

## **7716 Navajo Street**

### **Objections to PHC Application**

We, Kate and Sam Earle, owners of the property, are writing to formally state our objection to the pending application for its designation as a Philadelphia Historical Commission (PHC) landmark, citing both historical and architectural grounds.

The property is currently under contract for sale, a decision necessitated by significant personal and financial hardship stemming from a family health crisis. This context is crucial, as the proposed designation has caused severe complications and substantial financial burdens and damages at an already challenging time. Our financial and health situation also limits our capacity to engage the expert resources typically required to formally contest such applications in detail.

While we respect the goals of historic preservation, we believe this specific nomination warrants careful scrutiny. We previously engaged with the Chestnut Hill Conservancy in good faith to find alternatives, such as an easement that could address preservation concerns without the full constraints of PHC designation for potential buyers. Unfortunately, a mutually agreeable solution was not reached.

It is relevant to note that the impetus for this application appears linked to concerns extraneous to the property's inherent historical merit. A neighboring property owner, after expressing a desire to prevent potential future construction and making an unsuccessful offer to purchase our home, initiated contact with the Conservancy regarding this designation.

Our objections focus on the following points:

1. **Compromised Architectural Integrity:** The property's original Arts and Crafts design has been significantly altered by later, stylistically incongruous "Italianate" additions. While potentially by the original architect, these additions detract from the initial design's ethos and coherence. Preserving the building in its current mixed state prevents restoration to its original, arguably more significant, Arts and Crafts character and codifies these conflicting elements.
2. **Questionable Significance of Additions:** While the central hall structure may hold historical relevance to Chestnut Hill, the later service wing addition (former maid's, gardener's, and chauffeur's quarters) lack comparable significance. This addition was designed for outdated domestic arrangements and present significant practical challenges, including:
  - **Structural and Drainage Issues:** The addition directs water improperly, contributing to watershed, drainage, foundation, and erosion problems.

- **Functional Obsolescence:** The layout hinders modern circulation, egress between yards, and practical access (e.g., kitchen entry from the driveway). Necessary modifications to address these issues would likely conflict with designation restrictions.

The proposed designation would impose restrictions hindering necessary functional improvements, and potentially preventing a sensitive restoration to the building's original architectural style. Given our current circumstances and the questionable motivations surrounding the application's timing, we believe the designation would create an undue hardship without clear justification based on the property's overall architectural and historical merit in its current state.

We respectfully request that the Commission deny this application for PHC designation. We have included photographs, and explanation, to illustrate our points

## Objection to “the addition” being historically significant

“The Addition”



Erosion goes all the way down to the neighbor's property, and Lincoln Drive, caused by the path water takes due to "the addition".



The only path water can take from the front yard to the hill below.



The hill below and the path water takes.



Where water pools, the drain is too small, and the foundation is being degraded.



