

KROEHLER HALL NORTH
140 N. Wright Street
Naperville
DuPage County
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1270-D

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Midwest Region
601 Riverfront Drive
Omaha, NE 68102

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

KROEHLER HALL NORTH

HABS No. IL-1270-D

Location: Kroehler Hall North is located at 140 N. Wright Street, Naperville, Lisle Township, DuPage County, Illinois.

Kroehler Hall North is located at latitude: 41.776888, longitude: -88.138594. This coordinate was taken from entering the physical address in Google Earth on October 20, 2021.

Present Owner/

Occupant: Present owners: RAM West Capital, LLC
The buildings are currently vacant. They had been occupied by Little Friends School until December 31, 2020.

Present Use: Educational facility; currently vacant.

Significance: Kroehler Hall North is a good example of midcentury, small-college dormitory design, built to house women who were attending college at higher numbers than ever before. It was designed to take advantage of the open greenspace of the property. It sympathetically modified design cues from the neighboring Peter E. and Josephine Stephens Kroehler house for architectural continuity.

Historian: Andrew J. Elders, Architectural Historian. Independent contractor.
The completion date of this report is May 20, 2022.

Project

Information: Those involved in preparing the documentation for this report include Andrew J. Elders and Susan S. Benjamin, of Benjamin Historic Certifications, LLC.

This documentation project was prepared pursuant to Illinois Historic Resources Preservation Act (20 ILCS 3420) and its rules (17 IAC 4180) to address Stipulation I. MITIGATION of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) Regarding Demolition the North and South Dormitory structures at 140 North Wright Street and 619 E. Franklin Avenue along with the Carriage House at 148 North Wright Street (Additions), construct residential units within the Peter E. and Josephine Stephens Kroehler Mansion at 126 North Wright Street (Mansion), and construct 41 single-family attached dwelling units on the site bounded by North Wright Street to the west, School Street to the north, Columbia Street to the east, and North Franklin Avenue to the south (Site) in Naperville, DuPage County, Illinois.

Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History

1. **Date of erection:** 1956.
2. **Architect:** Mittelbusher & Tourtelot was a partnership formed in 1948 by architects Edwin H. Mittelbusher and Edwin M. Tourtelot. The firm built their reputation on designing university and public buildings throughout the United States. Among their more prominent works were a group of dormitories for the University of Wisconsin-Madison (1958), dormitories at the Illinois Institute of Technology (1959), and the University of Illinois' Krannert Center for the Performing Arts (1960).¹ Mittelbusher & Tourtelot merged with Schmidt, Garden & Erickson in 1974, and Edward Tourtelot continued on as a full time consultant, leading their educational and institutional work.²

Edwin Henry Mittelbuscher was born in Davenport, Iowa, on September 4, 1901, the son of prominent German-American Davenport citizens Richard and Laura Maehr Mittelbuscher. He was educated in Davenport schools and went on to study architecture at the University of Illinois, graduating in 1924.³ He showed great talent in his architectural studies, as he was awarded the American Institute of Architects Silver Medal in 1924. The Silver Medal was the highest honor awarded by the University, recognizing a senior whose work showed the highest degree of excellence throughout his college years.⁴ After graduating, Mittelbusher began his career as an architectural designer for Chicago architects Perkins, Fellows & Hamilton. In 1926, he went to work as a draftsman for Russell Walcott & Robert Work, remaining there until 1932. He then worked as a draftsman and designer for the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago. Mittelbusher then practiced alone until 1940, when he became Assistant Chief Architect of the Chicago office of the Federal Housing Authority, a position he held until 1945.⁵ Edwin Mittelbusher married Evanston native Martha Meaker in 1928, and the couple had two children.⁶ Having moved to San Diego, California in 1979, Edwin H. Mittelbusher died there on December 1, 1991.⁷

¹ George S. Koyl, ed., *American Architects Directory*, Second (New York, NY: R.R. Bowker Company, 1962), 488.

² "E.M. Tourtelot, 74; architect and engineer," *Chicago Tribune*, February 4, 1983.

³ Koyl, 488.

⁴ "E.H. Mittelbusher Wins Silver Medal in Architecture," *The Davenport Democrat and Leader*, April 6, 1924.

⁵ Koyl, 488.

⁶ "Evanston Girl Weds Edwin H. Mittelbusher," *The (Davenport, IA) Daily Times*, November 2, 1928.

⁷ "Obituary: Edwin H. Mittelbusher," *Chicago Tribune*, December 25, 1991.

