

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only
received
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic William Jacob Heller House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 501 Mixsell Street. not for publication

city, town Easton vicinity of congressional district 15

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Northampton code 095

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<u> </u> district	<u> </u> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>occupied</u>	<u> </u> agriculture	<u> </u> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>building(s)</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>private</u>	<u> </u> unoccupied	<u> </u> commercial	<u> </u> park
<u> </u> structure	<u> </u> both	<u> </u> work in progress	<u> </u> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>private residence</u>
<u> </u> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<u> </u> entertainment	<u> </u> religious
<u> </u> object	<u> </u> in process	<u> </u> yes: restricted	<u> </u> government	<u> </u> scientific
	<u> </u> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>yes: unrestricted</u>	<u> </u> industrial	<u> </u> transportation
		<u> </u> no	<u> </u> military	<u> </u> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Leland and Sophia Martinez Waller

street & number 501 Mixsell Street

city, town Easton vicinity of state Pennsylvania 18042

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Northampton County Courthouse

street & number Seventh and Walnut Streets

city, town Easton state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date Fall 1979 federal state county local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission/Bureau of Planning
City Hall I

city, town Harrisburg/Easton state Pennsylvania

7. Description

Condition

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

Check one

unaltered

altered

Check one

original site

moved

date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This eclectic-style residence is perched on a rock promontory (legendary Indian lookout point), commanding a majestic view of the Delaware River and, in particular, its New Jersey shore. Specifically, within the City of Easton, the structure is located on the east side of Mixsell Street where Monroe Street ends on Mixsell Street. The grounds comprise approximately two and 1/10 acres of primarily cliff real estate west of PA Route 611 and is part of a residential neighborhood commonly referred to as College Hill.

This three story (including attic floor) home has concrete stucco exterior walls, as well as, a gently sloped and widely projecting red tile roof. The corner supports of the projecting roof were not part of the original design. In the early 1950's, it was felt the roof was sagging; therefore, cast iron pipes were placed under the roof to aid in support.

The width of the front of the house is approximately 47 feet, plus another (approximately) 13 feet for the ground and second floor porches. The overall length of the house from front to rear is approximately 86 feet. The complex is as regular as possible with the exception of the octagonal sun porch (east end of the house) and an enclosed patio (north-east part of the house on ground floor).

Comprising the ground floor level from front to rear, through the middle of the house, are: loggia (6'x8'), foyer (10'x18'), stairway hall for base of stairway (18'x24'), family room (18'x24'), with large fireplace, and garden room (16'x28'). On the south side are: guest room (14'x14'), two closets, hallway (6'x14'), two full baths. On the north side are: guest room (14'x14'), walk-through closet, sewing room (11'x14'), and guest room (10'x11') with half bath and closet.

Comprising the third floor level (attic) from front to rear, through the middle, are: bedroom (18'x20'), hallway, and bedroom (18'x21') with full bath and closet. On the south side are: closet (7'x8'), stairway, and storage room (8'x11'). On the north side are: cedar closet (11'x12'), and storage room (12'x17').

Comprising the basement level from front to rear, through the middle, are: storage area (10'x18'), recreation area (18'x18'), furnace and laundry room (18'x23'), and a garage (16'x28'). On the south side are: three storage rooms, stairway hall, closet and half bath (powder room). On the north side are: long "L" shaped storage room, an extension of the recreation area (12'x30') with two closets, and an extension of the garage.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below					
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention				

Specific dates 1900

Builder/Architect William J. Heller

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

William Jacob Heller, the co-designer and first occupant of the house, was one of the great businessmen of Easton in the latter part of the 19th and early 20th century. He was born in Hellertown, Pennsylvania, on December 3, 1857 (the first Heller family having emigrated to America from Paterstein, Germany, in 1688). He owned and operated the first exclusive flag manufactory in the United States. His factory was located downtown in back of the State Theatre and what is presently the parking lots of the Easton Express Publishing Company. At the time of his death in 1920, the flag company was manufacturing half of the flags in the United States. He was also largely responsible for the agitation which put a flag on every schoolhouse.

