



**Figure 1:** *Stitched panorama of the west façade of 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street. The front of the building faced 12<sup>th</sup> Street at the left of this illustration.*

315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street: Ruttle-Schlickman Packing Company; Bluegrass Provisions

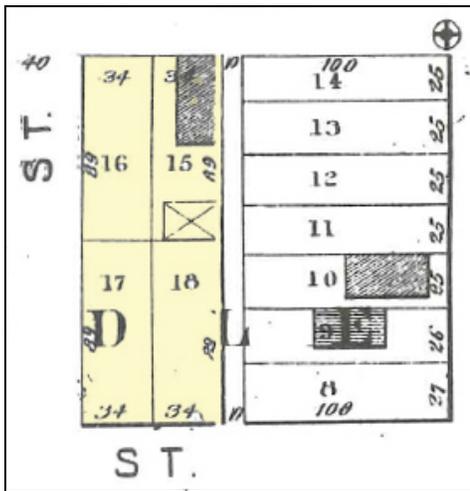
315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street (Figure 1) was a sprawling industrial building that filled the space bordered by Fisk, Watkins, 12th Street, and the unnamed brick alley that bisects the block north to south. The building was a very interesting and lively example of industrial architecture. Its numerous sections from various points in time in various styles and materials reflected a long history. Had it survived, it could have lent itself well to renovation as a gallery, restaurant, residential, or mixed use development. It was a document of over 150 years of the meat-packing and electrical industries in Northern Kentucky. While hazardous conditions in this structure limited our documentation to photography, we have established the basic outline of its complex evolution through analysis of its depiction in Sanborn maps over the years, from a sketch plan found posted at the site, and from the documentation photography.

The earliest depiction of the site available is in the 1877 Hopkins *City Atlas of Covington, Kentucky*, showing a rectangular masonry building its short side facing 12<sup>th</sup> Street. It stood adjacent to the alley, with a frame outbuilding behind, and no other structures on the block west of the alley (Figure 2). The footprint suggests the structure may have been a townhouse much like its neighbors. Some remnants of this house may have remained in the documented structure, but no evidence of that was noted. It is also not entirely clear if the business was run from this location at the time. By the time of the 1886 Sanborn depiction, the older structure on the 1877 map appears to have been enlarged to cover the whole front of the block, although it may have been demolished to create the larger structure. The property is now labeled “D. Ruttle and Co.’s Pork House” (Figure 3, left). The Ruttle’s meat company has a brief entry in the *Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*. Daniel Ruttle founded the business in 1859:

...and in 1862 that company became the Ruttle-Schlickman Company. Its plant was on W. 12<sup>th</sup> St., and it gained a national reputation for its quality pork products. In 1885, Ruttle’s retail operation at Seventh and Madison Ave. burned, and by 1902 both Ruttle and Schlickman were dead. In 1904 the company went bankrupt, and the business was assigned to John Osterholt by the Kenton County Fiscal Court.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Meatpacking,” p. 609, from *The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky in partnership with NKY.com*. Edited by Paul A. Tenkotte and James C. Claypool, The University Press of Kentucky. Republished for the World Wide Web by NKY.com and Enquirer Media. A Project of the Thomas D. Clark Foundation, Inc.



**Figure 2:** Detail of the property (shaded area) from the 1877 Hopkins' City Atlas of Covington, Kentucky. Twelfth Street is at the top of the figure.

The next depiction, on the 1894 Sanborn map, shows that the business had expanded with additions covering roughly 2/3 of the block, and the business is now labeled the “D. Ruttle and Co. Pork & Beef Packers” (Figure 3, right). A second brick addition is shown joined to the original structure by a frame hyphen containing a hog pen and lard rendering facilities (Figure 3, right). The two story brick addition contained new masonry smokehouses, and the front part of the structure was divided between sales and pickling on the first floor, and slaughtering and sausage making on the second floor. Around this same period, the 1890 and 1892 Covington City Directories list the business at 153-159 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street (the same location - the address was later changed to 315 West 12<sup>th</sup>) as the Ruttle-Schlickman Packing Company, with Daniel Ruttle as the president of the company.<sup>2</sup>

Little appears to have changed structurally by the time of the 1909 Sanborn map, except that an office is delineated on the northwest corner, but the association with D. Ruttle and Company has been dropped: the structure is now labeled “To Be Packing House,” suggesting that it was still vacant at that time following the bankruptcy of the Ruttle-Schlickman Company in 1904 (Figure 4, left).

