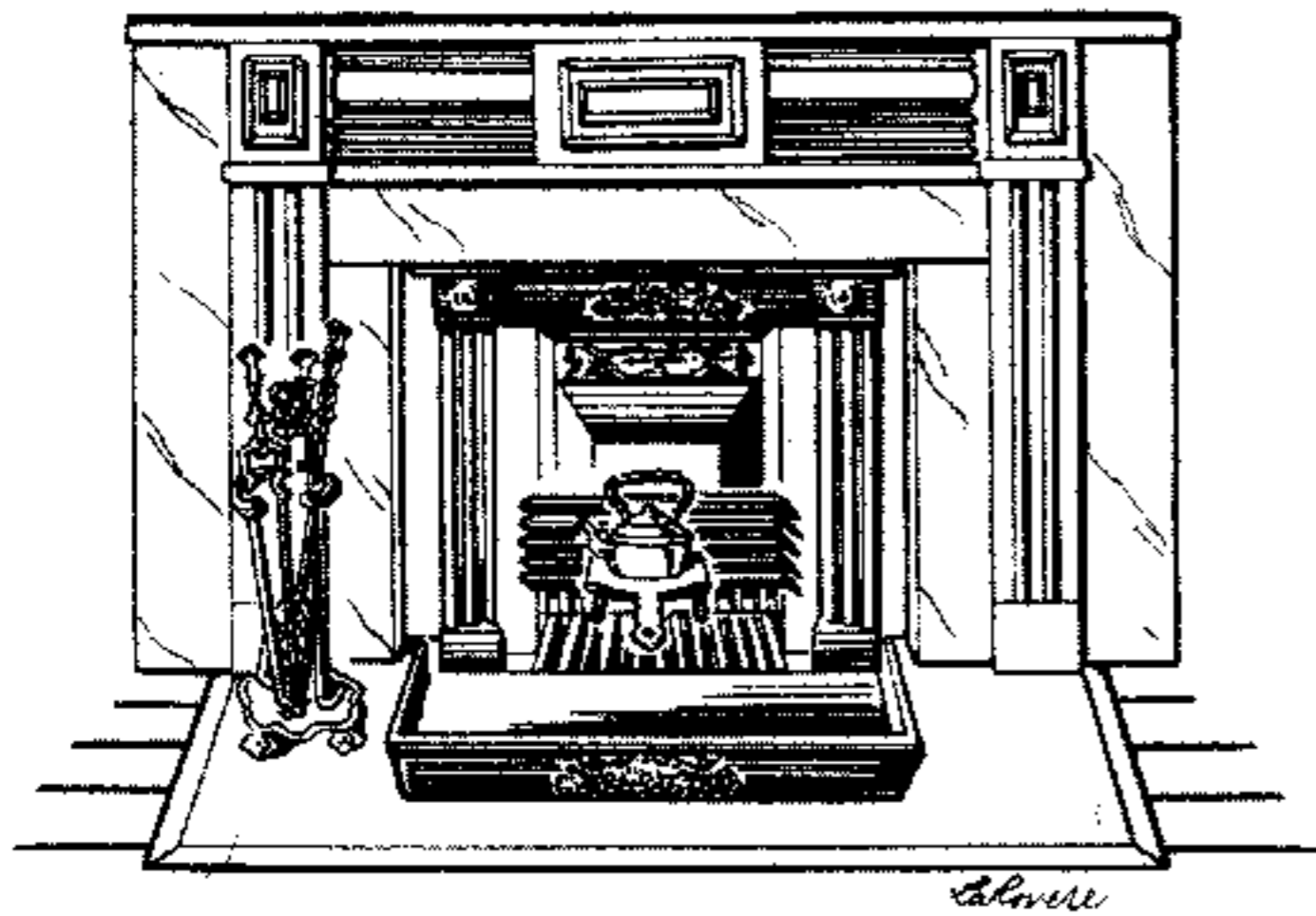


New York Row Houses: Federal Interiors

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The Federal Period in New York brownstone building spanned from the 1730's through the 1840's. The Federal row house was twenty to twenty five feet wide by thirty to forty feet deep with two rooms per floor. This layout ensured adequate lighting and ventilation and remained the standard in brownstone architecture through the late 1890's. (see layout on reverse side)

Modest Federal houses lacked a furnace and rarely had a cellar. Wood burning fireplaces were the source of heat. Marble or wood mantels graced most rooms in Federal homes. These consisted of a plain rectangular shelf supported by plain or fluted columns, flat side jambs and a horizontal jamb above the fireplace opening with a deeply set panel in the center. Favorite materials were wood, white marble, a mixture of white or black marble pieces, and in rare cases, black marble veined with gold.



