

GEORGE W. PARKER HOUSE
Central West End Historic District
4216 Westminster Place
St. Louis
St. Louis City County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1897

HABS
MO-1897

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MIDWEST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, NE 68102

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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Page 1

Location

George W. Parker House
Central West End Historic District
4216 Westminster Place
City Block 3910-S
St. Louis (City of St. Louis), Missouri

Significance:

Originally part of a three-building row of attached townhouses, 4216 Westminster Place was built in 1895-1896. The building is an example of a patterned masonry Queen Anne row house. There is significant design sophistication shown in the site planning and floor plan design that provides light and ventilation to all spaces of the residence in spite of the narrow lot and attached townhouse arrangement.

Description:

4216 Westminster Place is a Queen Anne style three-story masonry town-house. It measures 19-feet 6-inches in width across the front (north face) by a length of 60-feet 3-inches. Its first floor plan consists of three rooms along the east side connected by a large foyer/stair hall which extends two-thirds the length of the house's west side. Originally the spaces of the foyer/stair hall and the front room were open to each other forming a "living hall," a typical floor plan arrangement in a Queen Anne house. Presently a partition divides the foyer from the front room creating a corridor into the house front door.

Other distinctive elements of the Queen Anne plan present in 4216 Westminster Place are the stair hall fireplace and ornamented staircase. The fireplace is a very simple, but striking design. The only material employed is brick save for a moulded-edge wood mantelpiece. The top of the fireplace opening is a semi-circular rowlock arch. At the edges of the chimney cheeks on either side of the brick courses step down to the floor, widening the base of the chimney breast. The brick is currently painted.

The staircase begins under a decorative false beam supported at each end by fluted pilaster. The turned balusters of the stair rail, which are badly damaged at the first floor, continue unchanged in profile all the way to the third floor. Under the stair dormer where the stair rises to the third floor is a large arched casement window. It is the source of considerable light and is further evidence of the thoughtful design solutions employed for this building.

The center room of the house projects 5-feet 8-inches to the east. In the original plan this three-story gabled projection met the gabled west wall of the adjacent row house. The gables meeting created a continuous east-west ridge across all three units. Windows of the projection face north and south in the recesses created between the buildings. The projection also provides the circumstances for a novel solution to access between the front and rear yards, something rarely possible for an attached row house. The basement areaway is located directly beneath the projection and is provided with stairs leading to both front and back.

A steep-pitched gable end faces the street. It is devoid of decoration or relief, atypical of the normal Queen Anne, save for a narrow stone cap that terminates in a cut stone corbel at the gable shoulder. At the second floor is a wide oriel. The heads of the window openings in the oriel are flattened ogee arches. At the first floor level are two equal-sized symmetrically-placed semi-circular arches; one defines a window, the other an opening into a small recessed entry porch. In front of the entry porch is a large stoop which, in plan, projects 9-feet 0-inches and forms a quarter circle. The path from the front walk up the steps of the stoop and to the front door requires the visitor to make two ninety-degree turns. This indirect path to the front door helps to deemphasize the narrowness of the site.

Standing alone the immediate effect of the front of 4216 Westminster Place is of an imposing tall and narrow house. The original effect, when it was one of a row of three attached units, must have been quite different as the distinct horizontal element of the continuous gable across all three would have softened the verticality.

Typical of a Queen Anne row house the materials of 4216 Westminster are diverse. The base of the house in front, to the height of the first floor window sill and the rail around the front stoop, is coursed quarry-faced ashlar. Above the base to a point level with the top of the corbeling below the oriel (second floor level) the material is coursed dressed-face ashlar. The surrounds of the first floor semi-circular arches are cut stone in a pattern similar to traditional wood casings of the period.

Above the level of the second floor the building is faced with brick. Separating the second floor from the third floor level gable end is a band of dressed-face ashlar. This stone band aligns with the frieze of the oriel and the base of the stone corbels at the gable shoulders creating a smooth band of stone and wood across the front of the building.

