



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

**COMMISSION FOR
HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL
PRESERVATION**

Tom Liebel, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Chris Ryer
Director

March 9, 2021

REQUEST: Retroactive Approval to Demolish Building / Demolition Hearing 1-Determination of Architectural Significance

ADDRESS: 414 Wilson Street (Upton's Marble Hill Historic District)

PETITIONER(S): Demolition Man Contracting, Inc.(Contractor), Arrika Ashe (Owner)

STAFF: Eddie Leon

RECOMMENDATION: Disapprove the request for retroactive demolition as the building is a contributing resource to the Upton's Marble Hill Historic District.

SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT

General Area: The site is located at the north end of the Upton's Marble Hill Historic District. Upton's Marble Hill Historic District encompasses approximately seven blocks of houses that were built in the early 1870's through the 1890s. The houses are traditional, marble-stepped brick rowhouses, exhibiting either Queen Anne or Italianate influence. Typical details are bowed fronts, original wood double doors, conical roof towers at corners, corbelled brickwork, roof cresting, and arched doorways. The Upton's Marble Hill Historic District is significant as one of Baltimore's earliest African-American middle-class neighborhoods and for its well-preserved architectural details. In 1985, the first section of the Upton district was designated, with approximately 51 rowhouses in a one-block area between Mc Culloh Street, Druid Hill Avenue, Mc Mechan, and Mosher Streets. The expansion of the area in May 1990 increased the number of structures to 184 and the area of the district to about seven blocks under the name Upton's Marble Hill, recognizing the local tradition of the neighborhood's immaculate white marble steps.

Site Conditions: The property consists of a two-story, three bay brick building built alongside an alley street. The front facade is composed of two entry doors and a storefront for a former tailors business. The entry to the left was for the apartment units once located upstairs. The west elevation is a blank wall clad in stucco and once served as the party wall with 416 Wilson Street (now demolished). Historic Sanborn maps indicate that a porch once ran along the rear (north) elevation of the building. The porch is not longer extant. The east elevation which faces the alley has a single window opening.

BACKGROUND

The building has not been reviewed by the Commission or staff since the creation of the historic district in 1985.

- The applicants have filed for interior work permits which does not require CHAP review.
- The applicant's filed for zoning variances and interior demo permits in 2019 and 2020.
- These applicants submitted a proposal in May of 2020 to construct a third story addition.
- The CHAP tentative agenda committee determined the plans did not meet the guidelines and the applicants were instructed to return with revised plans.
- The owners did not contact the staff to discuss any design changes after being informed of the request to re-submit plans.
- The owners were issued a violation after the contractors they hired severely compromised the structure and proceeded to demolish the building during the summer of 2020.
- The Housing Department informed the owners that they should pursue a retroactive approval to demolish the building.

PROPOSAL

The applicants are requesting retroactive demolition approval for the demolition of the building at 414 Wilson Street. The demolition occurred when work was undertaken by contractors hired by the owner(s) severely compromised the structural integrity of the building. The owner is no longer working with these contractors.

APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

CHAP staff applied Chapter 3.6 Demolition Procedures of the Rules and Procedures.

DEMOLITION HEARING ONE-DETERMINATION OF ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The first step in the demolition review process is a public hearing to determine if the building contributes to a local historic district or continues to meet standards for designation as a local landmark. At this hearing staff shall present the following:

- 1. The historical and/or architectural significance of the property;*
- 2. The history of all structures on the property including the approximate dates of additions and significant alterations;*
- 3. A determination of the historical and/or architectural significance of a structure's additions, significant alterations, or ancillary buildings; and*
- 4. Application of criteria for designation to the structure in question.*

A determination regarding the significance of the structure will be made prior to considering details of the demolition and hardship application, and any projects for new construction on the site. Doing so allows the Commission to determine the importance of the structure solely upon architectural and historical criteria. If a structure does not meet the criteria or contribute to the historic character of a local district, then an Authorization to Proceed for demolition shall be issued.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

The quality of significance in Baltimore history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, public interiors, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- 1. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Baltimore history; or*
- 2. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in Baltimore's past; or*
- 3. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or*
- 4. That have yielded or may be likely to yield information important in Baltimore prehistory or history.*

The above criteria mirror the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, which were developed by the National Park Service to determine historic significance in American history and culture.

Building description:

The building at 414 Wilson Street was constructed between 1885 and 1889, according the historic maps and a deed reference to the empty lot.ⁱ Originally, it was built as a three-story brick building with a storefront and two rental unit spaces above.ⁱⁱ It also had a full basement. 414 Wilson Street was built originally as part of a duplex with 416 Wilson Street which was built as a single-family dwelling (demolished between 1954 and 1970).ⁱⁱⁱ The earliest uses of the building according to historic Sanborn maps and advertisements in the Sun have referred to the building having been used as a grocery store, a cobblers store before eventually becoming a tailor's shop.^{iv} The chain of ownership shows that the majority of changes in ownership occurred in the latter half of the twentieth century. Eventually, the building became a tailor's shop that remained in operation till the first decade of the twenty-first century.^v

Even though the building was located along the alley of Stoddard Alley, there is no physical or historical evidence to suggest the that the building was a carriage house. The lots were partitioned from the rear yards of the grander houses found on Druid Hill Avenue sometime before 1890.^{vi}

The building appears as a 3-story masonry building with a cornice and storefront as early as 1890, when it is shown on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.^{vii} The maps show this same building through 1971.^{viii} No historic photographs of the building have been located. The existing 2-story brick building appears to be what remains of the historic 3-story building. The storefront's rectangular bay window projects out onto the sidewalk with a single door entry. There was also a second door that gave access to apartments located over the store. The storefront cornice and details appear to be pressed metal that was the typical material choice after 1890. The original windows were no longer existing by the end of the 20th century but were likely one-over-one double hung wood windows found throughout the district. With the exception of security screens added in the latter half of the 20th century over the storefront windows, there was relatively little ornamental details to this late-Victorian building. Without any historic photos available staff was limited to exact physical details.

The building most likely had a modest Late-Italianate metal cornice which capped the top of the front facade at the third story with the typical slope roof leading to the rear and a capped parapet edge. According to Sanborn records for 1971 it appears that the attached building at 416 Wilson had been torn down, this demolition would be consistent with city wide efforts to remove dilapidated properties in the late 1960s.^{ix} According to all the historic maps both 414 and 416 Wilson had a continuous shared rear porch, and no rear yards.^x There are no records indicating when the 3rd story was removed. Historically, rowhouses were constructed with sloped roofs. As such, it can be inferred that the current roof is not the historic roofline.