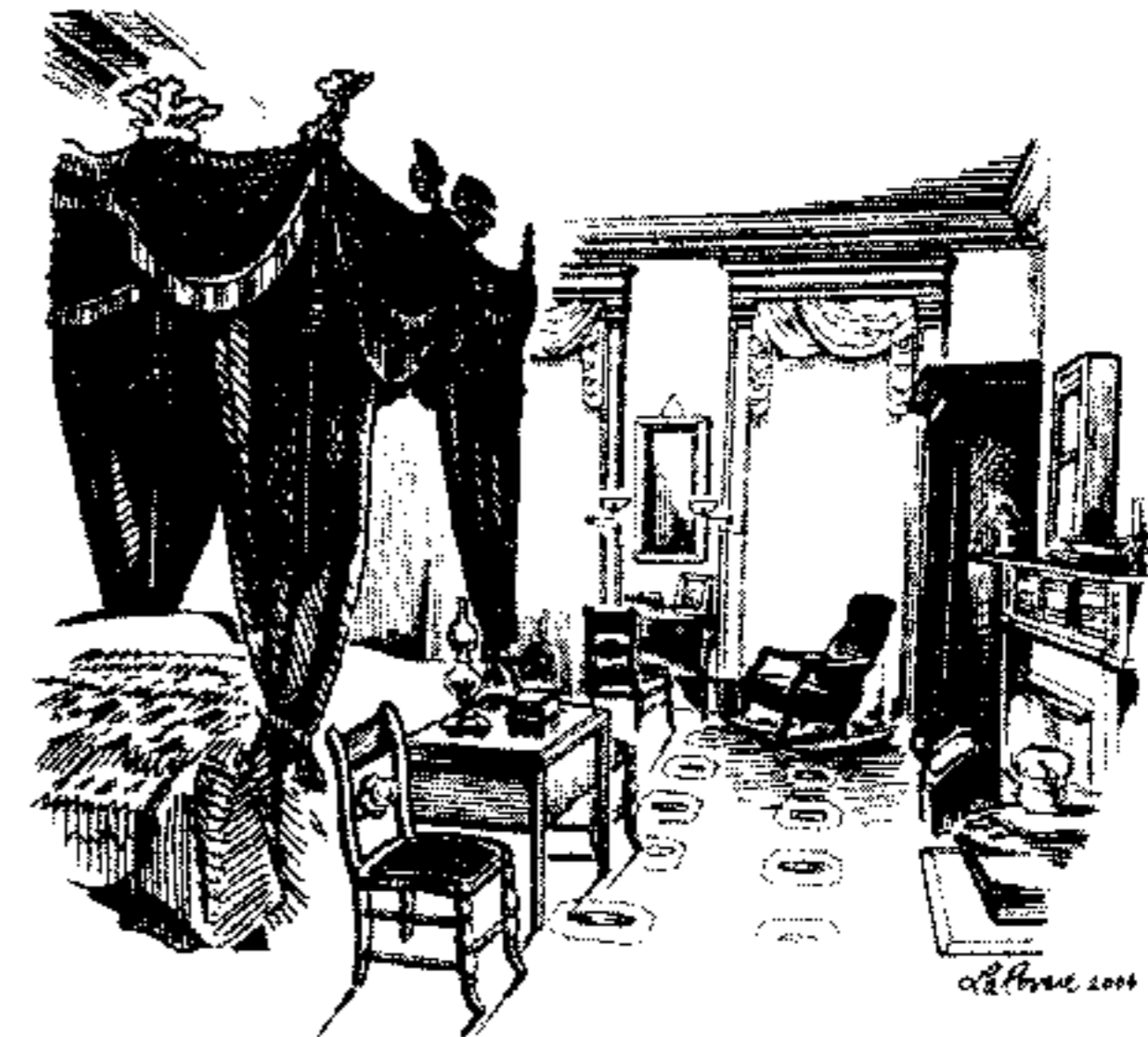
The kitchen of the Federal home was located at the rear of the garden level with a dining room at the front of the garden level. Formal dinner parties were held in the back parlor room and food would be brought up from the kitchen below through a hatch in the parlor floor. Due to the relative shortness of these homes, a permanent formal dining room on the parlor level would have made receptions and dancing parties difficult. Families who opted for a permanent parlor level dining room would then use the front room of the garden level as a nursery or office. Parlor dining rooms gained popularity in the 1850's with the advent of the dumbwaiter and a growing servant pool from European immigration.

