

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name International Corset Company Building

other names/site number N/A

Name of Multiple Property Listing N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

street & number 325 South Union Street not for publication

city or town Aurora vicinity

state Illinois county Kane zip code 60505

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: ___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date

Illinois Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
- ___ determined eligible for the National Register
- ___ determined not eligible for the National Register
- ___ removed from the National Register
- ___ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		site
		structure
		object
2	2	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/warehouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

NO STYLE

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: concrete
walls: Brick, cast stone

roof: Synthetic, terra cotta
other: Glass, wood

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity).

Summary Paragraph

The International Corset Company Building, 325 S. Union Street, Aurora, Kane County, Illinois, is a one- and three-story L-shaped manufacturing building with full basement that was constructed in 1912-17 as the headquarters of the International Corset Company. It is constructed of brick masonry walls, wood or cast-iron columns and wood joists, a concrete foundation, and a low-slope roof with a synthetic membrane. The central block was completed in 1912 and the north and south additions in 1917; together, they blend seamlessly to form a single visually uniform building. Interiors are largely open in plan and consist of wood floors, brick exterior walls, and exposed ceiling structure. A one-story garage (contributing building) constructed in circa 1917 is located to the west of the building. The International Corset Company occupied the property until the early 1950s, when it was sold to the Strathmore Company, a children's book printer. Strathmore made minor modifications to floor layouts, installed new freight elevators, and added loading dock facilities. Throughout the building, the upper multi-light wood sashes have been replaced with painted-wood panels. Overall, however, International Corset has a high degree of integrity with few alterations since the completion of the 1917 additions and remains eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Physical Description

The International Corset Company Building is located at 325 S. Union Street in Aurora, Illinois, a city about forty miles southwest of Chicago. Since its founding in 1834, Aurora has grown into the second-largest city in the state with 200,000 residents. International Corset Company was established in Aurora in 1907 and erected a new facility on S. Union Street in 1912. In 1917, the building was expanded with north and south additions. The property consists of 1) the main manufacturing building (1912-1917) and 2) a one-story brick garage located on the western edge of the property (c. 1917). At the time of construction, Union Street near 4th Avenue marked the southwestern edge of Aurora and was characterized by small frame houses set on large lots. International Corset remained in operation until the 1950s, when the property was sold to the Strathmore Company, a children's book printer and manufacturer of the "Magic Slate" toy. Today, the building is occupied by Relocation Services Inc., a moving company.

Site and Setting

The International Corset Company Building occupies the eastern third of a residential city block bounded by Union Street on the east, North Avenue on the north, Spencer Street on the west, and 4th Avenue on the south. The L-shaped building is oriented north to south with its primary façade facing east onto Union Street. The primary (east) façade is set back about 30 feet from Union Street and is bordered by a row of mature trees and a gently sloped landscaped strip extending the length of the building. The 1917 north addition is oriented east to west and faces north onto an asphalt-paved parking lot that separates the building from North Avenue. On the rear (west) side of the building is another paved parking area and the c. 1917 garage. A narrow driveway extends south along the west side of the building from the west parking area to a loading dock and parking area at the southern end of the property. A concrete-paved driveway entrance from 4th Avenue accesses the southern parking lot.

The surrounding setting remains a middle-income single-family residential neighborhood as it was when International Corset was constructed in 1912. Houses are primarily frame construction, one to two stories in height, and set back from the street with landscaped front yards; most date between the 1900s and 1940s. The lot selected for International Corset was previously occupied by two single-family frame houses.¹

¹ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Aurora, Illinois, 1907, Volume 1, Sheet 64.

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Main Building (Contributing) – 1912 (central block), 1917 (north and south additions) | Architects: Worst & Shepardson (1912), Eugene Malmer (1917)

The main building consists of three sections:

1) Original 1912 Building (Central)

The original central block of the building was constructed in 1912 according to the design of architectural firm Worst & Shepardson. Oriented east to face Union Street, it consists of three stories and a full basement with brick masonry walls, a concrete foundation, and a low-slope roof. The rectangular footprint is 150 feet long by 50 feet wide.

2) 1917 North Addition (North)

In 1917, architect Eugene Malmer designed a three-story and basement addition with a rectangular 150- by 50-foot footprint at the north end of the original block. The addition faces north onto North Avenue and forms an L with the 1912 central block.

3) 1917 South Addition (South)

A second addition designed by Eugene Malmer was completed in 1917 at the southern end of the 1912 central block. This one-story and basement addition has a square 50-by-50-foot footprint, matching the width of the original central block.

Exterior

The north and east facades are clad in multi-hued red face brick in a common bond pattern and the rear facades are tan common brick. On the north and east sides, where the red face brick is used, a cast-stone water table defines the building's base and the parapet cornice features a graduated brick pattern with brick corbels between bays. Original wood windows are evenly spaced two per bay and occupy the majority of wall surface to provide ample natural light to the factory floor. The historic fenestration pattern remains, but the majority of windows retain only a lower divided light sash; upper sashes have been infilled with painted-wood panels. Basement windows are set within the water table and consist of five-light wood awning sashes. Along the primary east facade, twin stair towers with arched stairway windows flank the original 1912 block and delineate the starting points of the north and south additions. The primary building entrance is located on the Union Street façade and marked by a cast-stone surround; the entrance is infilled with painted plywood panels on the exterior and interior. Secondary entrances are located at the stair towers and loading docks. The low-slope roofs are bordered by short brick parapets and drained by scuppers with unpainted aluminum leader heads and downspouts.

Original 1912 Building (Central)

The original 1912 block has a rectangular footprint and a symmetrical east facade, which is organized into seven bays and flanked by twin projecting stair towers. Each bay features two evenly spaced fifteen-over-fifteen double-hung wood sash windows with cast-stone sills (all upper sashes have been replaced with wood panels). The basement level has five-light awning windows set within the water table. The central bay of the east facade features the main building entrance, which is framed by a projecting scored cast-stone surround with a plain frieze and cornice. The doorway has a segmental arch but is infilled with boards. A graduated-brick cornice with brick corbels caps the building along this facade; these corbels are spaced to align with each bay. The twin stair towers project slightly from the elevation and feature secondary entrances with segmental brick arches and non-historic replacement aluminum storefront doors. The upper-floor windows of the towers are slightly recessed within a brick frame and consist of double-hung nine-over-nine wood windows; the topmost windows have multi-light arched sashes.

The west (rear) facade is tan common brick and divided into seven bays, each with two evenly spaced windows. The second bay from the north features three windows per floor. Most windows have infilled upper sashes and retain lower fifteen-pane wood sashes; however, a few windows that are boarded on the exterior retain both upper and lower sashes. The cornice is

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defined by a metal gutter. An elevator penthouse stands in the southwestern corner of the roof. At the south end of the façade is a non-historic wood access ramp leading to a resized doorway.

1917 North Addition

The 1917 north addition is attached to the north side of the 1912 block at the north stair tower and carries over the original building's regular fenestration and overall design. It is brick masonry construction with a concrete foundation, steel columns, wood joists, and a low-slope roof with a synthetic membrane. The narrow east end of the addition consists of three window bays, with a middle bay featuring single windows and two flanking outer bays each with two windows. All windows are fifteen-light wood double hung with cast-stone sills. Upper sashes have been infilled with painted-wood panels. The corbeled cornice matches the 1912 block. The northeast corner of the addition projects slightly from the primary wall surface and is capped by a cast-stone cornice and a flagpole attached to the parapet.

The north facade faces north onto a paved parking lot and is divided into ten bays, each with pairs of double-hung fifteen-light wood windows. The westernmost bay is a stair tower that is similar in design to the twin stair towers of the 1912 block. All upper sashes have been replaced with painted-wood panels. The cornice and parapet are similar to those on the east façade.

The west facade features the projecting stair tower on the north end that has single windows per floor, while the south half of the facade has two double-hung fifteen-light wood windows matching those on the east elevation. All windows have cast-stone sills.

The south (rear) façade is regularly fenestrated with four bays of windows similar to the street-facing north facade. There is a projecting brick elevator tower at the eastern end of the façade where the north addition meets the 1912 block. At the first-floor level beside the elevator tower is a concrete loading dock with metal-frame canopy dock added during the 1960s.

1917 South Addition

The 1917 south addition is a single story and basement addition with an east facade that is five window bays wide and similar in design to the east facades of the 1912 block and the north addition. The south side faces onto a paved parking lot and driveway and is divided into three bays. The outer bays have pairs of windows that are similar to those on the north side of the north addition, while the center bay has a concrete loading dock built in the 1960s with a shed roof, concrete stair, and two loading bays with overhead doors. A stepped parapet with limestone coping caps the facade. Basement windows are infilled with matching red brick. The west elevation is an uninterrupted parged clay tile wall.

Interior

The interior of the International Corset Company Building is largely utilitarian in design, with spacious open-plan work and/or storage spaces on each floor. Three stair towers, two flanking the east side of the 1912 block and one at the northwest corner of the 1917 north addition, and two freight elevators flanking the west side of the 1912 block serve all three floors and basement. The stairwells have exposed painted brick walls and concrete landings and stairs with pipe railings. The three blocks are separated by brick demising walls with door openings closed by metal fire doors. The basement level is finished with concrete floors, exposed concrete foundation walls, and ceilings with exposed wood joists and wood and steel beams. Pipes and conduit are attached to the walls and ceilings.

Original 1912 Building (Central)

The basement, first, second, and third floors of the 1912 block are comprised primarily of open spaces divided by into structural bays by wood posts. Floors are narrow tongue-and-groove wood, walls are exposed brick, and ceilings are exposed wood structure and subflooring. Some portions of the floors have later non-historic layers of steel plate, plywood and laminate flooring applied over the original floors. At the northwest corner, which Sanborn maps indicate was the location

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of the company's office, a portion of the original office appears to be extant in the form of two plaster partition walls, a plaster ceiling, and two painted-wood doors with operable transoms.

1917 North Addition

The basement, first and third floors of the 1917 north addition are largely open in plan and divided into structural bays by cast-iron columns. Finishes include narrow tongue-and-groove wood floors, exposed brick walls, and ceilings with exposed wood beams, joists, and subflooring. The second floor is partitioned with non-historic drywall demising walls. Some portions of the second floor have non-historic floor finishes (vinyl acoustic tile or carpeting) over original flooring. Some portions of the second-floor ceiling are concealed with non-historic dropped acoustic grid tiles. Conduit and pipes are attached to most walls and ceilings.

1917 South Addition

The 1917 south addition is a single open space divided by round cast-iron columns with wood tongue and groove floors, exposed brick walls, and ceilings with exposed wood joists and beams. Portions of the floor are covered by steel plates. Conduit, pipes and ducts are attached to the ceiling. A non-historic metal overhead door leads to the enclosed south loading dock.

Garage (Contributing) – 1917 | Architect: Eugene Malmer

The garage is a small, one-story red-brick building constructed in 1917 at the western edge of the International Corset property. Its east elevation has two vehicular openings with a non-historic wood paneled overhead door and a non-historic metal overhead door. The north elevation has a rectangular boarded window opening with a stone sill. Projecting brick courses line the base of the parapet, which is capped with stone coping.

Alterations

Non-historic alterations to the International Corset Company building are limited. Following its acquisition of the property in circa 1953, the Strathmore Company lightly remodeled floor layouts to accommodate new production lines and offices and installed new elevators and loading docks.² These non-historic partitions are largely concentrated on the second floor of the 1917 north addition. At an unknown date, most of the original upper wood window sashes throughout the building were replaced with painted-wood panels. The building's exterior doors are non-historic replacements of aluminum storefront or wood composite materials.

Assessment of Integrity

The International Corset Company Building retains excellent integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to convey its significance as an early-twentieth-century manufacturing building in Aurora, Illinois.

Location and Setting: The property is in its original location. The setting continues to be a low-rise, single-family residential neighborhood as it was during the period of significance.

Design, Materials, and Workmanship: The property exhibits a high degree of architectural integrity. On the exterior, minor changes include the construction of loading docks on the south elevations of the two 1917 additions and the replacement of exterior doors. Despite the removal of the upper wood window sashes, the building retains enough of its original windows and all original openings to communicate the building's use as a factory in need of abundant natural light. Original materials and finishes, form and massing, and fenestration pattern are intact throughout. On the interior, the open layouts and exposed, utilitarian finishes are mostly intact throughout the building. Non-historic partitions and finishes are largely concentrated on the second floor of the 1917 north addition where historic fabric has been concealed by non-historic fabric such as vinyl

² "Strathmore Buys Corset Co. Building," *The Aurora Beacon*, c.1955, The Aurora Public Library.

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tile, carpeting, and dropped ceilings. The non-historic partitions read clearly as later additions.

Feeling and Association: Integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship create integrity of feeling and association. International Corset remains readily identifiable as an early-twentieth century manufacturing building that rises above its residential neighbors but blends with its surrounding via setbacks, landscaping, and stylistic touches such as the front entrance surround and decorative brick cornice. There is no doubt that a former employee of the company would recognize the building if she were to visit today.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Industry

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

N/A

Period of Significance

1912-1953

Architect/Builder

Worst, Fred W.; Shepardson, Ralph Steele;

Malmer, Eugene

Significant Dates

1912, 1917, 1953

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

Summary of Significance Statement

The International Corset Company Building, 325 South Union Street, Aurora, Kane County, Illinois, is a brick, one- to three-story plus basement mill-type manufacturing building constructed between 1912 and 1917 for the International Corset Company, a corset manufacturer founded in 1907 by German entrepreneur Charles H. Schopbach. The building is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Industry for the important role it served in the industrial economy of Aurora and the corset-making industry that developed in the greater Chicago area and throughout the United States during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The International Corset Company Building's period of significance begins in 1912, following the completion of the original block, and ends in 1953, when the company closed and sold the building.

Industrial Development of Aurora, Illinois

The founding of Aurora is rooted in industry. In 1834, brothers Joseph and Samuel McCarty of New York arrived in Illinois in search of a river site to build a sawmill, which they established on a bend in the Fox River, about forty miles southwest of Chicago. Today, this river divides present-day Aurora into east and west sides, with Stolp Island serving as the historic central downtown. Other mills and early factories, including textile and gristmills, soon followed the McCartys' lead to take advantage of the river as a power source.³ Stolp Island, for instance, was named for J. D. Stolp, who founded Aurora Woolen Mills on the island in 1837.⁴ That same year, Zaphna Lake opened two more sawmills in what would become West Aurora. In 1845, the town was incorporated, and by 1850 it had grown into a sizable community of 1,200 residents.⁵

In the 1850s, the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy (CB&Q) railroad arrived in Aurora, both as a mode of transportation and as an employer at its railcar construction and repair shops (the CB&Q remained Aurora's largest employer until the 1960s).⁶ By supplying "abundant raw materials and a skilled labor force...[and providing] easy transport of finished goods to a wider market," the CB&Q became a natural draw for new industries.⁷ Examples of new enterprises established during this period include the Aurora Brewery (1855); Aurora Soap Factory (1856); Aurora Silver Plate Manufacturing Company (1869); and Love Brothers Foundry (1876).⁸ Over time, Aurora came to be known in particular for its textile and metal working concerns.⁹ By 1880, the city's population had grown to 11,873.

