

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

REFNUM 85003411

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

10-31-85

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

1. Name

historic Smith, Dr. Robert, House

and or common

2. Location

street & number 855 Ardmore Avenue not for publication

city, town Akron vicinity of

state OH code 039 county Summit code 153

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Founders Foundation c/o David Snider

street & number P.O. Box 449

city, town Akron vicinity of state OH 44302

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Summit County Courthouse

street & number 72 S. High Street

city, town Akron state OH

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title NONE has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal state county local

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state _____

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Smith House was built about 1915 and is a 2 1/2 story frame residence located on a corner lot in an early 20th century residential subdivision in the northwestern part of Akron. Constructed on a brick foundation, it is covered with horizontal lapped wood siding and has a gable roof with asphalt shingles. The roof has two dormers in the front elevation and a shed-type wall dormer at the rear. A full length porch with a low gable that is supported on brick pillars is on the facade, and it has a wooden railing with decorative cut-outs. The windows have 4/1 double-hung sash. A small projecting bay with a shed roof is on the center of the first floor level on the side elevation. A small enclosed porch is at the rear. A narrow cut in the side of the lot allows access to the basement through double wooden doors. A concrete block retaining wall supports the earth here as well as around the remainder of the lot.

The first floor interior includes a dining room with a coffered wood beam ceiling and a living room with narrow oak tongue and groove flooring. Low paneled walls flank the doorway between the dining and living rooms. A pine staircase leads from the living room to the upper levels where bedrooms and bathroom are located.

The house remains much as it did when Dr. Robert Smith and his wife Ann lived here from 1915 to 1950.

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 type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1935 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Dr. Robert H. Smith House is significant under criterion B for its association with the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). This national organization was established in 1935 through the efforts of Dr. Robert Smith, an Akron surgeon and William G. Wilson, a New York stockbroker. The initial experimentation and program development for AA occurred in Akron during the late 1930s and 1940s. The house was Smith's house from 1915 until his death in 1950.

Robert Holbrook Smith was born in Vermont in 1879 and was graduated from Dartmouth College in 1902. He worked as a salesman in Montreal and Boston, but quit his job in 1905 to enter Pre-Med School at the University of Michigan. After earning a medical degree in 1910 he interned at the Akron City Hospital for two years. Smith wed Anne Ripley from Chicago in 1915 and moved into the new house on Ardmore. He first worked as a general practitioner with an office in the Second National Bank in downtown Akron. In the late 1920s he decided to specialize as a Proctologist and Rectal Surgeon and received some additional training at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota and the Jefferson Medical School in Philadelphia. He joined the staff of the St. Thomas Hospital in 1934 and remained with them until his retirement in 1949.

AA was founded as a result of the meeting and friendship of Dr. Smith and Bill Wilson. In May 1935 Wilson, a recovering alcoholic, was in Akron when a stock-selling deal fell through. Near despair and tempted to return to drink, he began to seek help and ended up at the home of Henrietta (Mrs. Frank) Sieberling (whose house is now the Gate House at Stan Hywet-NR-1975, NHL-1981). Mrs. Sieberling was active in a group known as the Oxford Movement, a spiritual group interested in revitalizing religion; and this was a group that had earlier been of assistance to Wilson in dealing with his alcoholism. Mrs. Sieberling was also aware of Dr. Smith's battle with alcoholism and invited him to her house the evening of May 12 to meet Wilson. The two men ended up becoming fast friends after sharing their mutual problem and discussing ways that they could work together to help others. The friendship of the two fostered one of the main principles of AA—the buddy system — and as they struggled with their own alcoholism actively practiced its benefits. Smith stopped drinking for three weeks until he attended a meeting at Atlantic City and blacked out after drinking for three days. Wilson came and brought his new friend home where on June 10, 1935, Smith swore never to drink again. This date has traditionally been viewed as the date on which the movement was born.

