



CITY OF LA CROSSE
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Historic Landmark Nomination Form

1. What is the historic name of the Landmark or Landmark District?

THILL & LAPITZ BUILDING

2. What is the current name of the Landmark or Landmark District?(If applicable)

VACANT

3. Property Address: 514 STREET

4. OWNERSHIP

- a. Owner(s): MICHAEL BORGEN - SUB PAR HOLDINGS, LLC
b. Street: 3502 FARNAM ST.
c. City, State, Zip Code: LA CROSSE, WI 54601 Phone: (608) 792 - 8484
d. Email: mborgen@cbdla.com Parcel ID#: 17-20164-10

5. NOMINATED BY (If different):

- a. Name: MARC ZETTLER - PRESERVATION ALLIANCE OF LA CROSSE
b. Street: 119 KING ST.
c. City, State, Zip Code: LA CROSSE, WI 54601 Phone: (608) 784 - 1976
d. Email: preservationalliance@gmail.com

6. CLASSIFICATION AND USE (Check all that apply):

Proposed Designation (choose one)

- Landmark District
[X] Landmark

If it is a Landmark, choose a category (definitions can be found on the instructions page)

- [X] Historic Structure
Historic Site
Historic Object

Present Use

- Agriculture Industrial Religious [X] Commercial VACANT
Military Scientific Educational Museum
Transportation Entertainment Park Government
[X] Private Residence(s) Other
MULTI FAMILY
(2) UNITS VACANT

Condition:

Excellent

Deteriorated

Good

Ruins

Fair

Other

Has the property been nominated previously? Yes No

When? _____

What was the outcome? _____

Is the proposed Landmark or District on the National Register? Yes No

When? _____

7. SIGNIFICANCE:

Section 20.90 of the *Municipal Code of Ordinances* lists 4 criteria that a district, site, structure or object may be designated under.

Please check one or more of the listed criteria that apply to this Property:

Associated with events or person(s) who have made a significant contribution to the history, heritage, or culture of the City of La Crosse, the County of La Crosse, the State of Wisconsin, or the United States.

It embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period, style or method of construction or of indigenous material or craftsmanship.

It is representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual work is significant in the development of the City of La Crosse, the County of La Crosse, the State of Wisconsin, or the United States.

It exemplifies or reflects the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state, or community.

8. HISTORIC OVERVIEW/ANALYSIS (See attached instructions for analysis outline):

Please attach the analysis as a separate document containing the following sections:

A. Existing Physical Description

- a. Write a physical description of the nominated property or district in its current state.
- b. If it has been altered over time, indicate the date(s) and nature of the alterations.
- c. Include additional information as applicable.

B. Narrative History

- a. Provide a complete narrative history of the district, structure, site, or object.
- b. If known, include the year it was built, the architecture style, and the name of the architect or builder.
- c. Include references to source material that are listed in the bibliography.

C. Additional Information

- a. Include any additional information that helps support the claim of criteria (Section 7) made in this document; or is otherwise deemed useful for the purposes of evaluation.

D. Bibliography

- a. Include a list of all sources consulted.
- b. Include copies of relevant source materials with the nomination form.

9. PHOTOGRAPHS:

Include photos, as applicable, of the nominated district, structure, site, or object as follows:

A. Current photographs

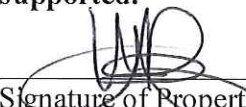
- a. Exterior photographs are required.
- b. Interior photographs if available and relevant to its historic significance.

B. Historic photographs

- a. Interior and exterior if available.

Each photograph must be labeled with the street address of the building(s) and the month and year the photograph was taken.

Designation of property will require affixing a plaque to said property and that the plaque will be the sole property of the City of La Crosse. Signature of the property owner assures the Heritage Preservation Commission that designation and installation of a plaque are supported.



Signature of Property Owner

10/31/2017

Date



Signature of Nominator

10-31-17

Date

When completed, submit application to the City of La Crosse Planning Department, 400 La Crosse Street, La Crosse WI.

