

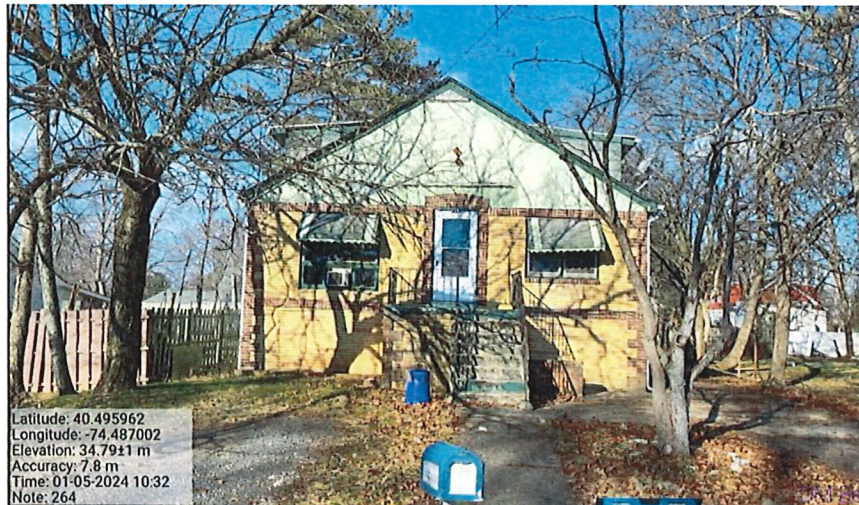
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TYPE & TIME OF OCCUPANCY

FOR THE PROPERTY AT

264 Girard Ave, Somerset, NJ



February 28, 2024

DM Bekus Background

I have worked in construction since the summer of 1979. I started my own construction company in 1984 and ran a framing crew for much of that decade. I renovated multiple residential buildings in the New Brunswick area from the mid 1980's to this day, gaining hands on familiarity of construction techniques and materials from the late 19th century to the present day. After graduating from Kean College of New Jersey in 1986, I also worked on townhome and condominium maintenance, and my company built many additions. During the 1990s, I obtained a New Jersey building inspector license, which I still maintain and renew through continuing education courses and began building subdivisions. Since that time, I have personally managed several residential projects and have gained broad hands-on experience in planning, site work, and sales. I was actively involved in cleanup efforts after Superstorm Sandy in late October 2012, arriving within days of the disaster. Over the course of my career, I have built more than forty single-family homes, forty multifamily units in New Jersey and completed over 100 renovations. I have been active in constructing, renovating, estimating, designing, fixing, inspecting, and consulting on building projects in New Jersey for over thirty-five years.

I have been retained in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC, more than 100 times as an expert witness. I have been accepted as an expert witness for the dating of buildings in South Bound Brook, Piscataway, Woodbridge, and Franklin Township NJ.

Overview and Analysis

Jarrett Sutton contacted me, David M. Bekus, to investigate a building at 264 Girard Avenue, Somerset, New Jersey, to see if it could be classified as a preexisting nonconforming use. This is a three-unit building that is no longer zoned for three-family occupancy. The purpose of this investigation was to determine if the building was originally occupied as a three-family occupancy and if that occupation preceded 1958.

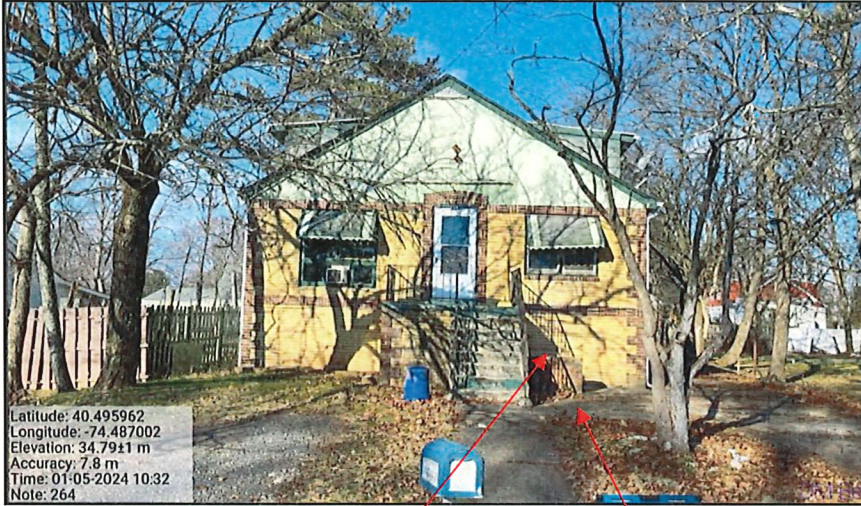
On January 5, 2024, I visited the site, took pictures, and examined the property. The building, particularly the interior, was in a poor state, with the lower level indicating extensive water damage. Public records indicate the home was built in 1953, and the current record lists the building as a single-family home and the current zoning as R15.