Smith and Wilson then began formal development of a treatment program. Group meetings were held in Smith's House and in another Akron home, but were moved to a school building when the membership grew too large. He also treated alcoholics in his home and at City Hospital. In 1939, St. Thomas Hospital in

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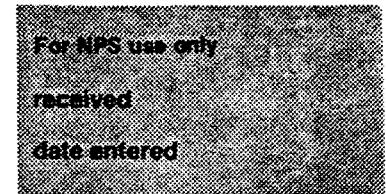
**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Robert Smith House, Akron, Summit County, Ohio

Continuation sheet SIGNIFICANCE

Item number 8

Page 2



Akron established the first alcoholics ward in cooperation with Smith. 1939 also saw the publication of the book by Smith, Wilson and an Akron Beacon Journal reporter which eventually gave the organization its name entitled Alcoholics Anonymous. It outlined the 12 steps to sobriety which have become the hallmark of AA treatment. After this Smith and Wilson became known as "Dr. Bob" and "Bill W." in keeping with the organization's anonymity.

The house has recently been purchased by a non-profit organization known as the Founders Foundation formed specifically to interpret the house as a museum. Dr. Smith's daughter, Suzanne Windows, still lives in Akron and is involved in this group.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Musanna, Russ. "Getting Soker." Akron Beacon Journal, June 9, 1985.
Schadle, Darlene. "Alcoholics Anonymous Founded in Akron 50 Years Ago This Month." Old Portage Trail Review, Vol. 38, No. 6 (June 1985).
"Dr. Bob," The A.A. Grapevine, January 1951.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Akron West

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

117	451391010	41541931410
Zone	Easting	Northing

B

Zone	Easting	Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property consists of Lot 44 of the Bloomfield Alotment of the City of Akron, minus the northern 40 feet.

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David Snider and David Simmons

