

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION  
JANUARY 25, 2016  
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS  
HDP-2015-1037  
3108 GRANDVIEW STREET**

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**PROPOSAL**

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Demolish a ca. 1913 house.

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**ARCHITECTURE**

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One-story, rectangular-plan, front-gabled brick house with a palm-plastered exterior applied over the brick; partial-width front-gabled independent porch on monumental brick piers; single and paired 6:6 fenestration. The house is built into the slope of a hill, and has a basement level at the rear not readily discernible from the street.

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**RESEARCH**

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The house appears to have been built around 1913. The first people associated with the house are Charles E. Wood, a teamster, and Louise Jenkins, a widow. Little more is known about these two people, who lived here until around 1915. Clarence M. Crawford, a driver for a clothes cleaner, was the next resident of the house; he lived here until around 1917. The house was then rented by Thurston and Minnie Cloud until around 1919, followed by David and Hallie Preece until around 1921, and finally by Charles and Mary McCracken until around 1923. Thurston Cloud was a driver for the City Street Department, David Preece was a farm foreman for the Texas School for the Blind (who appears in the 1920 U.S. Census as resident on the school site), and Charles McCracken had no occupation listed in the city directory.

From around 1923 until around 1970, the house was owned and occupied by Ben and Maude Leifeste. Ben Leifeste was a native Texan who had been living in St. Petersburg, Florida where he was a brick mason for a contractor doing government work. He returned to Austin around 1920, and was living with his widowed sister, Dora Lang, on Pearl Street, before moving into this house. He was divorced at that time, and had 4 children of his own, all of whom had been born in Florida. By the time he moved into this house around 1923, he was married again; he and Maude raised 3 more daughters in this house.

Ben Leifeste was a brick mason by trade, and also a plasterer. There is no proof available at this time, but it could be that the palm plastering applied over the original brick walls of this house were his work. His sons, Herbert, and Homer, are listed as plasterers in the 1927 city directory, while Ben is listed as a bricklayer. He later listed his occupation as a plaster contractor in city directories. Leifeste had his business office here at the house, so it would be likely that he plastered the exterior of the house to advertise his trade and skill. Palm plastering was an art of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, where the plaster was applied by hand rather than by a tool, and gave a deeply articulated finish noted for its artistry and its texture. Although primarily applied as an interior finish, palm plastering was also used on exterior walls. This house represents possibly the only example of the artistic and exterior application of palm plastering in the city.

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**STAFF COMMENTS**

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The house is not listed in any City survey.

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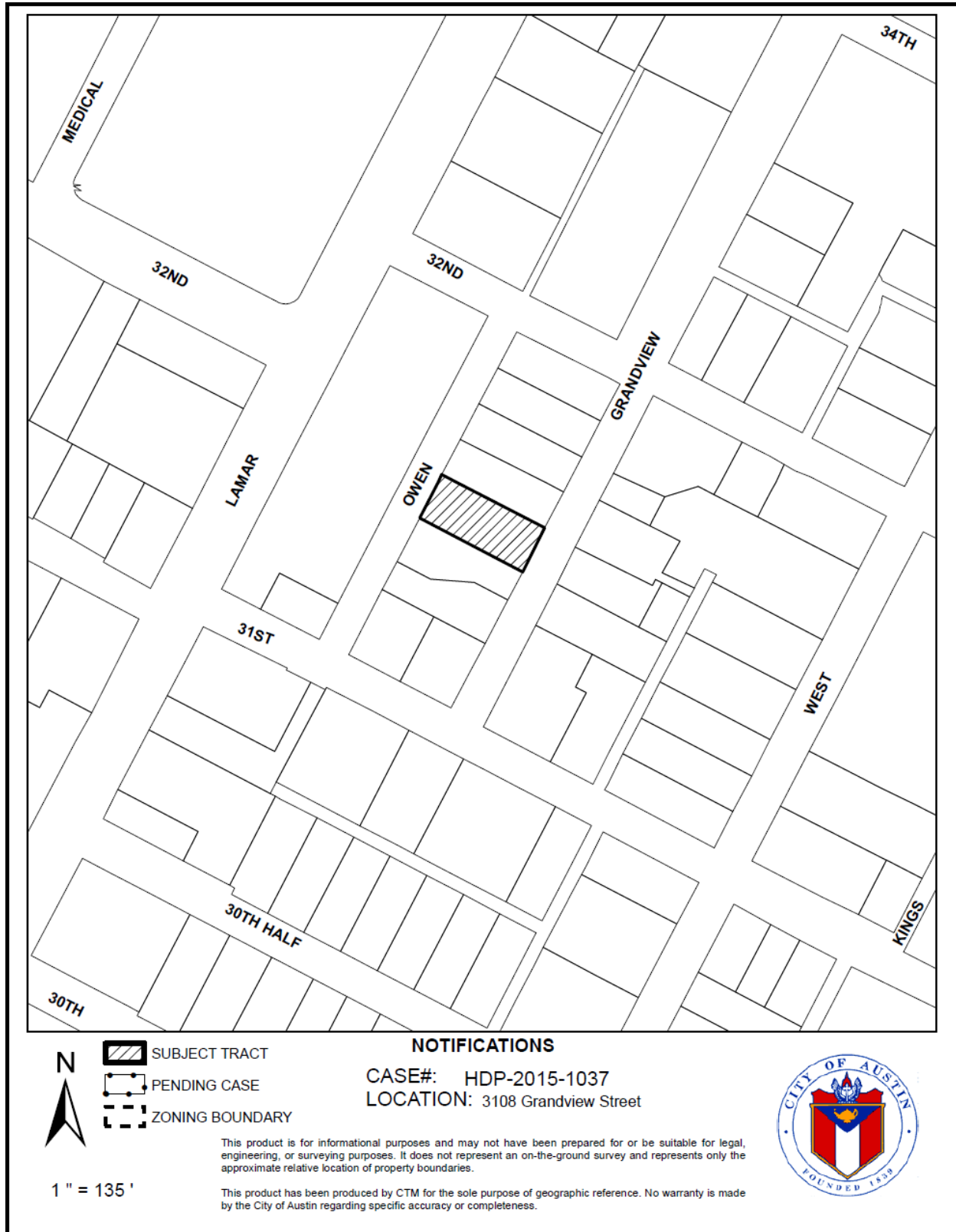
**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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Staff still believes that this house qualifies as a historic landmark for its architecture and its historical associations, but due to the structural condition of the house, based upon the

