"The embedded meanings of Front Street: The tension between commercial and residential landscapes in 24 The Strand"

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Many American towns, after suburban flight has moved commerce to the local mall, endure a slow death of their original commercial center. Merchants typically abandon buildings, which find new uses either as houses of various ill reputes or as painful symbols of a romanticized downtown in its bustling heyday. The buildings are finally torn down to make way for a parking lot or whatever other gentrifying project the local chamber of commerce wants to develop. The process of shifting commercial areas from one part of town in one form to another is not a twentieth century suburbanizing phenomenon. As economies and populations change, so too does the physical space of containing each. New Castle, in the early 19th century, underwent a similar shift of commercial area away from the waterfront along Front Street (today called The Strand) to Delaware Street across from the Courthouse. However, the remaining commercial buildings left on Front Street did not slowly get abandoned or bankrupt the owners; instead the Fire of 1824 cleared the blocks for a new landscape. According to a newspaper account, more than six stores burned, as well as a lumberyard, bakery, hotel, and a tavern.[1] In the rebuilding after the fire, many of the landowners erected residential townhouses instead of their previous commercial establishments. The Janvier brothers built side-passage, double parlor structures, as did the McCulloughs on both sides of the street; some built for tenants and other were owner-occupied. William McCullough's dwelling house on the west side of the street featured a Philadelphia-style piazza separating polite rooms from the service space. At the more northerly end of Front Street stood George Read, Jr.'s double-fronted townhouse. By the time of the fire, which it survived, the Read House was over twenty years old and probably thirty years out of

style, yet it still stood as the symbol of refined residential gentility during the post-fire period of Front Street's reconstruction. (Fig. 1)

Erected during the same period of post-fire reconstruction, the building currently numbered 24 The Strand blended in with the residential townhouse façade of the rebuilt Front Street, yet its interior bore little resemblance to the Greek Revival polite parlors of the other dwellinghouses. Instead, evidence suggests that it was used, at least in part, as a commercial space. If so, how did it integrate onto a street that was undeniably refashioning itself as a residential landscape? Since the fire cleared the area and then concentrated the rebuilding period into a relatively short time, the construction of any of the homes cannot be examined in isolation. Nonetheless, the interior of 24 The Strand has a decidedly different character than the interiors of its neighbors, yet from the exterior the buildings all project a common landscape. This dichotomy suggests a tension between residential space and commercial space not fully resolved, opposing urban landscapes that Dell Upton describes as systematic and competitive; the differences in these spaces' use and meaning ultimately speak to the tension between the interests of the hegemonic community and those of the individual, and the strategies each employed for domination.

To understand the significance of 24 The Strand in both its use and symbol, the building must be examined as an artifact; its many meanings are embedded spatially on Front Street in New Castle in the mid-Atlantic region. It manifests design influences from many parts of the Anglophone world, and its historical context extends from the present day to a period prior to the Fire of 1824. The goal of this project is to explicate the building's meaning in its first period of use. Therefore, the shape and contours of that

original structure – the artifact – must first be determined. Then the artifact's contexts must be discovered and explored in order to make the artifact "speak" about its meaning.[2] This method treats the building as an archaeologist would treat a shard of pottery. Artifacts, whether they are buried in the ground or erected above it, are examples of material culture that contain in their relationship to long dead people those ideas, beliefs, and meanings that archaeologies seek to discover and extricate. These artifacts/objects were used strategically by an individual to negotiate his economic, cultural, or ritualistic contexts. In fact, material culture creates social relations through an object's production, use, consumption, and disposal or collection. An examination of 24 The Strand in relation to its original economic and social structures will reveal part of its meaning by observing how it was used. However, its pragmatic meaning may be only part of the story that the building has to tell. The building's symbolic meaning can also be abstracted by examining the house in its historical and spatial contexts as well. Contained in these symbolic meanings is evidence of the struggle between the interests of the individual and those of the community.

Much of this process is based on asking questions and then searching for answers. The result is therefore predicated on the types of questions asked. Some of the first features I noticed about 24 The Strand in its current situation were the large storefront-like window and its location at the top of Packet Alley (Fig 2). Immediately I thought of it as potentially manifesting an original commercial use, and thus such questions and lines of inquiry shaped the project. Another limitation that affects my perspective is the building's current context as a private home. Some investigation, such as floorboard examination underneath carpet or identification of possible original walls built over by

newer walls, was obviously not possible. Finally, unlike an archaeologist who sometimes holds only the remains of an artifact, I have access to the whole artifact plus 200 years of accumulated re-use which can not simply be brushed off. Whereas an archaeologist dealing with below-grade artifacts must contemplate what part of the artifact has been lost, this project demanded that I discover what the object had gained and mentally take it away. And so the artifact's actual physicality is partly based on conjecture, but its reconstruction is nevertheless built on convincing evidence.

The Building As Recoverable Artifact

From the outside, 24 The Strand is classified as a two-bay, three story building. It prominently displays a large nine pane window installed in the 1970s by former owner Pam Gallery.[3] Nonetheless, a mid-20th century photograph of the house shows two four-over-four sash windows next to each other under a segmented arch. (Fig. 3) Whether these adjoining front windows are the original installation is not known. However, both the 1970s bay window and the windows in the photograph function as a type of oral history. If indeed they are both non-original, their presence nevertheless attests a community collective memory that this building had large storefront windows.[4]

From the side of the house, the steep pitch of the roof is evident. (Fig. 4a and 4b) At the time of construction, the height of the front would have been exaggerated by the greater difference between the top point of the front section and the roof of the middle section, which only achieved two stories. The third story of the middle and rear section is a later addition; the two windows in that section are the only ones on the side of the

building to have jack arches. Furthermore, the brickwork around the windows on the second floor has been disturbed, suggesting a change.