organization Ohio Historic Preservation Office

date 8/20/85

street & number 1985 Velma Avenue

telephone 614-466-1500

city or town Columbus,

state OH 43211

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

W. Ray Luce

title SHPO

date 9/13/85

For NPS use only

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

date

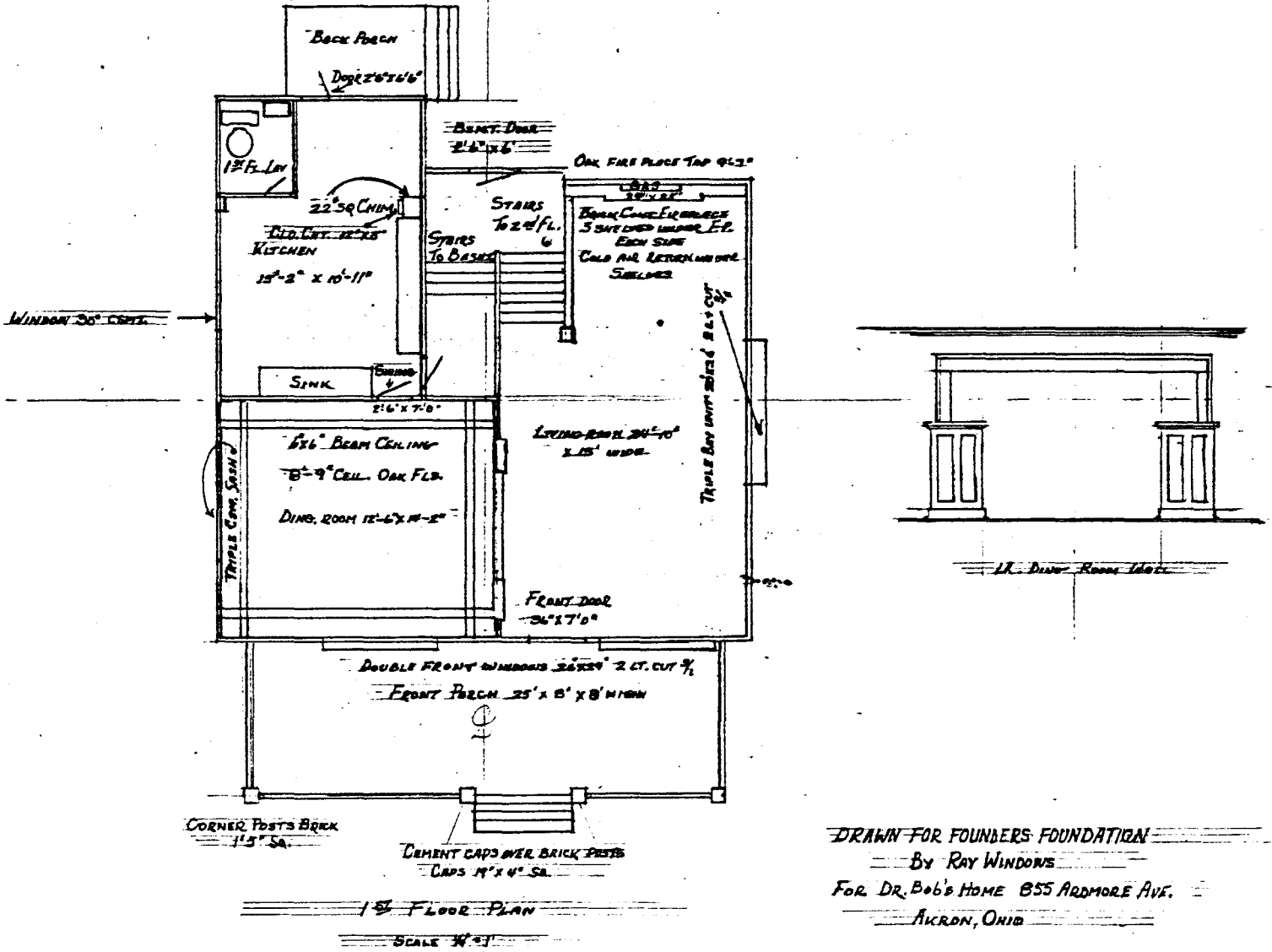
Keeper of the National Register

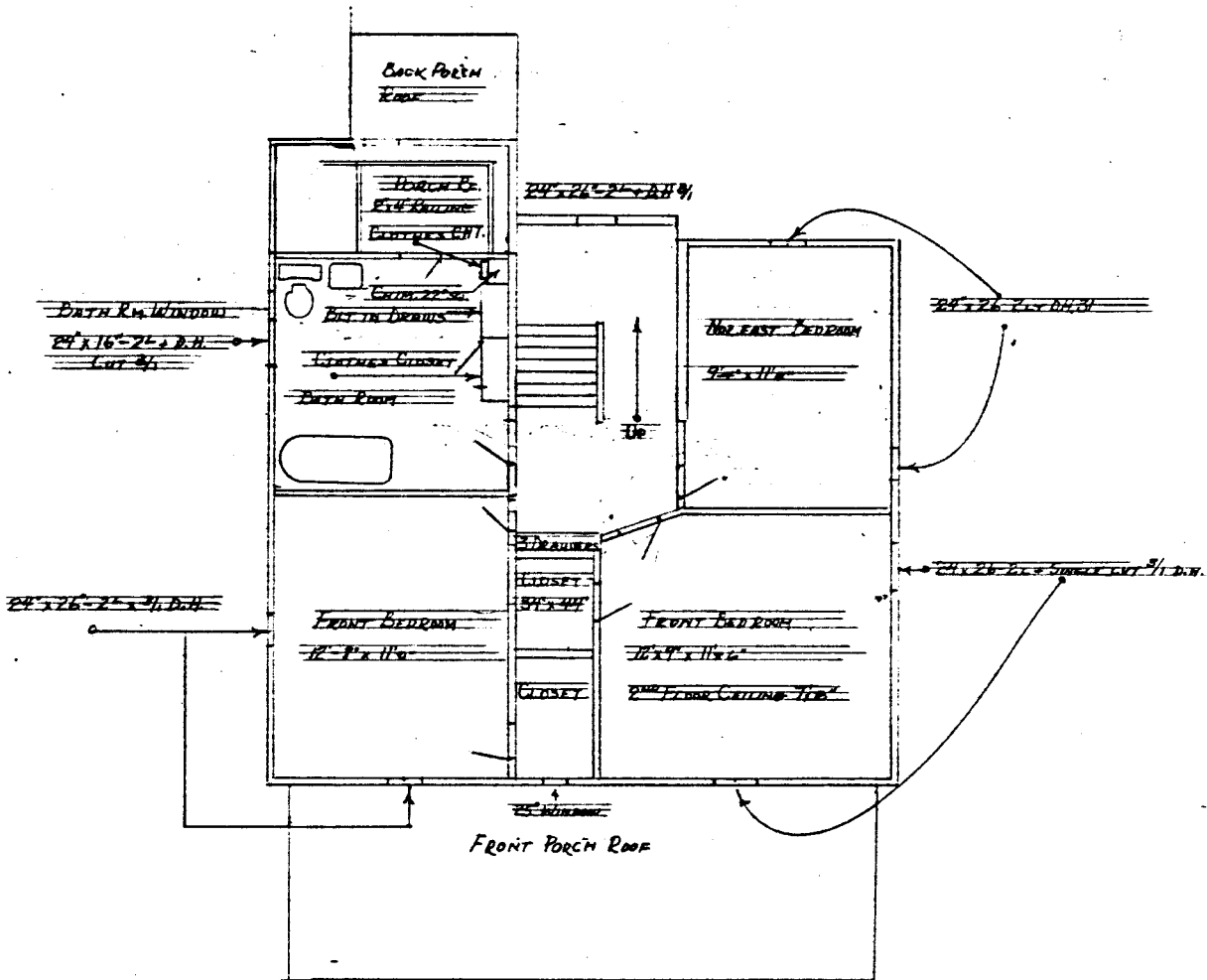
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

