



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

RON DESANTIS
Governor

CORD BYRD
Secretary of State

December 19, 2025

Ms. Daniela Salume
Historic Preservation Manager
Josephine Parker City Hall
1300 White St.
Key West, Florida 33040-1409

Re: The Armory (MO00227), 600 White Street, Key West, Florida 33040

Dear Ms. Salume:

A Florida National Register Nomination Proposal for the above referenced property has been prepared by the State Historic Preservation Office. We solicit your review and recommendation concerning eligibility in accordance with the procedures established by the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (54 U.S.C. 302504), which created the basis for the participation of Certified Local Governments in the Florida National Register of Historic Places nomination process. We are updating The Armory National Register Nomination. The nomination was originally listed on March 11, 1971.

According to the Act, before properties within the jurisdiction of the certified local government may be considered by the State to be nominated for inclusion on the National Register, the State Historic Preservation Officer shall notify the owners, the applicable chief local elected official, and the local historic preservation commission. The commission, after reasonable opportunity for public comment, shall prepare a report as to whether or not such properties meets the eligibility criteria. Within sixty days of the notice from the State Historic Preservation Officer, the chief local elected official shall transmit the report of the commission and their recommendation to the State Historic Preservation Officer. If no such report and recommendation are received within sixty days, the State shall proceed with the nomination process.

If either the preservation agency or the chief local elected official supports the nomination of the property, the proposal will be scheduled for consideration by the Florida National Register Review Board. We have tentatively scheduled the nomination for the above property for consideration by the Florida National Register Review Board at their February 19, 2026 meeting.

If both the commission and the chief local elected official recommend that a property not be nominated to the National Register, the State Historic Preservation Officer shall take no further action, unless within

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thirty days of the receipt of such recommendation by the State Historic Preservation Officer an appeal is filed with the State. Any party may file an appeal with the State Historic Preservation Officer. If the State Historic Preservation Officer, after hearing the appeal, determines that the property is eligible, he shall proceed with the nomination process. The State Historic Preservation Officer shall include any reports and recommendations from any party along with the nomination submitted to the Keeper of the Register.

We look forward to your recommendation and comments regarding this property. If we can be of any further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me at Kyra.Lucas@dos.fl.gov or 850-245-6339.

Sincerely,



Dr. Kyra Lucas
Survey & Registration Supervisor
Bureau of Historic Preservation

KNL/hae

Enclosures

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The Armory
Name of Property
Monroe County, Florida
County and State
71000243
NR Reference Number

State Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this X additional documentation additional documentation: name change
 move removal other

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.

Signature of Certifying Official/Title

Date of Action

Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this additional documentation additional documentation: name change
 move removal other

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.

Signature of Certifying Official/Title

Date of Action

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
- additional documentation accepted
- other (explain: _____)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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SUMMARY

Located in Key West, Florida, The Armory is a rectangular, two-story, wood framed building with a false front façade disguising its gable roof from the street. It is an example of late Italianate style architecture with twin hexagonal Victorian turrets, prominent cornice lines, wood brackets, arched entries with fanlights, wood sash windows, and narrow siding. The interior first floor drill hall, mezzanine balcony, second floor office and classroom spaces, historic wood panel doors with transoms, and twin stairways are retained as original. Since its construction in 1903, it has received minimal alterations, including the removal of upstairs metal window grilles, window replacements due to leaking and storm damage, and the addition of a side door and rear concrete ramp to comply with modern fire codes and the ADA. Small sections of the exterior wood siding have been replaced due to wood rot and water damage. These changes were made with sensitivity to the building's historic character.

The Armory was originally nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 under Criterion A: Military and Criterion C: Architecture at the national level with a period of significance of 1902-1950. This nomination update is a project element of a grant award from the National Park Service for Hurricane Irma damage repair and storm protection. Since 1971, The Armory has undergone alterations and restorations. The purpose of this update is to address those alterations and restorations, particularly those done after the damage incurred by Hurricane Irma. This update also provides current photographs, an update to the architectural classification of The Armory, and includes a restatement of significance under Criterions A: Military and C: Architecture. There are no changes to the property boundaries, period of significance, or areas of significance.

BACKGROUND

The Armory was listed in the National Register on March 11, 1971, under Criterion A: Military and Criterion C: Architecture at the national level with a period of significance of 1902-1950. In an effort to strengthen the United States' defense capabilities after the Spanish-American War, the U.S. government determined an enlisted army and local reserves would be needed.¹ This would be especially true of Key West which was an important seaport strategically located as a Union base during the Civil War and for its proximity to Cuba during the Spanish American War. After Key West's influential role in the Spanish American War and the Civil War, a volunteer military company of 80 men known as the Key West Rifles was organized in 1877. This company was short-lived, as their equipment was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1886 and never reorganized. Though location of their headquarters is unknown, this early military company laid the foundation of necessity for what would become The Armory in Key West. Due to Key West's importance as a Union base, this was one of the few Armories built in the South, as most states had little funding following the Civil War.

Shortly thereafter, in 1888 a new company was formed called the "Company 1, Second Regiment of Infantry, Florida State Troops, [which] is now part of the National Guard of Florida."² The Key West

¹ Dianna Everett, *Historic National Guard Armories: A Brief, Illustrated Review of the Past Two Centuries*, (Historical Services Division Office of Public Affairs, National Guard Bureau, 1991), 26.

