

CITY OF LA CROSSE HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Historic Landmark Nomination Form

1. W	hat is the historic	name of the Landn	nark or Landmar	k District?
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		0		
2. W	hat is the current	name of the Landn	nark or Landmar	k District?(If applicable)
East &	Edge of Do	centoun- a	crossfrom	Carthedral
3. Pr	operty Address:	529 May	n St. Ja	Crosse Wi 5460
4. OV	WNERSHIP	0		
	Owner(s):	Propertie	5 hh	
b.	Street: 525	Hain ST.	11.5/101-	
c.	City, State, Zip Coo	de: La Crosse	Phone: (608) 782-9680
d.	Email: Kay@	pmcmgmt.	COM Parcel ID#.	
5. NO	MINATED BY (If o	different):		
a.	Name:			
b.	Street:			
c.	City, State, Zip Coo	le:	Phone: (<u> </u>
d.	Email:			
	ASSIFICATION AN oposed Designation	ID USE (Check all the (choose one)	nat apply):	
X	Landmark District Landmark			
If i	t is a Landmark, choo	ose a category (definition	s can be found on the i	nstructions page)
_1	Historic Structure	Historic Site	Historic	Object
Pro	esent Use	2		
	Agriculture Military Transportation Private Residence(s)	Industrial Scientific Entertainment Other	Religious Educational Park	Commercial Museum Government

Condition:
ExcellentDeteriorated GoodRuins FairOther
Has the property been nominated previously? Yes XNo
When?
What was the outcome?
Is the proposed Landmark or District on the National Register? Yes XNo
When?
7. SIGNIFICANCE:
Section 20.90 of the <i>Municipal Code of Ordinances</i> 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
 - 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

2/15/2023

100

Date Date

Signature of Nominator

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

<u>PLEASE NOTE</u>: 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.

Exibit A.

Noelke Building

529 Main St.

La Crosse, Wi

The Noelke Building was constructed in 1879. It measures 22.5 feet wide and 84 feet long. The basement is original stone. The first floor has a dropped acoustic tile ceiling, but the original tin plate ceiling is still there 3 feet above the current ceiling. Carpet now covers the wood floor on the first floor, and in the second floor front room. But the 2nd and 3rd floors have the original wood floors.

The second floor interior features beautiful and original woodwork, done by a local La Crosse firm,:

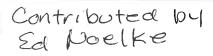
The third floor added shortly after 1900, is large rooms, for workers to rent. At the same time the 3rd floor was added, the front of the building was changed to reflect Chicago Stone look. The rooms were last occupied in 1964. The wood work there remains original, with one exception, a door for storage.

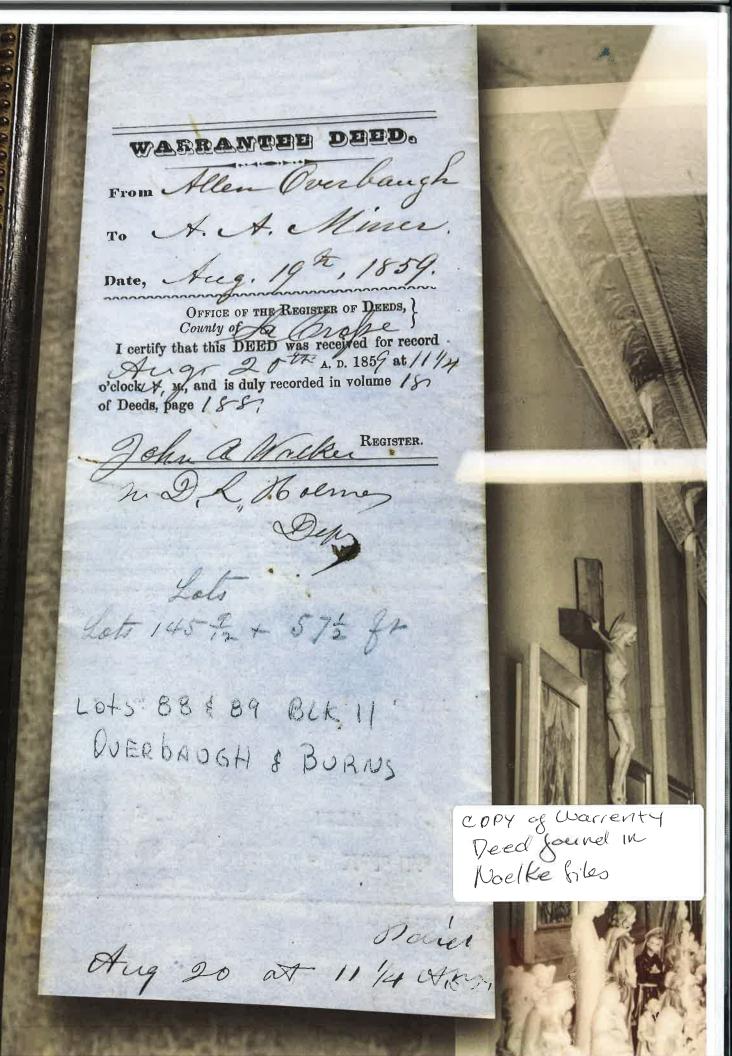
The surprise of the building is a skylight, underwraps for the past few years due to leaking issues. The 3 rd floor features windows that look out into the skylight. The bottom of the skylight is a ceiling on the second floor.

The front of the building was altered (again) in 1962, along with the first floor commercial area, to reflect the "modern" commercial look. It was featured in the December 1963 magazine, "Today's Business". The first floor still retains those updates.

The Noelke's started their business in 1883. They have always sold religious goods, but realized they needed to sell other things to stay in business. Over the years they have sold stationery, books, fancy goods, blank books, pianos, wallpaper (which is still present on the 2nd and 3rd floors) sheet music, school supplies and record players or as they were known at the time: Victrolas. Today they specialize in all sorts of religious goods, books, vestments, candles, cards, childrens books, rosaries and first communion gifts. The Noelkes sold the business in August of 2019 to Stempers out of Milwaukee. They are still selling religious goods to La Crosse area citizens.

The sale of the business and building mark the end of the longest family owned business in La Crosse WI. For the past 136 years 529 (531) Main has remained in the Noelke family. The new buyers plan to preserve as much of the history of the building as they can.





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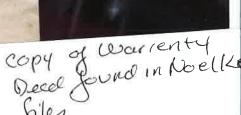
STATIONERS, RULERS AND BINDERS,

Main Street, La Crosse, Wis.

La Crosse Republican Steam Print.

Mark 17/12 m.





