

HISTORIC ILLINOIS BUILDINGS SURVEY
622 Graceland Avenue, HIBS Documentation

HIBS NO. CK-2024-1

<u>Location:</u>	622 Graceland Avenue Des Plaines, Illinois
<u>Present Owner:</u>	Mylo Residential Graceland Property LLC
<u>Present Use:</u>	Vacant; most recently offices of Journal & Topics Media Group
<u>Significance:</u>	The building at 622 Graceland Avenue is significant as an example of a New Deal-era post office and for the presence of murals completed with funding from the Works Progress Administration.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of construction: 1940–1941
2. Architect: Louis Adolphe Simon
3. Original and subsequent owners: The building at 622 Graceland Avenue in Des Plaines was constructed by the United States federal government and served as the United State Post Office with office space for other federal agencies in the basement, including the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Civil Service Commission. The building served as the Des Plaines post office from 1941 through 1974.

The building was purchased by Norfin International in 1975. The building remained unused for the next twelve years.

In 1987, the Wessell family purchased the building to serve as offices for the *Journal & Topics*, a local newspaper.¹ The Journal & Topics Media Group occupied the building until 2023, when it was purchased by Mylo Residential Graceland Property LLC, which intends to redevelop the site to house a multi-unit residential building.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Unknown. The federal government appropriated \$135,000 for the construction of the new post office building, which included \$18,000 for the site and \$82,200 for construction of the building, with the remaining funds used for new equipment.²
5. Alterations and additions: A cupola originally centered over the main entrance at the peak of the roof was removed at an unknown date prior to 1974.³

¹ “Developer proposes apartments, restaurant, lounge on Journal & Topics property in Des Plaines,” *Journal & Topics*, March 23, 2022, Journal & Topics Media Group.

² “New Post Office to Cost \$82,200 in Des Plaines,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 10, 1940. Des Plaines History Center archives.

³ Review of photos from Des Plaines History Center archives.

B. Historical Context:

Although a new post office was constructed in Des Plaines in 1930, a larger building was needed by 1938. The larger post office was constructed at 622 Graceland Avenue, at the northwest corner of Graceland and Webford Avenues. The new building typified the style of 1930s federal government buildings designed under the direction of Louis Adolphe Simon, Supervising Architect of the Treasury, who was responsible for the general design concept. The building was designed in the Colonial Revival style to match the nearby Municipal Building completed in 1937 (no longer extant). The contract for the post office building was executed on March 1, 1940. The federal government appropriated \$135,000 for the construction of the new post office building, which included \$18,000 for the site and \$82,200 for construction of the building, with the remaining funds used for new equipment.⁴ The new post office opened in 1941.⁵

The new building provided increased working space as compared to the previous post office and contained a public lobby with eight service windows, as well as a sorting room, office space, and a loading dock for shipping and receiving. The basement originally contained storerooms as well as office space for other federal agencies, including the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Civil Service Commission. A community meeting room, also utilized by the Civil Service Commission for civil service testing, was located in the basement as well.⁶

The new post office building opened on January 1, 1941, and was formally dedicated on June 21, 1941. U.S. Senators Scott Lucas and C. Wayland Brooks and Representative Lenard W. Schuetz attended the ceremony.⁷

A cupola originally centered over the main entrance at the peak of the roof was removed at an unknown date prior to 1974.⁸

The building served as the Des Plaines post office from 1941 through 1974. A new larger post office building was subsequently constructed at 1000 East Oakton Street in 1975.⁹

The building was purchased by Norfin International, a Seattle-based manufacturer of paper-collating equipment, in 1975, with the intent of opening a new office at the site. The building remained unused for the next twelve years. In 1987, the Wessell family purchased the building to serve as offices for the *Journal & Topics*, a local newspaper.¹⁰ The Journal & Topics Media

⁴ "New Post Office to Cost \$82,200 in Des Plaines," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 10, 1940. Des Plaines History Center archives.

⁵ Brian Wolf, "The Des Plaines Post Office (1930)," Des Plaines, Illinois, *Patch*, February 13, 2011, <https://patch.com/illinois/desplaines/the-des-plaines-post-office-1930>, accessed January 2024.

⁶ "New Post Office to Cost \$82,200 in Des Plaines."

⁷ "New Post Office, Des Plaines, Illinois," June 21, 1941. Des Plaines History Center archives.

⁸ Review of photos from Des Plaines History Center archives.

⁹ Pat Hammes, "Home Sweet Home," *The Journal*, April 13, 1988. Des Plaines History Center archives.

¹⁰ "Developer proposes apartments, restaurant, lounge on Journal & Topics property in Des Plaines," March 23, 2022, Journal & Topics Media Group.

Group occupied the building until 2023, when it was purchased by Mylo Residential Graceland Property LLC, which intends to redevelop the site to house a multi-unit residential building.

Development of downtown Des Plaines

In the early 1800s, Des Plaines was a small farming town known as the “Town of Rand.” The community began to expand in the 1850s, when the Chicago & North Western Railroad extended a line through the town to Chicago. In 1859, the railroad named its local station Des Plaines, and in 1869 the name of the municipality was changed as well. Various businesses were established near the rail line that formed the downtown area of Des Plaines.

With the development of a business district in Des Plaines, a separation developed between the residents who lived in town and the farmers who occupied the surrounding lands. In the late 1800s, the community of Riverview was formed in farmlands just outside of Des Plaines. Residents of Riverview were not in favor of the industrial and commercial growth of Des Plaines that was simulated by the construction of the rail line. In 1925, Riverview deannexed from Des Plaines and created its own city government.¹¹ By the early 1900s, the population of Des Plaines was around 1,800 persons.

