

411 West 12th Street (formerly 197 West 12th)

411 West 12th Street was a frame Italianate, two and half story Northern Kentucky Townhouse (Figure 1). The front façade was two bays wide with 1/1 and 2/2 sash windows (possibly early replacements, as the side gable had a 6/6 window (Figure 5)). The side-gable front section was capped with an ornate bracketed cornice pierced by two narrow windows. The principal hearth was vented by a chimney on the west side of the building. Behind this front section ran a two story, two-room ell with a center chimney, its gable perpendicular to the front section. The exterior was clad with a mid-twentieth century artificial siding of brick-patterned asphalt over the original weatherboards

The house appears to have had 2 major periods of construction, resulting in an unusual variation of the Northern Kentucky Townhouse plan, toward which it evolved from its original two-room configuration. Although it was not at first apparent in the field that the house was of more than one period (it had consistent trim style and no readily apparent seams), historic maps show a smaller footprint for the structure in 1877 and 1886, but then a larger footprint in 1894 (Figure 2).¹ This suggests that the house was enlarged circa 1890 by adding the side gable section to the front of the existing building rather than by the original structure being demolished and replaced. Consider this with what is known of the house's residents: the 1890 Covington City Directory lists George Niehaus, a stone cutter, and John W. Rekers, a carpenter, living at this address, along with Emma Niehaus, probably George's wife. In the 1892 City Directory, the residents have all changed: we have William Brunen (a tinner), Frances Brunen, and J. Conrad Gerde (a tailor).² Conceivably, Niehaus and Rekers enlarged the house, sold it, and then moved out soon thereafter. The front section of the building had an attractive cut stone foundation (Figure 4), suggesting the possible involvement of Niehaus, the stone cutter in its construction.

If this scenario is correct, the house began as a one or two story, two room plan town house set back some distance from the street, almost as if the later addition was planned from the beginning. This was essentially a center chimney hall/parlor or double-pen plan house oriented with one end facing the street. In its final form the house had an exterior back stair – it's not clear if this stair existed in this location prior to the addition of the front section of the house, or if the stair location was moved in the process of enlargement (refer to the floor plan in Figure 3). If the back stair was original, the original house may have been a duplex with different apartments on each floor, which is consistent with the city Directory evidence mentioned above.

The addition allowed the house to blend in with the style of its neighbors and featured a handsome bracketed cornice pierced by narrow windows to light the garret space. The newer front section was single room, two and a half story, side passage plan, adding a stair hall to the house, a formal front room on the ground floor, and a chamber and attic spaces above. An interesting pattern of circulation was created with an enclosed passage behind the stair hall underneath the landing and between the front and middle rooms of the ground floor (Figure 10). Thus, one could either circulate through the stair hall or behind it beneath the stair, while the second floor could be accessed either through the front door to the main stair or by the back stair via the exterior entry. As the city directory evidence suggests, the house continued to serve as a duplex for some time, so these patterns of circulation served the needs of unrelated people sharing the

¹ It's also interesting that the historic maps prior to 1894 also show a small dwelling at the back of the lot with the address of 197 ½. Similar dwellings are documented at several of the neighboring houses. The backyard dwellings of Covington must have been an interesting social situation, but most of them appear to have been cleared in the 1890s.

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

same house. The cellar could be accessed either through narrow entrance beneath the front stair or from a bulkhead located below one of the middle room windows (at “A” in the floor plan, Figure 3).

When documented, the house had a small kitchen and bath in the back room (Figure 18).



Figure 1: 411 West 12th Street, center left.

