

TOW ZONE
NO STOPPING
FIRE LANE
← →

11



























Back Bay Houses

Genealogies of Back Bay Houses

HOME FAQ OVERVIEW ARLINGTON BEACON BERKELEY CHARLESGATE EAST CLARENDON

COMMONWEALTH DARTMOUTH EXETER FAIRFIELD GLOUCESTER HEREFORD MARLBOROUGH MASSACHUSETTS

ALLEYS STABLES ARCHITECTS CONTACT

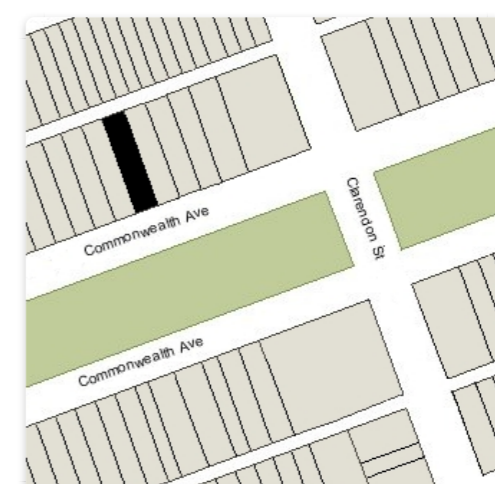
115 Commonwealth



115 Commonwealth (2014)

115 Commonwealth is located on the north side of Commonwealth, between Clarendon and Dartmouth, with [113 Commonwealth](#) to the east and [117 Commonwealth](#) to the west.

115 Commonwealth was designed by [Cummings and Sears](#), architects, and built in 1876-1877 by Weston & Shepard, masons and builders, for Walter Hastings, Jr., one of a symmetrical pair of houses (113-115 Commonwealth). He is shown as the owner on the original building permit applications for 115 Commonwealth, dated May 20, 1876, and for 113 Commonwealth, dated October 6, 1876, and on the final building inspection reports, both dated September 1, 1877.



Irregular Lot 28.54' on Commonwealth, 28.67' on the alley; 124.5' East-West (3,486 sf)

Walter Hastings purchased the land for 115 Commonwealth on April 1, 1876, from Dr. Joseph Adrian Booth, a physician in New York City. He had acquired the land on May 2, 1867, from his mother, Mary Ann (Holmes) Booth, the widow of actor Junius Brutus Booth. She had taken title to the land from the Commonwealth on October 13, 1864. Junius and Mary Ann (Holmes) Booth also were the parents of actor and presidential assassin John Wilkes Booth, actor Edwin Thomas Booth, and actor Junius Brutus Booth, Jr.

The land for 115 Commonwealth had been sold as Lot 8 by the Commonwealth at its auction on April 9, 1863. The successful bidder had been Orlando Tompkins, an apothecary and also manager and part owner of the Boston Theatre, and it appears that he purchased the lot on behalf of his friend, John Wilkes Booth. On April 3, 1863, Booth had written to his friend, Joseph H. Simonds, teller of the Mechanics Bank, asking him whether it was he or Orlando Tompkins who had sent him a catalogue of the Back Bay lands to be sold on April 9. In the letter (quoted in "[Right or Wrong, God Judge Me](#)" – [the Writings of John Wilkes Booth](#), edited by John Rhodehamel and Louise Taper), Booth expresses his interest in purchasing one of several lots on Commonwealth, including Lot 8, and indicates the amount he is willing to spend. He adds: "Let Orlando see this. Advise with him about it. He promised to buy for me or to let me know about it." After successfully bidding for Lot 8 at the auction, Tompkins probably paid for it with funds provided by Booth, with the land put in the name of Booth's mother when the deed was issued on October 13, 1864. Orlando Tompkins appears to have sent the deed to Booth, who wrote Tompkins on February 9, 1865, on several subjects, adding a postscript "By the way, I never acknowledged the receipt of that deed. Thank you, all right" (the letter was offered at auction by Skinner & Company in 2004).

Click here for an index to the deeds for [115 Commonwealth](#), and click here for [further information about the land between the north side of Commonwealth and Alley 424, from Clarendon to Dartmouth](#).

Walter Hastings was a wholesale dry goods merchant and treasurer of several textile mills. He and his wife, Elizabeth Diantha (Glidden) Martin Hastings, lived at [117 Commonwealth](#). After 113-115 Commonwealth were completed, they moved to 115 Commonwealth and sold 113 Commonwealth.

Walter Hastings and Elizabeth Glidden had married in September of 1868. She was the widow of Delavan Martin, who died in December of 1865 in St. Louis, and Walter Hastings adopted their daughter, Frances Clara, in February of 1873. She lived with them at 115 Commonwealth.

Frances Clara Hastings married in April of 1878 to William McKinley Osborne. He was a lawyer in Cleveland, where they lived after their marriage.

