NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

355

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

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NAT REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1. Name of Property

Historic name: The Somerset Apartments
Other names/site number: _____
Name of related multiple property listing:
Apartment Buildings in Ohio Urban Centers, 1870-1970
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

2. Location

Street & number: 802-814 Blair Avenue
City or town: Cincinnati State: OH County: Hamilton
Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national ___statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___B ___C ___D

Barbara Rowe **DSHPO for Inventory & Registration** 5/8/2014

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

Ohio Historic Preservation Office, Ohio Historical Society

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

Title : **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Patrick Andrus — Signature of the Keeper

6/30/2014 — Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:	X
Public – Local	
Public – State	
Public – Federal	

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)	X
District	
Site	
Structure	
Object	

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use
Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne
LATE VICTORIAN/Renaissance Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK, STONE: Limestone, METAL

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Completed in 1896, the Somerset Apartments at 802-814 Blair Avenue in the Cincinnati neighborhood of South Avondale is a large four-story multi-family dwelling built of pressed red brick accented with smooth limestone trim and corbelled brick (Photos 1 – 5). Architecturally it reflects the Queen Anne style with Renaissance Revival elements. Located on a busy thoroughfare, it is built to the sidewalk and stands very prominently at the northeast corner of Reading Road and Blair Avenue on a high coursed ashlar limestone basement (Figure 1). In plan the building is mostly rectangular with a diagonal façade along the alignment of Reading on the west and a short ell at the east end. The west elevation extends nearly 55 feet, while the Blair Avenue façade extends for 250 feet. The building is divided into four separate sections along Blair Avenue in varied widths of 7 bays, 5 bays, 7 bays, and 5 bays, going from left to right (west to east). The sections are separated by firewalls seen on the façade as three chimney stacks expressed as buttresses, and each section has its own entrance (Photo 6). The long Blair elevation is varied with setbacks and angled bays emphasizing the entrances. The building is topped by a short attic floor with a prominent black-painted metal cornice with a garlanded frieze and flat roof. The immediate area is a mixed urban neighborhood, including the massive Haddon Hall court apartment building to the north, St. Andrew Roman Catholic Church (3401 Reading Road), an imposing stone Gothic-style church dedicated in 1920, to the west, new single-family houses to the south, and early-20th-century homes to the east. Despite replacement of doors and windows, removal of rear porches and renovation of apartments, the building retains historic integrity of massing, materials, location, workmanship, and association.

Narrative Description

Each doorway is recessed behind a generous classical limestone surround with flat entablature and arched opening and accessed by a high stone stoop (Photos 5 and 6). Limestone stringcourses and bandcourses divide the floors. The windows are paired, divided by wide

mullions and joined by continuous stone lintels. The windows have vinyl replacement sashes with six-light interior grids in the upper sashes and solid panels in the transoms. Limestone pediments above most but not all third-floor windows provide another classical element. Windows at the fourth, or attic, floor are mostly infilled with painted plywood. Brick spandrels between the second and third floors feature decorative panels of corbelled brick. The flat rubber-membrane roof is pierced by two additional chimneys in each party wall as well as the east end wall, with one additional chimney in the easternmost section. Eight small porches have been removed from the rear elevation.

Interior

Entrance to the interior of the building is made through an open outer vestibule and an enclosed inner vestibule. Each outer vestibule has painted brick walls, vinyl tile floor, and a molded metal ceiling with square and rectangular coffers (Photo 8). Glimpses of original encaustic tile floors are visible under the edges of vinyl tile. Each inner vestibule is enclosed by two sets of wood doors, each with a wood-infilled transom above. The inner vestibules have vinyl tile floors, plaster walls and plain plaster ceilings. (See figure 3.)

The stair lobbies are finished with vinyl tile floors, painted marble wainscot, and painted plaster ceiling and walls. The wainscot converts to painted beadboard along the stairways, which have wood stringers, white marble treads and risers, and vinyl tile on the landings. The stairways in 802 and 806 Blair have stained square wood newel posts and railings with square balusters for their full flights (Photos 9 – 13). Those at 810 and 814 Blair have been replaced with simple metal railings. The stairhalls of 802, 810 and 814 are lighted with natural light from large square skylights above (Photo 12). However 806 Blair has no skylight.

Stairhalls in the center of each section provide access to two walkup apartments per floor, with the exception of 802 Blair, which has three apartments on the second and third floors and one apartment on the fourth floor. There are 24 apartment units in total; most (17) have four bedrooms although there are three two-bedroom units and four three-bedroom units. The apartments have been renovated at least twice since 1970; no original trim or doors remain (Photo 14), but most units appear to conform to their original sizes, with some changes to partitions and updated kitchens and baths. The apartment entry doors are flush wood doors in wood frames. Finishes in the apartments include plaster perimeter walls, gypsum board partitions and ceilings, and vinyl tile floors, with occasional wall-to-wall carpeting. The building has a full-height unfinished basement with concrete floor and exposed brick walls. The basement was the location of a series of boilers that feed baseboard radiators in the apartments. The basement was originally illuminated by windows, which have been infilled with painted plywood for security reasons.

Setting

The Somerset retains its historic setting on the corner of Blair Avenue and Reading Road, which was a major streetcar route and continues to function as a major north-south thoroughfare through the neighborhood. The building is built right to the sidewalk on the street elevations and has a shallow back yard on the interior of the block consisting simply of a grassy lawn enclosed with a chain link fence. On the east end is a small parking lot on land that was purchased by the original owners in 1906.

The immediate area is a mixed urban neighborhood, including the massive Haddon Hall court apartment building to the north, St. Andrew Roman Catholic Church (3401 Reading Road), an imposing stone Gothic-style church dedicated in 1920, to the west, and new single-family houses to south and early-20th-century homes to the east.

Integrity

Despite alterations described above, the property continues to retain its historic integrity of massing, materials, location, workmanship, and association. Major original features of its design and function such as its basic shape, circulation, and window and door openings, as well as exterior materials, such as red brick, ashlar limestone basement and smooth limestone trim, remain intact. The apartment units retain their original size and floor plan except for the changes noted above. The important features of the setting are its location on a large corner lot on a major streetcar route along reading Road. The Somerset retains the essential physical features and a sufficient level of integrity to represent its importance as a streetcar apartment building.

As an example of the "Streetcar Suburb Apartment Building" property type identified in the "Apartment Buildings in Urban Centers, 1870-1970" Multiple Property Documentation (MPD), the Somerset sufficiently retains the physical features and level of integrity to serve as an example of this type, specifically it exhibits nearly all of the characteristics identified in the MPD, including construction ca. 1890- 1910 and location on a corner lot on a major streetcar route in a neighborhood at the perimeter of the central city. The building now lacks rear porches but exhibits horizontal facade emphasis, repetition of bays, use of turrets and bay windows, multiple entrances and vestibules on long wall, a flat root, variegated exterior materials on primary elevations, and a total of 24 apartments.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [X] A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [ ] C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- [ ] A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- [ ] B. Removed from its original location
- [ ] C. A birthplace or grave
- [ ] D. A cemetery
- [ ] E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- [ ] F. A commemorative property
- [ ] G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

Period of Significance
1896-1943

Significant Dates
1896, 1943

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Steinkamp, Joseph G.
Thomas Emery's Sons

