



1613 TENNESSEE STREET, LAWRENCE KANSAS: The Real Story

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School of Architecture and Urban Design
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INTRODUCTION

Within the fabric of every building there is a story about its creation. That story is often lost or becomes distorted from reality. When this happens the only possible way of reviving the truth is to search for information that can lead to a reconstruction of the original story. The information can come from the built form itself or it can come from secondary sources (records, writings, verbal descriptions, etc.). This document is an attempt to reconstruct part of the true story about the creation of the house at 1613 Tennessee in Lawrence Kansas by searching secondary sources.

The house has been known by several names: the Thacher House, Fort Thacher, the Emery House, the Maupin House (its present title), and others. It was built in a time when a great westward movement was in progress in the U.S. Lawrence had just recently been founded (1854), had survived the Civil War, and was no longer on the edge of the frontier. Businessmen who had become well established in the area were ready to display in new dwellings the wealth they had acquired. The part of Tennessee Street from 14th Street to 17th Street became a prominent place for such new residences because of its amenities (hills, trees, etc.), its recent annexation into the town, and probably its proximity to the University (of Kansas).

The house as it stands today was built in two separate constructions. The front part (facing Tennessee St.) was built

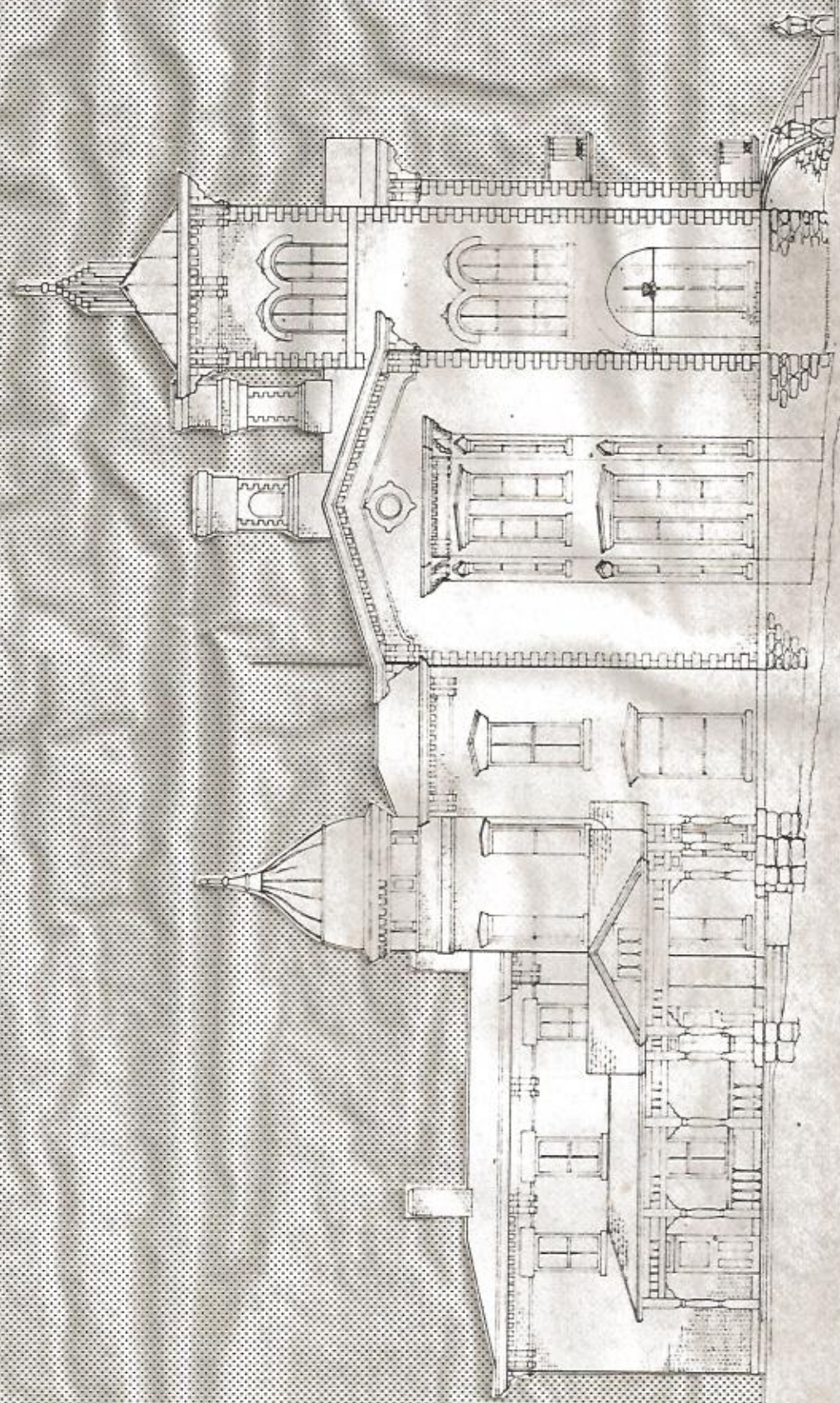
first and consisted of three large rooms and a hall on the first floor (Stough 1964). The back part was added later and more than doubled the original size. These two facts are the only truths that still exist about the story of the creation of the house. As is not uncommon the true story has become so exaggerated and distorted as to no longer represent reality.

