

NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL AND
ENGINEERING RECORD

CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES
217-219 EAST FRONT STREET

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RECORD

CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE

Location: 225 East Front Street
Wilmington, Delaware

Present Owner: William Parker
126 Landers Lane
New Castle, Delaware 19720

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: None

225 East Front Street - Captain Thomas Mendenhall House

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A.1. Date of Erection. The Captain Thomas Mendenhall House was erected in the last decade of the eighteenth century on the northwest corner of Front and Walnut Streets, facing what was then Wilmington's commercial waterfront along the Christina River.

A.2. Original Plans and Construction. As originally built, the Mendenhall House stood alone on a corner lot rising three full stories above a raised basement. The south and east elevations of the brick structure were laid in plain Flemish bond with struck mortar joints, while the foundations, rear wall, and west gable end were laid in common bond. At the first floor level a single course mortar round molded brick watertable ran along the primary elevations. The upper floors were differentiated by four-course Flemish bond belt courses. Visually the vertical emphasis of the dwelling was enhanced through the use of graduated window openings growing increasingly smaller from the ground floor to the attic without an increase in the number of lights per sash above the first story. The building was capped with a gable roof broken only by a central chimney pile emerging from the ridge. In plan the Mendenhall House began as a double-pile hall-parlor arrangement with each room heated by back-to-back hearths. Each room was paneled to some degree, with the more elaborate interior trim lavished on the second floor chamber and parlor. The first floor paneling was plainer in character, perhaps due to Mendenhall's using the street level rooms for his mercantile endeavors.

A.3. Alterations and Additions. Later additions included a two-story brick ell of the rear elevation dating from 1810 to 1820, and the modification of the original three-bay facade into a corner entrance store front in the 1870s.

B.1. Historical Context. The Thomas Mendenhall House, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970, is of prime historic, and architectural significance to the City of Wilmington. During the Revolutionary War; then Ensign Thomas Mendenhall, serving aboard the Brig Nancy, made and flew the first American flag in a foreign port. By 1800 Captain Thomas Mendenhall was engaged in the West Indies trade with his schooner Pratt. As a Quaker merchant Mendenhall was more than successful, for by the time of the 1804 tax assessment he owned the brick house on the corner of Front and Walnut, the two adjacent tenant houses at 65 and 67 (now 221 and 223) East Front Street, two stores, wharfage, two additional houses on rent, and a total of six additional lots. These undeveloped lots were not only in the immediate neighborhood of the house, but also included two two-acre lots in a then undeveloped section of the city near Brandywine Village. The type and quality of Men-

denhall's material goods as well as the archaeological potential and importance of the site are further illustrated by the spoils of a looted archaeological feature under the brick ell behind the main block of the house. Imported porcelain, cream wares, and ornamented pearl wares as well as locally produced utilitarian and decorative earthenwares describe a domestic consumption of no mean nature. Some of the ceramic remains show no signs of wear and may be representative of goods broken in transit as part of Mendenhall's trading endeavors. In addition to real estate and trading, Thomas Mendenhall's business interests extended to the founding of the National Bank of Delaware as a member of the first board of directors. Finally, the historical significance of the Thomas Mendenhall House has been increased by the accident of urban architectural additions. As the house and its dependent tenant houses stand today, they represent the last standing eighteenth century Wilmington street corner.

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A.1. Architectural Character. Through planned or accidental circumstances, the Captain Thomas Mendenhall House remains one of Wilmington's finest eighteenth century structures. With its urban setting, Federal period detailing, and later first floor changes, the structure portrays not only the standard of living obtained by the city's wealthiest Quaker merchants, but also the material ways in which that urban setting has witnessed historical change.

A.2. Condition of Fabric. Although the Mendenhall House has recently suffered extensive vandalism, the structure remains sound with a minimum of weather damage. The demolition of the block to the west, has measurably altered the pattern of rain runoff, however, and the house is now subject to some flooding in the course of severe weather.

B.1. Over-all Dimensions. The Captain Thomas Mendenhall House was built as a 21 by 32 1/2 foot structure with a near 40 foot elevation. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century and no later than about 1820 a two-story 21 1/2 by 31 1/2 foot ell was appended to the northwest corner of the building.

B.2. Foundations. The foundations of the main unit are of rubble stone masonry rising six inches above grade on the primary facade. Above the stonework to a height of three feet the foundations rise in common bond brick to a quarter-round molded brick watertable. The foundations for the house include a rubble stone bearing wall and round relieving arches supporting the main chimney pile.

B.3. Walls. The south and east elevations are laid in plain Flemish bond interrupted by raised four-course Flemish bond belt courses at each floor level. Within the belt courses, the top course projects and additional inch beyond the face of the lower courses. The west gable end is laid in common bond and is now largely masked by the two-and-a-half story gable end of 223 East Front Street. The bonding of the rear wall is presently obscured

by a coat of cement stucco.

B.4. Structural System, Framing. In addition to the roof, the only structural framing consists of sawn floor joists. In the cellar longitudinal girders butt end to end in the bearing wall containing the base of the chimney pile, with the joists tenoned in turn into the lateral face of each girder. In the upper floors the joists run the opposite direction and are carried at mid-point by either a masonry bearing wall or transverse girder.

B.5. Porches, Stoops, Balconies, Bulkheads. As originally built the Mendenhall House had no porches. In the latter half of the nineteenth century however, a corner store front porch was carved out of the original fabric of the building. With the masonry removed, the load bearing function of the corner was replaced by a single cast iron Doric column footed on reused King of Prussia marble steps. The architrave of the corner door consists of recessed panel reveals with the intermediate rails dressed with machine-turned wooden bosses. The triangular porch ceiling is finished in the same manner with a centrally placed and recessed medallion from which a gas light fixture formerly depended. The porch cornice, carried by the corner column and a flattened pilaster at either juncture of the architrave and wall, rises from a plain frieze to a cyma molded cornice. On each face of the porch is a pair of machine-produced Italianate brackets. The whole of the cornice is covered by a flat seam tin roof flashed into the earlier brick walling.

B.6. Chimneys. The ridge of the main block is broken by a single off-center chimney pile terminated and capped approximately six inches above the ridge. The entire stack rises from back-to-back relieving arches in the cellar and continues two open hearths at each story of the building. A later brick stove flue emerges from the base of the rear roof face, rises approximately four feet, and is finished with an undecorated terra cotta chimney pot.

B.7. Exterior Openings. As built, the Mendenhall House presented a three-bay, side-door facade to Front Street. The original ground floor entry (removed by vandals in 1979) consisted of raised panel reveals and an extended molded surround rising to crossetted corners and carrying an open pediment infilled with curvilinear, geometric, and stylized floral motifs. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, a corner entrance was cut into the southeast first-floor corner, and in the early twentieth century, garage bays were cut into the full length of the east wall of the two-story ell. On the ground floor, two shop front windows were introduced into the fenestration at the same time the corner doorway was worked into the building. Both of these windows, each measuring approximately 8 feet wide by 7 1/2 feet high, were most recently composed of a large plate glass light surmounted by three smaller lights. The whole of each window is enframed by an unadorned wooden architrave and finished with a box cornice and cyma crown molding. All other windows in the structure date from the original late eighteenth century building period and are composed of mortice-and tenoned architraves with quirked quarter-round moldings and a cyma bed molding beneath the exterior lip of the sill. On the ground floor wrought from pintles for exterior shutters were driven into the frames, while the upper

stories utilized butt hinges for the same purpose. All windows were sash, with six-over-six light sash being employed in all the upper level openings. The later window openings in the ell have been altered with sawn and nailed frames fitted with either one-over-one or six-over-one sash.

B.8. Roof. The gable roof of the main block is carried on common rafters set on rough two foot centers and footed into a raised plank false plate. Each of the rafters is braced to the opposing member through a blind half-dovetail lap joint. The flat roof of the ell is supported by joists laid across the top of the masonry walls. The main block is covered with a red standing seam sheet metal roof, while the wing is capped with a badly decayed asphalt roof. Both sections are furnished with boxed-in cornices. While the cornice of the ell is contemporary and identical to the shop front window trim, the earlier portion of the Mendenhall House retains its original roof trim. Along the Front Street facade the box cornice is ornamented with a broad cyma crown molding and a smaller cyma bed molding, each coming to a full return and stop. A section of unused molding found beneath the attic eaves shows that the crown molding was originally painted a dark green and the box cornice painted red. Along the eaves of the Walnut Street elevation, the roof line was visually terminated with a raking cyma molded verge board of the same contours as found on the cornice lines.

C.1. Floor Plans. As first built, the Mendenhall House was based on a two-room, hall-parlor plan on the first floor and a three-room variation of that plan in the upper stories. In the later nineteenth century a vestibule, or interior porch, was inserted behind the original entrance, and shortly after that, a narrow passage was introduced running the full depth of the building to the stair. As a result of these changes, the house became a side-hall, double-pile plan with a ground floor store front and upper story living quarters. A two-story brick wing, erected in the early nineteenth century, contained the household service functions and servants' quarters in two rooms. In the twentieth century these rooms were converted into a concrete floored automobile garage and repair shop. The second floor followed much the same pattern of development, with the exception that as built the upper story floor plans contained an additional forward room in the southwest corner and the use of a side passage for the stair hall was original to the structure. At the third floor however, while the stair passage remained intact in the rear half of the block, the forward corner room was dropped from the plan. The half depth side-passage contained not only a landing from the second floor but also a beaded edge verticle board paneled box stair to the attic or garret. Later conversion of these rooms to apartment usage subdivided the original spaces and resulted in the attic's being partitioned into two additional finished rooms.

C.2. Stairways. Again, as built, the Mendenhall House contained a broad open string staircase in the rear room, but later changes had the consequence of removing the first period finish. At present the stair rises from the first floor passage in a straight run to a rectangular landing and then to the second floor, where a twentieth century stick baluster landing and closed string continue to the upper floors. The stair to the attic is a box winder turning in a beaded edge verticle board staircase. There is no

stair from the ground floor of the ell to the upper story.

C.3. Flooring. On the ground floor the original flooring has been covered with mid-twentieth century linoleum tile and concrete slab. The upper floors are finished with one foot by one inch thick oak boards similar to those used in the adjacent Mendenhall tenant properties.

C.4. Wall and Ceiling Finish. All original wall surfaces are finished with plaster, applied to riven oak lath nailed over lapped vertical board partition walls and ceiling joists or applied directly to interior masonry surfaces.

C.5. Interior Openings. All interior doorways and windows have been robbed.

C.6. Decorating Features and Trim. Despite the present condition of the Mendenhall House, significant amounts of interior trim remain within the structure. On the ground floor a raised chair rail runs the depth of the present side passage. Supported on recessed paneled stiles set into the plaster wall finish, the chair rail is composed of a beaded lower edge, a plain face and a quirked cove molding stepping up to half round lip. In the first floor rooms are the remains of paneled overmantels incorporating flush set board surrounds of three-quarter inch thick pine, deeply beaded edges, and, in the rear room, a raised finely molded architrave defining the mouth of the hearth. The upper stories of the house have been largely stripped of their interior decorative detailing, but evidence remains for fully paneled hearth walls complete with raised panel chimney closets, overmantels, and boldly profiled mantels. Sections of original yellow poplar chair rail are described by a shallow cyma rising to a half-round molding. All interior trim was fastened in place with clenched wrought nails, driven into nailing blocks embedded in masonry or into the fabric of the board partition walls.

C.7. Hardware. No interior hardware survives.

D.1. General Setting and Orientation. Situated on the southeast corner of East Front and Walnut Streets, the Captain Thomas Mendenhall House faces the Wilmington Railroad Station, designed by Philadelphia architect Frank Furness in 1902 and completed in 1905. Contiguous to the west gable end are two of Mendenhall's pre-1804 rental houses currently under threat of demolition. The east gable end facing Walnut Street overlooks a Gulf service station and a commuter parking lot. The lots behind the house to the north are vacant; the buildings (including one structure possibly associated with Thomas Mendenhall) were demolished in October 1980.

D.2. Historic Landscape Design. The historic landscape familiar to Thomas Mendenhall would have included the structures standing to the immediate west, a two-story brick structure which formerly stood to the north of the house, and an unobstructed view of waterfront storehouses and wharfage along the north bank of the Christina River less than one block to the south. By 1905 that landscape had changed, with the ground floors of the Front Street structures altered to accommodate late Victorian shop fronts

and completion of the Wilmington Railroad Station.

D.3. Outbuildings. The only surviving outbuilding dating to the early period of the Mendenhall House is the two unit rental property at 221 and 223 East Front Street. Some archaeological evidence suggests, however, that the Mendenhall House was served by a brick lined and vaulted cistern, well, privy and storehouses.

NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING
RECORD

CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES

Location: 221 and 223 East Front Street
Wilmington, Delaware

Present Owners: 221 East Front Street - Frank Jannuzzio, et. al.
1115 Barksdale Drive
Sherwood Park
Wilmington, Delaware 19808

223 East Front Street - Mr. and Mrs. Roland Cohen
1717 Forestdale Drive
Twin Oaks
Wilmington, Delaware 19803

Present Occupants: Vacant

Present Use: None

221 and 223 Front Street

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A.L. Dates of Erection. 221 and 223 East Front Street were erected as a single two-and-a-half story brick structure by Captain Thomas Mendenhall, merchant, in the last decade of the eighteenth century. In the latter half of the nineteenth century the property was subdivided, and the facades and plans of the two halves of the structure were partitioned and altered in different ways.

A.2. Original Plans and Construction. The original first floor plan of the 221-223 East Front Street was a simple double-pile arrangement with a large diagonally set chimney pile running up along a nine-inch thick brick bearing wall. Both the front and rear rooms on either side of the building were heated by corner fireplaces. A partition wall, probably of vertically lapped board construction covered with nailed riven lath and plaster, divided the front and rear rooms and contained a doorway connecting the two spaces. A boxed stair stood approximately three feet out from the gable end terminus of each wall and contained a closed run of stairs leading to the upper floors. The second floor arrangement was characterized by a three-room plan disposition, with a narrow stair landing opening into a front chamber containing an original closet and into a full length rear chamber. Both principal second floor rooms probably contained hearths similar in placement to those located on the first floor. The attic level of the structure was built as a commodious storage space with no physical division between either half. The overall elevation of the building consisted of a two-and-a-half story gable roofed elevation with a central chimney pile flanked on either side by a single shed dormer, a balanced six-bay facade with doors at either end of the facade, and a four-course projecting belt course visually separating the first and second floors. The original wood shingled roof came down to a boxed cornice line finished with a cyma recta bed molding terminating approximately six inches in at either end of the cornice line. Windows were six-over-six sash at the second floor level and contained in mortice-and-tenon, beaded edge architraves. All openings were spanned with wood lintel load bearing members without masonry arches except for the doorways, which were furnished with header segmental arches seated in a two-course masonry skewback.

The fabric of 221-223 East Front Street consists of a brick Flemish bond facade and common bond rear and west gable end walls rising from a rubble stone masonry foundation formerly defining full cellars and the triangular footings for the central chimney pile. The internal framing for the floors consisted of a single transverse summer beam, or girder, in either half of the structure with one end resting in the gable end foundations and the other in the projecting corner of the chimney pile. The joints were tenoned into

the girders on one-foot three-inch centers with their front and rear wall ends set into masonry sockets. Floors were of approximately one-foot wide by one-inch thick tongue-in-groove boarding. The attic framing consists of a common rafter roof with four-by-five-inch rafters set on one-foot, nine-inch centers with half lapped ridge joints and collar beams half-lapped and half-dovetailed into the east face of each set of blades. Shingle lath spaced at six-inch intervals provided the seating for a square butt wood shingle roof. The individual rafter blades were footed onto a plank raising plate notched into the upper surfaces of the second floor ceiling joists. The centrally placed shed dormer windows were located between the middle two sets of rafters, which were set three feet apart. Surviving details suggest the dormers sprang from cheeks nailed to the inside edges of each of the bearing rafters and the whole roofed over with solid shingle lath. One other noteworthy roof framing detail is the use of partial nested purlin spiked to the undersurface of the rafters surrounding the chimney pile and footed atop the first collar beam in from either side of the stack face.

The second floor door surrounds are the only original trim remaining in 223 East Front Street. The frames, which terminate in vertically lapped partition walls covered with riven lath nailed in place with scantling cut iron nails and covered with plaster, are made up of a beaded edge rising to a filleted quarter-round molding. The frames were painted red and provided with H or HL hinges for the connecting doors. The baseboard rose with a quarter round bead to a flattened cyma bedded in the plaster finish.

A.3. Alterations and Additions. In the course of the nineteenth century one property was divided and heavily altered to its present appearance. The alterations, which included a roof raising, removal of walls, construction of now ruinous wings, and the near total removal of interior trim, will be discussed in Part II as part of the current architectural state of the building.