² Jefferson B. Browne, *Key West the Old and the New*, Reproduction of the 1912 Edition (University of Florida

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Armory, completed in 1903, was built for their successors, the Monroe County Militia/438th Company C.R.C. Florida National Guard. Monroe County contracted John T. Sawyer and A. Bruce Sawyer to build The Armory, as designed by Thomas F. Russell. The first floor of The Armory was used for training drills and recreation. The second floor served as offices and storage for arms.

The Armory continued to serve as a training facility in World War I and II; their National Guard was called to active duty in both wars. Through The Armory's active years, it engaged with its community in many ways. In 1935, the National Guard unit was called to active duty in the aftermath of the 1935 Labor Day Hurricane in the Upper Florida Keys. They also marched in parades, including the 1938 celebration of the completion of the Overseas Highway.³ By 1950 the National Guard was called to active duty for the final time for the Korean War, marking the end of military use of The Armory.

In the subsequent years, The Armory then went through a long period of neglect and vandalism. By the early 1970s, The Armory was in poor condition and discussions began about demolition. At that time, the preservation movement had just begun in Key West, with public outrage over the demolition of the Convent of Saint Mary's Church. The Armory was saved from demolition and stabilized by the State of Florida and the Historic Florida Keys Preservation Board and put back into use. Prior to this, The Armory had been under the management of the Monroe County Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission. When the State of Florida took over management of the building in 1973, they created the Historic Key West Preservation Board as a State agency to operate it. Since then, the Armory has been used as a community center, basketball court, American Red Cross blood center, an AARP senior nutritional and social center, wedding venue, professional offices, children's gymnasium, artist studios, and theatre space. In 1997, the State of Florida changed management of The Armory from a state agency to a private nonprofit, named the Historic Florida Keys Foundation.

SETTING

The Key West Armory is situated at the corner of White Street and Southard Street within the current Key West Historic District. The Armory addresses White Street and is directly across from the present day 1990's Peary Court housing complex, which was originally a large U.S. Army cantonment. The cantonment was adjacent to the Peary Court Cemetery for military interments. The Cemetery was used until 1920 and burials included civilians, some of which may have been National Guardsmen. The burials were supposedly relocated to the military cemetery at Fort Barrancas in Pensacola, Florida in 1927. Archaeological investigations by the Corps of Engineers in 1991 determined that the relocation was incomplete, and some intact burials remain.⁴ The 1912 Sanborn Map shows a "Naval Militia" building diagonally behind, to the south of the Armory, that addressed Ashe Street. This 1910 battalion of the Naval Militia was the first in Florida.⁵ The Armory, the Peary Court housing property, and cemetery formed a large military complex. The U.S. Navy sold the housing property to a private

Press, Gainesville, 1973), 155.

³ Stan Windhorn and Wright Langley, *Yesterday's Key West* (The Langley Press, Inc.: Key West, 1973), 111.

⁴ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mobile District, "Archeological and Historical Investigations for Proposed U.S. Navy Peary Court Housing Project, Key West, Florida," 1991.

⁵ Jefferson B. Browne, 155.

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developer, White Street Partners, in 2013.⁶ Ownership of Peary Court Cemetery was transferred to the City of Key West. The Armory lot measures 90' by 62' property for a total of 5,580 square feet. The building footprint is 75.85' by 45.3' for a total of 3,436 square feet. Thus, little open space remains typical of properties in the Key West historic district. The two-story historic residence just northeast of the property lies only 1.39' from the property line.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Five wooden steps lead to a landing at The Armory to large wooden double doors with a four-lite, fan-shaped glass transom, which appear to be original to the building (Photos 1-2). Above the door, is a small balcony, supported by large wooden brackets below and steel rods above. The balcony has a turned balustrade rail and can be accessed by a door with a smaller fan-shaped glass transom. This balcony provided a means to hoist the American flag on the wood flagpole mounted above. The front or northeast façade is symmetrical and addresses White Street and is an arched parapet wall in front of the building's gable roof. Twin turrets (also referred to as towers or lanterns, and colloquially as witch's hats) are positioned behind the parapet on each side (Photos 3-4). The turrets are six-sided with two over two, double hung wood windows on each face. The front façade consists of four windows two over two wood double-hung windows with lintels on the first and second floor. Window proportions are consistent throughout the building but decrease in size on the second floor and further on the turrets. All the first-floor windows are covered on the exterior with metal grills which are an original character defining security feature of the building. Hurricane shutters were added to the first-floor windows as a part of the Hurricane Irma grant project.

The northwest side elevation addresses Southard Street and the southeast elevation faces the side of a historic two-story residential structure. Both sides have 15 windows, all of the same style as those on the primary façade. On the second floor of the southeast façade, there is a single fixed window above a door that provides fire escape access. This door accesses a wood stairway with two landings that turn to the rear façade for discharge. It is likely the door opening was not original to the building as the Fire Marshall's office ordered that a second-floor egress stairway was required and it was added in the mid 1990's. The rear, southwest elevation addresses the side of a historic two-story residential structure. The rear consists of five windows with a central entrance with a concrete ramp and a non-historic wood door with a rectangular glass transom. There is a single window on the first and second floor on each side of this entrance of the same style as other windows on the building (Photos 5-7).