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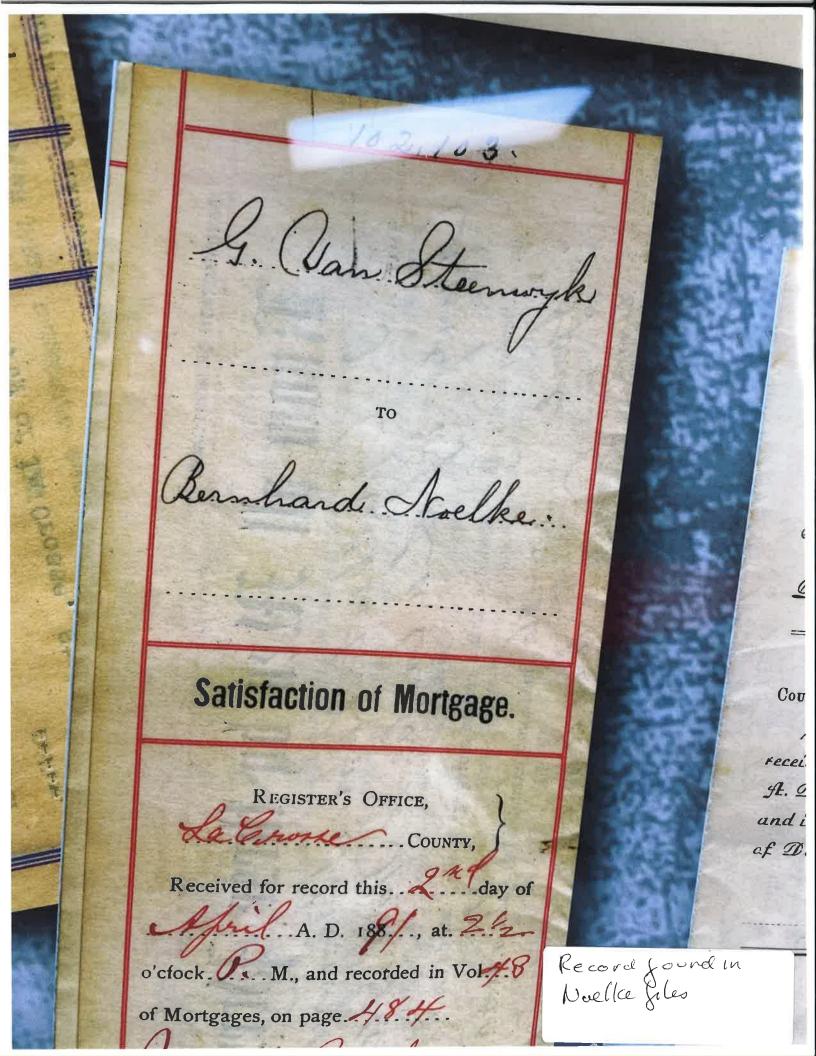
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Register of Deads, Notary Public, Conveyancer and Abstracter,

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WERE FROM THE
BOOK "GROWING
UP NOELKE" BY
THE LATE
SUSAN HESSEL

Growing up Noelke

THESE ARE THE HISTORICAL PHOTOS WE HAVE.

Creating the Carl B. Noelke Company



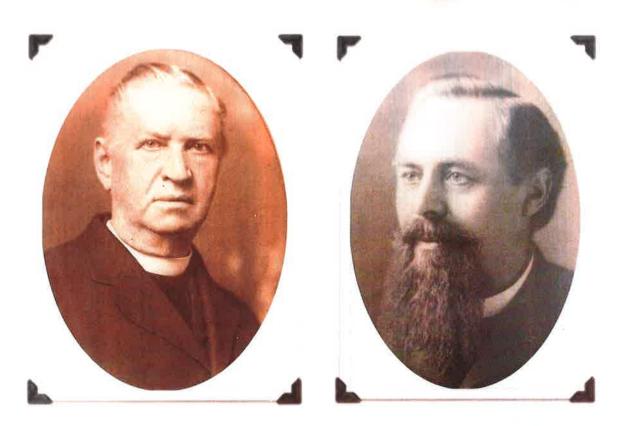
The store, which can be seen on the right, made its deliveries in the 1890s by horse and wagon.

people who made their living related to the Mississippi River and lumbering. La Crosse already had at least four breweries by that time and saloons aplenty to serve the local brews.

La Crosse's mercantile district had wooden sidewalks and while Main Street was paved in the 1860s with macadam – broken stone quarried from the bluffs that lined the city – that improvement stretched only to Fifth Street. That meant the Noelke store at Fifth and Main Streets and the Cathedral across the street were just west of where the paving ended.

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An 1887 invoice for the Bernhard Noelke Stationery, Books and Fancy Goods store.



Above left, Father Joseph Wiedmann, rector of St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral in La Crosse and brother of both Lisette and Anna Noelke. Above right, the bearded Bernhard Noelke, founder of the Noelke company.

To keep unpaved roads passable, layers of sawdust – which La Crosse had in abundance because of its many sawmills – were thrown down on streets. That may be a reason images in photos of Bernhard and Carl in front of their store appeared so dusty.

As Steve Kerbaugh noted, immigration records were imperfect at the time the Noelkes came to La Crosse, but the city in 1883 had a good share of its citizenry born in other countries, mostly European. The largest immigrant group came from Germany with the greatest influx from 1840 to 1850, long before the immigration of the Noelke family. The 1905 census showed 41 percent of the foreign born people of La Crosse were from Germany, or about 3,977 of the 9,516 people who were immigrants to this country. 6 And most Germans were Catholic.

Having worked in the office of that mine in Germany, Bernhard was not suited to the rough and tumble jobs in lumbering or brewing that employed many of his compatriots.

Nor was he an artisan with skills in woodworking that would make the magnificent and nationally known church altars of the E. Hackner Company in La Crosse.

WALL PAPER

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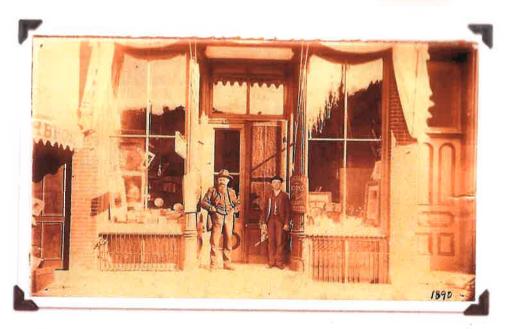
This 1902 view of the store shows wallpaper was one of the products sold by the Noelkes. Carl and an unknown man can be seen in front of the store.

As Ned heard the story, his grandfather was looking for a product to sell. He then asked his brother in law, Father Joseph Wiedmann, rector of the Cathedral, whether a religious goods store could be successful. "VVe need one, but don't think your faith will be strengthened by dealing with the clergy," the rector told him. Father Wiedmann's comment reflected upon the powerful role of the clergy in the late 19th century. A priest's word then was taken as if straight from God.

"Some clergy were hard to deal with," Ned admitted. "Some of the old

priests were pretty dictatorial. They are a lot better today, a lot more relaxed. In the old days they were authoritarian. What they said went."

So Bernhard began selling religious items in 1883 in a storefront he purchased facing the cathedral, naming the shop for his son, Carl B. Noelke. A late 19th century photo showed Carl and an unknown man standing in front of the store near a sign bearing the words, Carl B. Noelke Books, Church Goods & Religious Articles.



This 1890 photo shows Bernhard and Carl in front of the store.

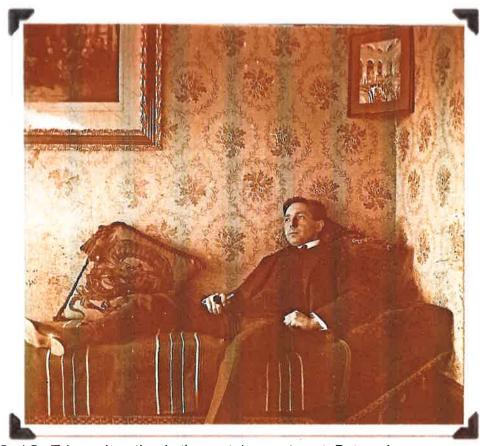
Their trade included crucifixes, candles, Bibles, prayer books and rosaries for the laity. "Later on, we got involved with church supplies," Ned said, "like chalices, vestments, that type of thing. They were things that the church could use or priests wore, which they still do of course."

Also sold were many copies of the Latin Breviary, a book of prayers to be read every day. It included public or canonical prayers, hymns, Psalms, readings and other notes of everyday use by the clergy. In the early days it was always in Latin. 7 "There was no English as far as the clergy was concerned at that time," Ned said. "We still sell breviaries, but everything is in English."