Edward Mortimer Tourtelot was born in Chicago on April 14, 1908, the son of Edward Mortimer Sterling and Marie Margaret Rodatz Tourtelot.⁸ Despite growing up in Palos Park, he commuted to and graduated from the Harvard School of Chicago in 1925.⁹ Tourtelot received his college education at Cornell University, studying Civil Engineering and graduating with his Bachelor of Architecture in 1931. After graduation, he worked as a draftsman for the New York City firm of Shreve, Lamb & Harmon until 1934. He practiced on his own between 1934 and 1948, interrupted by a period in the Navy from 1942 to 1946. In 1948, he joined with Edwin H. Mittelbush to form Mittelbush & Tourtelot.¹⁰ Edward Tourtelot married Evanstonian Madeline Burton Tripp in 1935.¹¹ They had two children. Edward M. Tourtelot died in Evanston on February 3, 1983.¹²

3. Original and Subsequent Owners:

The Legal Description for the property at 140 N. Wright Street is Block 2 in Kroehler's Addition to Naperville, in Section 18, Township 38, Range 10, East of the Third Principal Meridian, according to the plat thereof recorded on May 14, 1906, as document 87553 in DuPage County, Illinois.

The original owners of the property were Peter E. and Josephine Stephens Kroehler, but Kroehler Hall North was built after the family's ownership and the site of the building was the yard for the adjacent Kroehler residence.

The Kroehler property was purchased by North Central College from Josephine Stephens Kroehler Frech in 1945. What is now North Central College opened in Plainfield, Illinois as The Plainfield College of the Evangelical Association of North America on November 11, 1861, with 40 students studying in a two-story frame house.¹³ Plainfield is now a suburb of Chicago, lying 35 miles southwest of the city, but was an independent rural community for much of its history. The college's founders, the Evangelical Association of America, were part of a Protestant organization founded in 1816 that grew from the Methodist Church, with emphasis on simple worship, evangelism, and itinerant ministry.¹⁴ The college was co-educational from its founding, with most of the original faculty having been educated at Oberlin College, and the original faculty included a female English instructor named Catherine M. Harlacher.¹⁵ At the beginning, most of

⁸ Koyl, 710.

⁹ U.S., School Yearbooks 1900-1999, digital image s.v. "Edward Tourtelot", available at ancestry.com. (accessed February 4, 2022).

¹⁰ Koyl, 710.

¹¹ "Sims Sisters Are Engaged," *Chicago Tribune*, January 29, 1935.

¹² "E.M. Tourtelot, 74; architect and engineer."

¹³ Clarence N. Roberts, *North Central College; A Century of Liberal Education, 1861-1961*, (Naperville IL: North Central College, 1960), 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

the college's students were from the surrounding area and of German descent. With an eye toward growth, the school's board of trustees renamed it North Western College in 1864. Its growth was unlikely, however, as the village of Plainfield remained inaccessible by railroad. Needing greater accessibility and more room to expand, North Western College thus moved northeast to Naperville in 1870.¹⁶

At the time Peter Kroehler attended the college, an addition was made to Old Main on the Naperville campus and electric lighting was added to the facility, preparing the school to grow and move into the new century.¹⁷ Professor J.L. Nichols, an early mentor of Peter Kroehler, died in 1895 and left \$10,000 to the school, to be used for investments and to construct a new gymnasium called Nichols Hall.¹⁸ Despite bequests such as this, the school struggled financially for several decades (fighting successfully to maintain accreditation throughout the 1920s), though its student body and course offerings continued to increase. In 1926, in part to differentiate the college from Northwestern University in Evanston, the name was again changed.¹⁹ North Central College flourished for the rest of the century; in 2022 it served over 2,700 students from its 56-acre campus in the Naperville Local Historic District, awarding bachelor of arts and science degrees in more than 50 majors and offering six graduate programs. Though still affiliated with the United Methodist Church, a successor to the Evangelical Association, North Central remains nonsectarian in hiring and admissions.²⁰

North Central College sold the Kroehler campus to Little Friends – Sheltered Workshop Inc. in 1975. Little Friends is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1965 and today is a multi-faceted human services agency serving people of all ages experiencing autism, intellectual and emotional disabilities as well as their families.²¹ Beginning as a nursery school for five children, they now operate three schools, vocational training programs, community-based residential opportunities, and the Little Friends Center for Autism, a valued resource for diagnosis, comprehensive evaluations, therapies, and trainings for parents and professionals. Little Friends' Krejci Academy serves autistic students from over 60 school districts by providing therapies, small class sizes, and high staff-to-student ratios.²²

4. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers: Not known.

¹⁶ Janice L. Reiff, Ann Durkin Keating, and James R. Grossman, *Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Historical Society, 2005), 575.