The interior first floor of The Armory contains a restroom and a large drill hall with a large structural arch dividing the high ceiling, which is now home to a local theatre group. A mezzanine-like balcony along each side and at the front of the drill hall provides a viewing space to watch soldier drills, basketball, boxing, and dance chaperones. The mezzanine can be accessed via a set of twin stairways (which also leads to the second floor) located at the front foyer (Photos 8-13). The second floor has a central hall with rooms on each side. Some of these rooms have been partitioned off in modern times

⁶ Linda Grist Cunningham, "No Realistic Alternative/ Key West Should Purchase Peary Court," Key West Watch, 2016, <https://www.keywestwatch.com/2016/02/key-west-should-purchase-peary-court/>.

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and are now used as twelve artist studios. A large wooden pull-down ladder leads to the attic and the interiors of both turrets (Photos 14-18). The windowed turrets provide an expansive view of the surroundings.

A concrete rectangular cistern is on the southeast side of the building about one foot away from the property line and extending to three feet from the building eave as shown on the 1912 Sanborn Map. (Photo 19) Historically, cisterns or water tanks were the only means of storing freshwater.

HURRICANE IRMA'S DAMAGES AND REPAIRS

The Armory received a 2015-2017 Historic Preservation Special Category Grant from the Department of State. This grant funded the repair of windows, the installation and reworking of gutters and downspouts, insulating the attic, installing a fire sprinkler system, upgrading the electrical systems, and completing structural repairs to the mezzanine, balcony, and exterior stairway, which were completed June 2017. After the grant project was finished, The Armory was pristine for just three months when it sustained damage from Hurricane Irma in September 2017.

Damage incurred from Hurricane Irma includes shingles blown off the roof and eleven broken windows. Window damage from Irma was limited to broken glass and loosened putty. These damages allowed rainwater to enter from the roof, under doors, and through the towers and windows causing further damage to the exterior siding, roof shingles, underlayment, interior walls and ceiling. Following Hurricane Irma, a new asphalt shingle roof was installed.

In 2019, funds from the National Park Service were provided by the Hurricanes Harvey-Irma-Maria Disaster Recovery Grant Program. With these funds, 20 windows were repaired and removable hurricane panels were manufactured and installed for the Armory's 48 windows to protect the building from future storm damage. Additionally, funding was used to repair interior wood ceilings and walls, repair and repaint water damaged areas on the second floor, and replace a non-historic exit door.

INTEGRITY

The Key West Armory maintains its historic integrity and should maintain its listing on the National Register. It retains its integrity of location and setting as it has never been moved, and the surrounding neighborhood retains its historic mixed-use urban/residential character. The exterior siding and interior tongue and groove Dade County pine walls have been repaired, retained, and preserved. The Armory maintains many character defining features such as the historic first floor windows still protected by the military's chain link-style metal shutters, parapet and hidden gabled roof form, twin turrets, are as original. The hurricane panels added with funds from the Hurricane Irma grant are removable and prevent potential future damage. The historic concrete cistern on the southeast side of the building remains intact although not operational. Its interior maintains its character defining drill hall with high ceilings, structural arch, and mezzanine viewing area. Alterations have been limited to exterior entry and exit stairs and accessible facilities, such as a concrete ramp on the rear façade. The Armory retains most of its historic exterior and interior design, and its association with its history as an armory, remaining a landmark of the neighborhood. All repair and restoration work done after Hurricane Irma was done in

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accordance with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and reviewed by the Florida Department of State's Division of Historical Resources staff.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Browne, Jefferson B. *Key West the Old and the New*. Reproduction of the 1912 Edition. University of Florida Press: Gainesville. 1973.

Cunningham, Linda Grist. "No Realistic Alternative/ Key West Should Purchase Peary Court." 2016.
<https://www.keywestwatch.com/2016/02/key-west-should-purchase-peary-court/>.

Everett, Dianna. *Historic National Guard Armories: A Brief, Illustrated Review of the Past Two Centuries*. Historical Services Division Office of Public Affairs: National Guard Bureau. 1991.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, "Archeological and Historical Investigations for Proposed U.S. Navy Peary Court Housing Project, Key West, Florida." 1991.

Windhorn, Stan and Wright Langley. *Yesterday's Key West*. The Langley Press, Inc.: Key West. 1973.