applicants' attached reports, staff must acknowledge that it is neither feasible nor prudent to preserve and restore the house. Staff must therefore very reluctantly recommend release of the permit upon completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package, consisting of photographs of all elevations, a dimensioned sketch plan, and a narrative history, for archiving at the Austin History Center. Staff further recommends that the applicants continue to consider and evaluate the preservation of at least a portion of the house evidencing the artistic plastering associated with Ben Leifeste in any new construction on the site.

## LOCATION MAP





3108 Grandview Street  
ca. 1913







Details of the palm-plastered exterior of the house

## OCCUPANCY HISTORY 3108 Grandview Street

City Directory Research, Austin History Center  
By City Historic Preservation Office  
December, 2015

1992	A:	No return
	B:	Mandy L. McClure, renter No occupation listed NOTE: The directory indicates that Mandy L. McClure was a new resident at this address.
	C:	Gregory H. Ward, renter No occupation listed
1985-86	A:	Cindy Pitts, renter Student

NOTE: The directory indicates that Cindy Pitts was a new resident at this address.

B: Bill Barminski, renter  
Student

NOTE: The directory indicates that Bill Barminski was a new resident at this address.

1981	Pete Cyr, renter Student
1977	Robert Zinkle, renter No occupation listed
1973	David and Judy Gray, renters No occupation listed NOTE: The directory indicates that David and Judy Gray were new residents at this address.
1968	Maude Leifeste, owner Widow, Benjamin C. Leifeste Retired
1962	Maude Leifeste, owner Widow, Benjamin C. Leifeste No occupation listed
1959	Mary Leifeste, owner Widow, Benjamin C. Leifeste No occupation listed Also listed is Maud Leifeste, a nurse.
1955	Benjamin C. Leifeste, owner No occupation listed NOTE: Neither Maude nor Mary Leifeste are listed in the directory.
1952	Benjamin and Maude Leiffeste, owners Contractor (office at the house)
1949	Benjamin C. and Maude Leifeste, owners Contractor (office at the house)
1947	Benjamin C. and Maud L. Leifeste, owners Contractor (office at the house) NOTE: The house is listed as 3110 Grandview Street.
1944-45	Benjamin C. and Maude Leifeste, owners Contractor (office at the house) Also listed is Margaret E. Leifeste, a clerk at E.M. Scarbrough & Sons, department store, 6 <sup>th</sup> Street and Congress Avenue.
1941	Benjamin C. and Maude Leifeste, owners Contractor (office at the house)

Also listed are Margaret E. Leifeste, a student; Jocelyn I. Leifeste, a student; and W. Russell and Inez M. Buzbee. W. Russell Buzbee was an electrician; Inez M. Buzbee was a milliner.