PLEASE NOTE: It is the responsibility of the nominator to provide the Heritage Preservation Commission and its Staff with information sufficient to fairly evaluate the nomination. **Incomplete nomination forms will not be accepted. A fee, in the amount stated in the Schedule of Fees and Licenses table in Section 25.01 of the Municipal Code, must be included.**

A. Property Description:

Property Overview:

Current Name: Vacant

Historic Name: Thill and Lapitz Building

Address: 514 State Street, La Crosse, Wisconsin

Description:

514 State Street is a two story brick commercial building which has been clad with stucco scored to look like brick on the front (north) and clad in regular stucco on the alley (west) and rear side (south) facades, likely in the 1940s. It sits between 516 State Street and the alley which extends from State Street south to Main Street. The alley faces the former Elks Club building on the corner of 5th and State Streets. The former city hall once stood directly to the north of this building across State Street. The Thill and Lapitz Building is just outside the boundary of the downtown La Crosse commercial historic district. It is not individually listed, so the building is not currently eligible for any historic tax credits. 514 State Street currently does not have an individual file in the Wisconsin Historical Society's Architectural Historic Inventory (AHI).

The front façade, which faces north, is pressed orange brick which until this summer was completely covered over with stucco. After stucco removal, it was discovered that this brick was gouged to create a better bond for the stucco. The first floor entry door is recessed on the northwest corner and faces west, though the entry door was likely centered on the north facade originally. There is a door to the second floor located on the far east side of the north facade. The extant storefront is a remnant from the 1940s renovation. The storefront featured decorative aluminum covers for the original cast iron columns and once had black Carrara glass at the transom level. The Carrara glass was removed long ago, but the decorative metal was taken down this summer. This revealed the

original cast iron columns still in place. There was also a more modern copper canopy that was removed this summer. This canopy covered the space that was formerly clad by the top band of cararra glass.

The second floor has two pairs of double-hung windows that are located where two separate bay windows once were. Below the windows are plywood panels covering the bottoms of the old bay window openings. The top of the building has a plain parapet. The decorative cornice has been removed.

The parapet from the north façade turns the corner and runs down the west façade for about eight feet, the rest of the façade is clad in stucco. During stucco removal a recessed niche with an arched top was found on the west façade. The first floor has three modern vinyl windows and a larger service door opening that has been downsized to a pair of man doors near the southwest corner. This opening has a segmental arch top. There were at least three high windows on the first floor. These window openings have been stuccoed over, but can be seen from the interior of the building. The second floor has four double hung windows with segmental arch tops, a pair of infill windows at the middle of the façade that were formerly doors to a fire escape and a pair of double hung windows near the southwest corner of the building. All of the windows except the former fire escape doors have limestone lug sills.

The south façade is also completely covered with stucco. There are three doors on the first floor, one in the southwest corner leads directly to the basement, the middle door leads to the first floor and the door in the southeast corner has a transom and leads to the back stair for the second floor. A chimney runs full height at the center of the façade. There is a high vinyl window just to the west of the chimney. The second floor has four equally spaced double

hung windows with segmental arched tops and limestone lug sills below. There are two windows on each side of the chimney. The top of the wall is sloped following the roof line. Most of the east façade is covered by the adjacent building. There are two high windows on the second floor that have steel frames and wire glass.

The roof has a low slope that pitches from west to east. A continuous gutter and two downspouts are located at the top of the west wall.

The interior of the building has been heavily altered over the years. The first floor, which has always been some kind of commercial space, has been vacant for a number of years. Originally this space held the Thill and Lapitz Company which specialized in plumbing, steam and gas fitting. In the 1920's it was converted into automotive use. This is probably when the original wood floor structure was removed and replaced with the current concrete floor structure.

The second story has not been renovated for decades, however it appears to have always been residential in use. The way the plumbing has been retrofitted in these units it would appear as if these units were renovated possibly around the time the first floor use changed in the 1920s. It is unknown if there was always four apartment units on the second floor.

Overall, the historic integrity of the building is fair. The cladding of stucco on the exterior will take a great amount of effort to remove, but it may reveal the outlines of some of the decorative features, such as the cornice and bay windows. It is encouraging to see the limestone lug sills poking through the stucco on many of the second floor windows. The interior has lost most of its integrity on the first floor, but still contains some historic elements on the second floor. The exterior of this building is more

important than the interior historically speaking. This is due to the fact that the interior was never meant to be a major public space. It was another nicely sized commercial space with housing above. The exterior of the building contributes to the street wall as well as the scale of downtown as a whole.