In the early 1900s, numerous businesses lined the railroad tracks along Ellinwood Avenue.¹² These businesses comprised the town’s marketplace, where residents could purchase everything from groceries to industrial goods. In 1913, the Des Plaines First National Bank building, which featured a Neoclassical facade, opened along Miner Street in the downtown area. The bank closed during the Great Depression. Shortly after the bank closed, a new Des Plaines National Bank opened on the corner of Lee and Ellinwood (678 Lee Street). The new Neoclassical building was clad with Georgian marble.¹³ The building featured two-story arched window openings along Ellinwood Avenue and Lee Street and a decorative cornice.

The former Des Plaines First National Bank building on Miner Street housed the Des Plaines Public Library and other community activities. In 1924, the Polka brothers opened the Des Plaines Theater at the corner of Lee and Miner Streets. The building was designed by architect William B. Betts in the Spanish Renaissance style, with a red brick facade that included multi-color terra cotta detailing and an Art Deco marquee. The interior was influenced by Spanish Moorish architecture and could seat 900 people.¹⁴ In the same year, the Des Plaines Masonic Temple was built across the street from the theater, occupying an entire city block. The building was designed by Clarence Hatzfeld, with a limestone facade and a large auditorium on the interior.¹⁵

As the community continued to grow and the downtown area became increasingly commercialized, it became apparent that Des Plaines required a post office. In 1920, a post office was established in the Manuel Building on Miner Street. When the post office outgrew that space in 1925, it moved into the larger Masonic Temple Building on Lee Street. Mail service continued to expand, necessitating construction of the first designated post office building in Des Plaines in

¹¹ Donald Johnson, *Des Plaines, Born of the Tallgrass Prairie: A Pictorial History* (New York: Windsor Publications, 1984), 53.

¹² Aerial View of Des Plaines, 1915. Des Plaines Memory, Des Plaines History Center.

¹³ Angela Whitmal. *Greetings from Des Plaines Illinois: A Community History through Postcards* (Des Plaines, Illinois: Des Plaines Historical Society, 1995), 93.

¹⁴ Whitmal, 83.

¹⁵ David Whittingham, with the Des Plaines History Center and Des Plaines Public Library. *Images of America: Des Plaines* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2012), 92.

1930, at 650 Graceland Avenue. By 1938, a larger postal facility was needed. The new post office building was constructed at 622 Graceland Avenue, across Webford Avenue from the existing post office at the northwest corner of Graceland and Webford Avenues.¹⁶

With continued growth of automobile use, the downtown area of Des Plaines was transformed to better accommodate automobiles in the 1940s and 1950s. There was also the need for a new building type—gas stations—to provide fuel for automobiles. By the 1950s, a Sinclair gas station was located at the corner of Graceland Avenue and Ellinwood Avenue, across from the post office building.

In 1977, the Des Plaines Mall opened along Ellinwood Avenue, between Lee and Pearson Streets. Designed by the Chicago architectural firm of Erickson & Stevens, the mall replaced several nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings. Part of the mall development included the construction of a ten-story office building on the northeast corner of Prairie Avenue and Lee Street, as well as the Herbert H. Behrel Parking Plaza, which was located adjacent to the train tracks between Miner Street and Ellinwood Avenue. Some existing downtown businesses, including Spiegler's Department Store, moved into the new shopping complex. Despite high expectations, the mall was never successful, and by 1998, both the mall and parking garage were demolished.¹⁷

In the early 2000s, new apartment and condominium buildings were constructed along the train line, including properties adjacent to the former location of the Des Plaines Mall. Various commercial buildings from the early twentieth century were demolished and replaced with new structures during this time. A new building for the Des Plaines Public Library was constructed along Ellinwood Avenue, immediately north of the former mall. The mall itself was replaced by a parking garage.

Overall, buildings along the rail line have been the central to Des Plaines community development since the rail line was constructed in the mid-1800s. Various commercial businesses have closed and new ones opened, but there has always been an established commercial district along the rail line.

Post Office development during the early twentieth century

Construction of public buildings slowed during World War I and stopped completely upon the United States' entry into the war in 1917. Following the conclusion of the war, previously authorized building construction resumed. The Public Buildings Act of 1926 authorized \$100,000,000 for the construction of buildings outside Washington, D.C. The Act specifically noted that the Secretary of the Treasury, working with the Postmaster General, would select municipalities where new buildings were to be constructed. A nationwide survey was subsequently conducted to understand the need for postal facilities. The survey report found over 2,000 municipalities with postal receipts exceeding \$10,000 that lacked a dedicated postal

¹⁶ Wolf, "The Des Plaines Post Office (1930)."

¹⁷ Whittingham, 120; Stephen Lee, "Des Plaines Finally Gets Rid of Behrel Deck," *Chicago Tribune*, February 21, 1996. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1996-02-21-9602210244-story.html>, accessed January 2024; Carol Vinzant, "Des Plaines Mall Still on Life Support," *Chicago Tribune*, August 13, 1991. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1991-08-13-9103280432-story.html>, accessed January 2024.

facility. The Act also called for the continued use of standardized plans for small federal structures, such as post office buildings.¹⁸

By 1929, postal receipts at the Des Plaines post office surpassed \$40,000. In response, the first designated post office building in Des Plaines was constructed at 650 Graceland Avenue in 1930. The two-story brick building with Art Deco influences was designed by William McCaughey, Jr., who also was involved in the design of Maine East High School and the Pickwick Theatre, both in nearby Park Ridge.¹⁹

Following the 1929 stock market crash and beginning of the Great Depression, funding for public buildings was increased by \$100,000,000 in 1930 with the amendment of the Public Buildings Act of 1926.