The ground floor kitchen and family dining room had an inexpensive wide plank floor. The kitchen had a huge hearth fireplace where the cooking was done. Food and firewood were stored in vaults, generally ten feet wide and twenty feet long extending underneath the street in front.

On the first floor, a long narrow hallway led down the side of the house. In larger houses there was a smaller interior vestibule, leading to a stairway along the back of the house up to second and third floor bedrooms. Small windows were created at each half landing of the stairwell for light and ventilation. All homes had a set of windows at each end of the house. Some of the earliest Federal homes which were detached, had side windows as well.

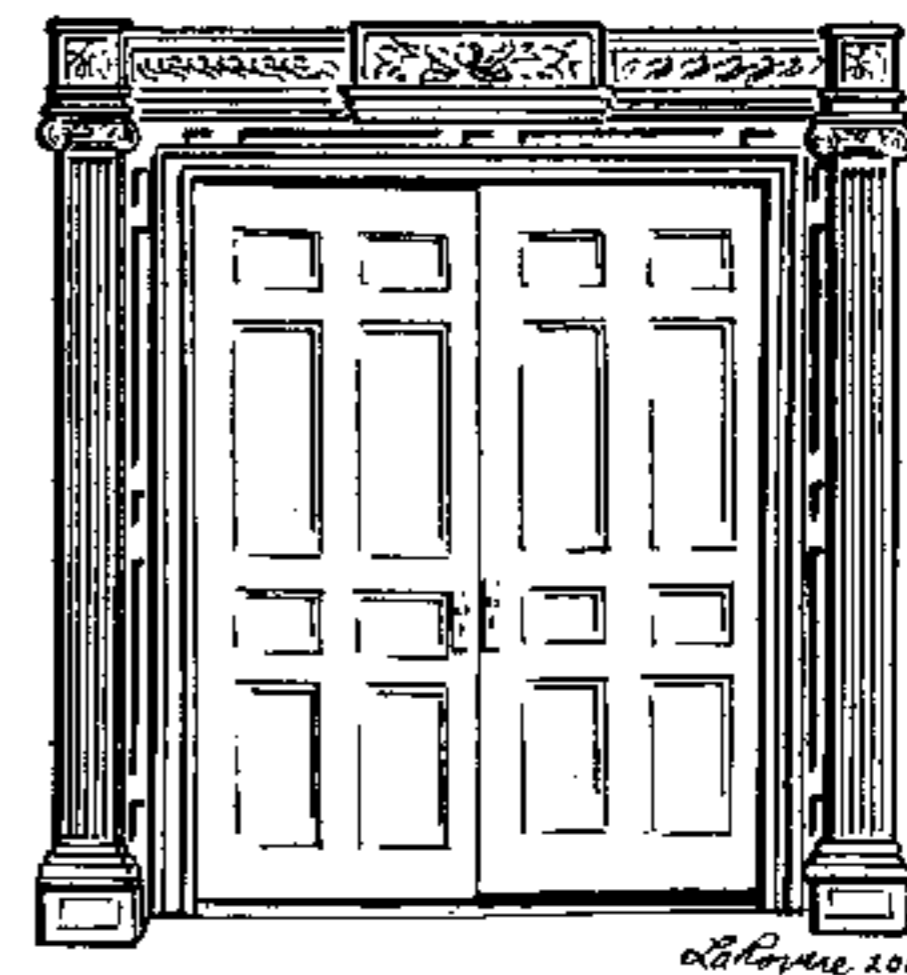
The front and back parlors were identical in shape, opening off the long hallway. The rich details and high quality materials were found on the parlor level of these homes. Crown moldings, baseboards, doors and window frames as well as fireplace ornamentation were the norm.