Two stories of the house's history have been promoted in the past. The first comes from Paul Wearing's undergraduate architecture thesis at KU in 1955. In this version, Shalor W. Eldridge built the original portion in 1868 with the aid of John G. Haskell (architect of the Kansas State House, old Frasier Hall, several Kansas courthouses, many churches, etc.). Reuben W. Ludington, who moved to Lawrence in 1857, bought the house in 1869 and made some additions. Ludington was a cousin of the Eldridges; he owned half interest in the Eldridge House for a short while then went into the mercantile business in the early 1860's. He served as mayor from 1864 to 1866 (succeeding the mayor killed in Quantrill's Raid) and again from 1876 to 1878 (Learnard, p.146). The house was then bought in 1872 by Judge Solon O. Thacher. He completed the house in 1889 (as it stood in 1955). Thacher was a delegate to the Wyandotte constitutional convention in 1859; he ran for governor in 1864 and was a state senator from 1881-1883. In 1884 he was appointed by President Arthur to a commission that negotiated treaties with South American countries.

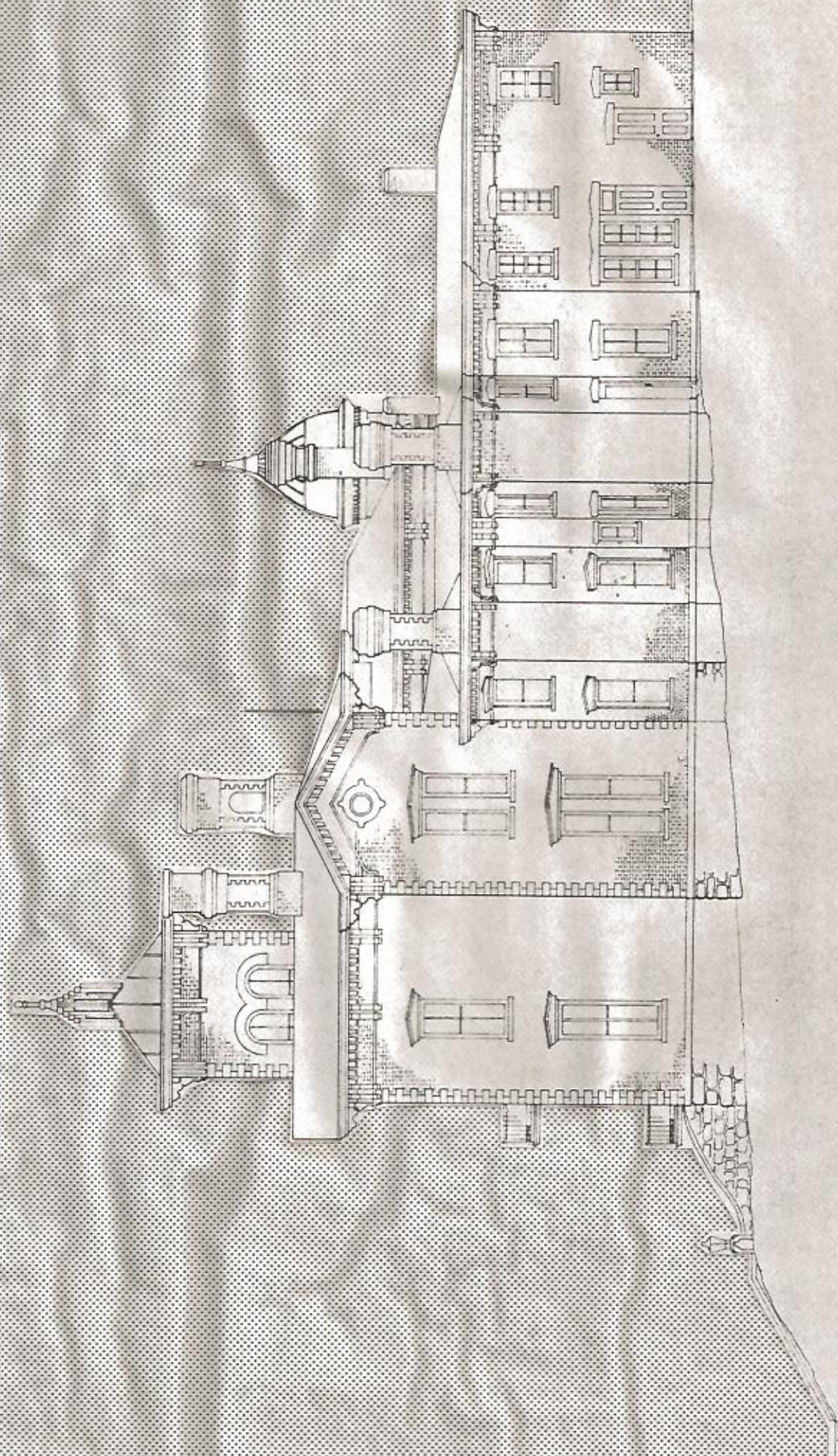
The second story of the house comes from an article in the Lawrence Journal-World written by Mary Stough in 1964. In this version, R.W. Ludington purchased the land and completed the