Beginning in 1930, private architectural firms received government contracts to design federal buildings in an effort to alleviate unemployment amongst architects. The use of private architectural firms typically depended on the source of the project's funding. Despite the use of private architects for some projects, specifications for the design of post office buildings were largely standardized, with changes in design seen only at the building facades.²⁰

Many small post office buildings constructed during this period were designed in a simplified Classical style without any ornamentation or in the Colonial Revival style. These styles were selected to reflect the strength and ideals of the federal government.

By 1938, a larger post office building was needed in Des Plaines. The new post office building was constructed in 1940 at 622 Graceland Avenue, across the street from the previous building.

In 1939, during federal government reorganization, the Public Buildings Administration was created as part of the Federal Works Agency (FWA) to oversee the construction of new federal buildings. From 1940 through 1942, hundreds of small post offices were constructed across the country. Design of these buildings generally followed the increasingly standardized plans developed by the FWA, although they differed stylistically. Eligible building sites were selected at the federal level, after interviews and consultation with the local postmaster. Needs of the building were identified and the contract was typically awarded to the lowest bidder. One percent of the budget was allocated for art for the building, the procurement of which was overseen by the Treasury Department Section of Fine Arts.²¹

The former Des Plaines post office building completed in 1940 is representative of the small post office buildings constructed during the late 1930s and early 1940s, with a public lobby separated from a workroom, and additional offices.

Louis Adolphe Simon

Louis Adolphe Simon (1867–1958) served as Supervising Architect of the United States, within the Department of the Treasury and Federal Works Agency from 1934 through 1941. Simon was promoted to the role after working for twenty years in the Office of the Supervising Architect of

¹⁸ “History of Post Office Construction, 1900–1940,” (Washington, D.C.: United States Postal Service, July 1982), 12–13.

¹⁹ Wolf, “The Des Plaines Post Office (1930).”

²⁰ “History of Post Office Construction, 1900–1940,” 18–19.

²¹ “History of Post Office Construction, 1900–1940,” 25.

the United States Department of the Treasury. Although the position had existed before, with the advent of New Deal policy during the Roosevelt Administration, Simon's role now fell within the Public Works Administration (PWA). The PWA initiated the design and construction of a flurry of new public buildings as part of its effort to provide jobs for the unemployed.²²

When the PWA was dissolved in 1939, Simon's position was shifted to the FWA, but the role and responsibilities remained the same. From 1934 until he retired in 1941, Simon oversaw the design and in some cases construction of hundreds of buildings across the United States—primarily post offices, courthouses, and federal administrative offices. He came to be known for standardizing the design and construction of public buildings across the country by creating “easily extendible plans which could be quickly executed for smaller communities.”²³ These designs could be adapted depending on local styles and purpose, but the buildings designed during Simon's tenure as supervising architect do possess a similar character. The Des Plaines, Illinois, post office is similar in design to the Crawford, Nebraska, post office (circa 1930s); the Eastland, Texas, post office (1936); and the Hutchinson, Minnesota, post office (1940).²⁴

A native of Baltimore, Simon studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and traveled extensively throughout Europe as part of his studies. At the beginning of his career, he briefly had his own architecture office in Baltimore, before joining the Office of the Supervising Architect in Washington in 1896. By 1905, Simon had earned the role of chief of the drafting division. During his lifetime, Simon was involved with such notable projects as the Internal Revenue Service Building in Washington, D.C., the Alaska State Capitol Building in Juneau, and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum in Hyde Park, New York (this project was separately commissioned by Roosevelt and was not completed under the FWA). To complement his extensive career, Simon was also a member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and was named a Fellow in 1937. He also participated in such organizations as the Association of Federal Architects and the American Planning and Civic Association.²⁵

Public art in Post Offices

A notable feature of many New Deal-era post office buildings is the presence of murals, paintings, and sculpture. Artwork was commissioned for inclusion in public buildings as part of the Public Works of Art Program (PWAP), which was established in 1933. Although this program was disbanded in 1934, a new temporary program, the Section of Painting and Sculpture, was established in the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department later the same year and was operated by the former administrators of the PWAP. The Section of Fine Arts, a

²² *Encyclopedia Britannica*, “Works Progress Administration,” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Public-Works-Administration>, accessed December 12, 2023.

²³ “Louis A[ldolphe] [sic] Simon, architect,” *ArchINForm*, <https://www.archinform.net/arch/110623.htm>, accessed December 12, 2023.

²⁴ “Louis A Simon—Supervising Architect Sites,” *Living New Deal*, <https://livingnewdeal.org/designers/louis-a-simon-supervising-architect/>, accessed December 12, 2023.

²⁵ “Louis A[ldolphe] [sic] Simon, architect,” *ArchINForm*, <https://www.archinform.net/arch/110623.htm>, accessed December 12, 2023.

permanent program, was established in 1938. Grant money from the Works Progress Administration financed the art programs.²⁶

Typically, scenes from American history, or of Americans at work and play, were depicted in art developed for New Deal-era public buildings. The goal of the arts programs was to create jobs (as with other New Deal initiatives), but also to make art readily accessible to the general public. Artists were selected through a juried competition process, and themes were usually negotiated by local representatives, unless the commission had been awarded from a submitted work. The input from the public was a key aspect of the program, since “. . . the Treasury Department decided that post offices were a unique location to display art in a permanent sense to people in communities.”²⁷ Records indicate that 1 percent of the budget for post offices was set aside for interior decoration and that the artists were compensated from that budget.²⁸ The murals do not depict everyday life in American during the Depression, but rather the optimism that the New Deal propagated of better times to come. Over 1,600 murals were commissioned by the Treasury Department between 1934 and 1943.²⁹

There are two murals inside the Des Plaines Post Office, both painted by James Michael Newell. Newell was a marine and World War I veteran who studied painting in Paris after his military service. When he returned to the United States following the war, Newell was commissioned by the Potomac Electric Company to paint murals in its offices in Washington, D.C. Newell joined the Public Works of Art Program in 1930s and completed the two murals in the Des Plaines Post Office in 1940.