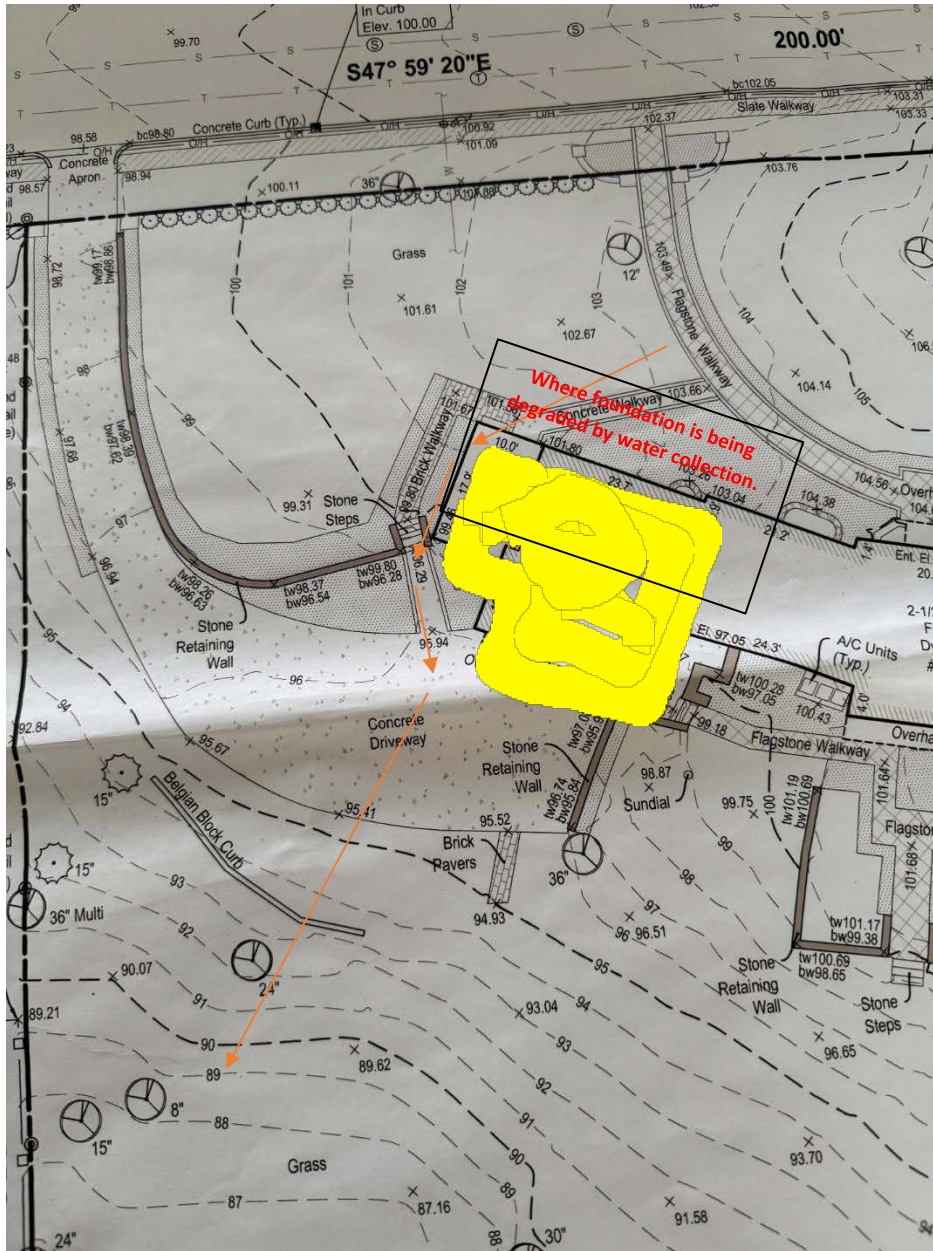
Larger view of the same.



The Steps the water must go down.



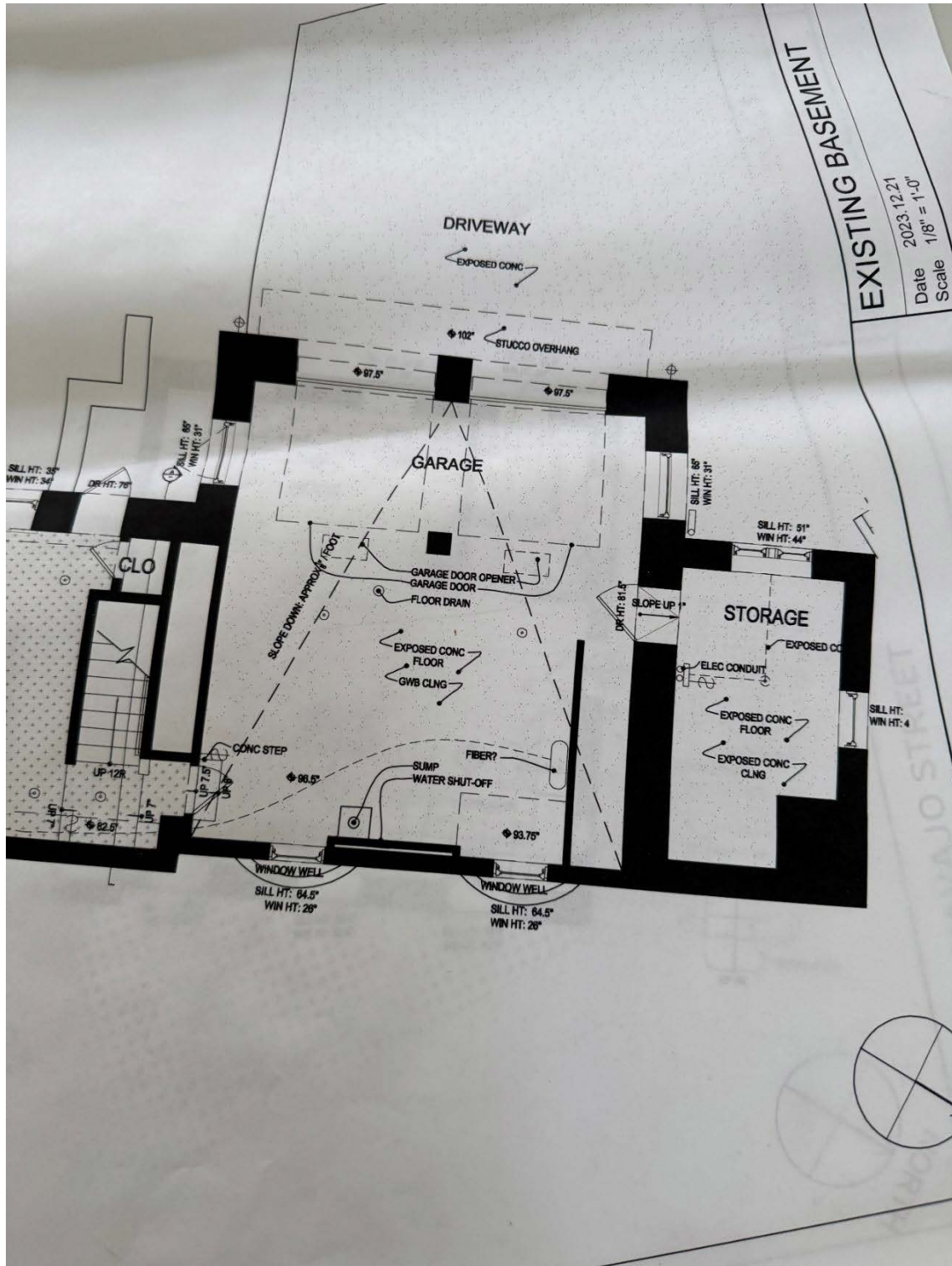
The Site Survey which shows water flows degrading the foundation and the property below.