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

Completed in 1896, the Somerset Apartments qualifies for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places on a local level under Criterion A in the area of community development for its association with the development of suburban streetcar transportation and multi-family living for middle-class residents in Cincinnati's emerging inner-ring suburb, Avondale, during the early 20th century. The Somerset Apartments clearly reflect significance within the historic context of "Streetcar Suburb Apartments in Cincinnati 1890-1930 and specifically "Early Middle Class Apartments," as presented in the MPD, "Apartment Buildings in Ohio Urban Centers, 1870-1970." As an example of the "Streetcar Suburb Apartment Building" property type identified in the MPD the Somerset Apartments meet the integrity threshold for individual eligibility established in the MPD. The Somerset is cited as one of several upper- and middle-class suburban apartments built around 1900 along Reading Road, a major streetcar artery in Avondale (Gordon, E-37). Moreover, the Somerset was the first large-scale apartment building in the Cincinnati neighborhood of Avondale and completed in the same year that Avondale was annexed by the city. The Somerset is also significant for its association with Thomas Emery's Sons, cited in the MPD for their role as Cincinnati's foremost developer of apartment buildings from 1880 through the early 1900s and as the work of the prolific Cincinnati architectural firm of Joseph G. Steinkamp (1868-1948) and his younger brother, Bernard F. Steinkamp (d. 1943), who specialized in apartment houses and built dozens of them for the Emerys (Gordon, E-37). The Somerset's period of significance is from 1898, the date of its construction, to 1943, when the building left ownership by the Emery family.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Streetcar. By the 1850s, the boundaries of Cincinnati had greatly enlarged in response to the increase of population and industry. Communities, including Avondale, experienced substantial growth with the introduction of the streetcar. In 1859, five companies organized to operate horse-drawn streetcars. The large, some with double-decks, horse-drawn omnibuses were introduced circa 1869. In a city charter granted to these companies, the City stated that the companies were "required to establish and provide service to the various sections of the community to and from the hub of the city" (Giglierano & Overmyer, 514).

In order to reach beyond the basin of Cincinnati, however, it was necessary to build incline railroads to climb the surrounding hills. The first of these inclines was built to scale Mount Auburn, from Mulberry and Main streets to Jackson Hill; this opened in 1872. Within two months of the incline's opening, horse-drawn omnibuses were running from the top of the incline to the adjacent suburbs of Clifton, Walnut Hills and the south end of Avondale. "By 1875, the city had 14 separate lines, employing 1,000 horses to pull streetcars over 45 miles of track."

In 1889, the streetcar routes began to be electrified (Stradling, 68). The Thompson Houston Company was hired to electrify the Avondale route in 1890 and built a generating station at the corner of Reading Road and McMillan to furnish power (Wagner & Wright, 111). *C. S. Mendenhall's Standard Guide Map of Cincinnati* published in 1903 shows that by that time an electric railway was running up Reading Road (about 11 blocks north of Blair Avenue) to Clinton Springs Avenue where it turned west, continuing along Mitchell Avenue to Winton and Spring

Grove Cemetery. There was also a cable railway from Fourth Street and Broadway downtown to Avondale town hall (Commercial Gazette, May 24, 1892).

But by end of the nineteenth century, electric trolleys radiated out of the city basin to the newly formed suburbs, which also allowed businesses to move from the basin to the suburbs. As history professor David Stradling states in *Cincinnati: from River City to Highway Metropolis*, Cincinnati needed these transportation systems to accommodate its rapidly growing population. By 1911, the Cincinnati Traction Company had unified the many streetcar lines into one system. The city's population climbed from 296,908 in 1890 to 325,902 in 1900; 363,591 in 1910; 401,247 in 1920; and by 1940 there were 455,610 Cincinnatians.

The combination of transportation improvements, a growing population, and annexations of outlying neighborhoods by the city spurred an exodus to the hilltops. "The electric streetcar not only reflected the growth of all of these more distant places, but also encouraged it." "Streets with trolley lines developed more intensely than those without, as business districts and apartment buildings thrived on the easy access provided by the streetcars" (Stradling, 69). Cincinnati's streetcar system provided an inexpensive mode of transportation that was integral in allowing the working and middle-classes an opportunity to move outside of the basin.

Avondale: Streetcar Suburb. Avondale began to develop as a Cincinnati suburb in the 1830s when businessmen began building homes there and commuting to work in the city. As more wealthy Cincinnatians began to construct suburban residences, Avondale landholders further divided their large holdings for sale as residential lots. Examples are Jonathan Dayton, who subdivided his property, known as Clinton, in 1846 and James Corry, who subdivided a tract he called Locust Grove soon after (Giglierano & Overmyer, 380).

Cincinnati merchants and manufacturers continued to move into large homes on ample Avondale parcels similar to what was happening in several other then-suburban areas, including Clifton, Mt. Auburn, and Walnut Hills. Among those who moved to Avondale were ironworks owners Miles Greenwood (1807-1885) and Stephen Burton (1816-1884). According to the Burton family, the area was first called Avondale in 1853, when Mrs. Burton compared the stream running behind her home to the Avon River in England (Giglierano & Overmyer, 380).

In 1854, the Cincinnati & Chicago Railroad bought the majority of the Clinton and Locust Grove properties previously owned by Jonathan Dayton and James Corry and platted a new combined subdivision. H. C. Freeman, the company surveyor, identified the tract as Avondale, which became its permanent name when the village incorporated in 1864. The incorporation was in large part an attempt to control lawlessness--burglaries, vagrancy, public drunkenness, and brawling. Much to the annoyance of Avondale's wealthy residents, these problems persisted in the community into the early 1890s. However, the village was able to accomplish essential public works such as road improvement and sewer lines. At the same time, the electric streetcar was completed (Giglierano & Overmyer, 380). Together these infrastructure improvements encouraged the movement of Cincinnati's expanding professional class to Avondale and other newly accessible suburbs.

In 1895, Avondale was described by Daniel J. Kenny in his *Illustrated Guide to Cincinnati and the World's Columbian Exposition*, as "one of the most beautiful and picturesque suburbs of the city," and, "for years the home of many of the most prominent merchants and manufacturers of Cincinnati. It abounds with beautiful residences and charming homes, many of them of palatial

dimensions." He notes the road improvements underway, mentions Avondale's "magnificent school building of 15 rooms, a handsome town hall and five churches," among its assets, and reports that, "There are many improvements now being carried out in the village and new neat cottages and houses are going up rapidly." (Kenny, 211-213.)

These infrastructure improvements generated a new wave of subdivisions, among them that of Wayne, Krohn, Wilson, and the Avondale and the Cincinnati & Avondale syndicates, comprising two or three hundred acres. This was followed by the subdivision of over a hundred acres of the original Woodward property (just north of the Somerset site), which had been divided among his three daughters—Mrs. Hutchins, Mrs. Gallup and Mrs. Cleveland. (See Figure 6. 1869 Titus map.) The former Woodward tract was crossed by a narrow-gauge railroad, which had been abandoned by the company so that when the streets were improved, the cuts at the crossings were filled in and railroad bridges removed. The railroad crossed Blair Avenue, east of the Somerset site. In 1891, the eight-acre Van Antwerp homestead, north of Forest and west of Reading Road, and the next year, Robert Mitchell began to develop the Rose Hill subdivision to the north (*Commercial Gazette*, May 24, 1892). Along Reading Road a number of upper- and middle-class suburban apartments began to appear, specifically the Cumberland (808 Cleveland Avenue, 1890), a unique dumbbell-plan, six-flat apartment building (now clad in aluminum siding) and the Somerset (802-814 Blair Avenue, 1896), a 24-unit four-story Queen Anne style building designed by Joseph Steinkamp for the Emery brothers (Gordon, E-37). (See Figure 8. Updated 1904 Sanborn map.)

The City of Cincinnati had sought to annex Avondale and a number of other communities since 1870 in order to recover some of its population and the associated tax income that had been migrating to the suburbs. In 1896, with development rapidly progressing, Avondale was finally annexed, despite resistance, providing improved police and fire protection to the residents. As a result, Avondale's crime problem was substantially reduced within a few years, and the neighborhood became a safer, more pleasant place to live (Giglierano & Overmyer, 381).

