

Coolot Building
812 J Street
Sacramento
Sacramento County
California

HABS
CAL
34-SAC,
66-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

**Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94107**

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

COOLOT BUILDING

HABS No. CA-2726

HABS
CAL
34-SAC,
66-

Location: 812 J Street, in the City of Sacramento,
Sacramento County, California
~~Easting. Northing. Zone~~
~~USGS:~~

Present Owner: Ingemanson Enterprises

Present Occupant: None

Present Use: Vacant. Building has been damaged by fire and water.

Significance: The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, primarily based upon the surface of the façade faced with tiles created by master Arts & Crafts terra cotta tile maker, Ernest Batchelder of Pasadena.

Part 1: Historical Information

A: Physical History

Date of construction: 1861

1. **Architect/Designer:** original architect not known. Later remodels were by Nathaniel Goodell (1885) and Starks & Flanders (1928).
2. **Original and subsequent owners:** Anthony Coolot was the original owner. He and his family lived on the second floor of the building and ran a notion business out of the first floor store from 1861 until 1888. At that time, the family moved to a nearby rooming house. Coolot continued to own and operate the store until his death in 1900. After that it passed to his daughter Clara Diepenbrock. She rented the building out until 1928, when it became the property and home of the Hickman & Coleman Real Estate Company. The building was sold in 1977 to Dan Malicott who had it remodeled into offices for lawyer tenants. Malicott lost the building in the early 1990s and in 1993 it was sold at auction to Dean Ingemanson, who owns the property at present.
3. **Builder/Contractor:** not known
4. **Original Plans and Construction:** no original plans available

5. Alterations and additions

B. Exterior Alterations:

The building was first constructed in 1861 and it was two stories in height with a residence on the second floor and a store on the first floor. The building was 20' wide and extended back about 60'. The street levels in Sacramento were raised 10' to eliminate flooding in the early 1870s. In 1872 Coolot modified his building accordingly, the former first floor with its store front became the basement, the second floor became the new street level store, and a new second story was added. There was an addition made at the rear that extended to about 34' in depth and a height of 18'.

In 1885, Coolot had architect Nathaniel Goodell put a new, more decorative facade on the building at the first and second floor levels. The building continued to be used as a store until after Coolot's death in 1900. Between 1902-1920 it was used primarily as a saloon. In the 1920s it housed women's clothing stores and there were probably minor changes in the exterior at the front to reflect these uses. In 1928 the building was purchased by the Hickman & Coleman Real Estate Company, and the building was remodeled inside and out by architects Starks & Flanders as offices for the real estate and investment companies. The building had a new front which included the application of decorative Ernest Batchelder tiles. The building was then further extended almost the full 160' depth of the lot, to the alley in the rear. The side walls had no window openings except for the last 60' at the rear, because the east and west elevations of the front two-thirds of the building were adjoined by other buildings. The store front remained the same as it was in 1928 until it was converted to use as a series of bank branches in the mid 1950s through 1970s. Changes were made to the store front to accommodate a nighttime deposit box on the west side of the façade, and the entry door was moved from the west side to the center. Changes also took place to the store windows.

While there was a major remodel in the early 1980s for law offices, the exterior did not change much at that time and the store front façade is essentially the same as it was during the bank era from the mid 1950s to 1970s, with the exception of the glass, which has been broken out and boarded up, and possible changes to the frieze between the first and second floors. The "Batchelder tile" is still in place in the first and second stories and two small decorative wrought iron grills, meant to simulate balconies below the second floor windows, that were installed in 1928, were removed sometime during the bank era. The rear elevation and the east and west walls at the last 60' remain unchanged since their construction in 1928. The front 100' on either side is now visible due to the removal of buildings on either side. The first store front is still in place beneath the sidewalk, although the original metal shutters have been removed from the entry doors, and windows and doors are boarded-up.

C. Interior Alterations:

The first notable changes to the interior occurred in 1872 soon after the street levels were raised in 1869-70. The first floor store became a basement storage area and the second floor residence became a street level store. A new third floor was added. In

1889, the Coolots moved out of the second floor residence into a nearby rooming house, after the marriage of their daughter.

In 1889 a passageway was made through the east wall of the building at the second floor level, which connected the second floor of the Coolot Building with the adjacent New William Tell Hotel, which Coolot owned. The second floor of the Coolot Building was converted into hotel rooms and the stairway leading down to the store below was removed. The second floor was thus isolated from the rest of the Coolot Building. The opening on this level between buildings has been covered and obscured. These second floor hotel rooms are still in place at the present time, although they were upgraded and somewhat modernized by the remodel that took place in the early 1980s to turn them into offices.

However, all areas of the building have been badly vandalized in recent years as the building has been unoccupied. Whatever interior details remained from the original building were removed in the 1928 Starks & Flanders remodeling, with the exception of a small partially dismantled fireplace in the second floor front living room, and wainscoting in the halls and rooms. Some tall wood pillars on the first floor may remain from the earlier days of the Coolot store.

In 1928 the building was extended an additional 60' to the rear creating a new interior space that included a mezzanine and a wrought iron staircase. At that time the original wood floors in the basement were probably removed and the concrete floor, that is there at the present, was added. The basement has been divided into rooms by wood frame and sheetrock walls. Various interior changes and partitions were added to the ground floor during the 1950s through 1980s to accommodate the bank branches which located in the building, as well as the early 1980 Malicott renovation. Many of those partitions have since been demolished or severely vandalized in recent years. In the 1980s a stairway was built to reconnect the ground floor at the front with the former hotel rooms. On the second floor, at the front 60' of the building, are the remains of the hotel rooms that were installed in 1889. Although somewhat modified during the 1980s renovation and badly damaged by recent vandalism, some of the walls, the dismantled fireplace, wainscoting, doors with transoms, and skylights still evoke that era. The 1872 back wall of the building, 60' back from the front, is still in place on the second floor. Its distinctive arched windows are still intact, although there is no sash or glass. A doorway was cut through the west side of this wall during the 1980s renovation to connect the former hotel rooms with the new offices that were added to the rear of the building during the 1928 and 1980s additions.