B. Historical Content. 221 and 223 East Front Street were erected as tenant houses between 1795 and 1805 by Captain Thomas Mendenhall. Mendenhall, a Quaker merchant, was active in the West Indies trade at the close of the eighteenth century and in the founding of the National Bank of Delaware in 1795. The 1804 and 1816 tax rolls describe Mendenhall's property holdings as including two acres, a house, wharfage, and two storehouses and four houses on rent. In 1814 the properties now identified as 221 and 223 East Front Street were occupied by Joel Zane, a teacher, and Benjamin Webb, a laborer. Zane had been renting from Mendenhall since at least 1800, when he lived in 221 East Front Street with his wife and family.

In the course of the nineteenth century the property was sold and the double family dwelling subdivided. By the second quarter of the century the ground floor spaces had been functionally and decoratively altered to accommodate commercial store fronts. The common attic between the two addresses was partitioned in the same period, while the upper stories of the building remained residential.

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION--221 East Front Street.

A.1. Architectural Character. Although 221 East Front Street was built as part of a larger double family row house, later subdivisions of the property led to the development of its architectural character as a distinct structural entity. As the building now stands, it is the product of late nineteenth century changes affecting fenestration, elevation, plans, and interior trim. Last occupied in 1974, 221 East Front Street has been in the process of decay for a considerably longer period of time.

A.2. Condition of Fabric. Late nineteenth century changes made in the roof line of the structure facilitated weather damage and the rotting away of major sections of interior framing. At present the building is unstable with rotting floors and joists.

B.1. Over-all Dimensions. The overall exterior dimensions describe a unit with approximately 18 feet of street frontage, a 33-foot elevation and 32-foot depth. The original ground floor rooms approximately 15 feet deep and 17 feet broad, were later partitioned into a double-pile, side-hall arrangement, with the front room 13 feet 9 inches by 15 feet 5 inches and the rear room 10 feet 6 inches by 14 feet 7 inches. The side stair passage flares from a 2 foot 8 inch width, 12 feet 8 inches into the building to a 5 foot 5 inch width. The front, rear, and west gable end walls are 1 foot 3 inches thick, while the partition wall shared with 221 East Front Street is only 9 inches thick. A rear wing, now partially demolished, measures 11 feet by 20 feet and housed the service functions of the unit in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

B.2. Foundations. The foundations are of rubble stone masonry laid in lime mortar. Prior to later nineteenth century changes, the foundation walls described a full cellar now back-filled with construction rubble from the alterations. Of additional note is the rubble stone triangular chimney pile base surviving from the first building period. At grade level the stone foundations are capped with the base courses of full height brick walling.

B.3. Walls. All exterior and load bearing walls for both 221 and 223 E. Front Street are of brick construction. From sidewalk level the street facade rises 3 feet in common bond to a quarter round molded brick water table, where the wall thins down 4 inches in width and the masonry shifts to plain Flemish bond with struck joints. At the second floor level a four course Flemish bond belt course juts out with the three lower courses capped by a fourth oversailing course. Above the belt course the Flemish bond pattern continues to the cornice line. Gable end and rear walls are of mixed common bond and the central bearing wall of unknown bonding covered with interior finishing plaster over a base coat of sand mortar with animal hair binding.

B.4. Structural System, Framing. Structural framing elements consist only of 3 by 10 inch floor joists bedded in the fabric of the masonry walls, late nineteenth century stud partition walls, and the roof framing for the late nineteenth century mansard roof line. Original lumber elements are all

of straight mill sawn oak.

B.5. Porches, Stoops, Balconies, Bulkheads. Along the street facade at the first floor level runs a full length shed roofed pent shading the store front. The pent is supported on factory-made Italianate consoles and open work chamfered edge brackets. Between the principal brackets run smaller purely decorative Italianate brackets.

B.6. Chimneys. A chimney pile shared with 223 E. Front Street emerged from the east gable end of 221 E. Front Street but was removed in the course of nineteenth century alterations. A smaller brick stove chimney occupies the position of the earlier pile.

B.7. Exterior Openings. Both the first and second floor fenestrations of the building have been altered from their original appearance. Flanked on the west by a segmentally arched doorway opening into a corridor leading to the rear and upper floors of the structure. The second floor openings have all been narrowed 6 inches in width and refinished with new-load bearing segmental arches in the late nineteenth century. The unboarded sash windows are filled one-over-one lights.

B.8. Roof. 221 East Front Street is capped by a fish scale patterned slate shingled mansard roof rising to the height of the original ridge line. Like the first floor pent, the cornice is visually supported at the corners by scroll work Italianate consoles and finished with smaller brackets of similar size alternating with raised panels. Two dormers with projecting open gables and broad architraves finished with turned wooden bosses and raised molded edge panels break the inward slope of the roof. Above the dormers at the break in the roof line is a verge board ornamented with the same motifs found around the dormers and on the cornice.

C.1. Floor Plan. The floor plan of 221 East Front Street is a variant of side-passage double-pile arrangement with a rear service ell and a commercial store front. On the second story the plan is retained, and the domestic spaces of the unit extended to incorporate the front room. Above the second floor level the structure is inaccessible due to water damage.

C.2 Stairways. A late Victorian period stairway is located in the rear section of the side passage. The open string stair rises in a straight run of 14 treads to a second-story landing. On each tread are factory-produced Eastlake style balusters which continue around the stair well at the second floor level.

C.3. Flooring. Flooring, dating to the period of nineteenth century remodeling, is largely rotted or covered with building debris.

C.4. Wall and Ceiling Finish. All walls and ceilings are finished with plaster applied either directly to masonry surfaces or to sawn wood lath nailed to studding.

C.5. Decorative Features and Trim. In addition to the stairway, the only surviving interior trim in 221 East Front Street is a round arched door surround and transom framing the entrance to the stairway. The factory planed architrave is a composite of raised angular and curved surfaces. All other accessible interior surfaces have been stripped of trim.

D. Site. 221 East Front Street is flanked on either side by row houses with late nineteenth century store fronts and faces the Wilmington railroad station, designed by Frank Furness in 1901 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Prior to the construction of the train station the houses faced the commercial area and wharfage of the Christina River. There are no surviving related outbuildings.

Part III. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION--223 East Front St.

A.1. Architectural Character. 223 East Front Street was erected as half of a double family row house in the period around 1800, and like its counterpart, 221 East Front Street, was later subdivided and altered for various commercial and domestic uses. Although the first floor interiors were largely gutted by 1900, the second floor retains a substantial amount of its original architectural character. While the unit has not been occupied since at least 1963, it remains in visibly better structural condition than its more heavily altered neighbor. Most structural damage is confined to the forward slope of the roof, where, it was cut and altered during the changes made to 221, and to the rear northeast corner of the rear load bearing wall, which has partially collapsed. The majority of the architectural evidence used to reconstruct the elevations and interior spaces of 221 and 223 East Front Street as they were built was drawn from 223.

B.1. Overall Dimensions. The overall exterior dimensions of 223 East Front Street describe a unit with 18 feet of street frontage, a 33-foot total elevation and a 32-foot depth. The original general floor plan and dimensions mirrored those of 221, but where 221 was partitioned into even smaller spaces in the late nineteenth century, 223 was opened up into a single commercial space. A demolished rear wing 13 feet wide by 15 feet long stood against the rear northeast corner.

B.2. Foundations. The foundations are of the same materials and contours as the adjacent property. Like 221, the cellar of 223 has been back-filled with construction rubble.

B.3. Walls. Above grade the brick facade of the unit rises approximately 3 feet in random common bond to a watertable capped with a quarter round molded brick course. The remainder of the wall is laid in plain Flemish bond with struck mortar joints and a belt course identical to 221. The undisturbed second floor openings are evened with queen closers and capped with continued use of Flemish bond masonry rather than any visible masonry arch support. The rear wall is of brick construction masked by later applications of mortar, while the gable end is a common wall with the

earlier corner structure at 225 East Front Street. The central bearing wall, of a 9-inch depth, is of unknown bonding and covered with an original plaster coat.

B.4. Structural System, Framing. Structural framing elements consist of 3 - by 10 - inch floor joists on 1 foot 6 inch centers and bedded in the masonry of the walls. The joists with their close centers act as lateral ties for both halves of the double unit structure, providing structural stability in lieu of free standing gable end walls. The roof framing for 223 is fully described in section I.A.2. As in the case of 221 East Front Street, all original lumber materials are of straight sawn oak.

B.5. Porches, Stoops, Balconies, Bulkheads. Above the shop front window runs a pent-like shed consisting of a flat roofed cornice supported on plain closely spaced brackets.

B.6. Chimney. The original chimney pile shared with 221 East Front Street was completely removed in the late nineteenth century and replaced with a 1 foot two inch by 1 foot 8 inch brick stove flue placed against the opposite gable wall.

B.7. Exterior Openings. While the second floor retains its original appearance, the first floor displays changes made in converting the initial three-bay row house facade into a late Victorian store front. The present ground floor elevation consists of a single display window with a three-light transom and side-door entrance reversed from its original placement at the opposite end of the facade. The present door, capped by a segmental arch opening, follows the seam of an earlier window and contained a plain transom window. The second floor windows are enframed in mortice-and-tenon architraves and consisted of six-over-six light sash. There is no visible evidence for exterior shutters.

B.8. Roof. The gable roof framing is fully described in section I.A.5. The present roof covering is composed of wood shingle covered with sheet tin. On each side of the roof a single gable roof dormer of a later date occupies the site of the original shed dormers. The dormers are finished with raised and filleted quarter round trim and crown molding nailed under the verge of the dormer's gables.

C.1. Floor Plan. The present floor plan of 223 East Front Street is a large open space containing only a stove flue, display window, and load bearing girder midway through the building. The second floor, accessible only by a fire escape located behind the structure, was originally divided into a three-room plan containing a narrow stair landing, a small street front chamber, and a larger rear chamber. In the early twentieth century a bathroom was partitioned off the northeast corner of the rear chamber and the stair removed to its present location over the site of the original chimney pile. The attic, originally open with whitewashed timbers, was longitudinally partitioned into two rooms in the same period.

Mendenhall Tenant Houses

C.2. Stairways. An enclosed stair containing a straight run leads from the second floor to the attic.

C.3. Flooring. The ground floor flooring is of narrow width boards with tongue-and-groove joints and is a late replacement of the original flooring. First period flooring, found on the second floor and in the attic, is of random width oak with half-lapped rabbeted joints.

C.4. Wall and Ceiling Finish. All walls and ceilings were plastered either over brick or wood lath. On the ground floor pine beaded edge stock molding was nailed to rails to create a field of late nineteenth century wainscot against the common wall shared with 221 East Front Street. On the second floor three original doorways present architraves composed of a beaded edge leading into a quarter-round molding. Baseboard rises from a quarter round molding over a flat surface to a shallow cyma terminating in the wall.

D. Site. 223 East Front Street is flanked on either side by late eighteenth century residences altered into Victorian store fronts facing the Wilmington Railroad Station. Together with 221 and 225, 223 is an integral part of a row of buildings erected by Quaker merchant Thomas Mendenhall prior to 1800. While there are no related above ground structures, archaeological disturbances indicate the earlier presence of support structures for the household.

NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING
RECORD

217-219 EAST FRONT STREET

Location: 217 and 219 East Front Street
Wilmington, Delaware

Present Owners: 217 East Front Street - Sophie Layton
217 East Front Street
Wilmington, Delaware 19801

219 East Front Street - Thomas Hatzis
1723 Gunning Drive
Forest Hills Park
Wilmington, Delaware

Present Occupants: 217 East Front Street - Vacant
219 East Front Street - Helen's Cafe
Sophie Layton

Present Use: 217 East Front Street - Vacant
219 East Front Street - Tap Room and Boarding House

217-219 East Front Street

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History. 217 and 219 East Front Street were erected in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as a double storefront and residence. The original fabric of the structure was of brick construction with a pressed brick facade and rough cast brick gable and rear walls. Slip glazed brick and molded bricks were additionally employed to create decorative arches and to accent points of visual separation in the overall street elevation. Like other structures in the area, 217 and 219 East Front Street were subdivided and treated as separate structures. The end result was the alteration and enlargement of 217 into a tap room, dance hall, and boarding house and the interior collapse of 219 due to water damage.

B. Historical Context. 217 and 219 East Front Street were built as near contemporaries to the Wilmington Railroad Station in the late nineteenth century. The three-story false front structure filled in the 100 block of East Front Street and dates a period of mason change from the area's earlier nineteenth century appearance. It is also likely that the structure replaced earlier buildings located on the site. These earlier structures may not have dated to the building period of 221, 223, and 225 East Front Street, but probably predated the 1860s. Because 217 and 219 were subdivided only after they were built and because they have suffered a minimum of exterior change, they will be discussed as a single unit.

Part II ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION.

A.1. Architectural Character. The architectural character of 217-219 East Front Street may be described in terms of a late nineteenth century commercial eclecticism. While the exterior makes use of a number of cosmetic devices, including glazed brickwork, oriel windows, turned wooden bosses and a heavy false front cornice, it fails to associate with any particular architectural style or aesthetic ideology.

A.2. Condition of Fabric. While 217 remains in use as a tap room and boarding house, 219 has fallen into an advanced state of decay in which the interior has largely collapsed in on itself. 217 has suffered structural damage from the roughshod demolition of adjacent properties, however, its structural condition is currently problematical.

B.1. Overall Dimensions. The total overall exterior front of the building measures approximately 38 feet in length, while the depth of the structure runs 32 feet, with a 15 by 29 foot two-story rear ell attached to

both halves of the structure. 217 possesses an additional wing placed at a right angle to the ell and measuring approximately 20 by 16 feet. The two units are separated at street level by a two and a half foot wide brick round arched passage, running the full depth of the main block and opening into a narrow concrete floored courtyard.

B.2. Foundations. The foundations are of rubble stone masonry construction and originally defined full cellars.

B.3. Walls. The exterior walls of the two units were laid in mechanical or stretcher bond with water pressed brick bedded in a lime finishing mortar. The masonry is decoratively enhanced with slip glazed stretchers patterned into round arches above the second floor windows and the use of fifteen course corbeled brick consoles capped with stretcher framed raised relief floral patterned bricks.

B.4. Structural System, Framing. Structural framing consists of joists bedded into the gable and load bearing partition walls. Roof framing was inaccessible.

B.5. Porches, Stoops, Balconies, Bulkheads. Although there are no porches or bulkheads, the second floor is interrupted by two timber framed oriel windows, one centrally placed in each of the two units. The windows were each visually supported on a pair of corbeled brick consoles projecting approximately one foot beyond the plane of the facade. Each window was equipped with a pair of eleven-over-one light sash with the upper lights composed of a clear central pane and surrounding glazed lights. The whole was capped with a hipped roof carried on a cove cornice, and a flat plain frieze atop an unadorned architrave.

B.6. Chimneys. A triple stove flue chimney arrangement, including an exterior stack and two flanking interior stacks, emerge from the west gable end. The caps of each stack are simply corbeled out from the body of the pile. A similar exterior end pile runs up the gable end of the east wall but lacks a finishing course.

B.7. Exterior Openings. The fenestration at street level remains unchanged for 219, although it has been broken up and altered for 217. As built, the first floor shop front was divided into a seven-bay, tripartite balanced facade. The central element was the opening to the alley way between the units/above the actual entry way a fanlight with a wood grill in fill provided a central visual element. To either side, a doorway with a tall single-light transom opened into a commercial space illuminated by a full height store front window with fixed transom lights echoing the doorway. The display windows were further set off by the springing for the consoles visually carrying the oriel windows at the second floor level. To the far gable ends, a single door opening into an enclosed stair provided street level access to the upper residential floors of the building. The upper level windows consist of the oriel windows previously described and one-over-one light sash windows capped with unadorned beam lintels. The balance

achieved on the first floor is lost in the upper stories, due to the partition of the space incorporated in the first floor alley.

B.8. Roof. The roof over the main block is a shallow gabled roof with flush eaves and a raised false front cornice on the street facade. The cornice is visually carried on corbeled brick consoles with trim identical to that found at street level. Between the consoles, springing from several courses below the tops of the third floor windows, curves a cove fascia atop which sits a frieze infilled with wood square raised panels and capped with a plain fascia and beveled cornice molding.

A similar belt frieze appears at the juncture of the first and second floors. Here the frieze, filled with turned wood bosses, rises to a beveled cornice covered with a shallow shed roof interrupted by the rhythm of the corbeled brick consoles.

C. Description of Interior. Although the exterior of 217 and 219 East Front Street are of the same style and material, the interiors, due to different ownership, have changed to varying degrees and in an individual manner. To avoid confusion the interiors will be discussed one address at a time, beginning with 217 and closing with 219 East Front Street. Only the ground floors of these structures are described: the upper floors of 219 are inaccessible due to advanced structural decay, and those of 217 are inaccessible because of current use as individually rented apartments.

217 East Front Street

C.1. Floor Plan. 217 East Front Street (Helen's Cafe) now consists of a single open space to accommodate the building's function as a tap room (formerly as a dance hall). The space was further enlarged though the addition of a two-story brick wing to the west. In the immediate front of the room stands an approximately 21 foot square clipped corner and hollow glass block bar dating from the mid-twentieth century. Along the walls are sets of yellow vinyl upholstered booths and below this a raised dance floor. At the far end of the room is a second bar incorporating a board counter top and hollow core wood Doric columns. At the east end of the bar a door leads into a kitchen. Access to the upper stories of the building is gained through a separate exterior entry opening into a closed run of stairs.