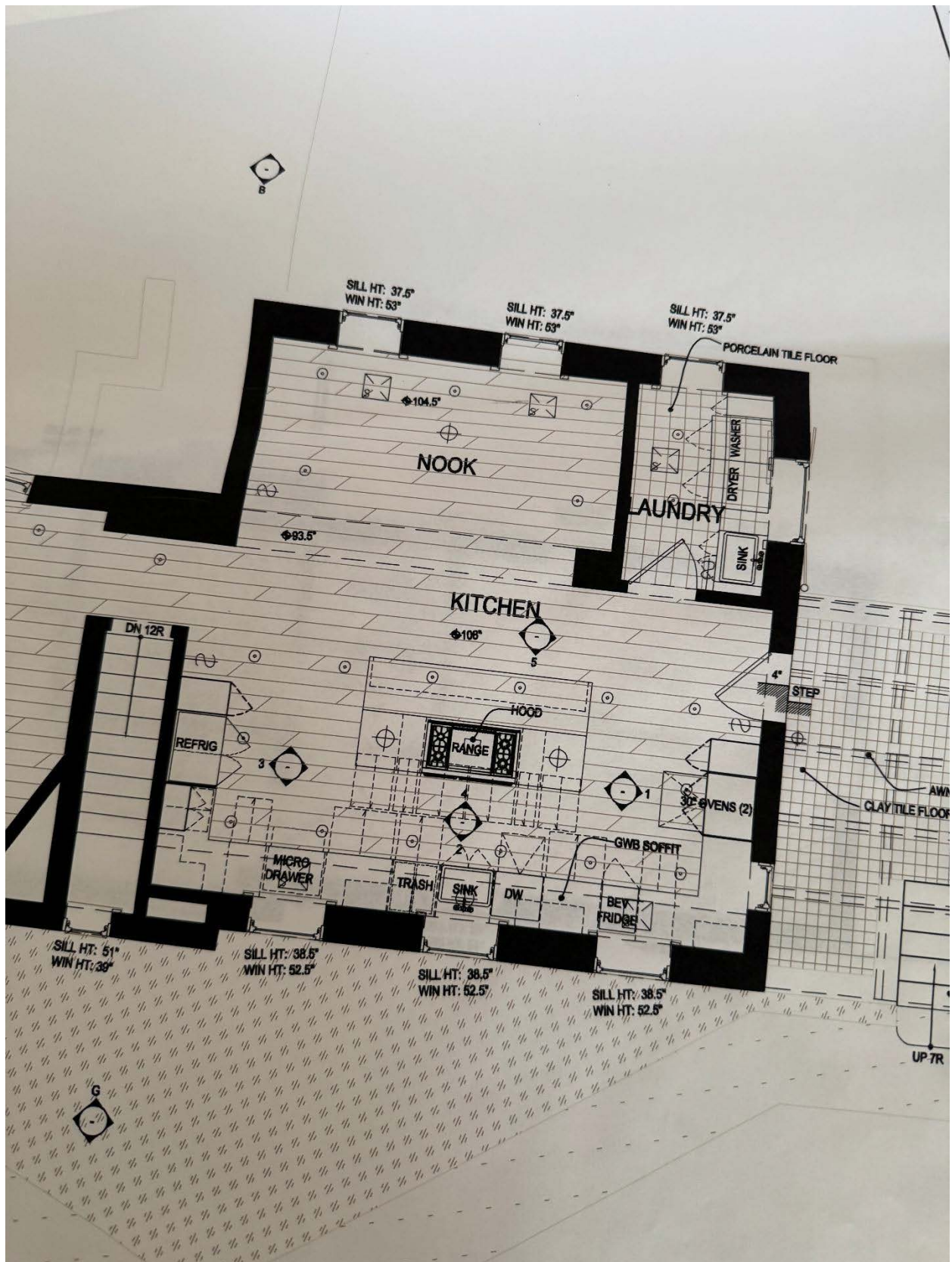


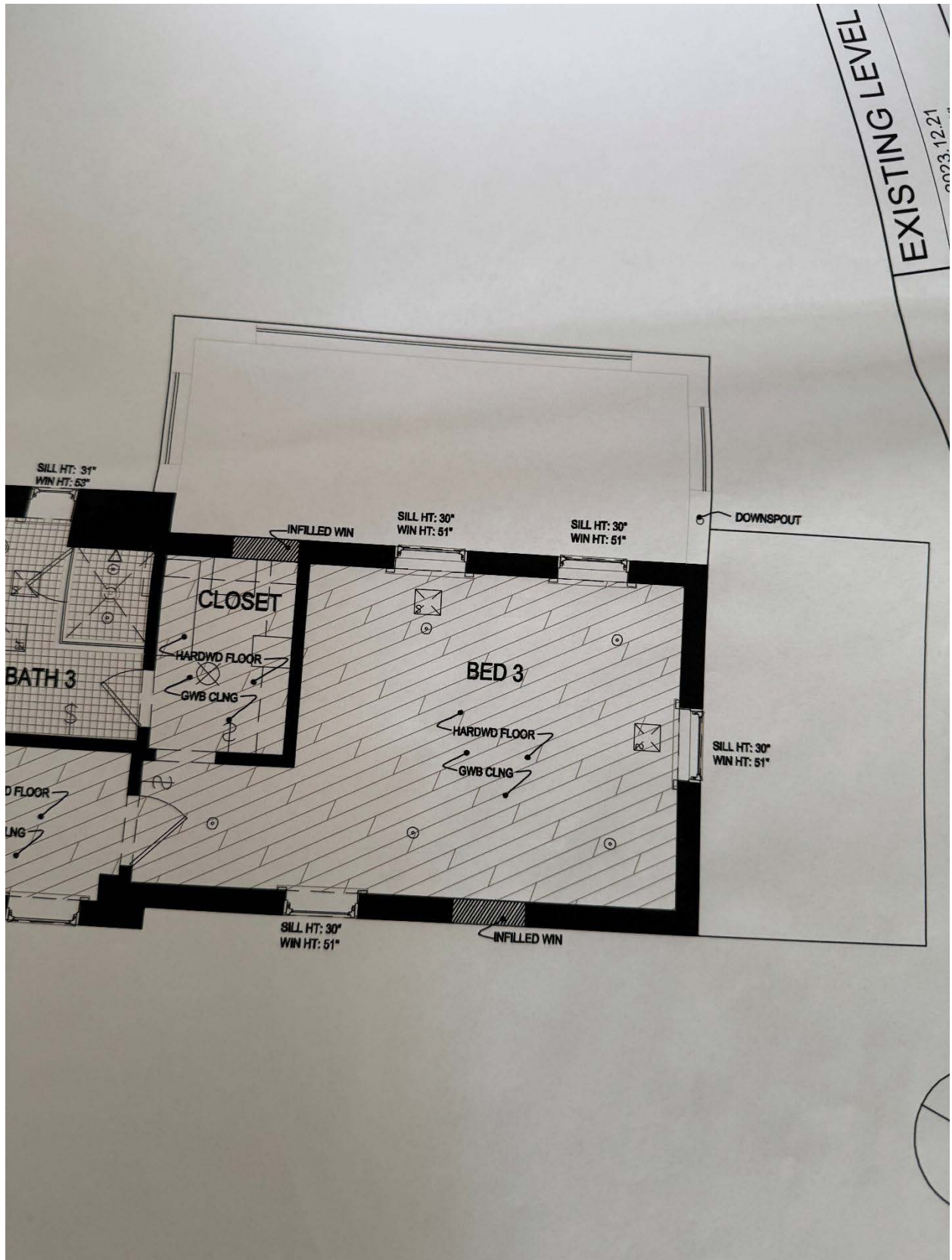
Even “the addition” which is when the CHC has proven post application to PHC, as when the “arts and Crafts” was changed to “Italianate” has the original Henry Mercer Tile found through the house. This thus proves further the original style is lost with the mixed styles.