B. Historical Analysis:

Building History:

The building at 514 State Street started out as a two story commercial storefront with second story residential dwelling units. Though an exact construction year was not established, the earliest listing of an occupant in the city directories was 1897. The city water tap records indicate a permit for 512-514 State Street on August 1896. This permit was pulled in the name of Thill and Lapitz. They also signed the permit as the plumbers for the project. In the 1895 city directory Thill and Lapitz had their plumbing business located at 511 Main Street, which would indicate that the building was probably complete or close to being ready to occupy by the time the 1897 directory was published.

The building is a fine example of the 19th Century Commercial Vernacular once common in La Crosse. Since Thill and Lapitz were plumbing contractors it is only natural that they pulled the permit and completed the construction for mechanical and plumbing work. It is not known if this building was completely constructed by Thill and Lapitz, or if they had a general contractor complete portions of the structure. It would be fairly common for a building of this era and size to be constructed without an architect or by a contractor claiming to be an architect/contractor.

Thill and Lapitz Plumbing and Heating Company was located in the building from the 1897 directory until the 1922 directory which lists the first floor as vacant. There were some changes to the company name over the years. In 1911 the directory lists the company name as Thill, Manning and Whalen Company. The name remained unchanged through the rest of their tenure at this location. In 1905 the directory also lists Steve Gilbertson, an Electrical Supply

Contractor at this location. He is listed there until the 1913 directory.

There was a brief period where the first floor was vacant. It was listed as such in both the 1922 and 1924 directories. Starting in 1926 a series of automotive uses moved into the storefront. John M Humpreys was listed as a tire retailer at 510-514 State Street in 1926. The 1928 directory has the Northwestern Tire Company and 1930 lists Theodore E. Frey tire service.

In 1932 we see a slight shift from tire companies to full automotive sales. Fess Motor Sales was listed in 1932 with the Low and Dickson Auto Dealers listed in the 1934 directory. This business stayed at this location until at least 1941.

There is a second plumber's permit for the property on file at the La Crosse Library Archives dated July 5, 1943. The corresponding directory lists the C B Rick Company who were watch dial manufacturers. They are listed at this location until at least 1951.

The Universal Photo Service shared the building with the watch dial company for a few years starting as early as 1948. The 1953 directory lists only Universal Photo in the commercial space. A 1962 newspaper article states that a major remodeling was done for the business in 1955. The business also featured "the first Drive-In Window for Photo Finishing in La Crosse." (La Crosse 1962.) This is one of the three windows facing the alley on the west side of the building. The last listing for Universal Photo is in the 1985 directory. From 1986 until present, the storefront is listed as vacant. The residences above were rented on and off throughout this period.

C. Additional Information:

-It embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen, inherently valuable for a study or a period, style or method of construction or of indigenous material or craftsmanship.

This is a good example of 19th Century vernacular architecture. It had some very ornate detailing making it unique from other buildings of the same era. The structure is load bearing brick walls with a central cast iron column line with wood beam above. This was a more substantial structure than the wood balloon framed commercial buildings with a brick veneer found outside of downtown. The original second floor bay windows would have made a very prominent architectural statement when they faced the former city hall and post office. The original cast iron storefront columns are still in service on the building, but are currently covered by later insensitive remodeling. These columns can be cleaned, painted and exposed as they were originally intended. The storefront also wrapped around the northwest corner of the building to have a single bay facing the alley. This would be highly visible since the building sits on a bend in State Street.

-It exemplifies or reflects the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state, or community.

This building was primarily built to house the business of Thill and Lapitz, a Plumbing and Mechanical Contractor. The rear door leading directly to a basement stair would have made it much easier to haul materials in and out of the basement shop/storage space. The first floor may have had a showroom in the storefront

with shop space behind. This floor also had a large door leading out the back and one facing the alley to make for easy loading of materials. The second floor would have been cheap square footage to build and appears to have always been used for income producing residential apartment units. The building was constructed to be flexible and accommodating to uses beyond the initial contracting business. Perhaps the most unique feature about the building is the substantial concrete floor structure for first floor. Using the existing wood floor structure as formwork for the new concrete structure showed ingenuity and resourcefulness of the people remodeling the building in the 1920's. After the concrete had cured, the old wood floor was then cut out of the building leaving a taller basement space. This remodel allowed the building to be used for automotive purposes which appears to have been the main focus of the northeast corner of downtown in the 1920's and 1930's. The Cameron Motor Car Company was located just around the corner on 6th and State Streets. There was also another car company listed on this block in the city directories.