In the late nineteenth century, Aurora made a concerted effort to further encourage its industrial economy. According to the 1880 city directory, the city had "secured a wide reputation for her railroad and other interests...[W]ith the excellent location of the city, railroad communication and ordinary cheap living, we see no reason why this city should not double her number of manufacturing institutions within a short time."¹⁰ To accomplish this goal, a committee of local citizens developed a strategy known as the "Aurora Plan," in which the City acquired undeveloped land along the railroad, a portion of which was donated to a desirable manufacturer, and the rest sold off in parcels to offset the cost of the donation.¹¹ The plan seems to have worked: according to U. S. Census data, in 1880 Kane County was home to 190 manufacturing establishments, and in 1900, the total had increased to 637, with 229 in Aurora alone.¹² The city's population in 1900 was 24,147, and 5,485, or

³ Ann Durkin Keating, ed. *Chicago Neighborhoods and Suburbs: A Historical Guide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 97-98; and Jo Fredell Higgins, *Aurora (Postcard History Series)* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), 9.

⁴ "Stolp Woolen Mill Store, Aurora, Kane County, Illinois," National Register of Historic Places, September 1, 1983.

⁵ Keating, 97. Population statistics were taken from Wikipedia, "Aurora, Illinois," August 2019.

⁶ Keating, *Chicago Neighborhoods and Suburbs*, 98.

⁷ "Middle Avenue Historic District, Aurora, Kane County, Illinois," National Register of Historic Places, September 1, 2016.

⁸ Higgins, *Aurora*, 9; *Holland's Aurora City Directory, 1880*; and Jim Edwards and Wynette Edwards, *Aurora (Images of America Series)* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 1998), 40, 59.

⁹ "Middle Avenue Historic District, Aurora, Kane County, Illinois," National Register of Historic Places, September 1, 2016.

¹⁰ *Holland's Aurora City Directory, 1880*, 44.

¹¹ "Middle Avenue Historic District, Aurora, Kane County, Illinois," National Register of Historic Places, September 1, 2016.

¹² United States Census, "Report on the Manufactures of the United States at the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880) – Table V. Selected Statistics of Manufactures, by Counties, in Each State and Territory: 1880," 216; and United States Census, "Bulletins of the Twelfth

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nearly one quarter, of its citizens worked in manufacturing.¹³ One of the many plants enticed to Aurora by this citizen group was the Chicago Corset Company, which was looking to expand and, in 1883, built a new four-story plant on the east side of Aurora at the corner of State and Claim Streets. By 1900, the company employed 700 workers and was producing about 4,000 corsets a day.¹⁴

This trend of industrial growth continued well into the twentieth century. In its 1932 edition, *Finch & McCullough's Aurora City Directory* attributes the city's success to its industry: "No city could enjoy the civic, the cultural, the social opportunities which are Aurora's without a substantial livelihood. From its some one hundred and forty diversified industries, with their normal average payroll of \$12,000,000 and an annual production of \$50,000,000, Aurora people find their income."¹⁵ This progress was made possible by the city's many assets, including its "strategic location in the great central market, but 38 miles from Chicago, the quality and quantity of its labor, the transportation facilities of four steam railroads...the abundance of water...and the general spirit of progressive determination which permeates its citizenship."¹⁶ Industry remained healthy into the post-World War II economic boom, and the population grew to 50,600 by 1950. In the 1980s, however, factories began to close, as they did in many cities and towns across the country. This was due to a variety of factors, including economic recessions, government policies, and labor shifts.¹⁷ Nevertheless, present-day Aurora still contains some industry, including the Caterpillar plant (construction machinery) and distribution centers for goods such as auto parts and industrial gases.¹⁸

History of the Corset

The corset, a tightly fitting undergarment designed to shape the figure, was an essential element of women's fashion throughout the Western World for four centuries. It was also one of the most controversial garments ever made, blamed for everything from female immorality to fatal illness. Its origins have been traced to the European aristocracy of the late Renaissance, but with the Industrial Revolution and the democratization of fashion, the corset became a must-have item in households of all classes.

In the fifteenth century, fashionable European women began wearing dresses that laced up the front for a tighter fit.¹⁹ This precursor to the corset eventually led to the separation of bodice and skirt to allow for an even more controlled shape. The first true corsets were created in the sixteenth century, most likely in Spain and/or Italy, and consisted of cloth bodices that incorporated a stiff material at the front to create a straight and rigid appearance. These early versions, also known as "stays," were shaped as an inverted cone and typically incorporated whalebone, horn, or buckram as the stiffener.²⁰ Italian noblewoman Catherine de Medici (1519-89) is widely credited with introducing the corset in France, where it became *de rigueur* among the nobility. The discipline required to wear a corset was linked to the aristocracy's emphasis on courtly etiquette and controlled self-presentation in contrast to the working classes, whose bodies were "bent by hardship and toil."²¹

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, corset design moved away from the inverted cone shape towards greater emphasis on the curves of the ideal female form. The concept of "tightlacing," or tying corset laces as tightly as possible to achieve a small waist, was first popularized during this period.²² This more eroticized style, which highlighted

Census of the United States: Manufactures – Illinois," February 21, 1902, 10, 20-21. There are no available statistics for Aurora manufacturing in 1880. Population totals were taken from Wikipedia, "Kane County, Illinois," August 2019.

¹³ United States Census, "Bulletins of the Twelfth Census of the United States: Manufactures – Illinois," February 21, 1902, 20-21.

¹⁴ Mary Clark Ormond, "Kane County History: Corsets Doing Big Business in Aurora? Scandalous!" kanecountyconnects.com, <https://kanecountyconnects.com/2018/08/kane-county-history-corsets-doing-big-business-in-aurora-scandalous/>.

¹⁵ *Finch & McCullough's Aurora City Directory*, 1932, 10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Keating, 98.

¹⁸ "Aurora: Economy," [city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com/us-cities/The-Midwest/Aurora-Economy.html), <http://www.city-data.com/us-cities/The-Midwest/Aurora-Economy.html>.

¹⁹ Valerie Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 6.

²⁰ Addeane, S. Caelleigh, "Too Close for Comfort: 500 Years of Corsets" – University of Virginia exhibit. The essay was originally published in *Academic Medicine* (vol. 73, no. 12/December 1998, p. 1228) <http://exhibits.hsl.virginia.edu/clothes/>

²¹ Steele, *The Corset*, 13.

²² Steele, 20-21.

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a woman's bust and hips, also restricted the breath and constricted the wearer's internal organs. As such, it was widely criticized for not only encouraging vanity and immoral behavior but also illness, even death.²³ Until the turn of the eighteenth century, corsets were largely limited to the nobility and laboriously handmade by personal or professional dressmakers. However, the undergarment gradually made its way into the basic wardrobes of working-class women, who made their own simple, inexpensive facsimiles.

After a brief hiatus at the end of the eighteenth century, when fashionable women favored looser and simpler silhouettes, the corset returned and endured, becoming a wardrobe staple for women of all classes for well over a century. Its popularity peaked in the 1870s through the 1890s, when the corset was synonymous with Victorian womanhood.²⁴ The fashionable silhouette favored for much of the mid- to late nineteenth century was the hourglass figure with a wasp-like waist, which was accomplished through tightlacing a steel-boned corset. This revived practice once again came to be viewed as a risk to female morality and health. Physicians attributed a variety of ills to it, including tuberculosis and cancer, religious leaders objected to its emphasis on the female shape, and early feminists decried it as a "real and symbolic imprisonment of women."²⁵

The ubiquity and persistence of the corset through the nineteenth century was due in large part to the Industrial Revolution. The railroad system, the mass-production capacities of factories, the invention of the sewing machine, and numerous material innovations such as the invention of elastic, led to clothing, including corsets, that was both affordable and well made.²⁶ In the 1860s, for instance, it was estimated that 1,200,000 corsets were sold annually in Paris, a number that would have been inconceivable prior to this period. The American corset industry also blossomed during this time. The first American factory, the Strouse, Adler Company Corset Factory, was established in 1861 in New Haven, Connecticut. By the 1890s, there were nine corset factories in New Haven employing over 3,000 workers.²⁷ In fact, the state of Connecticut alone was responsible for the production of more than fifty percent of the nation's corsets, according to the 1900 United States Census.²⁸ Another center of corset manufacturing was Illinois; by 1900, the state was home to 18 corset manufacturers employing 1,163 workers.²⁹ Women made up the vast majority of the industry's employees, both in the United States and Europe, during a time when few employment options were available to them.

In response to ongoing perceptions of the corset's detrimental effects, manufacturers began emphasizing the health and comfort of their allegedly physician-approved designs. The Chicago Corset Company, for instance, promoted a "health preserving corset" that it claimed was "the most...comfortable corset ever made."³⁰ New wool "health" corsets emphasizing an S-shape posture were marketed as less damaging alternatives to steel-boned corsets. In the early 1900s, innovations in materials and changes in fashion favoring more natural and straighter silhouettes led to the development of corsets with softer, less rigid fabrics and structure.

Metal rationing during World War I forced corset manufacturers to develop alternatives to the hollow steel bones that had given corsets their shape and rigidity since the mid-nineteenth century. This led to a brief "corset-less" period, which was followed by corsets designed with lightweight fabrics, elastics, and brocades with little to no boning. Following the war, corsets continued to be worn but were losing favor to more relaxed foundation garments, such as girdles and elastic brassieres. Following World War II, many corset companies that had survived wartime rationing and changing fashions during the interwar years succumbed to the new corset-less fashions and closed.

²³ Steele, 15-21.

²⁴ Strouse, Adler Company Corset Factory NR..., Section 8, page 8.

²⁵ Caellegh, "Too Close for Comfort: 500 Years of Corsets."

²⁶ Steele, 44.

²⁷ "Strouse, Adler Company Corset Factory, New Haven, New Haven County, Connecticut," National Register of Historic Places, Section 8, pages 5-8.

²⁸ United States Census, "Bulletins of the Twelfth Census of the United States: Manufactures -Connecticut," November 9, 1901, 2.

²⁹ United States Census, "Illinois," 15-16.

³⁰ Chicago Corset Company advertisement, *Daily Illinois State Register*, December 9, 1881; and Caellegh, "Too Close for Comfort: 500 Years of Corsets."

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Development of the Corset Industry in Aurora, Illinois

Illinois emerged as an important center of the American corset industry in the late nineteenth century. In 1900, there were 18 corset manufacturers in the state, and by 1920 there were 22, nearly all of which were located in Chicago or Aurora.³¹ According to Mary Clark Ormond, president of the Aurora Historical Society, “during the period of 1883 to 1952, millions of undergarments were created [in Aurora], thousands of women and girls were employed, and the local economy grew strong on profits.”³² Aurora’s three factories were: 1) the Chicago Corset Company (1883), 2) the Aurora Corset Factory (1895), and 3) the International Corset Company (1907; the subject property).

The Chicago Corset Company, founded in Chicago in circa 1880, opened a factory in Aurora in 1883 at the corner of State and Claim Streets that became its main plant (demolished). The company had been enticed to relocate as part of the city’s campaign in the 1880s to attract new industry to the area. By 1900, the large four-story brick building housed 700 employees who produced 4,000 corsets per day (more than a million annually). The company, known for its popular Ball and Kabo brands, called itself the second-largest corset manufacturer in the world.³³ Its name was changed to Kabo Corset Company and returned its operations to Chicago in 1906, and the building was converted into the Aurora Automatic Machinery Company (later Thor Power Tool).³⁴

Aurora Corset Company was founded in 1895. It moved into and later expanded a factory built in 1883 for the Aurora Watch Company on the southwest corner of Bluff and LaSalle streets (Adler & Sullivan, architects). During the 1900s, the company employed between 300 and 400 workers and continued to produce corsets until 1943, when the Formfit Company acquired the factory for the production of women’s underwear. Formfit remained in operation until 1959. After being individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1986, the building was destroyed by fire in 1989 and is today the site of Bluff Park.³⁵

The International Corset Company, 325 South Union Street, opened in 1907 as the third corset manufacturer in Aurora. In 1912, the company constructed a factory at South Union Street and North Avenue. Today, the Union Street factory remains the only extant manufacturing building associated with the corset industry in Aurora. Its history is discussed in more detail below.

Chicago Corset’s prodigious output, coupled with the arrival of two more corset companies in the following decades, led to the claim that Aurora was the “Corset Capitol of the World.”³⁶ The accuracy of this statement is unknown, but the claim itself illustrates that Aurora, and its manufacturers, were immensely proud of its contributions to the corset industry.

In 1920, there were 22 corset manufacturers in Illinois employing a total of 2,273 workers, 82 percent of whom were women. Seventeen of these manufacturers were located in Chicago, and two were located in Aurora. While there is a disparity in the number of establishments, Aurora’s two companies, Aurora Corset and International Corset, were substantial in size, employing nearly one quarter of the state’s entire corsetry workforce.³⁷

Corset factories in Illinois, including Aurora, began closing after World War II, as corset-less fashions rendered the undergarment obsolete. International Corset was the last to close in Aurora in 1953.

³¹ United States Census, “Illinois,” 15-16; and United States Census, “Fourteenth Census of the United States—Manufacturers: 1919 - Illinois,” 1922, 10, 16.

³² Ormond, “Kane County History: Corsets Doing Big Business in Aurora? Scandalous!”

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ “Aurora Watch Factory, Aurora, Kane County, Illinois,” National Register of Historic Places, May 8, 1986.

³⁶ Ormond, “Kane County History: Corsets Doing Big Business in Aurora? Scandalous!”

³⁷ United States Census, “Fourteenth Census of the United States—Manufacturers: 1919 - Illinois,” 1922, 10, 16; and “The Situation in the Steel Mills,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 17, 1918.

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History of the International Corset Company

The International Corset Company was founded in 1907 by Charles H. Schopbach, who immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1881. Schopbach settled in Chicago, where he began his career at the Chicago Corset Company, a national corset manufacturer. In 1883, he was transferred to the company's newly erected manufacturing facility in Aurora, where he remained for 24 years.³⁸ Following Chicago Corset's departure from Aurora in 1906, Schopbach decided to remain and establish his own corset factory, the International Corset Company, in 1907. The company began production in a small shop on the third floor of the Chapman Block, 136 Fox Street (extant; now 220 E. Downer Place). From its earliest days, the company grew rapidly to become an important manufacturer both in Aurora and in the corset industry nationally.

Schopbach's company was founded during a time of transition in the world of women's undergarments. Rigid corsetry was giving way to more forgiving models, and in response International Corset developed "La Camille," a front-lacing corset designed for comfort. Most corsets had lacing in back, which the company contended would dig into the spine. The La Camille, which became the company's main patented brand, was introduced as a high-grade and comfortable product to be sold across the country. As early as August 1907, advertisements were published in cities and towns across the Midwest, and as far as San Francisco, to recruit local dry goods stores and dressmakers to sell "the celebrated La Camille."³⁹ Special patented innovations, including the "The Ventilator," a built-in ventilation feature, combined with a nationwide advertising campaign, earned International's corsets national acclaim.⁴⁰

As the La Camille brand gained popularity, the company planned for future growth and expansion. In 1912, Schopbach commissioned the noted Aurora architectural firm of Worst & Shepardson to design a three-story plus basement brick factory.⁴¹ The 1912 factory block's design allowed for future expansion, namely the irregular north and south ends formed by flanking stair towers, which established connection points for additions.