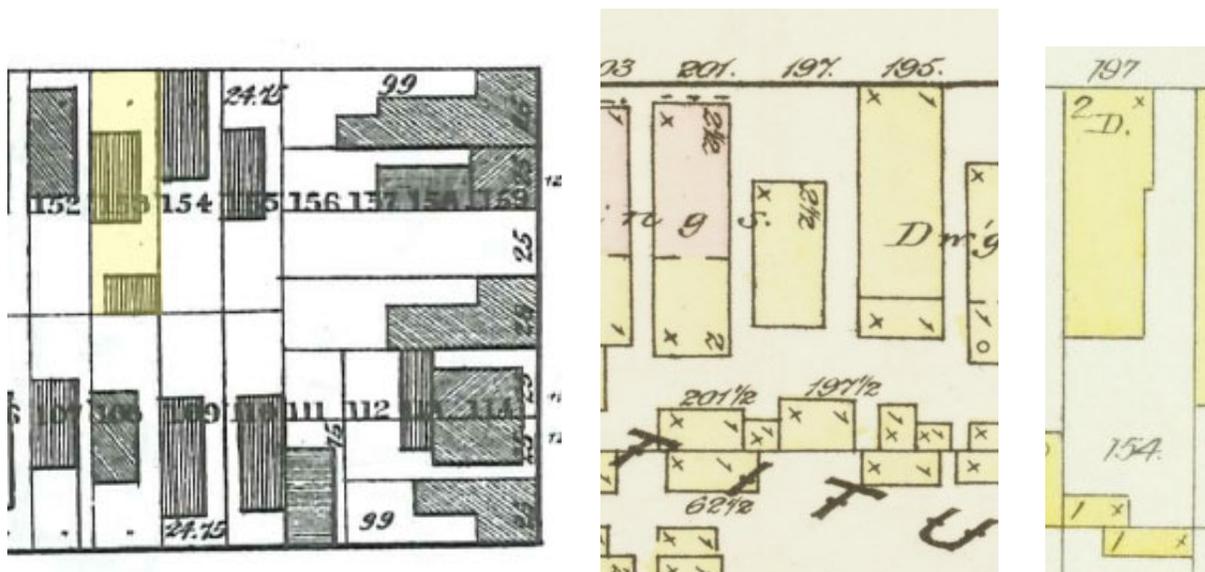


Figure 2: Left: Detail from Hopkins 1877 Atlas – 411 West 12th Street at that time had the address of 153 West 12th. Center: Detail of the 1886 Sanborn map, with 411 West 12th now with the street address of # 197. Right: Detail of the property as depicted on the 1894 Sanborn map, showing the building enlarged in size (compare with the floor plan, Figure 3 –note that the top of the map corresponds to the bottom of the floor plan). By 1894, the structure at the back of the property earlier identified with an address at 197 ½ has apparently been removed.