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|---------|---|
| 1939    | Benjamin and Maude Leifeste, owners<br>Plaster contractor   |
| 1937    | Benjamin C. and Maude Leifeste, owners<br>No occupation listed<br>Also listed is Leonard J. Leifeste, a student at the University of Texas.   |
| 1935    | Benjamin C. and Maude Leifeste, owners<br>Plasterer   |
| 1932-33 | Benjamin C. and Maude Leifeste, owners<br>Plasterer   |
| 1930-31 | Benjamin C. and Maude Leifeste, owners<br>Contractor<br>Also listed are A. Stewart and Anita Higgins; he was an engineer.   |
| 1929    | Benjamin C. and Maud Leifeste, owners<br>Plasterer  |
| 1927    | Benjamin C. and Maud Leifeste, owners.<br>Bricklayer<br>Also listed are Herbert Leifeste, a plasterer; and Homer Leifeste, a plasterer.   |
| 1924    | Benjamin C. and Maud Leifeste, owners<br>Contractor<br>Also listed are Herbert Leifeste, a plasterer; and Homer Leifeste, a plasterer.  |
| 1922    | M. Charles and Mary McCracken, renters<br>No occupation listed<br>NOTE: Benjamin C. and Maud Leifeste are not listed in the directory.  |
| 1920    | David W. and Hallie Preece, renters<br>Farmer, Texas School for the Blind   |
| 1918    | G. Thurston and Minnie Cloud, renters<br>Driver, City Street Department   |
| 1916    | Clarence M. Crawford<br>Driver, Leonard Baker, clothes cleaner, 3911 Guadalupe Street.  |
| 1914    | Charles E. Wood<br>Teamster<br>Also listed is Mrs. Louise Jenkins, the widow of Tillman Jenkins; she had no occupation shown.   |
| 1912-13 | The street is not listed in the directory.<br>NOTE: Charles E. Wood is not listed in the directory. There is a listing for a Charles E. Wood in the 1910-11 directory; he was a huckster living on the east side of S. 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street near Gibson Street in the Bouldin Addition of South Austin. |

NOTE: Louise Jenkins is not listed in the directory.

# **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:**

## **David W. and Hallie Preece (ca. 1919 - ca. 1921)**

David W. and Hallie Preece appear in the 1920 U.S. Census for the Texas School for the Blind. David W. Preece was 48, had been born in Texas, and was the foreman of the farm for the School for the Blind. Hallie Preece was 36, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had 4 children: Richard, 14; Hattie, 11; Katherine, 9; and Lenora, 8. All the children had been born in Texas.

## **Benjamin and Maude Leifeste (ca. 1923 – ca. 1970)**

His 1918 World War I draft registration card shows Benjamin Charles Leifeste living in St. Petersburg Florida. He was a bricklayer doing government work. He was of medium height and medium build, had blue eyes and grey hair.

The 1920 U.S. Census shows Ben C. Leifeste living with his sister, Dora Lang, a widow, at 2915 Pearl Street in Austin, a house she owned. Ben C. Leifeste was a 43, had been born in Texas, and was divorced. He was a brick mason. He had 4 children: Hazel, 19, a stenographer in an office; Herbert, 17, a delivery boy for a grocery store; Stella, 15; and Homer, 13. All of the children had been born in Florida.

The 1930 U.S. Census shows Ben C. and Maude S. Leifeste at this house, which is noted as 3110 Grandview Street. They owned the house, which was worth \$7,000. Ben C. Leifeste was 53, had been born in Texas, and was a plasterer in the building trades. Maude S. Leifeste was 40, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had 3 daughters: Margaret, 6; Frances, 4; and Betty, 2.

Ben and Maude Leifeste appear in the 1940 U.S. Census as the owners of this house. Ben Leifeste is listed as a bricklayer in building construction. Maude Leifeste had no occupation listed. With them lived their daughters, Margaret, 16, Frances, 14, and Betty Jo, 13. None of the girls had an occupation listed.

The 1940 U.S. Census also shows another family as renters at this address: William and Inez Buzbee, and their 2 children, Jocelyn and Jack. William Buzbee was 44, had been born in Texas, and was an electrician for the LCRA. Inez Buzbee was 38, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. Jocelyn Buzbee was 17; Jack Buzbee was 14. Both had been born in Texas and neither had an occupation listed.

His 1957 death certificate shows that Ben C. Leifeste was born in Texas in 1875 and worked as a brick mason. He was living at this house at the time of his death at the age of 81.



**BEN C. LEIFESTE**

Ben C. Leifeste, 81, a resident of 3108 Grandview, died in a local hospital Saturday. He was a retired Austin contractor and a member of University Methodist Church. He was a veteran of the Spanish-American War and had been a resident of Austin 40 years.