The majority of Avondale's population for most of the nineteenth century was merchant-class Protestant of English or German ancestry. Only a small number of its inhabitants were middle or lower class, and only 8-10% was black. Beginning in the 1890s, however, well-to-do German Jewish families began moving into the northern part of Avondale, as they were often not welcomed in the exclusive social circles that dominated other wealthy suburbs like Clifton. Escaping the crowding and pollution of the city's Basin, many of Cincinnati's upwardly mobile Jewish professional class relocated after 1900 to the Avondale neighborhood (Giglierano & Overmyer, 381).

In the early 20th century, less affluent residents began to settle in newer, less expensive subdivisions in southern Avondale. The Somerset and other court apartment buildings provided housing for the growing middle-class in Avondale, allowing for the community to become more diverse. These new residents included many Greek Americans and Eastern European Jews, particularly following a general exodus of the Jewish population from the declining West End in the early twentieth century, and would profoundly change the character of the community. Between the 1920s and the end of World War II, Avondale was known as the "gilded ghetto", with Jewish inhabitants making up 60% of the suburb's total population. A variety of Jewish institutions and businesses, many of which originated in the old Jewish neighborhoods of the West End, also took up residence in Avondale at this time (Giglierano & Overmyer, 381).

The character of Avondale changed once again after World War II, as many of the community's younger residents bought more modern homes in the newer suburbs, taking advantage of low mortgage rates. After World War II, the community development pattern and the population began to transition as the Jewish community began to move out of Avondale to Amberley Village. Through the 1950, 60s and 70s property values continued a downward spiral as land use patterns changed and density increased substantially in Avondale. It became common for the large single family dwellings to be subdivided into apartments. In addition to the subdivision of dwellings, the increase of renter-occupied housing resulted from the development of vacant land zoned for high-density apartment development, which changed the community development pattern as green space on residential side streets were replaced with large multi-unit apartment buildings.[1]

The Somerset. Thomas Emery's Sons, Cincinnati's foremost developer of apartment buildings from 1880 through the early 1900s, acquired land in Avondale for the Somerset apartment building in 1895 in two parcels from heirs of the Cleveland family, specifically John D. Browne, widower of Frances Cleveland Browne; their daughters Virginia F. Browne and Alice Cleveland Cooley; and three other family members. The first purchase, recorded in January 15, 1895 (Deed Book 778, page 549), was for a parcel at the northeast corner of Main (Reading) and Woodward (Blair) avenues, extending 250 feet east on Blair and 50 feet north at the east end. The second purchase, recorded on June 26, 1895 (Deed Book 786, page 388), for an adjoining parcel on the north, provided 25 additional feet in depth. (An additional 50-foot-wide parcel abutting the east end of the building on Blair was purchased by John J. and Mary Emery from the same parties in February 1906. This parcel, an asphalt-paved parking lot, has always been vacant.)

The Emerys engaged the prolific Cincinnati architectural firm of Joseph G. Steinkamp to design the Somerset, which was completed by the end of 1896, the same year that Avondale was annexed by the City of Cincinnati (Hamilton County Recorder; *Ohio Architect & Builder*, XIII, 6.) Joseph G. Steinkamp and his younger brother, Bernard F. Steinkamp, specialized in apartment houses and built dozens of them for the Emerys beginning in the early 1880s. Completed in 1896, the Somerset was the team's first large-scale apartment building built in Avondale (Figure 7).

The Emerys continued to own the Somerset until December 1942. By this time, the population of Avondale was solidly Jewish. In 1943, it was conveyed by Maurice H. Koodish, trustee, to Joseph and Catherine Eschmann, who sold it in 1944 to John H. Koerner. Koerner owned it until 1971, when he sold it to Somerset Associates. It was likely at this time that the Somerset became affordable housing. In 1982, it was acquired by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Since that time, it has been owned by a series of property management companies until it was transferred by default to Fannie Mae in 2011. The Community Builders purchased it from Fannie Mae in November 2012 in anticipation of another renovation.

The Emerys: Cincinnati's Leading Apartment Builders. As Cincinnati developed more densely after the Civil War and downtown land values rose, single-family detached townhouses became economically impractical and the upper classes began to embrace apartment living. The first fashionable apartment buildings began to be built in the 1870s through 1890s on the

[1] For more information concerning Avondale's land use pattern change from 1930 to 1970 see the "North Avondale Community Master Plan," published in 1970.

fringes of downtown. The Sinton Flats (342 West Fourth Street, 1874), designed by James McLaughlin, is considered to be Cincinnati's earliest remaining luxury apartment building. In the 1880s and 1890s, Thomas J. Emery's Sons became Cincinnati's most prolific developer of apartment buildings. Starting in downtown, their projects included the Lombardy Apartments (318-326 West Fourth Street, 1881) in the West Fourth Street Historic District (NRHP, 1979), the Brittany (100-104 West Ninth Street, 1885), the Saxony (105-111 West Ninth Street, 1891), and the Waldo Apartments (FKA The Norfolk, 801 Elm Street, 1893) in the Ninth Street Historic District (NRHP, 1981)(Gordon, E35-E36).

The Emerys were leaders in Cincinnati's business, civic, and arts arenas for three or more generations. The family dynasty began in 1832, when English-born Thomas L. Emery came to Cincinnati and soon after entered the real-estate business. By 1836 he began an industry based on by-products of Cincinnati's vast pork-packing industry, first producing lard oil, followed by candles in the 1850s. An advertisement in Charles Cist's self-published *Cincinnati in 1841: Its Early Annals and Future Prospects* shows Thomas Emery was offering "houses, stores and lots for sale," as well as "country seats and farms." After his death in 1857, his sons—John J. Emery, Sr. (1834-1908), Thomas J. Emery (1830-2906), and J. Howard Emery (1838-86)—continued and developed the real-estate and manufacturing enterprises under the name Thomas Emery & Sons.

In the 1870s and early 1880s the Emerys commissioned a number of fine building designs from Samuel Hannaford, including the Lombardy Flats on West 4th Street which is considered one of Cincinnati's first "fashionable" or respectable apartment buildings; the stylish Palace (now Cincinnatian) Hotel; in addition to Thomas J. Emery's own 1881 mansion, "Edgecliff" in East Walnut Hills. From the 1880s until World War I, the Emery firm developed dozens of up-to-date apartment buildings, often along or at the ends of the new streetcar lines, downtown and in such suburbs as Clifton, Walnut Hills, and South Avondale. Most of these were designed by members of the Steinkamp family, formerly builders, who also served as architects in this period. Among their designs for the Emerys were the Normandy (519-527 Race Street, 1885, demolished) and the Savoy, 225 West Court Street, 1885).

The Emery firm began building in Walnut Hills in the early 1880s—after transportation improvements made the neighborhood attractive for new residential development. During the 1880s and 1890s they built several rowhouse blocks and small apartment houses near the new transit lines. Rowhouse and duplex projects included Gilbert Row (NRHP, 1982) at 2152-2166 Gilbert Avenue; a series of double houses at 2128-2140 St. James Avenue (1885; HAM-1443-31), and the St. James Rowhouses (2112-2126 St. James Avenue, c. 1895; HAM-1442-31), on the same street. In 1895 the firm built The Eden Flats (HAM-0907-31), a four-story Romanesque Revival apartment building designed by the Steinkamp firm on Sinton Avenue in the Gilbert-Sinton Historic District (NRHP, 1983)(Warminski).

Maxwell describes the key role the Emerys played in apartment house development (while omitting the involvement of Samuel Hannaford & Sons), as follows:

> The Thomas Emery's sons were the first to erect apartment houses in Cincinnati and employed one firm of architects, Joseph G. Steinkamp and Brother, exclusively. By doing this, every apartment house erected by them was an improvement over the previous one. Flat seekers always apply to Thomas Emery's sons first, and very often rent apartments without even having seen the plan, knowing that the best arrangement and most comfort

would be found in their apartments (Maxwell, Walter, The Emery Estate, "A Commercialized Philanthropy," *Saxby's Magazine*, XX (October 1909), 65).