Historical Significance:

From the time it was constructed circa 1885-89 the storefront had been used as a grocery store and then a cobbler's repair shop.^{xi} However, its most significant use came in the middle of the twentieth century when Rufus Mitchell established Mitchell's Tailors.^{xii} Rufus N. Mitchell who was born in North Carolina and moved to Baltimore grew up nearby on Brunt Street in Druid Heights. He attended Carver Vocational School where he decided that learning how to become a tailor interested him more than automotive repair.^{xiii} While living on Brunt Street he was called for duty during World War II, where he served in the Navy as a gunner's mate until 1949.^{xiv} Upon exiting service with the Navy he returned to Baltimore, purchased the business located at Wilson Street, and began a 55-year career that made him an institution to the neighborhood.^{xv}

Rufus and his wife Margaret opened the shop together daily, before he would leave her at the shop and head to one of many second jobs he held through the years. He worked at such well-known stores downtown as Stewart's, Hutzler's, later he worked at Fort Holabird and eventually he worked at the Naval Academy.^{xvi} Their shop became a gathering place for many of the neighborhood's children during the next 20 years of the 1950s and 60s. They witnessed the generational and social changes in the community through the 1960s and 1970s. They served the community at large and did all sorts of alterations from dresses to men's suits. Their work could be seen on holidays and events held by his fellow Masons.^{xvii} Rufus retired from the Naval Academy in 1989 and his wife retired as well. Rufus continued working at the shop until he turned 80 in 2004. Rufus and Margaret sold the business and the property to David Fleming in 2004 and enjoyed their retirement in Baltimore County until they passed away in 2013 and 2014. They are buried together in the Garrison Forest Veteran's Cemetery. Rufus, Margaret and their business for over 60 years had become an institution to the neighborhood.^{xviii}

The business eventually closed and property was sold at a City tax sale in 2016. Since 2016 the building had been assigned to investors that have mothballed the building. In 2020, the owners planned on establishing a recording studio and residence in the building. In the summer of 2020, crews working on removing debris in the interior caused severe structural damage to the building. The building was demolished without permit or approval from CHAP.

ANALYSIS

The staff believes that the building at 414 Wilson Street was an important local institution to the community of Upton's Marble Hill and contributed to the historic district as it met both Criteria number

1. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Baltimore history;

As a neighborhood institution the business contributed to the daily and special events of the lives to many residents who lived and conducted business in the community.

and Criteria number

2. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in Baltimore's past.

Rufus and Margaret Mitchell and their small business became institutions during a time of significant social and generational changes in the community.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS The community association was informed and has voiced its opposition to the demolition request of the building for both its architectural and historical contribution to the history of the community. They will be sending a formal letter.

RECOMMENDATION: Disapproval of the retroactive demolition request because the building is a contributing resource to the Upton's Marble Hill historic district.

Eric Holcomb Director



Chronology of the Building:

2000- PRESENT

- 2019- 11-21 Assignment of Deed- Grantee: V.Chells Homes of Pearl,
Grantor: Fisher Management
- 2017-10-12 Assignment of Deed- Grantee: Tempest LLC Grantor: Fisher Management -
Grantor: LOKORUSO, LLC
- 2017-04-05 Assignment of Deed- Grantors: LOKORUSO LLC & Fisher Management
Solutions LLC, Grantee: LOKORUSO LLC & Fisher Management Solutions
LLC
- 2016-05-26 Assignment of Deed :Grantee: LOKORUSO LLC Grantor: Henry Raymond,
Director of Finance
- 2014-11-28 Margaret Mitchell passes away-Buried Garrison Forest Veterans Cemetery
- 2013-10-20 Rufus N. Mitchell passes away- Buried Garrison Forest Veterans Cemetery
- 2011-05-06 Receivership- Grantee Ground Rents LLC ,Grantor: Federal Deposit Insurance
Corp
- 2006-03-23 Deed- Grantors: Rufus N. Mitchell & Margaret Mitchell
Grantee: David A. Fleming
- 2004-06 Mitchell's Tailors sold to David A. Fleming from Rufus & Margaret Mitchell
- 2004- 05-22 Assignment of Deed- Grantors: Rufus N. Mitchell & Margaret Mitchell
to Grantee: David A. Fleming

1900-1999

- 1989 Rufus Mitchell retires from tailor job at United States Naval Academy
- 1972 Aerial Map of Baltimore- Department of Planning- Next door building 416
Wilson Street demolished
- 1971 Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- Three-story storefront building (416
Wilson Street demolished)
- 1969-09-15 Deed: Marvin & Annette Wolfson to Rufus N. Mitchell
- 1965-5-21 Deed: Anne Shockett to Margaret Spriggs
- 1953 Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- Three-story storefront building
- 1950-5-24 Deed: Joe Gold to Harry & Annette Shockett

- 1949 Mitchell's Tailors established by Rufus and Margaret Mitchell
- 1949 Rufus Mitchell leaves the Navy
- 1949-5-23 Deed: Straw man Inc. to Joe Gold
- 1914 Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- Three-story storefront building
- 1901 Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- Three-story storefront building
(416 Wilson noted as dwelling only)

1869-1899

- 1891-7-23 Deed: William Oler to Louis Wise
- 1890 Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- Three-story brick building with storefront
- 1885 Bromley Atlas of Baltimore- Lot for 414 and 416 Wilson Street not yet created
- 1869 Sachse Aerial View of Baltimore- Empty field