Survivors include his wife; one son, Herbert C. Leifeste of Houston; a step-son, Buford Royce of Houston; five daughters, Mrs. C. M. Statler of Laredo, Mrs. Mal-lord Kutch of Houston, Mrs. John L. Skeen of Austin, Mrs. Wallace Guess of Austin and Mrs. Noral N. Moore of San Antonio; a step-daughter, Mrs. Thyra White of Austin; 3 brothers, Irving Leifeste and Fred Leifeste, both of St. Petersburg, Fla., Leonard Leifeste of San Francisco; one sister, Mrs. Carrie Lehmberg of Kerrville; and 10 grandchildren.

Funeral services are tentatively set for 2 p.m. Monday at Hyltin-Manor Funeral Home. Burial will be in Austin Memorial Park.

Obituary of Ben C. Leifeste  
Austin American-Statesman, April 28, 1957

**LEIFESTE, Mrs. Maude Loretta**, 89, 21 Waller, died Sunday. Services 1:30 p.m. today at Hyltin-Manor Funeral Chapel. Burial, Austin Memorial Park. Survivors: daughters, Mrs. Thyla White of Austin, Mrs. Margaret Kutch of Pearland, Mrs. Frances Odem of Tomball; sister, Miss Mae Florida of Austin; eight grandchildren; six great-grandchildren.

Obituary of Maude Leifeste  
Austin American-Statesman, December 11, 1979

**TK CONSULTING ENGINEERS**  
**7621 SPICEWOOD SPRINGS ROAD**  
**AUSTIN, TEXAS 78759**  
**512-219-1574**  
**tom@tkaustin.com**

Bart Sherman

December 4, 2015

Re: 3108 Grandview / TK # 15215

Dear Bart,

Per your request I visited this site on December 3, 2015 in order to determine the adequacy of the existing structure / building. I made the following Observations:

I measured the Floor Elevations and noted the floor is 2.40 " out of level. Remedial Foundation work is required to relevel the floor.

Deterioration of the wood framing and wood flooring from insect infiltration and "rot" was observed at multiple locations.

Several of the walls are constructed with "rubble" brick masonry and a lime rich mortar. Numerous cracks were observed. At one location a steel rod had been previously installed between masonry walls near a corner to keep the walls from separating totally from the building.

The site slopes downward from the front to the back. The lower level is mostly below grade. Evidence of significant / consistent water infiltration was observed in the lower level floor and walls below grade.


The exterior wall finish is a cement based stucco with numerous cracks which have allowed water to infiltrate the perimeter walls. The presence of mold growth within the exterior walls is high.

All secondary features such as windows, insulation, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing do not meet current codes.

Based on all the above issues, it is our professional recommendation to entirely remove the existing building and reconstruct a completely new building to current codes.

Please call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Thomas W. Kam', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Thomas W. Kam P.E.

Note: This report is based on and limited to the Observations noted. This is "not" a guarantee. Additional deficiencies may exist which may require remedial work in the future.



*[Handwritten signature]*  
DEC 9, 2015

**TK CONSULTING ENGINEERS**  
**7621 SPICEWOOD SPRINGS ROAD**  
**AUSTIN, TEXAS 78759**  
**512-219-1574**  
**tom@tkaustin.com**

Bart Sherman  
Robert Kelly

December 29, 2015

Re: 3108 Grandview / TK # 15215

Dear Bart / Robert,

Per your request I revisited this site on December 21, 2015 in order to document the deficiencies of the existing structure / building. I made the following Observations: Refer to photos **P1** to **P14**.

**I] MAIN BUILDING:**

1] Foundation: At the time of my initial visit in early December I measured the Floor Elevations and noted the floor is 2.40 " out of level. Significant Remedial Foundation work is required to relevel the floor and / resupport the foundation. Numerous cracks and patching was observed in the interior and exterior plaster / stucco. There are numerous plate washers on the back wall and a visible diagonal rod visible in the upper level northwest room connecting the west and north walls. These appear to have been installed to keep the masonry walls in place given the movement in the foundation below.

2] Drainage: The grade at the front / east end of the building is at the upper level and the grade at the west end is at the lower level. Evidence of moisture infiltration was observed in the floor and walls at the lower level.

3] Moisture Infiltration: There is a perceptible pungent odor in the building indicating the presence of mold. The perimeter exterior walls are constructed of solid brick masonry with no steel reinforcing, no moisture membrane or gap between the interior and exterior finishes. Moisture is being transmitted and trapped within the walls. Deterioration of the embedded wood framing and wood flooring from insect infiltration and "rot" was observed at multiple locations. All wood needs to be replaced.