Walter Hastings died in October of 1879. Elizabeth Hastings continued to live at 115 Commonwealth.

In December of 1880, Elizabeth Hastings traveled to Europe with William and Frances Osborne, remaining abroad for several years. When they returned, they all moved to 36 Crawford in West Roxbury, where Elizabeth Hastings died in November of 1887. William Osborne served as Boston Police Commissioner in the 1880s and 1890s, and in March of 1897 was appointed US Consul-General to London by President William McKinley, who was his first cousin (the President's mother, Nancy (Allison) McKinley was the sister of William M. Osborne's mother, Abigail (Allison) Osborne).

While Elizabeth Hastings was abroad, 115 Commonwealth was leased by Oliver Ames and his wife Anna (Ray) Ames. He was a partner in his family's pick and shovel firm, and an officer and director of numerous railroads. He served as Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor in 1882-1885, and as Governor in 1886-1887.

The Ameses leased 115 Commonwealth from the Walter Hastings estate while their home at [355 Commonwealth](#) was being built; they moved there in 1883 after its completion.

In April of 1883, 115 Commonwealth was offered for sale by real estate dealer John Jeffries & Sons, whose advertisements in the *Boston Journal* noted that "this house was built by the day under the personal inspection of the late owner. It is beautifully finished, and contains all the improvements of modern houses."

On July 31, 1883, the house was purchased from Walter Hastings's estate by a trust established under the will of shipping, railroad, and real estate magnate William Fletcher Weld for the benefit of his son, George Walker Weld.

By the 1883-1884 winter season, George W. Weld had made 115 Commonwealth his home. His mother, Isabella Melissa (Walker) Weld, lived with him. They previously had lived in Philadelphia and before that at [1 Arlington](#). They also maintained a home in Newport.

George W. Weld was an investor in real estate. An avid rower, founded Harvard's Weld Boat Club in 1889 and financed the construction of a boathouse, which was replaced in 1906 by the current Weld Boathouse. He never married.

Isabella Weld and George W. Weld were joined at 115 Commonwealth by her cousin, Miss Isabella Hazen Dana (she was Isabella (Walker) Weld's second cousin, once removed; their common ancestor being John Frink of Rutland, Massachusetts).

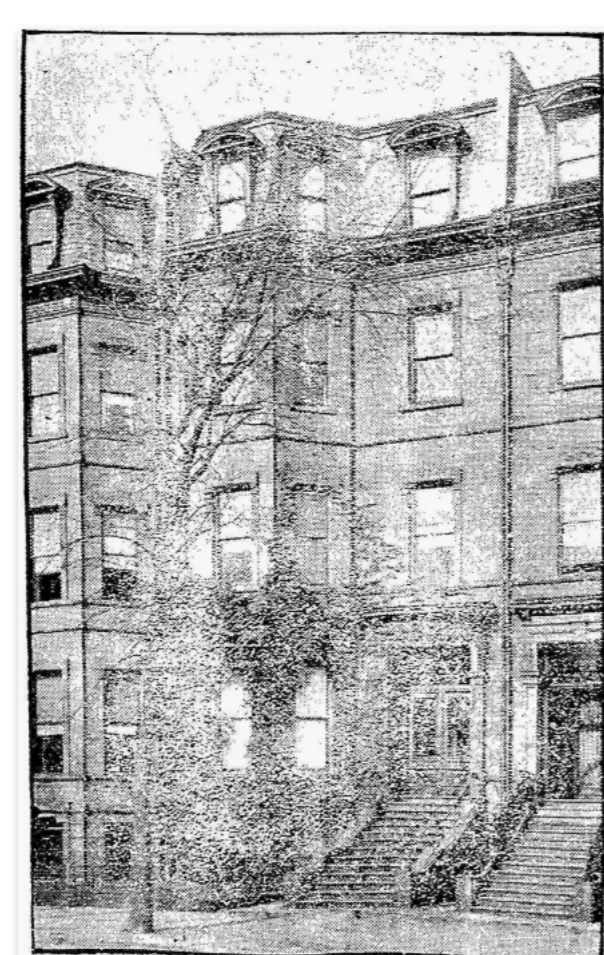
Two of Isabella Weld's step-daughters lived on the same block: Sarah Minot (Weld) Pratt, the widow of George Langdon Pratt, lived at [127 Commonwealth](#), and Anna (Weld) Perkins and her husband, George Hamilton Perkins, lived at [123 Commonwealth](#).

On December 27, 1895, the trust transferred 115 Commonwealth to George W. Weld in his own name.

George Walker Weld died in February of 1905 and 115 Commonwealth was inherited by Isabella Weld. She died in October of 1908.

Isabella Hazen Dana continued to live at 115 Commonwealth during the 1908-1909 winter season, but moved thereafter to The Abbotsford at [186 Commonwealth](#).