Entering the house and through an enclosed foyer, the front room offers several questions. (Fig. 5a) Investigating the floorboards of the front room revealed several of these inconsistencies. Of primary concern is the current location of the staircase. An observation of the wall between the stair and the middle room from beneath the stairs reveals evidence of plaster, indicating that a part of the wall now concealed beneath the stair was once uncovered and open to the room. Therefore, the current stair cannot be original. In fact, floorboards from the front room remain continuous even under the landing by the front of window, and so all of that floorspace was initially exposed. (Fig. 5b) There is evidence of space in the floor cut out for a stairwell (Fig. 6), but it was most likely a tight winder stair; a patch on the floor near the current door to the cellar indicates the space where the first few steps spilled out of the stairwell and into the room. (Fig. 7)

Two boards that proceed in a line with the north wall of the enclosed foyer represent significant patches. (Fig. 8) What they seem to indicate is the former location of a wall that separated the front room from an entry hallway. The enclosed foyer is probably not original; instead, a door immediately to the right upon entering through the front door probably led into the front room, while the hall continued into the interior of the house. The step up from the front room to the middle room most likely occurred at the entrance to the middle room, and it may have been accompanied by a door. The window, which today seems off-center between the stair and the front room, was necessary to provide light into the former hallway. The front room reveals no evidence

of a fireplace; however, burn marks on the floor about four feet from the original back (western) wall indicate the former location of a small coal stove.

Most evidence for original woodwork appears to be missing in the house. The door frames are probably reproduction, because some surround doors that do not appear to be original, such as the door into the entry foyer and the two closet doors in the middle room. The woodwork around the windows most likely *is* original, and it represents a very simply, utilitarian finish. (Fig. 9) Original fireplace surrounds and mantels, usually the best features from which to determine style of finish, are absent from the primary rooms. Nonetheless, evidence in the floorboards, viewed from the basement, indicates the former position of a fireplace in the middle room. The chimney stack is still present in basement, as are the heavy braces that formerly supported the hearth. (Fig. 10)

Finally, the back room probably functioned as the kitchen, and there is compelling evidence not only for the location of the fireplace but also for an extraordinary surviving element from the 18th century house. In the basement below this room is a large brick plastered relieving arch that is oriented against the wall. Originally built to support a chimney stack and fireplace above it, the arch has the floor joists crossing over top of it, undisturbed. This strongly suggests that it predates the post-fire house, and may indicate parts of the foundation that were also reused. In the house that was built over it, some of the floor joists cross over the arch at an angle, indicating that the arch was in fact employed as a support for a corner fireplace in the original post-fire kitchen. (Fig. 11) The floorboards in the kitchen reveal patches where such a corner fireplace would have been. The fireplace currently in this kitchen/ TV room was a 1970s installation.

A winder stair formerly connected this kitchen with the basement and the room above it. A ghost outline of the stairs along the wall shows the location and orientation of this former stairwell, as do patches in the floor similar to those seen in the front room.

The second and third floor rooms above the front room each had a small fireplace on their north wall but without a corresponding fireplace beneath in the front room. The floors of the second floor seem to have been raised, and so without a close examination of current boards hidden under wall-to-wall carpeting, the second floor plan is impossible to determine. The room above the middle room most likely had a fireplace in a space that is now a closet. Very little information about the room above the kitchen can be determined; the whole rear of the house has been extended, with a chimney put in on the south wall between the original and added portions. That later 19th century chimney and its accompanying fireplaces have all been covered. In the basement, the whole area has been sealed off with cinderblock.

The resulting floorplan indicates a segmentation of space, in which the back room, with its corner fireplace, functioned as a kitchen in tandem with the equally domestic family parlor in the middle room. The front room stood somewhat detached from the rear two rooms, on a lower plane with its own staircase. The hall leading from the front door separated that room and its staircase from the minds of individuals passing through to the family parlor. Similarly, individuals engaged only in the front room had their sight and sound lines blocked from the residential back of the house. Their attention instead was focused out to the street through a large front window, down Packet Alley to the waterfront. Such sightlines only obliquely considered the rest of Front Street but did directly include the commercial building across the street. This description of an

individual's experience of the building *suggests* both pragmatic and symbolic meanings, but those abstracted meanings must be gained from understanding the building as artifact embedded in its many contexts.

The historical context for 24 The Strand involves temporal and spatial elements. We must first undertake an understanding of the time period dating back to 1806 when the man who built the structure first purchased the land. Next, we will explore the building's "region," originating at the structure's location and radiating outward to include Front Street, New Castle, and in fact the whole region from Philadelphia to Baltimore. From this investigation, we will be able to extricate some of the building's meanings.