Smith, Dr. Robert, House
Akron, Summit County, Ohio

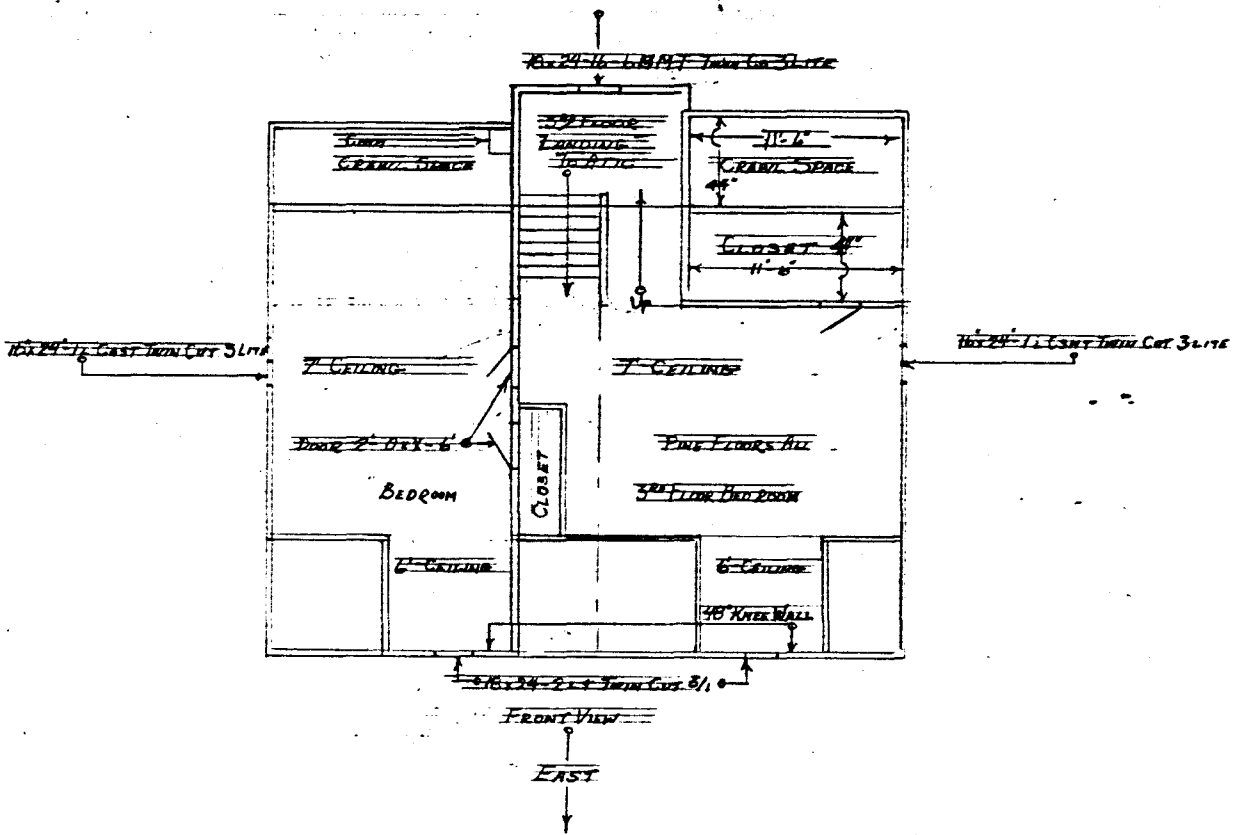




2ND FLOOR PLAN
ALL PINE FLOORS

DRAWN FOR FOUNDERS FOUNDATION
BY RAY WINDOWS
FOR DR. BOB'S HOME 855 ARDMORE AVE.
AKRON, OHIO

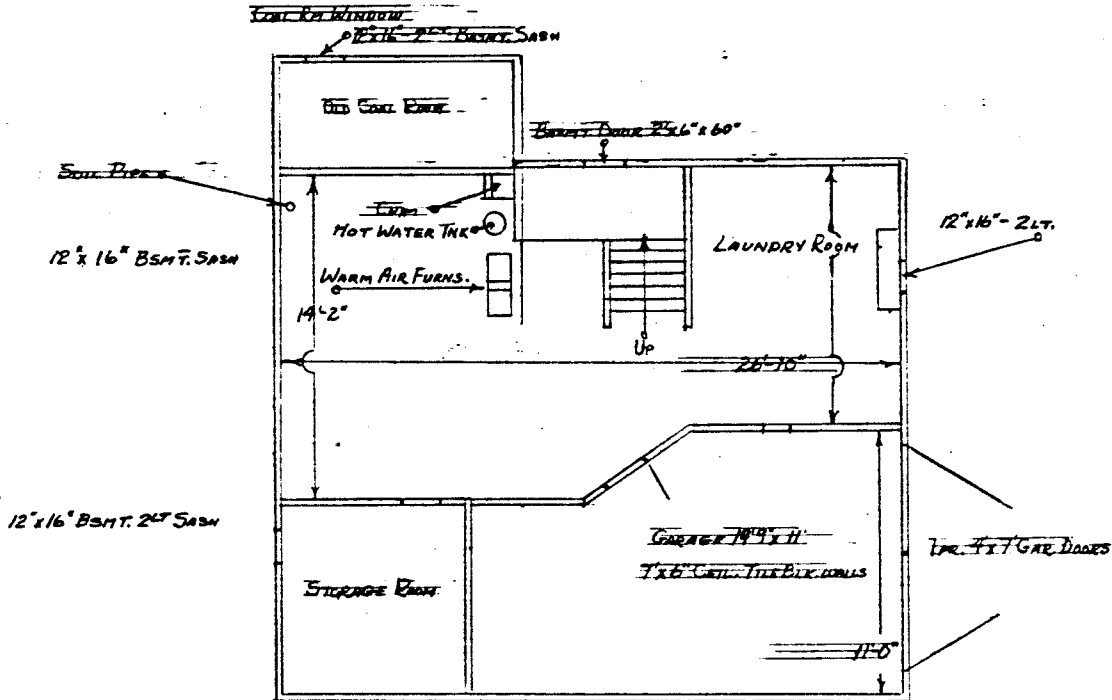




3RD FLOOR PLAN
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DRAWN FOR FOUNDERS FOUNDATION
