



## **Kolln Hardware Historical Restoration**

Peter MacDonald

April 2006

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April 26, 2006

Mr. Jerry Iserson  
Director of Planning and Community Development  
City of Pleasanton  
200 Old Bernal Avenue  
P.O. Box 520  
Pleasanton, CA 94566

Subject: **Kolln Hardware Historical Restoration**

Dear Jerry,

The degraded sheds at the back of the Kolln Property lack the physical integrity, the architectural merit, and the historical significance to justify their classification as a “significant historical resource”. I am writing as a citizen with a longstanding interest in the well-being and historical preservation of downtown Pleasanton, not as an advocate of Mr. Cornett, who owns the Kolln Hardware building.

#### **The Cornett Proposal**

Mr. Cornett has proposed a complete rehabilitation of the front building on the Kolln Hardware site (Main Street façade). His proposal also involves removal of the two degraded shed facades at the rear of Kolln Hardware to be replaced by a building extension matching the general architecture of the front building. (Attachment 1). Mr. Cornett designed his proposal to conform with the Downtown Specific Plan, Chapter IX, Historic Preservation, particularly Policy 6: *“Additions and other modification to the exteriors of buildings exceeding 50 years in age should match the original building exterior in terms of architectural style and all other exterior design elements”*.

#### **Support for Cornett Proposal**

The Pleasanton Downtown Association Board has voted to support the Cornett Proposal. The merchants want this vital retail part of Main Street open for business again. I believe Mr. Cornett’s Victorian Extension proposal is a high quality design; the proposal would preserve what is historically worthy of preservation on the Kolln Hardware site. The expansion of Kolln Hardware building would increase the vitality of downtown Pleasanton and develop the side street retail essential to bringing critical mass to downtown.

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### **Shed Restoration Proposal**

An alternate proposal is being considered which involves restoration of the two shed facades at the back of the lot. (Attachment 2). That "Shed Restoration" alternative is also aesthetically pleasing, and would increase the vitality of downtown. But the shed restoration would cost at least three times as much as new construction per square foot, or more. Moreover, the Shed Restoration alternative is not historically authentic. And the Shed Restoration alternative would eliminate the existing parking on the Kolln Hardware site in violation of the parking ordinance requirement that existing spaces be maintained in the case of building expansions, unnecessarily exacerbating an already tight parking situation. (Parking calculations in Attachment 3).

### **Environmental Review**

A key factor affecting the owner's choice of options is the Historical Resource Evaluation prepared by Architectural Resource Group dated January 10, 2006 ("ARG Report"). Mr. Cornett has been told by City Staff that unless he opts for the Shed Restoration alternative he may be required to do an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), costing him an additional \$80,000 and six to ten months of further study. I believe that an EIR is not required by CEQA because the sheds do not qualify as a significant historical resource. Years of processing delay combined with unreasonable and inconsistent restoration requirements discredit historic preservation rather than encouraging it.

### **Contrast with Firehouse Art Center**

Some people have noted the inconsistency of City processing of the Firehouse Art Center project. Like the Kolln hardware proposal, the Firehouse Art Center proposes to rehabilitate and adaptively reuse a historical building. With the Firehouse Art Center, the approximately 2000 sq. ft. historic fire station is dwarfed by an 18,000 sq. ft. facility with an entirely different architecture. Amazingly, The Firehouse Art Center was processed, not with an EIR, nor even a negative declaration, but with a complete exemption from CEQA review. What exemption? The CEQA exemption for rehabilitating a historic structure! Mr. Cornett is proposing to rehabilitate a historic structure and extend that historical architectural style along the Division Street frontage – a CEQA exemption for his proposal would be equally supportable.

### **The ARG Report**

One person's reaction upon reading the ARG Report's conclusion that the boarded up sheds at the back of Kolln Hardware constitute a historically significant resource was, "When did our historical standards get so low?" Its as if someone declared the portable buildings at the corner of Bernal and Main Street as cultural resources, because Mayor Tarver held meetings there.