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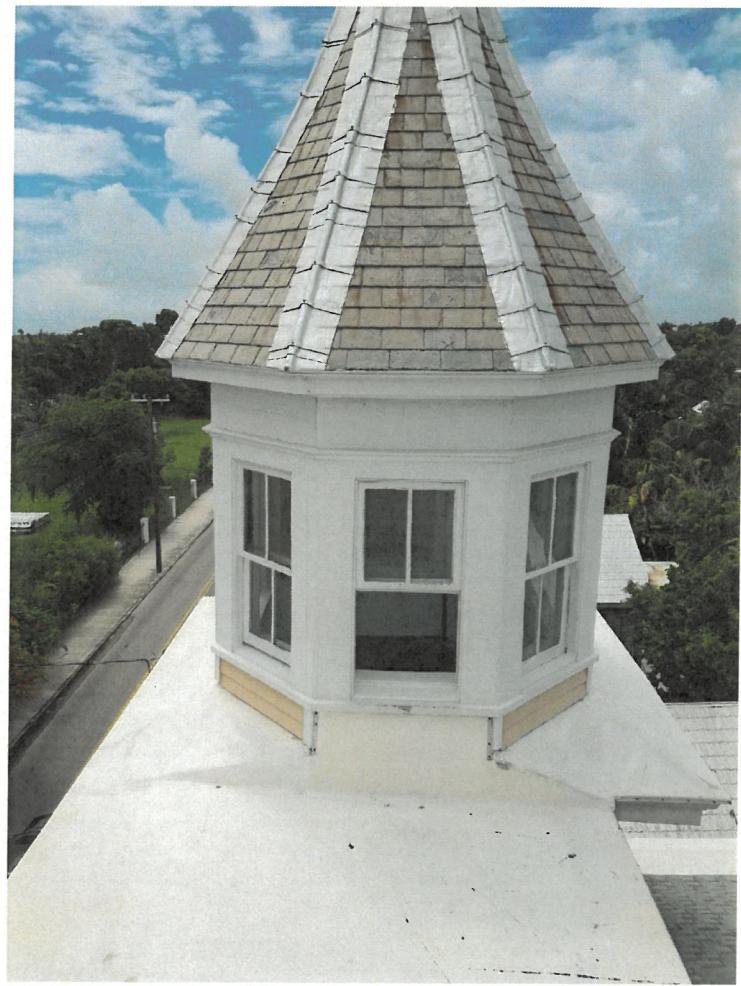
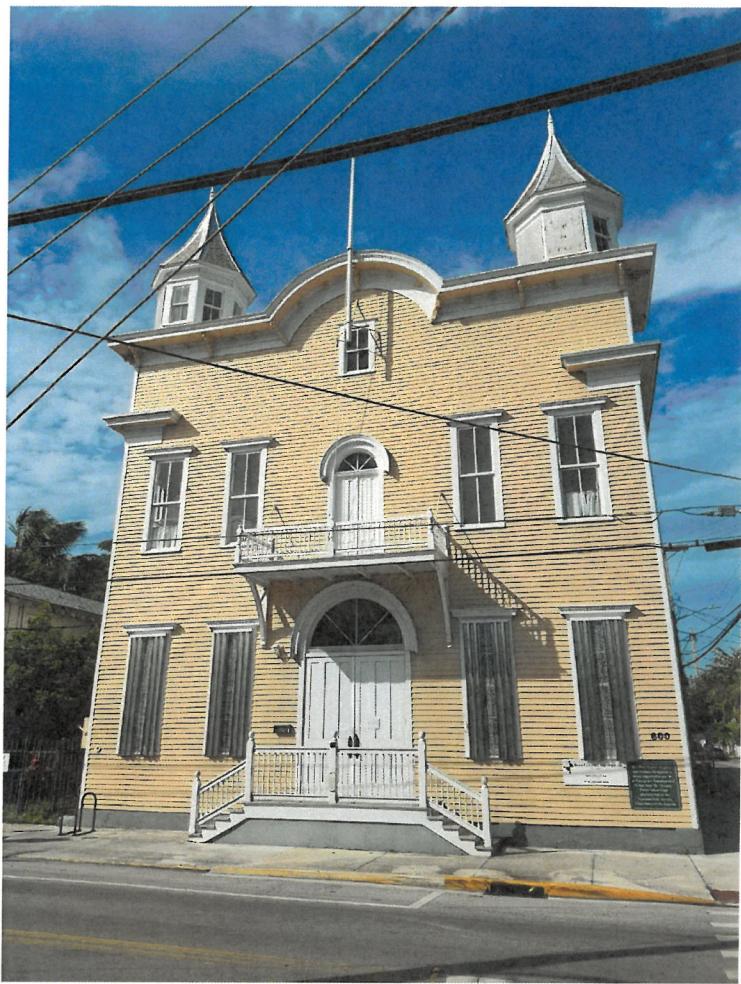
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