Scenes including American Indians were a popular subject throughout murals commissioned for inclusion in post office buildings and represent approximately 400 of the 1,600 murals completed and installed in post offices. The scenes typically address European settlers in America and were allegedly intended to capture the “power and awesome responsibility of a nation to define itself.”³⁰

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

The building at 622 Graceland Avenue is a masonry structure, rectangular in plan, with the primary, east facade along the long axis of the building facing Graceland Avenue. At the rear, west facade of the building is a projecting loading dock under an enclosed second level. The projecting portion of the building is of similar overall height to the main building.

²⁶ “History of Post Office Construction, 1900–1940,” (Washington, D.C.: United States Postal Service, July 1982), 21–22.

²⁷ Mark Tobias, “The Story Behind Nebraska’s Post Office Murals,” Nebraska Public Media, April 25, 2013.

²⁸ Patricia Raynor, “Off the Wall: New Deal Post Office Murals,” *Enroute 6* (4), October–December 1997.

²⁹ “To See and be Seen: The American Indian Subject in Post Office Murals from the New Deal Era,” *Indians at the Post Office* (online exhibit), Smithsonian: National Postal Museum, <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/indians-at-the-post-office/introduction>, accessed December 13, 2023.

³⁰ “To See and be Seen: The American Indian Subject in Post Office Murals from the New Deal Era,” from *Indians at the Post Office*.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 86 feet 5 inches long by 60 feet 7 inches wide, with the projecting loading dock measuring 35 feet long by 20 feet 11 inches wide.
2. Foundations: The concrete foundation walls are clad with limestone.
3. Walls: The primary facades of the building are composed of a limestone base and limestone frieze with a low-profile cornice, with cream brick laid in a common bond pattern with a header course every sixth course comprising the field of the wall. The primary, east facade is symmetrical, with a central granite stair flanked by limestone abutments and metal railings. The northeast and southeast corners of the building project slightly from the main facade, providing minor relief in three of the facades. Recessed limestone panels are located below each triple-hung window.

The cornerstone, located on the south end of the east facade, reads as follows:

James A Farley
Postmaster General
John M Carmody
Federal Works Administrator
W Englebert Reynolds
Commissioner of Public Buildings
Louis A Simon
Supervising Architect
Neal A Melick
Supervising Engineer
1940

4. Chimneys: a single brick chimney projects upward from the west side of the building, immediately east of the loading dock.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance is centered on the east elevation. The contemporary wood door has sidelights and two transoms, of which the upper transom displays an ornamental metal grille with a bald eagle at its center. A set of wood doors, each with six-light glazed panel is present at the basement level of both the north and south elevations. A six-light transom is above each set of doors. A single metal door is centered on the west elevation of the loading dock.
 - b. Windows: Typical windows are triple-hung wood windows with six lights per sash. Six line the east elevation, with five each on the north and south elevations, and four on the west elevation. Below each triple-hung window is a six-over-six double hung wood window at the basement level.
Three eight-over-eight double hung wood windows are present on the second floor over the loading dock at the west elevation with two eight-over-eight double hung wood windows at the second floor over the loading dock at both the north and south elevations. The windows typically have limestone sills.
A rectangular clerestory, with openings on each side, rises from the center of the low-slope roof at the center of the building, providing daylight to the central portion of the building.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: A sloped asphalt roof forms hips at the four corners of the building. Additional hips are present above of the projected portion of the facades on the north and south sides of the building, creating a triangular hipped roof at these elevations. All hips terminate around a central low-slope roof that sits lower than the top of the hip roof. A

rectangular clerestory extends upward from the center of the low-slope roof. A low-slope roof is over the two-story projecting loading dock.

- b. Cornice: A decorative limestone cornice, 7-1/2 inches tall, projects from the limestone frieze below and extends along the perimeter of the entire building, continuing to the two-story loading dock. The brick parapet at the loading dock extends upward past the cornice.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The interior of the post office consists of a lobby and conference room along the east side of the building. A large workroom comprises the west portion of the building, with a projecting loading dock centered on the west facade of the building. Within the loading dock is a small toilet room and a staircase to the lower level and the second floor. The main entrance to the former post office is centered on the east facade, which fronts Graceland Avenue. The main entrance of the building leads to a small interior vestibule defined by a wood-frame enclosure. The vestibule is hexagonal in plan. The vestibule leads to an open, double-height space that originally served as the post office lobby. Three openings lead from the lobby to the workroom to the west, with five louvers at the upper portion of the wall above the openings. A small conference room is located to the south of the lobby. A steel-walled vault that opens into the workroom is situated to the south of the conference room. The loading dock projects from the west side of the building and includes a small toilet room at the first floor and stairs leading to the second floor and basement. A small vestibule leads from the workroom to the exterior loading dock.
 - b. Second floor: The second floor of the building extends over the loading dock and consists of a small hall at the top of the stair, with an office to the north and a locker room to the south.
 - c. Basement: The basement is divided into a series of spaces used for storage. One space near the center of the basement has been converted into a photographic darkroom. A mechanical room is present at the northwest corner of the lower level. Two toilet rooms are located along the south side of the lower level.
2. Stairways: A painted concrete stair with metal-tube railing is located in the projecting loading dock at the west side of the building and connects the first floor to the basement and second floor.
 3. Flooring: Terrazzo flooring is present at the lobby, with carpet at the workroom and conference room. It is not known if wood flooring or terrazzo is present below the carpet, though it is unlikely that carpet would historically have been present in the building. The toilet room adjacent to the conference room features hexagonal-shaped tile flooring and a tile base. Wood flooring is present at the second floor hall and office, with hexagonal-shaped tile flooring at the adjacent locker room. Exposed concrete floors are present at the basement.
 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster walls and ceilings are present throughout the building, with stone paneling also present along the lower portion of the east, south, and north walls of the lobby. The locker room features a tile wainscot, hexagonal-shaped tile flooring, and stone partitions between shower stalls. The basement features plaster walls and painted concrete ceilings. Conduit and ductwork are exposed and attached to the basement ceiling.
 5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: At the hexagonal vestibule at the main entrance are multi-light window panels and two door openings. The doors are no longer extant. Interior doors are typically two-panel wood doors with 6-inch-wide decorative trim. The door from the