front part of the house in 1860 with Haskell as the architect. S.O. Thacher bought the property in 1869. In 1872 Peter Emery, son-in-law of Thacher, had the rear of the house added while Solon was traveling in Europe with his family. Upon return, Thacher refused to pay for the addition until a law suit was threatened because it did not architecturally match the front. In 1912 Solon Emery, grandson of Solon Thacher, enherited the house. Paul Snyder, a KU professor, bought it at auction for back taxes in 1940. Finally, it was bought in 1960 by Tom Maupin and Neil Mecaskey.

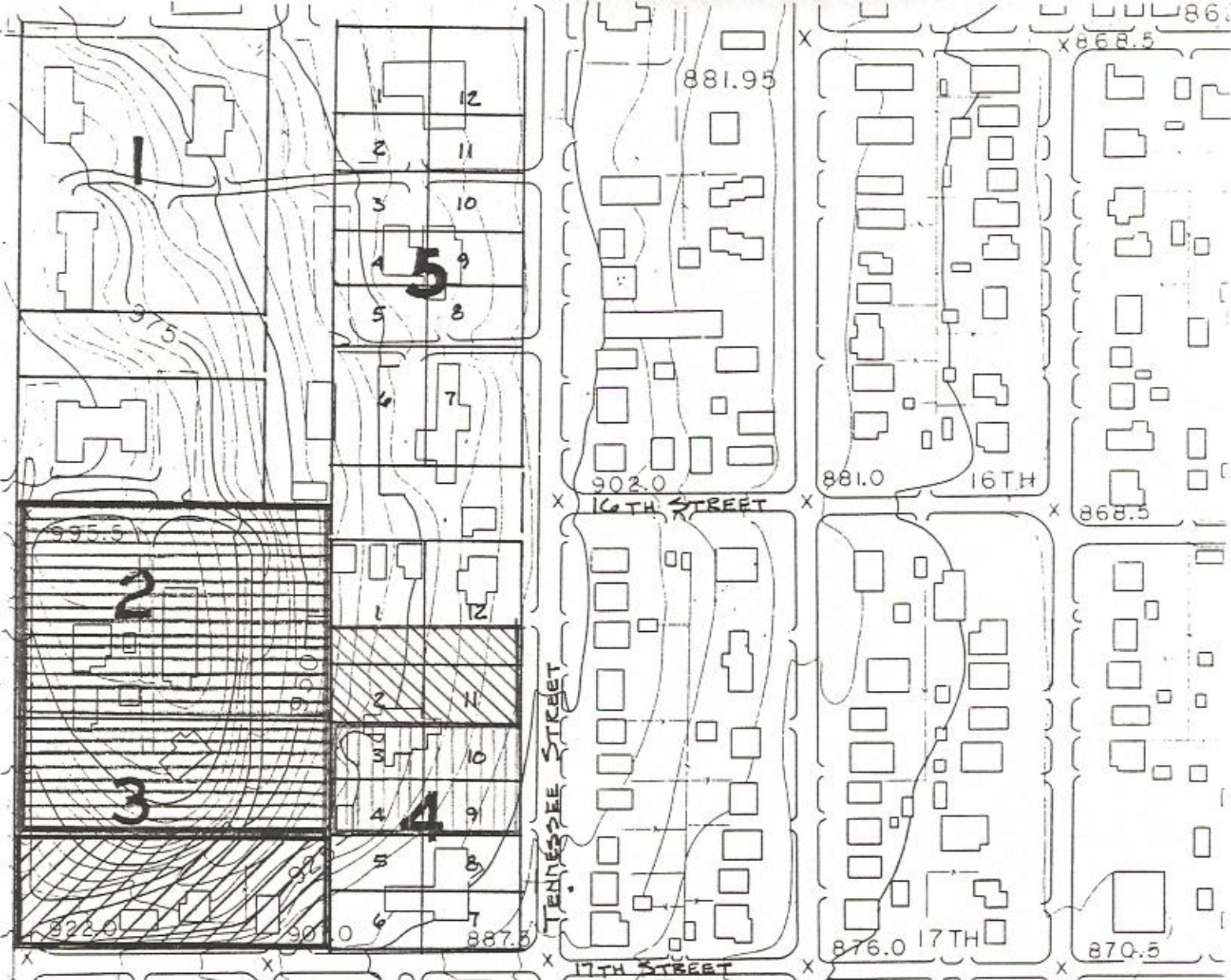
It is apparent from the discrepancies in these two stories that the true story of the house's creation has been lost. To help correct this a search has been conducted of the Douglas County Deed Records, the Lawrence City Directories, the Tax Assessment Roles, and newspaper articles from that time period. The information found will be presented in an outline form with important points highlighted. A more accurate story will be drawn from these sources and be presented in the conclusion.