At present the front of the building is painted white, trimmed in black. The side walls are painted red. Visible only within the recessed entry porch and on the chimney stacks above the eaves is the original buff-colored brick. The white paint obscures completely the different colors of the brick and various stones on the building front. It similarly obscures the subtle difference in textures created by the alternating use of smooth stone and brick. The quarry-faced stone base in spite of the white paint is still readable as an element in the composition of the building.

History:

The building at 4216 Westminster Place was constructed in 1895-96. The development of which it was a part is described on the building permit index card as "Three adjoining two and one-half story brick dwellings." The index card is dated 3/25/95 and is on file at the City of St. Louis Records Division. The owner is identified on the card and in the March 26, 1895 issue of the St. Louis Daily Record as George W. Parker. No further information is provided. Two George W. Parkers appear in the 1896 Gould's City Directory. One was President of the St. Louis, Alton & Terre Haute Railway and resided at 3620 Washington Avenue, six blocks east and two blocks north of the site. The other was President of the Parker-Russell Mining & Manufacturing Co. and resided at 3405 Oak Hill Place, several miles south of 4216 Westminster.

Contractor and builder for the three-unit complex was Sutherland & Shassere. This information came from the notice published in the Daily Record. William Sutherland and E. P. Shassere's company had offices at 304 North Eighth St. in downtown St. Louis. The company is listed in 1896 Gould's Directory under the heading of "Contractor-Builder." None of the reference sources consulted regarding the building permit identified an architect for the project.

In the context of the development of the south side of the 4200 block of Westminster, of which 4216-18-20 Westminster was a part, twenty-one homes were built. One other project was for a three-unit row house development; all others were free-standing single-family dwellings. It appears from permit records and maps that all the buildings were built between 1892 and 1898. Only five, including 4216, currently remain. The overview history of the Central West End Complex (HABS No. MO-1878) submitted with this documentation describes the development of the 4200 block of Westminster Place, the forces that have affected it, and the circumstances that have given rise to the improvement project currently in progress.

The names of the residents of 4216 Westminster Place and other information about them comes from two principal sources: Gould's City Directory which became in later years Polk's City Directory and Gould's Blue Book, a social register.

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| 1896-1899 | Mr. & Mrs. P. Constam, I. O. Constam
Mr. P. Constam was Vice President of the Jacob Strauss Saddlery, 414 North Sixth St. I.O., presumably a son, was a salesman there. |
| 1900-1902 | Dr. & Mrs. John A. J. James
Dr. James was a physician with an office at 3554 Olive Street. |

- 1903-1914 Mr. Porter White, Mrs. Elizabeth Munson & Children
Mr. White was a plaster contractor. His office during this period was at 415 Locust then, in 1913, was relocated to 207 North Eighth. Mrs. Munson's son was named Porter W. Munson, so she was likely Mr. White's daughter. Given the longevity of Mr. White's plastering firm and the time it is likely that it was involved in construction of buildings for the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair.
- 1915-1917 During this period the only two reference books which included reverse directory information were Gould's Blue Book, a social register, and Gould's Red Book, a professional and business register. For the years 1915-17 the resident of 4216 Westminster was not listed in either book.
- 1918-1919 Daniel C. McCluney
Mr. McCluney was the son of Mr. John H. McCluney who, earlier in the century, was President of the State National Bank in downtown St. Louis. John H. McCluney was deceased by 1918, but his widow lived at 4427 Westminster Place (4300 and 4400 Westminster Place are known as Fullerton Place and are listed on the National Register). Daniel McCluney was employed by McCluney & Co., Brokers and Dealers in Commercial Paper. The principals of this firm appear to have been his cousins and uncles.
- 1920-1923 Sherwood H. Standish
Mr. Standish is listed in Gould's City Directory as a "Supt." In the terminology of the period such a title referred to a construction superintendent. In 1921 a building permit was issued to C. Dolph, owner, to construct a frame shed at 4216 Westminster. C. Dolph is listed in the City Directory as residing at 4401 McPherson, very close to 4216 Westminster (1½ blocks away). From this information and the short terms of residence during the period it is likely that Mr. McCluney and Mr. Standish were tenants of Mr. Dolph's.
- 1923-1938 Mrs. Mary Pickel
Mrs. Pickel is listed in the Directories as the "(widow of John)." John Pickel is listed in a 1908 Directory as a Contractor. From the address listed he appears to have been involved with the Pickel Construction Co., a large firm based on the many members of the Pickel family