¹⁷ Roberts, 125.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁹ Reiff.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ "About Us," Little Friends, Inc., accessed May 18, 2022, <https://www.littlefriendsinc.org/about-us-1>.

²² "Hometown Heroes," *The Daily Herald*, May 23, 2008.

5. **Original Plans and construction:** Kroehler Hall North was designed as a T-shaped residence hall that would complement the original Kroehler family property. The siting of the building allowed it to be surrounded by and benefit from the property's many mature trees and park-like atmosphere, while anchoring the corner of the campus.
6. **Alterations and Additions:** While the outside of the building is almost completely unchanged, the interior has experienced many alterations. A number of former dormitory rooms have been combined to create larger classrooms (figure 17). On the third floor, cathedral ceilings have been dropped with a hanging grid and ceiling tiles (figure 16).

B. Historic Context:

Growth of Collegiate Co-Education at North Central College

After the surge of veteran students attending college on the GI Bill subsided, college attendance continued to grow, especially for female students. At the beginning of the 1953-1954 school year, 650 students were expected to begin studies at North Central College. Of that number, between 75 and 100 of them were Korean War veterans attending under the Korean GI Bill. A new, \$400,000 men's dormitory opened that fall, but housing for female students was projected to be short if enrollment continued to increase.²³ Thus, the need for a new dormitory was established, resulting in Kroehler Hall North. In the 1954-1955 school year, total enrollment at North Central was 863 students, of whom 387 were women, with that figure expected to rise.²⁴ The school began taking bids for construction on the new \$300,000 dormitory in October 1955. Of that construction figure, \$225,000 in gifts and bequests were already in place, with solicitation of donations expected to cover the remaining balance. It was to be the third new building on campus within two years.²⁵ Kroehler Hall North opened in the fall of 1956, housing 125 women. That year's enrollment was the school's highest since the postwar years, with a student roster of 800-850 students, an increase over the previous year's enrollment of 774.²⁶ With the completion of Kroehler Hall North, the women's dorm Kaufman Hall was handed over to male students and all North Central College women were then housed on the Kroehler campus.²⁷

²³ "GIs Swell Total," *Chicago Tribune*, August 29, 1954.

²⁴ "North Central Plans Addition to Co-Eds Dorm," *Chicago Tribune*, May 15, 1955.

²⁵ "Bidding Slated on New Wing at North Central," *Chicago Tribune*, October 30, 1955.

²⁶ "5,000 College Co-Eds Begin Campus Trek," *Chicago Tribune*, September 2, 1956.

²⁷ "North Central Plans Addition to Co-Eds Dorm."

Part II. Architectural Information

A. General Statement

- 1. Architectural Character:** Kroehler Hall North was designed with elements of the neighboring Kroehler house carrying over to the dormitory, albeit in a streamlined, modernist sensibility. The planes of the south and east walls are smooth, and punctuated only by windows, as in the original Kroehler house. The terra-cotta color of the concrete asbestos shingle roof and copper-colored fascia and downspouts on the dormitory mimic the coloration of the house. Overall, the design somewhat harmonizes with the original Kroehler house while assuming a different, more modernist aesthetic.
- 2. Condition of Fabric:** The general condition of the building is fair. It remains structurally sound but has been heavily used.

B. Description of Exterior

- 1. Overall Dimensions:** The footprint is a T-plan, measuring approximately 134' x 106'.
- 2. Foundations:** There is no basement, only an excavated crawlspace housing the footers for structural columns. Foundations are of reinforced concrete, 5'-6" deep x 11" thick.
- 3. Walls:** Exterior walls are faced in a yellow iron-spot brick measuring 2 ¼" x 8" laid in common bond with ½" mortar joints. The north wing entrances centered on its west and north walls are set in vertical bands of flat limestone panels, rising to the roofline on the west and to just above the second story on the north.
- 4. Structural System:** Exterior walls are 11" thick and have face brick laid over hollow clay tile. Floors are poured concrete supported by columns extending upward from the crawlspace. Interior partitions are of 2 ½" metal studs faced with Rocklath overlaid with plaster.
- 5. Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads:** The principal entrance to Kroehler Hall North is at the southwest corner of the building, sheltered by a thin projecting cantilevered canopy that reduces in profile from the wall to the outer edge (figure 7). It overhangs the entrance doors and half sidewalls of stacked course brick. The entrance is reached by a wheelchair ramp to the north and two steps up from sidewalk level on the south. The wheelchair ramp is lined on both sides by 1 ¼" diameter metal pipe railings. The west entrance to the north wing is similarly sheltered by a projecting cantilevered canopy which reduces in profile from the wall to the outer edge (figure 9). The concrete entrance stoop is reached by a set of five concrete steps. Metal pipe

railings that are 1 ¼" diameter frame the sides of the stairs and stoop. The north entrance of the building is set below ground level, with a curving access walk set between concrete retaining walls, with two steps leading down to the door. The door is sheltered with a cantilevered canopy like the ones on the other entrances, but this one has been topped with a shingled, hipped cap that was added at a later date (figure 11).