conference room to the restroom has frosted glass at the upper panel. A double steel door at the steel vault is present behind a wood door that opens into the workroom.

- b. Windows: The interior of the exterior windows at the first floor are painted wood units with 6-inch-wide decorative wood trim. Louvered openings are present at the upper portion of the wall between the lobby and work room. The windows at the basement and second have 3-inch-wide decorative wood trim that is inset from the adjacent plaster walls.
6. Decorative features: Two murals commissioned as part of the initial construction of the building are located in the lobby space. The mural entitled *Conquest of the Prairie Lands* is centered on the east wall of the lobby over the door to the conference room. The mural entitled *The Death of Pere Marquette* is situated over the central opening from the lobby to the workroom to the west, directly opposite the entrance vestibule.

Both murals were painted by James Michael Newell. The mural *The Death of Pere Marquette* depicts Father Marquette dying, surrounded by his fellow French explorers and Native American allies, the latter of whom appear to be invoking a higher being. The mural *Conquest of the Prairie Lands* is thought to depict a scene from the Black Hawk Wars. The scene is a violent encounter between a family of European descent and an American Indian family, in which the pioneer wields a knife against the American Indian.³¹

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation:

The site of 622 Graceland Avenue is defined by Graceland Avenue, Webford Avenue, and the Union Pacific train tracks that run through downtown Des Plaines. The building is set back from the street, with a concrete sidewalk leading to the main entrance on the east side of the building from the public walk along Graceland Avenue. A flagpole is located near the southeast corner of the building. A small parking area is present west of the building.

³¹ “Post Office (Former) Murals,” *Living New Deal*, <https://livingnewdeal.org/sites/old-post-office-murals-des-plaines-il/>, accessed January 2, 2023.

PART III: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views:



Postcard of Des Plaines Post Office building, circa 1940, view from southeast. Note the cupola at the roof over the main entrance. Source: Des Plaines History Center, object number 2009-25-46.



Postcard of Des Plaines Post Office building, circa 1940s, view from northeast. Note the cupola at the roof over the main entrance. Source: Des Plaines History Center, object number 1992-78-19.



Postcard of Des Plaines Post Office building, circa 1940s, view from northeast. Note the cupola at the roof over the main entrance. Source: Des Plaines History Center, object number P454.



Postcard of Des Plaines Post Office building, circa 1940s, view from northeast. Note the cupola at the roof over the main entrance. Source: Des Plaines History Center, object number P2681.



Postcard of Des Plaines Post Office building, circa 1948, view from east. Note the cupola at the roof over the main entrance. Source: Des Plaines History Center, object number 1993-1-5.



Postcard of Des Plaines Post Office building, 1949, view from southeast. Note the cupola at the roof over the main entrance. Source: Des Plaines History Center, object number P2682.



Postcard of Des Plaines Post Office building, 1960, view from east. Note the cupola at the roof over the main entrance. Source: Des Plaines History Center, object number P3858.



View of former Des Plaines Post Office building from Ellinwood Avenue, 1974, view from east. Note that the cupola above the main entrance is no longer extant. Source: Des Plaines History Center, object number P494.



View of former Des Plaines Post Office building from Ellinwood Avenue, 1975, view from east.
Source: Des Plaines History Center, object number P3702.



View of former Des Plaines Post Office building with railroad tracks in foreground, circa 1970s,
view from northeast. Note that the cupola above the main entrance is no longer extant. Source:
Des Plaines History Center, object number 2000-34-4-1.



Aerial view of former Des Plaines Post Office building, circa 1996. Note the clerestory is visible at the center of the building. Source: Des Plaines History Center, object number 1996-40-38.



Aerial view of former Des Plaines Post Office building, undated. Note the clerestory is visible at the center of the building. Source: Des Plaines History Center, object number P4440.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Photographs, Des Plaines History Center Archives.

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Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Chicago, Cook County, Illinois. Sanborn Map Company, Vol. A, 1924. Map, https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn01790_068/, accessed December 2023.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Des Plaines, Cook County, Illinois. Sanborn Map Company, 1956. Map, https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn01824_001/, accessed December 2023.