In 1915, Schopbach established a corsetry school that was attended by corsetieres from around the country as well as Aurora women interested in entering the profession. The International School of Scientific Corsetry offered "corset fitting, stock keeping, advertising, salesmanship, and medical corsetry which was taught by a woman physician."⁴² School advertisements encouraged locals to enroll, describing the corsetry field as "far more remunerative and interesting than stenography or bookkeeping, and it is uncrowded."⁴³

The Corset and Underwear Review, a national trade journal, described International Corset's building as "a modern three-story factory that represented the highest development in up-to-date equipment and construction that stands today among the largest in turning out productive capacity, particularly of high grade corsets."⁴⁴ Nevertheless, five years after its completion the factory proved too small for the company's needs. In 1917, it doubled in size with the addition of a three-story plus basement north addition along North Avenue and a smaller single-story plus basement south addition, both designed by Aurora architect Eugene Malmer.⁴⁵ Renderings of the plant published between 1917 and the 1930s show the south addition with two additional stories, which were never built. Similarly, the west wall of the south addition was built of parged clay tile block, which suggests that a westward expansion may have been planned. A small two-car brick garage was built on the western edge of the property around the same time as the additions. By 1918, the company had 200 employees.⁴⁶

³⁸ "International Corset Plant Built in 1912," *Aurora Beacon News*, September 5, 1937: 28.

³⁹ Advertisement, *Chicago Tribune*, September 8, 1907: 65; advertisement, *The Marion Star* (Marion, Ohio), September 3, 1907: 9; advertisement, *The Elwood Daily Record* (Elwood, Indiana), October 26, 1907: 2.

⁴⁰ "Chas. H. Schopbach Celebrates His Thirty-Fifth Anniversary in the Corset Business," *The Corset and Underwear Review*, January 1917: 64; advertisement, *The Corset and Underwear Review*, March 1918: 33.

⁴¹ *The Construction News*, March 16, 1912: 21.

⁴² "International Corset Company" advertisement, *Aurora Beacon News*, September 15, 1946.

⁴³ "International Corset Company" advertisement, *Aurora Beacon News*, April 17, 1921.

⁴⁴ "Chas. H. Schopbach Celebrates His Thirty-Fifth Anniversary in the Corset Business," *The Corset and Underwear Review* January 1917: 64.

⁴⁵ "Aurora, ILL.," *American Contractor*, December 16, 1916: 56.

⁴⁶ "The Situation in the Steel Mills," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 17, 1918.

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International Corset remained a significant manufacturer in the corset industry following World War I even as new and more relaxed women's foundation garments, such as girdles and elastic brassieres, rose in popularity. To remain competitive, International Corset improved on their main product and created a wide range of sizes. After the war, the company lightened the weight and tension of the front lacing on their flagship *La Camille* brand.⁴⁷ In addition, it developed the "Magic Darts" feature, which replaced firm boning. In 1919, it opened a "style salon" on Fifth Avenue in New York, "the fashion center of the country," to increase its presence in the high-end market.⁴⁸ The company also advertised regularly in *Vogue*, one of America's premier fashion magazines.

During the 1930s, as corsets declined in popularity, International Corset introduced the *La Senorita* brand in 1931 and later the *NuControl* brand. These products continued to offer comfort and support instead of rigid shaping and were sold in a wide range of sizes. Schopbach died in 1943. His obituary in the *Chicago Tribune* described him as "a pioneer in the manufacture of women's foundation garments."⁴⁹

After World War II, International Corset Company continued to manufacture its lines of corsets until the early 1950s. Around 1953, Aurora-based printer and toy manufacturer The Strathmore Company acquired the International Corset factory building on Union Street, where it manufactured its "Magic Slate" product and printed children's books. At its closing, International Corset was the last corset manufacturer in Aurora, concluding over half a century of the city's legacy as one of the primary corset producers in the United States.

Architects

Architects Worst & Shepardson

The Aurora, Illinois, architecture firm of Worst and Shepardson was founded by Fred W. Worst (1873-1917) and Ralph Steele Shepardson (1873-1919).⁵⁰ Worst graduated from East Aurora High School in 1887, then joined with architect J.E. Minott in Aurora in 1895. Shepardson was born in DeKalb, Illinois in 1873, studied at the University of Illinois, and worked as a draftsman in Chicago. He joined Worst to form Worst and Shepardson in 1904. The firm designed many commercial, institutional, and residential works in Aurora, including the original section of the International Corset Company Building in 1912. The firm designed an addition to the Aurora Watch Factory, which was first designed by the firm of Adler and Sullivan in 1893; the factory was occupied beginning in 1895 by the Aurora Corset Company and was destroyed by fire in 1989. In 1916, the firm designed a large addition to Copley Hospital in Aurora. Their other work included Prairie-style residences in Aurora. Worst was killed in an automobile accident in December 1917 and the firm was dissolved.⁵¹ Shepardson left the field of architecture and before his death moved to Beaufort, North Carolina where he reacquired himself with farming and became the assistant manager of Potter Farms.⁵²

Architect Eugene Malmer (1873-1943)

Architect Eugene Malmer was born in Aurora and graduated from East Aurora High School, the Armour Institute (Illinois of Technology), and the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1894, he entered the architectural firm of his professor William A. Otis and advanced to the position of head draftsman. After obtaining his architects license, Malmer moved to Aurora in 1903 to oversee the construction of Carnegie library (non-extant). Malmer remained in Aurora and designed commercial and residential buildings. In 1917, he designed the north and south additions to the International Corset Company Building.

⁴⁷ "International Corset Plant Built in 1912."

⁴⁸ "La Camille Style Studio—International Corset Co. Plan to Open Distinctive Corset Style Salon on Fifth Avenue," *The Corset and Underwear Review*, April 1919: 66.

⁴⁹ "Charles H. Schopbach," *Chicago Tribune*, August 25, 1943.

⁵⁰ City of Aurora, "Architects Worst & Shepardson," Historic Aurora. Published online at: <https://www.aurora-il.org/664/Architects-Worst-Shepardson>. Accessed August 15, 2018.

⁵¹ "Slain Architect Was Well Known in DeKalb," *The Daily Chronicle*, DeKalb, Illinois, December 7, 1917.

⁵² "United States World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918." Database with images. *FamilySearch*. <http://FamilySearch.org>: August 5, 2019. Citing NARA microfilm publication M1509. Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.

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Additional examples include the Hotel Arthur (1905, 2-4 North Broadway, Aurora, Illinois, NR# 04001300), the Sherer Building (1910, 9-15 West Downer Place, Aurora, Illinois, extant), and the Geneva City Hall (1912, 22 South First Street, Geneva, Illinois, extant).

Conclusion

The International Corset Company building at 325 S. Union Street is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Industry because it embodies Aurora's history of industry, which was central to its growth and prosperity, and is the last remaining factory associated with the city's corset industry of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From the 1880s through World War II, Aurora was an important center of corset manufacturing at a time when corsets were a key component of women's wardrobes. Referred to as the "Corset Capitol of the World," Aurora's corset manufacturers supplied millions of corsets to the national market over a half-century in business. International Corset was known throughout the United States as a producer of well-made corsets designed for a variety of figures. As tastes and technologies changed, the company kept pace, developing new designs and features that distinguished it from the competition. In addition, it was an important employer of women in Aurora during a time when few employment options were available to them. For these reasons, the International Corset Company building is eligible for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

International Corset Company Building

Name of Property

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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_____. “Report on the Manufactures of the United States at the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880) – Table V. Selected Statistics of Manufactures, by Counties, in Each State and Territory: 1880.”

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

International Corset Company Building
Name of Property

Kane Co., Illinois
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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>41.749056°</u> Latitude	<u>-88.302258°</u> Longitude	3	_____ Latitude	_____ Longitude
2	_____ Latitude	_____ Longitude	4	_____ Latitude	_____ Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The International Corset Company Building sits on an L-shaped parcel bounded by North Avenue to the north, South Union Street to the east, 4th Avenue to the south, and legal parcel lines to the west.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundary encompasses the building and the land parcel historically associated with the International Corset Company during the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Noel Weidner, Gabrielle Begue, Rachel Barnhart date 08/2024
organization Ryan, LLC telephone 708-556-3264
street & number 227 W. Monroe St., Suite 4200 email Noel.weidner@ryan.com
city or town Chicago state Illinois zip code 60606

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Site Plan**
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**
- **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

International Corset Company Building
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Kane Co., Illinois
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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: International Corset Company Building
City or Vicinity: Aurora
County: Kane **State:** Illinois
Photographer: Noel Weidner, Ryan LLC
Date Photographed: July 2024

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- Photo 1 of 19:** North and east elevation, 1917 north addition, facing southwest
- Photo 2 of 19:** North elevation, 1917 north addition, facing southeast
- Photo 3 of 19:** East elevation, 1917 south addition (left) and 1912 block (middle), facing northwest
- Photo 4 of 19:** East elevation, 1912 block, facing northwest
- Photo 5 of 19:** East elevation, main entrance of 1912 block, facing southwest
- Photo 6 of 19:** South and east elevations, 1917 south addition (middle) and 1912 block (right), facing northwest
- Photo 7 of 19:** South and West elevations, north 1917 addition (left) and 1912 block (right) facing northeast
- Photo 8 of 19:** Basement, 1912 block, facing northeast
- Photo 9 of 19:** Basement, north 1917 addition, facing northwest
- Photo 10 of 19:** 1st Floor, 1912 block, facing southeast
- Photo 11 of 19:** 1st Floor, north stair and entrance in 1912 block, facing southeast
- Photo 12 of 19:** 2nd Floor, north stair in 1912 block, facing southwest
- Photo 13 of 19:** 2nd floor, 1912 block, facing northwest
- Photo 14 of 19:** 2nd floor, 1912 block, facing south
- Photo 15 of 19:** 2nd floor, north 1917 addition, facing west
- Photo 16 of 19:** 3rd floor, north 1917 addition, facing west
- Photo 17 of 19:** 3rd floor, 1912 block, facing north
- Photo 18 of 19:** 3rd floor, 1912 block, facing north
- Photo 19 of 19:** Garage, facing southwest

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Property name: International Corset Company Building
Illinois, County: Kane

List of Figures

(Resize, compact, and paste images of maps and historic documents in this section. Place captions, with figure numbers above each image. Orient maps so that north is at the top of the page, all document should be inserted with the top toward the top of the page.

Figure 1. GIS Location Map with National Register Boundary, 2024.

Figure 2. Context Map, 2024.

Figure 3. Site Map with contributing resources, 2024.

Figure 4. Chronology Map, 2024.

Figure 5. Exterior Photo Key, 2024.

Figure 6. Current Basement Plan with Photo Key, 2024.

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Figure 8. Current Second Floor Plan with Photo Key, 2024.

Figure 9. Current Third Floor Plan with Photo Key, 2024.

Figure 10. International Corset Company Building, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, June 1907, Volume 1, Sheet 64.

Figure 11. International Corset Company Building, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1958, Volume 1, Sheet 64.

Figure 12. Charles S. Battle, *Centennial Biographical and Historical Record of Aurora for One Hundred Years, 1834-1937* (Illinois, 1937), 96.

Figure 13. Advertisement, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 7, 1914: 11.

Figure 14. Advertisement, *Vogue*, Vol. 42, Iss. 5 (Sep 1, 1913): 102.

Figure 15. Advertisement, *Vogue*, Vol. 70 Iss. 8 (Oct 15, 1927): 178.

Figure 16. A graduating class of International Corset Company's International School of Scientific Corsetry. *The Corset and Underwear Review*, October 1920.

Property name: International Corset Company Building
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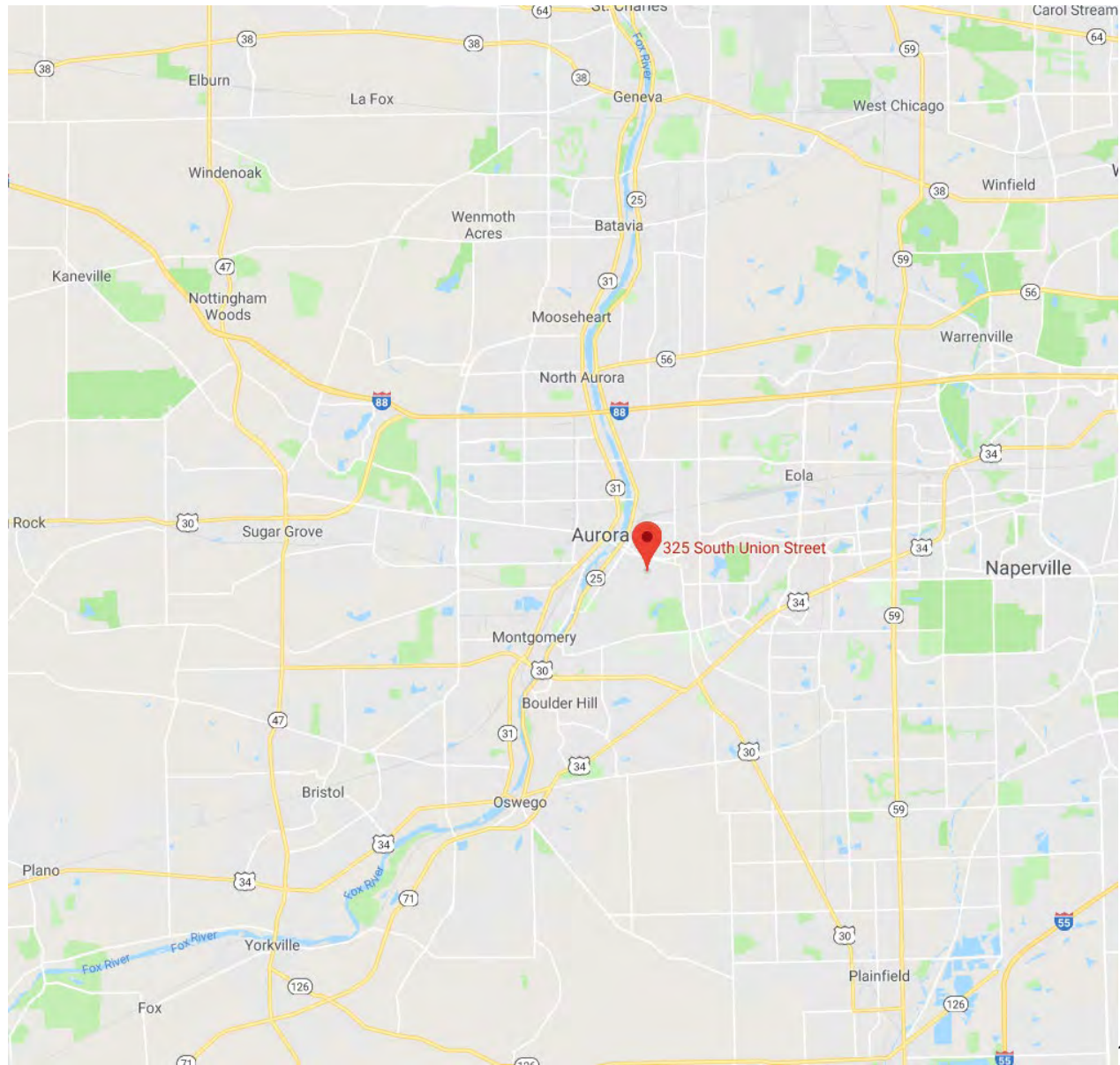
Figure 1. International Corset Company Building, GIS Location Map with National Register Boundary, 2024. Source: Google Earth, 2024.