6. **Chimneys:** A single interior chimney rises through the south wing, exiting the roof midway through the eastern slope. The chimney is capped with a metal fan vent.

7. Openings

- a. **Doorways:** The principal entrance, at the southwest corner of the south wing, contains a pair of painted metal, full-light doors flanked by full-light sidelights and set beneath glass transoms. The west entrance of the north wing contains a single painted metal half-light door that is flanked by ¾ light sidelights and surrounded by flat limestone panels set into the brick wall surface. The north entrance is a modern metal full-light door with a full-light sidelight to its left. It is surrounded by flat limestone panels set into the brick wall surface.
- b. **Windows and shutters:** Windows are primarily replacement vinyl Chicago-type units with sliding side panels. Each interior dorm room contains one of these windows, which are placed regularly along each wall. Windows rest on limestone sills and beneath steel lintels.

8. Roofs

- a. **Shape, covering:** The roof of the building consists of a side-gable configuration with a shallow pitch. It is covered with historic asbestos cement shingles in a terra cotta color.
- b. **Cornice, eaves:** There is no cornice on the building. Eaves are concrete box eaves, unadorned and painted white. A green-painted metal gutter system is present, along with green metal downspouts.
- c. **Dormers, cupolas and towers:** N/A

C. Description of Interior

1. **Floor Plans:** The building is representative of a mid-twentieth century dormitory building. Arranged in a T-plan, each wing of the building is split down the middle by a full-length corridor. A series of dormitory rooms, later converted to offices and

classrooms, open off the corridors. This arrangement is repeated on all three floors of the building (figures 2, 3, 4).

2. **Stairways:** There are two interior stairways in the hall, one in the center of the north wall of the north wing, and one at the southeast corner of the south wing. These stairs allow access to all floors. They are constructed of painted steel with painted steel pipe railings bent at landings and supported by bent strips of flat steel. Both sets of stairs are of halfspace landing configuration.
3. **Flooring:** Flooring is all original. It is a mixture of 12" vinyl composite tile and commercial grade carpeting in hallways and classrooms. Several original bathrooms retain their 12" rubber tile (figure 14). Original shower and toilet rooms retain their brown and tan poured terrazzo (figure 13).
4. **Wall and ceiling finishes:** Walls throughout the building are of smooth painted plaster. Some expanded classrooms have popcorn-type ceilings, while most others are smooth painted concrete. Corridor ceilings consist of original acoustic tile affixed to a concealed grid. Areas of the third floor have dropped-grid acoustic tile ceilings concealing original cathedral ceilings of painted concrete (figure 16). In the toilet and shower rooms, walls are lined with 4" tan ceramic tile, and showers are separated by brown marble partitions (figure 13). The wall behind the reception area at the principal entrance is finished with painted, random-width vertical wood planks.
5. **Openings**
 - a. **Doorways and doors:** Most interior doors are original. In the corridor there are flat solid core doors; in other spaces there are flat hollow core doors that retain their original clear finish. Original door openings lack casings, with the drywall surface continuing to the door jamb (figure 15).
 - b. **Windows:** Windows are all white vinyl on the interior surfaces. They are set into walls with no casings but rest on a slightly projecting sill.
6. **Decorative features and trim:** None.
7. **Hardware:** Original hardware is present on door silver-finish rounded knobs with round backplates.

8. Mechanical equipment

- a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:** The building is heated with a hot water system, with metal fin radiators enclosed in vented metal cases placed beneath windows. Air conditioning is supplied by window units.
 - b. Lighting:** All lighting consists of modern flush-mount fluorescent tube fixtures.
 - c. Plumbing:** Plumbing is original to the building, with bathrooms that contain modern porcelain toilets and historic sinks and tubs.
- 9. Original furnishings:** N/A

D. Site

- 1. Historic landscape design:** Several old specimen trees are present on the property, likely dating back to the period when the property was a residence. All other original landscape features have been removed. The Mansion, Kroehler Hall South, and Kroehler Hall North are accessed via a curved drive with a sidewalk on its east edge which follows part of the original drive path to the Mansion (figure 1).
- 2. Outbuildings:** There are no outbuildings outside of the four buildings recorded above.