From circa 1895 to circa 1915, apartment construction occurred in several other expanding neighborhoods of Cincinnati. The neighborhoods of Avondale, Clifton, and Hyde Park had experienced significant residential growth with developers constructing large apartments to meet the demand for this type of housing. As mentioned above, the Emerys acquired land in Avondale for the Somerset apartment building in 1895 and completed it by the end of 1896, the following year.

At about the same time, the Emerys moved into Clifton, purchasing land in 1896 to build the Parkside Apartments (3315-3317 Jefferson Avenue, 1897, NRHP, 2006). Like Avondale, Clifton was a pastoral compound settled by Cincinnati's merchant class and annexed by the City in 1896. Streetcars had begun running on Ludlow Avenue in the late 1880s. The Parkside was the first large-scale apartment building built in Clifton. Designed by J. G. Steinkamp, the Parkside was an unusual Shingle-style design with 23 units arranged in a unique Y-shaped plan. This ingenious configuration enhanced privacy and maximized views of Burnet Woods, the adjoining park. The Emerys followed with several middle-class perimeter plan apartments, including The Roslyn (3404-3420 Middleton Avenue, 1904; HAM-07502-07), The Roanoke (359 Ludlow Avenue,1900; HAM-01821-07), The Romaine (3401 Middleton Avenue, 1905), and the Rutland (358 Shiloh Avenue, 1906). The largest of these was the Roanoke, with 37 apartments (Gordon E-38).

During the 1900s, the Emery firm built large-scale blocks of flats along major thoroughfares in these outlying neighborhoods that were served by public transit, enabling tenants to commute to jobs downtown. With construction of nine large-scale apartment buildings they became the "city's major landlord for apartment living" (Mitchell, "The Alexandra," NRHP, 1996). In addition to the four already mentioned in Clifton and Haddon Hall in Avondale, they built four in Walnut Hills—the Alexandra Apartments (921 East Wm. Howard Taft Road, 1904; NRHP, 1996), The Navarre Apartments (2651 Gilbert Avenue,1905), The Verona (1906; NRHP, 2007), and The Clermont (1404-06 East McMillan Street,1906; East Walnut Hills [Local] Historic District).

The Alexandra was prominently sited at the corner of Gilbert Avenue and William Howard Taft Road, just a block from the end of the Gilbert Avenue streetcar line and the bustling Peebles Corner shopping district, centered along Gilbert Avenue and McMillan Street. At 54 units, the Alexandra was the largest apartment building built in the city at the time, and Cincinnati's first large-scale apartment complex outside of the central business district. The Navarre is a large, U-shaped, three-and-a-half-story brick building with brick-and-stone entrance porticoes and projecting brick porches, arranged around a central courtyard. With 36 flats of 5 to 6 rooms each, it was intended to house middle-class tenants. A year later, The Verona and Clermont, also handsome brick courtyard apartment buildings, were built. In the same year as they erected the Alexandra, the Emerys also built in Avondale. The result was Haddon Hall (3418-3420 Reading Road, (1904; NRHP, 1982), an imposing E-shaped Dutch Colonial apartment building with 56 units.

Fueled by population growth after World War I, Cincinnati's apartment building surge continued through the 1920s, spreading out into neighborhoods farther from the city center. During the 1910s and 1920s two- to four-story apartment houses of a variety of plans were built for middle- and upper-middleclass tenants in Walnut Hills, Avondale, Clifton, Hyde Park, Oakley, College

Hill, Price Hill, and Westwood.

J. G. Steinkamp, Architect. The firm of J. G. Steinkamp was considered among the leading architects of Cincinnati. Joseph G. Steinkamp and his younger brother, Bernard F. Steinkamp, got their start in the office of their father, John B. Steinkamp (1827-1890). A native of Germany, John came to Cincinnati in 1835 at the age of eight. Trained as a carpenter, John served for 25 years as superintendent of construction for the Emery family, among others. Beginning circa 1885, John Steinkamp practiced as an architect until his death in 1890. Joseph Steinkamp graduated from St. Xavier College in Cincinnati and then went to work for his father. Following his father's death, he continued the business under his own name for seven years. In 1897, he took on his brother as a partner, and they practiced together until at least 1936, after which Joseph continued alone until ca. 1948, the year of his death. Bernard, like his brother, received his education in parochial schools and St. Xavier.

"Outstanding examples of their practice are school and college buildings, while they have to their credit a large number of other structures built for investment purposes within the Cincinnati area." (Leonard, 594) These included school buildings for various Catholic parishes such as St. Mark's, St. Andrew's and St. William's, as well as St. Xavier College, their alma mater. Among their most prominent commissions are the Mercantile Library Building and the Hotel Metropole. While the firm drew a considerable number of clients, the Steinkamps are most closely associated with Thomas Emery & Sons, who hired them exclusively to design and build innumerable apartment buildings downtown and in the inner suburbs. "Although some of these are handsome structures, the firm was best known for its efficiency and practicality" (Langsam).

Examples of these apartment buildings are the four-story LaSalle Apartments on a large corner lot at 3501 Montgomery Road in Evanston (1906), the Parkside Apartments (1898) at 3315-3317 Jefferson Avenue, the first large-scale apartment built in Clifton. Several early middle-class perimeter-plan apartments built by the Emerys in Clifton followed: the Roslyn (3404-3420 Middleton, 1905); the Romaine (3404-3420 Middleton, 1905); and the Rutland (358 Shiloh, 1905; OAB, July & Nov. 1904, March 1905; Wright, 234). The Steinkamp brothers also designed the Young Men's Mercantile Library Building, built 1902-1903 and the Mercantile Library, completed in 1908 for the Emery Estate. In 1909, Steinkamp designed Haddon Hall for the Emerys adjacent to the north. This large E-shaped Dutch Colonial design of brick with shingle gables more closely resembles the Parkside in Clifton than the Somerset next door.

Conclusion. As the introduction of the streetcar line in the 1890s spurred population growth in the Cincinnati suburb of Avondale, developers seized the opportunity to construct large, multi-unit buildings that appealed to a broad population of the middle- and upper-middle classes. Before the prevalence of the automobile, these Streetcar Suburb Apartments were typically located near key streetcar intersections or along major streetcar arteries such as Reading Road. This trend continued, fueled by population growth after World War I, as suburban apartment buildings continued to be a desirable housing option. The multi-family construction boom changed the development pattern of Avondale from an area of large, splendid single-family dwellings on spacious lots to a more architecturally diverse area with a rich collection of suburban apartment buildings.

The Somerset Apartment Building meets Criterion A in the area of community development under the broad theme of transportation for its association with high-density suburban apartment development in Avondale during the era of the electric streetcar in the 1890s. The

Somerset Apartments clearly reflect significance within the historic context of "Streetcar Suburb Apartments in Cincinnati 1890-1930 and specifically "Early Middle Class Apartments," as presented in the MPD, "Apartment Buildings in Ohio Urban Centers, 1870-1970." The Somerset is cited as one of several upper- and middle-class suburban apartments built around 1900 along Reading Road, a major streetcar artery in Avondale (Gordon, E-37).

In addition, the Somerset was the first large-scale apartment building in Avondale and its completion in 1896 coincided with the year Avondale was annexed by the City of Cincinnati. Furthermore, it is associated with Thomas Emery's Sons, Cincinnati's foremost developer of apartment buildings from 1880 through the early 1900s, and the prolific Cincinnati architectural firm of Joseph G. Steinkamp and his younger brother, Bernard F. Steinkamp, who specialized in apartment houses and built dozens of them for the Emerys.