Parlor walls were painted plaster with foot high Crown moldings at the ceiling and baseboards at the floor. Dentillated crown moldings, resembling teeth, were most common. Grander homes possessed acanthus oak leaf crown moldings. Toward the end of the Federal period, ceiling flowers surrounding hanging chandeliers began to appear.



Hinged, rectangular parlor doors separated the front and back parlors. Sliding pocket doors did not appear in townhouse construction until the 1820's. The enframement of these mahogany and rosewood veneer doors consisted of pilasters at each side supporting a horizontal lintel with carved square end blocks and in the center, usually a large rectangular carved block. On the first floor, boldly carved acanthus oak leaves enriched the end and center blocks. Often, an antechamber between the front and back parlor had two sets of doors for the two rooms. The walls of the antechamber were often beautifully paneled. They contained a china closet or a small butler's pantry. On higher floors, this area was utilized as either a clothes press or an area for washbasins and chamber pots.

Row houses during this period had deep back yards or gardens. Federal homes in particular were characterized by deep gardens. Initially, there had been a sunken areaway with steps that led to the back floor. By the mid nineteenth century, gardens and back-yards were dug to the same level as the basement. Gardens were not the carefully landscaped sanctuaries we see in today's restored homes. They contained outhouses and often served as a repository for the homes' debris and garbage as well. Some of the most wonderful examples of Federal townhouses can be found along Washington Square North between University Place and



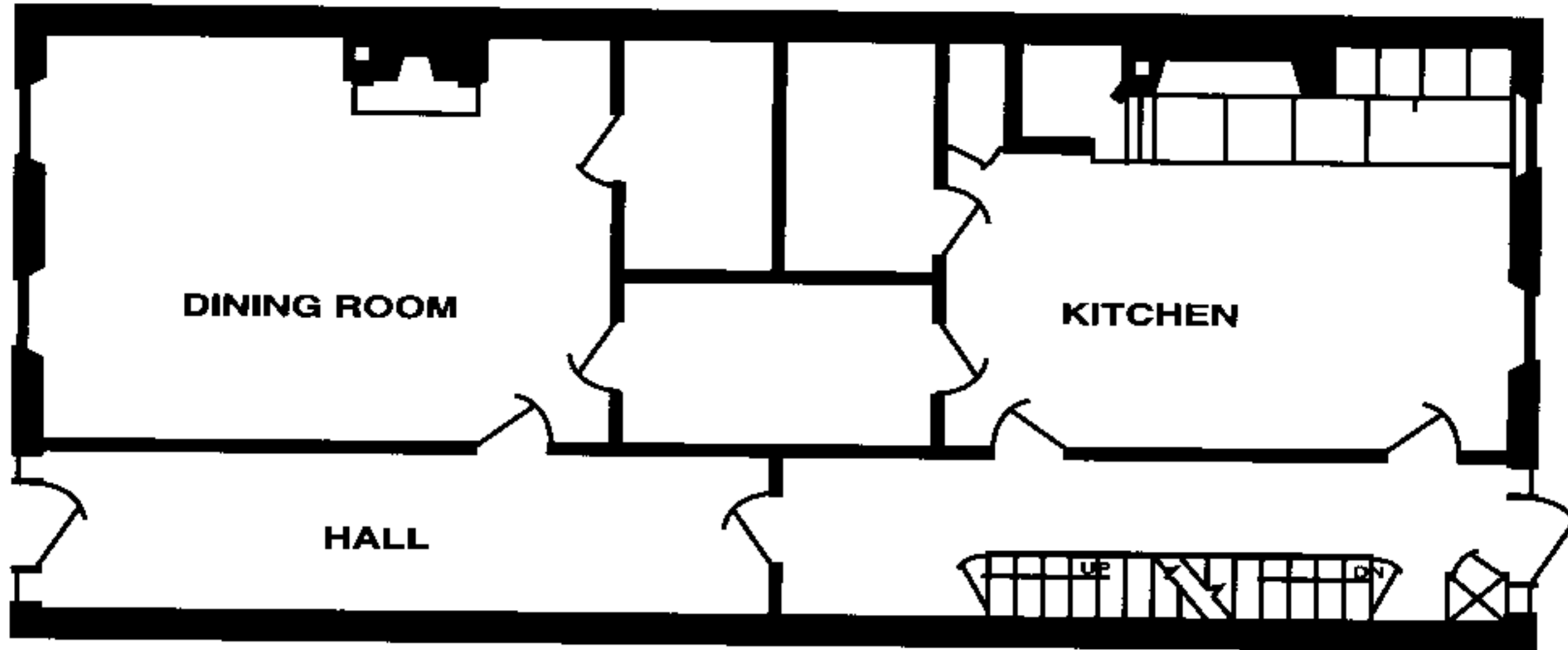
Macdougall Street, on Charleton, Vandam and King Streets between Sixth and Seventh Avenue, in the lower Village; as well as the homes at 4-10 Grove Street, 7 Leroy Street, 56 West 10th; and the diminutive houses of Grove Court in the West Village.