In 1806, Richard Sexton purchased a lot of land on the western side of Front Street opposite Packet Alley that extended westward almost to the Presbyterian Church (Fig. 12). In the deed transferring the land and its included buildings from Archibald Alexander to Sexton, the latter is listed as a wharf-builder.[5] Whether carpentry or masonry was his primary trade is unclear, as he performed carpentry work six year earlier but had bills due him for sales of bricks at his death in 1831.[6] The house on the lot, which burned in the fire, is seen in one of Latrobe's 1804 elevations. (Fig. 13) As drawn, this 18th century brick three bay house had a central door, a feature common but not exclusive to townhouses used for commercial purposes. The finishes on it were very plain, especially compared to Janvier's dwellinghouse two doors to the south; however, it's most extraordinary feature was its location at the top of Packet Alley, one of the access points to the wharves. Whether his clients were men who already owned wharves that needed repairs or merchants who sought to improve their trade by building their own

wharf on a water lot, Sexton maintained a presence that took advantage of maritime transportation.

More significant than movement of goods off of the packets up the alleys and into New Castle stores was the movement of people. In fact, legal international trade slowed during the Embargo of 1807, and Philadelphia merchants and manufacturers responded by developing intraregional trade into the continental interior. New Castle, on the eastern shore of the Delmarva Peninsula, sought to strengthen its economy as well as regional predominance, by making use of its location, as the following traveler's account details:

> "A great line of packets and stages passes through [New Castle] from Philadelphia to Baltimore, by way of Frenchtown. Vast quantities of merchandise are sent by this route, from Philadelphia to the western country. It is at present, one of the greatest thoroughfares for traveling in the United States. There are seven large and well-accommodated packets, which sail constantly between this port and Philadelphia, and from 10 to 15 heavy wagons, for the transportation of goods and passengers across the peninsula to Frenchtown; besides four land stages."[7]

New Castle residents pursued livelihoods that serviced these passengers or the vehicles that conveyed them, as well as encouraging continued transportation activity by improving the regional roads. Investors from New Castle and the surrounding region including Philadelphia undertook internal improvements such as turnpikes, bridges, and canals; they formed companies, sought charters from the state government to incorporate, and sold stock to finance the construction.

Two such projects included a bridge at Newport and corresponding road to New Castle and the improvement of the turnpike from New Castle to Frenchtown. While both ran into financial and political struggles, these projects illustrated New Castle's determination to reinvent its economy when circumstances such as the embargoes and

national recessions challenged prosperity (or even survival). Similarly, Richard Sexton pursued other avenues for earning a livelihood when wharf-building no longer proved solvent. He became involved with the internal improvements of the region, not as a stockholder, but as the actual contractor. In 1811, the New Castle Turnpike Company appointed Sexton as one of the managers of the construction of a turnpike from New Castle to Clark's Corner, a road that would ultimately become part of the larger New Castle/Frenchtown turnpike, which had stalled due to lack of funds at that time. Sexton's responsibilities also involved securing the supplies. The shorter turnpike did generate a small profit by collecting tolls from sufficient traffic passing through the toll booth erected at the corner of Delaware and Union Streets (now Fifth Street). In the mid 1810s, Sexton also worked as the contractor for the company's plan for macadamizing the road to the Newport Bridge; without such an improvement, the company was restrained from collecting bridge tolls.[8]

Sexton built the house at 24 The Strand more than a decade after his participation in these enterprises. Nonetheless, they contribute to an understanding of the spatial context of the house and the economy in which it was situated. Folks located along Front Street earned their livelihoods not by attracting visitors/consumers *to* their commercial spot, but rather by moving them *through* it. Sexton, first as wharf-builder, then as contractor, and later also as a "victualler" and the militia's commissary with stables behind the house[9], met people's needs and filled their orders for supplies as they engaged New Castle as a thoroughfare.[10] This movement *through* makes his location on Front Street at the top of Packet Alley so critical to his understanding of and engagement with New Castle's overall livelihood. However, by employing such a spatial strategy, Sexton

did not wish to enable swift progress from the wharves through the town to Frenchtown but instead to impede it. Like the turnpike that facilitated speedy travel by offering an improved road but then charging a toll at a booth, Sexton's structure at the top of Packet Alley greeted the traveler and offered food, a horse, or information. From the inside of the structure, the view of the waterfront reminded fellow contractors and stockholders who were meeting in the space of the transportation character of their common livelihood. Although the earlier structure was destroyed by the fire in 1824, the nature of this spatial context must be articulated, for Sexton actively embraced it when he undertook reconstruction. The spatial context of Front Street in the late 1820s had a very different character than that which preceded it, as we will see, and the meaning of the structure at 24 The Strand would not be fully comprehended without including the earlier context.

With this articulation of the economic structures in which Sexton operated, we can now confirm the pragmatic meaning of 24 The Strand as displaying a commercial space in the front room of the building. Documentary evidence from the time of Sexton's death further develops the functional relationships this building has to its contexts. The probate inventory lists, in succession, a writing desk, silver teaspoons and crockeryware, an umbrella and stand, and a stove, all of which were probably utilized in this space's functioning as a counting room or office. Such spaces, though semi-public and not intended for sociability, still retained some of the accoutrements of a polite parlor.[11] In this space, Sexton negotiated deliveries of supplies, contracts for new buildings or other projects, or arrangements for food provisions. A large front window involved a view of the Delaware River into the room. Although no chairs appear to be in this room at the

time of the inventory, the middle room on the first floor lists eight chairs, suggesting that movement between the two spaces may have been more fluid than previously thought.