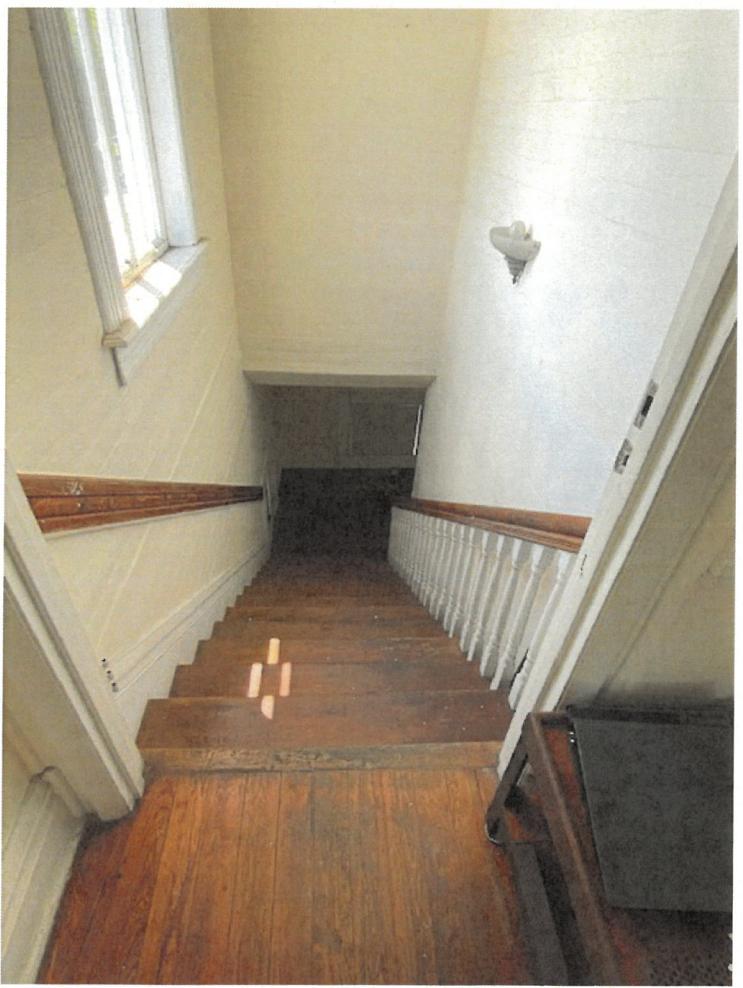
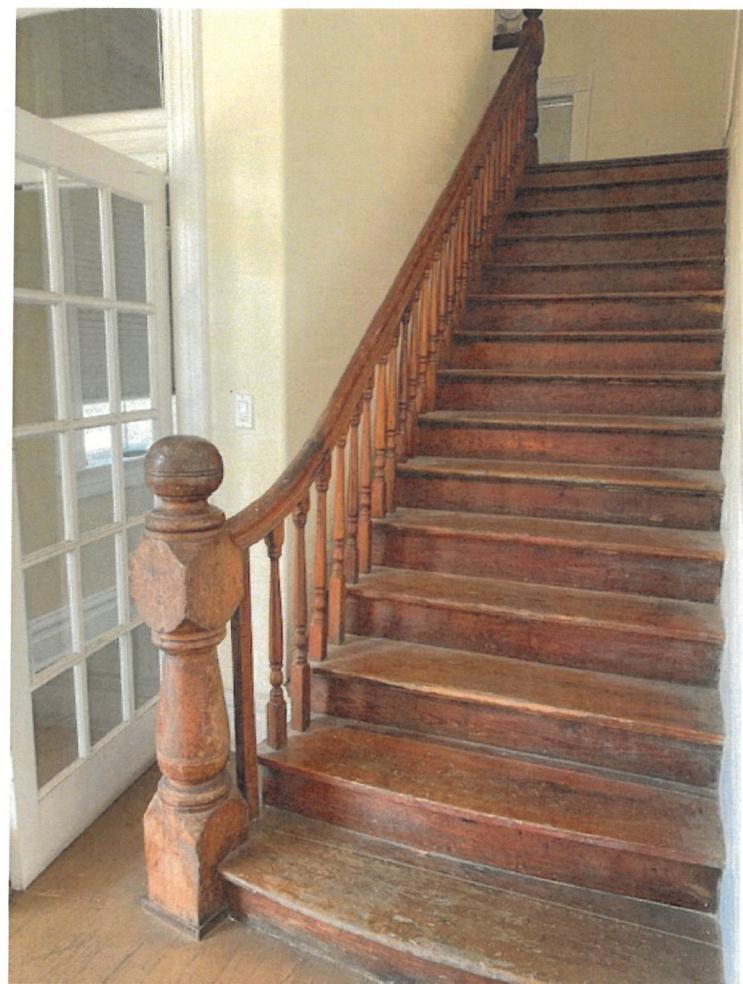
Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