SOUTH ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION



Lida W. Eldridge purchases



March 30, 1863 - from O. E. Learnard - \$250 - Lots 2 and 11 and south 42½' of lots 1 and 12 in Block 4 of Babcock's Addition.



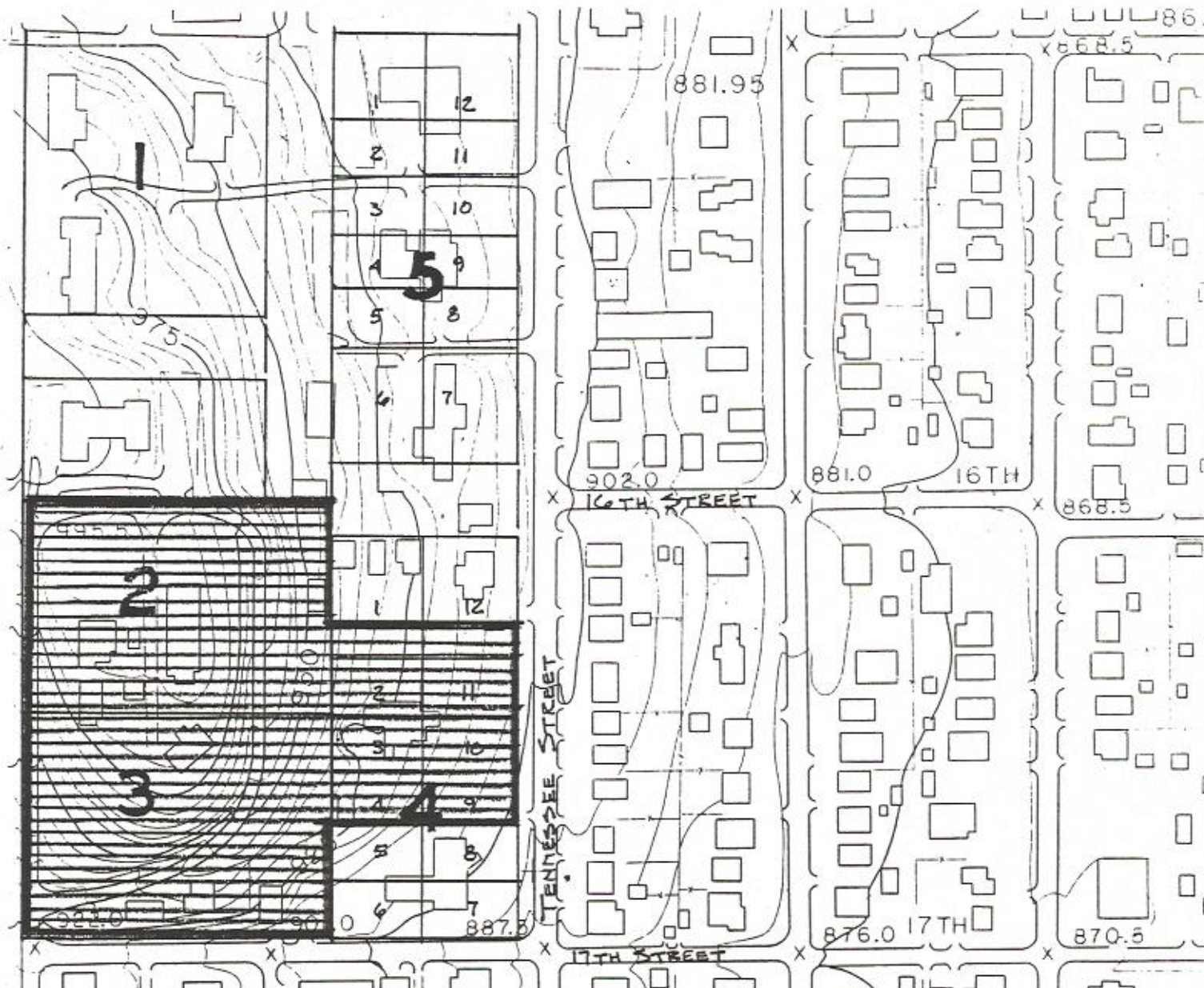
March 30, 1863 - from John B. Sutliff - \$250 - Lots 3, 4, 9, and 10 in Block 4 of Babcock's Addition.