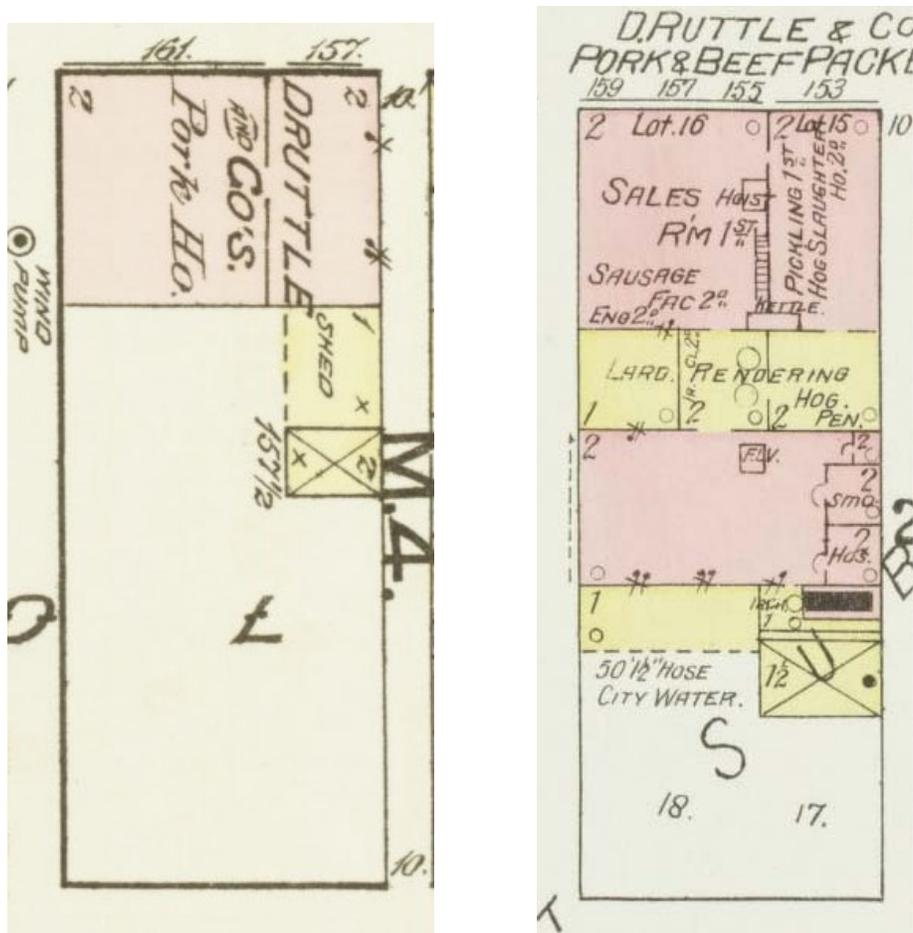
The next Sanborn depiction available is 1945, by which time the building had been extended all the way to the back of the block on Watkins Street with the addition of a loading dock, a locker room, a boiler room and coal storage. It was owned by the Blue Grass Provision Company, another meat packing concern (Figure 4, right). During the tenure of Blue Grass Provision Company, the front end of the building was remodeled as well, the façade clad in Art Deco style with orange brick, concrete tile, metal casement windows, and glass blocks (Figure 9). The office was moved to the northeast corner of the building. The company name was identified by a carved sign above the front entry (Figure 16).

This mid-twentieth century renovation to the front of the building included handsome new office spaces at the North East corner (Figure 18 – 23). The offices included a reception area, two small private offices, a large main office and conference room, a walk-in safe, and restrooms. The interiors of the new offices were lined with a yellow beige glazed tile surfaces and lit at the front by glass block windows. A third of front part of the building was taken up by a large loading dock area accessed through a corrugated metal overhead door (Figure 9, Figure 25, & Figure 26).