Maps and Drawings
Exhibit 1- Upton's Marble Hill Historic District

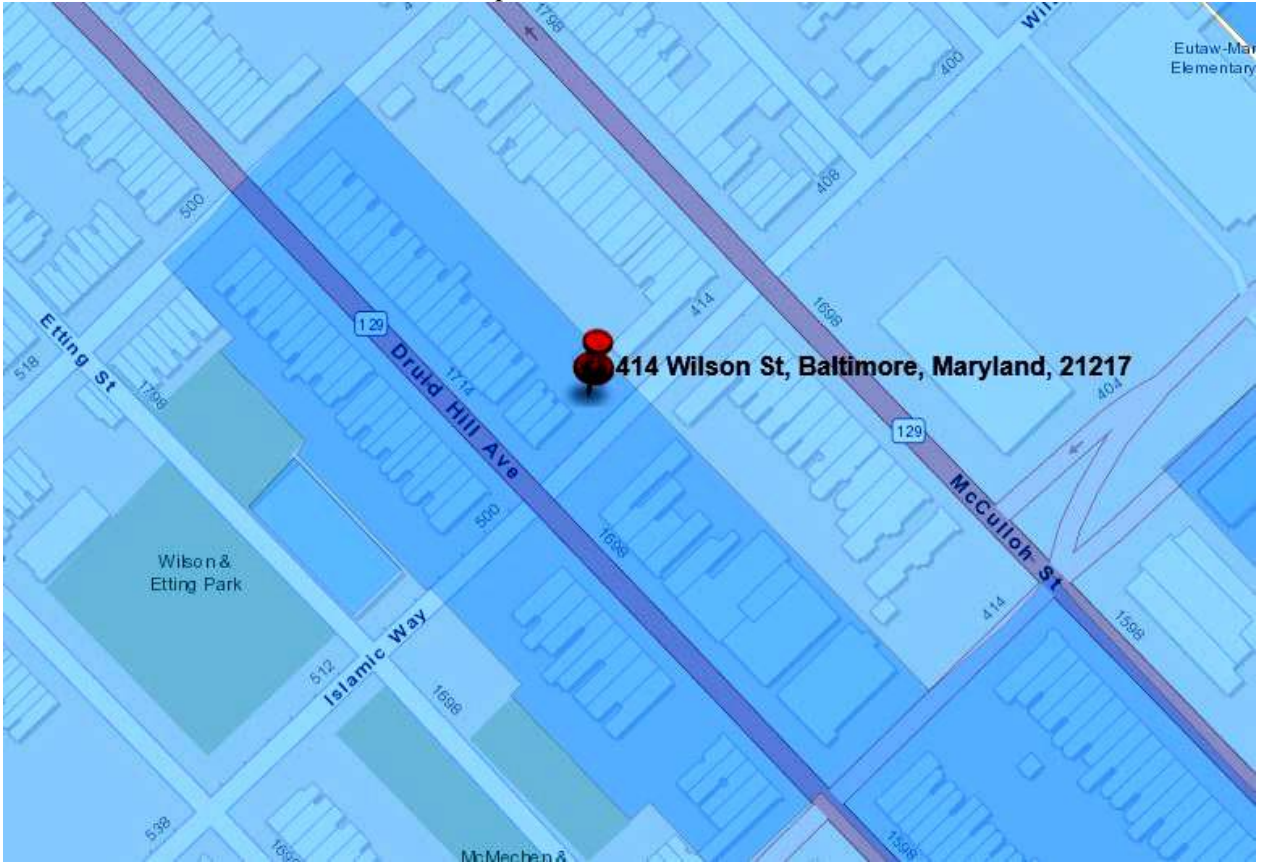


Exhibit 2- Property location



Exhibit 3-Google Earth View 2019- Southwest elevation

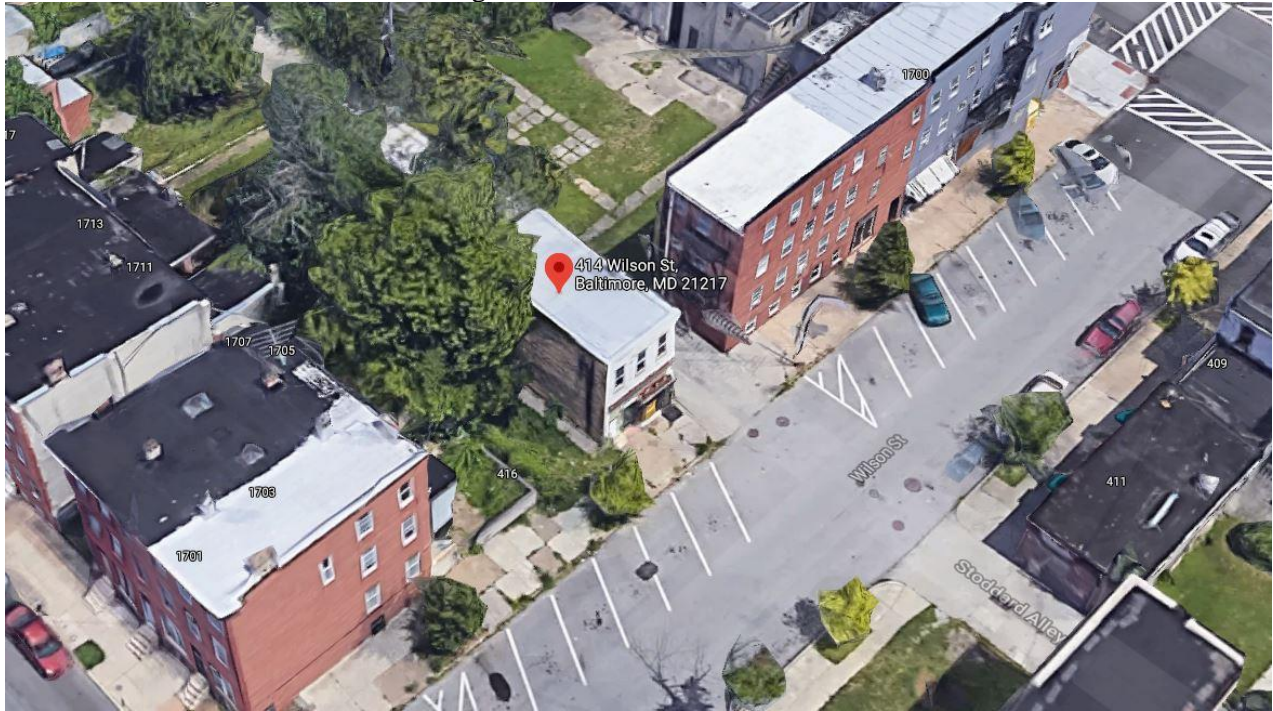


Exhibit 4- Google Earth View 2019- Southeast elevation