October 3, 1865 - from Carmi W. Babcock - \$408 - beginning at SW corner of Lot 4 in Block 4 of Babcock's Addition then W 391', then N 267', then E 393', then S 267' - 24/10 acres±.

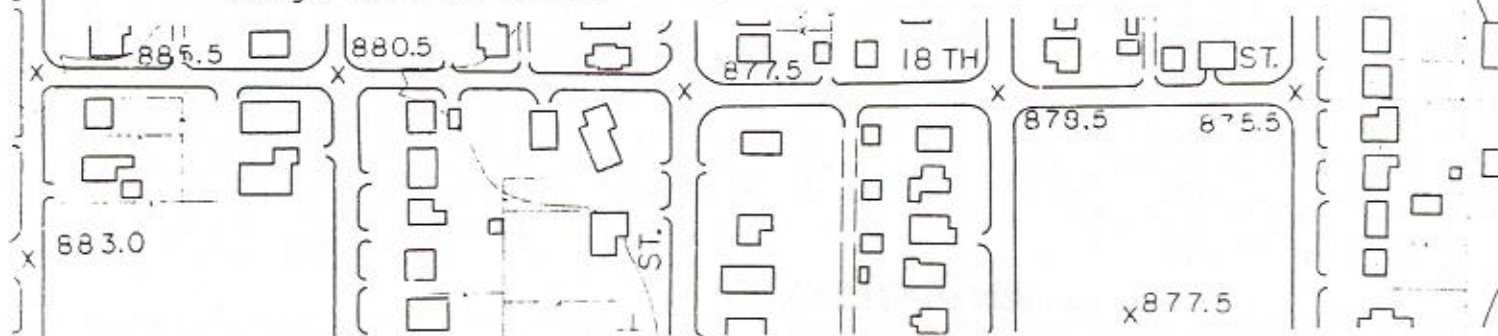


