321 West 12th Street and Associated Structures

Figure 1: *321 West 12th Street and Hellman's Planing Mills*

One of the most significant and interesting sites in the 12th Street project area is the commercial property which occupies the half block bordered by Fisk, Watkins, 12th streets , and an unnamed alley running north-south from 12th to Watkins (Figure 1). The property survives the project in part: the frame section closest to 12th Street has been demolished for the road expansion. As documented, it consisted of a series of connected buildings. The frame section at the front at 321 west 12th Street was a Northern Kentucky Townhouse, and served as the public and private offices and domestic spaces of the business (Figure 2). This part of the structure has been demolished. Behind that, a series of connected masonry and frame structures, industrial in nature, are still standing (Figure 3, Figure 6, Figure 8, and Figure 9). Together along Fisk Street, they coalesced as an interesting jumbled façade, and faced a similarly jumbled industrial façade of the former meat-packing plant on the other side of Fisk Street (Figure 4), which was often blocked by trucks backing into the loading docks of the two plants. The meat-packing plant has also been cleared, so the Hellman's shops are the last remaining vestige of this small industrial zone.

Unlike the meat-packing plant at 315 West 12th Street, Hellman's wood milling operation had domestic spaces included within the industrial development. This was a once-common configuration of small industry in both rural and urban settings. The meat-packing plant actually did include a townhouse at one time, but that was later demolished for the upgraded front offices. Hellman's was a rare survival of an important property type, an urban domestic-industrial complex. Research remains to be done on the Hellman's company and the role the house portion of the property played within the owning, managing, and day to day work of the company, and how that role changed over time. A good surviving example at slightly smaller scale is found at the Schroeder Saddle-Tree Factory in Madison, Indiana, where, as one would expect, the owner occupied the domestic spaces.[1] Eventually, the house at Hellman's was entirely given over to offices and no longer served as a residence.

[1] http://www.historicmadisoninc.com/saddletree_museum.htm

Figure 2: *321 West 12th Street, main entrance and east elevation*

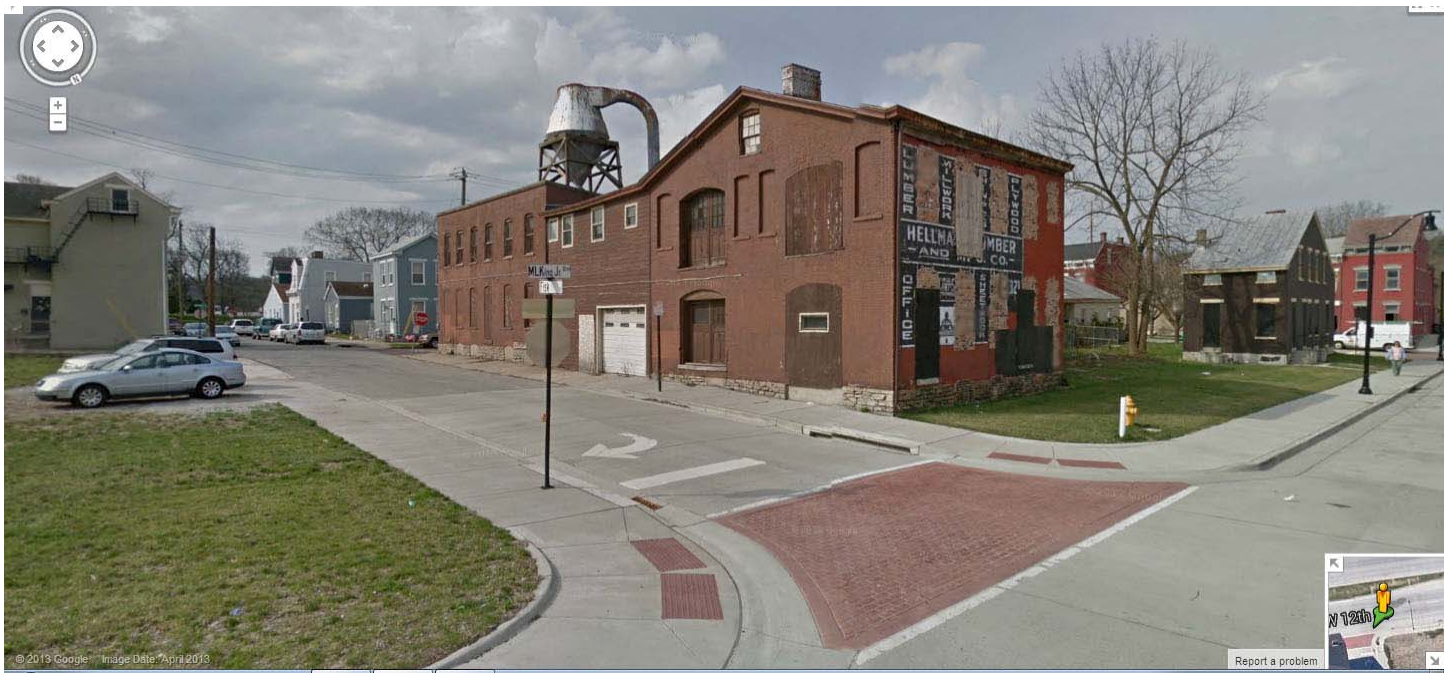

Figure 3: *Hellman's today, Google Street View http://goo.gl/maps/Gedts*

Figure 4: *Panorama of the west façade of ht meat-packing plant at 315 West 12th Street, which ran along Fisk street opposite Hellman's.*

Architecturally, it was a very successful execution, the type of resource that makes cities like Covington so fascinating. It evolved over time, adapting to changing circumstances, operating as a successful woodworking business for many years. The narrow, tall house dominated the street view from the corner of 12th and Fisk (Figure 1). However, in plan view, we can see that Hellman's was quite a large structure; the showrooms, warehouses, and shops dwarfed the original house at the front (Figure 12).