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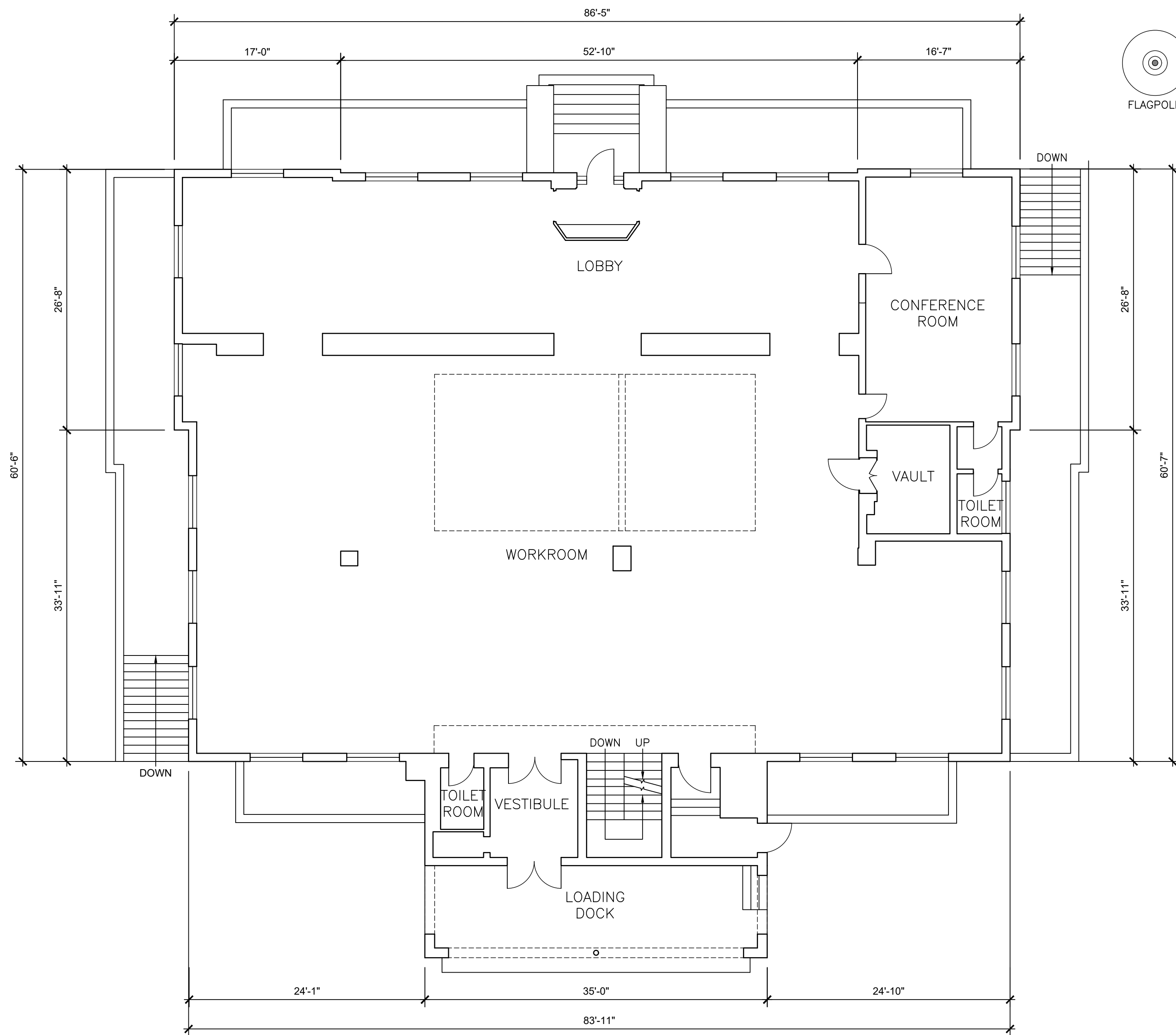
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PART IV. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