The Heller house was the first concrete stucco home built in the area, its construction is tremendous and massive. In this framed house, Mister Heller used 3" x 6" studs and metal lath. Those days metal lath (until metal lath of today) consisted of black sheet metal with holes punched through it. This was then nailed to the studs and concrete was spread on. Sometimes problems would arise if moisture got behind the metal (as a result of a roof leak). It would then have to be patched for the stucco to be reapplied.

The Spanish practice, based upon Moorish precedent, of concentrating ornament around the openings--doors and windows--and of leaving the walls somewhat blank and bare has been inherited by the Hispanic American forms.

Thus, in this particular structure the ornamentation on the exterior walls is confined to the areas immediately around the openings. This includes the doorway with its entrance porch, the fenestration, the walkways and the crowning glory of the home--its roof. These are the chief details which in addition to the wide areas of stucco texture, lend grace and beauty to the house.

The entrance was, according to Moorish custom, a place for great elaboration and enrichment. Often, the ornamentation was centered on this prominent element of the architecture, thereby serving to add interest to the design. It is this doorway which evokes a romantic feeling for the exotic in the Islamic minarets of the Moors.

Here the design is executed in the rectangular panels (alfiz) of the entrance room (porch) in the central pavilion. It is balanced by the symmetry of the two flanking wings. The traditional rounded horseshoe arch (it has been pointed) of the Moors is supported by two engaged and two freestanding short simple Doric columns. The arches, themselves,

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terminate in curvilinear modillion-like structures which serve as a graceful capping element for the column. The outline design of the door itself, is a beautiful reflection of the Moorish inspired entrance. The massive quality of the mahogany states the definite relationship between form and content. The door is paneled and is of generous width. The two panels of glass in the upper panels of the door itself displace the use of a transom. Since the hall was wide enough, separate windows on both sides of the door outside were used. These windows possess the characteristics rounded horse-shoe arch which is expressed throughout the house in various design areas.

The side windows of the first floor continue the design of the rounded horseshoe arch characteristic of Moorish architecture. These windows are larger in size than the typical Spanish Colonial house of America. These colonial windows were smaller in either a rectangular or circular shape. This was invariably a pattern which was followed down from early days when the home of the Spaniard partook of the nature of a fort. Characteristically, "rejas" (wrought iron grillwork) served as a protective covering element--which in this situation, gave way to heavily moulded windows with large panes of glass.

On the second floor are completely rounded arched shaped windows of a larger and greater length. Also on the second floor is an outside covered walkway, which was a feature of the New Mexican architecture. This arcade on the exterior may be used as a circulatory element, as well.

In a central position and immediately below the eaves of the house is a fine mutilinear oculus reminiscent of Pedro Huisar's baptistry window at San Jose do Aquayo. Huisar's window is considered the finest piece of Spanish Colonial ornamentation existing in America today.

Despite the simplification of ornamentation, this oculus succeeds surprisingly well nestled between the windows of the second floor. The handsome pattern of the leaded calmes is reflected against the gleaming white plaster of the wall. The diagonal pattern of leaded quarrels was a survival of English medieval windows and have been incorporated here in these windows. This lattice pattern is evidenced again in the mirrored overmantel chimney piece. Thin posts are used as a support and as framing elements for the flanking windows.

The ploychrome clay roof tiles provide an outstanding element of contrast to the broad expanse of stuccoed wall. It was used extensively in the Spanish Colonial homes of the Southwest, California and Florida and is a direct influence from Spain. The most salient impression of the structure is the gently sloped and widely projecting roof. It is almost reminiscent of the Japanese pagodas, though Japanese bracketing

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is much more complicated.