International Corset Company Building
325 S. Union Street, Kane County, IL
41.749056°, -88.302258°



Property name: International Corset Company Building
Illinois, County: Kane

Figure 2. International Corset Company Building, Context Map, 2024. Source: Google Maps, 2024.



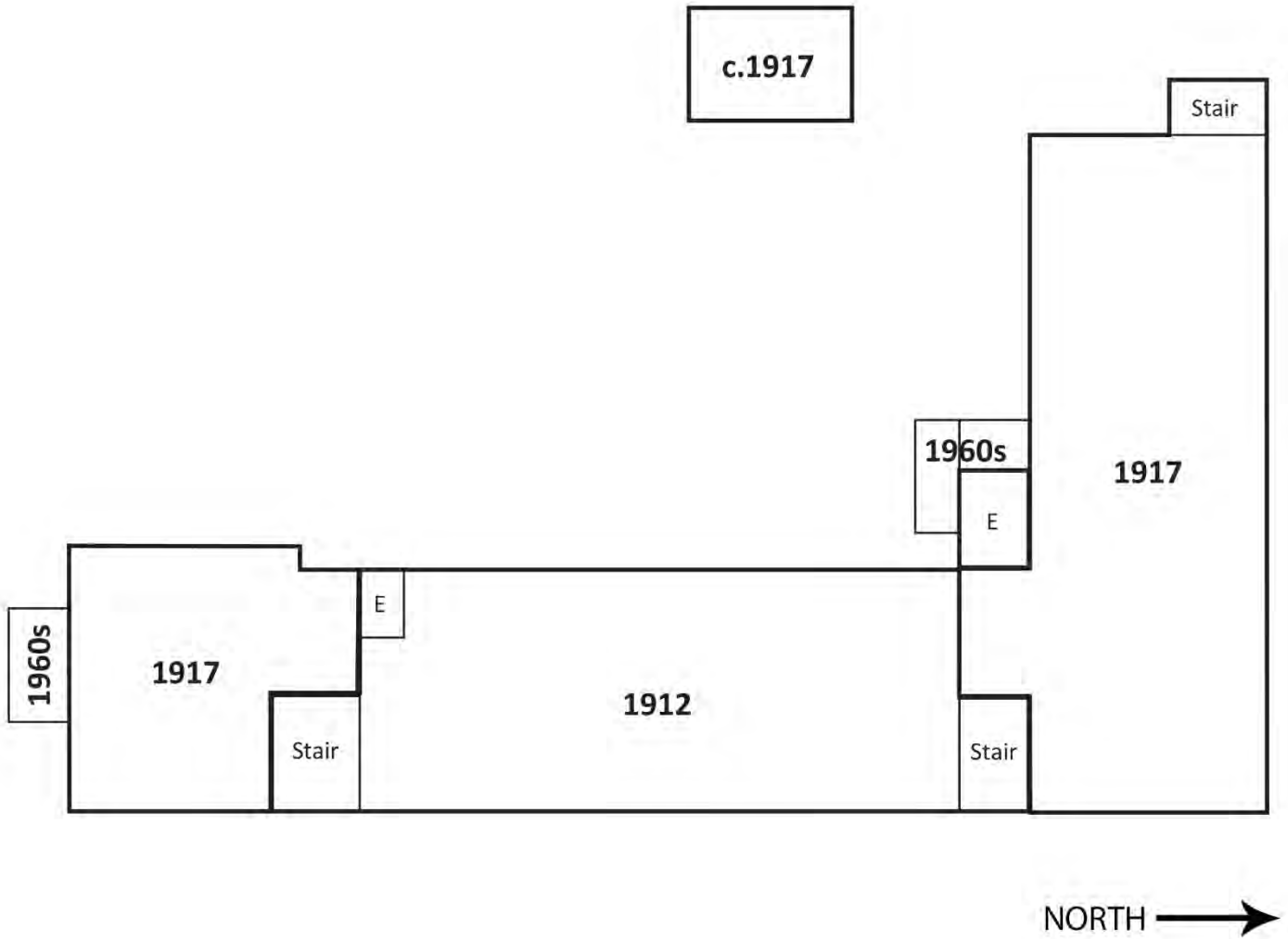
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Figure 3. International Corset Company Building, Site Map with contributing resources and National Register boundary, 2024. Source: Google Earth, 2024.



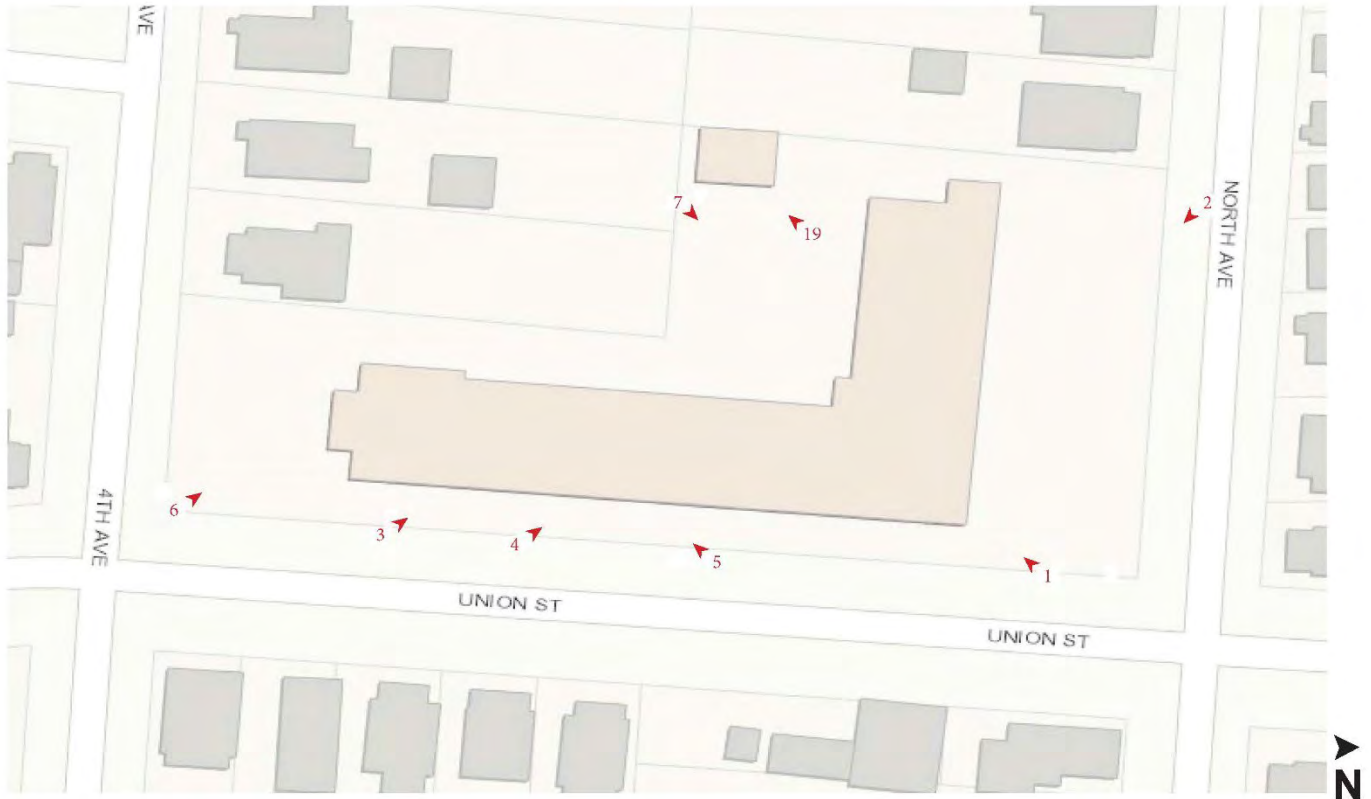
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Figure 4. International Corset Company Building, Chronology Map, 2024. Source: Ryan LLC, 2024.



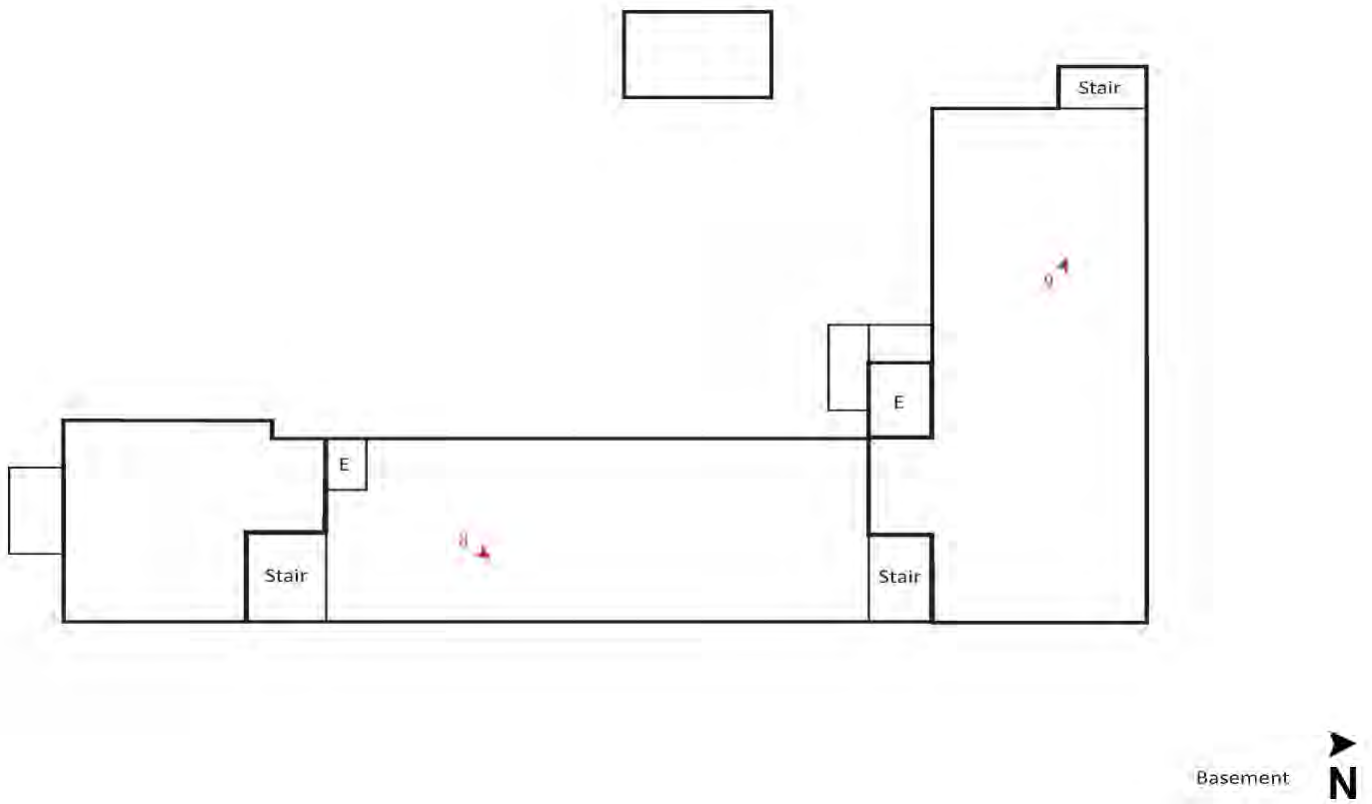
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Illinois, County: Kane

Figure 5. International Corset Company Building, Exterior Photo Key, 2024. Source: Ryan LLC, 2024.



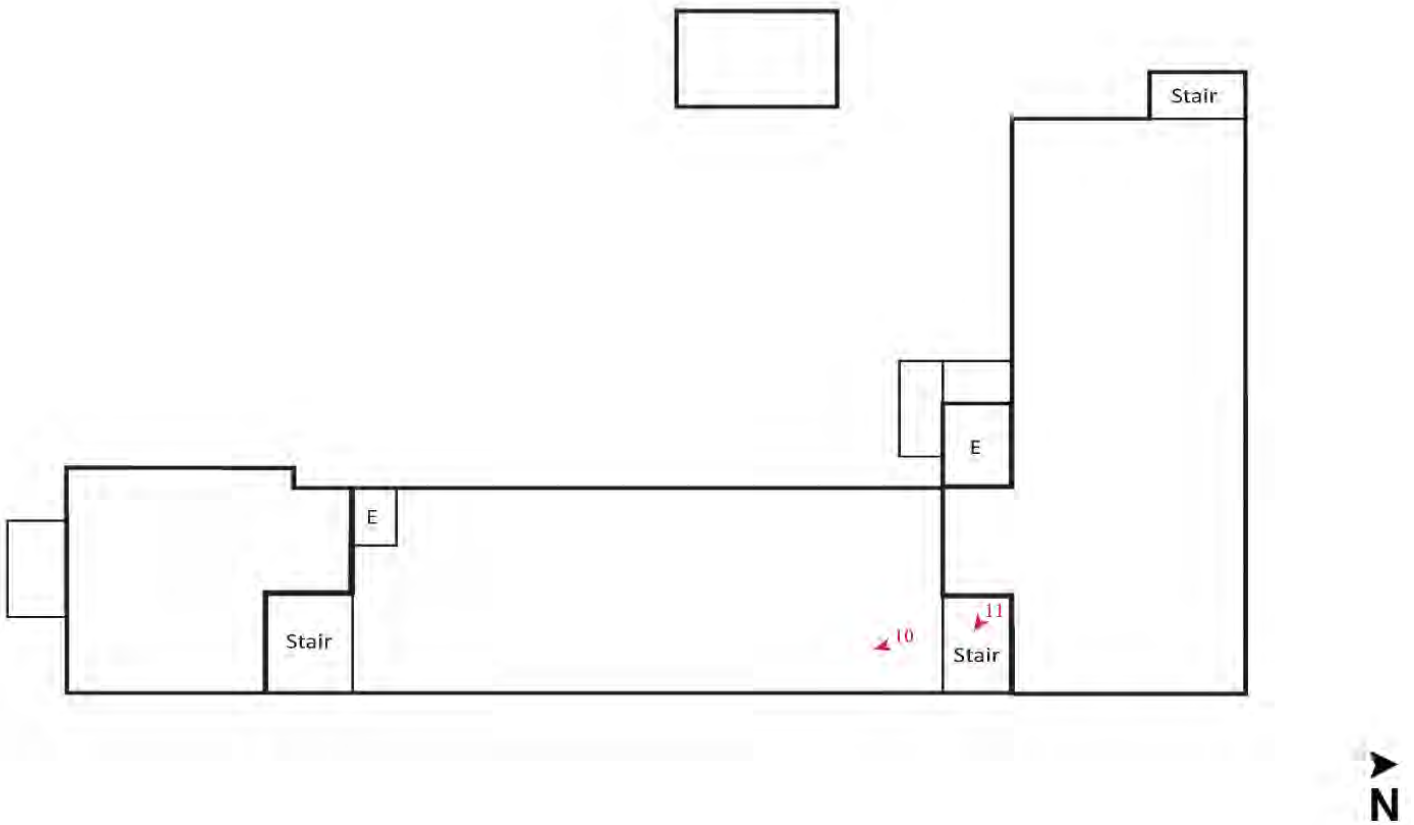
Property name: International Corset Company Building
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Figure 6. Current Basement Plan with Photo Key, 2024. Source: Ryan LLC, 2024.



