

Subject: 14-18 West Third Street Properties
Re: Request and reasoning for demolition – attached to the COA

We are requesting that HARB approve the demolition of these properties for future development based on the demonstrated lack of structural integrity of the properties, the minimal amount of retained historic importance of the two properties, and the prohibitive cost required to repair these buildings, to allow for an improved economic and aesthetic impact a new development will have on this critical area of South Bethlehem and provide an appropriate neighbor to the approved development immediately to the east on Third Street.

The photos included, show many structural issues with the building. A portion of the west wall has collapsed, many interior structural-related cracks are evident and daylight can be seen where the walls have separated from the floor structure. Structural modifications and renovations to repair the structure would prove to be difficult and prohibitively expensive.

Other than some elements that may be worth saving on the Third Street façade, which we propose to save and donate to a preferred local historic group of your preference (wood cornices, wood bracketing, etc.), over 75% of the facades of these buildings have no redeeming value and, in fact, present an extremely negative presence on this very important part of South Bethlehem and this major entry to the South Side, the very important pedestrian Greenway, and Lehigh University, all by the way of the Hill to Hill Bridge which is a major entry point to the South Side. We feel it is important to provide a development on this critical site that is evocative of the renaissance that is occurring on the South Side.

I ask that you allow us to demolish these properties for these many reasons.

We have also included a scaled drawing of the existing façade, images of the planned development, images of the approved adjacent development, and site plan indicating the bounds of the property (ies).

Thank you.