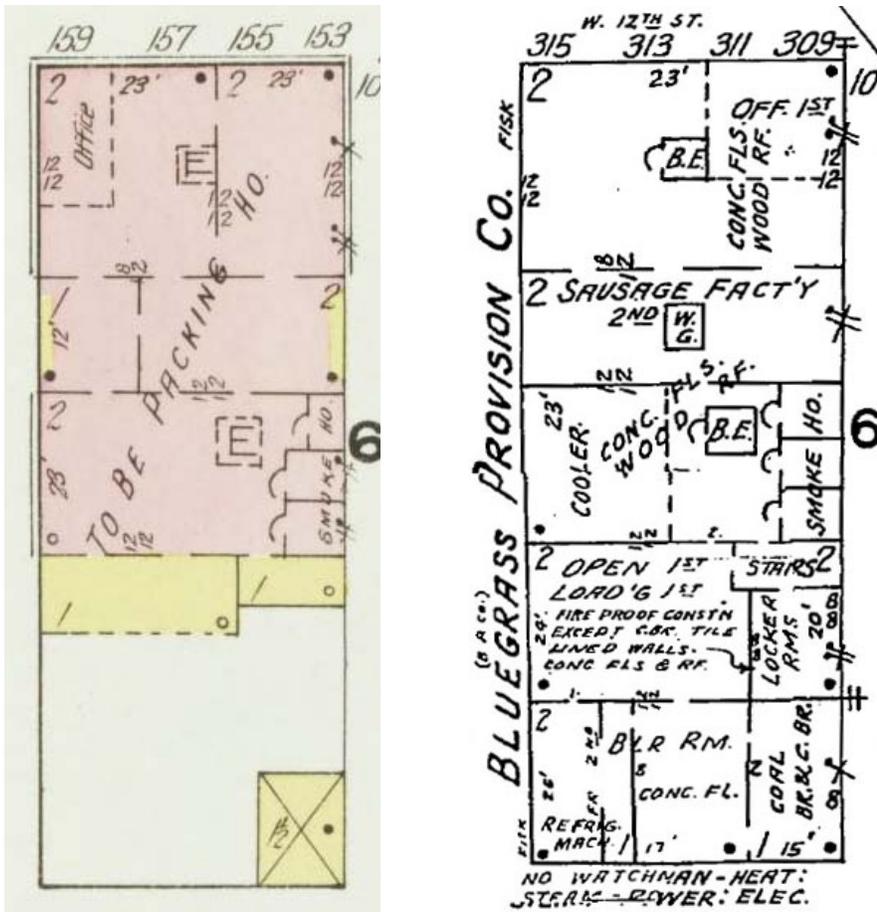
<sup>2</sup> Ancestry.com. *Covington, Kentucky Directories, 1890, 1892* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: The Generations Network, Inc., 2000.

It's not clear when the Blue Grass Provision Company sold the building, but by the time of our documentation, the building had for some time been occupied by Oberjohn's OEM Electric, builders of starters, alternators, and generators. The layout of the building remained roughly the same, but it was now used for engine building. The meat packing facility turned out to be quite adaptable for metal grinding. Where hogs were once rendered, workers now assembled engine parts. Floor plans that document the structure's use as an engine parts company were found posted on a billboard at the site (Figure 5 - Figure 8). The first floor plan (Figure 5), corresponds closely with the late Sanborn footprint of 1945 (Figure 4, right). The elevators are both marked in the same location; the smokehouses had been adapted for parts storage (Figure 37), and the general room arrangement was roughly the same as it was in the meat production period. The building also had a full second floor consisting of several work and storage rooms (Figure 6), and three levels of basement beneath the first floor, with more storage and a boiler room (Figure 7 - Figure 8).