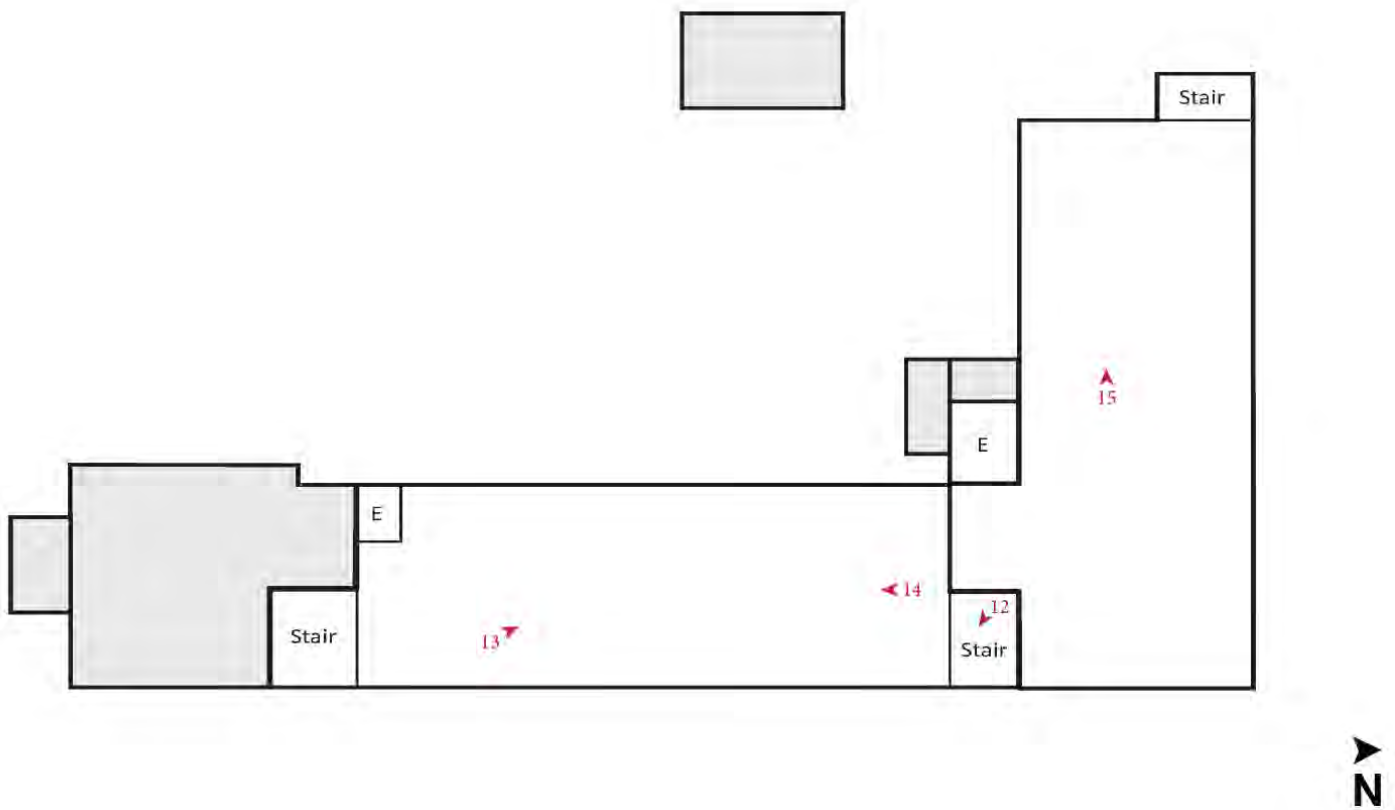
Property name: International Corset Company Building
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Figure 7. Current First Floor Plan with Photo Key, 2024. Source: Ryan LLC, 2024.



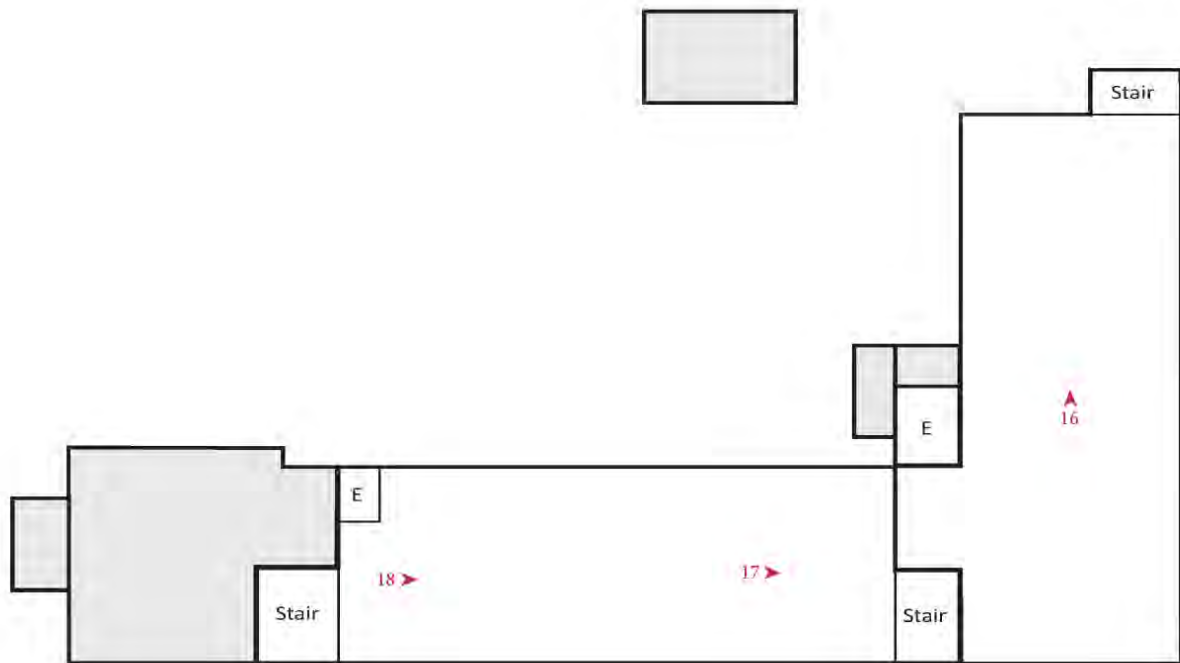
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Figure 8. Current Second Floor Plan with Photo Key, 2024. Source: Ryan LLC, 2024.



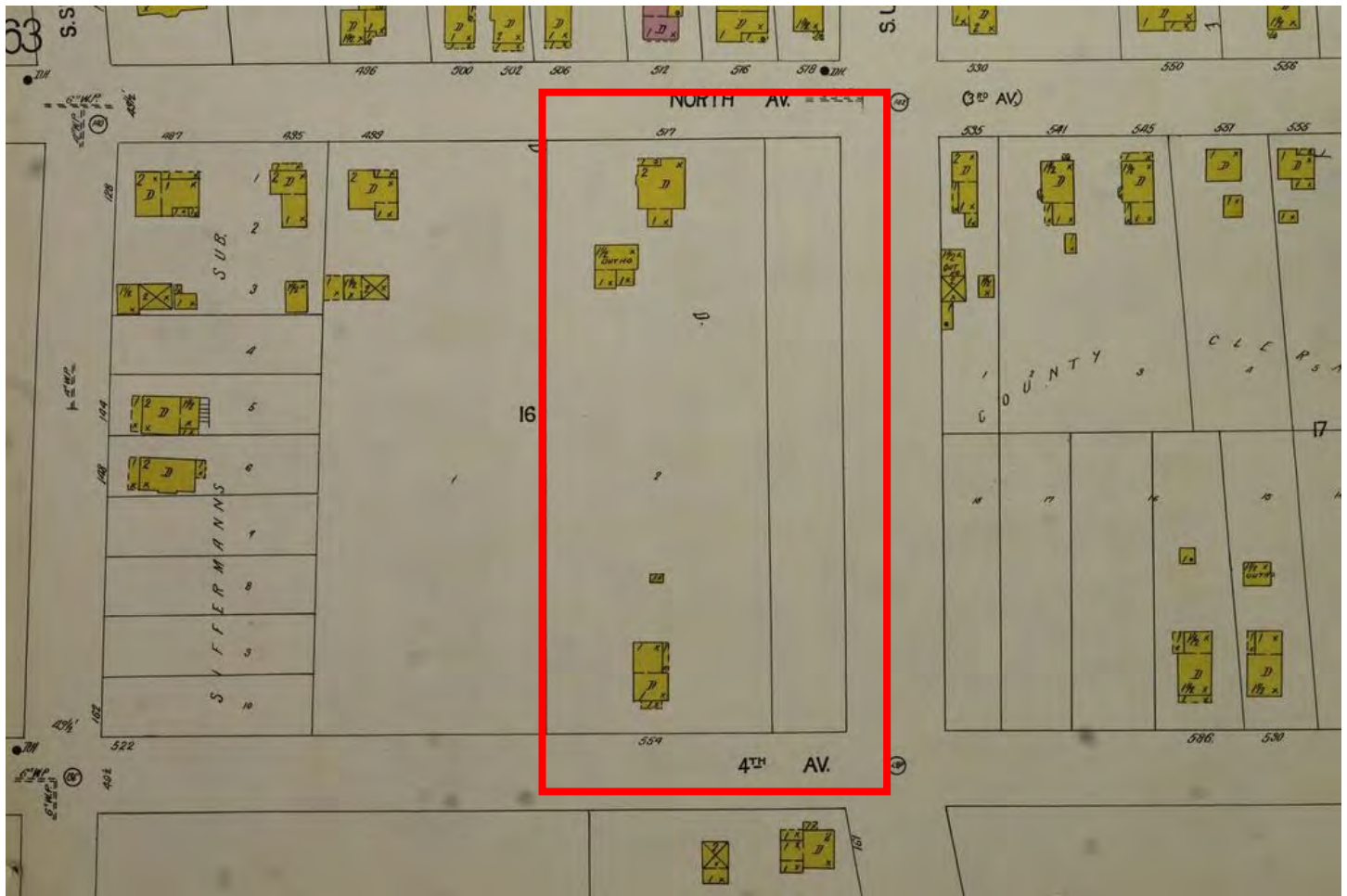
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Illinois, County: Kane

Figure 9. Current Third Floor Plan with Photo Key, 2024. Source: Ryan LLC, 2024.



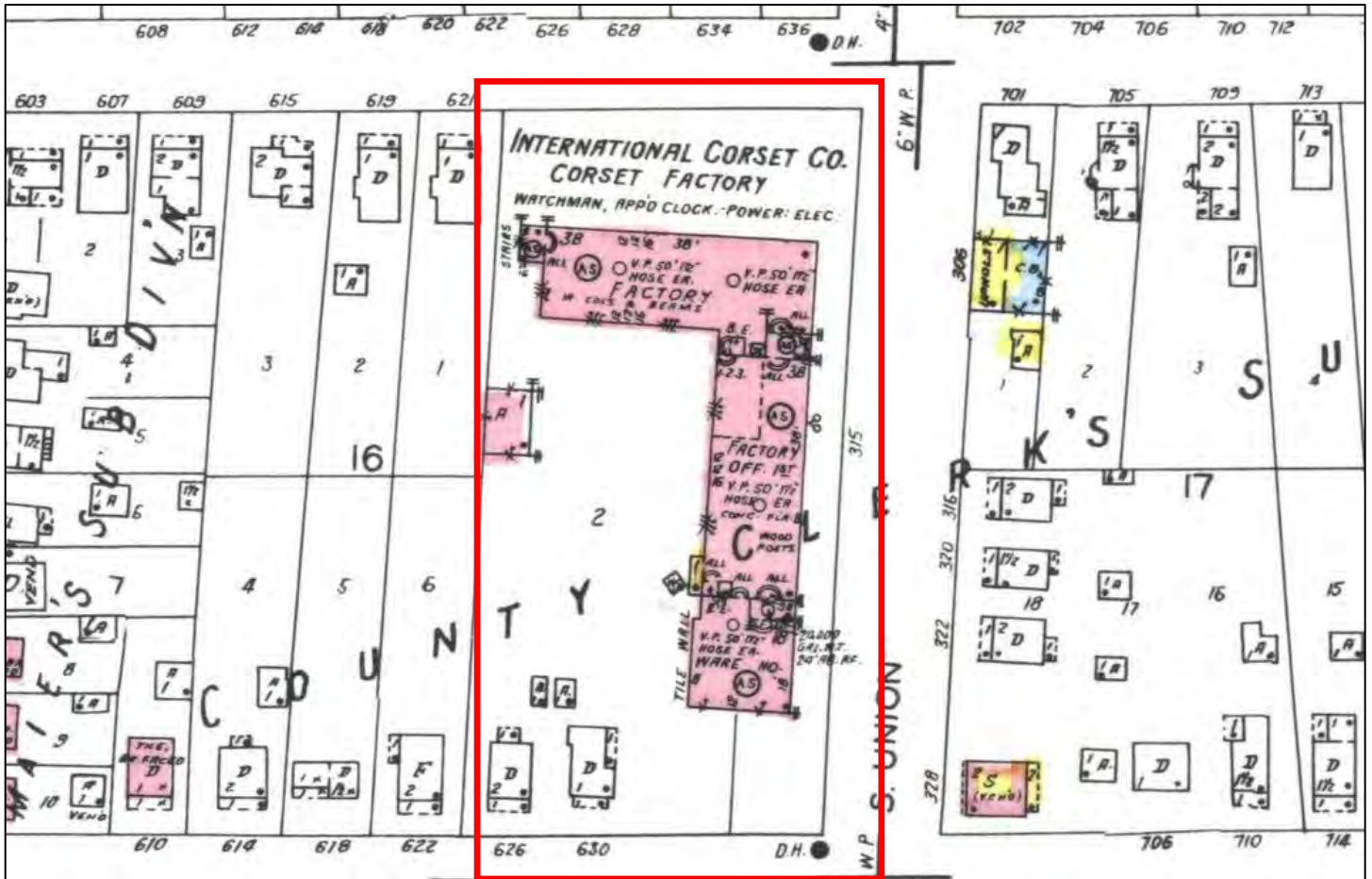
Property name: International Corset Company Building
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Figure 10. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, June 1907, Volume 1, Sheet 64. Source: Library of Congress



Property name: International Corset Company Building
Illinois, County: Kane

Figure 11. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1958, Volume 1, Sheet 64. Source: Library of Congress.