C.2. Flooring. The flooring of the unit is composed of alternating light-and-dark linoleum tile except in the area defined by the bar island, which is finished with alternating green and white linoleum tile.

C.3. Wall and Ceiling Finish. The walls and ceilings are finished with plaster applied to sawn wood lath fixed in place with wire nails. Of particular note are the two murals painted in the front part of the bar by Raymond Eanton in 1950. Coated with shellac, the mural on the west wall consists of a triptych comprised of a central element of the American Revolution with George Washington flanked on either side by European landscapes. The whole of the composition is symmetrically divided by fluted and sectioned

Doric style columns. On the opposing west wall the stair to the upper stories breaks the mural into two sections: one of a harbor scene with sailboats and an iron railed promenade, the other illustrating a river scene with a young couple in ante-bellum dress, sitting on the bank gazing at an otter in the water. On the opposite shore stands a country house in a landscape of evergreens. (A painted ashlar wall provided a visual foundation for the scenes.) According to the present owner, Mrs. Kitty Layton, the scenes were chosen by her mother from books supplied by Eanton. The entire painting project took three to four months during which time Mr. Eanton commuted to Wilmington from Chester, Pennsylvania, and worked on the murals from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. The completed project covered the entire front room but was partially covered in 1968 with a coat of paint.

C.4. Interior Openings. The glass block windows were installed in masonry jambs between 1945 and 1949. The only interior window was an opening for passing food through to the rear bar from the kitchen.

C.5. Decorative Features and Trim. The interior trim includes the front bar previously described, a band stand, and a rear bar. The band stand was raised in the same period the front bar and windows were installed. Three treads lead up to a linoleum tiled dance floor at the far end of which is a band stand raised on two courses of hollow glass blocks. The bar at the rear of the room contains a Doric tri-style counter section with leatherette panels. The central panel has the word "Belmon" spelled out in brass furniture tacks. According to the owner, Belmon refers to a New York race track, but its significance in its present context has been lost. Behind the counter is the display area containing two Corinthian columns framing a triptych of winter woodland and pastoral scenes painted on plywood. The scenes, containing deer, some trees, and forest cottages, appear to be mass produced rather than hand painted. The cornice of the bar is finished with stock egg-and-dart molding, while the area below contains plain service drawers and a stepped four-tread display area.

219 East Front Street

C.1. Floor Plans. 219 East Front Street defines a plan made up of an open full depth store front with a separate entrance providing access to the upper stories of the building. Behind the front room are a series of two smaller service rooms. Between these two rooms is an enclosed stairwell with flights leading both to the second floor rooms and to a full cellar.

C.2. Flooring. The flooring for 219 East Front Street is of tongue-and-groove construction, supported on circular sawn pine joists.

C.3. Wall and Ceiling Finish. All walls are finished with plaster applied either directly to the masonry or over sawn lath. The front room is further finished with a plain baseboard terminating in a shallow cyma molding. The middle rear room is additionally embellished with a plain level edge chair rail.

C.4. Interior Openings. Doors and windows were framed in machine molded architraves with the doors being of paneled construction. The four paneled doors contained two elongated shallowly recessed panels in the upper section and two shorter paneled fields below. The panel effect was enhanced with mitred cyma moldings defining each panel.

C.5. Decorative Features and Trim. The only surviving first floor decorated trim in 219 East Front Street is an architectural kitchen cupboard located in the northeast corner of the rear wing. The cupboard has a shelved upper section finished with two slightly raised panels, under which are two drawers and below that two additional cupboard doors.

D. Site. 217 and 219 East Front Street currently face the Wilmington Railroad Station designed in 1901 by Frank Furness. The structure is flanked to the west by vacant lots and to the east by an altered row house dating from about 1800.

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FIGURE 1

CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
AND MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES:
RECONSTRUCTED FRONT STREET ELEVATION, ca. 1805



FIGURE 2
CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
AND MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES:
RECONSTRUCTED GROUND FLOOR PLAN, ca. 1805

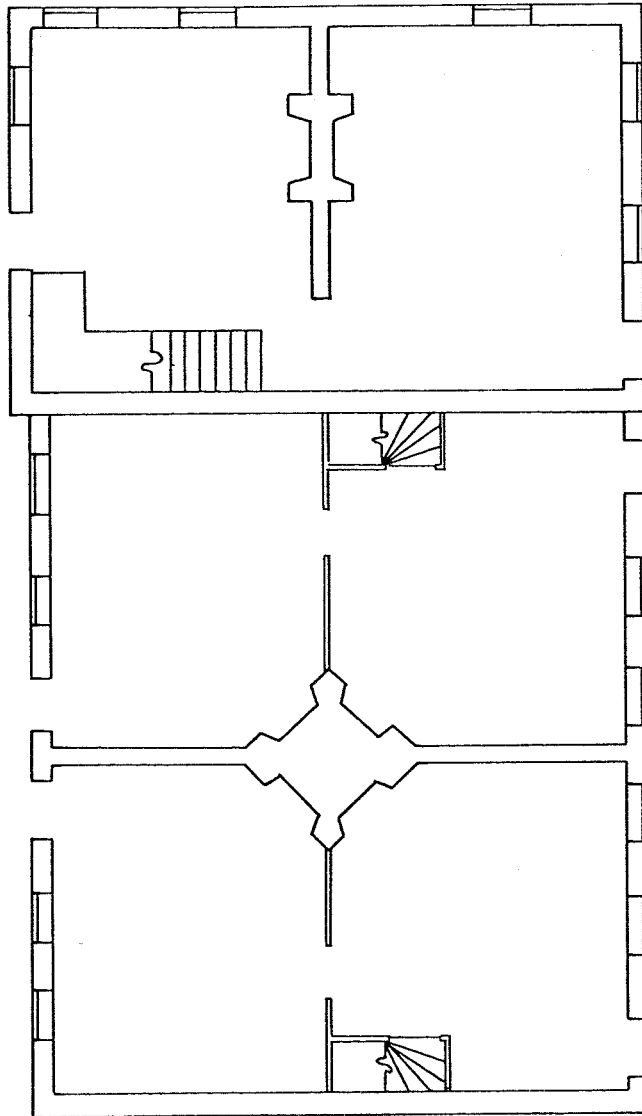


FIGURE 3

CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE AND MENDENHALL
TENANT HOUSES: RECONSTRUCTED SECOND FLOOR PLAN, ca. 1805

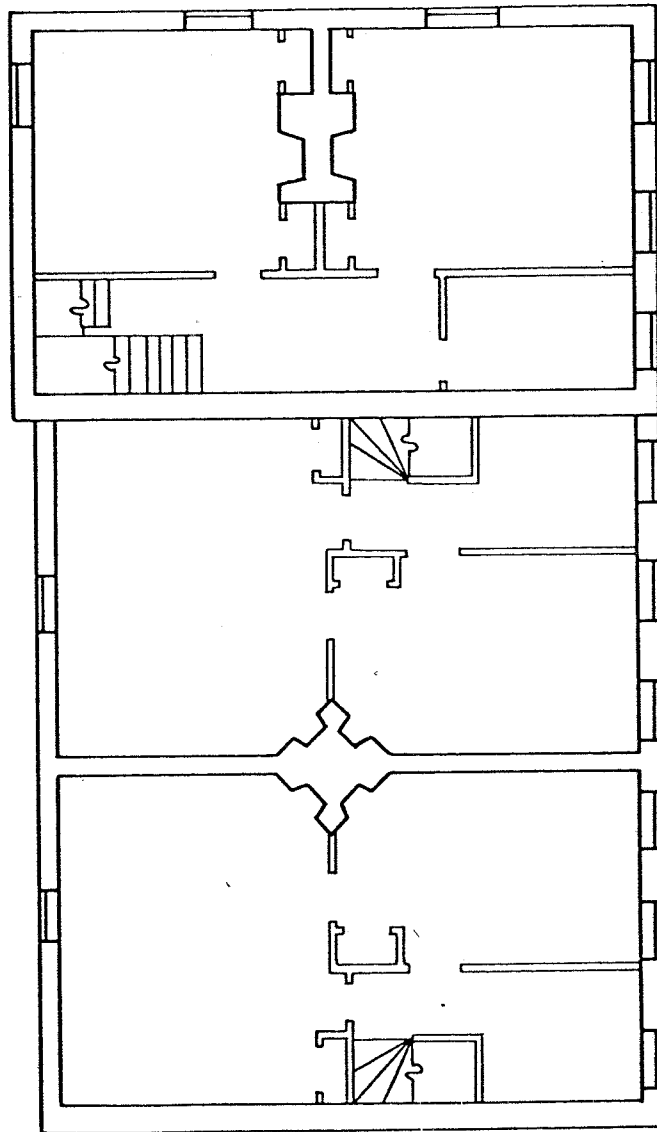


FIGURE 4
CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
RECONSTRUCTED THIRD FLOOR PLAN, ca. 1805

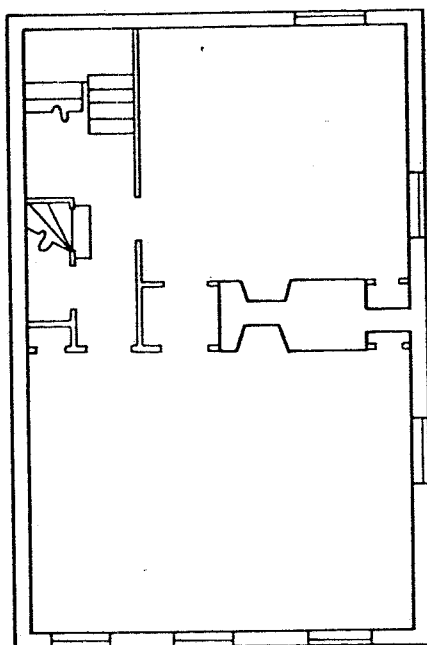


FIGURE 5

MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES
RECONSTRUCTED ROOF SECTION, ca. 1805

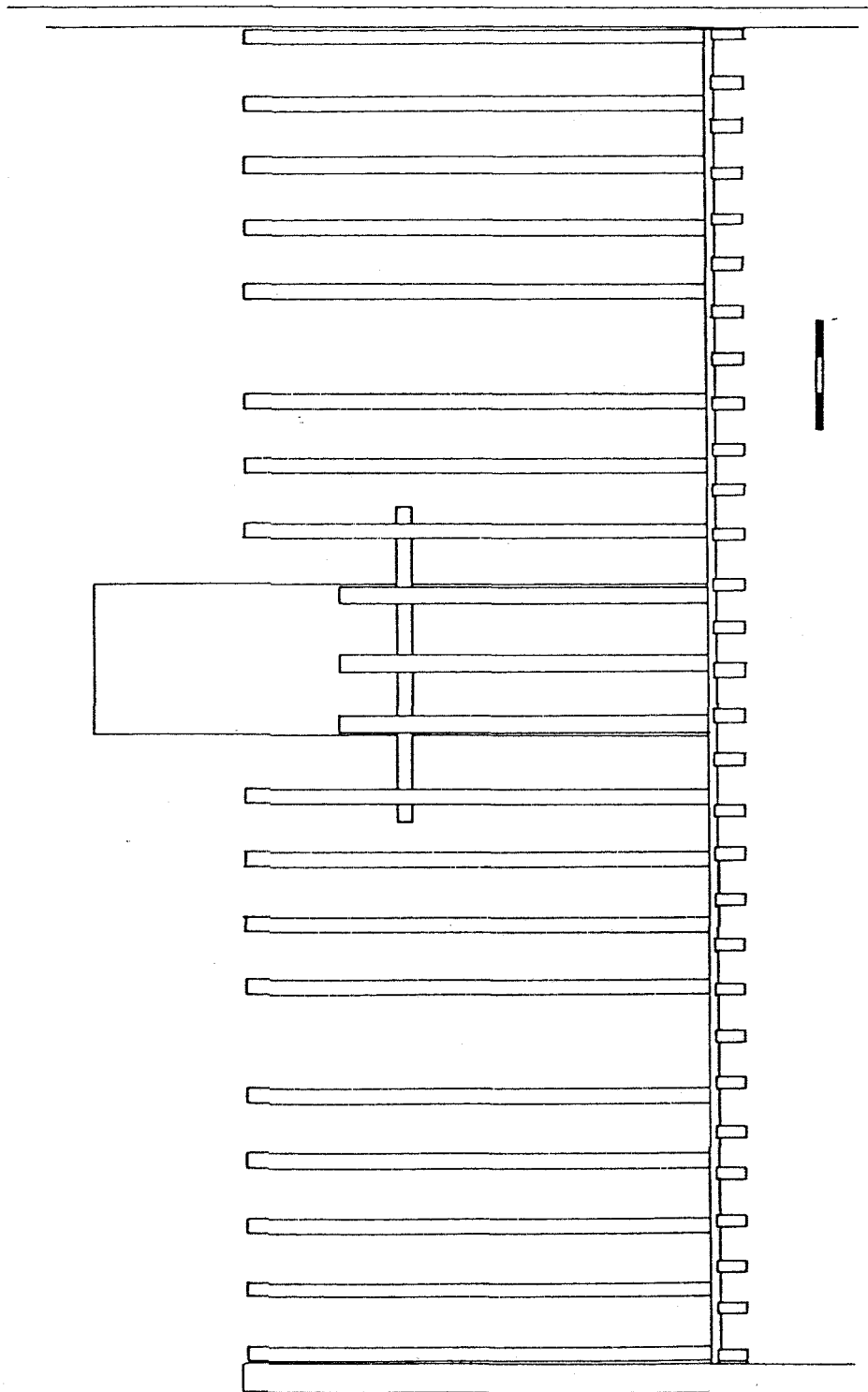


FIGURE 6

MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES:
RAFTER SECTION AND EXPLODED PERSPECTIVE
AT FALSE PLATE ASSEMBLY WITH BRIDLED SCARF JOINT

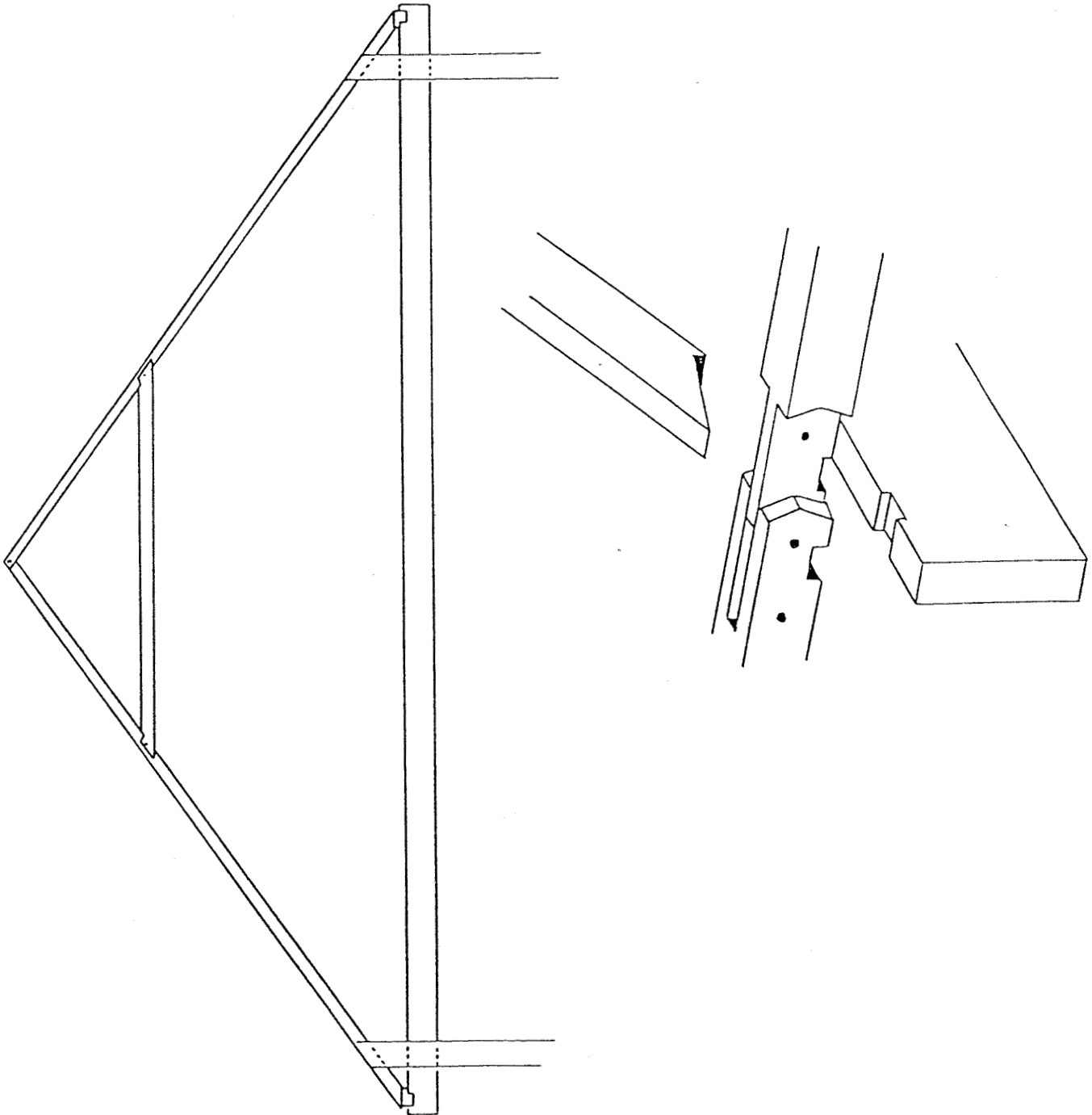


FIGURE 7

CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE:
SECOND FLOOR PARTITION WALL AND DOORWAY
(SCALE: 3/5" = 1')