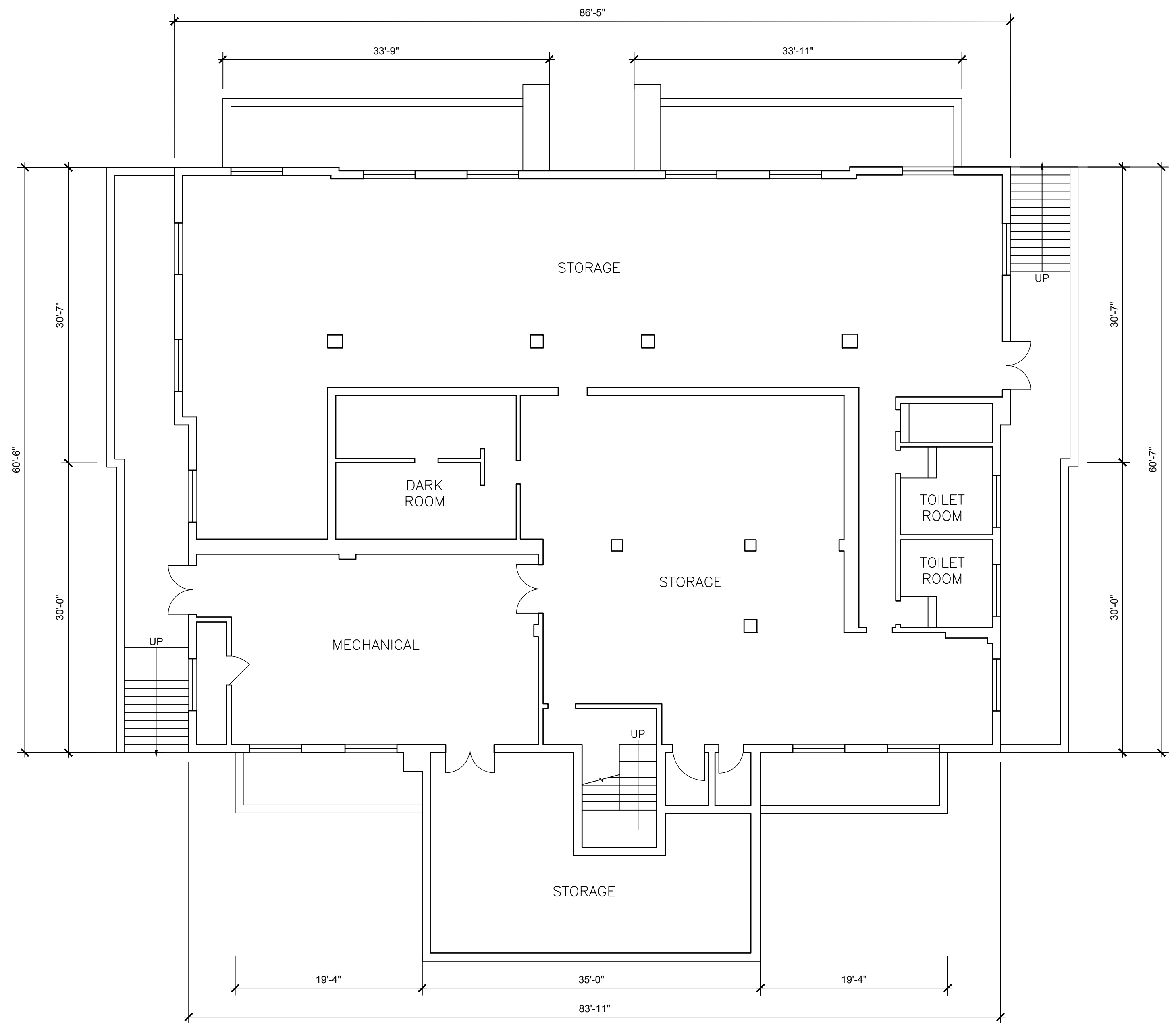
- A. Research Strategy: Review available documents and information at local archives and repositories, as well as online resources.
- B. Actual Research Process: Visit local archives including Des Plaines History Center and Des Plaines Public Library and supplement material with online research.
- C. Archives and Repositories Used: Des Plaines History Center, Des Plaines, Illinois; Des Plaines Public Library, Des Plaines, Illinois; Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (online)
- D. Research Staff:
 - 1. Primary Preparer: Timothy Penich, Senior Associate, Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.
 - 2. Photographer: Leslie Schwartz, Photographer, Leslie Schwartz Photography
 - 3. Delineator: Josh Hakimian, Associate II, Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.
 - 4. Additional Staff: Deborah Slaton, Principal, Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.; Cray Kennedy, Administrative Associate III, Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.; and Heather Kneezel, Associate III, Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.

PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION:

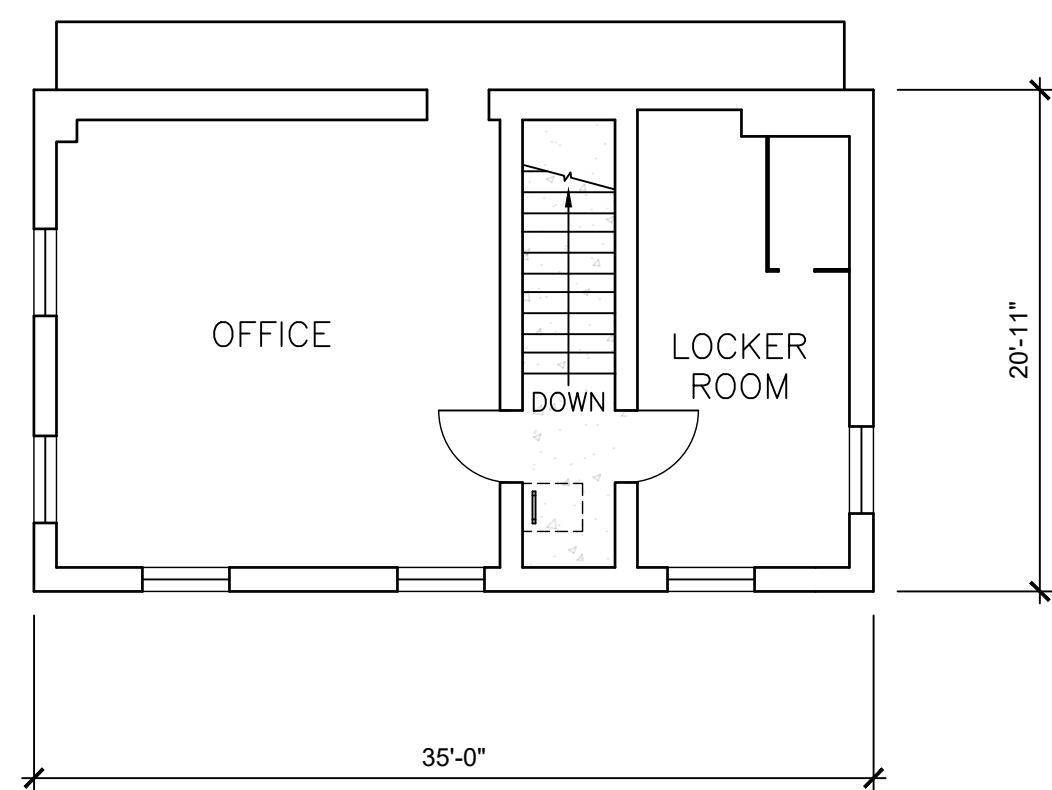
The HIBS documentation for 622 Graceland Avenue was completed on behalf of Mylo Residential Graceland Property LLC to fulfill mitigative requirements outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement between the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office, and in accordance with the Illinois State Agency Historic Resources Preservation Act [20 ILCS 3420/1 et seq] and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.