D. Historical Background and Context:

The original owner of the building at 812 J Street, was Anthony Coolot. Coolot operated a variety store at this location from 1856 until his death in 1900. Although he was quiet, unpretentious and lived modestly, when Coolot died his estate was estimated to be worth between \$2-\$3 million, making him one of the wealthiest individuals in Sacramento at that time. Coolot's Building at 812 J Street provided the original cash

flow and business that was the nexus of this hidden empire, and served as Coolot's family residence for most of his life in Sacramento.

An Austrian emigrant, Coolot sailed to California around-the-horn on the Yankee Blade in 1854. He first went to Moore's Flat in Nevada County and commenced mining. Within six months, Coolot returned to Sacramento with little more than the clothes on his back. He got a job in a glass and crockery store and worked there for two years. Coolot then left that job to open his own notion and variety business in 1856 at 234 J Street (the parcel addresses on J Street were renumbered in 1880), on the property that he would eventually own. At that time Coolot rented the property from George Jones and operated out of what was described as only a shanty. (Tax assessment records of the time reflect improvements on the property of just \$150.) Coolot's business prospered and he added additional product lines. He sold stationery, blank books, schoolbooks, ammunition, twine, pocket knives, playing cards, cigars and many other items.

Coolot married his wife Margaretha in 1861. In the same year, he purchased the property occupied by his business and erected a modest brick structure on it worth about \$1,200. Examining the structure on the lot currently, this would include the first two stories, with a 20' frontage, on the northerly 60 feet of the lot. At the time the first brick building was erected, the street address for Coolot's business was changed from 234 to 238 J Street.

Disastrous floods occurred in Sacramento in the winter of 1861-62 and the decision was eventually made to raise the levels of all the streets in the central area by about ten feet. Some merchants jacked their buildings up and put new foundations and storerooms underneath them. Others added floors on top of the structure already in place. The latter solution appears to be the approach taken by Coolot. The original ground floor, which had iron shutters on the doors, and windows at then-street level, became the basement for the building. Coolot constructed a new story on the top of the building. The original second story of the building now became the main street-level floor. By 1872 Coolot had added another \$1,100 in improvements to the building, which probably included an addition, 34 feet in length and 18 feet tall to the rear of the building. The assessed value of the Coolot Building and property remained stable from 1872 through 1885, indicating that the building apparently experienced few changes during this period.

In May of 1885, Coolot retained well-known local architect Nathaniel Goodell to put a new front on the building. Evidence of a different front can be seen in the photograph, Exhibit X, which shows how the front brickwork is no longer tied into the sidewalls of the building. The Coolot family lived in the building, on the second floor above the store, until 1889, when they moved to a nearby rooming house at 1010 8th Street. Daughter Clara had married Melchior Diepenbrock in 1888, and the family probably needed less room, thus the move to the nearby rooming house.

In 1885 Coolot bought the property to the immediate east of his 812 J Street property from Leland Stanford. In November, Coolot again retained Goodell to build a three story hotel, the New William Tell Hotel. This building was not only adjacent to Coolot's building, but was eventually connected to it in 1889 by a passageway at the second story level which allowed the hotel to use the second story of the Coolot Building for additional rooms. This connection caused the removal of a stairway between the first and second floor in the front area of the Coolot Building, isolating the second floor from the rest of the building.

Anthony Coolot lived plainly and frugally. At his death in 1900, local residents said the last time he had left town for any length of time was ten years before, for a brief trip to the dedication of a cathedral in San Francisco. Coolot was rarely seen at public events and some long time residents in his neighborhood reported that they had never seen him west of Seventh Street - a block and one half from his store.

However, for a number of years before his death, Coolot did become known as one of the wealthiest men in Sacramento. This was apparently because his name appeared so often in the assessor's rolls. In 1900, Coolot owned some 86 properties in Sacramento and San Francisco that produced a profit and income of some \$15,600 annually. Coolot had also been one the earliest investors in the Central Pacific Railroad.

He was a member of the Catholic church and gave generously to support the work of the Church. He donated the stained glass windows representing the Last Supper as well as other works of art to the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament at 11th and K Streets. The Last Supper window can still be seen today, dominating the eastern wall of the main apse of the church, above the main altar.

Coolot's daughter, Clara L. Diepenbrock, inherited the 812 J Street building from her father in 1900. Her brother Augustine ran the tobacco store from the building until 1902 when he moved to San Francisco. Clara Diepenbrock rented the building to the New William Tell Hotel from 1902 to 1909. The Hotel ceased operating after 1909, and from 1913-1930 the Franklin Rooms operated the hotel portion of the property as 812 1/2 J Street. It is assumed that the Franklin Rooms and its successors continued to utilize the second floor of the Coolot Building, since it was still intact as hotel rooms when it was reopened in the late 1970s during the Mallicot renovation.

From about 1909-1919, the Coolot Building housed a number of Saloons. After enactment of the Volstead Act (Prohibition) the building's career as a saloon ended. In 1920 it returned to its original use as a Cigar & Tobacco store operated by Charles Russell. In 1919-1920 the assessed value of the building increased by about \$4,000 indicating that Mrs. Diepenbrock made some attempt to remodel the building to attract a different clientele and a group of various women's clothing shops soon followed in the mid and late 1920s.

Diepenbrock sold the Coolot Building and property to realtor Frank Hickman in 1928, and from then until 1956, it housed his, and later his son's, various business enterprises

such as: Hickman & Coleman Real Estate and Insurance, Hickman Investment Co. and Sacramento Guarantee Building and Loan Association. The name Hickman & Coleman appeared on the front of the building (See Exhibit XX photograph taken in 1936). At the time Hickman & Coleman moved into the Coolot Building they were considered to be one of the oldest real estate brokerages in the state, having been founded in Sacramento in 1864 by W.P. Coleman. The building and loan association was the oldest in the state having received its charter in 1874.