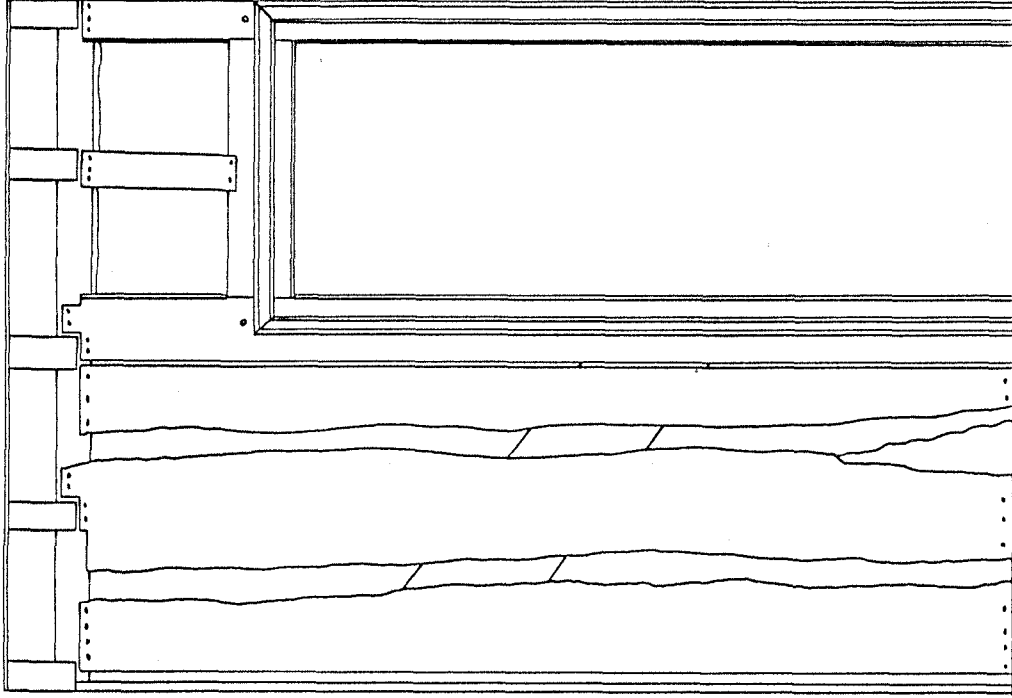


PLATE 1: 217, 219, 221, 223 AND 225 EAST FRONT STREET



PLATE 2: CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE



PLATE 3: CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
AND MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES

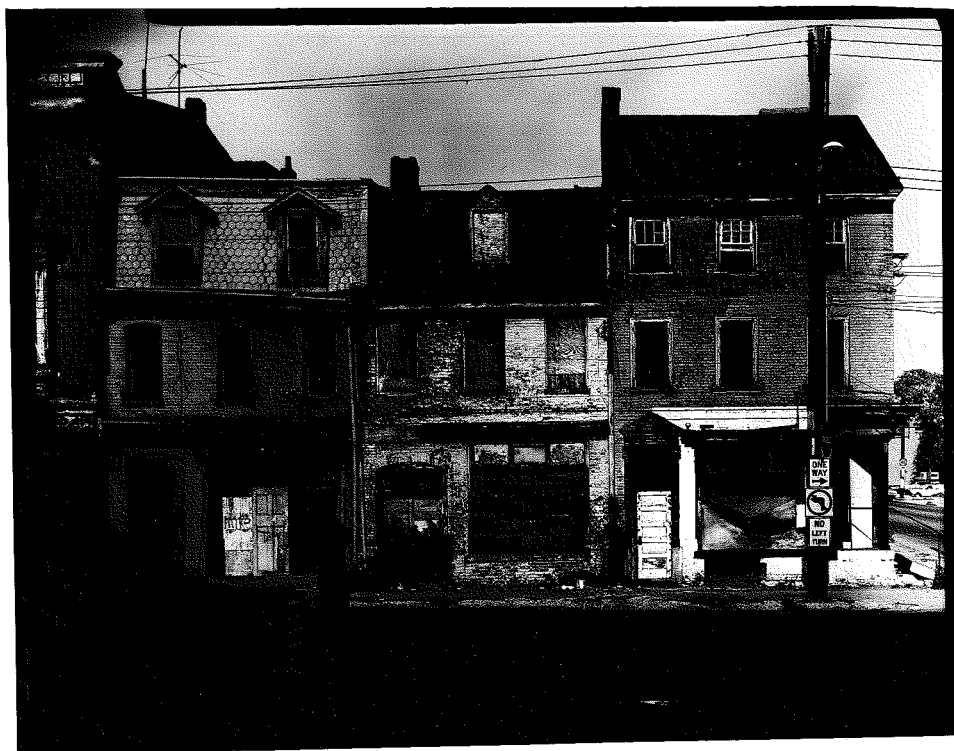


PLATE 4: CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
19TH CENTURY FRONT STREET COMMERCIAL FACADE

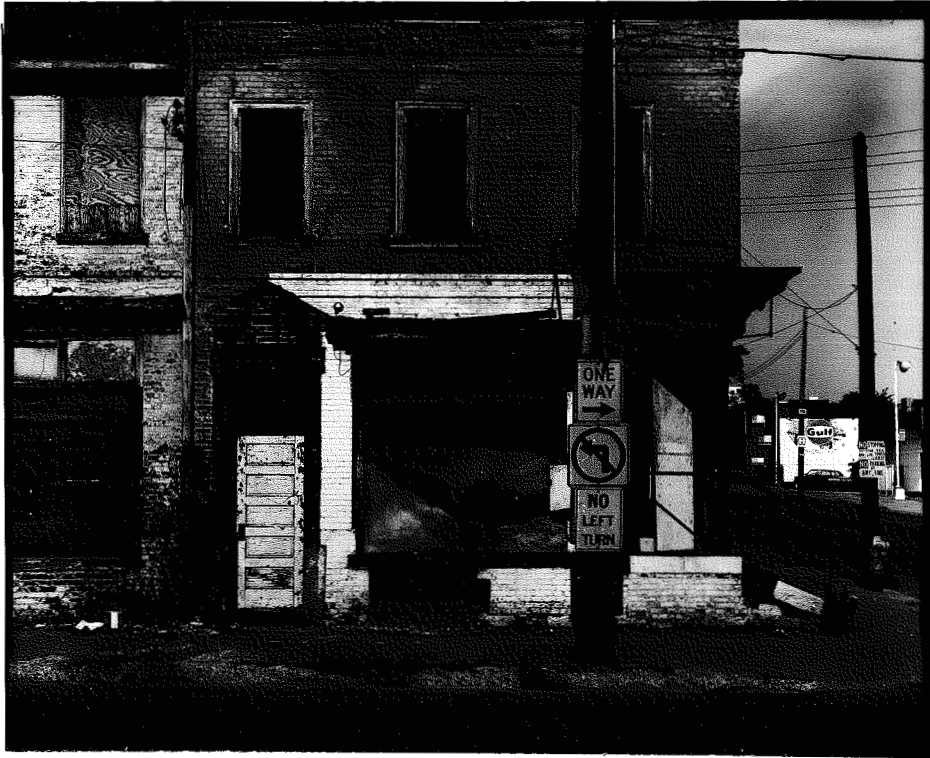


PLATE 5: CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
2ND FLOOR STAIR LANDING WITH ORIGINAL CHAIR RAIL



PLATE 6: CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
2ND FLOOR LANDING CHAIR RAIL SCAR



PLATE 7: CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
2ND FLOOR FRONT PARLOR SHOWING PANELING SCARS



PLATE 8: CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
2ND FLOOR PARTITION WALL DETAIL



PLATE 9: CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
2ND FLOOR LAPPED VERTICAL BOARD PARTITION WALL



PLATE 10: CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
3RD FLOOR REAR CHAMBER PANELING AND PARTITION WALL



PLATE 11: CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
3RD FLOOR FRONT CHAMBER MANTEL GHOST



PLATE 12: MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES
FRONT STREET ELEVATION



PLATE 13: 217 AND 219 EAST FRONT STREET



PLATE 14: 219 EAST FRONT STREET
19TH CENTURY STOREFRONT



PLATE 15: 217 AND 219 EAST FRONT STREET
STREET LEVEL ALLEY DETAIL



PLATE 16: 217 EAST FRONT STREET



APPENDIX: Rationale for Reconstructed Plans and Elevations of the Captain Thomas Mendenhall House and Mendenhall Tenant Houses

The basis for the reconstructed plans and elevations of the Captain Thomas Mendenhall House and the adjoining Mendenhall Tenant Houses rests wholly in the surviving architectural remains, including wall, ceiling and flooring scars, as well as in the location and recognition of fragments of original fabric, such as remnants of the chimney pile and stack, roof framing elements, and evidence of closers in the elevations.

Figure 1: Captain Thomas Mendenhall House and Mendenhall Tenant Houses Reconstructed Front Street Elevation, ca. 1805. Evidence for all the second and third floor openings and their locations survived in unaltered bays found in the Mendenhall House and the tenant houses at 223 and 225 East Front Street. The second floor window openings for the tenant house at 221 East Front Street had been closed with brick infill to create narrower openings, but the presence of queen closers and the dimensions of the original windows piercing the second floor of 223 East Front Street provided both the location and size of the original openings and second floor fenestrations. The roof lines of 223 and 225 East Front Street also reflected the initial period of construction, and because 223 and 221 used to be a single structure that was later subdivided and altered, the roof for 223 East Front Street was reconstructed as a continuous elevation over its neighboring property. The more detailed information for this conclusion involved the presence of a bridled scarf joint in the Front Street facade false plate and the extension of chimney braces which had enframed the large central chimney pile shared by the two addresses. Finally, the first floor elevation and fenestration were extrapolated from the placement of openings in the upper floors, original door openings located in the Front Street facades of 221 and 225 East Front Street, and the scars for an infilled window opening positioned adjoining and above the present doorway for 223 East Front Street. With the dimensions known for all first floor openings and the positioning derived for known doors and windows, the lines of the second floor openings were extended downwards and the heavily altered street level facade of ca. 1805 reconstructed.

Figure 2: Captain Thomas Mendenhall House and Mendenhall Tenant Houses: Reconstructed Ground Floor Plan, ca. 1805. Heavily altered through 20th-century commercial usage, the ground floor plans for all three addresses were reconstructed through the recognition and examination of surviving first period architectural features and later subtractions and additions to those features. Both of the Mendenhall Tenant Houses had lost their first floor plan configurations from the period of their initial construction. While 221 East Front Street had been converted into a side-passage double-pile storefront, 223 East

Front Street had been completely gutted for commercial usage. As originally built, the Mendenhall Tenant Houses had been mirror images of one another, and architectural evidence taken from both addresses was combined to reconstruct the plans. The fenestration was derived from the reconstructed Front Street elevation and remnants of infilled first period openings piercing the rear elevation. The location of the diagonally-set central chimney pile was drawn from the original base standing in the basement of 221 East Front Street, the remaining half of the original stack under the later roof of 221 East Front Street, and the smoke-blackened flue backs found under later lath and plaster between the second and attic floors of 223 East Front Street. The location of the partition wall, enclosed box-winder stair and approximate placement of interior doorways was all founded in the second floor arrangement of 223 East Front Street, which provided information on the dimensions of the stair and, by extension, its general configuration.

The first floor plan of the Thomas Mendenhall House was reconstructed in a similar manner. Once the original fenestration had been established, the interior arrangement was reconstructed from a combination of evidence found in the basement, first, and second floors. While the chimney pile had survived intact, the brick load-bearing walls resting on stone load-bearing walls in the basement had been removed. The previous existence of these walls, however, is known from a similar wall extant on the second floor between the chimney pile and the Walnut Street elevation of the building. The location of the open string stair is original as is much of its construction as evidenced in the use of hand-wrought nails, riven lath and morticed-and-tenoned stringers. The location of the stair is further supported by a first-period chair rail (see Plates 5 and 6) set into the plaster of the wall shared with the gable end of 223 East Front Street. The absence of stair passage or other internal partition walls is based on the unbroken profile of the chair rail for the full length of the present stair passage and the complete absence of any indication of studs or scantling walling either tenoned or nailed to the first floor ceiling joists.

Figure 3: Captain Thomas Mendanhall House and Mendenhall Tenant Houses: Reconstructed Second Floor Plan, ca. 1805. The second floor plans of 225 and 223 East Front Street survived to the present with relatively little change. The second floor plan of the Thomas Mendenhall House, although extensively vandalized, retained all of its first period partition walls and openings. The adjacent tenant house at 223 East Front Street survived in a similar state of presentation with the exception of the removal of the original stair and chimney pile. Flooring scars, however, revealed the size and position of the original stair, while the replacement of scantling walling with a later stair and closet in conjunction with a smoke-blackened flue back beneath a more recent lath and plaster wall indicated the presence and location of the first period chimney pile. The first period plan of the second floor of 221 East Front Street was drawn from its counterpart at 223 East Front Street.

Figure 4: Captain Thomas Mendenhall House: Reconstructed Third Floor Plan, ca. 1805. Like the second floor, the third story of the Thomas Mendenhall house endured the history of the building with little change. All original walls and openings have remained extant, and the only addition to the arrangement was the insertion of a 20th-century stud wall subdividing the room overlooking Front Street into two smaller spaces.

Figure 5: Mendenhall Tenant Houses: Reconstructed Roof Section, ca. 1805. Although the roof framing for 221 East Front Street had been replaced in the latter half of the 19th century, the first period roof system for the adjoining property at 223 East Front Street survived intact. A pair of cut chimney braces spiked to the underside of the rafters and a bridled scarf joint in the false plate seating the rafter feet indicated a parallel extension of the roof framing system for 223 East Front Street over 221 East Front Street. This assumption was verified during the demolition of these properties in July 1981, when the later mansard roof over 221 East Front Street was removed, revealing the ghost of the original gable bedded into the wall of 219 East Front Street.

NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL AND
ENGINEERING RECORD

CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES
217-219 EAST FRONT STREET

Prepared by
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and
David L. Ames

College of Urban Affairs and Public Policy
University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware

December 1980

It is the policy of the University of Delaware that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of race, color, religion, sex, national or ethnic origin, handicap, age or veteran status.

This project was funded through the City of Wilmington Planning Department in compliance with Executive Order 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

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NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING
RECORD

CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE

Location: 225 East Front Street
Wilmington, Delaware

Present Owner: William Parker
126 Landers Lane
New Castle, Delaware 19720

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: None

225 East Front Street - Captain Thomas Mendenhall House

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A.1. Date of Erection. The Captain Thomas Mendenhall House was erected in the last decade of the eighteenth century on the northwest corner of Front and Walnut Streets, facing what was then Wilmington's commercial waterfront along the Christina River.

A.2. Original Plans and Construction. As originally built, the Mendenhall House stood alone on a corner lot rising three full stones above a raised basement. The south and east elevations of the brick structure were laid in plain Flemish bond with struck mortar joints, while the foundations, rear wall, and west gable end were laid in common bond. At the first floor level a single course mortar round molded brick watertable ran along the primary elevations. The upper floors were differentiated by four-course Flemish bond belt courses. Visually the vertical emphasis of the dwelling was enhanced through the use of graduated window openings growing increasingly smaller from the ground floor to the attic without an increase in the number of lights per sash above the first story. The building was capped with a gable roof broken only by a central chimney pile emerging from the ridge. In plan the Mendenhall House began as a double-pile hall-parlor arrangement with each room heated by back-to-back hearths. Each room was paneled to some degree, with the more elaborate interior trim lavished on the second floor chamber and parlor. The first floor paneling was plainer in character, perhaps due to Mendenhall's using the street level rooms for his mercantile endeavors.

A.3. Alterations and Additions. Later additions included a two-story brick ell of the rear elevation dating from 1810 to 1820, and the modification of the original three-bay facade into a corner entrance store front in the 1870s.