The Moorish-inspired rounded arch dormer window displays this gentle slope and enormous overhang. Though it may appear it merely emphasizes Mister Heller's affinity for romantic grandeur. This is verified by the tremendous mass of the rafters themselves.

One would expect the typical Spanish Colonial patio plan interior behind such a facade; however, to one's surprise and delight, one encounters a flamboyant--almost art nouveau--staircase which gently takes one's gaze to a second floor balcony.

Therefore, the plan of the house is simple, comparatively efficient and economical of space. The ground floor plan is a central hall with rooms opening from it on either side. The hall is no larger than necessary to allow circulation. It is conceived as a place to pass through, not as a spatial feature. The staircase rises to as small as possible on the second floor around which bedrooms are simply enclosed.

The whole complex is as regular as possible and, with the exception of the octagonal sun porch, is usually enclosed within a rectangle. The rooms are moderately high and maintain basically isolated volumes of space of pronouncedly vertical proportions.

The stairway itself is reminiscent of the Neo-Baroque architecture as epitomized in the fluid curves of the Grand Staircase in the Paris Opera. The Opera reflects the taste of the beneficiaries of the industrial revolution newly rich and powerful, who saw themselves as the heirs of the old aristocracy and adopted this "architecture of conspicuous display". Similarly, one sees Mister Heller's lavish expenditure on the staircase as a very personal whim. As previously quoted, Mister Roberts tells us of his grandfather's flamboyant desire to have a staircase just like the boats of his time had.

The moulded and polished mahogany handrail is extremely graceful. It is brought into the mahogany string piece with the handrail winding itself into a volute-like spiral at the bottom.

The curvilinear balustrades consist of the Spanish inspired "curlycued" design so often seen in the metal grillwork used for ornamentation in Spanish Colonial homes. To give the design more body and substance a spined wing-like element was inserted which also lends it a more plastic appearance. The moulded string piece ends in the characteristic claw foot of the Queen Anne style of furniture.

The two north rooms are entered through the rounded archway supported by flanking freestanding stucco pilasters. The two rooms are of differing sizes. The larger

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was used as a formal living room and the smaller room, in earlier years, as a downstairs bedroom. A small bathroom was also built off this small "bedroom".

On the south side of the house is the library, which is richly paneled. Again one sees the rounded arch motif echoed in the panel profile of the dado. This dado continues to flank the walls of the entrance hall. Behind the library is a small "island" kitchen. It has undergone two costly renovations.

The extreme east end of the house is an octagonal garden room (or solarium), which overlooks the Delaware River. The roof of this garden room (a sun deck serving the master bedroom) is supported on the exterior by eight Ionic columns. Again this is probably the result of Mister Heller's attraction to ships and boats, as the sun deck resembles the helm of a ship.

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.12

Quadrangle name Easton

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 18 482980 4505710
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sophia Martinez Waller