Bibliography:

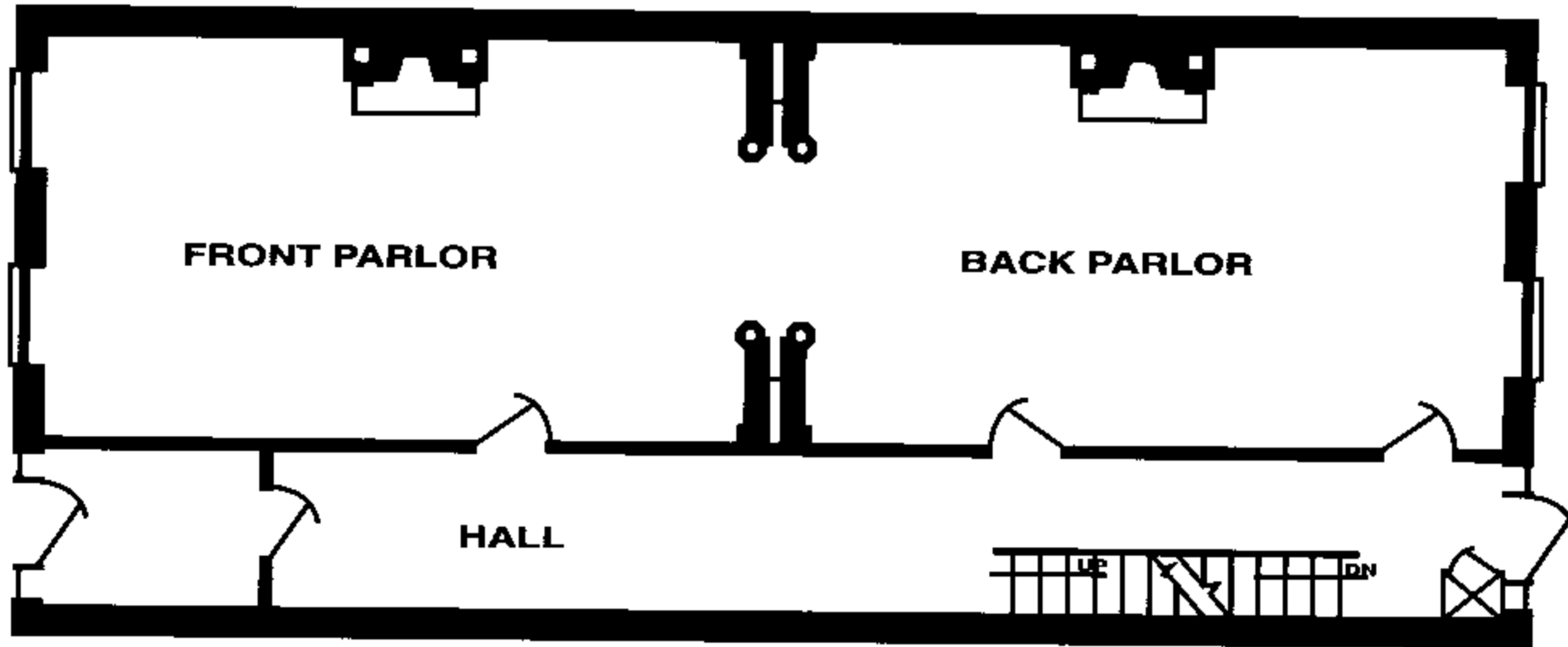
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Tatiana Cames, Vice President