Exhibit 5- Google Earth View 2019- Northeast elevation

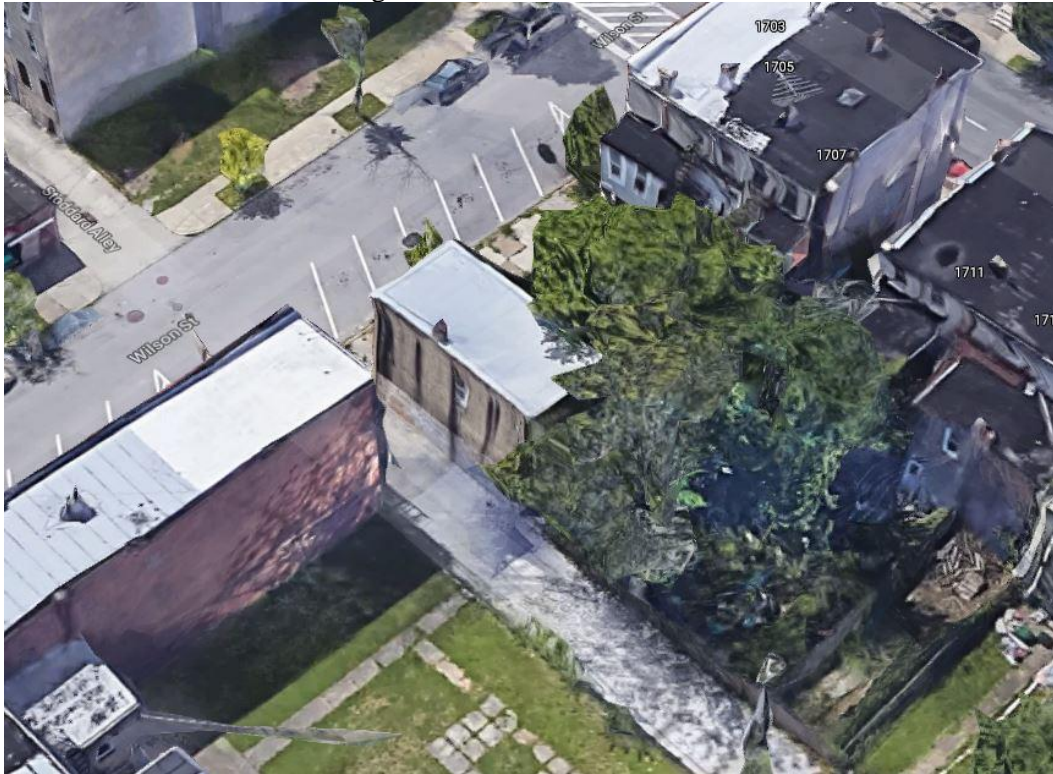


Exhibit 6- Google Street view 2019- Front (South) elevation

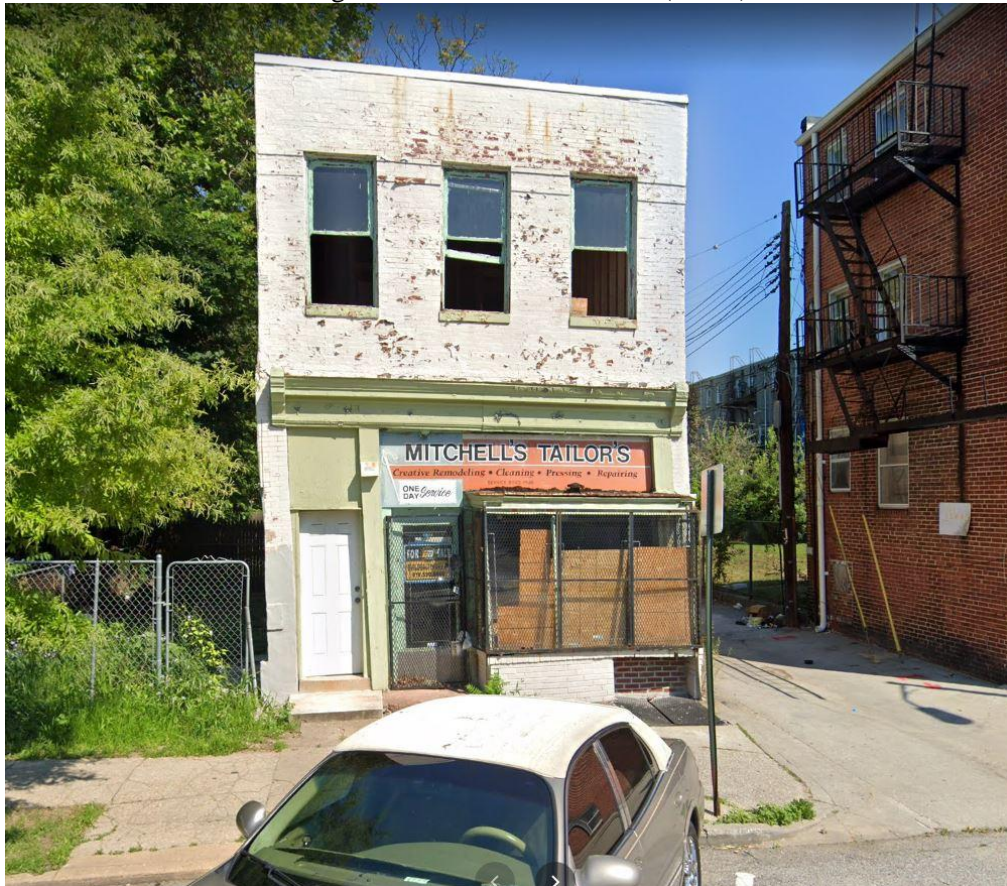


Exhibit 7-Google Street view 2007- Front elevation



Exhibit 8- Google Street view- Southeast corner-2019

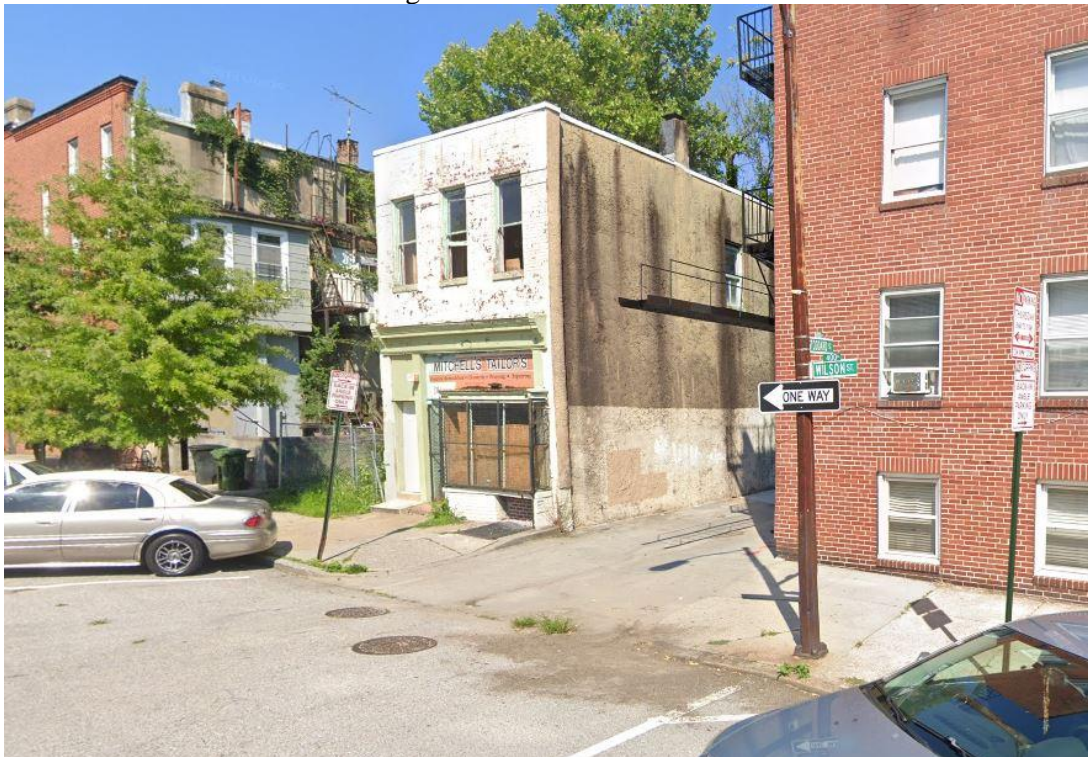