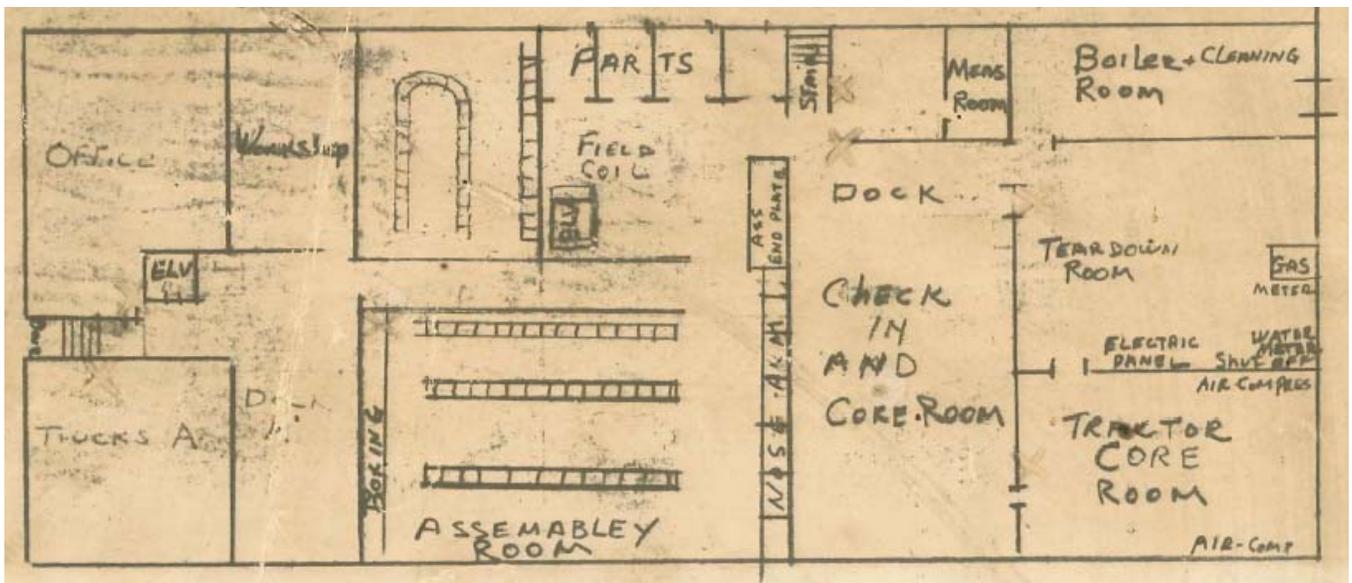
The Ruttle's Meat Packing/Blue Grass Provisions/Oberjohn's Electric building was a fascinating resource, a conglomeration of elements that evolved and changed over time, but which cohered into a successful architectural statement. It reflected over a century of hard work in the meat-packing and subsequently motor parts industries in Covington, and changing work practices over that period of time. Together with the still partially extant Planing Mill operation next door at 321 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, it formed a small industrial zone that had great potential for adaptive reuse. Further description of the facility is found in the captions to the figures below.



**Figure 3:** Sanborn map illustrations of 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> street. 1886, left, 1894 right. The 12<sup>th</sup> Street side of the building is at the top of the figures.



**Figure 4:** Sanborn Map illustrations of 321 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, 1909, left, and 1945, right. The 1959 update of the map included no further changes. The 12<sup>th</sup> Street side of the building is at the top of the figures.



**Figure 5:** First Floor Plan of 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, from drawing found on site. The 12<sup>th</sup> Street side of the building is at the left of the figure.

