

Documentation of Historic Structures on Twelfth Street, Covington



By

Bill Macintire

Fieldwork: Amanda Abner, Sarah Briland, Janie-Rice Brother, Danielle Jamieson, Rachel Kennedy, Bill Macintire, Mike Spencer and Rebecca Horn Turner

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Figure 1: *The 500 Block of West 12th Street, looking south in 2006.*

The Covington 12th Street project documents historic buildings that were demolished, or in a few cases moved, in the redevelopment of the 12th Street corridor. That project involved the demolition of over 40 buildings on the South side of 12th Street, between Interstate 75 and Scott Street. Many of the buildings were contributing properties in two districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP): East Lewisburg and Hellentown. As part of an effort to mitigate the loss of these historic properties, the Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office (KHC), in cooperation with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, documented 33 of the buildings with photographs and floor plans prior to their demolition.

The loss of these buildings was a tough one for historic preservation. It was a landscape of high quality, high integrity, and of major historic significance. This report is an attempt to preserve some memory of what was lost. It is an incomplete picture: depending on condition, significance, access, scheduling, and safety issues, some of the structures were analyzed in greater depth than others. In fact there were several we would like to have examined in greater depth.

This project was made possible with the assistance of many people at the Kentucky Heritage Council, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, and the University of Kentucky, including Amanda Abner, Sarah Briland, Janie-Rice Brother, Diane Comer, Danielle Jamieson, Rachel Kennedy, Phil Logsdon, Bill Macintire, David L. Morgan, Danae Peckler, Craig Potts, Mike Spencer, Yvonne Sherrick, Roger Stapleton, Rebecca Horn Turner, David Waldner, and Dan White.

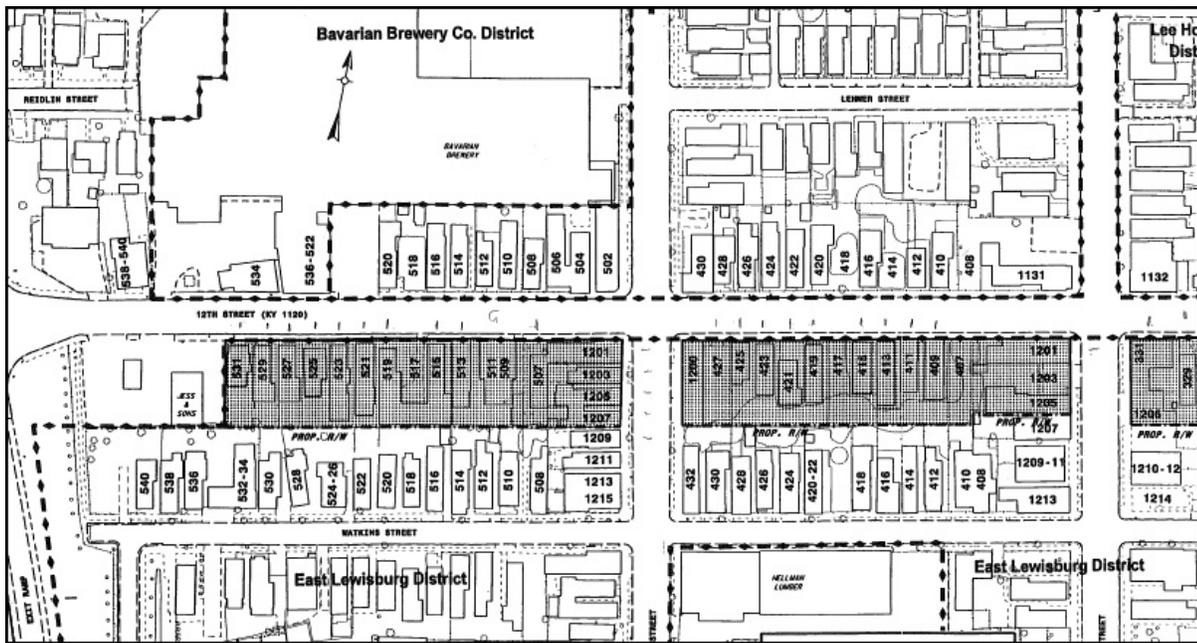


Figure 2: The 400 and 500 blocks of West 12th street, from “Effects of Alternate D, E, & F on Historic Resources,” in *Addendum to Cultural/Historical Baseline for KY 1120 Improvement Study, 12th Street Corridor, Covington*. The area in darker grey was taken for the expansion of the 12th Street corridor (report prepared for the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet by Helen Powell for H.W. Lochner Co, Lexington, 1997; copy on file at Kentucky Heritage Council).

Introduction

The construction of 12th Street began in the early 1840s when city officials began annexing farmland south and east of the city for future development. Covington’s population grew quickly in the following decades as an influx of predominantly German, Irish, and Welsh immigrants found work in the city’s growing industrial sector and trade professions, taking up residence in its newly-developed suburbs.

Mid-19th century transportation improvements such as the completion of the Lexington & Covington Railroad (later known as Kentucky Central) in 1853, the opening of Roebling’s Cincinnati-Covington suspension bridge in 1867, and the advent of horse-drawn railway service to and from Cincinnati furthered the city’s development. The Railroad particularly affected the 12th Street corridor where the Kentucky Central line came into the city along Washington Street, establishing the axis by which 12th Street is divided into East and West.

The architecture of 12th Street reflects its history as an area comprised largely of single and multi-family dwellings and light commercial use for more than a century. Specialty stores, including barbers, bakers, and grocers, were commonly found on street corners and clustered around communal structures and busy intersections. A few industrial operations, such as a brewery, lumber yard, meat packing facility, and a coat factory, existed along 12th Street and supplied jobs to area residents in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Small backyard commercial structures such as shops were common features. Two Catholic churches, St. Joseph’s (c.1859) and St. Mary’s Cathedral (c.1875), provided spiritual and educational services to the local populace. In 1872, a public institution, Covington High School, was erected on the north corner of Russell and 12th Streets.

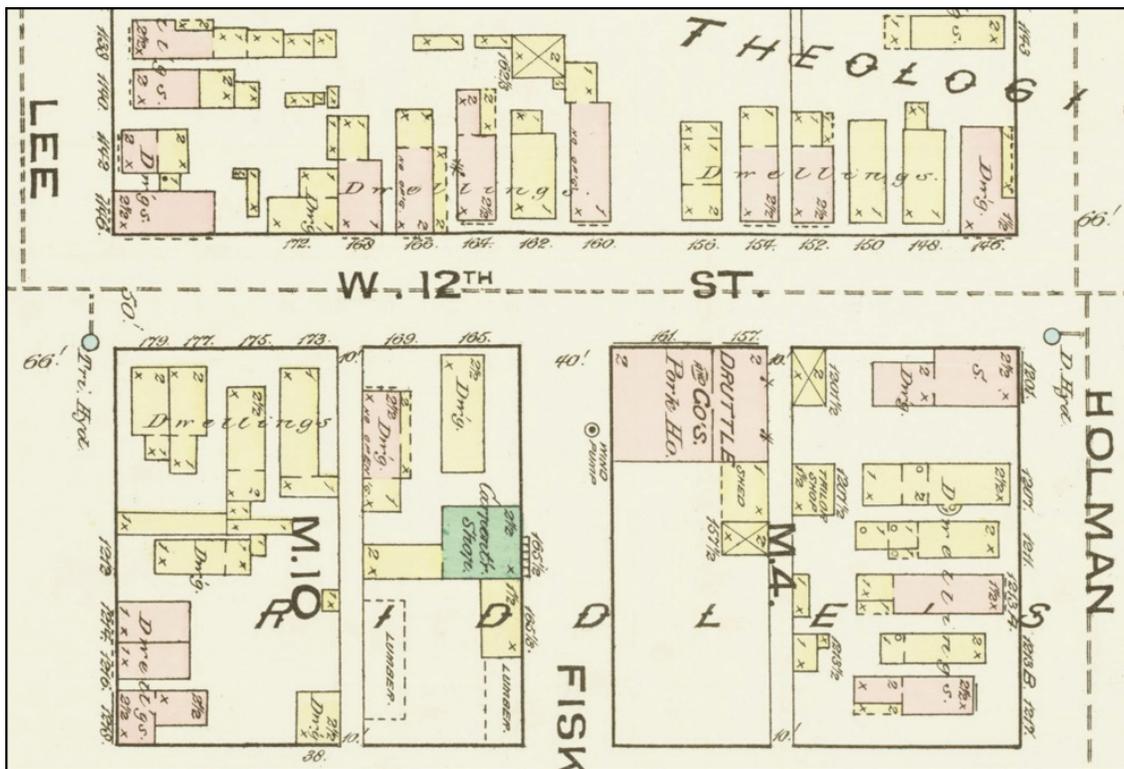


Figure 3: The (now) 300 block of West 12th Street in 1886. Dwellings predominate, but they are intermingled here with a lumber yard & carpentry shop, a meat packing house, a tailor's shop, and numerous outbuildings and rear additions that probably included stables, chicken houses, privies, kitchens, washhouses, and various types of workshops. Top of the image is north. Masonry buildings are indicated in red, frame in yellow, "special frame" in green. (New York: Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, 1886)

Much of the street's built environment originated in the mid- to late 19th century, but early 20th century infill was fairly common. Despite the heavy concentration of European immigrants in this area, the buildings along 12th Street employed predominantly American, vernacular design traditions that collectively created a dense, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented, urban environment typical of American cities in that time period. The architecture of 12th Street evolved throughout the 1900s, as property owners made minor repairs, replaced materials, demolished some buildings (outbuildings in particular), and renovated and added on to the existing ones. A few prime corners were cleared for convenience marts and fast food.

In the 1970s, Covington saw a dramatic population loss that left many of its buildings vacant and neglected. A renewed interest in urban living and economic development, beginning in the 1980s and continuing into the 21st century, has once again brought a wide variety of people into the city. Exhibiting a diverse ethnic heritage, middle and working class cultures, vernacular architecture, and a walkable urban environment, dating back to the mid-19th century, Covington's 12th Street corridor has contributed to the city's larger identity, while remaining undeniably distinct – a legacy that continues to enrich its redevelopment today.

12th Street Buildings

Historic buildings in the project area were predominantly dwellings or combined commercial/domestic buildings of the mid 19th to the early 20th century, in styles narrowly ranging from Italianate to Dutch Colonial revival. Houses in the field often resist easy categorization into defined forms, but broadly speaking, two major house types constituted the majority of the dwellings in the project area. These are the Shotgun House and the Northern Kentucky Townhouse. The shotgun is a well-known vernacular house type, typically urban, but also

often a rural dwelling, one room wide, one story tall, and several rooms deep, with the principal entry on the front, narrow, gable end. Shotgun (often in locally distinctive variants such as the Louisville Camelback) are found in very large numbers in many American cities, particularly those along the Mississippi and its tributaries such as the Ohio and Missouri Rivers, cities like New Orleans, St. Louis, Cairo, Louisville, and to a lesser extent, Covington, more or less the path that the house type followed inland. John Vlach's study of the shotgun house traces its association back to African roots back from New Orleans to places such as Haiti.¹ Shotgun houses have historic associations with slavery and tenant farming in the deeper south, while in the urban environment of cities such as Covington, it is primarily the dwelling of workers and trades people, both tenants and owners.