shown to be involved in the Directory. In the 1938 Directory, Mary Pickel is listed as the owner of 4216 Westminster Pl. The same Directory lists her as offering "furn. rms."

- 1938-1940 Mr. & Mrs. Fay Jarvis
Mr. Jarvis' occupation is listed as a sales engineer.
- 1941-1945 During these war years the house had two occupants listed in the City Directories: Michael Mitkos in 1941 and Herbert Lang in 1942. There were no directories available for review for the years 1943 or 1945. The 1944 Directory listed the house as being vacant.
- 1946-1955 Mr. & Mrs Joe M. Combs
Mr. Combs' occupation is listed as being a salesman.
- 1956-1960 Mr. John D. Blissenbach
Mr. Blissenbach's occupation is listed as being a "warehouseman at Kroger." A building permit was issued to Mr. Blissenbach in 1956 to add a fire escape to the building.
- 1961 The 1961 Directory lists the house as being "vacant"
- 1962-66 Mr. Wayne Hubbard
Mr. Hubbard's occupation is listed as being a teacher in the Granite City, Illinois School District. A permit was issued to Mr. Hubbard in 1962 to convert 4216 into a two-family dwelling.
- 1967-1989 Mr. & Mrs. Chauncey Gilbert
Mr. Gilbert's occupation is listed as being a construction worker. He apparently died in the early 1970's as Mrs. Mary Gilbert is the sole occupant listed between the years 1973-1989. Permits were issued to Mr. & Mrs. Gilbert in 1967 and 1968 to erect chain link fences in the front and rear yards. In 1977 the adjoining units to 4216 Westminster Pl., 4218 and 4220, were demolished. A fire badly damaged 4216 in 1989 forcing Mrs. Gilbert to move. Based on evidence in the house at present Mrs. Gilbert rented rooms in the house to others.

Sources:

City of St. Louis, Records Division, Active and Inactive Building Permits (microfilm). City Hall, St. Louis, Missouri.

Gould's Blue Book for the City of St. Louis. St. Louis: Gould Directory
Co. 1897-1914.

Gould's St. Louis City Directory. St. Louis: Gould Directory Co.
1895-1954.

Polk's St. Louis City Directory. Taylor, MI: R.L. Polk & Co. 1955-1980.

St. Louis Daily Record. March 26, 1895. St. Louis Daily Record Co.,

Southwestern Bell Telephone Directory. 1988, 1989. Southwestern Bell
Media, St. Louis, Missouri.