The front portion began as a 2-1/2 story frame house, built after 1877 (Figure 13). It was later expanded on the first floor for a showroom, and extended at the back. The house was frame, side gable, 2-1/2 stories tall, two bays wide, Italianate/neoclassical in style, with a bracketed front cornice. It was a Northern Kentucky Townhouse related form, which is clarified in plan (Figure 22). It may have been entirely domestic, or may have included offices or rentals. It has the typical cross stair; in this case two rooms back with a third room behind. The original main entry was probably along Fisk Street directly into the stair hall. It was set some ways back from Fisk Street, so there was a side yard. The rooms on the first floor and most of the second were converted into office spaces, but some original domestic interiors or portions thereof survived on the upper floors, discussed later. Although this portion appears to have been built as a dwelling, it was eventually enlarged with a single story flat roof shed along the Fisk street side yard, and a two story addition at the back, which joined it up to the series of shops and warehouse spaces at the back of the block along Fisk and Watkins streets, some of which were built at the same time or even prior to the house.

Figure 5: *Side View along Fisk Street, looking West*

That the frame house at the front of the lot and the shop structures at the back had once been separate is clear in the depictions of the property in the 1877 Atlas and the later Sanborn Insurance maps (Figure 13, Figure 14, and Figure 15). The property is vacant in the 1877 Atlas, but by 1886, the house has been built and the back part of the lot includes a carpenter's shop and lumber storage (Figure 13, center). The 1894 Sanborn shows that the carpentry shop has been greatly expanded and is now labeled "C. Hellman's Planing Mills, Sash, Door, & Blind Fac," but the house still has not

been connected to the shops. (Figure 14, left) The property is pretty much unchanged on the 1909 map (Figure 15). By 1945, the property is depicted with the addition constructed connecting the house to the shops (Figure 14, right).

The scale of the building and its form is perhaps best comprehended by a virtual walk around it. Beginning with Figure 1, a ¾ view from 12th Street, we see the main entrance on the corner in the single story section, the original townhouse rising 3 stories tall behind, and the shops and storage areas stretching behind. Proceeding along Fisk Street (Figure 2), note the fenestration of the original house, the large scale of the side gable and the cornice. Behind the single story office addition to the house is a 2-story frame structure that joins it up to the masonry section beyond, fitted with a garage door opening for deliveries (Figure 5, Figure 6, and Figure 7). We will call this the "hyphen" area as it connected the domestic and industrial sections of the building much as the hyphen of a Virginia plantation house connects the manor and the kitchen. The hyphen had a garage door on the ground floor and a pair of 2/2 sash windows on the second (Figure 7). In back of this are three joined 2-story structures along Fisk Street that still stand – a front-gable masonry section, a flat roof frame section, and a shed roof masonry section (Figure 6, Figure 9). This part of the structure exists today absent the house (Figure 3).

Figure 6: *321 West 12th Street, Fisk Street façade of shop area, looking southwest.*

Figure 7: *321 West 12th Street, 2/2 sash windows in the second floor of the hyphen area between the house and the shops.*

The gable-front masonry section of this part of the building, the section closest to 12th Street and to the house was identified as a shop on the 1886 Sanborn map (Figure 13, right) and as a storage area on the 1894 map (Figure 14, left), by which time the masonry and frame sections further down Fisk Street had been constructed to enlarge the shop, which appears to have initially had a large lumber yard at the back, eventually consumed by construction. This old shop section is two stories tall, has a stone foundation and a handsome symmetrical façade facing Fisk Street (Figure 6). The ground and second floor each has a pair of arched double door openings for loading and unloading goods. Some of the original doors survive, the two northern openings have been sealed to accommodate interior alterations as the use of the building changed. The first floor has no window openings, the second floor has 4 arched openings in a W/D/W/W/D/W arrangement with the freight doors, all 4 subsequently sealed. There is a single window at the peak of the gable with 6/6 sash.

Next along Fisk Street is another sort of hyphen, a frame structure that connects the old brick shop to the second brick structure, which will be discussed next. This frame section has four sash windows somewhat randomly spaced on the second floor, and a door and garage door on the first floor (Figure 8). Sanborn mapping from 1886 shows a frame building in this location (Figure 13, right). The brick shop beyond doesn't show up until the 1894 map (Figure 14, left). Portions of this section thus may predate the second brick shop.

Figure 8: *321 West 12th Street, view looking west at the corner of Fisk and Watkins streets.*

The second brick shop is the masonry section at the back on the corner of Fisk and Watkins Street, a handsome shed roof structure with a stone foundation, brick walls and segmentally arched window openings and door, most of those on the first floor now sealed up. It faces Fisk Street with a two story façade with D/W/W/D/W/W fenestration on the first floor and six windows evenly spaced above (Figure 8). There are four arched openings below the first floor windows through the brick foundation to light space below, but they are sealed with plywood. Above the stone foundation and below the Northernmost window at right is a large stone lintel. Its function is unclear, the wall and window above appear unaltered, but it may relate to the opening below, perhaps a bulkhead entry. The end wall of the building facing Watkins Street has one arched and now sealed window on each floor displaced to the East side of the building and a centered cellar light though the foundation (Figure 9).

Figure 9: *321 West 12th Street, view looking northwest at the corner of Fisk and Watkins streets.*

This part of the building at the corner of Fisk and Watkins once held the furnace and wood-working machinery, according to the Sanborn maps (Figure 15). On top of this building is an unusual large metal and wood structure, looking something like a large teapot (Figure 10). As we proceed around the building, we see that it is one of two such structures, the second is atop the frame section that encloses the large shop floors (Figure 9). The two structures are sawdust collectors, and are very characteristic of milling operations. Exhaust and dust collection was a critical issue in the industry and parts of the impressive exhaust system remain in place. The collectors powered by large fans in the boiler area separated sawdust from the exhaust and fed the shavings to the boiler to help power the system (Figure 11). We will discuss them in some more detail below as we look at the interior of the shop.