Applicant: Joseph T. Posh



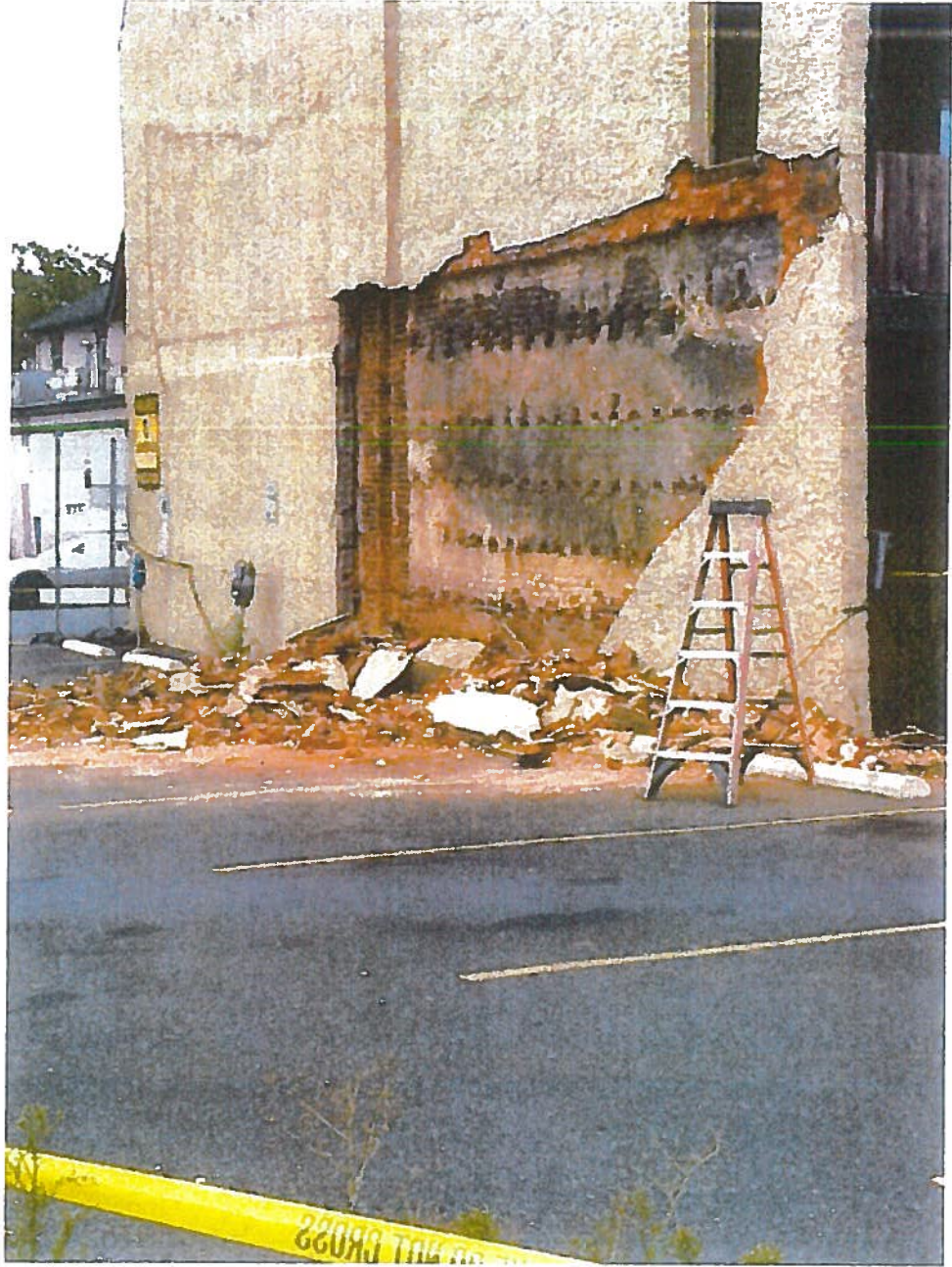
interior wall cracking



temporary support at
collapsed wall



collapsed side wall



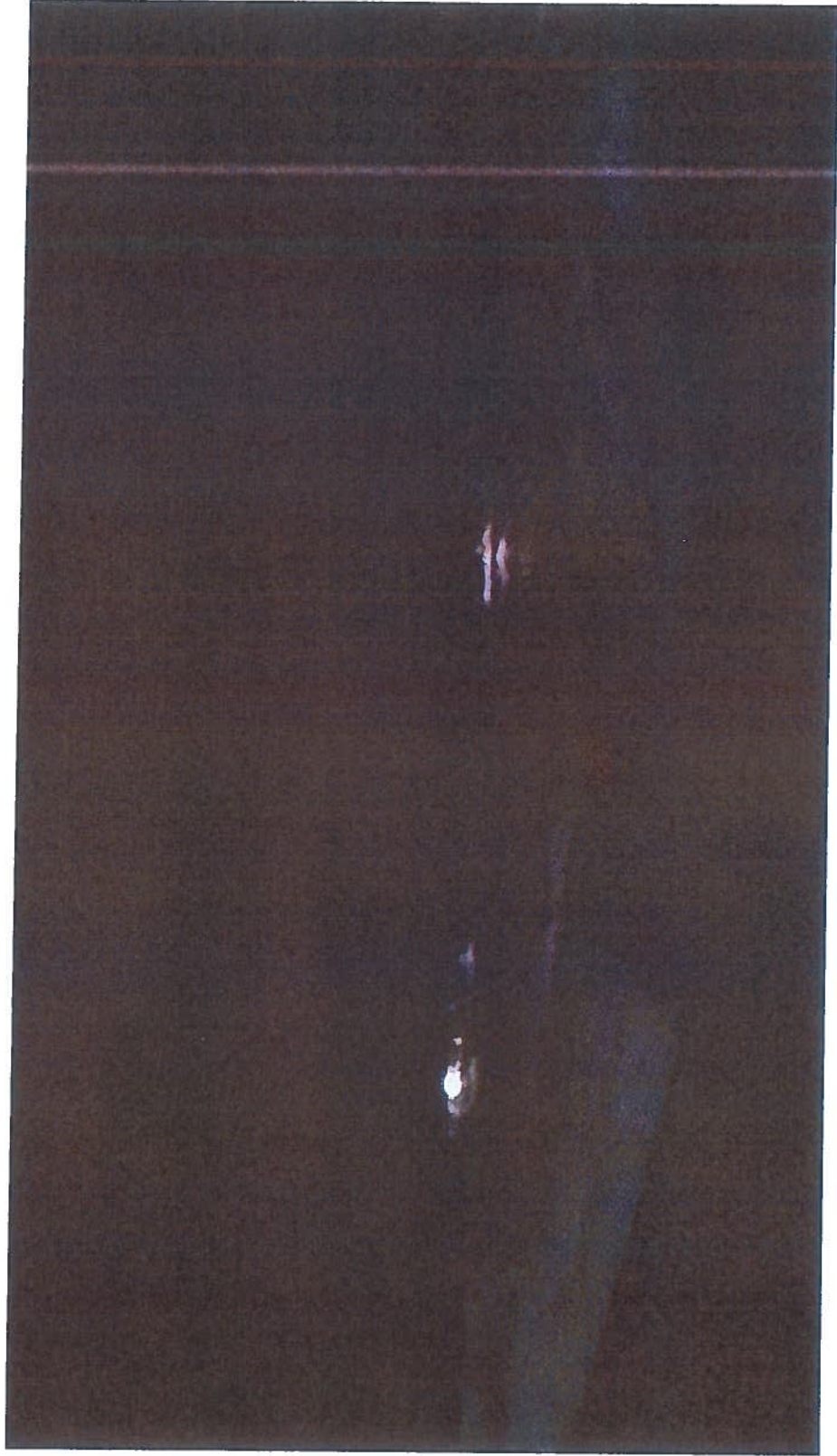
collapsed side wall



temporary support
-for side walk.