Exhibit 8- Google Street view- Signage 2007



Exhibit 9- Sachse Aerial View of Baltimore 1869

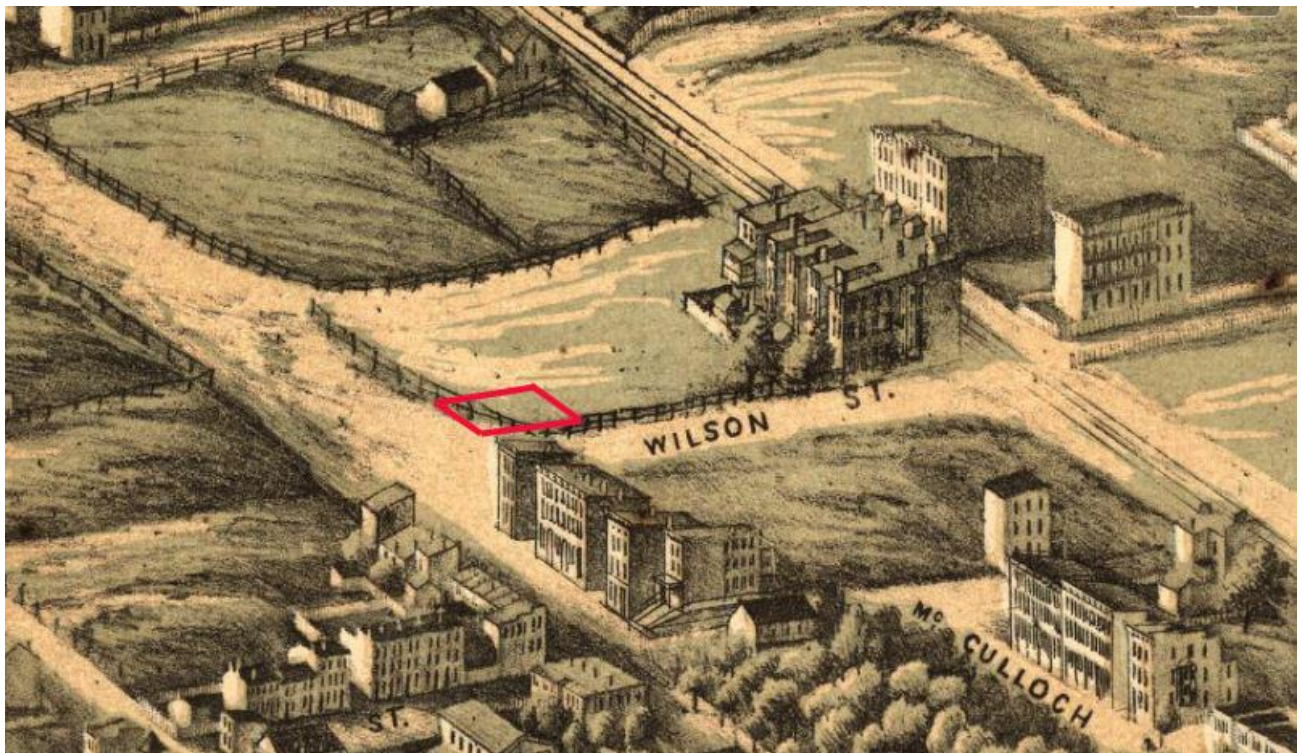


Exhibit 10- Bromley Atlas of Baltimore 1885- plate 14

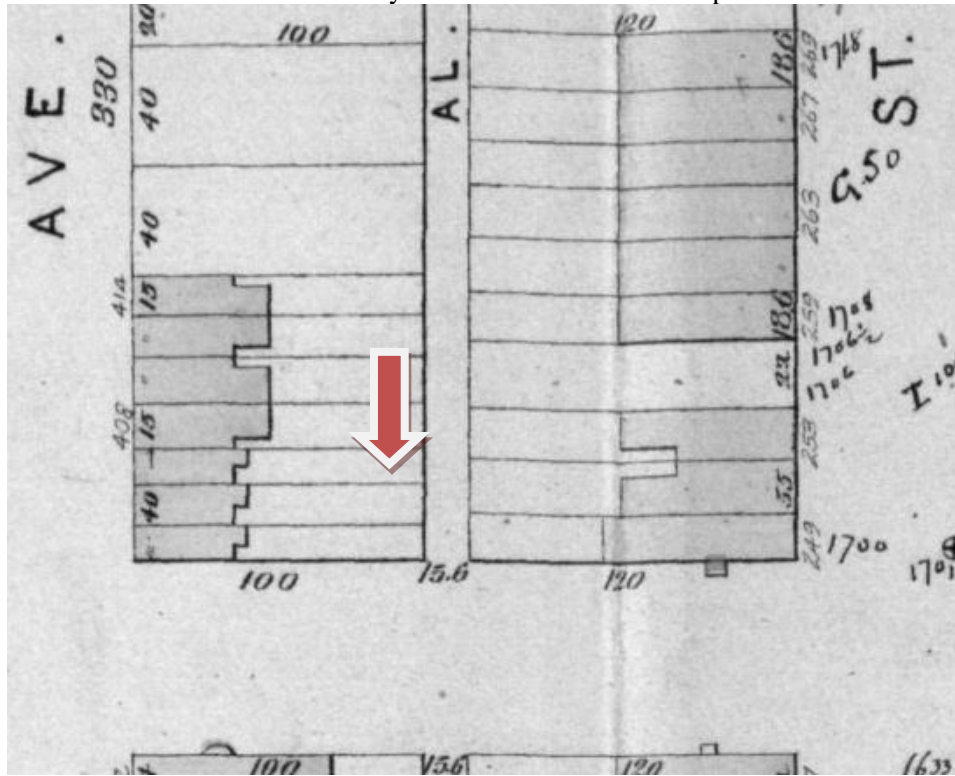


Exhibit 11- Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- 1890 vol. 13, sheet 107