Figure 10: *Detail of Sawdust Separator on the roof over the carpentry shop at Hellman's, 321 West 12th Street.*

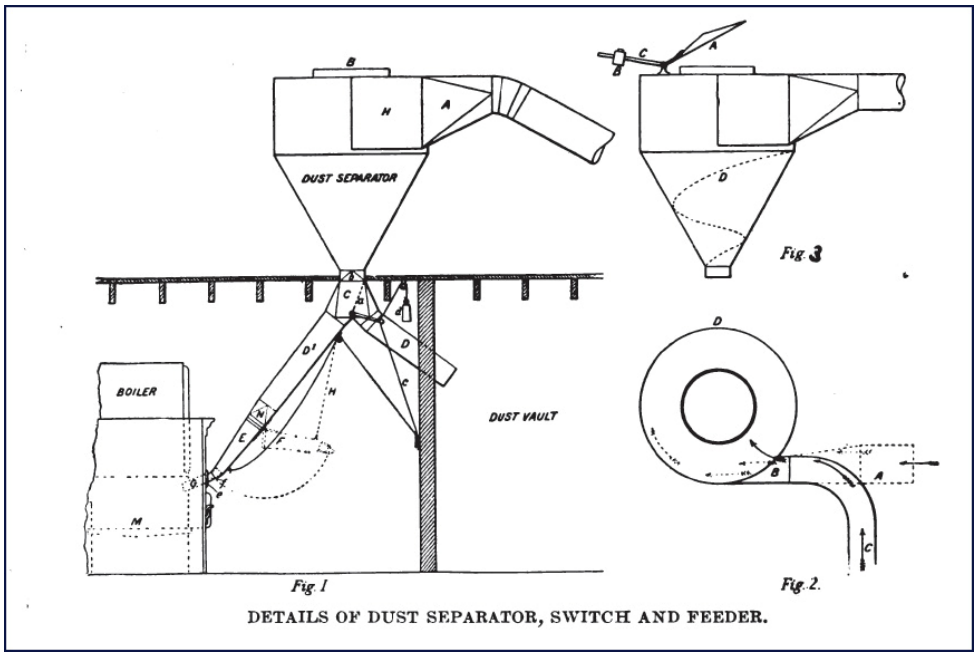

Figure 11: *Details of Dust Separator, Switch and Feeder" from Practical Exhaust and Blow-Piping: a Treatise on the Planning and Installing of Fan-Piping in All its Branches, by W. H. Hayes (New York: The sheet Metal Publication Company, Second Edition, 1918), 16; accessed here: http://archive.org/details/practicalexhaus00hayegoog.*

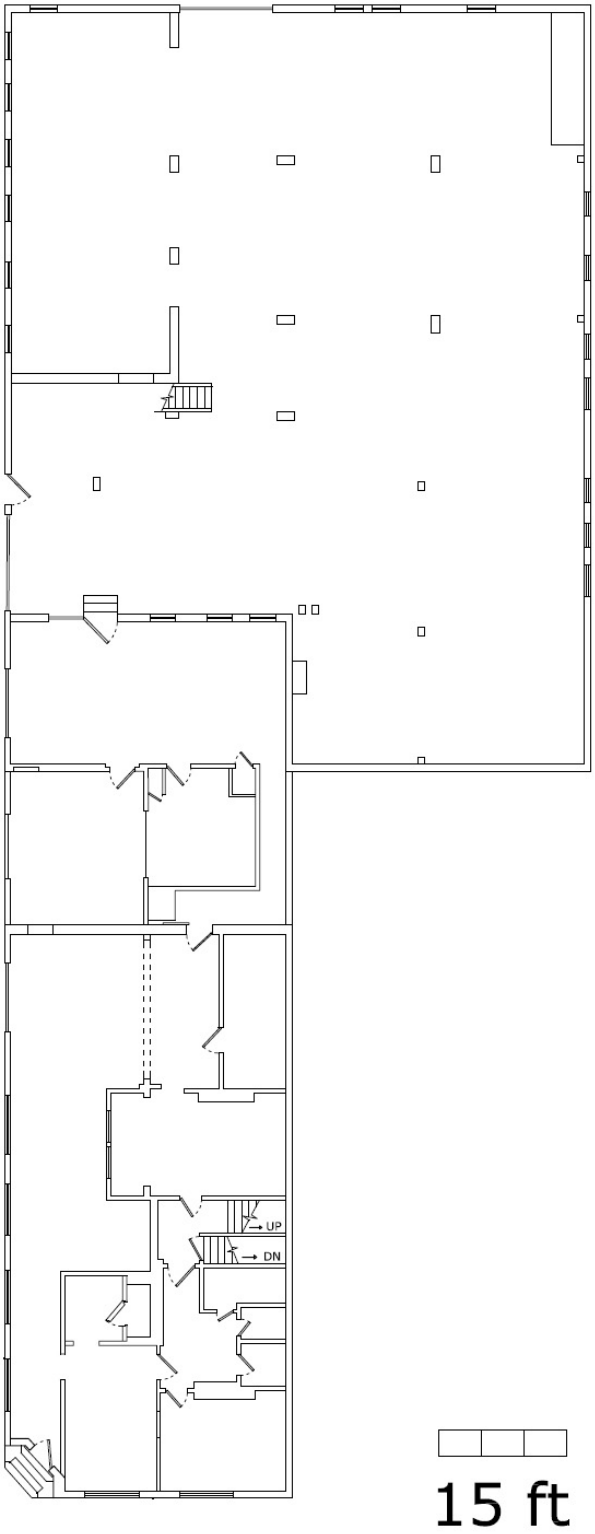

Figure 12: *Floor plan of 321 West 12th street. The house portion facing 12th street is at the bottom, the shops are at the top.*