organization

date

street & number 501 Mixsell Street

telephone 215-253-5312

city or town Easton

state Pennsylvania 18042

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer

date 2/24/82

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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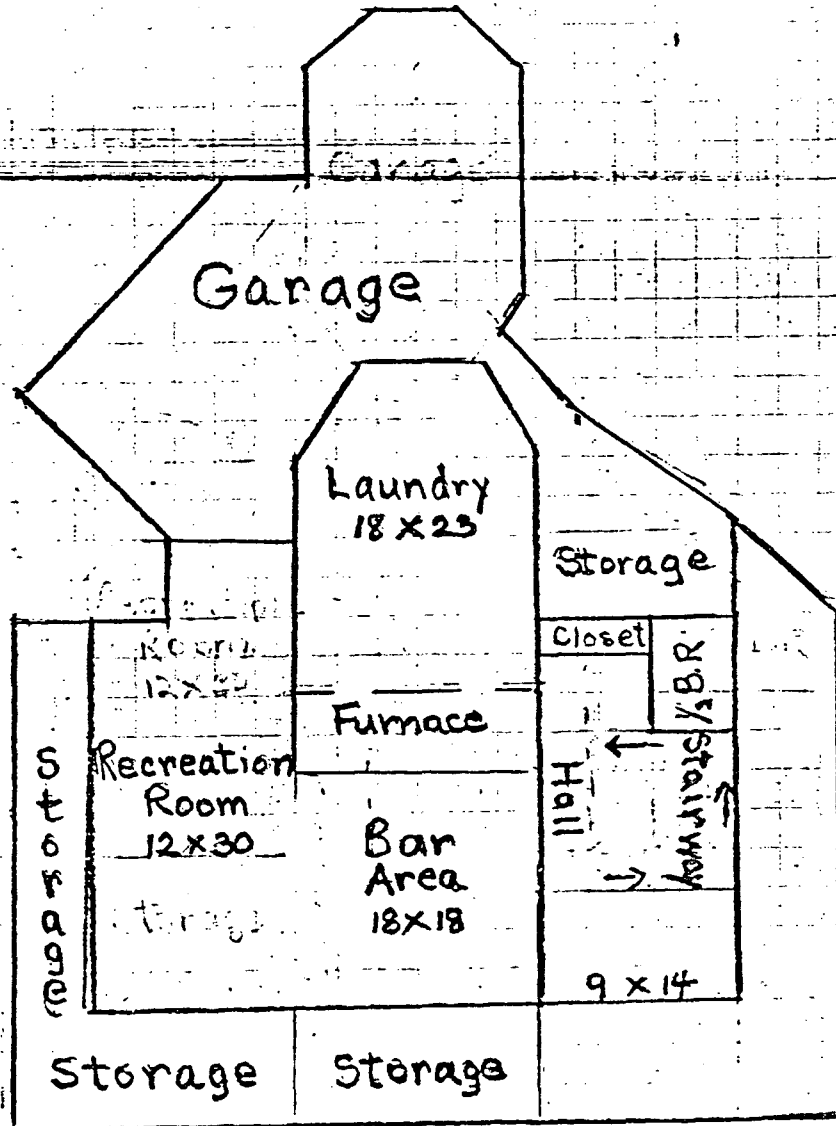
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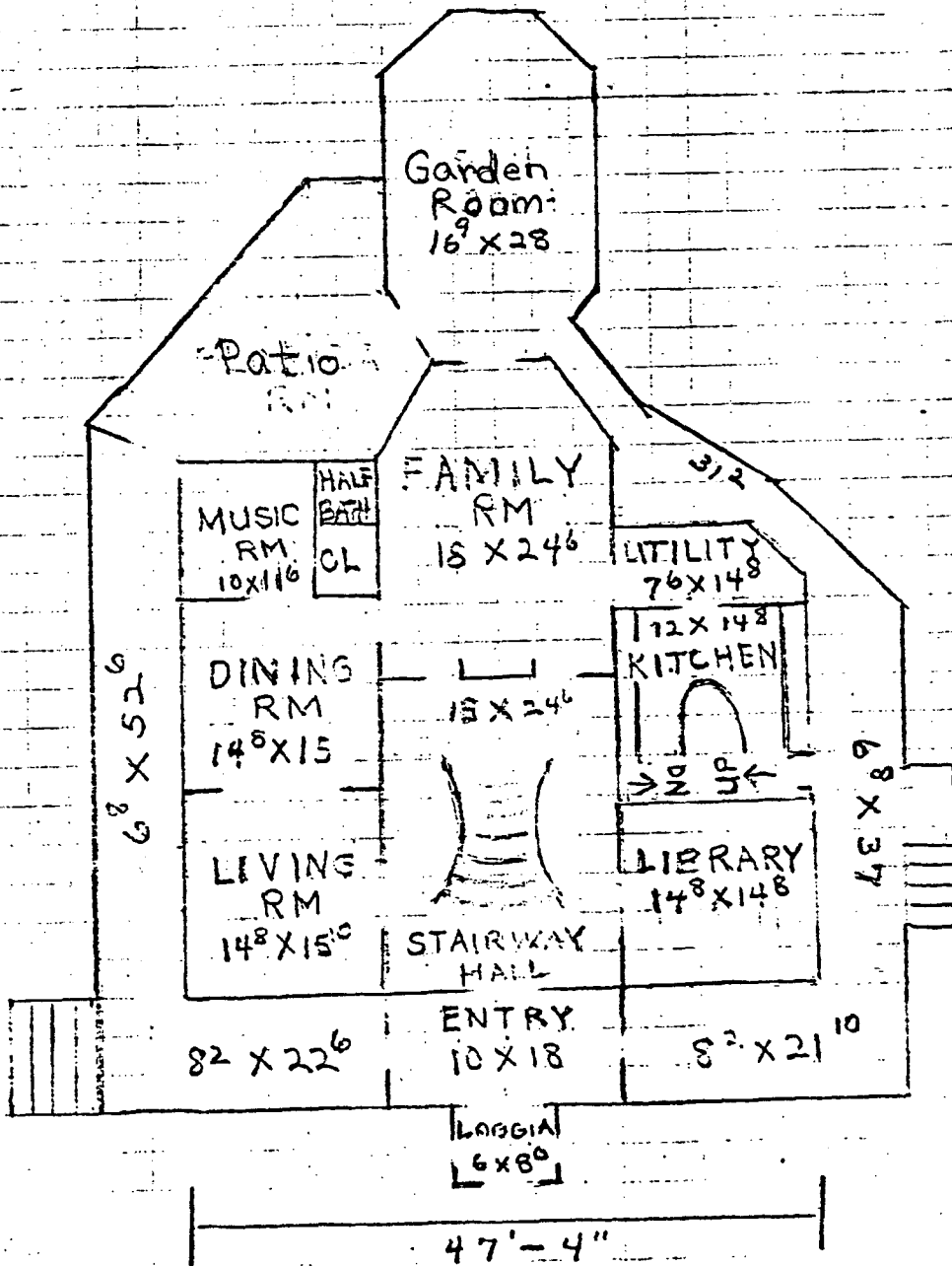
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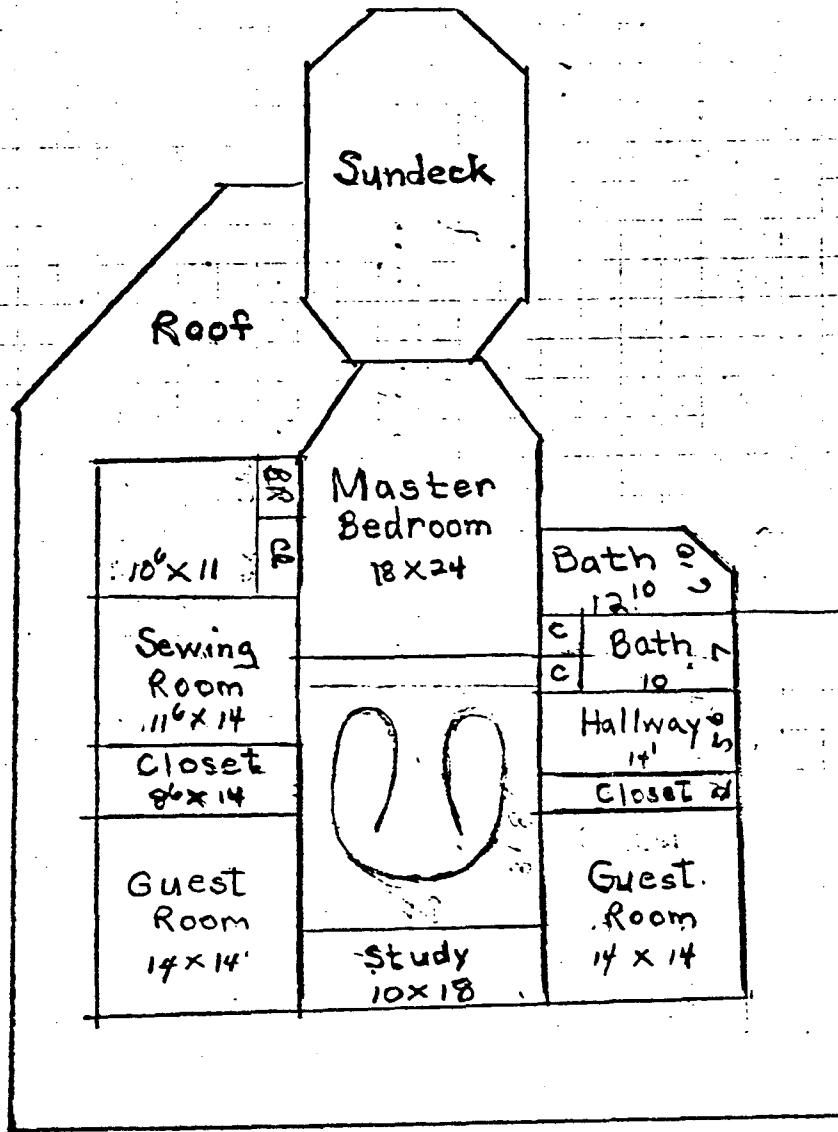
Basement