The ARG Report makes its case for historical significance of the sheds by focusing on the following California Register Criteria:

*[In order to qualify for historic registration] "a historical resource must be significant at the local, state, or national level under one or more of the following criteria:*

*1) it is associated with events or patterns of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States; . . .*

The ARG Report reaches its unwarranted recommendation by doing two things:

1. It overstates the importance of the historical setting.
2. It overstates the importance of the shed buildings in terms of architecture, historical significance, and historical integrity.

Under the ARG standard, every building over 50 years old in downtown Pleasanton is a historical resource.

### **1. Discussion of Historical Setting**

The ARG Report treats downtown Pleasanton with the “museum” standard of historical preservation that would be appropriate to a place such as Williamsburg, Virginia, which has a high concentration of a distinctive period architecture, or a place such as Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, which was the site of significant historical events. In the ARG Report, the significant “historical setting” is based upon the presence of approximately fifty buildings over 50 years old scattered throughout the downtown. Most of the downtown historical buildings have been remodeled or updated from their original architecture. The buildings in downtown Pleasanton are not representative of one particular style of notable architecture like Williamsburg. In summary, a museum standard for rehabilitation in downtown Pleasanton is not justified by our architecture or history. Downtown Pleasanton is not a museum; it is a dynamic community center with an attractive combination of historical buildings and new construction compatible with the downtown small town character.

The second basis for the ARG Report claim that the sheds are in a historically significant “setting” arises from the halo effect of the two sheds being located on the same site as the outstanding Victorian Revival Kolln Hardware building. But, the ARG Report ignores that Original Hardware Building (nicknamed Building 2 in the ARG Report) was defaced at the time it was moved to the back of Kolln Hardware. Its overhang was removed, its doors and windows were boarded up, and the façade materials were degraded and replaced over time. From the moment the Victorian Revival Kolln Building was created, the Original Hardware Building has been an architectural detraction from it, inconsistent in style, and not having any style in its defaced condition. The Tin Shop (nicknamed Building 3 in the ARG Report) has also been defaced for more than half a century. When the ARG Report is proposes to re-create the doors, windows, and materials on the Original Hardware Building and the Tin Shop at their sidestreet location, ARG is proposing an imitation historical setting that never existed in real life.

### **2. Discussion of Sheds’ Architectural Significance**

If the sheds’ setting was Williamsburg or Gettysburg, by all means, the costly effort at museum quality restoration might be worth undertaking. But, with their degraded condition and history of degradation, only the original form of the building facades remain: doors and windows have been boarded up, the front overhang removed, original building materials replaced, and all style is gone. Even if the sheds had been kept intact and at their original locations, they represent the simplest most common building style, standard Western storefronts, not unique or architecturally significant – as admitted at several places in the ARG Report.

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### **The Issue of Integrity**

A key requirement of the California Register of Historic Places is that the building possess historical integrity. The ARG Report slides Building 2 and 3 in with the Victorian Revival Kolln Hardware building in making its analysis of “integrity”. Here is a more accurate analysis of the integrity of just Buildings 2 and 3:

Location: Both Building 2 and Building 3 have been moved from their original location, and have been a detraction to the superior architecture of Building 1 at their side street locations.

Setting. Discussed at #1 above. Contrary to the statement in the ARG Report, replacement of the defaced sheds with architecture consistent with the Kolln Hardware building would enhance the small town character and scale of historic Main Street, as required by the Downtown Specific Plan.

Materials. Both Buildings 2 and 3 are at the end of their useful lives. The only thing that remains is the exterior building form – not original materials of particular historic value. On the interior, which ARG did not visit while preparing their \$5,000 report, the material condition is worse. After sitting on a central support beam without a foundation for 100 years, the floor joists on Building 3 sag at least six inches on each side. It would take an archival level of cost and effort to retain the few scraps of historical building materials.

Workmanship. If the goal is to preserve the craftsmanship of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, these buildings do not possess any features requiring a high degree of craftsmanship.

Feeling. The ARG Report acts as if all three buildings were one building in analyzing “feeling”. But neither Building 2 or 3 can reasonably be characterized as a high quality example of “the aesthetic or historical sense of a particular period of time.” They feel like side street sheds.