Part III. Sources of Information

“Bidding Slated on New Wing at North Central.” *Chicago Tribune*, October 30, 1955.

“E.H. Mittelbusher Wins Silver Medal in Architecture.” *The Davenport Democrat and Leader*, April 6, 1924.

“E.M. Tourtelot, 74; architect and engineer.” *Chicago Tribune*, February 4, 1983.

“Evanston Girl Weds Edwin H. Mittelbusher.” *The (Davenport, IA) Daily Times*, November 2, 1928.

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Koyl, George S., ed. *American Architects Directory*. Second ed. New York, NY: R.R. Bowker Company, 1962.

“North Central Plans Addition to Co-Eds Dorm.” *Chicago Tribune*, May 15, 1955.

“Obituary: Edwin H. Mittelbusher.” *Chicago Tribune*, December 25, 1991.

Reiff, Janice L., Ann Durkin Keating, and James R. Grossman. *Encyclopedia of Chicago*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Historical Society, 2005.

“Sims Sisters Are Engaged.” *Chicago Tribune*, January 29, 1935.

U.S., School Yearbooks 1900-1999, digital image s.v. “Edward Tourtelot,” available at [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) (accessed February 4, 2022).

“5,000 College Co-Eds Begin Campus Trek.” *Chicago Tribune*, September 2, 1956.