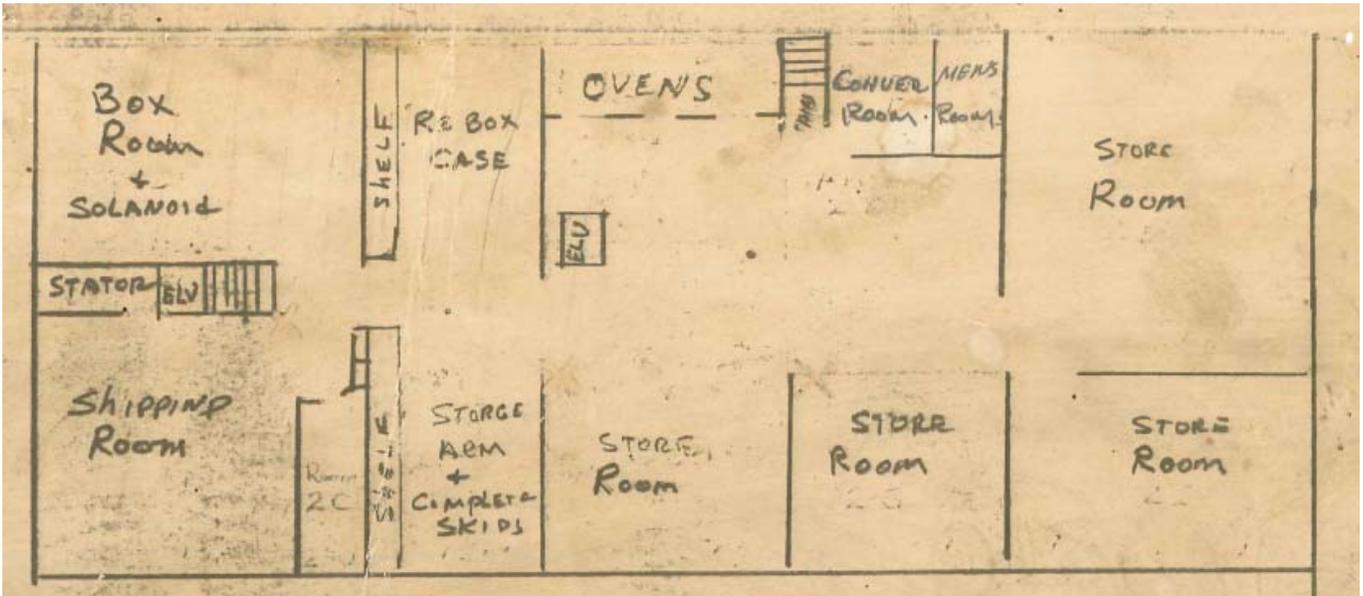


Figure 6: Second Floor Plan of 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, from drawing found on site. The 