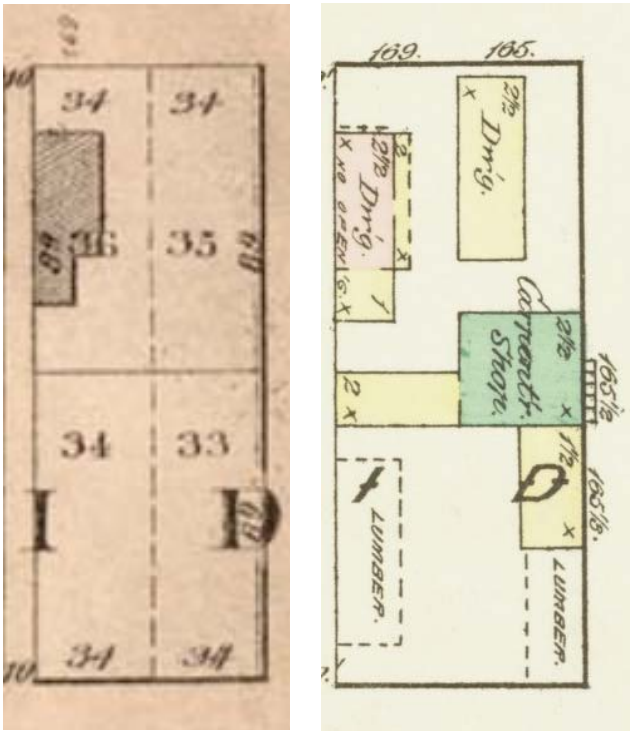

Figure 13: *1877 and 1886 maps of the lot, with 12th Street at the top of the image, Fisk at right, and Watkins at the bottom. The documented property vacant in the 1877 Atlas at left, but there was one dwelling at modern-day 323 West 12th, which was gone by the time of the documentation project, and which may have had a historic connection to the business. By the time of the 1886 Sanborn map, right, a carpenter's shop and a dwelling had been constructed on the site, and part of the lot is a lumber-yard. It all appears to be one lot, including the dwelling shown on the 1877 Atlas. Yellow is frame, red masonry, and the green coloring of the "Carpent'r Shop" stands for "Frame Special."*

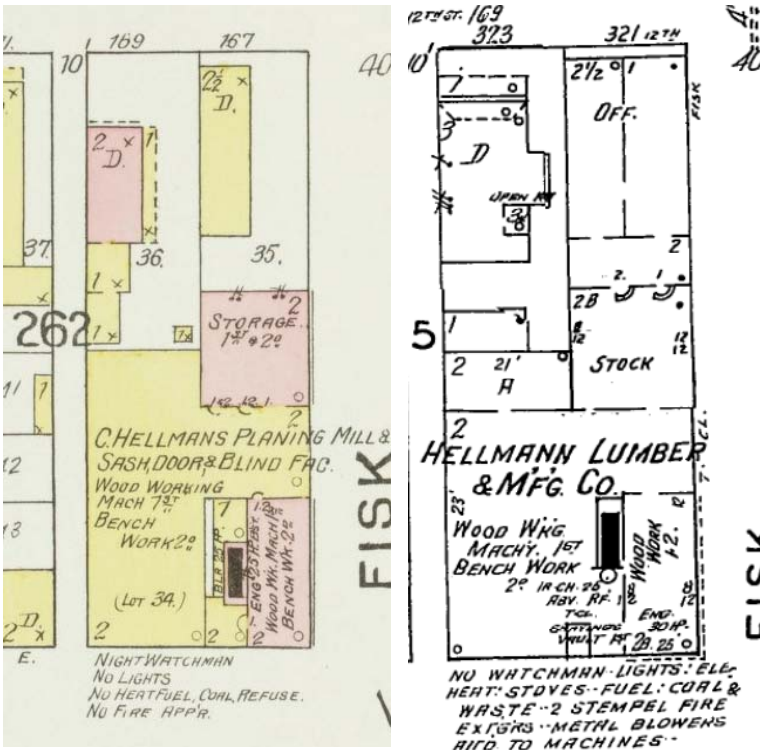

Figure 14: *The 1894 Sanborn, left, shows further development of the property, and the "Frame Special" construction area formerly labeled on the 1886 map as a Carpenter's shop is now noted as storage and coded as masonry. Little has changed in the 1909 depiction (***Figure 15***), but the 1945 mapping at right shows that the house had by then been physically connected to the shop. In both of these maps modern-day 323 West 12th at upper left appears to have been separated from the property.*