As an example of the "Streetcar Suburb Apartment Building" property type identified in the "Apartment Buildings in Urban Centers, 1870-1970" Multiple Property Documentation (MPD), the Somerset sufficiently retains the physical features and level of integrity to serve as an example of this type, specifically it exhibits nearly all of the characteristics identified in the MPD, including construction ca. 1890- 1910 and location on a corner lot on a major streetcar route in a neighborhood at the perimeter of the central city. The building now lacks rear porches but exhibits horizontal facade emphasis, repetition of bays, use of turrets and bay windows, multiple entrances and vestibules on long wall, a flat root, variegated exterior materials on primary elevations, and a total of 24 apartments.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

_X__ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
____ previously listed in the National Register
____previously determined eligible by the National Register
____designated a National Historic Landmark
____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

____ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
__X__ Other
Name of repository: The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _HAM-00668-01_____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.515 (less than one)

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: Longitude:
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or
UTM References
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

[X] NAD 1927 or [ ] NAD 1983

1. Zone: 16	Easting: 716728	Northing: 4335240
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting :	Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description

The Somerset is located within the corporate limits of Cincinnati. The boundaries coincide with parcel 107-0010-0062-00 recorded by the Hamilton County Recorder. (See Figure 2. Boundary map.)

Boundary Justification

Parcel 107-0010-0062-00 represents the consolidation of three previous smaller parcels, including two on which the Somerset Apartment Building stands as well as a vacant lot on the east side of the building acquired by Thomas Emery's Sons, the original builders, which lot has been associated with the property since 1906.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Beth Sullebarger, Principal
organization: Sullebarger Associates
street & number: 1080 Morse Avenue
city or town: Glendale state: OH zip code:45246-3830
e-mail sullebarger@fuse.net
telephone: (513)772-1088
date: January 9, 2014

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:**

Figure 1. Location map
Figure 2. Boundary map
Figure 3. First floor plan and photo key
Figure 4. Fourth floor plan and photo key
Figure 5: 1909 view of the Somerset in *Ohio Architect & Builder* 14 (June 1909)
Figure 6. 1869 Titus map of Avondale
Figure 7. 1904 Sanborn map of Avondale
Figure 8. 1904 (updated through April 1949) Sanborn map, pl. 393
Figure 9. 1922 Sanborn map of Avondale

Photographs

Photo Log

Name of Property: The Somerset Apartments

City or Vicinity: Cincinnati

County: Hamilton State: Ohio

Photographer: Randall E. Birckhead

Date Photographed: May and July 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 14. Front (south) and side (east) elevations, looking northwest
2 of 14. Front (south elevation, looking northeast
3 of 14. Rear (north) and Side (west) elevations, looking east
4 of 14. Rear (north) elevation, looking east
5 of 14. Front (south) elevation detail
6 of 14. Front entrance detail, typical
7 of 14. Stone detail at entrance, typical
8 of 14. Vestibule ceiling detail, typical
9 of 14. Stairhall (802 Blair Avenue), first floor
10 of 14. Stairway, looking northwest
11 of 14. Stairway, looking north
12 of 14. Skylight detail
13 of 14. Stairway (806 Blair Avenue), first floor
14 of 14. Living room, typical