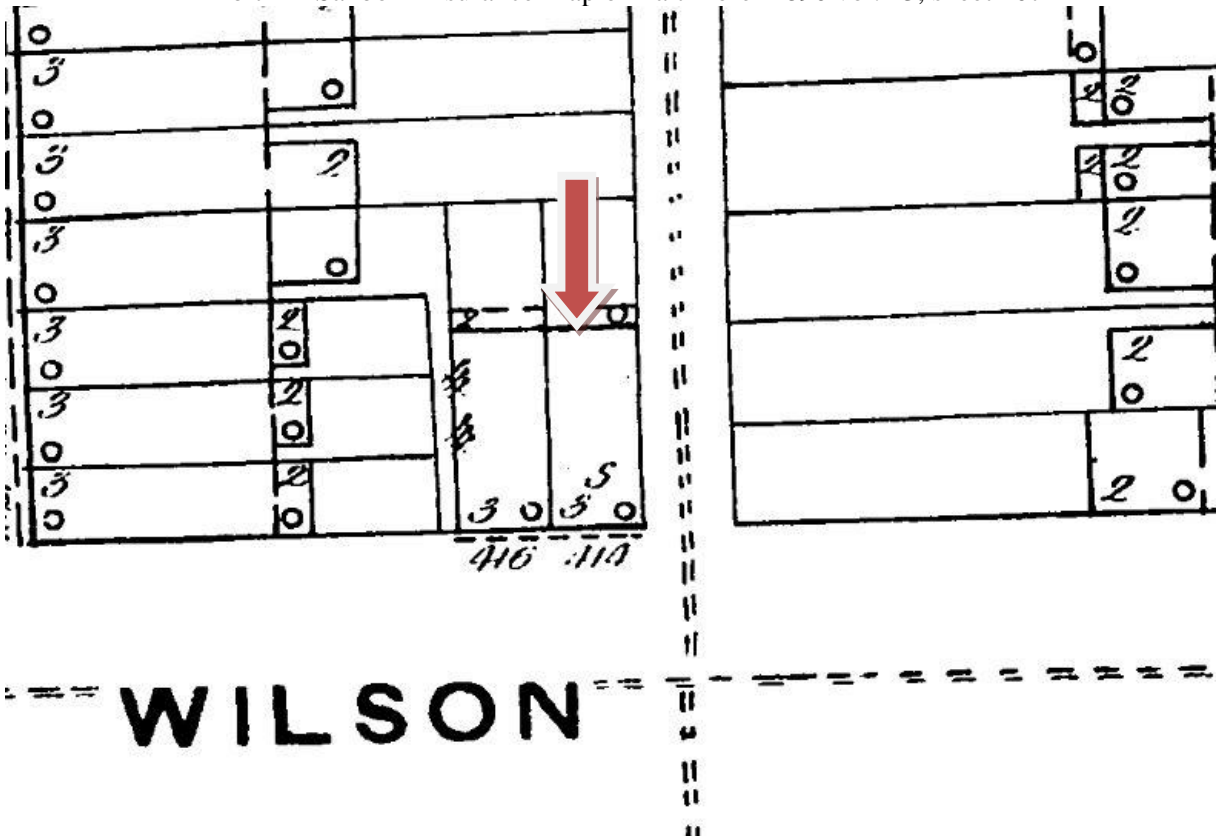


Exhibit 12- Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- 1901-2 vol. 2 Sheet 174

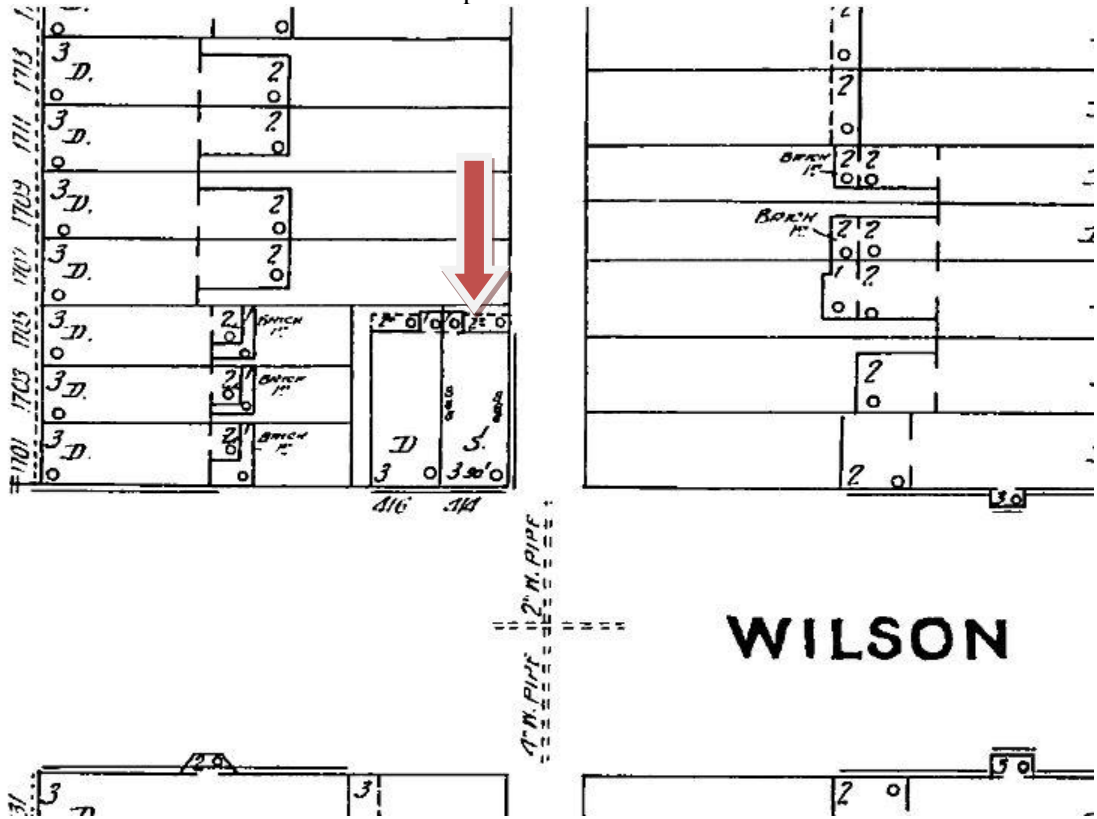


Exhibit 13- Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- 1914-15 vol. 2 Sheet 206

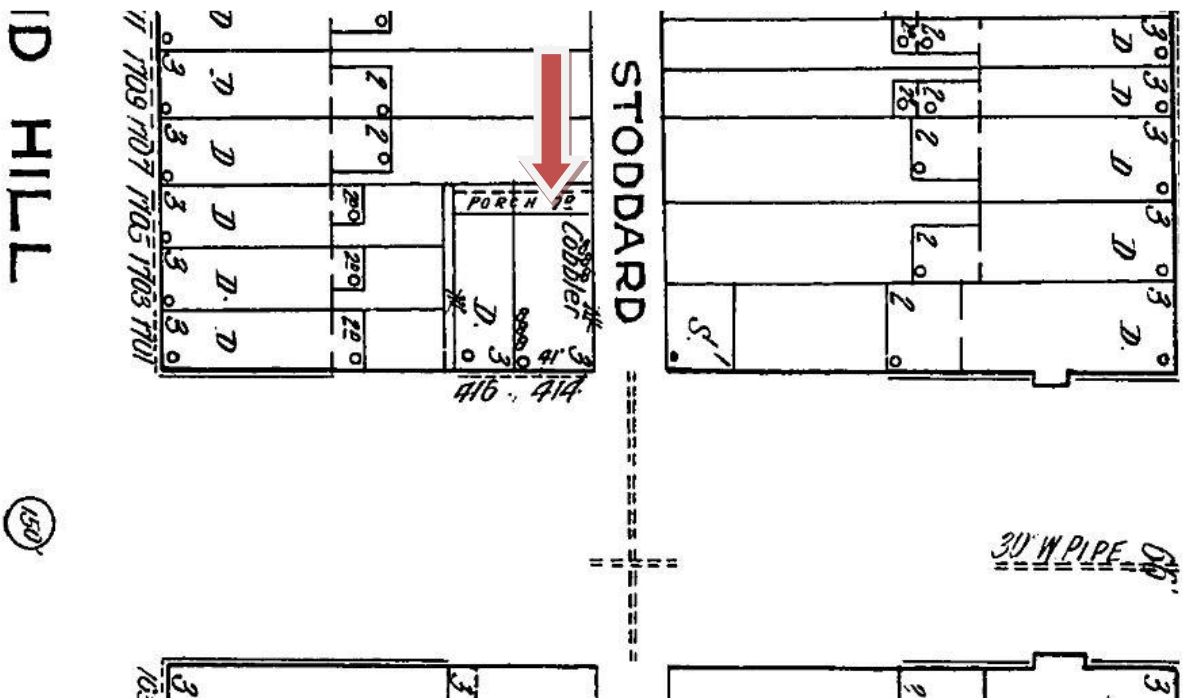


Exhibit 14- Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- 1914-51 vol. 2 sheet 206