Just a handful of the houses in the project area can be classified as shotguns, while most of the rest in the project area are what is known as a Northern Kentucky Townhouse (NKYTH), sometimes called a "Covington/Newport house" (Figure 4). This house type is less well known than the shotgun and is thought to have a restricted geographic range to Covington and surrounding urban areas, but it has striking similarities to townhouse forms found in east coast urban centers as disparate as Charleston and Boston. Additionally, Covington's large mid-19th century European immigrant population – Germans in particular - provided another strong cultural influence to Covington's built environment. With the Shotgun house and the NKYTH in Covington these traditions are all combined, and it is daunting to unravel the resulting tapestry. Since they are the majority of the buildings in the project area, this report concentrates mainly on few of the threads that run through the Northern Kentucky Townhouse, as it seemed like a good opportunity to explore that form in some depth.

The Northern Kentucky Townhouse's narrow end faces the street in the same manner as the shotgun house – either is well-suited for one of the deep, narrow lots typical of Covington. The principle difference is that the NYTH has multiple stories, while the shotgun is a single story; both types are a single room wide and multiple rooms deep. Rita Walsh of Gray & Pape, Inc. studied the NKYTH and wrote a report, *The Northern Kentucky Townhouse Study*, prepared for the Kentucky Heritage Council in 1993. As defined in that report, the NKYTH is a "free-standing structure ... usually 2-½to 3 stories tall (though a fair number of 1-½story examples are found) with a two bay front, rectangular plan, and a side entrance, and it is notable in the absence of a door on the front."² Where typical shotgun houses have front entries, the typical NKYTH has no street façade entry, and adds upper stories, which requires the addition of a stair, resolved by the introduction of a stair hall. The main entry into the stair hall is found midway along the side of the building (Figure 5, left).

As defined in the *Northern Kentucky Townhouse Study*, the lack of a street façade doorway is a definitive feature of the NKYTH type: the definition "excludes houses which have a door on the front or have a side door which leads directly into the front room."³ This classification leaves us with a dilemma: how do we categorize those of the region's houses which are quite similar in form, but which do have front doors? House typologies are not typically hinged on fenestration patterns, but the two-window front façade is a striking feature: multi-story houses with window/window, two-bay front façades lacking any door are conspicuous in the area. Both historic architecture professionals and lay people notice this quite readily, since the two window facades are common throughout the older parts of the northern urban areas. At the same time, though, houses of very similar form

¹ John Michael Vlach: The Shotgun House: An African Architectural Legacy. Part I *Pioneer America* Vol. 8, No. 1 (January 1976), pp. 47-56.

² Rita Walsh: *Kentucky Historic Resources Survey: Northern Kentucky Townhouse Study* (Cincinnati, Gray and Pape, for the Kentucky Heritage Council, 1993, available [here](#)), 23.

³ Walsh, *ibid*, 27.

to the two window facade NKYTH (twfNKYTH) often do have a door-window façade (dwfNKYTH). In some cases, the front door is original, and in others, it has been cut through a window bay some time after original construction. The author has also observed examples where an original front door had later been closed up to become a window, reverting to the twfNKYTH. Several documented examples in the project area also have multiple entries on the side façade, including entries directly into the front room. At 527 West 12th Street, for example, there were three side entrances, one into the front room, one into the stair hall, and one into the kitchen (Figure 5, right). However, the similarity of 527 West 12th to the prototype offered by Walsh is unmistakable (Figure 5, left). This suggests the definition of the NKYTH should be broadened to encompass this variety, or that we have more work to do to establish more categories. As we will see in examples discussed below, there is also significant variance in the fenestration of the side of the building, in stair hall location, in circulation patterns, and in room arrangement. While mapping every variant could be a useful tool of analysis at the local level, at the wider survey level, splitting a simple typology into splinters of smaller subtypes runs the risk of overcomplicating the data.

The process of evaluating historic buildings relies heavily upon classification. This is particularly true of houses, many of which readily fall into a few standard arrangements of rooms, and so we categorize them, NKYTH, shotgun house, saddlebag, etc. In some cases, quick evaluation of National Register eligibility in the review process hinges upon how well the resource fits into the categorization schemes we have devised, although uniqueness sometimes serves as the contrary yardstick. In any case, the closer you look at particular houses, the more their individual identities impress themselves upon you, and the less helpful the categories become. The whole categorization scheme becomes confusing. The simple classifications we impose to complete a survey form fall short of conveying the building's significance and meaning because the building's history and complexity and individuality is all reduced to a few data points. This data is incredibly useful and vital to historic preservation practice, but it also misses a lot. In the event of a building's demise we often turn to deeper documentation in the form of drawings, descriptions, and photographs to help preserve some of that individual building's history, however short that may fall of the building's continued presence on the landscape. In this report we will strive less to establish a restrictive definition of the NKYTH type than to look at variations on the theme and offer some thoughts on how those variations reflect social realities. We will also have a look at the shotgun and other house types encountered in the study area, and at some very significant industrial and commercial properties.

For the Northern Kentucky town houses in the project area, whether there is a direct entry into the front room or not, there is typically a principal side entry into a stair hall, and one or more secondary entries directly into other rooms. Throughout the city, nearly all the row houses on a block will have their side entries on the same side (predominantly on the east on 12th Street) and few if any windows on the opposite side, so that each house enjoys some privacy on the main entry side. The spaces between the houses are large enough to allow for a small yard, garden, or work area.

Origins of the Northern Kentucky Townhouse

The origins of the NKYTH type are somewhat mysterious. It is formally similar to some known precedents. As early as 1711 there were townhouses in cities like Boston with the narrow end facing the street and a side entry into a stair hall between two rooms (Figure 6, left). Somewhat later we have the Charleston, SC, "single house," which is "that distinctive residential type that orients the main façade of the structure toward a side garden with

the end toward the street.” (Figure 6, right).⁴ The Charleston Single house, however, typically has a two-story porch sheltering the main, side entry, a feature not observed in Covington, at least in the project area. Whether or not there is any direct cultural link between the NKYTH and precedents such as Boston or Charleston is unclear, but all of these examples share the basic form of central stair passage, single pile houses, turned sideways to accommodate urban lots.

The Boston example is 1711, the Charleston single house was well established by the third quarter of the 18th century: the earliest known Northern Kentucky Townhouses date to about the 1860s.⁵ Perhaps a common thread runs through all three, but that’s very speculative. Multiple strains of influence are probable. Another possible source is found in the architectural style books that became so influential in the mid-19th century. Walsh examined several architectural pattern books of the period and found one plan with some striking similarities in Bicknell’s *Village Builder* in the 1870s (Figure 7). Bicknell’s plan, called a “*Model design for a Cheap City Dwelling*,” is similar to the NKYTH, although it has a central front door on the street façade. The more crucial dissimilarity is that Bicknell shows no direct exterior access to the central stair hall along the side of the house. It’s easy to imagine a builder changing that detail which seems to violate customary practice. The depicted architectural style of Bicknell’s cheap city dwelling is also similar to many Covington examples.

Another theory is that since the Northern Kentucky area had a large number of immigrants, particularly from Germany, that the form may have its source there. Walsh researched 41 NKYTH examples and concluded that

The results of this study indicated that the builders, developers, and residents exhibited a wide variety of backgrounds, with no single economic or ethnic group responsible for the house’s development. Fourteen of the houses were built by German natives, which were the largest identified ethnic group, but this high number probably had more to do with this ethnic group’s preponderance in the region rather than a conscious preference based on their nationality.⁶

Absent research on the urban architectural traditions of the predominant source areas of the region’s immigrant population, this conclusion cannot be verified. One possibility is that while the NKYTH has a formal relationship to the Atlantic coast precedents, it’s actually a later branch of similar European sources common to all of them, at least in part. The reality is probably more complicated. What we find in the field in Kentucky echoes many strains in American culture, reflecting the influences of established peoples and the impact of later waves of immigrants from multiple backgrounds. More research remains to be done on urban townhouses in the region and in surrounding areas, and on the precedents that may have given rise to the form of the NKYTH that is so predominant in the Northern Kentucky urban areas.

⁴ Carter L. Hudgins, Carl R. Lounsbury, Louis P. Nelson, and Jonathan H. Poston, editors, *The Vernacular Architecture of Charleston and the Lowcountry 1670-1990: a Field Guide* (Charleston, SC: The Vernacular Architecture Forum, 1994), 164.

⁵ Walsh, *ibid* 5.

⁶ Walsh, *ibid*, 16.



Figure 4: 411 West 12th Street, from north, a two window Northern Kentucky Townhouse.



Figure 5: Left: "Typical Floor Plan of the Covington/Newport House Type" from *Northern Kentucky Townhouse Study* by Rita Walsh (Cincinnati, Gray and Pape, Inc., for the Kentucky Heritage Council, 1993). Right: 411 West 12th Street . Scale in feet. Shaded area is first period, "A" indicates the location of a bulkhead entry to the cellar. Drawing by Danielle Jamieson and Bill Macintire).