B.1. Historical Context. The Thomas Mendenhall House, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970, is of prime historic, and architectural significance to the City of Wilmington. During the Revolutionary War, then Ensign Thomas Mendenhall, serving aboard the Brig Nancy, made and flew the first American flag in a foreign port. By 1800 Captain Thomas Mendenhall was engaged in the West Indies trade with his schooner Pratt. As a Quaker merchant Mendenhall was more than successful, for by the time of the 1804 tax assessment he owned the brick house on the corner of Front and Walnut, the two adjacent tenant houses at 65 and 67 (now 221 and 223) East Front Street, two stores, wharfage, two additional houses on rent, and a total of six additional lots. These undeveloped lots were not only in the immediate neighborhood of the house, but also included two two-acre lots in a then undeveloped section of the city near Brandywine Village. The type and quality of Men-

denhall's material goods as well as the archaeological potential and importance of the site are further illustrated by the spoils of a looted archaeological feature under the brick ell behind the main block of the house. Imported porcelain, cream wares, and ornamented pearl wares as well as locally produced utilitarian and decorative earthenwares describe a domestic consumption of no mean nature. Some of the ceramic remains show no signs of wear and may be representative of goods broken in transit as part of Mendenhall's trading endeavors. In addition to real estate and trading, Thomas Mendenhall's business interests extended to the founding of the National Bank of Delaware as a member of the first board of directors. Finally, the historical significance of the Thomas Mendenhall House has been increased by the accident of urban architectural additions. As the house and its dependent tenant houses stand today, they represent the last standing eighteenth century Wilmington street corner.

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A.1. Architectural Character. Through planned or accidental circumstances, the Captain Thomas Mendenhall House remains one of Wilmington's finest eighteenth century structures. With its urban setting, Federal period detailing, and later first floor changes, the structure portrays not only the standard of living obtained by the city's wealthiest Quaker merchants, but also the material ways in which that urban setting has witnessed historical change.

A.2. Condition of Fabric. Although the Mendenhall House has recently suffered extensive vandalism, the structure remains sound with a minimum of weather damage. The demolition of the block to the west, has measurably altered the pattern of rain runoff, however, and the house is now subject to some flooding in the course of severe weather.

B.1. Over-all Dimensions. The Captain Thomas Mendenhall House was built as a 21 by 32 1/2 foot structure with a near 40 foot elevation. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century and no later than about 1820 a two-story 21 1/2 by 31 1/2 foot ell was appended to the northwest corner of the building.

B.2. Foundations. The foundations of the main unit are of rubble stone masonry rising six inches above grade on the primary facade. Above the stonework to a height of three feet the foundations rise in common bond brick to a quarter-round molded brick watertable. The foundations for the house include a rubble stone bearing wall and round relieving arches supporting the main chimney pile.

B.3. Walls. The south and east elevations are laid in plain Flemish bond interrupted by raised four-course Flemish bond belt courses at each floor level. Within the belt courses, the top course projects and additional inch beyond the face of the lower courses. The west gable end is laid in common bond and is now largely masked by the two-and-a-half story gable end of 223 East Front Street. The bonding of the rear wall is presently obscured

by a coat of cement stucco.

B.4. Structural System, Framing. In addition to the roof, the only structural framing consists of sawn floor joists. In the cellar longitudinal girders butt end to end in the bearing wall containing the base of the chimney pile, with the joists tenoned in turn into the lateral face of each girder. In the upper floors the joists run the opposite direction and are carried at mid-point by either a masonry bearing wall or transverse girder.

B.5. Porches, Stoops, Balconies, Bulkheads. As originally built the Mendenhall House had no porches. In the latter half of the nineteenth century however, a corner store front porch was carved out of the original fabric of the building. With the masonry removed, the load bearing function of the corner was replaced by a single cast iron Doric column footed on reused King of Prussia marble steps. The architrave of the corner door consists of recessed panel reveals with the intermediate rails dressed with machine-turned wooden bosses. The triangular porch ceiling is finished in the same manner with a centrally placed and recessed medallion from which a gas light fixture formerly depended. The porch cornice, carried by the corner column and a flattened pilaster at either juncture of the architrave and wall, rises from a plain frieze to a cyma molded cornice. On each face of the porch is a pair of machine-produced Italianate brackets. The whole of the cornice is covered by a flat seam tin roof flashed into the earlier brick walling.

B.6. Chimneys. The ridge of the main block is broken by a single off-center chimney pile terminated and capped approximately six inches above the ridge. The entire stack rises from back-to-back relieving arches in the cellar and continues two open hearths at each story of the building. A later brick stove flue emerges from the base of the rear roof face, rises approximately four feet, and is finished with an undecorated terra cotta chimney pot.

B.7. Exterior Openings. As built, the Mendenhall House presented a three-bay, side-door facade to Front Street. The original ground floor entry (removed by vandals in 1979) consisted of raised panel reveals and an extended molded surround rising to crosssetted corners and carrying an open pediment infilled with curvilinear, geometric, and stylized floral motifs. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, a corner entrance was cut into the southeast first-floor corner, and in the early twentieth century, garage bays were cut into the full length of the east wall of the two-story ell. On the ground floor, two shop front windows were introduced into the fenestration at the same time the corner doorway was worked into the building. Both of these windows, each measuring approximately 8 feet wide by 7 1/2 feet high, were most recently composed of a large plate glass light surmounted by three smaller lights. The whole of each window is enframed by an unadorned wooden architrave and finished with a box cornice and cyma crown molding. All other windows in the structure date from the original late eighteenth century building period and are composed of mortice-and tenoned architraves with quirked quarter-round moldings and a cyma bed molding beneath the exterior lip of the sill. On the ground floor wrought from pintles for exterior shutters were driven into the frames, while the upper

stories utilized butt hinges for the same purpose. All windows were sash, with six-over-six light sash being employed in all the upper level openings. The later window openings in the ell have been altered with sawn and nailed frames fitted with either one-over-one or six-over-one sash.

B.8. Roof. The gable roof of the main block is carried on common rafters set on rough two foot centers and footed into a raised plank false plate. Each of the rafters is braced to the opposing member through a blind half-dovetail lap joint. The flat roof of the ell is supported by joists laid across the top of the masonry walls. The main block is covered with a red standing seam sheet metal roof, while the wing is capped with a badly decayed asphalt roof. Both sections are furnished with boxed-in cornices. While the cornice of the ell is contemporary and identical to the shop front window trim, the earlier portion of the Mendenhall House retains its original roof trim. Along the Front Street facade the box cornice is ornamented with a broad cyma crown molding and a smaller cyma bed molding, each coming to a full return and stop. A section of unused molding found beneath the attic eaves shows that the crown molding was originally painted a dark green and the box cornice painted red. Along the eaves of the Walnut Street elevation, the roof line was visually terminated with a raking cyma molded verge board of the same contours as found on the cornice lines.

C.1. Floor Plans. As first built, the Mendenhall House was based on a two-room, hall-parlor plan on the first floor and a three-room variation of that plan in the upper stories. In the later nineteenth century a vestibule, or interior porch, was inserted behind the original entrance, and shortly after that, a narrow passage was introduced running the full depth of the building to the stair. As a result of these changes, the house became a side-hall, double-pile plan with a ground floor store front and upper story living quarters. A two-story brick wing, erected in the early nineteenth century, contained the household service functions and servants' quarters in two rooms. In the twentieth century these rooms were converted into a concrete floored automobile garage and repair shop. The second floor followed much the same pattern of development, with the exception that as built the upper story floor plans contained an additional forward room in the southwest corner and the use of a side passage for the stair hall was original to the structure. At the third floor however, while the stair passage remained intact in the rear half of the block, the forward corner room was dropped from the plan. The half depth side-passage contained not only a landing from the second floor but also a beaded edge verticle board paneled box stair to the attic or garret. Later conversion of these rooms to apartment usage subdivided the original spaces and resulted in the attic's being partitioned into two additional finished rooms.

C.2. Stairways. Again, as built, the Mendenhall House contained a broad open string staircase in the rear room, but later changes had the consequence of removing the first period finish. At present the stair rises from the first floor passage in a straight run to a rectangular landing and then to the second floor, where a twentieth century stick baluster landing and closed string continue to the upper floors. The stair to the attic is a box winder turning in a beaded edge verticle board staircase. There is no

stair from the ground floor of the ell to the upper story.

C.3. Flooring. On the ground floor the original flooring has been covered with mid-twentieth century linoleum tile and concrete slab. The upper floors are finished with one foot by one inch thick oak boards similar to those used in the adjacent Mendenhall tenant properties.

C.4. Wall and Ceiling Finish. All original wall surfaces are finished with plaster, applied to riven oak lath nailed over lapped vertical board partition walls and ceiling joists or applied directly to interior masonry surfaces.

C.5. Interior Openings. All interior doorways and windows have been robbed.

C.6. Decorating Features and Trim. Despite the present condition of the Mendenhall House, significant amounts of interior trim remain within the structure. On the ground floor a raised chair rail runs the depth of the present side passage. Supported on recessed paneled stiles set into the plaster wall finish, the chair rail is composed of a beaded lower edge, a plain face and a quirked cove molding stepping up to half round lip. In the first floor rooms are the remains of paneled overmantels incorporating flush set board surrounds of three-quarter inch thick pine, deeply beaded edges, and, in the rear room, a raised finely molded architrave defining the mouth of the hearth. The upper stories of the house have been largely stripped of their interior decorative detailing, but evidence remains for fully paneled hearth walls complete with raised panel chimney closets, overmantels, and boldly profiled mantels. Sections of original yellow poplar chair rail are described by a shallow cyma rising to a half-round molding. All interior trim was fastened in place with clenched wrought nails, driven into nailing blocks embedded in masonry or into the fabric of the board partition walls.

C.7. Hardware. No interior hardware survives.

D.1. General Setting and Orientation. Situated on the southeast corner of East Front and Walnut Streets, the Captain Thomas Mendenhall House faces the Wilmington Railroad Station, designed by Philadelphia architect Frank Furness in 1902 and completed in 1905. Contiguous to the west gable end are two of Mendenhall's pre-1804 rental houses currently under threat of demolition. The east gable end facing Walnut Street overlooks a Gulf service station and a commuter parking lot. The lots behind the house to the north are vacant; the buildings (including one structure possibly associated with Thomas Mendenhall) were demolished in October 1980.

D.2. Historic Landscape Design. The historic landscape familiar to Thomas Mendenhall would have included the structures standing to the immediate west, a two-story brick structure which formerly stood to the north of the house, and an unobstructed view of waterfront storehouses and wharfage along the north bank of the Christina River less than one block to the south. By 1905 that landscape had changed, with the ground floors of the Front Street structures altered to accommodate late Victorian shop fronts

Captain Thomas Mendenhall House

and completion of the Wilmington Railroad Station.

D.3. Outbuildings. The only surviving outbuilding dating to the early period of the Mendenhall House is the two unit rental property at 221 and 223 East Front Street. Some archaeological evidence suggests, however, that the Mendenhall House was served by a brick lined and vaulted cistern, well, privy and storehouses.

NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING
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CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES

Location: 221 and 223 East Front Street
Wilmington, Delaware

Present Owners: 221 East Front Street - Frank Jannuzzio, et. al.
1115 Barksdale Drive
Sherwood Park
Wilmington, Delaware 19808

223 East Front Street - Mr. and Mrs. Roland Cohen
1717 Forestdale Drive
Twin Oaks
Wilmington, Delaware 19803

Present Occupants: Vacant

Present Use: None

221 and 223 Front Street

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A.L. Dates of Erection. 221 and 223 East Front Street were erected as a single two-and-a-half story brick structure by Captain Thomas Mendenhall, merchant, in the last decade of the eighteenth century. In the latter half of the nineteenth century the property was subdivided, and the facades and plans of the two halves of the structure were partitioned and altered in different ways.

A.2. Original Plans and Construction. The original first floor plan of the 221-223 East Front Street was a simple double-pile arrangement with a large diagonally set chimney pile running up along a nine-inch thick brick bearing wall. Both the front and rear rooms on either side of the building were heated by corner fireplaces. A partition wall, probably of vertically lapped board construction covered with nailed riven lath and plaster, divided the front and rear rooms and contained a doorway connecting the two spaces. A boxed stair stood approximately three feet out from the gable end terminus of each wall and contained a closed run of stairs leading to the upper floors. The second floor arrangement was characterized by a three-room plan deposition, with a narrow stair landing opening into a front chamber containing an original closet and into a full length rear chamber. Both principal second floor rooms probably contained hearths similar in placement to those located on the first floor. The attic level of the structure was built as a commodious storage space with no physical division between either half. The overall elevation of the building consisted of a two-and-a-half story gable roofed elevation with a central chimney pile flanked on either side by a single shed dormer, a balanced six-bay facade with doors at either end of the facade, and a four-course projecting belt course visually separating the first and second floors. The original wood shingled roof came down to a boxed cornice line finished with a cyma recta bed molding terminating approximately six inches in at either end of the cornice line. Windows were six-over-six sash at the second floor level and contained in mortice-and-tenon, beaded edge architraves. All openings were spanned with wood lintel load bearing members without masonry arches except for the doorways, which were furnished with header segmental arches seated in a two-course masonry skewback.

The fabric of 221-223 East Front Street consists of a brick Flemish bond facade and common bond rear and west gable end walls rising from a rubble stone masonry foundation formerly defining full cellars and the triangular footings for the central chimney pile. The internal framing for the floors consisted of a single transverse summer beam, or girder, in either half of the structure with one end resting in the gable end foundations and the other in the projecting corner of the chimney pile. The joints were tenoned into

the girders on one-foot three-inch centers with their front and rear wall ends set into masonry sockets. Floors were of approximately one-foot wide by one-inch thick tongue-in-groove boarding. The attic framing consists of a common rafter roof with four-by-five-inch rafters set on one-foot, nine-inch centers with half lapped ridge joints and collar beams half-lapped and half-dovetailed into the east face of each set of blades. Shingle lath spaced at six-inch intervals provided the seating for a square butt wood shingle roof. The individual rafter blades were footed onto a plank raising plate notched into the upper surfaces of the second floor ceiling joists. The centrally placed shed dormer windows were located between the middle two sets of rafters, which were set three feet apart. Surviving details suggest the dormers sprang from cheeks nailed to the inside edges of each of the bearing rafters and the whole roofed over with solid shingle lath. One other noteworthy roof framing detail is the use of partial nested purlin spiked to the undersurface of the rafters surrounding the chimney pile and footed atop the first collar beam in from either side of the stack face.

The second floor door surrounds are the only original trim remaining in 223 East Front Street. The frames, which terminate in vertically lapped partition walls covered with riven lath nailed in place with scautling cut iron nails and covered with plaster, are made up of a beaded edge rising to a filleted quarter-round molding. The frames were painted red and provided with H or HL hinges for the connecting doors. The baseboard rose with a quarter round bead to a flattened cyma bedded in the plaster finish.

A.3. Alterations and Additions. In the course of the nineteenth century one property was divided and heavily altered to its present appearance. The alterations, which included a roof raising, removal of walls, construction of now ruinous wings, and the near total removal of interior trim, will be discussed in Part II as part of the current architectural state of the building.

B. Historical Content. 221 and 223 East Front Street were erected as tenant houses between 1795 and 1805 by Captain Thomas Mendenhall. Mendenhall, a Quaker merchant, was active in the West Indies trade at the close of the eighteenth century and in the founding of the National Bank of Delaware in 1795. The 1804 and 1816 tax rolls describe Mendenhall's property holdings as including two acres, a house, wharfage, and two storehouses and four houses on rent. In 1814 the properties now identified as 221 and 223 East Front Street were occupied by Joel Zane, a teacher, and Benjamin Webb, a laborer. Zane had been renting from Mendenhall since at least 1800, when he lived in 221 East Front Street with his wife and family.

In the course of the nineteenth century the property was sold and the double family dwelling subdivided. By the second quarter of the century the ground floor spaces had been functionally and decoratively altered to accommodate commercial store fronts. The common attic between the two addresses was partitioned in the same period, while the upper stories of the building remained residential.

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION--221 East Front Street.

A.1. Architectural Character. Although 221 East Front Street was built as part of a larger double family row house, later subdivisions of the property led to the development of its architectural character as a distinct structural entity. As the building now stands, it is the product of late nineteenth century changes affecting fenestration, elevation, plans, and interior trim. Last occupied in 1974, 221 East Front Street has been in the process of decay for a considerably longer period of time.

A.2. Condition of Fabric. Late nineteenth century changes made in the roof line of the structure facilitated weather damage and the rotting away of major sections of interior framing. At present the building is unstable with rotting floors and joists.

B.1. Over-all Dimensions. The overall exterior dimensions describe a unit with approximately 18 feet of street frontage, a 33-foot elevation and 32-foot depth. The original ground floor rooms approximately 15 feet deep and 17 feet broad, were later partitioned into a double-pile, side-hall arrangement, with the front room 13 feet 9 inches by 15 feet 5 inches and the rear room 10 feet 6 inches by 14 feet 7 inches. The side stair passage flares from a 2 foot 8 inch width, 12 feet 8 inches into the building to a 5 foot 5 inch width. The front, rear, and west gable end walls are 1 foot 3 inches thick, while the partition wall shared with 221 East Front Street is only 9 inches thick. A rear wing, now partially demolished, measures 11 feet by 20 feet and housed the service functions of the unit in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

B.2. Foundations. The foundations are of rubble stone masonry laid in lime mortar. Prior to later nineteenth century changes, the foundation walls described a full cellar now back-filled with construction rubble from the alterations. Of additional note is the rubble stone triangular chimney pile base surviving from the first building period. At grade level the stone foundations are capped with the base courses of full height brick walling.