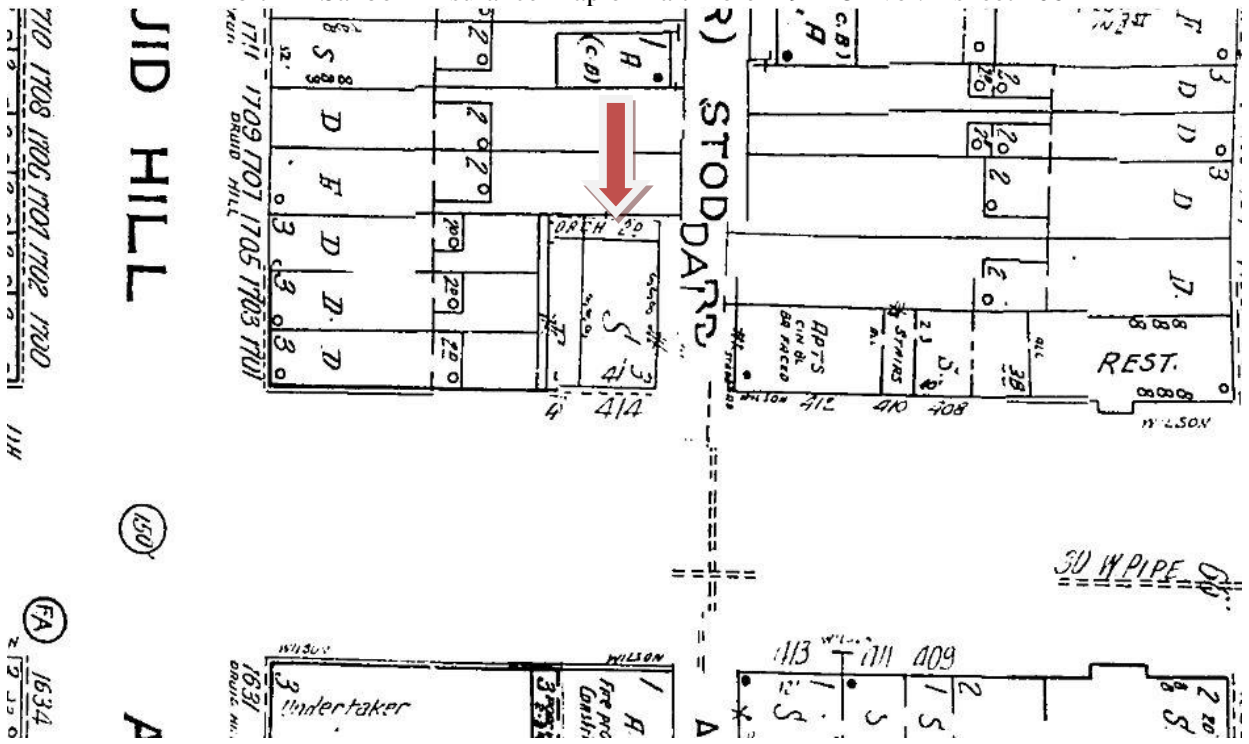


Exhibit 15- Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- 1914-53 vol.2 sheet 206 republished 1952

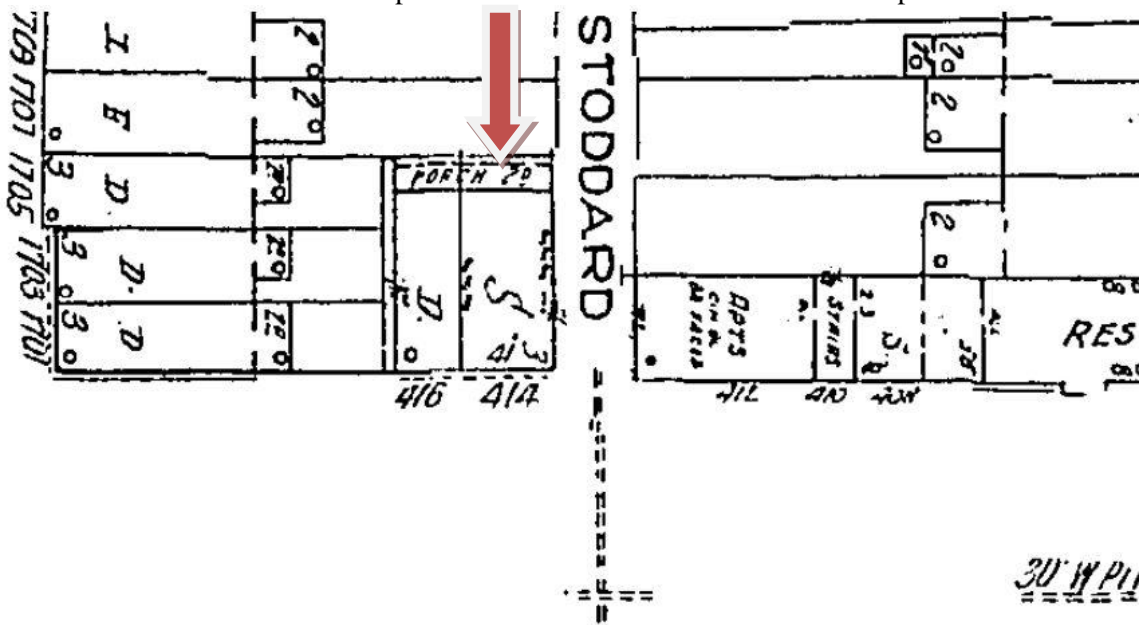


Exhibit 16- Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- 1914-53 vol. 2 sheet 206