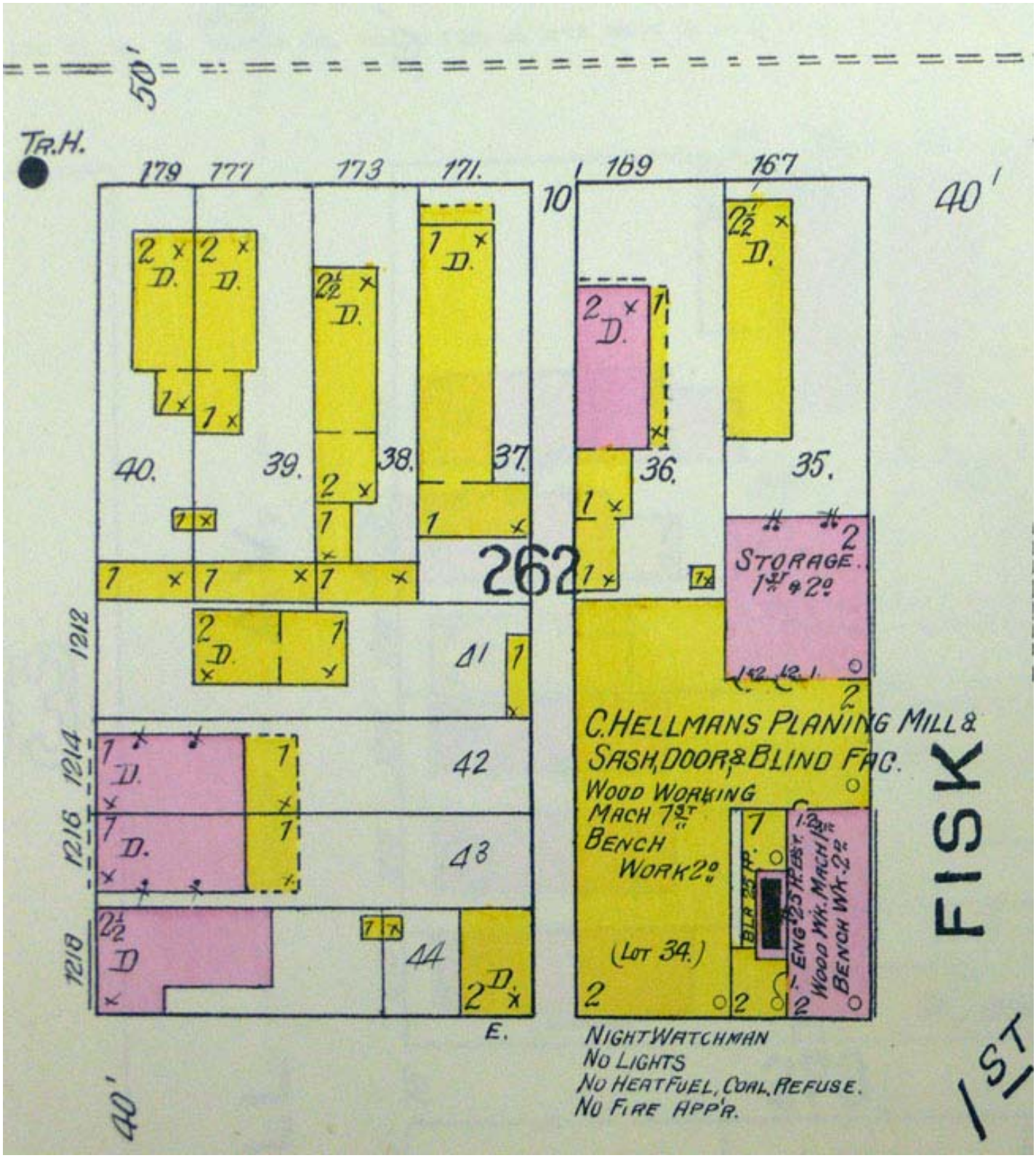

Figure 15: *Detail of the 300 block of west 12th street from the 1909 Sanborn insurance map, showing Ruttle's meat packing company and C. Hellman's Planing mill and surrounding properties. North is at the top of the sheet. The Hellman's Planing Mills were at this point still physically separate from the dwelling at 325 West 12th Street. The vertical black rectangle at lower right indicates a steam boiler according to the map key.*

The large frame section of the building that borders Watkins Street and the unnamed alley is much more utilitarian than the brick shops in appearance, with more random fenestration and a large garage door opening on the back along Watkins Street (Figure 9, at left). It is frame, with weatherboard siding, and sits right along the edge of the unnamed alley (Figure 16). The side of the building facing the alley is also weatherboard, with several 2/2 sash windows on each floor. Following the brick-lined alley leads us to the empty lot beside the house part of the structure. The front (north) wall of the frame shop is stuccoed and perhaps masonry, and has evidence suggesting there was once a single story addition attached to it, possibly just an open storage shed (Figure 18). As we continue through the alley back to 12th Street, we see the large, mostly blank side wall of the townhouse (Figure 19). The two small windows on the ground floor lit modern restrooms inside, and probably were not original. At one time, this side of the house would have been less visible due to the house that stood next door at 323 West 12th Street.

Figure 16: *321 West 12th Street, looking north east at the back of the building along Watkins Street. The unnamed brick alley along the side connects Watkins to 12th Street.*

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Figure 17: *Advertisement for Hellman Lumber & Manufacturing Company, located at 321 West 12th Street, which was 165 West 12th at that time. From* ***Ohio architect, Engineer & Builder*** *volume 28, number 1, July, 1916, 63 (Detroit: Charles E. Shippey).*

Figure 18: *321 West 12th Street, view of the back buildings looking south east from the corner of 12th and the alley.*

Figure 19: *321 West 12th, looking southeast.*

Figure 20: *321 West 12th, looking south.*

We will proceed now to the interior, beginning with the now-lost house portion of the building. A customer entering the front door of the building (Figure 2) would find themselves in a long, narrow hallway (Figure 21, left, Figure 22) which led a larger open area probably used as the public showroom (F in Figure 22, Figure 23). The front door opened awkwardly against a wall that had been inserted to divide a larger space (Figure 21, right). A short distance down the hall from the front door there was a door on the right that opened into a paneled office, possibly that of the receptionist ("E" in Figure 22, Figure 24). This office had a single window facing out onto 12th Street. At the back of this office was a doorway into a small storage room that contained a built-in safe.

Figure 21: *321 West 12th Street, Left: front hall as seen upon entering the main entry at 12th and Fisk; right, front hall looking north toward main door.*

All of these spaces so far – the hallway, showroom, and receptionist's office - were in the single story addition to the original townhouse. Straight through the receptionist's office, a doorway led into the three-story section, where you entered into a sort of hallway with a pair of restrooms straight ahead and a supply closet to the left ("B in Figure 22, Figure 27). This space was once the second room back in the original townhouse, but it had been subdivided in the office renovation. As you entered into this space from the receptionist's office, to the right was a door that opened into the original front room of the townhouse, which appears to have been the head office ("A" in Figure 22, Figure 25, Figure 26). Back into the hallway, past the restrooms and the supply closet, another door at the back opened into a narrow stair hall ("C" in Figure 22; Figure 30, left). On the other side of the stair hall was another office in the back, probably the original kitchen of the house ("D" in Figure 22, Figure 28). The layout of these spaces that occupied the original townhouse part of the building can be seen in the shaded area of the floor plan detail shown in Figure 22.