Today, the word breviary refers to any abridged version of any text, a brief account or a summary of some subject, but is primarily used to refer to the Catholic liturgical book. In general, the Breviary refers to a collection and/or order of Christian prayers and readings, including in Anglican or Lutheran churches.

The Noelkes were not afraid to self other goods over the years, including school supplies. Bernhard and Anna also sold items for a more general audience, including stationery, pictures and wallpaper:

course. That was before my day."



Carl Sr. Takes a breather in the upstairs apartment. Date unknown.

The third floor of the Noelke building was much plainer in design since it was meant for renters, not the family.

Single people – men in the early days – rented a single room on the third floor. They cooked their meals on a hot plate or a little stove, or went out for dinner.

"My grandmother would have no women and no married people, of course," Ned recalled. "And she ran a tight ship. She didn't want any hanky-panky going on, bringing up ladies, that sort of things. She would check on them. They all had to go past where she lived to get to the third floor. She kept good tabs on them."

Door numbers remain on the third floor rooms, which today are used for storage. Also on the second floor is the old wooden desk that Father Wiedmann had used at the Cathedral. Jane Kerbaugh, Ned's daughter, said the desk went untouched for many years. "I found two little crystal knife rests from the 19th Century that had not been touched. I don't think anybody knew they were there," she said. Also found in that desk were photos of the early Cathedral, including its construction, a reflection of how deeply connected the Noelkes were with that seat of the Diocese of La Crosse.





Carl was a college man at St. John University's in Collegeville, Minnesota, when his father died in 1892. Carl, shown with a cigar, helped his mother, but finished college before returning home to take over the business



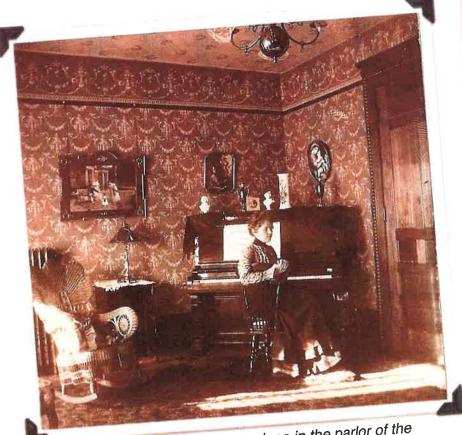
1895 advertisements in the La Crosse Chronicle showed Carl Noelke was selling bloycles. These ads were discovered by the late Robert Funk, a neighbor in business on Main Street in downtown La Crosse who was very active in the La Crosse County Historical Society. They ads also reflect the willingness of Carl to offer new products.

Music was in Carl's soul

With tremendous musical talent, Carl B. brought a new dimension into the store after he returned from college and began running Noelke's with his mother. Carl began selling pianos and sheet music and later records in the store. This was a smart marketing move in an era before radio when a piano in the parlor was the centerpiece for home entertainment.

"He sold many kinds of pianos, player pianos for homes, grand pianos," Ned recalled."One of his most outstanding sales was to Albert Funk, Sr. [a founder of the La Crosse Rubber Mills]. He ordered a gorgeous, woodcarved grand piano specifically made for him, a Mason & Hamlin Louis XV."

The Albert Funk purchase was



Augusta, Carl's half sister, at the piano in the parlor of the upstairs apartment over the store.

book, which showed a purchase of the Louis XV for \$9,500, an extraordinary amount of noted in Carl's ledger money in 1927. That \$9,500 would be equal to \$113,399.48 in 2007 dollars, according to Measuring Worth, which offers Six Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1774 to Present.9

This was a very impressive plano. Such artists as Planist Sergel Rachmaninoff, Composer Maurice Ravel, and opera singer Anna Case and American violinist Yehudi

Growing up Noelke

all endorsed Mason & pianos. According to a history, "With Mason innovations, use of finest materials and craftsmanship, its pianos world's costliest to and widely accepted as evends finest."10 Funk, M. [most 🚃 Mchael] Funk, bought a modest \$907 piano in aso paying in cash. edger book is a of La Crosse. early La Crosse einfelder, Erec Hixon.

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unusual electrical reproducing system. "You put the roll in and it would play. You wouldn't have to pump it like you did in the old days," Ned said.

Many people, particularly those with more limited incomes, purchased \$300 upright pianos over time, making \$10 or \$25 payments monthly or every few weeks. The ledger included occasional notations about repossessed pianos.

Also listed were pianos rented for special occasions, such as an occasion when the nurses of the La Crosse Hospital borrowed one in 1905. The cartage (delivery) of the \$200 piano was listed as \$1.50. Also purchasing a \$950 Steinway was St. Rose convent in 1910 and the Knights of Columbus a \$250 piano in 1917.

It wasn't all pianos. The Victor Talking Phonograph Company produced a musicplaying Victrola, beginning in 1901. Its famous Victor Victrola marketing featured a dog listening to music coming out of the external horn of the Victrola.

Carl sold the Victrola to such customers as La Crosse County Judge James Higbee, who purchased a top of the line Victrola in 1912 for \$200 plus an assortment of records for another \$16.95. Josephine Hintgen, for whom an elementary school was later named in La Crosse, bought a more modest \$100 Victor Victrola.

Pianos were displayed in an annex showroom where Carl was always eager to demonstrate the sound quality by playing a certain tune that was quite popular at the time, "Cupid's Garden."

Ned heard about that sheet music years later when he was expected to learn the piece during piano lessons that he took from his cousin next door, Ella Neuhs. She was something else as a piano teacher in La Crosse having trained for four years her graduation from La Crosse High School. Leschetizky was a world-renowned

under Theodore Leschetizky in Vienna, Austria, after

Carl B. Noelke

531 MAIN STREET

PIANOS VICTOR TALKING MACHINES

And the Choicest Records FINE SOCIETY STATIONERY School Supplies, Pictures and Picture Framing LA CROSSE :: WISCONSIN

This 1911 advertisement was in The Racquet, the student newspaper at the La Crosse Normal School (now the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse)

allowin study leave study characteristics.

allowing her to spend that time in Europe studying piano that she vowed to never leave again. Instead she taught piano to students who included the Noelke children. Her mother, Mary, bought several pianos from Carl over the years, including a Steinway, still considered among the best in the world.

"I took lessons from her. We all did. When I took lessons from her, she gave me this piece of music and said, 'Ned, your father sold many a piano by just playing this number,'" Ned

recalled.

The song was Max C. Eugene's "Cupid's Garden," first published in 1901. Bert Timoney's lyrics were:

"There is a bower where fair flowers grow, Cupid's Garden, Violets, lilies roses flourish there; stray'd to that glade, once a love-lorn youth said, 'Cupid, pardon! One of your beautiful roses give to me." violets small and tender Lilies tall and slender, Roses that engender Love, bloom there; Woo'd by men they're taken, Oft to sadly waken, Lone, betray'd, for-saken in de-spair."

"Here's an American Beauty for thee," Cupid answered. "Nev-er for gold are they sold, but Ere we part, you, Sir, must swear you will guard it with care, walking, sleeping, and as abond in my keep — ing Leave your heart." "For your heart, in token of your pledges spok-en, I re-tain, and broken it shall me; By my mag-ic pow-er, if you harm this flow-er, Take-en from my bow-er, Dear to me."

"Every once in a while the two families would have a mad on. They didn't talk to each other for a while," Ned recalled. "At one time my aunt was so angry at my dad that she threw a bucket of water on him when he was going into the piano annex with a customer."