gap at wall/floor intersection



daylight thru side wall at
floor



STREET ADDRESS

REAR OF PROPERTIES



COLLAPSED WALL



NO





THIRD STREET PARADES

T-Shirts
Hoodies
Jackets
Bags
Business Cards
Flyers
Stickers
Posters
etc.

STYLE YOU NEED
Screen Printing & More
3667

AHEAD





SI LE YOU
Sc en
Printing
821

Printery
Business
Cards
Booklets
Flyers
Posters
Menus
Labels

Printery
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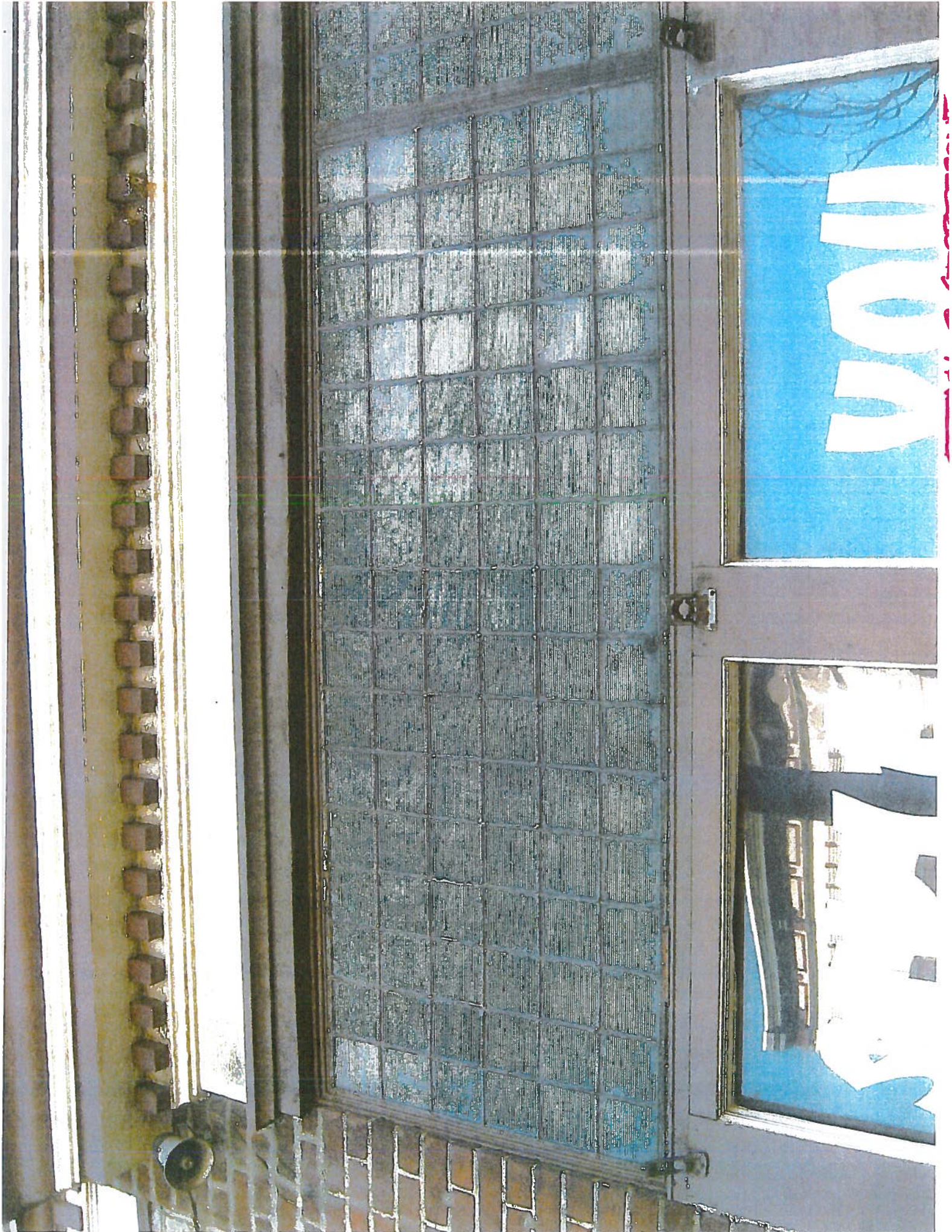
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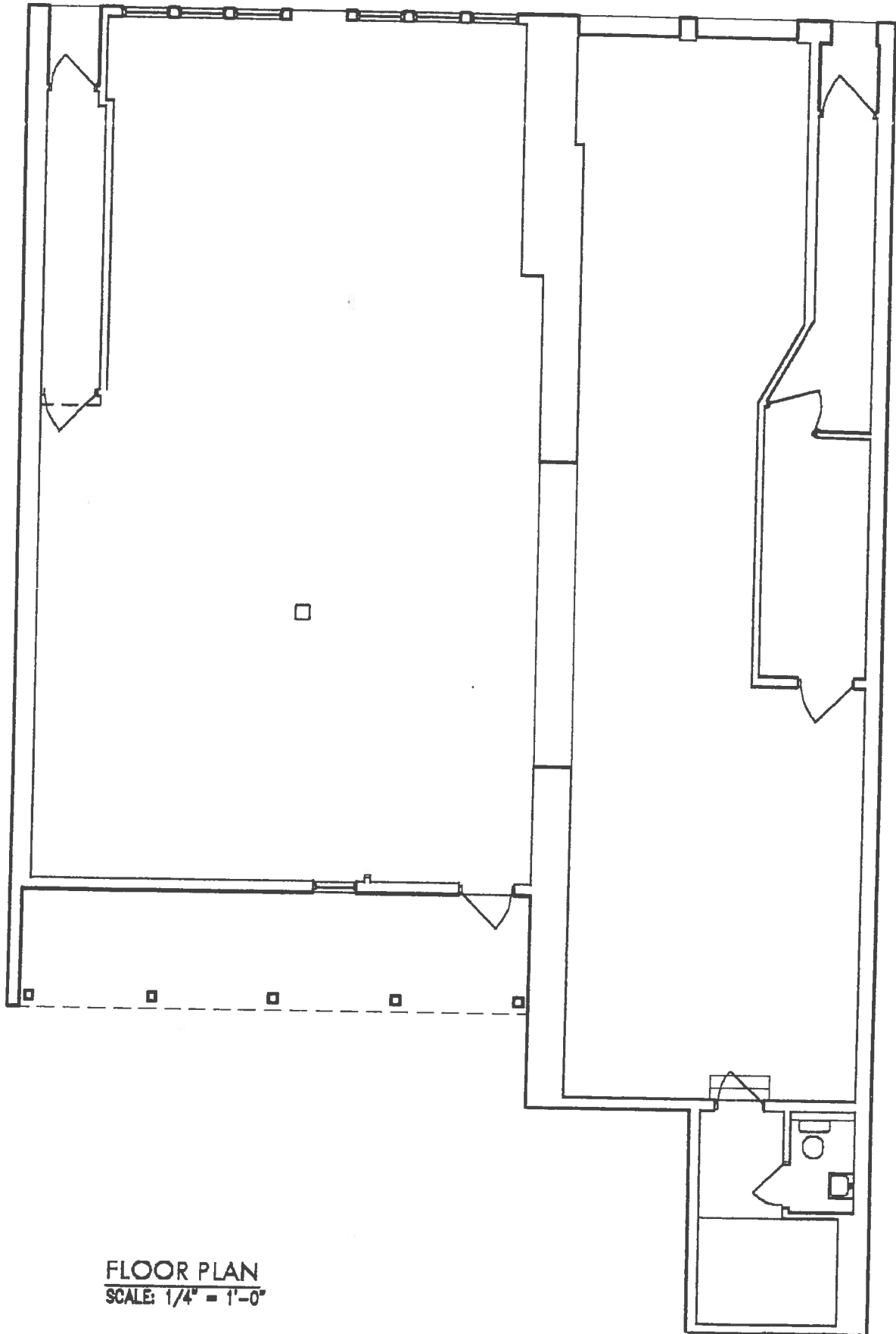


YOU

7

DOOR TO APARTMENTS STAIR





FLOOR PLAN
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

26 May 2020

Mr. Joseph Posh
Posh Properties
2216 Willow Park Road
Bethlehem, PA 18017

Mr. Posh,

As you know, back in 2016 I did an investigation of the building at 14-18 West Third Street in Bethlehem, PA, specifically about the west exterior wall. The following is a resulting letter I issued previously:

Thank you for asking me to provide structural engineering services pertaining to the building at 14-18 West Third Street, Bethlehem, PA. The purpose of my investigation was to evaluate the structural impact of damage to the west exterior wall.