B.3. Walls. All exterior and load bearing walls for both 221 and 223 E. Front Street are of brick construction. From sidewalk level the street facade rises 3 feet in common bond to a quarter round molded brick water table, where the wall thins down 4 inches in width and the masonry shifts to plain Flemish bond with struck joints. At the second floor level a four course Flemish bond belt course juts out with the three lower courses capped by a fourth oversailing course. Above the belt course the Flemish bond pattern continues to the cornice line. Gable end and rear walls are of mixed common bond and the central bearing wall of unknown bonding covered with interior finishing plaster over a base coat of sand mortar with animal hair binding.

B.4. Structural System, Framing. Structural framing elements consist only of 3 by 10 inch floor joists bedded in the fabric of the masonry walls, late nineteenth century stud partition walls, and the roof framing for the late nineteenth century mansard roof line. Original lumber elements are all

of straight mill sawn oak.

B.5. Porches, Stoops, Balconies, Bulkheads. Along the street facade at the first floor level runs a full length shed roofed pent shading the store front. The pent is supported on factory-made Italianate consoles and open work chamfered edge brackets. Between the principal brackets run smaller purely decorative Italianate brackets.

B.6. Chimneys. A chimney pile shared with 223 E. Front Street emerged from the east gable end of 221 E. Front Street but was removed in the course of nineteenth century alterations. A smaller brick stove chimney occupies the position of the earlier pile.

B.7. Exterior Openings. Both the first and second floor fenestrations of the building have been altered from their original appearance. Flanked on the west by a segmentally arched doorway opening into a corridor leading to the rear and upper floors of the structure. The second floor openings have all been narrowed 6 inches in width and refinished with new-load bearing segmental arches in the late nineteenth century. The unboarded sash windows are filled one-over-one lights.

B.8. Roof. 221 East Front Street is capped by a fish scale patterned slate shingled mansard roof rising to the height of the original ridge line. Like the first floor pent, the cornice is visually supported at the corners by scroll work Italianate consoles and finished with smaller brackets of similar size alternating with raised panels. Two dormers with projecting open gables and broad architraves finished with turned wooden bosses and raised molded edge panels break the inward slope of the roof. Above the dormers at the break in the roof line is a verge board ornamented with the same motifs found around the dormers and on the cornice.

C.1. Floor Plan. The floor plan of 221 East Front Street is a variant of side-passage double-pile arrangement with a rear service ell and a commercial store front. On the second story the plan is retained, and the domestic spaces of the unit extended to incorporate the front room. Above the second floor level the structure is inaccessible due to water damage.

C.2 Stairways. A late Victorian period stairway is located in the rear section of the side passage. The open string stair rises in a straight run of 14 treads to a second-story landing. On each tread are factory-produced Eastlake style balusters which continue around the stair well at the second floor level.

C.3. Flooring. Flooring, dating to the period of nineteenth century remodeling, is largely rotted or covered with building debris.

C.4. Wall and Ceiling Finish. All walls and ceilings are finished with plaster applied either directly to masonry surfaces or to sawn wood lath nailed to studding.

C.5. Decorative Features and Trim. In addition to the stairway, the only surviving interior trim in 221 East Front Street is a round arched door surround and transom framing the entrance to the stairway. The factory planed architrave is a composite of raised angular and curved surfaces. All other accessible interior surfaces have been stripped of trim.

D. Site. 221 East Front Street is flanked on either side by row houses with late nineteenth century store fronts and faces the Wilmington railroad station, designed by Frank Furness in 1901 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Prior to the construction of the train station the houses faced the commercial area and wharfage of the Christina River. There are no surviving related outbuildings.

Part III. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION--223 East Front St.

A.1. Architectural Character. 223 East Front Street was erected as half of a double family row house in the period around 1800, and like its counterpart, 221 East Front Street, was later subdivided and altered for various commercial and domestic uses. Although the first floor interiors were largely gutted by 1900, the second floor retains a substantial amount of its original architectural character. While the unit has not been occupied since at least 1963, it remains in visibly better structural condition than its more heavily altered neighbor. Most structural damage is confined to the forward slope of the roof, where, it was cut and altered during the changes made to 221, and to the rear northeast corner of the rear load bearing wall, which has partially collapsed. The majority of the architectural evidence used to reconstruct the elevations and interior spaces of 221 and 223 East Front Street as they were built was drawn from 223.

B.1. Overall Dimensions. The overall exterior dimensions of 223 East Front Street describe a unit with 18 feet of street frontage, a 33-foot total elevation and a 32-foot depth. The original general floor plan and dimensions mirrored those of 221, but where 221 was partitioned into even smaller spaces in the late nineteenth century, 223 was opened up into a single commercial space. A demolished rear wing 13 feet wide by 15 feet long stood against the rear northeast corner.

B.2. Foundations. The foundations are of the same materials and contours as the adjacent property. Like 221, the cellar of 223 has been back-filled with construction rubble.

B.3. Walls. Above grade the brick facade of the unit rises approximately 3 feet in random common bond to a watertable capped with a quarter round molded brick course. The remainder of the wall is laid in plain Flemish bond with struck mortar joints and a belt course identical to 221. The undisturbed second floor openings are evened with queen closers and capped with continued use of Flemish bond masonry rather than any visible masonry arch support. The rear wall is of brick construction masked by later applications of mortar, while the gable end is a common wall with the

earlier corner structure at 225 East Front Street. The central bearing wall, of a 9-inch depth, is of unknown bonding and covered with an original plaster coat.

B.4. Structural System, Framing. Structural framing elements consist of 3 - by 10 - inch floor joists on 1 foot 6 inch centers and bedded in the masonry of the walls. The joists with their close centers act as lateral ties for both halves of the double unit structure, providing structural stability in lieu of free standing gable end walls. The roof framing for 223 is fully described in section I.A.2. As in the case of 221 East Front Street, all original lumber materials are of straight sawn oak.

B.5. Porches, Stoops, Balconies, Bulkheads. Above the shop front window runs a pent-like shed consisting of a flat roofed cornice supported on plain closely spaced brackets.

B.6. Chimney. The original chimney pile shared with 221 East Front Street was completely removed in the late nineteenth century and replaced with a 1 foot two inch by 1 foot 8 inch brick stove flue placed against the opposite gable wall.

B.7. Exterior Openings. While the second floor retains its original appearance, the first floor displays changes made in converting the initial three-bay row house facade into a late Victorian store front. The present ground floor elevation consists of a single display window with a three-light transom and side-door entrance reversed from its original placement at the opposite end of the facade. The present door, capped by a segmental arch opening, follows the seam of an earlier window and contained a plain transom window. The second floor windows are enframed in mortice-and-tenon architraves and consisted of six-over-six light sash. There is no visible evidence for exterior shutters.

B.8. Roof. The gable roof framing is fully described in section I.A.5. The present roof covering is composed of wood shingle covered with sheet tin. On each side of the roof a single gable roof dormer of a later date occupies the site of the original shed dormers. The dormers are finished with raised and filleted quarter round trim and crown molding nailed under the verge of the dormer's gables.

C.1. Floor Plan. The present floor plan of 223 East Front Street is a large open space containing only a stove flue, display window, and load bearing girder midway through the building. The second floor, accessible only by a fire escape located behind the structure, was originally divided into a three-room plan containing a narrow stair landing, a small street front chamber, and a larger rear chamber. In the early twentieth century a bathroom was partitioned off the northeast corner of the rear chamber and the stair removed to its present location over the site of the original chimney pile. The attic, originally open with whitewashed timbers, was longitudinally partitioned into two rooms in the same period.

C.2. Stairways. An enclosed stair containing a straight run leads from the second floor to the attic.

C.3. Flooring. The ground floor flooring is of narrow width boards with tongue-and-groove joints and is a late replacement of the original flooring. First period flooring, found on the second floor and in the attic, is of random width oak with half-lapped rabbeted joints.

C.4. Wall and Ceiling Finish. All walls and ceilings were plastered either over brick or wood lath. On the ground floor pine beaded edge stock molding was nailed to rails to create a field of late nineteenth century wainscot against the common wall shared with 221 East Front Street. On the second floor three original doorways present architraves composed of a beaded edge leading into a quarter-round molding. Baseboard rises from a quarter round molding over a flat surface to a shallow cyma terminating in the wall.

D. Site. 223 East Front Street is flanked on either side by late eighteenth century residences altered into Victorian store fronts facing the Wilmington Railroad Station. Together with 221 and 225, 223 is an integral part of a row of buildings erected by Quaker merchant Thomas Mendenhall prior to 1800. While there are no related above ground structures, archaeological disturbances indicate the earlier presence of support structures for the household.

NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING
RECORD

217-219 EAST FRONT STREET

Location: 217 and 219 East Front Street
Wilmington, Delaware

Present Owners: 217 East Front Street - Sophie Layton
217 East Front Street
Wilmington, Delaware 19801

219 East Front Street - Thomas Hatzis
1723 Gunning Drive
Forest Hills Park
Wilmington, Delaware

Present Occupants: 217 East Front Street - Vacant
219 East Front Street - Helen's Cafe
Sophie Layton

Present Use: 217 East Front Street - Vacant
219 East Front Street - Tap Room and Boarding House

217-219 East Front Street

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History. 217 and 219 East Front Street were erected in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as a double storefront and residence. The original fabric of the structure was of brick construction with a pressed brick facade and rough cast brick gable and rear walls. Slip glazed brick and molded bricks were additionally employed to create decorative arches and to accent points of visual separation in the overall street elevation. Like other structures in the area, 217 and 219 East Front Street were subdivided and treated as separate structures. The end result was the alteration and enlargement of 217 into a tap room, dance hall, and boarding house and the interior collapse of 219 due to water damage.

B. Historical Context. 217 and 219 East Front Street were built as near contemporaries to the Wilmington Railroad Station in the late nineteenth century. The three-story false front structure filled in the 100 block of East Front Street and dates a period of mason change from the area's earlier nineteenth century appearance. It is also likely that the structure replaced earlier buildings located on the site. These earlier structures may not have dated to the building period of 221, 223, and 225 East Front Street, but probably predated the 1860s. Because 217 and 219 were subdivided only after they were built and because they have suffered a minimum of exterior change, they will be discussed as a single unit.

Part II ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION.

A.1. Architectural Character. The architectural character of 217-219 East Front Street may be described in terms of a late nineteenth century commercial eclecticism. While the exterior makes use of a number of cosmetic devices, including glazed brickwork, oriel windows, turned wooden bosses and a heavy false front cornice, it fails to associate with any particular architectural style or aesthetic ideology.

A.2. Condition of Fabric. While 217 remains in use as a tap room and boarding house, 219 has fallen into an advanced state of decay in which the interior has largely collapsed in on itself. 217 has suffered structural damage from the roughshod demolition of adjacent properties, however, its structural condition is currently problematical.

B.1. Overall Dimensions. The total overall exterior front of the building measures approximately 38 feet in length, while the depth of the structure runs 32 feet, with a 15 by 29 foot two-story rear ell attached to

both halves of the structure. 217 possesses an additional wing placed at a right angle to the ell and measuring approximately 20 by 16 feet. The two units are separated at street level by a two and a half foot wide brick round arched passage, running the full depth of the main block and opening into a narrow concrete floored courtyard.

B.2. Foundations. The foundations are of rubble stone masonry construction and originally defined full cellars.

B.3. Walls. The exterior walls of the two units were laid in mechanical or stretcher bond with water pressed brick bedded in a lime finishing mortar. The masonry is decoratively enhanced with slip glazed stretchers patterned into round arches above the second floor windows and the use of fifteen course corbeled brick consoles capped with stretcher framed raised relief floral patterned bricks.

B.4. Structural System, Framing. Structural framing consists of joists bedded into the gable and load bearing partition walls. Roof framing was inaccessible.

B.5. Porches, Stoops, Balconies, Bulkheads. Although there are no porches or bulkheads, the second floor is interrupted by two timber framed oriel windows, one centrally placed in each of the two units. The windows were each visually supported on a pair of corbeled brick consoles projecting approximately one foot beyond the plane of the facade. Each window was equipped with a pair of eleven-over-one light sash with the upper lights composed of a clear central pane and surrounding glazed lights. The whole was capped with a hipped roof carried on a cove cornice, and a flat plain frieze atop an unadorned architrave.

B.6. Chimneys. A triple stove flue chimney arrangement, including an exterior stack and two flanking interior stacks, emerge from the west gable end. The caps of each stack are simply corbeled out from the body of the pile. A similar exterior end pile runs up the gable end of the east wall but lacks a finishing course.

B.7. Exterior Openings. The fenestration at street level remains unchanged for 219, although it has been broken up and altered for 217. As built, the first floor shop front was divided into a seven-bay, tripartite balanced facade. The central element was the opening to the alley way between the units/above the actual entry way a fanlight with a wood grill in fill provided a central visual element. To either side, a doorway with a tall single-light transom opened into a commercial space illuminated by a full height store front window with fixed transom lights echoing the doorway. The display windows were further set off by the springing for the consoles visually carrying the oriel windows at the second floor level. To the far gable ends, a single door opening into an enclosed stair provided street level access to the upper residential floors of the building. The upper level windows consist of the oriel windows previously described and one-over-one light sash windows capped with unadorned beam lintels. The balance

achieved on the first floor is lost in the upper stories, due to the partition of the space incorporated in the first floor alley.

B.8. Roof. The roof over the main block is a shallow gabled roof with flush eaves and a raised false front cornice on the street facade. The cornice is visually carried on corbeled brick consoles with trim identical to that found at street level. Between the consoles, springing from several courses below the tops of the third floor windows, curves a cove fascia atop which sits a frieze infilled with wood square raised panels and capped with a plain fascia and beveled cornice molding.

A similar belt frieze appears at the juncture of the first and second floors. Here the frieze, filled with turned wood bosses, rises to a beveled cornice covered with a shallow shed roof interrupted by the rhythm of the corbeled brick consoles.

C. Description of Interior. Although the exterior of 217 and 219 East Front Street are of the same style and material, the interiors, due to different ownership, have changed to varying degrees and in an individual manner. To avoid confusion the interiors will be discussed one address at a time, beginning with 217 and closing with 219 East Front Street. Only the ground floors of these structures are described: the upper floors of 219 are inaccessible due to advanced structural decay, and those of 217 are inaccessible because of current use as individually rented apartments.

217 East Front Street

C.1. Floor Plan. 217 East Front Street (Helen's Cafe) now consists of a single open space to accommodate the building's function as a tap room (formerly as a dance hall). The space was further enlarged through the addition of a two-story brick wing to the west. In the immediate front of the room stands an approximately 21 foot square clipped corner and hollow glass block bar dating from the mid-twentieth century. Along the walls are sets of yellow vinyl upholstered booths and below this a raised dance floor. At the far end of the room is a second bar incorporating a board counter top and hollow core wood Doric columns. At the east end of the bar a door leads into a kitchen. Access to the upper stories of the building is gained through a separate exterior entry opening into a closed run of stairs.

C.2. Flooring. The flooring of the unit is composed of alternating light-and-dark linoleum tile except in the area defined by the bar island, which is finished with alternating green and white linoleum tile.

C.3. Wall and Ceiling Finish. The walls and ceilings are finished with plaster applied to sawn wood lath fixed in place with wire nails. Of particular note are the two murals painted in the front part of the bar by Raymond Eanton in 1950. Coated with shellac, the mural on the west wall consists of a triptych comprised of a central element of the American Revolution with George Washington flanked on either side by European landscapes. The whole of the composition is symmetrically divided by fluted and sectioned

Doric style columns. On the opposing west wall the stair to the upper stories breaks the mural into two sections: one of a harbor scene with sailboats and an iron railed promenade, the other illustrating a river scene with a young couple in ante-bellum dress, sitting on the bank gazing at an otter in the water. On the opposite shore stands a country house in a landscape of evergreens. (A painted ashlar wall provided a visual foundation for the scenes.) According to the present owner, Mrs. Kitty Layton, the scenes were chosen by her mother from books supplied by Eanton. The entire painting project took three to four months during which time Mr. Eanton commuted to Wilmington from Chester, Pennsylvania, and worked on the murals from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. The completed project covered the entire front room but was partially covered in 1968 with a coat of paint.

C.4. Interior Openings. The glass block windows were installed in masonry jambs between 1945 and 1949. The only interior window was an opening for passing food through to the rear bar from the kitchen.

C.5. Decorative Features and Trim. The interior trim includes the front bar previously described, a band stand, and a rear bar. The band stand was raised in the same period the front bar and windows were installed. Three treads lead up to a linoleum tiled dance floor at the far end of which is a band stand raised on two courses of hollow glass blocks. The bar at the rear of the room contains a Doric tri-style counter section with leatherette panels. The central panel has the word "Belmon" spelled out in brass furniture tacks. According to the owner, Belmon refers to a New York race track, but its significance in its present context has been lost. Behind the counter is the display area containing two Corinthian columns framing a triptych of winter woodland and pastoral scenes painted on plywood. The scenes, containing deer, some trees, and forest cottages, appear to be mass produced rather than hand painted. The cornice of the bar is finished with stock egg-and-dart molding, while the area below contains plain service drawers and a stepped four-tread display area.