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

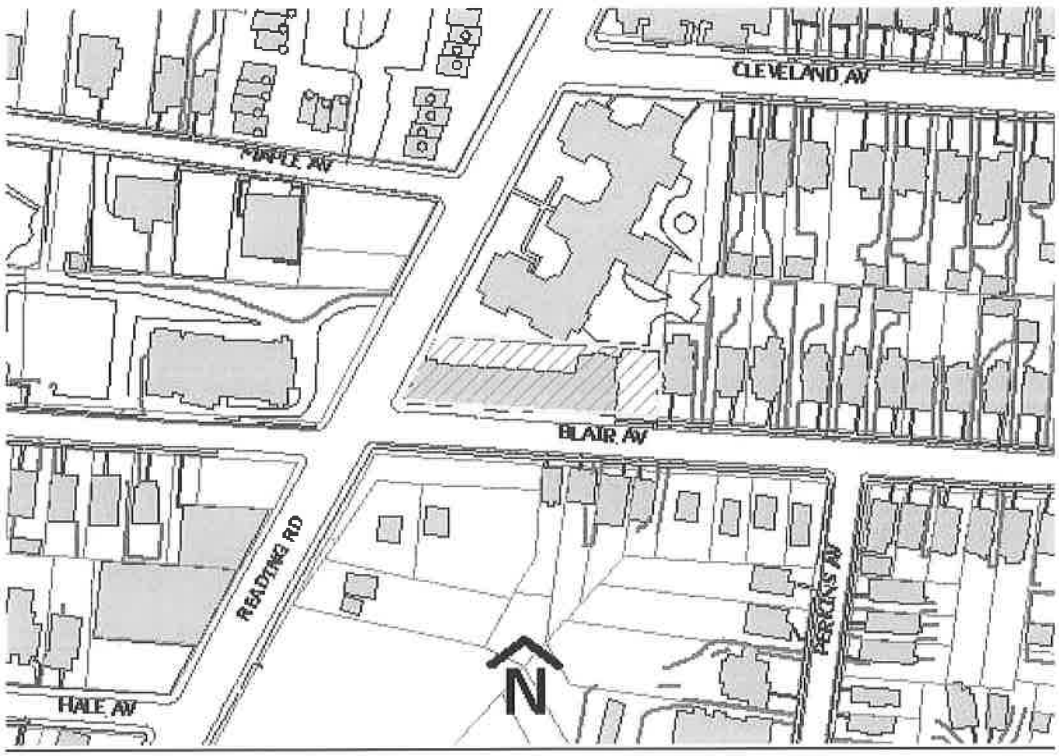

Figure 1. Location map

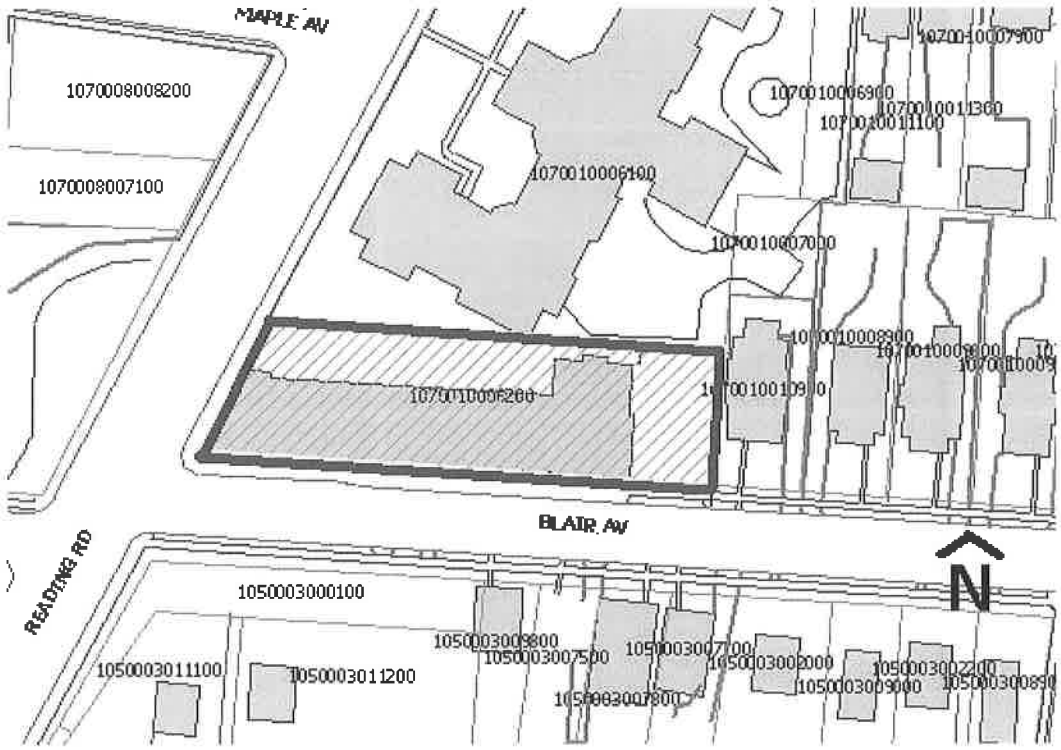

Figure 2. Boundary map

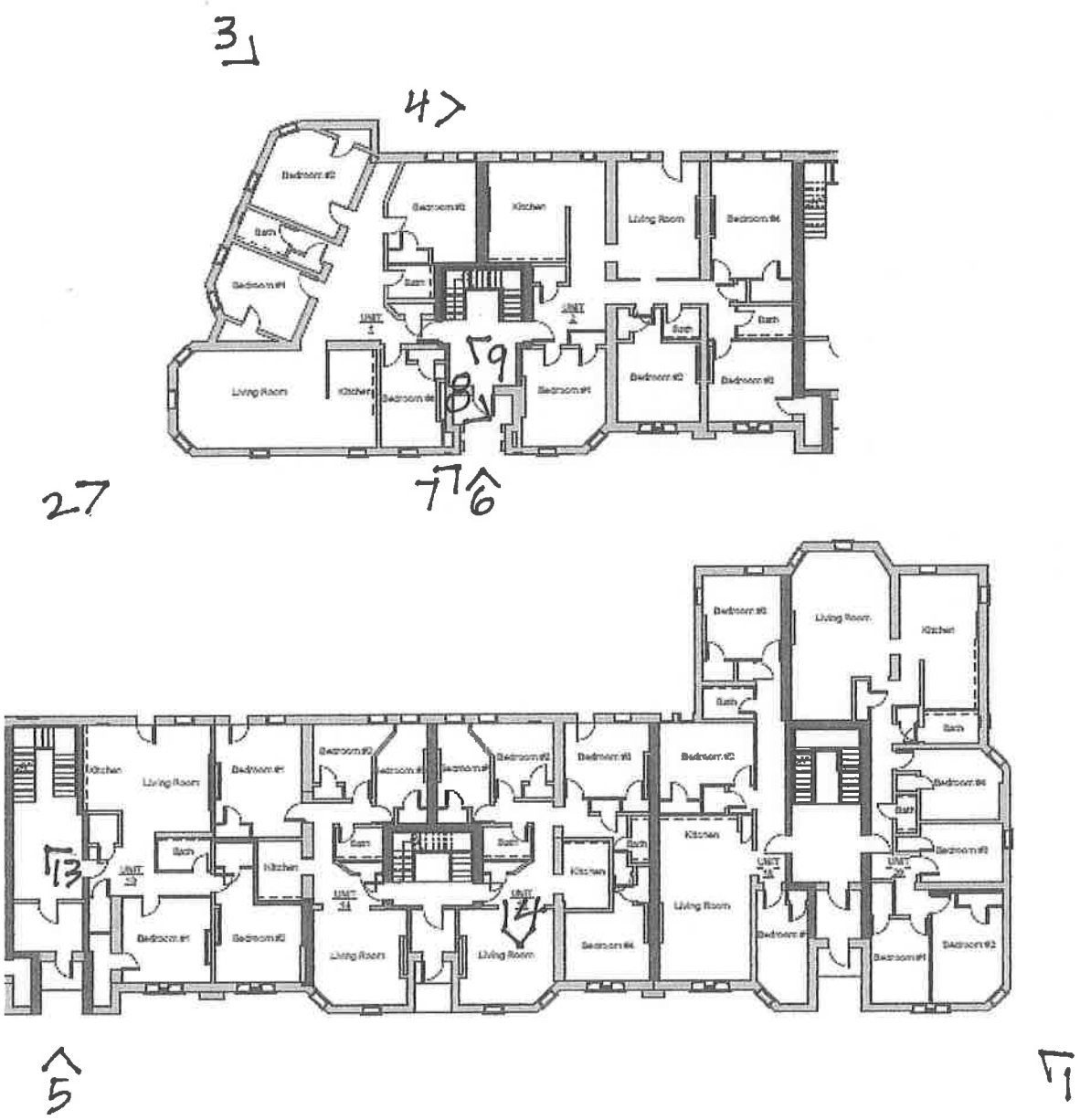

Figure 3. First floor plan (west end above, east end below) and photo key

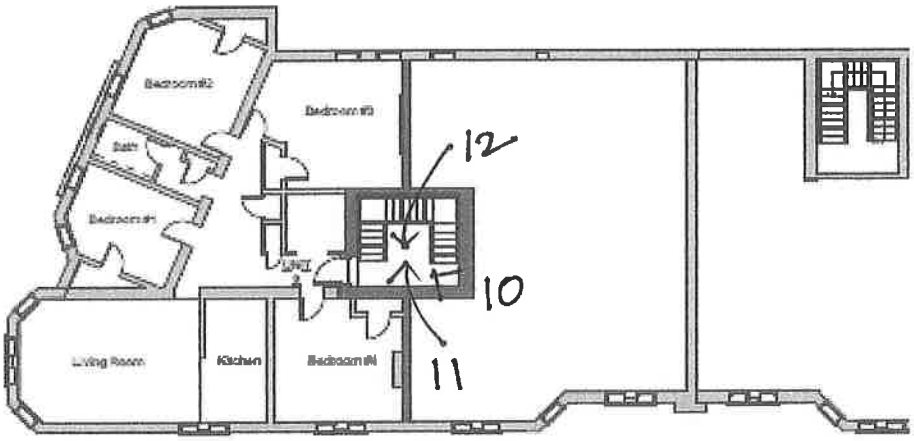

Figure 4. Fourth floor plan (west end) and photo key

The Somerset, Cincinnati, O.
Jos. G. Steinkamp & Bro., Architects, Cincinnati, O.

Figure 5: 1909 view of the Somerset in *Ohio Architect & Builder* 14 (June 1909)