D. Bibliography:

Bibliography:

City Directories, LaCrosse, Wisconsin. Wright Directory Company, Milwaukee, WI, various, LaCrosse Public Library archives.

Kooiman, Barbara, City of La Crosse Historic Landmark Nomination Form "Wenzel Schubert Meat Market and Residence." June 2017.

La Crosse Tribune. 1962.

Rausch, Joan. City of LaCrosse, Wisconsin, Intensive Survey Report, Architectural and Historical Survey Report. City of La Crosse, Wisconsin, July 1996.

Sanford Fire Insurance Company. Fire Insurance Maps for La Crosse, Wisconsin. 1884, 1887, 1891, 1906, 1944, 1954. Located on microfilm at the La Crosse Public Library archives.

Historic photograph ca. 1960, archived at La Crosse Public Library Main Branch, Archives.

Historic photographs, archived at University of Wisconsin – La Crosse, Murphy Library Special Collections.

E. Sanborn Insurance Maps:

514 State Street

La Crosse, WI

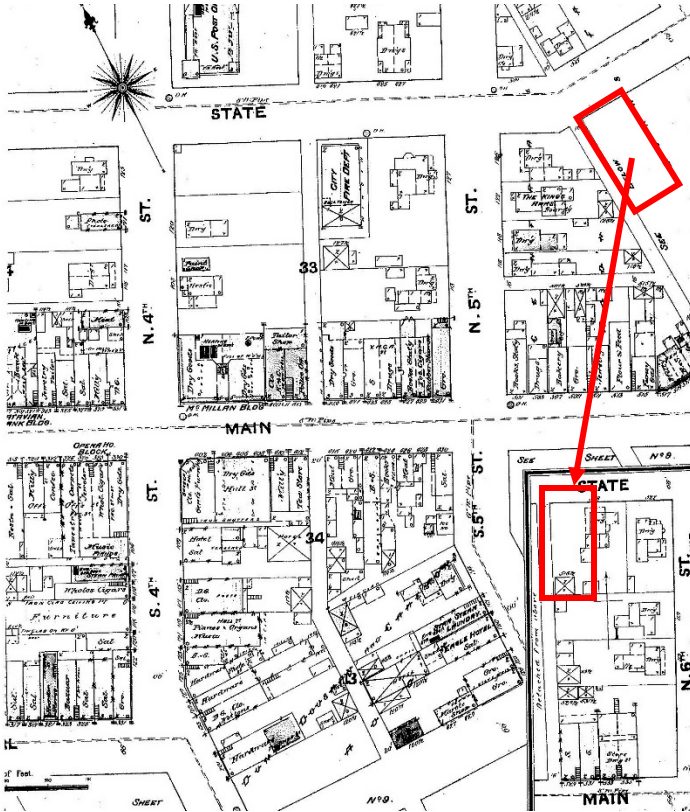


Figure 1 – 1891 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, City of La Crosse, WI. (No building shown)



Figure 2 – 1906 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, City of La Crosse, WI. (Masonry building shown – 2 stories)



Figure 3 – 1944 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, City of La Crosse, WI.