That was enough for Carl. He quickly had his two buildings joined with brick walls and a roof overhead to keep out any errant or unexpected buckets of water.

"I don't know what caused this, but they were quite volatile," Ned said of his emotional but talented relatives. He then added both his father and Ella were accomplished musicians.

Because of his love of classical music, Carl brought in opera singers to perform in La Crosse. He was particularly proud of a concert he arranged with soprano Johanna Gadski in May 1908.

Born in Prussia, Wagnerian soprano Gadski was a "major operatic figure. Her career was international in scope, but was focused in the United States during the first quarter of the century. She was neither a flamboyant personality nor a great beauty," wrote Harold Brude in liner notes for *The Complete Johanna Gadski: Volume 1*, which was issued in 1997 from her nearly 100 Victor Talking machine recordings from 1903 to 1909. 12



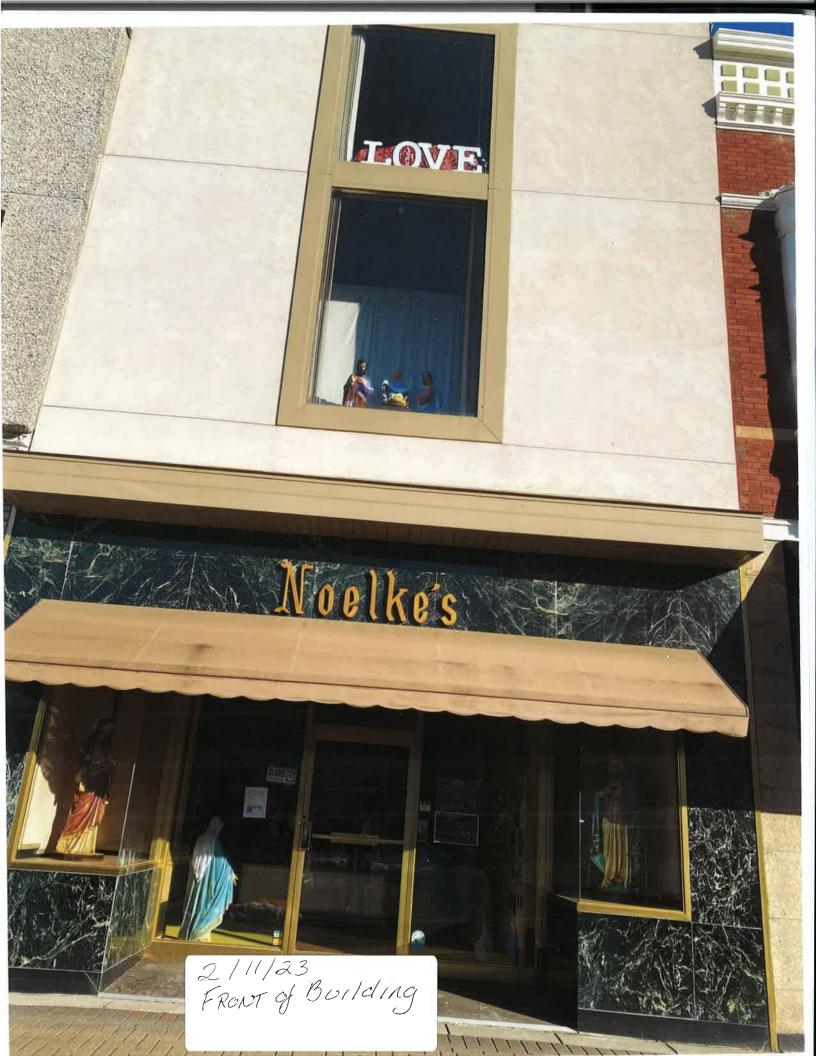
Carl B. Noelke

Although Carl B. could be seen at his father's side in those early photos and undoubtedly helped him as a boy growing up, Anna became the store's owner/manager after Bernhard's death in 1892 while her son completed studies at Saint John's College in Collegeville, Minnesota. It was unusual then for women to run a business, but Anna was not the only one to do so in La Crosse. Johanna Heileman, widow of Gottlieb Heileman, became president of the G. Heileman Brewing Company in 1878, making her one of the first female CEOs in the country until her own death in 1917 at age 85.

Anna made important decisions, including adding a third floor on the store. Until then, family members stayed on the second floor, which had beautiful woodwork in keeping with the building styles of the time. Not only did the third-floor addition give the family more breathing room, it allowed income from the room rentals.











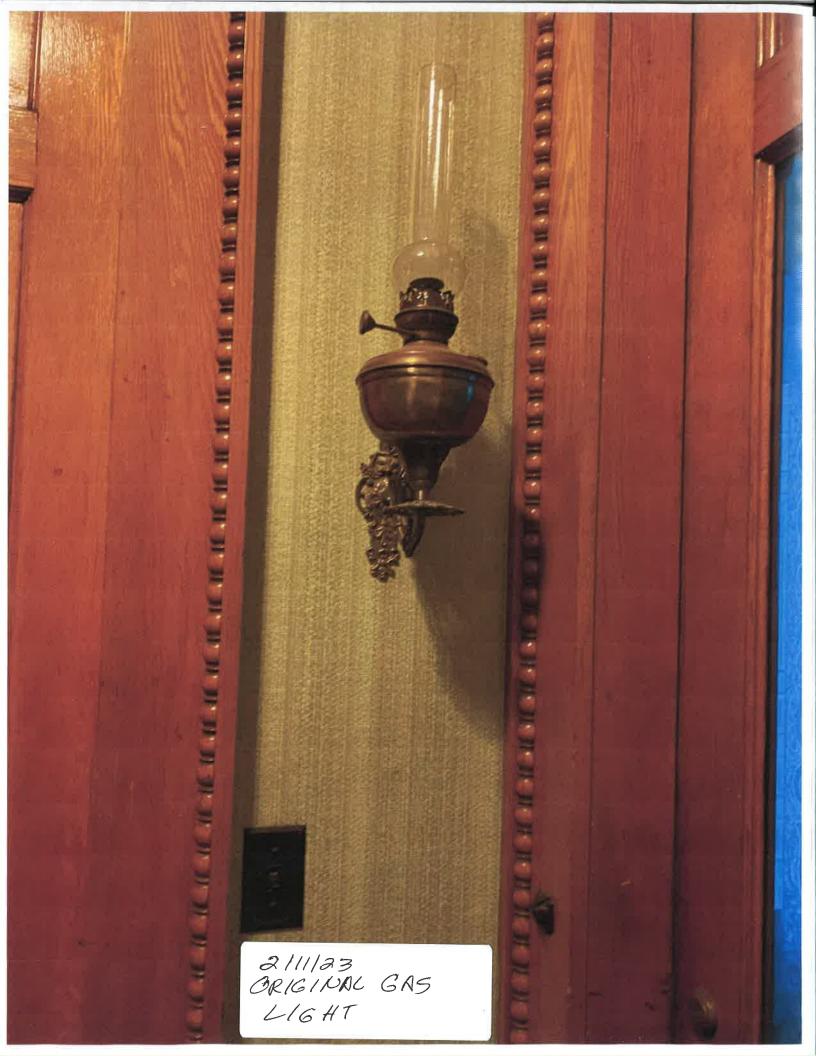
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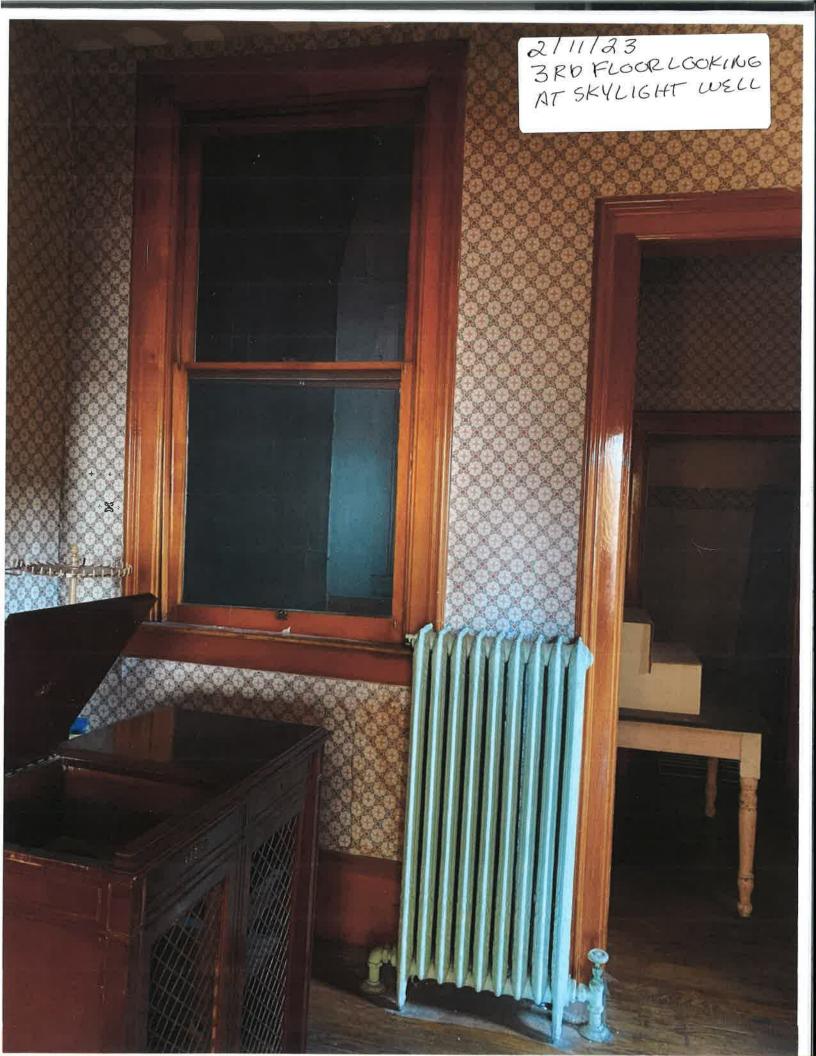