At the time of his death, Sexton was due rent from two men, a J. Lawden who did not appear in the 1830 census, and a recently deceased Robert McEvoy, whose household included a wife, two children under 15, and one male aged 15 to 20. Whether these individuals lived in 24 The Strand is unclear; Sexton had a lease for the land adjacent to his lot, and had presumably built 26 The Strand at the same time as 24.[12] Regardless, the probate inventory lists six beds and bedsteads, while Sexton's household had only four individuals in 1830.[13] Some space in the house was very likely used to accommodate tenants, and the two heated rooms on the second and third floor above the counting room could separate boarders with their own stairs from the family in the chambers above the middle room and kitchen. In such an arrangement, the entire front of the house was assigned commercial meanings, or at least residential meanings with a commodified character.

From the exterior, the front part of the house carried symbolic meanings that reified the pragmatic meanings of the interior. As mentioned earlier, the building's location at the top of Packet Alley inserts it into a commercial landscape. The shape of the front of the house, with its steeply pitched roof, manifests a belief in the value of signs that are impressive, imposing, and attention-grabbing; it occupies the entire visible streetscape from the perspective of Packet Alley. Sited on the top of the hill at the end of the alley, it obscures the rest of the town of New Castle behind it, including the Presbyterian Church, the Courthouse, and the new Town Hall built in the early 1820s. The first impression of New Castle that Henry Clay or Andrew Jackson or any of the

other folks listed on the 20th century Packet Alley historical marker was Richard Sexton's house, and it presented a commercial face to the town. "Welcome to New Castle. How may I help you?" the building proclaimed.

Such a reading of the building's shape and siting is abstracted from an early 19th century understanding of urban cultural landscapes described by Dell Upton as the "competitive landscape."[14] In this commercial landscape, city merchants appropriated spaces outside and beyond the traditional front room of their stores. Multiple stories carried merchandise visible through bulging windows; large French doors opened from the store, and merchandise spilled onto the sidewalk and beyond. Hawkers and cart vendors occupied streets and corners. Richard Sexton manifested a similar claim to the urban landscape in the first two decades of the 19th century; he claimed economic interests from the Newport Bridge down to the wharves of the Delaware Bay. He had a significant commercial stake stuck in the turnpike toll booth and at the top of Packet Alley. In the years following the Fire of 1824, bricks Sexton had sold were undoubtedly in countless buildings. And in rebuilding his house with a three-story commercial front, he claimed New Castle's skyline.

Of course, by the late 1820s, the view from Packet Alley had a limited audience; Sexton's assumption of a commercial landscape manifests a perspective that itself was embedded in the past. Like the physical rebuilding of his house that utilized the previous building's relieving arch, Sexton presumed an economic function of Front Street and by extension his house that had been diminishing for nearly a decade. Therefore, another context of the streetscape and the neighborhood must be explored to understand this

dichotomy between the meanings Sexton embedded in his house and its landscape and those beliefs and ideas that the surrounding community promoted.

By the late 1810s, properties along Delaware Street across from the Courthouse increasingly were developed as commercial enterprises. Other changes marked the ascendancy of the more interior streets of New Castle; the market stalls were improved and the Town Hall was built adjacent to the Courthouse. Residents also converged on the area, erecting new fashionable brick homes along Market and Orange Streets. Down along Front Street, although a commercial landscape had been lost in the fire, the property owners rebuilt primarily residential townhouses in a somewhat conservative style.[15] New Castle, in many instances, exhibited elements of a "systematic landscape," an early 19th century understanding of the urban landscape that opposed the "competitive" one. Commercial regulation, urban planning, and social classification occupied the interests of urban elites as they planned new office buildings, cemeteries, and penitentiaries. In New Castle, town planning had begun in 1797 and progressed with Latrobe's survey and the resulting paving of some of the streets. Another manifestation of the influence of the systematic landscape was the improvement in the market space and the construction of the Town Hall. Back along Front Street, the noisome quality of a commercial strip quieted with the last burning ember from the fire. Philadelphia style townhouses and their associated refined gentility organized the streetscape. Such homogeneity in function and style builds a context of spatial typology against which Sexton's assertion of the competitive landscape stands out.

Nonetheless, Sexton's building at 24 The Strand is not devoid of elements that gain meaning from the context of the neighborhood's townhouse typology. Entering the

house, a visitor did encounter a hallway, a step up, and possibly a door that all served to separate the domestic space from the commercial space, assigning social meanings grounded in beliefs and values of refinement. From the exterior, Sexton gave the house a roofline with dormer windows not unlike the other townshouses along the block; the front door, although abutted by a large storefront window, stood to the side of the façade rather than the center, implying a side passage, double-parlor interior. Approaching Sexton's house walking southward along Front Street, as many visitors disembarking from the public wharf below Harmony Street did, 24 The Strand blended into the newly-created streetscape, regulated by a hegemonic community that had recognized the end of a commercial landscape in favor of a residential one. (Fig. 14) Richard Sexton, in his early 60s at the time of the fire, constructed his house and counting room in a context of contested landscapes; his building reveals a power struggle of meaning between the individual and the community. His assertion of a commercial, competitive urban landscape could have been a convincing one, if anyone ever bothered to walk up Packet Alley. More likely, someone meandering along Front Street comprehended a unified streetscape of refined urban gentility, away from the smells and crowds of the central market. The tension continues even today. Residents of The Strand, as well as those throughout New Castle, abide by rules governing the maintenance of the historic character of their homes, and thus accepting a perspective that operates as a systematic landscape. Nonetheless, they welcome busloads of tourists onto their sidewalks; from a desire to keep their small gift boutique commerce profitable, they also adhere to a competitive landscape, tolerating tourists who claim residential space as public space.