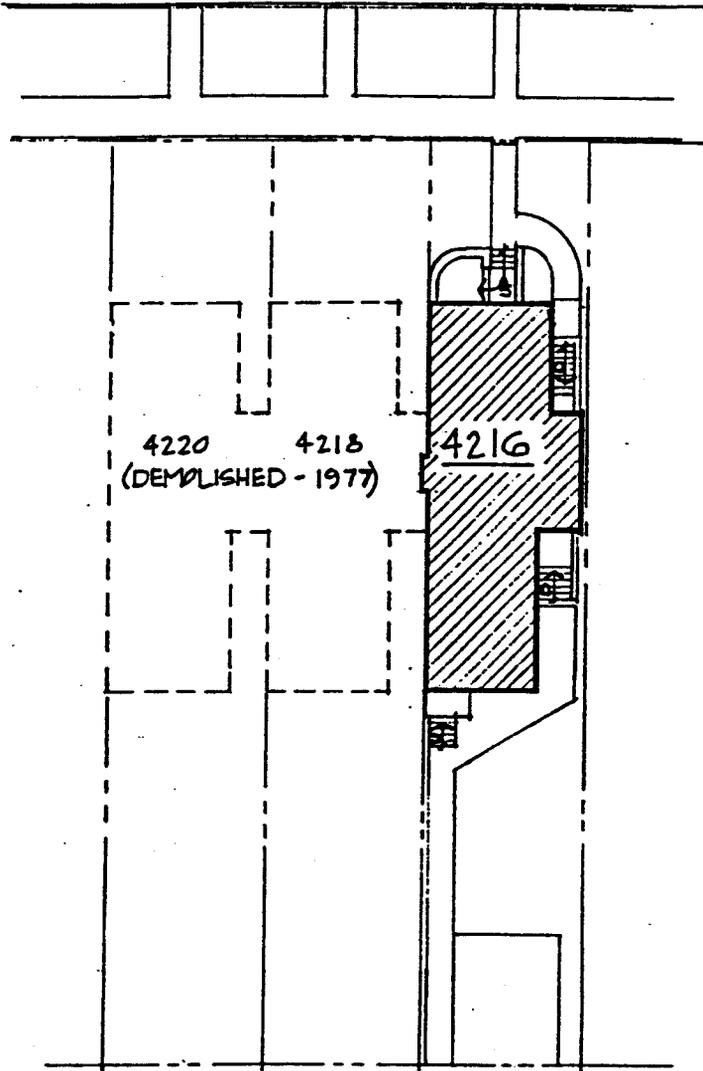
Other Information: Central West End Complex, HABS No. MO-1878; Dr.
Milton C. Marshall House, HABS No. MO-1898

Historian:

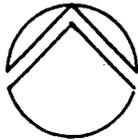
Ralph Eglin Wafer, Architect
22 April 1991

For and overview of the Central West End Historic District, see HABS No. MO-1878.