On August 4, 1909, Isabella Weld's estate filed a petition for registered land with the Land Court, and on November 4, 1909, the court granted the petition and issued a certificate of title to Charles G. Weld as executor of the estate. The petition specified lot measurements of 28.54 feet (28 feet 6½ inches) on Commonwealth and 28.67 feet (28 feet 8 inches) on Alley 424, based on a survey by Aspinwall & Lincoln, civil engineers, dated July 9, 1909. Prior deeds for the property specified measurements of 28 feet for both the northern and southern boundaries. As of December 31, 2020, no offsetting adjustments have been made in the lot measurements for either 113 Commonwealth or 117 Commonwealth.



115 Commonwealth (1909); *Boston Herald*, 21Nov1909

In November of 1909, 115 Commonwealth was purchased from Isabella Weld's estate by Ethel (Reed) Morss, the wife of Everett Morss. They previously had lived at [303 Marlborough](#).

Everett Morss was president of Simplex Wire and Cable Company, founded by his father, Charles Anthony Morss, which manufactured insulated wires and cables. He also served as Treasurer of MIT. Ethel Morss was a leader of the Woman's Municipal League of Boston, and meetings of the League (including the 1923 annual meeting) frequently were held at 115 Commonwealth during the 1920s and early 1930s.

On November 21, 1909, the "Social Life" column in the *Boston Herald* noted that the Morsses were "putting in various improvements" at 115 Commonwealth "which will prevent their occupying it at the present." It appears likely that it was at this time that the front entrance was lowered to street level. The Morsses lived at the Hotel Victoria at 273 Dartmouth during the 1909-1910 winter season, and on March 6, 1910, the "Table Gossip" column in the *Boston Globe* commented that they "expect that the alterations which they are having made in the house will be completed so that they can occupy it next fall."

By the 1910-1911 winter season, Everett and Ethel (Reed) Morss had made 115 Commonwealth their home. They also maintained a home in West Manchester. Their three children — Constance (Conney) Morss, Everett Morss, Jr., and Noel Morss — lived with them.

Constance Morss married in October of 1919 to Gardiner Horsford Fiske, a cotton broker. After their marriage, they lived in Weston and later at [206 Beacon](#). Everett Morss married in September of 1928 to Anne Wentworth. After their marriage, they lived in an apartment at [250 Beacon](#). He joined his father's firm and later would succeed him as president.

Everett Morss died in December of 1933. Ethel Morss continued to live at 115 Commonwealth with their son, Noel, a lawyer and amateur archeologist. Edith Morss died in November of 1936. Noel Morss married in 1937 to Mrs. Marion (Hayward) Clancey. They lived at 115 Commonwealth until about 1939, when they moved to Needham.

115 Commonwealth was shown as vacant in the 1939 City Directory.

In February of 1939, real estate dealer Henry Joseph O'Meara purchased 115 Commonwealth from the Morss family and conveyed it to Miss Katherine Theresa Foley and Dr. Lillian C. O'Donnell, a chiropodist. They operated it as a lodging house. Previously, Katherine Foley had lived in Brookline and Lillian O'Donnell had lived in an apartment at [197 Beacon](#).

They continued to live at 115 Commonwealth in 1941. By 1942, Katherine Foley had moved to [167 Commonwealth](#) and Lillian O'Donnell had moved to Newton Highlands.

By April of 1941, 115 Commonwealth also was the headquarters of the recently-formed Pan-American Society of Massachusetts, organized (according to an April 6, 1941, *Boston Herald* article) "at a time when the friendly relations between the Americas are of increasing importance." It had moved by September of 1941 to a temporary headquarters in Cambridge and then briefly to the Natural History Society building at 234 Berkeley. In October of 1941, it established its new headquarters at [205 Commonwealth](#).

In October of 1941, 115 Commonwealth was purchased by Charles Adrian Sawyer, Jr., a construction company executive. He and his wife, Clara Lucille (Zeiss) Sawyer, lived in Waban. That same month, he applied for (and subsequently received) permission to change the legal occupancy from a lodging house to a clubhouse for the St. Botolph Club. The club moved to 115 Commonwealth soon thereafter. It previously was located at 4 Newbury.

In June of 1945, the St. Botolph Club acquired the property from C. Adrian Sawyer. It continued to be located there until 1972, when it moved to [199 Commonwealth](#).

In December of 1971, 115 Commonwealth was purchased by attorney Frank S. Ganak and his wife, Yola Nina (DiCecca) Ganak. They previously had lived in an apartment at [111 Commonwealth](#). They converted 115 Commonwealth into six apartments and moved to one of them. In July of 1972, Frank Ganak purchased [131 Commonwealth](#).

In August of 1983, Frank Ganak transferred 115 Commonwealth to Yola Ganak. They subsequently divorced and she remarried to Nicholas Mourginis. They lived in an apartment at 115 Commonwealth.