12<sup>th</sup> Street side of the building is at the left of the figure.

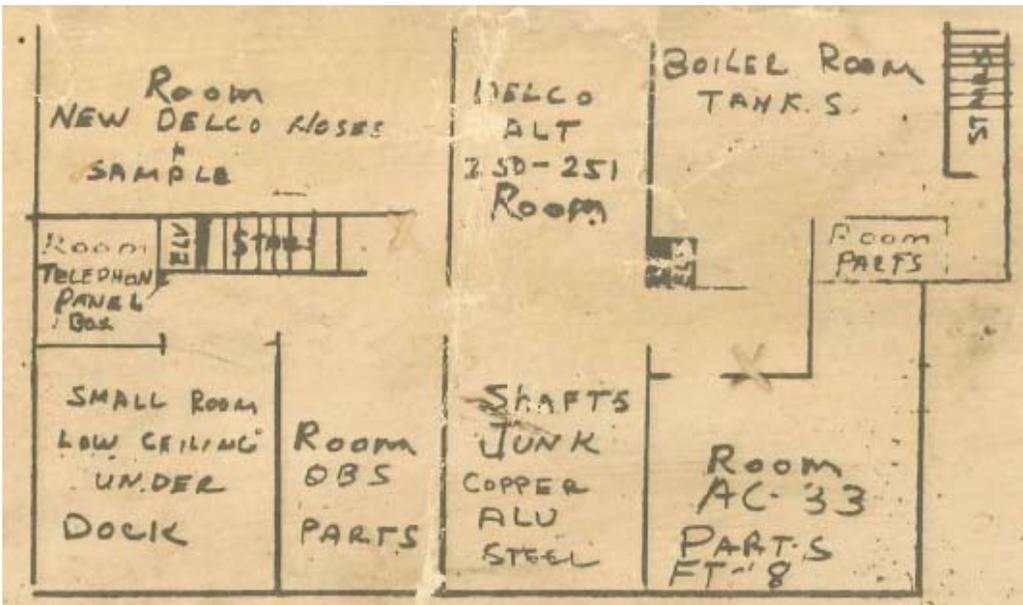
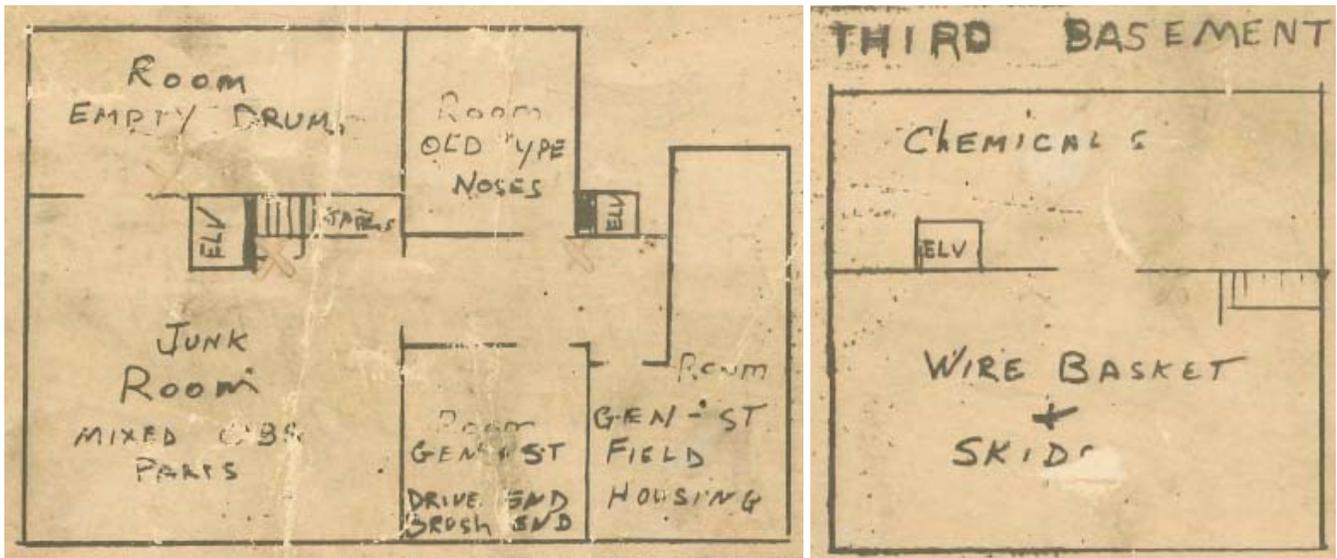