Hickman & Coleman had the building remodeled by well known Sacramento architects Starks & Flanders. It was at this time that the Ernest Batchelder Tiles were added to the front of the building, it was extended to its current length, and the wrought iron staircase and mezzanine were added.

From 1930 until 1962 the upper floors of the Coolot Building were used by a changing list of hotels. Between 1958 and 1973, the remainder of the Coolot building was occupied by various bank branches. Between 1974 and 1980, the building was listed as vacant, except for 1976 when it was occupied by Gemma's Health Club.

The building was sold in 1977 to Dan Mallicott, who eventually began to remodel the building for law offices. It was at this time that the rooms of the New William Tell Hotel on the second floor, in the original 1860s front portion of the building, were discovered and reopened. Mallicott's ownership and tenancy appears to have lasted until the early 1990's, at which time the building again became vacant. In a recent (11/7/99) inspection of the interior of the building, a 1993 painted sign was found that stated that the building was to be sold at auction.

The building is currently owned by Dean Ingemanson. The rest of the blockface on J Street between 8th and 9th Streets has been cleared over time, and it remains as the only building still standing on J Street. Two buildings remain along 8th Street near the alley. The original level of the city is revealed by the absence of the buildings, and the underground sidewalk areas, abandoned when the streets were raised in 1869-70, are visible as are the barrel vaulted arches that still support the sidewalk. This block appears to contain the largest remaining segment of vestiges of this early Sacramento phenomenon in the city.

The principal statement of the significance of the Coolot Building, as noted in its National Register of Historic Places nomination, was focused upon the installation of Ernest Batchelder's distinctive terra cotta tiles on the facade of the building. Batchelder was an Arts & Crafts artist who was considered a very important contributor to the movement. According to Robert W. Winter, well-known early 20th century California Art Historian, "Ernest Batchelder was a major figure in the American Arts and Crafts Movement. He wrote two books on design theory and frequently published articles in Gustav Stickley's *Craftsman Magazine*."

Batchelder's important books were *The Principles of Design* (1904) and *Design in Theory and Practice*. He was known for his innovative design and entrepreneurial

efforts. In 1909 Ernest Batchelder left a prestigious teaching position at Throop Polytechnic Institute (now known as Cal Tech) to start his own school and factory. His goal was to establish a West Coast guild of craftspeople. Batchelder started his ceramic tile making business as a backyard enterprise at his home in rural Pasadena, and he soon rose to national prominence. Twice between 1910 and 1920, the growth of Batchelder's business forced him to move his business to larger facilities. By 1930 the Batchelder & Wilson Company had showrooms in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and San Francisco, as well as representation in many of the other major cities in the U.S. He remained a pre-eminent leader of handmade tiles in the West until the Depression caused his business to fail in 1932. The tiles on the Coolot Building are representative of Batchelder's "California Floral" patterns in brown and blue glazes—both trademarks of his work. Batchelder tiles are well known and highly sought by art collectors.

Part II. Architectural Information

General Statement:

1. Architectural Character:

The façade of the three-story building is surfaced with terra cotta tile manufactured by Ernest Batchelder, a noted artist and figure of the Arts & Crafts movement in California. However, the image of the façade is not Arts & Crafts in character, but suggests Spanish influences. The building itself dates from the Gold Rush era, 1863, but its image does not reflect that era.

2. Condition of building fabric:

The exterior building fabric consists of brick unreinforced masonry, damaged by fire and the deterioration of original mortar. A fire has damaged the roof in the central part of the building, allowing excessive moisture into the interior of the building. The layer of façade brick is separating from the main portion of the building. Due to remodeling in the 1880s, the brick façade is not integrally attached to the brick sidewalls. The façade is in danger of detaching from the front of the building and collapsing.

B. Description of Exterior:

The building is a three-story brick structure, approximately twenty feet wide and one hundred and forty five feet long. The brick sidewalls were never originally exposed to public view because other structures were constructed adjacent to them. Only the J Street façade of the building and the variously dated alley elevations were visible prior to the removal of adjacent buildings.

Terra cotta Batchelder tiles trim the horizontal cornice of the building. The two façade windows are surmounted with a header of tiles and enframed with patterned tiles. The large street level entrance opening that extends from the east to the west sides of the building is bordered with terra cotta tiles. The frieze area above the street level is a blank cement plaster surface as is the upper façade around the tile

borders and cornice. The large street level entrance is boarded up with plywood at the present.

1. **Overall Dimensions:** 20' x 150'
2. **Foundations:** Corbelled brick
3. **Walls:** Brick
4. **Structural System, framing:** Brick, wood floor, ceiling joists
5. **Porches, stoops, balconies:** none
6. **Chimneys:** There are four chimneys. One at about one third of the distance toward the front from the alley, visible when viewing the east wall and three more visible when viewing the west wall near the front of the building.

7. **Openings:**

a. **Doorways and Doors:**

The original entrance door has been long replaced with an aluminum sash glass door and show windows, framed with fixed aluminum sash. All are now boarded over. At one point when this building was connected to the hotel next door since it was used as a saloon for the hotel from about 1902 to 1919. There were two doors on the first floor, but both have been removed and are now bricked in with concrete block. There was also a door or passageway allowing access from the second floor of the hotel into the second floor hotel rooms in the Coolot Building. This door or passageway has also been bricked in. There is doorway from the basement onto the alley at the rear. It is now boarded over. There is also another door in the east wall allowing access to the basement. It has been boarded over as well.

b. **Windows:**

The second floor, on the front façade, contains two casement windows fitted with wood sash, with four fixed lights above. The windows are gone from the west side of the façade, and partially missing from the other. The east wall has four windows on the top floor in the wouth one-half of the elevation. These are metal sash windows from the 1928 rennovation. There is one window on the mezzanine level near the rear of the building. There are ten windows in the east wall on the main floor level. All of them are located in the rear-most 2/3 of the building (1928). Eight of these are located in the middle one third of the building and are four matched pairs stacked over/under. Each of these horizontally rectangular windows has six lights. There are two more windows on the main floor near the rear of the east wall. They are indential to those on the mezzanine and second floor. On the rear elevation there are eight identical windows with four on the

second floor and a matching four on the first floor. In addition there two square windows flanking a doorway allowing access to the basement storage area from the alley. There are no windows on the west wall.