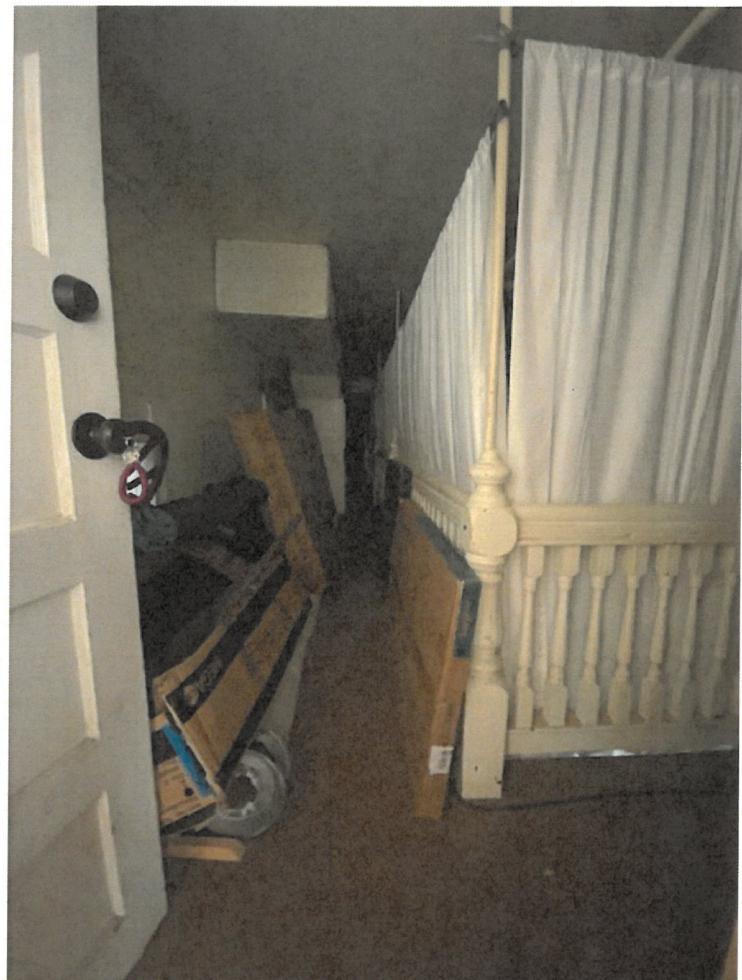
Property Name: The Armory
 City or Vicinity: Key West County: Monroe State: FL
 Photographer: David Salay, Diane Silva Date Photographed: 2018,2020, 2022
 Verification that photos over a year old are a true representation of the existing building or district