Association. Here, the “association” ascribed to Buildings 2 and 3 is their location near the Kolln Hardware building without reference to their detraction from that architectural gem. The ARG Report characterization of them as in a “relatively unaltered condition” is at odds with their relocation and defacement approximately 100 years ago. Their association with a fifteen block downtown which includes approximately 50 buildings built more than 50 years ago is not the kind of special historical association on which a government would spend its own money in implementing a museum quality reconstruction.

The proposed restoration of the shed buildings does not realistically meet any of the Historical Register’s criteria for integrity, let alone all of them. The massive and expensive restoration required for Buildings 2 and 3 cannot be characterized as a “rehabilitation”. It can only be characterized as a “reconstruction” aimed at saving at most a few archival shards of the original structure. As a reconstruction, it does not qualify for designation as a significant historical resource.

### **The Problem with the Museum Standard**

So much of the renovation that has revitalized downtown Pleasanton involved saving history and expanding upon it, like the Callahan renovation of 450 Main Street, the Spring Street

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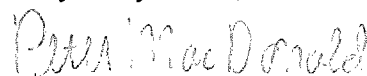
neighborhood, and the planned renovation of the Old Firehouse. If the City adopts a museum standard for this private property owner, every 50-year-old building in downtown should be subject to a similar exacting standard of preservation, including the Old Firehouse.

The museum standard would create immediate blight downtown. For the City to impose enormous restoration costs on historically and aesthetically insignificant structures will stop revitalization dead. There would be a brownfield effect on every old building – the same effect as when contamination is discovered on a site. With contaminated sites, the cost of remediation is capitalized as a reduced market price for the contaminated property. When the cost of rehabilitation of historic sheds exceeds the reasonable value of the finished reconstructed buildings, then that cost is reflected in a lower property value. Even if the City surprises an existing property owner like Mr. Cornett with the new museum standard, lenders require certain loan to value ratios that typically would not be met. More importantly, existing historic structures go stagnant because any effort at redevelopment triggers historical exactions disproportionate to their costs. The museum standard would fossilize downtown Pleasanton, and its economy.

#### **City Council Role**

The City Council and City Staff need to determine reasonable historic standards for downtown Pleasanton, and not let that policy decision be usurped by an historical consultant. That policy decision should be considered by the City Council before making the property owner spend \$80,000 and six months on an EIR that would provide no more information than a tour of the buildings, the ARG Report, and this letter. The City Council can reasonably make the finding that the degraded sheds at the back of the Kolln Property lack the physical integrity, the architectural merit, and the historical significance to justify their classification as a “significant historical resource”.

Very Truly Yours,



Peter MacDonald

Cc: Bud Cornett  
Charles Huff  
Wayne Rasmussen  
City Council  
Pleasanton Downtown Association  
Downtown Property Owners

#### Attachments:

1. Cornett Kolln Hardware Renovation Proposal
2. Shed Restoration Alternative
3. Parking Calculations for Shed Restoration Alternative
4. Selected Photographs

## **Attachments**

1. Cornett Koln Hardware Renovation Proposal
2. Shed Restoration Alternative
3. Parking Calculations for Shed Restoration Alternative
4. Selected Photographs



**MAIN STREET ELEVATION (WEST)**

Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"



**REAR ELEVATION (EAST)**

Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

DATE 1/28/05  
 PROJECT NUMBER 249.0401.03  
 DRAWN BY NS / RC / SR / AO

The client represents and warrants to provide the design development and site context, and that all of the information is accurate. The architect shall not be responsible for the accuracy, completeness, or timeliness of the information provided by the client. The architect shall not be responsible for the accuracy, completeness, or timeliness of the information provided by the client. The architect shall not be responsible for the accuracy, completeness, or timeliness of the information provided by the client.