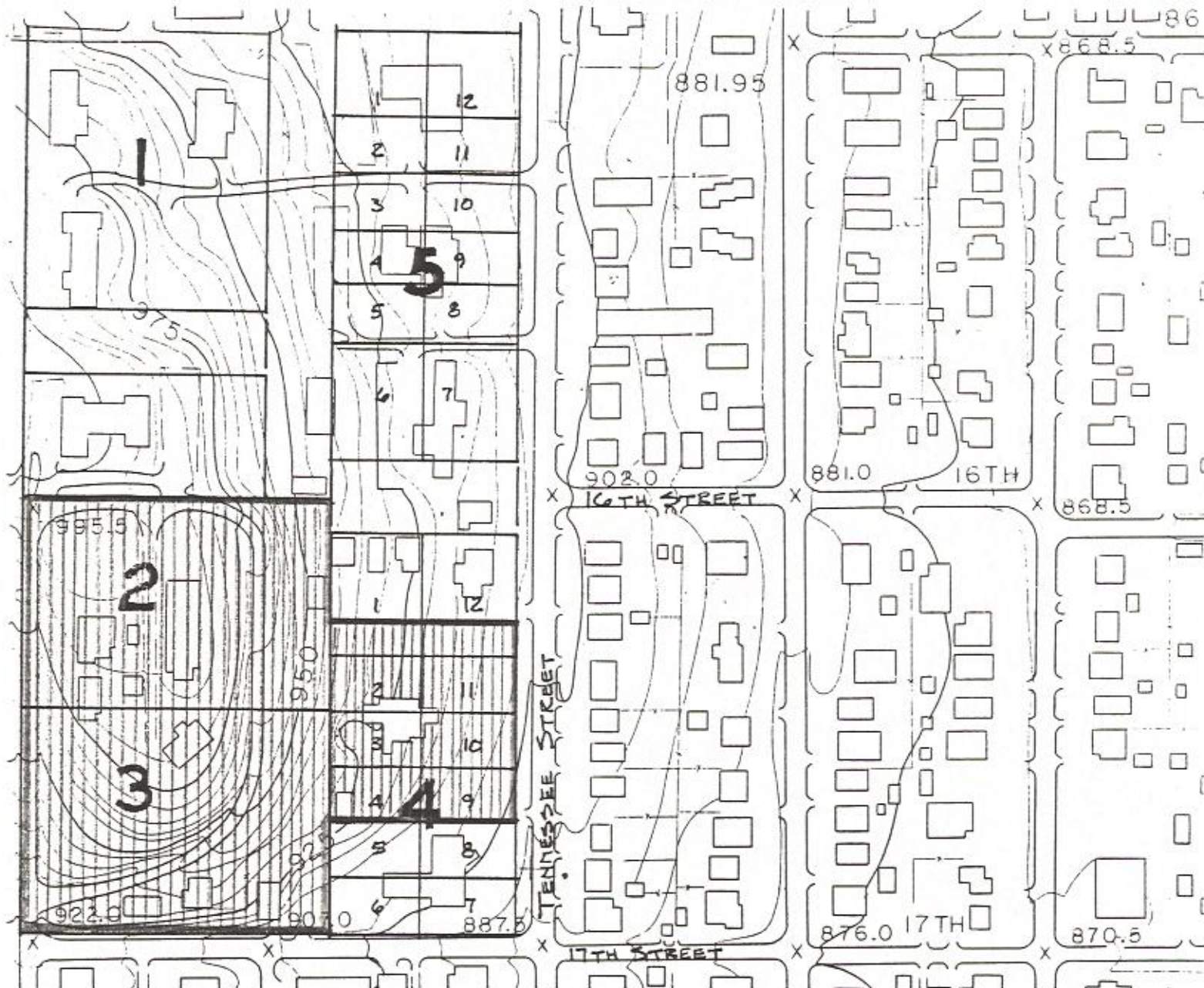
March 2, 1867 - from O. E. Learnard - \$550 - N border Eldridge, E border Alback, S border Addition boundry, W border Range line, in Block 3 of Babcock's Addition.