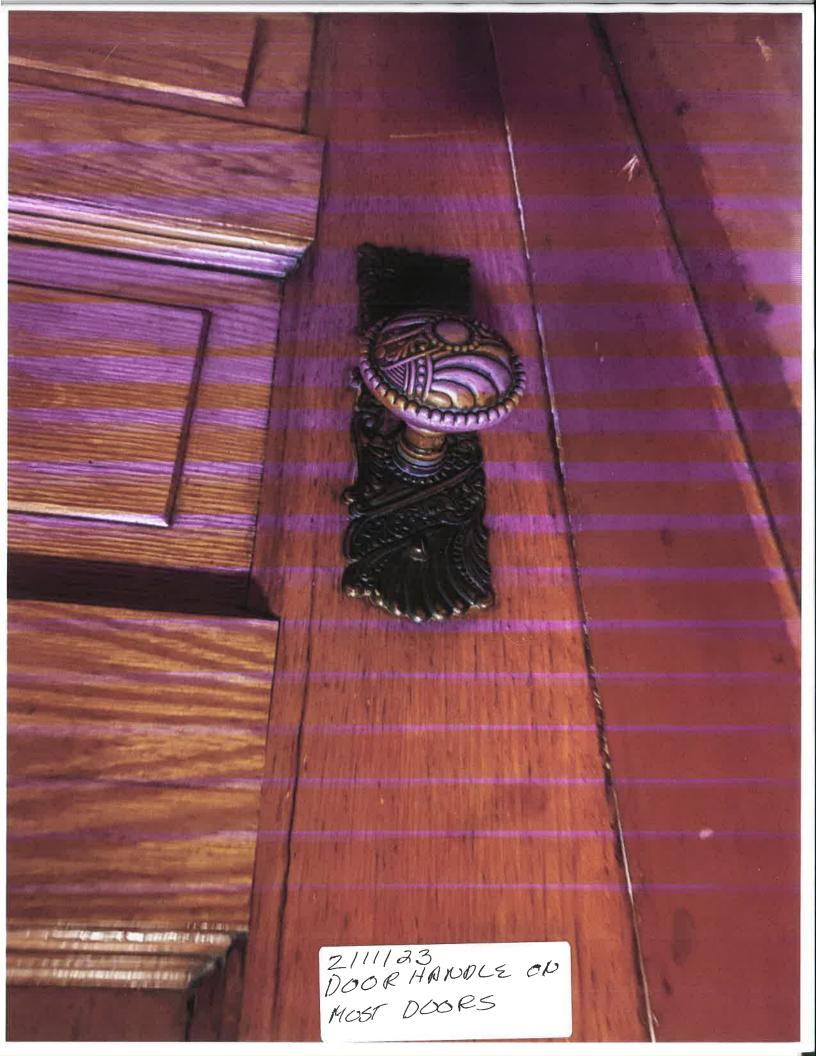


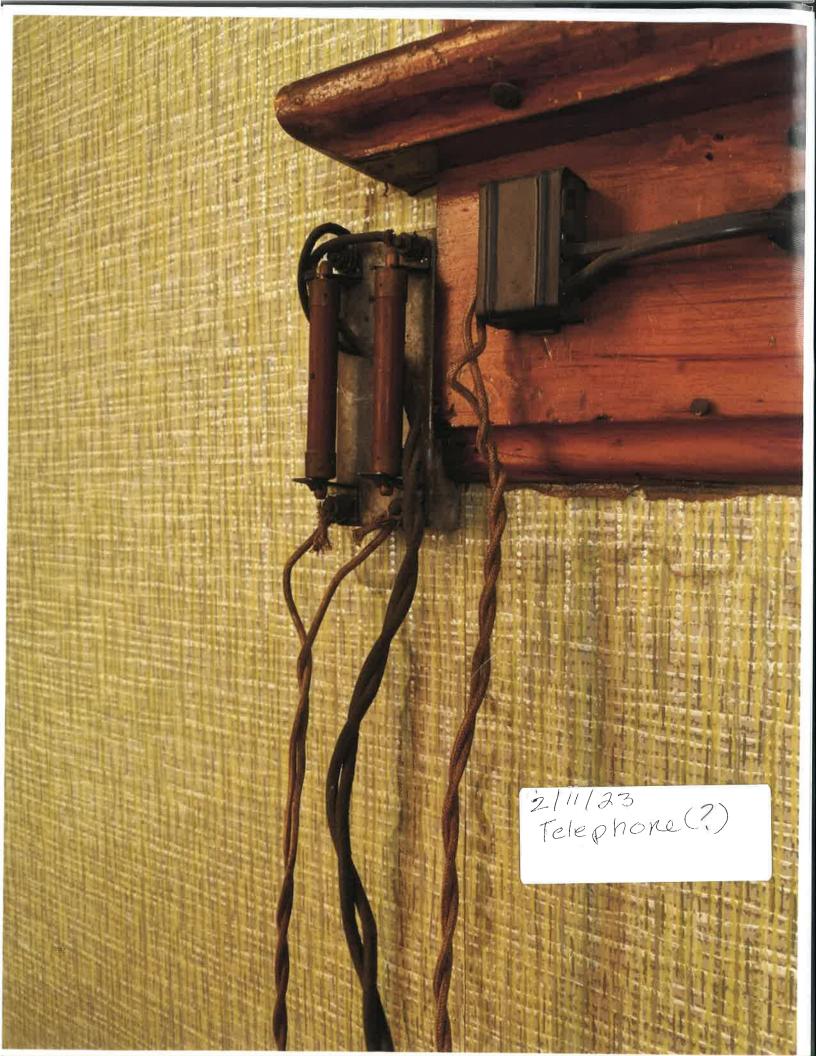


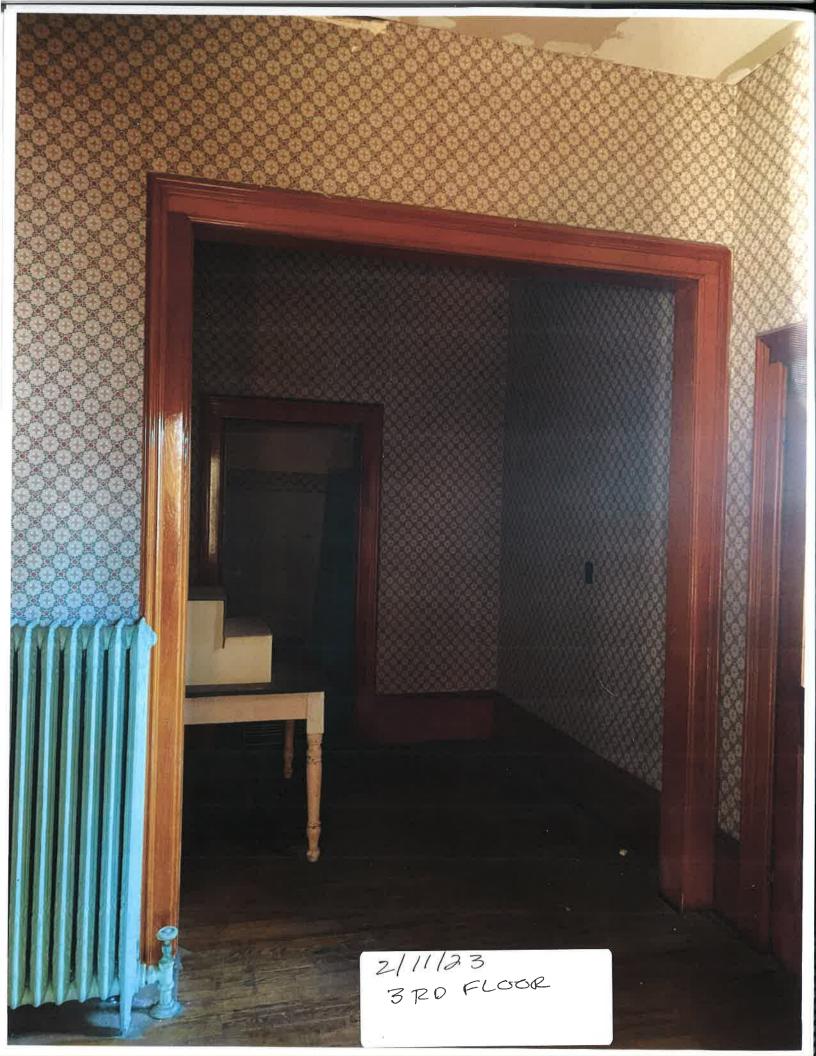