The following are as currently built architectural drawings which show how the egress to and from the house, and access to the back yard, are lost by the “maid’s quarters” which are now where a modern family lives.







## **Objection to the “architectural significance”, as it is lost**

“Italianate” addition of portico found, proven “after original” by CHC post application to PHC.

Note the Doric (Greek, not Italian) Columns.



Arts and Crafts brick, garden, and wisteria Pergola, consistent with a “garden house” leading to the historically significant side garden mentioned in the CHC application. Most of which btw, is on the neighbor’s property who proposed this application, per site survey.



Ionic (Greek, not “Italianate”) columns, marble, and slab, on back porch which replaced an original sleeping porch as evident from the master bedroom architectural structural items.







Original Henry Mercer Tile found throughout the house's exterior and interior. This debunks the historical significance, and originality, of the "Italianate", which is actually all Greek.















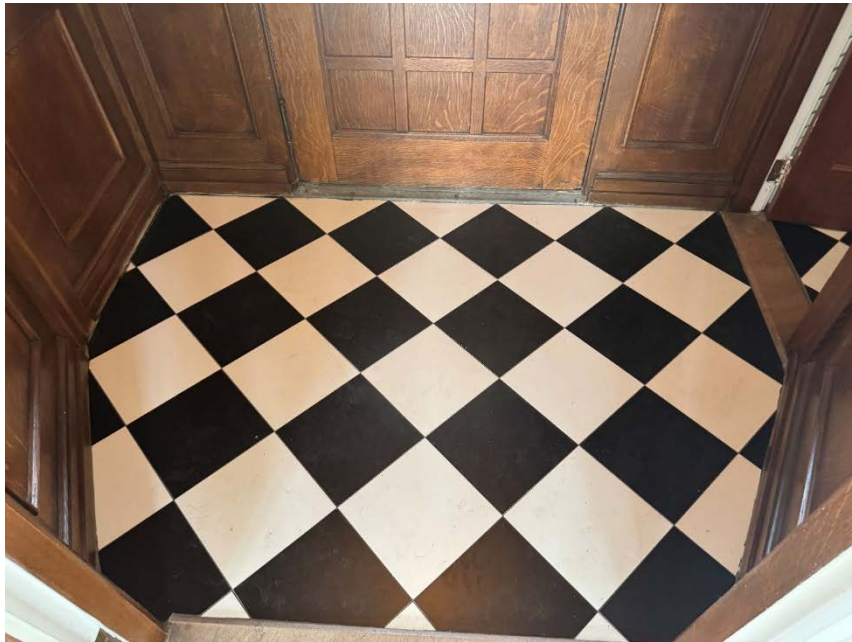


Calvin Pardee Tileworks, Perth Amboy, NJ, "Gruby Tiles" of the Arts and Crafts movement.





Arts and Crafts wood foyer, originally with Mercer Tile, now lost.



Sunporch which had a Henry Mercer Tile floor matching the addition porch.



Original Mercer Tile floor on sunporch.



Corinthian Columns. Again, Greek, not “Italianate”, in foyer.



Ionic Greek Columns in the foyer, next to the Corinthian.



Henry Mercer Tile on “the addition” which is supposedly when the “italianate” was added.