Appendix I - Site Plan

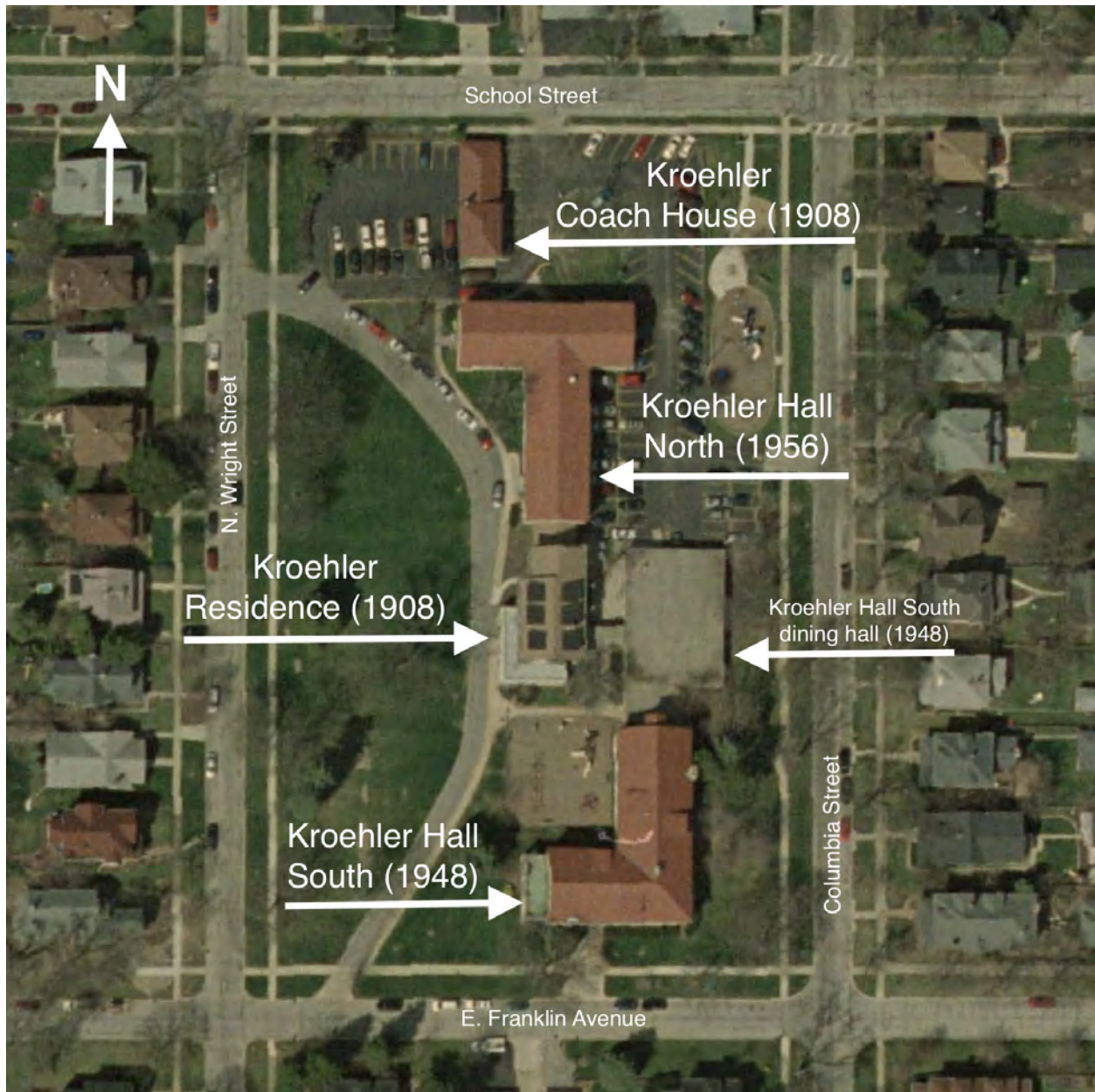


Figure 1: Aerial photo, 2002
Source: *historicaerials.com*

Appendix II – Floor Plans

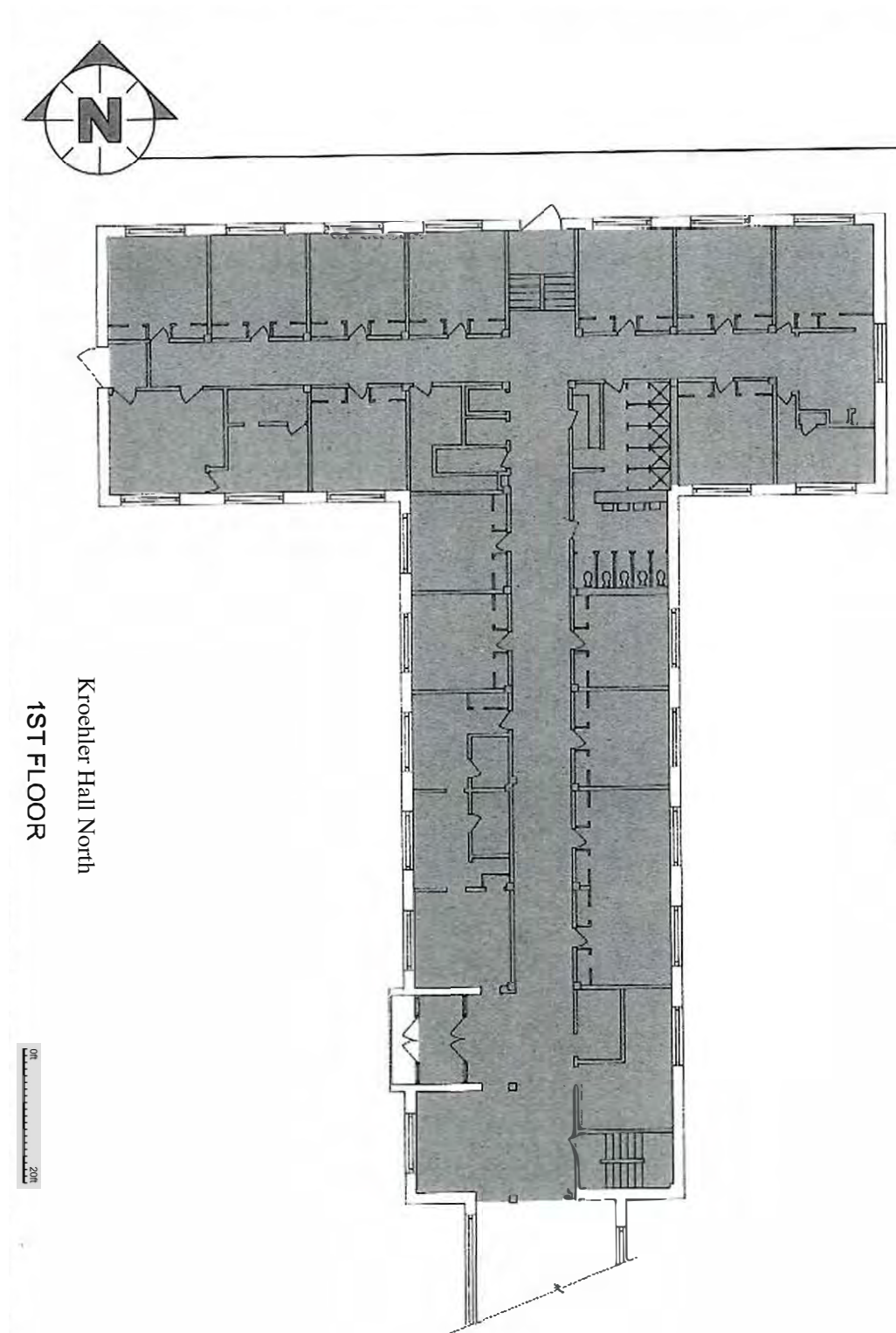


Figure 2: Kroehler Hall North, first floor

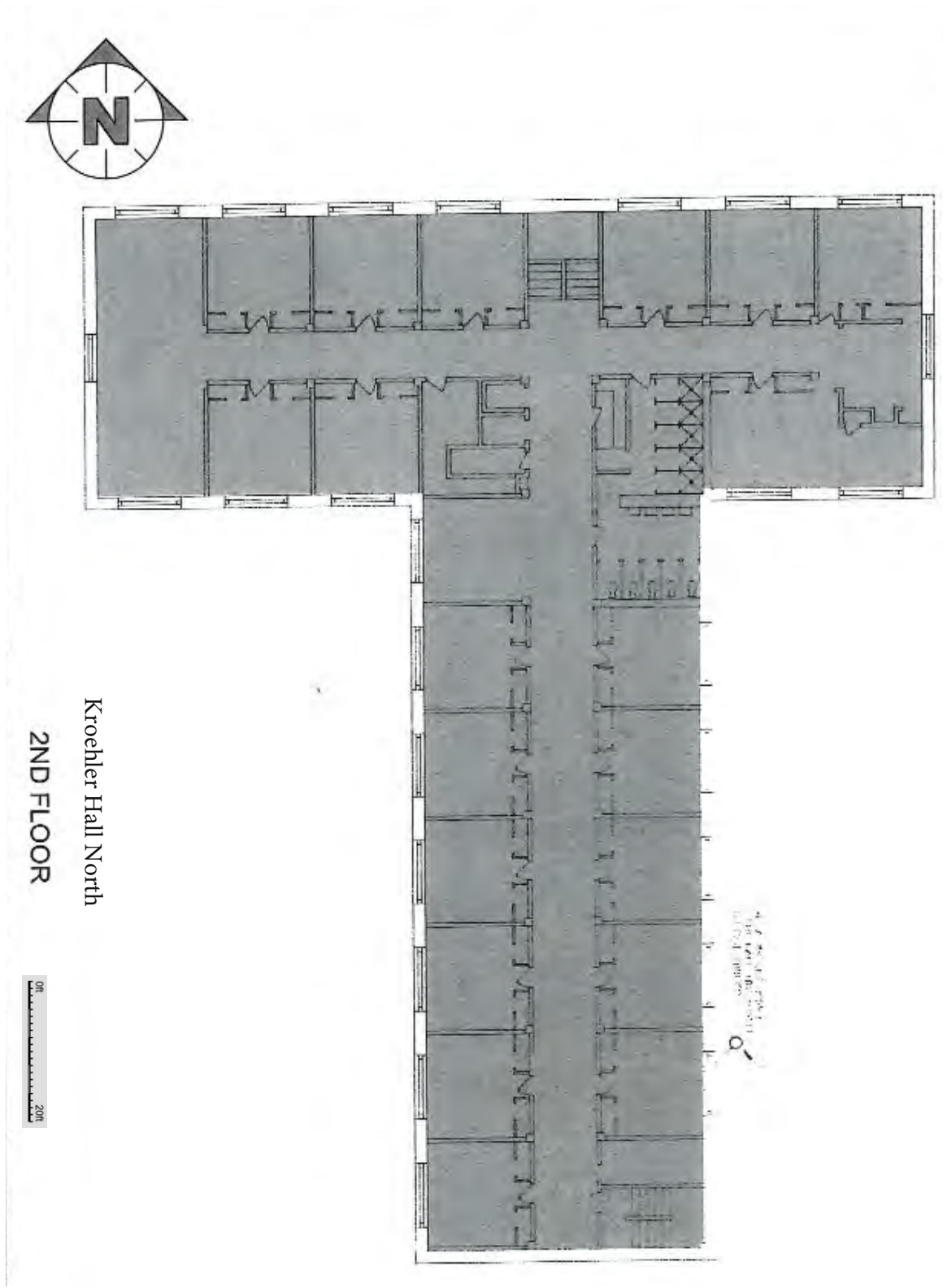
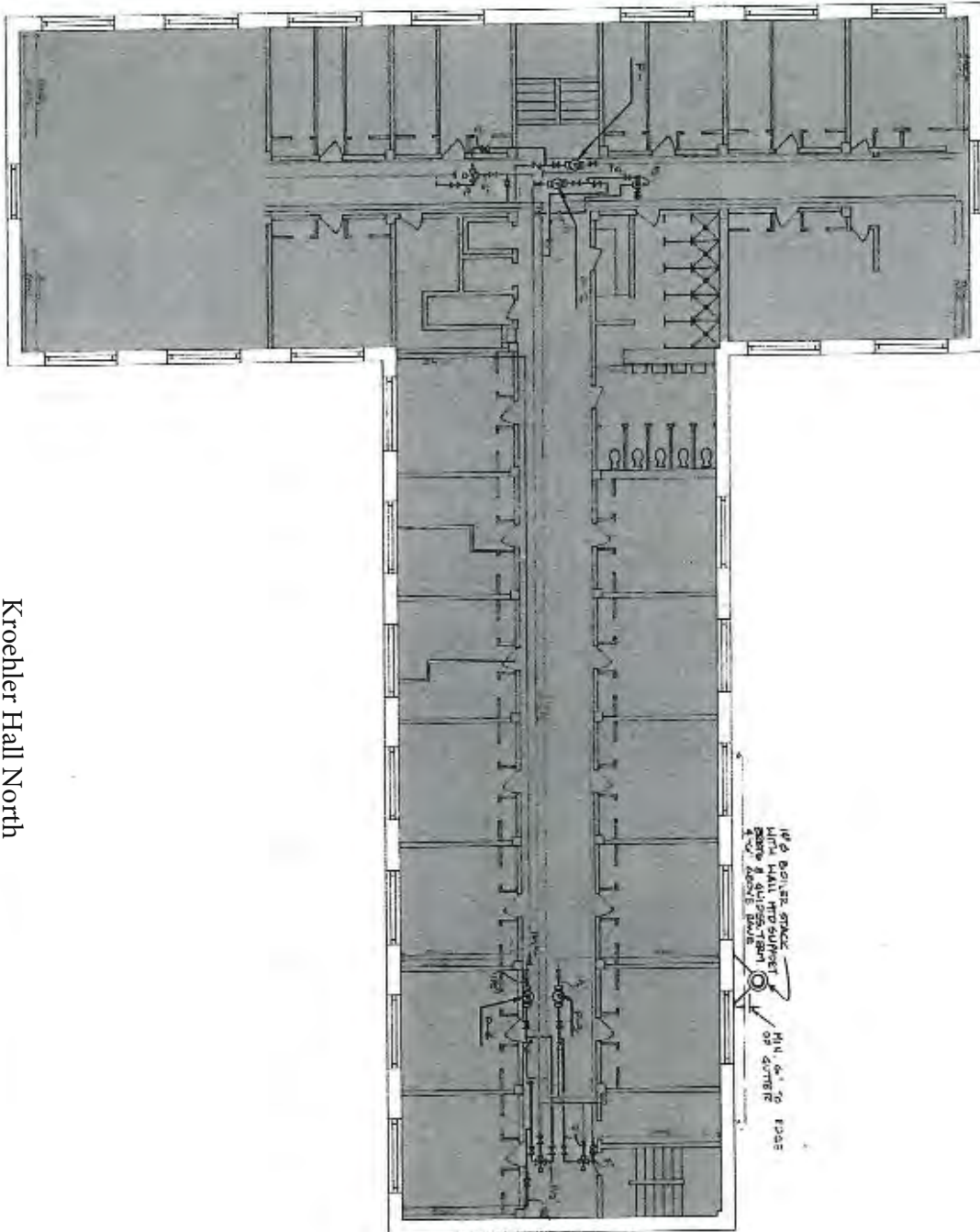


Figure 3: Kroehler Hall North, second floor



Kroehler Hall North
3RD FLOOR



Figure 4: Kroehler Hall North, third floor

Appendix III – Supporting Images



Figure 5: East side of the building, looking west



Figure 6: North wall, looking southwest



Figure 7: West façade, looking northeast
Source: author



Figure 8: Same view, 1959.
Source: The Spectrum 1959, North Central College yearbook, public domain.



Figure 9: West façade, looking east
Source: author



Figure 10: Same view, 1958
Source: The Spectrum 1958, North Central College yearbook, public domain.

All following images taken by author



Figure 11: North entrance detail, looking southeast



Figure 12: Dumbwaiter in corridor



Figure 13: Original shower room with marble and terrazzo



Figure 14: Original private bathroom



Figure 15: Flush-finished door jambs



Figure 16: Original cathedral ceiling above dropped grid



Figure 17: Classroom formed from two original dormitory rooms

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Leslie Schwartz, Photographer, December 2020

IL-1270-D-1 General view of Kroehler Hall North, looking northeast.

IL-1270-D-2 Detail view of Kroehler Hall North stairway, looking north.



EXIT