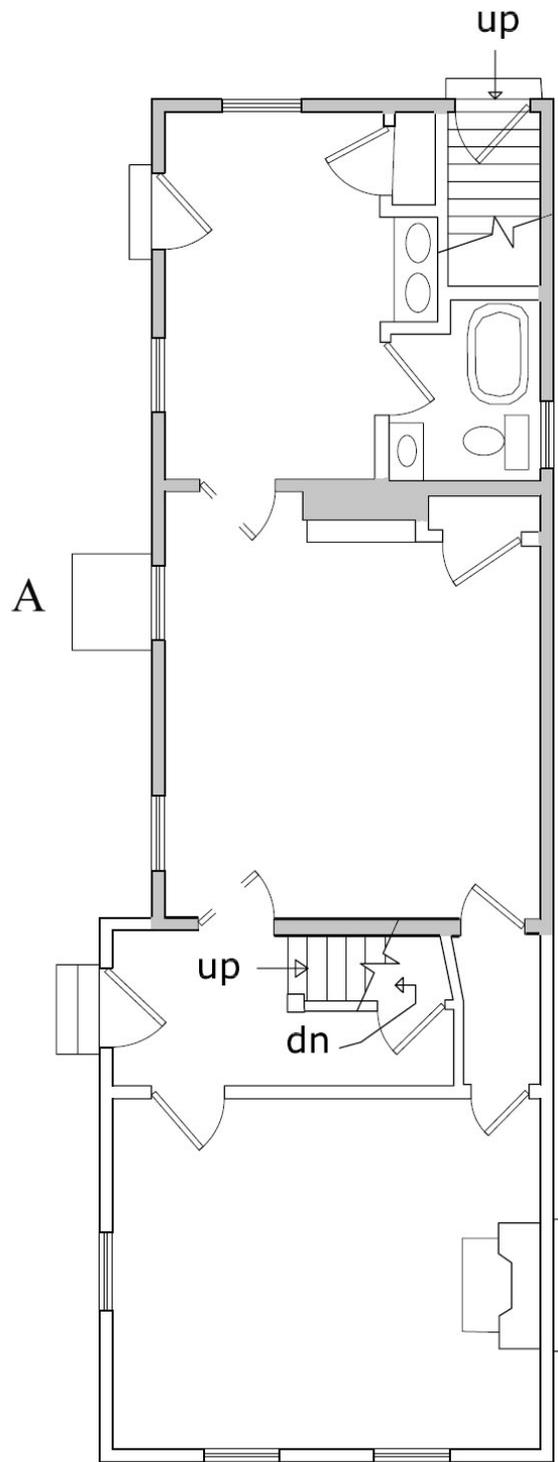


Figure 3: Floor plan of 411 West 12th Street, Drawn by Danielle Jamieson, measured by Bill Macintire. Scale in feet. “A” indicates the location of a bulkhead entry to the cellar. The grayed walls indicate the first period structure.

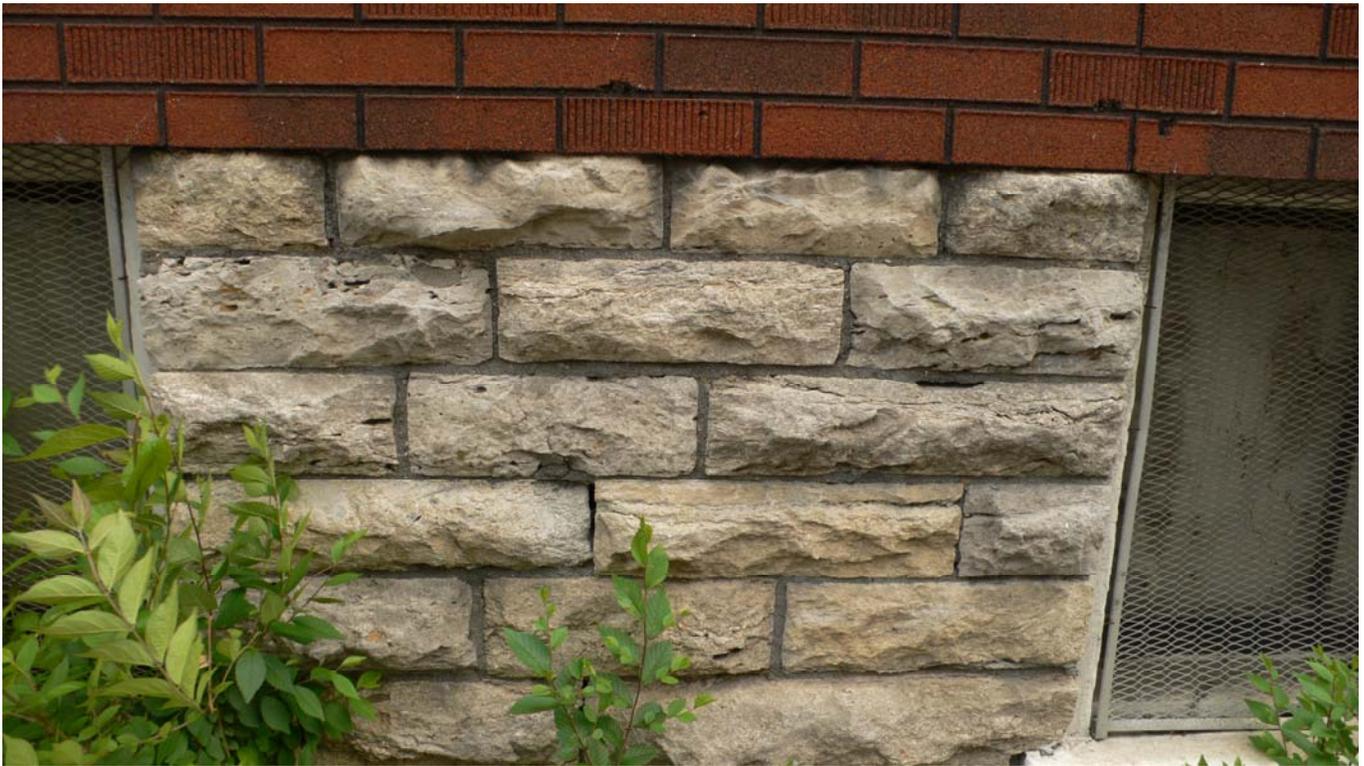


Figure 4: *Detail of stone foundation of the front section of 411 West 12th Street.*



Figure 5: *411 West 12th Street, right, detail of side gable and cornice.*



Figure 6: 411 West 12th street, back of structure from South.