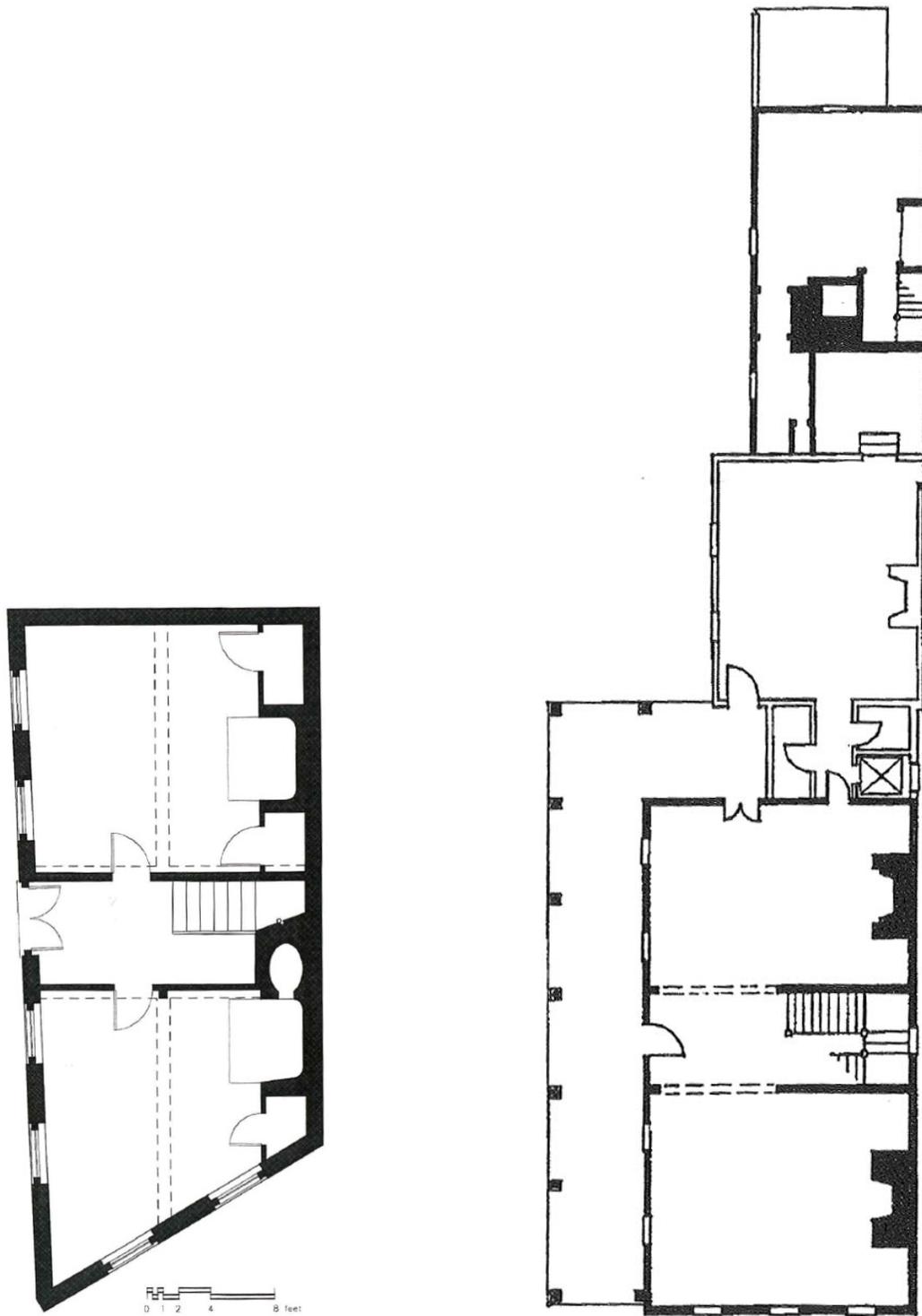


Figure 6: Left: Piercer-Hichborn House, North Square, Boston, first floor plan, after Historic American Buildings Survey, drawn by Jeff Klee, from Bernard L. Herman: *Town House: Architecture and Material Life in the Early American City, 1780-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 11. Right: John Fullerton House, 15 Legare Street, Charleston, SC, 1772-1773. first floor plan. Measured and drawn by Phillips and Oppermann, architects. From *The Vernacular Architecture of Charleston and the Lowcountry 1670-1990: a Field Guide* (Charleston, SC: The Vernacular Architecture Forum, 1994), p165.

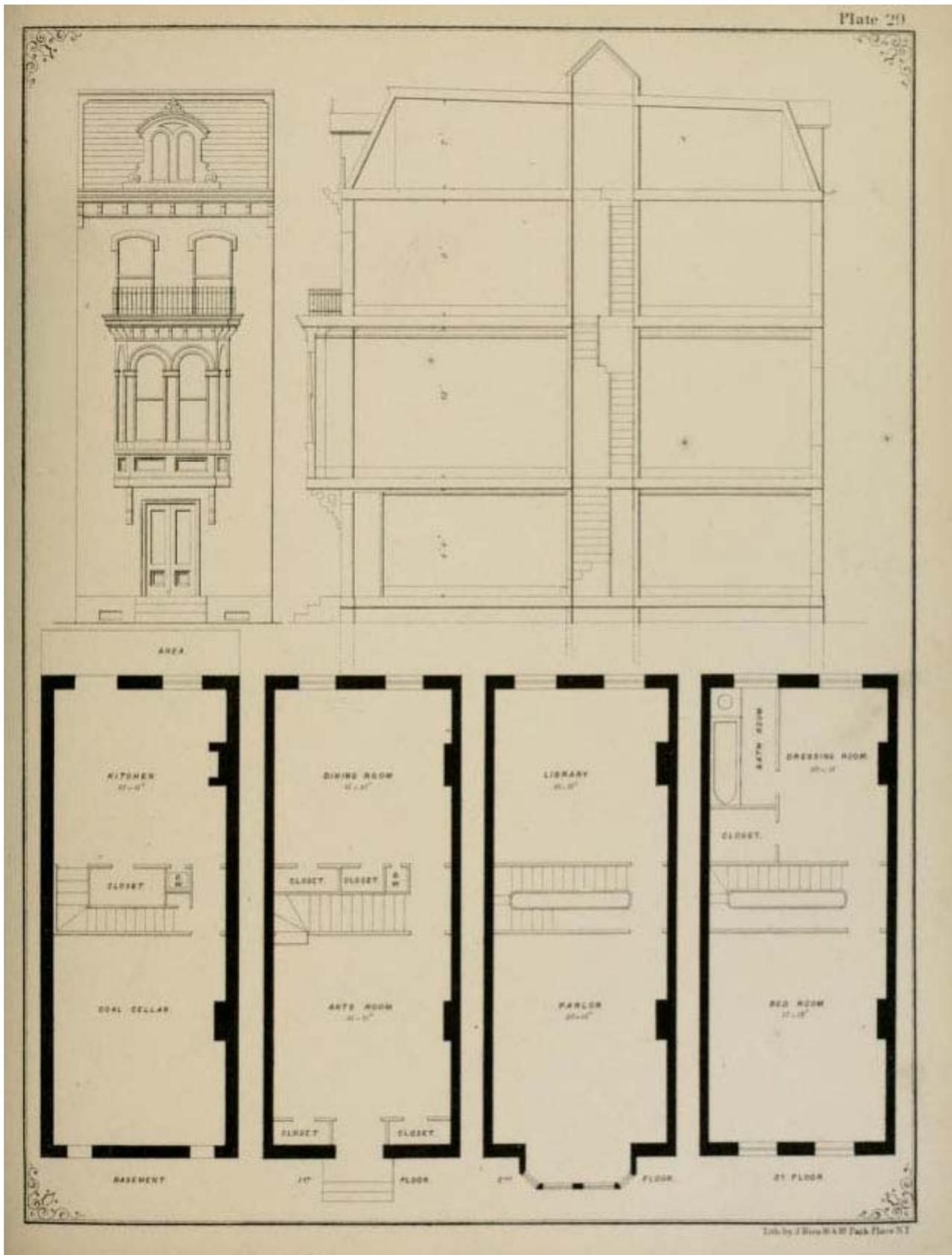


Figure 7: "Model design for a Cheap City Dwelling," from *Bicknell's Village Builder* (New York, A.J. Bicknell & Co, 1872, plate 29)

The Northern Kentucky Townhouse on 12th Street

The documentation of 12th Street provides us an opportunity to compare several examples of townhouses in Northern Kentucky. They vary quite a bit in their details. The “Typical Floor Plan of the Covington/Newport House” presented in Walsh’s report has a kitchen, dining room, stair hall, and parlor on the ground floor (Figure 5, left). The bedrooms are all upstairs in her example, and this suggests a single family house, or perhaps one where an upstairs room is rented out. In the project area, one house quite similar to Walsh’s prototype was found at 411 West 12th street, (Figure 5, right; Figure 4). Interestingly enough, it was not initially constructed in that form. This dwelling began as a frame double-pen house, and evolved into a NKYTH through a process of addition. The original house, one of the oldest ones in the project area, existed by 1877, when it appears in the *City Atlas of Covington, Kentucky*.⁷ It had two rooms of nearly equal size with a shared central chimney stack, and the gable end facing the street, but set back further than its neighbors. Between 1886 and 1890 (as determined through maps published by the Sanborn company and examination of the building) the house was enlarged with a side gable addition to the front, which included a stair hall and a front room, with a second passage between the front and middle rooms inserted behind the stairway (Walsh mentions that some examples of the NKYTH have this back passage). The house at 411 was not always used as a single family house. The Covington City directory of 1890 lists a stonecutter, his wife, and an apparently unrelated carpenter as the residents at this address.⁸ The extra staircase entered directly from the exterior at the back of the house also suggests accommodation for multiple family occupancy, perhaps even before the house was enlarged – it’s not clear if this stair was original to the house. It’s possible that it began as a single-story dwelling and was raised to two stories at the time of or shortly prior to the front addition.

Another example that conforms closely to Walsh’s prototypical plan is 529 West 12th Street, constructed in the very late 19th or early 20th century. While the front façade does lack a door, it had a tripartite window lighting the front room instead of a two bay window/window façade, reflecting the neoclassical styling of the house. The house also varies from the prototype by having a direct entry to the kitchen at the back via a small covered side porch (Figure 8). The kitchen pile is wider than the two front rooms to accommodate this entry, and also to allow room for a bath and pantry. This wider back room is a common feature of several examples in the project area, including the neighboring house at 527 West 12th Street, built about the same time (Figure 10 and Figure 10, left). The wider back room there was a single story but had its own entry, as did the front room, perhaps to conduct business or be let out to a tenant. Number 527 also differs from number 529 in that the stair hall is between the back two rooms rather than between the front two. The second room appears not to have been a dining room, at least in more recent history, as a bathroom was inserted into the space. The side porch entry at 527 was a proud architectural statement, heavily ornamental on an otherwise stylistically restrained house (Figure 50).

The houses at 527 and 529 West 12th street were built all at once as more or less pure examples of the prototypical NKYTH. We have seen that 411 West 12th Street became a NHKYTH through alteration of its original form. Several of the houses in the project area varied from the prototypical NKYTH via a process of change over time. 521 West 12th street, for example, began as an almost textbook example of the NKYTH, albeit with a front entry, (the wdfNKYTH type suggested above) but became a multiple occupancy dwelling in the early-mid 20th

⁷ *City Atlas of Covington, Kentucky* (Philadelphia: C.M. Hopkins, 1877; reprinted edition, Mt. Vernon, IN: Windmill Publications, 1993), 54

⁸ Ancestry.com. *Covington, Kentucky Directories, 1890, 1892* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: The Generations Network, Inc., 2000.

century with a frame addition for kitchen and bath facilities added to the back, another kitchen/bath inserted into the second room for the front apartment, and more kitchen/bath facilities inserted on the second floor for upstairs rental (Figure 10, right). We find an interesting NKYTH at 515 West 12th street, only 1.5 stories tall (Figure 14). It had a major alteration when the stair was relocated to the front room in the early-mid 20th century, crossing in front of the hearth in the front room (Figure 14, left).

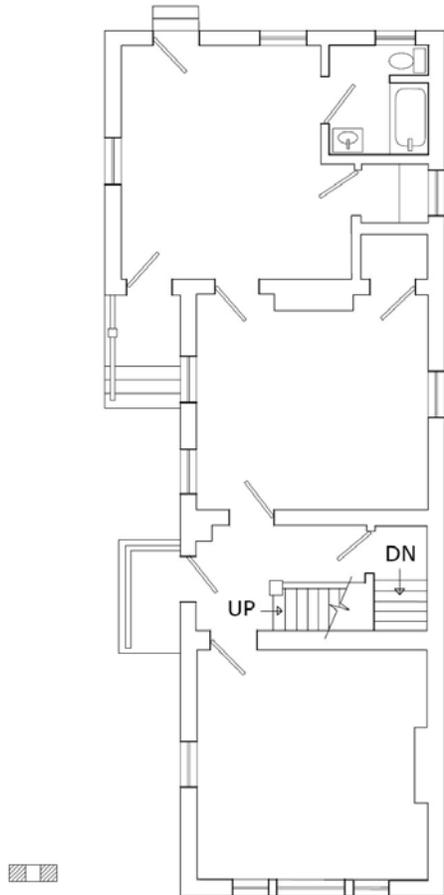


Figure 8: 529 West 12th Street. Left: First floor plan, drawing by Danielle Jamieson and Bill Macintire. Right: front of house from north.