Type	residential
Building Description	One and a Half Story Single Family
Year Constructed	1953
Interior Space (ft ²)	2565
Acreage	0.1538
Additional Lots	L63

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The building has three levels, each with a separate apartment. The interior has a mix of construction that indicates construction materials and techniques from the 1950s through 2000s. The exterior siding consisted of partial front brick and the other sides predominantly cement plaster. It is common for old buildings to have many renovations and updates over the years, and this building is no exception. There are three separate electric meters, which will be addressed later in this report, and a single gas service. There are two separate front entrances and two separate rear entrances. The upper front entrance leads to a small common area, an apartment to the left, and another apartment up the flight of stairs.

¹ NJ parcels



The front entrance

Side entrance under the front porch.

The framing indicates attempted later repairs to the door frame.

The brick work on the side entrance matches the brick on the home, indicating contemporaneous construction.

The fact the front brick continues below grade indicates it was part of the original construction.

The retaining wall has a different brick and was likely a repair at some point in the past.



Right side

The plaster siding is continuous from grade level to roof line, including the second floor. Other than having been painted over time, the plaster siding is the original siding from the construction of the home. The window size and configuration of the basement windows shows an intent for occupancy. Almost universally, basements from before the 1960s consisted of low ceiling heights and extremely few, small windows. The basement in this 1953 home is unusual in that there are multiple large windows, strongly indicating an intent for occupancy. There are no indications the windows were added after the initial construction. Even the size of the windows indicates an intent for occupancy because the far left window width and height can be associated with a typical living room or common room, and the two other windows are typical for bathrooms and kitchens from the period.

The upper floor wall being plastered as part of the original construction and the two large windows indicate an original intent for occupancy and not a later attic addition.



The window frame and plaster (note how it is let in to the front brick) indicate it is part of the original construction. The window itself is a vinyl replacement window.



The rear of the home has two entrances. The rear entrance retaining walls are part of the original construction. It appears that at one time there was a canopy over the entrance.



The original small window indicates an intent for occupancy by the original builder and designer.
The door has likely been replaced several times over the life of the building.

Most of the interior doors and floors have been replaced over time. The door shown below is the only original interior door I found. The style, hinge, and doorknob are typical of 1930s to 1950s construction.



Latitude: 40.496196
Longitude: -74.4869
Elevation: 34.79±1 m
Accuracy: 17.5 m
Time: 01-05-2024 10:46

The home had three kitchens, though one was removed.



Basement kitchen cabinets have been removed.