**II] GARAGE:**

1] Roof: The metal roof has curled up at many locations. Several roof rafter on the south side of the roof have failed. With continued exposure to weather I anticipate that the entire roof will collapse with a short period of time [months]

2] Floor: Portions of the floor are constructed of wood framing and have experienced significant deterioration. Complete replacement will be required.

3] Walls The lower sections of the perimeter walls are exposed and are severely deteriorated from water intrusion. A significant portion of the exterior walls, including the stucco, will have to be removed and replaced. The east wall is acting as a retaining wall with the high grade. A retaining wall shall be installed across the east side of the Garage.

### III] MISC.:

1] Stairs: The current stair well is too narrow to reconstruct a new stair to current code requirements. Significant demolition and reconstruction of the interior framing will be required.

2] Windows: Most of the wood windows are severely deteriorated, are single pane, and do not meet current code requirements.

3] Electrical and Plumbing: Almost all of the visible interior Electrical, Water Supply, and Wastewater lines are improper and / or severely deteriorated and need complete replacement:

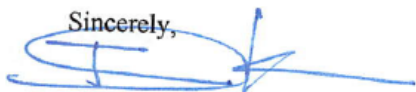
4] Mechanical / Insulation : None was observed.

Based on all the above issues, our prior professional recommendation remains. It is in the best interest of all parties that this entire structure be completely removed and no portion of it be reused except for crushed, concrete, bricks and stucco used as a compacted non-organic fill / backfill material

It is our understanding that some design features of the Exterior stucco have historical interest. It will not be possible to save any of the existing installation however, the style / desirable features can be easily be replicated in any replacement building.

Please call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Thomas W. Kam P.E.

Note: This report is based on and limited to the Observations noted. This is "not" a guarantee. Additional deficiencies may exist which may require remedial work in the future.