Figure 7: 411 West 12th Street, front windows.



Figure 8: Streetscape, From right to left, 415, 413, and 411 West 12th Street.

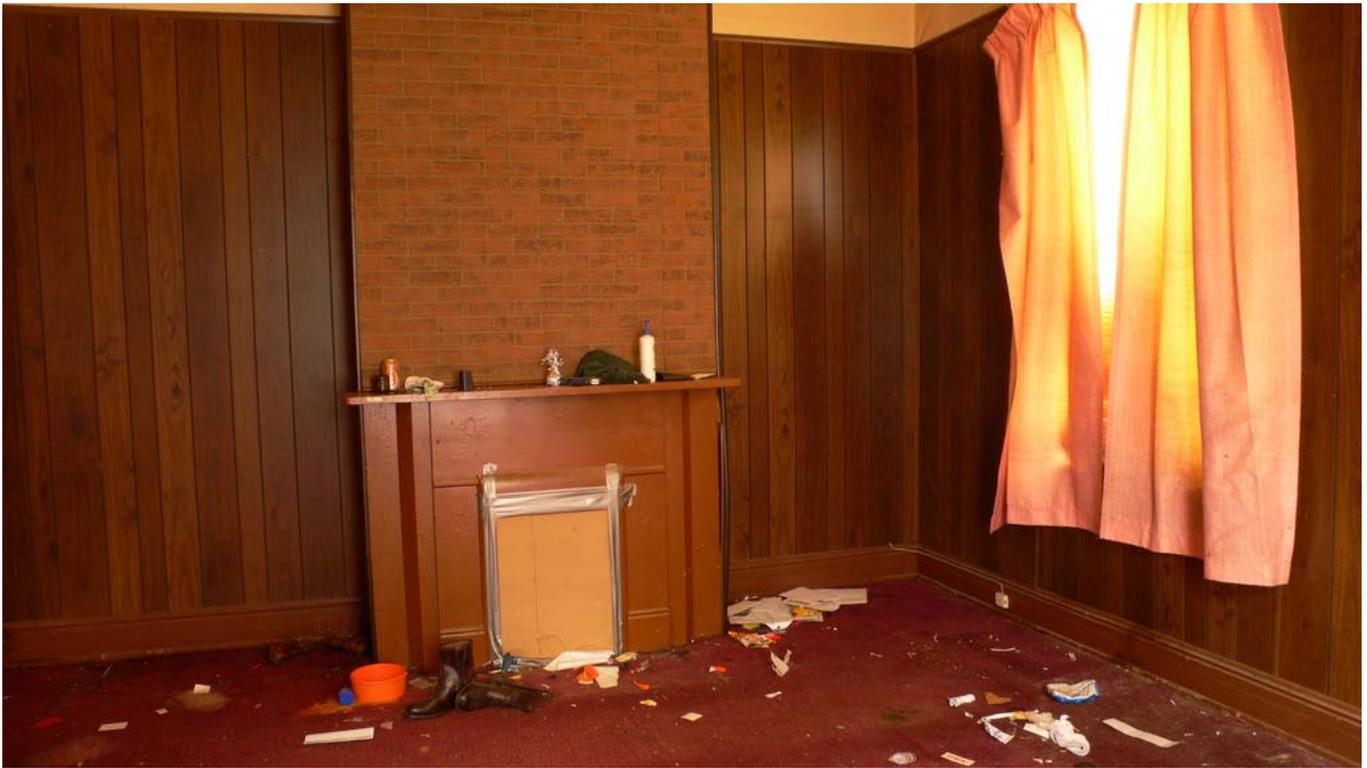


Figure 9: 411 West 12th Street, first floor front room, hearth wall.