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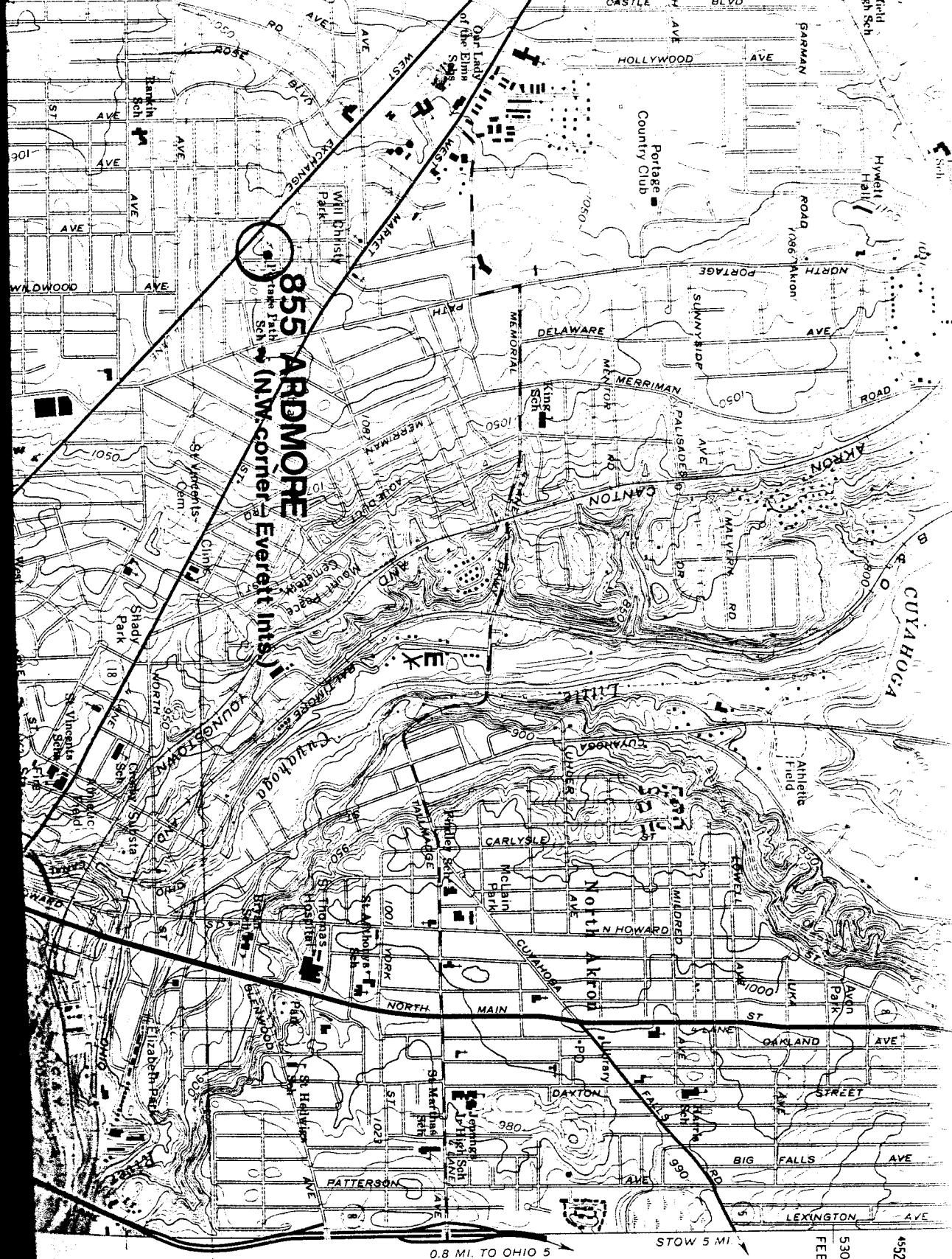




BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN
 ALL CONCRETE FLOORS

DRAWN FOR FOUNDERS FOUNDATION
 BY RAY WINDOWS
 FOR DR. BOB'S HOME 855 ARDMORE AVE.
 AKRON, OHIO





855 ARDMORE
 (NW corner Everett Ints)

Smith, Dr. Robert, House
 Akron, Summit County, Ohio

UTM: 17 453900 4549340