219 East Front Street

C.1. Floor Plans. 219 East Front Street defines a plan made up of an open full depth store front with a separate entrance providing access to the upper stories of the building. Behind the front room are a series of two smaller service rooms. Between these two rooms is an enclosed stairwell with flights leading both to the second floor rooms and to a full cellar.

C.2. Flooring. The flooring for 219 East Front Street is of tongue-and-groove construction, supported on circular sawn pine joists.

C.3. Wall and Ceiling Finish. All walls are finished with plaster applied either directly to the masonry or over sawn lath. The front room is further finished with a plain baseboard terminating in a shallow cyma molding. The middle rear room is additionally embellished with a plain level edge chair rail.

C.4. Interior Openings. Doors and windows were framed in machine molded architraves with the doors being of paneled construction. The four paneled doors contained two elongated shallowly recessed panels in the upper section and two shorter paneled fields below. The panel effect was enhanced with mitred cyma moldings defining each panel.

C.5. Decorative Features and Trim. The only surviving first floor decorated trim in 219 East Front Street is an architectural kitchen cupboard located in the northeast corner of the rear wing. The cupboard has a shelved upper section finished with two slightly raised panels, under which are two drawers and below that two additional cupboard doors.

D. Site. 217 and 219 East Front Street currently face the Wilmington Railroad Station designed in 1901 by Frank Furness. The structure is flanked to the west by vacant lots and to the east by an altered row house dating from about 1800.

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Sources of Information

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Records for the Port of Wilmington.

FIGURE 1

CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
AND MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES:
RECONSTRUCTED FRONT STREET ELEVATION, ca. 1805



FIGURE 2

CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
AND MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES:
RECONSTRUCTED GROUND FLOOR PLAN, ca. 1805

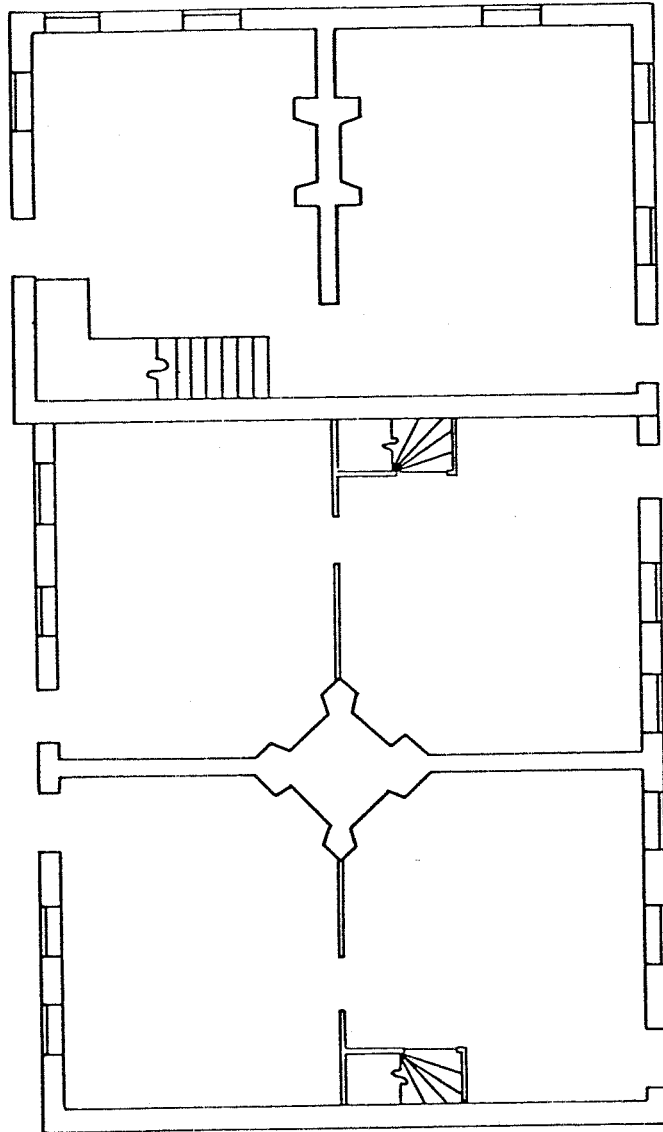


FIGURE 3

CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE AND MENDENHALL
TENANT HOUSES: RECONSTRUCTED SECOND FLOOR PLAN, ca. 1805

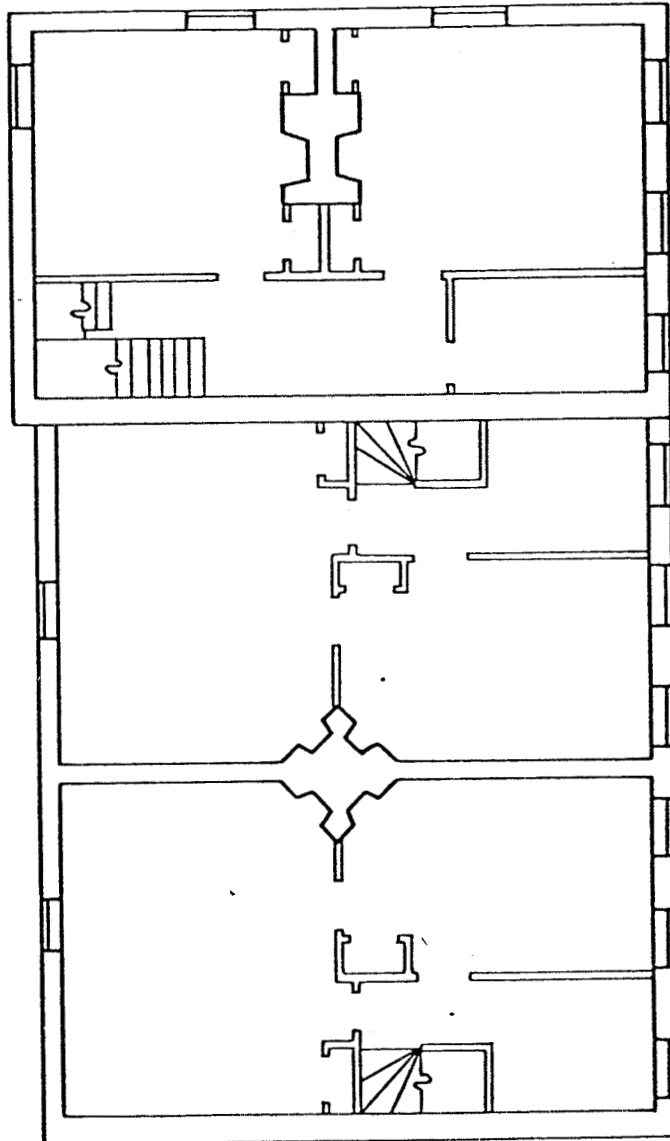


FIGURE 4
CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
RECONSTRUCTED THIRD FLOOR PLAN, ca. 1805

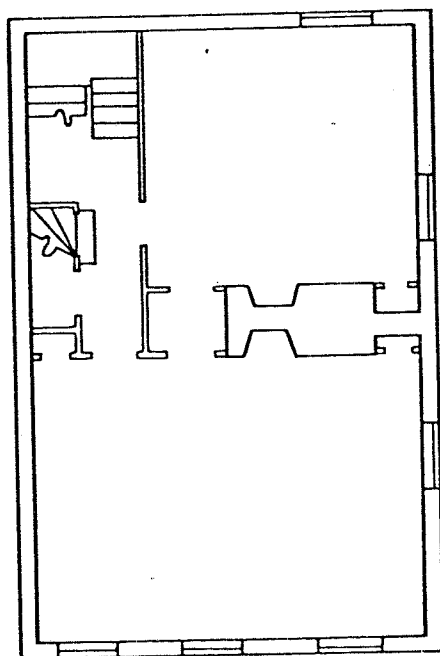


FIGURE 5

MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES
RECONSTRUCTED ROOF SECTION, ca. 1805

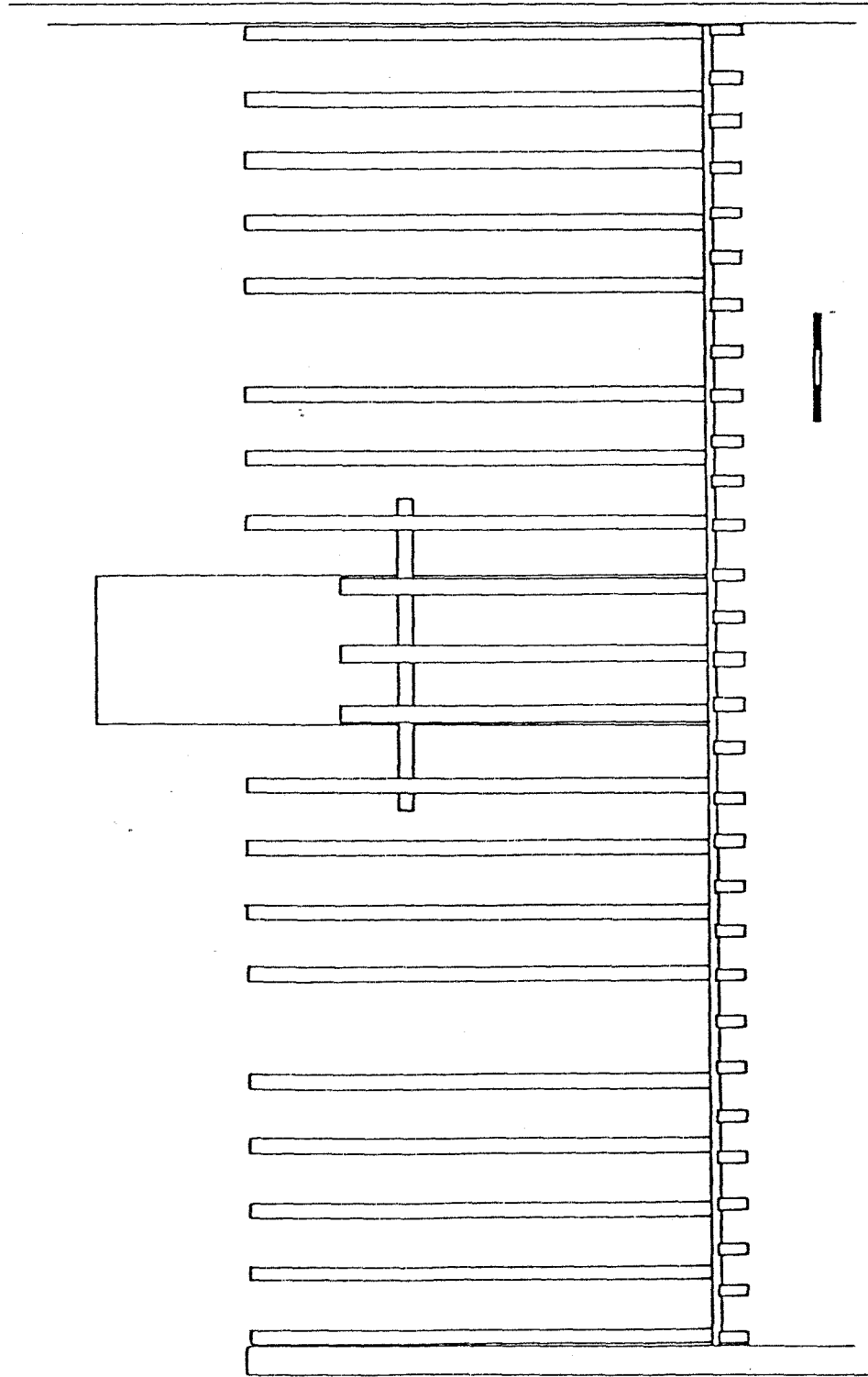


FIGURE 6

MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES:
RAFTER SECTION AND EXPLODED PERSPECTIVE
AT FALSE PLATE ASSEMBLY WITH BRIDLED SCARF JOINT

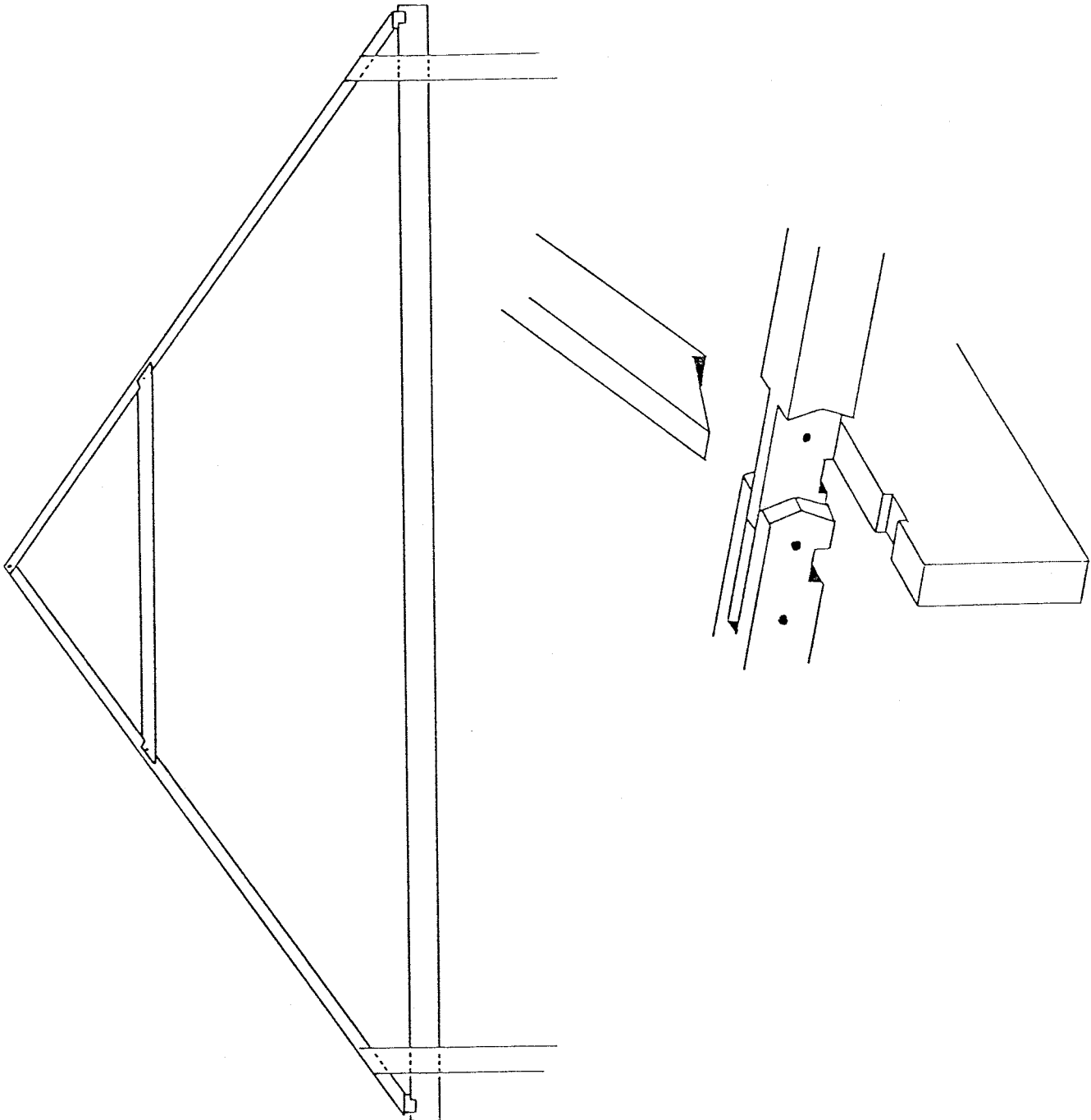
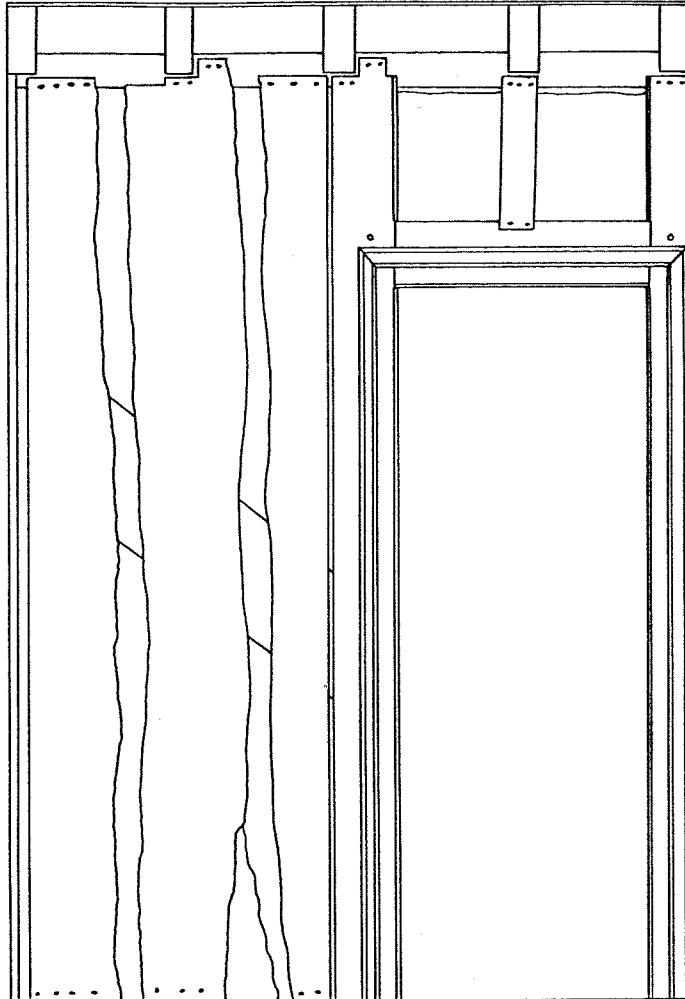


FIGURE 7

CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE:
SECOND FLOOR PARTITION WALL AND DOORWAY
(SCALE: 3/5" = 1')



APPENDIX: Rationale for Reconstructed Plans and Elevations of the Captain Thomas Mendenhall House and Mendenhall Tenant Houses

The basis for the reconstructed plans and elevations of the Captain Thomas Mendenhall House and the adjoining Mendenhall Tenant Houses rests wholly in the surviving architectural remains, including wall, ceiling and flooring scars, as well as in the location and recognition of fragments of original fabric, such as remnants of the chimney pile and stack, roof framing elements, and evidence of closers in the elevations.