Figure 9: 527 & 531 West 12th street (529 West 12th had been demolished by this time)

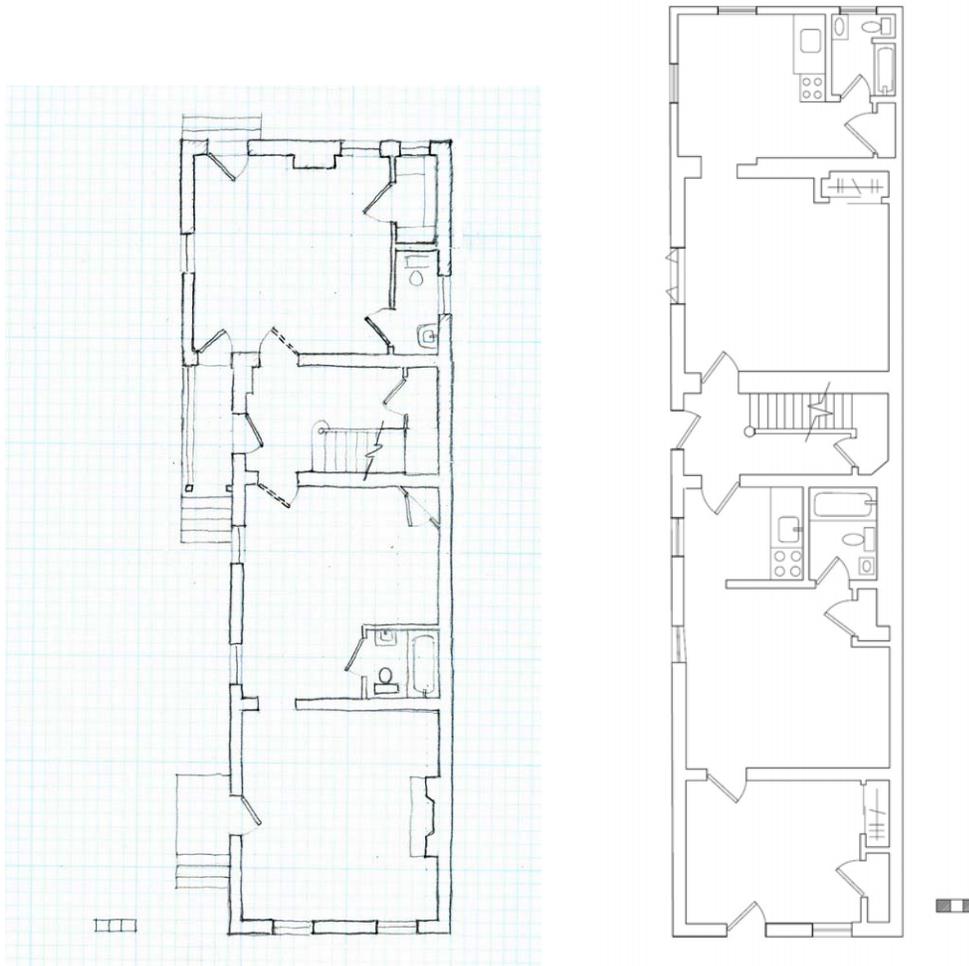


Figure 10: Left: floor plan of 527 West 12th Street measured and drawn by Bill Macintire, scale in feet; right: 521 West 12th Street. Floor plan drawings by Bill Macintire and Danielle Jamieson, scale in feet.

Provision for commercial activities called for elaborations to the basic NKYTH concept. In some cases this is fairly subtle: the front room might need to accommodate an office or store, and so they break the norm of the two-window façade to include a direct entry from the street. More notably, several properties in the project area had business spaces appended to the backs of the buildings. At 519 West 12th Street, for example, there was a large appendage to the back of the house that until recently housed a repair shop for televisions and other appliances, judging by the vacuum tubes and parts that had been left behind (Figure 11). The house over time had become attached to once free-standing outbuildings in the back yard. Parts of the back building were remnants of what was labeled a kitchen on the 1909 map, which depicts a crowded, but ordered urban backyard landscape of sheds, stables, shops, kitchens and privies (Figure 12). Similarly, 515 West 12th street had a backroom which included a workspace and a walk-in freezer at the time of documentation, apparently some sort of food preparation operation (Figure 14). Possibly the relocation of the stair in this case was undertaken as part of the commercial renovation of the back, creating a business entry where the private stair entry had been. The back rooms had collapsed and were only partially accessible.



Figure 11: 519 West 12th Street. Left, floor plan, drawing by Danielle Jamieson and Bill Macintire. Right, front of house from north.



Figure 12: Back yards in the 500 block of West 12th Street in 1909, as depicted on the Sanborn Insurance maps. Twelfth Street buildings are at the top of the figure, red is masonry, yellow is wood. The building labeled “Kitchen” at upper left is the same location as the back building at 519 West 12th shown in Figure 11.

The duplex NKYTH at 15-17 East 12th Street (Figure 15 and Figure 13) had a store later attached to the front. This house began as a single NKYTH at # 17 (the shaded area on the left in Figure 15), but was subsequently enlarged through the addition of another unit at 15 East 12th Street. At around the same time # 15 was constructed, # 17 was also enlarged with the addition of a side passage, porch and expansion of the second floor, somewhat reminiscent of a Charleston single house (the porch is visible on the left had side of the building in Figure 13). Still later, a single story concrete block addition to the front of # 17 converted it into a commercial space, which extended into the former domestic rooms at the front. The ground floor at # 17 ended up as a furniture showroom behind the P & M Odds & Ends store. At the time of documentation, it had some pretty interesting fixtures (Figure 16 and Figure 17). There was a frame addition to the back of both units, and the entire building was broken up into multiple units early on – the addition of the side passage stair and porch to # 17 was probably to accommodate second floor tenants.



Figure 13: 15-17 East 12th Street, from northeast. The addresses run right to left here, so # 15 is at the right, # 17 at the left with the store front addition.

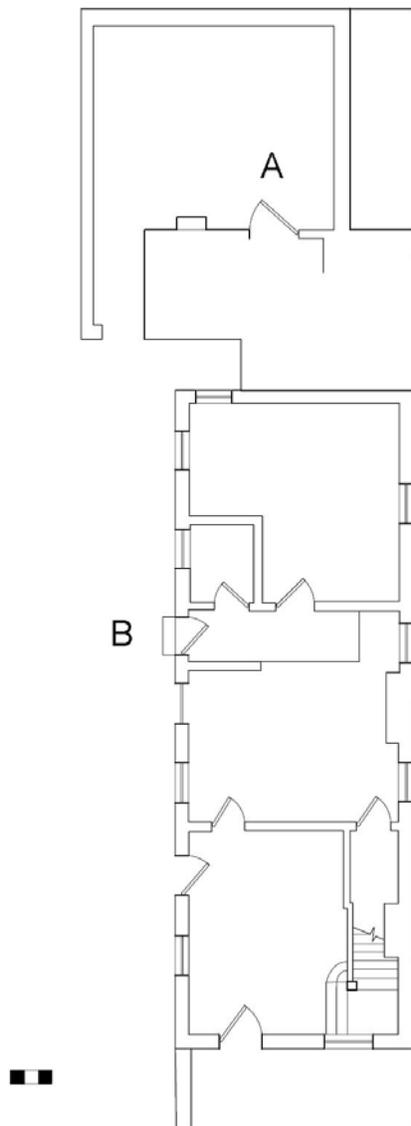


Figure 14: 515 West 12th Street. Left: floor plan, drawing by Danielle Jamieson and Bill Macintire. The space at the back had limited access due to partial collapse, but it included a walk-in freezer at "A." The original stair location was through the side door at "B." Right: front of house from north.

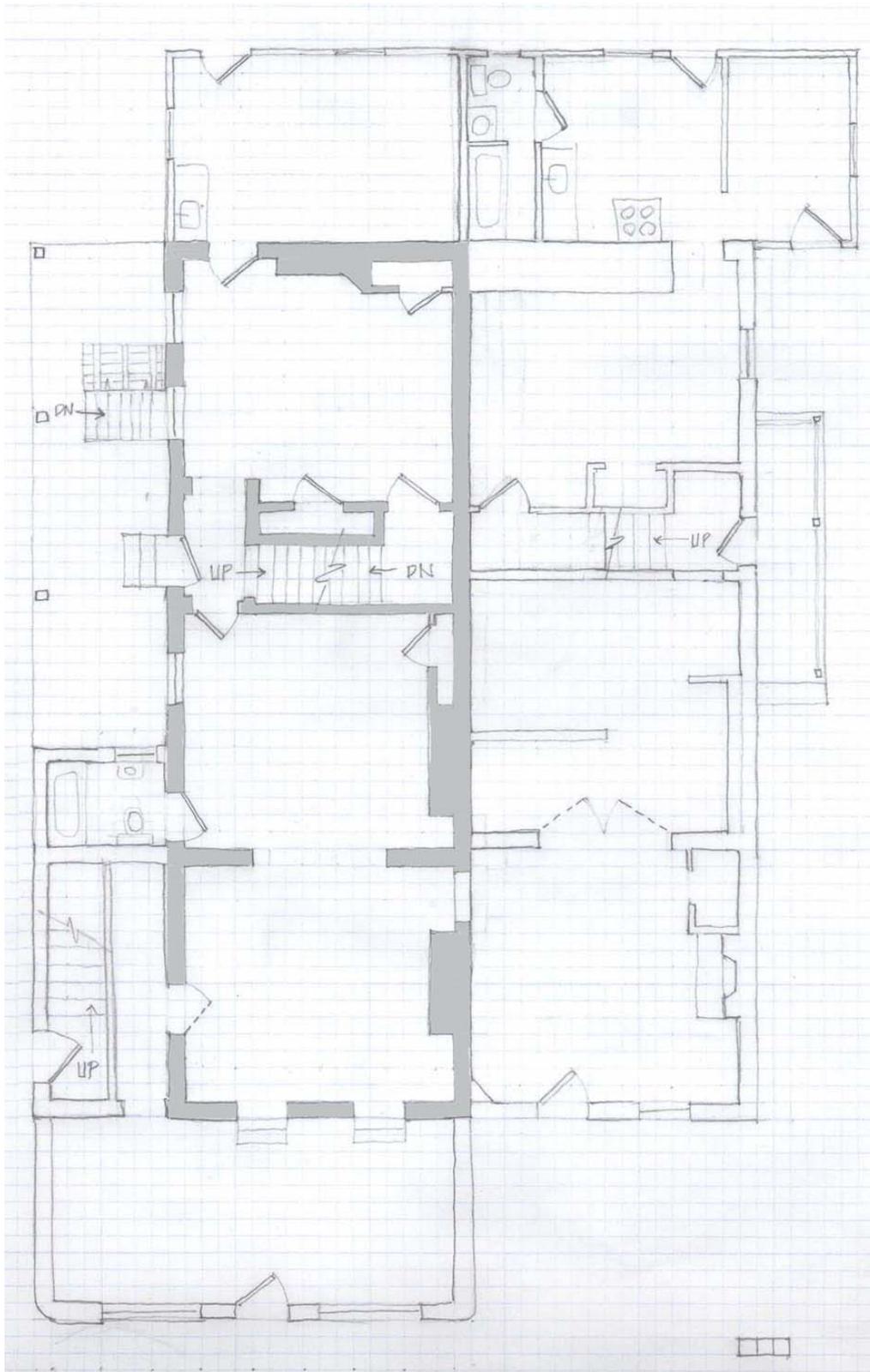


Figure 15: 17-15 East 12th Street, first floor plan, drawing by Bill Macintire. First period, # 17, is shaded.