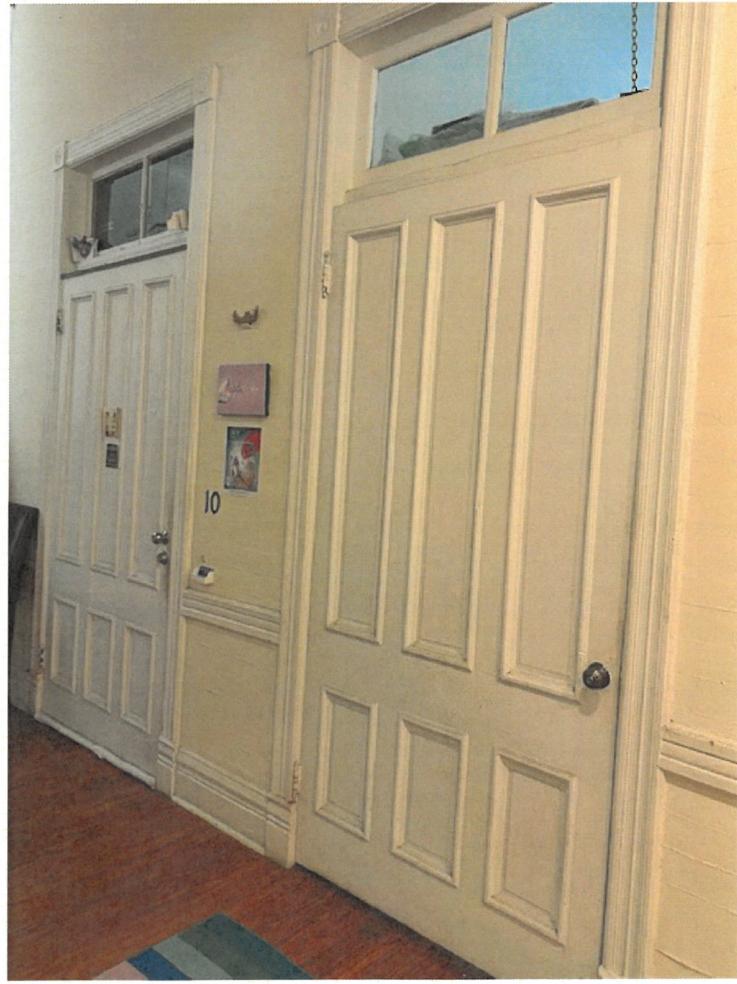
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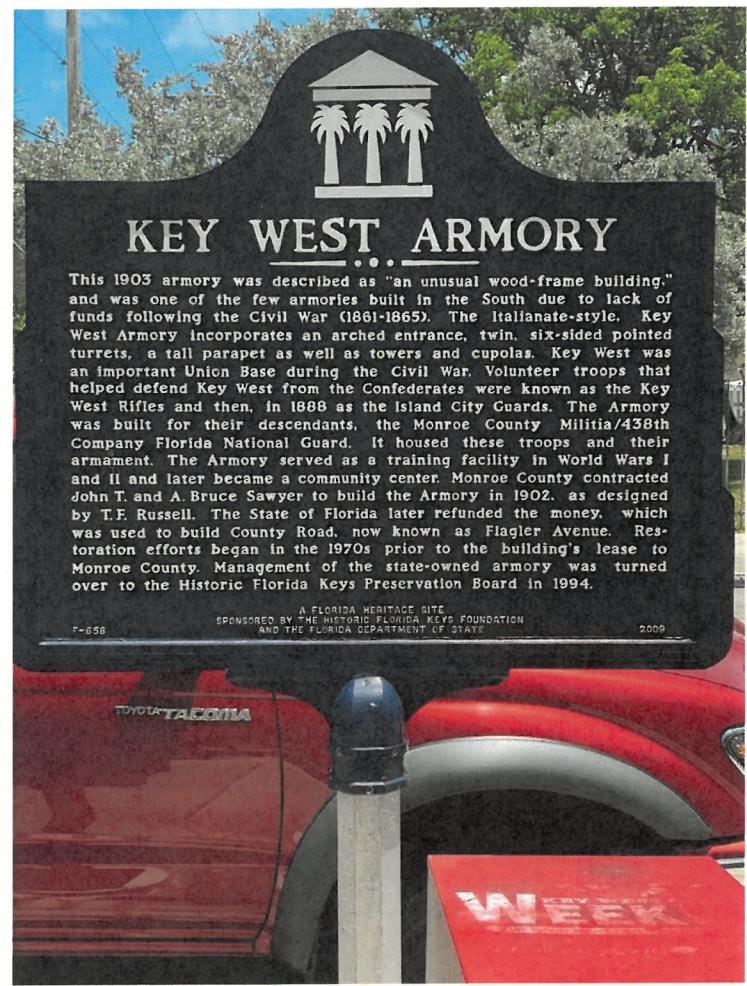
1. Photo #1: Key West Armory, Front Façade, Facing South. David Saly 9/15/2020.
2. Photo #2: Key West Armory, Front Façade (White Street) and Side Façade, Facing South. David Salay 9/15/2020.
3. Photo #3: Northwest Turret from the Roof, Facing North. David Salay 7/24/2020.
4. Photo #4: Northeast Turret, Facing East. David Salay 7/24/2020.
5. Photo #5: Northwest Façade (Southard Street), Facing Northeast. David Salay 9/15/2020.
6. Photo #6: Southeast Façade (Side adjacent to near neighbor), Facing Southwest. David Salay 9/15/2020.
7. Photo #7: One of Twin Stairways at the Entry Foyer leading to the Mezzanine and Second Floor, Facing West. Diane Silvia 4/28/2022.
8. Photo #8: Stairway. Looking Down, Facing West. Diane Silvia 4/28/2022.
9. Photo #9: Entry to Drill Hall on the First Floor, Facing South. Diane Silvia 4/28/2022.
10. Photo #10: Drill Hall, Facing Southwest. Diane Silvia 5/01/2018.
11. Photo #11: Mezzanine Balcony, Note Structural Steel Rod, Facing South. Diane Silvia 4/28/2022.
12. Photo #12: Mezzanine Balcony, Now Used as Storage (Balustrade height does not meet code), Facing South. Diane Silvia 4/28/2022.
13. Photo #13: Entry Doors to Second Floor, Facing South. Diane Silvia 4/28/2022.
14. Photo #14: Second Floor Hallway, Facing West. David Salay 9/30/2020.
15. Photo #15: Doors to Offices/Studios on the Second Floor, Facing West. Diane Silvia 4/28/2022.
16. Photo #16: Doors to Offices/Studios on the Second Floor, Facing West. Diane Silvia 4/28/2022.
17. Photo #17: Second Floor Access to Front Balcony, Facing North. Diane Silvia 4/28/2022.
18. Photo #18: Historic Concrete Cistern, Facing South. Diane Silvia 5/04/2022.
19. Photo #19: Key West Armory Historic Marker, Facing North. Diane Silvia 5/04/2022.