On December 14, 2004, the building was severely damaged by fire. In May of 2005, Yola Mourginis applied for (and subsequently received) permission to repair the fire damage and remodel the building into four apartments.

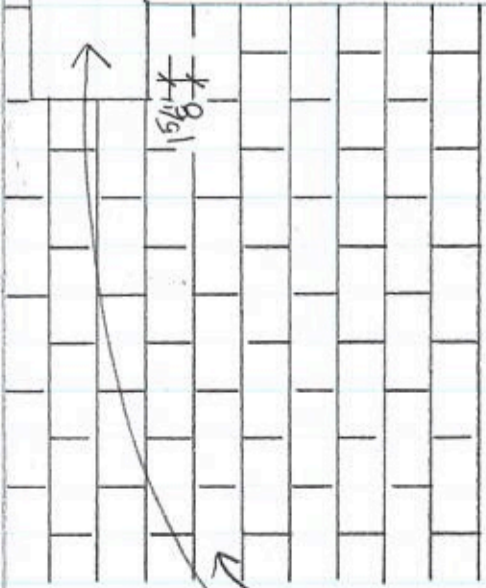
In September of 2012, 115 Commonwealth was purchased by Robert Atchinson and his wife, Michelle Atchinson. In February of 2015, they applied for (and subsequently received) permission to remodel the interior and reduce the number of units from four to three.

115 Commonwealth continued to be assessed as a three-family dwelling in 2021.



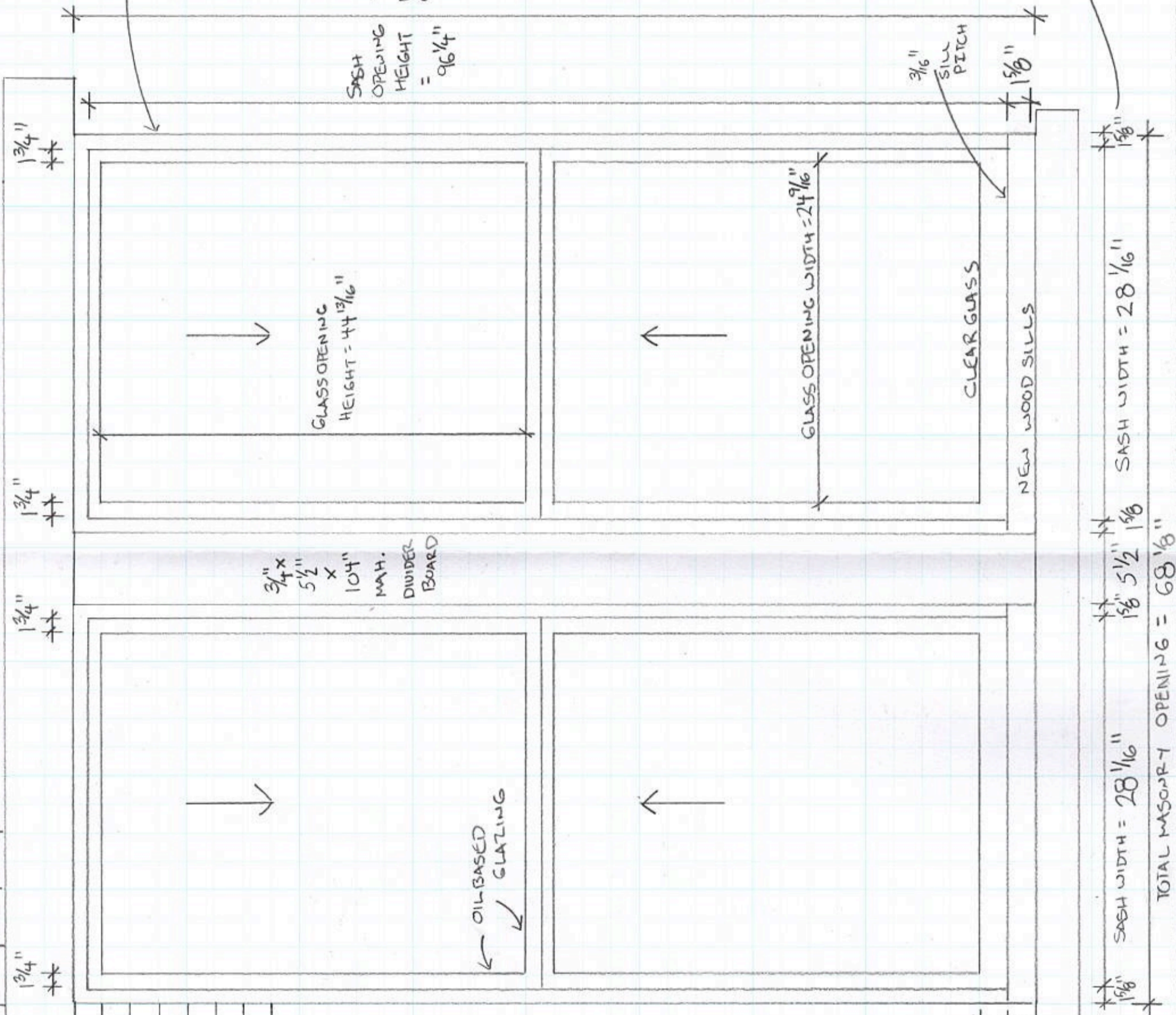
115 Commonwealth (ca. 1942), photograph by Bainbridge Bunting, courtesy of The Gleason Partnership