Reuben W. Ludington purchase

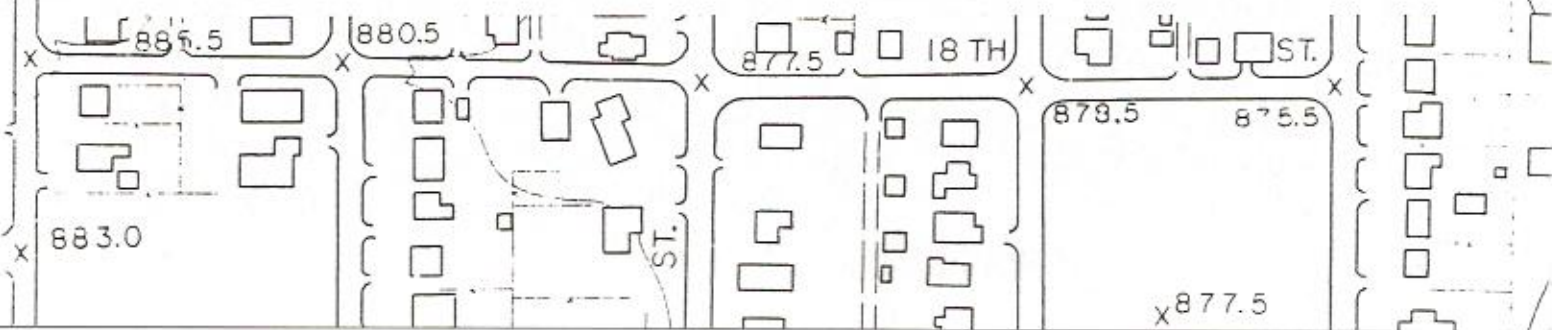
September 22, 1869 - from Lida W. Eldridge - \$9000 - Lots 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 and S 42½' of Lots 1 and 12; also beginning at SW corner of Lot 4 then W 391', then N 267', then E 393', then S 267'; also property bounded by Eldridge to the N, Alback to the E, Addition boundary to the S and Range line to the W,





Solon O. Thacher purchase

March 29, 1873 - from R. W. Ludington - \$30,000 - Lots 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 and S 42½' of Lots 1 and 12; also beginning at SW corner of Lot 4 then W 391', then N 267', then E 393', then S 267'; also property bounded by Eldridge to the N, Alback to the E, Addition boundry to the S, and Range line to the W.



LAWRENCE CITY DIRECTORY

1860:

Eldridge, Thomas B., East side New Hampshire between
Winthrop and Henry
Ludington, Reuben W., 88 Rhode island
Thacher, Solon O., 16 Connecticut

1866:

Eldridge, Thomas B., 77 Massachusettes
Ludington, Reuben W., 61 Massachusettes
Thacher, Solon O., unknown

1868:

Eldridge, Thomas B., West side of Tennessee South of
Adams (14th)
Ludington, Reuben W., 61 Massachusettes
Thacher, Solon O., East side Connecticut between Winthrop
and River

1871:

Eldridge, Thomas B., not listed
Ludington, Reuben W., Tennessee, South of Adams (14th)
Thacher, Solon O., corner of Winthrop and Rhode Island

1872:

Eldridge, Thomas B., not listed
Ludington, Reuben W., Hill Side, South end Tennessee
Thacher, Solon O., Connecticut Northeast corner of Win-
throp (7th)

1873:

Ludington, Reuben W., Connecticut Northeast corner of Win-
throp (7th)
Thacher, Solon O., South end Tennessee

1896:

Ludington, Reuben W., 640 Connecticut
Thacher, Sarah G. widow of Solon, 1613 Tennessee

 ASSESSMENT ROLE

Block 4, lots 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, and S 42½' of lots 1 and 12 of Babcock's Addition (1613 Tennessee)

YEAR	OWNER	PROPERTY	AMOUNT
1868	Eldridge	lots 2, 3, & 4	1200
		lots 9, 10 & 11	1200
<u>1869</u>	<u>Eldridge</u>	lots 2, 3, & 4	<u>1200</u>
		lots 9, 10 & 11	<u>1200</u>
<u>1870</u>	<u>Ludington</u>	lots 2, 3, & 4	<u>1600</u> *
		lots 9, 10, & 11	<u>1200</u>
<u>1871</u>	<u>Ludington</u>	lots 2, 3, 4,	
		9, 10, & 11	<u>7500</u>
<u>1872</u>	<u>Ludington</u>	"	<u>12000</u>
1873	Ludington	"	11400
<u>1874</u>	<u>Thacher</u>	lots 2, 3, 4, 9, 10,	
		11, and S 42½' of	
		lots 1 and 12	<u>10500</u>
1876	Thacher	"	9500
1878	Thacher	"	7500
1882	Thacher	"	6650
1883 est.	Thacher	"	5500
1886	Thacher	"	5940
1888	Thacher	"	5930
1890	Thacher	"	6350
1891 est.	Thacher	"	6350

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

September 15, 1869 - Republican Daily Journal

FOR SALE

A Rare Chance

The hillside residence of T. B. Eldridge, situated at the southern point of Mount Oread. The grounds, containing about seven acres, are handsomely laid out, and well planted with fruit, shade and ornamental trees and shrubs. Seventy-five cherry, seventy-five pear, and seventy-five apple trees; peaches, pears and small fruits, such as blackberries, strawberries, &c; a fine asparagus bed; one acre and a-half planted to grapes - all of which bore some fruit this season.