P1 / FRONT ELEVATION

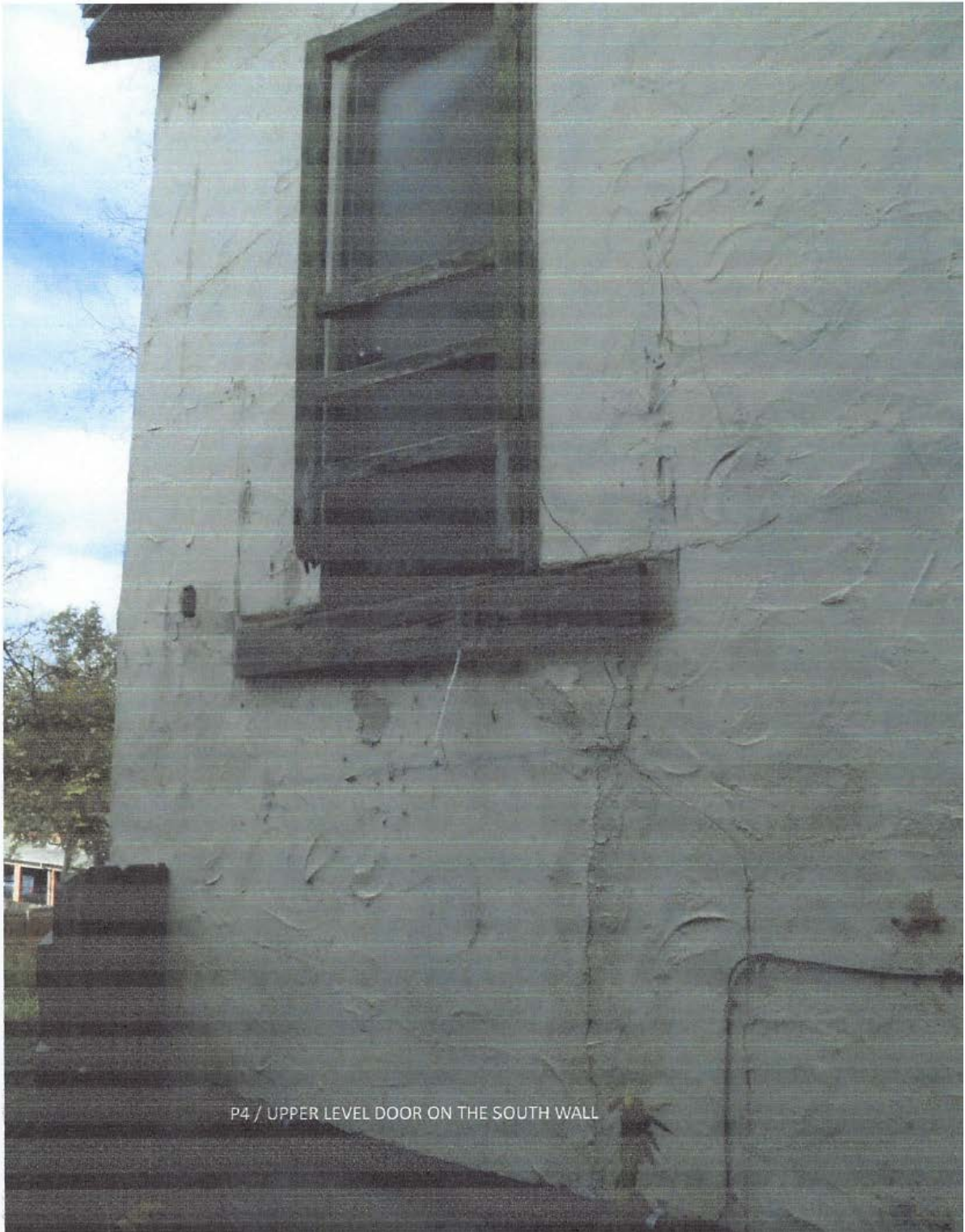


P2 SOUTH WALL ELEVATION





P3 / LOWER LEVEL WINDOW AT SOUTH WALL



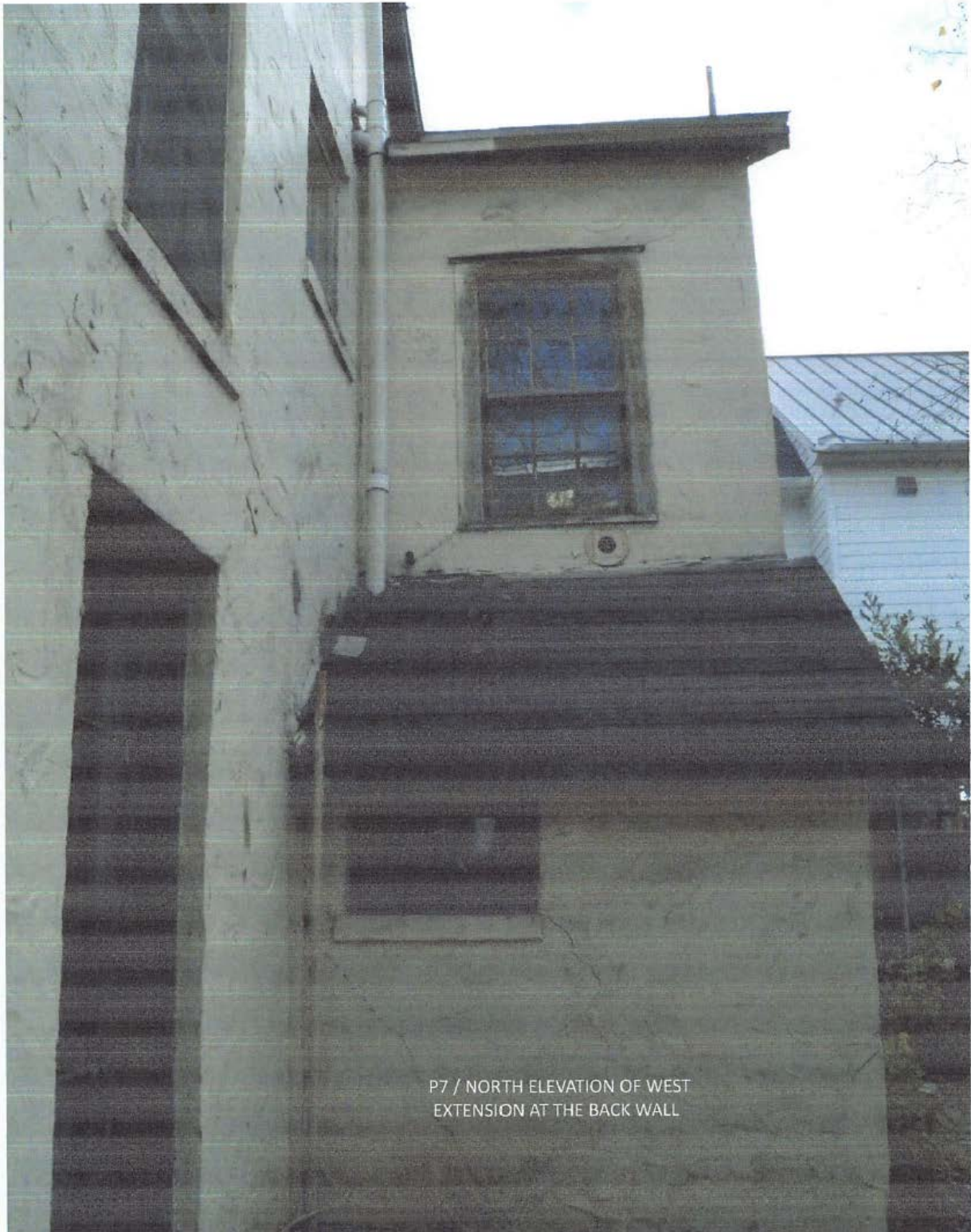
P4 / UPPER LEVEL DOOR ON THE SOUTH WALL