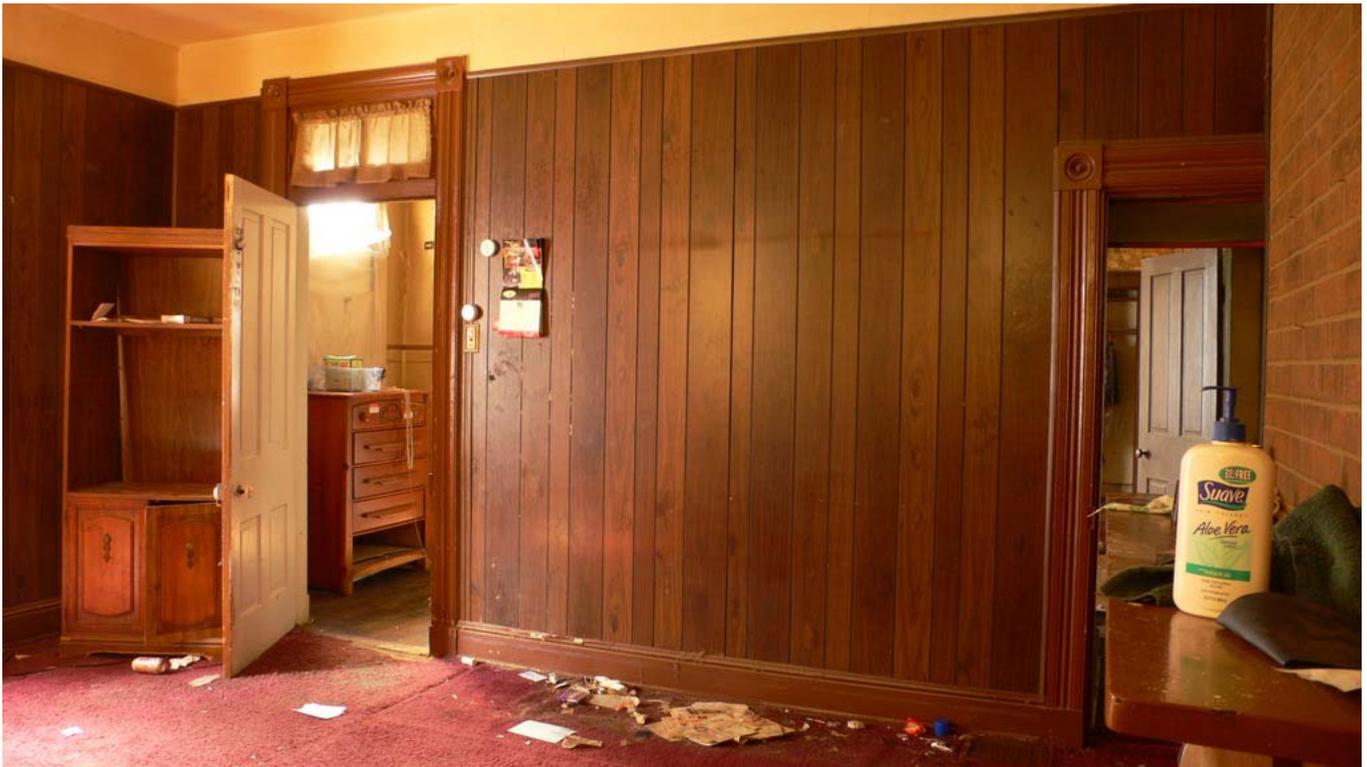


Figure 10: 411 West 12th Street, front room looking toward the back of the house. The passage behind the stair is visible to the right.