Below the original house there was a basement which housed utilities and storage (Figure 29). Like many of the neighboring townhouses in the 12th Street area, it had exposed stone foundation walls.

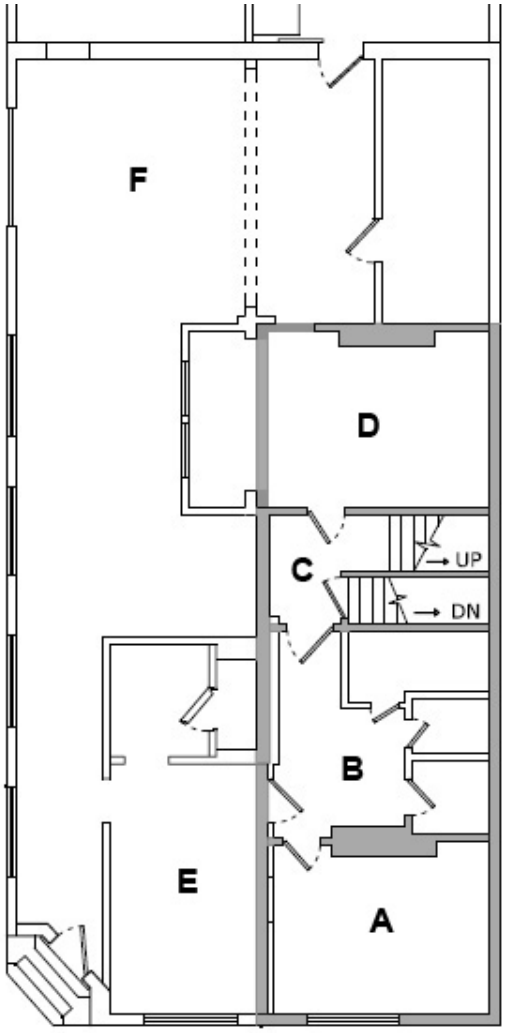

Figure 22: *Detail of floor plan shown in Figure 12. Original house is the shaded area. A: Main Office (Front Room); B Hallway, Restrooms, and Supply Closet (Second Room); C: Stair Hall; D: Office (Kitchen); E: Receptionist's Office; F: Showroom.*

Figure 23: *321 West 12th Street, Interior, front showroom area*

Figure 24: *321 West 12th Street, front receptionist's office. The room through the door at the back held a walk-in safe.*

Figure 25: *321 West 12th Street, front office.*

Figure 26: *321 West 12th Street, front office.*

Figure 27: *321 West 12th Street, first floor rest rooms.*

Figure 28: *321 West 12th Street, first floor, office at back and stairs.*

Figure 29: *321 West 12th Street, basement. The books on the shelf are ledgers from the business.*

The upstairs spaces on the second floor reflected the first floor below with three rooms and a stair hall (Figure 30, right). These rooms were used as offices and workspaces at the time of the documentation. The front room had two windows looking out over 12th Street, and a non-descript interior modernized with fake wood paneling (Figure 31). The second room back was fitted with drafting tables and flat files that included a number of blueprinted house plans (Figure 32 and Figure 33). The third room back was the most interesting of the three architecturally as it retained some visible original interior finish, and it had a large opening out the back looking into the hyphen area joining the house to the shops, with formerly exterior ghost signage still visible (Figure 34). We will move on to discussing the hyphen room as we look at the shops. The third room back had a tiny warming fireplace, signaling its former life as a chamber. It most recently appears to have been used for paint and chemical storage. It had a small closet in the north wall underneath the stair in the adjoining hall (Figure 35 and Figure 37). It retained wallpaper finish, the most recent layer probably early-mid 20th century in vintage (Figure 36).

Figure 30: *321 West 12th Street, stair case. Left: first floor; right: second floor landing, looking south.*