As you know, I visited the building on Thursday 1 December 2016. During the visit I noted and observed the following:

1. The structure in question is a multi-story building with wood framing for floors and roof, and masonry (brick) exterior walls. It is my understanding that all or a portion of the damaged wall is owned by the City of Bethlehem.
2. The wall in question is a multi-wythe brick wall that is two to three wythes thick. A full-height brick chimney is part of the wall construction, located at the middle of the wall.
3. During the visit, it was noted that a significant portion of the brick wall, from the chimney toward the back, from the ground up to above the second floor framing has partially collapsed, leaving one wythe of brick (approximately 4" thick) to support the second floor framing, the third floor framing, and the weight of the remaining brick wall above. In my opinion this is structurally unacceptable. Even if the remaining single wythe is of sound, firm brick and mortar, it is not acceptable in my opinion to rely on it to support load. It is too thin and brittle.
4. At the back end of the wall, it is alongside a two-story balcony. It appears the wall does not support the framing of the balcony. I noticed the wall is leaning, has significant cracks in it, and has been braced by the temporary wood bracing mentioned previously.
5. Further, it is important to note that the brick wall built, and intended to act, as a

single solid brick wall. The layers of brick were knit together when it was built. This was evident from numerous fractured tie bricks visible in the failed portion of the wall.

6. The ends of second floor joists were evident (and visible in a photograph provided to me). At the time of my visit the ends of the joists were covered in spray foam insulation.
7. Temporary wood shoring, consisting of wood studs (2x6 or 2x8) and diagonal wood braces, was in place at the time of my visit. The vertical wood studs lacked sheathing or lateral bracing to prevent buckling under vertical load. I did not see any indications that the vertical studs are fastened to the remaining single wythe of brick. The lateral bracing was toe-nailed to a horizontal wood board laying on and anchored to the asphalt of the driveway. The horizontal wood board appeared to be anchored to the asphalt with a combination of hex-headed anchors and some type of nail fasteners.
8. Brick debris and remaining brick in the wall appeared to be of dubious condition. The single wythe of brick under the 2nd floor framing appeared to be in good condition, but other brick did not. There appeared to be cases where the hard outer layer had come off, exposing soft interior brick. Further, it is not unusual in my experience for brick used in older interior walls (for buildings of this age) to be softer, weaker brick than that used in exterior walls. As you know, there had been a building alongside this one.
9. Even the undamaged portion of the wall, toward the front of the building, appears to be questionable. It is covered in stucco, making visual evaluation difficult. However, there are cracks and bulges which are visible. You indicated that portion of the wall had experienced a failure about seven years ago, and that the failed portion had been rebuilt. Observed cracking appears to have occurred since that work was done.

As we discussed, I have observed other cases where adjacent buildings were demolished, leaving the interior brick wall in place and covering it with stucco. In my opinion, this is not an adequate method of dealing with the wall. Moisture is able to infiltrate the stucco and cause deterioration of the wall over time (especially in cases where the brick is not intended to be used as exterior wall – item 8 above). The cracking, movement, and failure observed in this case is an indication that the wall was not adequately protected when the adjacent building was removed.

Based on the observed conditions, it is my opinion the brick wall in question has been severely compromised and as a result is compromising the structural integrity of the building. The remaining single wythe of brick is not adequate to support load imposed on it. Further, it is my opinion that the temporary bracing is not adequate to prevent a failure of the remaining single wythe of brick. If a failure of the wall occurs, I suspect it will be sudden and catastrophic, and could harm occupants at that end of the building.

I recommend evacuating the tenants on that end of the building immediately, installing

temporary shoring inside the building to support the floor framing, and having the wall demolished and replaced with a structurally sound wall.

Please note that my investigation has been limited to the conditions discussed and is based on conditions that could be observed and on information provided to me. It does not indicate my acceptance or rejection of any other structural conditions, or if conditions differ from that which was observed or from the information provided. This work was performed using the standard of care exercised by structural engineers in this area at the time of the work. No expressed or implied warranties are made.

If you have any questions regarding my findings, conclusions and recommendations, feel free to call, write or send me an e-mail message. Thanks again for allowing me to assist you with this work.

I am not aware of any efforts made to stabilize the wall in question. And while the wall apparently is still standing after four years, it continues to concern me, and my conclusions and recommendations have not changed. If there are further questions regarding my recommendations, or additional investigation is needed, let me know.