8. Roof:

- a. **Shape:** The roof shape is a shallow gable
- b. **Cornices:** The cornices are horizontal, with minimum trim, and undecorated except for the applied tile ornament on the façade.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans: No floor plans are available

- a. Basement (original main floor)
- b. First Floor (original second floor)
- c. Second Floor (added after 1869)

2. Stairway: The stairway in the front of the building interior leading to the front of the second floor is a recent construction to replace the original. The rear stairway was constructed in 1928. It provides access from the first floor to the mezzanine and second floor. It was fitted with decorative metal work balustrade and styled appropriately to the era. There is also a stairway, near the base of the mezzanine stairway leading from the first floor to the basement.

3. Flooring: The flooring, originally wood, is totally obscured by debris from fire and trash from homeless visitors. A large amount of discarded paper is scattered throughout the building.

4. Wall and Ceiling finish: Wall and ceiling finishes are lath and plaster, where original room configuration has been retained. The walls of the second floor portion in the front of the building is largely finished with plaster and wall paper trim in a few locations. The interior walls of the street level are also lath and plaster, painted. Other, later partition walls are sheetrock.

5. Openings:

See doors and windows.

6. Decorative features and trim: The only remaining decorative feature of the building besides the terra cotta tile façade, is the metal stair balustrade near the back of the building.

7. Hardware: Most original hardware has been removed.

8. Mechanical Equipment: There is no operational mechanical equipment. On the second floor and the roof are the remnants of a recent heating and air conditioning system.

9. Original furnishings: none

D. Site

1. General siting and orientation: The building is sited with its façade toward the north, facing J Street, and extends in a north/south direction.

2. Historic landscape design: None exists

3. Outbuildings: none

PART III. Sources of Information

See Bibliography

A. Original Architectural Drawings: not available

B. Early Views:

1. Interior and exterior views, Sacramento Bee, 7/14/28, p. A-1.
2. Façade and partial view of store windows, June 1941, Sacramento Museum & Archive Collection Center, Photo #85/24/1410.
3. Façade in late 1950s, Sacramento Museum & Archive Collection Center, Photo #92/722/97.
4. Two views of façade and detailed view of store front from late 1950s, Sacramento Museum & Archive Collection Center, Photo #98/722/92 and 93.
5. General view of façade from about 1940, Sacramento Museum & Archive Collection Center, Photo #85/24/1252.

C. Bibliography:

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Maps and Drawings:

"Birdseye View of Sacramento Map," *Sacramento City Directory*, 1873.

Official Map of the City of Sacramento, 1854.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1895, 1915, 1952.

Plans and Drawings:

None available

Newspapers, Periodicals:

California Architect & Builder's News, Vol. 6, No. 5, May 1885, p. 90, Vol. 6, No. 11, November 1885, p. 197.

Old City Guardian, Kirk, Bill, "Sacramento's Historic Down Under", October 1993, p. 9.

Sacramento Bee, December 1-4, 1900.

Photograph Collections:

California State Library, Photo Archive Collection.

Sacramento Archive and Museum Collection Center, Photo Archive Collection.

Sacramento Public Library, Photo Archive Collection.

Personal Interviews:

None.

E: Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Unknown at this time

F. Supplemental Materials

Coolot advertisement in *Sacramento Bee*, *Sacramento City Directory*, 1878.

STATIONERY,

SCHOOL BOOKS



SACRAMENTO.

BLANK BOOKS

AND BLANKS.

Sporting Ammunition, Cotton & Flax Twines, Irish Shoe Thread,
Pocket Cutlery, Playing Cards, etc.

NEW YORK MANUFACTURED AND IMPORTED

HAVANA



CIGARS

Alleghany Mills Papers, Drawing Papers, Caps, Shot, Fuse, Needles,
Thread, Pins, Shoe Laces, Pocket Goods, Combs, Brushes,
Perfumery, Spectacles, Notions, Fish Hooks, etc.

Established | **A. COOLOTT,** | 1853.