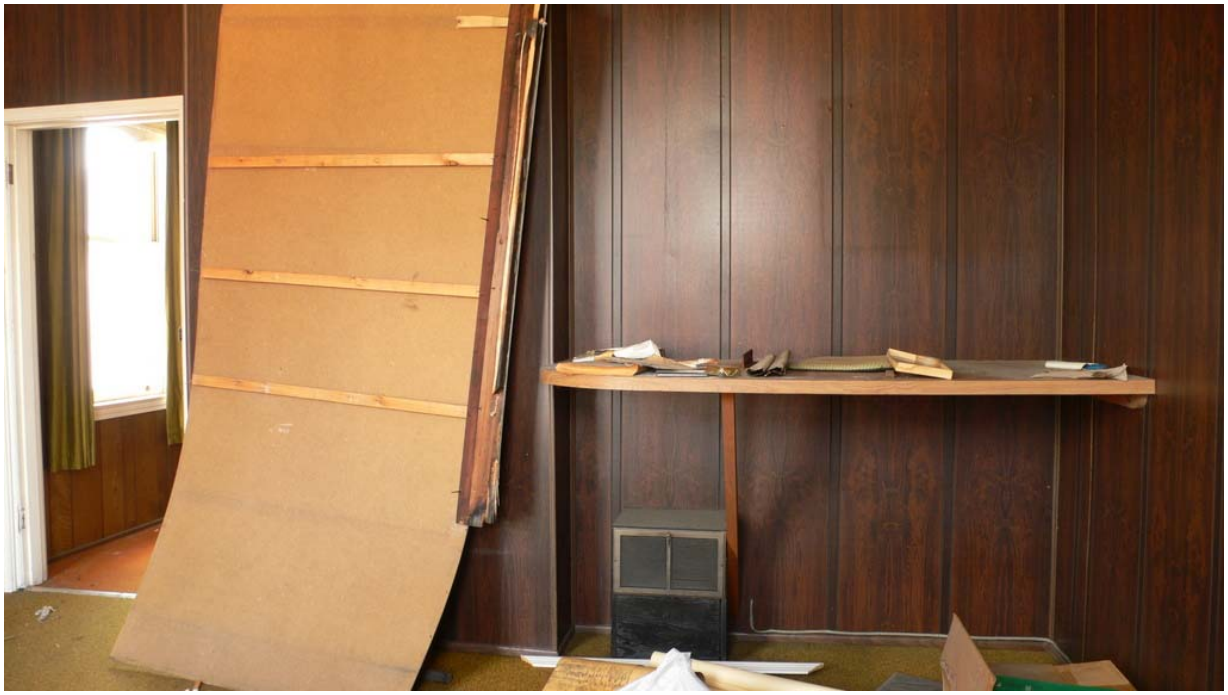

Figure 31: *321 West 12th Street, front room, second floor.*

Figure 32: *321 West 12th Street, middle room, second floor.*

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Figure 33: *321 West 12th Street, one of many blue print packages at the site.*

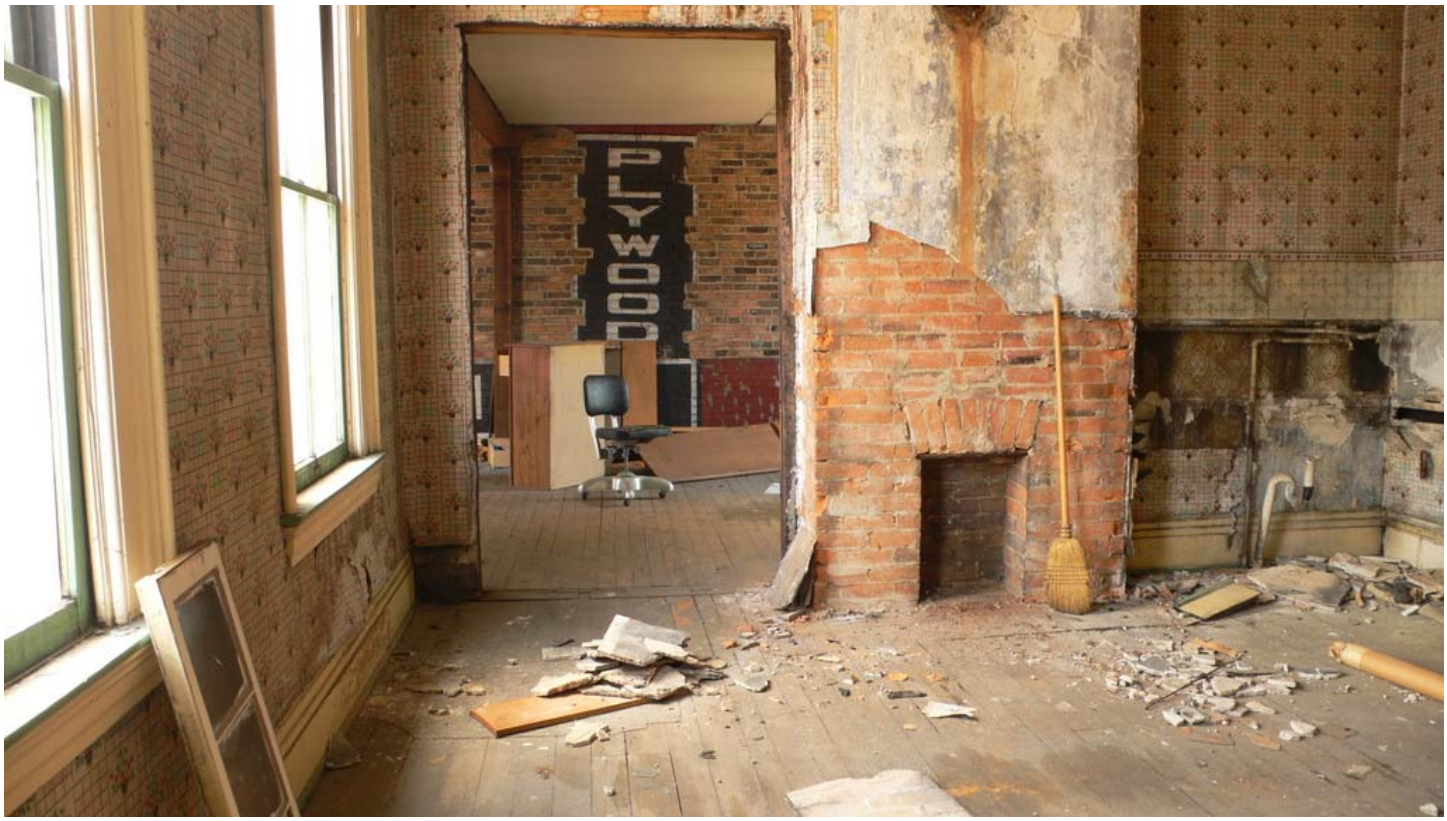

Figure 34: *321 West 12th Street, second floor back room, looking south into the area that connects the house to the shops beyond.*

Figure 35: *321 West 12th Street, second floor back room of the house, looking north. At left is a small closet beneath the staircase.*

Figure 36: *321 West 12th Street, detail of wallpaper in second floor back room of original house section.*

Figure 37: *321 West 12th street, left: interior of under-stair closet in back room, second floor of house. Right: third floor of house looking from front room south into center room.*

Proceeding upstairs to the third floor, it is apparent that the flight of steps between second and third is much more modest and contained than the flight from first to second, although the plainer steps were striking in their workmanship (Figure 38). The rooms on the third floor appeared to have been used for only storage most recently, and they retained early uncovered interior finishes. There was one full room in the center and striking sloping roof garret rooms at each end, with narrow windows at the floor under the cornice outside (Figure 39, Figure 40, Figure 41, and Figure 42).