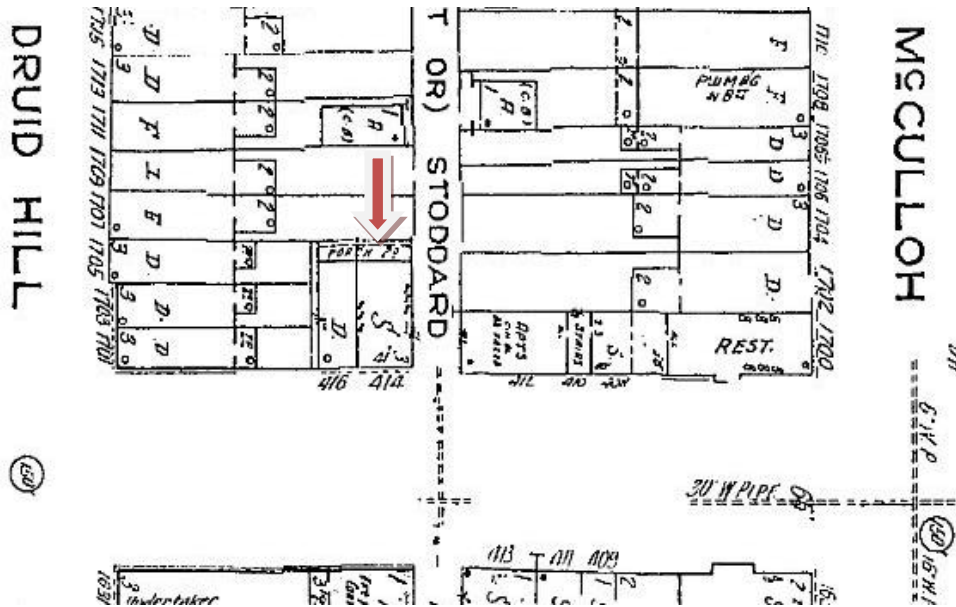


Exhibit 17- Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- 1952 vol. 2 Sheet 206 (Updated 1971)

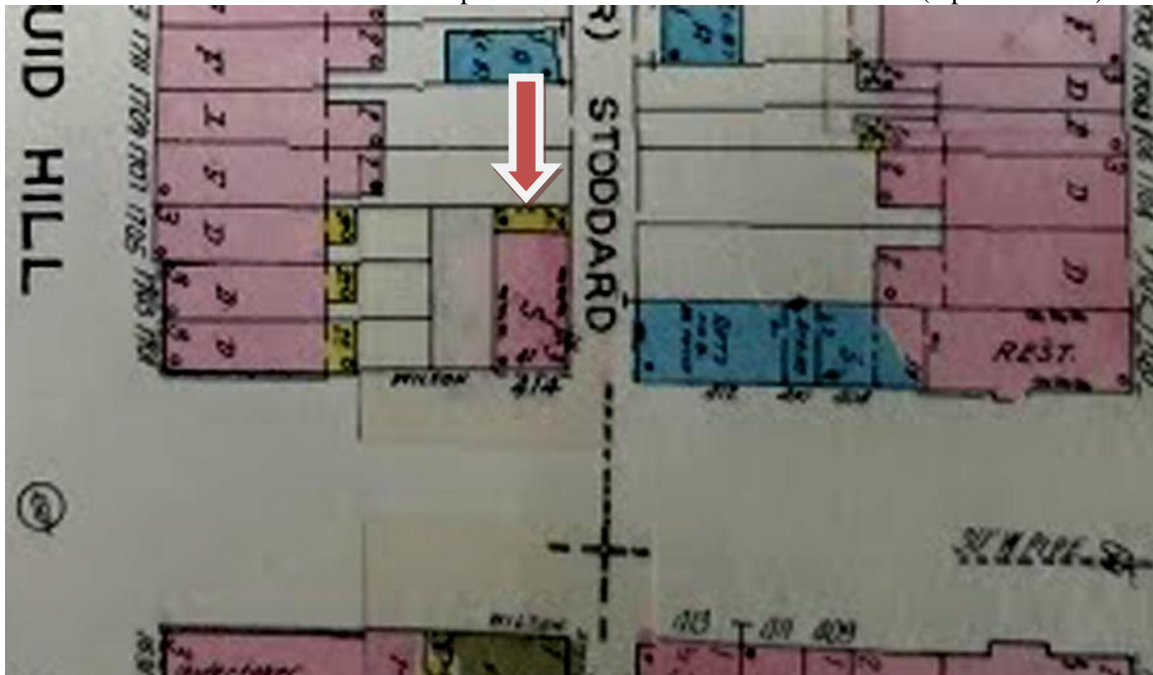


Exhibit 18 Draft Card Rufus N. Mitchell

14363

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after January 1, 1922 and on or before June 30, 1924)

SERIAL NUMBER	I. NAME (Print)			ORDER NUMBER
N. 877	Rufus	Nathaniel	Mitchell	14363
(First) (Middle) (Last)				
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print)				
2138 Brunt St. Balto. Md.				
(Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)				
[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]				
3. MAILING ADDRESS				
Same				
(Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same)				
4. TELEPHONE	5. AGE IN YEARS		6. PLACE OF BIRTH	
—	18		Hulander	
(Exchange) (Number) (Mo.) (Day) (Yr.) (Town or county)				
DATE OF BIRTH				
June 17, 1924				
(State or country)				
North Carolina				
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS				
Henrietta Mitchell 2138 Brunt Street				
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS				
Harry Grueal 6304 Bellonga Ave.				
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS				
5113 Roland Ave. Balto. Md.				
(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)				
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.				
D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 6-1-42)		(over)		e16-21630-8
				Rufus N Mitchell (Registrant's signature)

Exhibit 19 Gravestone Rufus and Margaret Mitchell



Exhibit 20- Pictometry view Fall 2020



Exhibit 21- Staff photo February 2021



Exhibit 22-Staff photo February 2021



ⁱ Bromley Atlas of Baltimore 1885- plate 14

ⁱⁱ Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- 1890 vol. 13, sheet 107

ⁱⁱⁱ Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- 1952 vol. 2 Sheet 206 (Updated 1971)

^{iv} Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- 1914-15 vol. 2 Sheet 206

^v Google Street view 2019- Front (South) elevation, <https://goo.gl/maps/Cvekg4F4ErosWT2NA>

^{vi} Bromley Atlas of Baltimore 1885- plate 14

^{vii} Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- 1890 vol. 13, sheet 107

^{viii} Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- 1952 vol. 2 Sheet 206 (Updated 1971)

^{ix} Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- 1952 vol. 2 Sheet 206 (Updated 1971)

^x Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- 1914-53 vol. 2 sheet 206

^{xi} Sanborn Insurance Map of Baltimore- 1914-15 vol. 2 Sheet 206

^{xii} <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406624194/92526A14571846F8PQ/2?accountid=10750>
Tying up loose ends of tailor's career ; Finally, at the age of 80, Rufus Mitchell puts down his scissors and thread, once and for all; Baltimore ... Or Less: [FINAL Edition] Bingham, Larry. The Sun; Baltimore, Md. [Baltimore, Md]01 Aug 2004: 2F.

^{xiii} Tying up loose ends of tailor's career ;

^{xiv} https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=8750&h=7625697&tid=&pid=&queryId=fe94f935f72e2ddbc39fdb1f318f8c2b&usePUB=true&_phsrc=fuh65&_phstart=successSource

^{xv} Tying up loose ends of tailor's career ;

^{xvi} Tying up loose ends of tailor's career ;

^{xvii} Tying up loose ends of tailor's career ;

^{xviii}