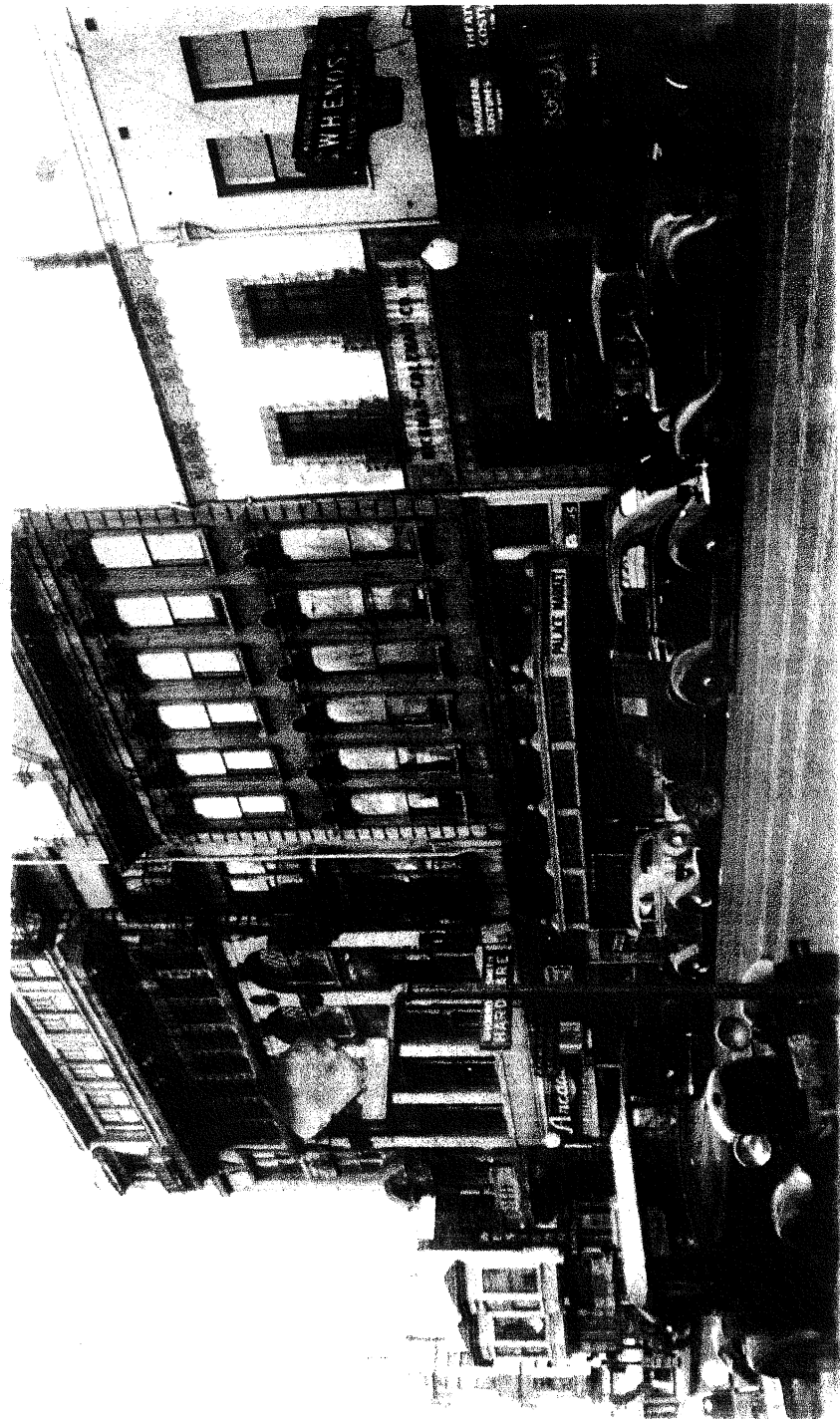
238 J Street, between 8th and 9th, Sacramento, Cal.

OFFICES:

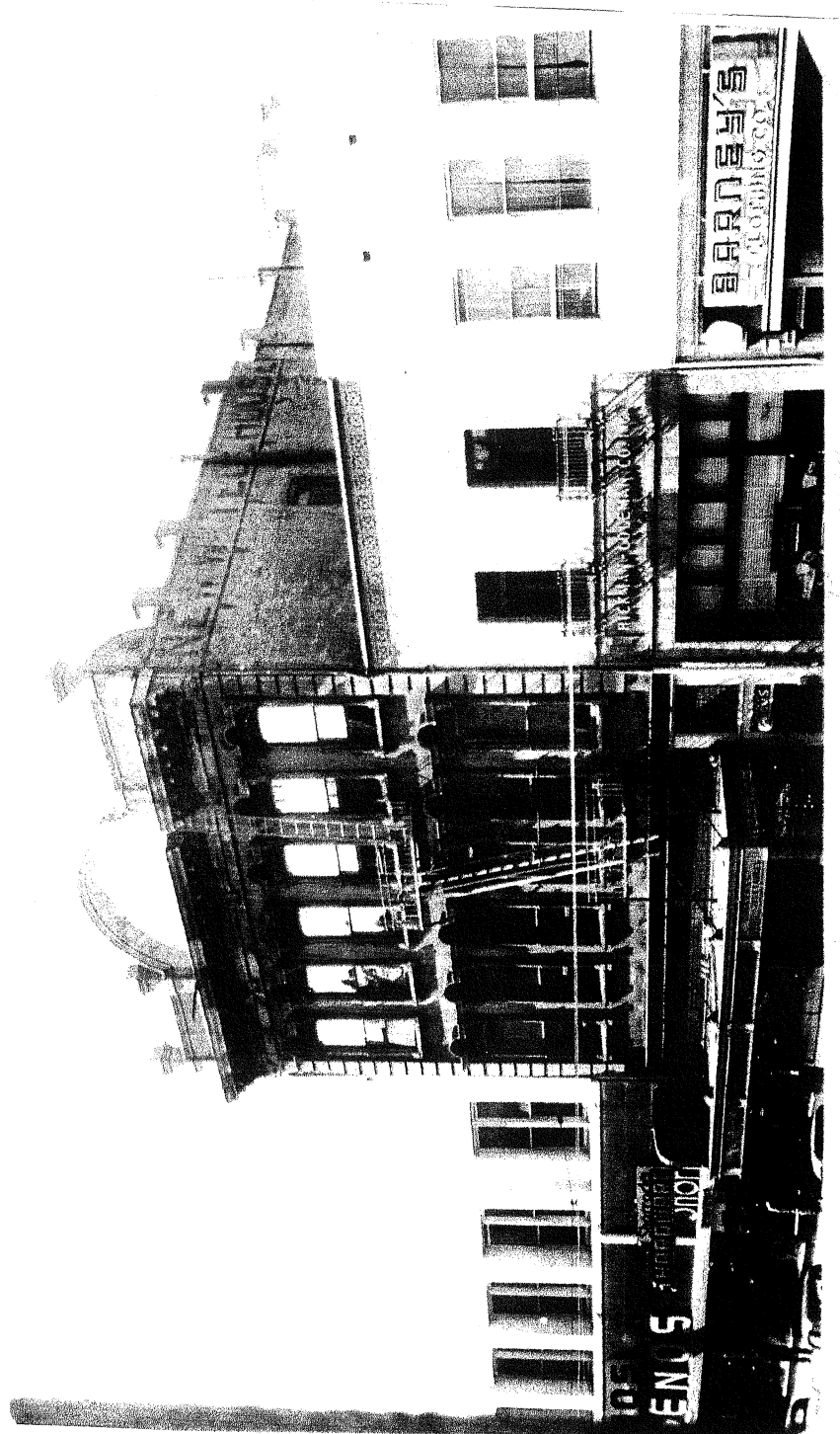
501 Market Street, San Francisco;
82 Beekman Street, New York;
27 Charlotte Street, Birmingham, England;
3 Rue de 4 Patisiers, Marseilles, France;
62 Boulevard de Strasbourg, Paris, France.