Impeding the tourists as they move through the town, the shop owners proclaim,

"Welcome to New Castle. Wouldn't you like to stay for dinner in an 'historic tavern'?"

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[1] *Wilmingtonian,* Vol. L, No. 33 (April 29th 1824), p. 3 col. 2.

[2] The method for abstracting an artifact's pragmatic and symbolic meanings from spatial, temporal, and typographical contexts is outlined in Ian Hodder, *Reading the Past: Current Approached to Interpretation in Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; second edition 1991), pp. 1-18, 121-155, 156-161.

[3] This information provided by current owner Linda Ratchford and confirmed by an article in the New Castle Gazette. The caption for the photo read, "The 19th century shop window was painstakingly and authentically reconstructed according to plans of the late Albert Kruse." *The New Castle Gazette* (May 14th, 1975), p.7.

[4] Plate 35 in Robert Frank Brown, "Front Street, New Castle, Delaware: Architecture and Building Practices, 1687-1859" (M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 1961)

[5] Deed book K, Vol. 3, p. 24. (1806: Alexander – Sexton). Recorder of Deeds, Wilmington, Delaware.

[6] Sexton received $51.07 for carpentry work done to the north side of the Christiana Ferry. J.Thomas Scharf, *History of Delaware, 1607-1888 Vol. I* (Philadelphia: L.J. Richards & Co, 1888), p. 419. In the settlement papers for Sexton's estate, there is a bill due from J. Janvier for $144.97 for bricks, and another one from Andrew Meston for $62.50. The Commissioners of Public Buildings also owe him $21 for bricks. Probate and inventory records for Richard Sexton.

[7] Joseph Scott. *A Geographical Description of the States of Maryland and Delaware.* (Philadelphia, 1807), p. 176-78.

[8] Sexton's contracting activities are listed in Scharf, p. 417.

[9] Sexton was identified as a victualler in his renewal of a leasehold on a Front Street lot adjoining the lot purchased in 1806. Deed book P, Vol. 4, p. 255. (1821: Trustees of New Castle Presbyterian Church - Sexton). Recorder of Deeds, Wilmington, Delaware

[10] Note the language of Scott's description: "passes through," "by this route," "thoroughfares," "across the peninsula."

[11] Ann Smart Martin, "Commercial Spaces as Consumption Arena: Retail Stores in Early Virginia," in *People, Power, Places: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture VIII*, ed. Sally McMurry and Annmarie Adams (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), pp. 209-211.

[12] Sexton first signed the lease for the lot adjacent on the north in 1807; by the 1816 tax assessment, he had fulfilled the leasehold requirement of improving the lot with a brick house. In the newspaper accounts of the fire, he reportedly suffered the loss of two brick dwellings as well as stables. Finally, the interconnectedness of the two brick building built post fire is attested to by a continuous line of a brick corbelled cornice between the two. Finally, when Sexton's son, Dr. Richard Sexton, sold the property in 1847 on which 24 The Strand stands, the deed mentions the adjoining property as the leasehold from the Trustees of the Presbyterian Church. It also makes reference to free use of an alley, which is partly on the granted property and partly on the leasehold, for occupants of both houses, but the use of the rooms extending over the alley belong to the owner or tenant of the house on the leasehold property (26 The Strand). Deed book P, Vol. 4, p. 255. (1821: Trustees of New Castle Presbyterian Church - Sexton). Recorder of Deeds, Wilmington, Delaware; New Castle County Tax Assessment, 1816-1817, microform no. 1820, Morris Library, University of Delaware; Deed book U, Vol. 5, p. 193. (1847: Sexton-George Houston). Recorder of Deeds, Wilmington, Delaware.

[13] The 1830 census lists Sexton in his sixties, his wife Margaret in her thirties, a woman in her twenties, and a young boy aged 5 to 10. Only his wife Margaret and his son, Dr. Richard Sexton, receive any inheritance from his will.

[14] Dell Upton, "Another City: The Urban Cultural Landscape in the Early Republic," in *Everyday Life in the Early Republic*, ed. Catherine E. Hutchins (Winterthur, Delaware:H.F.duPont Winterthur Museum, 1994), pp. 61-117.

[15] Brown notes in that "Normally, the commercial district of a town expands into its residential area. But, in New Castle, the reverse was true. The local mercantile class – Jeremiah Bowman, the Janviers, the Riddles, and the McCulloughs – was not expanding its activities. Instead it was content to make safe investments.

On Front Street it invested in property that was relatively inexpensive by now and erected on it a simple, stereotyped sort of building – the town house." p. 45. While most of the homes were townhouses, some of them did have more fashionable features, such as 1820s Greek Revival finishes. 30 The Strand was built with a piazza, which, although not a new feature for townshouses in the 1820s, does counter Brown's assertion that all the buildings on Front Street built post fire had service in the basement. He further contends that they all followed a town house plan, with "a side entrance and stair hall with two rooms, often equal in size, to one side." p. 39. Brown based many of his assumptions on investigations at the Jefferson Hotel, but provided less in-depth analyses of other properties. Accordingly, some of his generalizations seem overextended.