Figure 16: Chandelier at # 17 East 12th Street.



Figure 17: Faucet in the ground floor kitchen of 17 East 12th Street.

Interiors

If we enter the typical NKYTH via the stair hall entry (Figure 18, left) we find ourselves in a narrow space, prominently featuring the stair, typically the most ornamental architectural feature of the NKYTH, with decorative flourishes centered upon the newel post and supported by balusters and spandrels (Figure 18, right). The stair hall offers several choices of direction. In addition to the stairway up, there are doors or doorways to the left and to the right, and often a door to the basement at the back of the stair vestibule as well. In the standard three-room NKYTH with the kitchen at the back, the stair hall might be located between the first two or between the back two rooms. It makes a subtle difference in the house planning. The kitchen behind the stair hall is more isolated physically from the activities in front than the kitchen directly adjoining a major room. Project area houses with the stair hall between the kitchen and the front rooms often featured a shared porch for the stair hall and exterior kitchen entries (Figure 10, left; Figure 11), a significant enough feature, it seems, to be a recognized subtype of the NKYTH.⁹

The two front rooms in Walsh's plan are identified as parlor and dining rooms, but what we saw in the project area were typically two rooms of equal size and a comparable level of architectural detail which appear to have served variously as parlor, bedroom, dining, and general living rooms. Often one of the two will be more isolated than the other by virtue of whether or not they have exterior doors or if they serve as passageways between the kitchen and the stair hall. Each room has a fireplace, often located on the outside wall as in Walsh's plan, but also sometimes located on the interior walls between rooms. The mantles vary in style according to the period of the building, and are typically the most prominent architectural decoration of the house's interior aside from the staircase (Figure 19 , Figure 20).

The front rooms are usually lit by windows on two sides of the room, the front wall with either two windows or a window/door configuration (Figure 21), and the (yard) side wall, which typically has one or two windows or a door and a window (Figure 22). The center rooms are lit only by the side yard fenestration, typically two windows (Figure 22), although some examples of the NKYTH in the project area have exterior doors going directly into the center rooms. In some cases there might be a small window higher up on the private side wall offering some additional light. Finally, in the back, we have the kitchen (Figure 24, Figure 26), lit by openings on the yard side and in many cases, the back wall as well. Many of the kitchens in the project area included built-in pantries, which in some cases included a trap door leading to the cellar beneath (Figure 36, right). The kitchens are small, and hampered by the large number of door and window openings (Figure 25, Figure 26). Typically, a small bathroom and a pantry are located directly off the kitchen (Figure 25).

⁹ Maybe we call this the Side Porch Kitchen/Stair Hall Entry NKYTH, or SPKSHENKYTH



Figure 18: Left: Principal side entry into the stair hall at 1206 Banklick Street. Right: Interior of Stair hall at 411 West 12th Street.



Figure 19: 1206 Banklick Street, ground floor front room hearth wall, fireplace located on outside wall.



Figure 20: 419 West 12th Street, interior of ground floor front room hearth wall, fireplace located on interior wall. The Arts & Crafts style mantelpiece is a later replacement.



Figure 21: 419 West 12th Street, interior of ground floor front room, looking toward front door.



Figure 22: 529 West 12th Street, interior of front room looking toward stair hall door, with yard side window to the left.



Figure 23: 411 West 12th Street, middle ground floor room, looking toward front room, through stair hall. The door to the left leads to a narrow passage underneath the stair.



Figure 24: 411 West 12th Street, interior of kitchen, looking toward front of building.



Figure 25: 411 West 12th Street, interior of Kitchen showing sink bay positioned between the pantry and the bathroom.



Figure 26: 419 West 12th Street, interior of kitchen, looking toward the stair hall between kitchen and second room, passage behind stairway to the left.

Upstairs at the NKYTH

The stair from the ground floor to the second floor in the NKYTH is typically decorative and open, albeit narrow (Figure 27). Between the second and third floor, the stair is more typically closed behind a door to block the heat, and lacks special architectural ornament, although it is often very workmanlike in character (Figure 29, right; Figure 30, left; Figure 31). This hierarchy of ornament signals both the lower architectural status and the higher privacy level of the upper spaces, which are fully utilized in the dense urban environment. The predominate row house in the project area is a three-story affair, with semi-public spaces, dining rooms, and kitchens on the first floor, apartments and bedrooms on the second floors, and apartments, storage space, or both on third floors. In a 1.5 or 2 story model, the program is abbreviated, but the general pattern is the same. The only unfinished spaces aside from cellars tend to be small garrets under sloping roofs, probably used for storage (Figure 32). In many cases even this space has interior finish and is lighted by the small windows cut through the front cornice (Figure 33). Upper floors were most frequently configured for apartments at the time of documentation, with separate kitchen and bath facilities, many of them with early-mid 20th century plumbing fixtures. The city directories show us that multiple occupancy was common at the time of construction as well. The single-family house is the exception in the project area.

The upper floor plans of the NKYTHs and other domestic properties documented in this project area can be roughly categorized into two types: those with hallways and those without. With its stair at the front, 421 West 12th Street may not have been a standard NKYTH, but it provides us a good example of an upper floor with a hallway. The house had a heavily remodeled first floor, but the upstairs remained relatively intact, so we documented it as well (Figure 28). The first floor had been entirely gutted and reconfigured, but the stair appeared to be in its original location in the front room. The upstairs hallway ran along the unfenestrated side

of the building, providing access to a series of rooms that looked out over the entry yard, with a bathroom located at the back of the hall (Figure 28, center). In the project area, this was a pretty standard second floor configuration of private and semi-private rooms with a shared bath which could accommodate a family or multiple tenants.

Often the rooms off the hallway will also have doors opening to one another to form suites. The apartments above the liquor store at 23-25 East 12th Street, for example, were similarly configured (Figure 47 although the hallway was more like a small room than a corridor. Hallways were in many cases quite narrow, as at 529 West 12th Street (Figure 29), but in some cases, the stair would just lead directly into one of the middle rooms, as at 419 West 12th Street (Figure 34).

Floors are hierarchical not just in their stacking but also in their architectural finish. Typically the staircase from first to second floor in the NKTH has a high level of architectural detail and a formal presentation (Figure 27) The stair beyond to the third floor in contrast is often accessed through a door and has minimal architectural detail (Figure 31). And yet these garret stories often showed evidence of having been occupied spaces as well. In fact, third stories were among the most interesting of spaces encountered in the project area, because many of them were later given over to storage and consequently not remodeled.



Figure 27: 521 West 12th Street, stair detail.



Figure 28: 421 West 12th Street, left to right: first floor plan, second floor plan, front from north.

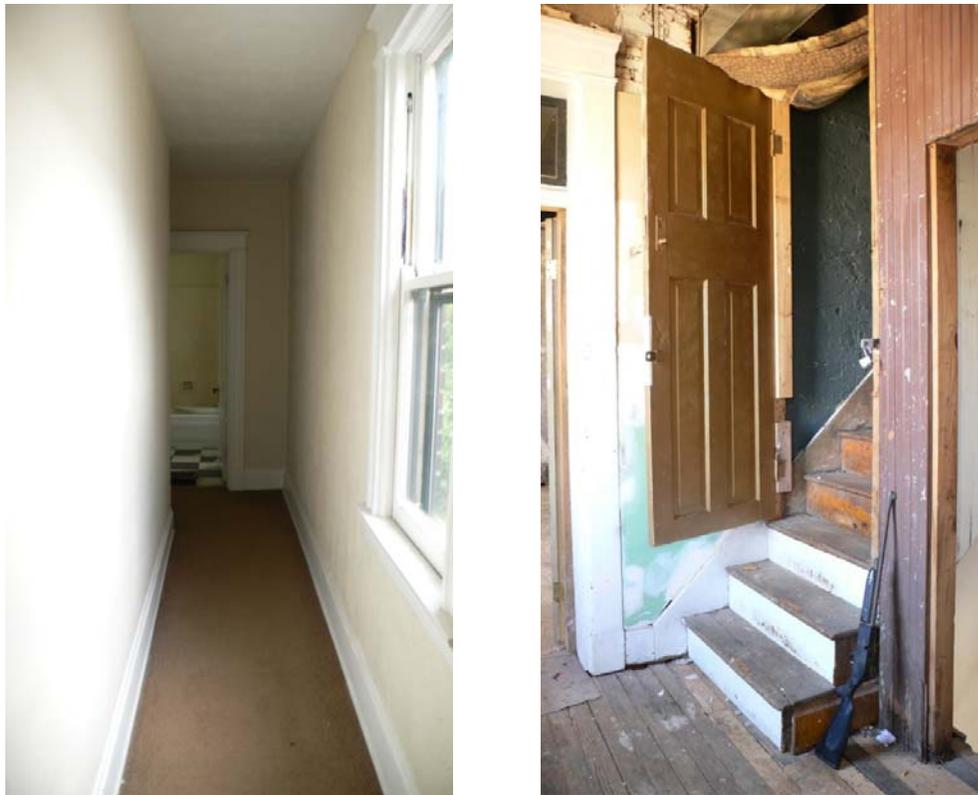


Figure 29: Left: Upstairs hallway, 529 West 12th Street. Right: Stairway opening to third floor, 1206 Banklick Street.



Figure 30: Left: 521 West 12th Street, stair transition from 2nd to 3rd floor. Right:

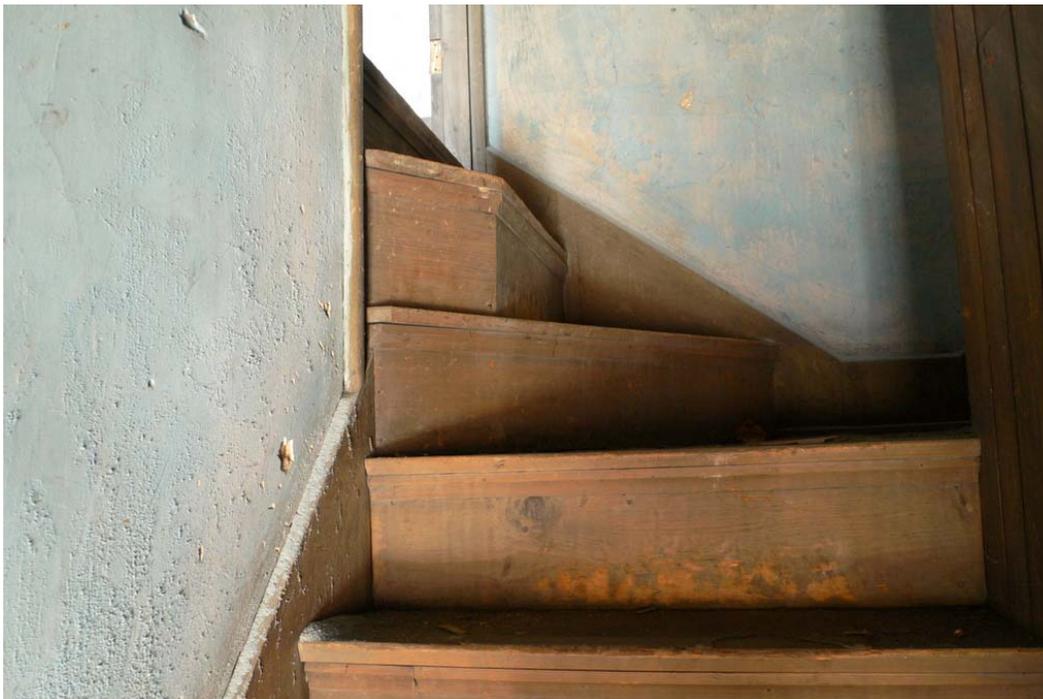


Figure 31: 321 West 12th, stairs to third floor.

