

11-12 MARION STREET (HOUSE)
Lowell
Middlesex County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MA-1292

HABS
MASS
9-LOW,
23-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Northeast Area Office
National Park Service
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

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Location: 11 - 12 Marion Street, Lowell, Middlesex County, Massachusetts

USGS Lowell, Massachusetts-New Hampshire Quadrangle
UTM Coordinates: 19.309910.4723750

Significance: 11-12 Marion Street is an example of a Second Empire multiple-family dwelling, and represents a typical example of worker housing which characterizes much of this neighborhood known as The Acre. The development of the site is related to the extension of Broadway Street (the nearest cross street) through the Acre from the Western Canal to Fletcher Street ca. 1861-1864. The property was acquired and developed by James J. Morris and the Morris family owned the property through 1936. It is one of a cluster of three buildings containing apartments owned by the Morris family and it is one of two similar Second Empire structures in the group.

Description: This 2 ½ story multiple family dwelling faces south toward a small lot framed by 11-12 Marion Street to the north, 13-14 Marion Street to the west, 199 - 207 Broadway Street to the south and by a chain link fence along Marion Street to the east. The building is rectangular in plan, set on a random coursed ashlar foundation. The walls are sheathed in asbestos shingle, which covers clapboard siding underneath, and rise to an asphalt shingle bell cast mansard roof, which has deep overhanging eaves. Paneled pilasters detail the corners of the building. Two dormers with shallow pediments project from the roof at each elevation and a red brick interior chimney rises above the upper slope of the roof. Windows are typically 2/2 double hung sash. The primary ornamental feature of the building is the bracketed projecting door hood which shelters the central double entry. The wood entry doors have two long glazed panels and two wood bottom panels. Two concrete steps lead up to the entries.

On the interior, the building is divided in half and has been further divided with one unit on the first floor and a second unit occupying the second floor and attic. The straight run stair runs along the central dividing wall and has a turned wood newel post and round balusters. The stair halls have wood wainscoting. Other interior features include window and door surrounds with a narrow cornice molding and wood baseboards. Doors are typically four panel wood doors similar to the entry doors but with all wood panels.

History: 11-12 Marion Street is one of two buildings presently located on a lot of land that was purchased by James Morris from Benjamin Adams on October 6, 1860 for \$221.07. Adams owned a larger parcel of land, which he sold off in smaller lots to several buyers, which was no doubt prompted by the planned extension of Broadway Street from the Western Canal to Fletcher Street ca. 1861-64. It appears that Morris purchased the Marion Street lot as an investment property. Morris had purchased the adjacent property at the northwest corner of Broadway and Marion Streets in 1854 and his family lived on that property from at least the 1870s through the early 1930s. A James Morris, peddler, was listed at 13 Broadway in 1874, which possibly was the present lot numbered 199-207 Broadway. No profession was shown in the later listings to confirm that this was the same James Morris.

The building at 11-12 Marion Street was constructed between 1860 and 1878. It first appears on the 1879 Hopkins Atlas of Lowell. The style, materials and detail match the building at 199-207 Broadway and the two buildings were most likely constructed at the same time by Morris. Morris was first listed in the unit that was originally 71 Broadway (later #203) in 1878 and leased the

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remaining units on Broadway and Marion Street to tenants. James Morris died on Feb. 26, 1881, and his widow Mary Morris continued to live at 203 Broadway until her death in 1909. Her son, Francis O. Morris, opened a grocery store in 1881 at 67 Broadway, later #199, but the store had closed by 1891. The property, including 199-207 Broadway Street and 11-12 and 13-14 Marion Street, was sold by the Morris descendants in 1936 to Francis C. Silva of Lowell. It continued to be leased as apartments until it was recently acquired by the Coalition for A Better Acre for redevelopment. Plans are to rehabilitate 199-207 Broadway Street and demolish 11-12 and 13-14 Marion Street. A shed appears at the northwest corner of the lot on maps from 1879 through 1924. It had been replaced by 1950 with a smaller structure, which is no longer extant.