Figure 1: (left) View of west side of The Strand, numbers 24, 26, 28, and 30. The Read House is visible on the far right. All photos by J. Barrett unless otherwise noted.

Figure 2: (right) View from Packet Alley up to 24 The Strand.

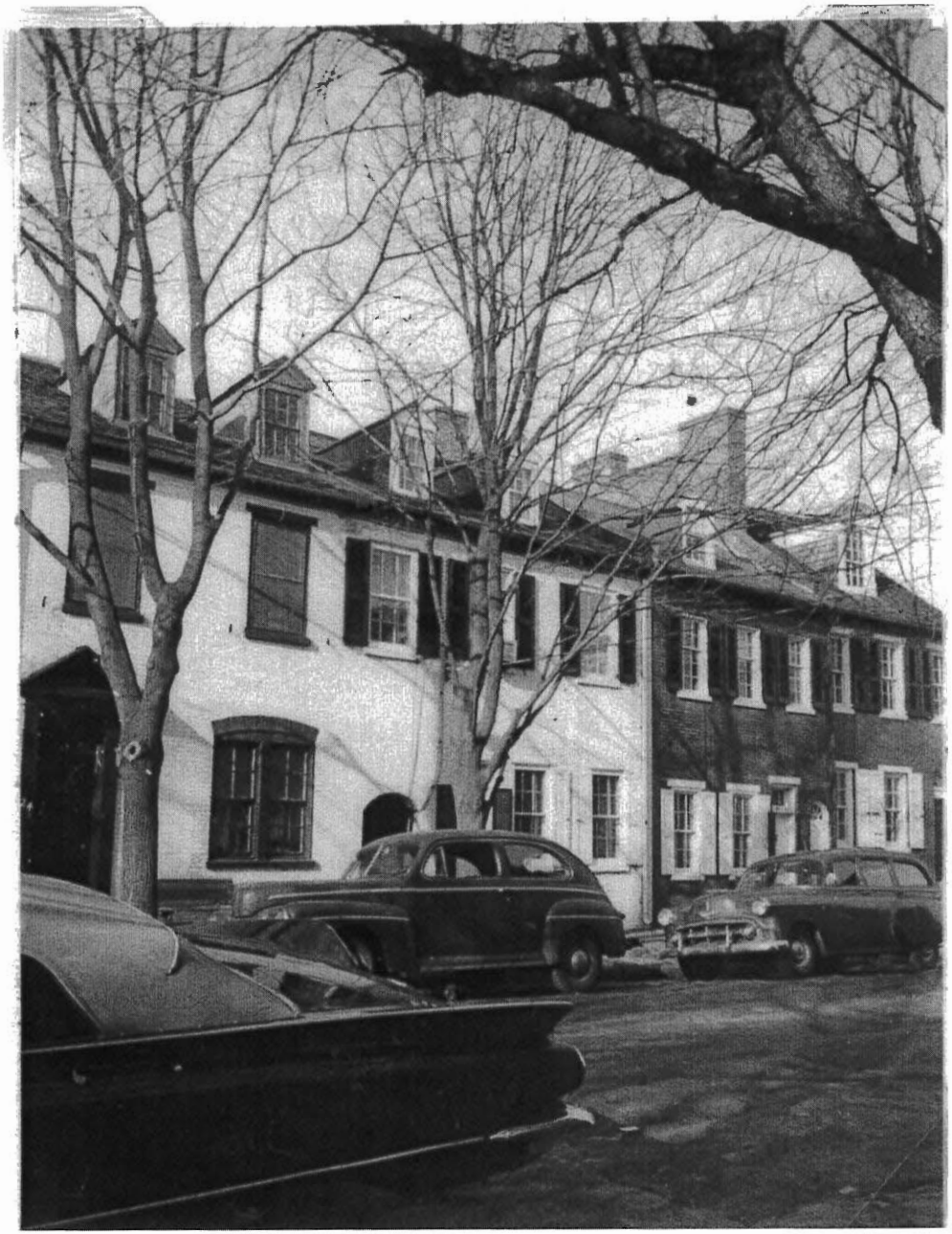


Figure 3: Mid-20th century photo of 24, 26, 28, 30 The Strand. Plate 35 from Robert Frank Brown, "Front Street New Castle, Delaware: Architecture and Building Practices, 1687-1859." PhD dissertation, University of Delaware, 1961.