MASONRY TO REMAIN



2 NEW TOTAL MAHOAGANY
1/4 SASH SETS, NEW FRAMES
BRICK MOLDING TO MATCH
NEXT BUILDING IN KIND
PAINTED TRI-CORN BLACK
AT EXTERIOR, DOUBLE HUNG

7 1/8"
1 3/8"



BACK DOWNCOREING
995 SILICONE
SEAL AT ALL POINTS
WHERE MASONRY MEETS
NEW MAH. JAMBS

SASH
OPENING
HEIGHT
= 44 13/16"
TOTAL
MASONRY
OPENING = 68 1/8"

*REMOVE ALL EXISTING
EXTERIOR STORM WINDOWS

1 1/8"
1 7/8"
NEW BRICK MOLDING
TO MATCH EXISTING ON
BUILDING, PAINTED TRI-CORN
BLACK

3/16"
SILL
PITCH

NEW WOOD SILLS

3/4" x
5 1/2" x
104"
MAH.
DIVIDER
BOARD

OILBASED
GLAZING

GLASS OPENING WIDTH = 24 9/16"

GLASS OPENING
HEIGHT = 44 13/16"

SASH WIDTH = 28 1/16"

SASH WIDTH = 28 1/16"

TOTAL MASONRY OPENING = 68 1/8"

Historic Window & Door Holdings
12 Forest Road, Junction 123&123A
P.O. Box 138
Alstead, N.H. 03602-0138

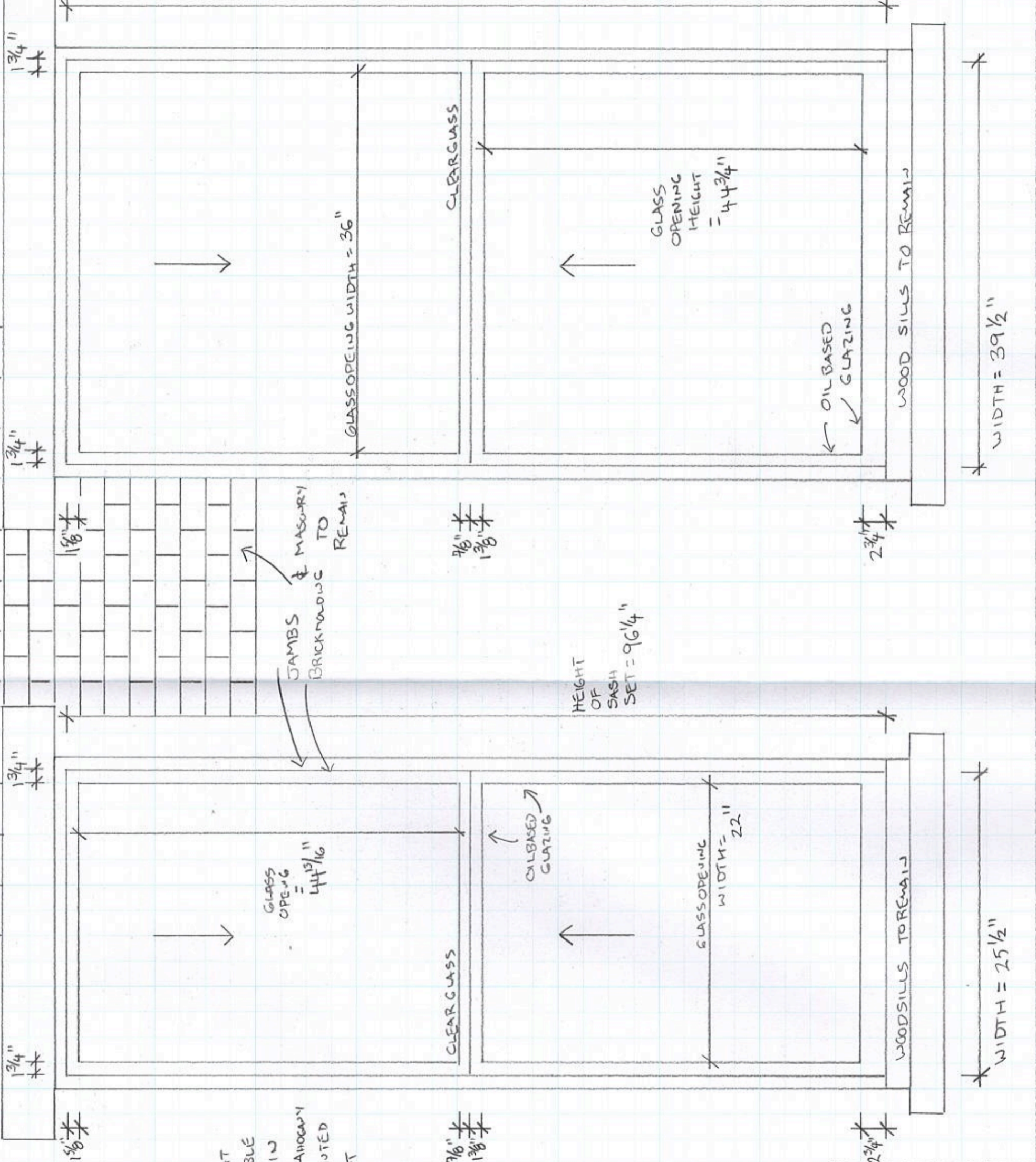
115 COMMONWEALTH AVE
BOSTON, M.A. 02116
REAR ELEVATION = SECOND FLOOR