WESTMINSTER



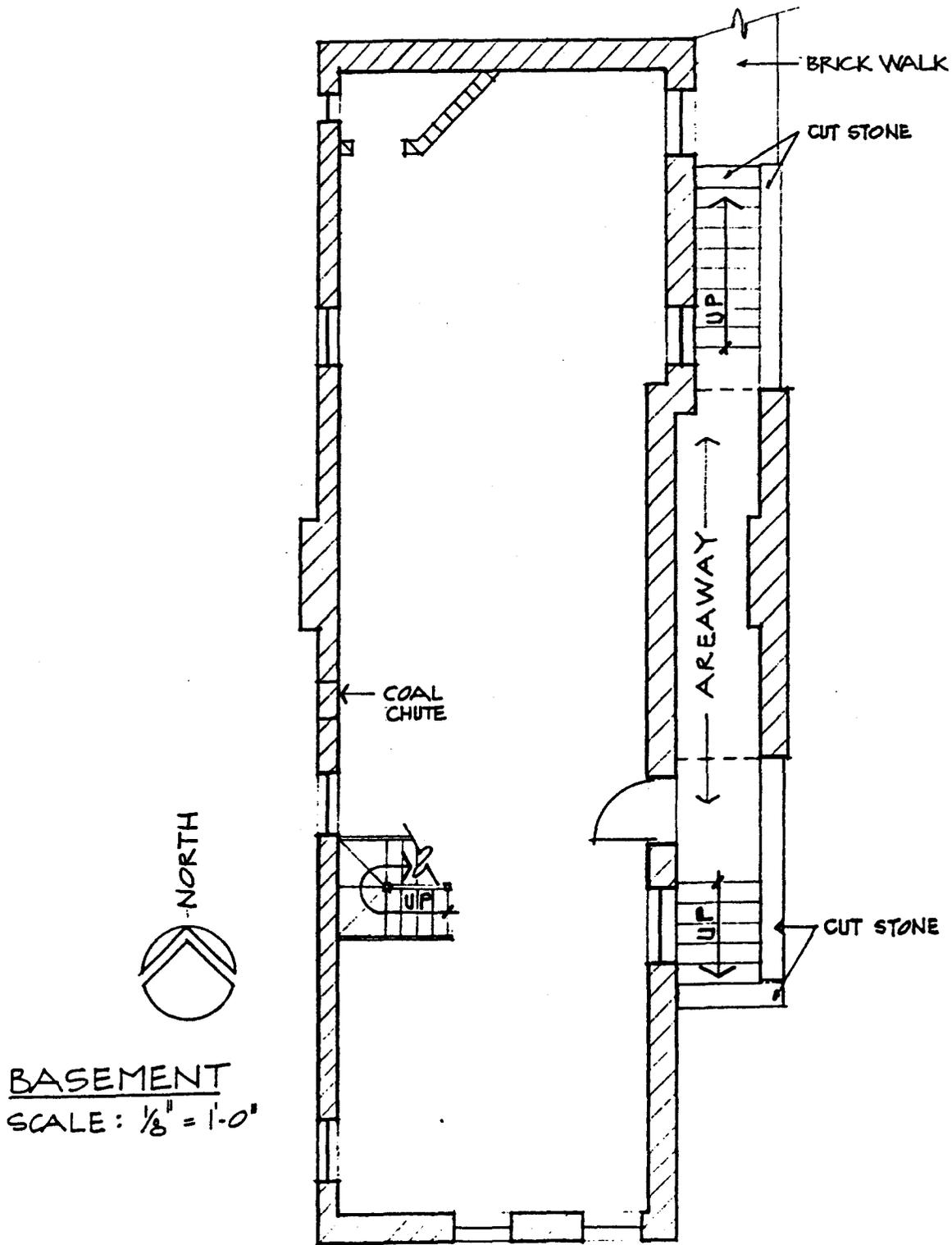
NORTH



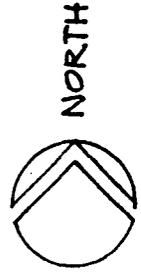
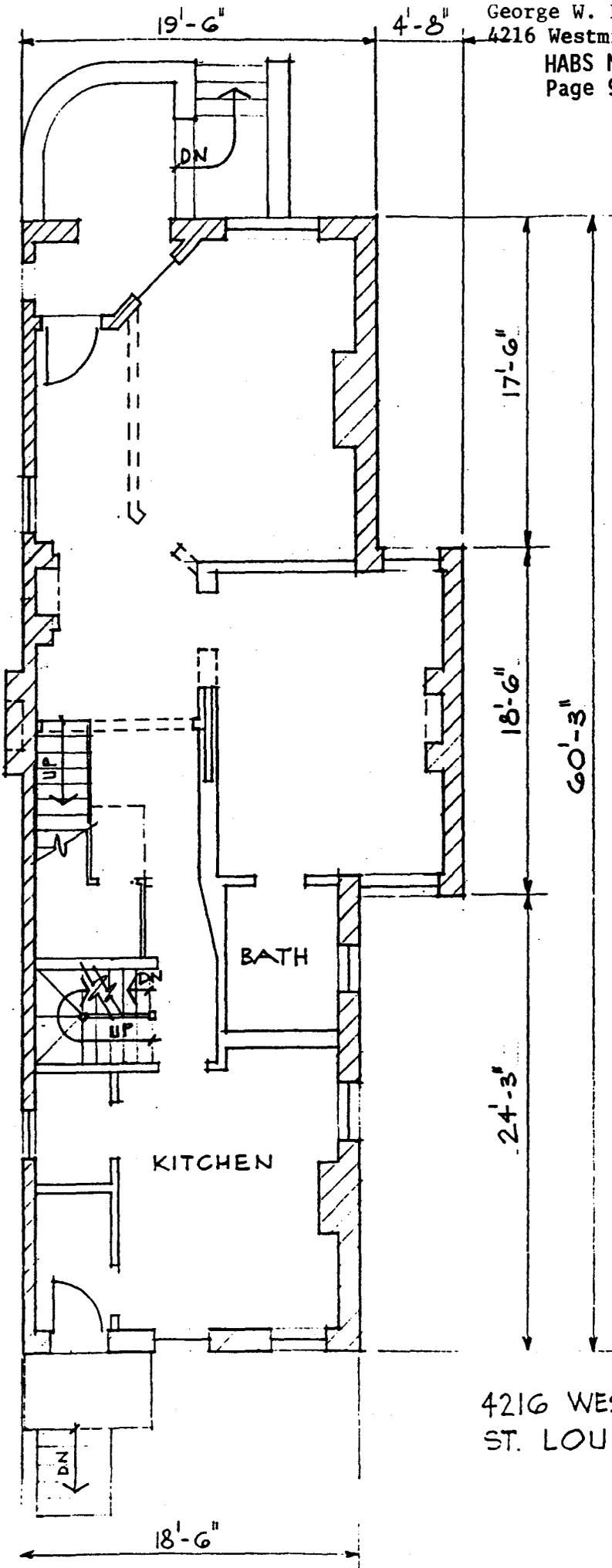
ALLEY