Figure 7: "First Basement" plan of 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street. The 12<sup>th</sup> Street side of the building is at the left of the figure.



**Figure 8:** “Second Basement” and “Third Basement” plans of 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> street. The 12<sup>th</sup> Street side of the building is at the left of the figure. These areas were too dark and inaccessible to document..



**Figure 9:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, front façade facing 12<sup>th</sup>. Offices are to the left, loading dock to the right.



**Figure 10:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, from northeast.



**Figure 11:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street from east. The stepped roofline reflects different periods of addition.



**Figure 12:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, from East, alley side of the building.



**Figure 13:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street from Northwest. Fisk Street is the cross street to the right.



**Figure 14:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Northwest corner with side loading dock on Fisk Street.



**Figure 15:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Southwest corner at Fisk and Watkins Streets.



**Figure 16:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> St., Front door of Blue Grass Provision Company, with later hanging OEM sign.



**Figure 17:** Oberjohn OEM Electric, Inc company. sign hanging from the front of the building



**Figure 18:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, first floor, front office reception area.



**Figure 19:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, first floor, center office.



**Figure 20:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, first floor, main office & conference room.



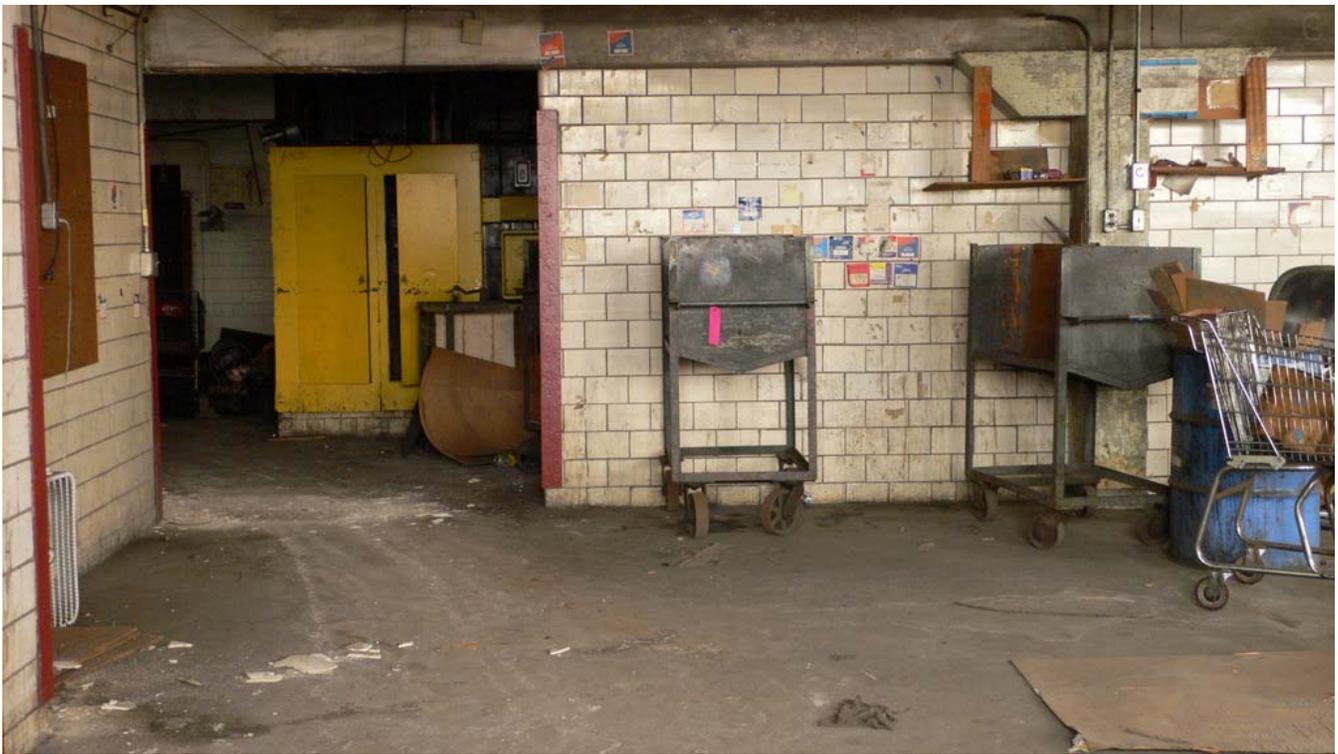
**Figure 21:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, first floor, main office, looking toward rest room and safe.



**Figure 22:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, first floor, middle office interior



**Figure 23:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, first floor. Left: middle office interior looking into hall, right: bathroom interior.



**Figure 24:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, second floor interior, marked "Shipping Room" on the plan in Figure 6



**Figure 25:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, first floor, loading dock area in front section of the building, marked “Trucks A” in Figure 5.



**Figure 26:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, first floor, loading dock, looking toward front garage door.



**Figure 27:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Second floor, front room, marked “Shipping Room” in Figure 6.



**Figure 28:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, back wall of the loading dock area.



**Figure 29:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, first floor area marked “Workshop” in Figure 5.



**Figure 30:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, ashtray in the “workshop” area. The work conditions appear to have been potentially hazardous, with exposure to solvents and fine metallic dust, as well as open smoking in some areas.



**Figure 31:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street



**Figure 32:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, second floor, area labeled “Box Room and Solanoid” in **Figure 6**.



**Figure 33:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, area labeled “Box Room and Solanoid” in Figure 6.



**Figure 34:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, area labeled “Box Room and Solanoid” in Figure 6.



**Figure 35:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, second floor, small room at center front, labeled “Stator” on plan in Figure 6.



**Figure 36:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, second floor, back wall of “shipping room” in Figure 6.



**Figure 37:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, storage rooms – these are in the location labeled smoke houses on the Sanborn maps, and as “parts” in Figure 5



**Figure 38:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, first floor, looing back toward the “dock” and “Check in and Core-Room” in Figure 5.



**Figure 39:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, first floor, “Check in and Core-Room” in Figure 5.



**Figure 40:** 315 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, First floor, looking down into the area marked “Boiler & Cleaning Room” in *Figure 5*.