Sacramento City Directory (ca 1878)

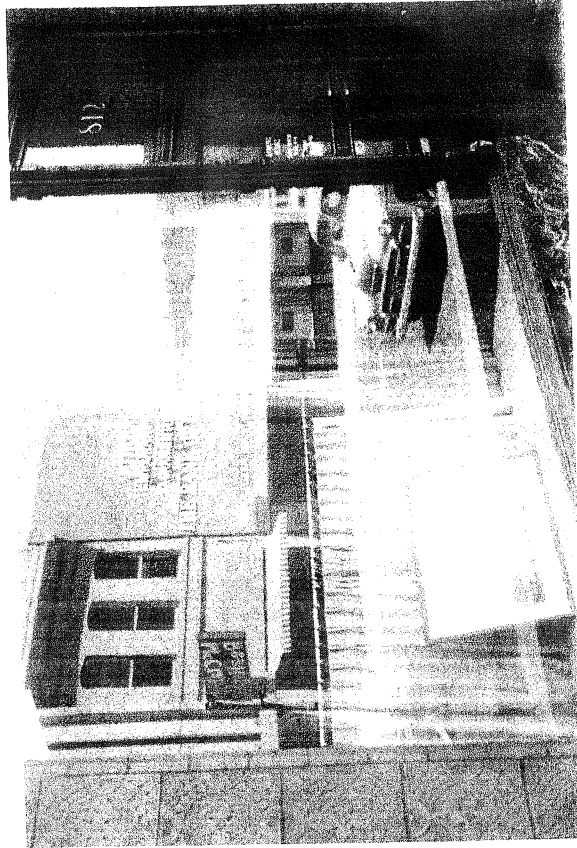
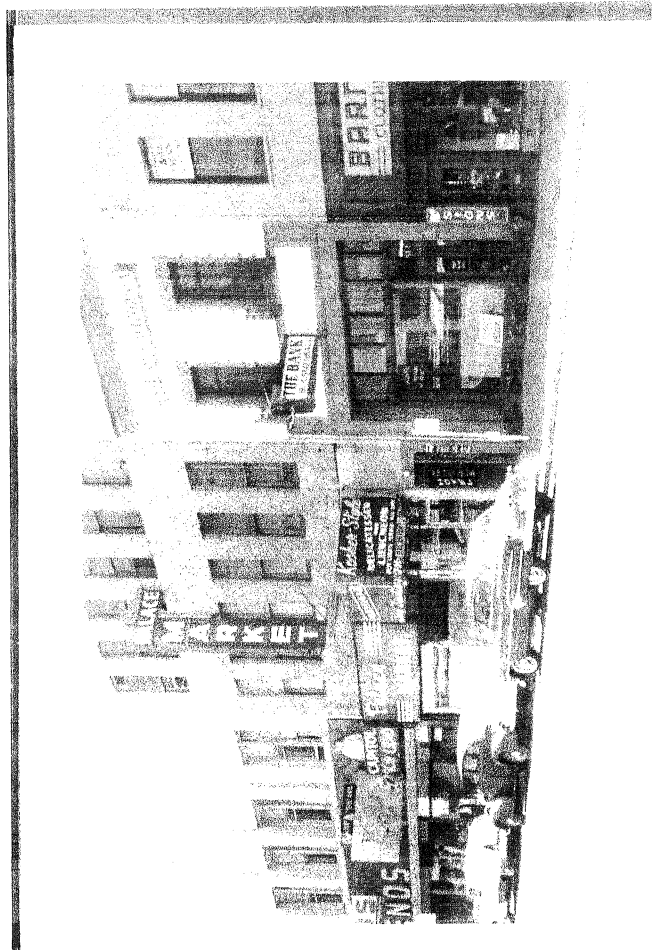
Sacramento Archive and Museum Collection Center
Photo #85/24/1252