FRONT VIEW

SHEET NO. 1 OF 4.

① 2 NEW,
 MIDDLE BAY,
 SIDE ELEVATION
 1/1, DOUBLE-HUNG
 SASHSETS IN
 EXISTING FRAMES
 MAHOOGANY, MORTISE
 & TENON, PAINTED
 TRI-CORN BLACK
 AT EXTERIOR

SASH OPENING
 HEIGHT = $96\frac{1}{8}$ "



2 NEW, LEFT & RIGHT
 SIDE BAY, 1/1, DOUBLE
 HUNG SASH SETS IN
 EXISTING FRAMES, MAHOOGANY
 MORTISE & TENON, PAINTED
 TRI-CORN BLACK AT
 EXTERIOR

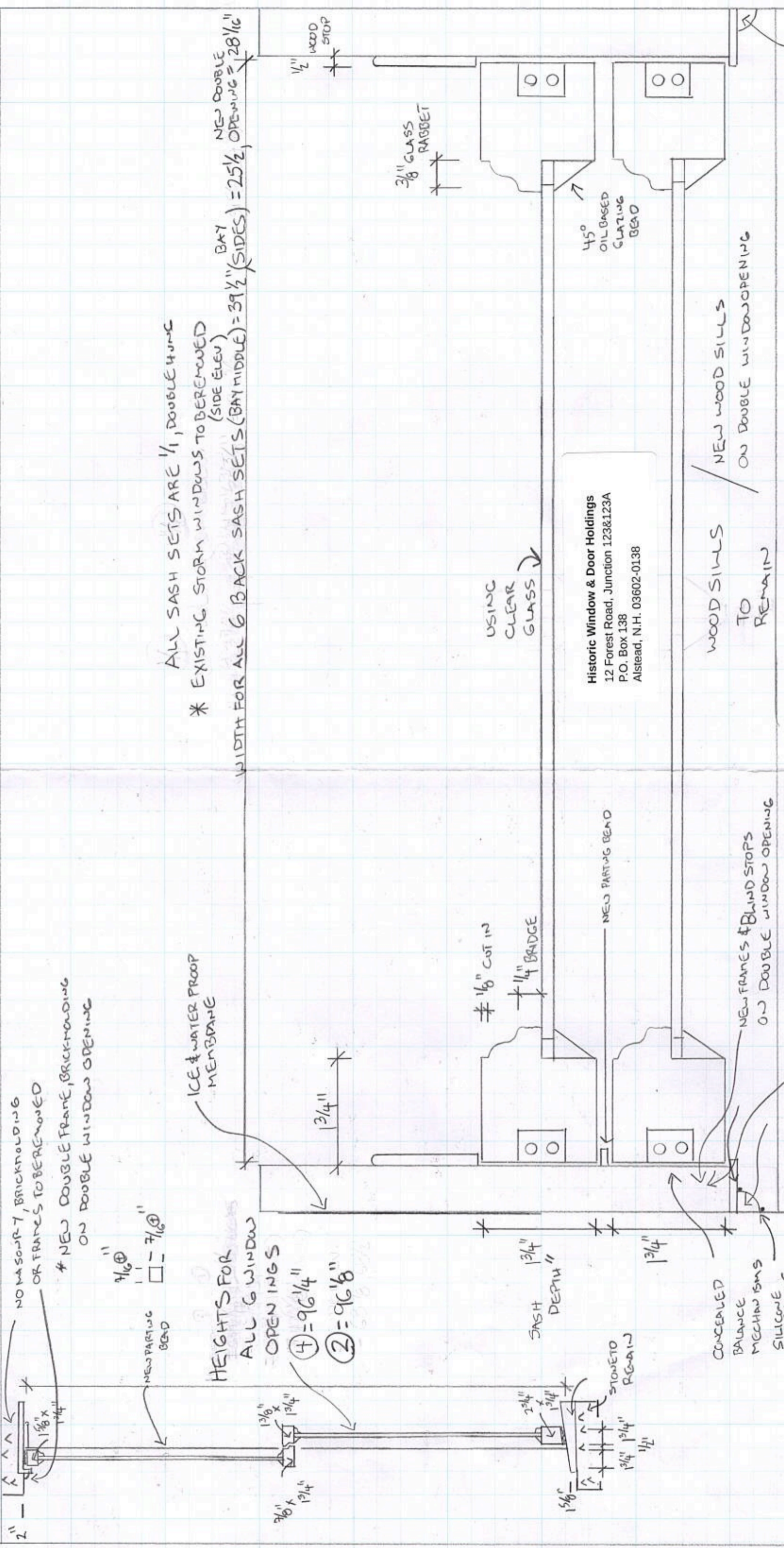
HEIGHT
 OF
 SASH
 SET = $96\frac{1}{4}$ "