The completed wing of the house contains four rooms, a large store room, china-closet, together with a kitchen, wood-shed &c.

A fine brick barn, with accommodations for two horses and a cow; a large carriage room, harness room, grain rooms, and sleeping room for hostler.

The view of the Wakarusa and Kansas valleys, and the city, obtained from this point, is one of the finest.

This property is offered for ten days only. Apply, for terms, &c., to T.B. Eldridge, on the premises, or to

Riggs and Sinclair,

Real Estate Agents.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES (cont.)

September 23, 1869 - Republican Daily Journal

A FINE PROPERTY - Mr. R. W. Ludington yesterday purchased the fine peice of property of Maj. Thomas B. Eldridge, which the latter gentleman recently advertised. This is one of the handsomest peices of property in the county, consisting of the residence, fine brick stables, and seven acres of land adjoining the city. Mr. Eldridge asked twelve thousand dollars for it, and Mr. Ludington will, no doubt, still further improve and beautify it.

July 14, 1870 - Kansas Weekly Tribune

FINE DWELLING - R. W. Ludington, Esq., has just commenced work on a fine dwelling house, just under Mt. Oread, where the old California road used to run up the point of the hill, generally known as the Eldridge place. Mr. Ludington will put up a building which will be an honor to our city, and worthy of this gentleman's enterprise.

October 17, 1870 - Republican Daily Journal

A number of costly two-story houses are now going up, as well as a much larger number of story-and-a-half. One of the finest of the former class is that of Mr. Ludington. It will have no superior in the city.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES (cont.)

June 18, 1871 - Republican Daily Journal

Still another house, not at all prospective, but already completed, is that of Mr. R. W. Ludington, it standing on one of the most commanding sites afforded by our beautiful situation as a city. Situated just at the point of the hill as it curves from the valley of the Wakarusa to the valley of the Kaw, the fine mansion commands a view of both, and of the entire city. Its high tower is seen almost as soon as the State University, by persons coming into the city from the south, southwest and east. The architect was Mr. T. H. Lescher, of Lawrence; the builder, Mr. Palmer. One of Mr. Peck's lightning rods holds its glittering point high above the tower, from which is also erected a flag pole, to be used on special occasions. The finish of the building is heavy and elaborate. Neither money nor pains have been spared to make the massive building a magnificent residence. Such buildings are a pride and ornament of the city.

CONCLUSION

From the information collected it is possible to reconstruct a portion of the story about the creation of the house at 1613 Tennessee. There are some gaps in the research that will be filled in by assumptions based on informed hunches. Since the information is interpreted, it is possible that some items have been misinterpreted. A critical review of the proposed story is welcomed.

In 1863 Lida and Thomas Eldridge (brother of Shalor) bought the land where the house presently stands. From 1863 to 1869, the Eldridges' bought more land to the west and developed the grounds with plantings (fruit trees, berries, vegetables, etc.). They also constructed a brick barn, which is believed to still be existing, and built a small house, probably wood framed.

Rueben W. Ludington bought the entire estate in 1869. It is impossible to tell if the Ludingtons' ever lived in the small frame house or if they had it removed immediately. By July of 1870 construction of the front part of the house had begun; the architect was T.H. Lescher of Lawrence. This portion was completed by June of 1871. The construction of the addition was begun soon afterwards and was completed by late summer or early fall of 1872.

Solon O. Thacher bought the house and property in the spring of 1873. It is believed that he made some improvements

to the house in 1889. Solon lived there until his death in 1895 and his wife stayed until her death around 1912. Solon Emery, grandson of the Thachers', inherited the house in 1912 and lost it for back taxes in 1940. Either Thacher or Emery sold the land to the west of the house in subdivided lots. Paul Snyder bought the house in 1940 and owned it until 1959 when Tom Maupin and Neil Mecaskey (of Maupintour Travel Service) acquired it. They have restored much of the house to its original condition and have made some additions to the estate (swimming pool, new garage, etc.).

EPILOGUE

Every building is the result of a set of circumstances and happenings that have created its built form. It is influenced by cultural beliefs, climate, particular people involved, etc.; as these influences change so does the built form! In many cases the only existing evidence of the circumstances surrounding the creation of a building is embodied within the built form. If only those stones could speak!

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