F. Historic Building Photos:

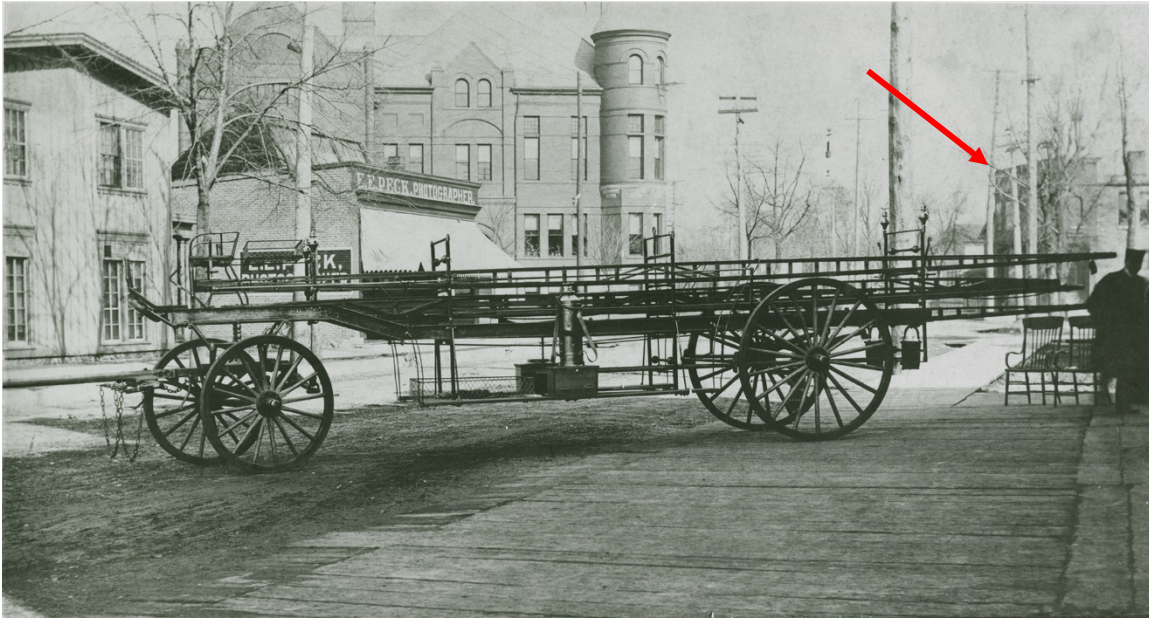


Figure 4 – View looking east from the 400 block of State Street. Circa 1896-1930. Courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.



Figure 5 – View looking east from the corner of 5th and State Street. Circa 1907-1944. Courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.

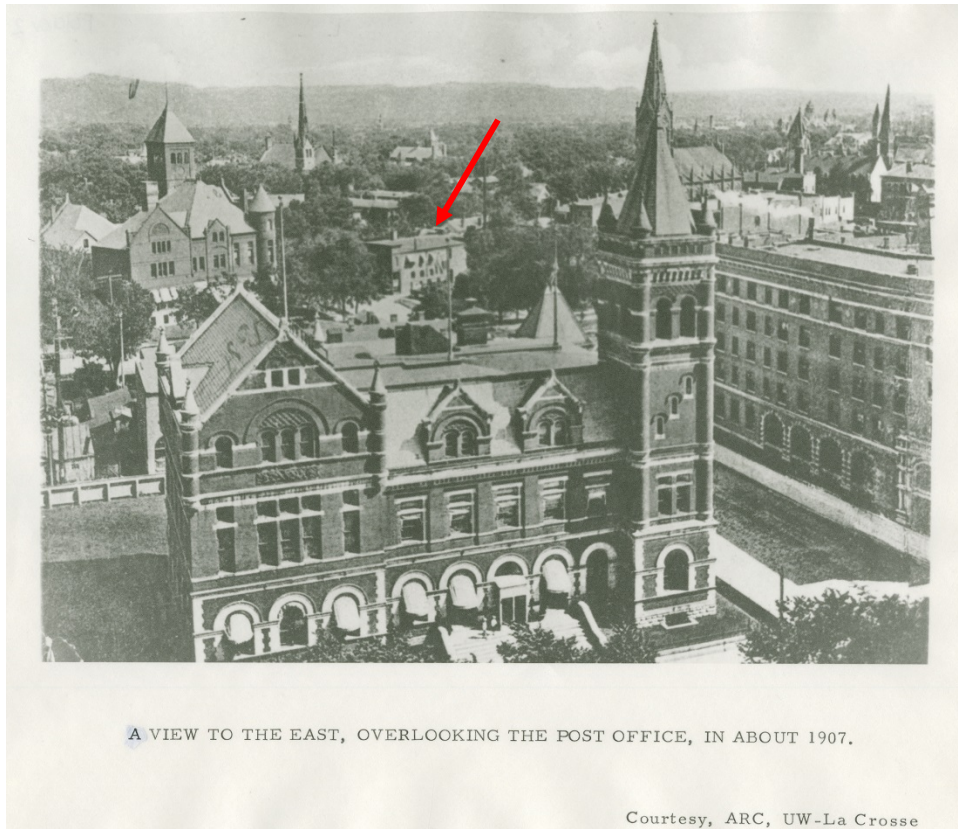


Figure 6 – View looking east from the old courthouse square. Circa 1907. Courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.