Sincerely,



Scott D. Gold, P.E.
Professional Engineer

copy: file



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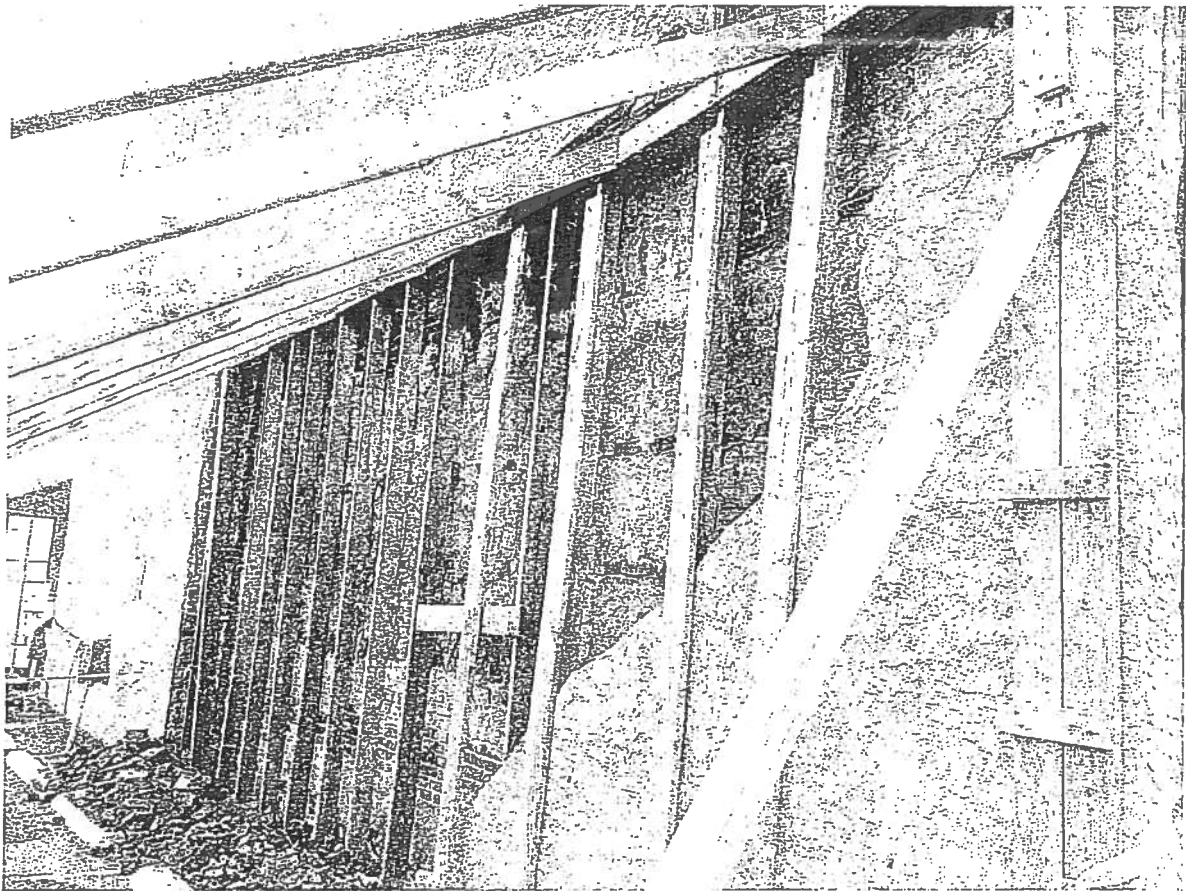