The building at 11-12 Marion Street has had slightly different addresses including 9 & 11 Marion Street in 1892, 11 & 13 in 1907 and in 1950. The directory listings beginning in 1917 are typically 11 & 12 or 11 & 11a. Tenants traced through the reverse directories, which first appeared in 1917, were predominantly Irish and tended to be blue collar workers, including several mill workers, both men and women, firemen, widows, a lab worker and a painter who worked for the City of Lowell at the nearby City Stables on Broadway. One long term tenant was a Joseph J. Shea, an employee at the Boott Mills. Shea was listed at 15 Marion Street from 1917 through 1930, married Elizabeth by 1925, and had moved to 11 Marion Street by 1935 where he was listed through 1955. Tenants with French surnames appeared in 1945 and some Greek names were listed here by 1966. Generally, the property seems to have been occupied, although in 1930 the rear buildings were apparently vacant except for Joseph J. Shea. In 1976, one unit at #11 and one unit in #12 were vacant which reflects the general decline of this neighborhood at that time.

Sources:

Atlas of The City of Lowell, MA. Springfield, MA: L.J. Richards & Co., 1896.

Richards Standard Atlas of The City of Lowell Massachusetts, Springfield, MA: Richards Map Company, 1924.

Insurance Maps of Lowell, MA, Vol. 2. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1892, 1907, 1950.

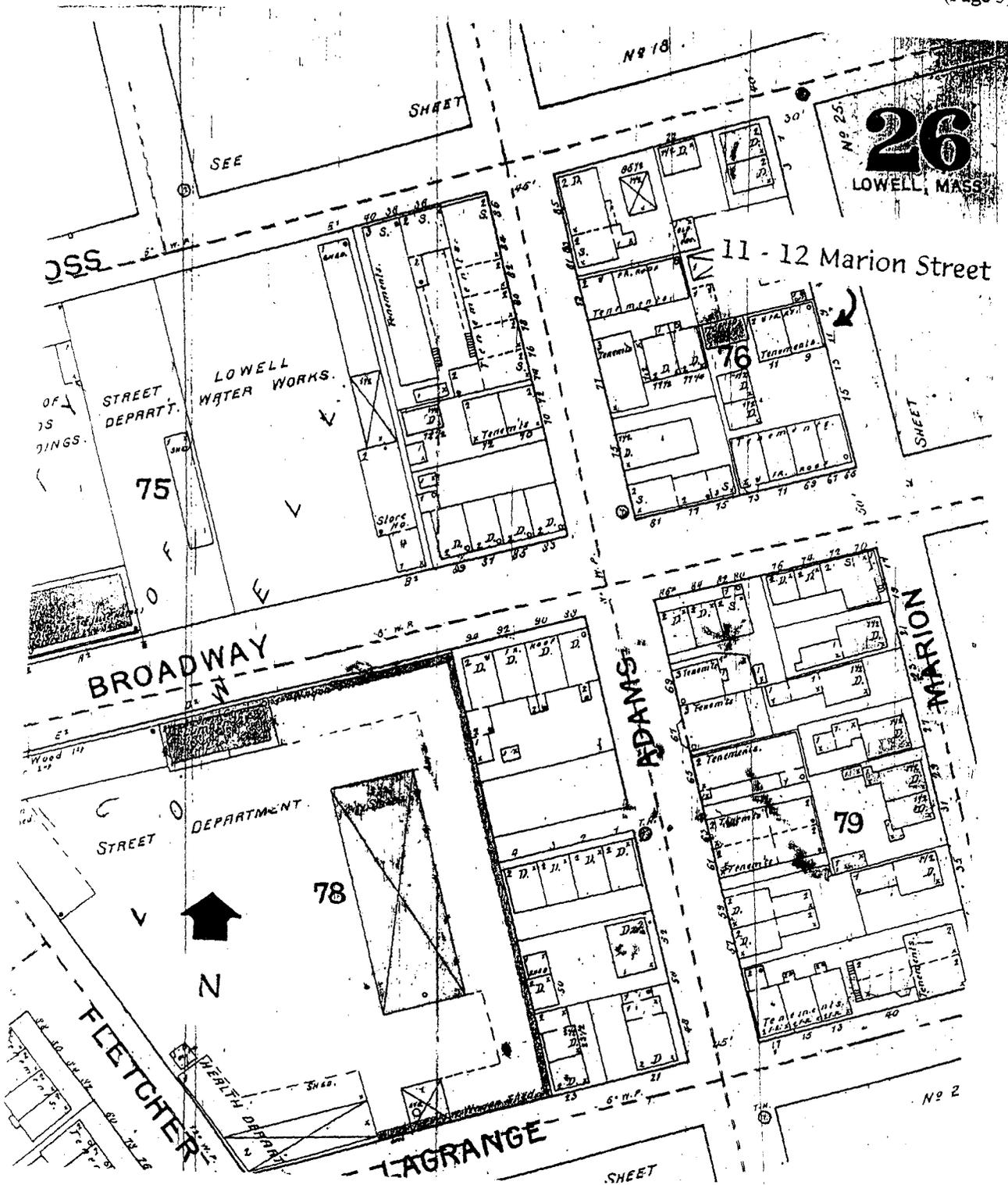
The Lowell Directory. Boston, MA: Sampson, Murdock & Co. 1874 - 1976.