Figure 38: *321 West 12th Street, detail of stairs to third floor of original house section.*

Figure 39: *321 West 12th Street, Interior for front room, third floor, front garret room.*

Figure 40: *321 Wst 12th Street, third floor center room, looking south west..*

Figure 41: *321 west 12th street, third floor, middle room, looking north toward front of house.*

Figure 42: *321 West 12th Street, third floor, back room garret, looking south.*

Back down on the ground floor, if we exit through the back office of the original house, we enter the hyphenated space that joined the house to the 1880s brick carpenter's shop. The hyphen appeared to be the latest period construction in the complex. At the back was a door that led into the carpenter's shop area, the gable-front brick structure facing Fisk Street. The ground floor space of this section was once open but had been divided into smaller rooms, altered from a shop into a support and storage facility for the newer shops beyond. The door from the now demolished house through the brick wall of the still standing former shop area leads to a narrow ell-shaped corridor, which hugs the outside perimeter of the northeast corner of the 1880s building. The corridor opens into a room in the back that appears to have been used most recently for tasks such as shipping and receiving, first aid, and clean-up (Figure 43 and Figure 44). In front of this room are two modern offices divided from the original shop space along with the corridor to the house area (see plan, Figure 12).

Behind the old carpenter's shop building is the addition containing the newer carpenter's shop. Part of this area is shown built in frame on the 1886 Sanborn map (Figure 13, right). At the corner of Fisk and Watkins is the brick building that held the boiler and engines. The rest of the area between these two brick structures and stretching all the way to the southern edge of the block on Watkins Street is framed open space on two floors. The shops had been cleared of woodworking machinery, but a great number of ducts, belts, and power wheels remained in place at the time of documentation.

Entering this space from the back of the old carpenter's shop, one faces the brick wall of the machine shop ahead, a regular door and a garage door to the left, and the shop floor to the right. A staircase up to the shops above rises against the brick wall of the machine shop (Figure 45). The machine shop itself has a basement level which was not readily accessible at the time of documentation. At the ground level, there was no extant machinery or boiler, but

ductwork and fans survived overhead (Figure 46). The area that once would have been the back wall of the machine shop is open, the roof supporter by large posts. The higher level ground floor of the machine shop is exposed at the open back wall (Figure 47). As we noted in our walk-around of the exterior, there are two large funnel-shaped sheet metal tanks with attached ductwork on top of the building over this shop area (Figure 10). These were part of a system of exhaust and sawdust removal. Recovered sawdust was fed back into the boiler to help power the shop: similar setups are referred to as "Sturtevant exhaust systems" in trade literature of the early twentieth century (Figure 11).[2] The roof system, together with the ductwork and machinery in the shop areas is an important example of early 20th century industry practice that merits preservation and better documentation such as for the Historic American Engineering Record.

From the back of the first floor shop looking forward, one gets a sense of the scale of this operation (Figure 48). While many of the workbenches, and machinery such as saws, drills, and planers had been removed, plenty of workplace artifacts remained at the time of documentation (Figure 49).

The floor above this is a second shop, similarly configured (Figure 50 and Figure 51). Through a large doorway, this space adjoins the second floor of the old carpenter's shop area, which was used for wood storage (Figure 52 and Figure 53). Though this space, we enter back into the hyphen area adjoining the house to the shops (Figure 54 and Figure 55). Here, the originally exterior wall of the old carpenter shop with its painted signage was now an exposed interior wall, making a very interesting architectural space. As mentioned, the house has subsequently been demolished for the 12th Street project, the wall of the old carpenter shop has once again become exterior (Figure 3).

Figure 43: *321 West 12th Street, first floor. This is in the transitional area between the front offices and the shops in the back, the area labeled "storage" in Figure 15.*

[2] A good description of how the system worked is found in "Shavings Exhaust System at the Canadian Pacific Shops" *The Railway Age*, XXXIX #18, May 5, 1905, 720-22, accessed here: http://books.google.com/books?id=_X9NAAAAYAAJ&lpg=PA720&ots=mYO5mrrTVp&dq=planing%20mill%20exhaust&pg=PA720#v=onepage&q=planing%20mill%20exhaust&f=false. More information can be found in *Practical Exhaust and Blow-Piping: a Treatise on the Planning and Installing of Fan-Piping in All its Branches,* by W. H. Hayes (New York: The sheet Metal Publication Company, Second Edition, 1918), 16; accessed here: http://archive.org/details/practicalexhaus00hayegoog.

Figure 44: *321 West 12th Street, first floor. This is in the transitional area between the front offices and the shops in the back, the area labeled "storage" in Figure 15.*

Figure 45: *321 West 12th Street, first floor, carpentry shops, looking south east.*

Figure 46: *321 West 12th St., First floor shop, looking East. Ductwork and exhaust fan for sawdust removal at upper right.*

Figure 47: *321 West 12th Street. Ground floor carpentry shops, looking east into the area where the blast furnace and wood-working machinery is indicated on the map in Figure 15.*

Figure 48: *321 West 12th Street, first floor, carpentry shop area. This is taken from the very back of the building looking north east. The furnace area is to the right.*

Figure 49: *321 West 12th Street, caution signs in saw area.*

Figure 50: *321 West 12th street, second floor wood shops in back, looking west.*

Figure 51: *321 West 12th Street, second floor carpentry shops, looking south west.*

Figure 52: *321 West 12th Street, second floor storage area interior looking south. This is inside the old shop area.*

Figure 53: *321 West 12th Street, second floor, lumber storage area, looking west.*

Figure 54: *321 West 12th Street, second floor, area between house and shops, looking south east. Former exterior wall with bricked in windows and remnants of signage.*

Figure 55: *321 West 12th Street, second floor area between house and shop, looking south, detail of old exterior signage. The room beyond is a lumber storage room seen in Figure 52 and Figure 53.*