La Crosse Public Library Archives
MS 125 La Crosse, Wis - Business
200-029 Howard W. Calvin
514 State St.
Universal Photo Service

Photo circa 1960

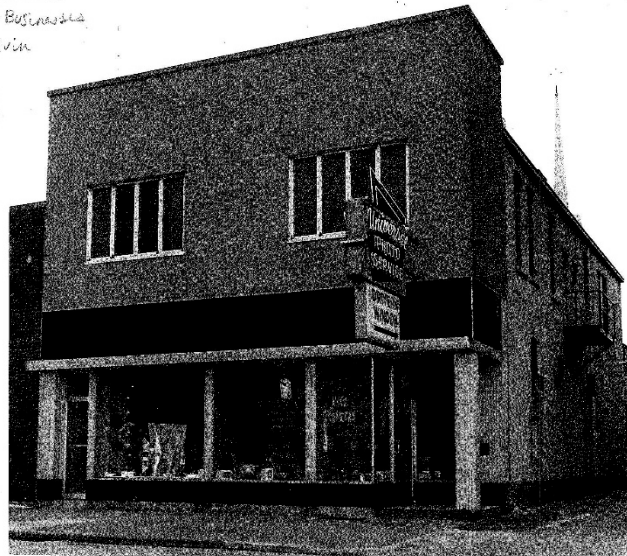


Figure 7 – View of 514 State Street looking south. Circa 1960. Photo courtesy of the La Crosse Public Library Archives.



Figure 8 – View of 514 State Street looking southeast. Circa 1960-1985. Courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.

G. Current Building Photos:



Figure 9 – North (Front) façade of 514 State Street. January 2017.



Figure 10 – Alley west of 514 State Street. January 2017.



Figure 11 – South façade of 514 State Street. January 2017.



Figure 12 – Back lot to the south of 514 State Street. January 2017.



Figure 13 – Detail of modern storefront. January 2017.



Figure 14 – West façade of 514 State Street. January 2017.



Figure 15 – Infilled historic window on west façade above former drive thru. January 2017.



Figure 16 – Concrete columns and slab in basement. January 2017.



Figure 17 – Wood floor framing below stair to second floor. January 2017.



Figure 18 – Remnants of old wood floor joists below current concrete floor slab. January 2017.



Figure 19 – Decorative scored plaster work on first floor. January 2017.



Figure 20 – Compromised structure (missing column) on first floor. January 2017.



Figure 21 – First floor looking south. January 2017.



Figure 22 – Remnants of beadboard ceiling, first floor. January 2017.



Figure 23 – Typical second floor restroom. January 2017.

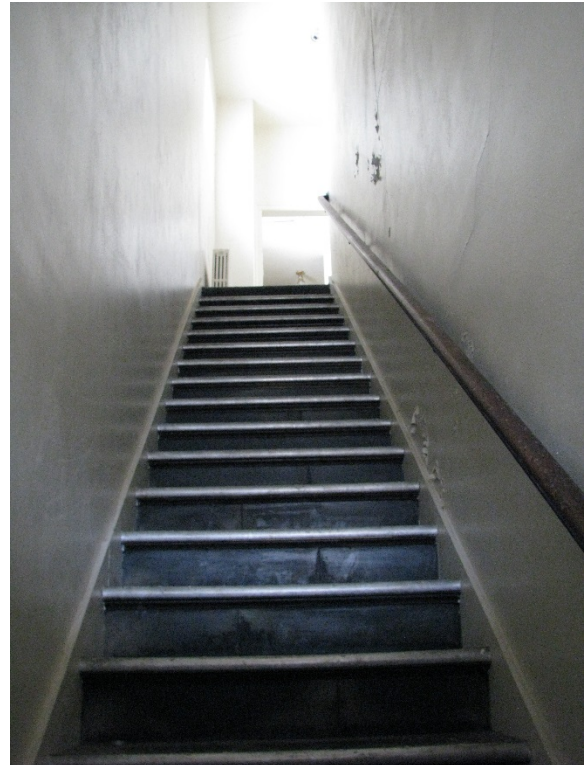


Figure 24 – Front stairs to second floor. January 2017.



Figure 25 – Apartment entry door hardware. January 2017.



Figure 26 – Apartment entry door. January 2017.



Figure 27 – Typical second floor restroom. January 2017.



Figure 28 – Typical second floor kitchen & entry hall. January 2017.



Figure 29 – North (Front) façade after stucco removal. September 2017.



Figure 30 – Detail of bay window remnants. September 2017.



Figure 31 – Test patch of brick restoration treatment. September 2017.



Figure 32 – Original cast iron storefront column. July 2017.