Property name: International Corset Company Building
Illinois, County: Kane

Figure 12. Charles S. Battle, *Centennial Biographical and Historical Record of Aurora for One Hundred Years, 1834-1937* (Illinois, 1937), 96.

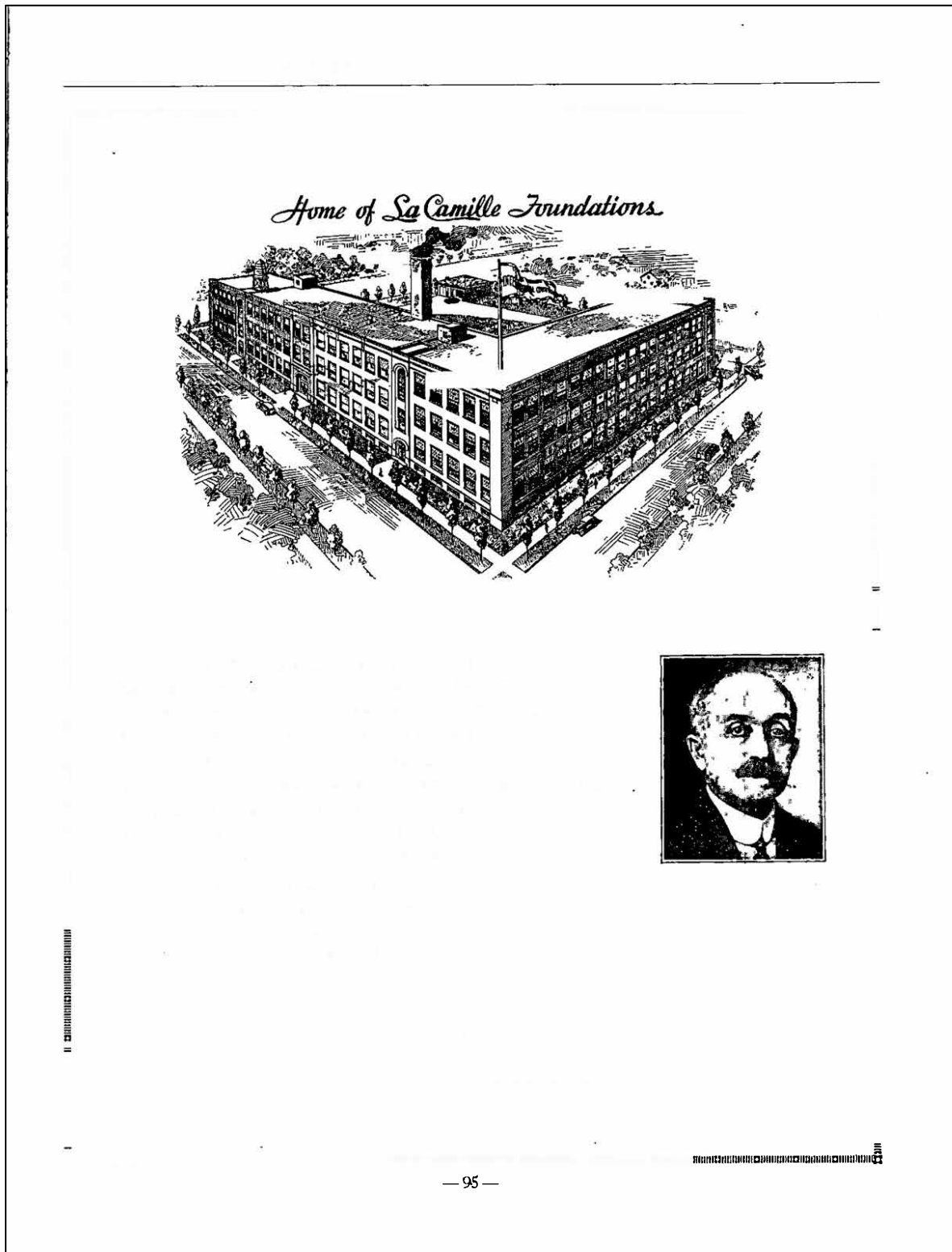


Figure 13. Advertisement, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 7, 1914: 11.

Display Ad 9 -- No Title

Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922); Oct 7, 1914; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune
pg. 11

You Know Your Own Figure



If your hips and limbs are large, the corset illustrated here is for YOU. It will improve your figure very much—and with comfort to you.

"La Camille"

is a front lace corset with the *Ventilo* back. That back is wonderful—always rigid—always provides a circulation of air.

This particular corset has elastic gores in hips and bottom of back to restrain superfluous flesh and confine form to attractive proportions. Abdomen is doubly supported by the addition of an elastic band across front.

Medium low bust—long skirt—eight hose supporters. Material is strong coutil.

This model sells at \$7.50. We have hundreds of other models, from \$2 to \$40. Every figure can be taken care of, with both style and comfort.

Your favorite dealer should be selling "La Camille." If not, ask us for catalogue and full information. No other corset will give you such style and comfort.

INTERNATIONAL CORSET CO.

117-127 Union St., Aurora, Illinois

Figure 14. Advertisement, *Vogue*, Vol. 42, Iss. 5 (Sep 1, 1913): 102.

102



All Well Dressed Women Should See Our New Belt-Top Corset

It is one of the latest style models in that ever-progressive fashionable family of

La Camille

*The front lace corset with the
"Ventilo" back*

The belt top extends just the least bit above the waist line, allowing free expression of the truly uncorseted figure above that point. Elastic gores take care of the shoulder blades and prevent any "rolling over" of flesh.

Below the waist, the figure is amply protected, while the free hip and flat back effects are given. Fleeshy figures are reduced—your best lines are brought out—the poor ones repressed.

At all times there is full comfort—at all times free movement is permitted in every direction. This is true of all models of the "La Camille."

Our exclusive "Ventilo" back eliminates pressure on the spine and the delicate nerves and blood vessels which surround it. The rigidity of the corset is preserved. A better circulation of air is obtained. The "Ventilo" front shield prevents lacers from marking the flesh—allows a better adjustment.

Your best dealer probably handles the "La Camille." If not, write us for sample, giving correct measure. Corset will be sent through the dealer you designate. Catalogue if you ask.

Prices, \$3.50 to \$25.00.

International Corset Co.

129 to 139 So. Union St., Aurora, Ill.



Section showing "Ventilo" feature
in back of corset

Figure 15. Advertisement, *Vogue*, Vol. 70 Iss. 8 (Oct 15, 1927): 178.



The International
 "NAMELESS"
 PATENTED TRADE MARK REG.

APPEALINGLY light and dainty—bringing to the figure straight smoothness yet leaving the hint of feminine lines, with their charm and loveliness. Magic-working darts—exclusive and patented features of this garment—completely replace boning and tight lacing. You have smart style without stiffness—fashion without firmness. Know comfort of the International "NAMELESS" for yourself by trying it on at your corsetières.

Under-belt garment illustrated
 No. 7247-S—\$12.00
 Same style in other beautiful materials \$5.00 and up.

International Corset Company
 276 Fifth Ave. New York City
 SALES AND DISPLAY ROOM
 Aurora, Illinois.
 MAIN OFFICE AND FACTORY

THE DIAMOND IN LEGEND

GEMS have always fascinated man, their brilliancy and colour awakening in him such longing and admiration that, for their possession, no act has been too horrible, no sacrifice too great. And the diamond, the most highly prized of the precious stones, has left a trail through history of continual bloodshed and of constant delight, both inspired by its frozen flame. Although always of great value, the king of the gems at certain periods has been superseded in public favour by other jewels. At the present time, however, the rivals are retreating from the field and the diamond is beginning to reign again in the world of fashion. It is interesting to see how its beauty has quickened the imagination of man in the past and to find out how man has striven to explain its qualities and its charm.

The origin of diamonds is still a matter of some dispute to the scientist. That it is a form of carbon is conceded. To the mind of the man living in India, hundreds of years ago, the answer to the question as to how the diamond came to the earth was beautifully clear. One day, the God of the Mines ordered his workers to bring him specimens of all the known gems. He took the ruby, the opal, the turquoise, the topaz, the sapphire, the emerald, stones of every degree of light, and crushed them together. From them, he made the peer of gems—clear white as the rock crystal, but containing within itself the essential fire of each stone—and ever since then the diamond flashes forth the red, the green, the blue, of its elements. In another Indian legend, it is Krishna, the highest deity who has given the diamond to man as a gift. The diamond in these stories is considered a favour of the Gods. The Persians, however, did not regard it as a blessing. In fact, they attributed it to the Devil, for they observed that the passions of covetousness and ostentation were often incited by sparkling gems. When Eve was in the Garden of Eden, the Evil One noticed how the many-hued flowers held her eye. The glowing shades captivated her; she could not remain away from the resplendent blossoms for any length of time. Satan, therefore, made the gems, the diamond and the others, in imitation of the flowers. So carefully and accurately did he steal their gleaming colours that all the successive generations of Eves were enchanted. In this way, a most successful snare was foisted upon mankind by the Prince of Darkness. The early Renaissance, seeking the truth of things in a more scientific spirit, rejected such ideas. The diamond, to them, was a natural phenomenon coming into existence from gold and the sun—exactly how was not known, but many ingenious hypotheses were advanced.

HOW MAN OBTAINED THE DIAMOND

When the problem of the origin of the diamond was satisfactorily settled—it had been either formed by a God or it had fallen down from the sun—it was still necessary to explain how man, with his bare hands, obtained such fabulous wealth from the earth. One remarkable tradition, in one form or another, persisted in the popular lore. In an early account, supposedly written by Aristotle, there is an interesting variation of the theme. Alexander, according to this word, was the first to mine diamonds. In the land of Hind, there was a deep valley upon the bottom of which crept loathsome, venomous serpents—so terrible in their aspect that whoever looked upon them dropped dead. Now this valley was also most extraordinary in that it was thickly strewn with diamonds. Alexander, unlike many people who had been there before him, carefully thought over the hindrances in his way and conceived a plan. He had his followers carry a huge mirror to the rim of the valley: the serpents looked at themselves and died. But Alexander could not get the diamonds, for no one would venture into the depths below. Finally, after a consultation with a wise man, pieces of raw meat were thrown into the valley. Birds of prey swooped down and carried off the meat to which a vast number of diamonds adhered. The birds were then chased away, and the stones gathered.

SINBAD AND THE DIAMOND

Another version, more popular, perhaps, is in "Sinbad the Sailor," one of the most thrilling stories in the "Arabian Nights' Entertainment." Sinbad, at one time, found himself in the valley of diamonds, utterly cut off from the world. He observed that merchants threw quantities of meat into the valley and that, each time, birds flew away with them. By holding on to a piece of meat, later borne away by a huge bird, he effected his escape. The fundamental tale arose probably from the Hindu custom of sacrificing to the God of the Mines whenever a new mine was opened. The meat was left there after the ceremony and was almost immediately eaten by the vultures. Sometimes, a diamond might have been found sticking to the meat that one of the birds dropped. The prevalence of these stories indicates that the belief in such a method was current for many years. Knowledge of the actual operation of a diamond mine did not become widespread in Europe until the seventeenth century, when the Indian mines were described by travelers.

Before the legends clustering about the properties of the diamond are considered, it is essential that we understand what significance a precious stone had for the man of former times. We now think of gems as ornaments, something to set off the beauty of a woman—rubies against raven hair, emeralds on white fingers. But, until two hundred years ago, a jewel was thought of in a different light. It was somehow animate, and it possessed great influence in shaping the fate of its wearer. Therefore, it was not worn merely as an ornament, but as an aid in one's undertakings.

THE SPIRIT IN GEMS

A typical illustration of this sentiment can be found in an early seventeenth-century book on precious stones, by Anselmus de Boot. He speaks of the spirits in gems. God spread His Works by having good angels enter into the stones to guard men from dangers and procure for them special grace. Sometimes, however, the spirit of evil made himself into a spirit of light, and then men placed their trust in his magic—rather than in God, the source of all good. Such conceptions of the animate quality of gems have not completely died out in our modern age. People still believe in the efficacy of natal stones; they still think that pearls become sickly and lustreless and that they can not be restored to their former beauty unless they are worn by a healthy, simple girl.

Since gems were alive, they had, of course, many of the qualities of people. There were, therefore, male and female diamonds. Jean de Mandeville, that delightful liar of the Middle Ages, gives a graphic account of the sex of diamonds.