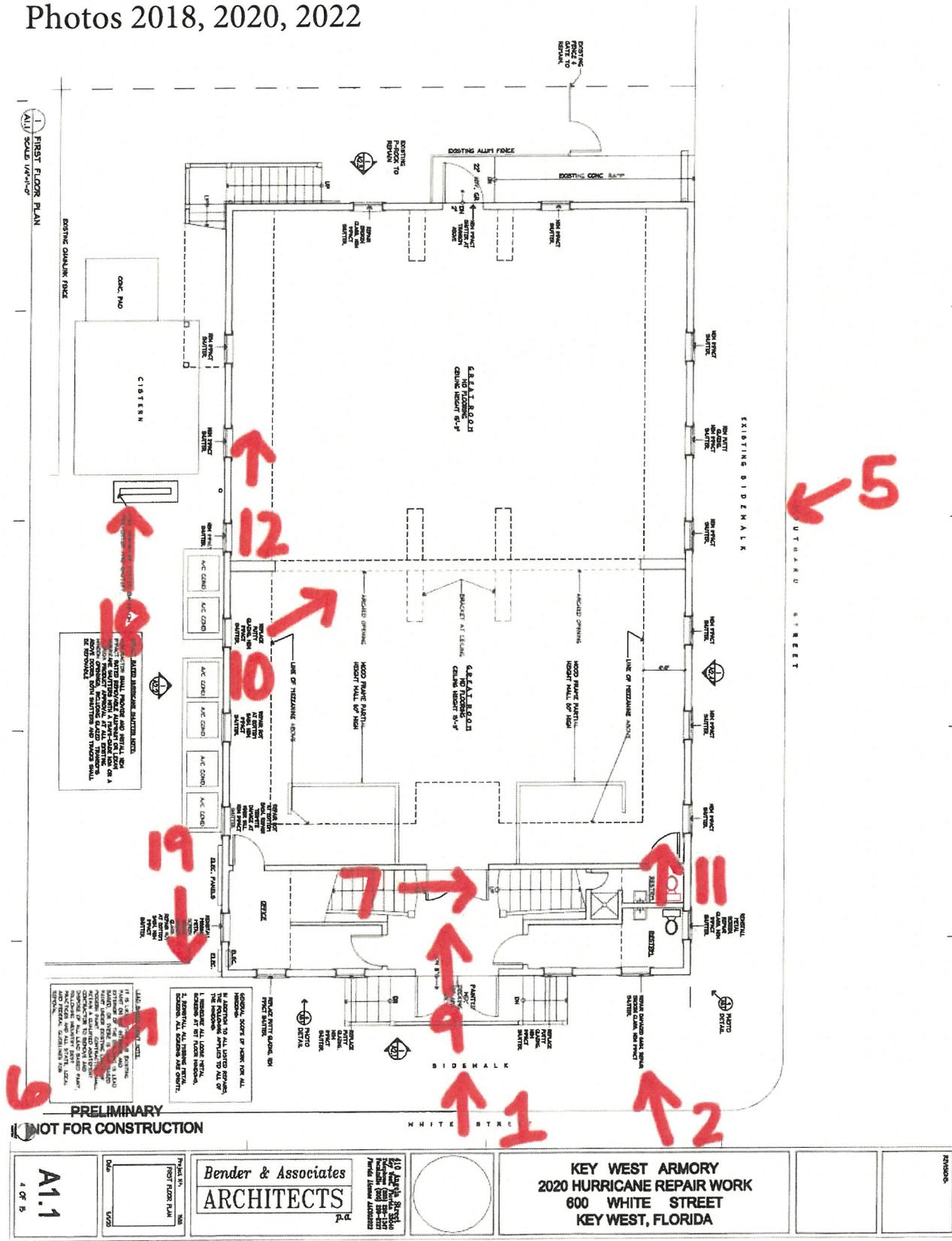




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First Floor Plan

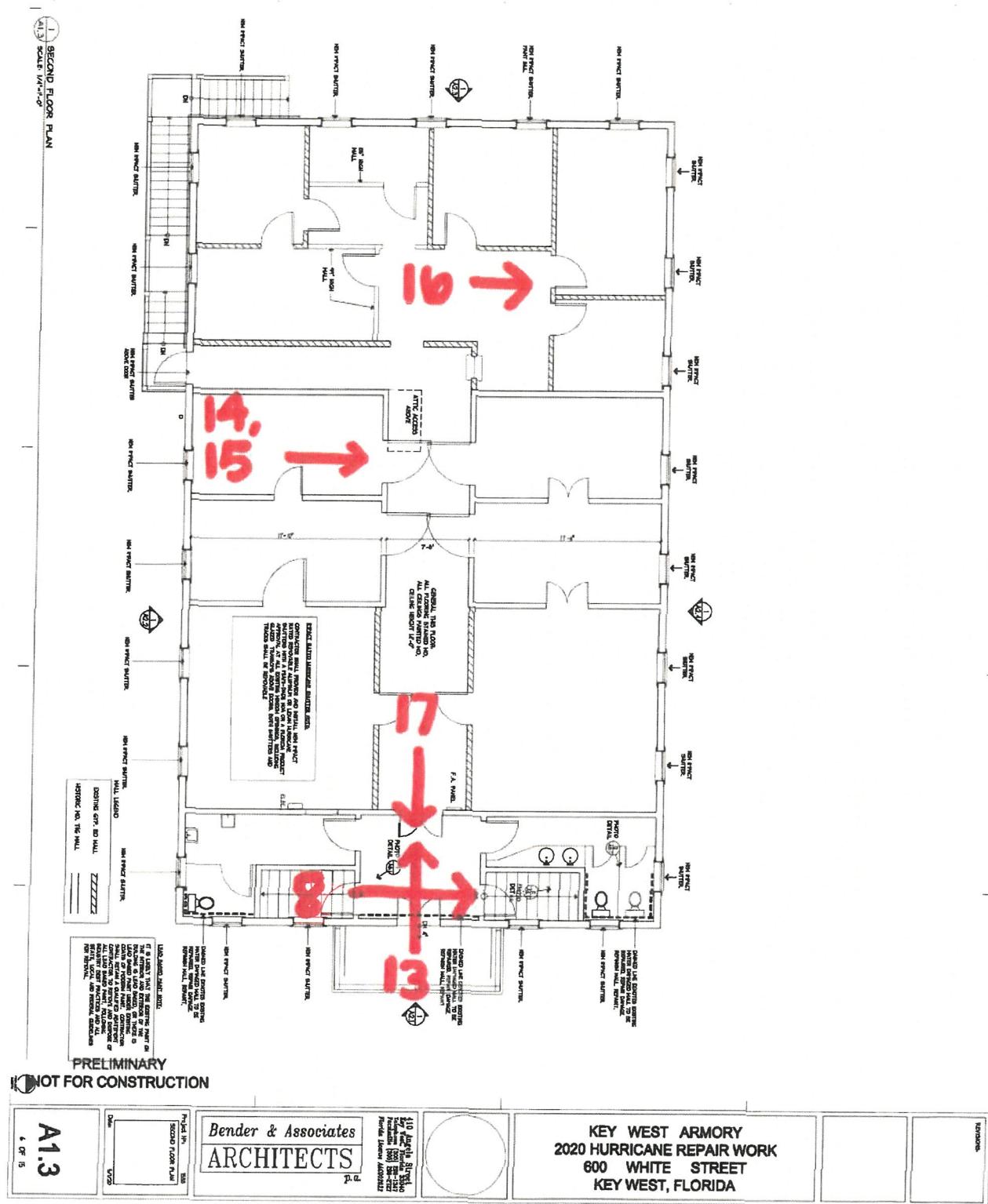
Photos 2018, 2020, 2022



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Second Floor Plan

Photos 2020, 2022



The Armory Roof Plan Photos 2020, 2022