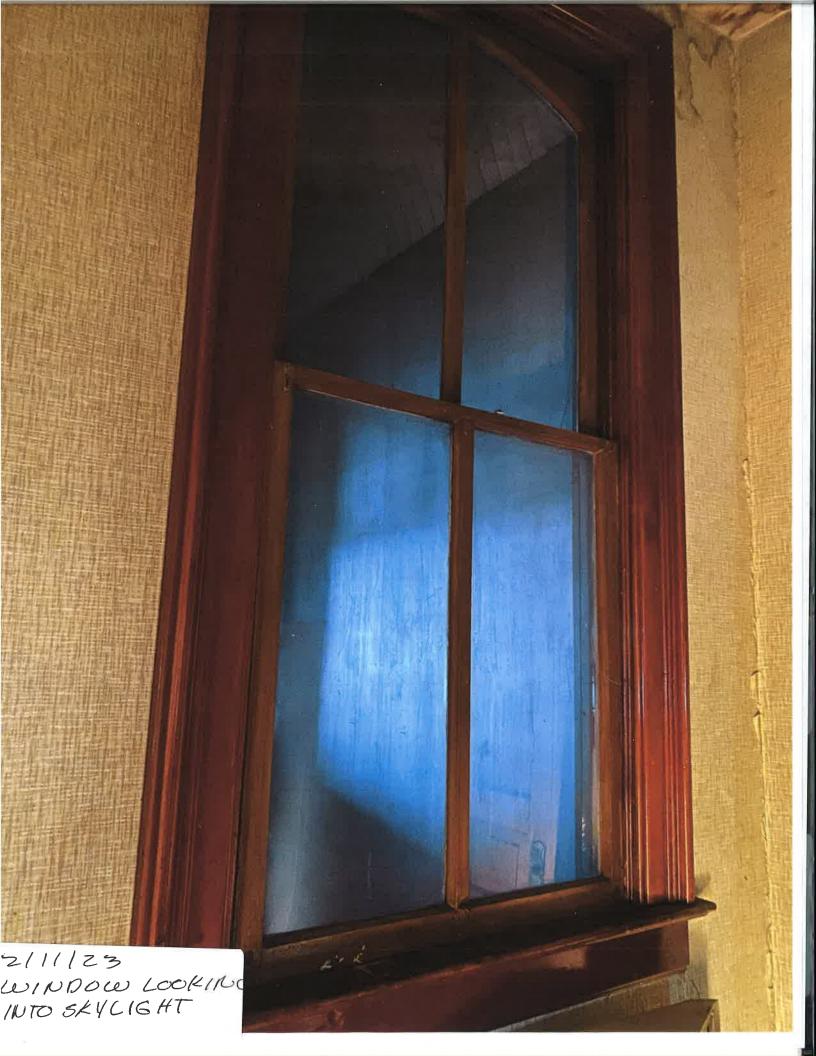




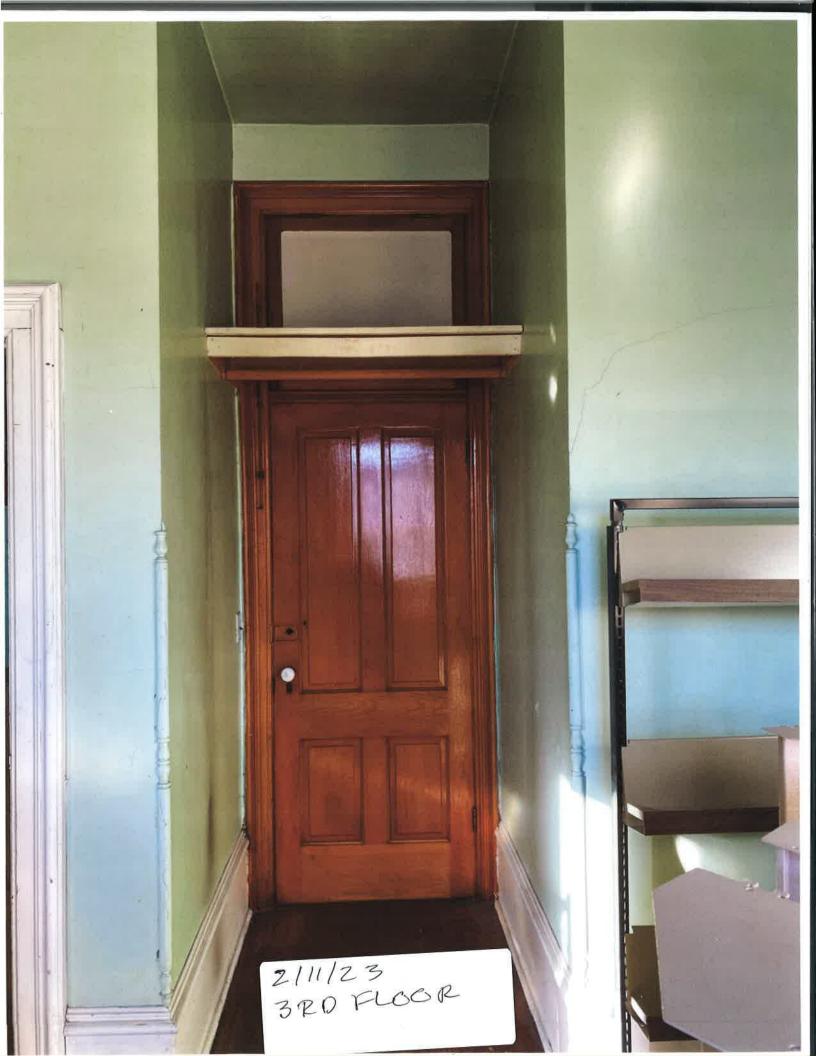




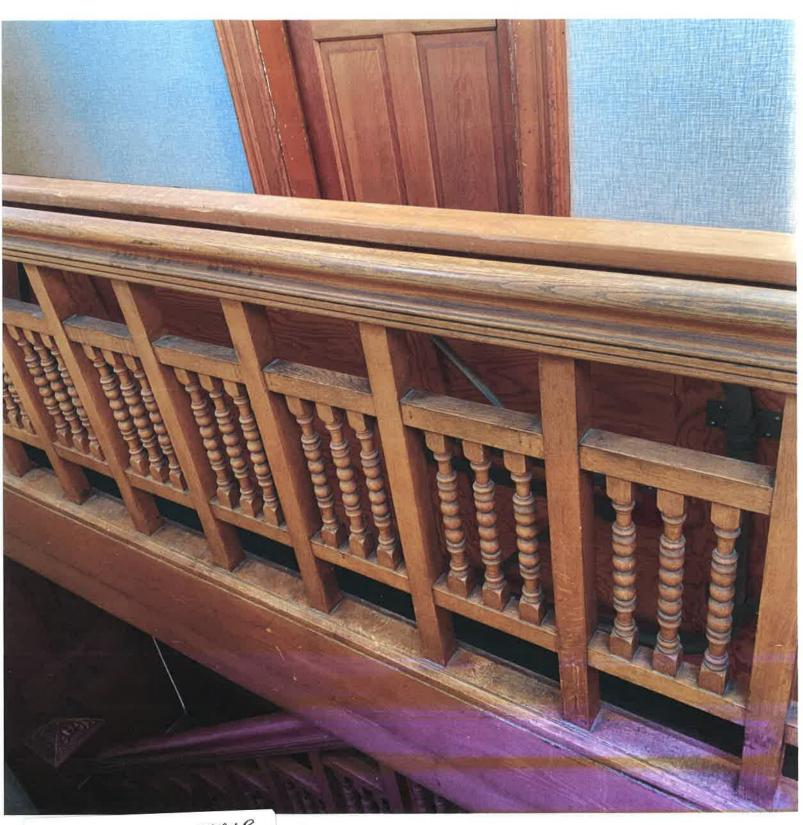