SITE PLAN
SCALE: 1" = 30'

4216 WESTMINSTER
ST. LOUIS, MO

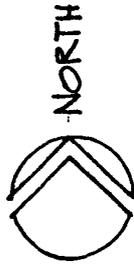
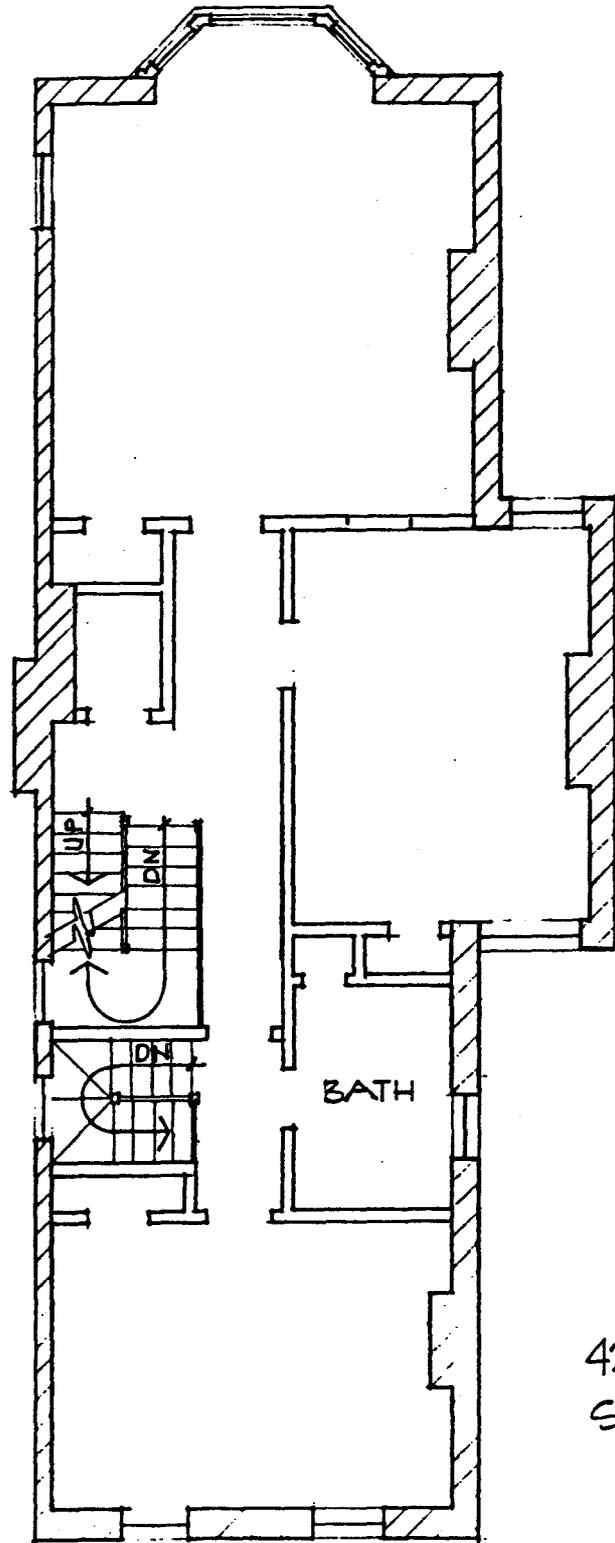