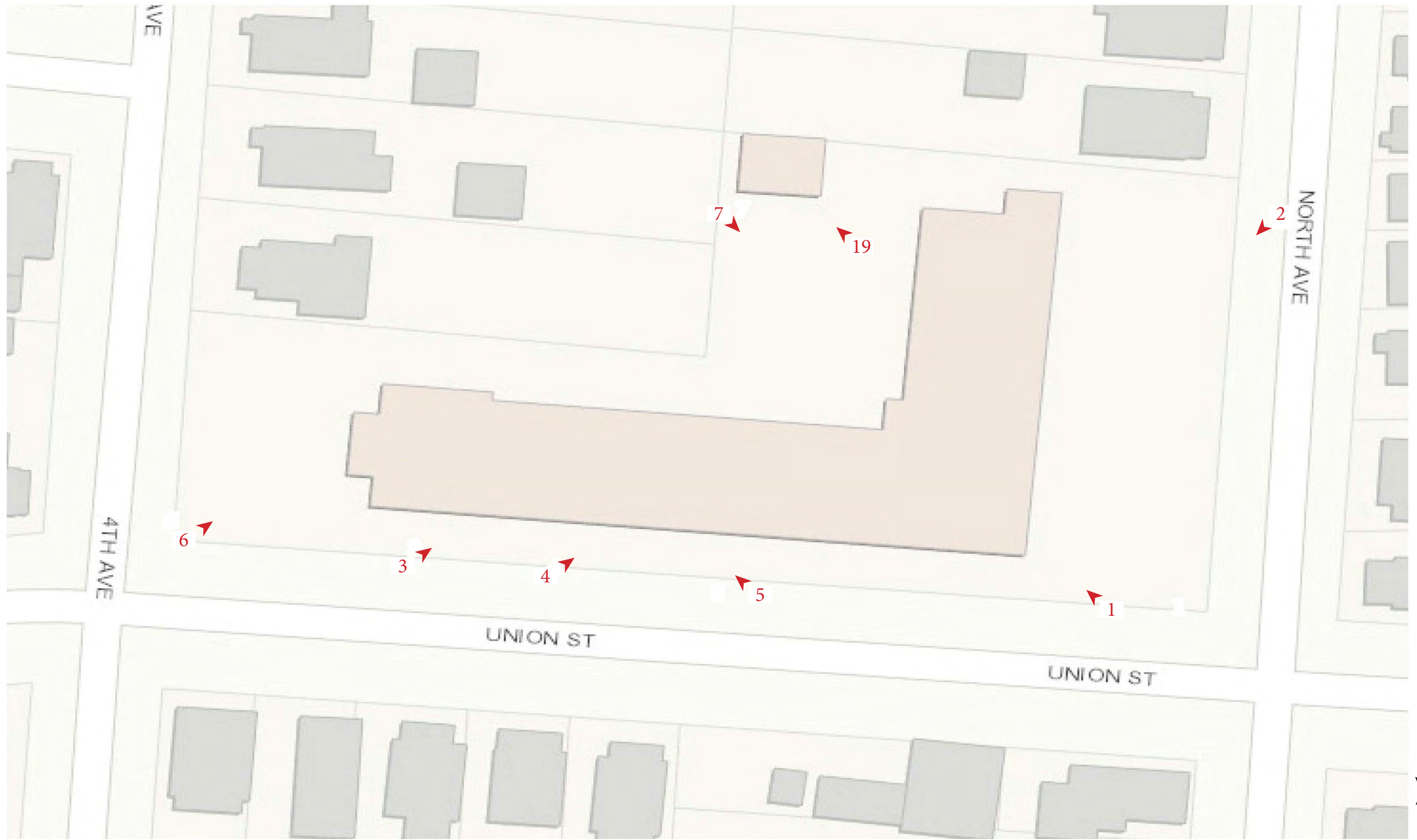
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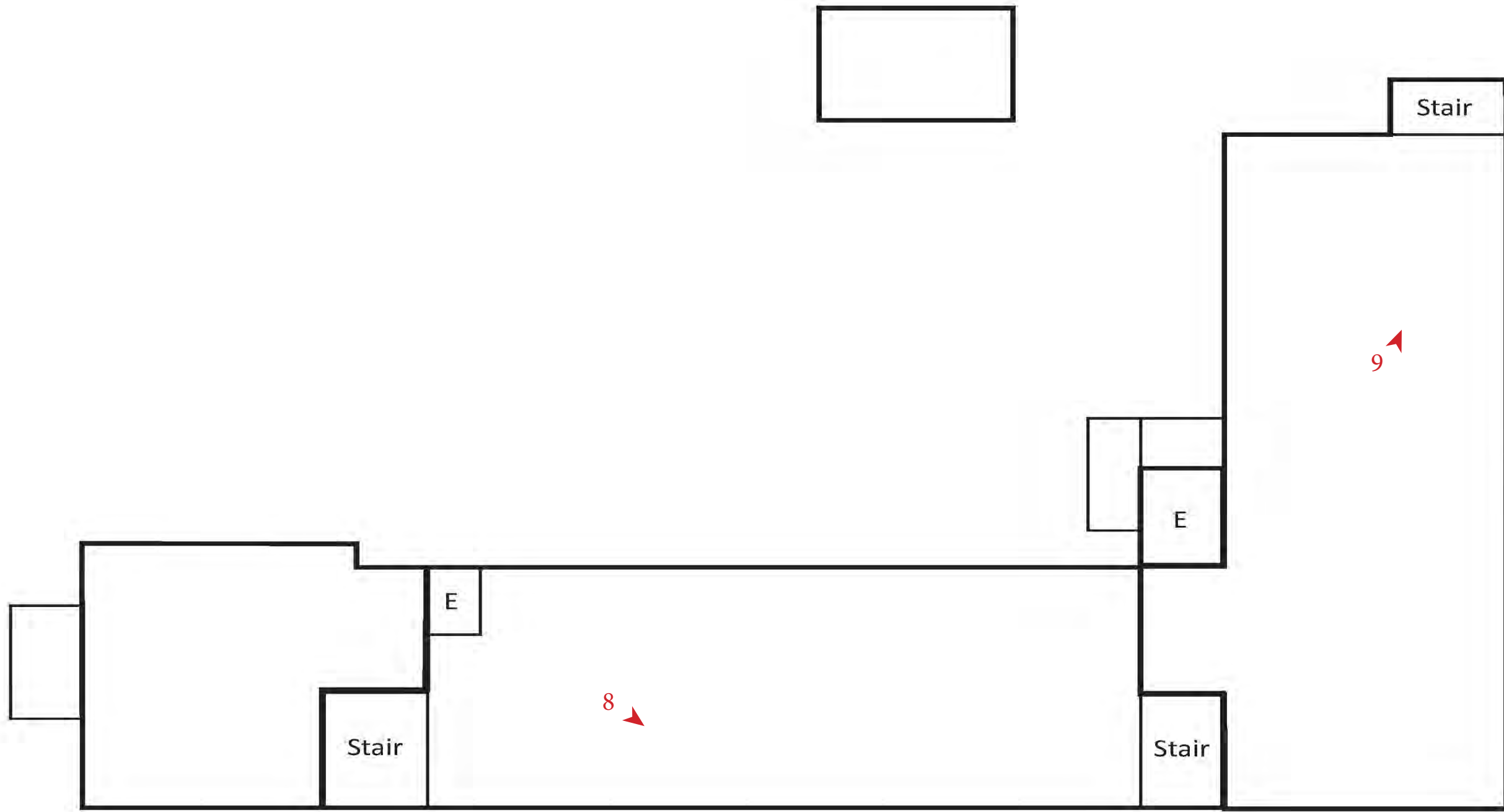
Property name: International Corset Company Building
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Figure 16. A graduating class of International Corset Company's International School of Scientific Corsetry. *The Corset and Underwear Review*, October 1920.



One of the recent graduating classes of the International School of Scientific Corsetry, conducted by the International Corset Co., of Aurora. The last session of the school, held in Aurora, was the most successful in the history of the I. S. S. C. and clearly indicated a growing appreciation of the usefulness of the work which is being accomplished.



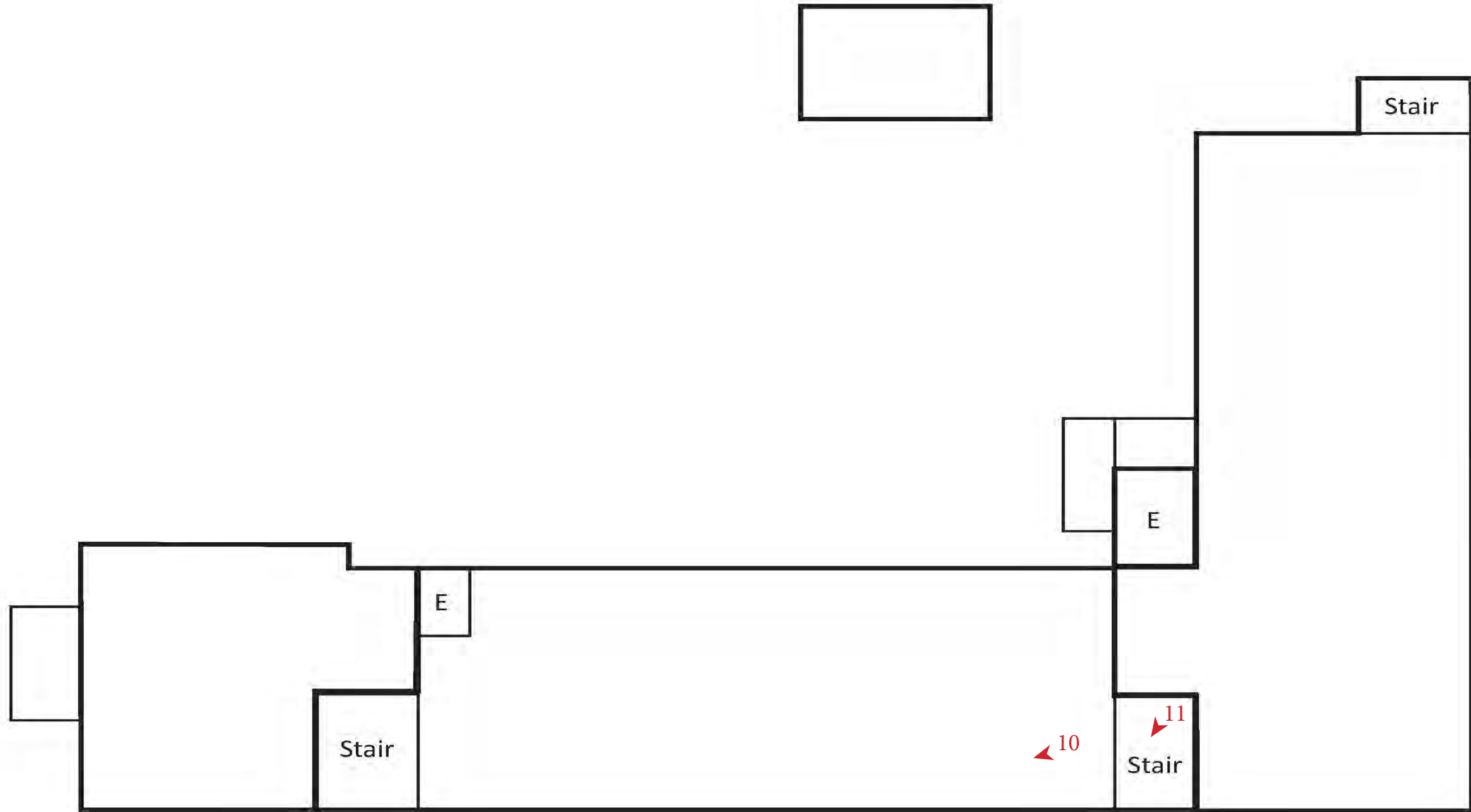


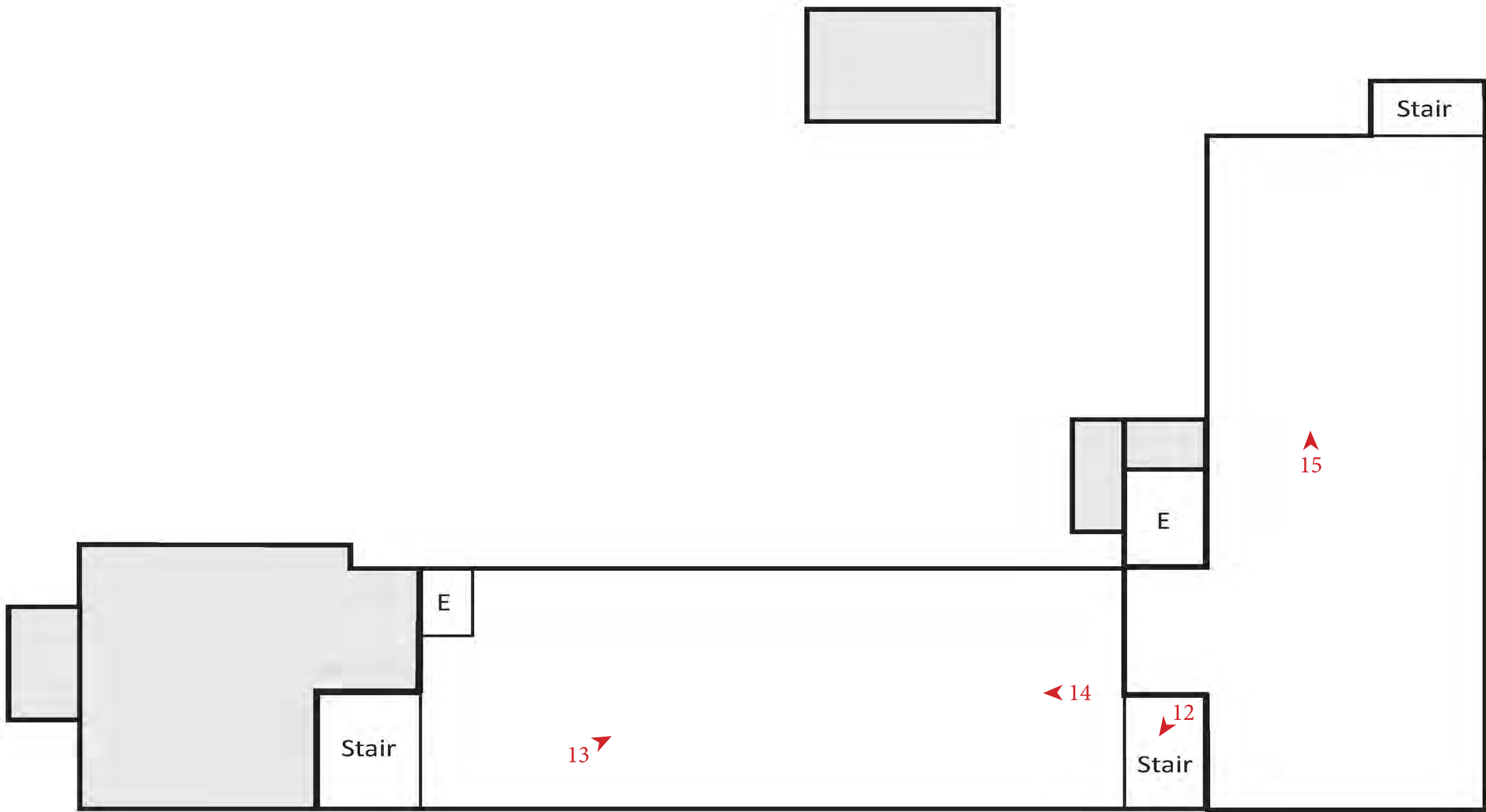
Basement



International Corset Company Building
325 South Union Street
Aurora, Kane County, IL

Basement Plan





Stair

15

E

E

14

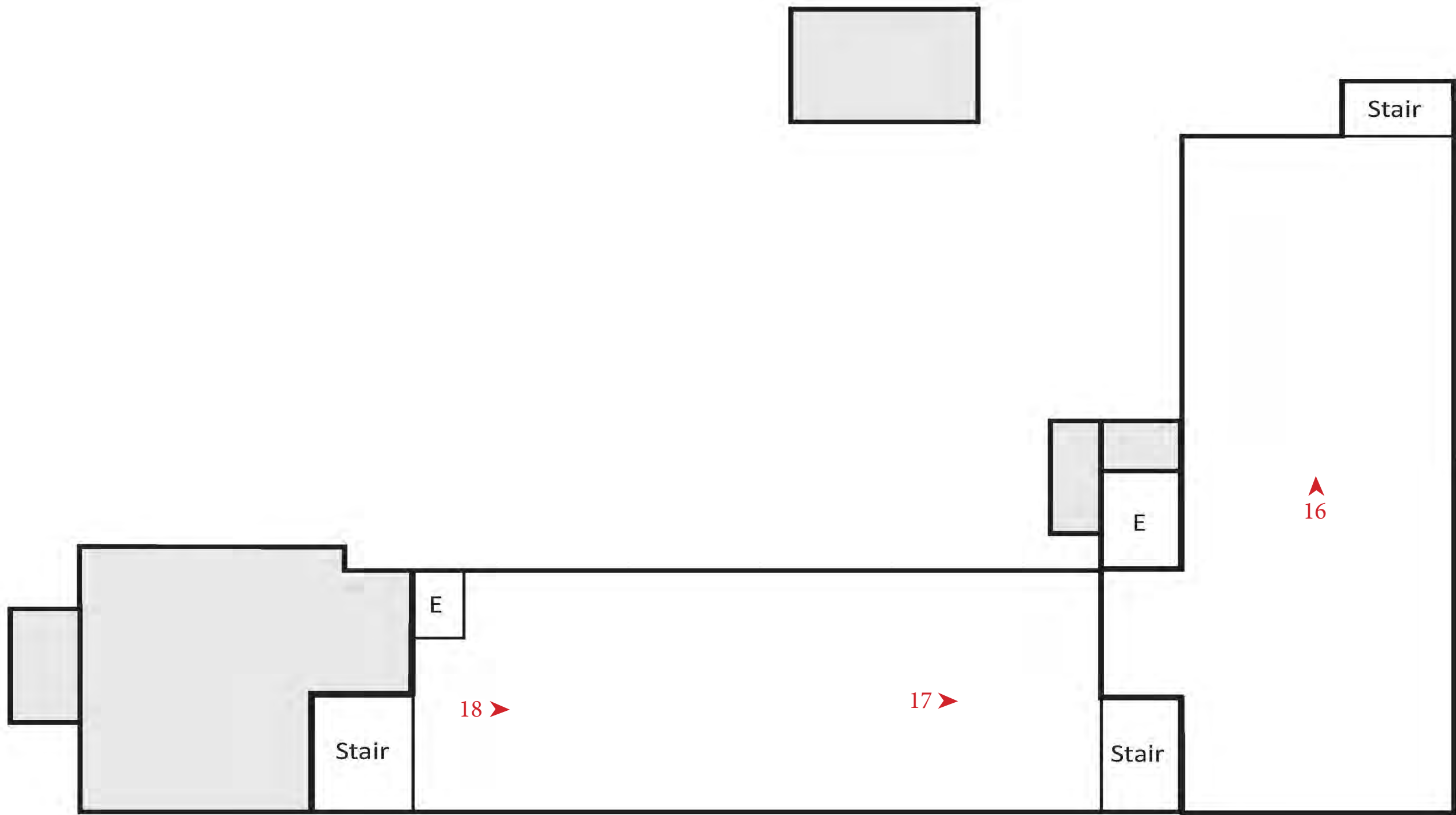
12

Stair

Stair

13





International Corset Company Building
325 South Union Street
Aurora, Kane County, IL