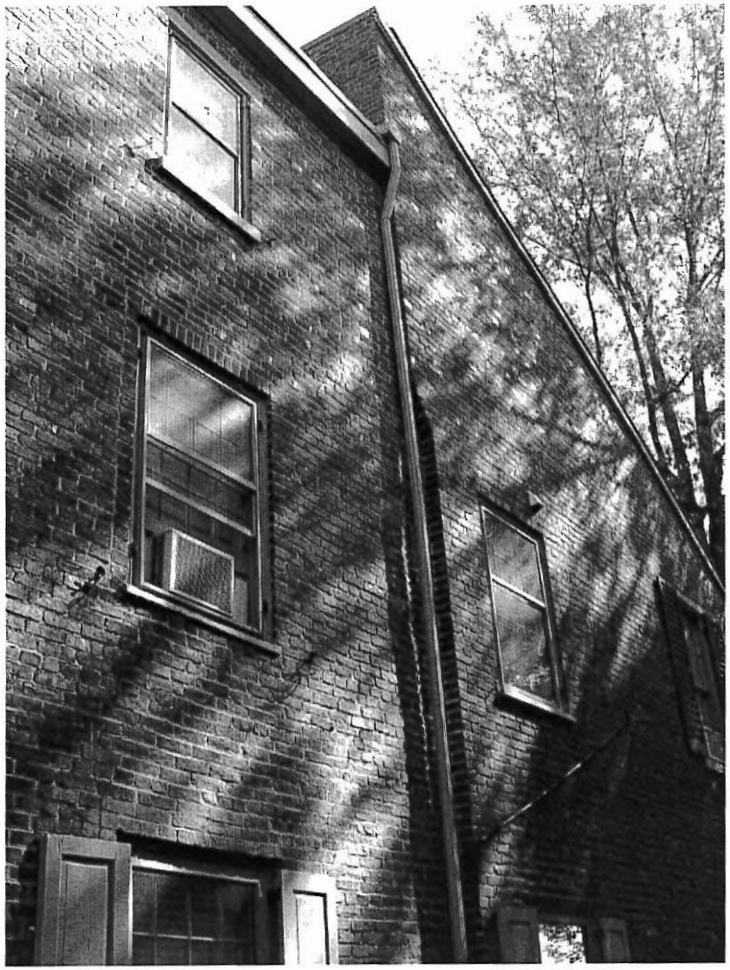


Figure 4a and 4b: Side of house with steeply pitched roof. Third floor in middle section is later addition.

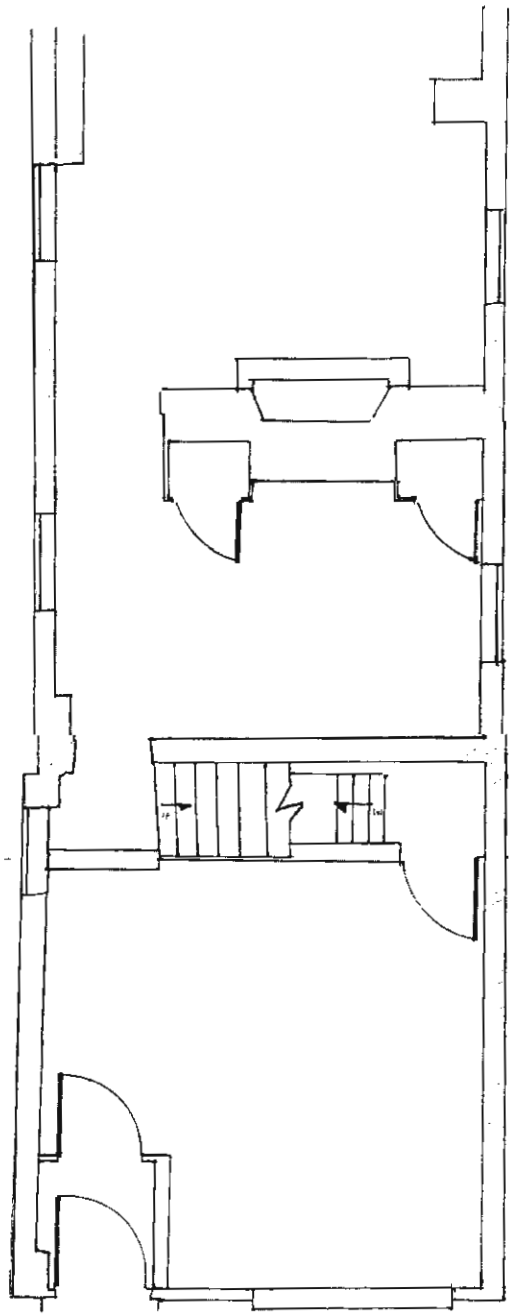


Figure 5a: Current floor plan. Front room measures 16. 5' wide by 19.5' deep (to the original back wall behind the stairs). Middle room measures 15.75' wide by 13.5' deep (including both hallways). Rear room measures 15.75' wide by 10' deep.