Figure 1: Captain Thomas Mendenhall House and Mendenhall Tenant Houses Reconstructed Front Street Elevation, ca. 1805. Evidence for all the second and third floor openings and their locations survived in unaltered bays found in the Mendenhall House and the tenant houses at 223 and 225 East Front Street. The second floor window openings for the tenant house at 221 East Front Street had been closed with brick infill to create narrower openings, but the presence of queen closers and the dimensions of the original windows piercing the second floor of 223 East Front Street provided both the location and size of the original openings and second floor fenestrations. The roof lines of 223 and 225 East Front Street also reflected the initial period of construction, and because 223 and 221 used to be a single structure that was later subdivided and altered, the roof for 223 East Front Street was reconstructed as a continuous elevation over its neighboring property. The more detailed information for this conclusion involved the presence of a bridled scarf joint in the Front Street facade false plate and the extension of chimney braces which had enframed the large central chimney pile shared by the two addresses. Finally, the first floor elevation and fenestration were extrapolated from the placement of openings in the upper floors, original door openings located in the Front Street facades of 221 and 225 East Front Street, and the scars for an infilled window opening positioned adjoining and above the present doorway for 223 East Front Street. With the dimensions known for all first floor openings and the positioning derived for known doors and windows, the lines of the second floor openings were extended downwards and the heavily altered street level facade of ca. 1805 reconstructed.

Figure 2: Captain Thomas Mendenhall House and Mendenhall Tenant Houses: Reconstructed Ground Floor Plan, ca. 1805. Heavily altered through 20th-century commercial usage, the ground floor plans for all three addresses were reconstructed through the recognition and examination of surviving first period architectural features and later subtractions and additions to those features. Both of the Mendenhall Tenant Houses had lost their first floor plan configurations from the period of their initial construction. While 221 East Front Street had been converted into a side-passage double-pile storefront, 223 East

Front Street had been completely gutted for commercial usage. As originally built, the Mendenhall Tenant Houses had been mirror images of one another, and architectural evidence taken from both addresses was combined to reconstruct the plans. The fenestration was derived from the reconstructed Front Street elevation and remnants of infilled first period openings piercing the rear elevation. The location of the diagonally-set central chimney pile was drawn from the original base standing in the basement of 221 East Front Street, the remaining half of the original stack under the later roof of 221 East Front Street, and the smoke-blackened flue backs found under later lath and plaster between the second and attic floors of 223 East Front Street. The location of the partition wall, enclosed box-winder stair and approximate placement of interior doorways was all founded in the second floor arrangement of 223 East Front Street, which provided information on the dimensions of the stair and, by extension, its general configuration.

The first floor plan of the Thomas Mendenhall House was reconstructed in a similar manner. Once the original fenestration had been established, the interior arrangement was reconstructed from a combination of evidence found in the basement, first, and second floors. While the chimney pile had survived intact, the brick load-bearing walls resting on stone load-bearing walls in the basement had been removed. The previous existence of these walls, however, is known from a similar wall extant on the second floor between the chimney pile and the Walnut Street elevation of the building. The location of the open string stair is original as is much of its construction as evidenced in the use of hand-wrought nails, riven lath and morticed-and-tenoned stringers. The location of the stair is further supported by a first-period chair rail (see Plates 5 and 6) set into the plaster of the wall shared with the gable end of 223 East Front Street. The absence of stair passage or other internal partition walls is based on the unbroken profile of the chair rail for the full length of the present stair passage and the complete absence of any indication of studs or scantling walling either tenoned or nailed to the first floor ceiling joists.

Figure 3: Captain Thomas Mendanhall House and Mendenhall Tenant Houses: Reconstructed Second Floor Plan, ca. 1805. The second floor plans of 225 and 223 East Front Street survived to the present with relatively little change. The second floor plan of the Thomas Mendenhall House, although extensively vandalized, retained all of its first period partition walls and openings. The adjacent tenant house at 223 East Front Street survived in a similar state of presentation with the exception of the removal of the original stair and chimney pile. Flooring scars, however, revealed the size and position of the original stair, while the replacement of scantling walling with a later stair and closet in conjunction with a smoke-blackened flue back beneath a more recent lath and plaster wall indicated the presence and location of the first period chimney pile. The first period plan of the second floor of 221 East Front Street was drawn from its counterpart at 223 East Front Street.

Figure 4: Captain Thomas Mendenhall House: Reconstructed Third Floor Plan, ca. 1805. Like the second floor, the third story of the Thomas Mendenhall house endured the history of the building with little change. All original walls and openings have remained extant, and the only addition to the arrangement was the insertion of a 20th-century stud wall subdividing the room overlooking Front Street into two smaller spaces.

Figure 5: Mendenhall Tenant Houses: Reconstructed Roof Section, ca. 1805. Although the roof framing for 221 East Front Street had been replaced in the latter half of the 19th century, the first period roof system for the adjoining property at 223 East Front Street survived intact. A pair of cut chimney braces spiked to the underside of the rafters and a bridled scarf joint in the false plate seating the rafter feet indicated a parallel extension of the roof framing system for 223 East Front Street over 221 East Front Street. This assumption was verified during the demolition of these properties in July 1981, when the later mansard roof over 221 East Front Street was removed, revealing the ghost of the original gable bedded into the wall of 219 East Front Street.

FIGURE 1

CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
AND MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES:
FRONT STREET ELEVATION, ca. 1805



FIGURE 2

CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE
AND MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES:
GROUND FLOOR PLAN, ca. 1805

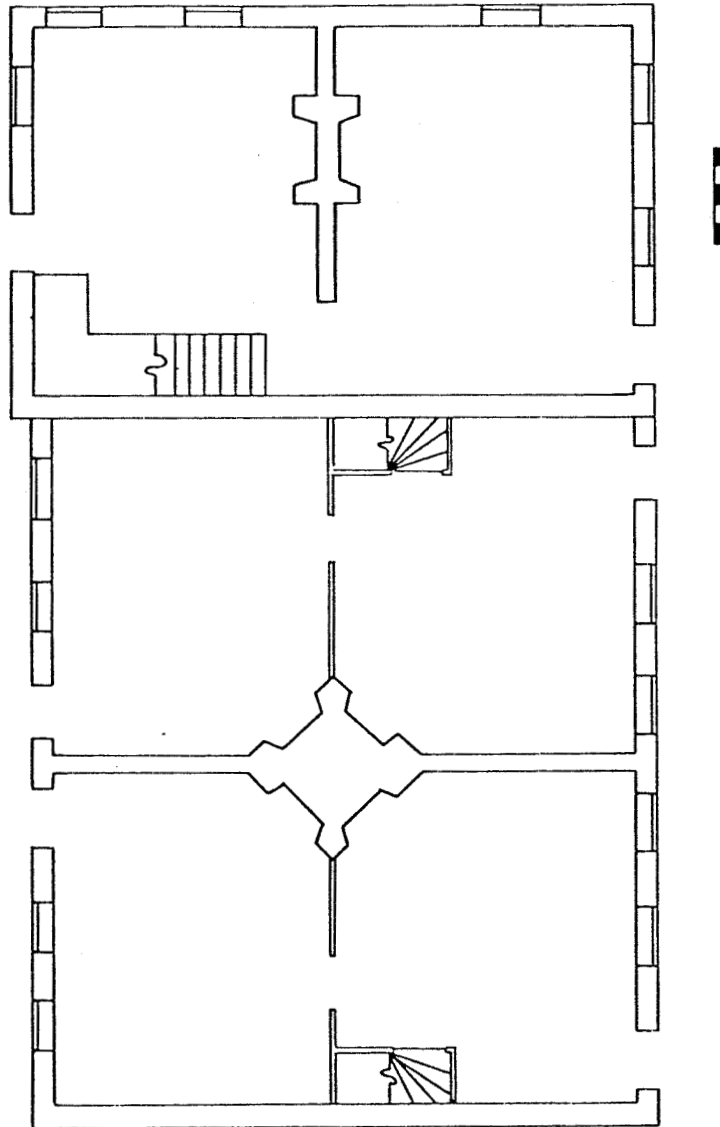


FIGURE 3

CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE AND MENDENHALL
TENANT HOUSES: SECOND FLOOR PLAN, ca. 1805

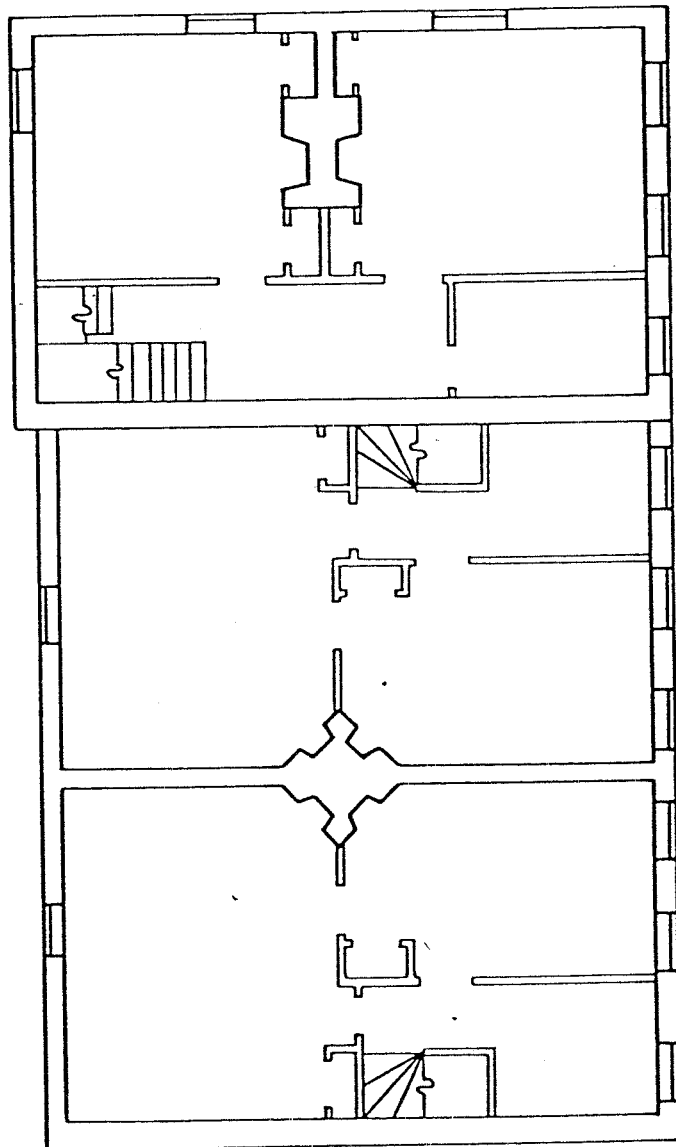


FIGURE 4

CAPTAIN THOMAS MENDENHALL HOUSE:
THIRD FLOOR PLAN, ca. 1805

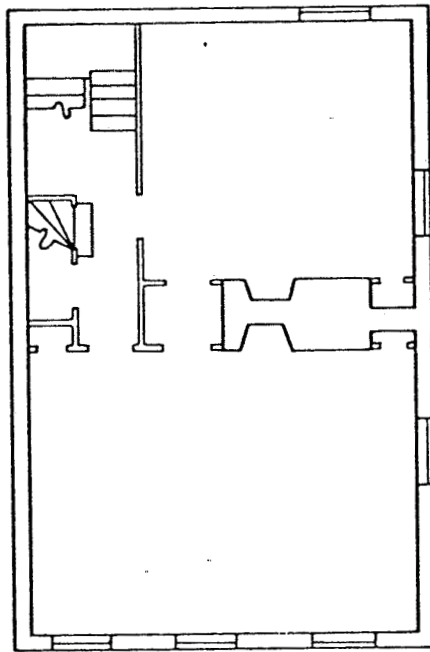
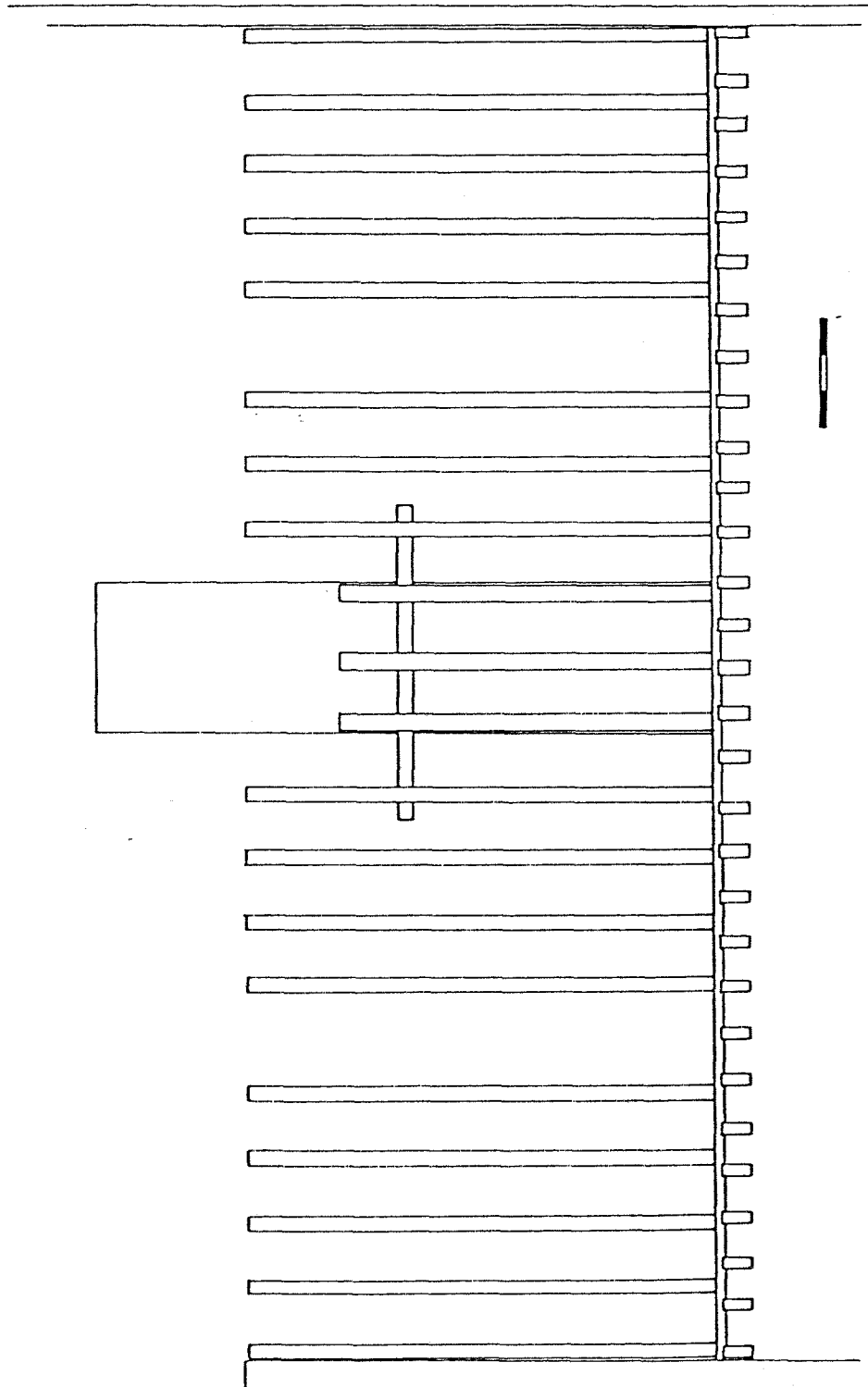


FIGURE 5

MENDENHALL TENANT HOUSES:
ROOF SECTION, ca. 1805



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