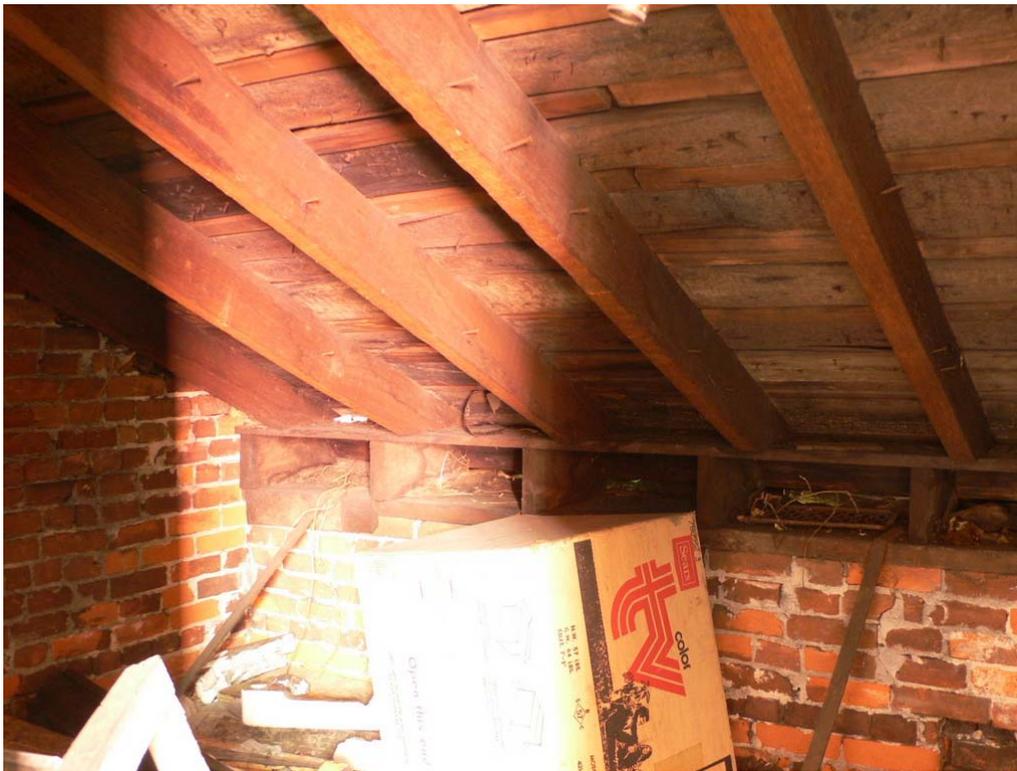


Figure 32: 515 West 12th, interior of front garret. The false plate arrangement with supporting joists crippled to maximize usable space is notable.



Figure 33: 1201 Main Street, interior of front garret. Unheated, but with floors, windows, and plaster finish this space was probably used as a bed chamber.



Figure 34: 419 West 12th Street. Left: first and second floor plans. Right: view from north. Scale in feet, shaded area is first period. Drawing by Bill Macintire.

Shotgun Houses

In contrast to the NKYTH type, there were several shotgun houses in the project area. The principal difference between the two is that the shotgun house is a single story and so lacks a stair hall. Though their ultimate cultural origins may vary, the close formal relationship of these two houses was illustrated at 419 West 12th Street, which evolved through alterations from a shotgun into a NKYTH (Figure 34). It began as a two-room shotgun (or double pen, sideways) prior to 1877, where it appears in the *City Atlas of Covington*. By the late 19th century, a room had been added to the back of the house. Sometime after 1909 (when it is still indicated as a single story building on the Sanborn insurance maps) a full second story was added to the house and a staircase was inserted at the back of the second room, blocking off the front of the hearth there. The outline of the original house was clearly visible in the brickwork of the walls (Figure 34, right).

Other examples of shotgun houses in the project area included 409 west 12th Street, a single story house several rooms deep, like a shotgun; but also like a NKYTH, in that its principal entries were along the side of the building and its street façade had two windows and no door (Figure 35). The false front furthered the illusion of NKYTH, and with the raised foundation of rusticated stone masonry, windows lighting the cellar space, and posts flanking the steps to the side yard, gave this small building a sense of mass, scale and solidity. A “purer” expression of the shotgun house form was found at 327 West 12th Street, with the slight variation of the back room being offset from the main body of the house to allow room for a back entry (Figure 36). An interesting feature of this house was the hatch in the floor of the pantry that allowed access to the cellar (Figure 36, right). A similar basement entry hatch was also observed at 1207 Main Street (Figure 37), which had the traditional

window/door façade of a shotgun, but whose principal entry appeared to be at the back along the side directly into the kitchen (Figure 38, left). The house had an unusual roofline, side gable in the front section, and a “flounder” roof on the back wing (Figure 38, right). Although it may not have been the original usage, at the time of documentation, the second room back from the front appeared to be the most formal mediating between a bedroom at the front and the kitchen behind (Figure 39). The bathroom was located at the very back, off the kitchen, and retained some of its turn-of-the-century interior details (Figure 40) The house was one of a small group of similar shotgun houses along Main Street (Figure 41).

There were also shotgun houses in the project area of brick masonry construction. The tiny two-room shotgun at 415 West 12th street had been gutted inside, the original front door replaced and transom closed, but retained its fine bracketed Italianate/Neo-classical cornice with partial returns (Figure 42). The interior was in the process of rehab at the time of documentation and had great potential as a small commercial or domestic space (Figure 43). What at first appeared to be a frame house at 507 West 12th street turned out to be brick with vinyl siding (Figure 44). The house, built before 1877 was originally one story, but the roof had been raised, and still later, a dormer added to create space for second floor bedrooms. The front room retained its Greek Revival mantle (Figure 45). It was also a kind of semi-flounder variation of the shotgun house in that it had a hipped shed roof instead of a front gable

The shotgun house appears to be found less frequently in Covington than the NKYTH, but it was a significant alternative, and shared many of the same features of the NKYTH on a smaller and for some, more economical scale



Figure 35: 409 west 12th Street. Left: Floor plan scale in feet, drawing by Bill Macintire; right: view of front from north.



Figure 36: 327 West 12th Street. Left: floor plan, drawing by Danielle Jamieson, after field notes by Bill Macintire. Scale in feet. Middle: View of front from north. Right: basement access hatch inside pantry.



Figure 37: 1207 Main street. Left, floor plan, measured by Bill Macintire and Rachel Kennedy. Right, front, from east.



Figure 38: 1207 Main Steet. *Left: kitchen interior, looking toward outside door. Right: roofline at back of house.*



Figure 39: 1207 Main Street, *interior of second room, looking toward front.*



Figure 40: 1207 Main Street, interior of bathroom, detail of beadboard wall treatment and early toilet paper roll holder.



Figure 41: 1207-1203 Main Street, from East.



Figure 42: 415 West 12th Street, from North.



Figure 43: 415 West 12th Street, Interior looking south.

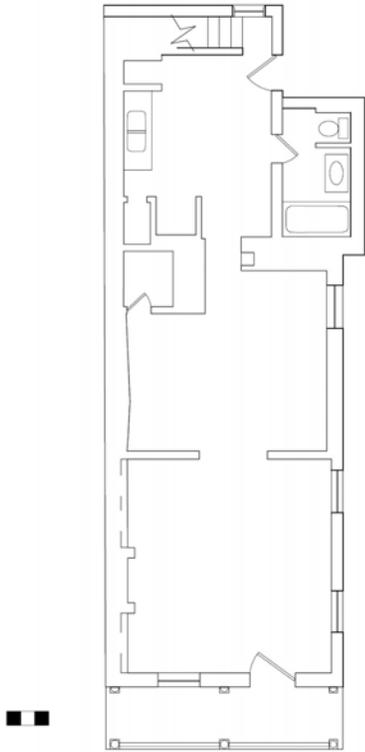


Figure 44: 507 West 12th Street. Left: Floor plan, drawn by Bill Macintire and Danielle Jamieson. Right, house from West.



Figure 45: 507 West 12th St, mantle on East wall of front room.



Figure 46: 23-25 East 12th Street.

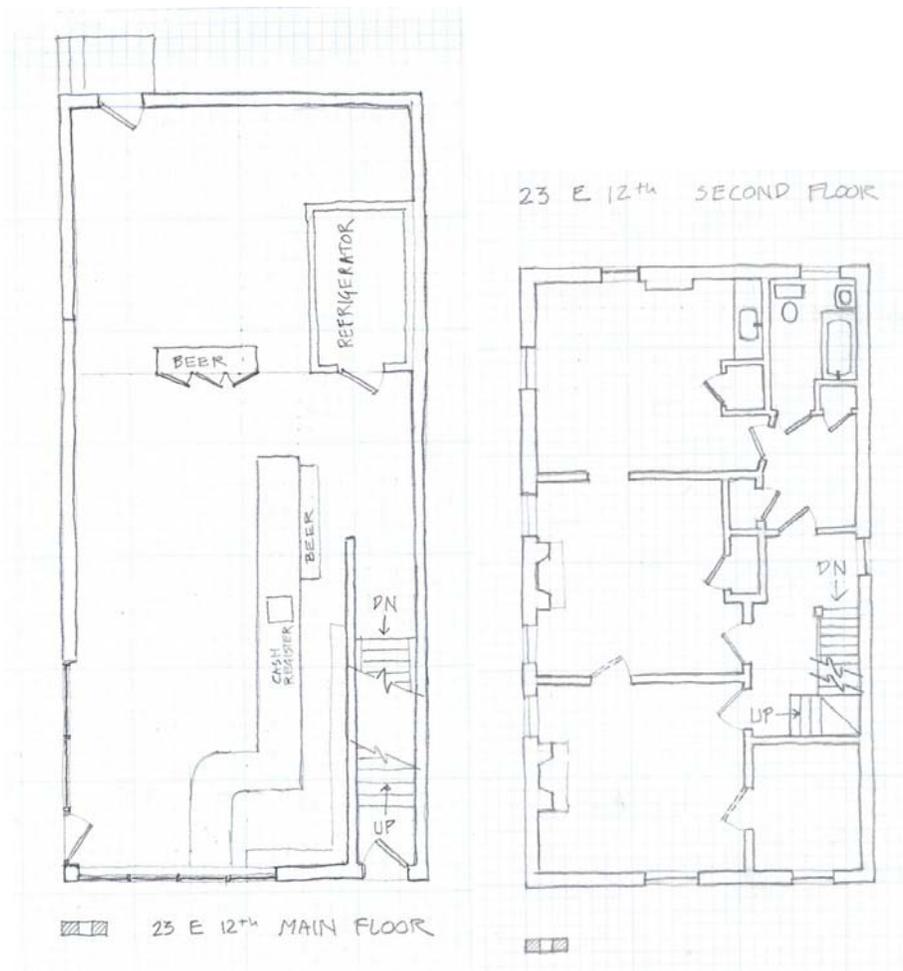


Figure 47: 23-25 East 12th Street, first and second floor plans, drawing by Bill Macintire.