Sacramento Archive and Museum Collection Center
Photo #85/24/1410



Sacramento Archive and
Museum Collection Center
Photo #98/722/92-93



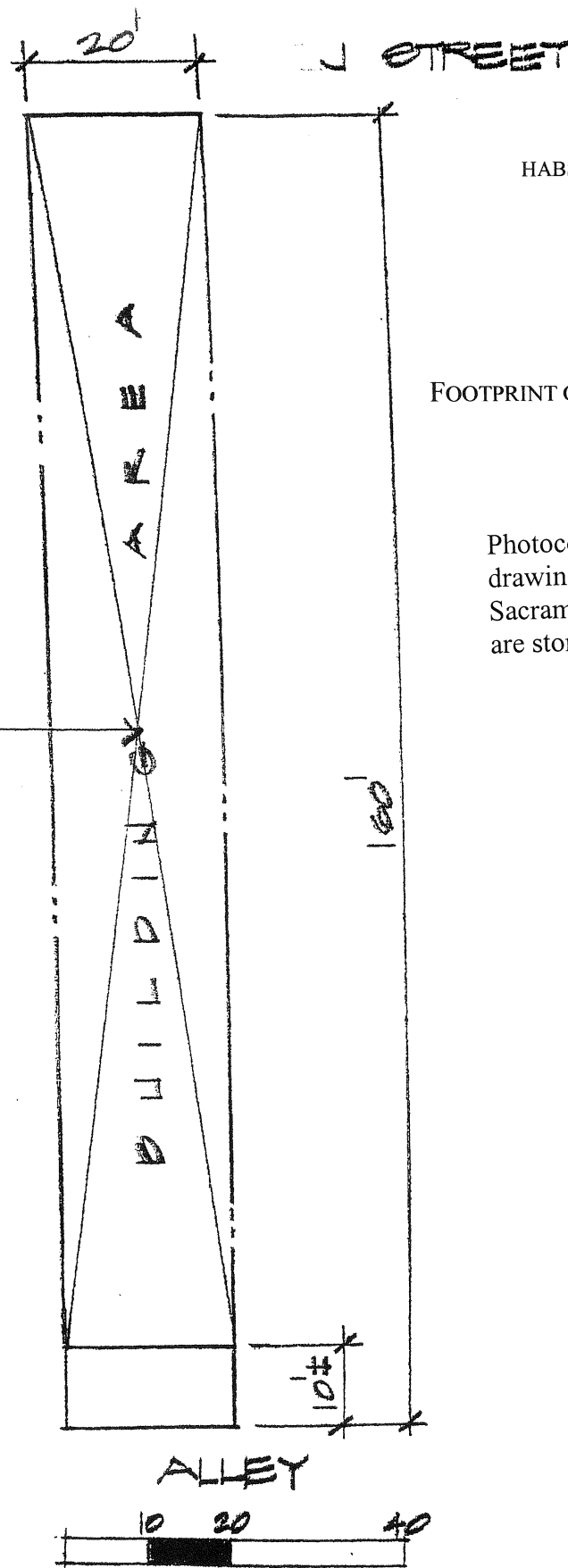


FOOTPRINT OF COOLOT BUILDING.

Photocopy of schematic
drawing by LPA Architects,
Sacramento, California, and
are stored at their location.

BUILDING OCCUPIES
THE ENTIRE WIDTH AND
APPROXIMATELY 50% OF
THE SITE LENGTH

SCALE: 1" = 20'-0"

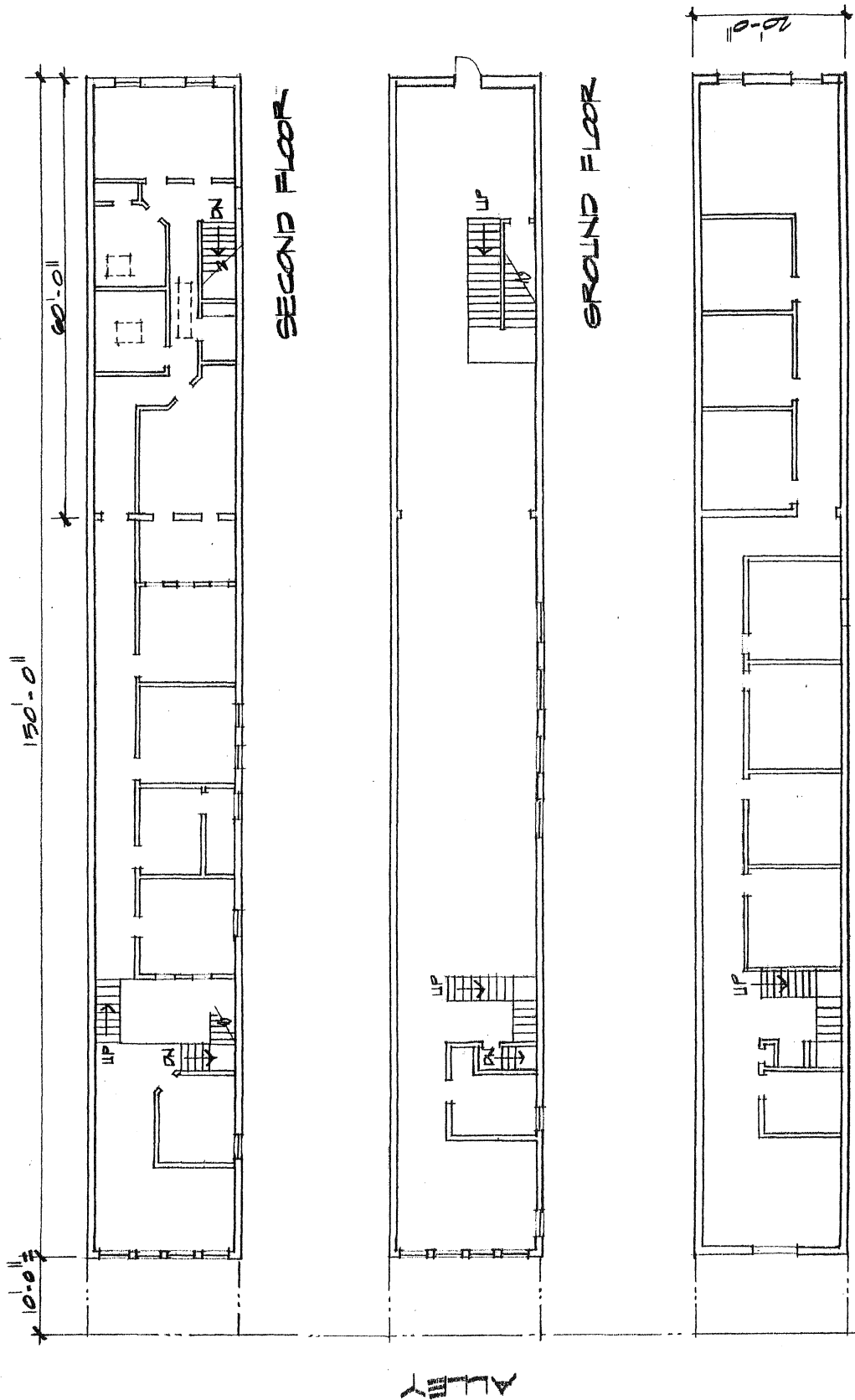


612 N ST. COMSTOCK BLDG.

9.28.99

FOOTPRINT OF COOLLOT BUILDING AND NORTH/SOUTH SECTION
SHOWING FLOOR LEVELS.