P7 / NORTH ELEVATION OF WEST  
EXTENSION AT THE BACK WALL





P8 / EVIDENCE OF TERMITE  
INFESTATION IN THE INTERIOR WOOD



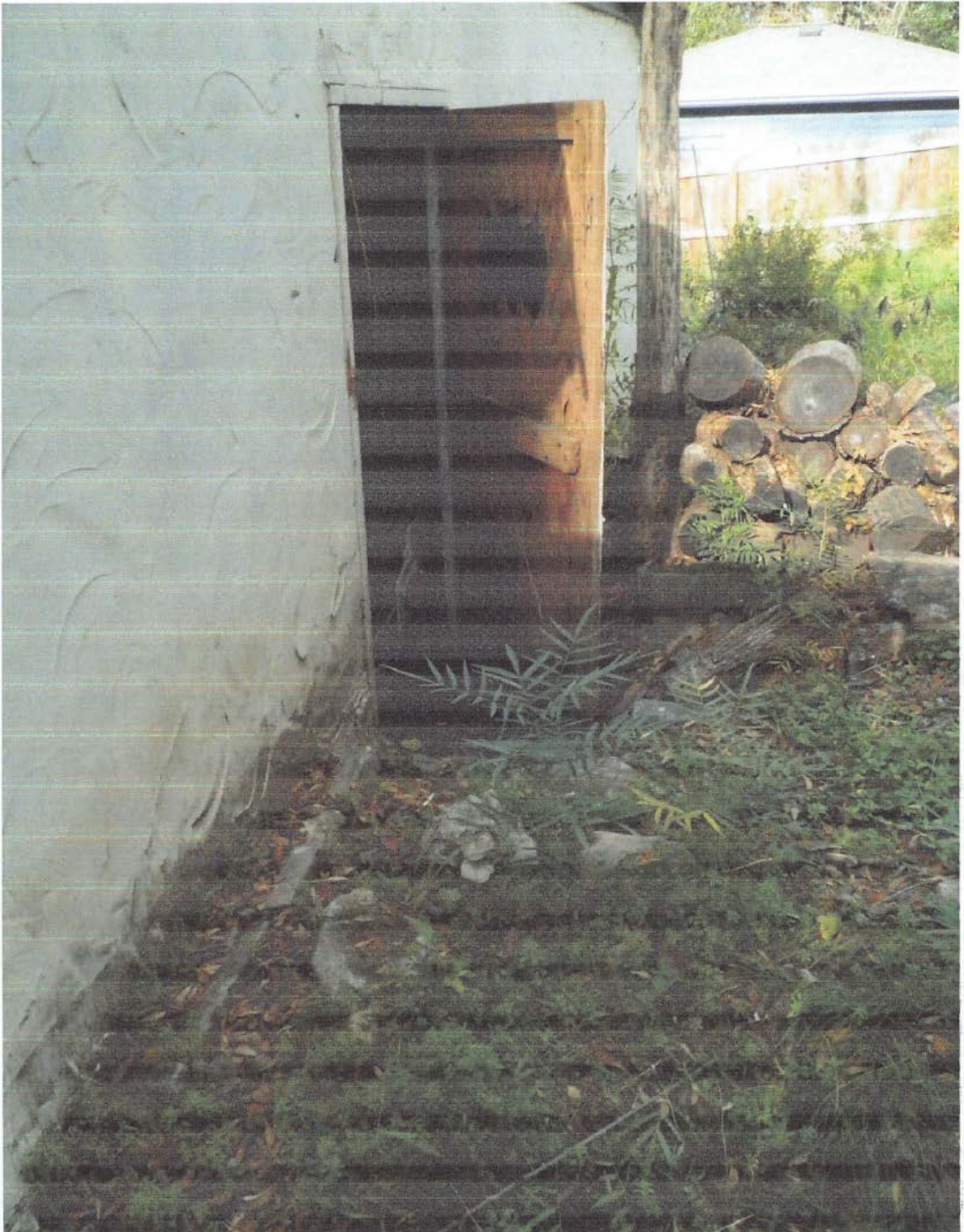
P9 / WATER INFILTRATION AT THE  
GROUND LEVEL FLOOR