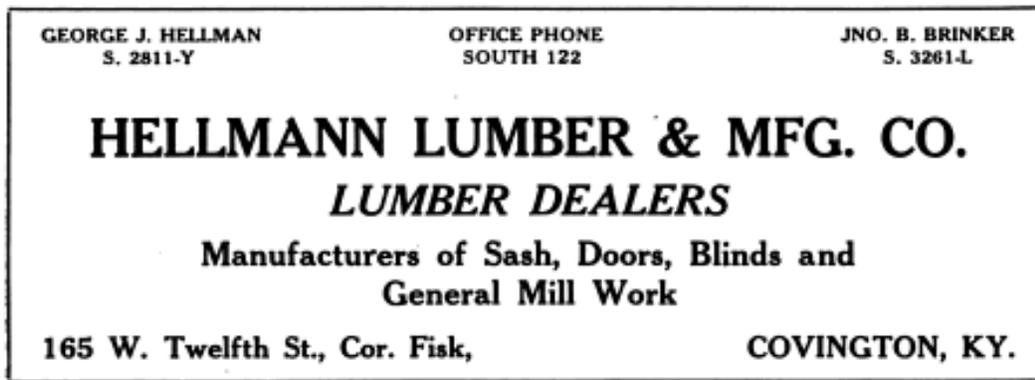


Figure 48: Advertisement for Hellman Lumber & Manufacturing Company, located at 321 West 12th Street, formerly 165 West 12th. From *Ohio architect, Engineer & Builder* volume 28, number 1, July, 1916, 63 (Detroit: Charles E. Shippey).

Architectural Style of houses in the Project Area

The domestic properties documented here were principally a product of the mid 19th-early 20th century, a period of diversity and development in architectural styles, a period when style became increasingly caught up in the spread of mass culture through print media and increasingly mechanized means of production. At the same time, in the project area at least, the forms – the building types- varied less over that time than did the styles, which is typical for the period. Historic sites survey asks us where possible to classify each resource into a style category like Italianate, Greek Revival, or Colonial Revival. This often becomes problematic, so the survey form allows us to choose multiple styles. What often happens is that the building has elements of several styles at once, none of them predominant. Style is often clearest in the details: the Greek Revival mantle at 507 West 12th Street (Figure 45), the Neoclassical returns and Italianate brackets of the wonderful cornices that lined the street (Figure 49), or the Queen Anne sawn and spindle-work porches like that at 527 West 12th Street (Figure 50). The actual style of the whole building is often less clear, as it offers an eclectic mix of styles in one building. Architectural elements, both stock and made-to order, were freely available in Covington, even manufactured at one of the properties in the project area, Hellman’s Mill (Figure 48, Figure 59, Figure 63). A diverse array of doors, windows, brackets, cornices, window arches, moldings, mantles, staircases stylize the limited number of house forms, at time of construction and as accretion over time, making the urban landscape of 12th Street a cohesive stylistic whole (Figure 53), until a clear break comes with the introduction of new house forms with the latest styles of the 1920s (Figure 56) and beyond to the corporate architecture of place/product marketing in the 1960s and (Figure 57).

While they vary in styles, the 12th street houses share a common vocabulary. The forms are straightforward and repetitive, mostly narrow side gable or shed roof houses. Other than those on corner lots, the houses had limited visibility on the sides, so ornamentation is heavily concentrated on their fronts (Figure 54). It is mostly concentrated on front cornices, doors, and window surrounds; on the principal side façade, ornament concentrates on entries and porches. Some of the plainer houses, such as 19 East 12th street, have few architectural details at all aside from the simple molded cornice and narrow window surrounds (Figure 51 – the stone veneer on the first floor and probably the stucco on the second floor came later, the building was brick underneath). In contrast, examples such as 521 West 12th Street sported highly elaborate cornices with brackets, dentils, and cornice windows, together with carved stone jack arches over the window openings (Figure 52).



Figure 49: Cornice details, 409-411 West 12th Street.

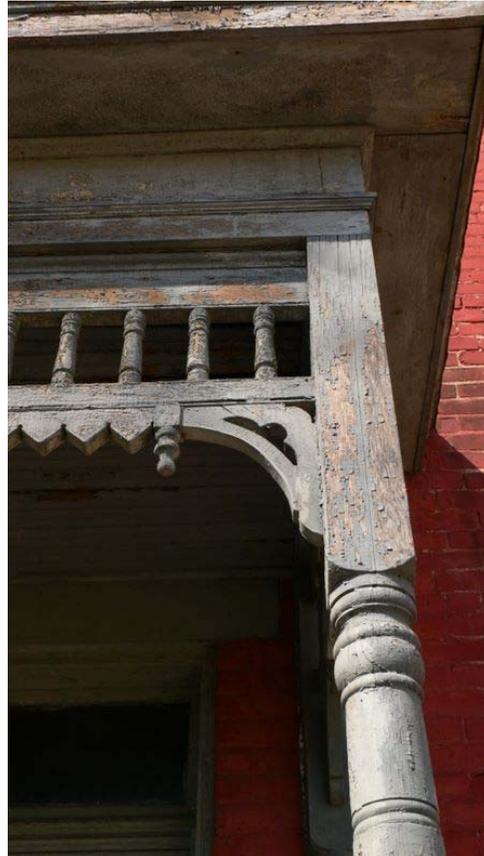
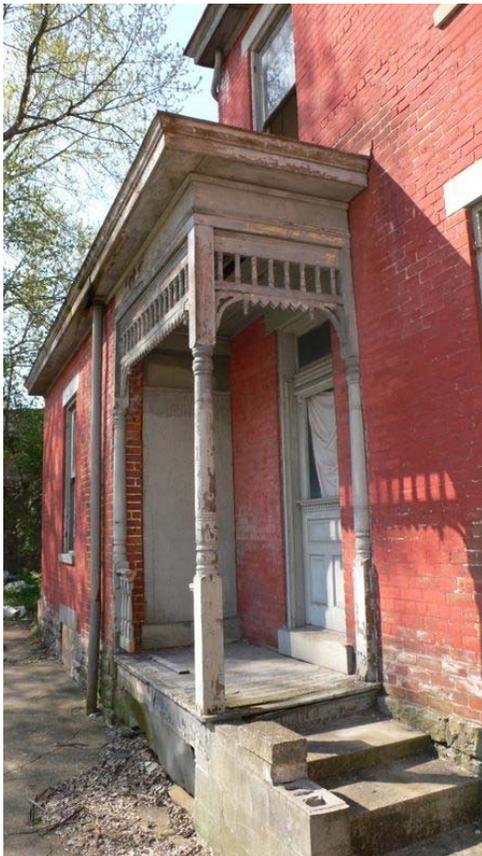


Figure 50: Left: 527 West 12th ST, porch entry on east side; right: detail of porch trim.



Figure 51: 19 East 12th Street, from Northwest.



Figure 52: 521 West 12th Street, box gutter cornice and window detail.



Figure 53: 1202-1208 Banklick Street



Figure 54: 1206 Banklick Street, from Northwest, after demolition of neighboring building at 1202 Banklick.



Figure 55: 1201 Main Street (with 1202-1207 Main to the left), view from Northeast.



Figure 56: 531 West 12th Street, from North.



Figure 57: White Castle, 1201 Madison Street.

Commercial and Industrial Buildings

Early urban commercial buildings are often domestic in form. Smaller commercial structures of the late 19th – early 20th century in the project area blended in with their domestic neighbors stylistically, differing mainly in size and most typically in corner placement. On a corner what we often find is a three bay wide townhouse with a commercial front on the first floor and apartments or offices in the ell and on the upper floors, as at 1201 Main Street (Figure 55). The first floor storefront with its corner entry was probably a later alteration. Along the street, many of the town houses incorporated commercial activity in front rooms or, for messier activities such as light manufacturing, food preparation, or repairs, in shops at the back of the lot, free-standing or appended to the house itself. In some cases, large domestic-industrial complexes grew out of this model, best represented by Hellman's wood milling operation at 321 West 12th Street. The meat packing plant at 315 West 12th Street probably also began with an attached house, but grew out of this model, exerting a larger presence through mass and overt use of architectural style to set it apart from the domestic styled smaller businesses (Figure 65, Figure 68). Later commercial structures are completely divorced from the domestic model, most overtly in place-product oriented structures such as White Castle, where the building itself works as a sign (Figure 57).

The area around 12th Street, outside of the center of the city, was a hub of commercial activity, with businesses ranging from large to small and concerns including trade, retail, manufacturing, distilling, and transportation. The Kentucky Central Railroad Shops nearby on Madison and 14th Streets helped fuel this trade (parts of this complex, including the roundhouse, still stand). Two sites in the project area in particular were outstanding examples of manufacturing enterprises. The first is Hellman's woodworking shop. We've already seen examples of townhouses with incorporated commercial spaces as at 15-17 East 12th (Figure 13) and 515 West 12th (Figure 14). Hellman's was more a commercial space which incorporated a townhouse, with a large NKYTH at the front of the property (Figure 60, most currently used for offices) joined to a much larger conglomeration of shops,

machinery, and warehouse spaces at the back (Figure 59, Figure 61, Figure 62, and Figure 63). The house at the front has been taken by the project, but the shops at the back happily still survive and will hopefully become the focus of a renovation project (Figure 64).

The second one is the site that most recently had been Oberjohn's OEM Electric, builders of starters, alternators, and generators. Back in the 1880s, however, the building hosted a thriving meat-packing operation, the "D. Ruttle and Co. Pork & Beef Packers" (Figure 59). 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. 12th 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.¹⁰

The building reflected its complex history of development and changes to the industries it housed over time. In 1877 the site just had one masonry building, probably a townhouse form, with a frame outbuilding behind, as seen in the Hopkins *City Atlas of Covington, Kentucky*. Some remnants of this house may have remained in the documented structure, but no evidence of that was noted. We don't know what the décor of the original front of the building looked like – it had a wonderful art deco renovation to the front offices and warehouse at some point in the 1930s – 40s. The front façade was the product of an early-mid 20th century renovation (Figure 66), while the side façade running along Fisk Street was a catalogue of 19th-mid 20th century industrial architecture (Figure 65, Figure 68). Plan views reveal a series of spaces dedicated to specific manufacturing processes, "pickling and hog slaughtering" in one space that later becomes an office, and so on (Figure 59 & Figure 58). The Ruttle's/Oberjohn's building was an excellent example of a small urban industrial/manufacturing plant.