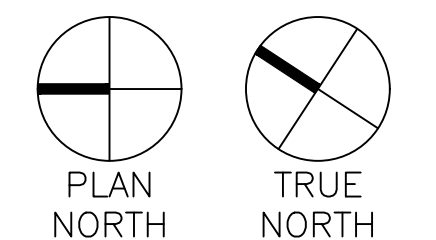
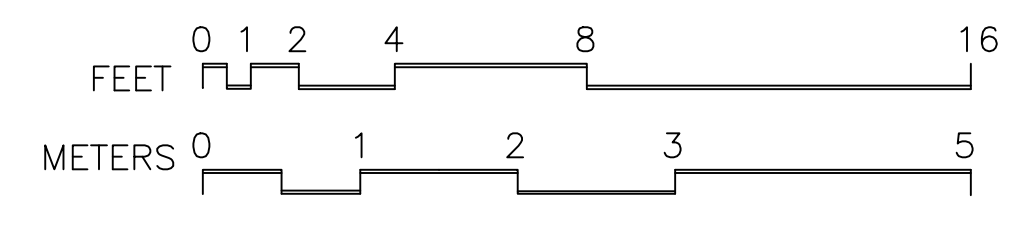
FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"



LOWER LEVEL FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"



UPPER LEVEL FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"



HISTORIC ILLINOIS BUILDINGS SURVEY

INDEX OF PHOTOGRAPHS

622 Graceland Avenue, Des Plaines, Illinois

HIBS No. CK-2024-1

Leslie Schwartz, Photographer, February 2024

CK-2024-1-1	EAST ELEVATION, LOOKING NORTHWEST
CK-2024-1-2	SOUTH ELEVATION, LOOKING NORTHEAST
CK-2024-1-3	WEST ELEVATION, LOOKING SOUTHEAST
CK-2024-1-4	NORTH ELEVATION, LOOKING SOUTHWEST
CK-2024-1-5	NORTHEAST CORNER OF BUILDING, WITH RAILROAD TRACKS IN FOREGROUND, LOOKING SOUTHWEST
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CK-2024-1-7	SOUTHWEST CORNER OF BUILDING, LOOKING NORTHEAST
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CK-2024-1-19	<i>CONQUEST OF THE PRAIRIE LANDS</i> , LOBBY, LOOKING SOUTH
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JOURNAL & TOPICS

ONE WAY
←











ONE
WAY
←

COOPERATORS



JOURNAL & TOPICS



JOUR



A black and white photograph of a brick building's corner. The upper portion is made of brick, while the lower portion is a smooth, light-colored material, possibly concrete or plaster, which shows signs of wear and peeling. A dark metal handrail runs diagonally across the corner. In the foreground, a set of concrete stairs leads up to the building. To the left, a doorway is visible with a small window above it. A utility box is mounted on the wall above the door. On the right, a rectangular plaque is mounted on the brickwork, containing text in all caps. The background shows a narrow alleyway and another building.

JAMES A. BARLEW
REPRESENTATIVE GENERAL
JOHN W. CARROLL
EDITOR ALBANY ADVERTISER
W. INGLETT, ATTORNEY
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC WORKS
GEO. A. TOWN
MANAGING DIRECTOR
MRS. A. W. WELLS
ASSOCIATING DIRECTOR
1912

JAMES A FARLEY

POSTMASTER GENERAL

JOHN M CARMODY

FEDERAL WORKS ADMINISTRATOR

W ENGLEBERT REYNOLDS

COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS

LOUIS A SIMON

SUPERVISING ARCHITECT

NEAL A MELICK

SUPERVISING ENGINEER

1940





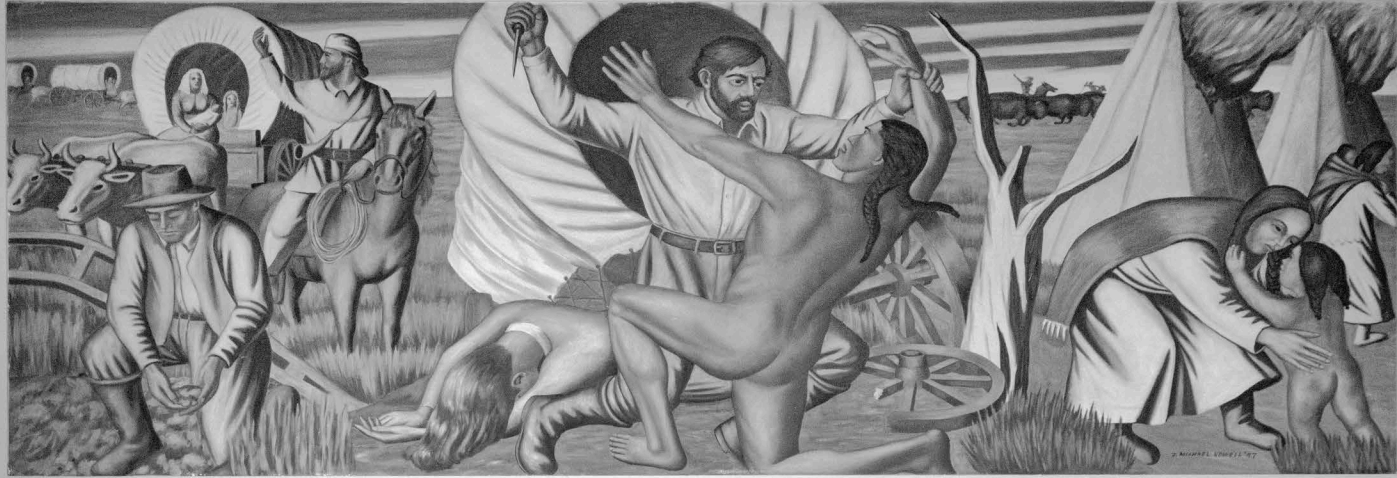












DO NOT FILE

