

1203 - 1207 Main Street

At 1203-1207 Main Street there were three single story shotgun houses. Based upon its relative integrity, 1207 was chosen for more in-depth documentation than 1203 and 1205 Main, including a measured floor plan (Figure 3). All three houses appear to have been quite similar, shotgun houses with a side-gable front section, two bay window/door front façade, and another entry half way back along one side. In plan, 1207 was a sort of “telescope” type shotgun, with two increasingly narrow rooms stretching behind the main block of the house. All three houses were constructed at some point in the late 19th century. The houses that are indicated on the 1877 Hopkins City Atlas (Figure 2, left) appear to be smaller, but these may be the core front two rooms of the three documented houses. In Sanborn maps, the earliest depiction of the area is on the 1894 edition with what appear to be the subject properties present. Substantially the same footprints are represented on later Sanborn maps, as in the 1909 edition (Figure 2, right).

City directories confirm that the residents of these houses were working class people. Residents listed in the 1890 Covington City Directories at 1207 Main are John Lind, a stone mason and his son John Lind Jr., a laborer. At 1205 Main, we find John Reuther, a cooper (possibly employed in the nearby brewery on 12th street), and Valentine Reuther, a wire worker; and at 1203 main, Bernard Willen, a machinist.

With their floor plans a single room wide and multiple rooms deep and the narrow end facing the street, these houses conform to the “shotgun” type, but other influences appear to be present. Just as a Northern Kentucky Townhouse echoes a rural, center passage I-house turned sideways, these Northern Kentucky shotgun houses recall double pen, hall/parlor type houses, with extra service rooms extending behind. Much more research remains to be done on this subject, but the formal relationship of these urban house types to those of a rural context is a fascinating aspect of Covington’s built environment. For example, at 1207, the front two rooms are equal in size and share a common central chimney (Figure 3), much like a log saddlebag or frame double-pen house. Each room was furnished with a mantle (Figure 8). Behind these two rooms was a smaller kitchen (Figure 6), and behind that a bathroom. The extensions may have occurred through a process of addition, but evidence for this was not observed, and maps support the existence of at least the kitchen extensions at 1207 as early as 1877 (Figure 2). An interesting feature of the kitchen was that the pantry had a trap door in the floor accessing a stair to the full cellar under the front two rooms (Figure 7). A similar bulkhead entry inside the pantry is a feature also documented at 327 West 12th street.

While the floor plan at 1207 Main (and likely, its neighbors) shows a regard for symmetry for the main portion of the house, this is not true of the front facades (Figure 4), which have an off-center door and window. The front door is largely formal: just as with Northern Kentucky Townhouses that have front doors, principal entry is gained through the side door, at least in current custom. The side entry in some cases is augmented with a covered porch area that would provide some shelter for outdoor work in inclement weather (Figure 5).