4216 WESTMINSTER
ST. LOUIS, MO



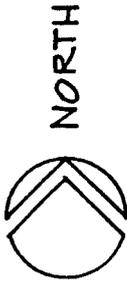
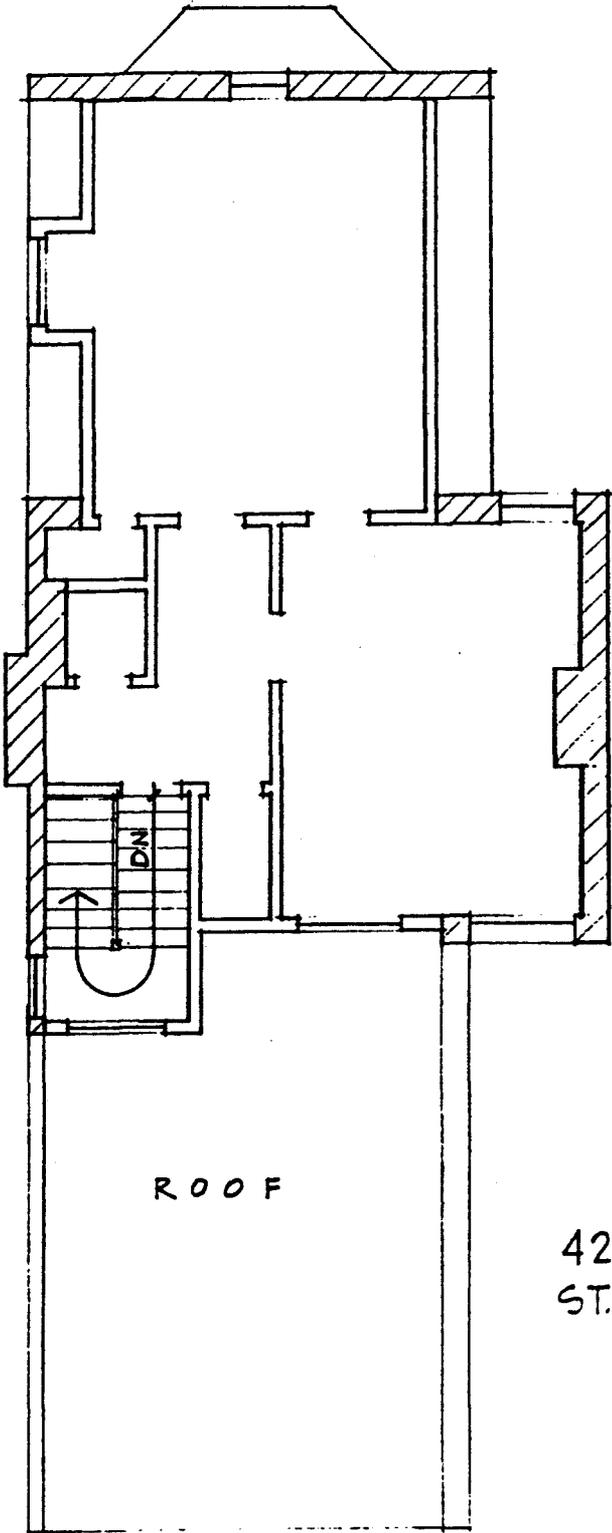
FIRST FLOOR
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

4216 WESTMINSTER
ST. LOUIS, MO



SECOND FLOOR
SCALE: $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'-0''$

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THIRD FLOOR
SCALE: $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'-0''$

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