P10 / SOUTHEAST CORNER OF THE GARAGE ROOF





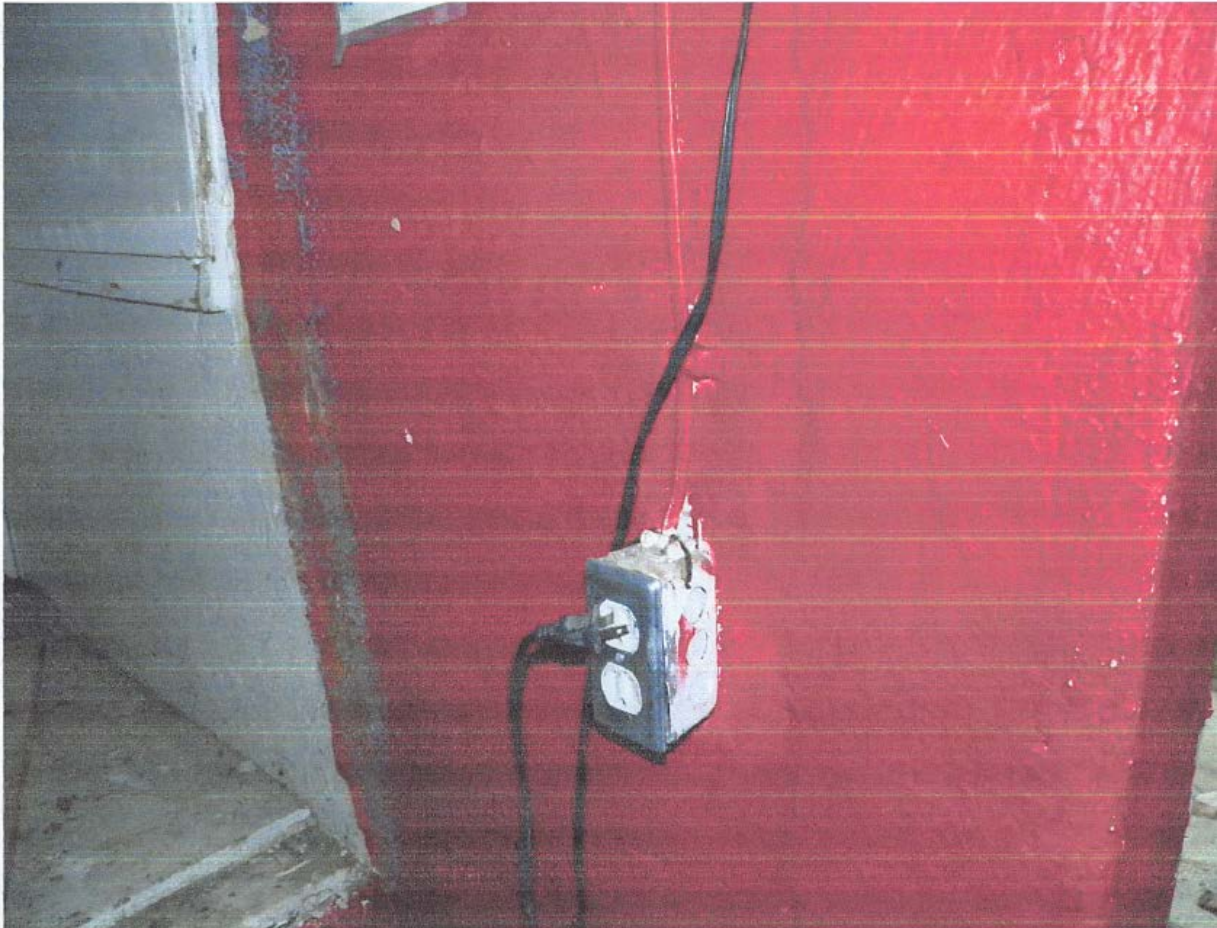


P12 / GARAGE FLOOR AT EAST ENTRY





P13 / LOWER SECTION OF NORTH GARAGE WALL



P14 / IMPROPER ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION

Steve,

I received your voicemail yesterday and wanted to forward you the attached engineers report regarding the condition of the existing structure at 3108 Grandview.

I have done my best to preserve the existing property, but due to the extremely poor condition, I cannot make remodeling the current building work in a realistic budget.

I respectfully request that you approve the application for our demolition permit.

Also, please let this serve as formal opposition to any historic zoning of the property.

Sincerely,

Bart Sherman  
Robert Kelly