Photocopy of schematic drawing by
LPA Architects, Sacramento, California,
and are stored at their location.



STREET

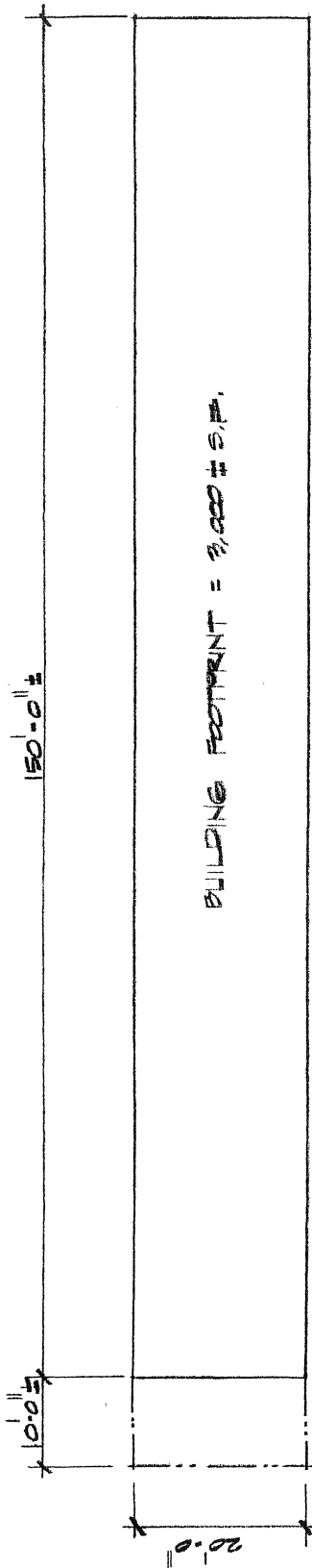
Coolot Building
HABS No. CA-2726 (Page 19)



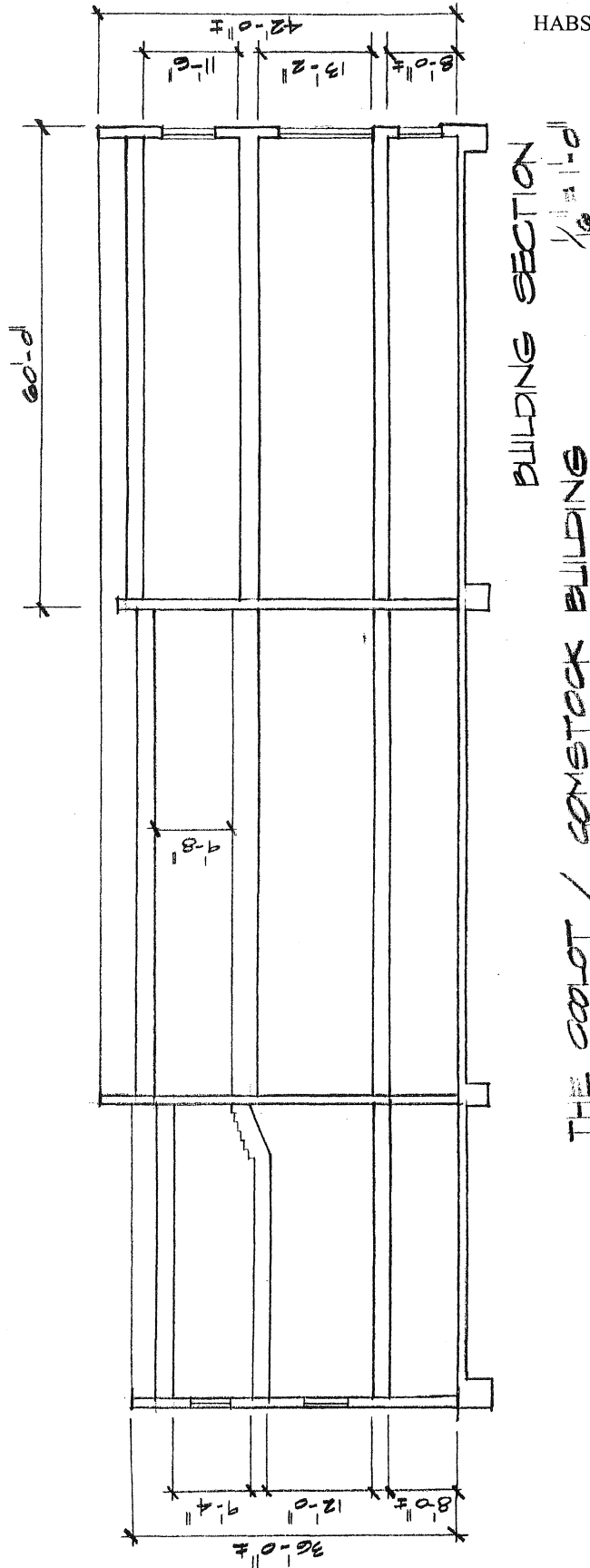
BASMENT FLOOR

1/6" = 1'-0"

THE COOLOT / COMSTOCK BUILDING



SITE PLAN
1/6" = 1'-0"
NORTH



Photocopy of schematic drawings
by LPA Architects, Sacramento,
California, and are stored at their
location.

FLOOR PLANS SHOWING THE BASEMENT, GROUND AND SECOND FLOOR
LAYOUT.