Hopkins, G.M. City Atlas of Lowell, Massachusetts. Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, C.E., 1879.

Middlesex Registry of Deeds, North District, 26/159, 891/574, 891/575.

Historian:

Leslie Donovan, October, 1996.

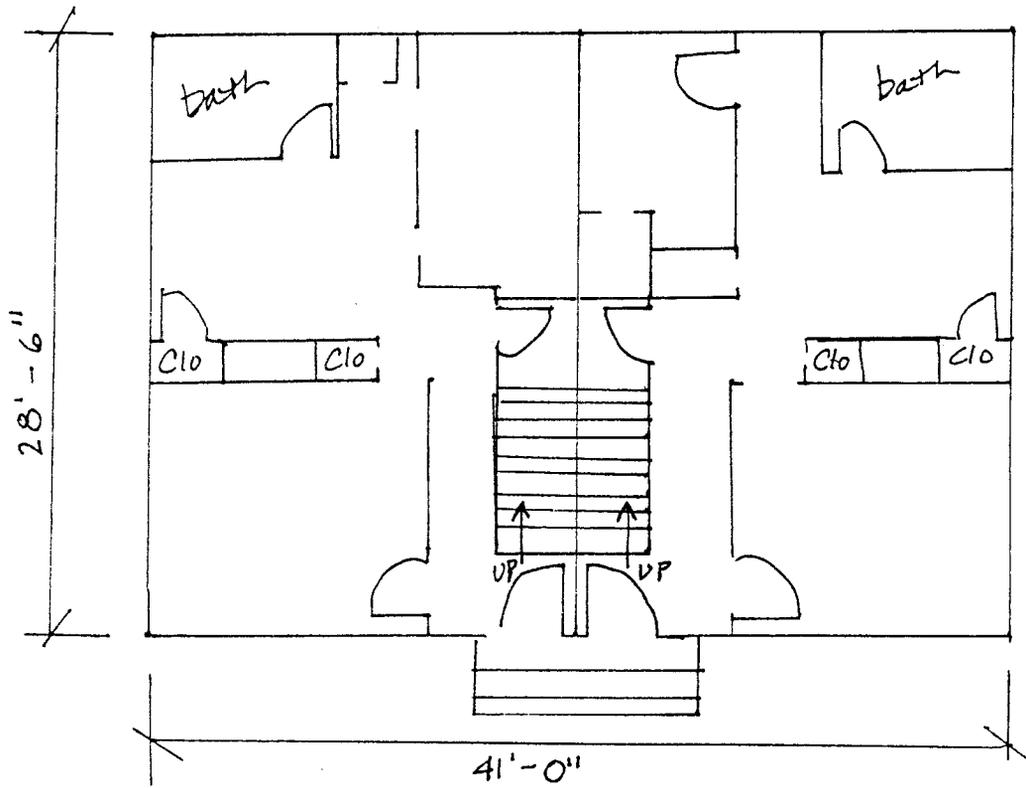


1892 Sanborn Insurance Map, Lowell, MA