PHOTO 1



PHOTO 2

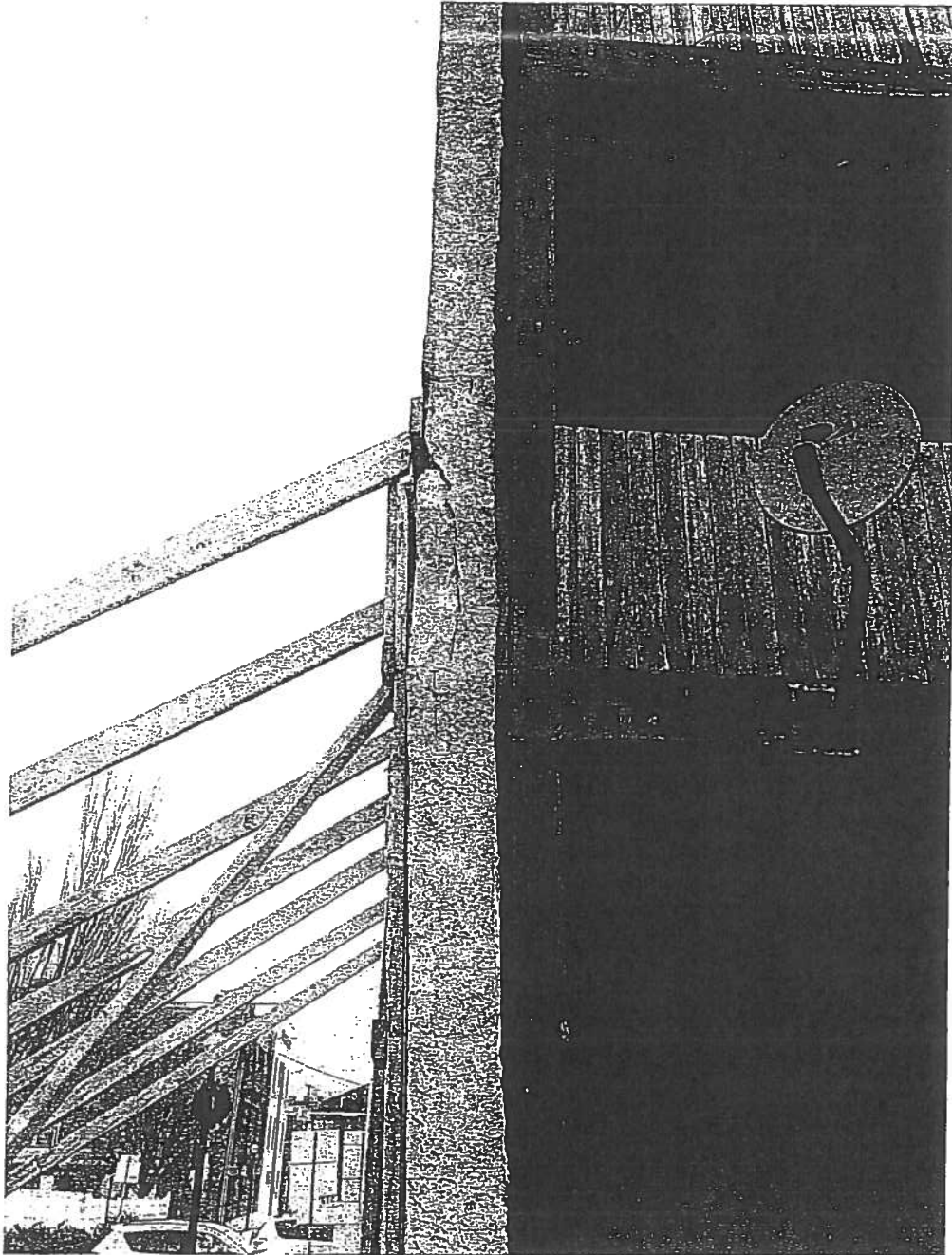


PHOTO 3



PHOTO 4