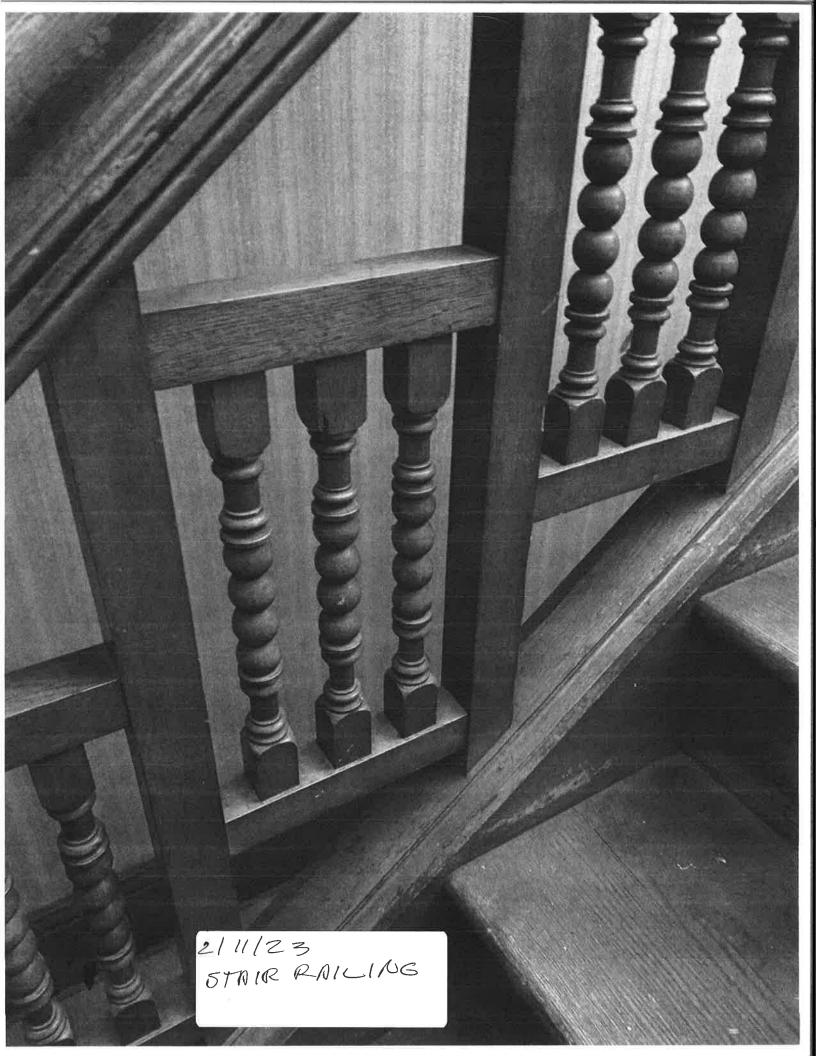
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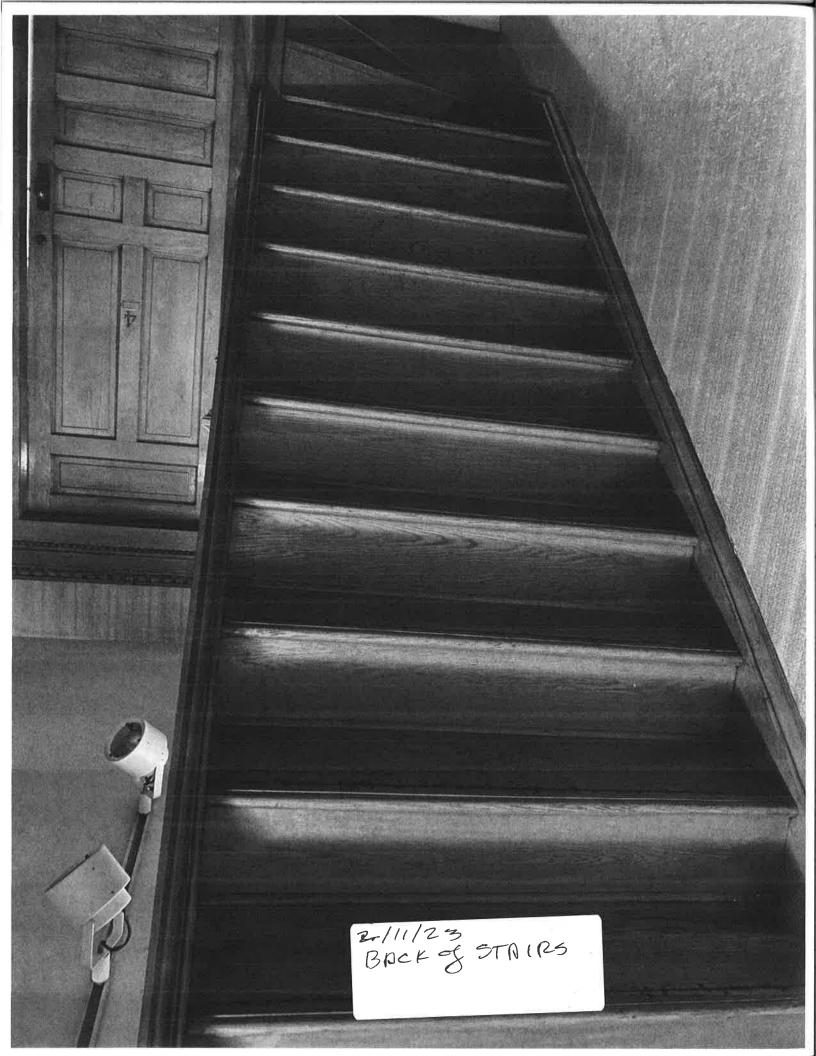