Historic Window & Door Holdings
 12 Forest Road, Junction 123&123A
 P.O. Box 138
 Alstead, N.H. 03602-0138

115 COMMONWEALTH AVE
 BOSTON, M.A. 02116
 REAR ELEVATION = SECOND FLOOR
 BAY

FRONT VIEW

SHEET NO. 2 OF 4.



ALL SASH SETS ARE 1/1, DOUBLE HUNG
 * EXISTING STORM WINDOWS TO BE REMOVED (SIDE ELEV)

WIDTH FOR ALL 6 BACK SASH SETS (BAY MIDDLE) = 39 1/2" (SIDES) = 25 1/2, OPENING = 28 1/16"

HEIGHTS FOR ALL 6 WINDOW OPENINGS
 (4) = 96 1/4"
 (2) = 96 1/8"

Historic Window & Door Holdings
 12 Forest Road, Junction 123&123A
 P.O. Box 138
 Alstead, N.H. 03602-0138

NEW BRICKMOLDING ON DOUBLE WINDOW OPENING TO MATCH OTHER OPENINGS

6 TOTAL REAR ELEVATION SASH SETS
 NEW WOOD SASH SETS IN EXISTING FRAMES, PAINTED TRI-CORN BLACK AT EXTERIOR

FRAMES, BRICKMOLDING TO REMAIN ALL 6 NEW
 SASH SETS TO BE MAHOGANY, SASHRAILS & PROFILE TO MATCH ORIGINAL, DOUBLE HUNG

#115 COMMONWEALTH AVE
 BOSTON, MA 02116

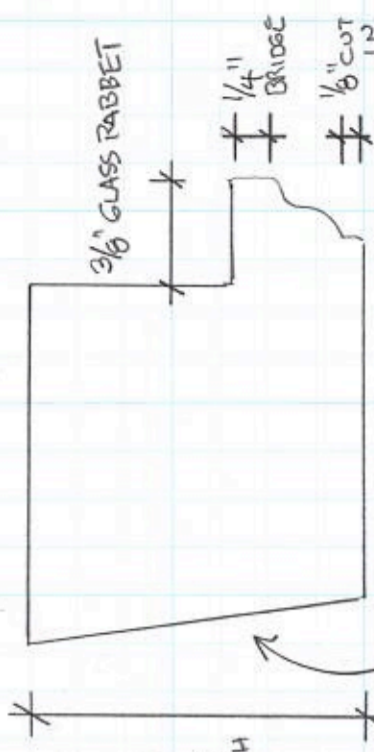
REAR ELEVATION = SECOND FLOOR

OVER HEAD & SIDE VIEW

SHEET NO 3. OF 4.