**KOLLN HARDWARE**  
 600 MAIN STREET  
 PLEASANTON, CA 94566  
**PEAK PROPERTY MAIN STREET LLC**  
 C/O CORNETT COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

**MAPLE DELL + McCLELLAND**  
 ARCHITECTS, LLP

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 1518 NORTH CALIFORNIA BOULEVARD  
 SUITE 100  
 WALNUT CREEK, CALIFORNIA 94596  
 P 925.931.6100 F 925.931.8484





**DIVISION STREET ELEVATION**

Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

**5**

DATE 1/28/05  
 PROJECT NUMBER 249.0401.03  
 DRAWN BY MS / RC / SR / AO

The above information is for the client's use only. It is not to be used for any other purpose. The architect and engineer are not responsible for the accuracy of the information provided. The architect and engineer are not responsible for the accuracy of the information provided. The architect and engineer are not responsible for the accuracy of the information provided.

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**PEAK PROPERTY MAIN STREET LLC**  
 C/O CORNETT COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

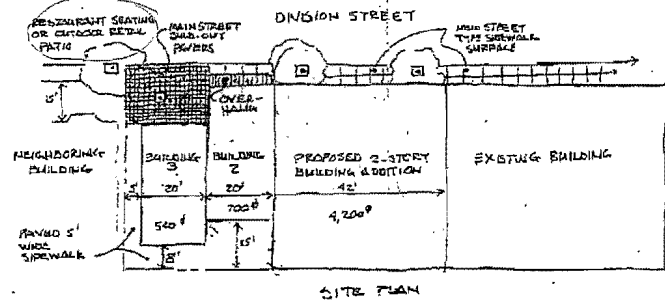
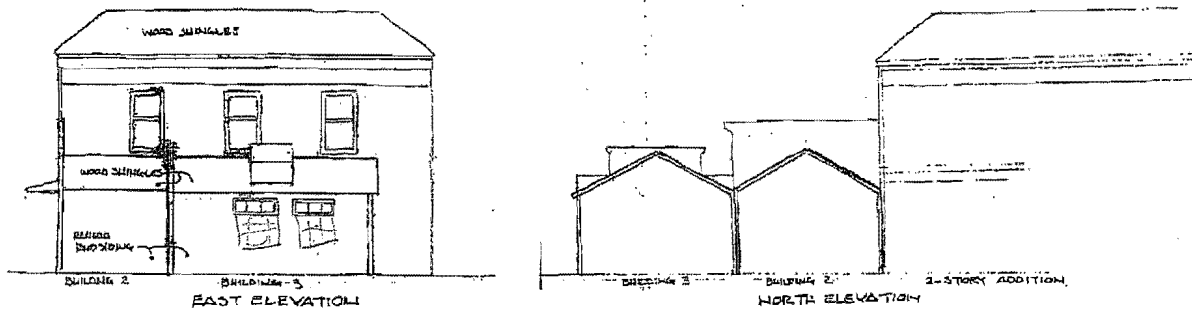
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NEW PROPOSED WINDOW ON DIVISION ST.  
TO MIRROR MAIN ST FACADE

5 FT SET BACK AT  
PROJECTS LINE



KOLLN HARDWARE  
PROJECT  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
STUDY BASE WORKING PLAN  
RASMUSSEN PLANNING, INC.  
3/29/06

## Shed Restoration Alternative

## Kolln Hardware Proposals In Lieu Parking Fees

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	Sq. Ft. Bldg.	Expansion (in sq. ft.)	Parking Spaces for Expansion Space	Parking Spaces Required	Parking Spaces Provided	In Lieu Spaces Required	% of Expansion	In Lieu Fees (@\$14,000 ea.)
		(A - 8,633)	(B / 300)	(C + 4)		(D - E)	(A / 8633) - 1	(F x \$14,000)
1. Existing Kolln building	8,633	0	0.0	4.0	4	0.0	0.000	\$0
2. Cornett proposal	10,983	2,350	7.8	11.8	4	7.8	0.272	\$109,667
3. Shed Resotration Alt.	11,683	3,050	10.2	14.2	0	14.2	0.353	\$198,333

Notes: 1. The Parking Ordinance provides that if in lieu spaces exceed 30% of required parking (i.e. for existing building, expansion is greater than 30%), then a project is required to pay the parking garage in lieu fee for all in lieu parking spaces. That fee has not yet been determined by the City Council.