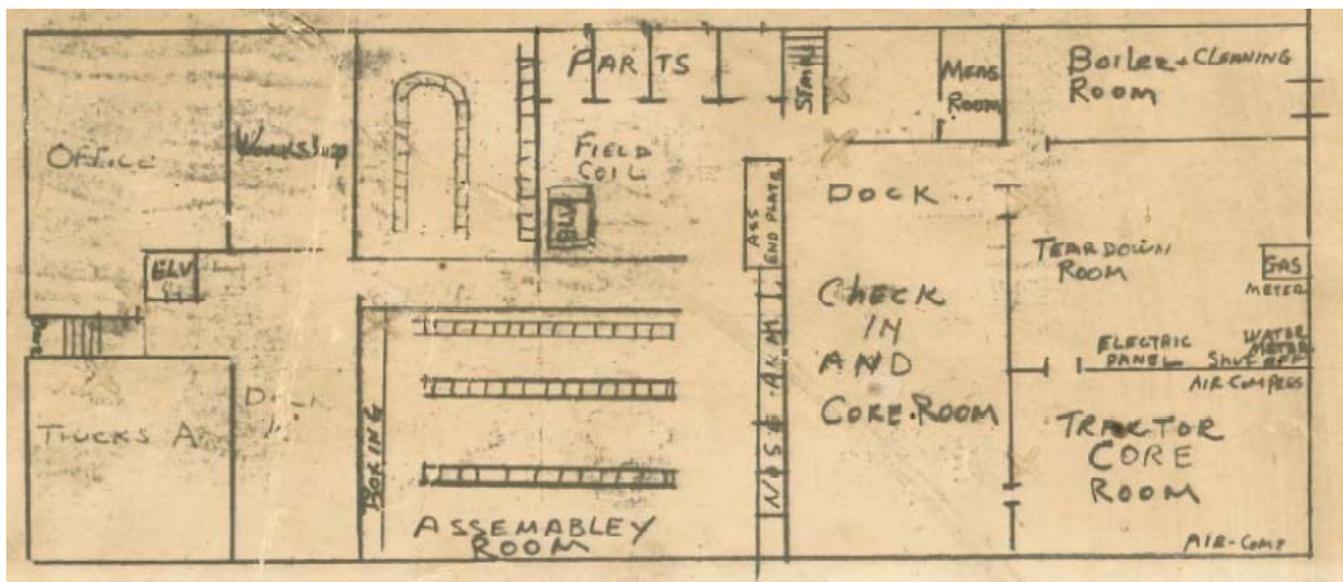


Figure 58: First Floor Plan of 315 West 12th Street. The drawing was found at the site. Front of the building is at the left.

¹⁰ "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.

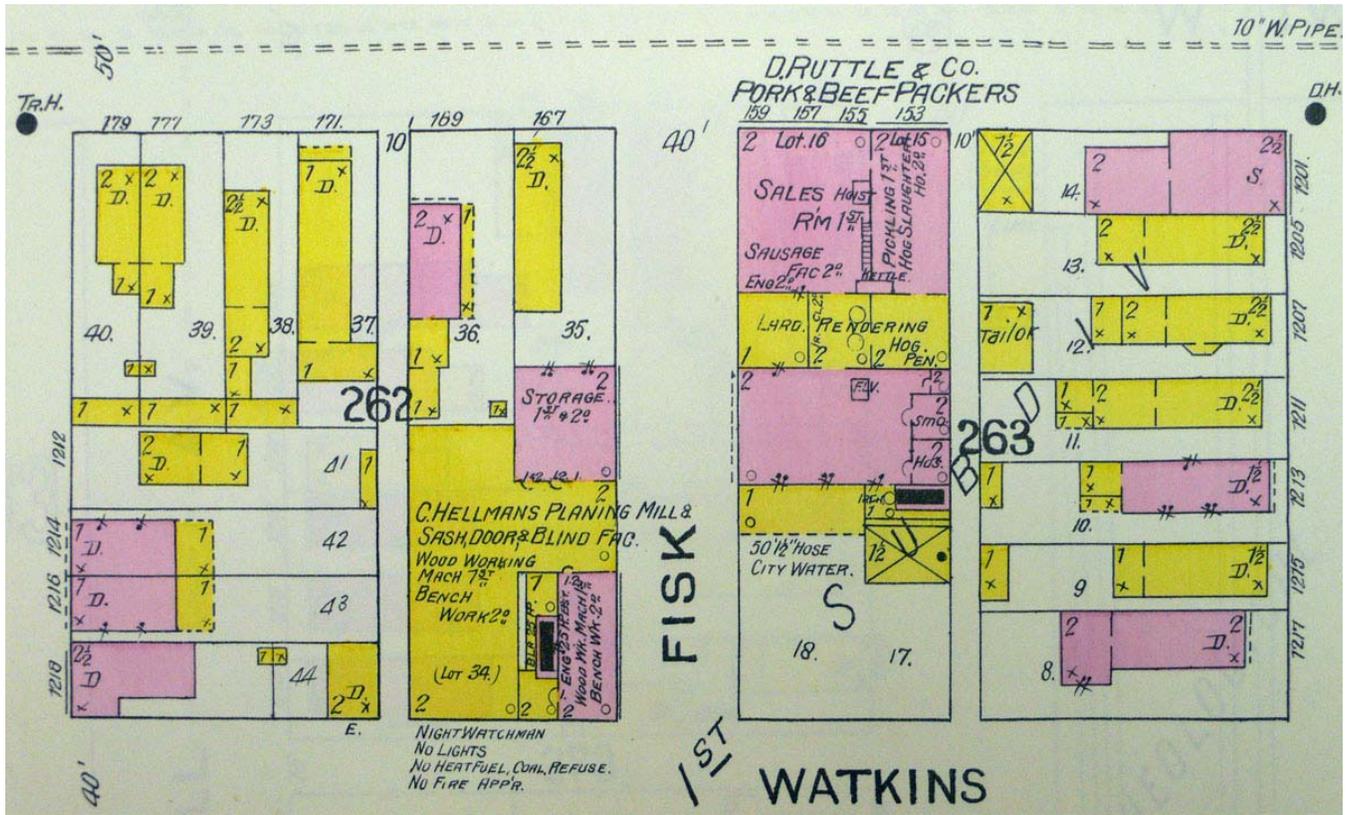


Figure 59: Detail of the 300 block of west 12th street from the 1909 Sanborn insurance map, showing Ruttle’s meat packing company and C. Hellman’s Planing mill and surrounding properties.



Figure 60: 321 West 12th street, from Northeast.

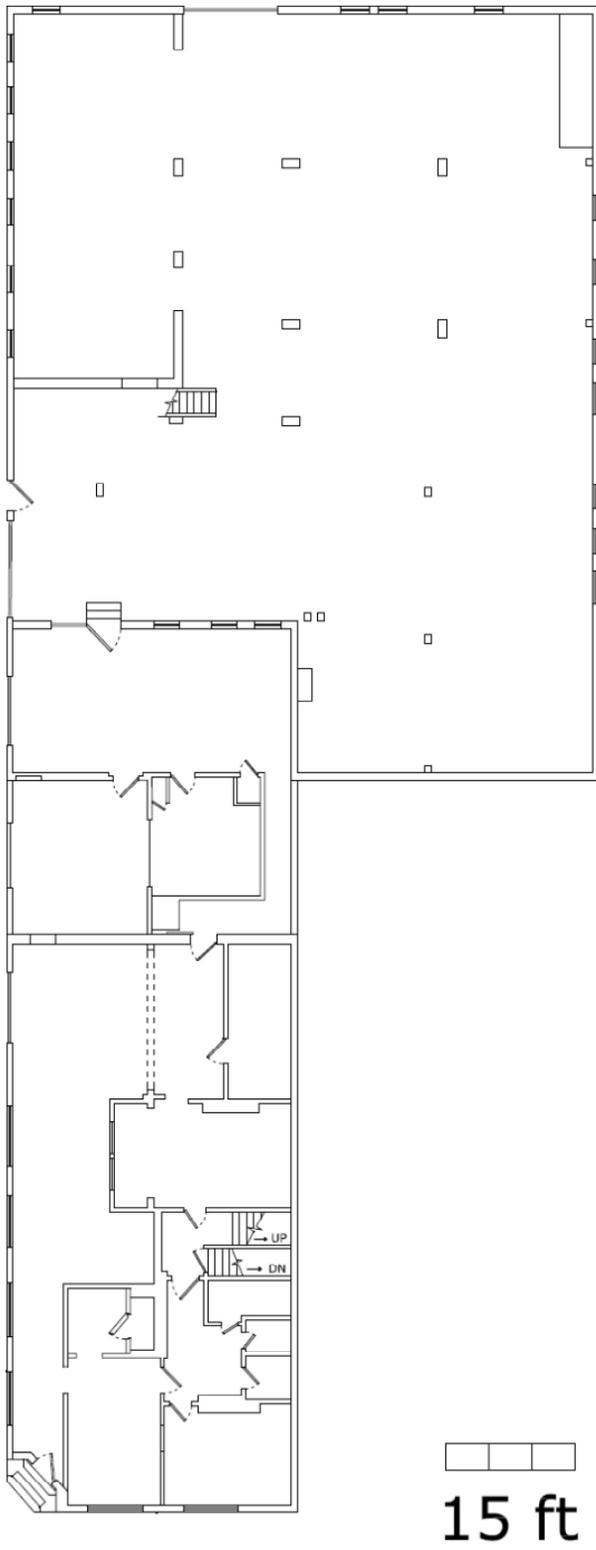


Figure 61: Floor plan of 321 West 12th Street, drawing by Danielle Jamieson.



Figure 62: 321 West 12th Street, view looking northwest at the corner of Fisk and Watkins streets.



Figure 63: 321 West 12th street, Hellman's, shop floor.



Figure 64: Hellman's today, Google Street View <http://goo.gl/maps/Gedts>



Figure 65: 315 West 12th Street, cornice and windows at back of building at the corner of Fisk and Watkins Streets



Figure 66: 315 West 12th street, from north.



Figure 67: 315 West 12th street, front office interior.



Figure 68: 315 West 12th Street, west façade along Fisk Street.

Concluding remarks

While the 12th Street expansion project improved access to the city and provided streetscape enhancements among other benefits, there is no way to sugarcoat the fact that it involved the demolition of a neighborhood of wonderful historic buildings. To Historic Preservationists this is a sad loss of history and of opportunity. Preservationists have many victories they can be proud of, but losses are a fact we all must live with. The forces of change, fueled at one end by neglect and lack of capitol, and at the other by money and grand visions are ultimately indifferent to Preservation, at times on its side and at other times not. What is inevitable is that change will occur over time. Incentives such as tax credits and regulations such as Section 106 review and local districting at least give Preservation a seat at the table where decisions about such changes are made. Even in projects where the majority of the buildings are lost, as at 12th Street, the presence of Preservationists at that table arguably improves the quality of the resulting project. Where we can't save important historic buildings, we must respect them. The last rites of measuring plans, photographing, and conducting research on the fated structures is a way of paying homage to their history and preserving at least their memory for future generations. Here's hoping that this report pays sufficient homage to the buildings of 12th Street Covington.