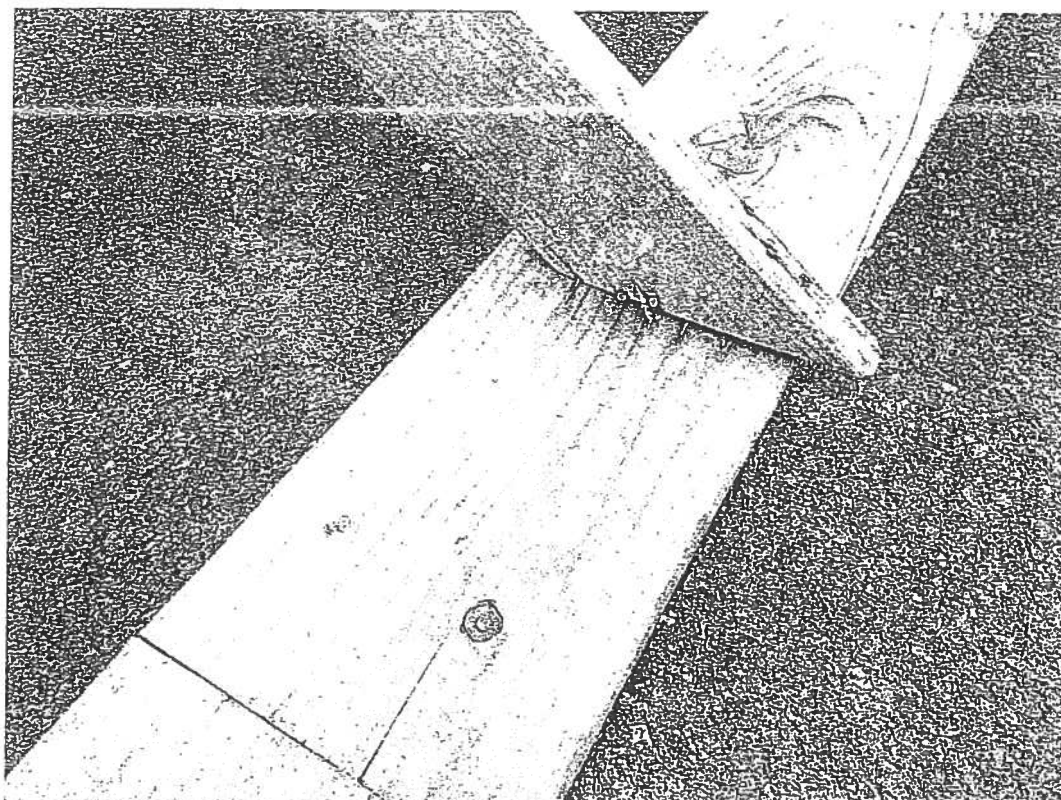


PHOTO 5

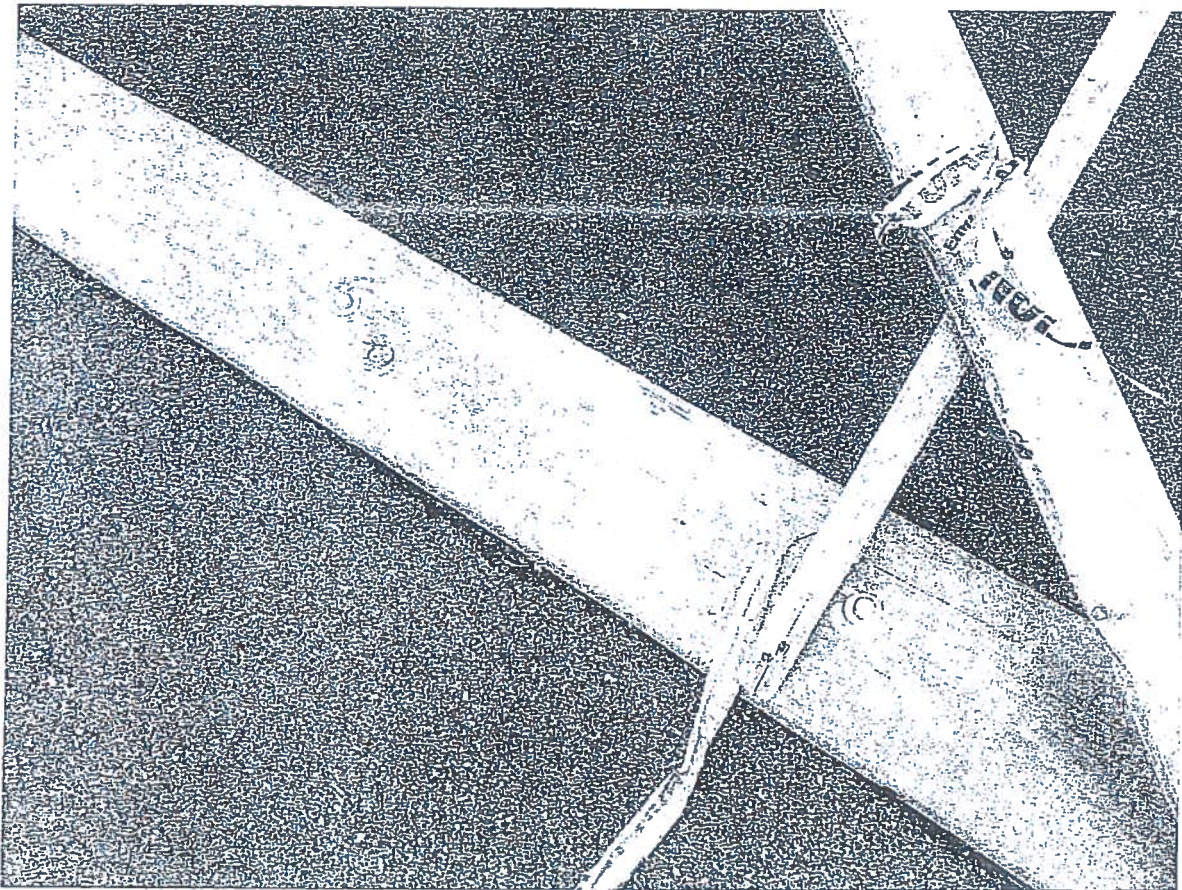


PHOTO 6



Property