2. For the façade preservation proposal, the plan would lead to two new on-street parking spaces, if Division is not turned into a pedestrian way.

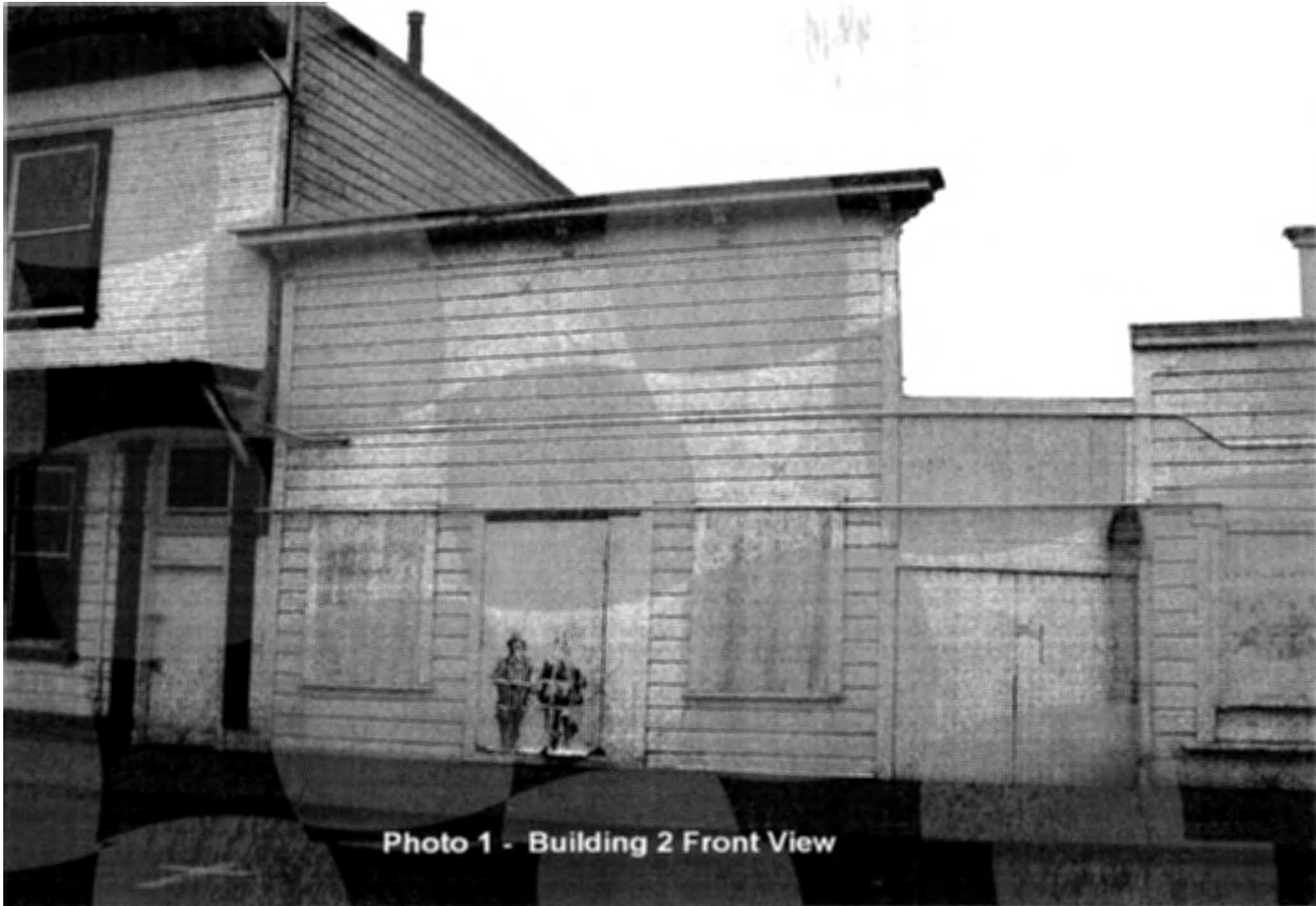
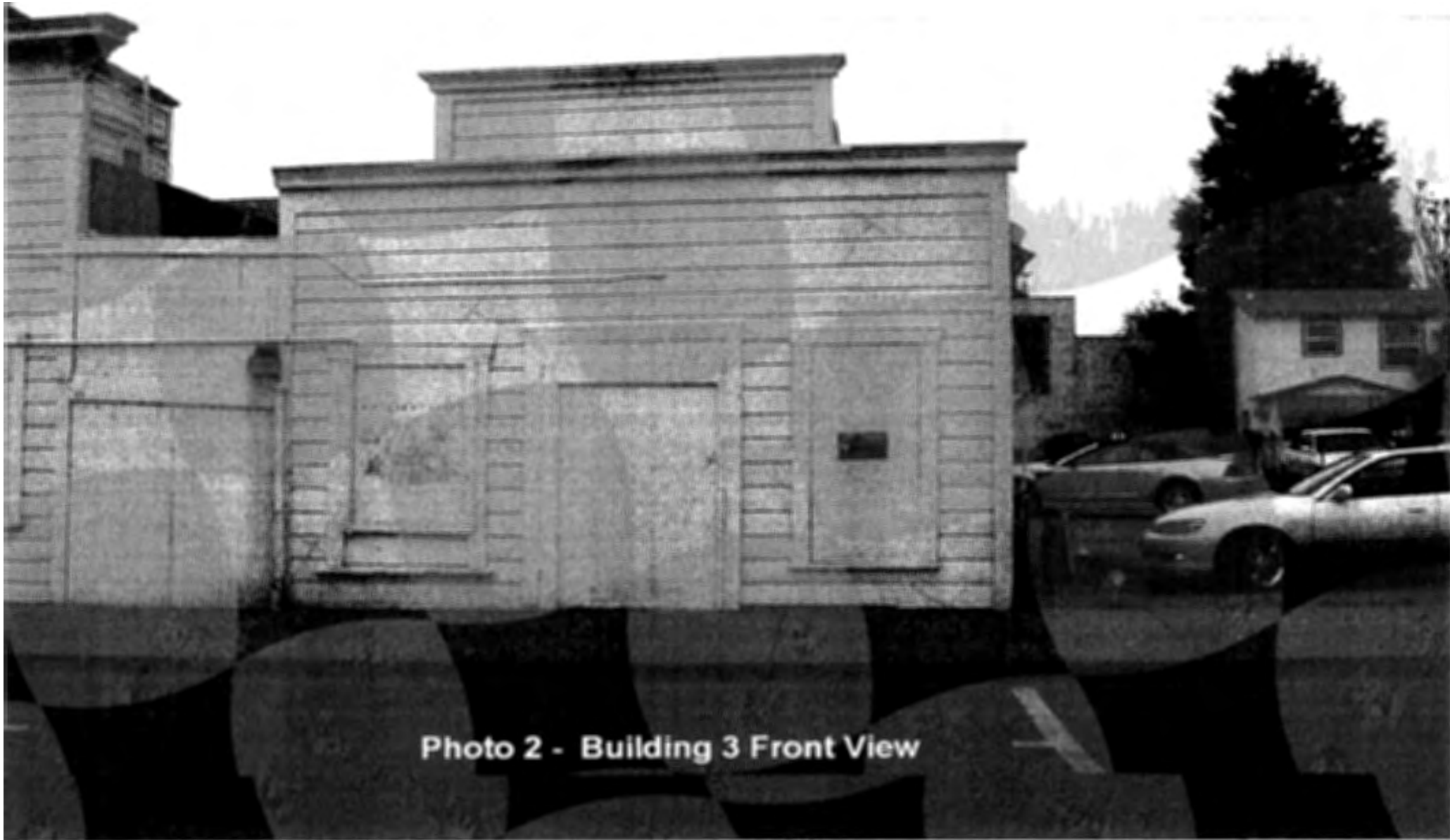