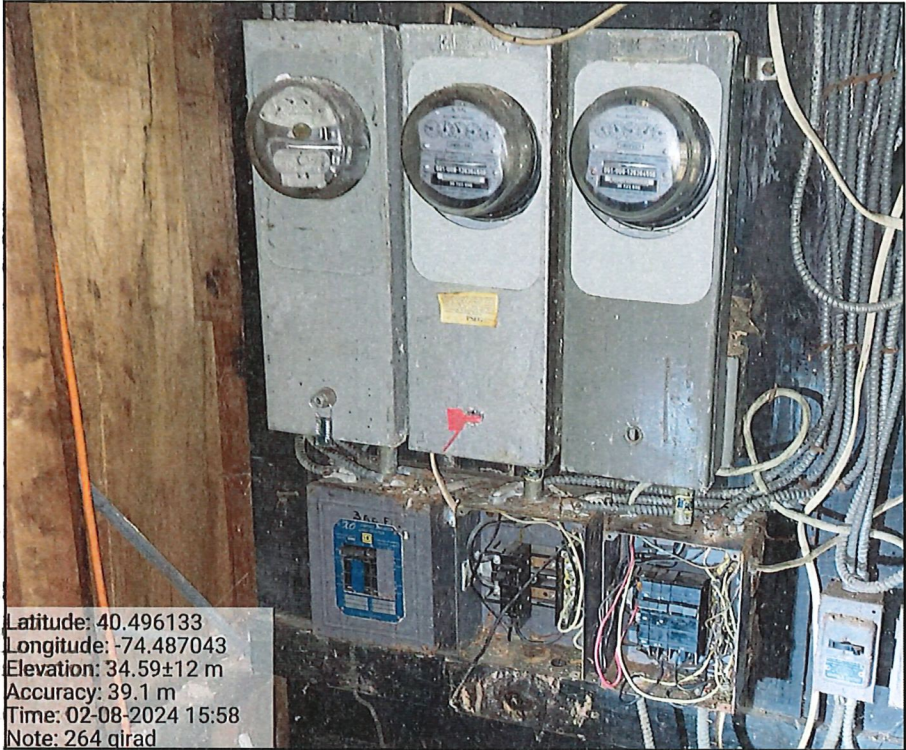


First floor cabinet

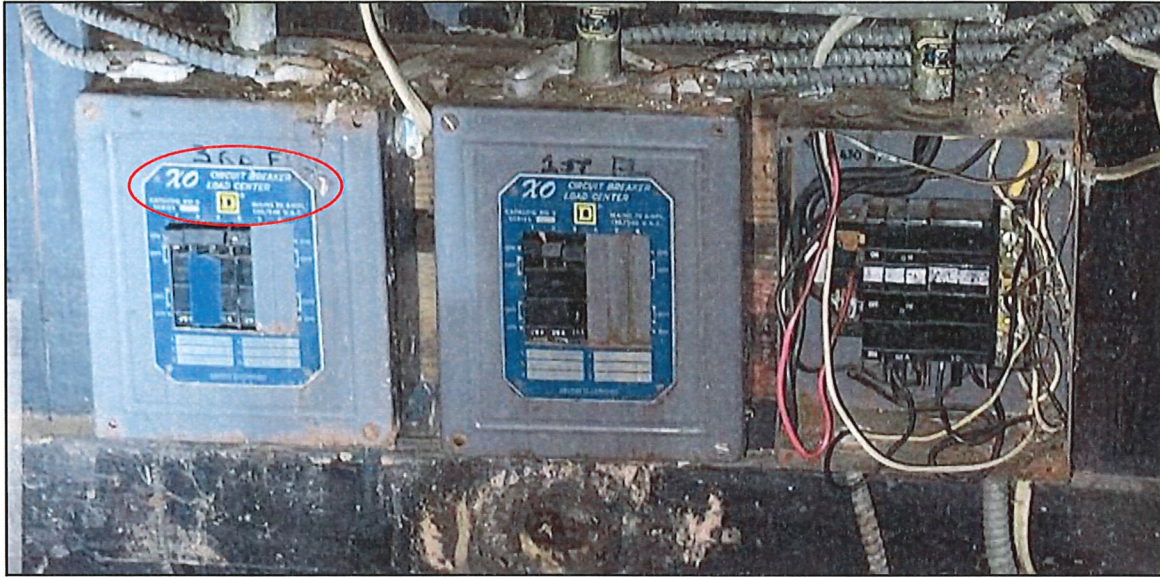


Third floor cabinets; the metal cabinets as shown above are typical for 1930s through 1950s construction.

The most compelling evidence that 264 Girard was a multifamily home from its construction is the electrical services. The building has three separate services with equipment that can be dated to the early 1950s.

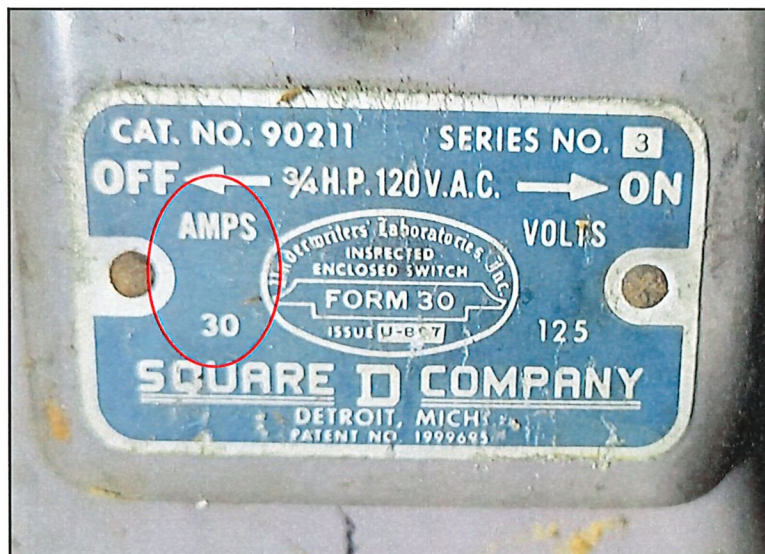


Three services in the basement



The service panel is the Square D XO series. The last production of the Square D XO was 1955.

The disconnect box, shown below, is a 30-amp Square D. In the early 1950s a 30-amp service was standard.




Conclusion

With reasonable professional certainty, I, David M. Bekus, affirm the following.

The home at 264 Girard Avenue, Somerset, New Jersey, was originally built as a three-family occupancy in or around 1953. To this day it has three kitchens (one with cabinets removed) and three separate bathrooms. The exterior window configuration along with the exterior door configuration support, three separate long obsolete electric services, along with the other evidence in this report, supports this conclusion.

David M. Bekus receives compensation for reports and opinions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David M. Bekus". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "D" and "B".

David M. Bekus