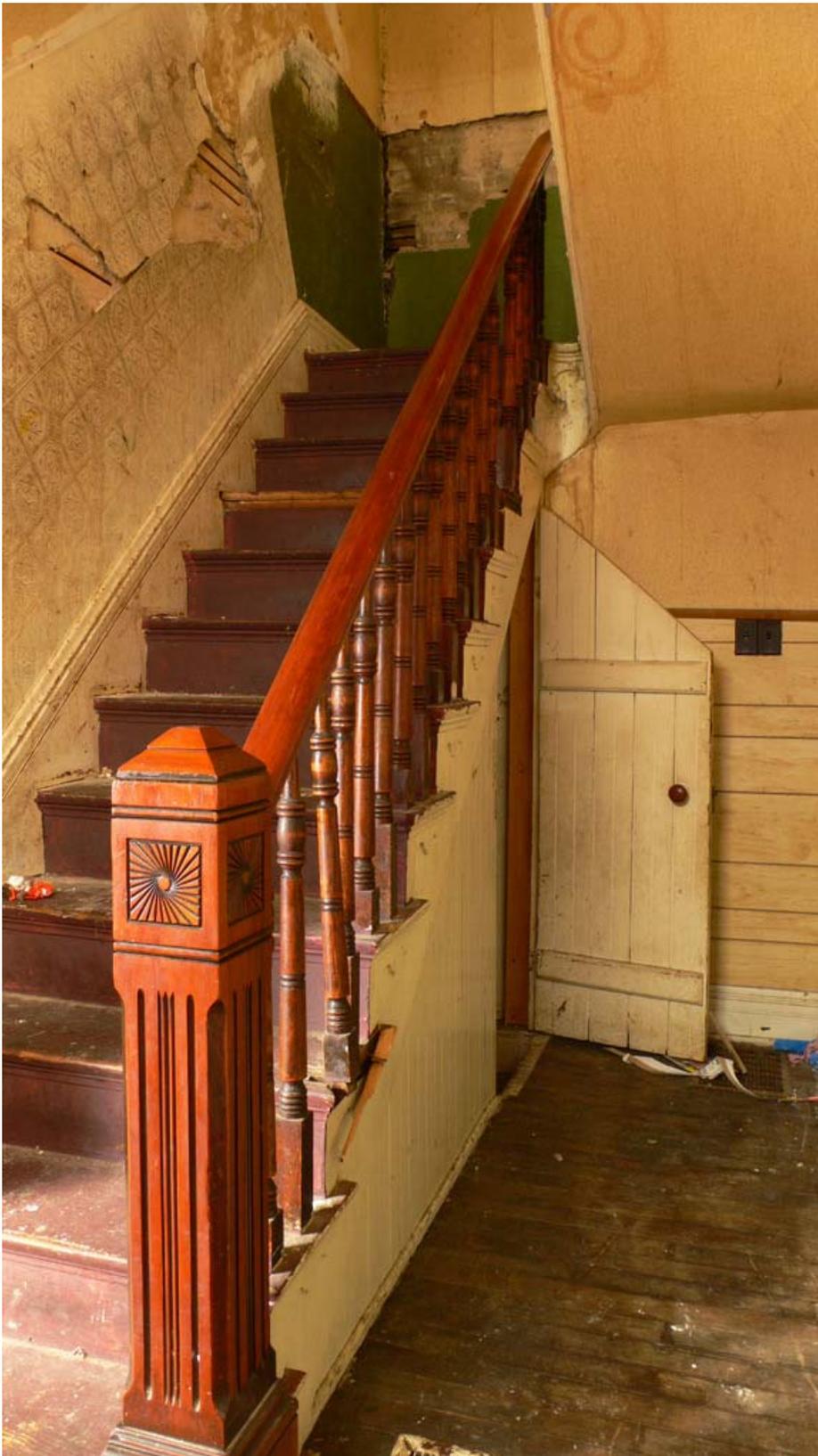


Figure 11: 411 West 12 Street, Stair Hall. *The open door at the back leads to a cellar stair.*



Figure 12: 411 west 12th Street, ground floor middle room interior, looking north toward the stair hall.



Figure 13: 411 west 12th Street, ground floor middle room interior, looking south toward the kitchen.



Figure 14: 411 West 12th street, interior of first floor kitchen looking north toward the front of the building.



Figure 15: 411 West 12th street, mantle in second floor front room.



Figure 16: 411 West 12th street, kitchen interior, second floor back room.



Figure 17: 411 West 12th Street, Detail of rafter framing.



Figure 18: 411 West 12th Street, kitchen interior, first floor back room.



Figure 19: 411 West 12th Street, upstairs back room looking toward stair corridor.