Photo 1 - Building 2 Front View



**Photo 2 - Building 3 Front View**



Photo 3 - Building 3 Side View

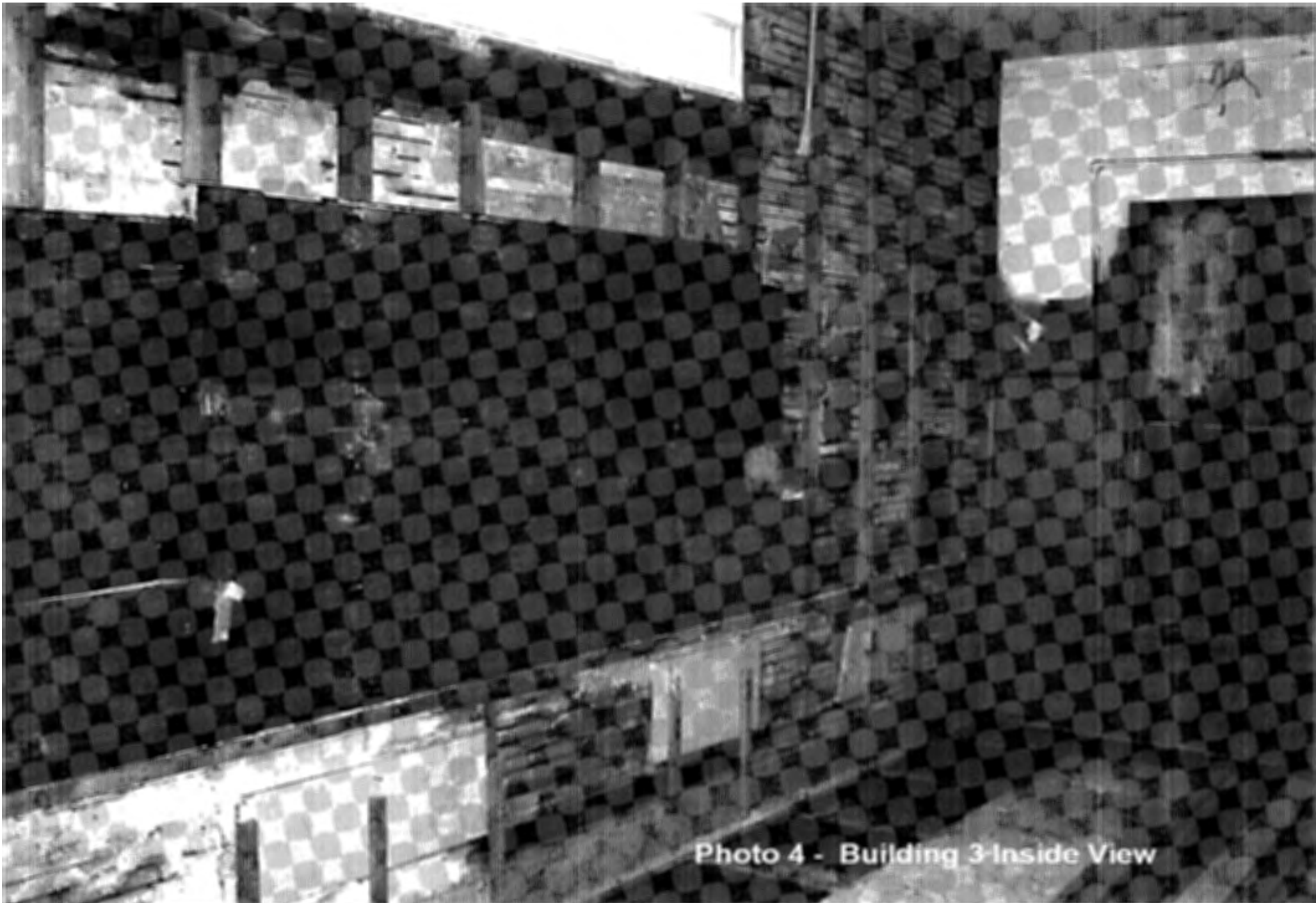