BOTTOM WOOD RAILS
OF SASH

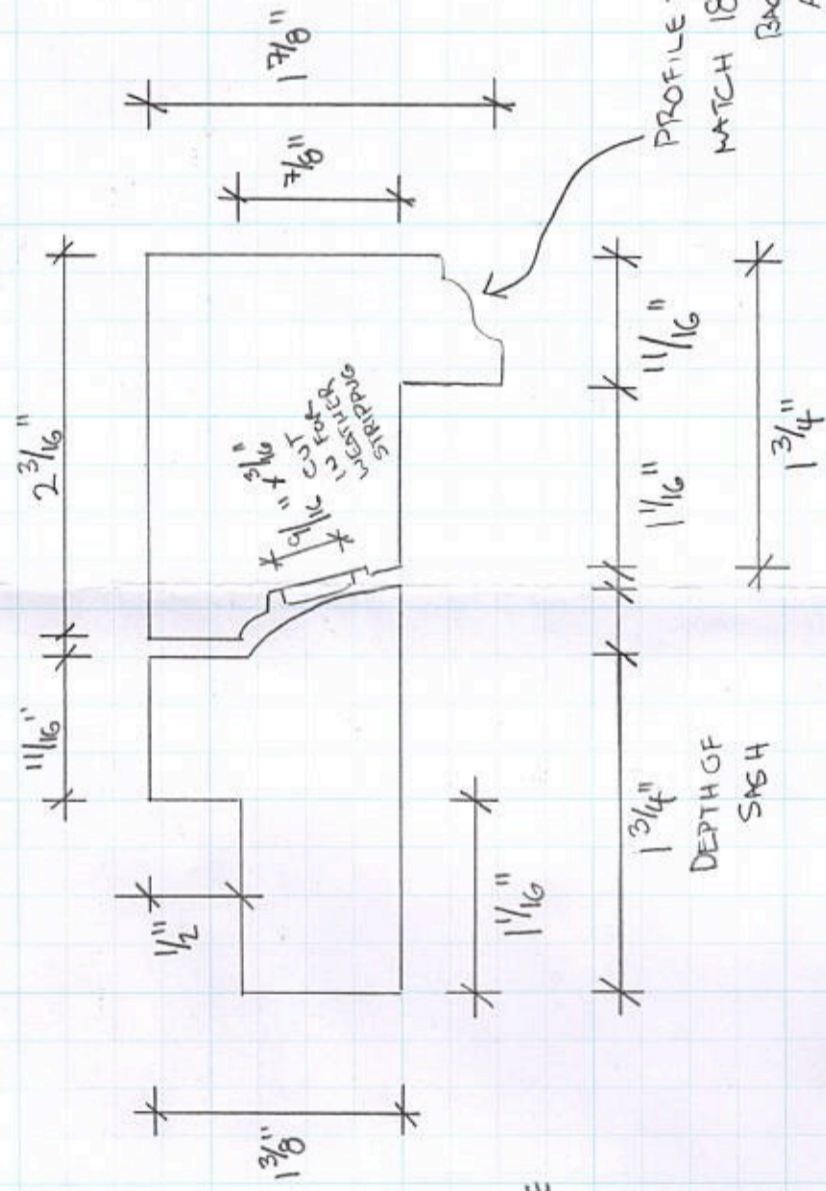
2 3/4"



1 3/4" DEPTH OF SASH

1/4" SILL PITCH TO MATCH EXISTING WOOD SILLS

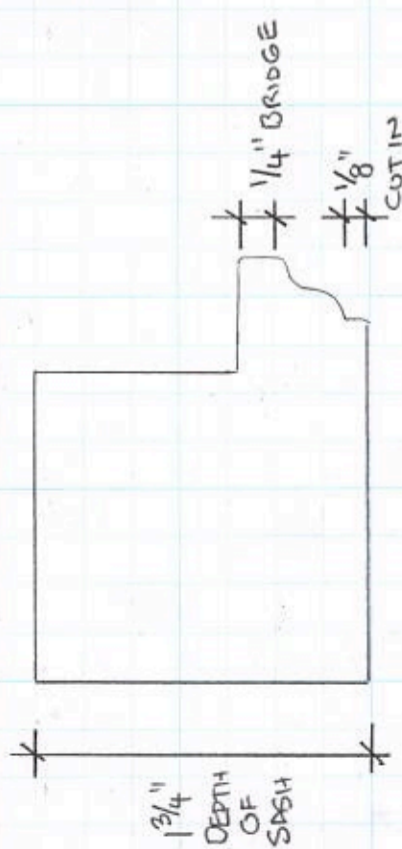
MEETING RAIL/SIDEVIEW



PROFILE TO MATCH 1880-1900 BACK GAY DESIGN AT INTERIOR

DEPTH OF SASH

1 5/8" = SIDE/TOP WOOD RAILS

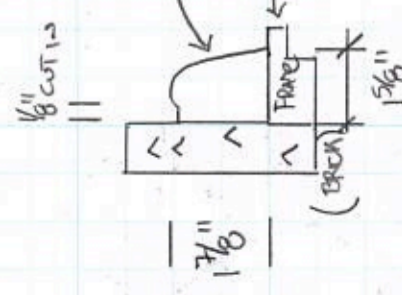


1 3/4" DEPTH OF SASH

1/4" BRIDGE
1/8" CUT IN

ROUND TO MATCH OTHER BRICKMOLDING ON DISCOMMAVE
← BUNDSTOP (NEW)

NEW MAHOGANY BRICKMOLDING
PAINTED TRI-CORN BLACK



Historic Window & Door Holdings
12 Forest Road, Junction 123&123A
P.O. Box 138
Airstead, N.H. 03602-0138

#115 COMMONWEALTH AVE
BOSTON, MA, 02116
REAR ELEVATION = SECOND FLOOR
SASH PARTS / CUT AWAY
SHEET NO. 4 OF 4