Photographs

August 2024



1. North and east elevation, 1917 north addition, facing southwest



2. North elevation, 1917 north addition, facing southeast



3. East elevation, 1917 south addition (left) and '1912 block (middle), facing northwest



4. East elevation, 1912 block, facing northwest



5. East elevation, main entrance of 1912 block, facing southwest



6. South and east elevations, 1917 south addition (middle) and 1912 block (right), facing northwest



7. South and west elevations, north 1917 addition (left) and 1912 block (right), facing northeast



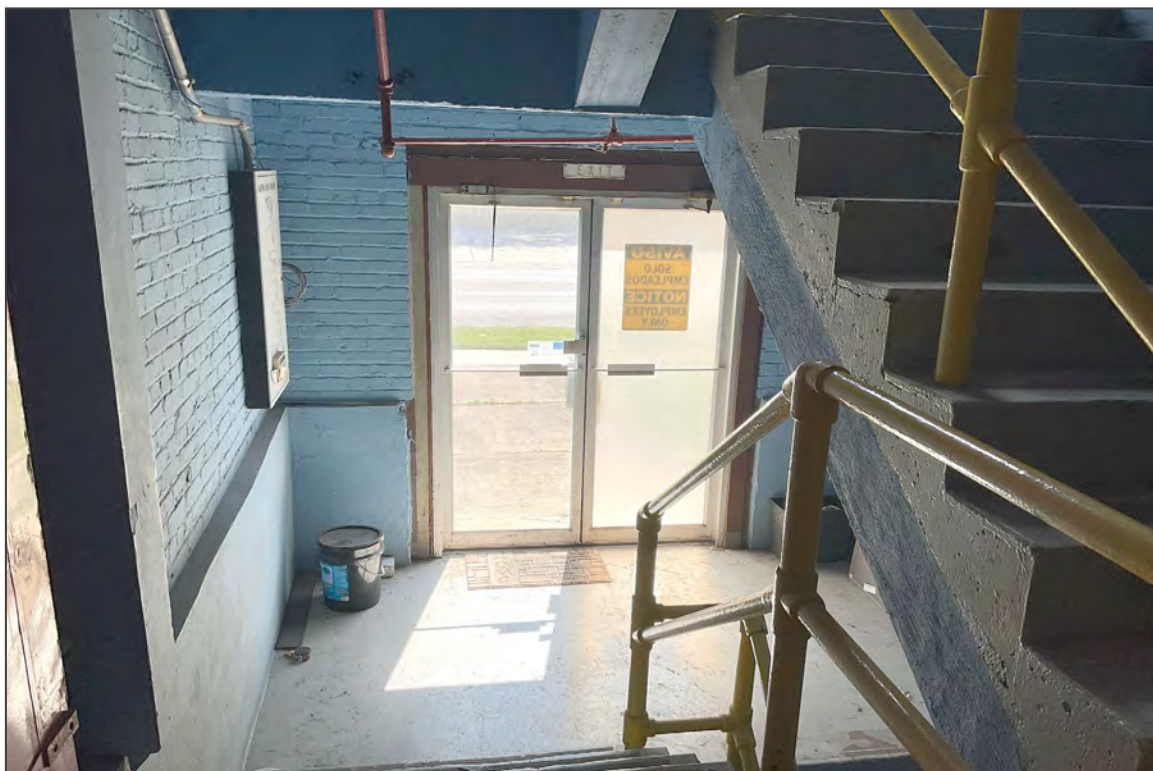
8. Basement, 1912 block, facing northeast



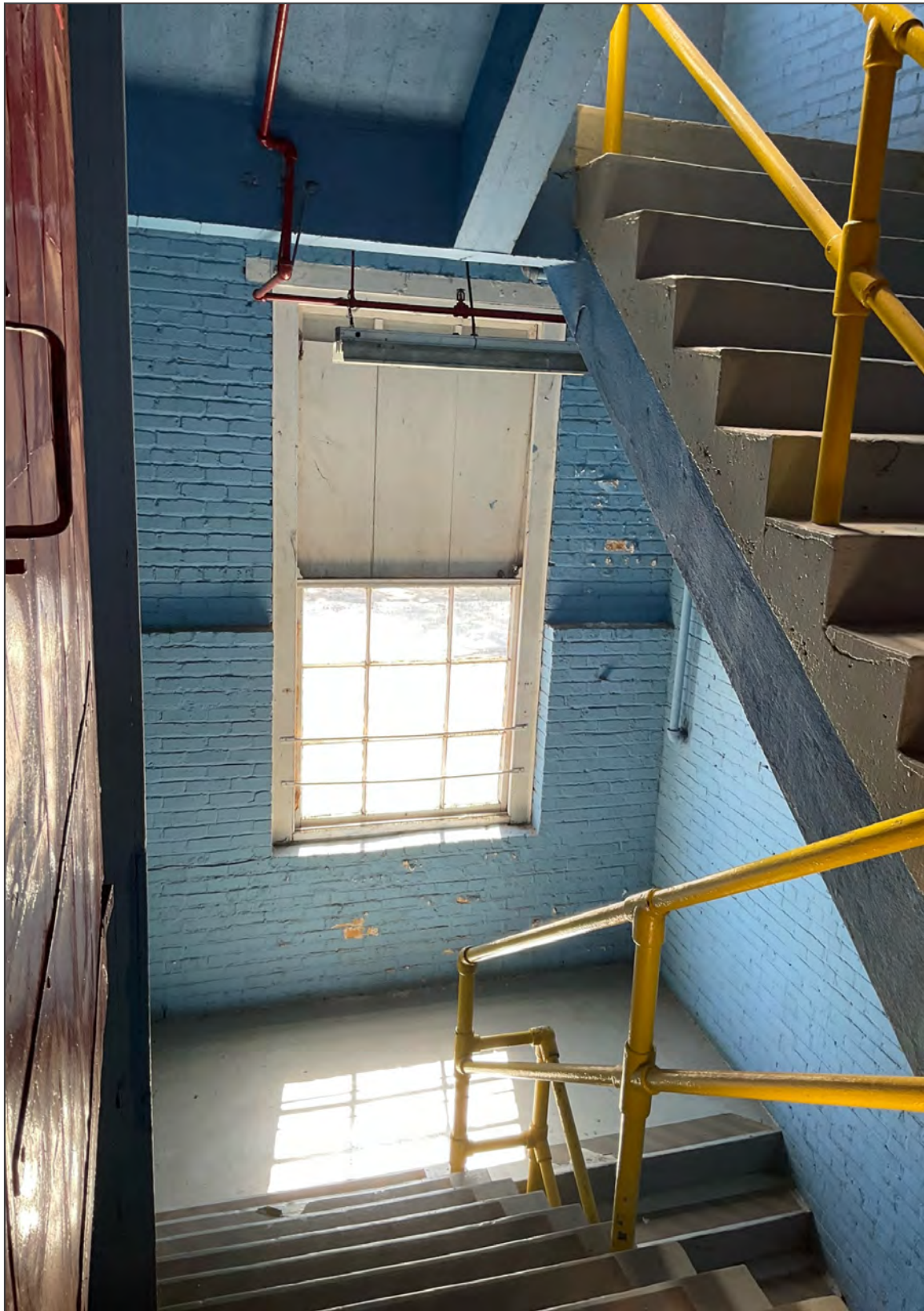
9. Basement, north 1917 addition, facing northwest



10. First floor, 1912 block – looking southeast.



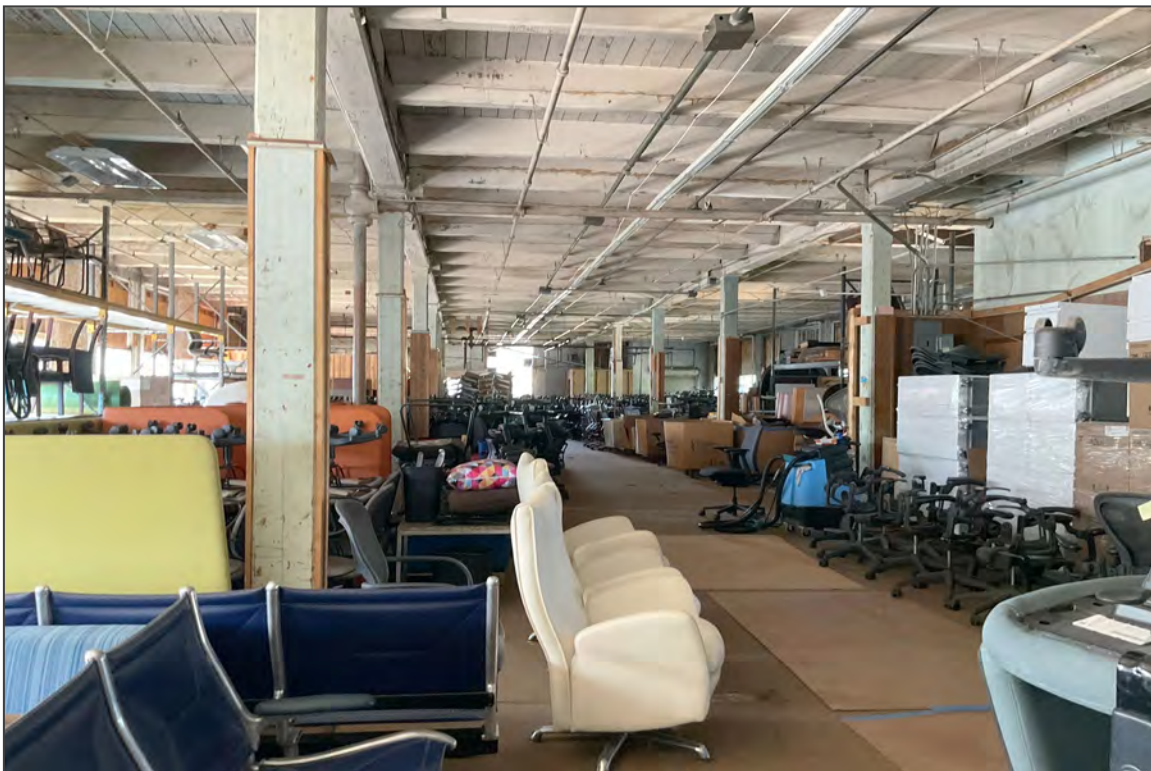
11. First floor, north stair and entrance in 1912 block, facing southeast



12. Second floor, north stair in 1912 block, facing southwest



13. Second floor, 1912 block, facing northwest



14. Second floor, 1912 block, facing south



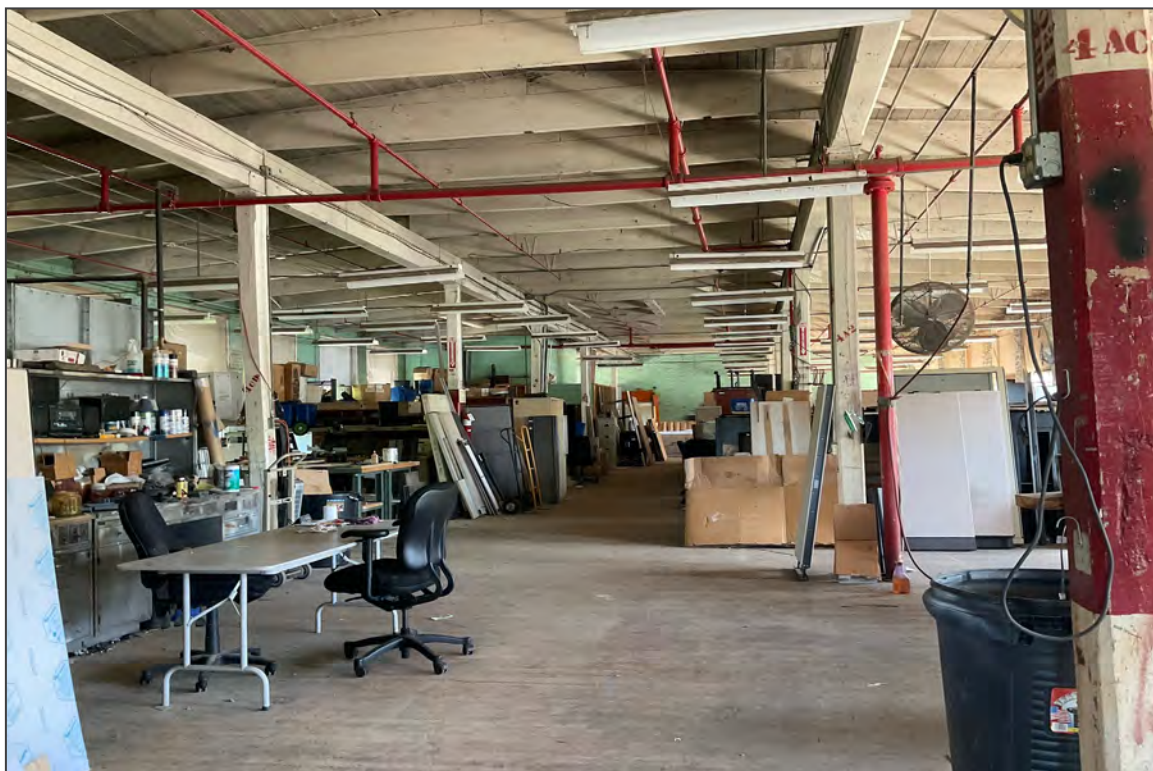
15. Second floor, north 1917 addition, facing west



16. Third floor, north 1917 addition, facing west



17. Third floor, 1912 block, facing north



18. Third floor, 1912 block, facing north



19. Garage, facing southwest