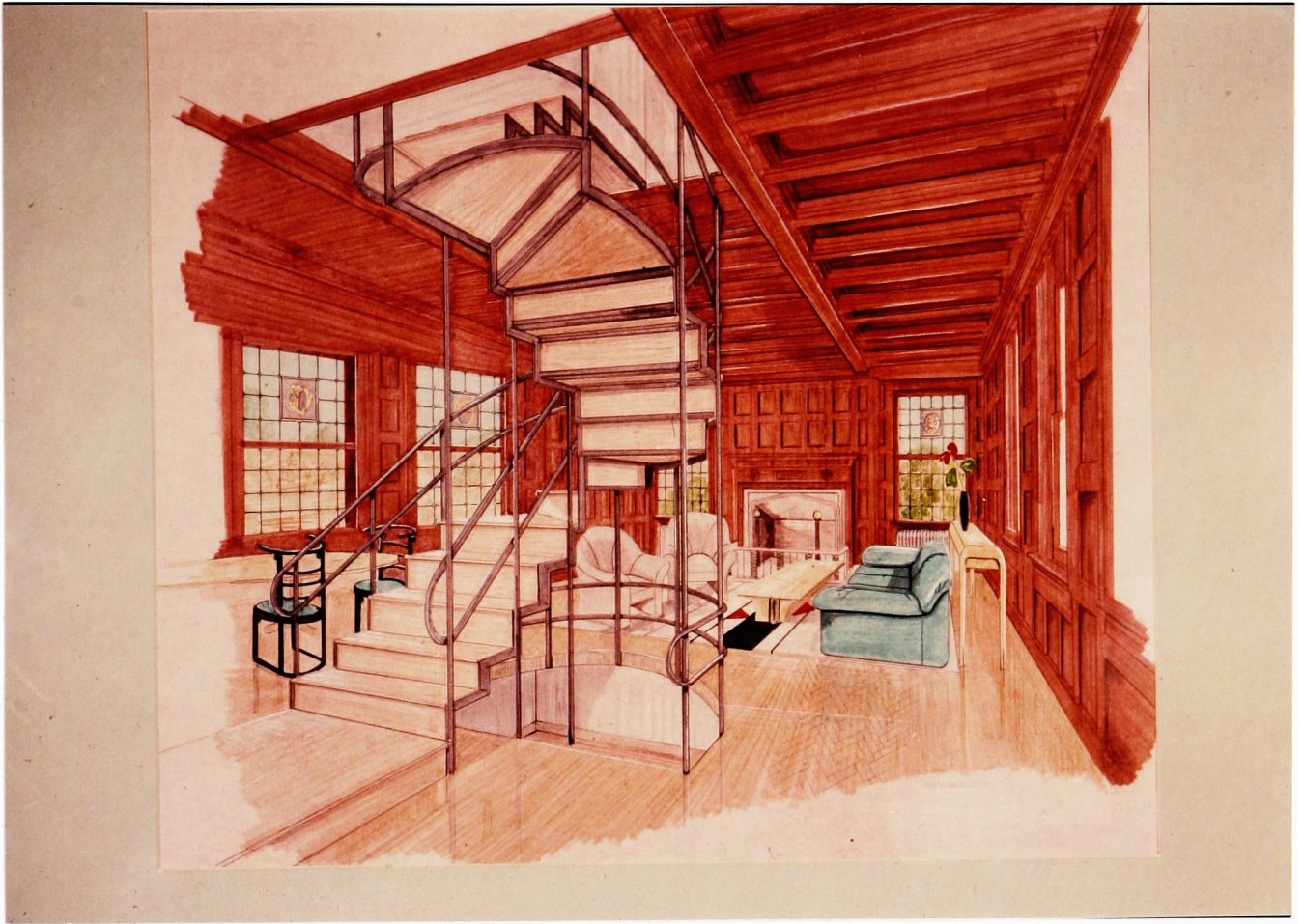


Figure 17 - Condominium C-2  
Living Room and Dining Room

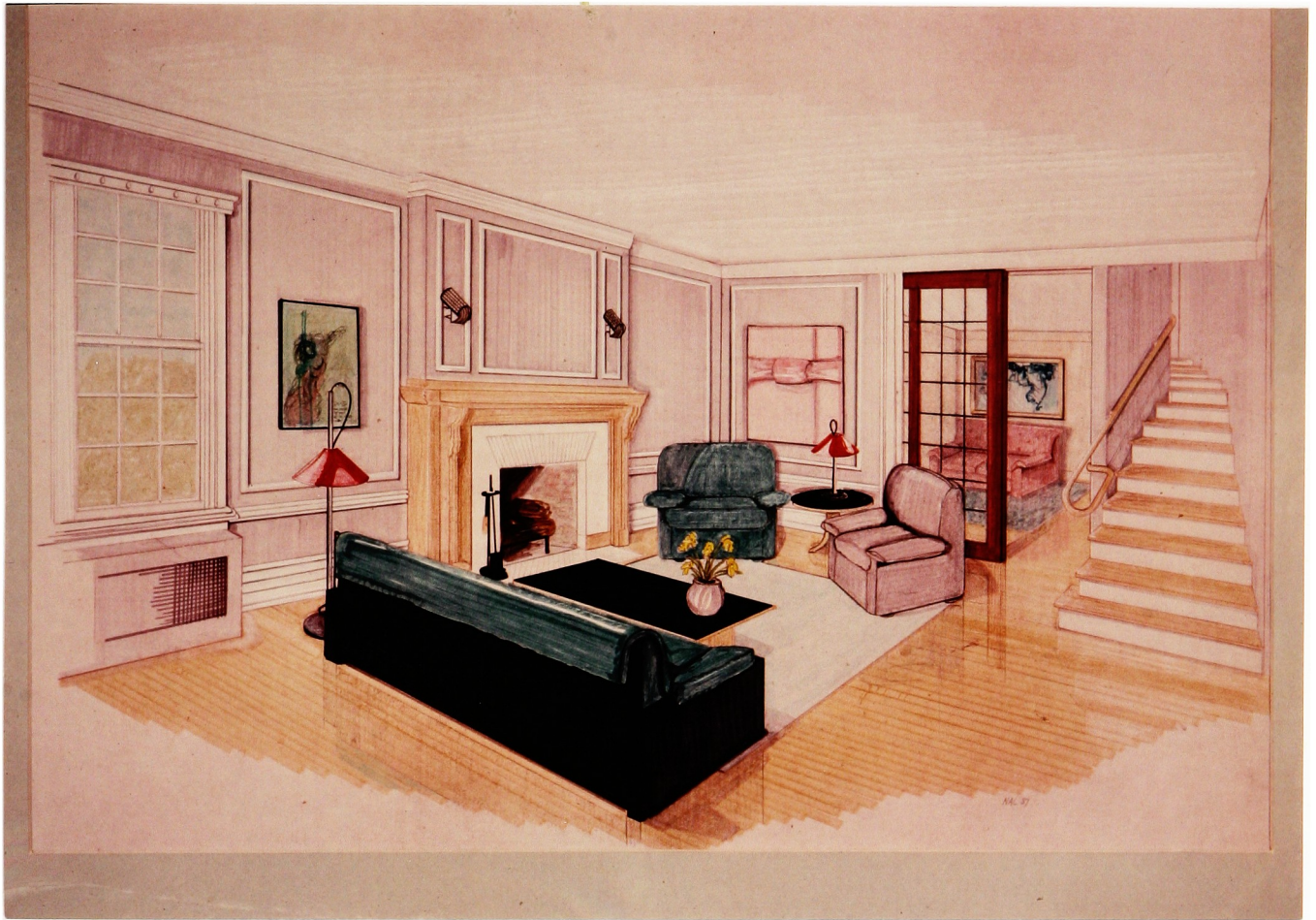


Figure 18 - Condominium C-4  
Living Room





Figure 19 - Front Hall Landing  
Public Area





Figure 20 - Site Plan