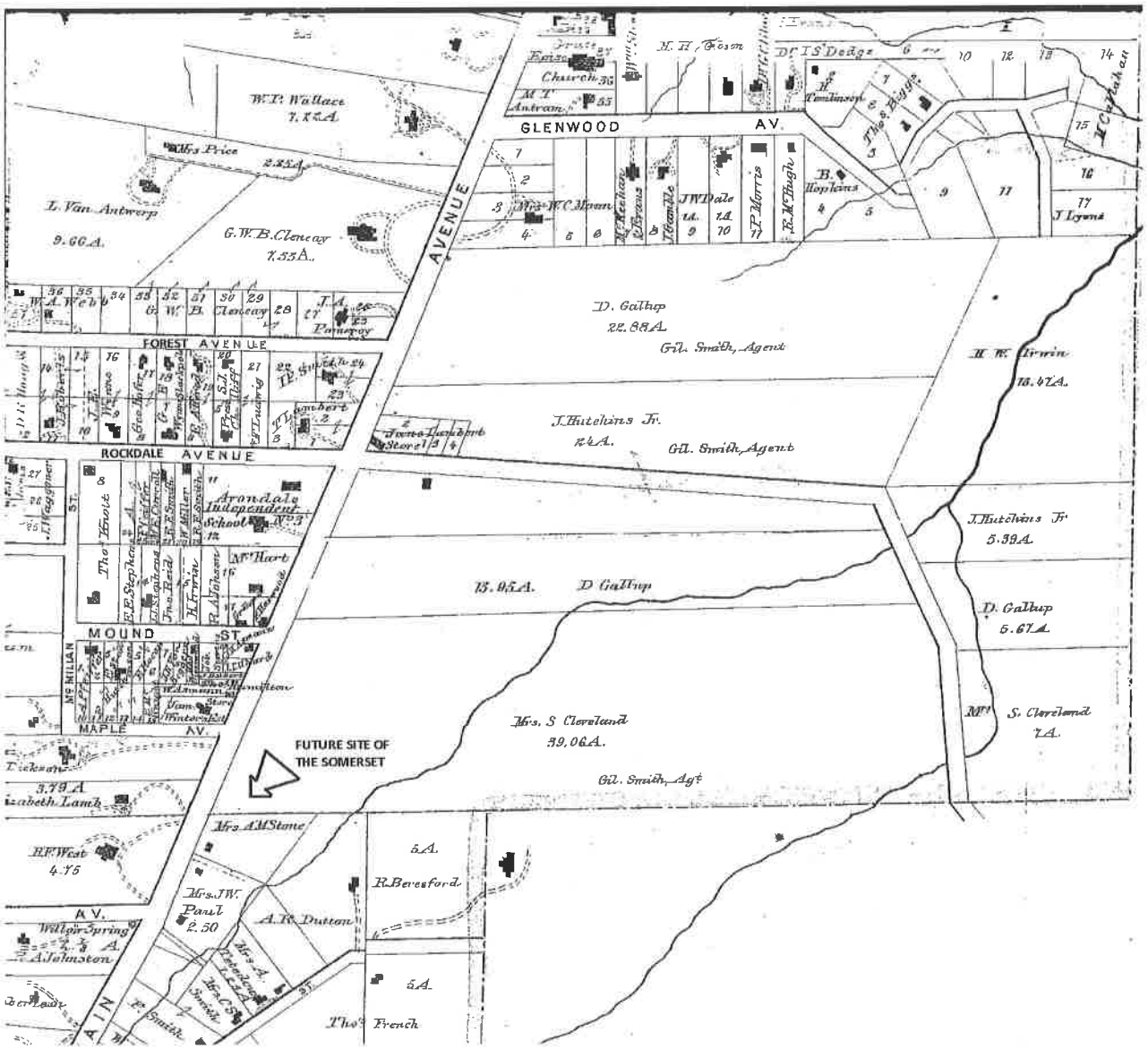

Figure 6: 1869 *Titus* map of Avondale with future site of the Somerset indicated on property of Mrs. S. Cleveland