Photo 4 - Building 3-Inside View

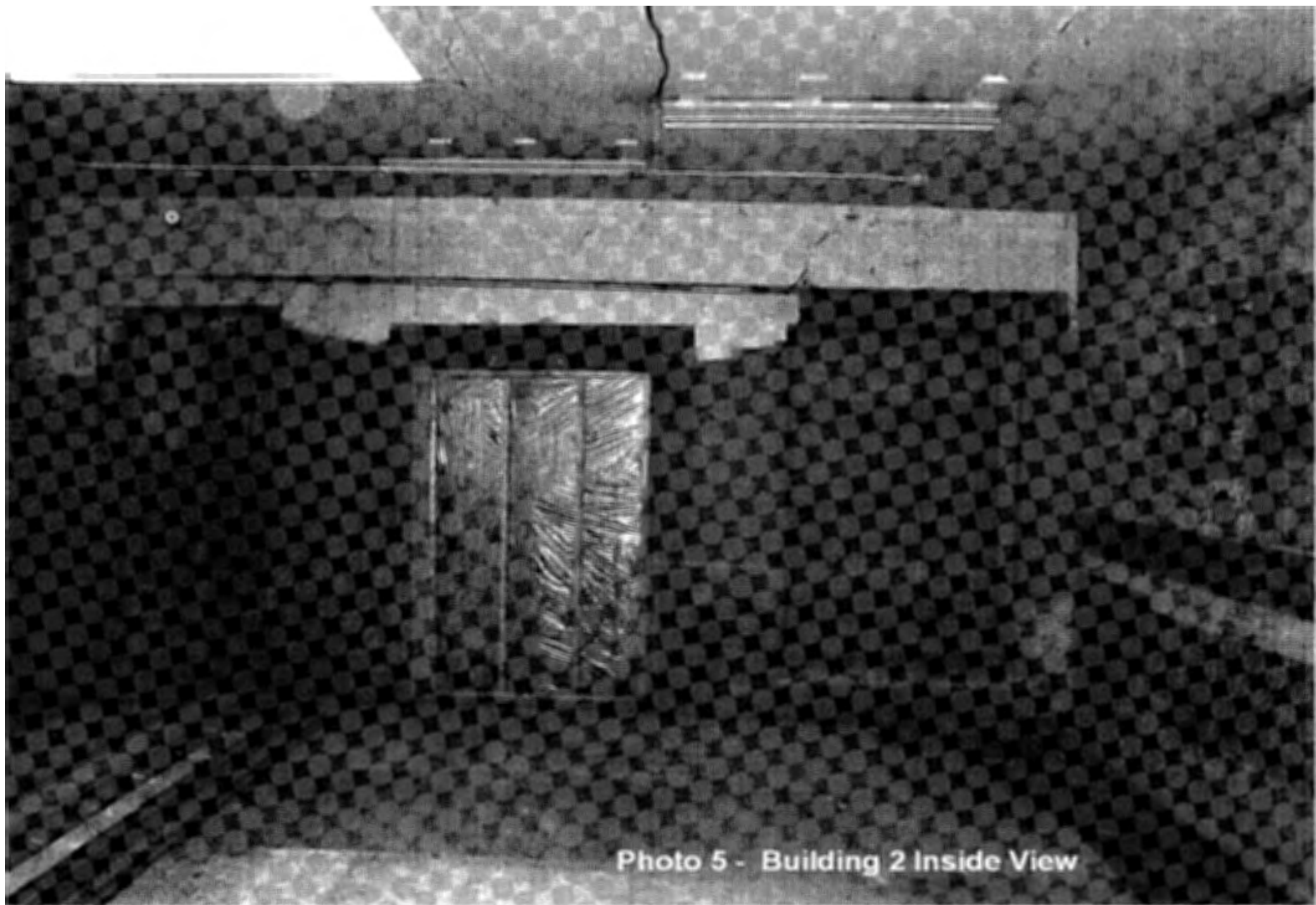


Photo 5 - Building 2 Inside View