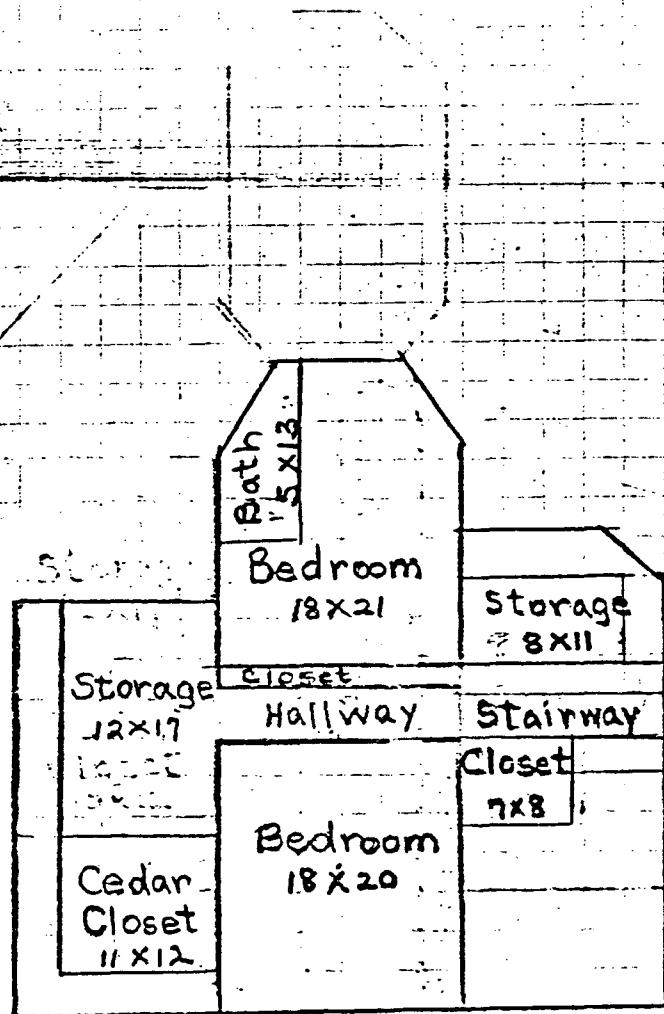
1st Floor



2nd Floor



3rd Floor



2
7x8

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

EASTON QUADRANGLE
Heller House noted in Red

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS