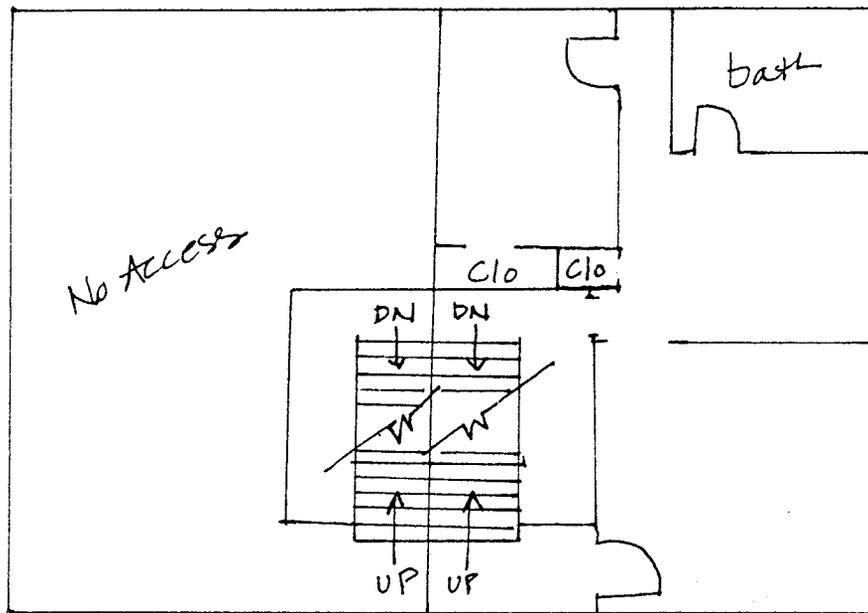
FIRST FLOOR PLAN 11-12 MARION STREET (HOUSE)

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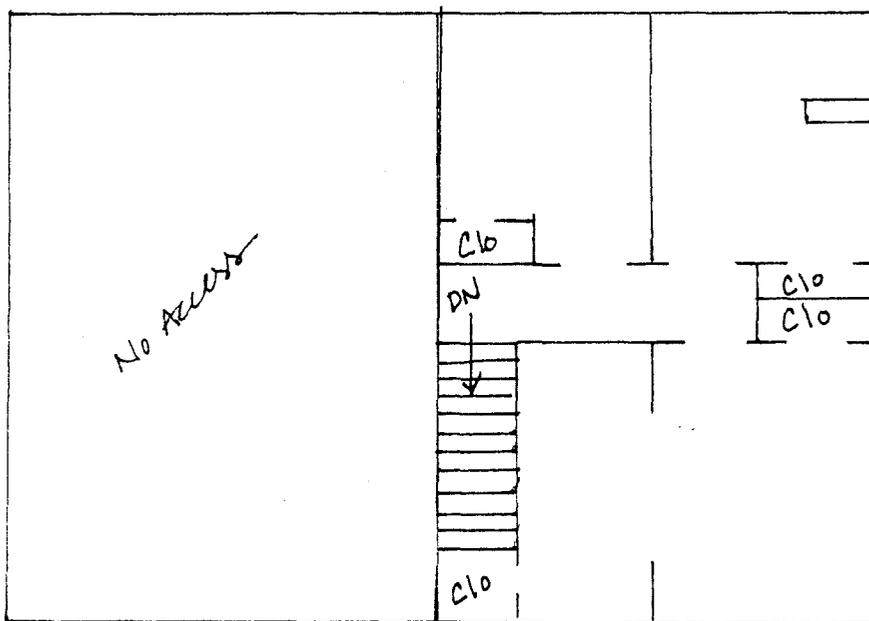
SECOND FLOOR PLAN



Sketch Plans

11 - 12 Marion Street (House), Lowell, MA

NOT TO SCALE



ATTIC PLAN

Sketch Plans
11 - 12 Marion Street (House), Lowell, MA
NOT TO SCALE