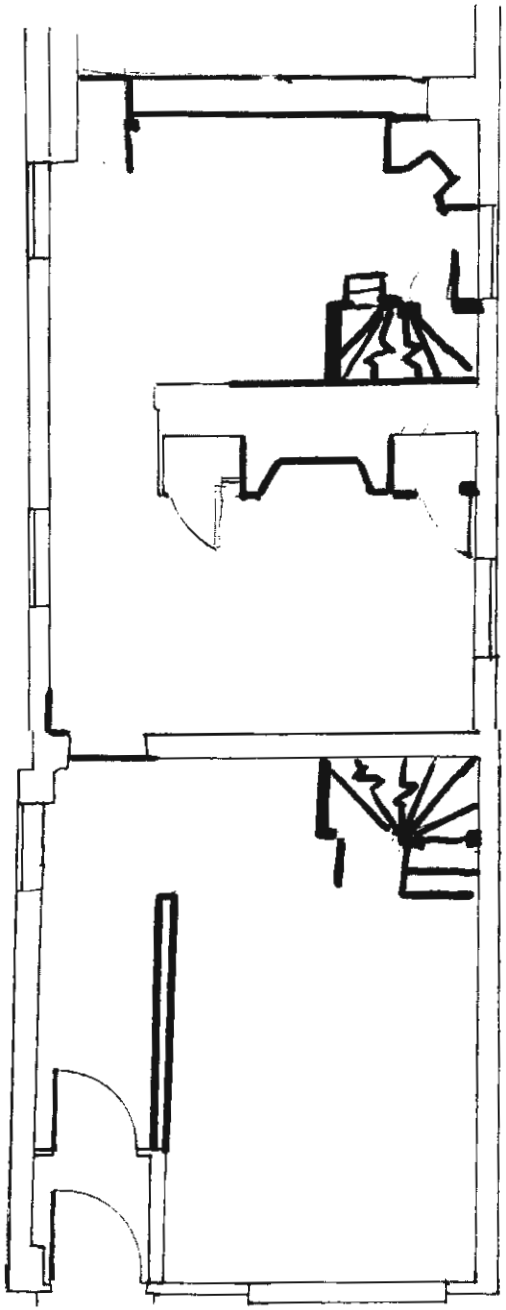


Figure 5b: First period floor plan. Changes from current indicated by thick lines. Front room had winder stair and wall creating hallway. Middle room had fireplace. Rear (kitchen) had corner fireplace and winder stair.

Figure 6: Evidence of plaster (a) on rear wall under modern stair in front room. Notice also the floorboards (b) that extend from the front room, through modern wall to original back wall.

Figure 7: (left) Patch in front of cellar stairs indicating original winder stair.

Figure 8: (right) Two floorboards in front room running in line with wall from entry foyer, indicating original wall for hallway. Lines drawn by computer to highlight outline of possible wall.

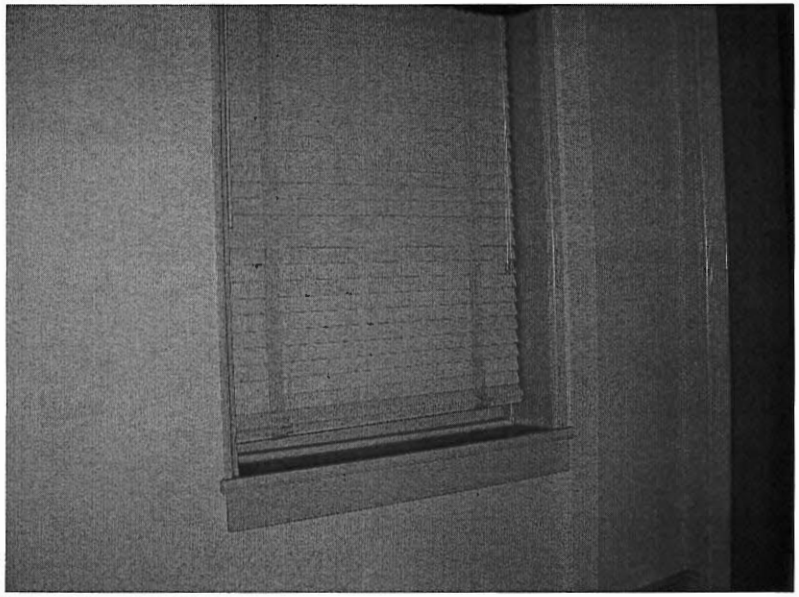


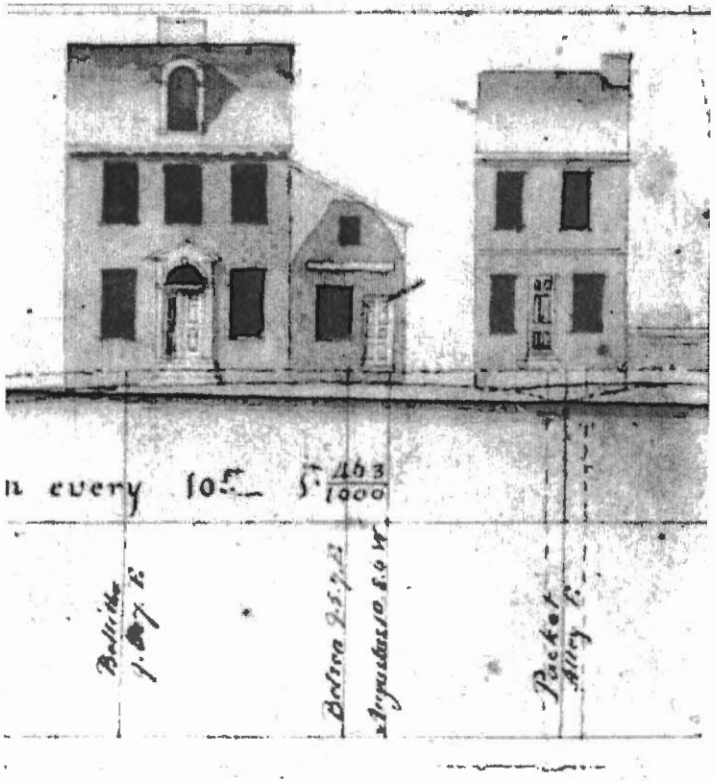
Figure 9: (upper left) Window in front room with original woodwork.

Figure 10: (above) Chimney stack on left with brace joists to hold former hearth.

Figure 11: (left) 18th century relieving arch with floor joists on top of it, and brace joists crossing at an angle to support a chimney stack.

Figure 12: (above) Detail from 1804 Latrobe survey, with probable Sexton property line highlighted.

Figure 13: (below) Close-up of Latrobe elevations. Sexton's pre-fire house is on far right.



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