Figure 1: 1207-1203 Main Street

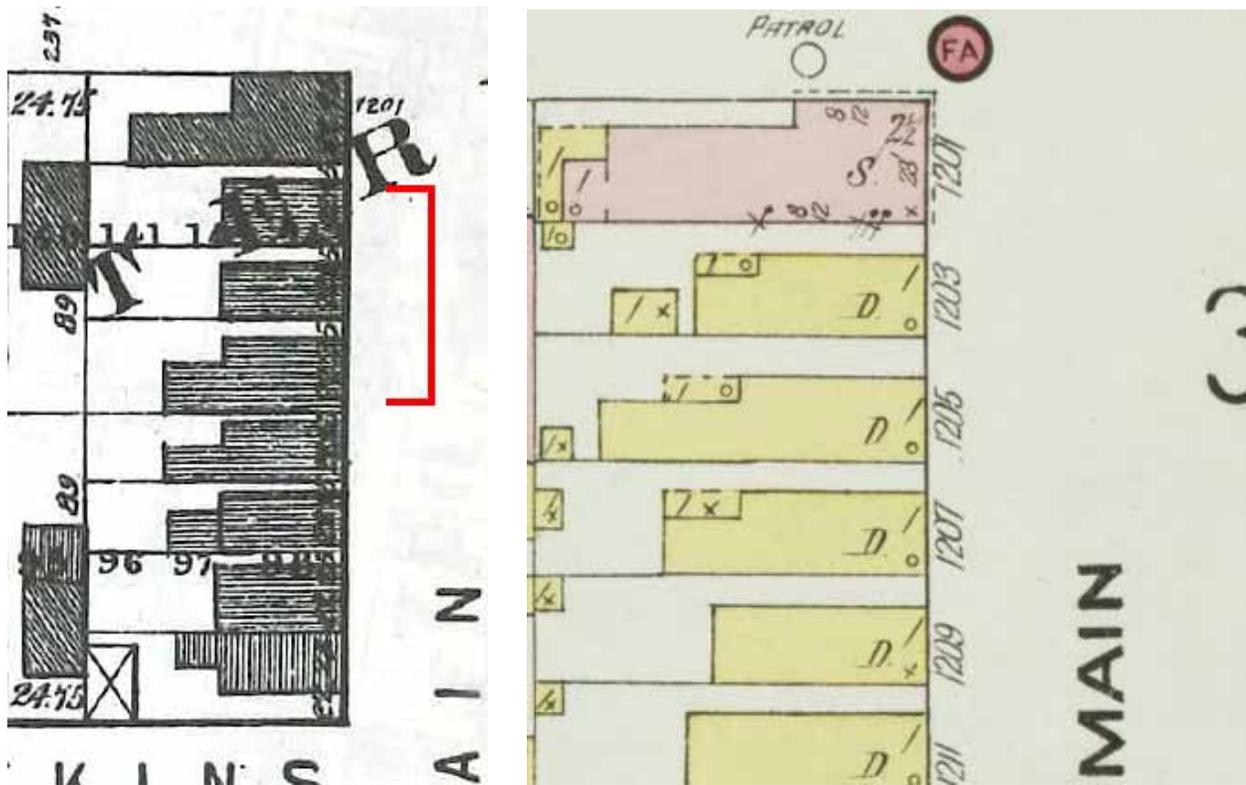


Figure 2: Left, Detail from the 1877 Hopkins' City Atlas of Covington, Kentucky (the red bracket indicates the location of 1203 – 1207 Main Street). Right: the same location as depicted on the 1909 Sanborn Insurance map.

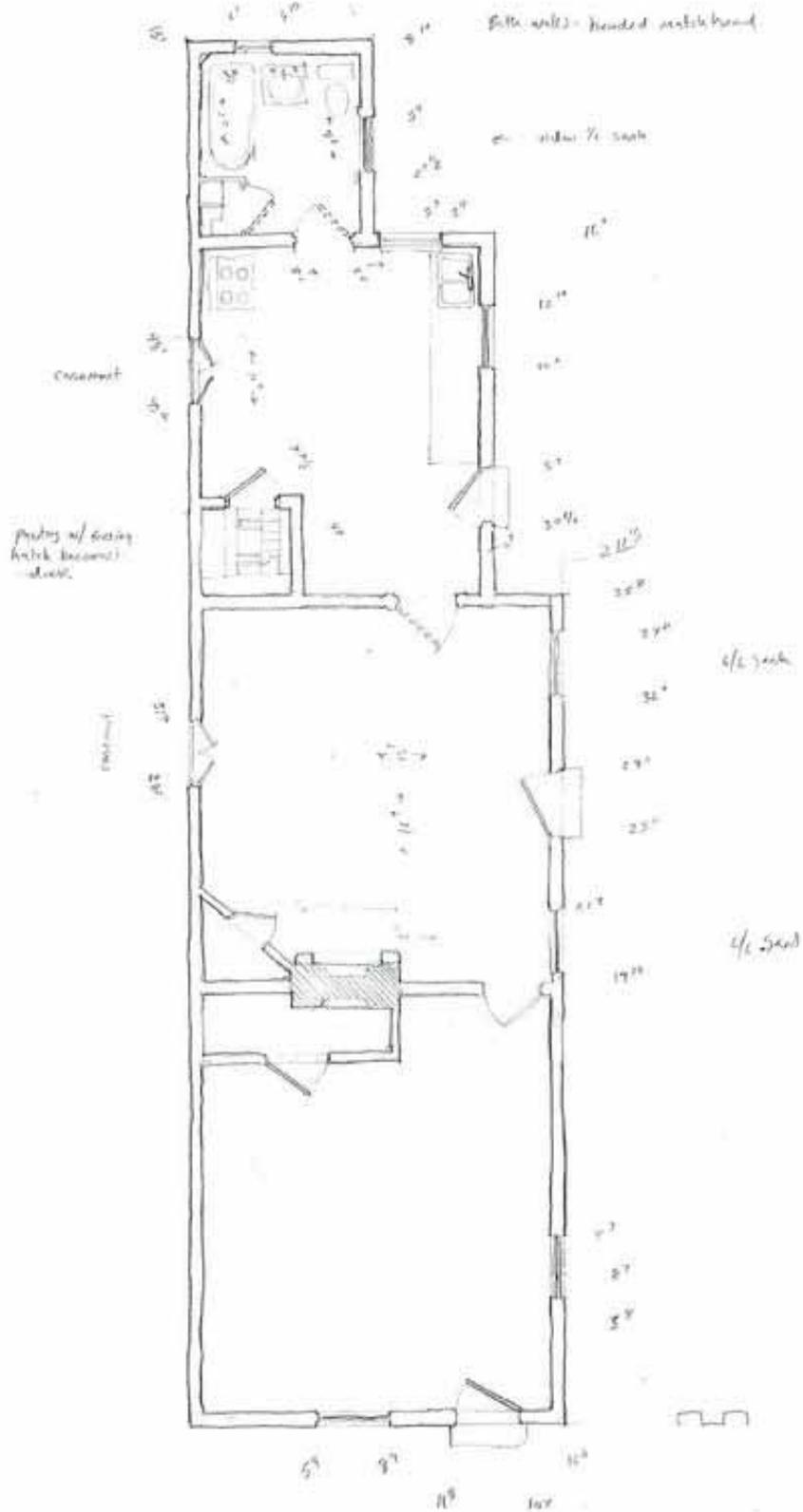


Figure 3: Floor plan of 1207 Main Street. Scale bar is in feet. Measured by Rachel Kennedy and Bill Macintire, drawn by Bill Macintire. 5/17/2006.



Figure 4: *1207 and 1205 Main Street.*



Figure 5: *Covered side porch at 1207 Main Street.*



Figure 6: 1207 Main Street; left: rear ell, right: interior of kitchen looking toward side entry.



Figure 7: 1207 Main Street, interior of basement.



Figure 8: 1207 Main Street, Interior view of second room, with mantle and closet.