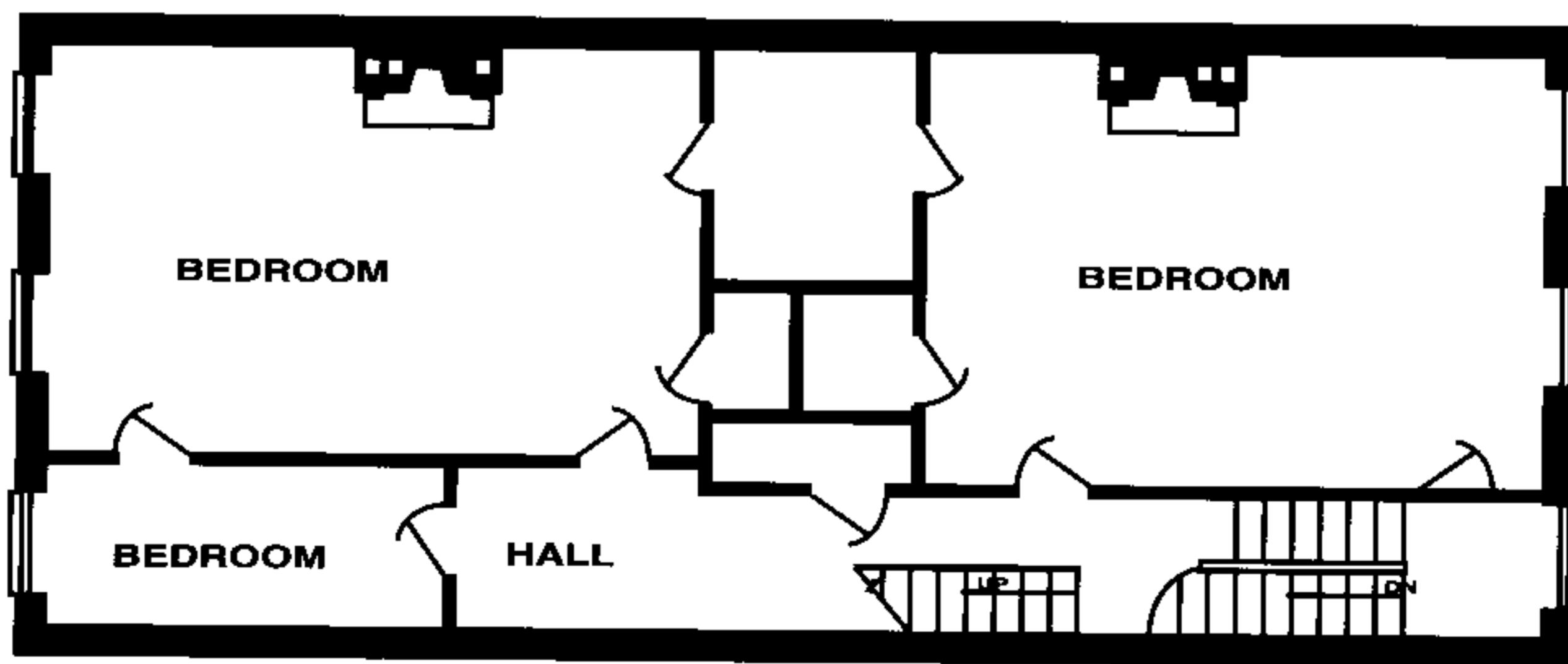
The Corcoran Group, 59 West 19th Street New York, New York 10011 • 212.444.7833 • tcc@corcoran.com



Garden Floor



Parlor Floor



Third and Fourth Floor