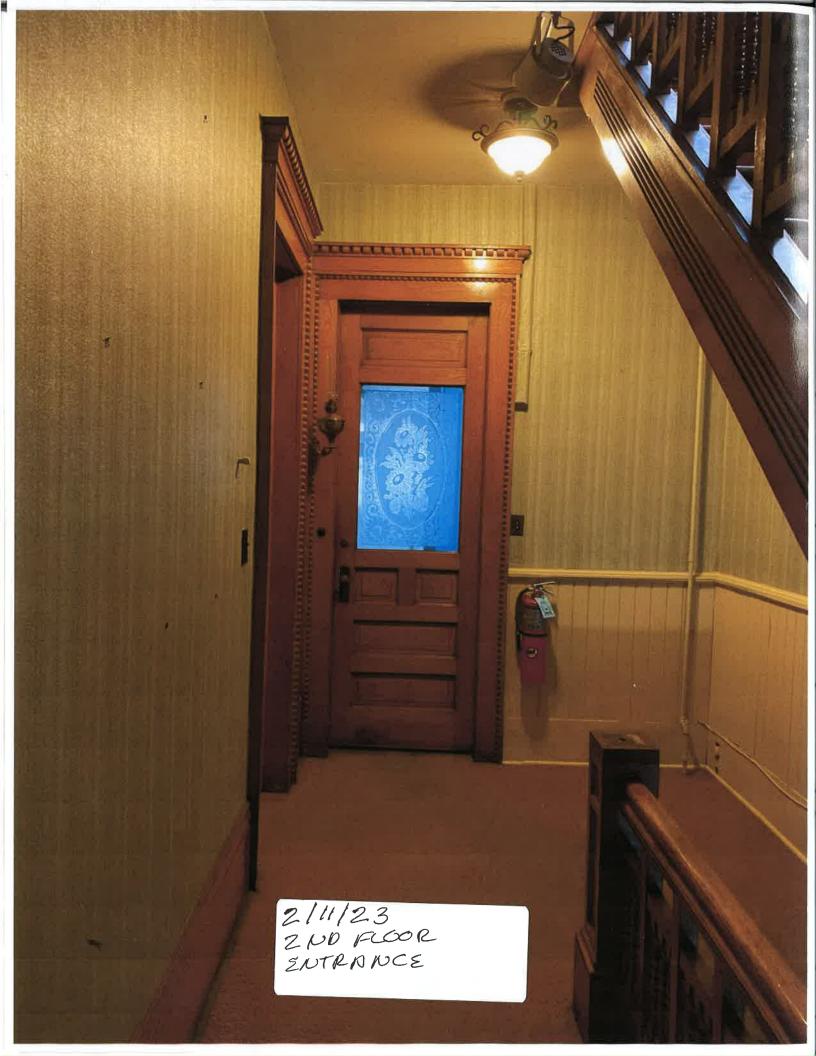


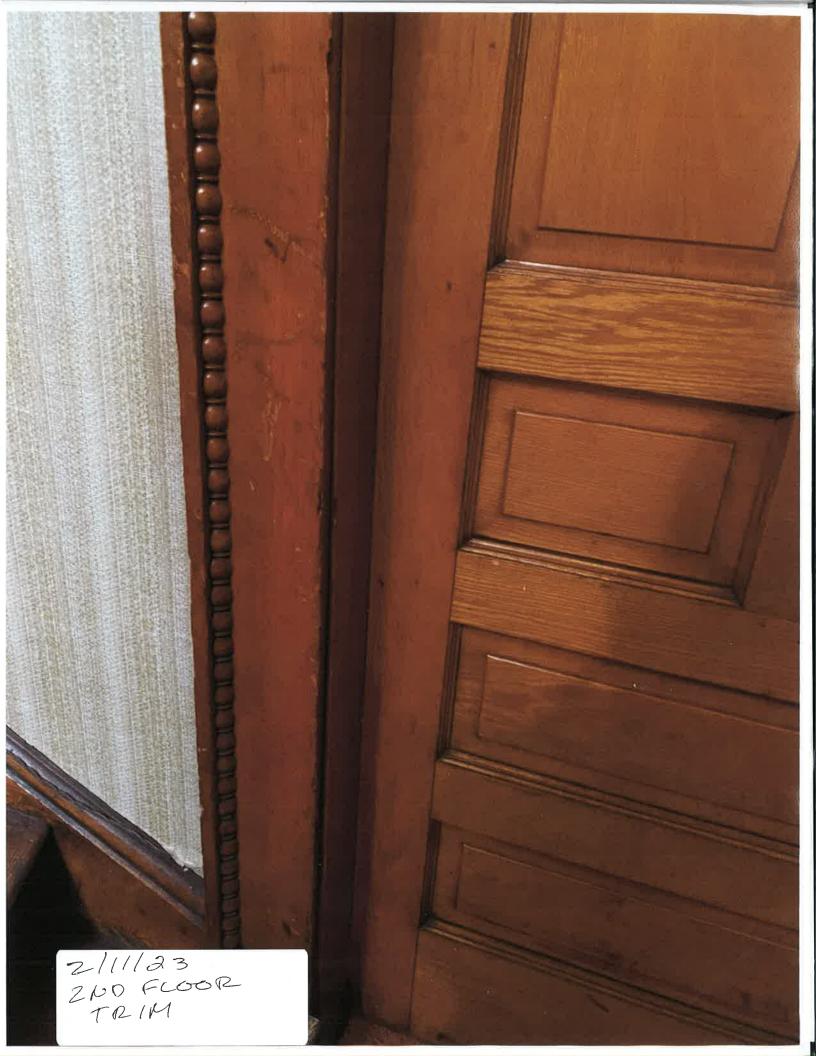


2/11/23 FRONT BRD FLOOR















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