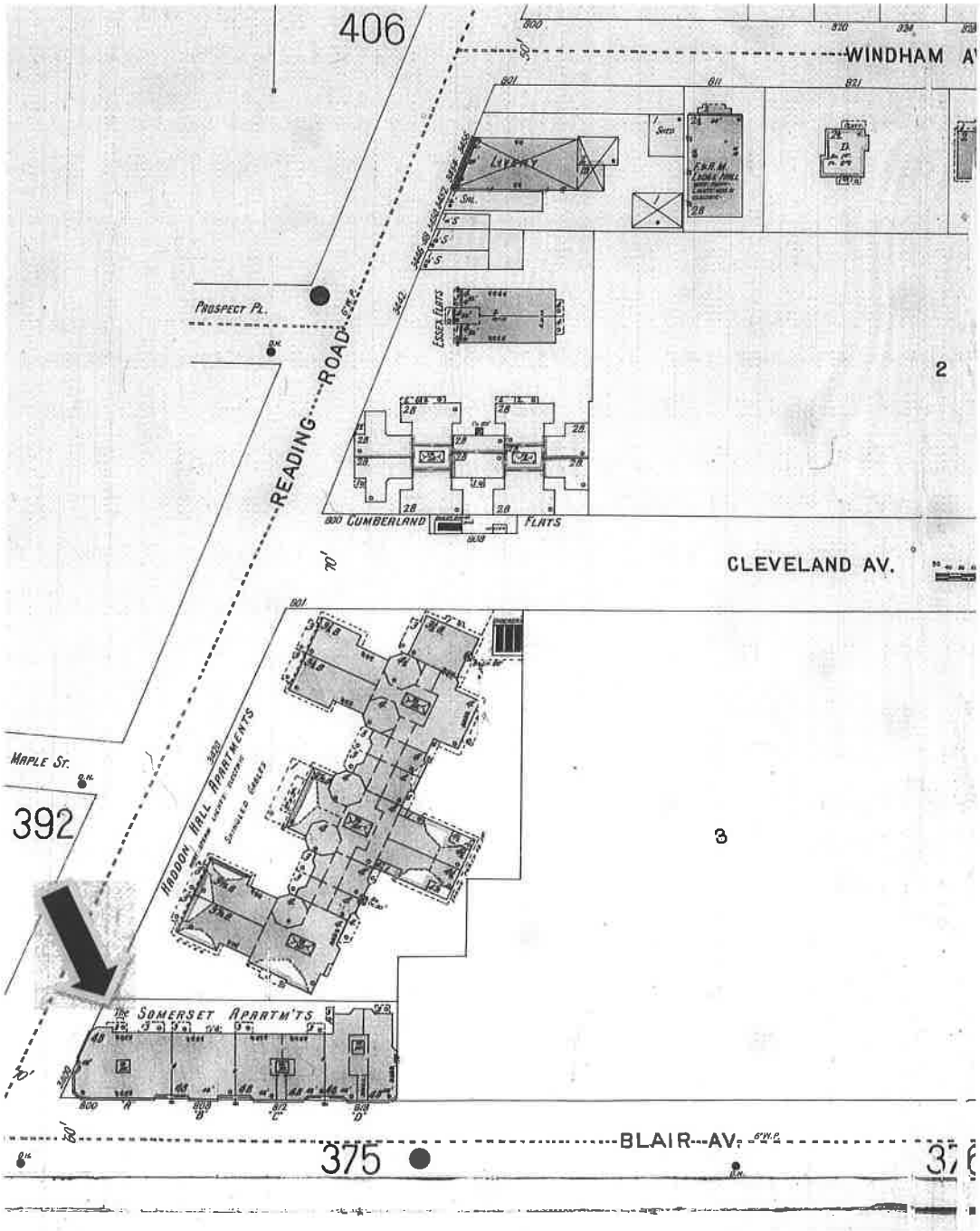

Figure 7: 1904 Sanborn map of Avondale showing the Somerset in lower left corner

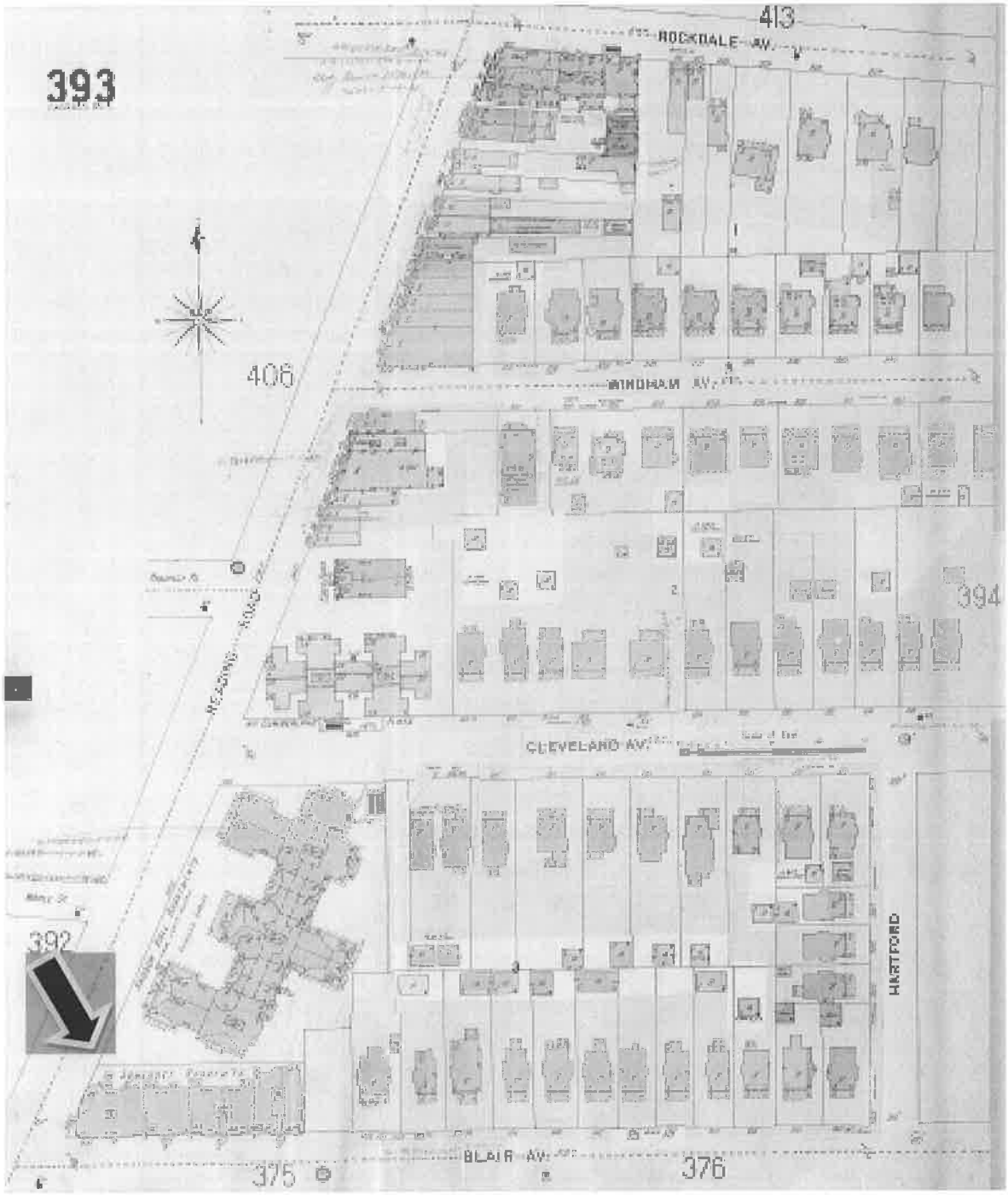

Figure 8: 1904 (updated through April 1949) Sanborn map, pl. 393 showing the Somerset in lower left corner

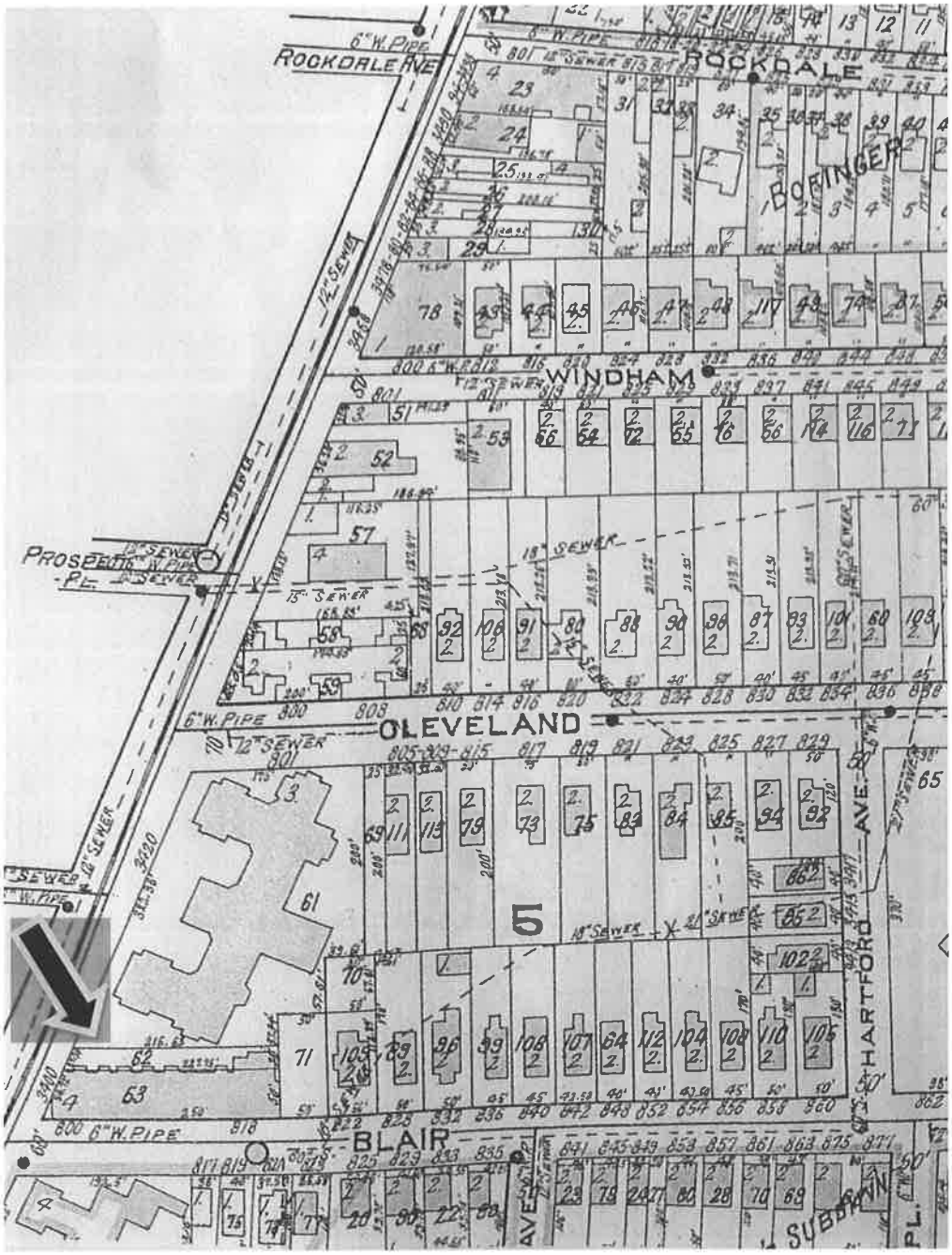

Figure 9: 1922 Sanborn map of Avondale showing the Somerset in lower left corner

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

CINCINNATI EAST QUADRANGLE
OHIO—HAMILTON CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, USCE, and City of Cincinnati

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1949 and in part by City of Cincinnati. Field checked 1953. Revised 1961

Polyconic projection. 10,000-foot grid ticks based on Ohio coordinate system, south zone. 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 16, shown in blue. 1927 North American Datum. To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983 move the projection lines 3 meters south and 6 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

Area east of the Little Miami River lies within the Virginia Military District. Area west of the Little Miami River lies within the Between the Miamis. Land lines based on the Great Miami River Base. Dotted land lines established by private subdivision of the Symmes Purchase

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map

UTM GRID AND 1981 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SCALE 1:24 000

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

OHIO
QUADRANGLE LOCATION

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled in cooperation with State of Ohio agencies from aerial photographs taken 1979 and other sources. This information not field checked. Map edited 1981

Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty — Light-duty
Medium-duty — Unimproved dirt
Interstate Route — U.S. Route — State Route

CINCINNATI EAST, OHIO

39084-B4-TF-024

1961
PHOTOREVISED 1981
DMA 4162 III NW—SERIES V852

INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA—1988

NOV 22 1988
RECORDS COPY

Somerset Apartments
Cincinnati
Hamilton County, OH
16 716728E 4335240N

NO STOPPING PARKING
ANY TIME
TOW ZONE
BLAIR
READING
SPEED LIMIT 30

802